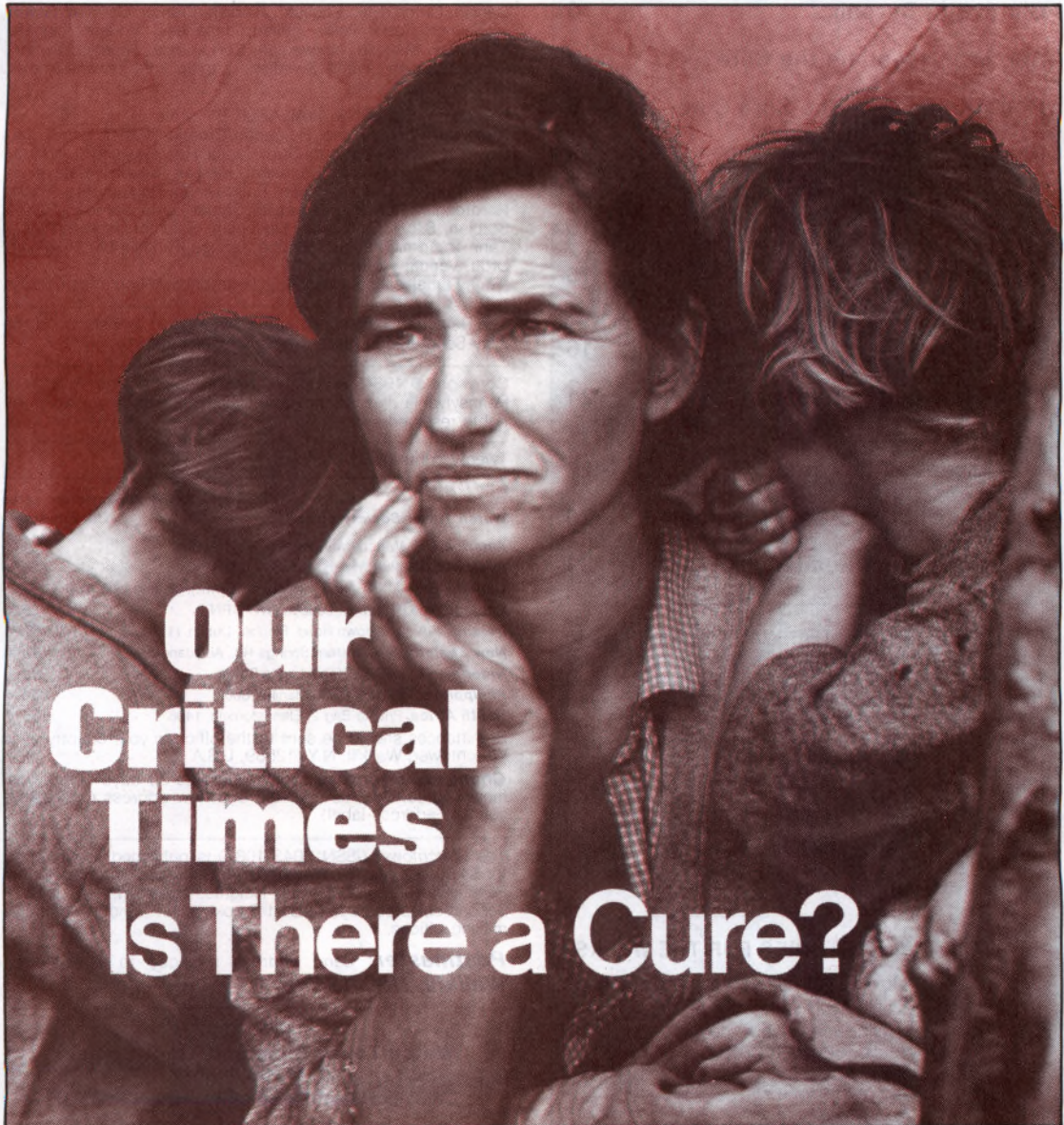


November 15, 1984

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**Our
Critical
Times**
Is There a Cure?

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

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

- December 16: Do You Appreciate Your Inheritance? Page 10. Songs to Be Used: 22, 55.
December 23: Cleansed and Zealous for Fine Works. Page 16. Songs to Be Used: 177, 133.
December 30: "The Time Left Is Reduced." Page 21. Songs to Be Used: 25, 172.

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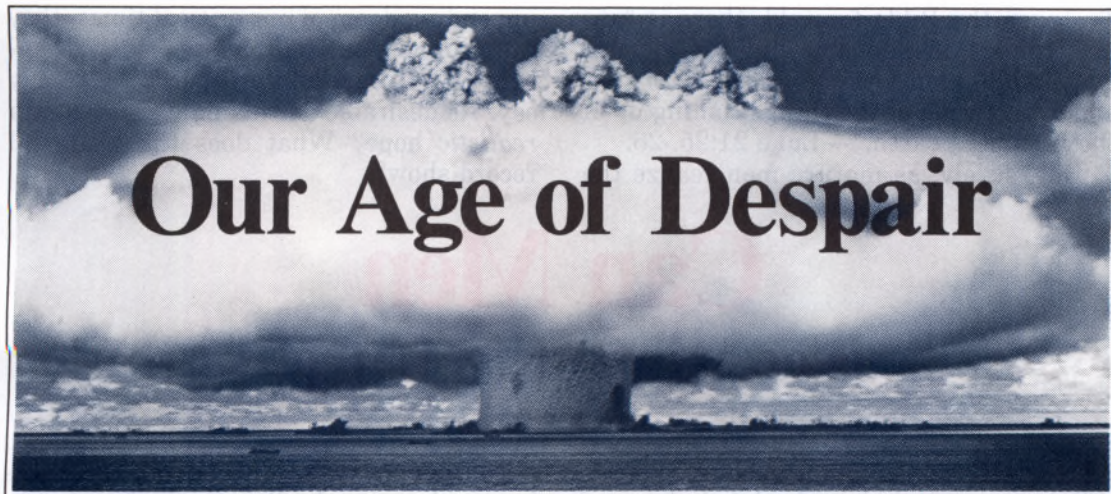
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Frederick W. Franz, President



"I WOULD love to see world peace in my day," the young college student said, "but I know this is simply a fantasy because of all the hatred in the world." Do you also feel this way? Does the world's situation appear hopeless to you?

Such a bleak outlook is not ill-founded. Conditions in the world *are* critical from many points of view. Mankind's very existence is being threatened. The earth's air, food and water are being polluted at an alarming rate. Economic situations worsen and crime soars, keeping many in constant fear for their lives and possessions. World unrest and tension are unprecedented.

Even more unsettling is the threat of nuclear annihilation that hangs like a pall over the earth as wars and insurrections continue with no sign of letup. Voicing the despair of many, another student said: "There seems to be virtually nothing the individual can do about the issue of nuclear war."

Even if nuclear annihilation could be averted, human existence is being imperiled by the sheer mass of mankind. "Global population grows inexorably and at a rate so prodigious that by the year 2000—only

16 years from now—the world, with its added billions, will be unable to provide adequate food and energy, let alone jobs, housing, education and health care," reports *Parade* magazine. "And what could happen by the mid-21st century (when babies born in this decade approach old age) defies imagination."

Annually, millions die due to the appalling nutritional situation that exists in many Third World countries. Says an expert at the U.S. Census Bureau's Center for International Research: "Unless international action is undertaken rapidly to control population, I can see systems of governments breaking down." Foreseen, along with the depletion of basic resources, are widespread malnutrition and disease, vast migrations, greater famines, civil strife and even wars.

Yet, increasing human animosity and selfishness stifle any hope that men will settle their problems and differences in a sane and amicable way. The law of might prevails as violence becomes the usual way of expressing grievances, real or imagined. "Old-fashioned" values of brotherhood—concern and respect for others—seem almost nonexistent in our modern world.

Truly, as the Bible foretold, there is "anguish of nations, not knowing the way out . . . , while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."—Luke 21:25, 26.

'But, surely, as mature men realize the

impending doom of our critical times, they can hammer out joint agreements to ensure world peace and prosperity,' you may say. As desirable as this may seem, is it a realistic hope? What does the historical record show?

Can Men Negotiate the Cure?

AS FAR back as history shows, treaties have regularly been broken in favor of selfish national interests. Moreover, they have not prevented war.

"Ever since men grouped themselves in tribes," writes Laurence W. Beilenson in his book *The Treaty Trap*, "peace treaties have walked hand in hand with war. Yet such is the magic of labels that treaties for peace are subconsciously associated with peace and their absence with war. This has led some commentators to assert that since war has become so suicidal, logic dictates dependence on treaties to prevent it. The conclusion, however, does not follow from the premise. Nuclear war would be a calamity, but only historical experience is a guide to whether treaties will prevent war."

Do Treaties Last?

The historical record shows that treaties do not prevent warfare. "All nations have been dependable treaty-breakers," Beilenson states. And while private citizens can find enforcement for a court's judgment against breaking a contract within their nation, this is not the case when treaties between nations are breached. War may even be resorted to as an effective means of redress.

Neither have international tribunals been able to settle disputes and maintain world peace. The International Court of Justice (the judicial agency of the United Nations, often referred to as the World Court), for instance, cannot enforce its decisions. Instead, it depends on world opinion and moral suasion. Many nations have refused to accept the Court's jurisdiction as compulsory in settling disputes. And according to the World Court's own rules, a nation can refuse to be judged by it by so stating before a particular case is taken to the Court.

Compounding the problem is the fact that nations are particularly sensitive concerning matters that would affect their sovereignty. Consequently, they are extremely wary when drafting treaties, often doing so in language that allows room for evasion wherever their sovereignty would be restricted. "Treaties are frequently drafted in ambiguous language," states *The Encyclopedia Americana*. "The rules of interpretation are legion . . . yet there is no generally accepted practice as to the proper application of any of them. . . . Hence disagreements as to the proper meaning arise, and countercharges of treaty violations are rife." As Charles de Gaulle, former president of France, once

put it: "Treaties are like young women and roses. They last as long as they last." Then, quoting from Victor Hugo's *Les Orientales*, he added: "Alas how many young girls have I seen die."

A Feature of Our Critical Times

That our time would be dominated by proud, selfish men unwilling to agree or to abide by their word was long ago foretold in the Bible. At 2 Timothy 3:1-5 we read: "Know this, that in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, *not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lov-*

ers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power; and from these turn away."

These "last days" began in this century—in 1914, with the first world war—and have continued down to the present time. The truthfulness of the Biblical prophecy has been firmly attested to by the historical record. Shocked by the severity of the Great War, as it was then called, the nations attempted to negotiate treaties that would prevent another war of such proportions. Before the war, there was neither a treaty that universally outlawed war nor any organization for the purpose of enforcing peace. So world leaders sought to formulate agreements between the nations to do just that and to ensure world peace.

The Covenant of the League of Nations was a promise that the member nations



"Treaties . . . last as long as they last"

would support and protect one another and would not go to war, except in self-defense, and then only after submitting the dispute to the Council of the League for settlement and allowing a three-month cooling-off period. It went into effect in 1920. The Locarno treaties, put into force in 1926, were hailed as a "victory for peace and security" among the European nations. The Pact of Paris, also known as the Kellogg-Briand Pact, renounced "recourse to war." It was to be a multilateral pact that would be open to ratification by all nations. Formally proclaimed in 1929, it was eventually signed by 63 nations that agreed to settle their disputes only by "peaceful means." A number of other treaties were enacted during that period, leading many to think that war would be a thing of the past. But it was not long

before most of those nations were embroiled in another world war.

So, then, can men negotiate peace? The historical record and world events today answer NO! As author Beilenson sums it up: "After the destruction of World War I, the statesmen erected the strongest paper structure for peace ever devised. It did not prevent as cynical a disregard for treaties as in any era of history, or the vast destruction of World War II, or other smaller wars since. Despite the treaty of the United Nations, the nations remained disunited."

Today, since mankind is "not open to any agreement" as the Bible foretold, no general peace treaty exists and the world lives in a climate of fear. Does that mean that there is no hope for our critical times? If there is a cure, wherein does it lie?

God's Kingdom —The Sure Cure

"MAN has dominated man to his injury." This statement, recorded in the Bible at Ecclesiastes 8:9, has held true throughout history and down to our very day. Why is this so? Why has man been unable to ameliorate the critical times he now faces?

"A small knowledge of human nature will convince us," George Washington wrote in 1778, "that, with far the greatest part of mankind, [self] interest is the governing principle; and that almost every man is more or less, under its influence. . . . Few men are capable of making a continual sacrifice of all views of private

interest, or advantage, to the common good. It is vain to exclaim against the depravity of human nature on this account; the fact is so, the experience of every age and nation has proved it and we must in a great measure, change the constitution of man, before we can make it otherwise."

Since *all* men are born imperfect and sinful, it has been impossible for any man to deal in an absolutely perfect and just way with his fellowman. (Romans 5:12) Selfish personal interests either color or dominate his judgment and actions. And, try as men may to legislate against these

inherent weaknesses, these cannot be set aside by any human government. "No system of government—whether by a monarch, dictator, tyrant, aristocracy, oligarchy, republic, pure democracy, or the Communist Party—has ever been devised that will insure that good and wise leaders will always steer the ship of state," writes Laurence Beilenson in *The Treaty Trap*. "That is because those who select them or acquiesce in their rule have been people. . . . Nor are the people the rulers govern good and wise. When men come to love their neighbors as themselves, laws to restrain, policemen to enforce them, and armed might to protect will become superfluous, and so will treaties."

While Beilenson feels, as do many, that such a "happy day" is "not imminent," that view does not take God's purpose for

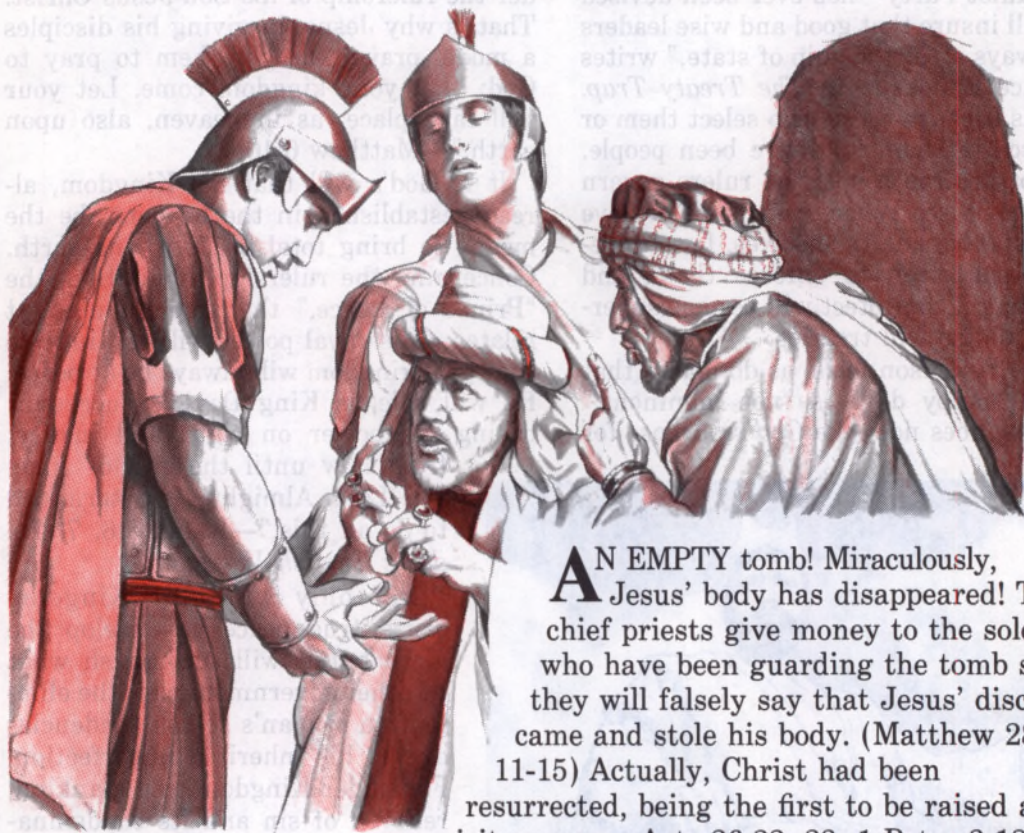
the earth into consideration. Man's failure to govern wisely and peacefully, no matter what avenue is pursued, has clearly shown that mankind is incapable of self-rule. The only solution rests in God's Kingdom under the rulership of his Son Jesus Christ. That is why Jesus, in giving his disciples a model prayer, taught them to pray to God: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:10.

It is God's will that his Kingdom, already established in the heavens, be the means to bring total peace to the earth. Concerning the rulership of his Son, the "Prince of Peace," the inspired account relates: "His royal power will continue to grow; his kingdom will always be at peace. He will rule as King David's successor, basing his power on right and justice, from now until the end of time. The LORD Almighty is determined to do all this."—Isaiah 9:6, 7, *Today's English Version*.

Not only will that Kingdom cause true peace to envelop the globe but it will accomplish what no other government can: the elimination of man's selfish tendencies due to his inherited imperfection. For under Kingdom rule mankind, relieved of sin and its condemnation to death, can enjoy the prospect of perfect, unending life on a paradise earth. (Romans 6:23) To this end, God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." And Jehovah promises: "Look! I am making all things new." (Revelation 21:4, 5) That will be the sure cure for our critical times.



The Two Resurrections



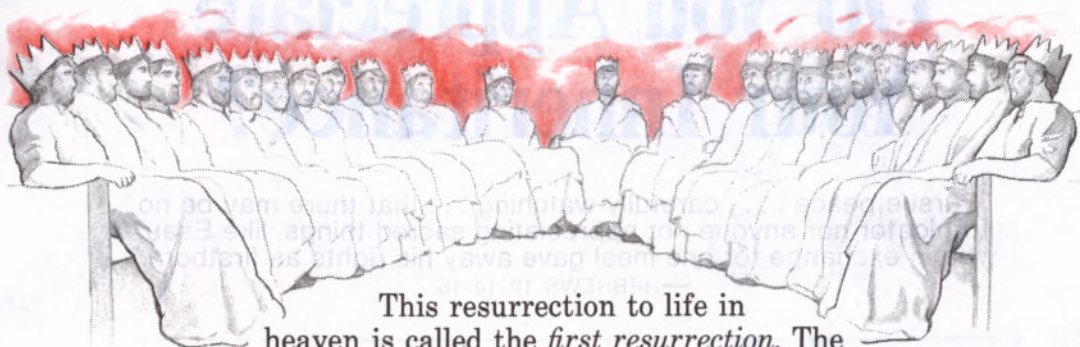
AN EMPTY tomb! Miraculously, Jesus' body has disappeared! The chief priests give money to the soldiers who have been guarding the tomb so that they will falsely say that Jesus' disciples came and stole his body. (Matthew 28:

11-15) Actually, Christ had been resurrected, being the first to be raised as a spirit person.—Acts 26:22, 23; 1 Peter 3:18.

Others besides Jesus enjoy a resurrection to spirit life, as the Bible says: "Each one in his own rank: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who belong to the Christ during his presence." (1 Corinthians 15:20-23) Who are "those who belong to the Christ"? They are the 144,000 faithful disciples who are chosen to rule as kings over the earth with Christ in God's Kingdom.—Revelation 5:10; 14:1, 3; 2 Timothy 2:11, 12.

The resurrection to life as spirit creatures in heaven, of course, is unseen to human eyes. The Bible describes the change to spirit life in this way: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised up in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised up in glory. . . . It is sown a physical body, it is raised up a spiritual body."—1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

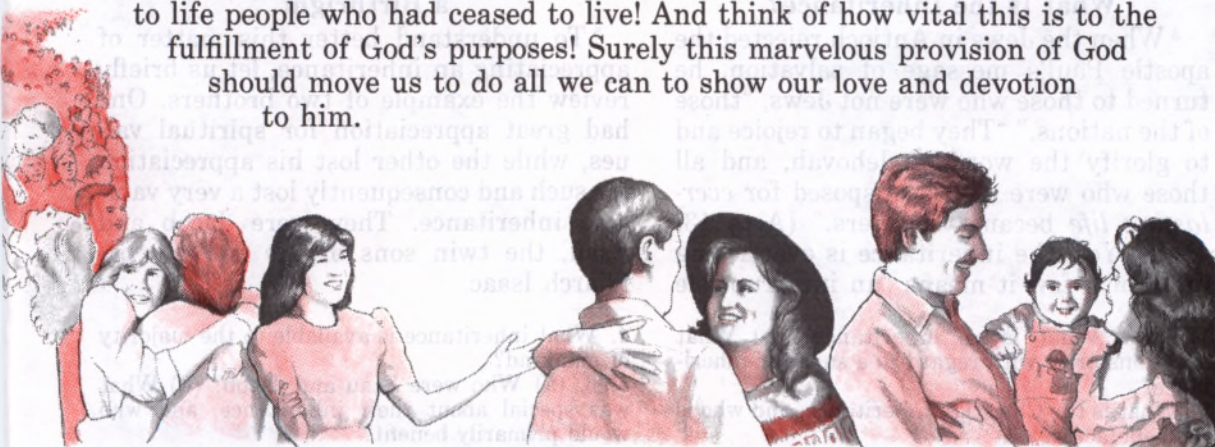
God's Word Is Alive



This resurrection to life in heaven is called the *first resurrection*. The Bible says, "Happy and holy is anyone having part in the *first resurrection*; over these the second death has no authority, but they will . . . rule as kings with him for the thousand years." (Revelation 20:6) The resurrection to heavenly life is also called "*the earlier resurrection*." (Philippians 3:11) As noted before, it occurs 'during Christ's presence,' which began in 1914, when Jesus Christ returned to begin ruling as King in the midst of his enemies.—Hebrews 10:12, 13.

The expressions "*first resurrection*" and "*earlier resurrection*" show that another will follow. After those who become corulers with Christ are resurrected and the earth is cleansed of all opposers of God's Kingdom, then, in time, the resurrection of dead ones to life on the earth will begin. Thus there are two resurrections. First, there is the resurrection to heavenly life. Second, there is the resurrection "of both the righteous and the unrighteous" with the opportunity to gain everlasting life on the earth.—Acts 24:15.

Consider what a wonderful miracle the resurrection is—actually restoring to life people who had ceased to live! And think of how vital this is to the fulfillment of God's purposes! Surely this marvelous provision of God should move us to do all we can to show our love and devotion to him.



Do You Appreciate Your Inheritance?

"Pursue peace . . . , carefully watching . . . 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."

—HEBREWS 12:14-16.

PEOPLE have murdered for it. Others have died without ever getting it. Many, having got it, have wasted it. What is it? It is an inheritance. And often that is the way things go when there is property to be inherited.

² The Bible speaks of inheritance(s) 229 times, and on most occasions it refers to a legacy of land or property. Yet, God's Word also speaks of an inheritance far superior to any that might be left in a will. And such a superlative inheritance is available to *you* if you do not disdain it. What is this inheritance? Who grants it? Why do some lose it? How can we show appreciation for it?

What Is the Inheritance?

³ When the Jews in Antioch rejected the apostle Paul's message of salvation, he turned to those who were not Jews, "those of the nations." "They began to rejoice and to glorify the word of Jehovah, and all those who were rightly disposed for *everlasting life* became believers." (Acts 13: 45-48) Yes, the inheritance is everlasting life. For a few it means "an incorruptible

and undefiled and unfading inheritance . . . in the heavens." Who is the benefactor? "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," said Peter.—1 Peter 1:3, 4.

⁴ But what about the vast majority of humankind who have no heavenly hope? Their inheritance can be perfect life as part of the "new earth," a new society of people redeemed by Jesus Christ's sacrifice. It offers the possibility of everlasting life on a transformed, pollution-free planet. (Revelation 11:18; 21:3, 4; John 17:3) How would you like to look forward to that as an inheritance? If you already do so, do you really appreciate it?

Disdaining and Appreciating a Birthright

⁵ To understand better this matter of appreciating an inheritance, let us briefly review the example of two brothers. One had great appreciation for spiritual values, while the other lost his appreciation for such and consequently lost a very valuable inheritance. They were Jacob and Esau, the twin sons of the Hebrew patriarch Isaac.

1, 2. (a) What is an inheritance? (b) What questions arise with regard to a superior inheritance?

3. What is the Christian inheritance, and who is the benefactor?

4. What inheritance is available to the majority of mankind?

5, 6. (a) Who were Esau and Jacob? (b) What was special about their inheritance, and who would primarily benefit?

⁶ Their grandfather Abraham died when they were 15 years old. The material inheritance that he left to his son Isaac included large herds of livestock and a field where the family burial cave was located. (Genesis 25:5-10) However, the more important aspect of the inheritance was not property or anything tangible. It was the promise that Jehovah had made to Abraham and had later repeated to Isaac: "By means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves." (Genesis 22:18; 25:24-26; 26:2-5) This revealed that the Messiah, actually the promised "seed" of Genesis 3:15, would come through Abraham's line of descent at some future date. Since Esau was the firstborn of the twins, on the death of his father, Isaac, he would have the legal right to this promise, as well as a double share of the property. Now the question is, Did he appreciate his inheritance?

⁷ As the twins grew older, their different personalities became evident. Esau was a restless hunter, "a man of the open country," whereas Jacob was "a blameless man," one who "led a settled life." (Genesis 25:27, *The Jerusalem Bible; New World Translation; The New English Bible*) One day when Jacob was preparing lentil stew, Esau came in from the field exhausted and hungry. "So Esau said to Jacob: 'Quick, please, give me a swallow of the red—the red there, for I am tired!'"—Genesis 25:30.

7. How were Esau and Jacob different in appreciation and personality? (Genesis 26:34, 35; 28:6-9)

⁸ At this point Jacob made a remarkable proposition to his twin brother, saying: "Sell me, first of all, your right as first-born!" (Genesis 25:31) He was asking for Esau's inheritance in exchange for a bowl of stew! Do you think that Jacob would have much hope of success in such a barter arrangement? Apparently he thought that he would. Why? Because he was aware of his brother's tendencies and sense of values. Was he wrong? Esau, obviously exaggerating his physical condition, answered: "I am at death's door; what use is my birthright to me?"—Genesis 25:32, *NE*.

⁹ The deal was sealed by an oath, and Jacob served his brother bread and lentil stew. Esau ate and left "without more ado." Then the inspired record pointedly

8. What surprising proposition did Jacob make to his brother, and how did Esau react?

9. How does Esau stand in contrast to his brother with regard to the inheritance?

Would you exchange your inheritance for a 'bowl of lentil stew'?



comments: "Thus Esau showed how little he valued his birthright." (Genesis 25: 33, 34, *NE*) By contrast, how highly Jacob appreciated the birthright! He was not after property—a burial field and some animals. He wanted the promised Messianic seed to come through his lineage. He wanted the spiritual inheritance. —Compare Matthew 6:31-33.

Would You Barter Your Inheritance?

¹⁰ Some 19 centuries later, the apostle Paul used Esau's example to warn early Christians, saying: "Pursue peace with all people, . . . carefully watching that no one may be deprived of the undeserved kindness of God; . . . 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 first-born." Why does Paul here relate a fornicator to Esau's actions? Because having Esau's mentality can lead to failure to appreciate sacred things and then to more serious sins, like fornication.—Hebrews 12:14-16.

¹¹ Are you sometimes tempted to barter your Christian inheritance, *everlasting life*, for something as transient as a 'bowl of lentil stew'? Do you, perhaps without realizing it, despise "sacred things"? For example, in recent times some Christians have fallen victim to the modern moral permissiveness. They seem to have Esau's impatient desire to satisfy a physical craving. Just as he said to Jacob: "*Quick, please, give me a swallow of the red,*" have they not, in effect, said: 'Quick! Why wait for honorable marriage?'—Genesis 25:30; compare Genesis 34:1-4.

10. (a) What interesting comment did Paul make regarding Esau? (b) What is the relationship between fornication and Esau's bartering his birthright?

11. What has happened to some Christians in modern times?

¹² Thus what has happened? A desire for sexual satisfaction at any price has become their 'bowl of lentil stew.' As a result, they have despised sacred things, including their relationship with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. They have disdained integrity, fidelity and chastity. They have jeopardized their inheritance. However, some of these have later been stirred to genuine repentance and apparently have regained their standing with God.—Compare Psalm 51.

Why Do Some Fall?

¹³ What causes these immoral tendencies? Could it be that these persons have allowed their spiritual values to be undermined? Many factors can have an insidious effect on our way of thinking—friends and relatives who do not share our principles, even spiritually weak persons in the congregation, a loose work atmosphere, dubious entertainment and reading, a misplaced search for love and affection from unbelievers. All these things can lead to immorality. Could any of these be affecting your sense of values right now?—2 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

¹⁴ For example, do you find yourself watching television or movies that condone and even promote immorality? It must be admitted that these films can fascinate the fallen flesh—like a whirlpool that sucks down the unwary. They can have a subtle effect on your thinking. This is seen clearly in the powerful influence exercised by homosexuals in the world of entertainment. They have promoted films

12. (a) How have some not shown appreciation for sacred things? (b) However, what action have some taken?

13. What factors can undermine our spiritual values?

14. What danger lies in some modern entertainment?

and plays that justify homosexuality. As a consequence, what was formerly considered a sexual perversion is now euphemized as "an alternative life-style"! The situation has been reached that the apostle Paul described: "Having come to be past all moral sense, they gave themselves over to loose conduct to work *uncleanness of every sort with greediness*."—Ephesians 4:19; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

¹⁵ What is the solution? Keep away from the "low sink of debauchery"! The Bible counsels: "Search for what is good, and not what is bad . . . Hate what is bad, and love what is good." Ah, there is the real test—actively to *hate* what is bad.—1 Peter 4:4; Amos 5:14, 15.

¹⁶ If we have the mind of Christ, should we not have scruples about the gratuitous violence, sick sadism and crass immorality presented in most entertainment today? Really, what should our standard be? Paul answers: "Whatever things are true, whatever things are of serious concern, whatever things are righteous, whatever things are chaste, whatever things are lovable, whatever things are well spoken of, whatever virtue there is and whatever praiseworthy thing there is, continue considering these things."—Philippians 4:8.

¹⁷ Surely it is better and safer to obey the apostle's injunction. Unfortunately some have 'continued considering' pornographic TV, movies and literature.* As a consequence, they have contaminated

* Pornography is defined as "written, graphic, or other forms of communication intended to excite lascivious feelings. [From Greek *pornographos*, writing about prostitutes . . .]."—*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*.

15. How can we avoid the pitfalls of immorality?
16. What standard did Paul set for Christians?
17. (a) What is pornography? (b) How have some contaminated their minds? (c) What is the wise course?

their minds and hearts with immorality and sexual perversions. How much better it would have been to apply the apostle's counsel: "Brothers, do not become young children in powers of understanding [in spiritual matters], but be babes as to badness"!—1 Corinthians 14:20.

How Can We Increase Our Appreciation?

¹⁸ An intimate relationship with one's parents can make one very conscious of their love and principles, thus making it less likely for one ever to disappoint the family. The same is true of our relationship with Jehovah. But how can we strengthen that relationship? By getting to know God intimately. Our *deep personal study* of God's Word will help us to know and love him so well that we will resist any temptation. As expressed by David in Psalm 23, we will always feel that our Shepherd, Jehovah, is with us. How foolish it would be to make a grave error while having the Shepherd so near!—Hebrews 4:13.

¹⁹ However, there are two basic problems. First, for many, personal study is a burden. Due to deficient educational systems, many people today have great difficulty reading. For them, study is an effort. But anything in life that is of permanent value involves effort. Is it not worth the effort to get to know Jehovah, the Sovereign Lord of the universe, our Father and the God of undeserved kindness?—Matthew 6:9; James 4:8.

²⁰ The second problem is a seeming shortage of time for personal study. And

18. What can serve as a protection and can help us to appreciate sacred things?

19, 20. (a) What two problems exist regarding personal study? (b) Why does there seem to be less time now for personal study?

yet 30 or 40 years ago there seemed to be time—time to converse, to read, to write letters, to stroll as a family, to meditate. Why have things changed? A form of inflation has affected our time. In real terms a day is often no longer worth 24 hours. Why? Because a “thief” has entered many homes and has taken away much valuable time. Do you recognize that “thief”? Yes, it is television, with its paralyzing influence. One study indicates that “the average American family watches television 7 hours and 22 minutes a day.” That is nearly a third of a day! On an average, how much time do you spend watching TV each day? Daily, around the world, billions of valuable hours of life are lost as people vegetate in front of a TV set. True, some programs are clean, entertaining or educational. But even these can be time consuming. TV’s allure is very seductive.

²¹ How can Christians avoid being robbed by this “thief”? Only by means of strict time management. Limit your TV viewing time. Set your priorities—people and relationships are more important than TV. For example, do you resent visitors who drop in during your favorite TV show? And do you find it hard to turn off the TV, even when the program is boring or bad? Then you have a problem.—1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

²² What practical steps can you take to buy back those precious hours for personal study and relationships? Note the programs worthy of being viewed by a Christian and *watch these only if there is nothing more important to do*. Some have even taken a more extreme measure—no TV at all in the home! That is a personal matter. But they certainly are not spiritually im-

21. (a) What problem might some have?

(b) What do you think is the solution?

22. How can we buy back TV viewing time for other pursuits?

poverished because of not having a television set.—Ephesians 5:15, 16.

²³ What, then, can we do if we want to preserve our precious inheritance and not sell it for a ‘bowl of lentil stew’? Make sure of the more important things in Christian life. Set your priorities and stick to them. Follow through conscientiously to obtain the gift of eternal life, even as the apostle Paul ‘pursued the goal for the prize of the upward call.’ Like Jacob, show deep appreciation for the inheritance. Like Moses, ‘look *intently* toward the payment of the reward.’—Philippians 1:9, 10; 3:13, 14; Hebrews 11:24-26.

²⁴ How can we motivate ourselves to do all of that? By means of diligent study of the Bible. Apply it daily in your life. Regularly attend Christian meetings and pay close attention while present. Love what is righteous and hate what is bad. No, do not despise your inheritance in order to satisfy some urgent fleshly desire. Your inheritance, everlasting life, is worth far more than any ‘bowl of lentil stew,’ whatever modern-day form that may take!—Hebrews 10:24, 25; 12:12-16.

23, 24. What can we do to show true appreciation for our inheritance? (Hebrews 11:26)

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What is the Christian inheritance?
- ☐ How did Esau disdain his birthright?
- ☐ What danger exists for Christians today regarding their inheritance?
- ☐ In what different ways can we increase our appreciation?

Insight on the News

Givers Benefit

"Though there weren't stress tests and EKGs in the days of St. Luke, he was medically accurate when he wrote [quoting Jesus, Acts 20:35], 'It is more blessed to give than to receive,'" states Denise Foley in *Prevention* magazine. "We've always known that people with generous spirits tend to be happier, but now doctors are saying they're healthier and live longer too."

Why is this the case? One reason advanced is that the generous giving of oneself to others is an effective antidote to stress—a factor in many diseases, including hypertension and coronary heart disease. Additionally, studies have indicated that loneliness is a basic cause of premature death. "The mandate to 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself' is not just a moral mandate," says Dr. James Lynch of the University of Maryland School of Medicine. "It's a physiological mandate. Caring is biological. One thing you get from caring for others is you're not lonely. And the more connected you are to life, the healthier you are." But, say the researchers, benefits will be reaped only if the giver is truly giving from the goodness of his heart and not just to get something in return or to fill a need.

Such generosity not only results in physical benefits, but it also wins the approval of God. "God loves a cheerful giver," says 2 Corinthians 9:7. To those manifesting such generous concern for his "brothers," the King Jesus Christ says: "Come, . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." (Matthew 25:34-40) And it is genuine, loving

interest in their neighbors that motivates Jehovah's Witnesses to preach the "good news" of God's Kingdom.—Matthew 24:14.

"From Embarrassing to Disastrous"

In late May, five people reportedly representing the Animal Liberation Front broke into a laboratory at the University of Pennsylvania Medical School and stole 33 videotapes documenting brain-damaging experiments on baboons and monkeys. The break-in, another chapter in the long-standing controversy between researchers and animal welfare groups, involved university officials in hours of explanations to justify the experiments.

"From a public relations standpoint," says the magazine *Science*, "some scenes on the tapes—which were made for documenting the research, not for public viewing—range from embarrassing to disastrous." Animal welfare groups claimed the experiments were cruel. But researchers, besides denouncing the break-in, defended the experiments, maintaining that they could lead to the alleviation of much suffering in humans.

Although meaningful experiments may directly benefit humans, the Bible does not ignore the welfare of animals. The Mosaic Law provided for the merciful treatment of animals, even stipulating that they rest on the Sabbath. (Deuteronomy 22:10; Exodus 23:12) And a Bible proverb states: "A good man takes care of his animals, but wicked men are cruel to theirs."—Proverbs 12:10, *Today's English Version*.

"Just" Wars —How Just?

"Every war is a just war, in the opinion of those who are running it," writes Gwynne Dyer in *The Gazette* of Montreal, Quebec, Canada. During World War II, even the Nazis contended that they were fighting a just war to restore what had been taken from the German people after their losses in the first world war. But, asks Dyer, "given that the Nazis were wrong and wicked—and also very powerful and dangerous—were their opponents really fighting a just war?"

No, he answers, for he holds that the war against the Third Reich was not started because of moral outrage over "the terrible things that were happening in lands under Hitler's control. . . . The worst of those things, like the extermination camps," writes Dyer, "did not occur until the war was well underway." He adds that the war "was fought for all the classic reasons: Over land . . . and especially over power. . . . Seen in the longer perspective, the Second World War was only one more round in the endless competition of sovereign states for power and security, within an anarchic system regulated ultimately by military violence."

Dyer's comments bring to mind the Bible's symbolic representation of world powers as beasts. (Daniel, chapters 7, 8; Revelation, chapters 13, 17) How appropriate, then, that Christians maintain neutrality! They realize that greed and selfishness—not morality—fuel the world's wars.—John 17:16; 18:36.

Cleansed and Zealous for Fine Works

'Jesus Christ gave himself to cleanse for himself a people peculiarly his own, zealous for fine works.'—TITUS 2:13, 14.

JEHOVAH is holy, good and upright. He and his Son also accomplish superb work with zeal. (Leviticus 19:2; Psalm 25:8; John 5:17) Hence, all witnesses of Jehovah must be clean and zealous for fine works.

² The apostle Paul mentioned both cleanness and zeal when he wrote that by God's undeserved kindness Jesus "gave himself for us that he might deliver us from every sort of lawlessness and cleanse for himself a people peculiarly his own, zealous for fine works." (Titus 2:11-14) What is required of those Jesus has cleansed? For what fine works are we to be zealous? And what blessings do cleansed and zealous witnesses of Jehovah enjoy?

Spiritual Cleanness Vital

³ Jehovah's servants must maintain a high standard of physical, moral and spiritual cleanness. (Exodus 30:17-21; Deuteronomy 23:12-14; Ephesians 5:25-27; 2 Corinthians 7:1) This basic point was stressed in the sixth century B.C.E., when

1. Why must witnesses of Jehovah be clean and zealous?
2. (a) How did the apostle Paul link cleanness with zeal? (b) What questions will we now consider?
3. (a) What standard of cleanness must Jehovah's servants maintain? (b) How was the need for cleanness stressed when Jewish exiles were released from Babylon?

Jewish exiles were freed from Babylon. (Ezra 1:1-4) Soon they would head for their homeland, joyfully carrying along the holy utensils that King Nebuchadnezzar had taken from God's temple in Jerusalem. How vital that those sanctuary items be carried only by clean worshipers of Jehovah! Fittingly, then, they were told: "Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her, keep yourselves clean, you who are carrying the utensils of Jehovah." (Isaiah 52:11) Those carriers had to be cleansed of all defilement from Babylon's religious and moral uncleanness.

⁴ The apostle Paul applied that demand for cleanness to anointed Christians who abandon Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. He wrote: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? . . . 'Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves,' says Jehovah, 'and quit touching the unclean thing.'" (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; Revelation 18:4, 5; Jeremiah 51:45) Indeed, Jehovah requires spiritual cleanness of Jesus' anointed followers and their companions, the "great crowd."—Revelation 7:4-9.

4. In harmony with 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, what is required of all witnesses of Jehovah?

“Repudiate Ungodliness and Worldly Desires”

⁵ Among other things, those serving as spiritually clean witnesses of Jehovah have been called upon to “repudiate ungodliness and worldly desires.” (Titus 2: 11, 12) As Paul said elsewhere: “We have renounced the underhanded things of which to be ashamed, not walking with cunning, neither adulterating the word of God, but by making the truth manifest recommending ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God.” (2 Corinthians 4:2) Like the apostle, present-day Christians must prove blameless in their ministry, free from any legitimate charge of corruption or deviousness in their dealings. (2 Corinthians 8:20, 21; Psalm 101: 1-8) They must not be guided by the world’s wisdom and selfish, sinful spirit, or actuating force.—1 Corinthians 1:21; 2:12; 3:19; Ephesians 2:1, 2.

⁶ To attain their objectives, people having a worldly spirit often resort to devious methods. But if a professing Christian does this, he has not ‘repudiated ungodliness’ and enjoys no intimacy with Jehovah. (Proverbs 3:31, 32) And if a person is dominated by unclean fleshly yearnings, he has not ‘repudiated worldly desires.’ (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 John 2:15-17) But what if we are struggling against such unspiritual tendencies as deviousness and improper fleshly desires? Then it would be fitting to pray as did David, who said: “Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one. Do not throw me away from before your face; and your holy spirit O do not take away from me.” (Psalm 51:10, 11; John 15:19) If we pray in such a way and

5. According to 2 Corinthians 4:2, what should be true of our ministry?

6. What can be done if we are struggling against such tendencies as deviousness and improper fleshly desires?

take full advantage of the help available through God’s Word, spirit and organization, we will be able to correct our thinking and can serve faithfully as Jehovah’s clean worshipers.

⁷ If some among us unrepentantly pursue a grossly unclean course, they must be disfellowshipped so that Jehovah’s name is not profaned, his organization is kept clean and his faithful servants are protected and impressed with the gravity of serious wrongdoing. (Leviticus 22:31-33; Deuteronomy 13:6-11) Years ago, God’s people realized that an unrepentant wrongdoer no longer merited their fellowship. For instance, in 1904 the Watch Tower Society’s first president, Charles Taze Russell, wrote: “The Church is to withdraw from him its fellowship and any and all signs or manifestations of brotherhood.” (*The New Creation*, page 290) Today, too, Jehovah’s people follow Scriptural counsel to “remove the wicked man” from their midst.—1 Corinthians 5:9-13.

⁸ Keeping Jehovah’s organization clean is a matter of great concern to appointed elders. Of course, they must be merciful where there are ‘fruits befitting repentance,’ even as Jehovah extends mercy when this is proper. (Luke 3:8; Psalm 86:15; 130:3, 4) And if a fellow believer takes a false step before he realizes it, those having spiritual qualifications must try to readjust him “in a spirit of mildness.”—Galatians 6:1.

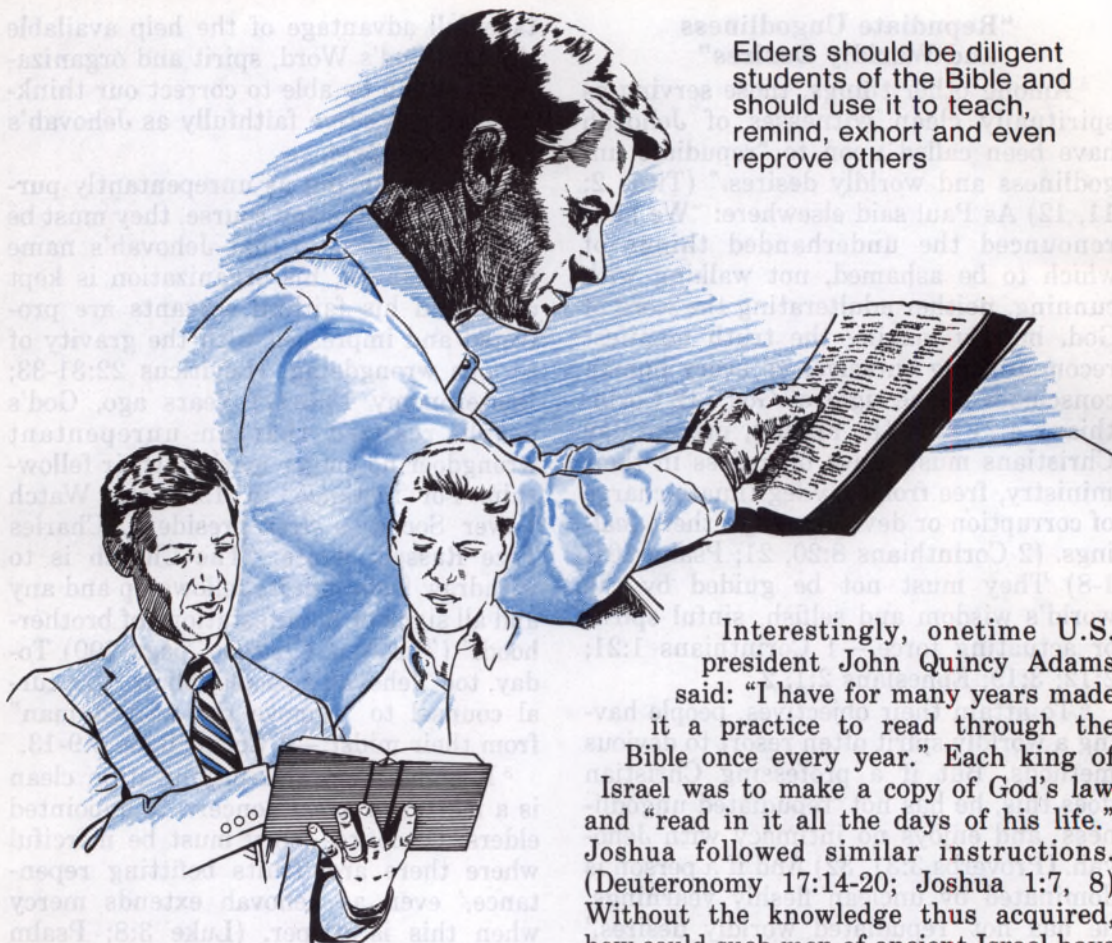
How Elders Can Help

⁹ How can overseers help other Christians to keep clean spiritually? One way is by giving upbuilding discourses. Another

7. Why must unrepentant wrongdoers be disfellowshipped?

8. What bearing do Luke 3:8 and Galatians 6:1 have on how elders deal with erring ones?

9. What are two of the ways in which elders can help other Christians spiritually?



Elders should be diligent students of the Bible and should use it to teach, remind, exhort and even reprove others

is through personal discussions and shepherding calls. (1 Peter 5:1-4) At such times, elders appropriately use the Bible to teach, remind, exhort and even reprove fellow believers.

¹⁰ The need to *teach* was stressed when Paul urged his co-worker Titus to "keep on speaking what things are fitting for healthful teaching." (Titus 2:1) Humble Christian elders are not seeking glory as public speakers but are eager to use the Bible properly to teach. (Proverbs 25:27)

10. (a) What attitude should elders have toward public speaking? (b) Why should spiritual shepherds be ardent students of the Bible?

Interestingly, onetime U.S. president John Quincy Adams said: "I have for many years made it a practice to read through the Bible once every year." Each king of Israel was to make a copy of God's law and "read in it all the days of his life." Joshua followed similar instructions. (Deuteronomy 17:14-20; Joshua 1:7, 8) Without the knowledge thus acquired, how could such men of ancient Israel have acted wisely or helped others spiritually? So if you are an appointed elder, have you read the entire Bible, perhaps many times? Undoubtedly this would enhance your ability to counsel others, including dedicated Christians who may themselves have read through the Scriptures often. Those serving as spiritual shepherds must be ardent students of God's Word, the basis for "healthful teaching."

¹¹ Paul also told Titus: "Continue re-

11. (a) What Scriptural reminders were needed by first-century Christians in Crete? (b) As regards Biblical reminders, what should appointed elders be qualified to do?

*mind*ing them to be in subjection and be obedient to governments and authorities as rulers, to be ready for every good work, to speak injuriously of no one, not to be belligerent, to be reasonable, exhibiting all mildness toward all men.” (Titus 3:1, 2) Those specific reminders were needed by first-century Christians on the island of Crete. Similarly, when a problem arises today, elders should be able to point to appropriate Scriptural reminders. And may we always be grateful when Jehovah’s reminders are drawn to our attention.—Psalm 119:99, 129.

¹² Titus also was told: “Keep on *exhorting* the younger men to be sound in mind.” (Titus 2:6) To exhort means “to urge strongly; advise or warn earnestly.” (*The World Book Dictionary*) Because of his genuine love and concern, Paul did not hold back needed exhortation. In fact, he could say to the elders of Ephesus: “Keep awake, and bear in mind that for three years, night and day, I did not quit admonishing [exhorting] each one with tears.” (Acts 20:31; compare *The Riverside New Testament*.) Present-day elders who manifest the same attitude, and who give fitting admonition or exhortation, are indeed a blessing to the congregation!

¹³ Paul also mentioned *reproof*, urging Titus: “Keep on reproofing them with severity, that they may be healthy in the faith, paying no attention to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn themselves away from the truth.” (Titus 1:13, 14) To reprove is “to call attention to the remissness of usu[ally] with a kindly intent to correct or assist,” or “to express disapproval of” a person for his words or actions. (*Webster’s New Colle-*

gate Dictionary) Paul spoke of reproofing, but with a noble purpose—“that they may be healthy in the faith.” Likewise today, elders avoid unchristian harshness. Unlike complaining apostates, true Christian elders do not try to be “masters” over the faith and lives of other believers but serve as stewards and fellow workers for their joy, helping them to stand firm in their faith.—2 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

¹⁴ Heeding Biblical teaching, reminders, exhortation and reproof will help us to remain spiritually clean. This makes us suitable for God’s sacred service. But with what spirit should we perform that service?

Have ‘Zeal for Fine Works’

¹⁵ As an organized body of dedicated Christians, Jehovah’s Witnesses are “zealous for fine works.” Zeal is “eagerness and ardent interest in pursuit of something.” (*Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary*) According to Paul’s letter to Titus, all Christians are to pursue a broad range of “fine works.” For instance, younger women should be chaste, workers at home and in subjection to their husbands. Titus was to be “an example of fine works,” showing uncorruptness in his teaching, using wholesome speech, and so forth. (Titus 2: 1-14) Of course, the finest work a Christian can do is that of helping others to learn about God and serve Him. If you are a witness of Jehovah, are you really zealous in doing this ‘fine work’? First-century Christians displayed zeal for evangelizing, even in the face of persecution.—Acts 11:19-21.

12. (a) What does it mean to exhort? (b) With what attitude should exhortation be given?

13. (a) To reprove is to do what? (b) With what attitude should elders give reproof?

14. What will help us to remain spiritually clean?

15. (a) How can zeal be defined? (b) What is the finest work a Christian can do?

How Would You Respond?

- ☐ What is required for one to be part of Jehovah's cleansed people?
- ☐ How can appointed elders help others to keep clean spiritually?
- ☐ For what fine work should God's people especially be zealous?
- ☐ What are some blessings enjoyed by Jehovah's cleansed and zealous witnesses?

¹⁶ Despite the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses today, God's spirit moves them to carry out the Kingdom-preaching commission—a basic reason for the existence of the Christian congregation. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Isaiah 61:1, 2) Like the early Christians, they zealously do the fine work of proclaiming the "good news" from house to house and otherwise. (Acts 5:41, 42; 20:20, 21) In his book *Evangelism, Inc.*, G. W. Target discusses witnessing methods including "doorstep evangelism" and notes that "some people would even call it *the* most common method—especially after the latest visitation from the Jehovah's Witnesses. . . . Others are catching on fast, but the Jehovah's Witnesses lead the field." Concerning the use of Bible literature, Target admits: "Once again, the Jehovah's Witnesses [are] leading the field. . . . By comparison, . . . very few denominations actually publish evangelizing matter." Indeed, Christian literature produced with the help of God's holy spirit and available from Jehovah's Witnesses for a contribution is helping sheep-

16. (a) What is a basic reason for the existence of the Christian congregation? (b) What has been said about the evangelizing work of Jehovah's Witnesses?

like ones earth wide to learn and do the divine will.

¹⁷ Jehovah prospered the preaching work of the early Christians. Thus congregations were formed in one place after another—Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, Thessalonica and elsewhere. Similarly, Jehovah is prospering the preaching activity of his modern-day servants, so much so that over 46,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses now exist worldwide. To God goes the credit for such marvelous growth.—Isaiah 60:22; 1 Corinthians 3:6, 7.

Our Many Blessings

¹⁸ Many, indeed, are the blessings and benefits of clean and zealous service enjoyed by Jehovah's people today. (Proverbs 10:22) For instance, as God's cleansed servants, we have the satisfaction of pleasing him. (1 Peter 1:13-16) Divine truth has set us free from Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. (Revelation 18:4, 5) We are not the victims of superstition, fear of the dead and the like. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 8:32) The 'peace of God guards our hearts and mental powers.' (Philippians 4:6, 7, 13) Assembling regularly with clean worshipers gives us a sense of security, like that of "a flock in the pen." (Micah 2:12) The possession of God's holy spirit enables us to display its fruitage of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness and self-control. (Galatians 5:22, 23) How all of this should make us rejoice!

¹⁹ As zealous Kingdom proclaimers, we are serving the Universal Sovereign—the finest privilege any human can have. Ours is "the holy work of the good news." Why, no other earthly endeavor brings greater

17. How can it be proved that God has prospered the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses? 18-20. What are some of the blessings we enjoy as God's servants?

joy than does declaring the message of “the happy God” and helping others to learn about him!—Romans 15:16; 1 Timothy 1:11.

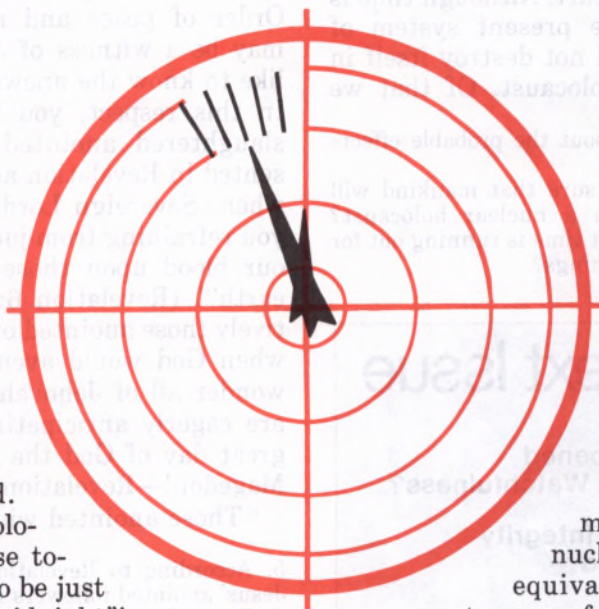
²⁰ A close relationship with God is another of our many blessings. We can pray to him with confidence that he hears us. (1 John 5:14, 15) How wonderful to be so close to Jehovah! As the psalmist put it: “The drawing near to God is good for me. In the Sovereign Lord Jehovah I have placed my refuge, to declare all your works.”—Psalm 73:28.

²¹ In view of our many blessings as God’s cleansed and zealous people, then, let us be determined to remain spiritually clean and aglow with godly zeal. If we so remain, we can be sure that Jehovah will uphold and direct us as his witnesses. Moreover, cleanness and zeal in God’s sacred service in these last days will, by his undeserved kindness, open the way for us to spend eternity doing clean and zealous works to Jehovah’s praise.

21. As Jehovah’s cleansed and zealous people, what should be our determination?

“The Time Left Is Reduced”

TIME is running out for this system of things. One reason why many have come to this conclusion is that the very existence of humankind is imperiled. Why, a nuclear holocaust seems so close today that it is said to be just “three minutes to midnight”!



1. Why do some think that time is running out for mankind?

² Writing on the subject “The Shadow of the Bomb,” Australian journalist Nick Brash stated: “A stick of gelignite weighing half a kilogram is enough to blow a man apart. Yet the nuclear stockpile is the equivalent today of four tonnes of gelignite for every

2. What has one journalist said about the nuclear threat?

man, woman and child on earth. More than \$500 billion has been ploughed into nuclear weapons and more than \$40 billion will be spent on weapons around the world this year [1983]. It's an awesome amount of overkill. Equivalent to spraying a lone mosquito with 10 cans of [the insecticide] Mortein."—*The Sun Weekend Magazine* (Melbourne, Australia), April 23, 1983.

³ It is hard to imagine the probable effects of nuclear warfare. Besides the death of hundreds of millions, the pall of global fallout, the ecological impact and the like, there would be incredible disruption of social, political and economic affairs earth wide. In fact, Dr. Brian Martin, a physicist and researcher at the Australian National University, admits: "Simply not enough is known to predict with confidence all the global effects of nuclear war."

⁴ The future seems ominous indeed. But lovers of God, take heart! Although time is running out for the present system of things, mankind will not destroy itself in a chaotic nuclear holocaust. Of that we

3. What can be said about the probable effects of nuclear warfare?

4. (a) Why can we be sure that mankind will not wipe itself out in a nuclear holocaust? (b) How do we know that time is running out for the present system of things?

In Our Next Issue

- What Has Happened to Christian Watchfulness?
- Your Life, Your Integrity and the Card
- My Lifetime of Changes for Jehovah

can be certain, for Jehovah, "the Shaper and Maker" of the earth, "did not create it as a chaos, he shaped it to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18, *Byington*) Of course, if mankind is to be saved from annihilation, prompt superhuman action must be taken to end this system, as well as its nuclear madness. Happily, the Creator of planet Earth and mankind will soon destroy this wicked, suicidal system. Its time is short because "the great day of Jehovah" is imminent! (Zephaniah 1:14-18) Yet, how comforting to know that during that rapidly approaching day of reckoning, 'Jehovah will guard all those loving him, but all the wicked ones he will annihilate'! —Psalm 145:20.

How Much Time Is Left?

⁵ God will unquestionably act against his enemies. But how much longer will it be before he puts an end to this wicked system of things and brings in his New Order of peace and righteousness? You may be a witness of Jehovah who would like to know the answer to that question. In this respect, you feel much like the slaughtered anointed Christians represented in Revelation as crying out: "Until when, Sovereign Lord holy and true, are you refraining from judging and avenging our blood upon those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:9, 10) Yes, figuratively those anointed ones wanted to know when God would avenge their blood. No wonder all of Jehovah's Witnesses today are eagerly anticipating "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon!—Revelation 16:14-16.

⁶ Those anointed witnesses whose blood

5. According to Revelation 6:9, 10, what were Jesus' anointed followers interested in learning? 6, 7. (a) Regarding time, what did Paul say at 1 Corinthians 7:29? (b) What statement of Peter emphasizes the fact that this system will have a disastrous end?

had been shed because of their faithfulness to Jehovah were in line for a reward, for the Bible account states: "A white robe was given to each of them; and they were told to rest a little while longer, until the number was filled also of their fellow slaves and their brothers who were about to be killed as they also had been." (Revelation 6:11) We can be certain that God will act at his appointed time. In fact, the words of the apostle Paul at 1 Corinthians 7:29 are most appropriate. He plainly told fellow believers: "The time left is reduced."

⁷ Paul's words not only bring Jehovah's modern-day servants encouragement but also indicate that the life of Christians should be focused on the urgent work God has assigned to them. In a similar vein, the apostle Peter wrote: "The end of all things has drawn close." (1 Peter 4:7) Peter knew that this system is slated for a disastrous end. That is where it is headed!

⁸ Both Paul and Peter emphasized the fact that this system of things is doomed. This is something that true Christians should never forget. The end will come in our day, and all the evidence indicates that it is very near indeed. Hence, day after day our pattern of life should reflect that conviction. Moreover, the fact that we have progressed so far into the final days of this system should fill us with determination to do our utmost in the fine and very urgent work of declaring the good news as Jehovah's cleansed and zealous witnesses.—Titus 2:13, 14.

Deep in "the Time of the End"

⁹ Jesus Christ foretold that during his invisible presence people would be preoc-

cupied with the affairs of life. They would be distracted, as people were in the days of Noah and of Lot. "The same way it will be on that day when the Son of man is to be revealed," said Jesus, referring to the time of his invisible presence, when destruction would be executed upon this wicked system.—Luke 17:26-30.

¹⁰ Consider also the prophecies recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. Jesus foretold things utterly beyond the control of man—such things as pestilences and great earthquakes. Moreover, there has been an "increasing of lawlessness" since 1914. Today's news, particularly in big cities, often is nothing more than a chronicle of crime and corruption. There is more to this than rising crime statistics, for a spirit of disregard for legal restraints now prevails, and the love of the greater number definitely is cooling off.—Matthew 24:12.

¹¹ Moreover, "anguish of nations" now is evident because men do not know the way out of their multiplying difficulties. (Luke 21:25, 26) Then, too, there has been a dwindling in the number of those of "this generation" of 1914, which is not to pass away before the fulfillment of all that Jesus foretold for our time. (Matthew 24:34) This is another clear indication that this system's end is near.

¹² Much additional evidence could be presented to prove that we are deep in "the time of the end." (Daniel 12:4) But no doubt the greatest proof that we are near the end of this system is the worldwide Kingdom-preaching work being done by Jehovah's Witnesses. Never before has such a thing occurred. Indeed, in 205 lands around the globe more than 2,650,000 witnesses of Jehovah are zealously

8. The fact that this system's end is near should have what effect on Jehovah's people?

9. With what are people in general preoccupied today, and has this ever happened before?

10, 11. What evidence is here presented to show that this system's end is near?

12. What is doubtless the greatest proof that we are deep in "the time of the end"?



May life's problems not distract us from the Kingdom-preaching work

doing the fine work of spreading the heartening message that Christ has been ruling in Kingdom power since 1914. And Jesus declared that when this good news of the Kingdom has been preached in all the inhabited earth, then "the end will come."—Matthew 24:14.

Live in Accord With Bible Counsel

¹³ With the remaining time clearly reduced and the end near, Jehovah's people need to live in accord with the Bible's counsel, such as the apostle Paul's words at 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. Right after saying that "the time left is reduced," he wrote: "Henceforth let those who have wives be as though they had none." Here the apostle did not mean that a Christian husband is to ignore his wife. No, but

13. How should we view Paul's statement that 'those having wives should be as though they had none'?

while a man faithfully cares for his marital responsibilities, he should have first in heart and mind his relationship with God, seeing to it that his marriage contributes to this.

¹⁴ In verse 30, Paul went on to say: "Also [let] those who weep be as those who do not weep, and those who rejoice as those who do not rejoice, and those who buy as those not possessing." What does that mean? These inspired words underscore the fact that personal matters, whether they involve possessions, sorrows or joys, are not the big things for Kingdom ministers. "Time and unforeseen occurrence" befall all of us and can change our circumstances suddenly. (Ecclesiastes 9:11; James 4:14) So it would be unwise to become so preoccupied with sorrows, hard-

14. According to 1 Corinthians 7:30, how should Kingdom proclaimers look upon personal problems, and so forth?

ships and various personal problems that these concerns seriously interfere with our ministry, our privileged activity of preaching the Kingdom good news.

¹⁵ At 1 Corinthians 7:31, the apostle Paul said: “[Let] those making use of the world [be] as those not using it to the full.” Because people of the world lack a Bible-based hope, they are wrapped up in thinking about their daily needs and ambitions. Often they seek to impress others by means of material possessions. But, as the apostle John made clear, “the showy display of one’s means of life” is one manifestation of “everything in the world” that “does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world.” And John assures us that “the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.” (1 John 2: 16, 17) Hence, it would be the height of folly for any Christian, with the prospect of an eternal future before him, to become so absorbed in personal matters that he has no time left for Kingdom interests. (Matthew 6:25-32; compare Philippians 2: 19-22; 2 Timothy 4:10.) Though it is not improper to enjoy beneficial material possessions and even some wholesome pleasure, we must never allow these things to become the focal point of our life.—Luke 12:15.

¹⁶ It is not uncommon for worldly people, or those lacking true spirituality, to complain about their lot in life. (Compare Jude 16.) If they are sickly, they may always be complaining about not being well. Similarly, the poor may complain because they are not rich. Why, such

15. Why would it be the height of folly for a Christian to become absorbed in personal matters involving material possessions, and the like?

16. What attitude and goals do worldly people often have, but what should be of utmost importance to Jehovah’s servants?

things as good health and great wealth may become consuming goals in their life! They struggle to achieve them, and failure may sink them into deep depression. But for Jehovah’s dedicated people “sacred service” is of utmost importance. (Romans 12:1, 2) True, although we are servants of Jehovah, we have problems to face. Yet these do not turn us into murmurers, complainers about our lot in life. We have God-given work to do, and to this blessed activity we give foremost attention. Indeed, we are joyful because we keep Kingdom interests first in life.—Matthew 6:33.

¹⁷ What, then, is the wise course for Jehovah’s servants? Well, we can use some things and services the world supplies, but let us never permit distractions to divert us from God’s service. (Luke 21: 34-36) Remember that nothing in the present system is permanent. Its very changeableness can be a source of distraction. Yes, as Paul said, “The scene of this world is changing.” (1 Corinthians 7:31) But we must not permit this to distract us from Jehovah’s service.

Do the Lord’s Work Diligently

¹⁸ Having spiritual discernment, we acknowledge the overwhelming evidence that we have been in “the time of the end” since 1914. Surely, then, we do not want to use the world to the full as though we would be missing out on something if we did not do so. Rather, let us fill our lives with “the work of the Lord.” We should ‘have plenty to do in the Lord’s work, knowing that our labor is not in vain in

17. As regards possible distractions, what must Jehovah’s people not permit?

18. (a) Inasmuch as we have been in “the time of the end” since 1914, with what work should we fill our lives? (b) If we keep busy in the Lord’s work, what is likely to happen to the problems of life?

connection with the Lord.' (1 Corinthians 15:58) So be absorbed in preaching and teaching Kingdom truths. Then what is likely to happen to the problems of life? Why, they will tend to recede into the background and become less important, less troublesome!

¹⁹ When giving his great prophecy regarding this system's final days, Jesus said that his followers would be "objects of hatred by all people" on account of his name. "But," he added, "he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved." (Mark 13:10-13) For us as individuals dedicated to Jehovah, "the end" may be either "the conclusion of the system of things" or our own death, perhaps after suffering at the hands of persecutors. (Matthew 24:3) In either case, we have a limited time to do the Lord's work. Should we not, therefore, be diligent and zealous in proclaiming the Kingdom message? Unquestionably, we should be!

High Time for Action!

²⁰ When the Jewish exiles were released from Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C.E., they had to make a decision. Would they return to their homeland and restore Jehovah's worship there, or would they remain in Babylon? Israelites who stayed in that city were not necessarily wicked, for aged Daniel was one of them. They could give the returning remnant material and moral support and could also send along a "voluntary offering" for Jehovah's house in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:2-4) Thus they could help to advance true worship. How happy all of Jehovah's worshipers could be as the remnant set out for their homeland, carrying

19. What does it mean to 'endure to the end'?

20. How were the Israelites freed from Babylonian captivity able to show their concern for the worship of Jehovah?

along the sacred utensils for use at Jehovah's temple! And the carriers of sanctuary articles had to make sure that they had cleansed themselves of all possible defilement with Babylon's religious and moral uncleanness.—Isaiah 52:11.

²¹ Are you as concerned about true worship as were those freed Israelites of some 25 centuries ago? Do you consider it a joyous privilege to render sacred service to Jehovah as part of a cleansed and zealous organization that honors his holy name? Can you discern the many evidences that we are living deep in "the time of the end"? If you answer yes to these questions, then make sure that you are taking positive action right now. Concentrate on keeping Kingdom interests first in your life. Since "the time left is reduced," our present opportunities to spread the good news take on greater and greater importance. Blessed are all who center their life around the Kingdom as loyal witnesses of Jehovah with plenty to do in preaching the good news while there is still time!

21. (a) What questions are presented for your consideration? (b) Since "the time left is reduced," what is true of opportunities to spread the good news?

What Answers Would You Give?

☐ Why is time running out for this system of things?

☐ How do we know that we are deep in "the time of the end"?

☐ If we keep busy in the Lord's work, what is likely to happen to our problems?

☐ Since the end is near, around what should we center our lives?

Integrity-Keeper in Argentina Rewarded

FOR more than 30 years, Jehovah's Witnesses in Argentina found it necessary to carry on their Kingdom activities under great pressure. Nevertheless, they have always maintained Christian neutrality, avoided every form of idolatry and adhered to the Bible in all other ways. (John 17:16; Exodus 20:4-6; 1 John 5:19) They have also continued to press ahead in doing God's work and upholding the righteous principles of his Word. Their faithful endurance was rewarded when they were given official recognition as a religion on March 9, 1984.

Happily, Argentina's present government has taken an enlightened view of the Witnesses and their Scriptural position. In recognition of their status as a religious organization and out of respect for freedom of worship, the children of Jehovah's Witnesses were recently exempted from participation in patriotic ceremonies. Of interest in this regard is the following report appearing in the well-known newspaper *La Nacion*, of Buenos Aires, on August 18, 1984:

"Exception to School Rules for Honoring the Flag"

"For religious reasons, students in teaching establishments set up for the promotion of the teaching of raising and lowering the flag can renounce this honor, according to a resolution of the Ministry of Education and Justice, signed by Dr. Carlos Alconada Aramburú.

"This modifies the last paragraph of the point 'National Flag' B 2 of the resolution No. 1635/78, which said: 'Students cannot renounce this honor (assignment for carrying, raising and lowering the country's emblem) for religious reasons or for any other reason they may call upon.'

"In this way, a great number of problems are avoided, which have arisen in many schools attended by students who are members of certain religions that prohibit the veneration of emblems that do not exclusively represent God, or simply preach as sinful all worship of effigies or earthly symbols.

"The ministerial resolution specifies that the refusal of this function must be based 'on the principles upheld by any religion or cult recognized by the state and inscribed in the National Ministry of Foreign Relations and Worship' and extends the application of the rule 'to the veneration, display and carrying of the National Emblem, insignia and symbols that have the colors of the country, and the singing of the National Anthem.'

"Finally, the ministerial resolution No. 1818 points out that 'this criterion will be applied, provided that the attitude of abstention is respectful and private and does not arouse manifestations of offense, affront, scorn or dishonor.'"

On the same date, the Buenos Aires newspaper *Clarín* made a similar report under the heading "More Respect for Freedom of Worship," and added:

"Anything but Affronts"

"In this case, the Ministry's resolution expresses that the criterion will be applied provided that the abstention is respectful, private and does not involve affronts, offense, scorn or dishonor.

"By the same decree, resolution No. 1635 of 1978 was annulled which established that no student could renounce the acts and honors mentioned by alleging religious or other reasons.

"The annulled resolution was repeatedly questioned, especially by the adherents of Jehovah's Witnesses who, out of respect for their religion, refuse to venerate the symbol of any country.

"This question caused numerous conflicts during the military regime since the students who followed this criterion were expelled from the schools, to the extent that they were appealed before the lower courts.

"Also, followers of this sect were sentenced to prison by the military authorities during the period from 1976/1983 because they considered this to be an insult or disgrace to the nation that had provided them with their primary studies and in some cases at a higher level."

It is fine to observe this evidence of respect for freedom of worship. And such steps as these have, indeed, proved to be a grand reward for integrity-keeping witnesses of Jehovah in Argentina.

Youths, 'What You Sow You Reap'



IT WAS a touching scene. Jesus Christ knew that his earthly ministry was drawing to a close. Soon he would enter Jerusalem, where a painful death awaited him.

Jesus had been teaching "great crowds," miraculously curing people and counseling his disciples while he still had time. (Matthew 19:2-12) A busy schedule indeed! Perhaps his disciples felt he was too busy to be bothered with "mere" children, who had been brought "for him to put his hands upon them and offer prayer." (Matthew 19:13) At any rate, they "began to reprimand" the well-meaning parents of the young children.—Luke 18:15.

But how did Jesus respond? "At seeing this Jesus was *indignant* [at the disciples] and said to them: 'Let the young children come to me; do not try to stop them, for the kingdom of God belongs to suchlike ones. Truly I say to you, Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a young child will by no means enter into it.' And he took the children into his arms and began blessing them, laying his hands upon them." (Mark 10:13-16) How pleased the parents and their children must have been!

This incident shows the tender concern that Christ Jesus has for young people. In turn, Jesus' concern perfectly reflects the attitude of Jehovah God. It was Jehovah who lovingly included a promise of long life in his commandment that young people honor their parents. (Exodus 20:12;

Ephesians 6:1-4) Moreover, in the Mosaic Law Jehovah made special provision for the spiritual instruction of children. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) Are you a parent? Then the tender emotions you feel for your children are but imperfect reflections of the feelings shown by "God our Father, who loved us."—2 Thessalonians 2:16; Genesis 1:26.

Serious Warnings

But the affection that Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have for young people is not sentimental. It does not turn a blind eye to wrongdoing. (Proverbs 15:3) The principle that "whatever a man [or a youth] is sowing, this he will also reap" cannot be negated by tender emotions. Youths and parents need to realize this.—Galatians 6:7, 8.

Because of Jehovah's concern for young people, he included straightforward warnings to them in his Word. For instance, an inspired proverb says: "The eye that holds a father in derision and that despises obedience to a mother—the ravens of the torrent valley will pick it out and the sons of the eagle will eat it up." Yes, gross disrespect and disobedience by young people could cost them their life!—Proverbs 30:17; compare Exodus 21:15, 17.

Jehovah well knows that young people have a sort of 'herd instinct.' If you are a young person, likely you can testify to the strong pressure you feel to speak, dress and act like your peers. If your associations are good, then this peer pressure can be beneficial. But if you are surrounded by bad influences, the result can be damaging indeed. (Proverbs 13:20) It was to protect youths—in fact, all the people of Israel—against contamination by bad, rebellious influences that the Mosaic Law prescribed the death penalty in extreme cases. Yes, a stubborn and rebellious son was put to death in order to 'clear away what was bad from their midst.' (Deuteronomy 21:18-21) Israelite parents who wanted to protect their children from rotten association doubtless appreciated that law.

The Bible shows just how bad things can get when young people herd together without discipline. Jehovah's faithful prophet Elisha encountered a band of juvenile delinquents as he traveled from Jericho to Bethel. They jeered him, showing great disrespect for him and his prophetic office. "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!" they shouted. (2 Kings 2:23) By this, they may have meant for him to get off the earth as they supposed his predecessor Elijah had done. In any case, they did not want God's representative around.

Elisha endured their jeers and taunts for a limited time. "Finally," the record says, "he turned behind him and saw them and called down evil upon them in the name of Jehovah. Then two she-bears came out from the woods and went tearing to pieces forty-two children of their number." How the parents of those children must have wished that they had disciplined them and taught them to respect their elders! (2 Kings 2:24; Leviticus 19:32) But now it was too late! They reaped the harvest of their neglect.

Worldly youths today routinely mock teachers, parents and anyone in authority. Often, television scriptwriters are paid large sums to portray children as clever and adults as stupid. Christian youths are surrounded by disrespectful persons and potentially bad association. Sadly, some have been affected by all of this. But this need not happen to you. Cultivate wholesome respect for older people and especially for your parents.

A Word to Parents

If you are a parent, the attitude and conduct of your youngster should be of great concern, for surely you want your child to 'sow to the spirit.' So parents, how do your younger children behave at meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses? Do they show proper respect for others? How do they respond when spoken to by older persons? Do they control themselves after the meeting is over, or do they race around the Kingdom Hall? How do you respond if an attendant must point out to you that your children have been causing a distraction or even a dangerous situation? Do you realize that seeds of disrespect and rowdiness, if excused now because you think your children are 'too young to know better,' can lead to a bitter reaping of outright rebellion later?

Questions such as these surely furnish Christian parents with food for thought. By word and example, therefore, they should help their youngsters to 'sow to the spirit.'

A Need for Caution

If you are a young person, you need to make an individual effort to 'sow to the spirit.' This calls for the exercise of caution and good judgment in various things, including entertainment.

For instance, some older youths have been influenced by the bad association

found in television serial dramas. These programs are like a training course in fleshly thinking and the cultivation of improper desires. While these dramas once were aimed at the bored housewife, now they are increasingly slanted at youth. So, youths, ask yourselves: Is it possible to watch such fare and still follow the Bible's counsel, "Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world"? Remember that the apostle John went on to say: "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world." And do not forget that "the world is passing away and so is its desire." If you want eternal life, then, reject worldly desires.—1 John 2:15-17.

If you are a fan of serial dramas, is it because you hate the world and want no part of it? Or is it because you secretly yearn for such a life-style? One young Christian, a full-time minister, caught herself watching these programs and thinking, 'Well, if I can't do these immoral things, at least I can watch others do them.' Has that happened to you? If so, what kind of seeds are being sown in your heart? What can you expect to reap in a moment of weakness or temptation?

'Sow With a View to the Spirit'

Youths, the world makes it very easy to 'sow with a view to the flesh.' There is a battle under way for control of your heart, and passive resistance on your part is not enough. As the apostle Paul put it: "He who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh, but *he who is sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit.*"—Galatians 6:8.

There is an old adage that 'the best

defense is a good offense.' If you wish to resist "the desire of the flesh" in these wicked days, stay on the offensive! Sow with a view to spiritual things. Fill your heart so full of spiritual hopes, plans and aspirations that fleshly desires are crowded out.

Is there a difference between your goals and those of your worldly classmates? There should be, if you are serious about "sowing with a view to the spirit." Likely, many of your fellow students are planning to get out of school, get a job and make a great deal of money. But what about you? With a view to spiritual things, why not plan to enter full-time service, perhaps hoping to serve someday at a Bethel home or as a traveling overseer or as a missionary?

Do not be content merely to drift along, following the world's view that 'you can have your religion, but keep it in its place, and you can have your career too.' By 'in its place,' the world means in *last* place in your life. If you adopt such thinking, you will soon be trying to serve two masters, and Jesus tells us that no one can succeed in such a course.—Matthew 6:24.

Perhaps it will be years before you will finish school. But it is never too early to begin sowing spiritual seeds in your life. The courses you take in school now can have a bearing on your future full-time service if they can equip you to find part-time secular work later.

In the meantime, concentrate on making a real contribution to your family's efforts to serve Jehovah together. Show that you are eager to prepare for Christian meetings and attend them. Concentrate on what is said at the meetings and discuss these points with your parents afterward. Regularly and zealously share in the field ministry. Set personal goals for yourself in your ministry, such as conducting a home Bible study, or auxiliary pioneer-

ing during the summer months. Be quick to respond to your parents' efforts to train you.

Youths, have you been sowing to the

flesh or to the spirit? Be honest with yourselves. Set spiritual goals and 'sow with a view to the spirit' now. Do so while there is still time to reap everlasting life!

Questions From Readers

■ Why do children of Jehovah's Witnesses not do holiday-oriented classwork, since other students carry out such assignments regardless of their religion?

Jehovah's Witnesses encourage their children to be diligent and cooperative students in school. But they feel it is incompatible with the family's deep-seated religious convictions for their children to engage in classwork based on holidays that they do not celebrate.

Public schools are open to all children, regardless of whether their families worship at a church, synagogue or temple, or have no religion. Sometimes class assignments are linked to a religious or national holiday that most people in the community celebrate. For instance, in many lands classwork during December incorporates Christmas music or art. Students from Jewish, Hindu or other non-Christian families may not celebrate Christmas at home. Still, some of them feel that they can sing holiday songs or draw pictures of Santa Claus, Christmas trees, and the like. They might reason that they do so objectively, while not celebrating Christmas.

Other students ask to be excused from such holiday work. Jewish students might do so because of what Jehovah God commanded ancient Israel. "When you enter the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to imitate the abhorrent

practices of those nations." "Do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did those nations worship their gods? I too will follow those practices.' You shall not act thus toward the LORD your God."*

As a specific example (which has been misapplied to decorating a Christmas tree but actually refers to making an idol), Jehovah said: "It is the work of a craftsman's hands. He cuts down a tree in the forest with an ax, he adorns it with silver and gold, he fastens it with nails and hammer." That was not to be viewed as a mere artistic effort. Jehovah pointedly commanded: "Do not learn to go the way of the nations."*

Children of Jehovah's Witnesses go to school because they want to obtain a reasonable education. A teacher, perhaps as an art exercise in the winter, might ask all students to draw a scene or work on some other project involving deer, snow and fir trees. If this was simply an art exercise and was not connected with Christmas, few Witness parents would probably object. But Jehovah's Witnesses feel conscientiously

obliged to abstain from school activities that conflict with their Bible-based understanding of God's will. They seek to apply in their lives what Jesus said: "God is a Spirit, and those worshipping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) So if the assignment called upon the students to share in unbiblical holiday activities, Witnesses would abstain even if this puzzled others with a different viewpoint. But, in accord with freedom of religion and their desire to be good students, Jehovah's Witnesses may ask to do an alternative exercise that would not have religious aspects.—Compare 1 Peter 4:3, 4.

Many considerate schoolteachers have appreciated receiving the clear explanation of such matters presented in the brochure *School and Jehovah's Witnesses*. In part, this helpful publication says: "Jehovah's Witnesses for conscientious reasons do not take any part in these holiday activities—whether it be singing, playing music, acting in plays, marching in parades, drawing pictures, attending parties, eating and drinking, and so forth. Yet, at the same time, we do not object to others celebrating such holidays nor try to hinder them. We appreciate it very much when teachers kindly excuse our children from participation in all activities that in any way commemorate these holidays."—Page 21.

* Deuteronomy 18:9; 12:30, 31; Jeremiah 10:2-4, *The Holy Scriptures, A New Translation*, by The Jewish Publication Society of America.

