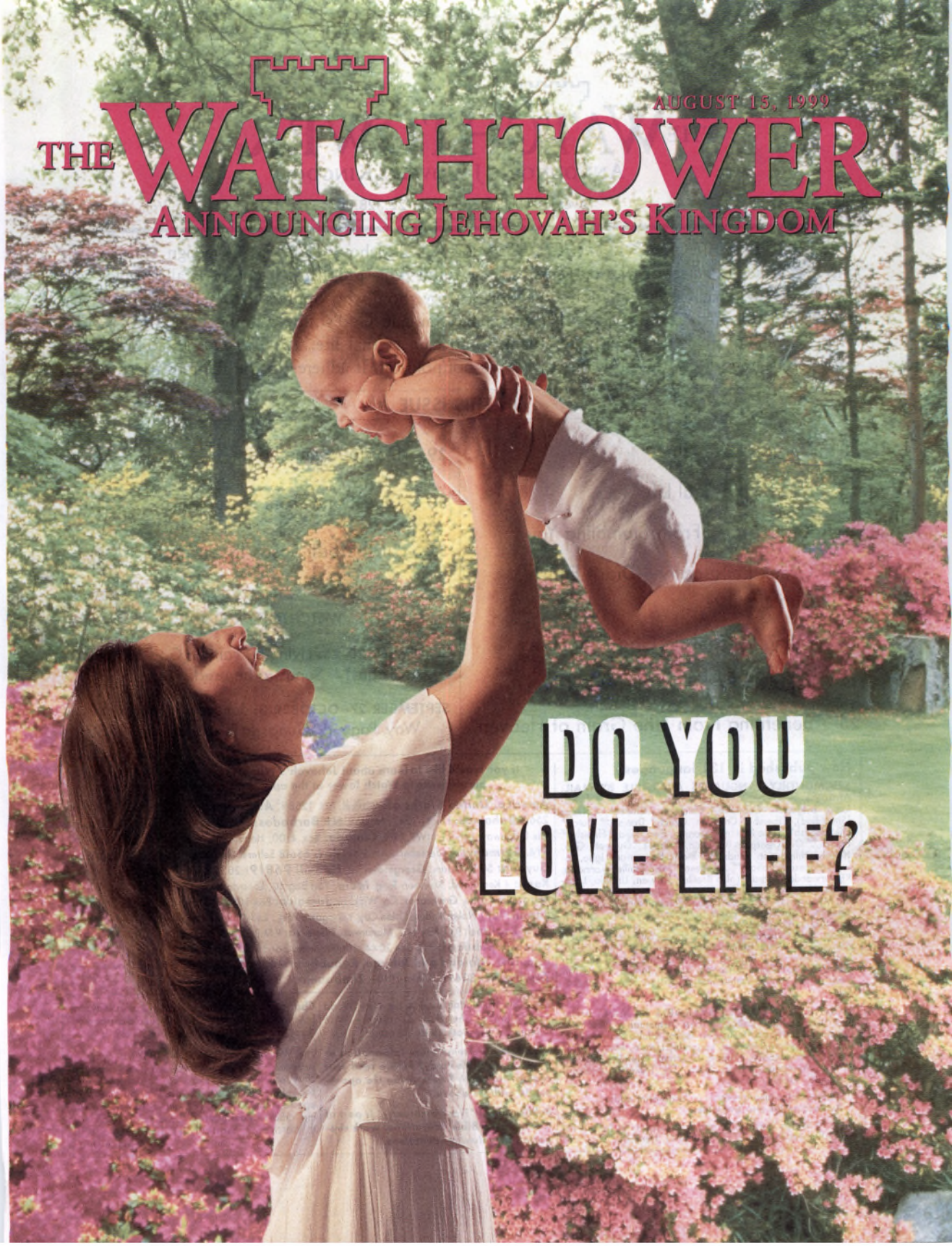
AUGUST 15, 1999

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



DO YOU LOVE LIFE?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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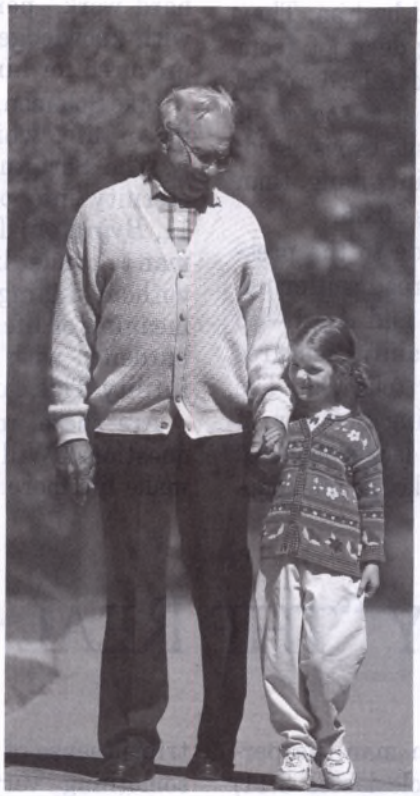
DO YOU LOVE LIFE?



"LET me see the light." These are the words that the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi reportedly uttered to those attending to him just before his death. The words suggest man's desperate attachment to life, represented by light.

Attachment to life is a precious impulse that moves most individuals to avoid dangers and to do all they can to keep living. In this, man is not greatly different from the animals, which have a strong survival instinct.

But what kind of life is truly worthy of being lived and loved? It is not mere physiological existence—just breathing and moving. Nor does general satisfaction come from a get-as-much-out-of-life-as-possible approach. The Epicurean philosophy, "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die," has not brought contentment to people for the most part. (1 Corinthians 15:32) While man certainly has a number of basic material needs, he also has cultural and social interests, not to mention spiritual needs, tied to faith in a Supreme Being. Sadly, hundreds of millions, if not billions, of people enjoy little more than mere existence because of miserable social and environmental conditions in many areas of the globe. Any who limit themselves primarily to satisfying their physical needs—eating, drinking, having possessions, or gratifying sexual desires—more or less lead an animal existence, from which they draw scant contentment. In effect, they make no use of the more meaningful resources that life offers to fulfill the human intellect and emotions. Moreover, any who seek to satisfy just their egoistic desires not only fail to get the best out of life but also damage the society in which they live, and they do not promote the interests of others.

Confirming this, a judge who deals with juvenile offenders says that "crises of values, exaltation of negative role models, and success by quick and easy enrichment" tend to "promote an exaggerated spirit of competition." This leads to behavior that is damaging to society and destructive to youths, especially when they turn to drugs.

You know that life offers many attractions—vacations in fascinating places, interesting reading or research, pleasant company, beautiful music. And there are other activities that bring satisfaction great and small. Those with a deep faith in God, and particularly in the God of the Bible, Jehovah, have more reasons to love life. True faith is a source of strength and serenity that can help people to deal with difficult

times. Believers in the true God can confidently say: "Jehovah is my helper; I will not be afraid." (Hebrews 13:6) People acquainted with God's love feel loved by him. They respond to his love, drawing deep joy from it. (1 John 4:7, 8, 16) They can lead an active and altruistic life that is a source of satisfaction. It is just as Jesus Christ said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

Sadly, there is another side to the present life. There are widespread suffering, injustice, poverty, sickness, and death—to mention just some of the painful features that often make life barely tolerable. The rich, powerful, and wise King Solomon of the ancient nation of Israel lacked none of the resources that can make people happy. Yet, there was something that troubled him—the realization that at death he would have to leave to someone else all that 'his hard work,' performed "with wisdom and with knowledge and with proficiency," had procured for him.—Ecclesiastes 2:17-21.

Like Solomon, most are aware of the brevity of life, which slips by all too rapidly. The Scriptures say that God 'has put eternity into our minds.' (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *Byington*) This sense of eternity moves man to ponder life's brevity. In the long run, without finding convincing answers to the meaning of life and death, one can become burdened with feelings of pessimism and futility. This can make life sad.

Are there answers to man's anguished questions? Will there ever be conditions to make life more attractive and lasting?

ENJOY "THE REAL LIFE"

JEHOVAH GOD has given man the perception of eternity. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) This makes humans feel powerless in the face of death but, at the same time, arouses in them an unrelenting desire to live.

The Holy Bible, God's inspired Word, gives us great hope. (2 Timothy 3:16) Jehovah, who is the essence of love, could not have made man with the ability to grasp the concept of eternity and then condemned him to live for just a few years. Creating us to be tormented over our lot is simply contrary to God's personality. We were not created like "unreasoning animals born naturally to be caught and destroyed." —2 Peter 2:12.

In creating Adam and Eve with an intrinsic sense of eternity, Jehovah God made something "very good"; he made them with the potential for living forever. (Genesis 1:31) But sadly, the first couple misused their free will, disobeying an explicit prohibition from the Creator and losing their original perfection. As a result, they died, having transmitted imperfection and death to their descendants.—Genesis 2:17; 3:1-24; Romans 5:12.

The Bible leaves no aura of mystery around the purpose of life and what death means. It says that in death "there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom" and that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) In other words, the dead are dead. The doctrine of the immortal soul is not Biblical, so there is

no profound mystery to be solved about the condition of the dead.—Genesis 3:19; Psalm 146:4; Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20; Ezekiel 18:4.*

God had a purpose; he did not create the earth "simply for nothing." He formed it "to be inhabited" by perfect humans in paradise conditions, and God has not changed his purpose. (Isaiah 45:18; Malachi 3:6) To realize it, he sent his Son to the earth. By remaining faithful until death, Jesus Christ provided the means to ransom mankind from sin and death. In fact, Jesus said: "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."—John 3:16.

Long ago, God promised that he would create "new heavens and a new earth." (Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:13) That would involve his choosing a limited group of faithful Christians for life in heaven. Together with Jesus Christ, they form a governmental nucleus. The Bible refers to this as "the kingdom of the heavens," or "kingdom of God," which will administer "the things on the earth." (Matthew 4:17; 12:28; Ephesians 1:10; Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1, 3) After destroying all godlessness on our globe and purifying it, God will bring in a righteous new human society, or "new earth." This will include people whom God protects through the imminent destruction of this wicked system of things. (Matthew 24:3, 7-14, 21; Revelation 7:9, 13, 14) They will be joined by those who are brought back to life through the promised resurrection.—John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15.

"The Real Life" Then

In confirmation of the thrilling description of life on the future Paradise earth, God says: "Look! I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:5) It is impossible for the human mind to grasp fully the marvelous works that God will perform for mankind. God will create a worldwide paradise, modeled after Eden. (Luke 23:43) As in Eden, beauty and pleasantness of color, sound, and taste will be abundant. Poverty and food shortages will be no more, for regarding that time the Bible says: "The former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:4; Psalm 72:16) No more will anyone say, "I am sick," as illness will be eliminated forever. (Isaiah 33:24) Yes, all causes of pain will disappear, including mankind's long-standing enemy, death. (1 Corinthians 15:26) In an amazing vision of the "new earth," the new human society under Christ's rule, the apostle John heard a voice saying: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." What could bring greater comfort and joy than the fulfillment of this divine promise?

In describing future life, the Bible particularly emphasizes conditions that will satisfy man's moral and spiritual aspirations. All the just ideals for which mankind has vainly struggled until now will be fully attained. (Matthew 6:10) Among these is the desire for *justice,* which has remained unfulfilled because man has often been afflicted by cruel oppressors who have dominated the weak. (Ecclesiastes 8:9) The psalmist wrote prophetically of conditions under Christ's rule: "In his days uprightness shall flourish, and peace in plenty."—Psalm 72:7, *The New Jerusalem Bible.*

Equality is another aspiration for which many have made sacrifices. In the "re-creation," God will abolish discrimination. (Matthew 19:28) All will enjoy the same dignity. This will not be equality imposed by some harsh governmental regime. On the contrary, the causes of discrimination will be eliminated, including the greed and pride

* For a detailed examination of the subject, see the brochure *What Happens to Us When We Die?,* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

that lead men to seek domination over others or to amass huge amounts of goods. Isaiah prophesied: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating."—Isaiah 65:21, 22.

How man has suffered because of bloodshed in both personal and collective warfare! This has continued from the murder of Abel down to the wars of the present time. How long humans have hoped and waited, seemingly in vain, for *peace* to be established! In the restored Paradise, all men will be peaceable and meek; they will "find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." —Psalm 37:11.

Isaiah 11:9 says: "The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea." Because of inherited imperfection, among other things, it is not possible for us today to understand fully the scope of those words. How perfect knowledge of God will unite us with him and how that will result in full joy, we may yet have to learn. But since the Scriptures inform us that Jehovah is a God marvelous in power, wisdom, justice, and love, we can be certain that he will hear all prayers expressed by the inhabitants of the "new earth."

"The Real Life" Is a Certainty—Grasp It!

For many, eternal life in a better world is just a dream or an illusion. However, for those who truly have faith in the Bible's promise, this hope is a certainty. It is like an anchor for their lives. (Hebrews 6:19) Just as an anchor holds a ship steady and prevents it from floundering, the hope of eternal life makes people stable and confident and enables them to confront the serious difficulties in life and even overcome them.

We can be sure that God will fulfill his promises. He has even furnished a guarantee by uttering an oath, an irrevocable commitment. The apostle Paul wrote: "God, when he purposed to demonstrate more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his counsel, stepped in with an oath, in order that, through two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we . . . may have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope set before us." (Hebrews 6:17, 18) The "two unchangeable things" that God can never annul are his promise and his oath, on which we base our expectations.

Faith in God's promises provides great comfort and spiritual strength. Joshua, a leader of the people of Israel, had such faith. When Joshua gave his farewell speech to the Israelites, he was old and knew that he was about to die. Yet, he expressed strength and unbreakable loyalty, which sprang from complete trust in God's promises. After saying that he was going "in the way of all the earth," the path that leads all mankind to death, Joshua stated: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed." Yes, three times Joshua repeated that God always keeps *all* his promises.—Joshua 23:14.

You too can have the same faith in God's promise of a new world that will soon be established. By earnestly studying the Bible, you will come to understand who Jehovah is and why he deserves your full trust. (Revelation 4:11) Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and other faithful ones of old had unbreakable faith, based on their intimate knowledge of the true God, Jehovah. They remained strong in hope, despite the fact that they "did not get the fulfillment of the promises" while they were alive. Still, "they saw

them afar off and welcomed them."—Hebrews 11:13.

Understanding Bible prophecies, we now see the approach of "the great day of God the Almighty," during which the earth will be cleansed of all wickedness. (Revelation 16:14, 16) Like faithful men of old, we must remain in confident expectation of future events, motivated by faith as well as by love for God and for "the real life." The nearness of the new world provides a strong incentive for those who exercise faith in Jehovah and who love him. Such faith and love need to be cultivated in order to gain God's favor and protection during his great day, which is at hand.—Zephaniah 2:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 10:37-39.

So, do you love life? And do you desire even more "the real life"—life as an approved servant of God, with the prospect of a happy future, yes, with eternal life in view? If that is what you seek, heed the exhortation of the apostle Paul, who wrote that we should 'rest our hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God.' Paul continued: "Be rich in fine works," which honor God, so as to "get a firm hold on the real life."—1 Timothy 6:17-19.

By accepting the offer of a Bible study with Jehovah's Witnesses, you can acquire knowledge that "means everlasting life." (John 17:3) Lovingly, the Bible records this fatherly invitation to all: "My son, my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe, because length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you."—Proverbs 3:1, 2.

KEEP ANGER FROM STUMBLING YOU

"TAKE a deep breath!" "Count to ten!" "Bite your tongue!" Are these phrases familiar to you? Perhaps you recite them to yourself to calm an inner agitation. Some people, in an effort to prevent an angry outburst, go for a walk. These are simple ways to manage anger and preserve relationships with others.

In recent years, though, conflicting advice from professionals on whether anger should be controlled or suppressed leaves many confused. For example, some psychologists have advanced the theory that "if it makes you feel better," give vent to your anger. Others warn that regular outbursts of anger are "a stronger predictor of dying young than [are] other risk factors such as smoking, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol." God's Word plainly states: "Let anger alone and leave rage; do not show yourself heated up only to do evil." (Psalm 37:8) Why does the Bible give such specific counsel?

Uncontrolled emotions lead to uncontrolled deeds. This became evident very early in man's history. We read: "Cain grew hot with great anger, and his countenance began to fall." Where did this lead him? His anger gripped him and took control, so much so that it hardened his heart to Jehovah's admonition to turn to doing good. Cain's unbridled anger led him into grave sin—the murder of his brother.—Genesis 4:3-8.

Saul, the first king of Israel, was similarly overtaken when he heard David receive great praise. "The women that were celebrating kept responding and saying: 'Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands.' And Saul began to be very angry, and this saying was bad from his viewpoint." Anger so dominated Saul's thinking that it drove him to make several assassination attempts on David. Even though David made overtures for friendship, Saul was unwilling to pursue peace and reconciliation. Ultimately, he totally lost Jehovah's favor.—1 Samuel 18:6-11; 19:9, 10; 24:1-21; Proverbs 6:34, 35.

Inevitably, when one gives way to uncontrolled anger, he or she will say and do things that will hurt everyone involved. (Proverbs 29:22) Cain and Saul became angry because each, in his own way, was jealous and envious. However, angry reactions can occur for various reasons. An unjustified criticism, an insult, a misunderstanding, or unfair treatment could be the spark that ignites an outburst.

The examples of Cain and Saul suggest a serious deficiency held in common. Cain's offering apparently lacked the motivation of faith. (Hebrews 11:4) Saul's failure to obey Jehovah's express commands and his subsequent attempts at self-justification led to his losing God's favor and spirit. Clearly, both men breached their relationship with Jehovah.

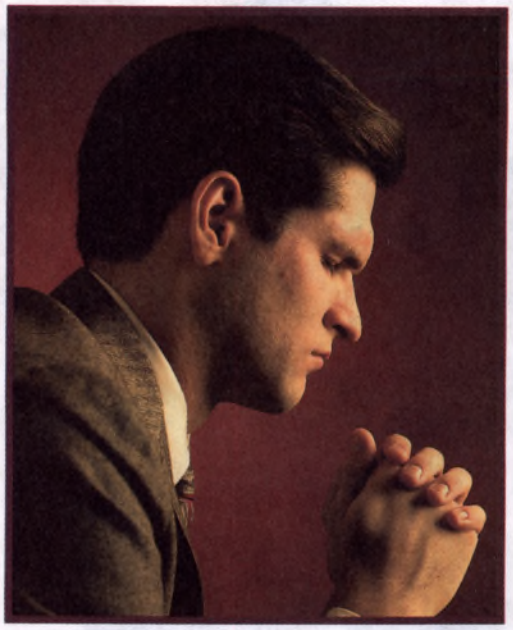
Contrast such dispositions with that of David, who had reason to be angry over the treatment he experienced from Saul. David restrained his spirit. Why? He said: "It is unthinkable, on my part, from Jehovah's standpoint, that I should do

this thing to my lord, the anointed of Jehovah." David had clearly in mind his relationship with Jehovah, and it affected his dealings with Saul. He humbly left matters in Jehovah's hands.—1 Samuel 24:6, 15.

Indeed, the implications of uncontrolled anger are serious. The apostle Paul cautioned: "Be wrathful, and yet do not sin." (Ephesians 4:26) While righteous indignation has its place, there is an ever-present danger that anger could become our stumbling block. No wonder, then, that we face the challenge of controlling our anger. How can we do so?

A primary way is to develop a strong relationship with Jehovah. He encourages you to open your heart and mind to him. Tell him your cares and concerns, and ask for a calm heart to subdue anger. (Proverbs 14:30) Be assured that "the eyes of Jehovah are upon the righteous ones, and his ears are toward their supplication." —1 Peter 3:12.

Prayer can mold and guide you. In what way? It can have a profound effect on your dealings with others. Remember how Jehovah has dealt with you. As the Scriptures say, Jehovah "has not done to us even according to our sins." (Psalm 103:10) A forgiving spirit is vital so that you "may not be overreached by Satan." (2 Corinthians 2:10, 11) Furthermore, prayer serves to open your heart to the guidance of the holy spirit, which can overturn strongly entrenched patterns in life. Jehovah gladly gives a 'peace that excels all thought,' which can release you from the gripping power of anger.—Philippians 4:7.



STEPS TO CONTROL ANGER

- ☐ Pray to Jehovah.—Psalm 145:18.
- ☐ Daily examine the Scriptures. —Psalm 119:133, 165.
- ☐ Keep busy in worthwhile activities. —Galatians 6:9, 10.

Prayer, however, must be coupled with a regular examination of the Scriptures in order for us to "go on perceiving what the will of Jehovah is." (Ephesians 5:17; James 3:17) If you personally have a hard time controlling your anger, strive to get Jehovah's thinking on the matter. Review scriptures specifically related to the controlling of anger.

The apostle Paul offers this important reminder: "Let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10) Focus your thoughts and deeds on doing good to others. Such wholesome, positive activity will encourage empathy and trust and will mitigate misunderstandings that can easily result in anger.

The psalmist said: "Fix my own steps solidly in your saying, and may no kind of hurtful thing domineer over me. Abundant peace belongs to those loving your law, and for them there is no stumbling block." (Psalm 119:133, 165) That can be true of you too.

Greek text: From the book *Ancient Greek Writers: Plato's Phaedo*, 1957, Ioannis N. Zacharopoulos, Athens; Plato: Musei Capitolini, Roma

GREEK PHILOSOPHY

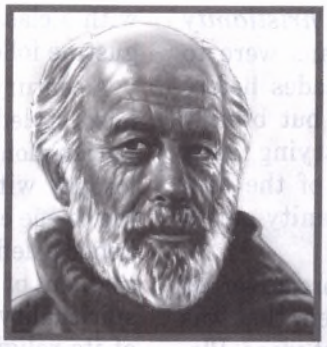
Did It Enrich Christianity?

"Christianity, though hostile to pagan Greek and Roman culture, in fact absorbed much classical philosophy."
—The Encyclopedia Americana.

AMONG those who had a definitive influence on "Christian" thought, "Saint" Augustine holds an undisputed position. According to *The New Encyclopædia Britannica,* Augustine's "mind was the crucible in which the religion of the New Testament was most completely fused with the Platonic tradition of Greek philosophy; and it was also the means by which the product of this fusion was transmitted to the Christendoms of medieval Roman Catholicism and Renaissance Protestantism."

Augustine's legacy is indeed enduring. Speaking of the extent to which Greek philosophy has influenced Christendom, Douglas T. Holden stated: "Christian theology has become so fused with Greek philosophy that it has reared individuals who are a mixture of nine parts Greek thought to one part Christian thought."

Some scholars strongly believe that such philosophical influence enhanced Christianity in its infancy, enriched its teaching, and made it more convincing. Was this the case? How and when did the influence of Greek philosophy take place? Did it, in fact, enrich or did it pollute Christianity?



Augustine

It is enlightening to trace a number of developments from the third century B.C.E. to the fifth century C.E. through an examination of four strange terms: (1) "Hellenized Judaism," (2) "Christianized Hellenism," (3) "Hellenized Christianity," and (4) "Christian philosophy."

"Hellenized Judaism"

The first, "Hellenized Judaism," is truly a contradiction. The original religion of the Hebrews, which was instituted by the true God, Jehovah, was not to be contaminated with false religious ideas. (Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:5, 6) Right from the start, however, purity of worship came under threat of corruption by the false religious practices and thinking that surrounded it—such as the influence from Egyptian, Canaanite, and Babylonian sources. Sad to say, Israel allowed its true worship to become deeply corrupted.—Judges 2:11-13.

Centuries later, when ancient Palestine became part of the Greek Empire under Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C.E., this corruption plumbed new depths and left behind a lasting and corrosive legacy. Alexander recruited Jews into his army. The contacts between the Jews and their new conqueror deeply influenced Jewish religious thinking. Judaistic education was penetrated by Hellenistic thought. High Priest Jason is reputed to have established a Greek academy in Jerusalem in 175 B.C.E. to promote the study of Homer.

Interestingly, a Samaritan, writing in the second half of the second century B.C.E., sought to present Bible history as Hellenized historiography. Apocryphal Jewish books, such as Judith and Tobit, actually allude to Greek erotic legends. A number of Jewish philosophers appeared who attempted to reconcile Greek thought with the Jewish religion and the Bible.

The figure that is most credited with this is Philo, a Jew of the first century C.E. He appropriated the doctrines of Plato (fourth century B.C.E.), the Pythagoreans, and the Stoics. Jews were profoundly influenced by Philo's views. Summing up this intellectual infiltration of Greek thought into Jewish culture, Jewish author Max Dimont says: "Enriched with Platonic thought, Aristotelian logic, and Euclidian science, Jewish scholars approached the Torah with new tools. . . . They proceeded to add Greek reason to Jewish revelation."

In time, the Romans absorbed the Greek Empire, taking over Jerusalem. This opened the way for even more significant changes. By the third century C.E., the philosophical and religious doctrines of thinkers who endeavored to develop and synthesize the ideas of Plato took their definitive form, known collectively today as Neoplatonism. This school of thought was bound to have a profound influence on apostate Christianity.

"Christianized Hellenism"

During the first five centuries of our common era, certain intellectuals sought to demonstrate a relationship between Greek philosophy and the revealed truth of the

Bible. The book *A History of Christianity* states: "Christian metaphysicians were to portray the Greeks in the decades before Christ as struggling manfully but blindly towards a knowledge of God, trying, as it were, to conjure up Jesus out of the thin Athenian air, to invent Christianity out of their poor pagan heads."

Plotinus (205-270 C.E.), a precursor of such thinkers, developed a system that was based chiefly on Plato's theory of ideas. Plotinus introduced the concept of a soul separate from the body. Professor E. W. Hopkins said of Plotinus: "His theology . . . had no little influence upon the leaders of Christian opinion."

"Hellenized Christianity" and "Christian Philosophy"

Starting in the second century C.E., "Christian" thinkers made a determined effort to reach the pagan intellectuals. Despite the apostle Paul's clear warning against "the empty speeches that violate what is holy" and "the contradictions of the falsely called 'knowledge,'" such teachers integrated in their teachings philosophical elements from the surrounding Hellenistic culture. (1 Timothy 6:20) The example of Philo seemed to suggest that it might be possible to reconcile the Bible with Platonic ideas.—Compare 2 Peter 1:16.

The real victim, of course, was Biblical truth. "Christian" teachers tried to show that Christianity was in harmony with Greco-Roman humanism. Clement of Alexandria and Origen (second and third centuries C.E.) made Neoplatonism the foundation of what came to be "Christian philosophy." Ambrose (339-397 C.E.), bishop of Milan, had "absorbed the most up-to-date Greek learning, Christian and pagan alike—notably the works . . . of the pagan Neoplatonist Plotinus." He tried to provide educated Latins with a classical version of Christianity. Augustine followed suit.

A century later, Dionysius the Areopagite (also styled pseudo-Dionysius), probably a Syrian monk, tried to unite Neoplatonic philosophy with "Christian" theology. According to one encyclopedia, his "writings established a definite Neoplatonic trend in a large segment of medieval Christian doctrine and spirituality . . . that has determined facets of its religious and devotional character to the present time." What a flagrant flouting of the apostle Paul's warning against "the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men"!—Colossians 2:8.

Corrupting Pollutants

It has been noted that "the Christian Platonists gave primacy to revelation and regarded Platonic philosophy as the best available instrument for understanding and defending the teachings of Scripture and church tradition."

Plato himself had been convinced that there exists an immortal soul. Significantly, one of the most prominent false teachings that crept into "Christian" theology is that of the immortality of the soul. Accepting this teaching can in no way be justified on the grounds that doing so made Christianity more appealing to the masses. When preaching in Athens, the very heart of Greek culture, the apostle Paul did not teach the Platonic doctrine of the soul. Rather, he preached the Christian doctrine of the resurrection, even though many of his Greek listeners found it hard to accept what he said.—Acts 17:22-32.

Contrary to Greek philosophy, the Scriptures clearly show that the soul is not what a person *has* but what he *is*. (Genesis 2:7) At death, the soul ceases to exist. (Ezekiel 18:4) Ecclesiastes 9:5 tells us: "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." The doctrine of the immortality of the soul is not taught in the Bible.

Another deceptive teaching had to do with the position of the prehuman Jesus, the notion that he was equal to his Father. Explains the book *The Church of the First Three Centuries:* "The doctrine of the Trinity... had its origin in a source entirely foreign from that of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures." What was that source? The doctrine "grew up, and was ingrafted on Christianity, through the hands of the Platonizing Fathers."

Indeed, as time went by and the Church Fathers became increasingly influenced by Neoplatonism, the Trinitarians gained ground. Third-century Neoplatonic philosophy seemingly enabled them to reconcile the irreconcilable—to make a threefold God appear like one God. By philosophical reasoning they claimed that three persons could be one God while retaining their individuality!

The truth of the Bible, however, clearly shows that Jehovah alone is Almighty God, Jesus Christ is His lesser created Son, and the holy spirit is His active force. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5; Acts 2:4; Colossians 1:15; Revelation 3:14) The Trinity doctrine dishonors the only true God and confuses people, turning them away from a God they cannot comprehend.

One more victim of the Neoplatonic influence on Christian thinking was the Scripture-based millennial hope. (Revelation 20:4-6) Origen was noted for his condemnation of millennialists. Why was he so opposed to this well-founded Biblical doctrine of Christ's rule of one thousand years? *The Catholic Encyclopedia* answers: "In view of the Neo-Platonism on which his doctrines were founded . . . , [Origen] could not side with the millenarians."

The Truth

None of the above-mentioned developments had anything to do with the truth. This truth is the entire body of Christian teachings as found in the Bible. (2 Corinthians 4:2; Titus 1:1, 14; 2 John 1-4) The Bible is the one and only source of truth.—John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16.

However, the enemy of Jehovah, of truth, of humankind, and of everlasting life—Satan the Devil, the "manslayer" and the "father of the lie"—has used a variety of devious ways to adulterate that truth. (John 8:44; compare 2 Corinthians 11:3.) Among the most powerful tools he has used are the teachings of pagan Greek philosophers—actually a reflection of his own thinking—in an effort to alter the content and nature of Christian teachings.

This unnatural blending of Christian teaching with Greek philosophy is an attempt to dilute Bible truth, diminishing its strength and appeal to the meek, sincere, and teachable truth seekers. (1 Corinthians 3:1, 2, 19, 20) It also tends to defile the purity of crystal-clear Biblical doctrine, making the line between truth and falsehood appear fuzzy.

Today, under the direction of the Head of the congregation, Jesus Christ, true Christian teaching has been restored. Also, sincere seekers of truth can very easily identify the true Christian congregation by its fruits. (Matthew 7:16, 20) Jehovah's Witnesses are willing and eager to help such ones find the unadulterated waters of truth and to assist them to get a firm hold on the inheritance of everlasting life offered by our Father, Jehovah.—John 4:14; 1 Timothy 6:19.

LIVING BY FAITH IN GOD'S PROMISES

"I am the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done."—ISAIAH 46:9, 10.

HOW involved is God in earth's affairs? Opinions vary. One view is that he is not involved at all. Having set things in motion through creation, he is either unwilling or unable to act in our behalf. In this view, God is like a father who puts his son on a new bicycle, steadies it, and gives it a push to start his son down the road. After that, the father walks away. The boy is on his own; he may fall, or he may not. Either way, the matter is out of the father's hands.

[2] Another view is that God is actively directing every aspect of our lives and that he is directly involved with every occurrence throughout his creation. If this is so, however, some would conclude that God causes not only the good things that happen but also the crime and tragedy that afflict humankind. Knowing the truth about God's dealings will help us know what to expect of him. It will also fortify our faith in the certain fulfillment of his promises. —Hebrews 11:1.

[3] Central to the question of God's involvement in human affairs is the fact that Jehovah is a God of purpose. That is implicit in his very name. "Jehovah" means "He Causes to Become." With progressive action, Jehovah causes himself to be the Fulfiller of all his promises. Consequently, Jehovah is spoken of as 'forming,' or fashioning, his purpose concerning future events or actions. (2 Kings 19:25; Isaiah 46:11) These terms are from the Hebrew word *ya·tsar',* related to the word meaning "potter." (Jeremiah 18:4) Just as a skillful potter can shape a lump of clay into a beautiful vase, Jehovah can shape, or maneuver, things to accomplish his will.—Ephesians 1:11.

[4] For example, God purposed that the earth would be a place of exquisite beauty to be inhabited by perfect, obedient humans. (Isaiah 45:18) Long before he created the first man and woman, Jehovah made loving preparation for them. The opening chapters of the book of Genesis describe how Jehovah established day and night, land and sea. Next he created vegetation and animal life. This preparation of the earth for human habitation involved many thousands of years. The project was successfully completed. The first man and woman began their lives in Eden, a delightful paradise that was fully provisioned so that they could enjoy life. (Genesis 1:31) Thus Jehovah was directly involved in earth's affairs, progressively fashioning his works to his lofty pur-

1, 2. What are some differing views about God's involvement in earth's affairs?

3. (a) How do we know that Jehovah is a God of purpose? (b) Why is Jehovah spoken of as 'forming,' or fashioning, his purpose?

4. How did God prepare the earth for human habitation?

pose. Did the expansion of the human family change his involvement?

Jehovah Limits His Dealings With Humans

[5] Though having the power to do so, Jehovah does not direct and control every detail of human activity. There are reasons for this. One is that humans were created in God's image, having free will, being free moral agents. Jehovah does not force us to do his bidding; neither are we puppets. (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20; Joshua 24:15) Though he holds us accountable for our acts, God has lovingly allowed us considerable freedom to decide how we will manage our lives.—Romans 14:12; Hebrews 4:13.

[6] Another reason why God does not direct everything that happens relates to the issue that Satan raised in Eden. Satan challenged God's sovereignty. He offered Eve what seemed to be an opportunity for independence—an offer that she and later her husband, Adam, accepted. (Genesis 3:1-6) In response, God has allowed humans to rule themselves for a period of time to prove whether Satan's challenge was justified. For this reason, the wrong things that people do today cannot be blamed on God. Moses wrote of rebellious people: "They have acted ruinously on their own part; they are not [God's] children, the defect is their own." —Deuteronomy 32:5.

[7] However, while allowing for free choice and experiments in independent rulership, Jehovah has not adopted a hands-off policy concerning earth's affairs, which would leave us with little hope that he will fulfill his promises. Though Adam and Eve rebelled against God's sovereignty, Jehovah did not alter his loving purpose for the earth and for humankind. He will without fail transform the earth into a paradise populated with perfect, obedient, and happy people. (Luke 23:42, 43) The Bible record from Genesis to Revelation describes how Jehovah has progressively been working to accomplish that aim.

5, 6. Why does God limit his dealings with humans?

7. What is Jehovah's purpose for the earth and for humankind?

God Acts to Accomplish His Will

[8] In his dealings with the nation of Israel, God demonstrated that he will accomplish his purpose. For example, Jehovah assured Moses that He would deliver the Israelites from Egypt and bring them into the Promised Land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Exodus 3:8) This was a momentous and reassuring proclamation. It would involve releasing those Israelites—numbering with their companions about three million—from a mighty nation that strongly opposed their departure. (Exodus 3:19) The land to which they would be brought was inhabited by powerful nations that would strongly resist their arrival. (Deuteronomy 7:1) In-between was a wilderness where the Israelites would need food and water. This was a situation that allowed Jehovah to display his supreme power and Godship.—Leviticus 25:38.

[9] God led the Israelites out of Egypt through a series of mighty acts. First, he brought ten devastating plagues on the nation of Egypt. Next, he parted the Red Sea, enabling the Israelites to escape while the pursuing Egyptian army perished. (Psalm 78:12, 13, 43-51) Following that, he cared for the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness, feeding them with manna, providing water, and even seeing to it that their mantles did not wear out and that

8. What was involved in bringing the Israelites to the Promised Land?

9, 10. (a) Why was Joshua able to testify that God's promises are reliable? (b) How important is it that we have confidence in God's ability to reward his faithful ones?

their feet did not become swollen. (Deuteronomy 8:3, 4) After the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Jehovah led them to victory over their enemies. Joshua, who exercised strong faith in Jehovah's promises, was an eyewitness of all these things. Thus, he could confidently say to the older men of his day: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you."—Joshua 23:14.

10 Like Joshua of old, Christians today are fully confident that God is willing and able to act in behalf of those who serve him. This conviction is an essential part of our faith. The apostle Paul wrote: "Without faith it is impossible to please him well, for he that approaches God must believe that he . . . becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him."—Hebrews 11:6.

God Foresees the Future

11 So far, we have seen that while God allows for free will and independent human rulership, he has both the power and the will to act to accomplish his purpose. Yet, there is another factor that contributes to the certain fulfillment of God's promises. Jehovah can foresee the future. (Isaiah 42:9) Through his prophet, God said: "Remember the first things of a long time ago, that I am the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done; the One saying, 'My own counsel will stand, and everything that is my delight I shall do.'" (Isaiah 46:9, 10) An experienced farmer knows when and where to plant seed, but there still might be some uncertainty about how things will develop. However, "the King of eternity" has accurate knowledge to foresee precisely when and where he should act to carry out his purpose.—1 Timothy 1:17.

12 Consider how God exercised foreknowledge in the days of Noah. Because of the widespread badness that had filled the earth, God determined to bring an end to disobedient humankind. He set a time when he would do this, 120 years into the future. (Genesis 6:3) In setting that specific period, Jehovah took into consideration more than the destruction of the wicked, something that he could do at any time. Jehovah's timetable also provided for the preservation of the righteous. (Compare Genesis 5:29.) In his wisdom, God foreknew when to assign the work that would lead to that end. He gave sufficiently detailed information to Noah. Noah was to build an ark "for the saving of his household," and the wicked were to be destroyed by a global deluge. —Hebrews 11:7; Genesis 6:13, 14, 18, 19.

A Colossal Building Project

13 Consider this assignment from Noah's viewpoint. Because Noah was a man of God, he knew that Jehovah could destroy the ungodly. Before that would happen, however, there was work to be done—a work that required faith. The construction of the ark would be a colossal project. God had specified its dimensions. The ark would be longer than some modern-day sports fields and as high as a five-story building. (Genesis 6:15) The builders would be inexperienced and few. They would not have the sophisticated tools and equipment available today. Moreover, since he did not have Jehovah's ability to foreknow the future, Noah had no way of knowing what situations would develop over the years that might either help or hin-

11. What factors enable God to fulfill his promises?

12. In what way did Jehovah exercise foreknowledge in the days of Noah?

13, 14. Why was the building of the ark a challenging assignment?

der the building project. Noah likely pondered many questions. How would the building materials be accumulated? How would he gather the animals? What food would be needed and how much? When, exactly, would the foretold Deluge occur?

14 Then there were the social conditions. Wickedness abounded. The mighty Nephilim—the hybrid offspring of wicked angels and women—filled the earth with violence. (Genesis 6:1-4, 13) Furthermore, ark building would not be a project that could be carried out in secret. People would wonder what Noah was doing, and he would tell them. (2 Peter 2:5) Could they be expected to approve? Hardly! Some years earlier, faithful Enoch had proclaimed the destruction of the wicked. So unpopular was his message that God "took him," or cut his life short, evidently to prevent him from being slain by His enemies. (Genesis 5:24; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14, 15) Not only was Noah to proclaim a similarly unpopular message but he was also to build an ark. As that ark was being constructed, it would serve as a powerful reminder of Noah's faithfulness in the face of wicked contemporaries!

15 Noah knew that the project had the backing and blessing of Almighty God. Had not Jehovah himself assigned the work?

15. Why did Noah have confidence that he could carry out his assignment?

Jehovah had assured Noah that he and his family would enter a completed ark and be preserved alive through the global Flood. God even underscored the certainty of that with a solemn agreement. (Genesis 6:18, 19) Likely, Noah recognized that Jehovah both anticipated and evaluated all that was involved before making the assignment. Moreover, Noah knew that Jehovah had the power to step in to help him when needed. So Noah's faith moved him to action. Like his descendant Abraham, Noah was "fully convinced that what [God] had promised he was also able to do."—Romans 4:21.

[16] As the years passed and the ark took shape, Noah's faith was fortified. Construction and logistic problems were resolved. Trials were overcome. No opposition could halt the work. Noah's family experienced Jehovah's support and protection. As Noah pressed on, 'the tested quality of his faith worked out endurance.' (James 1:2-4) Eventually, the ark was completed, the Flood came, and Noah and his family survived. Noah experienced the fulfillment of God's promises, as Joshua did later. Noah's faith was rewarded.

16. As the construction of the ark progressed, how was Noah's faith fortified?

Points to Recall

- ☐ Why does Jehovah not control all details of human activity?
- ☐ How was Jehovah's ability to carry out his purpose evident in his dealings with Israel?
- ☐ How was Jehovah's ability to see the future demonstrated in Noah's day?
- ☐ What confidence may we have in God's promises?

Jehovah Backs Up the Work

[17] Jesus foretold that our day would parallel the days of Noah. God has again determined to destroy the wicked and has set a time for this to happen. (Matthew 24:36-39) He has also set things in motion for the preservation of the righteous. Whereas Noah was to build an ark, God's servants today are to proclaim Jehovah's purposes, teach his Word, and make disciples.—Matthew 28:19.

[18] If Jehovah had not been with Noah to support and sustain him, the ark would not have been built. (Compare Psalm 127:1.) Similarly, without Jehovah's backing, true Christianity would be unlikely to survive, much less prosper. This was recognized in the first century by Gamaliel, an esteemed Pharisee and teacher of the Law. When the Jewish Sanhedrin wanted to do away with the apostles, he cautioned that court: "Do not meddle with these men, but let them alone; (because, if this scheme or this work is from men, it will be overthrown; but if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them.)"—Acts 5:38, 39.

[19] The success of the preaching activity, both in the first century and today, has proved that this is not a work from men, but is of God. The following article will discuss some of the exciting circumstances and developments that have helped to make this work so successful on such a vast scale.

Never Give Up!

[20] Though we live in "critical times hard to deal with," we can be sure that Jehovah is fully in control. He is supporting and sustaining his people as they work to complete

17. In what ways does our time parallel the days of Noah?
18, 19. How do we know that the preaching of the good news has Jehovah's backing?
20. Who support us as we preach the good news?

the preaching of the good news before God's appointed time to end this wicked system of things arrives. (2 Timothy 3:1; Matthew 24:14) Jehovah invites us to be "fellow workers" with him. (1 Corinthians 3:9) We are assured, too, that Christ Jesus is with us in this work and that we can rely on angelic backing and direction.—Matthew 28:20; Revelation 14:6.

[21] Because Noah and his family exercised faith in Jehovah's promises, they were saved through the floodwaters. Those who exercise similar faith today will be saved through the coming "great tribulation." (Revelation 7:14) We live in times that are truly exciting. Momentous events lie ahead! Soon, God will act to usher in glorious new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness will dwell. (2 Peter 3:13) Never, never give up in your conviction that whatever God says, he is also able to do.—Romans 4:21.

21. In what conviction should we never give up?

JEHOVAH PREPARES THE WAY

"This good news of the kingdom will be preached."—MATTHEW 24:14.

BECAUSE Jehovah is a God of love, it is his will that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) This has called for an international preaching and teaching campaign. In the first century, this preaching made the Christian congregation "a pillar and support of the truth." (1 Timothy 3:15) Afterward came a long period of apostasy in which the light of truth became dim. In recent times, during "the time of the end," "true knowledge" has again become abundant, bringing a Bible-based hope of everlasting salvation to millions.—Daniel 12:4.

1. What has been accomplished by the preaching work in both the first and the 20th centuries?

[2] Despite the unrelenting efforts of Satan to thwart God's purpose, the preaching activity in both the first and the 20th centuries has met with amazing success. It calls to mind the prophecy of Isaiah. Concerning the return of Jewish exiles to Judah in the sixth century B.C.E., Isaiah wrote: "Let every valley be raised up, and every mountain and hill be made low. And the knobby ground must become level land, and the rugged ground a valley plain." (Isaiah 40:4) Jehovah has also prepared and smoothed the way for the great preaching campaigns of both the first and the 20th centuries.

2. What has Jehovah done in connection with the preaching activity?

[3] This does not mean that Jehovah directly influenced every development on earth in order to advance the preaching of the good news; nor does it mean that Jehovah exercised his foresight to know in precise detail everything that would occur. Granted, he is able both to foresee and to shape future events. (Isaiah 46:9-11) But he is also able to react to developments as they unfold. Like an experienced shepherd who knows both how to direct and how to protect his flock, Jehovah guides his people. He leads them toward salvation, protecting their spirituality and moving them to take advantage of situations and developments that promote the successful preaching of the good news worldwide.—Psalm 23:1-4.

A Difficult Assignment

[4] As was the building of the ark in Noah's day, the work of Kingdom preaching has been an enormous project—both in the first century and in modern times. The task of reaching all peoples with any message is difficult enough, but this task was especially challenging. In the first century, the disciples were relatively few. Their Leader, Jesus, had been executed as an alleged seditionist. The Jewish religion was well established. A magnificent temple stood in Jerusalem. Non-Jewish religions in the Mediterranean area were also well established, with temples and priesthoods. Similarly, as "the time of the end" began in 1914, the anointed Christians were few, and adherents to other religions claiming to serve God were many. —Daniel 12:9.

[5] Jesus had warned his followers that they would be persecuted. He said: "People will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name." (Matthew 24:9) Added to such problems, particularly in "the last days," Christians would find themselves amid "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) The magnitude of the work, the certainty of persecution, and the difficulty of the times have made the work of preaching challenging and difficult. Great faith has been needed.

[6] While Jehovah knew that there would be difficulties, he also knew that nothing would stop the work. Success was foretold in a well-known prophecy having a remarkable fulfillment in both the first and the 20th centuries: "This good news of the kingdom *will be preached in all the inhabited earth.*" —Matthew 24:14.

[7] Filled with faith and holy spirit, God's servants in the first century went forth to carry out their commission. Because Jehovah proved to be with them, they achieved success far beyond what they might have expected. By the time Paul wrote to the Colossians, about 27 years after the death of Jesus, he could say of the good news that it was "preached in all creation that is under heaven." (Colossians 1:23) Comparably, by the close of the 20th century, the good news is being preached in 233 lands.

[8] Millions have embraced the good news in recent decades. Many have done so under unfavorable circumstances—during periods of war, ban, and intense persecution. That was true also in the first century. On one occasion Paul and Silas were brutally beaten with rods and thrown into prison. What an unlikely situation in which to make disciples! Yet, Jehovah used the situation to do just that. Paul and Silas were released, and

3. In what ways is Jehovah able to accomplish his purposes?
4, 5. Why has the preaching of the good news been a challenging assignment?
6. What assurance of success did Jehovah give his people?
7. How extensive was the preaching activity in the first century?
8. Under what kind of circumstances have many embraced the good news? Give examples.

the jailer together with his family became believers. (Acts 16:19-33) Such experiences show that the good news cannot be silenced by those who oppose it. (Isaiah 54:17) Still, the history of Christianity has not been one of unrelenting adversity and persecution. Let us now focus on some favorable developments that have helped smooth the way for the successful preaching of the good news in both the first and the 20th centuries.

Religious Environment

9 Consider the timing of the global preaching campaigns. As to the setting in the first century, the prophecy of the 70 weeks of years, found at Daniel 9:24-27, pinpointed the year when the Messiah was to appear —29 C.E. Though first-century Jews did not understand the exact timing of matters, they were in expectation, awaiting the Messiah. (Luke 3:15) The French *Manuel Biblique* states: "People knew that the seventy weeks of years fixed by Daniel were drawing to a close; nobody was surprised to hear John the Baptist announce that the kingdom of God had drawn near."

10 What about the setting in modern times? Well, a monumental development was the enthronement of Jesus in heaven, which marked the beginning of his presence in Kingdom power. Bible prophecy shows that this took place in 1914. (Daniel 4:13-17) Anticipation of this event also caused some religious people in modern times to be filled with expectation. Expectation was evident also among the sincere Bible Students who began to publish this magazine in 1879 as *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. Thus, both in the first century and in modern times, religious expectations prepared the environment for the preaching of the good news.*

9, 10. How did Jehovah create expectation for the preaching of the good news in the first and the 20th centuries?

11 Another factor that helped the work of Christians in both eras was that many people were familiar with the Sacred Scriptures. In the first century, Jewish communities were scattered throughout the surrounding Gentile nations. Those communities had synagogues where people regularly met to hear the Scriptures read and discussed. Thus, early Christians were able to build on the religious knowledge that people already had. (Acts 8:28-36; 17:1, 2) Early in our era, Jehovah's people enjoyed a similar environment in many lands. The Bible was widely available throughout the realm of Christendom, especially in Protestant lands. It was read in many churches; millions owned a copy. The Bible was already in people's hands, but they needed help to understand what they possessed.

The Benefits of Law

12 Christian preaching has often benefited from governmental law. The Roman Empire dominated the first-century world, and its written laws had a profound influence on daily life. These laws provided safeguards, and the early Christians benefited from them. For example, Paul's appeal to Roman law led to his release from prison and saved him from being flogged. (Acts 16:37-39; 22:25, 29) Reference to the provision of the Roman legal system helped to calm an angry mob in Ephesus. (Acts 19:35-41) Once, Paul was rescued from violence in Jerusalem

* For a more detailed explanation of these two Messianic prophecies, see the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, pages 36, 97, and 98-107, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

11. What religious foundations were laid to assist with the preaching of the good news?
12. How was Roman law usually a safeguard in the first century?

because he was a Roman citizen. (Acts 23:27) Later, Roman law allowed him to make a legal defense of his faith before Caesar. (Acts 25:11) Though several of the Caesars ruled as tyrants, the laws in the first century usually allowed for "the defending and legally establishing of the good news."—Philippians 1:7.

13 The same holds true in many lands today. Though there have been those who would 'frame trouble by decree,' written laws in most countries regard freedom of religion as a basic right. (Psalm 94:20) Recognizing that Jehovah's Witnesses pose no threat to the social order, many governments have granted us legal recognition. In the United States, where much of the Witnesses' printing has been done, existing laws have made it possible for the *Watchtower* magazine to be produced continuously for 120 years and to be read worldwide.

Periods of Peace and Tolerance

14 The preaching activity has also benefited from periods of relative peace. Though Jesus accurately foretold that in the times involved 'nation would rise against nation,' there were intervals of stability that made possible intense Kingdom preaching. (Matthew 24:7) First-century Christians lived under the *Pax Romana,* or Roman Peace. One historian wrote: "Rome had so completely subjugated the peoples of the Mediterranean world that she ended for them ages of almost constant war." This stability opened the way for early Christians to travel in relative safety throughout the Roman world.

15 The Roman Empire strove to unite peoples under its strong hand. This policy promoted not only travel, tolerance, and the exchange of ideas but also the concept of international brotherhood. The book *On the Road to Civilization* states: "The unity of the [Roman] Empire made the field [for Christian preaching] a favorable one. National barriers had been broken down. A Roman citizen was a citizen of the world. . . . Moreover, a religion that taught the brotherhood of man could be understood in a state which had developed the idea of universal citizenship."—Compare Acts 10:34, 35; 1 Peter 2:17.

16 What of our time? The 20th century has seen the most destructive wars in history, and regional wars continue to rage in some lands. (Revelation 6:4) Yet, there have also been periods of relative peace. The major powers of the world have not battled one another in all-out war for more than 50 years. This situation has greatly helped in the preaching of the good news in those lands.

17 The horrors of 20th-century warfare have led many people to recognize the need for a world government. Fear of world war led to the formation of both the League of Nations and the United Nations. (Revelation 13:14) A proclaimed aim of both organizations has been the promoting of international cooperation and peace. People sensing such a need often respond favorably to the good news of the world government that will bring genuine and lasting peace—God's Kingdom.

18 Though Christians have been ferociously persecuted at times, both the first and the 20th centuries have seen periods of religious tolerance. (John 15:20; Acts 9:31) The Romans freely adopted and adapted to the gods

13. How has the preaching work in our time often benefited from law?
14, 15. How did relative social stability benefit the preaching activity in the first century?
16, 17. What has motivated efforts to promote peace in modern times, and what conclusion have many people reached?
18. What attitude toward religion has favored the preaching work?

and goddesses of the people they conquered. Wrote Professor Rodney Stark: "In many respects Rome provided for a greater level of religious freedom than was seen again until after the American Revolution." In modern times, people in many lands have become more open to other viewpoints, with the result that they have been willing to listen to the Bible message that Jehovah's Witnesses bring.

The Role of Technology

19 Finally, consider how Jehovah has enabled his people to benefit from technological advances. Though early Christians did not live in an era of rapid technological advancement, one development they did make use of was the codex, or leaf-book. The codex replaced the cumbersome scroll. The book *The Birth of the Codex* states: "In contrast to the slow and piecemeal process by which the codex ousted the roll in secular literature, the Christian adoption of the codex seems to have been instant and universal." This reference work also says: "So universal is the Christian use of the codex in the second century that its introduction must date well before A.D. 100." The codex was easier to use than a scroll. Scriptures could be located faster. This surely helped the early Christians who, like Paul, not only explained the Scriptures but also 'proved by references' the things they were teaching. —Acts 17:2, 3.

19. How did early Christians make use of the codex?

20 The technological advances in our century have been astounding. High-speed printing presses have helped to make possible the simultaneous publication of Bible literature in scores of languages. Modern technology has speeded up the work of Bible translation. Trucks, trains, ships, and

20. How have God's people made use of modern technology in the global preaching activity, and why?

airplanes make it possible to transport Bible literature rapidly throughout the earth. Telephones and fax machines have made instant communication a reality. Through his spirit, Jehovah has moved his servants to put such technology to practical use to promote the spread of the good news worldwide. They are not using such developments out of a desire to know and employ whatever is the latest in this world. Instead, their first and foremost interest is what will help them to carry out their preaching commission most effectively.

Points for Review

- ☐ Why has the preaching of the good news been a challenging assignment?
- ☐ In what ways has the work of Christians benefited from governmental arrangements and relative social stability?
- ☐ Jehovah's blessing on the preaching work assures us of what future developments?

21 "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth," Jesus foretold. (Matthew 24:14) Just as early Christians saw a fulfillment of that prophecy, we today see such on a vast scale. Despite the enormity and difficulty of the work, during times favorable and unfavorable, amid changing laws and attitudes, in war and in peace, and amid all sorts of technological advances, the good news has been and is being preached. Does this not fill you with awe at Jehovah's wisdom and amazing foresight? We may be absolutely sure that the preaching work will be completed according to Jehovah's timetable and that his loving purpose will be accomplished to the blessing of the righteous. They will come to possess the earth and live on it forever. (Psalm 37:29; Habakkuk 2:3) If we harmonize our lives with Jehovah's purpose, we will be among them.—1 Timothy 4:16.

21. Of what may we be confident?

BENEFITING FROM "the Grain of Heaven"

SHORTLY after their miraculous deliverance from Egypt, the Israelites displayed a serious lack of faith in their Deliverer, Jehovah. As a result, Jehovah had them wander about in the wilderness of Sinai for 40 years. During all that time, the Israelites and the "vast mixed company" of aliens who joined them ate and drank "to satisfaction." (Exodus 12:37, 38) Psalm 78:23-25 tells us how this was possible: "He [Jehovah] proceeded to command the cloudy skies above, and he opened the very doors of heaven. And he kept raining upon them manna to eat, and the grain of heaven he gave to them. Men ate the very bread of powerful ones; provisions he sent them to satisfaction."

As a partaker of the manna, Moses described this unique food. He wrote that in the morning, after "the layer of dew evaporated . . . , upon the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flaky thing, fine like hoarfrost upon the earth. When the sons of Israel got to see it, they began to say to one another: 'What is it?'" or literally in Hebrew, *"man hu'?"* This expression was probably the origin of the word "manna," the name that the Israelites gave the food. Moses said: "It was white like coriander seed, and its taste was like that of flat cakes with honey."—Exodus 16:13-15, 31, footnote.

The manna was not a naturally occurring food, as some argue. A supernatural force was involved in its provision. For example, its availability was not limited to location or season. If kept overnight, it bred worms and began to stink; yet, the double portion that each family gathered on the day before the weekly Sabbath did not spoil overnight, so it could be eaten on the Sabbath—the day on which no manna appeared. Certainly, the manna was a miraculous provision.—Exodus 16:19-30.

The mention of "powerful ones," or "angels," in Psalm 78 suggests that Jehovah may have used angels to provide the manna. (Psalm 78:25, footnote) Whatever the case, the people had every reason to thank God for his kindness. However, most showed an ungrateful attitude toward the very One who delivered them from slavery in Egypt. We too may take Jehovah's provisions for granted or even become ungrateful if we fail to meditate on his loving-kindness. So we can be thankful that Jehovah included the record of Israel's deliverance and subsequent events for "our instruction."—Romans 15:4.

A Lesson for Israel Benefits Christians

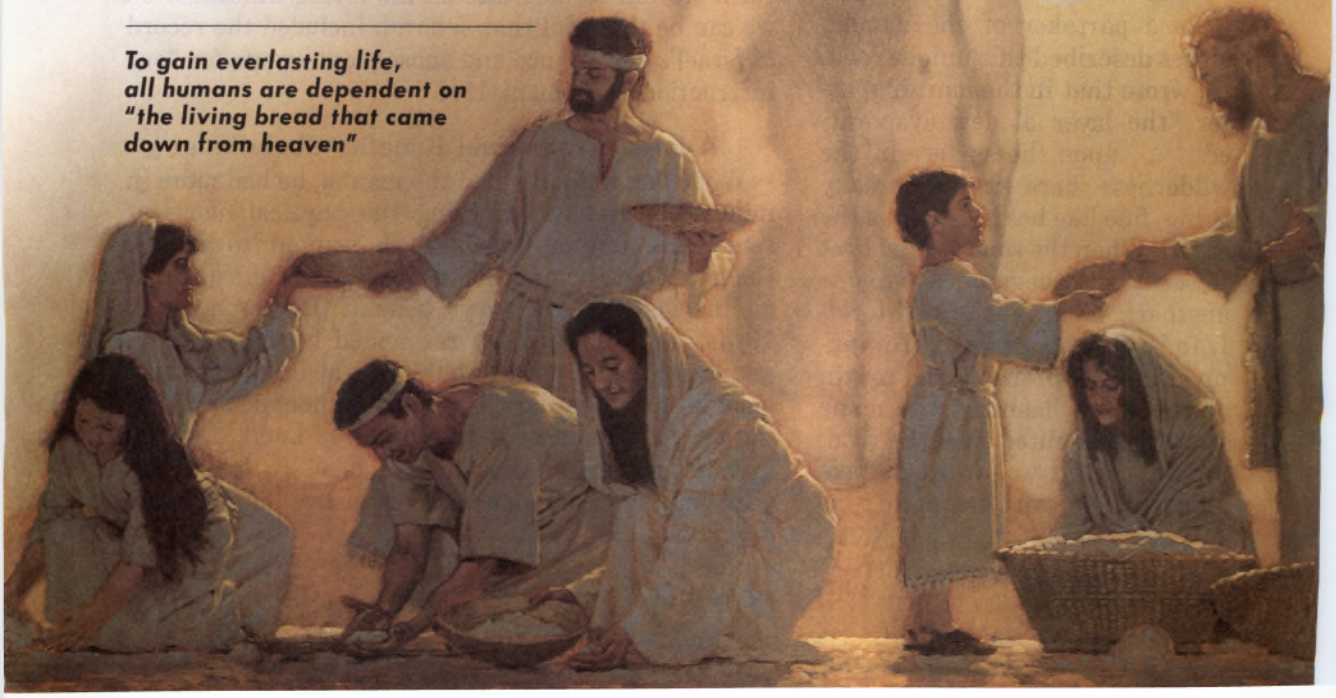
When Jehovah provided the manna, he had more in mind than simply satisfying the physical needs of some three million Israelites. He wanted 'to humble them and put them to the test' so as to refine and discipline them for their own benefit. (Deuteronomy 8:16; Isaiah 48:17) If they responded to that refining and discipline, Jehovah would delight in 'doing them good in their afterdays' by granting them peace, prosperity, and happiness in the Promised Land.

One vital thing that they needed to learn was that "not by bread alone does man live but by every

expression of Jehovah's mouth does man live." (Deuteronomy 8:3) Had God not commanded the manna, the people would have starved—a fact they readily admitted. (Exodus 16:3, 4) Appreciative Israelites were daily reminded of their total dependence on Jehovah and were therefore humbled. Once in the Promised Land with its material abundance, they would be less likely to forget Jehovah and their dependence on him.

Like the Israelites, Christians must remain conscious of their dependence on God for life's necessities—physical and spiritual. (Matthew 5:3; 6:31-33) In answer to one of the Devil's temptations, Jesus Christ quoted the words of Moses as found at Deuteronomy 8:3, saying: "It is written, 'Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth.'" (Matthew 4:4) Yes, true worshipers of God are nourished by reading Jehovah's expressions found in his Word. Additionally, their faith is strengthened when they experience the beneficial effects of these expressions in their lives as they walk with God and put his Kingdom interests in first place.

Imperfect humans can lose their appreciation for things that become a routine part of life—even if these things are a reflection of Jehovah's loving concern. For example, the supernatural provision of manna both astonished and gratified the Israelites at the start, but in time many of them complained. "Our soul has come to abhor the contemptible bread," they moaned disrespectfully—an indication that they were beginning to 'draw away from the living God.' (Numbers 11:6; 21:5; Hebrews 3:12) Their example, therefore, serves as "a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived."—1 Corinthians 10:11.



To gain everlasting life, all humans are dependent on "the living bread that came down from heaven"

How can we take to heart this warning example? One way is by never allowing Bible teachings or the provisions we receive through the faithful and discreet slave class to become ordinary, or commonplace. (Matthew 24:45) Once we start to take Jehovah's gifts for granted or become bored with them, our relationship with him begins to cool off.

For good reason, Jehovah does not flood us with a constant downpour of exciting new things. Rather, he sheds increased light on his Word gradually, progressively. (Proverbs 4:18) This allows his people to assimilate and put into practice the things they learn. Jesus followed his Father's example when teaching his early disciples. He explained God's Word to them "as far as they were able to listen," or "understand," as some translations put it.—Mark 4:33; compare John 16:12.

Fortify Your Appreciation for God's Provisions

Jesus also employed repetition. The mind, of course, may readily comprehend a certain point—a Bible principle, for example—but taking it to heart and making it a part of the Christian "new personality" may take a little longer, especially if old worldly ways and attitudes are deeply entrenched. (Ephesians 4:22-24) That certainly was the case with Jesus' disciples when it came to overcoming pride and developing humility. Jesus had to teach them about humility on a number of occasions, each time presenting the same basic point from a different angle so that it would sink in, which it eventually did.—Matthew 18:1-4; 23:11, 12; Luke 14:7-11; John 13:5, 12-17.

In modern times, Christian meetings and Watch Tower publications follow Jesus' example in the well-thought-out use of repetition. So let us appreciate this as an expression of God's loving concern for us and never become weary of what we receive, as the Israelites wearied of the manna. Indeed, as we patiently apply ourselves to absorbing Jehovah's regular reminders, we will see fine fruitage in our lives. (2 Peter 3:1) Such an appreciative attitude truly shows that we are "getting the sense" of God's Word in our hearts as well as in our minds. (Matthew 13:15, 19, 23) To that end, we have a fine example in the psalmist David, who, although not having the variety of spiritual food that we receive today, described Jehovah's laws as "sweeter than honey and the flowing honey of the combs"!—Psalm 19:10.

"Manna" That Gives Everlasting Life

"I am the bread of life," Jesus said to the Jews. "Your forefathers ate the manna in the wilderness and yet died. . . . I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever . . . The bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world." (John 6:48-51) Literal bread or manna did not and cannot give everlasting life. But those who exercise faith in Jesus' ransom sacrifice will eventually enjoy the blessing of everlasting life.—Matthew 20:28.

The majority of those who benefit from Jesus' ransom will enjoy everlasting life on a paradise earth. "A great crowd" of these—prefigured by the "vast mixed company" of aliens who joined the Israelites in their Exodus from Egypt—will survive the coming "great tribulation" that will rid the earth of all wickedness. (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14; Exodus 12:38) An even greater reward is enjoyed by those whom the Israelites themselves foreshadowed. The apostle Paul described these ones, numbering 144,000, as constituting the spiritual Israel of God. Their reward at death is a resurrection to life in heaven. (Galatians 6:16; Hebrews 3:1; Revelation 14:1) There Jesus will give them a special kind of manna.

Attendance at all Christian meetings reflects our appreciation for Jehovah's reminders

The Meaning of "the Hidden Manna"

"To him that conquers I will give some of the hidden manna," said the resurrected Jesus to spiritual Israel. (Revelation 2:17) This symbolic hidden manna calls to mind the manna that God commanded Moses to keep in a golden jar inside the sacred ark of the covenant. The Ark was kept in the Most Holy compartment of the tabernacle. There it remained out of sight, hidden as it were. Kept as a memorial, this sample of manna did not perish while it remained in the Ark, so it would be an apt symbol of an imperishable food supply. (Exodus 16:32; Hebrews 9:3, 4, 23, 24) In giving the 144,000 the hidden manna, Jesus guarantees their receiving immortality and incorruptibility as spirit sons of God.—John 6:51; 1 Corinthians 15:54.

"With you [Jehovah] is the source of life," said the psalmist. (Psalm 36:9) How well the provision of manna—both literal and symbolic—reaffirms that fundamental truth! The manna God gave to ancient Israel, the figurative manna he provided in the form of Jesus' flesh given in our behalf, and the symbolic hidden manna he gives through Jesus to the 144,000 remind all of us of our total dependence on God for life. (Psalm 39: 5, 7) Let us humbly, modestly, and regularly acknowledge this dependence. In turn, Jehovah will 'do us good in our afterdays.'—Deuteronomy 8:16.

In Our Next Issue

Does the Devil Make Us Sick?

Youths—Resist the Spirit of the World

Make Your Life Successful!

DO YOU REMEMBER?

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

☐ **What two questions have helped many Christians facing employment decisions to reach a personal decision?** The first key question is: *Is the secular work itself condemned in the Bible?* The second question is: *Would doing this work make one an accomplice in a condemned practice?*—4/15, page 28.

☐ **In what way was 'the human creation subjected to futility'? (Romans 8:20)** We were "subjected to futility" because of the actions of our original parents, Adam and Eve. It was "not by [our] own will" or as a result of personal individual choice that this happened. We inherited it. Mercifully, although our original parents could now pass on only imperfection, sin, and death, Jehovah allowed them to produce children. Death spread to all men, so in that sense God "subjected [the creation] to futility."—5/1, page 5.

☐ **Why is it logical to say that there will be a future "standing in a holy place" by "the disgusting thing"? (Matthew 24:15)** In the ancient pattern, 'the disgusting thing standing in a holy place' was linked to the Roman attack under General Gallus in 66 C.E. The modern-day parallel to that attack—the outbreak of the "great tribulation"—is still ahead. (Matthew 24:21) So "the disgusting thing that causes desolation" is yet to stand in a holy place.—5/1, pages 16, 17.

☐ **How might a working father and mother find time for their children?** The mother who feels exhausted after a day's work could ask her children to prepare a meal with her. The father with a full list of things to do on weekends could do some of those chores with his children.—5/15, page 6.

☐ **What must those who 'walk in Jehovah's way' do? (Jeremiah 7:23)** Walking in Jehovah's way demands loyalty—a determination to serve him alone. It demands trust—complete faith that Jehovah's promises are reliable and will come true. Walking in Jehovah's way demands obedience—following his laws without deviation and keeping his high standards. (Psalm 11:7) —5/15, page 14.

☐ **What are four important responsibilities that "gifts in men" can fulfill? (Ephesians 4:8)** They can tenderly readjust us, lovingly build us up, contribute to our unity with the congregation, and courageously protect us. (Ephesians 4:12-14)—6/1, page 14.

☐ **What can we learn from Paul's association with some one hundred individuals mentioned in Acts and in his letters?** We should always work with God's organization, with our local congregation, and with our fellow believers. We need their help, support, and comfort in good times and in troublesome times.—6/1, page 31.

☐ **What three lines of reasoning might be used in helping others to think about the Creator?** The precision seen in the vast universe, the origin of life on earth, and the undeniable uniqueness of the human brain, with its varied capacities.—6/15, page 18.

☐ **Why is an understanding of the meaning of the Creator's personal name so important?** God's name signifies "He Causes to Become" and emphasizes that he both purposes and acts. By our knowing and using his name, we can better appreciate that he fulfills promises and actively brings his purpose to realization.—6/15, page 21.

☐ **How can children be involved in a family Bible study?** Where possible, arrange for each child to have his own Bible and study publication. A youngster could be asked to explain pictures that appear in the study material, and a child could be assigned in advance to read a scripture. An older one might be assigned to point out opportunities for practical application of the study material.—7/1, page 15.

☐ **What are some goals that a family might include in preparation for congregation meetings?** (1) Each one in the family be ready to comment at the meetings; (2) each one work on giving comments in his own words; (3) include scriptures in comments; and (4) analyze the material with a view to personal application. —7/1, page 20.

☐ **What is a key to a good marriage?** To unlock and experience the precious joys of a good marriage, one essential is good communication. This involves a sharing of sentiments and ideas. And wholesome communication entails things that are upbuilding, refreshing, virtuous, praiseworthy, and consoling. (Ephesians 4:29-32; Philippians 4:8)—7/15, page 21.

☐ **What is 'Jehovah's way'? (Psalm 25:8, 9, 12)** That way is the way of love. It is based on doing what is right according to God's standards. The Bible calls this application of principled love "a surpassing way." (1 Corinthians 12:31)—8/1, page 12.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

How seriously should Christians view an engagement to marry?

An engagement to marry is a cause for happiness, but it is also a serious matter. No mature Christian should take an engagement lightly, feeling that he at any time can end it on a whim. The period of engagement is also a time for the couple to get better acquainted before marriage.

In discussing this topic, we need to realize that social customs involving marriage, and the steps leading to it, vary greatly in different places and times. The Bible illustrates this.

Lot's two daughters, who had "never had intercourse with a man," were in some way engaged to two local men. Lot's 'sons-in-law were to take his daughters,' yet the Bible does not tell us why or how the engagements came about. Were the daughters adults? Did they have a key voice in choosing whom to marry? Did they become engaged by taking some public step? We do not know. (Genesis 19:8-14) We do know that Jacob made his own agreement with Rachel's father to marry Rachel after he worked seven years for him. Though Jacob spoke of Rachel as "my wife," they had no sexual relations during those years. (Genesis 29:18-21) As another example, before he could marry Saul's daughter, David had to gain a victory over the Philistines. Upon meeting Saul's demand, David could marry the daughter, Michal. (1 Samuel 18:20-28) Those "engagements" differed from one another and from what is common in many lands today.

The Mosaic Law had regulations about marriage and engagement. For example, a man could have more than one wife; he could obtain a divorce on various grounds, though apparently a wife could not. (Exodus 22:16, 17; Deuteronomy 24:1-4) A man who seduced an unengaged virgin had to marry her if her father agreed, and he could never divorce her. (Deuteronomy 22:28, 29) Other laws applied in marriage, such as when sexual relations were to be avoided. (Leviticus 12:2, 5; 15:24; 18:19) What regulations dealt with engagement?

An engaged Israelite woman had a different legal standing from that of an unengaged woman; in some respects she was considered to be married. (Deuteronomy 22:23-29; Matthew 1:18, 19) Israelites could not get engaged to or marry certain relatives. Usually these were blood relatives, but some engagements and marriages were prohibited because of inheritance rights. (Leviticus 18:6-20; see *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1978, pages 25-8.) It is plain that servants of God were not to view engagement lightly.

Israelites were under all such regulations of the Law, but Christians are not under that Law, including its regulations about engagement or marriage. (Romans 7:4, 6; Ephesians 2:15; Hebrews 8:6, 13) In fact, Jesus taught that the Christian norm relating to marriage differed from that of the Law. (Matthew 19:3-9) Still, he did not minimize the seriousness of marriage, nor that of engagement. So, what of the topic under consideration, engagement among Christians?

In many lands individuals make their own choice as to whom they will marry. Once a man and woman promise to marry each other, they are considered engaged. Usually, no added formal step is required to establish the engagement. Granted, in some places it is common for the man to give his wife-to-be a ring to signify their engagement. Or it is customary to announce the engagement to relatives and friends, such as at a family meal or other small gathering. These are personal choices, not Scriptural requirements. What makes the engagement is the agreement by the two.*

* In some societies parents still arrange for the betrothal of their children. This may be done quite some time before the two would be in a position to marry. In the meantime they are recognized as engaged, or promised to each other, but they are not yet married.

A Christian should not rush into courtship, engagement, or marriage. We publish Bible-based material that can help single individuals to decide whether it is wise to commence a courtship or to take steps toward engagement or marriage.* A key element of the counsel is that a Christian marriage is permanent.—Genesis 2:24; Mark 10:6-9.

Two Christians ought to know each other quite well *before* they begin thinking of engagement. Each can ask, 'Am I really sure of the other's spirituality and devotion to God? Can I envision serving God with that one for a lifetime? Have we been adequately exposed to each other's personality traits? Am I confident that we will be lastingly compatible? Do we know enough about the past actions and present circumstances of each other?'

Once two Christians are betrothed, it is right for them *and for others* to expect that marriage will follow. Jesus admonished: "Let your word *Yes* mean Yes, your *No*, No." (Matthew 5:37) Christians who get engaged should mean it. In a rare case, however, an engaged Christian may learn that something serious was not mentioned or was concealed before the betrothal. It might be a significant fact about the other's past, even criminal or immoral acts. The Christian coming to know of this must decide what to do. Perhaps the two will discuss the matter thoroughly and agree to continue their engagement. Or they may mutually decide to end the engagement. Though doing so may be a private matter—not something that others should intrude into, try to second-guess, or judge—it is a very weighty decision. On the other hand, the one learning of the serious issue may personally feel compelled to end the engagement, even if the other person wants it to continue. —See "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of June 15, 1975.

* See *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, chapters 28-32, and *The Secret of Family Happiness*, chapter 2, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

There is good reason for resolving such issues before entering a marriage. Jesus said that the only Scriptural basis for divorce that frees one to remarry is *por·nei'a*, gross sexual immorality on the part of the other marriage mate. (Matthew 5:32; 19:9) He did not say that a legal marriage can be ended by divorce if one learns of a grave problem or wrongdoing that preceded the wedding.

For example, in Jesus' day contracting leprosy was distinctly possible. If a Jewish husband learned that his mate was (knowingly or unknowingly) leprous when she married him, would he have a basis for divorce? A Jew under the Law might thus divorce, but Jesus did not say that this was fitting for his followers. Consider some modern-day situations. A man infected with syphilis, genital herpes, HIV, or another serious communicable disease might marry without revealing that fact. Maybe his infection was contracted through sexual immorality before or during the engagement. The wife's later learning of his disease or past immorality (even of sterility or impotence) does not change the fact that they are now married. An unsavory past before the wedding is not a Scriptural basis for ending the marriage any more than if she had contracted some disease or even was concealing a pregnancy by another man when marrying. They are married now and have committed themselves to each other.

Granted, such sad situations are rare, but these examples should add emphasis to the basic point: Engagement is not to be taken lightly. Before and during an engagement, Christians should strive to get to know each other well. They ought to be honest about what the other party wants to know or has a right to know. (In some lands couples are legally required to have a medical examination before marriage. Others may want such a checkup for their own information.) Thus the joyousness and seriousness of an engagement will serve an honorable purpose as the two move toward the even more joyous and serious state of marriage. —Proverbs 5:18, 19; Ephesians 5:33.

"If the Salt Loses Its Strength"

WARS have been fought over it. It has been used as a medium of exchange. In ancient China it was second only to gold in value. Yes, salt has long been viewed by mankind as a highly prized commodity. To this day, healing and antiseptic properties are attributed to it, and it is used around the globe as a flavor enhancer and as a preservative.

In view of the many desirable qualities and uses of salt, it is not surprising that it is used figuratively in the Bible. The Mosaic Law, for example, required that anything offered on the altar to Jehovah had to be salted. (Leviticus 2:13) This was not done to boost the taste of the sacrifices, but likely because salt represented freedom from corruption or decay.

In his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ said to his followers: "You are the salt of the earth." (Matthew 5:13) By this statement, Jesus implied that their preaching to others about God's Kingdom would have a potentially preserving, or life-saving, influence on their hearers. Indeed, those who applied Jesus' words would be protected from the moral and spiritual decay in the communities in which they lived and served.—1 Peter 4:1-3.

However, Jesus went on to give the warning: "But if the salt loses its strength, . . . it is no longer usable for anything but to be thrown outside to be trampled on by men." Commenting on this, Bible scholar Albert Barnes said that the salt known to Jesus and his apostles "was impure, mingled with vegetable and earthy substances." So if the salt lost its saltiness, "a considerable quantity of earthy matter" might remain. "This," Barnes noted, "was good for nothing except . . . to place in paths, or walks, as we use gravel."

In heeding this warning, Christians should take care not to cease their public witnessing or to relapse into ungodly patterns of conduct. Otherwise they would deteriorate spiritually and could become useless, like 'salt that has lost its strength.'