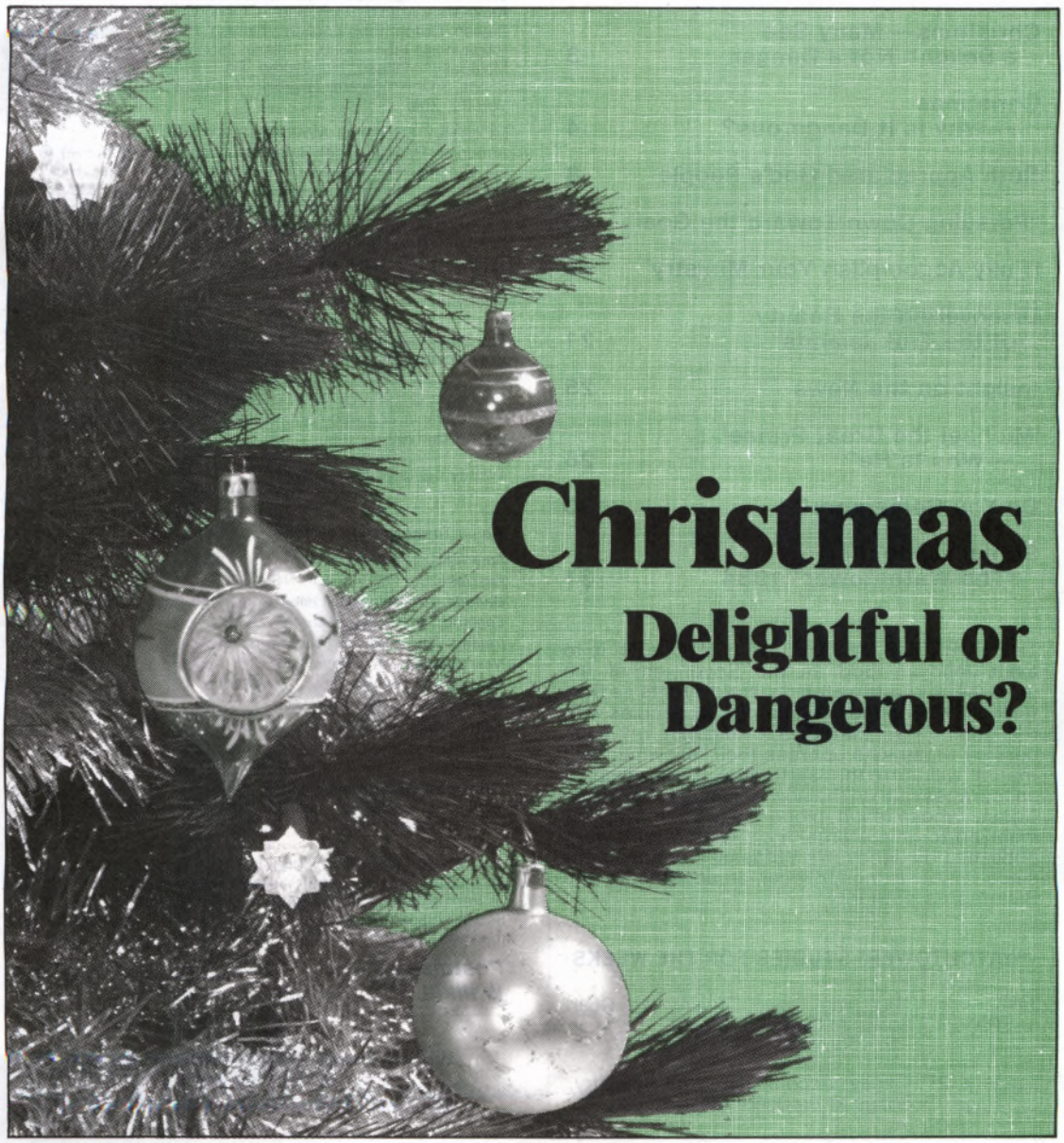
December 15, 1984

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



Christmas

Delightful or Dangerous?

The Watchtower®

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

December 15, 1984
Vol. 105, No. 24

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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.

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Christmas —Many See a Delight, Not a Danger

"THERE seems a magic in the very name of Christmas," wrote a youthful Charles Dickens. "Petty jealousies and discords are forgotten . . . Would that Christmas lasted the whole year through." Dickens, it seems, found much delight in Christmas, and he communicated it to millions through novels like *A Christmas Carol.* On Christmas Eve this book is still read aloud in family circles (former U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt reportedly followed the custom). When Charles Dickens died, a youngster exclaimed: "Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?" But Father Christmas, or Santa Claus, is still very much alive in the minds and hearts of many children.

Nor are children alone in viewing the celebration as a delight, not a danger. An influential Australian was touched by what he saw through an open window on Christmas Eve 1937. A radio was softly playing, and there sat an old lady, candle in hand, listening to carols. By next Christmas he organized a mass outdoor gathering called "Carols by Candlelight." It was well suited to Australian summer evenings, and its popularity soon spread. Today, all across that country, people gather, light a candle and sing carols.

Francis of Assisi was a real champion of the cause of Christmas. In 1224 he conducted a Christmas service around a real manger with a live ox and ass, to the delight of many townsfolk. Soon the crib scene became popular, and at Christmastime it is still displayed in many Catholic homes and churches. The Aracoeli, a church in Rome, has a crib scene with a babe adorned with gold and jewels. Women bring their children to venerate this "holy babe." Alongside the image are piles of letters from all over the world asking for help and miracles.

In England, Prince Albert (a German) and his wife, Queen Victoria, popularized the Christmas tree by using one in their 1841 Christmas celebration. Soon the German *Weihnachtsbaum* became very popular among the British. Later, two Anglican clergymen suggested that a Christmas tree and a crib be used in St. Paul's Ca-

thedral, London. This met opposition, so King George V was asked to present the Cathedral with two trees, which he did. Ever since, the crib and trees have been part of the December scene there, and other Protestant churches use these symbols too.

Christmas practices may vary in different lands, yet the Christmas spell, such as is created with lights and evergreens, cribs and carols, parties and presents, is something that many find irresistible. "Where is the child for whom Christmas Day is not the greatest in all the year?" asked historian Pimlott. But if Christmas seems so delightful to many, why is the thought of danger brought up in this discussion? The fact is, the true origin of Christmas is disturbing, and its effects can be harmful. How so?

Christmas —Why Is It Dangerous?

"CHRISTMAS," wrote George Bernard Shaw in 1897, "is forced on a reluctant and disgusted nation by the shopkeepers and the press." Was that so back then? More importantly, is it true today?

In its 1983 Christmas message, *The Star* of Johannesburg, South Africa, lamented: "With loud exhortations to spend, spend, spend, blaring from radios, television and supermarkets, in newspapers and in magazines, many people have lost the message of love in a fever of buying."

In the face of such things, religious people urge: Put Christ back into Christmas. But Christians have reason to ask: Was Christ ever part of Christmas? This is of crucial concern, for true Christians understand the danger. If they share in religious activities that God does not approve, they will not have his blessing. So, what is the origin of Christmas?

Its Background

Ancient northern peoples feared that the long darkness of December would conquer the sun. As part of a magical rite, they decorated their homes with holly, ivy, mistletoe, laurels and other evergreens because these seemed to have supernatural ability to survive. Candles and fires were burned in an attempt to revive the dying sun. In parts of Europe the ceremonial burning of a log is still practiced. What is behind this practice that is now a Christmas custom? "It was apparently the fusion of two old customs—lights with evergreens—which gave us our modern Christmas-tree," concludes Michael Harrison in *The Story of Christmas.*

The ancient Romans had a winter festival called the Saturnalia, which commenced on December 17th and lasted until the 24th. In his book *Ancient Italy and Modern Religion,* Dr. Conway gives this description of that festival: "Ordinary life

was by common consent turned topsy-turvy; people gave up serious occupations, and when they were not feasting at one another's houses, they roamed about the streets calling to one another 'Io Saturnalia' just as we say 'Merry Christmas' . . . You were expected at this festival to make some present to all your friends; . . . you were thought to be a quite unsociable person if you were sober all through the Saturnalia!"

Are nativity scenes, such as this one at a church in Rome, linked to Christian worship?

In about 85 C.E., the poet Martial published *Xenia* and *Apophoreta,* two books made up of 350 short verses. These poems were designed to be copied and sent with Saturnalia gifts to add, as Dr. Conway explains, "a pleasant literary flavour." Does that not sound like today's cards at Christmastime? And like some modern Christmas cards, a number of Martial's verses were grossly immoral.

The Saturnalia was hardly over when the Romans celebrated the New Year festival of Kalends. "In the middle of this period of general gaiety," explains *The Story of Christmas,* "there was a day set aside for special reverence to the sun whose apparent rebirth on the Winter Solstice had originally provided the excuse for all these widespread pagan jollifications. This day was known as *Dies Solis Invicti Nati,* the Day of the Birth of the Unconquered Sun, and it fell on what corresponds to *25 December* in our calendar." This celebration was later labeled Christmas so that the Roman population might be attracted to a decadent "Christianity."

Yes, Christmas has its origin in non-Christian sun worship. The celebration can be further traced back to ancient Babylonia where the people worshiped the sun-god Shamash. "Uncanny parallels to Christmas customs occur in the New Year celebrations of Babylon," admits historian Pimlott in *The Englishman's Christmas.*

Can you thus see why the word "danger" should be linked with Christmas. The Bible gives a clear warning to Christians with regard to Babylon the Great (related to religion based on ancient Babylonish teachings). God's Word advises: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues." (Revelation 18:4) Some may feel that it is rather an exaggeration to view Christmas as a spiritual danger. But let us note the historical facts about how the early Christians viewed keeping a holiday that supposedly centered on Jesus' birth but actually was linked with a pagan celebration.

Did Early Christians Celebrate Christmas?

"The early Christians," states Professor Ferguson in his book *The Religions of the Roman Empire,* "did not celebrate the birthday of Jesus; it was unrecorded." The

Bible does not give the exact date of Jesus' birth. Furthermore, it indicates that Jesus was born, not in the cold, rainy month of December or January but in a warmer season. How can this be said?

About the time of Jesus' birth, the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus decreed that subjects travel to the city of their birth and get registered. The Bible reports: "All people went traveling to be registered, each one to his own city." (Luke 2:1-7) Joseph and Mary traveled over 70 miles (110 km) from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Would this have been practical or possible in the cold, rainy December period?

But that is not all. Concerning the time of Jesus' birth, the Bible adds: "There were also in that same country shepherds *living out of doors* and keeping watches *in the night* over their flocks." (Luke 2:8) This description does not fit Israel's rainy month that corresponds to our present December—a time when temperatures in the Bethlehem area can drop very low. —Ezra 10:9, 13; Jeremiah 36:22.

There is another important point. If Jesus wanted his followers to celebrate his birth, why did he not instruct them to do so? With respect to the day of his death, he outlined a simple celebration and commanded: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19) Jesus gave no such instruction regarding his birth.

The word "Christmas" does not even appear in the Bible because there was no such celebration among Jesus' early disciples. Dr. R. S. Conway explains: "The great theologian Origen, early in the third century several times repeats a remark which he says he took from one of his predecessors, that no just man or Christian saint had ever kept a birthday, his own or anyone else's. It was only evil persons like Pharaoh or Herod whose birthday celebrations were mentioned in the Scriptures. This shows pretty clearly that if he had ever heard of such a festival as Christmas he repudiated it entirely."

Apostate Christians and Pagan Winter Festivals

Early Christians resisted the temptation to join in the pagan festivities of their neighbors. But the Bible foretold that, in time, a great apostasy would develop among Christians (Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Peter 2: 1, 2) Toward the end of the second century, the writer Tertullian had to censure "Christians" for taking part in "the feasts of Saturn, and of January, and of the Winter solstice." He mentions the "dispensing of gifts" and expresses surprise that many were decorating their homes with "lamps and laurels."

Despite such admonition the original pure Christian congregation was corrupted. Going from bad to worse, apostate Christians justified their course by giving the pagan celebrations a "Christian" name. As the book *Christmas* admits: "The Christian Church . . . in the 4th century found it convenient to take over the sacred pagan day of December 25, the winter solstice . . . The birthday of the sun became the birthday of the Son of God."

Why Christmas Is So Dangerous

Some might feel that the celebration of Christmas is dangerous because it promotes a spirit of selfishness. For instance, entertainer Danie Martins said on a South African radio broadcast that he was shocked to learn how children viewed Christmas. At children's parties he asked them why "we celebrate Christmas." The usual reply: "To get presents." Parents and authors Martin and Deidre Bobgan, point to another danger: "Many adults feed children dishonesties and distortions

which eventually may lead to atheism. From a child's eye view, if Santa told as truth is a lie, then maybe God told as truth also is a lie."

Yet the most serious danger of celebrating Christmas is that it could lead to losing God's favor. Why? There are a number of reasons. For example, Christmas promotes idolatry, something forbidden in the Bible. (1 John 5:21) This is openly practiced in front of many nativity scenes, such as in the Aracoeli church in Rome. What about the introduction of the heathen Christmas tree into many Protestant churches? Does this not smack of idolatry?

Furthermore, the celebration of Christmas has promoted the worship of Jesus in place of his Father, Jehovah God. This is another form of idolatry since the glorified Lord Jesus Christ is "the beginning of the creation by God." (Revelation 3:14; see also Romans 1:25.) Carol-singing has served to entrench this wrong idea in billions of young hearts. One popular carol includes these words: "In the bleak midwinter a stable-place sufficed the Lord God Almighty Jesus Christ."

The fact is that Jesus never claimed to be God Almighty. Instead Jesus declared: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) He directed all worship to his Father, saying: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him *alone* you must render sacred service." (Matthew 4:10) Even after his resurrection, Jesus continued to direct worship to his heavenly Father.—John 20:17.

Christmas gives a religious covering to what in reality is a time of overindulgence and abandon. Loose behavior at Christmas parties is a notorious cause of marriage problems. According to the British National Marriage Guidance Council, twice the normal weekly number of couples

At Christmastime, children of Rome are brought to worship this image in the Aracoeli church

came for counseling following the 1983 Christmas season. Christmas parties were singled out as one of the causes as well as "lack of money for food, gifts and toys." Such things relate to another serious problem. "The rate of suicides and attempted suicides escalates alarmingly at this time," according to a Johannesburg psychiatrist.

Nor can we ignore that those who continue under the religious spell of "Babylon the Great" face great danger. Bible prophecy indicates that the time for her judgment is very near.—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

To be sure, the world empire of false religion, with its heathen practices and holidays, will soon be gone forever. Now, while there is yet time, separate yourself from her enticing activities. Associate instead with true Christians who will survive to enjoy everlasting peace and goodwill among men.—Psalm 37:29.

Ruth Appreciated God's People

THE attractive young woman here is Ruth, who lived in Moab, east of the Dead Sea. Even though she was raised among the Moabites who worshiped false gods, she is eager to serve the true God, Jehovah, along with his people of Israel. (Numbers 25:1-5) When she has this opportunity, she grasps it with an earnestness that endears her to other worshipers of Jehovah who know her as "an excellent woman."—Ruth 3:11.

A famine in Israel provided Ruth with this opportunity to serve Jehovah. As a result of the famine, a family of four from the town of Bethlehem moved to the land of Moab. They are the family seen here —Elimelech, his wife Naomi and their sons Mahlon and Chilion. But shortly thereafter Elimelech dies. Later Mahlon marries Ruth, and Chilion marries another Moabite girl named Orpah. So with both a husband and a mother-in-law who worship Jehovah, Ruth comes to know the true God.

Not long afterward, however, both Mahlon and Chilion die, leaving the three women without husbands or children. You can just imagine their sadness. What will they do? Naomi learns that the famine in Israel is over. So she decides to return to her people in Bethlehem. Ruth and Orpah love their mother-in-law very much and they go with her. But after traveling for a while on the road, Naomi, as you can see, tells the girls: 'Go back home and stay with your mothers.'

Naomi kisses the girls good-bye, and they start to cry. "No, but with you we shall return to your people," they sob. Naomi urges: 'You must go back, my daughters.' So Orpah starts on her way home. However, Ruth does not go.

Naomi turns to Ruth and says: "Return with your widowed sister-in-law." But Ruth replies with convincing earnestness: "Do not plead with me to abandon you, to turn back from accompanying you; for where you go I shall go, and where you spend the night I shall spend the night. Your people will be my people, and your God my God." (Ruth 1:1-17) So Ruth returns with Naomi and becomes a part of God's people of Israel.

Have you, like Ruth, come to know the true God, Jehovah, and the people that are worshiping him? If so, may you have the same determination to give loyal support to Jehovah's servants today as Ruth did long ago!

"Pursuing Down Toward the Goal"

"Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead, I am pursuing down toward the goal."
—PHILIPPIANS 3:13, 14.

WHEN Saul of Tarsus was on the way to Damascus intent on persecuting Christians, a light from heaven flashed around him, and he heard a voice say: "'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' He said: 'Who are you, Lord?' He said: 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Nevertheless, rise and enter into the city, and what you must do will be told you.'"—Acts 9:3-6.

[2] Why did Jesus give Saul of Tarsus such an experience? Jesus explained it to the disciple Ananias: "This man [Saul] is a chosen vessel to me to bear my name to the nations as well as to kings and the sons of Israel." Ananias obediently went, laid hands upon Saul and said: "Jesus that appeared to you on the road over which you were coming, has sent me forth, in order that you may recover sight and be filled with holy spirit." (Acts 9:15, 17) As soon as he recovered sight, he was baptized, starting his association with the Christian congregation in Damascus. Now, as a baptized Christian minister, he immediately got busy in zealously preaching the good news about Jesus, the Son of God, among the Jews.—Acts 9:20-22.

[3] This zealous minister is better known as the apostle Paul. He always spoke highly of his ministry and the undeserved kindness that was shown to him. "I am

1, 2. (a) How did Saul of Tarsus receive an assignment in the ministry, and what was it? (b) He had what reaction to this assignment?

3, 4. (a) How did Paul evaluate his ministry? (b) In what way did Paul's attitude differ from that shown by the congregation in Ephesus?

grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who imparted power to me, because he considered me faithful by assigning me to a ministry, although formerly I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man. Nevertheless, I was shown mercy, because I was ignorant and acted with a lack of faith." (1 Timothy 1:12-14) Yes, he highly esteemed the ministry.—Romans 11:13; 2 Corinthians 4:7.

[4] Such expressions on Paul's part illustrate the evaluation of the ministry that he maintained throughout his career. He did not fall into the condition that at one time existed in the congregation in Ephesus, to whom Jesus said: "I hold this against you, that you have left the love you had at first." (Revelation 2:4) Rather, Paul kept his goal in front of him and kept up the same zeal and enthusiasm for the ministry that he had in the early days in Damascus.

[5] After being a faithful Christian minister for decades, Paul used his own background and experiences to encourage fellow ministers in the Philippian congregation so that they would not give up. Have you not found that usually it is very interesting to hear how someone learned the truth and became a minister? Accordingly, do you encourage others on the basis of your personal history and years of faithful service as a dedicated Christian minister?

[6] Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, could refer to his life as a practicing Jew. He said: "If any other man thinks he has grounds for confidence in the flesh, I the more so: circumcised the eighth day, out of the family stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born from Hebrews; as respects law, a Pharisee; as respects zeal, persecuting the congregation; as respects righteousness that is by means of law, one who proved himself blameless." —Philippians 3:4-6.

[7] With such a background Paul could have had many material advantages in association with the Jews. However, he went on to say: "What things were gains to me, these I have considered loss on account of the Christ. Why, for that matter, I do indeed also consider all things to be loss on account of the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. On account of him I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, . . . so as to know him and the power of his resurrection and a sharing in his sufferings, submitting myself to a death like his, to see if I may by any means attain to the earlier resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:7-11) Those are words demonstrating complete faith in Christ Jesus and the provisions made by Jehovah God. Are you like Paul in not letting desire for prominence or material gain dominate your life?

The Right Mental Attitude

[8] After Paul had served God for decades, could he let up in the pursuit of his goal? He wrote the Philippians: "Brothers, I do not yet consider myself as having laid hold on it; but there is one thing about it: Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead, I am pursuing down toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13, 14) He had already made a good record in the Christian ministry and endured many things, and it was while he was in prison

5. After we have served Jehovah for years, how can we encourage others?
6. What was Paul's background as a Jew?
7. Why did Paul leave those things behind, and what did he gain by so doing?
8. (a) After serving long in the ministry, what did Paul say about his goal? (b) How can Paul's words at 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 be true in our case?

in Rome that he wrote these words to the Philippians, yet his ministry had not come to an end. If he was to receive the prize that was available to those who served in the first-century Christian congregation, namely "the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus," then he had to keep on pursuing his goal. This is the correct view held by all mature Christians, whether their hope is for future life in heaven or on earth. Each one of us does well to examine our own position and our way of thinking to see whether we truly appreciate the ministry that has been committed to us under God's arrangement.

[9] Paul identifies the mature Christian outlook, saying: "Let us, then, as many of us as are mature, be of this mental attitude; and if you are mentally inclined otherwise in any respect, God will reveal the above attitude to you." (Philippians 3:15) The mature Christian attitude leads to success. This involves following in the footsteps of Christ Jesus, who successfully completed his assigned earthly ministry. Jesus was able to pray to his Father: "I have glorified you on the earth, having finished the work you have given me to do. So now you, Father, glorify me alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was."—John 17: 4, 5.

[10] If we are to please Jehovah God, and in this way receive the prize of everlasting life, we must have the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus showed. Knowing this, Paul appealed: "Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took

9. We can have what mature mental attitude?
10. What more can be said about Christ's exemplary mental attitude toward Jehovah's service?

Christ Jesus did much to strengthen those who had spiritual needs

a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake. For this very reason also God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name." (Philippians 2:5-9) What a marvelous attitude Jesus had! Can we copy him? Humbly seeking to do God's will always leads to blessings. When an assignment is carried out, it results in good.

[11] In view of what Paul wrote, some in the Philippian congregation evidently still had to strive to attain the mature Christian attitude. Paul took the initiative to

11. What should be done by those who are spiritually strong and mature?

encourage and help them. In most congregations today, there are those who are stronger in the faith and those who have some weakness. The stronger ones should, like Paul, encourage the others. Christ Jesus did much to strengthen those who had spiritual needs, setting an example for Christians to follow. "We, though, who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of those not strong, and not to be pleasing ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor in what is good for his upbuilding. Now may the God who supplies endurance and comfort grant you to have among yourselves the same mental attitude that Christ Jesus had, that with one accord you may with one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."—Romans 15:1, 2, 5, 6.

12 Paul, in strengthening the faith of the Romans, pointed out that "the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) During his ministry Jesus, too, had much to say about everlasting life. It is a wonderful reward God offers to his servants. God wants his servants to keep their eyes on the prize, for this motivates them to be faithful. When we do so we are showing strong faith in his promises. At our Christian meetings we have occasion to speak often of the reward Jehovah gives to faithful ones.

Our Ministry Despite Difficulties

13 Our keeping the right outlook, or mental attitude, will prove to be invaluable as we carry on our ministry in these last days. Though some may lose the love they had at first, may we be resolved that this will never be so with us. The Scriptures themselves are an aid to this end. (Romans 15:4) Through our study of them we gain hope. Are you deeply thankful to Jehovah for the Scriptures, with the many things recorded in them about faithful servants of Jehovah such as the apostle Paul?

14 What would we do if we had the personal experiences Paul mentions at 2 Corinthians 11:23-28? Why did Paul not give up? Because he had his goal in mind. We may experience some similar things. Yet we must keep pursuing our goal for the prize God holds out to us. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he showed his good thinking by mentioning that he was in prison bonds for the defense of the good news. (Philippians 1:7, 16) He understood why he was there. That is important when we come under such a test. Furthermore, we know that Jehovah can use us to give a witness to his praise.

15 The Philippians were having some tests similar to what Paul was having at Rome. He wrote: "For you have the same struggle as you saw in my case and as you now hear about in my case." (Philippians 1:30) In these circumstances Paul could write encouragingly to them. He said that the good news had become known among the Praetorian Guard. Evidently the Christian message had even penetrated into the very household of the emperor, some there becoming dedicated Christians. The congregation in Rome was responding well to the situation, not getting downhearted, discouraged or afraid due to the fact that Paul was being held in prison. Instead they were busy with the work Jehovah wanted done, showing all the

12. We should have what view of the prize that God will provide?
13. What part do the Scriptures play in our having the right mental attitude?
14. How did Paul keep his positive attitude in the face of difficult experiences?
15. (a) Why did the Philippian congregation need encouragement, and what did Paul tell them to build them up? (b) How had the congregation in Rome reacted to Paul's imprisonment?

more courage to speak the word of God fearlessly.—Philippians 1:12-14; 4:22.

16 When opposition arises, there are great benefits in maintaining the unity of the Christian congregation. Paul stressed unity and oneness. (Philippians 1:27-2:4) Such times require expressing words of faith to one another, so that we do not give up in pursuing toward the goal. It is a time to keep a loving, humble attitude and to do good to one another, looking out for the interests of one another.—Compare Philippians 2:19-21.

Overcoming Obstacles

17 A close associate of the apostle Paul was Epaphroditus. On account of the Lord's work he came quite near to death, but there is no evidence that his health problem caused him to lose sight of the goal ahead of him. (Philippians 2:25-30) At 2 Corinthians 12:7, Paul mentioned his own experience with "a thorn in the flesh," possibly referring to some difficulty with his eyes. He prayed that it might depart from him, but his request was not granted. Nevertheless, having his goal in mind helped Paul to keep pursuing it despite any physical ailments. Though having weaknesses, he found a way with the help of Christ Jesus.—2 Corinthians 12:9.

18 The letter to the Philippians (4:11-13) also made mention of life's necessities. Experiencing shortages can be a test for the Christian as to whether he is going to give up in pursuing his goal. Or will he take the mature attitude by dealing with the problem and still having a share in the ministry? (Compare Acts 18:1-4.) Whether Paul was low on provisions or had an abundance, his ministry came first. When he had an abundance he did not use the occasion to spend a lot of time seeking pleasures, but he kept pursuing the goal of the prize.

19 Paul did not mention every kind of experience that a Christian might have in life. Yet when things come along that could interfere with the ministry, as mature Christians we should turn to Jehovah in prayer, the course recommended in Philippians 4:6, 7. Then Jehovah will give us peace of mind, helping us to think clearly and aiding us in overcoming the problems as we keep on being his faithful ministers. Prayer helps us to maintain our faith and to continue pursuing down toward our goal.

20 Many are those associated with the congregations today who have served Jehovah for decades. All of them have passed through tests while carrying on their ministry. But Jehovah has helped them, so they are continuing to pursue down toward the goal for the prize. We are thankful to Jehovah that there are in modern

16. What especially do we need to do when opposition arises?
17. Why should we not give up pursuing our goal when health problems arise?
18. How did Paul show good balance regarding material things?
19. What does Philippians 4:6, 7 advise us to do when we need help? With what results?
20. (a) How do the examples of faithful older ones in the truth encourage us? (b) What should we do? Why?

Points to Keep in Mind

□ What was Paul's personal background, and how did he use this to encourage his brothers?

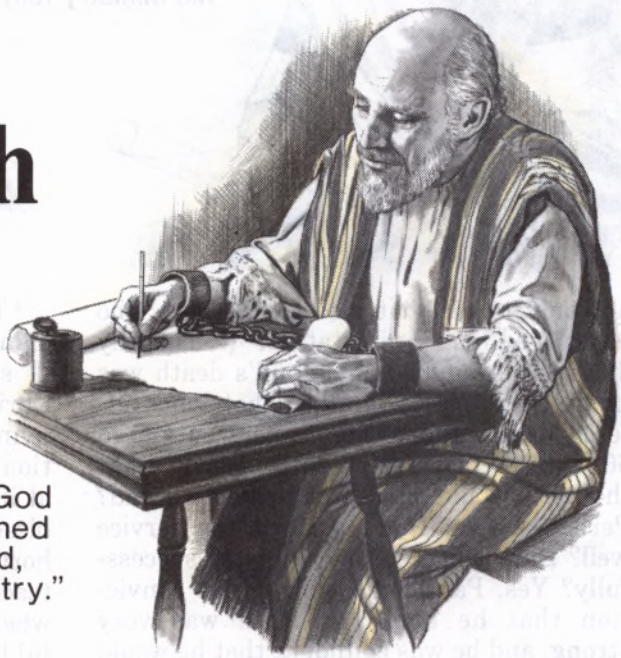
□ How do the examples of Christ Jesus and Paul show us what the mature Christian attitude is?

□ How can we manifest our unity when opposition arises?

□ Why must we continue pursuing toward our goal?

times, as there were in the first century, brothers and sisters who are examples of endurance, faithful in their Kingdom service and keeping their eyes on the prize. Those who are young or newer in "The Way" benefit by examining the record of the apostle Paul or of the faithful servants in the modern-day congregation, seeing how these have handled their problems. (Acts 9:2; Hebrews 13:7) May each one of us use every occasion to encourage one another that we may endure faithfully in the service we have undertaken and *unitedly keep pursuing down toward the goal* Jehovah has set before us. By so doing, we have the prospect of serving Jehovah God forever in happy association with faithful ones.—Philippians 3:13-16.

"Fully Accomplish Your Ministry"



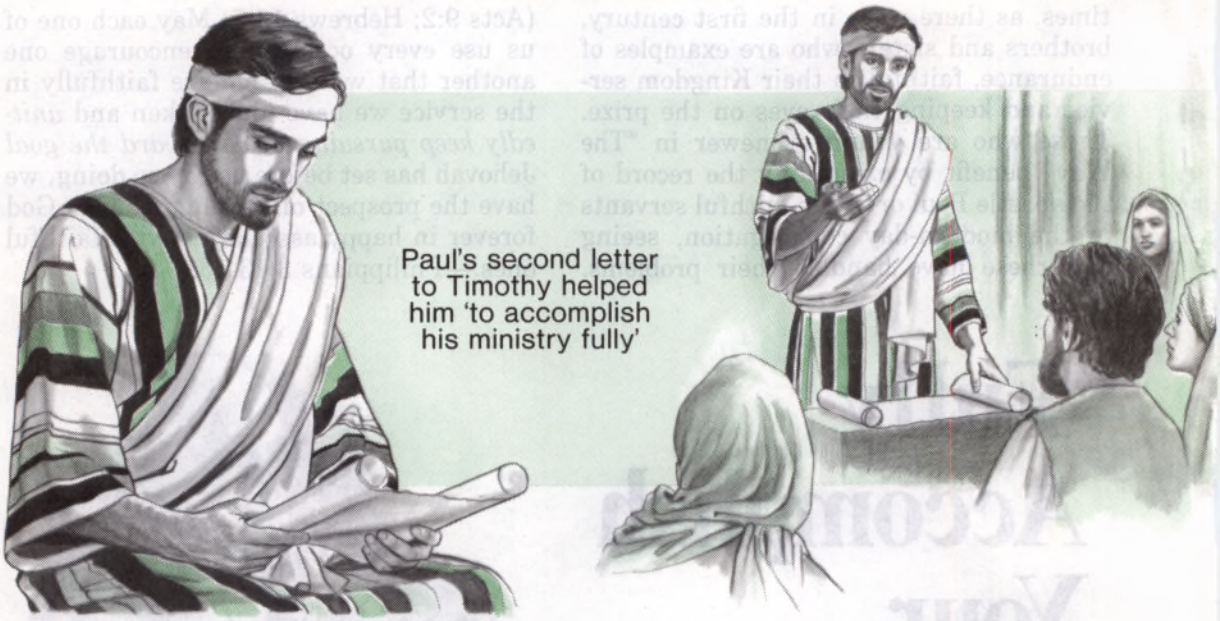
"I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is destined to judge the living and the dead, . . . fully accomplish your ministry."
—2 TIMOTHY 4:1, 5.

WHEN the apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, Paul had been pursuing his goal as a minister of God for some 30 years. He had received many blessings from Jehovah. (2 Timothy 1:2) Paul had chosen Timothy to work in close relationship with him in the traveling work, serving congregations. They enjoyed years of fruitful experiences together. —Acts 16:1-5.

1. What was the relationship between Paul and Timothy?

[2] Now the time had approached for Paul's ministry to end. He wrote: "I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the due time for my releasing is imminent. I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith. From this time on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me as a reward in that day, yet

2. What is the significance of Paul's words at 2 Timothy 4:6-8?



Paul's second letter to Timothy helped him 'to accomplish his ministry fully'

not only to me, but also to all those who have loved his manifestation." (2 Timothy 4:6-8) This implied that Paul's death was imminent. It is understood that Paul suffered death under Nero's persecution in 66 C.E. When faced with death, what thoughts would run through Paul's mind? Perhaps these: Did I perform my service well? Did I complete my ministry successfully? Yes, Paul could express his conviction that he had! His faith was very strong, and he was confident that he would gain the prize of the upward call. What satisfaction he must have had because he never deviated from his assignment!

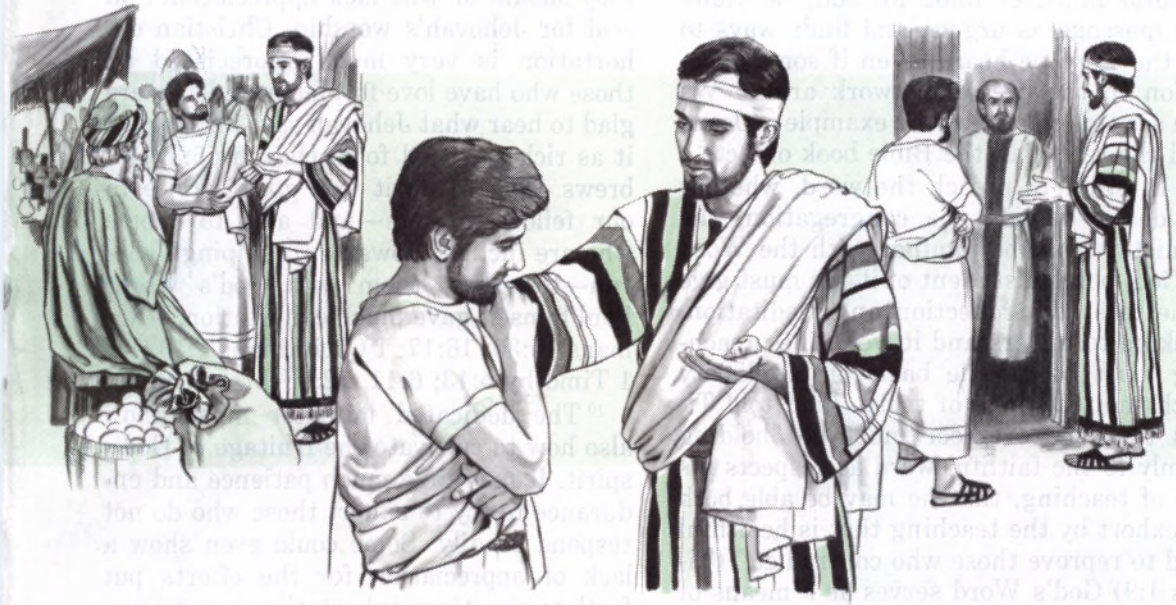
[3] Paul still had a little time left to do something good. Before falling asleep in death, what good thing could Paul do for Timothy? Under inspiration he gave important counsel. We read his thoughts and words in the book of Second Timothy. These are his last writings in the Scriptures for our benefit as well.

3. Before his death, what good thing could Paul do for Timothy?

[4] Timothy had not yet finished his assignment in the ministry, so Paul wrote: "I solemnly charge you before God and Christ Jesus, who is destined to judge the living and the dead, and by his manifestation and his kingdom, preach the word, be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season, reprove, reprimand, exhort, with all long-suffering and art of teaching. For there will be a period of time when they will not put up with the healthful teaching, but, in accord with their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, whereas they will be turned aside to false stories. You, though, keep your senses in all things, suffer evil, do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplish your ministry."—2 Timothy 4:1-5.

[5] That fine counsel must have considerably benefited Timothy, but will we, too,

4. What exhortation did Paul give Timothy?
5. Why is Paul's counsel of special interest to us?



benefit from it? We are living in "the last days" about which Paul wrote. Many people today have 'a form of godly devotion but prove false to its power.' (2 Timothy 3: 1-5) Such ones are inclined to listen only to "teachers" who will tickle their ears. Yet, in addition to preaching the word in a congregational setting, true Christians have an obligation to preach to all publicly, seeking those who will respond to "the word." So this counsel is relevant today to Christian witnesses of Jehovah.

How to Accomplish the Ministry Fully

[6] The ministry has varied facets; there are many things for the minister to do. First, Paul mentioned, "preach the word." This is the word that Jehovah has chosen to reveal to his servants. It is the word of truth about which Jesus spoke. Jehovah lets it be known what his message is for mankind at a given time, having his witnesses upon the earth to present his side of the issue. Jehovah's way is to give the message of warning before he takes action. (2 Chronicles 36:15, 16; Isaiah 42:9; 43:12; Jonah 3:2-4) His message will result in good for those who listen to it; they can gain a place of safety. Those who do not give heed have to pay the consequences when Jehovah goes into action to execute his judgment. They must bear their own responsibility. (Acts 20:20, 21, 26, 27) Yet, the course of wisdom for a minister of God is: "Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching. Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you."—1 Timothy 4:16.

[7] The preaching work is done under varying conditions, but it must go forward. "Be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season," Paul wrote. The message can mean life for people. Therefore, in whatever circumstances the

6. (a) Why should we "preach the word"? (b) What benefits come from paying attention to how we perform our ministry?

7. Why is it an urgent work even if conditions seem unfavorable?

faithful minister finds himself, he views the message as urgent and finds ways to let the word be heard, even if some opposition to the preaching work arises. We can see this clearly by the example of Jesus and the record in the Bible book of Acts.

[8] In order to preach the word, whether inside or outside the congregation, the minister must be familiar with the Word of God, being a student of it. He must give time to study, reflection and meditation, seeking to understand it well. The preaching must be on the basis of familiarity with the teachings of truth. Paul told Titus that the overseer must be "holding firmly to the faithful word as respects his art of teaching, that he may be able both to exhort by the teaching that is healthful and to reprove those who contradict." (Titus 1:9) God's Word serves as a means of giving reproof to those out of line with what Jehovah requires, correcting the offender for his own good. This is all part of fully accomplishing the ministry.

Exhortation Needed

[9] Sometimes reminders are needed for those who may not be doing everything they should or who lack appreciation and zeal for Jehovah's worship. Christian exhortation is very much appreciated by those who have love for Jehovah. They are glad to hear what Jehovah says and regard it as rich spiritual food. (Isaiah 55:3; Hebrews 12:5, 6) So it is a good service to our fellow workers—and also to people who are inclined toward worshiping Jehovah—to exhort them with God's Word. Paul himself gave much exhortation.—Romans 15:30; 16:17; 1 Corinthians 1:10, 11; 1 Timothy 4:13; 6:11, 12; Hebrews 10:24.

[10] The dedicated minister must know also how to cultivate the fruitage of God's spirit. It may take much patience and endurance to try to exhort those who do not respond readily. Some could even show a lack of appreciation for the efforts put forth to give them exhortation and encouragement. Nevertheless, it must be done, especially by all Christian elders. The art of teaching comes into play. The more a person uses Jehovah's Word, the more adept he becomes in its use. When a teacher gets to know a student, he should be able to impart information to that one. Paul well describes the proper method in 1 Thessalonians 5:14: "We exhort you, brothers, admonish the disorderly, speak consolingly to the depressed souls, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all."

Turn Away From Apostates

[11] Paul wanted Timothy to be able to maintain his balance, or to keep his senses in all things. He must not let himself become like those who do not put up with the healthful teaching and turn their ears away from the truth. The true minister of God today does not become unduly anxious

8. (a) What can help the minister to preach the word? (b) Why may reproving be part of the ministry?
9. Why is Christian exhortation needed?
10. Why is long-suffering required in connection with giving exhortation?
11. What should we do about apostates?

In Our Next Issue

- **Armageddon—What It Is Not**
- **Unified in Publishing the Word of Jehovah**
- **Witnessing Brings Kingdom Increase**

and disturbed in his activities when he finds that some turn away from the Word of God and its healthful teaching. We have been forewarned that there will be apostates and people who just like to have their ears tickled. Counsel such as at 2 John 9-11, 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 and 2 Timothy 3:5 allows no room for associating with those who turn away from the truth. Nor do we purchase or read their writings. There are many others who love to hear the truth, and it is with these that we have our Christian association.—1 Timothy 6: 20, 21.

[12] Paul advised: "Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse, misleading and being misled." (2 Timothy 3:13) In the light of that advance warning, the Christian minister does not go along with such ones. He heeds the apostle's good advice: "You, however, continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe, knowing from what persons you learned them and that from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness, that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3:14-17) Regular study of the Word of God is a boon to those seeking to accomplish their ministry.

Blessings From Christian Association

[13] It was a real blessing to Timothy to have had years of association with Paul, being able to observe how a faithful, mature minister of God conducts himself. Paul used their experiences as a good reminder for Timothy: "You have closely followed my teaching, my course of life, my purpose, my faith, my long-suffering, my love, my endurance, my persecutions, my sufferings, the sort of things that happened to me in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra, the sort of persecutions I have borne; and yet out of them all the Lord delivered me. In fact, all those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:10-12) Though we today are not in direct contact with Paul, the extensive record of his ways found in the Bible can help us too.

[14] Paul mentioned his persecutions and sufferings, and his advice to the Christian minister is to be willing to suffer evil. (2 Timothy 4:5) It often is necessary to pass through some sort of persecution in fully accomplishing our ministry. It is a privilege to keep integrity under test and to make Jehovah's heart glad. (Proverbs 27:11) A witness can result to Jehovah's praise!

The Work of an Evangelizer

[15] Evangelizing takes up a good part of the faithful Christian minister's time. Jesus said: "In all the nations the good news has to be preached first." (Mark 13:10) He made it clear that the end will not come until the good news has been sufficiently preached. Paul was privileged to share the good news with many believers throughout the Roman Empire. This resulted in new congregations being formed and overseers being appointed. They, in turn, participated with their Christian brothers and sisters in the evangelizing work and so ex-

12. Why does the Christian minister take this firm stand?
13. How was working in the ministry with Paul a benefit to Timothy, and how can we benefit?
14. Why must we be prepared to suffer evil?
15. Why must evangelizing be shared in as we fully accomplish our ministry?

tended the preaching work far and wide. Much of the work is done as Paul described it, 'teaching publicly and from house to house.' (Acts 20:20) There were good results then, and there are excellent results today when the Christian preaching is being done worldwide.—John 14:12.

16 With faith, many are taking hold of opportunities to enlarge their activities in the evangelizing work. Thousands have entered the missionary field, and hundreds of thousands share in forms of the pioneer service. In 205 lands there are now more than 2,650,000 serving as evangelizers in over 46,000 congregations, and the numbers are increasing. These wonderful things are evidence that Jehovah's dedicated servants take to heart the divine charge to them and "fully accomplish" their ministry.

Accomplishing the Work

17 Jehovah has assigned his anointed ones to a ministry, and the "great crowd" work side by side with them. Prophetically, in Ezekiel chapter 9, the work is likened to putting a mark on the foreheads of those sighing and groaning. We know from that prophecy that the time will come when the man with the secretary's inkhorn will say: "I have done just as you have commanded me." Jehovah is pleased with his servants when they do as he commands them. —Ezekiel 9:4, 11; Genesis 6:22; 1 Corinthians 4:2.

18 As we watch world conditions developing in line with the prophecies concerning these last days, we cannot help but feel the urgency of the preaching work assigned to us. Lives are involved. The ingathering is taking place and Jehovah is speeding it up in its time. (Isaiah 60:22) Therefore, whatever your responsibility as a dedicated servant of Jehovah, work at it to please him fully. (Colossians 1:10; 3:23, 24) Keep in mind the work that you have been given to do and try to accomplish it fully. If you are looking after some duties at the Kingdom Hall, do the work thoroughly. If you are assigned to activities with a Congregation Book Study group, work closely with it and exhort and encourage one another. If you are a pioneer or a missionary, be sure to work hard to meet your service goals. —Romans 12:6-9.

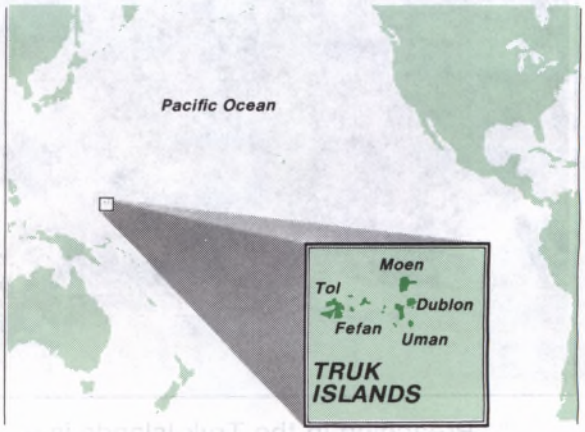
19 You can also ask yourself, Can I be doing something more to help other Christians, especially new ones in the congregation, to be upbuilding to them? If part of your ministry is being an elder in the congregation, know the appearance of "the flock" and take good care of all those associated. Pay attention so that none will be inactive or unfruitful regarding the accurate knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8) Above all, be alert to what you are doing in the evangelizing work to the end that you "fully accomplish your ministry."

16. What evidence shows that many are applying Paul's counsel at 2 Timothy 4:5?
17. What does Jehovah desire to see his servants do regarding the work assigned them today?
18, 19. What are some ways you can now apply Paul's exhortation at 2 Timothy 4:1-5?

Do You Recall?

- □ What was Paul's situation when he wrote Second Timothy?
- □ Why is it vital to preach the word?
- □ Why is exhortation important?
- □ How should false teachers be dealt with?
- □ Why is evangelizing so important today?

Discovering the Beauty of the Truk Islands



FARAWAY in the Western Pacific, some 3,000 miles (4,800 km) southwest of Hawaii, are the tropical Truk Islands. The center of the island group is a large lagoon, about 40 miles (65 km) in diameter, encircled by a protective coral reef. In the placid waters of the lagoon are the main islands of Truk—Moen, Dublon, Fefan, Uman, Tol and others, with a total population of about 39,000. Numerous low coral islets are scattered about in the lagoon and along the reef.

If you come to the Truk Islands by air, you will first be impressed by the crystal clear, deep blue waters of the Western Pacific. In some areas you can see to a depth of 100 feet (30 m). As you approach the main lagoon, patches of sea that are aqua and turquoise in color come into view. You will also see the frothy surf pounding over the barrier reef. Inside the lagoon are islands with their white, sandy beaches and lush, green, tropical growth. The islands are abundant in breadfruit and coconut trees, bananas, taro, and a host of other tropical vegetation, allowing many literally to live off the land.

Despite its paradiselike appearance, the Truk Lagoon earned for itself the macabre name "the graveyard" during the days of World War II. As a result of "Operation Hailstone," an intensive air raid by American warplanes on February 17 and 18, 1944, some 50 Japanese warships and several hundred airplanes were entombed in the lagoon. The hulls of these ships are now covered with rich pastel-shaded formations of corals, coral trees, underwater flora and marine growth. They have become a unique underwater museum for divers, underwater photographers and filmmakers from all over the world.

Missionary Work Begins

World War II also left its mark on the islanders. Survivors of the war still have vivid memories of the terror of bombings, the pain of losing loved ones, the dread of mass executions, forced labor, hunger and other hardships. The generation that grew up since the war was confronted with political uncertainties, economic pressures and little hope to compete with youths in lands of greater opportunity.

Thus, in 1965, when a missionary couple of Jehovah's Witnesses from the United States arrived at the island of Moen, they found the Trukese people very receptive, warm and friendly. They obtained housing in the Quonset hut of a local

Preaching in the Truk Islands is a delightful experience

couple. Soon they were conducting up to 35 home Bible studies, even though they had no previous knowledge of the Trukese language. People on Truk still comment on how quickly this couple learned to preach in Trukese.

Another couple, graduates of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead, arrived in December 1966. They obtained accommodations from a local family on the opposite end of the island. Several members of this family eventually became Jehovah's Witnesses.

Congregations Formed

More missionaries came the following years. By 1972 there were seven dedicated, baptized Witnesses engaging in the door-to-door ministry on the island of Moen. So the first congregation in Truk was formed. The next move was to expand the preaching work to the nearby island of Dublon. One of the brothers who undertook that assignment recalls their first journey:

"It was late evening when we saw the shoreline of the island. The long dock built by the Japanese forces prior to World War II was now overgrown with shrubs and trees. Indeed, the island appeared to be a thick tropical jungle. There were no visible roads for vehicles, only pathways through heavy foliage.

"We spent two nights on the abandoned dock amid its thick overgrowth and swarms of mosquitoes and other insects. As we walked around the island, we came across giant craters, formed by heavy bombing during World War II. We saw huge oil tanks melted down by the intense heat of burning oil. Then we realized why the folks on the adjacent islands said that during the war the Dublon sky was often lighted up at night. It was from these burning oil tanks."

The constant reminders of the devastation of war on this island helped the missionaries to appreciate fully the privilege of bringing a message of peace and comfort from the Bible to the humble people. The fine response of these Bible-loving people was reflected at their first observance of the Memorial of Christ's death, when 90 people attended. In 1974 the nine baptized Witnesses on this island were enrolled as the Dublon Congregation.

To the Outer Islands

The other islands within the Truk lagoon also need to be reached with the Kingdom message. Two boats are being used regularly for witnessing trips to the islands of Tol and Fefan, and much interest has been found on both islands.

Missionary Glenn Tateishi built his own 16-foot (5-m) boat. After years of experience in transporting fellow missionaries and publishers, he is now an expert navigator and mechanic. He has become famil-

iar with the hazardous shallow reefs and treacherous waves and channels of the various islands. But "when the sea is calm and the wind is warm," reflects Glenn, "your mind is at ease. You can meditate on spiritual things, and when alone I pray, oftentimes aloud."

When groups of publishers go on such an island witnessing trip, they make it an all-day affair. The day's preaching activity includes long walks on dusty or muddy paths, a refreshing picnic lunch, more hours of walking in the tropical sun and a bumpy boat ride home. By the end of the day, they are exhausted. But they feel a deep satisfaction in having spent it well in Jehovah's service.

Boats are used to spread the Kingdom message

Occasionally, missionaries and publishers get to travel on government supply ships to islands outside the lagoon. A local sister who utilized her vacation to go on one of these island-hopping trips with the missionaries relates:

"We were able to get on the ship *Truk Islander*. Once outside the lagoon the waves were very big. There were strong winds, and it was raining. There was room for only a few passengers, and we were not able to stretch out or lie down on deck but had to remain in a sitting position. One of the government workers felt sorry for us and offered us his cabin. We happily looked forward to meeting the outer islanders and sharing with them the good news of the Kingdom."

On one island the people were mostly Catholics and asked if the missionaries came in the name of the pope. On another, the island chief invited them to preach to his people, and all listened with interest. The people on some islands were hospitable, offering food, shelter and a bath. On others, the people were prejudiced and did not even allow the Witnesses ashore. "The inconveniences we experienced," said the sister, "were more than offset by the joy of meeting newly interested ones and sharing with them the Kingdom message."

Overcoming Obstacles

Among the first to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses in Truk was Kyomi Shirai. She and her husband opened their home for the first missionary couple. At the time she was a deaconess in the Protestant Church, the president of the YWCA and on the committee that translated the Bible into Trukese. How did she become interested in Jehovah's Witnesses? "It was their Bible-based teachings," she said. She had never been taught that God's name is Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18) "I thought the name Jehovah was another name for Jesus," she explained.

"When I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses," recalls Kyomi, "my friends and relatives ridiculed me. Many of my relatives disowned me. But I found happiness

and peace of mind in association with my spiritual brothers and sisters." Since the Watch Tower Society had published no Bible literature in Trukese at that time, she would write down key texts on various Bible topics in a little notebook and use the texts in preaching to others. Till this day, she has this 1966 notebook.

One of the relatives Kyomi helped was her sister, also a former Protestant deaconess, who recalls: "When my sister Kyomi showed me from the Bible the hope of everlasting life on earth, and the unscripturalness of the teachings of my church, this opened my eyes spiritually." She and other deaconesses used to visit members of their church who were elderly, sick or in mourning. "We tried to comfort them mainly by singing songs, bringing them food and other material things. But our visit would put a burden on the family as they would feel obligated to prepare food for about 12 visitors." All of that has changed. "Now, I feel like a qualified woman minister when helping people learn the truly comforting message of the Bible," she says. One of her daughters and two granddaughters now share actively in the preaching work.

Like many others in the islands, Amiko formerly lived in constant fear of wicked spirits. To appease them, the Trukese engage in many forms of superstitious practices. Pieces of thread are tied around the wrists or ankles of newborn infants to bring them good luck. A man who cannot win the love of a maiden will turn to magic by giving her a charmed lei or other gifts to cause her to fall in love with him. Some islanders say they have been physically disabled or have contracted incurable diseases from spells cast upon them by their enemies through black magic.

Amiko had a book on the use of herb "medicine" with rituals, chants and certain signs to cure sicknesses. Upon learning the Bible truth that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all" and that such demonistic practices are "detestable to Jehovah," she burned her books on magical arts, as did the early Christians in Ephesus. (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Deuteronomy 18:9-12; Acts 19:19, 20) Many other Trukese have also broken free from the fear and bondage of such spiritistic practices upon coming to an accurate knowledge of the Bible. They, in turn, find much joy in taking the Bible truth to others so that they too can be set free.—John 8:32.

Recent Developments

Over the years, Jehovah God has indeed blessed the efforts of the missionaries. Their fine spirit has rubbed off on the local brothers. There are now about 35 Kingdom proclaimers in the two congregations in Moen and Dublon. Through their continued efforts, the name of Jehovah and Jehovah's Witnesses have become well known in these remote islands, and a fine Kingdom witness has been given. The attendance of 366 persons at the Memorial of Christ's death in 1983 is a clear indication that "the harvest is great" in these islands of the sea.—Matthew 9:37.

The brothers in Truk have enjoyed many visits from their fellow Christians elsewhere. Visiting brothers, like other tourists, enjoy the tropical scenery, the dazzling ocean waters with their many hues of blue and green, the stately palm trees silhouetted against colorful sunsets, and the historical sites. But they feel most enriched when they get to know the Trukese brothers, seeing their fine missionary spirit and their eagerness in witnessing to their relatives. Yes, by becoming acquainted with their faithful, isolated brothers, they feel they have discovered the real beauty of the Truk Islands.

Insight on the News

"Instruments" of Peace?

"Instruments of security and freedom for the nations." That is how Pope John Paul II described soldiers attending Mass in St. Peter's Square. The religious service was for members of armies from 24 countries and was held in connection with the Roman Catholic Church's Holy Year. The pope told the soldiers: "Your strength is necessary for the welfare of your fellowman, for the security of your fatherland, for the common good of national and international peace!"

What a change this is from the attitude displayed during the early centuries of our Common Era, as revealed even by church history! For example, the Swiss Catholic publication *Orientierung* says of the patron "saint" of France, "Saint" Martin, (316-397 C.E.): "That this highly renowned *saint of Western Christianity* resigned from military service out of Christian conviction, considering being a soldier and a Christian at the same time incompatible, has always been embarrassing to Catholic theology. This fact—either deliberately or undeliberately—has simply been kept quiet." Allegedly, "Saint" Martin said to Roman Emperor Julian: "I am Christ's soldier; I am not allowed to fight."

Rather than urging his followers to engage in temporal warfare, Jesus Christ encouraged them to 'continue to love their enemies.' (Matthew 5:44) The apostle Paul indicated the Christian's position toward participation in earthly conflicts when he wrote: "The truth is that, although we lead normal human lives, the battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level." —2 Corinthians 10:3, Phillips' *The New Testament in Modern English*.

Famine's Toll

Another evidence of the last days is famine. Pointing to our time, Jesus Christ predicted 'food shortages in one place after another.'—Matthew 24:3, 7.

Famine now stalks masses of people across a wide belt of north-central Africa and is leaving great misery and the death of millions in its wake. But it was generally unknown that between 1958 and 1961 drought, floods and infestations turned China's poor harvests into severe food shortages. For the first time, officials of mainland China recently acknowledged that more than ten million of her inhabitants died during that four-year famine. Associated Press writer Jeff Bradley quotes The State Statistical Bureau spokesman, Xu Gang, as saying that during those years "over 10 million people" experienced unnatural deaths "due to both man-made factors and serious natural disasters."

Efforts to cover up the facts notwithstanding, famine's death toll for this century cannot be hidden. All of this adds to the powerful fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy concerning 'the sign of his presence and of the conclusion of this system of things.' —Matthew 24:3.

"What Is Happening in Our Society?"

So often today, violence strikes at the most unexpected times and places. For example, the peace of an early Sunday afternoon in a Sydney suburb was shattered suddenly when rival "bikie" gangs armed with shotguns, rifles, knives, clubs, screwdrivers and chains waged open warfare on one another. When the battle ended about 15 minutes later, six members of two motorcycle gangs and a 14-year-old female bystander lay dead. At least 20 others had been injured, some seriously.

A question that is being asked by many people in Australia and the rest of the world was well summed up in *The Australian* of September 3, 1984: "What is happening in our society?" Individuals who are "taught by Jehovah" know the answer. (John 6:45) What Australia recently witnessed is just one frame in a long reel of continuous acts of violence seen worldwide since the year 1914. No place on earth is immune to the deadly touch of violence. The Bible points to such things as evidence that mankind is living in "the last days." True to the prophetic Word of God, we now see an "increasing of lawlessness" and a society plagued with people who are "without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness."—Matthew 24:12; 2 Timothy 3:1-3.

'Michael the Great Prince' —Who Is He?

THE spirit creature Michael is not mentioned often in the Bible, but when he is, the context is always dramatic. In Daniel we see him fighting wicked angels on behalf of God's people. In Jude he is disputing with Satan over the body of Moses. And in the book of Revelation he casts Satan and his demons down to the earth. Evidently, Michael is a key figure in heaven. Hence, it is proper to wonder, Who is Michael?

For many years Jehovah's Witnesses have taught that Michael is a heavenly name for the only-begotten Son of God, who was named Jesus while on earth. However, most other religions view Michael as one of several archangels, as if there were more than one archangel. In view of this, Is the teaching of Jehovah's Witnesses correct? What does the Bible say about Michael?

"The Prince of You People"

We are introduced to the one named Michael in the book of Daniel. There an angel of God refers to him in these words: "But the prince of the royal realm of Persia was standing in opposition to me for twenty-one days, and, look! Michael, one of the foremost princes, came to help me . . . And now I shall go back to fight with the prince of Persia. When I am going forth, look! also the prince of Greece is coming. However, I shall tell you the things noted down in the writing of truth, and there is no one holding strongly with me in these things but Michael, the prince of you people."—Daniel 10:13, 20, 21.

Here we have a fascinating glimpse of the spirit realm. We see that spirit creatures—good and bad—are very much involved in world affairs. There was a spirit "prince of the royal realm of Persia," opposing the activities of God's angel. After Persia there would be a "prince of Greece," promoting the interests of that world pow-

er. Among these spirit creatures, Michael was one of "the foremost princes." Which nation did he guide and protect? Clearly, it was Daniel's people, the Jews.

The name "Michael" means "Who Is Like God?" thus indicating that this foremost prince upholds Jehovah's sovereignty. Since Michael is also a champion of God's people, we have reason to identify him with the unnamed angel that God sent ahead of the Israelites hundreds of years before: "Here I am sending an angel ahead of you to keep you on the road and to bring you into the place that I have prepared. Watch yourself because of him and obey his voice. Do not behave rebelliously against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; because my name is within him."—Exodus 23:20, 21.

It is logical to conclude that this was the angel that delivered so many important communications to God's people. (Acts 7: 30, 35; Judges 2:1-3) He had full authority from God to act in His name, just as kings in ancient times entrusted their seal rings to reliable subjects, empowering them to act in their name.—Exodus 3:2, 3; 4:10.

Is there anything here to make us believe that Michael and Jesus Christ are the same person? Well, Jesus is called "the Word." (John 1:1) He is God's spokesman. This special angelic messenger, too, was clearly God's chief spokesman to the Israelites.

Michael 'Stands Up'

Michael was "the prince of you people." But he was to receive additional authority. We next see him in the final chapter of the book of Daniel. "And during that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of your people. And there will certainly occur a time of distress such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation until that time."—Daniel 12:1.

Daniel, in chapter 11, had just described the march of world powers from his own time on into the future. He had accurately described the fall of Persia and the rise of Greece. Then came the partitioning of the Greek empire. Two of the resulting political entities—the king of the north and the king of the south—would vie for ascendancy and control over God's people. At the climax of that rivalry, Michael would "stand up." What does this mean?

Well, in other parts of this same prophecy, the term "stand up" means that the person assumes authority to rule as a king. (Daniel 11:3, 4, 7, 20, 21) Hence, when Michael 'stands up' he, too, starts to rule as a king. Consider the implications of this.

Before Daniel died, the last Jewish king, Zedekiah, had been deposed. There would be no Jewish king for centuries to come. Daniel's prophecy showed that one day in the future God's people would once again have a king—Michael.

Ezekiel, Daniel's contemporary, foretold the coming of one "who has the legal right" to rule again as king of God's people. (Ezekiel 21:25-27) This one is not to be identified with the Levite Maccabees who exercised some authority during a brief period of independence. Not being descendants of King David, they had no "legal right" to be kings. Rather, it was Jesus Christ who was anointed by God to rule as king in a heavenly kingdom. (Luke 1:31-33; 22:29, 30; Psalm 110:1) He was the only one thus anointed. It is therefore only logical to say that Jesus and Michael are the same person.

In Daniel chapter 7, there is another prophecy about the march of world powers that has parallels with Daniel chapter 11. At the climax of that prophecy, however, we read that "someone like a son of man" was "given rulership and dignity and kingdom." (Daniel 7:13, 14) The one "like a son

Michael is the archangel who became a king...

of man" is widely recognized as Jesus. (Matthew 10:23; 26:64; Revelation 14:14) Hence, in the climax of one prophecy, Jesus becomes a king. In the other prophecy in Daniel, Michael becomes a king. Since both prophecies deal with the same time and the same event, surely it is reasonable to conclude that they are also dealing with the same person.

The Archangel

We next read of Michael in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The book of Jude tells us: "But when Michael the archangel had a difference with the Devil and was disputing about Moses' body, he did not dare to bring a judgment against him in abusive terms, but said: 'May Jehovah rebuke you.'" (Jude 9) This incident helps to show the closeness of Michael to God's ancient people. Therefore, it supports the argument that he was the angel that went ahead of the Israelites to protect them.

We learn from Jude that Michael had the post of archangel. In fact, he was *the* archangel, since no other archangel is mentioned in the Bible, nor does the Bible use "archangel" in the plural. "Archangel" means "Chief of the angels." (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*) Among God's spirit servants, only two names are associated with authority over angels: Michael and Jesus Christ. (Matthew 16:27; 25:31; 2 Thessalonians 1:7) This, too, argues that Jesus and Michael are the same.

Interestingly, the name of Jesus is linked with the word "archangel" in one of Paul's letters. The apostle writes: "The Lord [Jesus] himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an *archangel's* voice and with God's trumpet." (1 Thessalonians 4:16) The context places this event during "the presence of the Lord," when Jesus has started to rule as king.—1 Thessalonians 4:15; Matthew 24:3; Revelation 11:15-18.

It is Jehovah's will and arrangement for Jesus to resurrect the dead. (John 6:38-40) It is God's trumpet that sounds the call for the dead to come back to life, just as God instructed that trumpets be used for an assembly of his people in ancient times. (Numbers 10:1-10) Jesus issues "a commanding call" to the dead to come forth, just as he did on occasion while on earth. (John 11:43) But now he calls, not with a man's voice as he did then, but with all the power of "an archangel's voice" (*en pho·ne' arkh·ag·ge'lou*). However, only an archangel can call with an archangel's voice! And no one but Jesus has been given the authority to resurrect the dead. Hence, this rousing prophecy gives additional strong reason for identifying Jesus with the archangel, Michael.

War in Heaven

The final appearance of the name Michael in the Bible is in the book of Revelation. There we read: "And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail." (Revelation 12:7, 8) Here we see Michael in action as God's archangel. He, along with "*his* angels," defeats Satan and casts him down to the earth.

...He also took the lead in ousting Satan from heaven

This is the beginning of the "short period of time" before Satan's wicked system is completely destroyed. After the end of Babylon the Great at the hands of the nations, the nations themselves are destroyed by Jesus and his angelic armies. (Revelation 12:12; 17:16, 17; 19:11-16) Finally, Satan is abyssed for a thousand years, after which he suffers complete annihilation in "the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:1, 2, 10) This—the long-promised final 'crushing of Satan's head'—is also accomplished by Jesus, along with his resurrected spiritual brothers.—Genesis 3:15; Galatians 3:16; Romans 16:20.

Since Jesus is the one prophesied to crush Satan's head, and since he accomplishes all these other judgment acts, it is only logical to conclude that he would lead heaven's armies in the casting of Satan out of heaven. Hence, the conquering Michael referred to in Revelation 12 must be Jesus, who was told by Jehovah to "go subduing in the midst of [his] enemies." —Psalm 110:1, 2; Acts 2:34, 35.

The appearance of the name Michael, instead of Jesus, in Revelation chapter 12 draws our attention to the prophecy considered earlier in Daniel chapter 12. In Daniel we read of Michael's standing up. (Daniel 12:1) In Revelation chapter 12, Michael acts like a conquering monarch throwing Satan down to the earth. The result: "Woe for the earth and for the sea." —Revelation 12:12.

Jesus an Angel?

Some object to identifying Jesus with the angel of Jehovah mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures. For Trinitarians, of course, such an identification poses a problem since it shows conclusively that he is not equal to Jehovah God. But even some who do not accept the Trinity doctrine feel that Jesus' identity with an angel somehow detracts from his dignity.

Remember, though, that the basic meaning of "angel" (Hebrew, *mal·'akh';* Greek, *ag'ge·los*) is "messenger." As the "Word" (Greek, *lo'gos*), Jesus is God's messenger *par excellence.* Remember, too, that as the archangel, as well as "the firstborn of all creation," Jesus had the highest rank among the angels even before he came to earth.—Colossians 1:15.

True, the apostle Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "He [Jesus] has become better than the angels, to the extent that he has inherited a name more excellent than theirs." (Hebrews 1:4; Philippians 2:9, 10) However, this describes his situation *after* his having been here on earth. He was still the archangel and "the beginning of the creation by God." (Revelation 3:14) But he *became* better than the angels. The 'more excellent name' or position is something he did not possess before coming to earth. (These scriptures contradict the Trinitarian concept that the Son is and always has been equal in every way to the Father.)

Hence, the fact that Michael is the archangel, chief of the angels, the fact that he stands up to rule as King, and the fact that he takes the lead in casting Satan out of heaven at the time of the birth of God's Kingdom all lead us to just one conclusion: 'Michael the great prince' is none other than Jesus Christ himself.—Daniel 12:1.

Do You Remember?

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

□ Since the Hebrew word translated God is often in the plural form ('*Elo·him*'), does this support the Trinitarian argument for a three-in-one God?

No, it does not. This same Hebrew word, '*Elo·him*', is used in the same way for individual divinities, such as Dagon (1 Samuel 5:7) and Marduk (Daniel 1:2), who were not triune gods. Grammatically, this plural indicates excellence—not number—being used consistently with a singular verb. —8/15, page 28.

□ In what sense is the word "heart" used by Bible writers?

In a few cases the literal heart is meant, such as at Exodus 28:30 and Psalm 45:5. But in almost a thousand other references, "heart" is used in a figurative sense to describe the emotional and moral qualities that go to make up the inner person.—9/1, page 7.

□ What is a key idea that is highlighted throughout the book of Joshua?

The idea of being courageous is emphasized. Over half of the times that the words "courageous" and "strong" occur together in a Bible verse are in the book of Joshua or in comments about him. The book of Joshua, therefore, provides a powerful incentive for all Christians today to be courageous. (Joshua 24:14, 15, 29)—9/15, pages 27, 31.

□ What is "the house" that Paul refers to in Hebrews 3:2, 6?

In each case "the house" that Paul refers to is basically God's people, or congregation. In verse 2 "the house" was the congregation of fleshly Israel under the Law covenant. Moses was himself a part of that "house." In verse 6 "the house" is the congregation of spiritual Israel. It is constructed by Christ Jesus, and he serves over it according to "a new covenant." (Hebrews 8:7-13; Jeremiah 31: 31-34)—9/15, page 31.

□ What did Paul mean at 2 Timothy 3:1, 3 in saying that men would be "having no natural affection" in "the last days"?

The Greek word *storgé* has reference to family love of kindred. However, the word for "having no natural affection" is *ástorgos*, which means just the opposite —a breakdown in the natural love that should exist between family members.—10/1, page 6, footnote.

□ When, at Matthew 24:12, Jesus said that "the love of the greater number will cool off," was he predicting this to happen to true worshipers now?

Jesus' words were part of a prophecy about 'the sign of his presence and of the conclusion of the system of things.' (Matthew 24:3) These words found an application in the first century among Jews claiming to worship God. With their lack of love they did not heed Jesus' warning, and they suffered the consequences when the Roman armies invaded Jerusalem. Comparably, among professing Christians today not only is neighbor love diminishing but so is love for God. This is the principal application of Jesus' words, yet they should act as a warning for all true Christians as well.—10/1, page 31.

□ What are three of the teaching aids used by Jesus that could well be cultivated by all Christian teachers of God's Word?

Jesus used simplicity, illustrations and questions.—11/1, pages 12, 13.

□ What two points should be kept in mind while reading the book of Judges?

One is that it is very easy to let your faith in God grow weak or to forget all that he has done for you. (Revelation 2:4) The other point is to remember that God can use you to accomplish outstanding things if you have strong faith. (Matthew 21:21)—11/1, pages 27-8.

□ What is doubtless the greatest proof today that we are near the end of this system of things?

The greatest evidence is the worldwide preaching work now being done by Jehovah's Witnesses. Never before has such a thing occurred. Today, in 205 lands more than 2,650,000 witnesses of Jehovah are proclaiming the message that Christ has been ruling in Kingdom power since 1914. (Matthew 24:14)—11/15, page 23.

□ How only can a Medical Alert card be of real value to you in a time of emergency?

The Medical Alert card should be regularly carried and it should also be current and valid. The card is obtained from the elders in the congregation each year and should be filled in, dated and signed, and then countersigned by two witnesses. It is best for one of the witnesses to be your next of kin. (Proverbs 22:3)—12/1, pages 25-6.

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