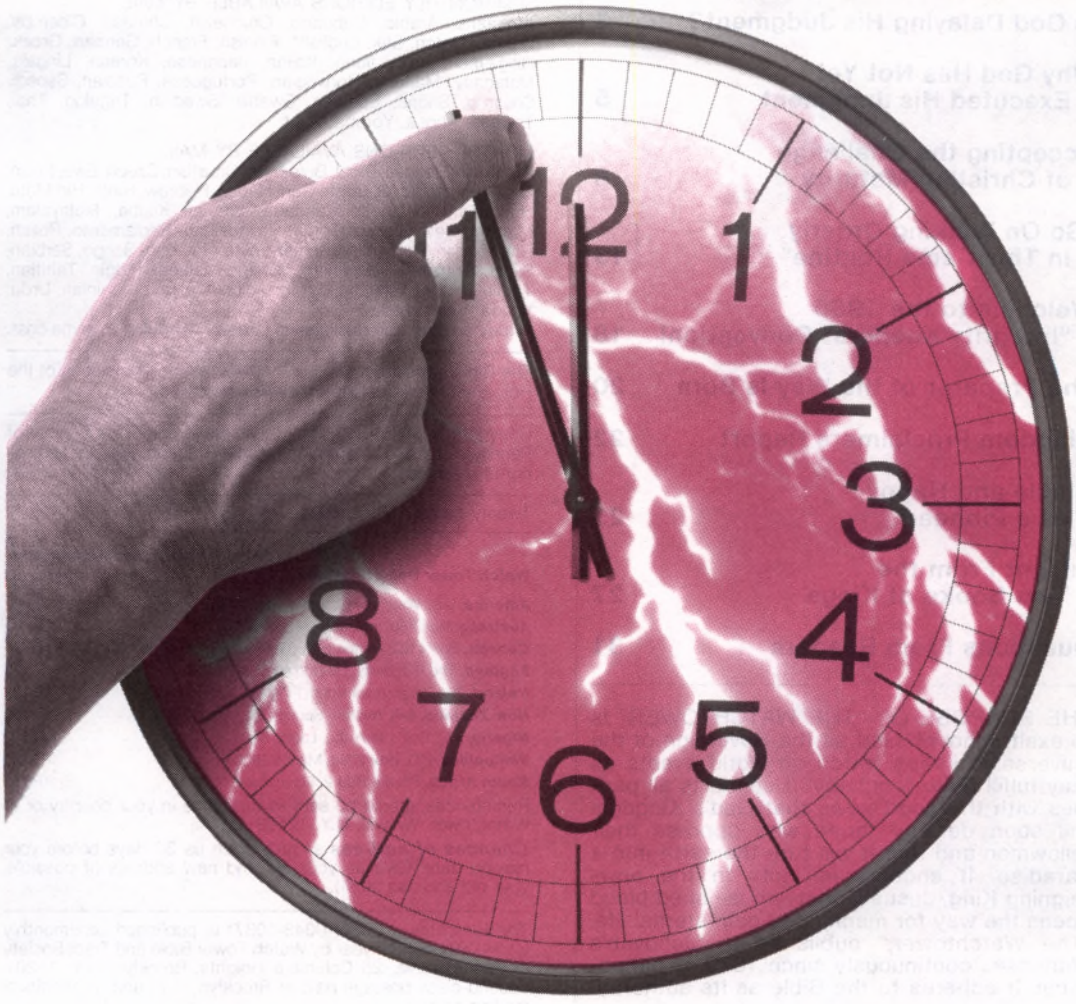
May 1, 1985

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



Is God Delaying His Judgment?

The Watchtower®

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

May 1, 1985
Vol. 106, No. 9

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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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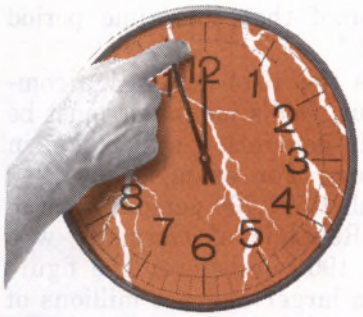


Is God Delaying His Judgment?

IMAGINE you are awaiting an out-of-town visitor who has told you the day of his arrival but not the hour. As time passes, and he still has not come, you begin to wonder if he has been delayed. Was this really the day he said he would come? Could there have been a misunderstanding? Slowly, what was at first only impatience gives way to something more disconcerting, something called doubt.

This may well describe how some people feel about the promised arrival of God's time to execute judgment against wickedness. After all, his worshipers have been waiting so long for it. Take, for example, faithful King David. Over 3,000 years ago he said: "Jehovah himself at your right hand will certainly break kings to pieces on the day of his anger. He will *execute judgment among the nations.*" So can anyone today be blamed for wondering, When?—Psalm 110:5, 6.

By comparing world conditions with Bible prophecy and by taking into account Bible chronology, serious Bible students have become convinced that God's day of judgment is finally near. But have not many people in the past felt the same way, only to find out later that they were mistaken? Is there any *sure* way of determining exactly when God's judgment will be executed?

At God's "Appointed Time"

Jesus indicated that judgment would take place at a definite time. But in warning to his followers, he said: "Keep awake, for you do not know when *the appointed time* is."—Mark 13:33.

Habakkuk, commissioned by God six centuries earlier to write about the execution of divine judgment, also said it would be "for *the appointed time.*" And as a warning against becoming impatient, or perhaps even doubtful, he promised at God's direction: "It will not tell a lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late."—Habakkuk 2:2, 3.

But if God's judgment is "for the appointed time" and if it "will not be late," why does Habakkuk say "even if it should delay"? Evidently to show that some of God's people would expect it to come sooner than it actually would. Why? Because the *exact* time of its coming would remain unknown to them.

While on earth, even Jesus did not know the exact time, for he said: "Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father." (Mark 13:32) What he did know, however, was the *time period* during which judgment would occur. Thus, at his disciples' request, he gave a sign that would enable them to recognize this time period once it had begun. Its first evidence, Jesus said, would be "like the first pains of childbirth." Now, of course, a pregnant woman going into labor does not know the exact time her child will be born.

Many of the generation of 1914 hope to see "all these things occur"

She does know, however, that its birth is imminent.—Matthew 24:3-8, *Today's English Version.*

"This Generation Will by No Means Pass Away"

Besides knowing when the time period for divine judgment would come, Jesus was able to put a limit on its length. Using the illustration of a fig tree, he said: "Just as soon as its young branch grows tender and it puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. Likewise also you, when you see all these things, know that he is near at the doors. Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur."—Matthew 24:32-34.

Thus judgment would be executed sometime during the life span of people seeing the first evidence of the time period foretold by Jesus. The start of this time period would mark the beginning of the end for Satan's world, against which God's newly established Kingdom in heaven would execute divine judgment. Bible chronology and the fulfillment of Bible prophecy provide ample proof that this time period began in 1914.*

Thus before the 1914 generation completely dies out, God's judgment must be executed. This generation still exists in goodly numbers. For example, in 1980 there were still 1,597,700 persons alive in the Federal Republic of Germany who were born in 1900 or before. The figure would be even larger had not millions of its citizens experienced premature death during the two world wars.

In promising that "this generation will *by no means* pass away," Jesus used the two Greek negatives *ou* and *me. The Companion Bible* explains this usage as follows: "The two negatives when combined lose their distinctive meanings, and form the strongest and most emphatic asseveration [affirmation]." Only now, at a time when it appears that the generation *could* pass away before all is fulfilled, do Jesus' words "by no means" take on real significance.

A Test of Faith

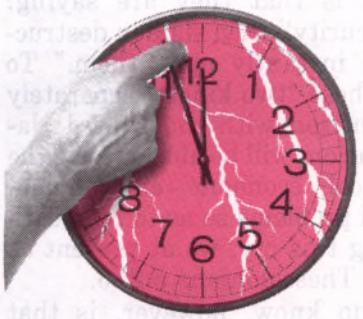
Habakkuk's warning words indicate that there would be an apparent delay in Jehovah's judgment, serving as a test of faith. Logically this test could not arise until late in the generation of which Jesus spoke. In reference to the example at the beginning of this article, consider this: When would you begin seriously doubting that your visitor was coming? Certainly not at nine o'clock in the morning, nor at noon, possibly not even in the late afternoon. But likely your faith *would* be tested once evening had set in. However, remember that even at 11:30 p.m. your visitor still would have sufficient time to come in fulfillment of his promise!

* A detailed explanation can be found in chapters 16 and 18 of the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,* published in 1982 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

There is no reason to worry that God's Word will go unfulfilled. It has never failed. Joshua's words to the Israelites over 3,000 years ago are as true now as they were then: "Not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed."—Joshua 23:14.

"Respecting the fulfilment of prophecy it seems to be natural for us, and for all humanity, to be impatient and to expect things to be done more rapidly than they usually come to pass." So said *The Watch Tower* in its May 1, 1910, issue, adding: "This is a delay as respects our expectations, but we may be sure that there is no delay in the matter as respects the divine intention . . . We have no doubt that the results will be attained in the fulness of time—God's time."

In retrospect, faithful Christians living today can see good reasons why God's judgment has not yet been executed. In fact, they rejoice that it has not. Our next article explains why.



Why God Has Not Yet Executed His Judgment

ABOUT two decades after Jesus' death, some Christians were already expecting Jehovah to "arrive" in judgment. This prompted the apostle Paul to write them, saying: "The day of Jehovah . . . will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed, the son of destruction." Although Paul admitted that "the mystery of this lawlessness" was "already at work" in his day, it obviously was not to the extent necessary, so that divine judgment could come. —2 Thessalonians 2:2, 3, 7, 8.

A Twofold Ingathering

The apostasy, although sure to come, would not hinder God's purpose to choose 144,000 faithful Christians to be joint rulers with his Son, Jesus, in heaven. (See Revelation 14:1-5.) Only after their number had been completed and they had finally been sealed by God could the execution of Jehovah's judgment take place. Revelation 7:2, 3 explains: "To the four angels [it was said]: 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees [by bringing the destructive winds of God's judgment against the nations], until *after* we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.'" As we now know, this work had not been finished when the Kingdom was established in 1914.

Thus, even though some were hopeful that it might, God's execution of judgment could not come at that time. The January 1, 1914, issue of *The Watch Tower* left room for this development, stating that although "the Year 1914 is the last one of

what the Bible terms 'Gentile Times' . . . we are by no means confident that this year, 1914, will witness as radical and swift changes of dispensation as we have expected." Still, as the article went on to explain, Christians were grateful that Bible chronology had awakened them to the imminence of divine judgment. It said: "We believe that the chronology is a blessing. If it should wake us a few minutes earlier or a few hours earlier in the morning than we would otherwise have waked, well and good! It is those who are awake who get the blessing."

Also among those getting a blessing would be what the Bible describes as "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." Not until 1935 was it fully understood that this "great crowd" would be composed of persons "that come out of the great tribulation," that is to say, those who abandon Satan's organization and take their stand on God's side, so as to survive the execution of God's judgment. For some five decades now, the work of gathering this "great crowd" has been proceeding in accordance with Jehovah's purpose. We can rejoice that divine judgment will not be executed until this life-saving work has been completed.—Revelation 7:9, 14.

Political Developments

Certain political developments were also foretold to occur before the execution of God's judgment. A fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy about "two kings" (chapter 11) is now clearly seen as edging toward completion.* At the culmination of this fulfillment, God will execute judgment.—Compare Daniel 2:44.

Although opposed to each other, the superpowers and their blocs—"the king of the south" and "the king of the north"—are both represented in the global political organization that today causes people to "wonder admiringly." What an apt description of the post-World War I League of Nations and its post-World War II successor, the United Nations organization. —Daniel 11:40; Revelation 17:8.

Ideologically and politically divided, and yet at the same time "united," these "two kings" have much to say about preserving world "peace and security." This, too, is significant, for Bible prophecy says that "whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them." To what extent these "two kings," separately and in conjunction with the United Nations organization, will be able to solve the world's political, economic, environmental, and social problems so as to feel justified in making this cry, we at present do not know.—1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3.

What we do know, however, is that sometime during its rule, the United Nations organization, together with all its

WHAT MUST PRECEDE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT

The apostasy—2 THESSALONIANS 2:2, 3

The sealing of the 144,000—REVELATION 7:2, 3

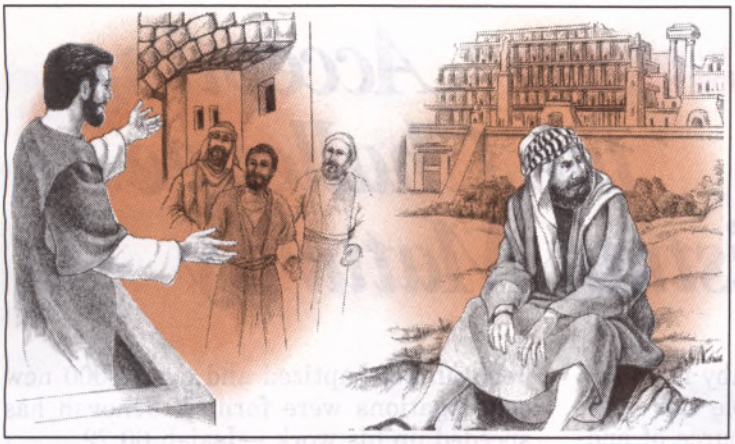
The gathering of the "great crowd" for survival—REVELATION 7:14

The appearing of the League of Nations and then the United Nations—REVELATION 17:8

The final confrontation between the two great blocs of nations—DANIEL 11:40, 44, 45

The global cry of "Peace and security"—1 THESSALONIANS 5:2, 3

* This prophecy is explained in detail in the book *"Your Will Be Done on Earth,"* published in 1958 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



Peter regarded God's patience as salvation, whereas Jonah complained. Whose example will you follow?

member nations—including most prominently these "two kings"—will experience God's judgment and 'go off into destruction.' We also know that the 1914 generation is well into the evening of its existence, thus allowing only little time for this prophecy yet to be fulfilled. But we also know—for this we have Jesus' own promise—that "this generation will *by no means* pass away until all these things happen."—Revelation 17:11; Mark 13:30.

Jehovah Will Not Delay—Will You?

If you are studying the Bible and learning about Jehovah's purposes, do not delay in fleeing to God's symbolic place of protection. "Seek righteousness, seek meekness," so that "you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger."—Zephaniah 2: 1-3.

Keep in mind the first-century Christians who fled from Jerusalem in 66 C.E. upon recognizing the sign that Jesus had given of its impending judgment. Any who delayed their flight—for whatever reason—were probably lulled into a false sense of security when the Romans, who had encircled the city and then unexpectedly withdrawn, failed to return. Weeks passed. Weeks turned into months. Months turned into years. Some may have thought that Jehovah was delaying the execution of his judgment. But suddenly the Romans returned in 70 C.E. For those inside the city, there was no escape. —Luke 21:20-22.

People today, on the other hand, who have already dedicated their lives to doing God's will and have fled to his place of safety, should not delay in fulfilling their Christian obligations. They should not beg off preaching Jehovah's message of judgment as Jonah tried to do when he was instructed to warn the Ninevites of divine judgment. Neither should they withdraw into inactivity to sulk, as he did, because things have not developed as they expected or as rapidly as they hoped.—Jonah 1:1, 2; 4:2, 5, 10, 11; 2 Peter 3:15.

Appropriately *The Watch Tower* of June 1, 1906, stated concerning God's execution of judgment: "Time will fully manifest the divine wisdom in what seems to short-sighted humanity like pitiless delay . . . God has kindly brought us to his standpoint of view and bidden us look into the glorious future . . . and in proportion as we are able to comprehend and believe it, we may rest and rejoice in it. But in the meantime, being thus graciously refreshed by the cheering prospect, we must patiently wait for the end, however painful the waiting season may be."

And wait we will, with this full conviction: "It will without fail come true. It will not be late."—Habakkuk 2:3.

"Speaking the truth, let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ." —EPHESIANS 4:15.

Accepting the Challenge of Christian Maturity

A HEALTHY, bouncing baby is truly a bundle of joy. Few people can resist its amusing antics. It is a source of endless excitement and delight, the center of attention wherever it goes. Understandably, parents love it as their 'pride and joy' in spite of all the toil and turmoil it brings. Indeed, "the fruitage of the belly is a reward."—Psalm 127:3.

[2] Lovable as a baby may be, however, what happens if it fails to give any sign of growth? If it remains in that state after months or perhaps even years of loving care from the parents, then clearly something is seriously wrong. Indeed, growth has come to be synonymous with life; we expect it of all living things. It is a testimony to Jehovah's creative power and wisdom.—Luke 2:52.

Spiritual Growth Essential

[3] True to Jesus' prophecy, growth of another kind is taking place. Around the world, a spiritual "harvest" is in progress. (Matthew 9:37) During the 1984 service year, for example, six countries reported averages of over a hundred thousand Kingdom publishers. Just three years earlier, in 1981, only two countries did. In the last six years, 827,144 new witnesses of Jehovah got baptized and over 5,000 new congregations were formed. Jehovah has speeded up his work.—Isaiah 60:22.

[4] These figures show that about one in every three persons who regularly associate with Jehovah's people and share in the preaching work today got baptized within the last six years. Are you one of them? If so, you have been a source of great joy to those who assisted you in learning the truth, to all your Christian associates, and to your heavenly Father, Jehovah God. (Proverbs 27:11) Like the first step taken by an infant, the step you have taken to dedicate yourself to Jehovah was an exciting event. It signified a forward, progressive move on your part. It was a sign of growth.

[5] What about since then? With the loving attention of your fellow Christians, are you showing evidence of steady spiritual growth? 'How can I tell?' you may ask. Well, recall what the apostle Paul said about growth: "When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe." (1 Corinthians 13:11) So, it was not just the passing of time but the doing away with "the traits of a babe" that

1, 2. (a) In what ways is 'the fruitage of the belly' a reward? (b) What is expected of newborn infants?

3. What growth was foretold by Jesus, and what fulfillment is seen?

4. What has been the result of the worldwide growth among Jehovah's people?

5. What questions should each individual ask himself? What can help in finding the answers?

IN THE PAST SIX YEARS

—827,144 new Witnesses got baptized

—Over 5,000 new congregations were formed

—Of those who now share in the preaching work, one in every three got baptized during this time

made him a mature man. What are these traits?

[6] One thing about infants is that they have a very short attention span. Though they are curious about everything around them, they are also unpredictable, changeable, and unsettled. Obviously, anyone remaining in such a state is in grave spiritual danger. He is likely to be "tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error," as the apostle Paul described it at Ephesians 4:14.

[7] Waves and wind can break forth as quickly as they dissipate. Today, when it is planned for things to go obsolete, trends, fads, and fashions come and go. Things that were considered essential just a short while ago are completely outdated and forgotten. Whether it is in the field of entertainment, dress and grooming, or anything else, how unwise—and childish—it is to be caught up in always wanting or getting the latest in everything, only to be outclassed and disappointed quickly. In spiritual matters, the consequence of such unsteadiness can be disastrous.—Compare James 1:6-8.

6, 7. (a) Describe one 'trait of a babe' and the danger it poses. (b) How is this trait manifest? What can be the outcome?

[8] Another 'trait of babes' is that they have very little conception of what is good or bad, right or wrong. Similarly, spiritual babes have not yet had their "perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong," and that is why the apostle Paul urged his fellow Christians to "press on to maturity, not laying a foundation again." (Hebrews 5:14; 6:1) Those who are spiritual babes need constant reassurance that what they have accepted as truth is indeed truth, and what they have been taught to do is indeed what they ought to do. They need help in even the most fundamental things. Otherwise they are easily confused, frustrated, and overtaken by doubts that can damage their faith.

[9] Have you ever noticed that children are always eager to do what they see adults do? To them, of course, it is only a game. Part of the fun, no doubt, is in being able to do what they want to do without having to accept the responsibility that goes with it. That, after all, is what a child's life is all about. (See Matthew 11:16, 17.) But with growth and development come duty and responsibility. It is a challenge that a child must be helped to accept. How well he responds to it will determine, to a large extent, his success or failure in later life. Spiritually, it is even more important that each one of us seriously consider the challenge of

During the 1984 service year, six countries averaged over a hundred thousand Kingdom publishers

8. What is another 'trait' of spiritual babes, and what danger does it present?
9. Why must we accept the challenge of Christian maturity?

Christian maturity. Are you willing, even eager, to accept the responsibility that comes with being a full-grown, mature, spiritual person? Or do you merely coast along, letting others shoulder your responsibility for you?—Galatians 6:4, 5.

Christian Maturity—What Is It?

[10] When the apostle Paul urged Christians to "press on to maturity," what did he have in mind? (Hebrews 6:1) The context shows that Paul originally had much to say to the Hebrew Christians concerning the "high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek," Jesus Christ. But he felt that they were not ready for it because what he had in mind was "hard to be explained." (Hebrews 5:10, 11) Instead, he reminded them: "You have become such as need milk, not solid food. For everyone that partakes of milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong."—Hebrews 5:12-14; compare Jude 3.

[11] Does this mean, then, that maturity is just a matter of having knowledge of the deeper things of the Bible? While Christian maturity includes knowledge and understanding of the Bible, there is much more to it. An understanding of the words used by the apostle Paul will help us see the matter more clearly. The Greek word translated "maturity" is *te·lei·o'tes,* and the adjective "mature" is translated from *te'lei·os.* These words are related to *te'los,* which means "end." W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words,* therefore, explains that being mature (*te'lei·os*) "signifies having reached its end (*te'los*), finished, complete, perfect." Thus, a mature Christian is one who has reached a certain end, or goal. What is this goal?

[12] The apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4:11-13, explained that Christ Jesus, as the head of the Christian congregation, has made many provisions to help the "holy ones" to reach that goal, namely, that "we all attain to the oneness in the faith and in the accurate knowledge of the Son of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ." Here, being mature, or full-grown (Greek, *te'lei·os*), is related not only to having "accurate knowledge" but also to "oneness in the faith" and to measuring ourselves according to the stature attained by Christ.

[13] "Oneness in the faith" signifies unity. Before a person comes to learn of the "one faith," he may have his own ideas and opinions about how things should be done, about what is right and what is wrong, and so on. (Ephesians 4:4, 5.) If he allows such ideas to persist, he will find it very difficult to grow spiritually. Paul once called the Christians in the ancient Corinthian congregation "babes in Christ" and "fleshly" because they were torn by "jealousy and strife," some claiming to follow Paul, others Apollos. (1 Corinthians 3:1-4) It can easily be seen, therefore, that unity, or "oneness in the faith," goes hand in hand with Christian maturity. There cannot be one without the other. So we must ask ourselves: Have we abandoned our former worldly ways of thinking? Do we see the importance of unity in thought and action with Jehovah's people? "Oneness in the faith" is an indispensable ingredient of Christian maturity.—Ephesians 4:2, 3.

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10. Why did Paul urge the Hebrew Christians to "press on to maturity"?
11. What does being mature signify?
12. According to Ephesians 4:11-13, what does maturity involve?
13. Why can there be no Christian maturity without "oneness in the faith"?

Many today choose the ministry above materialistic pursuits

[14] Christian maturity is also related to having "the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ." What does this mean? Paul goes on to say that those who reach this stature are no longer babes, "tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men" who cunningly contrive error. Rather, they have an accurate knowledge of the truth. They have grown up in the love of the Christ, and they show forth other godly qualities, such as wisdom, righteousness, and power. (Ephesians 4:13, 14; John 15: 12, 13; 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; 2:7, 8; Proverbs 8:1, 22-31) While we, as imperfect humans, may not be able to attain completely to the 'stature of the Christ,' we can certainly make him our Exemplar, setting for ourselves the end, or goal, of developing the same kind of godly personality. (Colossians 3:9) To the extent that we reach out for this goal we become mature.

14. To what else is maturity related?

Grow Up by Love

[15] Having considered the meaning embodied in the term "Christian maturity," we need to know how we can attain it. As we have seen, Hebrews 6:1 shows that in the quest for Christian maturity there is a certain foundation on which we must build. Once this is done, further efforts can be directed toward pressing on to maturity. First among the various elements making up that foundation is "repentance from dead works."

[16] Obviously, "dead works" would include works of the fallen flesh, which, if unchecked, will lead to death. We readily come to recognize outright transgressions such as fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, and spiritism as sinful, and we shun them. But the works of the flesh, "dead works," also include what some might call personality traits such as enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, and envies. (Galatians 5:19-21) Unless such personality traits are stripped off and replaced by "the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty," it is very unlikely that one will make any headway toward attaining Christian maturity.—Ephesians 4: 22-24.

[17] Besides the works of the flesh, the "dead works" of which we must divest ourselves also include works and pursuits that are *spiritually* dead, vain, and fruitless. They may be money-making, get-rich-quick schemes. They may be ambitious and time-consuming plans for advanced education, or they may be worldly movements for social reform, peace, and so on. All these things may appear to have

15. What is the first step in the quest for maturity?
16. From what "dead works" must we repent?
17. What else can be considered "dead works"? Why?

some merit in themselves, but they are "dead works" because they may spell spiritual death for those who become entangled in them. All those who are interested in attaining Christian maturity must 'repent from' or desist from pursuing, such "dead works" and follow Jesus' admonition to "keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness." —Matthew 6:33.

18 Once the foundation is built upon, what then? Paul advises: "But speaking the truth, let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ." (Ephesians 4:15) First of all, we note that Paul mentions the need for "speaking the truth." This expression evidently involves much more than just speech; it actually means "maintaining truth." (*Kingdom Interlinear*) Other translations render it as "live by the truth"; "lovingly follow the truth at all times—speaking truly, dealing truly, living truly".—Ephesians 4:15, *The Jerusalem Bible; The Living Bible.*

19 Thus, the pursuit of Christian maturity requires that we maintain, or uphold, the truth by the way we live, speak, act, and deal with others. This means putting to use in our everyday affairs the Bible knowledge we have gained and thus come to be among "those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." (Hebrews 5:14) Are you doing this? Do you reason along the lines of Bible principles each time you are faced with a decision? Do you accept the challenge of becoming a mature Christian, upholding the truth by word and deed, or would you rather remain a spiritual babe, free from responsibilities and free to pursue your own desires and wishes?

18, 19. (a) In Ephesians 4:15, what is meant by "speaking the truth"? (b) How is it related to Christian maturity?

20 Paul says: "Let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ." (Ephesians 4:15) Here, Paul points to the heart of the matter—the motivation. At 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 he shows that works that might otherwise be of value become totally profitless if they are done without the proper motivation. Thus we must examine our motive for everything that we do. Is it done to be viewed by others, to impress them so that they will think we are mature? Or, rather, is it done out of love for God and love for our neighbor? When love is our motive, we will "grow up in all things," becoming balanced, dependable, mature Christians, in full recognition of "him who is the head, Christ."

21 While striving to reach Christian maturity is a worthwhile goal, it is not the end. Once a person has reached this goal, is there something more for him to do? What about those who have been in the truth for a number of years and have attained the goal of Christian maturity? This we will consider in the next article.

20, 21. (a) How is love involved in growing to maturity? (b) What questions await further discussion?

Can You Explain?

- What are some "traits of a babe," and what dangers do they pose?
- How are "oneness in the faith" and "fullness of the Christ" related to maturity?
- To reach Christian maturity, what "dead works" must we abandon?
- How does one "by love grow up"?

"To what extent we have made progress, let us go on walking orderly in this same routine." —PHILIPPIANS 3:16.

"Go On Walking Orderly in This Same Routine"

WHEN Alisa was little more than two years old, she delighted everyone by being able to sing through the names of all the 66 books of the Bible, recite the names of the 12 apostles, and describe by gestures the nine fruits of God's spirit. (Matthew 10:2-4; Galatians 5:22, 23) By the time she was in the fifth grade at school, she was conducting a weekly Bible study with a girl in the third grade, who, in turn, was able to get her older brother interested in the Bible. Alisa and her little companion have set a goal for themselves. They look forward to being partners in full-time preaching work as special pioneers in due time.

[2] Surely, it would be a delight for any one of us to know children such as these, and very likely you do. At the same time, however, we cannot help but wonder: What will they turn out to be when they grow up? Will they continue their spiritual development until they reach their goal? Or will they be distracted by other things and fall by the wayside?

Continued Advancement

[3] Obviously such youngsters need a great deal of spiritual development before they reach their goal. But is it only the young or the new ones that need to make advancement? In fact, is advancement necessary only until one reaches spiritual maturity or becomes qualified for a certain privilege? Not so. Consider the apostle Paul. Rather than being satisfied with what he had achieved, he said in his letter to the Philippians: "Not that I have already received it or am already made perfect, but I am pursuing to see if I may also lay hold on that for which I have also been laid hold on by Christ Jesus."—Philippians 3:12.

[4] Clearly, Paul was not talking about attaining maturity, for there was no question but that he already was a mature Christian. Yet he said he was "pursuing" something that he had not yet "received." What was it? Paul went on to explain: "I am pursuing down toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:14) The goal he was pursuing was not just Christian maturity or qualification for a certain position, but it was something greater. For him and his fellow anointed Christians, it was "the upward call," the hope of heavenly life through a resurrection.

1, 2. (a) How are exemplary youths a source of encouragement? (b) Yet, what questions about them come to mind?

3. Who need to make advancement?

4. What "goal" was the apostle Paul pursuing?

[5] This helps us to see the reason for continuing to grow and develop spiritually no matter how long we have been in the truth. If a person made advancement only to the point of being considered mature, or only to the point of qualifying for some special privilege, what lasting benefit would there be for him? Maturity and special privileges are no guarantee that we will reach our final goal—everlasting life. Instead, we must do as the apostle Paul did: 'Forget the things behind and stretch forward to the things ahead.' (Philippians 3:13) Not only should we leave behind the unprofitable things we may have done before coming to a knowledge of the truth but we should also be careful not to become self-satisfied with what we have done since that time. In other words, the advice is not to rest on one's laurels but to press forward without letup. Are you doing this, or are you, for one reason or another, slowing down?—See 1 Corinthians 9:26.

[6] With this possibility in mind, Paul continued: "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) Earlier, in verse 12, Paul indicated that he did not consider himself as "already made perfect." Yet here he said "as many of us as are mature," or, "perfect ones." (*Kingdom Interlinear*) This is not a contradiction. Rather, it only makes the point that even mature Christians such as Paul must bear in mind that they have not yet reached the ultimate goal, and they must continue to make advancement in order to reach it. That is why he summed it up this way: "At any rate, to what extent we have made progress, let us go on walking orderly in this same routine."—Philippians 3:16.

5. (a) Why is continuous growth essential? (b) What may "forgetting the things behind" include?

6. Comparing Philippians 3:12 with 3:15, what can be said about making advancement?

Alisa and her Bible student have the full-time ministry as their goal

Orderly Routine

[7] When Paul encouraged Christians to "go on walking orderly in this same routine," was he telling them to work out a comfortable pattern of activity and stay put until the time came for them to receive their reward? To do so would be doing like the slave in Jesus' illustration who buried the one talent his master had given him and simply waited for the master's return. (Matthew 25:14-30) Even

7. What "routine" was Paul urging Christians to follow?

though the slave did not lose the talent or quit his service, he was called "good-for-nothing" and rejected by the master. Surely Paul was not telling us just to hold on to what we have for fear that we might lose it. He was speaking about making progress. By "routine" Paul evidently had in mind a set course of forward movement, something like that of a soldier who is not standing at attention but is marching forward.

[8] Paul's advice should help us to recognize the importance of putting forth continuous and strenuous effort to advance, improve, and better ourselves in Jehovah's service. "To what extent we have made progress," whether elders, ministerial servants, pioneers, or publishers, our chief concern should be to improve the quality and, if possible, the quantity of our service. We must be careful not to fall into the same frame of mind as the delinquent Israelites of Malachi's day who thought they were getting away with offering inferior sacrifices to Jehovah. But how did Jehovah feel about it? "Yes, you have brought it [the lame and sick offering] as a gift," he said. Then he added: "Can I take pleasure in it at your hand?"—Malachi 1:13.

[9] To the contrary, we should take our service to God seriously. As Paul reminded the Romans, whatever privilege of service we may be given, we should be 'at it,' "in real earnest" and not 'loiter at our business.' (Romans 12:6-8, 11) To loiter is to hang around aimlessly, with no forward movement toward any specific goal. Interestingly, the Greek word used here literally means "slothful," a most fitting description. A report shows that, though capable of rapid movement, over a period of 168 hours, one sloth slept or remained completely motionless for 139 hours —83 percent of the time. No wonder we are admonished not to be "slothful" but to "be aglow with the spirit" and "slave for Jehovah"! What can help us to do this?

[10] At 1 Timothy 4:12-16 the apostle Paul spelled out in detail the things Timothy should do so that his advancement might "be manifest to all persons." At the time, the disciple Timothy was neither a youngster nor a novice. In fact, by then he had worked closely with Paul for more than ten years and had considerable responsibility and authority entrusted to him in the Christian congregation, no doubt because of the advancement he already had made up to that point. Yet, Paul still gave Timothy such counsel. Clearly, it behooves all of us to pay close attention to what Paul had to say.

Become an example in speech and conduct

[11] First, in verse 12, Paul said: "Let no man ever look down on your youth. On the contrary, become an example to the faithful ones in speaking, in conduct, in love, in faith, in chasteness." This list reminds us of "the fruitage of the spirit," which Paul detailed at Galatians 5:22, 23. Who can deny that every one of us needs to produce this fruitage to a greater extent in our lives? Most of us put forth a great deal of effort to *learn* and *memorize* the nine fruits of the spirit, and to teach the

8. With what should we concern ourselves regarding our service to God?
9. How is Paul's counsel at Romans 12:6-8, 11 related to making advancement?

10. Why should we be keenly interested in Paul's counsel to Timothy at 1 Timothy 4:12-16?
11, 12. (a) What is the first area we should give attention to in making advancement? (b) Why is it more important than advancement in knowledge or skill?

young and the new ones to do the same. But do we put forth at least that much effort to *cultivate* them? Paul made the point that those who are mature should be exemplary in these matters. Surely, this is one area in our lives where all of us can easily make advancement.

12 In one sense, perhaps, these qualities are even more of an indicator of our spiritual progress than knowledge and skills are, because the former are products of God's spirit, whereas the latter are often related to one's natural abilities and education. The scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus' day were well versed in the Scriptures, and they were scrupulous in observing the intricate details of the Law. Yet, Jesus condemned them, saying: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you give the tenth of the mint and the dill and the cumin, but you have disregarded the weightier matters of the Law, namely, justice and mercy and faithfulness." (Matthew 23:23) How important it is for us to continue to make advancement in cultivating these "weightier matters" in our lives!

Application to reading, exhortation, and teaching

13 Next, Paul admonished Timothy to "continue applying [himself] to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching." (1 Timothy 4:13) Elsewhere in his letters, Paul spoke highly of Timothy as an able and faithful minister. (Philippians 2: 20-22; 2 Timothy 1:4, 5) Yet he advised Timothy to continue giving attention to these essential responsibilities of an overseer. If you are an appointed overseer in the congregation, do you "continue applying yourself" to these matters? For example, do you take seriously the suggestions offered in the *Theocratic Ministry School Guidebook* and work on your deficiencies, or do you feel that this counsel is only for the beginners? Do you study the Bible and the Society's publications carefully so that you can "exhort, with all long-suffering and art of teaching"?—2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9.

13. How can appointed overseers benefit from Paul's counsel at 1 Timothy 4:13?

Do not neglect the gift of service

14 While only a few are appointed to teach in the congregation, all Christians are commissioned by Jesus Christ to share in the Kingdom witnessing and the disciple-making work. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) This involves teaching honest-hearted ones the Bible truth, exhorting them to make changes in their lives and to take their stand on Jehovah's side. Do you "continue applying yourself" to improve your ministerial skills? Do you conscientiously make use of the suggestions offered in *Our Kingdom Ministry* and the weekly Service Meeting so as to 'do the work of an evangelizer, fully accomplishing your ministry'?—2 Timothy 4:5.

15 Previously, Paul had given Timothy this reminder: "Do not be neglecting the gift in you that was given you through a prediction and when the body of older men laid their hands upon you." (1 Timothy

14. How can we show advancement in our field ministry?

15. What was Timothy's "gift," and what about today?

4:14) Apparently, through the operation of the holy spirit, Timothy had been designated for and subsequently appointed to some special service in the Christian congregation. (1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 1:6) Similarly, today there are many in the organization who have cultivated God-given abilities, resulting in their being appointed as traveling overseers, missionaries, regular or special pioneers, elders, and so on. Even though no special prediction or laying on of hands is involved, the counsel "do not be neglecting the gift in you" applies with similar force.

[16] To neglect something, according to the dictionary, means to give little attention to it or to leave it undone through carelessness. When something becomes commonplace, it is easy to neglect it. This could happen if we stop making progress, or advancement, but take our assignments for granted. Therefore, we can profit from what Paul said at Colossians 3:23, 24: "Whatever you are doing, work at it whole-souled as to Jehovah, and not to men, for you know that it is from Jehovah you will receive the due reward of the inheritance. Slave for the Master, Christ."

Continuous Effort Brings Blessings

[17] When we give close attention to the matters discussed above, we can be assured that we will not fall into the trap of complacency or self-satisfaction. "Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them, that your advancement may be manifest to all persons," said Paul. (1 Timothy 4:15) The "advancement," of course, is not for the purpose of showing off or impressing others. When we, young and old, grow and develop spiritually, we bring joy and encouragement to all who associate with us, as did young Alisa and her companion, mentioned earlier in this article.

[18] A double blessing awaits us if we apply Paul's counsel diligently. "Pay constant attention to yourself and to your teaching," said Paul. "Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you." (1 Timothy 4:16) Yes, by constantly examining ourselves as to whether we are doing what we teach others to do, that is, to advance, grow, and develop spiritually, we will avoid the tragedy of 'becoming disapproved somehow.' (1 Corinthians 9:27) Rather, the happy prospect of life in God's promised New Order is assured for us and for those whom we have the joyful privilege to help. Thus, for our blessing and for the blessing of others, and for the praise of Jehovah God: "Go on walking orderly in this same routine"!—Philippians 3:16.

16. What can prevent us from neglecting our "gift"?
17. How only will we see the result of our efforts?
18. What double blessing awaits us if we apply Paul's counsel diligently?

Do You Remember?

- □ What is the ultimate "goal" we should have in mind? How do we pursue it? (Philippians 3:12, 13)
- □ What is the "routine" in which we should walk? (Philippians 3:16)
- □ Why must we continue to improve in Christian conduct and speech? (1 Timothy 4:12)
- □ How can elders, ministerial servants, and others make advancement in their teaching skill? (1 Timothy 4:13)
- □ What must we do not to neglect "the gift" entrusted to us? (1 Timothy 4:14)

Welcome to the 1985 "Integrity Keepers" Convention!

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES are well known not only for their zealous house-to-house ministry but also for their large Christian conventions. These have been featured for more than a hundred years now, going back all the way to 1879. There is good Scriptural precedent for these conventions.

Three times each year the Israelites were required to come together for their festivals. Jehovah considered these so important that he repeatedly had Moses stress them in the Pentateuch. See Exodus 23:14-17; 34:22-24; Leviticus 23:4-22; Numbers 28:16–29:12; Deuteronomy 16:1-16. We also read that Jesus' parents regularly went up to Jerusalem for the Passover festival.—Luke 2:41, 42.

For 38 years now, assemblies of Jehovah's Witnesses have been following a pattern similar to that in ancient Israel. Twice each year we rejoice to come together for our circuit assemblies, involving anywhere from 8 to 20 congregations. Then we look forward eagerly to assembling once each year for our district, national, or international conventions. Do we appreciate these gatherings as much as we should? Not all our brothers throughout the earth have this blessing. Thus a recent report from a Balkan country where the work has long been under restrictions tells that "for the first time we could hold a district convention in a public hall . . . The brothers were very happy about it."

They had reason to be happy, for it does seem that the greater the number of Witnesses that come together, the greater the happiness. One country reported in 1983 that "the 'Kingdom Unity' convention in December was indeed the highlight of the year," and another described it as "the high point of the year." It is no wonder that most of Jehovah's Witnesses make plans, often at great self-sacrifice, to attend district conventions all three and a half days.

Last year we were privileged to attend "Kingdom Increase" conventions. The program told how fitting that theme was in view of the great increases in Kingdom publishers worldwide. Further, it stressed the obligations of each individual Witness in connection with that increase. And what fine instruments we received for our ministry —the Reference Edition of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures,* the Bible study aid *Survival Into a New Earth,* and the brochure *The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever!* This year another treat is in store! We rejoice to assemble in the "Integrity Keepers" convention. This theme calls attention to the importance of our sharing in the vindication of Jehovah's name by keeping integrity through to the end of Satan's system.

How important that theme is! It is bound up with the most important issue facing all intelligent creatures, namely, the rightfulness of Jehovah's sovereignty, as upheld by creatures keeping their integrity in spite of all that Satan the Devil can do. It is not

easy to be an integrity keeper in these "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) It is the very opposite of following the line of least resistance. It means 'going through the narrow gate and walking on the cramped road that leads to life.'—Matthew 7:13, 14.

Keeping integrity as ministers of Jehovah God involves two basic requirements. On the one hand there is the need to bring forth the fruitage of the spirit so that we may "adorn the teaching of our Savior, God, in all things." (Titus 2:10) On the other hand we have the commission to preach and to make disciples, as we share in fulfilling Bible prophecy.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

To meet these two requirements, we need to keep on seeking first the Kingdom and God's righteousness. We must fight against all the machinations of Satan the Devil, all the temptations that this old world puts in our way in the form of materialism and pleasure seeking, and we must do as Paul did, 'pummel our bodies and lead them about like slaves.' (1 Corinthians 9:27; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 2:15-17) Successfully overcoming threats to our integrity is no easy matter.

If we appreciate fully the challenge of keeping our integrity, we will come to the convention 'conscious of our spiritual need.' (Matthew 5:3) We will pay close attention to what is said from the platform, take notes, join heartily in the singing, and enter into the spirit of the prayers offered. Also, we will listen carefully to the counsel given on keeping our integrity toward Jehovah God, toward our marriage mates, and toward our fellow Christians. By talks, interviews, demonstrations, and dramas we will be encouraged and equipped to be more determined than ever to keep integrity down to the end of this old, wicked system of things.

Nor would we want to overlook the fact that our large gatherings serve as a witness to the world. This past January the "Kingdom Increase" convention was held at the River Plate Stadium, Buenos Aires, Argentina, for four days. It made big news! The local news publication *Ahora* presented a fine color-illustrated report on the convention, with the banner headline, "Faith Fills Stadiums."

Under a large heading, "A Kingdom That Is Growing—That of Jehovah's Witnesses," a two-page article said in part: "Certainly incredible. Seeing is believing. Faith moves mountains. It has to be faith that motivated an average of 42,000 persons silently and with admirable order to fill the football stands of the River Plate Stadium during four days of this torrid summer. It has to be faith, also, that was able to assemble no fewer than 46,000 faithful without distinction of sex, age, culture, race, or nationality for the last day of the district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. . . . Whether or not we share their ideas and doctrines, this entire multitude deserves our greatest respect. They show themselves to be humble, far removed from the trivial things of daily life and the modern world it is our lot to share; they make a dogma of peace and love among the brothers."

The article went on to say: "What about their organization? All was perfect. The police detailed there were bored as they had nothing to do . . . Not so much as a minor incident, provocation, or disorder occurred in the four days. . . . We are left with an immeasurable peace that the Witnesses appear to have . . . Wrong or not, they won our respect. What moves them? That faith. That faith that moves mountains."

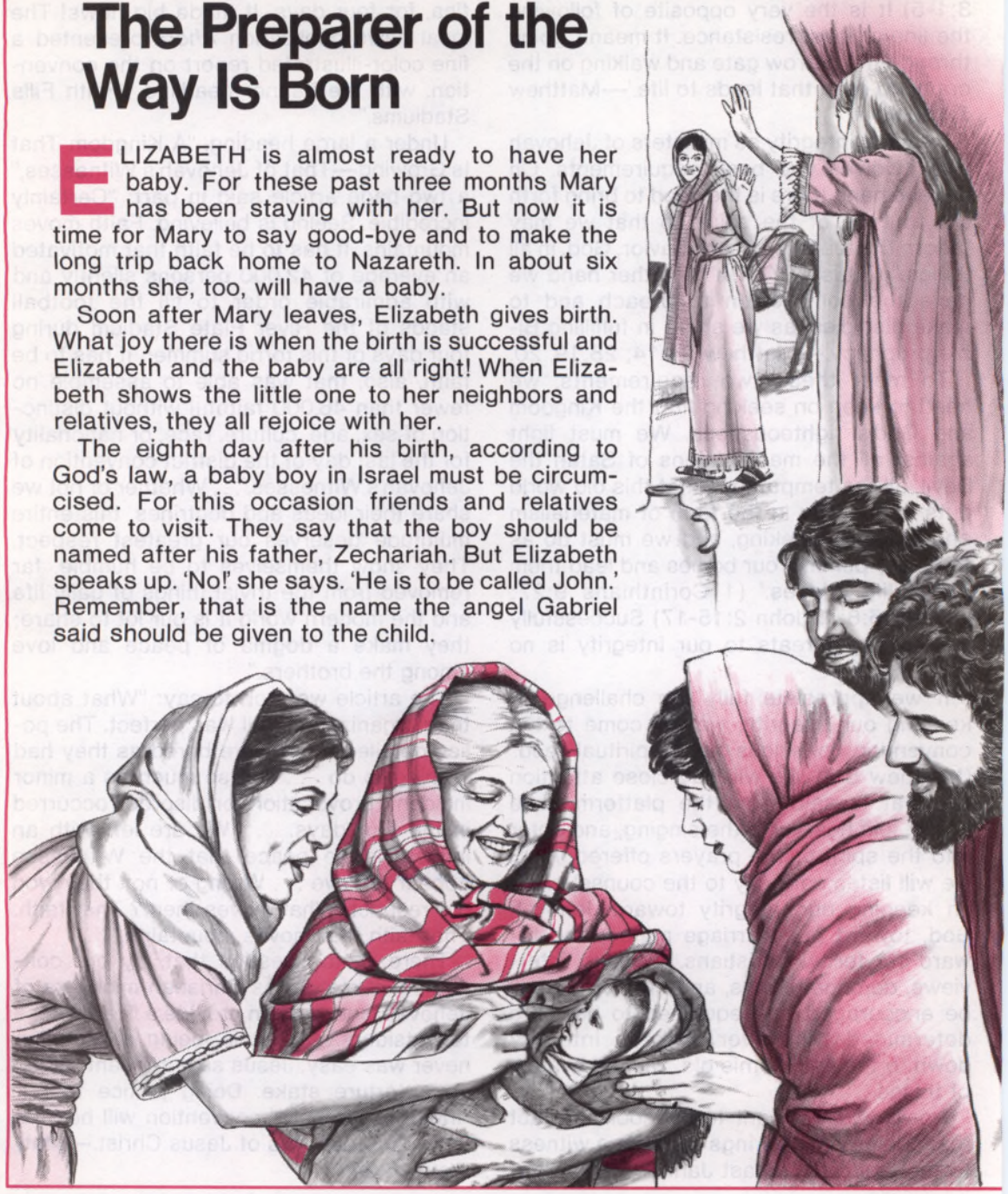
There is no question that, by our conducting ourselves as Christian ministers of Jehovah God, we can provide a fine witness to outsiders. True it is, being a Christian never was easy. Jesus said it meant taking up a torture stake. Doing justice to our "Integrity Keepers" convention will help us to be fine followers of Jesus Christ.—Matthew 16:24.

The Preparer of the Way Is Born

ELIZABETH is almost ready to have her baby. For these past three months Mary has been staying with her. But now it is time for Mary to say good-bye and to make the long trip back home to Nazareth. In about six months she, too, will have a baby.

Soon after Mary leaves, Elizabeth gives birth. What joy there is when the birth is successful and Elizabeth and the baby are all right! When Elizabeth shows the little one to her neighbors and relatives, they all rejoice with her.

The eighth day after his birth, according to God's law, a baby boy in Israel must be circumcised. For this occasion friends and relatives come to visit. They say that the boy should be named after his father, Zechariah. But Elizabeth speaks up. 'No!' she says. 'He is to be called John.' Remember, that is the name the angel Gabriel said should be given to the child.



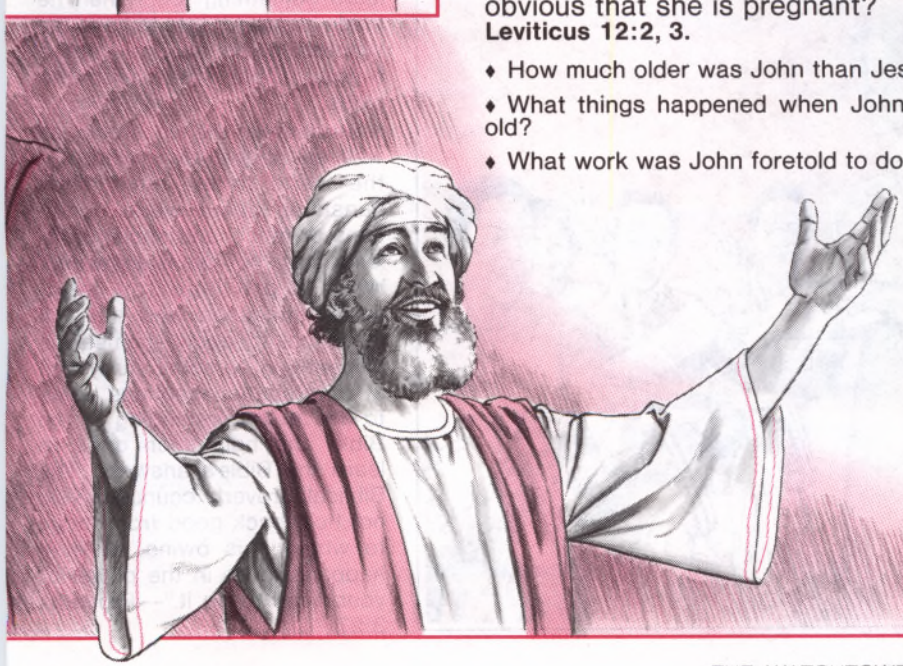
However, their friends protest: 'There is no one among your relatives with that name.' Then, using sign language, they ask what his father wants to name the boy. Asking for a writing tablet, Zechariah, to the astonishment of all, writes: 'His name is John.'

With that Zechariah's speech is miraculously restored. You will recall that he lost his ability to speak when he did not believe the angel's announcement that Elizabeth would have a child. Well, when Zechariah speaks, all those living in the neighborhood are amazed and say to themselves: 'What really will this child become?'

Zechariah is now filled with holy spirit, and he foretells regarding his son: 'He will be called a prophet of the Most High, and he will go ahead of Jehovah and prepare the way for him. He will tell the people that they must be saved by having their sins forgiven.'

By this time Mary, who evidently is still an unmarried woman, has arrived home in Nazareth. What will happen to her when it becomes obvious that she is pregnant? **Luke 1:56-80; Leviticus 12:2, 3.**

- How much older was John than Jesus?
- What things happened when John was eight days old?
- What work was John foretold to do?



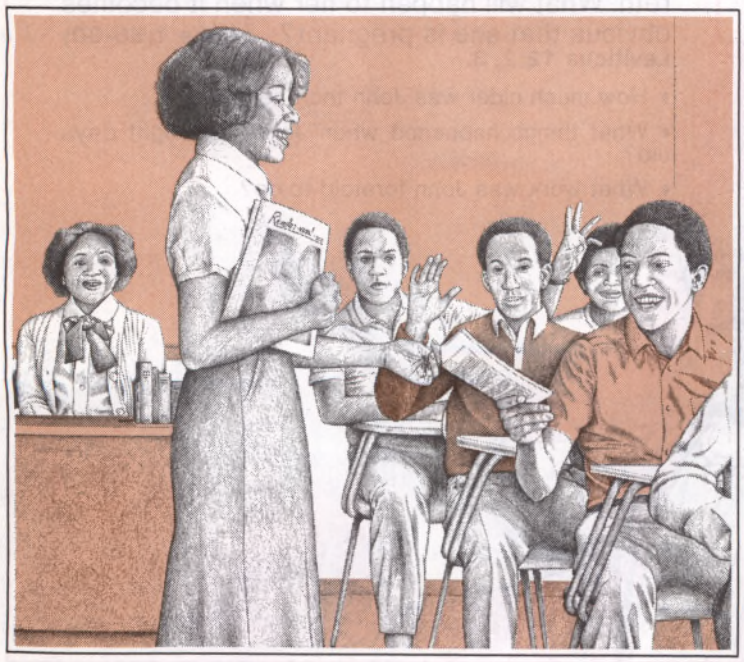
Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Witnessing at School

"DO YOUR utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright," wrote the apostle Paul to the young man Timothy. (2 Timothy 2:15) Many children of Jehovah's Witnesses have opportunity to give a witness about the good news of God's Kingdom at school. They are not ashamed to do so and are appreciated for it by many of the other students.

□ An example of this comes from Martinique. A young girl who is known in school as one of Jehovah's Witnesses was often asked her opinion on religious subjects by her teacher. She had had several conversations with this teacher, and the teacher accepted some of the Watch Tower literature.

One day a discussion came up in class about the overpopulation of the earth. In discussing how to stop overcrowding the earth, contraception and abortion were mentioned. Some students were for abortion and some against it. The teacher asked the young sister for her opinion. She said that she would be pleased to give a complete explanation the next day. That night she prepared, and the next day brought to school some *Awake!* magazines that dealt Scripturally with the subject of abortion. After reading the material, she asked the class questions, and at the end of the discussion "all in the class expressed themselves against abortion," she said. Some students subscribed to the *Awake!* magazine.



□ Another experience comes from Sweden where the brothers have often been invited to give lectures in schools. One special-pioneer minister of Jehovah's Witnesses had been invited to give several lectures in a class. The teacher said: "We have had other pastors here, but they just play the guitar and tell the students to be good. That is all right," said the teacher, "but I want my students to learn something too." Then he made arrangements to have the Witness come and conduct a regular Bible study with the class.

Students in the classroom, as well as people everywhere in the world today, have many questions about world conditions or family and social problems that they want answered. What a privilege for Jehovah's Witnesses who are still in school to apply themselves diligently in personal study and at congregation meetings, so as to get an understanding of the Bible and help such ones to learn the Bible's answers! The Biblical proverb counsels: "Do not hold back good from those to whom it is owing, when it happens to be in the power of your hand to do it."—Proverbs 3:27.

Single and Happy as a Pioneer

As told by Margaret Stephenson

MOMBASA, East Africa, 1958. The tropical heat bore down, covering everything with a shimmering haze. Flies buzzed irritatingly around me. Under the tin roof of the customs shed at the harbour, the temperature was nearing 40 degrees Celsius (104° F.). As I waited patiently, the perspiration rolled down my cheeks. The humidity hung over us like a steamy blanket, and the air—dank and stuffy—was almost too thick to breathe. Was all of Kenya going to be like this?

I began to wonder whether this was a good place for a single woman. I had seen pictures of vast rolling plains filled with game, lush forests, even snowcapped mountains, but here . . . "Oh, what have I done?" I asked myself. "What have I let myself into?"

It was all so very different from Ottawa, Canada, where I had been living. The trip by sea had taken five weeks. Ten thousand miles just to get here! Would there be anyone to meet me? I did not know whether there were any Jehovah's Witnesses in Mombasa, so you can imagine my surprise and relief to see a group of smiling faces. It was so heartening! And what a warm welcome!

The first meeting that very night also did much to allay my fears about this land so new and strange to me. Just two families—how appreciative and encouraged they were to hear experiences and to have some company. There is such a great work to be done here, I thought. How could I possibly leave these few brave people to do it all by themselves? That first night helped me greatly to be determined to stay and help as long as I could.

Answering the Call

"Step over into Macedonia!" was the invitation extended by the speaker almost 18 months earlier at the 1957 assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in Seattle, Washington, U.S.A. We had all been asked to consider seriously whether our personal circumstances would permit us to answer the call for more workers in the field, helping as preachers of the good news of the Kingdom even in foreign lands. I thought to myself: 'Is there really anything holding me back? Is there any reason why I cannot make myself available?

I am single with no one to support. I have always been a person who likes to do things with a whole heart, and here is a direct request from Jehovah that I should respond to.' Hurriedly, I started to write down all the places the speaker designated as modern "Macedonias," in memory of the place of great need to which the holy spirit invited the apostle Paul in the first century.—Acts 16:9, 10.

You may wonder what makes a somewhat fragile woman over 50 years of age take courage and strike out on her own to a distant part of the globe. Adventure? No, not at all; I am definitely not the adventurous type. Perhaps it was the influence of elderly Sister Bartlett, who so patiently and lovingly taught me the truth up to my baptism in 1954. She was always encouraging the full-time service, stressing its joys and blessings. But what changes that would mean for me! My father had already shown deep respect for the Bible and *The Watchtower,* but he had never come to the point of taking a clear stand for Bible truths. I, too, hesitated for a while. For two and a half years Sister Bartlett had tried to encourage me to take part in the house-to-house preaching work. I understood why this work was necessary, but I was terrified. Finally, after covering four large study books and while I was still offering lame excuses, she urged me into magazine street work. "If you've any pride left," she said, "that will get rid of it." How marvelously Jehovah supplies to all of us the power we need to accomplish his will!—Philippians 4:13.

As I look back now, I am so grateful that the pioneer work and its rewards were always set before me as a goal. Having tasted and seen that the ministry was indeed a truly satisfying work, in 1956 I decided to do it full time as a pioneer. Since I was due to retire from my work the following year, I decided: 'Why not do it now, straight away?' So I did—and loved it. "Should I apply for Gilead missionary school?" I asked a mature couple. "No," came their reply, "you are too old!" "Well, then, should I apply to work at the Society's headquarters?" Again came the reply, "You're too old, Margaret!" 'Oh, well,' I thought, 'I'll just have to serve where the need is greater.' Wisely they encouraged a move within Canada first to see how I could adapt and get along with changes before trying another country.

After receiving an assignment, I packed up and travelled the 2,500 miles (4,000 km) from Vancouver right across Canada to Ottawa. There I met Aubrey and Eunice Clarke, just assigned from Gilead School and going to Kenya. They were positive and kindly offered to write and provide all the information they thought would be helpful to me. After a number of letters filled with practical advice, encouragement, suggestions, and warnings, and many other things that would help me in deciding whether I could make it, I was off.

Was I scared? Oh, no! . . . not until the moment I arrived in Mombasa. But the warmth that the local brothers showed, and the efforts they all put forth to make me feel welcome and wanted, soon helped me to settle in. After only two days at the

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coast, I travelled up to the capital, Nairobi, 300 miles (480 km) inland.

An Enlarged Field

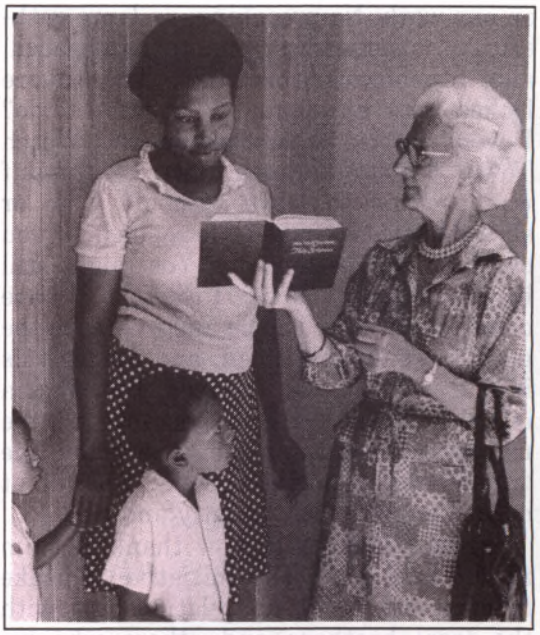
At first, our witnessing was mostly informal and only among Europeans, as our work had not yet been legally recognized in Kenya. Under these circumstances, the challenge was great indeed. We had so many people to reach with the good news and few people to do it! Still, a foundation was being laid for greater expansion. What a happy day it was in 1962 when *total* recognition and acceptance as a Bible association was granted! With this new freedom, we could go from house to house and witness to the local African people.

So we started, armed with great excitement and rather limited, memorized Swahili sermons. The reaction really gave us a thrill. Many new Bible studies were started, and the people were so pleased to learn! But the conditions were very different from what I had been used to, and I remember thinking, 'Oh, how people need the life-giving message of the truth!'

The hospitality of the people especially was an endearing quality. How many cups of tea we drank I cannot remember. And now and then in the midst of it all a spark of interest would be kindled, and the appreciation the new ones showed for the truth was a great stimulus to all of us to stick with our work.

Lonely?

Was I lonely as a single person so far from home? Not really. There were so many friends and such a lot of work! We did things together, visited one another, and kept busy. There have been opportunities for marriage in my life, but I just never got around to it. Instead, I was able to use the extra freedom and mobility that singleness affords to keep busy in the ministry, and this has brought me great



'The reaction to our Swahili sermons gave us a thrill'

happiness. Admittedly, when making return visits on interested families, I used to think, 'Well, I suppose a husband would have his uses!' Since certain families kindly included me in things they would do, I was rarely on my own. Here in Kenya I have a spiritual family made up of about 15 different ones I have been privileged to help along to dedication and baptism. Even now, as I look at the congregation, I see that one of these individuals and her five children are publishing the good news too. Surely, this is what makes all the sacrifice and effort worth while. These new ones, along with my dear spiritual brothers and sisters, have so filled my life that there is always something to do and not too much time for loneliness.

Work Banned! Stay or Leave?

What a shock! Like a bolt out of the blue, one morning we awoke to a total ban

on our work. No preaching, no large gatherings, missionaries soon to be expelled, and literature proscribed. The future looked quite uncertain. What was I to do? I went to see a brother in the Watch Tower Society's branch office. He himself was packing to leave. "Should I go or should I stay?" I asked. He replied: "If you can, you had better stay. You might still be able to help." 'Well,' I thought, 'I have come to serve the people and to preach the good news as best I can, and for me this is still possible.' So I stayed. But what a loss I felt as I waved good-bye to the missionaries at the airport! So many fine friends and associates gone, and all at once! I missed them greatly and still do.

When I look back, how thankful I am that I had taken the initiative to make friends and build up relationships with the local brothers and others who remained! Had I not done this, I would have been totally on my own. Together, we weathered the storm. And how thrilled and relieved we were when, just a few months later, matters were cleared up, the ban was cancelled, and our work was legally recognized again!

Slowly, more help arrived. How that gave all of us and the work a boost! What a joy to see how the work has progressed! When I first arrived in Kenya, there were only about 30 brothers and interested ones struggling to bring the light of truth to the people. Now we have some 3,000 Kingdom publishers and well over 4,000 Bible studies in the country. I used to know everyone at our small assemblies. But as I look at large, colourful, and packed grandstands these days, that is impossible. I remember, too, the first little branch office. Now, instead of a small two-room office, we have a fine new branch office and printing facilities.

Jehovah's Sustaining Power Always Evident

Not too long ago my eyes began troubling me, requiring some rather costly operations. This would have put quite a strain on my already dwindling resources. Here again, I had to decide whether to return to Canada or to try to stay in my pioneer assignment. I made this problem a matter of prayer. So you can imagine my excitement when I heard the news that the Canadian government was just changing the laws to allow pensions to be paid to citizens even though they were not residing in Canada. Jehovah had shown me the way out, and I was thrilled, for I had made Kenya my home and really wanted to stay.

Over the years my relationship with Jehovah has deepened. As a single woman in an African country, I have seen him as a Protector. He sustains us, too, for at 77 I am still pioneering and have now been doing so for the past 27 years. I have also learned to stick with what is right when problems arise. Eventually, things always change; they do not remain the same forever. And then how glad you are that you remained faithful! As for me, well, just as long as I can, I hope to continue serving Jehovah as a happy pioneer.

"Happy is the one who has the God of Jacob for his help,
Whose hope is in Jehovah his God,
The Maker of heaven and earth,
Of the sea, and of all that is in them,
The One keeping trueness to time indefinite."

—PSALM 146:5, 6.

Insight From the Two Books of Kings

ON ONE occasion when Jesus was speaking in his hometown of Nazareth, he said something that provoked a surprisingly strong reaction. The inhabitants of Nazareth seemingly were wondering why he had not performed as many miracles there as he had in other towns. In telling them why, Jesus used two Scriptural examples. Here is what he said:

"Truly I tell you that no prophet is accepted in his home territory. For instance, I tell you in truth, There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, so that a great famine fell upon all the land, yet Elijah was sent to none of those women, but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon to a widow. Also, there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed, but Naaman the man of Syria." (Luke 4: 24-27) At these words, those listening became filled with anger and tried to kill Jesus. Why did they respond so violently?

To find the answer, we have to look back into the Hebrew Scriptures and read the histories of Elijah and Elisha. The first-century Christians were thoroughly familiar with these books, and so were their Jewish listeners. On numerous occasions Christian Bible writers referred to events and personalities in these earlier books to illustrate a point, as Jesus did here. These references were instantly recognized and understood by the listeners. If we are to get the full point of Jesus' teachings, we need to recognize those references too.

The truth is, it is impossible to understand the Christian Greek Scriptures fully unless we are familiar with the Hebrew Scriptures. The histories of the prophets Jesus referred to, Elijah and Elisha, are recorded in the two books of Kings. Let us consider these two books to illustrate this point and see how a knowledge of them gives us a deeper and more vivid understanding of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

An Unfavorable Comparison

First of all, why were the inhabitants of Nazareth so upset when Jesus referred to

two miracles performed more than 900 years earlier by Elijah and Elisha? Well, Jesus was clearly comparing the Nazarenes with the Israelites of the northern kingdom of Israel during the days of Elijah and Elisha, and according to the two books of Kings, Israel was not in a good spiritual condition at that time. The Israelites had gone right over to Baal worship and were persecuting the prophets of Jehovah. Elijah was actually fleeing from his own countrymen when a widow in Zarephath, in a foreign country, took him in and fed him. That was when he performed the miracle Jesus referred to. (1 Kings 17:17-24) Israel was still riddled with Baal worship when Elisha healed the Syrian army chief Naaman of his leprosy. —2 Kings 5:8-14.

The inhabitants of Nazareth did not appreciate being compared with the paganized Jews of those days. Was Jesus' comparison justified? Evidently so. Just as Elijah's life was in danger in Israel, so Jesus' life was now in danger. The record tells us: "All those hearing these things in the synagogue became filled with anger; and they rose up and hurried him outside the city, and they led him to the brow of the mountain upon which their city had been built, in order to throw him down headlong." But Jehovah protected Jesus, as he had earlier protected Elijah.—Luke 4:28-30.

King Solomon's Glory

That is one example of how the two books of Kings flesh out, as it were, the words of Jesus and the early Christians. Consider another example. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus encouraged his listeners to rely on Jehovah in the matter of material necessities. Among other things, he said: "Also, on the matter of clothing, why are you anxious? Take a lesson from the lilies of the field, how they are growing; they do not toil, nor do they spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these." (Matthew 6:28, 29) Why did Jesus refer to Solomon here?

His Jewish listeners would have known because they were familiar with the glory of Solomon. It is described at some length in the book of First Kings (as well as in Second Chronicles). They would likely have remembered, for example, that the food for Solomon's household each day "proved to be thirty cor measures of fine flour and sixty cor measures of flour, ten fat cattle and twenty pastured cattle and a hundred sheep, besides some stags and gazelles and roebucks and fattened cuckoos." (1 Kings 4:22, 23) That was a lot of food.

Besides that, the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year amounted up to "six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold," well over 250 million dollars (U.S.) at current values. And all the ornaments of Solomon's house were of gold. "There was nothing of silver; it was considered in the days of Solomon as nothing at all."

(1 Kings 10:14, 21) As Jesus triggered their recollections of these things, his listeners quickly got the point of what he was saying.

Jesus referred to Solomon in another context. Some scribes and Pharisees had demanded that he perform a sign, and Jesus answered: "The queen of the south will be raised up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it; because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, but, look! something more than Solomon is here." (Matthew 12:42) Why was this reference a strong rebuke to the listening religious leaders?

If we are familiar with the first book of Kings, we know that "the queen of the south" was the queen of Sheba. She was clearly a great lady, queen of a wealthy realm. When she visited Solomon, she brought with her "a very impressive train," expensive oil and "very much gold and precious stones." (1 Kings 10:1, 2) Peaceful communications between national rulers are usually undertaken by means of ambassadors. Hence, for the queen of Sheba, a reigning monarch, to travel personally all the way to Jerusalem to see King Solomon was unusual. Why did she do it?

King Solomon was very wealthy, but so was the queen of Sheba. She would not undertake such a journey just to see a rich monarch. However, Solomon was not only rich but he "was greater in riches and *wisdom* than all the other kings of the earth." (1 Kings 10:23) Under his wise rule "Judah and Israel continued to dwell in security, everyone under his own vine and under his own fig tree, from Dan to Beer-sheba, all the days of Solomon." —1 Kings 4:25.

It was Solomon's wisdom that attracted the queen of Sheba. She was "hearing the report about Solomon in connection with the name of Jehovah. So she came to test him with perplexing questions." When she arrived in Jerusalem, "she came on in to Solomon and began to speak to him all that happened to be close to her heart. Solomon, in turn, went on to tell her all her matters. There proved to be no matter hidden from the king that he did not tell her."—1 Kings 10:1-3.

Jesus, too, possessed outstanding wisdom "in connection with the name of Jehovah." In fact, he was "more than Solomon." (Luke 11:31) The queen of Sheba, who was not a Jewess, made a long, inconvenient journey just to see Solomon for herself and to benefit from his wisdom. Thus, surely the scribes and Pharisees should have listened appreciatively to the one 'greater than Solomon' when he was right there in front of them. But they did not. "The queen of the south" appreciated God-given wisdom far more than they did.

Allusions to the Prophets

During the period of history covered in the books of First and Second Kings, the rulers in the 12-tribe kingdom—and later

in the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah—were kings. At that time Jehovah's prophets were very active among His people. Outstanding among these were Elijah and Elisha, to whom we have already referred. Jesus' reference to them in Nazareth was not the only time they were mentioned in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The apostle Paul in his letter to the Hebrew Christians wrote about the faith of God's servants of earlier times and, as one example of this, said: "Women received their dead by resurrection." (Hebrews 11:35) Doubtless he had in mind Elijah and Elisha, both of whom were used to perform resurrections. (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37) When three of Jesus' apostles became 'eyewitnesses of Jesus' magnificence' during the transfiguration vision, they saw Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah. (2 Peter 1:16-18; Matthew 17:1-9) Why was Elijah chosen to represent the line of pre-Christian prophets who bore witness to Jesus? If you read the account of First Kings and see his great faith and the mighty way he was used by Jehovah, you will understand the answer.

Nevertheless, Elijah was really just an ordinary person like us. James referred to another event in First Kings when he wrote: "A righteous man's supplication, when it is at work, has much force. Elijah was a man with feelings like ours, and yet in prayer he prayed for it not to rain; and it did not rain upon the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the land put forth its fruit."—James 5:16-18; 1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-46.

Further Echoes From Kings

Many other references in the Christian Greek Scriptures contain echoes from the two books of Kings. Stephen reminded the Jewish Sanhedrin that Solomon built a house for Jehovah in Jerusalem. (Acts 7:47) Many of the details of that building work are in the first book of Kings. (1 Kings 6:1-38) When Jesus spoke to a woman in Samaria, the woman said to him in surprise: "'How is it that you, despite being a Jew, ask me for a drink, when I am a Samaritan woman?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)" (John 4:9) Why did the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans? The account in Second Kings describing the origin of this people sheds light on the matter.—2 Kings 17:24-34.

A letter found in the book of Revelation to the congregation of Thyatira contains this strong counsel: "Nevertheless, I do hold this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and misleads my slaves to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols." (Revelation 2:20) Who was Jezebel? The daughter of a Baal priest in Tyre. As the first book of Kings tells us, she married King Ahab of Israel and became queen of Israel. Dominating her husband, she introduced Baal worship into an already apostate Israel, brought a host of Baal priests into the land and persecuted Jehovah's prophets. Ultimately, she died a violent death. —1 Kings 16:30-33; 18:13; 2 Kings 9: 30-34.

The woman showing the spirit of Jezebel in the congregation of Thyatira was evidently trying to teach the congregation to practice immorality and to violate God's laws. Such a spirit had to be exterminated in the congregation, just as the family of Jezebel had to be exterminated from the Israelite nation.

Yes, we need the Hebrew Scriptures in

order to understand the Christian Greek Scriptures. Many details would be meaningless without the background that the Hebrew Scriptures provide. Jesus and the early Christians, as well as the Jews that they spoke to, were thoroughly familiar with them. Why not take the time to make yourself equally familiar with them? Thus you will take the fullest advantage of *"all Scripture,"* which is "inspired of God and beneficial for teaching."—2 Timothy 3:16.

Questions From Readers

■ **In view of reports that doctors may be able to reverse a voluntary sterilization, might not some Christians choose it as a form of birth control?**

The Bible shows that God has high regard for reproductive powers. He purposed that humans fill the earth by reproducing their kind. (Genesis 1:28; 9:6, 7) Later, Israelites regarded large families as a blessing from Jehovah, and tampering with reproductive powers brought divine disfavor. (Psalm 127:3-5; Deuteronomy 1:11; 23:1; 25:11, 12) Such points in the Hebrew Scriptures have influenced the thinking of many of God's servants with regard to the practice of voluntary sterilization.*

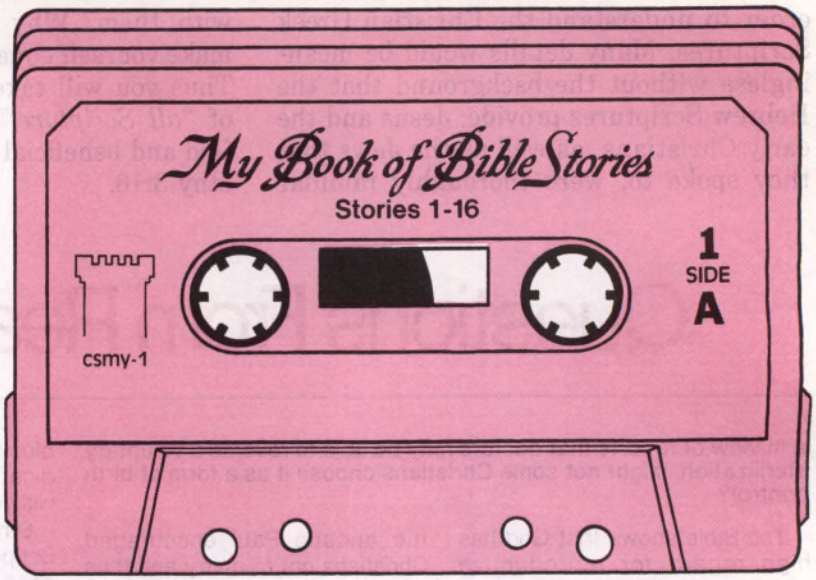
What, though, do we find in the Christian Greek Scriptures bearing on the matter? For one thing, we learn that Christians are not under the Mosaic Law. (Galatians 3:24, 25) Further, Jesus urged the expansion of Christianity by preaching the good news, not by procreation. Since a great harvest of disciples would result, Jesus advised disciples who could make room for it to become eunuchs in a spiritual sense, expressing self-control as single persons. Of similar import, the apostle Paul encouraged Christians not to marry and thus to have greater freedom to preach and teach. That way they would gather in spiritual children. Even married couples were to remember that "the time left is reduced"; their goal should be 'freedom from the anxieties' of family life.—1 Corinthians 7:29-32, 35; Matthew 9:37, 38; 19:12.

When we last discussed voluntary sterilization in this column* most physicians considered the procedure irreversible and thus permanent. However, medical developments in the last decade have changed the situation somewhat. For example, *Population Reports* (November-December 1983, Johns Hopkins University) says about vasectomies: "In recent reports reversals have restored patency—that is, sperm have been found in the ejaculate—in 67 to 100 percent of men. Functional success—that is, pregnancies among the wives of men who have had reversals—has ranged from 16 to 85 percent." New surgical procedures and methods of implanting temporary blocks are also pointed to as indicating that reversal success will yet increase.

Since the Christian Greek Scriptures give no direct guidance on such matters, Christians must make personal decisions about limiting the size of their family and about birth control. As to sterilization, they should bear in mind that even though a reversal is theoretically more possible now than it was a decade ago, physicians *cannot guarantee* that reproductive ability can be restored.

Above all, a couple should keep a clear conscience before Jehovah and toward their fellow Christians. If a couple is thinking of sterilization as a form of birth control, they still should consider any effect their actions may have on others. Though married couples do not usually publicize their decision about birth control, if it became widely known that a couple had resorted to voluntary sterilization, would the congregation be greatly upset and lose respect for them? (1 Timothy 3:2, 12, 13) These are factors to consider very seriously, even in this private and personal matter. In the final analysis, Paul's statement is appropriate: "To his own master [Jehovah] he stands or falls."—Romans 14:4, 10-12.

* See, for example, "Questions From Readers," *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1975.



A Fabulous Memory Aid

The cassette recordings of *My Book of Bible Stories* are just that. A mother from Alberta, Canada, explains:

"One day I was reading a story from *My Book of Bible Stories* to my four-and-a-half-year-old son, Shaun. As I paused at one point I found that to my amazement he began to continue the story, word for word, as it appears in the *Bible Stories* book. At first I thought it was just one story that he knew. So I tried another and then another and he had memorized every one. . . .

"As he listens to the tape he studies the picture in the book that is associated with each story. It seems that in this way he has actually memorized, word for word, the first 33 stories, including difficult names of places and people. If he has a memory lapse, it often takes just a word and no more than three or four words to prompt him and he is able to continue again."