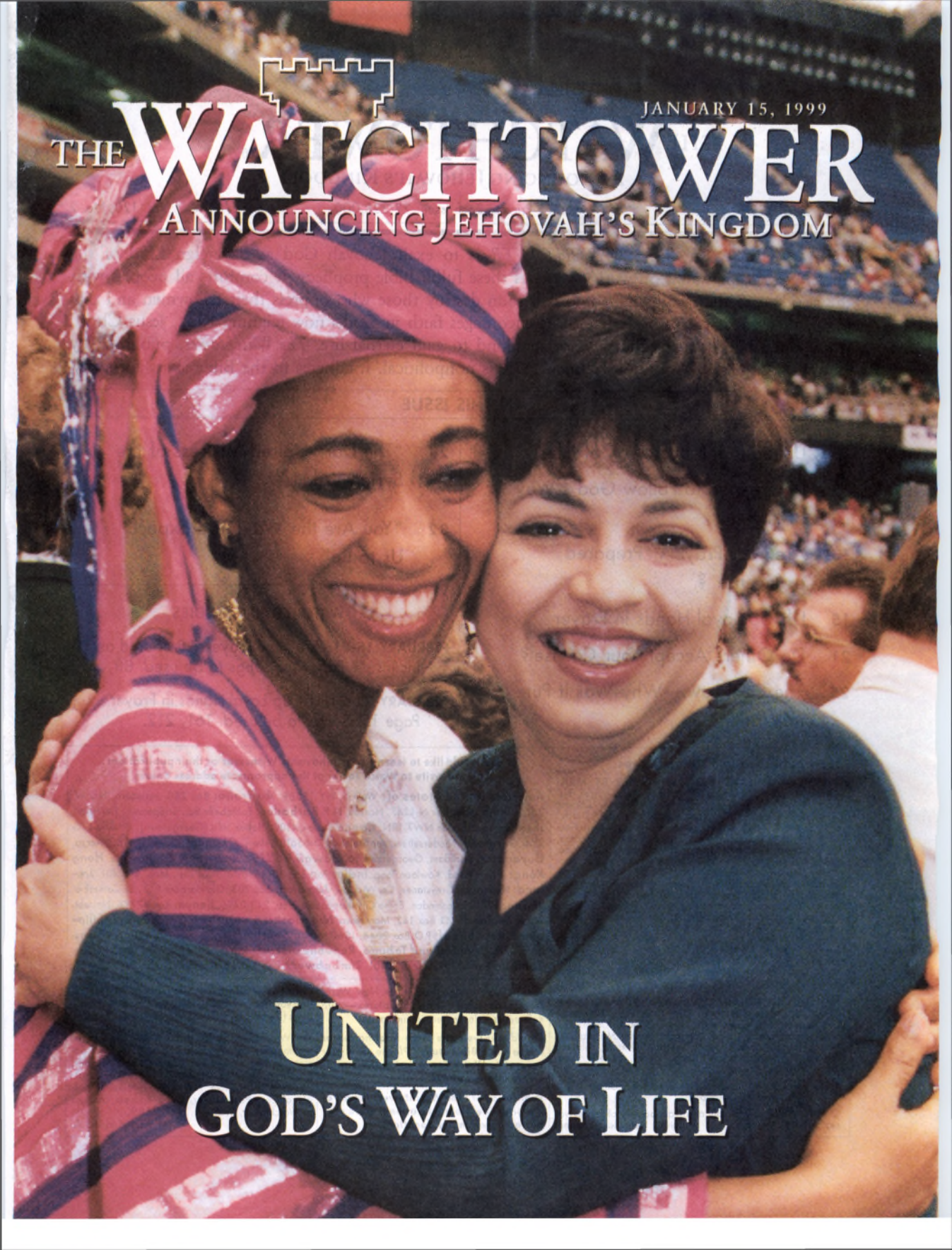




JANUARY 15, 1999

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

UNITED IN
GOD'S WAY OF LIFE

THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

January 15, 1999

Average Printing Each Issue: 22,328,000

Vol. 120, No. 2

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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Now published in 130 languages.

SEMI-MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano,* Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,* Danish,* Dutch,* Erik,* English,* (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,* French,* Ga, Georgian, German,* Greek,* Gujarati, Gun, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,* Igbo, Iloko,* Indonesian, Italian,* Japanese,* (also Braille), Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Korean* (also Braille), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Norwegian,* Pangasinan, Papiamentu, Polish,* Portuguese* (also Braille), Rarotongan, Romanian,* Russian,* Samar-Leyle, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Slovak,* Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,* Sranantongo, Swahili, Swedish,* Tagalog,* Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian,* Urdu, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

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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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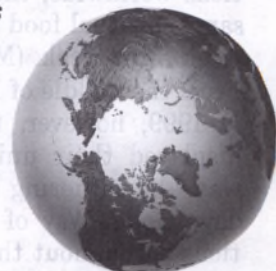
The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Printed in U.S.A.



UNITED IN THE BEST WAY OF LIFE

If the world's population continues to climb, there will soon be six billion people on earth. Though all stem from a common ancestor, most do not seem to acknowledge that they are members of a global family and are accountable to a wise and loving Creator. The disunity and strife between nations, races, and cultures bear grim testimony to this sad state of affairs.



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IN VIEW of present world conditions, global unity may seem to be an unattainable goal. *The Columbia History of the World* states: "On the all-important question of how to live together, the contemporary world has not a single new idea to offer, not one."

However, the bringing about of unity among all earth's inhabitants does not require a new idea. The path to unity is set out in the Holy Scriptures. It centers on the worship of the One who created the earth and all life on it. True unity of thought, purpose, and way of life already exists among God's people. Numbering more than five and a half million

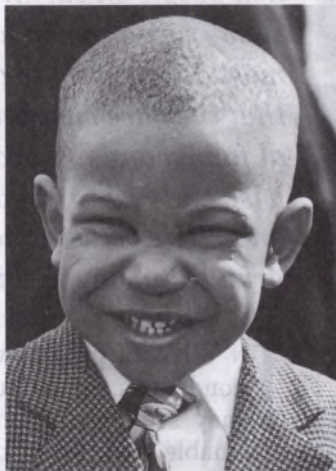
in 233 lands, they are united in their conviction that God's way of life is the best way. Like the psalmist, they pray: "Instruct me, O Jehovah, about your way. I shall walk in your truth. Unify my heart to fear your name." —Psalm 86:11.

This uniting of people in pure worship was foretold long ago by the prophet Isaiah. He wrote: "It must occur in the final part of the days that the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills; and to it all the nations must stream. And many peoples will certainly go and say: 'Come, you

people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.’”—Isaiah 2:2, 3.

The unity of Jehovah’s Witnesses is unique. In over 87,000 congregations worldwide, they partake of the same spiritual food at their meetings week after week. (Matthew 24:45-47) From the middle of 1998 until early 1999, however, the Witnesses displayed their unity in another way—by gathering at their three-day “God’s Way of Life” Conventions throughout the world. In 13 countries, these gatherings included large delegations from various lands and were called international conventions. Others were designated district conventions. But all these conventions presented the same program of spiritually good things.

How pleasant it was to behold happy, well-dressed delegates streaming into auditoriums and stadiums to be taught by Jehovah! Typical was the expression of one delegate to the international convention held in Michigan, U.S.A. She said: “It was such a joy to see our brothers from all over the world—the Czech Republic, Barbados, Nigeria, Hungary, England, Holland, Ethiopia, Kenya, and many other lands—embracing one another! It was beautiful to see brothers dwelling together in unity, shedding tears of joy because of the love they have for one another and for their great God, Jehovah.” The next article will examine the convention program enjoyed by millions throughout the earth.





DETERMINED TO FOLLOW GOD'S WAY OF LIFE

The "God's Way of Life" Conventions had so much to offer to those wanting to serve God! One delegate described the convention as "a wonderful period of instruction, encouragement, and enlightenment."



ANOTHER delegate said that "there was so much to enjoy, to ponder, to take in." Let us now consider the program itself.

Jesus Christ—The Way, the Truth, and the Life

This was the theme of the first day of the convention. (John 14:6) The first talk set out the purpose of our gathering together at the convention: to be further taught about the best possible way of life, God's way of life. Jehovah teaches his people how to walk in his ways. He does this through the Bible, "the faithful and discreet slave," and the holy spirit. (Matthew 24:45-47; Luke 4:1; 2 Timothy 3:16) What a privilege it is to be instructed by the Sovereign of the universe!

In keeping with the theme for the day, the keynote address was "Christ's Ransom—God's Way of Salvation." In conforming to God's way of life, it is vital to recognize the role of Jesus Christ in Jehovah's purpose. The speaker said: "Without the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, no man, regardless of his beliefs or works, could receive everlasting life from God." He

then quoted John 3:16, which states: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." Exercising faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice requires that we come to an accurate knowledge of truth. It also involves dedicating our lives to Jehovah, symbolizing this by water baptism, and living in accord with the example that Jesus Christ provided.—1 Peter 2:21.

The afternoon session began with a talk entitled "The Way of Love Never Fails." This included a verse-by-verse discussion of Paul's stirring description of love, recorded at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. The audience was reminded that self-sacrificing love is an identifying feature of Christianity and that love of God and neighbor are essential features of worship approved by Jehovah.

Next came a three-part symposium entitled "Parents—Inculcate God's Way in Your Children." Parents can help their children to serve God by setting a good example in reading and studying his Word. They can inculcate

the truth in their children through regular family study, tailoring it to meet the needs of the family. It is also important to help children become involved in congregation activities and the field ministry. Although raising God-fearing children in this wicked world is a challenge, doing so brings great rewards.

Following this symposium was the talk "Let Jehovah Shape You for Honorable Use." Just as a potter shapes a clay vessel, so God shapes those who wish to serve him. (Romans 9:20, 21) He does this by providing counsel in his Word and through his organization. Jehovah will help us to use our abilities to the full if we make ourselves available, respond to opportunities, and are willing to let him direct our steps.

An exciting portion of the program now followed—"Service in the Missionary Field." Currently serving throughout the earth in 148 countries are 2,390 Christian ministers who are considered to have missionary status. They set a splendid example of loyalty and zeal and are deeply grateful for their privilege of serving in foreign fields. During this part of the program at the international conventions, missionaries spoke of the challenges and joys of missionary life.

The final talk on the first day was entitled "Is There Life After Death?" This question has perplexed mankind for millennia. People in every society have grappled with the subject. There is no shortage of supposed answers. They are as diverse as the customs and religions of those offering them. Yet, people need to learn the truth.

Consequently, the speaker announced the release of the colorful new 32-page brochure *What Happens to Us When We Die?* This brochure explains the origin of the teaching of the immortality of the soul and shows how the concept has become central to nearly all religions of the world today. In a clear and

appealing way, it examines what the Bible says about the soul, why we die, and what happens to us at death. The brochure also explains what hope there is for the dead and for the living. What a blessing this publication will be to truth seekers everywhere!

Keep Strict Watch on How You Walk

What an appropriate theme this was for the convention's second day! (Ephesians 5:15) The morning program focused on the preaching and disciple-making work. Following a discussion of the daily text, the program continued with the talk "Helping People Get on the Way to Life." In carrying out this urgent work, it is important to have a positive attitude, recognizing that sharing the truth with others is both a privilege and a duty. In the first century C.E., most people rejected the Word of God. Despite opposition, however, there were those 'who were rightly disposed for everlasting life and became believers.' (Acts 13:48, 50; 14:1-5) The situation is similar today. Though many reject Bible truth, we continue to search for those who will respond favorably.—Matthew 10:11-13.

The next talk discussed the challenge of reaching others with the message of life. Since it is now harder to find people at home, we need to be thorough and resourceful if we are to reach as many as possible with the Kingdom message. In many lands, publishers of the good news achieve fine results through telephone witnessing and by preaching in business territory, thus reaching those who are otherwise difficult to contact.

The talk entitled "Teaching Disciples All That Christ Commanded" focused on the importance of becoming skillful in our ministry. Our teaching skills are sharpened as we learn from others and apply the excellent training received at congregation meetings. As we become skillful in our teaching,



Many were baptized

**The new brochure was released by
A. D. Schroeder, a member of the Governing
Body of Jehovah's Witnesses**

we find increased joy and satisfaction in our work of helping people to learn Bible truth.

The morning session ended with a talk on the meaning of dedication and baptism. One of the points made by the speaker was that if we trust in God completely and we earnestly endeavor to do his will, he will bless and sustain us. The wise man wrote: "In all your ways take notice of [God], and he himself will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:6) The joyful baptism itself was a convention highlight demonstrating that many had started to conform to God's way of life.

Following a lunch break, the afternoon session started with the talk "Serving With Endless Life in View." God's purpose to have obedient humans serve him forever on earth will be fulfilled. How fitting it is, then, that we focus our thinking, plans, and hopes on serving Jehovah with eternity in view! While we want to keep "the day of Jehovah" close in mind, it is vital to remember that our goal is to serve for eternity. (2 Peter 3:12) Not knowing the exact time when

Jesus will execute God's vengeance keeps us vigilant and gives us daily opportunities to prove that we serve Jehovah with unselfish motives.

The two talks that followed examined the 4th chapter of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Among the things considered was the blessing we have in "gifts in men," spiritually qualified men who are appointed by holy spirit. These elders provide counsel and direction for our spiritual benefit. Paul's inspired letter also urges Christians to put on "the new personality." (Ephesians 4:8, 24) A godly personality includes such qualities as compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, long-suffering, and love.—Colossians 3:12-14.

Keeping strict watch on how we walk involves keeping ourselves unspotted from the world—the subject of the next talk. Balance is needed in choice of entertainment, social activities, and material pursuits. By applying the counsel at James 1:27 to keep unspotted from the world, we enjoy a clean

standing with God and a good conscience. We can also live purposeful lives and will be blessed with peace, spiritual prosperity, and wonderful associates.

Then came a three-part symposium entitled “Youths—Follow God’s Way.” Knowing that God loves them and appreciates their efforts to uphold pure worship, young people should train their perceptive powers to serve him faithfully. One way to develop perceptive powers is to read God’s Word daily and meditate on it. If we do this, we can come to know Jehovah’s ways. (Psalm 119:9-11) Perceptive powers are also developed by accepting mature counsel from parents, elders, and the Society’s publications. Through the use of their perceptive powers in the right way, youths resist the preoccupation with material possessions, unclean speech, and excesses in recreation that characterize this world alienated from God. By following God’s way



of life, young and old alike can enjoy true success.

The final talk of the day was “The Creator—His Personality and His Ways.” After pointing out that billions of people do not know the Creator, the speaker said: “Real meaning in life relates to knowing the Creator, our personal God; recognizing his personality; and cooperating with his ways. . . . There are facts about our world and about us that you can use to help people to accept the Creator and to find meaning in connection with him.” The speaker then discussed evidence pointing to the existence of a wise

Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?

The new book bearing this title presents convincing evidence of the existence of the Creator, Jehovah, and discusses his qualities. It is designed particularly for those who are well educated in secular matters but who do not believe in God. This 192-page book will also enhance the faith of individuals who already believe in God, building appreciation for his personality and ways.

Is There a Creator Who Cares About You? does not assume that the reader believes in God. Rather, it discusses how recent scientific discoveries and concepts testify to the existence of the Creator. Among the chapters are those entitled “What Can Add Meaning to Your Life?,” “How Did Our Universe Get Here?—The Controversy,” and “How Unique You Are!” Other chapters consider why we can be sure that the Bible is divinely inspired. The new book also gives an overall view of the Bible, which reveals the Creator’s personality and ways. Not only does the book discuss why God has allowed so much suffering but it also explains how he will end it forever.





A thrilling drama encouraged daily Bible reading

and loving Creator. The talk climaxed with the release of a new book—*Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?*

"This Is the Way. Walk in It"

This was the theme of the convention's third day. (Isaiah 30:21) The program began with an exciting symposium of three talks, focusing on Ezekiel's temple vision. This vision has great meaning for God's people today, since it relates to pure worship in our time. A key to understanding the vision is this: Jehovah's great spiritual temple represents his arrangement for pure worship. As the features of the vision were discussed, listeners pondered their activity in support of the work done by loving overseers of the anointed remnant and by the prospective members of the chieftain class.

Later in the morning, there was a colorful Bible drama with a cast of costumed participants. The drama was entitled "Families—Make Daily Bible Reading Your Way of Life!" It portrayed the faith and courage of the three Hebrews who refused to bow down to the golden image erected by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The object of the drama was to demonstrate that not only is the Bible a book of ancient history but its counsel is truly beneficial to both young ones and adults today.

The afternoon session was the time for the public talk "The Only Way to Everlasting Life." After tracing the history of mankind's fall into sin and death, the speaker concluded with these thought-provoking words: "The Bible theme text for this convention day has been Isaiah chapter 30, verse 21, which says: 'Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: "This is the way. Walk in it, you people," in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left.' How do we hear this voice? It is by listening to God's Word, the Holy Bible, and by following the direction that our Grand Instructor, Jehovah God, provides through it and through his modern-day Christian organization. Indeed, to do this is the *only way to everlasting life.*"

Following a summary of the Watchtower study article for the week came the final talk, entitled "Keep On Walking in Jehovah's Way." In part, it reviewed the main points of the program. The speaker then presented a resolution expressing determination to continue living in God's way.

The resolution concluded with these stirring words: "We are convinced that living by Scriptural principles, counsel, and admonition makes for the best way of life today and lays a fine foundation for the future, so that we may get a firm hold on the real life. Above all, we make this resolution because we love Jehovah God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength!" All in attendance affirmed their agreement with a resounding aye!

ARE YOUR PRAYERS “PREPARED AS INCENSE”?

“May my prayer be prepared as incense before you.”—PSALM 141:2.

JEHOVAH GOD commanded his prophet Moses to have sacred incense prepared for use at Israel’s tabernacle of worship. The divine formula called for a fourfold aromatic mixture. (Exodus 30:34-38) It proved to be sweet-smelling indeed.

² The Law covenant into which the nation of Israel was taken provided for the burning of incense daily. (Exodus 30:7, 8) Did the use of incense have special significance? Yes, for the psalmist sang: “May my prayer be prepared as incense before you [Jehovah God], the raising up of my palms as the evening grain offering.” (Psalm 141:2) In the book of Revelation, the apostle John describes those around God’s heavenly throne as having golden bowls full of incense. “And,” says the inspired account, “the incense means the prayers of the holy ones.” (Revelation 5:8) So, then, the burning of sweet-smelling incense symbolized acceptable prayers offered up by Jehovah’s servants both day and night. —1 Thessalonians 3:10; Hebrews 5:7.

³ If our prayers are to be acceptable to God,

- 1, 2. The burning of incense symbolized what?
3. What should help us to ‘prepare our prayers as incense before God’?

we must pray to him in the name of Jesus Christ. (John 16:23, 24) But how can we improve the quality of our prayers? Well, giving consideration to some Scriptural examples should help us to prepare our prayers as incense before Jehovah.

—Proverbs 15:8.

Offer Prayers in Faith

⁴ If our prayers are to ascend to God as sweet-smelling incense, we must pray in faith. (Hebrews 11:6) When Christian elders find a spiritually sick person receptive to their Scriptural help, their “prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well.” (James 5:15) Prayers offered in faith are pleasing to our heavenly Father, and so is prayerful study of God’s Word. The psalmist manifested a fine attitude when he sang: “I shall raise my palms to your commandments that I have loved, and I will concern myself with your regulations. Teach me goodness, sensibleness and knowledge themselves, for in your commandments I have exercised faith.” (Psalm 119:48, 66) Let us ‘spread out our palms’ in humble prayer and exercise faith by complying with God’s commandments.

4. How is faith related to acceptable prayer?



⁵ Suppose we lack the wisdom needed to deal with a trial. Perhaps we are not sure that a particular Bible prophecy is now being fulfilled. Instead of allowing this to destabilize us spiritually, let us pray for wisdom. (Galatians 5:7, 8; James 1:5-8) Of course, we cannot expect God to answer us in a spectacular way. We need to show the sincerity of our prayers by doing what he expects all of his people to do. It is necessary for us to engage in faith-building study of the Scriptures with the aid of publications provided through “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Matthew 24:45-47; Joshua 1:7, 8) We also need to advance in knowledge by participating in meetings of God’s people on a regular basis.—Hebrews 10:24, 25.

⁶ Today, some Christians are pursuing interests and careers suggesting that they have lost awareness that we are now deep in “the time of the end.” (Daniel 12:4) Fellow believers can well pray that such ones rekindle or bolster their faith in the Scriptural evidence that Christ’s presence began in 1914 when Jehovah installed him as heavenly King and that he is ruling in the midst of his enemies. (Psalm 110:1, 2; Matthew 24:3) All of us should realize that such foretold events as the destruction of false religion—“Babylon the Great”—the satanic attack of Gog of Magog upon Jehovah’s people, and the rescue of them by God the Almighty at the war of Armageddon can strike with startling suddenness and can all occur within a comparatively short period of time. (Revelation 16:14, 16; 18:1-5; Ezekiel 38:18-23) So let us pray for God’s help to stay awake spiritually. May all of us pray earnestly for the sanctification of Jehovah’s name, for his Kingdom to come,

5. What should we do if we lack wisdom?

6. (a) All of us should realize what about our day and the fulfillment of Bible prophecies? (b) In addition to praying for the sanctification of Jehovah’s name, what should we do?

and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Yes, may we continue to exercise faith and give evidence that our prayers are sincere. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Indeed, may all who love Jehovah seek first the Kingdom and his righteousness and have the greatest possible share in preaching the good news before the end comes.—Matthew 6:33; 24:14.

Praise and Thank Jehovah

⁷ An important way to ‘prepare our prayers as incense’ is by expressing heartfelt praise and gratitude to God. King David offered such a prayer when he and the people of Israel contributed toward the construction of Jehovah’s temple. David prayed: “Blessed may you be, O Jehovah the God of Israel our father, from time indefinite even to time indefinite. Yours, O Jehovah, are the greatness and the mightiness and the beauty and the excellency and the dignity; for everything in the heavens and in the earth is yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Jehovah, the One also lifting yourself up as head over all. The riches and the glory are on account of you, and you are dominating everything; and in your hand there are power and mightiness, and in your hand is ability to make great and to give strength to all. And now, O our God, we are

7. What impresses you about David’s prayer recorded in part at 1 Chronicles 29:10-13?

In Our Next Issue

The Price of Pride—How High?

The Great Potter and His Work

“Jehovah” or “Yahweh”?

thanking you and praising your beautiful name.”—1 Chronicles 29:10-13.

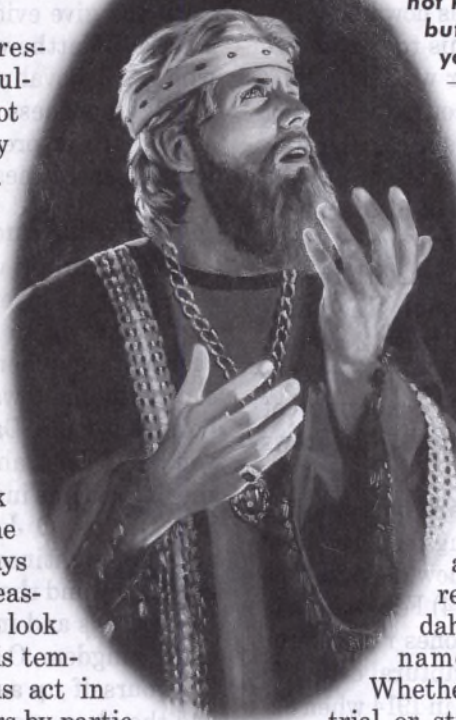
⁸ What beautiful expressions of praise and thankfulness! Our prayers may not be as eloquent, but they can be just as heartfelt. The book of Psalms is filled with prayers of thanks and praise. Choice words of praise are found in Psalms 148 to 150. Gratitude to God is expressed in many psalms. “One thing I have asked from Jehovah,” sang David. “It is what I shall look for, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of Jehovah and to look with appreciation upon his temple.” (Psalm 27:4) Let us act in harmony with such prayers by participating zealously in all the activities of Jehovah’s congregated throngs. (Psalm 26:12) Doing this and meditating on God’s Word daily will give us many reasons to approach Jehovah with heartfelt praise and gratitude.

Humbly Seek Jehovah’s Help

⁹ If we are serving Jehovah wholeheartedly as his Witnesses, we can be sure that he hears our prayers for help. (Isaiah 43:10-12) Consider King Asa of Judah. The first 10 years of his 41-year reign (977-937 B.C.E.) were marked by peace. Then Judah was invaded by a million-man army under Zerah the Ethiopian. Though greatly outnumbered,

8. (a) What words of praise in Psalms 148 to 150 especially touch your heart? (b) If we share the sentiments expressed at Psalm 27:4, what will we do?

9. How did King Asa pray, and with what result?



Like King Jehoshaphat, at times we may need to pray: ‘We do not know what we ought to do, but our eyes are toward you, Jehovah’

Asa and his men went out to meet the invaders. Before the battle, however, Asa prayed fervently. He acknowledged Jehovah’s power to deliver. Pleading for help, the king said: “Upon you we do lean, and in your name we have come against this crowd. O Jehovah, you are our God. Do not let mortal man retain strength against you.” Total victory resulted as Jehovah saved Judah for the sake of his great name. (2 Chronicles 14:1-15)

Whether God delivers us from a trial or strengthens us to endure it, there is no question that he hears our pleas for his assistance.

¹⁰ If we do not know how to deal with a certain crisis, we can be confident that Jehovah will hear our petitions for help. This was illustrated in the days of Judean King Jehoshaphat, whose 25-year reign began in 936 B.C.E. When Judah was threatened by the combined forces of Moab, Ammon, and the mountainous region of Seir, Jehoshaphat pleaded: “O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For in us there is no power before this large crowd that is coming against us; and we ourselves do not know what we ought to do, but our eyes are toward you.” Jehovah answered that humble prayer, fighting for Judah by striking

10. When we do not know how to deal with a certain crisis, how can the prayer of King Jehoshaphat prove helpful?

the enemy ranks with confusion so that they slaughtered one another. As a result, the surrounding nations became fearful, and peace prevailed in Judah. (2 Chronicles 20:1-30) When we lack the wisdom needed to meet a crisis, like Jehoshaphat we can pray: 'We do not know what we ought to do, but our eyes are toward you, Jehovah.' The holy spirit may cause us to recall Scriptural points needed to solve the problem, or God may help us in a way that surpasses human reasoning.—Romans 8:26, 27.

¹¹ We may have to persevere in prayer for God's help. Nehemiah mourned, wept, fasted, and prayed for days about Jerusalem's ruined wall and the desperate plight of Judah's inhabitants. (Nehemiah 1:1-11) His prayers evidently ascended to God like sweet-smelling incense. One day Persian King Artaxerxes asked dejected Nehemiah: "What is this that you are seeking to secure?" "At once," reports Nehemiah, "I prayed to the God of the heavens." That short and silent prayer was answered, for Nehemiah was permitted to fulfill his heart's desire by going to Jerusalem to rebuild its ruined wall.—Nehemiah 2:1-8.

Let Jesus Teach You How to Pray

¹² Of all the prayers recorded in the Scriptures, especially instructive is the model

11. What can we learn about prayer from Nehemiah's actions in connection with Jerusalem's wall?

12. In your own words, how would you summarize the main points of Jesus' model prayer?

Do you pray in harmony with Jesus' model prayer?



prayer presented as sweet-smelling incense by Jesus Christ. Says Luke's Gospel: "A certain one of [Jesus'] disciples said to him: 'Lord, teach us how to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.' Then he said to them: 'Whenever you pray, say, "Father, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Give us our bread for the day according to the day's requirement. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is in debt to us; and do not bring us into temptation."'" (Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:9-13) Let us consider this prayer, not meant to be recited but intended to serve as a guide.

¹³ "Father, let your name be sanctified." Addressing Jehovah as Father is a special privilege of his dedicated servants. As children readily approach a merciful father with any concern, we should spend time in regular dignified and reverential prayer to God. (Psalm 103:13, 14) Our prayers should reflect our concern about the sanctification of Jehovah's name because we long to see it cleared of all the reproach that has been heaped upon it. Yes, we want Jehovah's name to be set apart and held as holy, or sacred.—Psalm 5:11; 63:3, 4; 148:12, 13; Ezekiel 38:23.

¹⁴ "Let your kingdom come." The Kingdom is the rulership of Jehovah expressed

13. How would you explain the significance of the words, "Father, let your name be sanctified"?

14. What does it mean to pray, "Let your kingdom come"?

through the heavenly Messianic government in the hands of his Son and Jesus' associated "holy ones." (Daniel 7:13, 14, 18, 27; Revelation 20:6) It will soon "come" against all earthly opposers of God's sovereignty, removing them from the scene. (Daniel 2:44) Then the will of Jehovah will be done on earth, even as it is in heaven. (Matthew 6:10) What joy that will bring to all creatures loyally serving the Universal Sovereign!

¹⁵ *"Give us our bread for the day according to the day's requirement."* Asking Jehovah for food "for the day" indicates that we do not request provisions in great abundance but only our daily needs. Though we trust in God to provide, we also work and use whatever proper means are available to us in order to obtain food and other necessities. (2 Thessalonians 3:7-10) Of course, we should thank our heavenly Provider because his love, wisdom, and power are behind these provisions.—Acts 14:15-17.

¹⁶ *"Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone that is in debt to us."* Since we are imperfect and sinful, we can-

15. Asking Jehovah for "our bread for the day" indicates what?

16. How can we receive God's forgiveness?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why should we offer prayers in faith?
- ☐ What role should praise and thanks play in our prayers?
- ☐ Why can we confidently seek Jehovah's help in prayer?
- ☐ What are some main points of the model prayer?
- ☐ How can we work in harmony with our prayers?

not fully measure up to Jehovah's perfect standards. Hence, we need to pray for his forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice. But if we want the "Hearer of prayer" to apply the merit of that sacrifice to our sins, we must be repentant and willing to receive whatever discipline he gives us. (Psalm 65:2; Romans 5:8; 6:23; Hebrews 12:4-11) Moreover, we can expect to be forgiven by God only if we "have forgiven our debtors," those sinning against us.—Matthew 6:12, 14, 15.

¹⁷ *"Do not bring us into temptation."* The Bible sometimes says that Jehovah does things when he is merely permitting them. (Ruth 1:20, 21) God does not tempt us to commit sin. (James 1:13) Temptations to do evil originate with the Devil, our sinful flesh, and this world. Satan is the Tempter who tries to maneuver us into sinning against God. (Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5) When we make the request, "Do not bring us into temptation," we are asking God not to allow us to fail when we are tempted to disobey him. He can guide us so that we do not succumb and are not overreached by Satan, "the wicked one."—Matthew 6:13; 1 Corinthians 10:13.

Work in Harmony With Your Prayers

¹⁸ Jesus' model prayer covered principal points, but we can pray about any matter. For example, we may pray about our desire for a happy marriage. To maintain chastity until wedlock, we may pray for self-control. But then let us work in harmony with our prayers by avoiding immoral literature and entertainment. Let us also be determined to 'marry only in the Lord.' (1 Corinthians 7:39; Deuteronomy 7:3, 4) Once married, we will need to work in harmony with our prayers

17. What is meant by the words, "Do not bring us into temptation"?

18. How can we work in harmony with our prayers for a happy marriage and family life?

for happiness by applying God's counsel. And if we have children, it is not enough to pray that they will be faithful servants of Jehovah. We must do all we can to inculcate God's truths in their minds through Bible study and by regularly attending Christian meetings with them.—Deuteronomy 6:5-9; 31:12; Proverbs 22:6.

¹⁹ Are we praying for blessings in the ministry? Then let us act in harmony with such prayers by having a meaningful share in the Kingdom-preaching work. If we pray for opportunities to help others to get on the path to everlasting life, we need to keep good records of interested ones and be willing to fit the conducting of home Bible studies into

19. What should we do if we are praying about our ministry?

our schedule. What if we desire to take up the full-time preaching work as a pioneer? Then let us take steps in harmony with our prayers by increasing our preaching activity and by sharing in the ministry with pioneers. Taking such steps will show that we are working in harmony with our prayers.

²⁰ If we are serving Jehovah faithfully, we can be confident that he will answer our prayers that are in harmony with his will. (1 John 5:14, 15) Surely, beneficial points have been gleaned from an examination of some of the prayers recorded in the Bible. Our next article will consider other Scriptural guidelines for those desiring to 'prepare their prayers as incense before Jehovah.'

20. The next article will give consideration to what?

LIFT UP LOYAL HANDS IN PRAYER

"I desire that in every place the men carry on prayer, lifting up loyal hands, apart from wrath and debates."—1 TIMOTHY 2:8.

JEHOVAH expects his people to be loyal to him and to one another. The apostle Paul linked loyalty with prayer when he wrote: "I desire that in every place the men carry on prayer, lifting up loyal hands, apart from wrath and debates." (1 Timothy 2:8) Apparently, Paul was referring to public prayer "in every place" where Christians met together. Who were to represent God's

1, 2. (a) How does 1 Timothy 2:8 apply to prayer involving Jehovah's people? (b) What will we now consider?

people in prayer at congregation meetings? Only holy, righteous, reverent men who carefully observed all Scriptural duties toward God. (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14) They had to be spiritually and morally clean and unquestionably devoted to Jehovah God.

² Especially should congregation elders 'lift up loyal hands in prayer.' Their heartfelt prayers through Jesus Christ display loyalty to God and help them to avoid debates and outbursts of wrath. Actually, any man privileged to represent the Christian

congregation in public prayer should be free from wrath, ill will, and disloyalty to Jehovah and his organization. (James 1:19, 20) What further Biblical guidelines are there for those who are privileged to represent others in public prayer? And what are some Scriptural principles that we should apply in our private and family prayers?

Give Prayer Advance Thought

³ If we have been asked to pray publicly, likely we will be able to give our prayer at least some advance thought. Doing this may enable us to cover appropriate important matters without saying a lengthy, rambling prayer. Of course, our private prayers can also be vocalized. They may be of any length. Jesus spent an entire night praying before he chose his 12 apostles. When he instituted the Memorial of his death, however, his prayers over the bread and wine were apparently rather brief. (Mark 14:22-24; Luke 6:12-16) And we know that even Jesus' short prayers were completely acceptable to God.

⁴ Suppose we are privileged to represent a family in prayer before a meal. Such a prayer could be fairly short—but whatever is said should include an expression of gratitude for the food. If we are praying publicly before or after a Christian meeting, we do not need to offer a long prayer covering many points. Jesus criticized the scribes who 'made long prayers for a pretext.' (Luke 20:46, 47) Never would a godly person want to do that. At times, though, a somewhat longer public prayer may be appropriate. For instance, an elder chosen to say the final prayer at an assembly should give it advance thought and may desire to mention several points. Yet, even such a prayer should not be of excessive length.

3, 4. (a) Why is it beneficial to give public prayer advance thought? (b) What do the Scriptures indicate regarding the length of prayers?

Approach God With Reverence

⁵ When praying publicly we should remember that we are not addressing humans. Rather, we are sinful creatures petitioning the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. (Psalm 8:3-5, 9; 73:28) We should therefore manifest reverential fear of displeasing him by what we say and how we express it. (Proverbs 1:7) The psalmist David sang: "As for me, in the abundance of your loving-kindness I shall come into your house, I shall bow down toward your holy temple in fear of you." (Psalm 5:7) If we have that attitude, how will we express ourselves when asked to pray publicly at a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses? Well, if we were speaking to a human king, we would do so respectfully and with dignity. Should not our prayers be even more dignified and respectful, since we are praying to Jehovah, the "King of eternity"? (Revelation 15:3) So when praying we would avoid such statements as, "Good morning, Jehovah," "We send you our love," or, "Have a nice day." The Scriptures show that God's only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, never addressed his heavenly Father in that way.

⁶ Paul said: "Let us . . . approach with freeness of speech to the throne of undeserved kindness." (Hebrews 4:16) We can approach Jehovah with "freeness of speech" in spite of our sinful state because of our faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (Acts 10:42, 43; 20:20, 21) Yet, such "freeness of speech" does not mean that we are chatting with God; nor should we say disrespectful things to him. If our public prayers are to please Jehovah, they must be offered with proper respect and dignity, and

5. (a) What should we bear in mind when praying publicly? (b) Why pray in a dignified and respectful manner?

6. What should we bear in mind when we 'approach the throne of undeserved kindness'?

it would be inappropriate to use them to make announcements, counsel individuals, or lecture an audience.

Pray With a Humble Spirit

⁷ Whether we are praying publicly or privately, an important Scriptural principle to keep in mind is that we should display a humble attitude in our prayers. (2 Chronicles 7:13, 14) King Solomon manifested humility in his public prayer at the dedication of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem. Solomon had just completed one of the most magnificent buildings ever constructed on the earth. Yet, he humbly prayed: "Will God truly dwell upon the earth? Look! The heavens, yes, the heaven of the heavens, themselves cannot contain you; how much less, then, this house that I have built!" —1 Kings 8:27.

⁸ Like Solomon, we should be humble when representing others in public prayer. Although we should avoid sounding sanctimonious, humility can be shown by our tone of voice. Humble prayers are not bombastic or melodramatic. They draw attention, not to the person praying, but to the One addressed. (Matthew 6:5) Humility is also shown by what we say in prayer. If we pray humbly, we will not sound as though we are demanding that God do certain things

7. How did Solomon manifest humility when praying at the dedication of Jehovah's temple?
8. What are some ways that humility is shown in public prayer?

King Solomon manifested humility in his public prayer at the dedication of Jehovah's temple



our way. Rather, we will petition Jehovah to act in a manner that harmonizes with his sacred will. The psalmist exemplified the proper attitude when he pleaded: "Ah, now, Jehovah, do save, please! Ah, now, Jehovah, do grant success, please!" —Psalm 118:25; Luke 18:9-14.

Pray From the Heart

⁹ If our public or private prayers are to please Jehovah, they must come from the heart.

Thus, we will not merely repeat a prayer formula over and over again without thinking about what we are saying. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus counseled: "When praying, do not say the same things over and over again, just as the people of the nations do, for they [mistakenly] imagine they will get a hearing for their use of many words." Put another way, Jesus said: "Do not babble words; do not utter empty repetitions." —Matthew 6:7; footnote.

¹⁰ Of course, we may need to pray about the same matter time and again. That would not be wrong because Jesus urged: "Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep

9. What fine counsel given by Jesus is found at Matthew 6:7, and how can it be applied?

10. Why would it be proper to pray about the same matter more than once?

on knocking, and it will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7) Perhaps there is a need for a new Kingdom Hall because Jehovah is prospering the local preaching work. (Isaiah 60:22) It would be proper to keep on mentioning this need when praying privately or when offering public prayers at meetings of Jehovah’s people. Doing so would not mean that we were ‘uttering empty repetitions.’

Remember Gratitude and Praise

¹¹ Many people pray only to ask for something, but our love for Jehovah God should move us to give him thanks and praise in both private and public prayer. “Do not be anxious over anything,” wrote Paul, “but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6, 7) Yes, in addition to supplications and petitions, we should ex-

11. How does Philippians 4:6, 7 apply to private and public prayer?



press thankfulness to Jehovah for spiritual and material blessings. (Proverbs 10:22)

The psalmist sang: “Offer thanksgiving as your sacrifice to God, and pay to the Most High your vows.” (Psalm 50:14)

And a prayerful melody of David included these touching words: “I will praise the name of God with song, and I will magnify him with thanksgiving.” (Psalm 69:30) Should we not do the same in public and private prayer?

¹² Regarding God, the psalmist sang: “Come into his gates with thanksgiving, into his courtyards with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For Jehovah is good;

12. How is Psalm 100:4, 5 being fulfilled today, and for what can we therefore thank and praise God?

his loving-kindness is to time indefinite, and his faithfulness to generation after generation." (Psalm 100:4, 5) Today, people of all nations are entering the courtyards of Jehovah's sanctuary, and for this we can give him praise and thanks. Do you express gratitude to God for the local Kingdom Hall and demonstrate your appreciation by regularly assembling there with those who love him? While there, do you heartily raise your voice in songs of praise and thankfulness to our loving heavenly Father?

Never Feel Ashamed to Pray

¹³ Even if we feel unworthy because of guilt, we should turn to God in earnest supplication. When the Jews sinned by taking foreign wives, Ezra knelt, spread out his loyal palms to God, and humbly prayed: "O my God, I do feel ashamed and embarrassed to raise my face to you, O my God, for our errors themselves have multiplied over our head and our guiltiness has grown great even to the heavens. From the days of our forefathers we have been in great guiltiness until this day . . . And after all that has come upon us for our bad deeds and our great guiltiness—for you yourself, O our God, have underestimated our error, and you have given us those who have escaped such as these—shall we go breaking your commandments again and forming marriage alliances with the peoples of these detestable things? Will you not get incensed at us to the limit so that there will be none remaining and none escaping? O Jehovah the God of Israel, you are righteous, because we have been left over as an escaped people as at this day. Here we are before you in our guiltiness, for it is impossible to stand before you on account of this."—Ezra 9:1-15; Deuteronomy 7:3, 4.

13. What Scriptural example shows that we should supplicate Jehovah even if we feel unworthy because of guilt?

¹⁴ To receive God's forgiveness, confession to him must be coupled with contrition and "fruits that befit repentance." (Luke 3:8; Job 42:1-6; Isaiah 66:2) In Ezra's day, a repentant attitude was accompanied by an effort to right the wrong by dismissing the foreign wives. (Ezra 10:44; compare 2 Corinthians 7:8-13.) If we are seeking God's forgiveness for serious wrongdoing, let us make confession in humble prayer and produce fruits befitting repentance. A repentant spirit and a desire to right the wrong would also move us to seek the spiritual help of Christian elders.—James 5:13-15.

Draw Comfort From Prayer

¹⁵ When our heart is in pain for some reason, we can find comfort in prayer. (Psalm 51:17; Proverbs 15:13) Loyal Hannah did. She lived when large families were common in Israel, but she had borne no children. Her husband, Elkanah, had sons and daughters by his other wife, Peninnah, who taunted Hannah for being barren. Hannah prayed earnestly and promised that if she was blessed with a son, 'she would give him to Jehovah all the days of his life.' Comforted by her prayer and by the words of High Priest Eli, Hannah "became self-concerned no more." She gave birth to a boy whom she named Samuel. Later, she turned him over for service at Jehovah's sanctuary. (1 Samuel 1:9-28) Grateful for God's kindness toward her, she offered a prayer of thanksgiving—one that lauded Jehovah as the one without equal. (1 Samuel 2:1-10) Like Hannah, we can draw comfort from prayer, confident that God answers all requests that harmonize with his will. When we pour out our heart to him, let us be "self-concerned

14. As demonstrated in Ezra's day, what is required in order to receive God's forgiveness?

15. How does Hannah's experience show that we can find comfort in prayer?

no more,” for he will remove our burden or will enable us to bear it.—Psalm 55:22.

¹⁶ If a situation causes fear, pain of heart, or anxiety, let us not fail to turn to God for comfort in prayer. (Psalm 55:1-4) Jacob was fearful when about to meet his estranged brother, Esau. Yet, Jacob prayed: “O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O Jehovah, you who are saying to me, ‘Return to your land and to your relatives and I will deal well with you,’ I am unworthy of all the loving-kindnesses and of all the faithfulness that you have exercised toward your servant, for with but my staff I crossed this Jordan and now I have become two camps. Deliver me, I pray you, from my brother’s hand, from Esau’s hand, because I am afraid of him that he may come and certainly assault me, mother together with *children*. And you, you have said, ‘Unquestionably I shall deal well with you and I will constitute your seed like the grains of sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude.’” (Genesis 32:9-12) Esau did not assault Jacob and his entourage. Thus Je-

16. As illustrated in Jacob’s case, why should we pray when we are fearful or anxious?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Of what benefit is it to give public prayer advance thought?
- ☐ Why should we pray in a respectful and dignified manner?
- ☐ What spirit should we display when praying?
- ☐ When praying, why should we remember thanks and praise?
- ☐ How does the Bible show that we can draw comfort from prayer?

hovah did “deal well” with Jacob on that occasion.

¹⁷ During our supplications, we may be comforted by recalling things said in God’s Word. In the longest psalm—a beautiful prayer set to music—it may have been Prince Hezekiah who sang: “I have remembered your judicial decisions from time indefinite, O Jehovah, and I find comfort for myself.” (Psalm 119:52) In humble prayer when we are sorely tried, we may recall a Bible principle or law that can help us to pursue a course resulting in the comforting assurance that we are pleasing our heavenly Father.

Loyal Ones Persevere in Prayer

¹⁸ All who are loyal to Jehovah God will “persevere in prayer.” (Romans 12:12) In the 32nd Psalm, possibly composed after David sinned with Bath-sheba, he described his agony for failing to seek forgiveness and the relief that repentance and confession to God brought him. Then David sang: “On this account [because Jehovah’s pardon is available to truly repentant ones] every loyal one will pray to you at such a time only as you may be found.”—Psalm 32:6.

¹⁹ If we cherish our relationship with Jehovah God, we will pray for his mercy on the basis of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. In faith, we can approach the throne of undeserved kindness with freeness of speech to obtain mercy and timely help. (Hebrews 4:16) But there are so many reasons for prayer! Let us therefore “pray incessantly”—often with words of heartfelt praise and gratitude to God. (1 Thessalonians 5:17) Day and night, let us lift up loyal hands in prayer.

17. In keeping with Psalm 119:52, how may prayer bring us comfort when we are sorely tried?

18. Why can it be said that ‘every loyal one will pray to God’?

19. Why should we lift up loyal hands in prayer?

Do Others Accept Your Counsel?

GOOD counsel given properly always gets fine results. Right? Wrong! Even excellent counsel given by capable counselors is often ignored or rejected.—Proverbs 29:19.

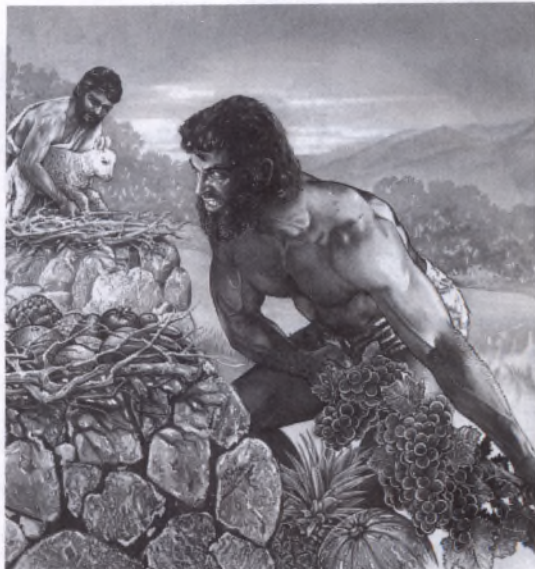
This happened when Jehovah counseled Cain, who had developed a hatred for his brother, Abel. (Genesis 4:3-5) Knowing the danger this posed for Cain, God said to him: “Why are you hot with anger and why has your countenance fallen? If you turn to doing good, will there not be an exaltation? But if you do not turn to doing good, there is sin crouching at the entrance, and for you is its craving; and will you, for your part, get the mastery over it?”—Genesis 4:6, 7.

Jehovah thus likened sin to a predator waiting to pounce on Cain if he persisted in nursing a grudge against his brother. (Compare James 1:14, 15.) There was still time for Cain to change his attitude, to “turn to doing good” instead of pursuing a calamitous course. Sadly, Cain did not take heed. He rejected Jehovah’s counsel, with dire consequences.

Some resent and reject any kind of counsel. (Proverbs 1:22-30) Could it be that it is the counselor’s fault that the counsel is rejected? (Job 38:2) Do you who give counsel make it difficult for others to accept it? Human imperfection makes that a real danger. But you can minimize the possibility of having that happen by carefully following Bible principles. Let us consider several of them.

‘Readjust in a Spirit of Mildness’

“Brothers, even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness, as you each keep an eye on yourself, for fear you also may be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1) The apostle Paul thus pointed out that those having “spiritual qualifications” should try to readjust a Christian who “takes some false step before he is aware of it.” Sometimes it seems that those least qualified to do so are most inclined to give advice. Hence, do not be too quick to counsel others. (Proverbs 10:19; James 1:19; 3:1) It is primarily the



congregation elders who are spiritually qualified to do this. Of course, any mature Christian should sound a warning if he sees a brother walking into danger.

If you do offer advice or counsel, be sure to base what you say on godly wisdom, not on human theories and philosophies. (Colossians 2:8) Be like the careful cook who makes sure that any ingredients used are wholesome and free of anything that might be poisonous. Make sure that your counsel is firmly based on God's Word and not simply on personal opinion. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) By doing this, you can be sure your counsel will not harm anyone.

The objective of the counsel is to "readjust" the erring one, not to force unwilling change. The Greek word rendered "re-adjust" is related to a term that pertains to the resetting of a dislocated bone in order to prevent further damage. According to lexicographer W. E. Vine, it also suggests "the necessity for patience and perseverance in the process." Imagine the gentleness and skill required to avoid inflicting unnecessary physical pain. Similarly, a counselor needs to exercise great care so as to avoid hurting the one being counseled. This is difficult enough when someone requests counsel. When your counsel is not requested, even greater skill and tact are required.

You certainly will not "readjust" anyone if you alienate him. To avoid doing this, bear in mind the need to display "the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering." (Colossians 3:12) If a doctor is impatient and unnecessarily rough, the patient may ignore his advice and never return for needed treatment.

This does not mean that counsel should lack firmness. Jesus Christ was firm when he counseled the seven congregations in the district of Asia. (Revelation 1:4; 3:1-22) He gave them some very direct counsel that they needed to hear and apply. But Jesus' firmness was always balanced with such qualities as compassion and kindness, reflecting the loving spirit of his heavenly Father.—Psalm 23:1-6; John 10:7-15.

Counsel With Graciousness

"Let your utterance be always with graciousness, seasoned with salt, so as to know how you ought to give an answer to each one." (Colossians 4:6) Salt can enhance the flavor of food, making it appealing. If your counsel is to be palatable, it must be presented "with graciousness, seasoned with salt." Even with the best of ingredients,



Like nutritious food, your counsel should be wholesome

however, food can be prepared badly or be thrown on a plate in an unattractive heap. That does not improve anyone's appetite. In fact, it may be hard to swallow even one unpalatable mouthful.

When giving counsel, it is important to choose the right words. The wise man Solomon said: "As apples of gold in silver carvings is a word spoken at the right time for it." (Proverbs 25:11) He may well have had in mind a beautifully engraved silver container with exquisitely carved gold apples on it. How pleasing that would be to the eye, and how much you would appreciate receiving it as a gift! In the same way, well-chosen, gracious words can have strong appeal to a person you are trying to assist.—Ecclesiastes 12:9, 10.

In contrast, "a word causing pain makes anger to come up." (Proverbs 15:1) Badly chosen words can easily result in pain and anger instead of gratitude. In fact, not just ill-chosen words but the wrong tone of voice may cause a person to reject essentially good counsel. Giving counsel in a tactless, insensitive way can be as damaging as attacking someone with a weapon. "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword," says Proverbs 12:18. Why speak thoughtlessly and make it difficult for someone to listen to counsel?—Proverbs 12:15.

As Solomon said, a word of counsel should be "spoken at the right time for it." Timing is so important if counsel is going to be successful! It is obvious that food may not be appreciated by someone who has lost his appetite. Perhaps he has recently had a large meal, or he may be sick. Force-feeding someone who does not want to eat is neither wise nor acceptable.

Counsel With Lowliness of Mind

"Make my joy full in that you are . . . doing nothing out of contentiousness or out of egotism, but with lowliness of mind considering that the others are superior to you, keeping an eye, not in personal interest upon just your own matters, but also in personal interest upon those of the others." (Philippians 2:2-4) If you are a good counselor, you will be motivated by "personal interest" in the well-being of others. You will also display "lowliness of mind" when dealing with spiritual brothers and sisters, considering others superior to you. What does that mean?

Lowliness of mind will prevent you from adopting a superior attitude or tone. None of us have a basis for feeling superior to fellow believers. Every one of us falls short from time to time. Since you cannot read the heart, it is especially important not to judge the motives



**Do you make
your counsel as
appealing as
apples of gold in
silver carvings?**

of the one you counsel. He may be innocent of any bad motive and unaware of any wrong attitude or actions. Even if he is somewhat aware that he is out of step with God's requirements, no doubt he will find it much easier to accept counsel if it is given humbly with a genuine interest in his spiritual welfare.

Imagine how you would feel if you were invited to a meal but your host treated you in a cold, disdainful manner! You certainly would not enjoy the meal. Indeed, "better is a dish of vegetables where there is love than a manger-fed bull and hatred along with it." (Proverbs 15:17) Likewise, even the best counsel can be difficult to accept if the counselor manifests a dislike for the one he is counseling or belittles and embarrasses him. However, love, mutual respect, and trust will make counsel easier to give and to take.
—Colossians 3:14.

Counsel That Was Accepted

The prophet Nathan showed lowliness of mind when he counseled King David. Love and respect for David was evident in what Nathan said and did. Nathan began with an illustration that took into account the possible difficulty that David might have had in listening to counsel. (2 Samuel 12:1-4) The prophet appealed to David's love of justice and righteousness, even though it had not been in evidence in his actions involving Bath-sheba. (2 Samuel 11:2-27) When the point of the illustration was pressed, David's heartfelt reaction was: "I have sinned against Jehovah." (2 Samuel 12:7-13) Unlike Cain, who did not listen to Jehovah, David humbly accepted correction.

No doubt Jehovah guided Nathan, taking into account David's imperfection and the likelihood that he could react unfavorably. Nathan proceeded with great tact and obviously considered David superior because of David's position as Jehovah's appointed king. If you are in a position of some authority, you might give proper counsel, but it could be hard to accept it if you failed to display lowliness of mind.

Nathan readjusted David in a spirit of mildness. The prophet's words were gracious and carefully prepared so that David could respond in a way that would be in his own best interests. Nathan was not motivated by personal interest, nor did he try to assume moral or spiritual superiority over David. What a fine example of saying the right words in a fitting way! If you display a similar spirit, it is far more likely that others will accept your counsel.

The prophet Nathan humbly appealed to David's love of justice and righteousness



THE ORAL LAW

Why Was It Put in Writing?

WHY did many first-century Jews fail to accept Jesus as the Messiah? One eyewitness reports: "After [Jesus] went into the temple, the chief priests and the older men of the people came up to him while he was teaching and said: 'By what authority do you do these things? And who gave you this authority?' " (Matthew 21:23) In their eyes, the Almighty had given the Jewish nation the Torah (Law), and it gave certain men God-given authority. Did Jesus have such authority?

Jesus showed the utmost respect for the Torah and for those to whom it granted genuine authority. (Matthew 5:17-20; Luke 5:14; 17:14) But he frequently denounced those who overstepped the commandments of God. (Matthew 15:3-9; 23:2-28) Such men followed traditions that came to be known as the oral law. Jesus rejected its authority. In turn, many rejected him as the Messiah. They believed that only someone supporting the traditions of those in authority among them could have God's backing.

Where did this oral law originate? How did Jews come to view it as having authority equal to the written Law recorded in the Scriptures? And if it was meant to be an oral tradition, why was it eventually put in written form?

Where Did the Traditions Originate?

The Israelites came into a covenant relationship with Jehovah God at Mount Sinai in 1513 B.C.E. Through Moses, they received the statutes of that covenant. (Exodus 24:3) Following these regulations would allow them to 'prove themselves holy as Jeho-

vah their God was holy.' (Leviticus 11:44) Under the Law covenant, worship of Jehovah involved sacrifices offered by a designated priesthood. There was to be a central place of worship—eventually the temple in Jerusalem.—Deuteronomy 12:5-7; 2 Chronicles 6:4-6.

The Mosaic Law provided the overall structure for Israel's worship of Jehovah as a nation. However, some details were not explicitly stated. For instance, the Law forbade work on the Sabbath, but it did not draw an explicit line between work and other activities.—Exodus 20:10.

If Jehovah had seen fit to do so, he could have provided detailed regulations covering every conceivable question. But he had created humans with a conscience, and he allowed them the initiative to serve him with a degree of flexibility within the framework of his statutes. The Law made provision for judicial cases to be dealt with by priests, Levites, and judges. (Deuteronomy 17:8-11) As cases increased, certain precedents were set, and no doubt some of these were passed on from generation to generation. Methods of caring for the priestly duties at Jehovah's temple were also conveyed from father to son. As the nation's collective experience increased, so did its traditions.

At the heart of Israel's worship, however, remained the written Law given to Moses. Exodus 24:3, 4 states: "Moses came and related to the people all the words of Jehovah and all the judicial decisions, and all the people answered with one voice and said: 'All the words that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do.' Accordingly Moses

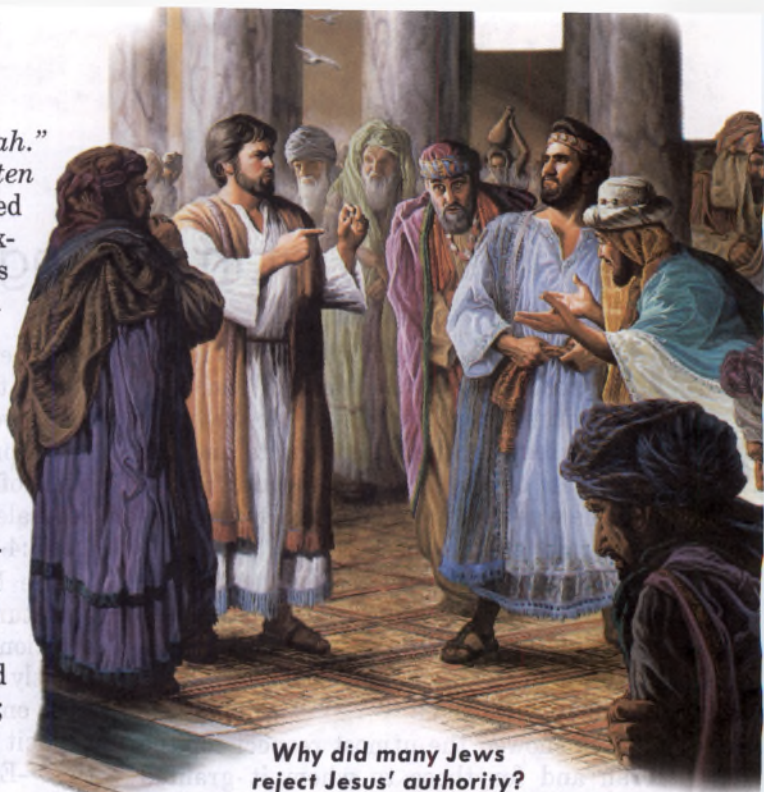
wrote down all the words of Jehovah.” It was in keeping with these *written commandments* that God concluded his covenant with the Israelites. (Exodus 34:27) In fact, the Scriptures nowhere mention the existence of an oral law.

“Who Gave You This Authority?”

The Mosaic Law clearly left primary religious authority and instruction in the hands of the priests, the descendants of Aaron. (Leviticus 10:8-11; Deuteronomy 24:8; 2 Chronicles 26:16-20; Malachi 2:7) Through the centuries, however, some priests became unfaithful and corrupt. (1 Samuel 2:12-17, 22-29; Jeremiah 5:31; Malachi 2:8, 9) During the era of Greek domination, many priests compromised on religious issues. In the second century B.C.E., the Pharisees—a new group within Judaism that distrusted the priesthood—began instituting traditions by which the common man could consider himself as holy as the priest. These traditions appealed to many, but they were an unacceptable addition to the Law.—Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32 (13:1 in Jewish editions).

The Pharisees became the new scholars of the Law, doing the job that they felt the priests were not doing. Since the Mosaic Law did not allow for their authority, they developed new methods of interpreting Scripture through cryptic allusions and by other methods seemingly supporting their views.* As the chief caretakers and promoters of these traditions, they created a new base of authority in Israel. By the first century C.E., the Pharisees had become a dominant force in Judaism.

* This style of Scripture interpretation is called *midrash*.



Why did many Jews reject Jesus' authority?

As they collected existing oral traditions and searched for Scriptural implication to establish more of their own, the Pharisees saw the need to give added authority to their activity. A new concept regarding the origin of these traditions was born. The rabbis began to teach: “Moses received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to elders, and elders to prophets. And prophets handed it on to the men of the great assembly.” —Avot 1:1, the Mishnah.

In saying, “Moses received Torah,” the rabbis were referring not only to the written laws but to all their oral traditions. They claimed that these traditions—invented and developed by men—were given to Moses by God at Sinai. And they taught that God had not left it up to men to fill in the gaps but had orally defined what the written Law had left unsaid. According to them, Moses passed this oral law down through the generations, not to the priests, but to other leaders. The Pharisees themselves claimed to be

the natural inheritors of this “unbroken” chain of authority.

The Law in Crisis—A New Solution

Jesus, whose God-given authority was questioned by the Jewish religious leaders, had foretold the destruction of the temple. (Matthew 23:37–24:2) After the Romans destroyed the temple in 70 C.E., the requirements of the Mosaic Law involving sacrifices and priestly service could no longer be met. God had established a new covenant on the basis of Jesus’ ransom sacrifice. (Luke 22:20) The Mosaic Law covenant had been brought to an end.—Hebrews 8:7-13.

Rather than seeing these events as evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, the Pharisees found another solution. They had already usurped much of the authority of the priesthood. With the temple destroyed, they could go one step further. The rabbinic academy at Yavneh became the center for a reorganized Sanhedrin—the Jewish high court. Under the leadership of Yohanan ben Zakkai and Gamaliel II at Yavneh, Judaism was completely restructured. The services at the synagogue, led by the rabbis, replaced worship at the temple, supervised by the priests. Prayers, especially those on the Day of Atonement, replaced sacrifices. The Pharisees reasoned that the oral law given to Moses at Sinai had already foreseen and made provision for this.

Rabbinic academies took on added prominence. Their main curriculum was intense discussion, memorization, and application of the oral law. Previously, the basis for the oral law was tied to Scripture interpretation—Midrash. Now, the ever-increasing traditions that were accumulating began to be taught and organized separately. Each ruling of the oral law was reduced to short, easily memorized phrases, often set to a melody.

Why Write Down an Oral Law?

The abundance of rabbinic academies and increasing rabbinic rulings created a new problem. Rabbinic scholar Adin Steinsaltz explains: “Each teacher had his own method and phrased his oral rulings in his own singular fashion. . . . It was no longer sufficient to be acquainted with the teachings of one’s own mentor, and the student was obliged to acquaint himself with the work of other scholars Thus students were forced to memorize vast quantities of material because of the ‘explosion of knowledge.’” Amid a sea of disordered information, the student’s memory was taxed to the breaking point.

In the second century C.E., the Jewish rebellion against Rome, headed by Bar Kokhba, led to intense persecution of rabbinic scholars. Akiba—the foremost rabbi, who had supported Bar Kokhba—as well as many leading scholars were put to death. The rabbis feared that renewed persecution could endanger the very existence of their oral law. They had believed that traditions were best passed on by word of mouth from master to disciple, but these changing circumstances led to an increased effort to create an organized structure to preserve the teachings of the sages, lest they be forgotten forever.

During a subsequent period of relative peace with Rome, Judah Ha-Nasi, the leading rabbi of the late second and early third centuries C.E., gathered numerous scholars and edited vast amounts of oral tradition into an organized system made up of six Orders, each subdivided into smaller tractates—63 in all. This work became known as the Mishnah. Ephraim Urbach, an authority on the oral law, comments: “The Mishnah . . . was granted approval and authority such as had never been granted to any book except the Torah itself.” The Messiah had been rejected, the temple was in ruins, but with the oral law preserved in writing in the form of the Mishnah, a new age in Judaism began.



Detail of: Giovanni Battista Tiepolo, *Queen Zenobia Addressing Her Soldiers*, Samuel H. Kress Collection, Photograph © Board of Trustees, National Gallery of Art, Washington

"THE DARK-HAIRED MISTRESS OF THE SYRIAN WILD"

HER complexion was olive, her teeth pearly white, her eyes black and lustrous. She was well-educated and was a proficient linguist. This warrior queen was said to be greater in intellect than Cleopatra and perhaps equally beautiful. Because she dared to stand up to the dominant world power of her day, she fulfilled a prophetic role in a Scriptural drama. After she was long-dead, writers praised her, and painters idealized her. A 19th-century poet portrayed her as "the dark-haired mistress of the Syrian wild." This highly acclaimed woman was Zenobia—queen of the Syrian city of Palmyra.

How did Zenobia gain prominence? What was the political climate that led to her rise to power? What can be said of her character? And what prophetic role did this queen fulfill? Consider first the geographic setting in which the drama unfolds.

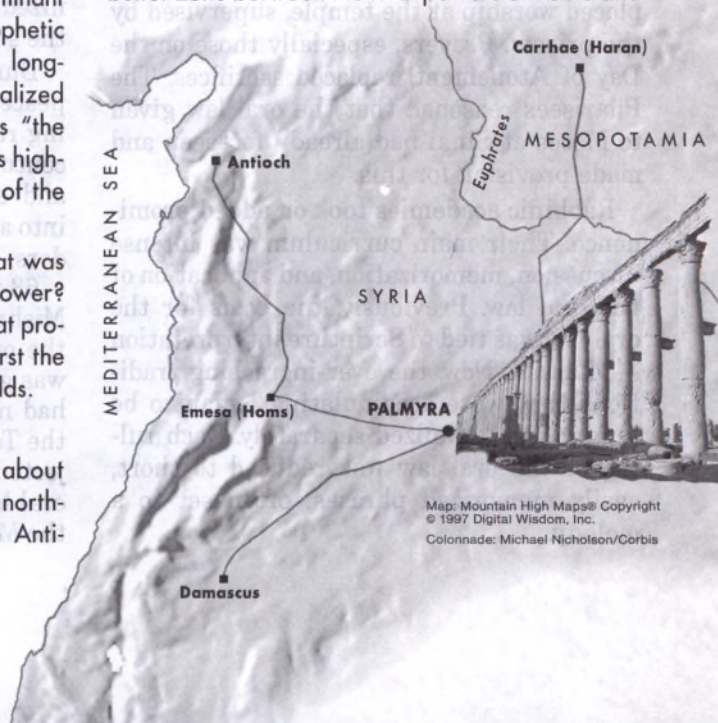
A City at the Edge of a Desert

Zenobia's city, Palmyra, was situated about 130 miles northeast of Damascus, at the northern edge of the Syrian Desert where the Anti-

Lebanon mountains drop off into the plain. This oasis city was about halfway between the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Euphrates River to the east. King Solomon may have known it as Tadmor, a place that was vital to his kingdom's welfare on two counts: as a garrison for the defense of the northern frontier and as a crucial link in the chain of caravan towns. Therefore, Solomon "re-built Tadmor in the wilderness."—2 Chronicles 8:4.

The history of the thousand years following King Solomon's reign is silent about Tadmor. If correctly identified with Palmyra, its climb to prominence began after Syria became an outpost province of the Roman Empire in 64 B.C.E. "Palmyra was important to Rome in two spheres, economic and military," says Richard Stoneman in his book *Palmyra and Its Empire—Zenobia's Revolt Against Rome*. Since this city of palms was on a major trade route connecting Rome to Mesopotamia and the East, through it passed the commercial riches of the ancient world—spices from the East Indies, silk from China, and other goods from Persia, Lower Mesopotamia, and Mediterranean lands. Rome depended on the import of these goods.

Militarily, the province of Syria served as a buffer zone between the rival powers of Rome and



Map: Mountain High Maps® Copyright © 1997 Digital Wisdom, Inc.
Colonnade: Michael Nicholson/Corbis

Persia. The river Euphrates separated Rome from its eastern neighbor during the first 250 years of our Common Era. Palmyra was just across the desert, west of the city of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates. Recognizing its pivotal position, such Roman emperors as Hadrian and Valerian visited Palmyra. Hadrian added to its architectural magnificence and made many generous donations. Valerian rewarded a Palmyrene noble named Odaenathus—Zenobia's husband—by raising him, in 258 C.E., to the rank of consul of Rome because he had successfully campaigned against Persia and extended the boundary of the Roman Empire into Mesopotamia. Zenobia played an important part in her husband's rise to power. Historian Edward Gibbon wrote: "The success of Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her [Zenobia's] incomparable prudence and fortitude."

In the meantime, King Sapor of Persia decided to challenge Roman supremacy and assert his sovereignty over all the former provinces of Persia. With a formidable army, he marched westward, captured the Roman garrison towns of Nisibis and Carrhae (Haran), and proceeded to ravage northern Syria and Cilicia. Emperor Valerian personally came to lead his forces against the attackers but was defeated and captured by the Persians.

Odaenathus considered it timely to send costly gifts and a message of peace to the Persian monarch. King Sapor haughtily commanded that the presents be thrown into the Euphrates and demanded that Odaenathus appear before him in the role of captive suppliant. In answer, the Palmyrenes assembled an army of desert nomads and the remnants of the Roman forces and began to harry the now retreating Persians. Against the hit-and-run tactics of the desert warriors, Sapor's forces—campaign-weary and laden with plunder—had little defense and were forced into flight.

In recognition of his victory over Sapor, Valerian's son and successor, Gallienus, gave Odaena-



Roman coin
possibly depicting
Aurelian

ZENOBIA'S LEGACY

Upon returning to Rome after defeating Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra, Emperor Aurelian built a temple to the sun. In it he placed the statues of the sun-god that he had brought back from her city.

Commenting on further developments, the magazine *History Today* says: "The most reverberant of all Aurelian's actions is perhaps the establishment, in AD 274, of an annual festival of the sun falling on the winter solstice, December 25th.

When the empire became Christian the birthday of Christ was transferred to this date to make the new religion more acceptable to those who enjoyed the festivities of the old. It is a curious thought, that it should be ultimately due to the Empress Zenobia that . . . [people] celebrate our Christmas."

thus the title *corrector totius Orientis* (governor of all the East). In time, Odaenathus gave himself the title "king of kings."

Zenobia Aspires to Create an Empire

In 267 C.E., at the height of his career, Odaenathus and his heir were assassinated, supposedly by a vengeful nephew. Zenobia took over her husband's position, since her son was too young. Beautiful, ambitious, capable as an administrator, accustomed to campaigning with her late husband, and fluent in several languages, she managed to command the respect and support of her subjects—no small feat among the Bedouin. Zenobia had a love for learning and surrounded herself with intellectuals. One of her advisers was philosopher and rhetorician Cassius Longinus—said to have been "a living library and a

Nisibis

Dura-Europos

walking museum." Author Stoneman points out: "During the five years after the death of Odenathus . . . Zenobia had established herself in the minds of her people as mistress of the East."

On one side of Zenobia's domain was Persia, which she and her husband had crippled, and on the other was foundering Rome. Concerning the conditions in the Roman Empire at that time, historian J. M. Roberts says: "The third century was . . . a terrible time for Rome on the frontiers east and west alike, while at home a new period of civil war and disputed successions had begun. Twenty-two emperors (excluding pretenders) came and went." The Syrian mistress, on the other hand, was a well-established absolute monarch in her realm. "Controlling the balance of two empires [Persian and Roman]," observes Stoneman, "she could aspire to create a third that would dominate them both."

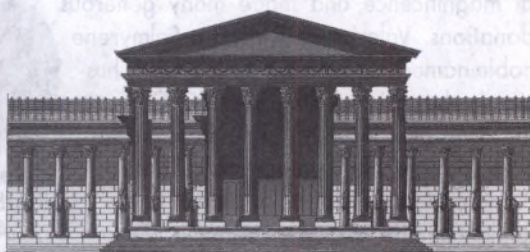
An opportunity for Zenobia to expand her regal powers came in 269 C.E., when a pretender disputing Roman rulership appeared in Egypt. Zenobia's army swiftly marched into Egypt, crushed the rebel, and took possession of the country. Proclaiming herself the queen of Egypt, she minted coins in her name. Her kingdom now stretched from the river Nile to the river Euphrates. At this point in her life, she came to occupy the position of "the king of the south" spoken about in the Bible prophecy of Daniel, since her kingdom then dominated the area south of Daniel's homeland. (Daniel 11:25, 26) She also conquered most of Asia Minor.

Zenobia strengthened and embellished her capital, Palmyra, to such an extent that it ranked with the larger cities of the Roman world. Its estimated population reached over 150,000. Splendid public buildings, temples, gardens, pillars, and monuments filled the city, within walls that were said to be 13 miles in circumference. Colonnades formed of rows of Corinthian pillars over 50 feet high—some 1,500 of them—lined the principal avenue. Statues and busts of heroes and wealthy benefactors abounded in the city. In 271 C.E., Zenobia erected a pair of statues of herself and

her late husband. At the edge of the desert, Palmyra sparkled like a jewel.

The Temple of the Sun was one of the finest structures in Palmyra and no doubt dominated the religious scene in the city. Likely, Zenobia too worshipped a deity associated with the sun god. Syria

The Complete Encyclopedia of Illustration/J. G. Heck



Temple of the sun in Palmyra

of the third century, however, was a land of many religions. In Zenobia's domain there were professed Christians, Jews, astrologers, and worshippers of the sun and moon. What was her attitude toward the various ways of worship in her realm? Author Stoneman observes: "A wise ruler will not neglect any customs that seem appropriate to her people. . . . The gods, it was . . . hoped, had been marshaled on Palmyra's side." Apparently, Zenobia was religiously tolerant. But had gods really been "marshaled on Palmyra's side"? What was in the offing for Palmyra and its "wise ruler"?

An Emperor 'Arouses His Heart' Against Zenobia

During the year 270 C.E., Aurelian became emperor of Rome. His legions successfully repulsed and disciplined the barbarians of the north. In 271 C.E.—now representing "the king of the north" of Daniel's prophecy—Aurelian 'aroused his power and his heart against the king of the south,' represented by Zenobia. (Daniel 11:25a) Aurelian dispatched some of his forces directly to Egypt and led his main army eastward through Asia Minor.

The king of the south—the ruling entity headed by Zenobia—'excited himself' for warfare



Queen Zenobia addressing her soldiers

against Aurelian “with an exceedingly great and mighty military force” under two generals, Zabdadas and Zabbaï. (Daniel 11:25b) But Aurelian took Egypt and then launched an expedition into Asia Minor and Syria. Zenobia was defeated at Emesa (now Homs), and she retreated to Palmyra.

When Aurelian besieged Palmyra, Zenobia, hoping to get help, fled with her son toward Persia, only to be captured by the Romans at the Euphrates River. The Palmyrenes surrendered their city in 272 C.E. Aurelian dealt magnanimously with its inhabitants, collected an immense quantity of plunder, including the idol from the Temple of the Sun, and departed for Rome. The Roman emperor spared Zenobia, making her the prize feature in his triumphal procession through Rome in 274 C.E. She spent the rest of her life as a Roman matron.

The Desert City Brought to Ruin

Some months after Aurelian took Palmyra, the Palmyrenes massacred the Roman garrison he had left behind. When the news of this revolt reached Aurelian, he immediately ordered his soldiers to

retrace their steps, and this time they visited an appalling vengeance upon the population. Those who escaped the merciless slaughter were led off into slavery. The proud city was sacked and ruined beyond repair. Thus the bustling metropolis was reduced to its former status—“Tadmor in the wilderness.”

When Zenobia stood up to Rome, she and Emperor Aurelian unwittingly enacted their roles as “the king of the south” and “the king of the north,” fulfilling part of a prophecy recorded in great detail by Jehovah’s prophet some 800 years earlier. (Daniel, chapter 11) With her colorful personality, Zenobia won the admiration of many. Of greatest significance, however, was her role in representing a political entity foretold in Daniel’s prophecy. Her reign did not last for more than five years. Palmyra, the capital of Zenobia’s kingdom, today is nothing more than a village. Even the mighty Roman Empire has long since faded away and yielded to modern kingdoms. What will be the future of these powers? Their destiny too is governed by the sure fulfillment of Bible prophecy.—Daniel 2:44.

"You Are the Way God Expects Us to Be"



COOOPERATING with secular authorities "for the Lord's sake," Christians can expect to receive "praise [as] doers of good." (1 Peter 2:13-15) Jehovah's Witnesses in South Africa experienced this a while ago at a district convention they held in a college campus hall.

On the first day of the convention, the college security police braced themselves for the usual number of irate and uncooperative delegates, such as they experienced with other sorts of conventions. Never having had dealings with Jehovah's Witnesses, however, they were in for a pleasant surprise!

As part of their regular security checks at the gates, the security police searched every car entering and leaving the property. They were astonished when they were greeted with friendliness, patience, and respect, even though the searches delayed the delegates. There was none of the usu-

al resistance, arguing, and abusive speech. "Unlike other visitors," remarked one security officer, "you display a humble spirit and quiet dignity that are obvious to us all."

Once the chief of security became aware of the cooperative conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses, he decided that it was not necessary to search the cars "because," he said, "you are so well disciplined." Consequently, cars identified with "JW" parking stickers were granted entrance without being searched.

At the end of the convention, the chief of security said that he hoped to see the Witnesses back again soon. "We have never seen such well-behaved people," he stated. "You are the way God expects us to be." Such commendation is an added incentive for true Christians to 'maintain fine conduct,' so that people 'may glorify God as a result of the fine works of which they are eyewitnesses.'—1 Peter 2:12.