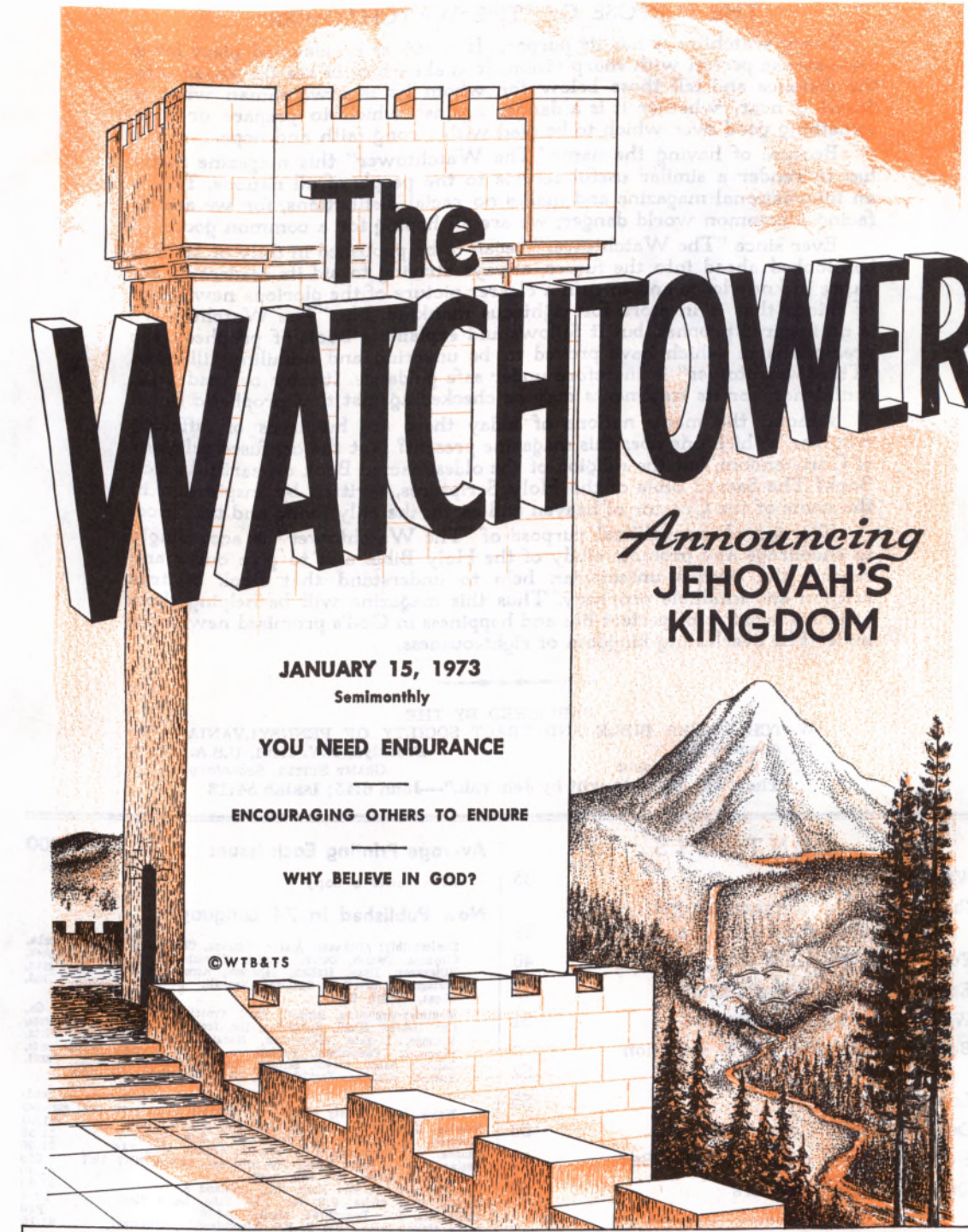




The WATCHTOWER

Announcing
**JEHOVAH'S
KINGDOM**

JANUARY 15, 1973

Semimonthly

YOU NEED ENDURANCE

ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO ENDURE

WHY BELIEVE IN GOD?

©WTB&TS

"YOU ARE MY WITNESSES," SAYS JEHOVAH.—Isa. 43:12

THE PURPOSE OF "THE WATCHTOWER"

Every watchtower has its purpose. It serves as an elevated place for a wide-awake person with sharp vision. It enables him to see far ahead into the distance and tell those below for whom he is a watchman what is drawing near, whether it is a danger against which to prepare or it is something good over which to be glad with strong faith and hope.

Because of having the name "The Watchtower" this magazine justly has to render a similar useful service to the people of all nations. This is an international magazine and makes no racial distinctions, for we are all facing a common world danger; we are all hoping for a common good.

Ever since "The Watchtower" began to be published in July of 1879 it has looked ahead into the future, always striving to aid its readers to advance in knowledge and to gain a clearer picture of the glorious new order of things that is in store for righteous mankind. No, "The Watchtower" is no inspired prophet, but it follows and explains a Book of prophecy the predictions in which have proved to be unerring and unfailing till now. "The Watchtower" is therefore under safe guidance. It may be read with confidence, for its statements may be checked against that prophetic Book.

Among the many nations of today there are hundreds of differing religions. Which one does this magazine present? Not the confused religions of Christendom, but the religion of the oldest sacred Book on earth. Which Book? The Sacred Bible of the Holy Scriptures, written by inspiration in the name of the Creator of heaven and earth, the only living and true God.

The sacred, nonpolitical purpose of "The Watchtower" is accordingly to encourage and promote study of the Holy Bible and to give our many readers the needed unsectarian help to understand that Book of true religion and infallible prophecy. Thus this magazine will be helping them to prove worthy of perfect life and happiness in God's promised new order under His everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

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"They will all be taught by Jehovah."—John 6:45; Isaiah 54:13

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Announcing
JEHOVAH'S
KINGDOM

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Why Believe in GOD?

DO YOU believe in God? Some persons who do, pride themselves as being "better" than those who do not. But suppose you, the one professing to believe in God, are asked to give reasons for your belief? Can you explain clearly why you believe in God?

Surprisingly, most persons who claim to be Christians cannot do this. Some adhere to a belief in God simply because their parents did or because they now happen to live where it is socially popular to do so. But that will not convince another person to believe in God, will it? Indeed, one of the reasons why many persons, even the children of some so-called Christians, become doubters of God is the inability of believers to explain convincingly their convictions. And, frankly, unless a person has been *personally convinced* to believe in God, he is not likely to hold that belief when under pressure.

A legitimate belief in God must be founded on facts that we intelligently de-

termine to be true. But as an ancient writer said: "No man has seen God at any time." (John 1:18) So to be convinced of his existence our belief must be based on other things observed and on our accumulated personal experience. Then with our powers of reason we can develop an unassailable belief in God.

WHAT CAUSED CREATION?

For example, what thoughts come to you when you observe the starry, seemingly endless heavens, or the many and varied forms of life on earth? Are you moved to reason on the *source* of these things? This is called reasoning from "effect" to "cause." Reasoning on the existing "effect," creation, makes it evident that there must be some "cause" behind it. But it might fairly be asked, 'Why must that cause be God? Could it not be just blind chance?'

Well, consider what experience has shown you. A watch obviously has a cause or maker. And does not a carefully designed timepiece reveal something about the cause, that it is the product of an orderly mind that has the ability to design? It was made by an intelligent *person*.

Yet men set their timepieces on earth by the impressive heavenly bodies. Their regularity, also the vibrations of certain atoms on this earth, allow man today to adjust his clocks to within very tiny *fractions* of a second. Would not this superb

design in creation also indicate intelligence? And have you ever known intelligence to exist apart from personality? So, you see, the law of cause and effect compels us to conclude that creation testifies to the existence of an Intelligent Person as its Maker—God.

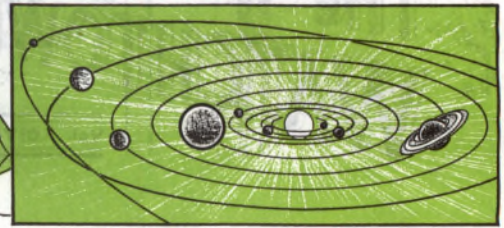
Similarly, what about life itself? Have you ever known life to come from any source other than life? Those who question God's existence generally try to evade this simple question. But they then are faced with other equally simple but baffling questions, like those that Hal Borland raises in the book *The Enduring Pattern*:

"Those who explain the origin of life as a chance combination of chemical elements which they admit could not happen under the conditions of today are falling back, perhaps unconsciously, on some force that brought about that chance combination. What was it? Those who believe that life appeared in the primordial seas from some remote place in outer space are admitting the existence of life elsewhere at that time. Where and how did *that* life come into being? Those who trace the germ of life to nucleic acid and say the substance of the genes can be duplicated, admit that they do not know whence the genes, or the nucleic acid, received their power of life or the patterns they dictate. Where lies that power, that pattern? If it is in the way those elusive elements combine, why do they combine that way? The questions are persistent and most difficult."—(1959) page 244.

Based on what we know, reason obliges us to conclude that only a *living* Creator could produce *life*.

FROM WHERE DID CONSCIENCE COME?

Belief in God is also necessary to explain conscience in man. Why do we say that? A brief examination of the subject reveals the reason.



A watch has an intelligent maker. Would not the heavenly bodies by which the watch is set also have a Maker?

Wherever and whenever men have lived, there has been an inborn sense of right and wrong, also sometimes called moral law or natural law, to guide their actions. Testifying to this is the comment by Princeton University's P. R. Coleman-Norton:

"We find that the law of nature [or, a sense of right and wrong] has three characteristics: (1) universality, because its precepts are always the same in all times and among all peoples; (2) necessity, because it is a demand upon man's rational nature; (3) immutability, because it is independent of all human authority."

However, some might argue that while one person, using his conscience, would call a certain practice entirely "right," another person would call it grossly "wrong." But inborn natural law *consistently condemns the same basic wrongs* in every society. Anthropologist M. F. Ashley Montagu observes:

"Murder is universally regarded as a crime, and if the murderer is caught and brought to justice the penalty is usually death. . . . Incest regulations are universal . . . private property is universally respected. Individual rights in property exist in all non-literate societies, in property that is real, property that is movable, and property that is incorporeal."—*Anthropology and Human Nature* (1957), pages 58, 63, 64.

Obviously what distinguishes murder from, say, self-defense will vary slightly between different groups, as will the ex-

act relationship that is defined as "incest." The precise laws governing theft in an agrarian society will differ from those in a technological one. But the *root practices* are invariably considered wrong. (Compare Romans 2:14, 15 in the Bible.) It is no wonder that R. W. Firth, formerly of the University of London, noted:

"In many respects the rules of primitive morality accord fairly closely with those observed in a sophisticated civilized society."

In fact, "sophisticated civilized society" in our own twentieth century used the law of conscience to convict legally certain Nazi war criminals at Nuremberg after World War II. Though these pleaded they were merely obeying Nazi law and their own governmental superiors, it was ruled that the "higher natural law of justice" should have been followed. And, right now, in avowedly godless Red China, there, nevertheless, appears to be a strong sense of morality as the nation has acted to clean out such practices as prostitution.

From where did this universal natural law, moral law or law of the conscience come? Do you know of any law that does not have a *lawmaker*? Further, is it not reasonable that an outstandingly moral Person must be the Maker of a natural law that has worked for the obvious good and even preservation of all human society? That moral Person is God.

EVIDENCE OF GOD IN THE BIBLE

The Bible, too, is proof that God exists. How is that?

Much of the Bible contains detailed prophecies or predictions. If there is no God, how can these be explained? A case in point: How could the Bible have foretold hundreds of years in advance where Jesus would be born? (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1-6) His family line? (Gen. 22:15-18; 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:8-16; Matt. 1:1, 2, 6) When he would appear as Messiah? (Dan. 9:24-27) Certainly Jesus himself could do

very little to control these factors. Yet these and hundreds of other prophecies of this nature in the Bible came true. How could this be—unless there is a farseeing God? No man has such ability to peer into the future.

Further, what the Bible does for people who *actually apply its principles* proves there is a God. A contrast helps us to understand this.

Currently, there is a multitude of problems facing the human race. Few men are even optimistic about any lasting solution. One scientist concluded in the very conservative journal named "Science":

"We may have even less than a 50-50 chance of living until 1980 . . . The shortness of the time is due to the exponential and multiplying character of our problems."

Does not what you yourself read in the daily newspaper regarding such things as racial problems, the arms buildup, crime, and family disruptions, confirm this scientist's studies?

By contrast, over a million and a half of Jehovah's witnesses in more than 200 lands and islands attempt to apply the principles of the Bible to these same problems as they touch their own lives. With what results? Well, consider some examples:

In race relations, do you see genuine improvement among the nations of the world? Most people readily say 'no'; there are strong racial hatreds on every continent. But we read statements like this one concerning Jehovah's witnesses:

"I am struck with their genuine high regard for the people of all races. Unlike some who pay lip service to the doctrine of racial brotherhood, the Witnesses welcome all to their society—even to places of outstanding leadership—without reference to color or feature."—G. Norman Eddy in *Journal of Bible and Religion*.

Have men been able in thousands of years of effort to stop war? And now are there not more weapons stockpiled than

ever in the past? The answers are obvious. But recognizing the words in the Bible at Isaiah 2:2-4 as a command from God, Jehovah's witnesses have 'beaten their swords into plowshares.' Nationalistic barriers do not cause them to hate and kill. The Sacramento (California) *Union* editorialized in 1965:

"Suffice it to say that if all the world lived by the creed of the Jehovah[']s Witnesses there would be an end of bloodshed and hatred, and love would reign as king."

Moreover, while crime rises in ever so many parts of the world, Jehovah's witnesses' law-abiding conduct is well known. The Piscataway (New Jersey) *Chronicle* observes:

"We know from having had personal contact with the JW's when they were here [for a convention] in 1950 that they bend over backward to observe all laws of the township as faithfully as possible."

Divorce and juvenile delinquency rates climb daily. But well-behaved families are characteristic of the Witnesses. The book *Christians of the Copperbelt* tells about Witness families in parts of Africa:

"Watchtower parents do more to help young people in their homes . . . The Watchtower families we learnt to know seem to be exceptionally well-adjusted and happy together."

Yes, Jehovah's witnesses have found a workable solution to *all* these problems and many others. But no human experts have come up with a real solution. The Witnesses' success is possible only because they follow the Bible. The Bible, therefore, must come from a source higher than the most brilliant man. That source is God.

BELIEF GIVES LIFE PURPOSE

Truth-loving persons will find, as have Jehovah's witnesses, another persuasive argument that serves to convince them that there is a God. What is that?

Only a belief in God allows for human life to have a satisfying purpose.

But, you might reason, 'How can that

be? Has not God been responsible for death and suffering? What "satisfying purpose" does that give life?"

Well, did you know that the Bible does not teach that God is responsible for suffering and death? Quite the contrary, in its opening book the Bible shows that *man* has brought suffering and death on himself. Further, the Bible shows that rather than allow present wicked conditions like these to continue, God will shortly end them and restore paradise to this earth. Most of those who have died will be *brought back to life* by a resurrection. But, only a belief in God makes such a heart-cheering understanding possible.—Gen. 3: 3, 17-19; Eccl. 7:29; John 5:28, 29; Rev. 21:3, 4.

On the other hand, suppose you do *not* believe in God? Can you see a purpose behind the thousands of years of wickedness and offer *any* satisfying explanation for it? Suppose your child's grandmother or a youthful schoolmate dies. Can you convincingly explain to your child why death exists at all?

Those who have considered the contrast between belief and nonbelief in God may conclude as did a writer in the *Chicago Tribune* who said:

"Most non-God views of the world with man as just a biological accident adrift in an empty void seem cold, futile, and absurd."

How reasonable, therefore, to accept belief in God! Life then can have purpose!

Of course, there are other questions that you may wonder about concerning God or conditions on this earth. Why not consider what Jehovah's witnesses point out in the Bible by way of explanation? Ask Jehovah's witnesses to explain personally what belief in God can do for you. If you cannot locate any of Jehovah's witnesses in your community, write to *The Watchtower* and we will arrange to have someone contact you. There is no charge for this service.

ARE you one who has been entrusted with responsibility to care for sheeplike ones in the Christian congregation? To "shepherd the flock of God" is not easy work, but it is rewarding. (1 Pet. 5:2-4) The work of a spiritual shepherd can, in certain respects, be compared to that of a literal shepherd.

In the Middle East the Bedouin shepherd has remained essentially unchanged through the centuries. He still wears a long shirtlike garment that nearly touches the ground. His outer coat, or *aba*, may be of camel's hair or of coarse handspun wool. And on his head he wears his Arabic headdress.

The shepherd is responsible to find good pastures and suitable watering places. Then when sheep become sick, or when lambs are born, special attention is required. A native of Syria years ago reported watching shepherds tend their flocks upon the slopes of Mount Hermon:

"Each shepherd watched his flock closely to see how they fared. When he found a newborn lamb he put it in the folds of his *aba*, or great coat, since it would be too feeble to follow the mother. When his bosom was full, he put lambs on his shoulders, holding them by the feet, or in a bag or basket on the back of a donkey, until the little ones were able to follow the mothers."

Similarly, a good spiritual shepherd gives loving attention to "the flock," tenderly caring for weak or new members of the congregation. In this way he imitates the example of Jehovah God, whose loving care for his people is so fittingly described in this way: "Like a shepherd he will shepherd his own drove. With his arm he will collect together the lambs; and in his bosom he will carry them. Those giving suck he will conduct with care."—Isa. 40:11.

It is interesting, too, that Middle Eastern shepherds call their sheep, and the sheep know the voice of the shepherd and obediently follow. J. L. Porter described a scene he witnessed among the hills of Bashan:

"The shepherds led their flocks forth from the gates of the city. . . . The shepherds stood together until all [the sheep] came out. Then they separated, each shepherd taking a different path, and uttering as he advanced a shrill, peculiar call. The sheep heard them. At first the masses swayed and moved as if shaken by some internal convulsion; then points struck out in the direction taken by the shepherds; these became longer and longer until the confused masses were resolved in long, living



streams, flowing after their leaders."—*The Giant Cities of Bashan and Syria's Holy Places*, page 45.

But is it really the voice of the shepherd that the sheep recognize? Yes, it is, as was observed by W. M. Thomson when visiting the Middle East years ago. He wrote: "The shepherd calls sharply from time to time, to remind them of his presence. They know his voice, and follow on. . . . This is not the fanciful costume of a parable; it is simple fact. I have made the experiment repeatedly."

Jesus Christ said that he was the "fine shepherd" of the "sheep," and that "my sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:14, 27) If those who serve as undershepherds of Jesus really speak his words, adhering closely to what is found in the Bible, the "sheep" will respond. They will follow the lead of those who faithfully shepherd the flock of God.

How well do you, as spiritual shepherds, know the "sheep" that have been entrusted to your care? A good shepherd keeps busy looking after the individual needs of the sheep, heeding closely the Bible admonition: "You ought to know positively the appearance of your flock. Set your heart to your droves."—Prov. 27:23.

A good shepherd needs to have endurance and courage, and needs to give careful attention to the flock. In the summer there is exposure to the blazing sun; and in the winter, to cold rain or snow. There may be danger from wild beasts, and even from robbers who may try to steal the sheep. A shepherd of "the flock of God" similarly must have endurance and courage. He needs to be on guard against wolf-like men who would turn the flock from the paths of righteousness.—Acts 20:28-30.

While shepherding is demanding work, it is also rewarding work. A spiritual shepherd, in particular, has the satisfaction of serving the interests of God, the One he confidently looks to as the rewarder of his people.

You Need ENDURANCE

"You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise."—Heb. 10:36.

THE years following the rising up of nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom in the year 1914 have been difficult ones for the human race, but it should not have been expected that they would be otherwise. Bible prophecies about these times in which we live indicated that there would be "food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another" and that all these things would be but "a beginning of pangs of distress." (Matt. 24:7, 8) Revelation 12:12 foretold that it would be a time of "woe" on the earth because the Devil knows he has only "a short period of time." The apostle Paul, in 2 Timothy chapter 3, showed why these "last days" would be "critical times hard to deal with," a time when many people would be without faith or integrity.

²In addition, the prophecy of Jesus at Matthew chapter 24 foretold how true Christians in these days would be hated by all the nations, some even being betrayed and killed. It would be a time when there would be false prophets in the earth, when lawlessness would increase, when the love of people would grow cold. And after describing all these coming conditions, Jesus stated: "But he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved."—Matt. 24:13; Rev. 12:17.

1. (a) Why was it expected that the years following 1914 would be difficult ones? (b) What are some of the difficulties so accurately foretold?

2. What trying conditions would Christians have to endure?

³That endurance in times like these is very necessary for the servants of God is also emphasized in the parallel account of Jesus' prophecy, in Luke chapter 21, which reports on the sufferings and persecutions due to befall faithful Christians at this time. There Jesus put it this way: "By endurance on your part you will acquire your souls." Gaining everlasting life, then, is involved.—Luke 21:12-19.

⁴Along with this endurance and suffering through years of difficulties, Christians were destined, according to Bible prophecy, to engage in preaching the good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations before the end of this system of things comes. The *1973 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* shows that such preaching is being done now in 208 lands around the world.—Matt. 24:14.

⁵What is it that helps Christians to endure in these "last days"? Many years have passed since 1914, when the first world war began, and during this period God's servants have experienced numer-

3. (a) What does the parallel account at Luke 21 indicate would happen to Christians? (b) Why, then, is endurance so important?

4. (a) In spite of all the difficulties of the 'time of the end,' what special work do Christians have to perform? (b) What proves it is being done world wide?

5. How is the example of Jesus Christ of aid to us?

**INCREASE
IN
KINGDOM
PROCLAIMERS
SINCE
1920**



1920
8,402

1940
74,804

1960
851,378

1972
1,596,442

**Jehovah has given
his people a great
worldwide increase
in fellow Witnesses. This
encourages us and helps us
to endure**

ous tests. Under such trying conditions one thing that has helped them very much is Christ's example of endurance under sufferings. Peter draws it to our attention: "In fact, to this course you were called, because even Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely. He committed no sin, nor was deception found in his mouth. When he was being reviled, he did not go reviling in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteously." (1 Pet. 2:21-23) We remember how Jesus Christ relied on his Father and kept praying to him. We too must petition Jehovah for the help to endure.—Matt. 26:39, 42, 44.

⁶ Besides enduring suffering, there is also the need to resist temptations. Paul's above description of mankind's bad conduct in the "last days" indicated what a strong influence for wrongdoing would be present in the earth. Therefore, Christians must continually be very careful and constantly rely upon Jehovah to help them in time of temptation. At 1 Corinthians chapter 10 Paul outlined some of the temptations to which the early servants of Jehovah were subjected, such as idolatry or fornication, and then said: "Consequently let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall. No temptation has taken you except what is common to men. But God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it."—1 Cor. 10:12, 13.

⁷ Jehovah helps us to endure temptation and withstand suffering by giving us spiritual guidance and encouragement. Also, Jehovah has given his people a tremendous worldwide increase in fellow witnesses, and this encourages us. Because we have love for one another, we should be found always encouraging others in our family and in the congregation. It is evident that many need to be helped to be conscious of their spiritual need because, after being enlightened and beginning to serve Jehovah, some allow themselves to become spiritually weak; they lose appreciation for Jehovah's righteousness and fall into inactivity as far as spiritual things are concerned. (Matt. 5:3) Those who thus become inactive in the ministry should wake up and become reac-

6. (a) Why must one beware that one does not fall? (b) Why can we rely upon Jehovah for help when under temptation?

7. (a) What sources of encouragement are there for us? (b) What proof can you give to show that some allow themselves to be spiritually weak?

tivated. This, then, opens up a great field of work for us who are strong.* —Gal. 6:1.

* It is sad to see someone begin to serve Jehovah and then slow down, because it can mean the loss of an opportunity for everlasting life for such an individual. (Rev. 3:15, 16) Likewise serious is the position of those who yield to temptation, commit serious violations of God's laws, and, as a result, must be put out of the congregation. Where disfellowshipping is concerned, it is always done because God's Word sets the standard for members of the congregation. (1 Cor. 5:9-13) The question is, How can we prevent these things from happening to ourselves or to others near us? What can be done to increase our endurance?

IN THE FIRST CENTURY C.E.

* An interesting example of how to help others to endure has to do with the Hebrews who became Christians after Pentecost in the year 33 of the Common Era. They had left behind practices that were carried on under the law covenant, including the offering of animal sacrifices, recognition of the priesthood and support of the temple. They had accepted the new

* That there is grave danger of failing to endure as a Christian is demonstrated by the facts. During the 1970 service year, to take one country as an illustration of the problem, the United States showed a total of 13,732 who became inactive as to public preaching of the good news, this requiring attention spiritually from the local congregation overseers. There were 4,332 other persons disfellowshipped for serious violation of God's righteous laws. That some who are disfellowshipped repent and eventually gain readmission to the congregations is borne out in the total of 1,642 who had been put out in former years and who were reinstated during the service year 1970. All together, in the United States in 1970, 13,469 were reactivated. While these figures are small in comparison to the United States' peak of 388,920 Kingdom proclaimers, they should serve to alert everyone to pay attention to spiritual things and keep himself strong spiritually. —1 Tim. 4:16.

8. How serious is it to become inactive, and what questions does this raise?

9. (a) What conditions and circumstances made endurance so vital to the Hebrew Christians of the first century C.E.? (b) What helps us to understand the kind of pressures experienced by the early Hebrew Christians?

and better arrangement of God, which was made operative through the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus. These Christians lived during the "time of the end" of the Jewish "system of things" and had endured bitter, fanatical opposition from fellow Jews at Jerusalem and in Judea. Paul himself had experienced the same fanatical Jewish persecution before being sent away to Rome to present his appeal before Caesar. (Acts chapters 22 and 23) In spite of such pressure conditions, the Hebrew Christians had to keep integrity. Additionally, there was just ahead of them the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy at Luke 21: 20-24, which we now know was a very difficult time for them. Roman armies would be moved into the area because of the rebelliousness of the Jews (66 C.E.), and then such armies would be suddenly withdrawn, allowing an opportunity for those who heeded the prophecy of Christ to flee. Surely it would become a test to any who put much value on material things. To abandon homes and possessions and flee Judea, they must really have faith. So there was, in fact, a small-scale fulfillment of Matthew chapter 24 and Luke chapter 21, which have a larger fulfillment in our time. By the conditions in our day we can understand, to a certain extent, what kind of pressures faced the Hebrew Christians over a period of years in the first century C.E.—See *The Watchtower*, December 15, 1968.

¹⁰ When it appeared that a number had begun to cool down in their devotion, the apostle Paul wrote a letter to encourage them. (Heb. 13:22) By observing what the apostle Paul said, we can learn how to help ourselves and encourage others also to gain endurance. One good way to encourage a person is to remind that one of how Jehovah has sustained him in the

10. (a) Why did Paul write to the Hebrews? (b) How did Paul encourage them, and how can looking back at past tests help one to face the next test courageously?

face of great tests. Paul said: "Keep on remembering the former days in which, after you were enlightened, you endured a great contest under sufferings, sometimes while you were being exposed as in a theater both to reproaches and tribulations, and sometimes while you became sharers with those who were having such an experience. For you both expressed sympathy for those in prison and joyfully took the plundering of your belongings, knowing you yourselves have a better and an abiding possession. Do not, therefore, throw away your freeness of speech, which has a great reward to be paid it. For you have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise." (Heb. 10:32-36) Yes, they had passed through some severe tests and had lost some of their possessions, but they were still alive, having clothing, food and other necessities. So they could be thankful to Jehovah and keep on serving him. Above all, they had the prospect of gaining everlasting life by endurance. By all of this they should see that Jehovah is able to take them through many tests in the future, so why fear the next one? Such encouragement was designed to keep those Hebrew Christians strong in appreciation of Jehovah's things and the prize to be gained by keeping integrity.

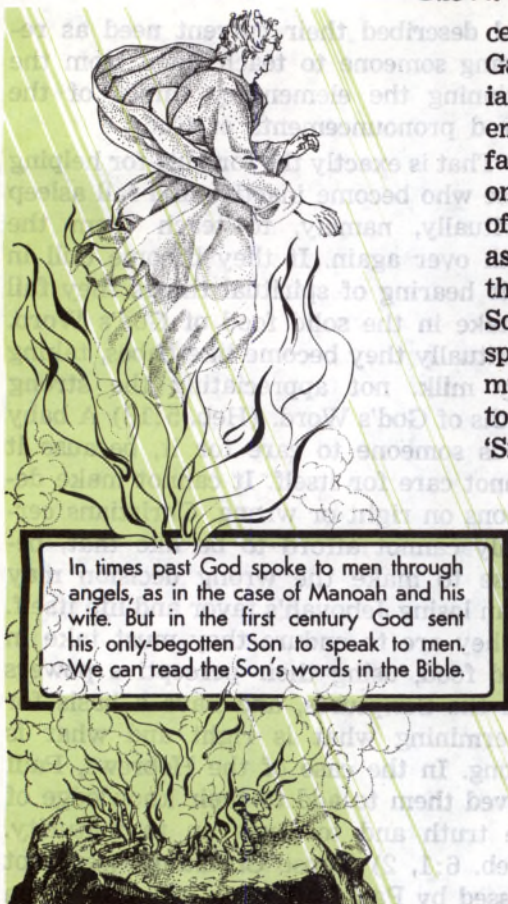
¹¹ Paul wrote very frankly to these Christians. They had 'become dull in their hearing.' (Heb. 5:11) This did not mean that their ears failed to function, but, rather, their spiritual hearing and alertness to spiritual things were weak. They had shown some indifference toward Jehovah's Word and purposes, being careless about their spiritual needs. Perhaps they did not realize the danger of their position. Someone had to alert them. So

Paul described their current need as requiring someone to teach them from the beginning the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God.

¹² That is exactly the formula for helping those who become inactive and fall asleep spiritually, namely, to teach them the truth over again. If they become dull in their hearing of spiritual things they fail to take in the solid food of God's Word. Spiritually they become like babes, taking only milk, not appreciating the strong truths of God's Word. (Heb. 5:13) A baby needs someone to care for it, because it cannot care for itself. It cannot make decisions on right or wrong. Christians certainly cannot afford to be like that, because to make the wrong decision may mean losing Jehovah's favor and life itself. If they are to endure they must take in solid food, using their perceptive powers and the Scriptures, and have a basis for determining what is right and what is wrong. In the case of the Hebrews, Paul moved them to add to their knowledge of the truth and to press on to maturity. (Heb. 6:1, 2) Those Christians were not classed by Paul with ones who had fallen away beyond recovery, but, rather, he said: "In your case, beloved ones, we are convinced of better things and things accompanied with salvation, although we are speaking in this way. For God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name, in that you have ministered to the holy ones and continue ministering. But we desire each one of you to show the same industriousness so as to have the full assurance of the hope down to the end, in order that you may not become sluggish, but be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. 6:

11. What indicates that some of the Hebrews had lost their spiritual alertness, and why is it dangerous to be in such a condition?

12. (a) What is the best way to assist one who has become dull in spiritual hearing? (b) What did Paul say to encourage them not to be satisfied with elementary truth, but to make a recovery?



9-12) Those words of Paul are very encouraging to us too.

BUILDING APPRECIATION

¹³ As we examine this letter written by the apostle Paul, we see the importance of Christians building up appreciation for spiritual things in the minds of other Christians. At the very outset of his letter, in chapters one and two, the apostle mentioned how Jehovah long ago spoke to his servants through prophets (who often re-

13. In the opening chapter of his letter to the Hebrews, how did Paul start to build appreciation for what Jehovah had done?

ceived information from the angels). (Compare Galatians 3:19.) The Hebrews were very familiar with history and knew how Jehovah had employed angels in dealing with their forefathers. That was something wonderful. If any one of us were spoken to personally by an angel of Jehovah it could hardly be forgotten as long as we might live. But in the first century something special had been done for the Christians. Something far grander had occurred. God had spoken by means of his Son, who had a position much superior to that of angels. "With reference to which one of the angels has [God] ever said: 'Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet?'"

—Heb. 1:13.



¹⁴ With an appreciation of these great truths the reasoning Christian sees how important it is to pay attention to what this Son of God says. So Paul next writes: "That is why it is necessary for us to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, that we may never drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved to be firm, and every

transgression and disobedient act received a retribution in harmony with justice; how shall we escape if we have neglected a salvation of such greatness in that it began to be spoken through our Lord and was verified for us by those who heard him?" (Heb. 2:1-3) Therefore, if we are not inclined to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, we are bound to drift away and lose out on everlasting life.

¹⁵ It is very interesting to see that Paul used this expression "never drift away." Perhaps you have seen someone in a small boat hurry away when reaching the shore, without tying up the boat. If one is watching one sees that the move-

14. Why is it necessary to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us?

15. (a) How might we use a boat to illustrate drifting away? (b) Describe how a Christian might drift away from God and the Christian congregation.

ment of the boat away from the shore is slow at first, depending upon the currents and the wind. But as time passes, the boat drifts farther and farther out into the lake. On the other hand, if one had not been constantly watching, one might be shocked a little later to see the boat far out in the middle of the lake. So the process of drifting is generally a slow one, and this is what can happen to Christians when they stop paying "more than the usual attention to the things heard," when they become 'dull in their hearing.' As the loss of appreciation for spiritual things grows, the individual gradually develops bad habits, perhaps failing to study, then missing Christian meetings. Becoming irregular in telling the good news to others is not something that happens like a speedboat rushing across the lake, but it is a slow process, as when a canoe, inch by inch, drifts away from a safe anchorage. It is really what the apostle Paul calls it, 'neglecting salvation.'

¹⁶ Our enemy, the one who causes suffering and loss of salvation, is Satan the Devil. Through the coming of Christ Jesus the means for bringing to nothing the Devil became a certainty. Christ became the Chief Agent of salvation and suffered death to make this provision. (Heb. 2:10, 14) Certainly this glorious provision for salvation should be looked upon with great appreciation by the Christian. Paul emphasized to his suffering Hebrew brothers that Christ Jesus understands our position; he too once suffered as a man. Paul was very encouraging in pointing to this fact: "For in that he himself has suffered when being put to the test, he is able to come to the aid of those who are being put to the test." (Heb. 2:18; 4:15, 16) Ah, yes, Christians know there is a living Christ in the heavens who is ready to come to their aid when they are being put to the test! So pray for this divine assistance the next time your endurance and integrity are sorely being tried.

16. (a) What important truths should we appreciate, as mentioned in Hebrews 2:10, 14, 18? (b) What should we do when our endurance is being tested?

Encouraging Others to

ENDURE

IT WAS only about nine short years before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. that the apostle Paul wrote his dynamic letter to the Hebrew congregation of Christians in that city. In the previous article we considered what he said in chapters one and two of

that letter. In chapter three of the letter to Christianized Hebrews Paul urged his Hebrew brothers to consider the apostle and high priest Jesus, who was faithful as a Son over the house of God. Christians have

1. (a) What did Paul urge upon his Hebrew brothers? (b) How often is it good to encourage one another?

before them the opportunity to be of that household if they make fast their hold on their freeness of speech and their boasting over the hope firm to the end. That means endurance. Christians must avoid developing "a wicked heart lacking faith by drawing away from the living God," but, rather, they must keep on exhorting and encouraging one another *each day* as long as it may be called "Today."—Heb. 3:12, 13.

²In the Scriptures there are many fine words of counsel, many examples for us to consider. Paul reminded the Hebrew Christians there in Jerusalem of some of these examples for their encouragement. He told how God became disgusted with ancient Israel and did not let most of the older Hebrews who came out of Egypt enter the Promised Land. Why not? Because, lacking faith, they acted disobediently. Now, we do not want similarly to fall short of gaining the promise. The good news has been declared to us, and if we exercise our faith we can be sure of entering into 'God's rest.' So we exhort one another and encourage one another not to fall into the same pattern of disobedience as those who came out of Egypt did. We should always have high appreciation for the good news declared to us and keep our faith strong. Let the Word of God exert its power in our lives. "For the word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints and their marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart."—Heb. 4:1-5, 11, 12.

2. In chapter four of the book of Hebrews, how did Paul encourage his brothers?

³Those Hebrew Christians of the first century lived in the midst of great crowds of Jews who practiced the traditional rabbinical religion, and who attempted to follow the law covenant despite the fact that it had ended. Christians were in the minority and so were unpopular, persecuted and hated. But they could not begin to think of returning to Judaism to avoid the hatred and persecution, nor could they allow themselves to be attracted to the social festivities connected with the synagogues. They had to have sound knowl-

edge and understanding of how Christ fulfilled the Law, in order to keep from falling back to Judaism and the offering of animal sacrifices, all of which by now was nothing more than empty, ineffective ritual in God's sight.

⁴Under these conditions, who was better able to understand the pressure and persecution to which Jewish Christians there in Jerusalem were exposed than the apostle Paul? Who was better equipped to supply them with powerful arguments in refutation of the Jewish tradition than Paul, a former Pharisee? With his knowledge of the Mosaic law learned at the feet of Gamaliel, he was able to present uncontested proof that Christ is the fulfillment of the Law, along with its ordinances and sacrifices, and that the former arrangement had now been replaced by far more glorious realities. All the strikingly brilliant new teachings about the Christ were here presented to the Jewish converts with such abundant proof from the

THE NEXT ISSUE

- Are You Living for What You Can Get Out of Life Now?
- Will Your Days Be "Like the Days of a Tree"?
- Changing from Boyhood to Manhood.

3. What circumstances might have become a snare to the Hebrew Christians?

4. What are some of the doctrines that Paul included in his letter to build up the Hebrews?

Hebrew Scriptures that no reasonable person could fail to be convinced and built up spiritually. The letter to the Hebrews shows Paul's deep love for his brothers and his burning desire to help them in a practical way in their time of great spiritual need.

SUPERIORITY OF THE NEW OVER THE OLD

* A consideration of this letter to the Hebrews shows how Paul stressed the superiority of the new arrangement that God had made for his people. Under this new system of things Jesus Christ became the high priest forever, one who does not need any successors, as the high priests did in the ancient Levitic days. He does not need daily to offer up sacrifices for his own sins and then for the people's sins as those high priests did. He was able to make one sacrifice for the people's sins perpetually, and then sat down at the right hand of God.—Heb. 6:20; 7:11-28; 8:1; 9:6-28.

* Now a new covenant has come into operation that does things that the law covenant could never do. The law covenant kept reminding men of their sins, requiring that they continually offer up sacrifices. And yet, it could never open the way for man to receive everlasting life. Paul quoted from Jeremiah's prophecy concerning a new covenant that Jehovah would make: "This is the covenant that I shall covenant toward them after those days," says Jehovah. "I will put my laws in their hearts, and in their minds I shall write them." And he continued quoting: "I shall by no means call their sins and their lawless deeds to mind anymore." "Now where there is forgiveness of these," Paul reasons, "there is no longer an offer-

ing for sin." (Heb. 10:16-18; 8:7-13; Jer. 31:31-33) So the new is vastly superior to the old in many ways.

* In chapter 11 of Paul's letter to the Hebrews faith was stressed as absolutely necessary, for without it it is impossible to please God. The Christianized Hebrews knew about their forefathers, the faithful men of old. So Paul was able to use the experiences of Abraham and those other men of faith as a means of encouragement. Those devoted men of God demonstrated the absolute necessity of maintaining strong faith under many tests. Then in chapter 12 Paul capped his argument off with reference to the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, saying: "So, then, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight and the sin that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Indeed, consider closely the one who has endured such contrary talk by sinners against their own interests, that you may not get tired and give out in your souls." (Heb. 12:1-3) The faithful endurance of Christ is our example to copy. He endured contrary talk and pain because he could by faith see, beyond the experience of death, the joy ahead. If our faith is strong, so that we visualize the New Order ahead of us, we too should be able to endure. By thus keeping a spiritual spotlight on the superiority of Christ's example and on the Christian arrangement, Paul was able to exhort his fellow servants of God to maintain a high appreciation of sacred things.

5. How did he stress the superiority of the new Christian arrangement?

6. Why was the new covenant so superior to the law covenant?

7. (a) How did Paul stress the importance of having faith? (b) How did the example of Jesus demonstrate the relationship of faith and endurance?

ENCOURAGED TO APPRECIATE SACRED THINGS

⁸ He showed too the importance of sanctification and cleanness, tying them all together, thus: "Pursue peace with all people, and the sanctification without which no man will see the Lord, carefully watching that no one may be deprived of the undeserved kindness of God; that no poisonous root may spring up and cause trouble and that many may not be defiled by it; that there may be no fornicator nor anyone not appreciating sacred things, like Esau, who in exchange for one meal gave away his rights as firstborn. For you know that afterward also when he wanted to inherit the blessing he was rejected, for, although he earnestly sought a change of [his father's] mind with tears, he found no place for it." (Heb. 12:14-17) Yes, Esau could not hold appreciation of sacred things even under the slight pressure of feeling hungry. He did not have the faith required to visualize the joy that was to come to the faithful ones. He failed to endure so small a test. In these "last days" food shortages will occur and we too may sometime feel hungry. But that is no reason to give up our blessed position as God's servants. Jehovah will help

8. How do sanctification and appreciation of sacred things relate to endurance?

us through all our trials, be they small or large. (Matt. 4:1-11) Jesus is our great example in this regard.

⁹ As a cure for those who may become dull in their hearing and who slip into inactivity, Paul recommends: "Let us hold fast the public declaration of our hope without wavering, for he is faithful that

promised. And let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near." (Heb. 10:23-25) By this we are impressed with the importance of both attending meetings and regularly *participating* in meetings, in order to maintain our appreciation of spiritual things. Those who have become weak or dull in their hearing can be renewed or incited to love and fine works by our bringing them to Christian meetings. There is really

no substitute for this provision of God.

¹⁰ Paul told us to be encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near. Now that we have reached this stage in history when

9. What is one of the best ways to help ourselves and others to appreciate spiritual things and the need to endure?

10. (a) Why should we be encouraging one another now? (b) What quality moves one to encourage one's brothers?



By commenting in meetings we encourage and exhort one another to endure



Are the things that we talk about really those matters that bring spiritual benefits?

the end of Satan's rule is near at hand, it becomes imperative to keep on encouraging one another. While most of the true Christians today may not have come out of the Jewish religious system that opposed and persecuted early Christians, nevertheless, we are surrounded by temptations and are under the pressure of persecution and hatred from many other sources. We have come out of Babylon the Great, which still appears to be materially prosperous in some places, but we certainly do not wish to return to her evil practices. Peter warned against such a thing as that. (2 Pet. 2:21, 22) Now is a time to maintain high appreciation for the sacred things we have learned about. Because of the love existing in the Christian congregation, all desire to see their brothers and sisters endure and continue in the way that leads to everlasting life. Therefore, it is a time for exhorting and encouraging one another. Each one of us can remember what the apostle Paul did to encourage and help his brothers. He emphasized for them the superiority of

this new and better arrangement that God has made for his people. Therefore, there should be no inclination on our part to drift away to the world and its religious systems.

¹¹ We too can benefit from what Paul told the Hebrews, reminding ourselves about the great provision Jehovah made through the everlasting priesthood, the benefits of the new covenant, and the taking away of sins forever through the one sacrifice of Christ. Although we may have heard these things many times, they are not something common or ordinary. They are absolutely superior. Repetition of the truth is upbuilding. There are many excellent opportunities to speak of the spiritual benefits we all enjoy as Jehovah's dedicated servants in these "last days." By reminding one another of these all-important things we shall be helping one another to keep from slowly drifting away.

SPIRITUAL BENEFITS

¹² What are some of the spiritual benefits that we as Jehovah's Christian witnesses can speak about to one another? They are very numerous. We can start by saying we know how to get life; we appreciate the ransom sacrifice of Christ. (Rom. 6:23) Think of those who are still practicing Judaism and still waiting for a Messiah, or think of those who are pagan, knowing little or nothing about Christ and the hope of life. (1 Cor. 1:18, 23) Or, think of Christendom, which is all mixed up with many false theories and philosophies and is not taking the course that leads to salvation by Christ. (Compare Matthew 15:1-9.) In contrast, Jehovah's servants have been set free from the traditions of Babylon the Great. (John 8:31,

11. How do we benefit by the spiritual things Paul wrote to the Hebrews?

12. (a) Why is knowing how to gain everlasting life so special now? (b) What are some of the other things comparatively few people have now?

32) We do not live with fear of suffering in purgatory or hellfire. We know that the dead sleep. We have the wonderful resurrection hope. (John 5:28, 29; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Rev. 20:4-13) We are not confused by any false Trinity teaching. We have been made free from superstitions—not relying upon charms, images, idols, not having to crawl upon our knees up the sides of mountains or to altars in religious ceremonies. We do not suffer from spiritual neglect by the false shepherds in Christendom nor are we oppressed by her clergy. (1 Cor. 10:14; Matt. 9:36; Luke 22:25, 26; 2 Cor. 1:24) These truths are something special that comparatively few people understand.

¹³ Think of how Jehovah has opened up the minds and understanding of his people to appreciate the dangers of demonism in its many manifestations, such as astrology and fortune-telling, and how he provides protection against it. (Deut. 18:10-12; 1 Cor. 10:21; Gal. 5:19, 20; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 18:4, 23) Though others are afraid, we do not have to fear spiritism. —Num. 23:21, 23; Prov. 18:10.

¹⁴ World conditions are growing worse from day to day. Men become faint out of fear of what is coming. Among all people Jehovah's Christian witnesses alone have a real hope for the future. These Christians have loving brothers who comfort and build them up; when one is in need, others are there to help. Especially when Babylon the Great is destroyed amid great violence it will be a time for these faithful Christians to comfort and aid one another and watch Jehovah's salvation. There will indeed be many blessings by being in the ranks of Jehovah's people then. —Luke 21:26; 1 Thess. 5:12-15; Rev. 17:15-18; 19:1.

13. How do those who serve Jehovah find protection against demonism?

14, 15. At this time in world history, what are some advantages God's servants have?

¹⁵ We know why wickedness has been allowed. We understand the meaning of the "last days" and we need not be involved in the world's politics and confusion. True Christians do not become embroiled in the strikes, riots, insurrections and lawlessness of these "last days." All of this is a protection for us. —Ex. 9:15, 16; Job 1:6-2:10; John 6:15; 17:16; Rom. 13:1-9.

¹⁶ Personally Jehovah's witnesses have many benefits. Because we do not experience the anxieties of those in this old system of things who have no hope, we can avoid many afflictions. Anxiety is one of the chief causes of heart disease. By following Jehovah's laws on morality we avoid the venereal diseases of the world, which are spreading so fast in these "last days." We keep ourselves clean from the tobacco habit, and this is a protection against cancer, which afflicts so many now. We do not become drunkards and thus are not afflicted with the destructive effect of alcoholism on the mind and body. We do not suffer the unhappiness that gambling losses bring. Worldly holidays cause many people to go into debt in showing the "holiday spirit," and thereafter they spend many, many months trying to settle these debts. In contrast, knowledge of the truth from God's Word makes us happy, and it is said that a happy heart is good medicine. There is also much happiness in giving the truth to others. So many benefits there are, in every way! —Phil. 4:6, 7; Gal. 5:19-23; Prov. 4:20-22; Matt. 5:3-12; Acts 20:35.

¹⁷ A great number of worldly families today have been broken up because of failure to respect the laws of Jehovah. But Jehovah's teaching has helped us to attain family unity. Following the Scriptures,

16. What are some of the things in which we personally benefit because of knowing and living by God's Word?

17. By keeping God's laws, what benefits come to Christian families?

children properly instructed by their parents in Christian activities are protected from the harmful effects of delinquency and addiction to narcotics that are so prevalent today and that result in so much distress and unhappiness.—Eph. 6:1-4; Prov. 3:1, 2.

¹⁸ Our association together in the Christian congregation and companionship with our brothers is a great blessing, for it is a real pleasure to be around those who are producing the fruitage of the spirit. Thus, we do not become involved with the works of the flesh, which are so detrimental.—Prov. 17:17; Gal. 5:22-26; 1 Cor. 15:33.

¹⁹ It would be possible to go on and on spending many hours reviewing the blessings Jehovah's arrangement provides for his servants. Who but Jehovah's servants can see what God's kingdom means since the King Jesus Christ began to rule in the heavens in 1914 C.E.? (Ps. 2:4-6; 110:1, 4; Dan. 2:44; 7:13, 14; Matt. 11:25-27; 13:44; Rev. 11:15-17; 19:11-21) Who else

18. With scriptures, show the superiority of Christian companionship over worldly companionship.

19. (a) Can you think of more reasons to be thankful to Jehovah? What are some of them? (b) How can we endure to the end?

understands how, under that Kingdom rule, Jehovah will make this earth a paradise in which man will live forever? (Rev. 21:1-5; Ps. 37:9-11, 29; Eccl. 1:4; Isa. 65:17-23; Ezek. 34:25-27; Luke 23:42, 43) As you read God's Word, keep thinking on all the ways Jehovah has provided what we need, and never fail to thank Jehovah. (Rom. 8:28) It is this sort of appreciation of the good things of Jehovah and this thinking on his many blessings that build up and encourage. These are the things for us to talk about. (Acts 14:21, 22; 1 Cor. 14:3) This is how we can help one another to maintain our spirituality. Even though tests may come, we have been given so many provisions by Jehovah to help us to endure. (Jas. 1:12) As individuals and congregations we have fortified our faith so we are in an excellent position to endure to the end, as we resist the temptations and evil influences of these "last days" and share in the proclamation of the good news. Hence let our determination be the same as expressed by the apostle Paul: "Now we are not the sort that shrink back to destruction, but the sort that have faith to the preserving alive of the soul."—Heb. 10:39.

WHO REPRESENT CHRISTIANITY?

● If people in general today were asked who best represent Christianity, many might point to the educated clerics. However, an interesting point is made about the early Christians in the book *Evangelism in the Early Church*:

"In contrast to the present day, when Christianity is highly intellectualized and dispensed by a professional clergy to a constituency increasingly confined to the middle class, in the early days the faith was spontaneously spread by informal evangelists, and had its greatest appeal among the working class.

"If there was no distinction in the early Church between full-time ministers and laymen in this responsibility to spread the gospel

by every means possible, there was equally no distinction between the sexes in the matter. It was axiomatic that every Christian was called to be a witness to Christ, not only by life but by lip. Everyone was to be an apologist, at least to the extent of being ready to give a good account of the hope that was within them. And this emphatically included women. They had a very large part to play in the advance of Christianity."

If, then, a woman or someone of the working class calls on you at your home to speak about Christianity, consider what he has to say from the Bible. Such a one may actually represent Christianity more closely than an educated cleric.

BODILY TRAINING OR GODLY DEVOTION

—WHICH?

AS TOLD BY ADRIAN THOMPSON

RUGBY football was my father's big interest in life. So from the time I was old enough to walk, I went along with him to the gymnasium on Monday nights and to the football ground on Saturday afternoons. From as far back as I can remember, I would wake up on my birthday every year and find a new football beside my pillow. During the football season I was usually home late for the evening meal, and home then only because it was too dark to see the ball anymore.

Though my father was more interested in sports than in the Bible, my mother took a deep interest in God's Word of truth. When I was only four years old, we attended a Bible lecture entitled "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," given by Watch Tower Society representative A. Howlett when he visited Wellington, New Zealand. My mother recognized the message in the lecture as the truth.

Thus, from time to time when it was too rainy to go outside, I can recall sitting on the sofa reading the *Scenario of the Photo-Drama of Creation*, a book that told the true-life story of the Bible in pictures as well as in written text. Then on Sundays I went along with the family to the meetings of the Christian congregation, and heard different ones give reports on how they used their time to serve God.

However, while I was taking in a little Bible knowledge, I was developing more than average ability as a football player. With New Zealand having a climate ideally suited for outdoor sports, my time was taken up virtually every Saturday throughout the year with playing football. After my entering college, this meant travel to other cities for intercollegiate games. Then, after graduation, I was selected to play for the local province and to participate in trials to select the national team to tour South Africa. Though I enjoyed learning about the Bible, there was no doubt that sports, and football in particular, was my prime interest in life.

A TIME OF DECISION

The time was certain to come when I would have to make a decision. The Christian apostle Paul had stated it clearly to the young man Timothy: "Bodily training is beneficial for a little; but godly devotion is beneficial for all things." (1 Tim. 4:8) So, which would I choose? World events brought me face to face with this decision.

World War II broke out. To encourage enrollment in the military forces, sportsmen were offered commissions. I was offered the rank of captain in the Army. Here was a challenge! What would I do?

From what I had learned from the Bible, I knew that participation in war did not harmonize with Christian principles. Even though not baptized as a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, I shared to some extent in preaching the good news of God's kingdom. So I could see that the time had come for me to make my decision. I decided for godly devotion, and in January 1940 I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to Jehovah God.

As New Zealand was then under the supervision of the Watch Tower Society's branch office in Sydney, Australia, I immediately applied to work there. I was accepted, and one of my first assignments in Bethel, as the branch home is called, was peeling potatoes with white-haired Brother Johnson, who had served in South Africa for some years and later as branch overseer in Australia. I can still remember his saying that he considered it a great privilege to do any kind of work in Bethel.

With Australia intensifying its war effort, it was not long till the conscription issue came up again, and I was one of five single men from Bethel who were required to report. I requested deferment on the grounds that I was a "theology student," and the issue was argued in court for several months. Without warning, though, in January 1941, Jehovah's witnesses were banned by the government, and, along with my four Christian brothers, I went to jail.

VISITING MY CHRISTIAN BROTHERS UNDER BAN

Upon release from jail, I was assigned to work on one of the Society's farms in Australia. Then in 1942 came word that the arrangement for a representative of the Society to visit congregations to help and encourage them (now called circuit overseer work) would start again. I was

invited to share in this work. Since the Christian preaching was still under ban, there were many challenges to be met.

Take, for example, the work in Adelaide, South Australia. The public ministry had virtually come to a halt, for the Witnesses there were out of contact with the branch office and were not sure of what to do. But after my meeting with those having oversight of the two congregations in the city, plans were made to start the public ministry again. Jehovah richly blessed their efforts.

With the lifting of the ban in June 1943, it was easier to travel and visit the congregations. In time, I visited all the congregations and groups in the country, including those living right in the heart of the continent, where the train was scheduled to operate on a once-a-week basis.

GILEAD SCHOOL AND SERVICE IN THE UNITED STATES

Toward the end of 1947, I was preparing to travel to the United States to attend the Watch Tower Bible School of Gilead. The eleventh class of this missionary school, in the early part of 1948, was the second international one. Soon after the start of the course, the school's president, N. H. Knorr, announced that it was now possible for missionaries to go to Japan. But as conditions would be totally different from what any of the missionaries had experienced, he called for volunteers to go there. Most of the one hundred students volunteered to go, and about twenty-five were selected to start studying the Japanese language. All too quickly the course ended, and we were advised that we would wait in the United States until living quarters in Japan were arranged.

While waiting, I was assigned as circuit overseer in the state of Arizona, also visiting congregations in Nevada and California. It was a happy year and reminded me of the Kingdom work in Aus-

tralia; congregations were relatively small and there were long distances to travel.

MISSIONARY WORK IN JAPAN

Since there was not even one active witness of Jehovah in Japan, one from among our group, Don Haslett, went on ahead of the rest of us to arrange for living quarters. He arrived in December 1948, and after he made the necessary arrangements for us, we left for Japan in the fall of 1949.

When we arrived in Japan, we learned that a missionary home in Kobe city had been purchased for our use. As soon as we were settled, we began to preach the good news of God's kingdom. But it was not easy. Our understanding of the language was inadequate. Also, although we had the Japanese Bible, the only literature we had in Japanese was the second volume of the book *Light*, published in 1930, and a booklet. And then there was the postwar economic condition of the people; they were working very long hours seven days a week.

Nobody among the foreigners living in Japan envisioned our having much success. This was forcefully brought to my attention one day when I was picking up our supply of rationed bread. A Britisher who had lived for forty years in Japan said to another missionary and me that he could not see where his church or any of the churches had succeeded in making many Christians. Then he suggested that we would be doing something of more practical value if we were to work as dentists or doctors. We thanked him for his opinion and continued to study the Japanese language and to preach, realizing the urgency of the times.

Now, over twenty years later, there are more than 14,500 true Christians associating with the 334 congregations of Jehovah's witnesses in Japan. Jehovah has richly blessed the work of Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making in Japan.

CIRCUIT AND DISTRICT OVERSEER PRIVILEGES

In 1951 the Watch Tower Society's president, N. H. Knorr, made his first visit to Japan. There were then small congregations in five of the six largest cities, and it was timely for the circuit overseer work to begin. I was appointed as circuit overseer. But since the number of places to visit was few, the Society arranged for me to spend two weeks where missionaries were located. During my second week with them, I would teach them the Japanese language for an hour each morning and night. Then, on the second Sunday, I gave another public talk.

Reviewing my first time around the circuit in the spring of 1951 helps one to see how much the work has prospered in the past twenty years. After serving the Tokyo congregation, which had about forty persons associating with it, my next visit was at Ichinomaki in Miyagi prefecture, about nine hours by train from Tokyo. Brother and Sister Miura lived there, and it was a privilege to encourage and to be encouraged by them. They had been in the full-time preaching work before World War II, and because of his stand on Christian neutrality, Brother Miura was put in jail—in Hiroshima. He was still there in jail when the atomic bomb was dropped on the city, but he came out of it uninjured, and after the war he was able to resume preaching the good news along with his family.

My next call was at a town just below Wakkanai city, situated on the uppermost tip of the northern island of Hokkaido. Here, there was just one person who had done some preaching. These were the only Kingdom proclaimers north of Tokyo. To the south, there were missionaries and small congregations in Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe.

Apart from these places there were Brother and Sister Ishii in Kure city and

Brother Hayashi in Kagoshima city, all of whom were associating with God's people before World War II. So that meant my visiting about one hundred persons in nine cities, not far from the number that began to preach on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. There was one big difference, however, and that was the much larger population in Japan, more than 70 million at the time.

Being a foreigner, I found that visiting my Japanese Christian brothers provided its share of interesting moments. Rice and raw fish were the basic meal. This was not too easy to get used to, but was delicious once I got my thinking lined up and my stomach adjusted. And rooming? Most Japanese homes do not have solid walls. Rather, they have sliding-type walls that usually do not have any locks. With young, inquisitive children in the home, one need not be surprised if the door opens suddenly at any time. Out in the country areas there were people who had never seen a foreigner at close range. Many were the opportunities to satisfy their curiosity and to let them know why I came to Japan.

In 1955 I married Norrine Miller, who was doing missionary work in Nagoya city after being airlifted out of Korea at the start of the war there in 1950. Shortly thereafter, I was assigned to do district work, and Norrine accompanied me.

When we visited the city of Iwakuni,

not far from Hiroshima, we met a man who was studying the Bible with the Witnesses and who had progressed to the point that he wanted to be baptized. He invited the circuit overseer and us to eat the evening meal with him and his family two days before a circuit assembly was due to begin. After the meal, he asked me to go upstairs with him. As we sat down, he opened his photo album and showed me a picture of a British general surrendering to the Japanese during World War II. Then he pointed to a Japanese soldier in the photo and said that it was he himself! Now, with his military record, he wanted to know, Would Jehovah recognize his dedication? It was a privilege to discuss the matter with him and assure him that he was taking the approved course, even as the military officer Cornelius had done in the first century C.E. He was baptized and continues to serve as an overseer in the Christian congregation.

So, by putting godly devotion first in my life I have enjoyed many benefits of "the life now." I have enjoyed more than thirty years of full-time preaching work. But that is not all! As the apostle Paul goes on to say: "Godly devotion . . . holds promise of the life . . . which is to come." So, I am happy that I made the right decision to what was the big question in my life: Bodily training or godly devotion—which?—1 Tim. 4:8.

Learn Now

- It was once observed that 'people who expect salvation "at the eleventh hour" often die at 10:30.' The Bible presents a fine contrasting example involving a jailer in the first century. The apostle Paul and his companion Silas were imprisoned, when, in the middle of the night, they were miraculously freed by an earthquake that opened all the doors and loosened their bonds. That same night, without delay, the jailer and his household listened to the "word of Jehovah" spoken by Paul, and the jailer "rejoiced greatly with all his household now that he had believed God." (Acts 16:25-34) It is still the course of wisdom to act without delay in taking in such life-giving information.

Do You REALLY

Believe It?

OFTEN a man will say, "I believe that," when he is merely giving mental assent to something as being true. His mental assent does not mean that he is going to take action in harmony with it. He may be like some Christians in the first century C.E., to whom the disciple James wrote: "You believe there is one God, do you? You are doing quite well. And yet the demons believe and shudder. But do you care to know, O empty man, that faith apart from works is inactive?"—Jas. 2:19, 20.

The angels who made themselves demons by following a rebellious course knew that God existed. They had to believe in him. But that belief did not move them to act in harmony with God's will.

Accordingly, belief that has value in the eyes of Jehovah God is not just a matter of acknowledging something as true. One who acts in harmony with his belief shows that it is genuine.

TRUE BELIEF MOTIVATES TO ACTIVITY

If you are one of Jehovah's dedicated witnesses, you believe that the generation

of people now living is in its "last days." You believe that it is urgent to help others to become approved servants of Jehovah God and put themselves in line for surviving the coming world "tribulation" that will bring the "last days" to their end. You also believe that it is God's will that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Tim. 2:4) Does what you believe about the "last days," the coming "tribulation," and God's purpose for man stir you to activity? Does your *whole way of life* demonstrate that you really believe that these are the "last days" and that people's lives are in danger?

One who is truly devoted to Jehovah God and has deep love for fellow humans acts in harmony with his belief. He exerts himself vigorously in proclaiming the Kingdom message to others. That is why Jehovah's witnesses are very busy in this activity. Even in lands where their work is carried out under great difficulty because of official opposition, they do not give up in preaching "this good news of the kingdom." (Matt. 24:14) In fact, the combined total of hours that Jehovah's witnesses in eleven of these lands devoted to public preaching of God's Word this past year was much greater than during the same period the year before. That was also true in other countries, including Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Spain and Zambia.

This is not to say that all who are associated with Jehovah's witnesses are living their life in full recognition of the fact that these are indeed the "last days"—no, not even in the lands just named. While Jehovah's witnesses are accomplishing much as a body, undoubtedly some individuals could do much better. Is that true of you? In a number of lands, including Australia, the British Isles, West Germany, the Philippines and the United States, the total report shows fewer hours

spent in Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making last year than during the previous year. Yet it cannot be said that Jehovah's witnesses as a group did not work hard in these lands. Surely the millions of hours that they did spend reflect zeal in using opportunities to help others to gain an accurate knowledge of God's Word. Were you personally zealous about this work? Self-examination can be beneficial.

Of course, circumstances vary from country to country and from individual to individual. However, all of us must continually watch lest we lose sight of our precious relationship with God and cease acting in harmony with what we know to be true. None other than Jesus Christ alerted his followers to the danger of getting ensnared before divine judgment is executed. He said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth. Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man." (Luke 21:34-36) Effort is required to resist the pressures that would plunge one into a deep spiritual sleep.

EXCESSES LEAD TO SPIRITUAL DROWSINESS

Excesses in food and drink as well as in other pleasures must be avoided. Such excesses dull mental and spiritual perception and overload the heart with feelings of guilt. They also cause the good motivations of the heart to be crowded out by fleshly desires. Any who allow fleshly desires to get the mastery over them cannot hope to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ as approved servants of Jehovah God when the "last days" culminate in the complete destruction of this system of things. —2 Pet. 3:11-14.

While a person may not be engaging in gluttony and drunkenness, he may nevertheless be pursuing a course that is interfering with spiritual wakefulness. He may be letting recreation occupy too prominent a place in his life and thus weakening his desire to help others to come to an accurate knowledge of God's truth. It is vital for each dedicated servant of God to examine his attitude and way of life.

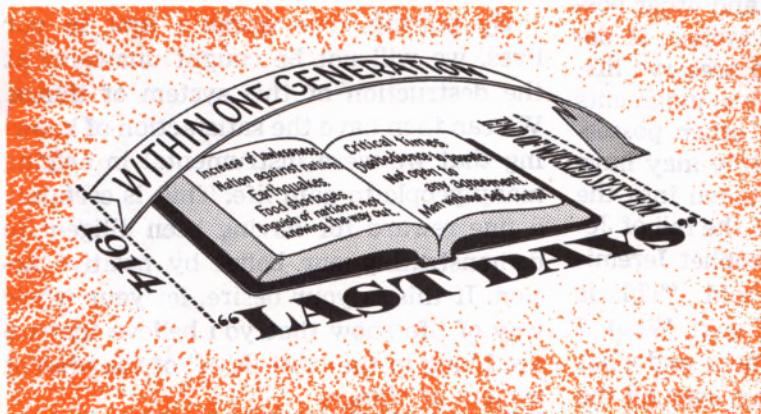
Ask yourself: Is the truly important thing in my life my relationship to God? Where is my heart?

If you are doing what you know to be right, you have reason to be happy with your service to God. This is in harmony with what God's Word says: "He who peers into the perfect law that belongs to

freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it." —Jas. 1:25.

UNDUE CONCERN OVER DAILY NEEDS IS DANGEROUS

Some dedicated servants of Jehovah God, however, are not experi-



encing this happiness even though they may not be given to excesses in food or drink or the pursuit of pleasure. What is their problem? Their hearts have become 'weighed down with the anxieties of life,' that is, they have become overly concerned about making a living. (Matt. 6:25-34) Their concern about providing food, clothing and shelter has robbed their hearts of the calm assurance that Jehovah God will supply everything his servants need. When this happens, the motivations of the heart become centered on materialistic things. The desire to share with others the marvelous promises of Jehovah God diminishes. Planning a secure future for oneself and one's family becomes the main thing in life. This may lead to taking on time-consuming business ventures, much extra secular work or extensive building operations.

Should your heart ever incline you in that direction, what should you do? Prayerfully consider where we are in the stream of time. Ask yourself: Is it reasonable to carry on affairs of life in such a way as to ignore that this present system will soon come to its end? Is it right for me to take time that I could be using in helping others spiritually and spend it in gaining possessions that I really do not need?

Remember, Jehovah God has not promised to preserve fine homes and other possessions when this wicked system is destroyed. He has promised to preserve life. Past executions of Jehovah's judgments prove this. Any home and other possessions that Noah and his family may have had, but that could not be taken into the ark, were destroyed. Prior to the fall of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E., the prophet Jeremiah's secretary Baruch was told: "This is what Jehovah has said: 'Look! What I have built up I am tearing down, and what I have planted I am uprooting, even all the

land itself. But as for you, you keep seeking great things for yourself. Do not keep on seeking. For here I am bringing in a calamity upon all flesh,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I will give you your soul as a spoil in all the places to which you may go.'" (Jer. 45:4, 5) Similarly, the Christians who forsook Jerusalem before its destruction in 70 C.E. escaped with their lives and with what few material possessions they could carry. Everything else they had to leave behind.

Yes, let us be satisfied and rejoice with what God grants us as our "spoil"—our souls—preserved through the coming destruction.

Would it, therefore, not be an unwise and dangerous risk to pursue material interests and neglect spiritual things? "Remember the wife of Lot." (Luke 17:32) It may well have been her attachment to material things in Sodom that caused her to disobey angelic instruction, to look back, and consequently to lose her life.

This does not mean that all building and acquiring of material possessions is wrong in these "last days." Nor does it mean that God's servants should reduce themselves to virtual poverty. Wise use of material assets can actually free one to devote more time in the advancement of spiritual interests, and this is commendable.—Luke 16:9.

By putting true worship first in our lives, we will not be caught unawares at the destruction of this system of things. We can then have the satisfaction of knowing that we were instrumental in helping many people to gain life. That is certainly a fine reward for having been diligent in demonstrating our belief by positive action. If this is your desire, let your whole way of life show that you believe that we are living in the "last days" of the present system of things.

HOW IMPORTANT CAN

A Promise Be?

NOT a day passes without millions of people being disappointed, hurt and even angered by broken promises. Contracts, leases and other agreements are not lived up to. Appointments are not kept. Promised rewards, gifts and services are forgotten about. Marriage engagements are broken. Marriage vows are shoved aside as individuals get legal separations and divorces on flimsy grounds. Repeatedly the promises of politicians prove to be empty words. Moreover, many promises are purposely deceptive.

The actions of many people demonstrate that a promise does not mean much. They have little concern about the harm a broken promise may cause. Nevertheless, whether such persons want to recognize it or not, they have a certain accountability to One who has at no time failed to fulfill a promise. That One is the Creator of man, Jehovah God. He does not view the making and breaking of promises as just a little thing, particularly when the action is deliberate and definitely injurious. Then, too, if *his name* is associated with a promise, he will not permit his name to be defamed by nonfulfillment of that promise. Take the case of the Judean King Zedekiah as an example.

ZEDEKIAH'S COVENANT-BREAKING

In the year 617 B.C.E. Zedekiah's nephew, King Jehoiachin, along with other

foremost men and members of the royal family, was taken as a captive to Babylon. At that time the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, placed Zedekiah on the throne of Jerusalem and made him promise, on

oath in the name of Jehovah, that he would be a loyal vassal king. Princes and other prominent men also bound themselves to be loyal vassals. (Ezek. 17:13, 14; 21:23) Did Jehovah God view these oath-bound promises as being of little importance?

There were Jews who thought that it did not matter to Jehovah if they broke their oath-bound promises. They favored rebelling against the king of Babylon and relying upon Pharaoh of Egypt for support. They encouraged Zedekiah to do this. Speaking prophetically of the rebellion against King Nebuchadnezzar, Jehovah declared:

"He [Zedekiah] finally rebelled against him in sending his messengers to Egypt, for it to give him horses and a multitudinous people. Will he [Zedekiah] have success? Will he escape, he who is doing these things, and who has broken a covenant? And will he actually escape? 'As I am alive,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'in the place of the king [Nebuchadnezzar] who put in as king the one [Zedekiah] that despised his oath and that broke his covenant, with him in the midst of Babylon he will die. And by a great military force and by a multitudinous congregation Pharaoh will not make him effective in the war, by throwing up a siege rampart and by building a siege wall, in order to cut off many souls. And he [Zedekiah] has despised an oath in breaking a covenant, and, look! he had given his hand [in pledge of covenant keeping]

and has done even all these things. He will not make his escape.'—Ezek. 17:15-18.

NO ESCAPE FROM PUNISHMENT

Thus Jehovah emphasized that he would not approve of Zedekiah's breaking the oath and would not protect him from the bitter consequences to follow. He foretold that King Nebuchadnezzar would not overlook the rebellion of Zedekiah but would march against Jerusalem. This would be in harmony with Jehovah's purpose to use King Nebuchadnezzar and his armies as the punitive "sword" against the oath-breaking rebels who used Jehovah's name in vain.

In coming into the land of Palestine from the north, Nebuchadnezzar, at the head of his army, came to a fork in the line of march. He therefore wanted guidance in making a decision as to which way he should lead his army. One branch of the crossways led to the Ammonite capital city of Rabbah and the other to the more strongly fortified city of Jerusalem. The question was, Should he first go against Rabbah and then, after his troops were elated about the capture of that city, proceed with the more difficult siege against Jerusalem? In order to make sure that his would be the right decision, Nebuchadnezzar resorted to three methods of divination. Jehovah God revealed this to his prophet Ezekiel:

"O son of man, set for yourself two ways for the sword of the king of Babylon to enter. From the one land both of them should go forth, and an index hand should be cut out; at the head of the way to the city it should be cut out. A way you should set for the sword to enter against Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and one against Judah, against Jerusalem fortified. For the king of Babylon stood still at the crossways, at the head of the two ways, in order to resort to divination. He has shaken the arrows [one marked for Rabbah and the other for Jerusalem, to be drawn out of a vessel after be-

ing shaken]. He has asked by means of the teraphim; he has looked into the liver [of a slain animal victim]. In his right hand the divination proved to be for Jerusalem, to set battering-rams, to open one's mouth for a slaying, to raise the sound in an alarm signal, to set battering-rams against gates, to throw up a siege rampart, to build a siege wall."—Ezek. 21:19-22.

What King Nebuchadnezzar drew forth with his right hand was the favored choice, to indicate the most auspicious course. Jehovah God saw to it that this choice would, in agreement with his will, direct the king of Babylon against Jerusalem first. This meant bringing up against Jerusalem all the Babylonian heavy siege equipment and using all the devices for besieging a strongly fortified city.

This prophecy foretelling the outcome of Nebuchadnezzar's divination sounded "untrue" to the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. They felt that the king of Babylon would not desire to come against such a heavily fortified place as Jerusalem. They felt that he simply could not take such a strongly walled city. They also felt that Egypt's military might would repel any possible military effort undertaken against them. What the overconfident Jews failed to remember was that their oath breaking was a sin against Jehovah God. He would see to it that their rebellious course would be exposed and not forgotten by King Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem would be conquered and its inhabitants 'seized by the hand' and led captive to Babylon. (Ezek. 21:23, 24) That also signified that King Zedekiah would be forced to do what Jehovah had declared through Ezekiel:

"You, O deadly wounded, wicked chieftain of Israel, whose day has come in the time of the error of the end, this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'Remove the turban, and lift off the crown. This will not be the same. Put on high even what is low, and bring low even the high one. A ruin, a

ruin, a ruin I shall make it. As for this also, it will certainly become no one's until he comes who has the legal right, and I must give it to him."—Ezek. 21:25-27.

By his rebellious course King Zedekiah mortally or fatally wounded himself. That deadly wound meant, not a peaceful death as a loyal vassal king in Jerusalem, but a disgraceful death as a dethroned, childless, sightless, imprisoned exile in Babylon. By reason of his rebellion, Zedekiah showed himself to be a "wicked chieftain of Israel." His day for eating the bitter fruitage of his badness had come. It was now the "time of the error of the end," not alone the "error" of King Zedekiah, but also the "error" of all the kingdom of Judah and of Jerusalem. The time of this "end" began in the thirteenth year of Judean King Josiah, at which time Jeremiah began to prophesy. (Jer. 1:1, 2; 25:3-11) At the culmination of this "end" King Zedekiah did not voluntarily give up his turban and crown. This consequence was forced upon him when his royal throne and city were destroyed.

With that destruction in the year 607 B.C.E. the typical kingdom of God on earth, with a descendant of David sitting on "Jehovah's throne" in Jerusalem, came to an end. This meant a complete reversal of matters on the world stage. As the miniature kingdom of Jehovah God, the Kingdom of Judah had been the "high one." But it was made "low" by being destroyed. The Gentile or non-Jewish nations, however, were "put on high," for the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah left Gentile rule in control of all the earth.

THE ONE WHO WILL ACT AGAINST DELIBERATE PROMISE BREAKERS

The Gentile nations were to maintain such control until the coming of the one "who has the legal right," a descendant of Judean King David. That one proved to

be the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike wicked King Zedekiah, Jesus Christ is no breaker of promises. He is "loyal, guileless, undefiled." (Heb. 7:26) As a man on earth he always spoke the truth. 'No deception was found in his mouth.' (1 Pet. 2:22) Hence Jesus wants as his subjects only persons who are rightly motivated to imitate his example. In harmony with his Father's will, he will soon take action against all who, like Zedekiah of old, are rebellious and untrustworthy, lacking respect for Jehovah's name.

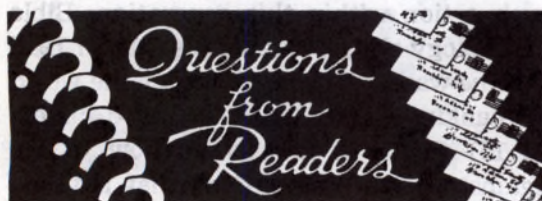
We know that Jesus Christ will take such action within this generation. Bible chronology clearly establishes that in 1914 C.E. he was given rulership over the world of mankind. (Dan. 4:16-27; 7:12-14; Rev. 11:15) So he is in position now to act against peoples and nations that have no regard for truth and righteousness. Christendom today, like unfaithful Jerusalem, has failed in conducting herself in line with God's commands. The breaking of solemn promises and agreements is just one of the many transgressions she has committed. Therefore, as a system professing to be in a covenant with God, Christendom will be the first to go down in destruction.

That is in keeping with the pattern of what happened in ancient times. The punitive "sword" came first against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem, people who were unfaithful to their covenant relationship with God. But the "sword" did not stop there. The Ammonites, like the unfaithful Jews, were not devoted to what was right and, therefore, they too were in line for punishment. Of course, the prophets of Ammon did not think so. They were "beholding" an escape for their capital city Rabbah. Also, the diviners were predicting that the city would

be spared. But the prophets and diviners were mistaken. What the prophets were "beholding" proved to be "an unreality," and the predictions of the diviners were shown up to be "a lie." This was when Nebuchadnezzar brought the land of the Ammonites to ruin. Thus, as foretold through Ezekiel, the slain ones of Ammon were 'put on the necks' of the slain wicked Israelites, as if in one pile of dead ones. —Ezek. 21:28-32.

Hence today no nation that has been

deliberately false and deceptive in its promises and agreements will escape punishment. This makes it imperative for each person to examine his own course. He might ask himself: Am I an imitator of Jesus Christ, in whose 'mouth there was no deception'? Or, do I reflect the traits of a rebellious oath breaker, as was King Zedekiah? The life of everyone today depends upon preserving fine conduct. That includes living up to one's solemn promises. Failure to do so can lead to loss of life.



● Revelation 14:3 reads: "They are singing as if a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one was able to master that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been bought from the earth." If the elders mentioned here, and in Revelation 4:4, represent the entire body of 144,000 heavenly king-priests, how is it possible for the 144,000 to sing in front of these elders?—Ecuador.

A key to understanding the book of Revelation is provided in its opening words: "A revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave him, to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place. And he sent forth his angel and presented it in signs through him to his slave John." (Rev. 1:1) Manifestly, something that would be impossible in reality can be portrayed by means of signs or symbols. For example, while a man could not sing in front of himself, he could stand in front of his own picture and sing. So there is really nothing contradictory about the fact that the 144,000 are depicted as standing before something by which they themselves are represented or symbolized.

The very background of the one seeing the vision, the apostle John, aids us in determining in what sense the "twenty-four elders"

mentioned in Revelation 4:4 are a sign or symbol. Being a Jew, John knew that the "older men of Israel" represented and spoke for the entire nation. (Ex. 3:16, 18; 19:7) Now, the entire congregation of anointed Christians forms the "holy nation" of spiritual Israel, and Christian "older men" or "elders" may stand for or represent that entire "nation." (1 Pet. 2:9) In agreement therewith, the "twenty-four elders" seated on thrones would represent the entire body of 144,000. The number twenty-four would have reminded John of the twenty-four priestly divisions arranged for by King David to serve at Jerusalem's temple. (1 Chron. 24:4) This dovetails nicely with the fact that the "holy nation" of 144,000 are to function as a "royal priesthood."

Note also that John was here being given a vision of future events, "things that must take place." (Rev. 4:1) Accordingly, the vision of the "twenty-four elders" was a prophetic preview of the arrangement Jehovah God would set up in heaven. At the time the apostle John saw the vision, not a single member of the body of 144,000 was in heaven. Those of that body who had fallen asleep in death were awaiting a resurrection. (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 51, 52) However, the fact that the "twenty-four elders" were seen in vision guaranteed that the positions of eldership would be filled by those for whom they had been reserved.

● Without compromising one's position as a Christian, can one take a 'loyalty oath'? —U.S.A.

Whether a Christian can conscientiously take a certain oath or not depends primarily on

the purpose, content or nature of the oath.

Back in the first century C.E., Jesus Christ corrected the Jews for making light, loose and indiscriminate oaths. They swore by heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem and even by their own heads. But Jesus reproved them, saying: "Just let your word *Yes* mean *Yes*, and your *No*, *No*; for what is in excess of these is from the wicked one." (Matt. 5:33-37) A worshiper of God should not need to back up every statement by an oath in order to make it more believable.

Under certain circumstances, however, the Mosaic law required oaths. (Ex. 22:10, 11; Num. 5:21, 22; Deut. 21:1-9) And Jesus himself did not object to being put under oath by the Jewish high priest. (Matt. 26:63, 64) So Jesus' statement about swearing cannot be used as a basis for condemning *all* oaths. But what kind of oaths may a Christian take without injuring his conscience?

This he must determine for himself by comparing the oath in question with Bible principles. Jesus Christ stated: 'Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God.' (Matt. 22:21) Hence a Christian could not swear to anything that would require him to do things that are contrary to God's law. But there would be no objection to his taking an oath to 'uphold or defend' the provisions of the law that do not stand in opposition to God's law. The Christian recognizes that his defense and support of Caesar's law must be within the limitations imposed by God's Word. He can 'defend' the law by word, by his daily conduct and, in legal matters, by his testimony in court. Christians are told: "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities." (Rom. 13:1) So there would be nothing objectionable to swearing to do something that one is already obligated by God to do.

Many enlightened countries, though, recognize the reasonableness of the Christian's other obligation, to 'give to God what belongs to God.' Thus the Constitution of the United States, as well as that of many other nations, guarantees freedom of religion. It is understood, then, that a Christian is not going to be required to do anything contrary to his religious beliefs and his obligations to God. There is no danger to the country in this provision, because true Christians do not engage in subversion; rather, they strive to be exemplary, law-abiding citizens.

Since a true Christian takes his worship and his relationship with God very seriously, he ought to give careful thought to any oath he is asked to take. He should be convinced in his own mind that the oath will not cause a violation of his conscience or compromise his neutral position as regards the political nations and their controversies. (Compare Romans 14:5.) If, after reasoning on the matter, he finds that he can take a particular oath, he will have to bear his own responsibility. He should always keep in mind his prior obligation to the Supreme Sovereign, Jehovah God, before ever putting himself under any other obligation.

● The Bible says: "Make friends for yourselves by means of the unrighteous riches." (Luke 16:9) Does this mean that, as long as money or other possessions are used in a good way or to benefit others, it is not important whether such material things have been obtained dishonestly, unrighteously?—U.S.A.

The above statement of Jesus Christ does not mean that Jehovah God is unconcerned about how people acquire possessions. Luke 16:9 does not say, 'Acquire riches through fraudulent means and then use these riches in the right way to make friends for yourselves.' Not the *means* for acquiring them, but the *riches* are referred to as being "unrighteous." Why? In contrast to the possession of or desire for spiritual riches, the possession of or desire for material riches can, and often does, lead to lawless acts.

When saying "make friends," Jesus Christ was not speaking about gaining friends among humans. He added that the friends to whom he was referring would receive one into the "everlasting dwelling places" when the "unrighteous riches" failed. Riches fail all humans at the time of death, and dying humans cannot receive anyone into "everlasting dwelling places." But the eternal and immortal God Jehovah and his immortal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, can receive others into "everlasting dwelling places." Jesus Christ assured his disciples of this, saying: "In the house of my Father there are many abodes. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going my way to prepare a place for you."—John 14:2.

The only ones who will gain access to the "everlasting dwelling places" of Jehovah God and his Son are those who measure up to his requirements. Said Jesus: "Not everyone say-

ing to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will." (Matt. 7:21) God's will for humans includes their leading honest, upright lives. In his Word we are told that "greedy persons" and "extortioners" will not inherit his kingdom. (1 Cor. 6:9, 10) We also read: "Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work, that he may have something to distribute to someone in need." (Eph. 4:28) Hence no one who continues acquiring riches through dishonest or fraudulent means will become a friend of Jehovah God and of his Son and be received into the "everlasting dwelling places."

Honesty is required not only of those who will rule with Christ in the heavenly kingdom but also of those who will be its loyal subjects. Such loyal subjects are depicted in Scripture as being arrayed in "white robes," that is, as having a clean, acceptable appearance before Jehovah God. It being their privi-

lege to render sacred service to God in his temple, they must meet the requirements for being a guest in that temple. (Rev. 7:13-15) Answering the question as to who would be a guest in Jehovah's sanctuary, the inspired psalmist declared: "He who is walking faultlessly and practicing righteousness and speaking the truth in his heart. . . . And a bribe against the innocent one he has not taken." —Ps. 15:1-5.

The point emphasized by Jesus at Luke 16:9 is thus seen to be the need for one to use material riches properly, wisely. One desiring divine approval should use honestly acquired material things, not for selfish purposes, but, rather, for the advancement of pure worship and in rendering aid to needy fellow humans.

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