



The **Watchtower**  
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

January 15, 1987

# THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

## What Has It Accomplished?

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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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# 'Preaching the Gospel' Through Social Work

**K**UO TUNG, a young Buddhist man from Hong Kong, received a college education. Hsiu Ying, a mother in Taiwan, found much-needed treatment for her son's critical illness. What do these two seemingly unrelated events have in common?

A college education would normally have been out of the question for Kuo Tung. But through the church to which he belongs, doors were opened for him. Similarly, the complicated medical procedure needed by Hsiu Ying's son was available only at the church-owned hospital in her area. Again, through connections with the church, the problem was solved.

The stories of Kuo Tung and Hsiu Ying are by no means unusual. Thousands of people in developing countries have been drawn to schools, hospitals, orphanages, and other social institutions operated by churches. In this way they have gained considerable material benefit for themselves. And in the process, by joining the church many of them have helped to swell the church membership rolls.

## A Practice With a Long History

Church schools and hospitals, of course, are not new. In fact, from the early days when missionaries were sent forth to what some have called hostile heathen lands, schools and hospitals have been looked upon as the most effective means of opening up new territories and gaining the trust and friendship of the local populace.

For example, in describing the situation in India in the early 19th century, the

book *Nineteen Centuries of Missions* (1899) says: "The missionaries are not only earnestly engaged in *evangelistic* work, but they also labor with marked success in *educational, medical* and *zenana* work." The result? "Each mission has its *day* schools, *industrial* and *boarding* schools, a high school or *college*, and in nearly every case, a *theological seminary*."

Commenting on the role of medical work in the "missionary enterprise," the book continues: "The physician is always welcome, and the relief given from physical suffering not only inspires confidence in the physician, but is often followed by faith in the religion which he teaches. Whole villages are often led as an outcome of medical treatment, to renounce idolatry and receive Christian instruction."

What was true in India also became true in other countries in the Far East, South America, and Africa. The idea of preaching the gospel through social means had caught on. European and American missionary societies, both Catholic and Protestant, sent forth workers into these areas and established their missions along with their schools, hospitals, and other institutions. Much of this proved so successful in attracting the local people that such social work soon became an integral part of the overseas missionary work sponsored by the churches.

Over the years these church-run establishments have grown to occupy a very important place in the local communities. Their schools and universities often are the most prestigious and sought-after

institutions of higher learning. Generally, their hospitals are the best equipped and most up-to-date. And, in many areas, where governments are hard pressed by overwhelming social problems, they are welcomed, if not also honored.

There is no question that the services provided through such a program have resulted in much good for the communities thus served. Church-run schools and universities have provided literally thousands of students with an education that they might have been denied otherwise. Such hospitals and health services have brought relief to countless numbers of

people in remote and backward areas. The humanitarian work of Albert Schweitzer and "Mother" Teresa, for example, are well known internationally and both of them have won the Nobel peace prize.

On the other hand, one must ask: Has the social gospel really achieved its aim? Has it made real Christians of those who have benefited from the charitable works? Has it given the people true faith and hope? Even more importantly, we must ask: Is this what Jesus had in mind when he commissioned his followers to 'preach the gospel in all the world'?—Matthew 24: 14, *King James Version*.

# Social Ministry

## —How It Affects People



**S**TARTING with only five barley loaves and two small fishes, Jesus Christ miraculously fed over 5,000 men, women, and children about the time of the Pass-

over (March-April) in 32 C.E. (Matthew 14:14-21; John 6:1-13) Recognizing the tremendous potential Jesus held, the people wanted to make him their king. Possi-

bly they felt that he would deliver them from the Roman yoke and improve their lot in life. What was Jesus' response?

Instead of submitting to the popular demand, Jesus "withdrew again into the mountain all alone." (John 6:15) But the crowd did not give up easily. They came to him again the next day. Detecting their ulterior motive, Jesus said to them: "You are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate from the loaves and were satisfied." Then he added: "Work, not for the food that perishes, but for the food that remains for life everlasting."—John 6:25-27.

What can we learn from this account? Among other things, it clearly shows that with material benefits it is relatively easy to attract people. However, building genuine appreciation for spiritual things—things of lasting value—is an entirely different matter. Today, the tendency to look at things from a purely materialistic point of view is even greater.

### **Strong Appeal of Social Ministry**

In the eyes of the people of the developing countries, the advanced Western nations represent all the opportunities and material benefits that one could want—opportunities that are unavailable in their own country. The prosperity is envied, the life-style emulated. The opportunity for higher education is set in front of virtually every student as a passport to advancement and success. Against such a background it is not hard to understand why the social programs of the foreign churches have had such a strong appeal in these countries. But what are the results?

In the Orient, for example, the willingness of the people to do just about anything the churches require in order to qualify for the gifts or handouts has given rise to the contemptuous label "rice Christians." The saddest part, of course, is that

when such relief or support stops, so does the interest of the people. Many of the rice Christians simply vanish from the scene. Thus, among the Cantonese, there is a popular saying that translates into something like this: "God loves the world, but the world loves powdered milk."

Although most church groups no longer operate relief programs, except perhaps during times of disaster, what happened in the past has left its mark. To many Orientals, churches are synonymous with charitable organizations, and the only reason to go to church is to get, not to give. They see no need to make any personal sacrifice for the church. This attitude is shown, for example, in their reluctance to contribute for Bible literature because, in their minds, something produced by a church should be free.

Using the church as a means to an end is most readily seen in the field of education. In many developing countries, to gain a Western-style education is viewed as a sure way to fame and success. According to one source, at the time of India's gaining independence from Britain, 85 percent of that nation's members of parliament had attended "Christian schools." And, according to Confucian ideals, in the Far East, to be well educated is one of the highest goals in life. Naturally, many look to the church schools, which generally use Western methods and standards, as a means for self-advancement. And, hoping to get their children into one of the church-run schools and perhaps overseas later, many Oriental parents who normally follow the traditional religions happily go to church themselves and urge their children to do the same.

### **What Is the Fruitage?**

Compared with the churches back home, the mission churches are usually well attended. Many people are thus

introduced to church teachings and to some concept of Christianity. But has this exposure helped them to understand the Bible and its message? Has it really made them Christians, that is, followers of Jesus Christ?

Take, for instance, Kuo Tung, the young man mentioned earlier. When asked whether he now believed in God after having attended church for some time, he replied: "No. Proof that God exists was never discussed." In fact, he admitted that he was not sure if any of his friends believed in a personal God, even though they had been attending church with him. They went along merely for the opportunity to learn English, he said.

Another young man came home for vacation from college in the United States. When one of Jehovah's Witnesses called on him, he asked if the Witnesses hold their meetings in English. Why? "So I can keep up with my English," he said. When he was told that the meetings were held in the local language so that all could benefit spiritually, the young man said he would go where English meetings were held twice a week.

Even those who have become church members and have been baptized show little change in their outlook. Many of them still cling to their former beliefs or practices, often with the approval, if not also the blessing, of their church. In China, for example, Roman Catholics are allowed to continue their ancestor worship, although this is forbidden elsewhere. Plaques beseeching the blessing of the door god are often seen around doorways of "Christian" homes. And in Okinawa, animal depictions of native gods are put on roof corners to protect the family.

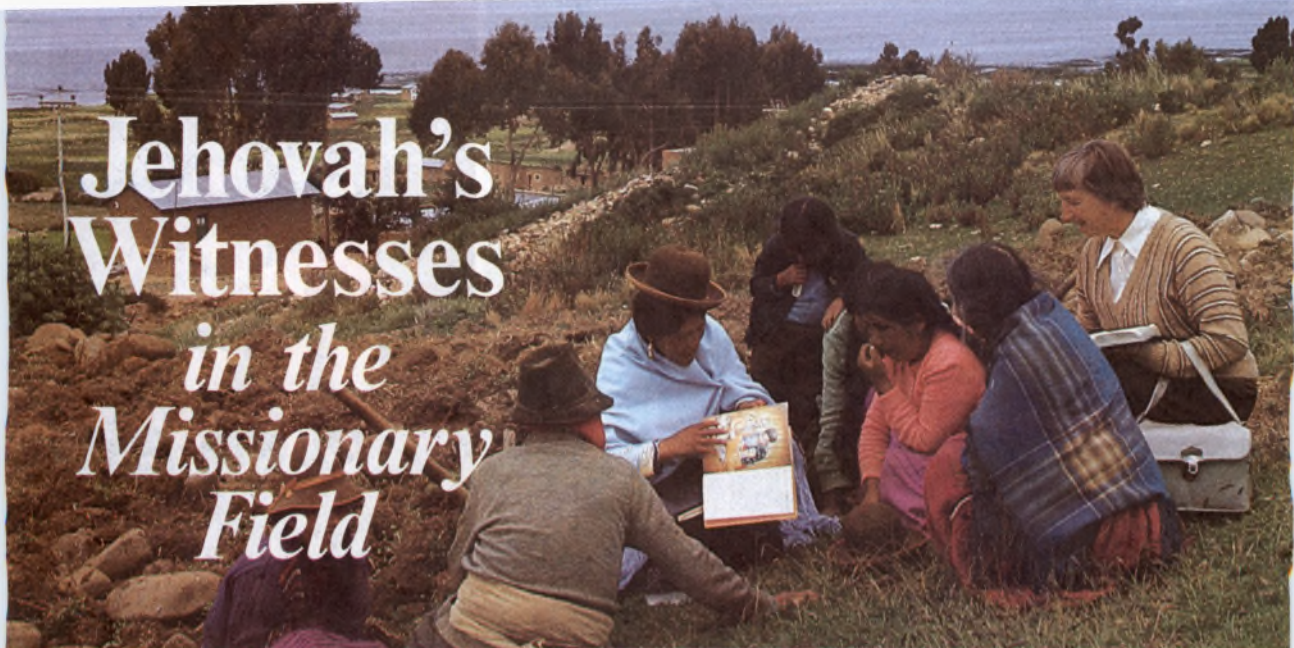
What about those who have benefited from the church programs? In their newfound financial and material security, it

is not uncommon to hear them say that the answer to today's problems is to rely on oneself. The result is that many of them have either totally separated themselves from any church involvement or, at best, kept themselves at a respectable distance.

Missionaries of the churches have had many fine opportunities to instruct the people in what the Bible teaches. But rather than teaching them to follow Jesus' admonition to "keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you," they have placed the emphasis on the "other things." (Matthew 6:33) Through their social programs, they have done much to help people physically, medically, and educationally, but the benefits are primarily of a temporal kind. Without providing a spiritual outlook, frequently such programs only become an incentive to strive for more temporal, or worldly, advantages.

The churches set out to preach the gospel. But what has resulted, in many instances, is the promotion of the Western, materialistic way of life. Yes, they have gained many converts. But as we have seen, many of these have turned out to be more worldly and materially inclined than ever. In Jesus' day, he said of religious leaders: "You traverse sea and dry land to make one proselyte, and when he becomes one you make him a subject for Gehenna twice as much so as yourselves." (Matthew 23:15) In this sense, Christendom's effort in preaching the gospel through social means has backfired. It has fallen far short of the great commission given by Jesus Christ: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

# Jehovah's Witnesses *in the Missionary Field*



**M**ISSIONARIES of Jehovah's Witnesses in Asia and elsewhere are often asked: "Why don't you have English classes like the other missionaries?" "Do you have schools that I can send my children to or hospitals for the sick?" The answer, of course, is no. But why not? In fact, what is the objective of the Witnesses? And what have they done for the people in these countries?

## Contrast in Viewpoints

It is undeniable that the missionaries of Christendom have made many converts by the social services they provide. But because such works are directed mainly at satisfying the people's material needs rather than their spiritual ones, these missionaries have not been successful in making real disciples of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 7:22, 23; 28:19, 20) More importantly, they have not been able to point out any permanent solution to the social ills they are trying to overcome.

Jehovah's Witnesses, on the other hand, are concerned with the more important commission of preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) This is

not because they are unaware of or unconcerned about all the human suffering and injustices they see. Rather, it is because they recognize that the only remedy for these serious problems lies, not in human hands, but in God's Kingdom.—Psalm 146:3-10.

That was precisely what Jesus and his disciples preached in the first century. "I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God," Jesus said, "because for this I was sent forth." (Luke 4:43) Jesus pointed to and preached about God's Kingdom as the only complete remedy, for he knew that the world's problems were too vast for man to cope with alone. Although Jesus performed many miraculous cures, he urged his disciples to "keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."—Matthew 6:33.

Later, when Jesus sent out his disciples, he first told them: "As you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" Then he added: "Cure sick people, raise up dead persons, make lepers clean, expel demons." (Matthew 10:7, 8)

## Solutions to Social Ills by God's Kingdom

Read in your own Bible the following scriptures and be comforted by seeing how God promises to do away with today's problems and social ill in the following areas:



**Health**  
**Isaiah 33:24;**  
**35:5, 6;**  
**Revelation 21:4**

**Education**  
**Isaiah 11:9;**  
**Habakkuk 2:14**

That sets the priority for modern-day disciples of Jesus Christ. They, too, must put preaching the Kingdom good news as their primary objective, over and above performing humanitarian works. That is what missionaries of Jehovah's Witnesses endeavor to do.

### Filling People's Spiritual Needs

As a group of Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses are engaged in a massive volunteer program of providing Bible education for the people. Being publishers of the good news, they are interested in helping others benefit from the Bible's wisdom and counsel, both now and in the future. (Psalm 68:11) Why is this so?

The Witnesses realize that when people are helped to understand and follow the

Bible's counsel, they become better equipped to deal with the problems and pressures of life. On the one hand, they gain the moral fortitude needed to overcome enslaving and physically damaging habits such as smoking, overdrinking, misuse of drugs, poor hygiene, gambling, and sexual promiscuity. On the other hand, Bible truth helps them to make their minds over, bringing them a purpose in life and a realistic hope for the future.

Thus, by providing the highest form of education—that which comes from God's Word, the Bible—Jehovah's Witnesses are making a direct contribution toward raising the moral and physical health of the community in which they live and preach. Often this is noted by others who

**Employment**  
Isaiah 65:21-23



**Food**  
Psalm 67:6; 72:16;  
Isaiah 25:6

**Justice**  
Isaiah 11:3-5;  
32:1, 2



have observed them objectively. For example, Dr. Bryan Wilson of Oxford University, who studied the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa, stated in a letter to the *London Times*:

"Jehovah's Witnesses are hard-working and often more conscientious and enterprising than the average among their fellow citizens. They are enjoined by their leaders to pay their taxes promptly, to refrain from violence, and to avoid giving offence. They are orderly, honest and sober. These values were of great importance in the economic and social development of Western society, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that Jehovah's Witnesses are among the most upright and diligent of the citizenry of African countries."

In similar words, another observer in

South America stated this in a newspaper editorial:

"The Jehovah's Witnesses are hard-working, honest, God-fearing people. They are conservative and tradition-loving and their religion is based on the teachings of the Bible."

So while Jehovah's Witnesses do not put stress on what is commonly referred to as the social gospel, they actively contribute to community interests by helping others to bring their lives into harmony with the high standards of the Bible. (Romans 12:1, 2) Most importantly, they are also helping people everywhere to look beyond the injustices and inequalities of this rapidly deteriorating system of things to the new system of God's making, soon to come.—Revelation 21:5.

# SO GREAT A CLOUD OF WITNESSES!



"Because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, . . . let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."—HEBREWS 12:1.

**P**ICTURE yourself as a runner in a stadium. You press onward, straining every muscle, your eyes fixed on the goal. But what about the observers? Why, all of them have been triumphant runners! They have been not mere spectators but active witnesses in both word and deed.

<sup>2</sup> The apostle Paul may have had such a figurative setting in mind when writing to Hebrew Christians (c. 61 C.E.). They needed firm faith. (Hebrews 10:32-39) Only by faith could they heed Jesus' warning to flee when Jerusalem was surrounded by encamped armies (in 66 C.E.) a few years before its destruction at Roman hands (in 70 C.E.). Faith would also sustain them when they were "persecuted for righteousness' sake."—Matthew 5:10; Luke 21:20-24.

1, 2. (a) What figurative setting may Paul have had in mind when writing to Hebrew Christians? (b) Why did Hebrew fellow believers need firm faith?

<sup>3</sup> After reviewing pre-Christian acts of faith (in Hebrews, chapter 11), Paul urged: "Because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also put off every weight [that would encumber us spiritually] and the sin [lack of faith] that easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race [for life eternal] that is set before us." (Hebrews 12:1) Paul's review of faith in action highlights various aspects of it and will help us, whether we are anointed Christians running the race for immortality in heaven or we are part of the "great crowd" with the goal of endless life on a paradise earth. (Revelation 7:4-10; Luke 23:43; Romans 8:16, 17) But just what is faith? What are some facets of this spiritual gem? And how will we act if we have faith? As you seek answers to such questions, please read cited verses of He-

3. At Hebrews 12:1, what is "the sin that easily entangles us," and Christians are urged to run what race with endurance?

brews chapters 11 and 12 during private and congregational study.

### What Faith Is

<sup>4</sup> Paul first defined faith. (*Read Hebrews 11:1-3.*) In part, faith is “the assured expectation of things hoped for.” The person having faith has a guarantee that everything God promises is as good as fulfilled. Faith is also “the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld.” The convincing proof of unseen realities is so powerful that faith is said to be equivalent to that evidence.

<sup>5</sup> By means of faith “men of old times had witness borne to them” that they pleased God. Also, “by faith we perceive that the systems of things”—the earth, the sun, the moon, and the stars—“were put in order by God’s word, so that what is beheld has come to be out of things that do not appear.” We are convinced that Jehovah is the Creator of such things, although we cannot see him because he is an invisible Spirit.—Genesis 1:1; John 4:24; Romans 1:20.

### Faith and the “Ancient World”

<sup>6</sup> One of the many facets of faith is appreciation for the need of a sacrifice for sins. (*Read Hebrews 11:4.*) In the “ancient world,” faith in a blood sacrifice was shown by Abel, the second son of the first human pair, Adam and Eve. (2 Peter 2:5) Doubtless Abel discerned in himself the death-dealing effects of inherited sin. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:6, 7; Romans 5:12) Evidently he also noted the fulfillment of God’s decree that brought laborious toil upon Adam and considerable pain during pregnancy to Eve. (Genesis 3:16-19) So

Abel had “the assured expectation” that other things spoken by Jehovah would come true. These included the prophetic words directed to the archdeceiver Satan when God said to the serpent: “I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel.”—Genesis 3:15.

<sup>7</sup> Abel displayed faith in the promised Seed by presenting to God an animal sacrifice that could substitute pictorially for Abel’s own life. But his faithless elder brother Cain offered bloodless vegetables. As a murderer, Cain thereafter spilled Abel’s blood. (Genesis 4:1-8) Yet Abel died knowing that Jehovah considered him righteous, “God bearing witness respecting his gifts.” How? By accepting Abel’s sacrifice offered in faith. Because of his faith and divine approval, about which the Inspired Record continues to bear witness, ‘although Abel died, he yet speaks.’ He saw the need for a sacrifice for sins. Do you have faith in Jesus Christ’s far more significant ransom sacrifice?—1 John 2:1, 2; 3:23.

<sup>8</sup> Faith will move us to speak God’s message with boldness. (*Read Hebrews 11:5, 6.*) Jehovah’s early witness Enoch courageously foretold divine execution of judgment upon the ungodly. (Jude 14, 15) Doubtless Enoch’s foes sought to kill him, but God “took him” so that he did not suffer the pangs of death. (Genesis 5:24) First, however, “he had the witness that he had pleased God well.” How so? “By faith Enoch was transferred so as not to see death.” Similarly, Paul was transferred, or “caught away into paradise,”

4. What is faith?

5. By faith we perceive what?

6. Why did Abel have an “assured expectation” that Jehovah’s prophetic words about the ‘seed of the woman’ would come true?

7. (a) How did Abel show appreciation for the need of a sacrifice for sins? (b) In what way did God ‘bear witness respecting Abel’s gifts’?

8. (a) What do we learn about faith from Enoch’s courageous witnessing? (b) How was Enoch “transferred so as not to see death”?

evidently receiving a vision of the future spiritual paradise of the Christian congregation. (2 Corinthians 12:1-4) So Enoch apparently was enjoying a vision of the coming earthly Paradise when Jehovah put him to sleep in death, safe from enemy hands. To be pleasing to God we, like Enoch, must speak God's message with boldness. (Acts 4:29-31) We must also believe that God exists and "becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him."

<sup>9</sup> Following God's instructions closely is another facet of faith. (*Read Hebrews 11:7.*) Acting in faith, Noah did 'just as God commanded.' (Genesis 6:22; 7:16) Noah received "divine warning of things not yet beheld" and believed Jehovah's statement that an earth-wide flood would occur. In faith and with reverential fear of God, Noah "constructed an ark for the saving of his household." By obedience and righteous acts, he thus condemned the unbelieving world for its wicked works and showed that it deserved destruction. —Genesis 6:13-22.

<sup>10</sup> Noah was also one of Jehovah's witnesses in that he was "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5) Although busy building the ark, he took time to preach, as Jehovah's Witnesses do today. Indeed, Noah spoke out boldly as a herald of God's warning to those antediluvians, but "they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away." —Matthew 24:36-39.

### **Faith Among Post-Flood Patriarchs**

<sup>11</sup> Faith includes complete confidence in

9. How did Noah's course show that following God's instructions closely is another facet of faith?

10. Although Noah was building the ark, he took time for what other activity?

11. (a) How did Abraham show that faith includes complete confidence in Jehovah's promises? (b) In faith, Abraham was awaiting what "city"?

Jehovah's promises. (*Read Hebrews 11:8-12.*) By faith Abraham (Abram) obeyed God's command and left Ur of the Chaldeans, a city with much to offer in a material way. He believed Jehovah's promise that "all the families of the ground" would bless themselves by means of him and that his seed would be given a land. (Genesis 12:1-9; 15:18-21) Abraham's son Isaac and grandson Jacob were "heirs with him of the very same promise." By faith Abraham "resided as an alien in the land of promise as in a foreign land." He looked forward to "the city having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God." Yes, Abraham awaited God's heavenly Kingdom under which he would be resurrected to life on earth. Does the Kingdom hold such an important place in your life? —Matthew 6:33.

<sup>12</sup> The wives of the God-fearing patriarchs also had faith in Jehovah's promises. For instance, by faith Abraham's wife Sarah, though barren until about 90 years old and "past the age limit," was empowered "to conceive seed, . . . since she esteemed him [God] faithful who had promised." In time, Sarah bore Isaac. Thus from 100-year-old Abraham, "as good as dead" as regards reproduction, eventually "there were born children just as the stars of heaven for multitude." —Genesis 17:15-17; 18:11; 21:1-7.

<sup>13</sup> Faith will keep us loyal to Jehovah even if we do not see the immediate fulfillment of his promises. (*Read Hebrews 11:13-16.*) The faithful patriarchs all died without seeing the complete fulfillment of

12. What happened because Sarah had faith in Jehovah's promises?

13, 14. (a) Although Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "did not get the fulfillment of the promises," how did they react? (b) How can we benefit from considering the patriarchs' loyalty to Jehovah even if we do not see the immediate fulfillment of his promises?

God's promises to them. But "they saw [the promised things] afar off and welcomed them and publicly declared that they were strangers and temporary residents in the land." Yes, they lived out their lives in faith, for generations passed before the Promised Land became the possession of Abraham's offspring.

<sup>14</sup> The fact that they did not get the fulfillment of divine promises in their lifetime did not embitter Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or cause them to become apostates. They did not abandon Jehovah and go back to Ur, becoming immersed in worldly activities. (Compare John 17:16; 2 Timothy 4:10; James 1:27; 1 John 2:15-17.) No, those patriarchs 'reached out' for a place far better than Ur, "that is, one belonging to heaven." So Jehovah 'is not ashamed to be called upon as their God.' They maintained faith in the Most High until death and will soon be resurrected to life on earth, part of the domain of the "city," the Messianic Kingdom God made ready for them. But what about you? Even if you have 'walked in the truth' for years, growing old in Jehovah's service, you must maintain your confidence in his promised new system. (3 John 4; 2 Peter 3:11-13) What a reward you and the faithful patriarchs will receive for such faith!

<sup>15</sup> Unquestioning obedience to God is a vital facet of faith. (Read *Hebrews 11:17-19*.) Because Abraham obeyed Jehovah without question, he "as good as offered up Isaac," his "only-begotten son"—the only one he ever had by Sarah. How could Abraham do this? Because "he reckoned that God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead," if necessary, to fulfill the promise of offspring through him. In a

15. (a) What enabled Abraham virtually to offer Isaac as a sacrifice? (b) How should our faith be affected by the event involving Abraham and Isaac? (c) What was prophetically portrayed by that event?

moment the knife in Abraham's hand would have ended Isaac's life, but an angel's voice prevented this. Hence, Abraham received Isaac out of death "in an illustrative way." We should likewise be moved to obey God in faith even if our life or that of our children is at stake. (1 John 5:3) It is noteworthy, too, that Abraham and Isaac then prophetically portrayed how Jehovah God would provide his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as a ransom so that those exercising faith in him might have everlasting life.—Genesis 22:1-19; John 3:16.

<sup>16</sup> If we have faith, we will help our offspring to set their hope on what God promises for the future. (Read *Hebrews 11:20-22*.) So strong was the faith of the patriarchs that although Jehovah's promises to them were not completely fulfilled in their lifetime, they passed these on to their children as a cherished inheritance. Thus, "Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come," and dying Jacob pronounced blessings on Joseph's sons Ephraim and Manasseh. Because Joseph himself had strong faith that the Israelites would leave Egypt for the land of promise, he made his brothers swear to take his bones with them when departing. (Genesis 27:27-29, 38-40; 48:8-22; 50:24-26) Are you helping your family to develop comparable faith in what Jehovah has promised?

### Faith Makes Us Put God First

<sup>17</sup> Faith motivates us to put Jehovah and his people ahead of anything this world has to offer. (Read *Hebrews 11:23-26*.) The Israelites were slaves needing deliverance from Egyptian bondage when Moses' parents acted in faith. 'They did not fear the

16. With regard to our children and faith in God's promises, what example did the patriarchs furnish?

17. How did Moses' parents act in faith?

king's order' to kill Hebrew males at birth. Rather, they hid Moses for three months, finally placing him in a papyrus ark among the reeds by the bank of the Nile River. Found by Pharaoh's daughter, he was 'brought up as her own son.' First, however, Moses was nursed and spiritually trained in the home of his father and mother, Amram and Jochebed. Then, as a member of Pharaoh's household, he "was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" and became "powerful in his words and deeds," mighty in mental and physical capabilities.—Acts 7:20-22; Exodus 2:1-10; 6:20.

<sup>18</sup> Yet, Egyptian education and the material splendor of the royal house did not cause Moses to abandon Jehovah's worship and become an apostate. Rather, "by faith Moses, when grown up, refused to be called the son of the daughter of Pharaoh," a course implied when he defended a Hebrew brother. (Exodus 2:11, 12) Moses chose "to be ill-treated with the people of God [Israelite fellow worshipers of Jeho-

vah] rather than to have the temporary enjoyment of sin." If you are a baptized servant of Jehovah who has a solid background of proper spiritual training, will you follow Moses' example and stand firm for true worship?

<sup>19</sup> Moses threw in his lot with Jehovah's people "because he esteemed the reproach of the Christ as riches greater than the treasures of Egypt." Most likely Moses 'esteemed the reproach of being an ancient type of Christ, or God's Anointed One, as riches greater than Egypt's treasures.' As a member of the royal household, he could have enjoyed wealth and fame in Egypt. But he exercised faith and "looked intently toward the payment of the reward"—eternal life through resurrection on earth in God's promised new system.

<sup>20</sup> Faith makes us fearless because we are confident in Jehovah as a deliverer. (Read Hebrews 11:27-29.) After hearing that Moses had killed an Egyptian, Pharaoh sought his death. "But Moses ran away from Pharaoh that he might dwell in the land of Midian." (Exodus 2:11-15) So Paul seems to allude to the Hebrews' later Exodus from Egypt when he says: "By faith he [Moses] left Egypt, but not fearing the anger of the king [who threatened him with death for representing God in Israel's behalf], for he continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." (Exodus 10:28, 29) Although Moses never actually saw God, Jehovah's dealings with him were so real that he acted as if he did see 'the invisible One.' (Exodus 33:20) Is your relationship with Jehovah that strong?—Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 16:3.

19. (a) How is it evident that Moses put Jehovah and His people first in life? (b) Moses looked toward the payment of what reward?

20. What is there about Moses' experience that shows that faith makes us fearless as Jehovah's servants?

18. Because of his faith, what position did Moses take with regard to Jehovah's worship?

### How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What is faith?
- ☐ Enoch's example teaches us what about faith?
- ☐ How did God-fearing patriarchs show that faith includes complete confidence in Jehovah's promises?
- ☐ What action by Abraham indicates that unquestioning obedience to God is a vital facet of faith?
- ☐ What actions by Moses show that faith means putting Jehovah and His people ahead of anything the world has to offer?

<sup>21</sup> Just before Israel's departure from Egypt, "by faith he [Moses] had celebrated the passover and the splashing of the blood, that the destroyer might not touch their [the Israelites'] firstborn ones." Yes, it took faith to hold the Passover with the conviction that Israel's firstborn sons would be spared while those of the Egyptians would die, and this faith was rewarded. (Exodus 12:1-39) Also "by faith they [the people of Israel] passed through the Red Sea as on dry land, but on venturing out upon it the Egyptians were swal-

21. As regards Israel's departure from Egypt, what happened "by faith"?

lowed up." What a marvelous deliverer God proved to be! And because of this deliverance, the Israelites "began to fear Jehovah and to put faith in Jehovah and in Moses his servant."—Exodus 14: 21-31.

<sup>22</sup> The faith of Moses and the patriarchs is indeed a model for Jehovah's Witnesses today. But what happened when God dealt further with Abraham's descendants as a theocratically organized nation? What can we learn from further acts of faith in ancient times?

22. Regarding faith, what questions remain for consideration?

# THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY OF THEM

"They were stoned, they were tried, . . . and the world was not worthy of them."—HEBREWS 11:37, 38.

**J**EHOVAH'S WITNESSES of ancient times maintained integrity to God despite many tests brought upon them by unrighteous human society. For instance, God's servants were stoned and slaughtered with the sword. They suffered ill-treatment and tribulation. Yet they did not waver in faith. Surely, then, as the apostle Paul said: "The world was not worthy of them."—Hebrews 11:37, 38.

<sup>2</sup> The faith-inspiring acts of godly antediluvians, patriarchs, and Moses prompt Jehovah's modern-day witnesses to serve God in faith. But what about others men-

tioned in Hebrews chapters 11 and 12? How can we benefit from considering the facets of their faith?

## Faith of Judges, Kings, and Prophets

<sup>3</sup> Faith is not mere belief; it must be proved by works or actions. (*Read Hebrews 11:30, 31.*) After Moses' death, faith brought the Israelites one victory after another in Canaan, but this called for effort on their part. For instance, by the faith of Joshua and others "the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days." But "by faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those [faithless residents of Jericho] who acted

1, 2. Under what circumstances did Jehovah's witnesses of ancient times maintain integrity, and how do their acts affect God's servants today?

3. How do incidents involving Jericho and Rahab show that faith must be proved by works?

disobediently.” Why? “Because she received the [Israelite] spies in a peaceable way,” proving her faith by hiding them from the Canaanites. Rahab’s faith had a solid basis in reports that “Jehovah dried up the waters of the Red Sea” from before the Israelites and granted them victory over Amorite kings Sihon and Og. Rahab made proper moral changes and was blessed for her active faith by being preserved along with her household when Jericho fell and by becoming an ancestress of Jesus Christ.—Joshua 2:1-11; 6:20-23; Matthew 1:1, 5; James 2:24-26.

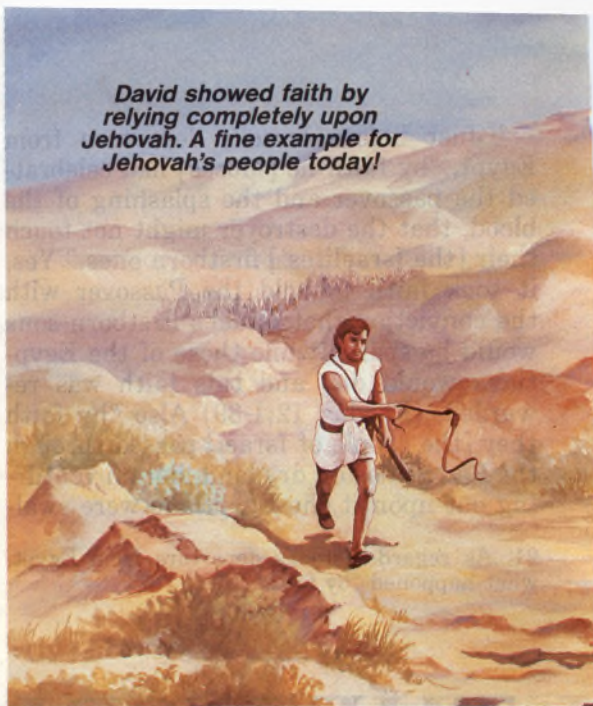
<sup>4</sup> Faith is shown by complete reliance upon Jehovah in the face of danger. (Read *Hebrews 11:32*.) Paul admitted that time would fail him if he went on to tell about “Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David as well as Samuel and the other prophets,” whose exploits gave abundant evidence of faith and reliance upon God in perilous situations. Thus, by faith and with a band of only 300 men, Judge Gideon was empowered by God to crush the military might of the oppressive Midianites. (Judges 7:1-25) Encouraged by the prophetess Deborah, Judge Barak and an infantry force of 10,000 poorly equipped men triumphed over King Jabin’s far greater forces having 900 armored war chariots commanded by Sisera.—Judges 4:1-5:31.

<sup>5</sup> Another example of faith from the days of Israel’s judges was Samson, mighty enemy of the Philistines. True, he eventually became their blinded captive. But Samson brought death to many of them when he pulled down the pillars of the house in which they were presenting a

4. What do the experiences of Gideon and Barak emphasize as to showing faith in the face of danger?

5. In what ways did Samson and Jephthah display faith that gave evidence of complete reliance upon Jehovah?

*David showed faith by relying completely upon Jehovah. A fine example for Jehovah’s people today!*



great sacrifice to their false god Dagon. Yes, Samson died with those Philistines but not as a despairing suicide. In faith he relied upon Jehovah and prayed to him for the strength needed to wreak vengeance upon those foes of God and His people. (Judges 16:18-30) Jephthah, to whom Jehovah granted victory over the Ammonites, also displayed faith that gave evidence of his complete reliance upon Jehovah. Only with such faith could he have fulfilled his vow to God by devoting his daughter to Jehovah’s service as a perpetual virgin.—Judges 11:29-40.

<sup>6</sup> Also notable for his faith was David. He was only a young man when he fought the Philistine giant Goliath. ‘You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin,’ said David, ‘but I come to you with the name of Jehovah of armies.’ Yes, David relied upon God, killed the towering Philistine, and went on to become a valiant warrior—fighting in the interests of God’s people. And because of David’s faith, he was a man agreeable to Jehovah’s heart.

6. How did David show his faith?



(1 Samuel 17:4, 45-51; Acts 13:22) Throughout life, Samuel and other prophets also displayed great faith and full dependence upon God. (1 Samuel 1:19-28; 7:15-17) What fine examples for Jehovah's present-day servants, young and old!

<sup>7</sup> By faith we can successfully meet every test of integrity and can accomplish anything harmonizing with the divine will. (*Read Hebrews 11:33, 34.*) In citing further acts of faith, apparently Paul had in mind Hebrew judges, kings, and prophets, for he had just named such men. "Through faith" such judges as Gideon and Jephthah "defeated kingdoms in conflict." So did King David, who subdued the Philistines, Moabites, Syrians, Edomites, and others. (2 Samuel 8:1-14) Also through faith, upright judges "effected righteousness," and the righteous counsel of Samuel and other prophets moved at least some to avoid or abandon wrongdoing.—1 Samuel 12:20-25; Isaiah 1:10-20.

7. (a) Who "through faith defeated kingdoms in conflict"? (b) Who "effected righteousness" through faith?

<sup>8</sup> David was one who through faith "obtained promises." Jehovah promised him: "Your very throne will become one firmly established to time indefinite." (2 Samuel 7:11-16) And God kept that promise by establishing the Messianic Kingdom in 1914.—Isaiah 9:6, 7; Daniel 7:13, 14.

<sup>9</sup> The prophet Daniel successfully met a test of integrity when he continued to pray to God according to his daily custom despite a royal interdict. With the faith of an integrity keeper, Daniel thus "stopped the mouths of lions" in that Jehovah preserved him alive in the lions' pit into which he was cast.—Daniel 6:4-23.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel's integrity-keeping Hebrew associates Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in effect "stayed the force of fire." When threatened with death in a superheated furnace, they told King Nebuchadnezzar that, whether their God rescued them or not, they would not serve the Babylonian monarch's gods or worship the image he had set up. Jehovah did not put out the fire in that furnace, but he made sure that it did the three Hebrews no harm. (Daniel 3:1-30) Comparable faith enables us to maintain integrity to God to the point of possible death at enemy hands.—Revelation 2:10.

<sup>11</sup> David "escaped the edge of the sword" of King Saul's men. (1 Samuel 19:9-17) The prophets Elijah and Elisha also escaped death by the sword. (1 Kings 19:1-3; 2 Kings 6:11-23) But who 'from a weak state were made powerful through faith'? Well, Gideon considered himself and his

8. What promise did David obtain, and to what did it lead?

9. Under what circumstances were 'the mouths of lions stopped through faith'?

10. Who "stayed the force of fire" through faith, and what will comparable faith enable us to do?

11. (a) Through faith, who "escaped the edge of the sword"? (b) Who were "made powerful" through faith? (c) Who "became valiant in war" and "routed the armies of foreigners"?

men too weak to save Israel from the Midianites. But he was “made powerful” by God, who gave him the victory—and that with only 300 men! (Judges 6:14-16; 7:2-7, 22) “From a weak state” when his hair was shorn, Samson was “made powerful” by Jehovah and brought death to many Philistines. (Judges 16:19-21, 28-30; compare Judges 15:13-19.) Paul may also have thought of King Hezekiah as one “made powerful” from a weak state militarily and even physically. (Isaiah 37:1-38:22) Among God’s servants who “became valiant in war” were Judge Jephthah and King David. (Judges 11:32, 33; 2 Samuel 22:1, 2, 30-38) And those who “routed the armies of foreigners” included Judge Barak. (Judges 4:14-16) All these exploits should convince us that by faith we can successfully meet every test of our integrity and can accomplish anything that is in accord with Jehovah’s will.

### Others of Exemplary Faith

<sup>12</sup> Faith includes belief in the resurrection, a hope that helps us to maintain integrity to God. (*Read Hebrews 11:35.*) Because of faith, “women received their dead by resurrection.” By faith and God’s power, Elijah resurrected a widow’s son at Zarephath and Elisha raised to life the boy of a Shunammite woman. (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37) “But other men were tortured [literally, “beaten with sticks”] because they would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain a better resurrection.” Apparently these Scripturally unidentified witnesses of Jehovah were beaten to death, refusing to accept deliverance requiring that they compromise their faith. Their resurrection will be “better” because it will be without the unavoidable need to die again (as did

12. (a) What “women received their dead by resurrection”? (b) In what way will the resurrection of certain men of faith be “better”?

*“Women received their dead by resurrection.”  
Faith in the resurrection  
helps us to maintain  
integrity to Jehovah*



those raised by Elijah and Elisha) and will occur under Kingdom rule by Jesus Christ, the “Eternal Father” whose ransom provides an opportunity for endless life on earth.—Isaiah 9:6; John 5:28, 29.

<sup>13</sup> If we have faith, we will be able to endure persecution. (*Read Hebrews 11:36-38.*) When we are persecuted, it is helpful to remember the resurrection hope and to realize that God can sustain us as he did “others [who] received their trial [or, test of faith] by mockings and scourgings, indeed, more than that, by bonds and prisons.” The Israelites “were continually . . . mocking at his prophets, until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people.” (2 Chronicles 36:15, 16) By faith, Micaiah, Elisha, and other servants of God endured “mockings.” (1 Kings 22:24; 2 Kings 2:23, 24; Psalm 42:3) “Scourgings” were known in the days of Israel’s kings and prophets, and opponents “struck” Jeremiah, not merely slapping him as an insult. “Bonds and prisons” may remind us of his

13. (a) “Mockings and scourgings” were suffered by whom? (b) Who experienced “bonds and prisons”?

experiences as well as those of the prophets Micaiah and Hanani. (Jeremiah 20: 1, 2; 37:15; 1 Kings 12:11; 22:26, 27; 2 Chronicles 16:7, 10) Because of having similar faith, Jehovah's modern-day witnesses have been able to endure comparable sufferings "for the sake of righteousness."—1 Peter 3:14.

<sup>14</sup> "They were stoned," said Paul. One such man of faith was Zechariah, son of priest Jehoiada. Enveloped by God's spirit, he spoke out against Judah's apostates. The result? At the order of King Jehoash, conspirators pelted him to death with stones in the courtyard of Jehovah's house. (2 Chronicles 24:20-22; Matthew 23:33-35) Paul added: "They were tried, they were sawn asunder." He may have thought of the prophet Micaiah as one of those who "were tried," and uncertain Jewish tradition has it that Isaiah was sawed in two during King Manasseh's reign.—1 Kings 22:24-28.

<sup>15</sup> Others "died by slaughter with the sword," as, for example, Elijah's fellow prophets of God who were "killed with the sword" in the days of wicked King Ahab. (1 Kings 19:9, 10) Elijah and Elisha were among those with faith who "went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, while they were in want, in tribulation, under ill-treatment." (1 Kings 19:5-8, 19; 2 Kings 1:8; 2:13; compare Jeremiah 38:6.) Those who "wandered about in deserts and mountains and caves and dens of the earth" as objects of persecution must include not only Elijah and Elisha but also the 100 prophets that Obadiah hid by 50's in a cave, supplying them with bread and water when idolatrous Queen Jezebel started to "cut off Jehovah's prophets." (1 Kings 18:4, 13; 2 Kings 2:13; 6:13,

14. (a) Who was among those "stoned"? (b) Who may have been "sawn asunder"?

15. Who suffered "ill-treatment" and "wandered about in deserts"?

30, 31) What integrity keepers! No wonder Paul said: "The world [unrighteous human society] was not worthy of them!"

<sup>16</sup> Faith gives us the conviction that in God's due time all who love him will "get the fulfillment of the promise." (*Read Hebrews 11:39, 40.*) Pre-Christian integrity keepers "had witness borne to them through their faith," now a matter of Scriptural record. But they have not yet received "the fulfillment of the promise" of God by an earthly resurrection with the prospect of eternal life under Kingdom rule. Why? "In order that they might not be made perfect apart from" Jesus' anointed followers, for whom "God foresaw something better"—immortal heavenly life and privileges of rulership with Christ Jesus. By their resurrection, beginning after the Kingdom's establishment in 1914, anointed Christians are "made perfect" in the heavens before Jehovah's witnesses of pre-Christian times are resurrected on earth. (1 Corinthians 15:50-57; Revelation 12:1-5) For those earlier witnesses, being "made perfect" must relate to their earthly resurrection, their eventually being "set free from enslavement to corruption," and their attaining human perfection through the services of the High Priest Jesus Christ and his 144,000 heavenly underpriests during his Millennial Reign.—Romans 8:20, 21; Hebrews 7:26; Revelation 14:1; 20:4-6.

### Keep in View the Perfecter of Our Faith

<sup>17</sup> Having discussed the acts of pre-Christian witnesses of Jehovah, Paul

16. (a) Why have pre-Christian witnesses of Jehovah not yet received "the fulfillment of the promise"? (b) For Jehovah's witnesses of pre-Christian times, being "made perfect" must relate to what?

17, 18. (a) To succeed in our race for eternal life, what must we do? (b) How is Jesus Christ the "Perfecter of our faith"?

pointed to the prime example of faith. (*Read Hebrews 12:1-3.*) What a source of encouragement to have 'so great a cloud of witness bearers surrounding us'! This prompts us to put off every weight that would impede our spiritual progress. It helps us to avoid the sin of loss or lack of faith and to run with endurance the Christian race for everlasting life. To reach our goal, however, we must do something more. But what is that?

<sup>18</sup> If we are to succeed in our race for eternal life in God's new system, we need to "look intently at the Chief Agent [or, Chief Leader] and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus." The faith of Abraham and other integrity keepers living prior to Jesus Christ's earthly ministry was imperfect, incomplete, in that they did not understand then unfulfilled prophecies about the Messiah. (Compare 1 Peter 1:10-12.) But by Jesus' birth, ministry, death, and resurrection, many Messianic prophecies were fulfilled. Thus faith in a perfected sense "arrived" through Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:24, 25) Moreover, from his heavenly position Jesus continued to be the Perfecter of the faith of his followers, as when pouring out upon them the holy spirit at Pentecost of 33 C.E. and by revelations that progressively developed their faith. (Acts 2:32, 33; Romans 10:17; Revelation 1:1, 2; 22:16) How thankful we are for this "Faithful Witness," this "Chief Leader" of Jehovah's Witnesses!—Revelation 1:5; Matthew 23:10.

<sup>19</sup> Since it is not easy to endure the reproaches of the faithless, Paul urged: "Consider closely the one [Jesus] who has endured such contrary talk by sinners against their own interests, that you may not get tired and give out in your souls." Indeed, if we keep our eyes fixed on "the

19. Why should Jesus be 'considered closely'?

Faithful Witness," Jesus Christ, we will never tire of doing the divine will.—John 4:34.

<sup>20</sup> From the 'great cloud of witnesses' we learn much about the facets of faith. For instance, faith like that of Abel enhances our appreciation for Jesus' sacrifice. True faith makes us courageous witnesses, even as Enoch boldly spoke Jehovah's message. As with Noah, our faith moves us to follow God's instructions closely and serve as preachers of righteousness. Abraham's faith impresses us with the need to obey God and trust in His promises, even though some of them have not yet been fulfilled. Moses' example shows that faith enables us to keep unspotted by this world and stand loyally by Jehovah's people. Exploits of Israel's judges, kings, and prophets prove that faith in God can sustain us amid persecution and trials. And how grateful we are that the superlative example of Jesus Christ makes our faith firm and unshakable! Therefore, with Jesus as our Leader and in the strength of our God, let us continue to manifest enduring faith as Jehovah's Witnesses.

20. What are some things you have learned about faith by considering Hebrews 11:1-12:3?

#### What Are Your Answers?

- ☐ What acts of pre-Christian witnesses of Jehovah prove that faith is shown by complete reliance upon God in the face of danger?
- ☐ Why can it be said that by faith we can successfully meet every test of our integrity?
- ☐ What proof is there that through faith we can endure persecution?
- ☐ Why is Jesus called the "Perfecter of our faith"?
- ☐ What are some of faith's many facets?

# Earthquakes

## —Distress Upon Distress

**"I**T was horrible. We were lost. It was like an ocean, an ocean, everything moving."

So said a survivor of one of the most lethal earthquakes on record. That devastating earthshock struck in 1976 in China, leveling the city of Tangshan and snuffing out some 800,000 lives. Amazingly, that escapee was able to struggle barefoot out of a hotel that, along with 20 square miles (52 sq km) of cityscape, had collapsed into rubble.

Such seismic events have affected more people in our time than during any other century on record, stimulating worldwide interest in earthquakes. Millions have suffered injury and loss, and millions more have been killed. Major quakes make headlines globally. The 1985 temblor that killed over 9,000 people in Mexico City shook the world emotionally, galvanizing nations to rush aid to the city.

Scientific study of earthquakes has intensified, employing modern technology. The magnitude of quakes is generally rated by the Richter scale, with larger values indicating greater release of energy. Yet, if you were caught in an earthquake, do you suppose you would be wondering about its Richter rating? Not likely. You would be worrying about staying alive. Knowing the Richter magnitude would not alter your personal experience.

### Earthquakes in Bible Prophecy

In a prophecy having many features, Jesus Christ included earthquakes, saying: "There will be . . . earthquakes in one place



after another." He also predicted: "There will be great earthquakes." Their significance was in their association with the other parts of his prophecy foretelling a generation marked by a unique combination of war, famine, pestilence, lawlessness, fear, and distress on a global scale. The fulfillment would form "the sign" of Jesus' enthronement as King of God's Kingdom and would mark the entry of the world system into its last days. "The sign," including its earthquake feature, has been evident since 1914.—Matthew 24:3, 7-12; Luke 21:11, 25, 26, 31, 32.

Many seismologists believe that earthquakes are no greater or more frequent now than they were in the past. Conversely, others conclude that our generation has experienced earthquakes more frequently than did previous ones. Based on available records, the 20th century does significantly overshadow the past in seismic activity. Publications of the Watch Tower Society have repeatedly called attention to this, highlighting the Biblical significance of earthquakes occurring since 1914.\*

Records of earthquakes before 1914 are not complete, however. And earlier generations did not have scientific means of measurement that would permit us reliably to compare the magnitudes of earthquakes past and present. Does this mean that we cannot recognize the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy?

No, not at all. Jesus apparently foresaw

\* See "Earthquakes—A Sign of the End?" in *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1983.

that history would not record all pre-1914 quakes and that earlier generations would not have accurate seismological instruments, just as he foresaw the other circumstances of our time. Consequently, he did not word the prophecy in such a way that recognition of the fulfillment would require earthquake records from earlier centuries or instrument readings. Jesus did not say that the number of earthquakes in "the last days" would be X times greater than the number during some earlier period, nor did he state that we would see the greatest earthquakes ever. (2 Timothy 3:1) He did not speak as a seismologist.

Jesus focused on the human experience. Earthquakes were to be part of "a beginning of pangs of distress." (Matthew 24:8) Distress is not measured by instruments. The travail of people is the ultimate measure of a calamity, including an earthquake. For Jesus' prophecy to be fulfilled, distress caused by earthquakes would have to be present in a significant way. Recognition of the earthquake feature of the prophecy is thus not dependent on the vagaries of human record-keeping or upon scientific measurements of energy released. Today's reports of earthquakes graphically portray the dimensions of human distress resulting from seismic activity.

### **Why Earthquake Distress Has Increased**

Jesus apparently knew that world population would "explode" and that man's practices would verge on "ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) In fact, world population has almost tripled since 1914. In prior centuries, an earthquake of a given magnitude usually affected fewer people than it would now.

Consider Tangshan. It was just a hamlet until the 1870's. If the 1976 quake had

struck then, fatalities could not have exceeded the small number of residents. In 1879 industrial development began. By the 1970's the population had grown to over a million, setting the stage for grave disaster in 1976.

Furthermore, comparisons based simply on the Richter scale can be misleading. For example, the 1964 earthquake in Alaska killed 115 people and was 8.5 on the Richter scale. The Tangshan quake was rated lower at 8.2. Which one was truly greater? Measured by the human toll rather than by the Richter scale, the Tangshan event was clearly worse, the most severe of the 20th century. Instruments cannot measure the magnitude of human distress.

### **Relief From All Distress**

Just as Jesus foretold, mankind's experience since 1914 has been one of "pangs of distress," with earthquakes contributing their share. He showed the significance, saying: "When you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, This generation will by no means pass away until all things occur." What would that mean for Jesus' disciples? "As these things start to occur," he said, "raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near."—Luke 21:28, 31, 32.

Soon now, no more will distress, including that caused by earthquakes, plague mankind. Under God's Kingdom, every tear of sorrow will be wiped away forever. That is the prospect for people of this generation. And that can be your hope if you respond to the fulfillment of another part of Jesus' prophecy, the message now being heralded worldwide by Jehovah's Witnesses: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."—Matthew 24:14; Revelation 21:3, 4.

# Insight on the News

## "A Bad Idea"

Increasing concern over contaminated blood is forcing medical professionals to take a second look at the advisability of transfusing blood. Henry B. Soloway, M.D., editor of the journal *Pathologist*, noted that from its inception the transfusing of blood has been plagued with problems. "Early on," he explains, "the transfusion of blood contaminated during collection and storage . . . caused numerous deaths from sepsis [infection] and endotoxic [poisonous] shock. The transmission of hepatitis B by blood and blood products caused considerable morbidity during World War II." Even with the advent of technical measures designed to ensure a "safe" blood supply, the transmission of such diseases as AIDS continues.

New concerns have now surfaced over the long-term survival of cancer patients following surgery during which blood transfusions were administered. Soloway says: "There is a significant survival disadvantage when . . . transfusions are given to patients undergoing surgery for cancer of the lung, breast, and colon." What, then, are the alternatives? Soloway concedes: "Jehovah's Witnesses have insisted . . . that transfusion is a bad idea. Perhaps one of these days they will be proved to be wrong. But in the meantime there is considerable evidence to support their contention, despite protestations from blood bankers to the contrary."

Actually, it is obedience to divine law that has kept Jehovah's Witnesses free of the many negative consequences of blood transfusions. Leviticus 17:14

says: "You must not eat the blood of any sort of flesh, because the soul of every sort of flesh is its blood." And Christians were told to 'abstain from blood.' (Acts 15: 28, 29) Clearly, God views taking blood in any form as "a bad idea."

## "A Gap in Evolution"

"The wings of the insects did not evolve from any extremities or from anything else. They began as exceedingly small appendages sticking up from the back." So states the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, reporting on recent research as to how insects got their wings. "According to one theory," the report says, "they could have used their prospective wings as a sort of flyswatter for catching insects, until they one day found that they could also fly and carry themselves up from the ground through the air or down from the trees."

The report also shows that biologists are discussing the idea that the "prospective wings," while too small for flying, could have served as solar receptors for warming up and energizing the body. What made them grow from miniature to full size? "Here is a gap in evolution that is hard to explain," admits the report.

The Bible, however, clearly indicates how insects got their wings. "God proceeded to create . . . every winged flying creature according to its kind," says Genesis 1:21. While years of scientific research have merely resulted in speculative theories and a "gap . . . that is hard to explain," the Bible's account fits the known facts. The marvelous design and function of insect wings give credit not to blind evolution but to an intelligent Creator.

## Abuse of the Elderly

Older people are more and more becoming the victims of abuse and neglect. It is common nowadays to hear reports of the aged being mistreated, robbed, beaten, and murdered—even in lands where the elderly have traditionally been held in great esteem. In one Eastern country, "a social worker tells of an old woman chained up by her family for fourteen years and allowed only one bath a fortnight," reports *Asiaweek*. It adds that a 60-year-old woman in another Asiatic land "died recently in an old people's home. Her son and daughter-in-law didn't even turn up at her deathbed." The situation is no less true in Western lands. "About 1 in 25 elderly Americans is neglected or abused, either at home or in institutions," says *U.S. News & World Report*. "Neglect is the most common form of mistreatment . . . But both physical abuse and sexual abuse are on the rise."

Inhabitants of ancient Israel as well as members of the early Christian congregation were admonished to show respect, consideration, and honor for older ones. (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:32; Ephesians 6:1, 2; 1 Timothy 5:1, 2) However, the apostle Paul foretold that in the last days we would come into "critical times" when people would move further and further away from God's direction. (2 Timothy 3:1) One of the characteristics Paul singled out was that people would be "utterly lacking in . . . normal human affections." (2 Timothy 3: 2, 3, *The New Testament in Modern English*, by J. B. Phillips) Who can doubt the truthfulness of his words?

## The Proud and the Lowly

**A**FTER mentioning the virtues of John the Baptizer, Jesus turns attention to the proud, fickle people around him. "This generation," he declares, "is like young children sitting in the marketplaces who cry out to their playmates, saying, 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance; we wailed, but you did not beat yourselves in grief.'"

What does Jesus mean? He explains: "John came neither eating nor drinking, yet people say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of man did come eating and drinking, still people say, 'Look! A man gluttonous and given to drinking wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.'"

It is impossible to satisfy the people. Nothing pleases them. John has lived an austere life of self-denial as a Nazirite, in keeping with the angel's decla-

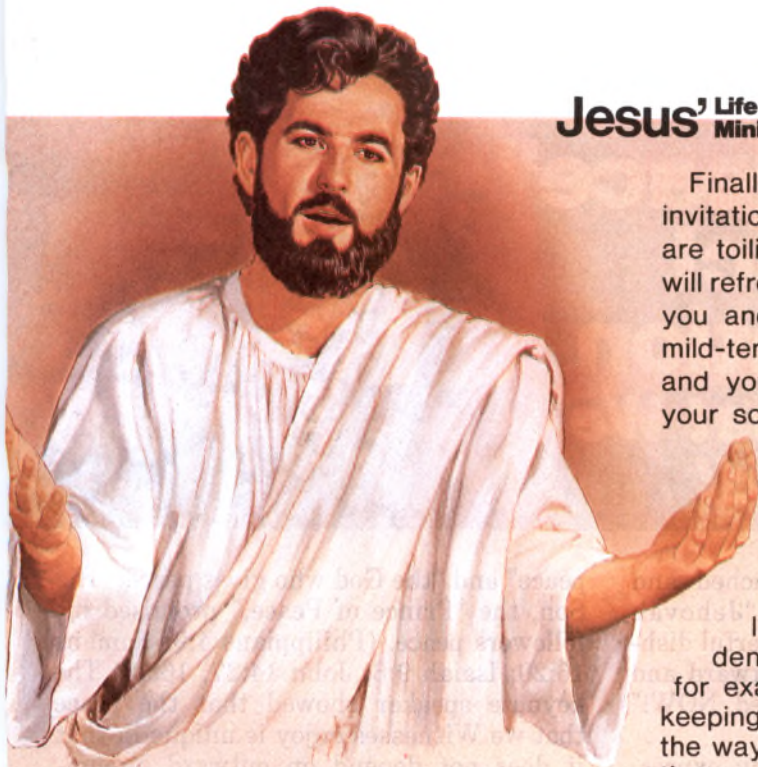
ration that "he must drink no wine and strong drink at all." And yet the people say he is demonized. On the other hand, Jesus lives like other men, not practicing any austerity, and he is accused of excesses.

How hard to please the people are! They are like playmates, some of whom refuse to respond with dancing when other children play the flute or with grief when their fellows wail. Nevertheless, Jesus says: "Wisdom is proved righteous by its works." Yes, the evidence—the works—make clear that the accusations against both John and Jesus are false.

Jesus goes on to single out for reproach the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, where he



## Jesus' Life and Ministry



Finally, Jesus gives the appealing invitation: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light."

How does Jesus offer refreshment? He does so by providing freedom from the enslaving traditions with which the religious leaders have burdened the people, including, for example, restrictive Sabbath-keeping regulations. Also, he shows the way of relief to those who feel the crushing weight of domination by the political authorities and to those who feel the weight of their sins through an afflicted conscience. He reveals to such afflicted ones how their sins can be forgiven and how they can enjoy a precious relationship with God.

The kindly yoke Jesus offers is one of complete dedication to God, being able to serve our compassionate, merciful heavenly Father. And the light load Jesus offers to those who come to him is that of obeying God's requirements for life, His commandments, which are not at all burdensome. **Matthew 11: 16-30; Luke 1:15; 7:31-35; 1 John 5:3.**

- ♦ How is Jesus' generation like children?
- ♦ How will it be more endurable for Sodom than for Capernaum?
- ♦ In what ways are people burdened down, and what relief does Jesus offer?

has performed most of his powerful works. If he had done them in the Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon, Jesus says, these cities would have repented in sackcloth and ashes. Condemning Capernaum, which apparently has been his home base during his ministry, Jesus declares: "It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day than for you."

What does Jesus mean by this? Evidently he is showing that, during Judgment Day when proud ones in Capernaum are resurrected, it will be more difficult for them to admit their mistakes and accept Christ than it will be for the resurrected ancient Sodomites to repent humbly and learn righteousness.

Jesus next publicly praises his heavenly Father. He is moved to do so because God conceals precious spiritual truths from wise and intellectual ones but reveals these marvelous things to lowly ones, to babes, as it were.



# **The “Divine Peace” District Convention**

## **—Just What We Needed!**

**“H**EARTS have been reached and attitudes affected.” “Jehovah spread a banquet of many wonderful dishes.” “The talks were straightforward and specific.” “Just what we needed NOW!” “This is just what we needed!”

Such are typical of the many expressions of appreciation heard for the 1986 “Divine Peace” District Convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses. All such expressions showed that those in attendance had heeded the fine counsel given both by the chairman and by the opening talk: “Listen and Get the Sense of It.”

Since the theme of peace is made so prominent in God’s Word, the term occurring more than 300 times in the Bible, it was most fitting that it should be made the theme of our 1986 district conventions. In fact, 18 of the inspired letters from Romans to Revelation begin with such statements as, “May undeserved kindness and peace be increased to you.” Let it be noted that in the Hebrew Scriptures the word translated “peace” is *shalom*, which not only means the absence of war and strife but also implies health, prosperity, and welfare.—1 Peter 1:2.

Peace was highlighted time and again throughout the program. As the keynote speaker stressed, Jehovah is “the God of

peace” and “the God who gives peace.” His Son, the “Prince of Peace,” promised his followers peace. (Philippians 4:9; Romans 16:20; Isaiah 9:6; John 14:27; 16:33) The keynote speaker showed that the peace that we Witnesses enjoy is unique in that it does not depend on outward circumstances. It is dependent on our respect for authority, which is the reason why the world is without peace—it has no respect for the greatest Authority, Jehovah God. Isaiah put it so well: “O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments! Then your peace would become just like a river.”—Isaiah 48:18.

Among the helpful suggestions given so that we might enjoy divine peace more fully was that we strive to take away from each meeting one practical point of counsel to work on. This talk showed that to be peacemakers it is not enough for us to be *peaceful*; we must work for peace, being willing to yield in the interest of peace.

### **Feet Shod With the Equipment of the Good News of Peace**

Well is our message called “the good news of peace.” (Ephesians 6:15) We received much fine counsel on how to bring this good news of peace to others. A three-part symposium on our ministry was very

helpful toward this end. The first speaker showed how our house-to-house ministry has become a trademark of Jehovah's Witnesses. Since this work is not easy, we prove our love for God and man by engaging in it. To be truly effective, we must be conscientious and resourceful, keeping accurate records and calling at different times so as to reach all.

The second speaker explained that for us to make disciples we must keep on making return visits on interested persons, doing so with a positive attitude. We should take a personal interest in those we call on, having noted on the original call what interests the householder. Make sure that the householder learns something new on each return visit.

The third speaker pointed out that our Bible students will be helped to become Witnesses if we reach their hearts with viewpoint questions. We want to show genuine interest in them by directing them to God's organization, helping them get to meetings, visiting them at other times, and even inviting them to our homes. In the past 35 years, Bible studies have increased tenfold.

Following this symposium, we had stressed for us the need to manifest an eagerness to share the good news of peace wherever possible and under all circumstances. Age is no handicap. Young children and those in their 90's keep preaching. Some are pioneers, or full-time preachers, though totally blind. Others pioneer though deaf, still others though confined to wheelchairs. One pioneer couple has six young children accompanying them in field service.

Most fitting was the counsel "Do Your Utmost by Sharing in the Full-Time Ministry." Full-time service is the most satisfying, the most rewarding, way of life. Having started, pioneers were urged to do their utmost to remain in full-time service.

As at previous conventions, we heard from longtime proclaimers of the good news, some having served from 30 to as many as 70 years. They told of their joy in preaching the good news. It was indeed encouraging to hear how they overcame obstacles to continue in the ministry. For instance, one brother did not fail to participate in the field ministry a single month in 43 years of service.

### **Counsel for Family Members**

The fine counsel for family members was greatly needed in view of the threat the wicked system of things poses to those in the Christian family. Youths were asked, "Are You Spiritually Progressive?" Today many are serving full-time as pioneers and in Bethel homes. But could more be doing so? To be spiritually progressive means to put God's will first in our lives. It also means having good study habits and sharing regularly in congregation activities and in the field service, as well as having good relations with older ones. And it means not finding pleasure in anything God's Word forbids.

Another three-part symposium began with the searching question, "Is Your Home a Place of Rest and Peace?" Basic to this is choosing as a mate a witness of Jehovah who puts Kingdom interests first and who manifests the fruitage of God's spirit. For a home to be a place of rest and peace, the husband must take the lead in spiritual things, and he ought to love his wife as his own body. The wife should be supportive and have deep respect for her husband. It is also essential to pray together and not to allow place for the Devil. Children can contribute to making a home a place of peace and rest by being submissive and cooperative. Family ties are strengthened when families study the Bible and Bible literature together. —Psalm 34:11.

Greatly needed was the talk that followed, "Is Separation a Way for Marital Peace?" The answer? Perhaps for worldlings but not for Witnesses! For them, separation is not an easy way out of a trialsome marriage. The entire tenor of God's counsel on marriage is that couples remain united. Separation almost invariably has a harmful effect on the children involved, and there is other bad fruitage. Bluntly put, separation is an admission that either one marriage mate or both of them are not manifesting the fruitage of the spirit.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

Fine counsel was given to single Christians in the talk "Should an Unmarried Person Feel Incomplete?" By no means! Since the ministry is the center of our lives, we can be complete whether single or married. In fact, as Paul shows, single Christians have certain advantages. By cultivating contentment, they can rejoice in the gift of singleness and make the most of it.—1 Corinthians 7:32-34.

### **Needed Counsel on Clean Living**

The ever-worsening moral climate of this world has resulted in a number of Witnesses' getting reprovved or even disfellowshipped for bad conduct. So how fitting was the straightforward counsel given on matters of conduct! To enjoy divine peace, we must watch our conduct at all times. This was made clear, for example, in the talk "Avoid the Snares of Social Entertainment." Parties can be a lot of fun, but if we are not careful, they can easily interfere with theocratic activities and lead to uncleanness. The imperfect human heart is deceitful and ready to take advantage of any opportunity for toying with immorality. Especially do large parties pose serious dangers, and so does debasing music.—1 Corinthians 15:33.

To preserve our divine peace, we must "Avoid This World's Death-Dealing 'Air.'"

Like the air we breathe, this selfish and disobedient spirit of the world is all around us. The talk dealt with nine manifestations of this death-dealing air, among which are toying with immorality, extremes in clothing and grooming, immoderate use of food and drink, addiction to sports, and pride of race. Keep breathing in this air and it will kill you spiritually.

This matter was driven home still further by the talk "Are You Remaining Clean in Every Respect?" Carelessness makes us guilty of hypocrisy. To have a good conscience, we must keep clean physically, mentally, morally, and spiritually. To that end we must "hate what is bad," "abhor what is wicked." This includes abhorring apostate propaganda.—Psalm 97:10; Romans 12:9.

The fine talk "Jehovah's Discipline Yields Peaceable Fruit" was pertinent here. Jehovah is the Great Disciplinarian, and he disciplines us because he loves us. None of us are beyond the need for discipline. Even the Son of God was not! (Hebrews 5:8) Yes, discipline basically means training, not always chastisement, and to benefit from the many ways that God administers it, we must be honest with ourselves—and keep humble!

The talk "Keep Building One Another

## **In Our Next Issue**

- **Customs or Bible Principles  
—Which Govern Your Life?**
- **Determination Helped Me  
Succeed**
- **Do You Have  
an Inquiring Mind?**

Up" gave fine counsel as regards our speech. How much harm we can do by thoughtless, critical, or complaining talk! Truly, the tongue is hard to control. Fittingly, we were reminded that we should "quit speaking against one another." (James 4:11) Brotherly love will make us careful. And before we say something, it will make us ask: "Is it really true?" "Must I speak of it?" "Will it be upbuilding?"

### **Drawing On the Prophecies**

Talk after talk drew on the inspired prophecies for reminders and admonition. Thus, in the talk "God's Judgments—Unpopular With the World," the speaker stressed that we not only have good news to preach about a paradise but also, like Jeremiah, proclamations to give about God's coming judgments. (Jeremiah, chapters 6 and 7) As Jeremiah boldly exposed the false teachings and corrupt practices of the religious leaders of his day, so we are admonished to do.

The talk "A Time of Testing and Sifting" showed the modern application of Malachi 3:1-3. Jehovah's people have, indeed, been cleansed from false Babylonian teachings and practices. The instituting of theocratic order and the realization that the house-to-house ministry is of prime importance were among the positive points the speaker made.

We also heard a fine talk in which the speaker discussed chapters 11 and 12 of Daniel. It was entitled "Sacred Secrets Unsealed Yield a Sure Hope for Peace." The rivalry between the king of the north and the king of the south keeps the world in turmoil. From Daniel's prophecy, we can see that these kings will never end their conflicts. Only Michael can bring lasting peace.

Another talk drawing on the inspired prophecies was "Worldwide Security Under the 'Prince of Peace.'" It dealt with

Isaiah 9:6, 7 and the context of those verses, showing how that prophecy fittingly applied to Jesus Christ. The speaker stated in his conclusion that Michael "will crown his brilliant career with the victory at Armageddon that will resound without fading at all to time eternal . . . So, then, onward to greater world prominence than ever before, all you witnesses of Jehovah, with complete trust in your God and his reigning King, the 'Prince of Peace'! Display outright fearlessness of the present world conspiracy . . . Be all of you for signs and miracles to the honor of Jehovah!" This really was one of the convention's most stirring talks.

### **Appreciate Those Taking the Lead**

A two-part symposium entitled "Overseers Who Serve the Interests of Peace" truly helped us to appreciate those taking the lead. The first speaker considered the role of traveling overseers and showed that they are, indeed, worthy of double honor because of their many duties. These include giving talks, helping out with problems, training brothers in witnessing, and visiting the physically or spiritually sick. Truly, all traveling overseers deserve our full cooperation and Lydialike hospitality.—Acts 16:15.

The second speaker spelled out the duties of the elders and their role in promoting peace in the congregation. This they can do by preparing for and conducting meetings, making shepherding calls, handling judicial matters, taking the lead in field service, and setting a fine example in conduct and family life. Surely, all of us should want to show appreciation for the appointed elders by being obedient and submissive, as we are counseled at Hebrews 13:17.

"Reaching Out and Acquiring a Fine Standing" was a talk that drove home the need for qualified elders in view of the

great increases in Witnesses. It showed all dedicated brothers who are not elders how they can reach out for greater privileges. Especially did the talk urge those who were qualified but did not see the need to serve to a greater extent to ask themselves, Why am I holding back?

### Other Spiritual Treats

Much appreciated was the talk "Are You Satisfied With Jehovah's Provisions?" We heard Biblical examples of those who did appreciate the spiritual provisions God supplied and those who did not. To the extent that we are conscious of our spiritual need, we will be satisfied with Jehovah's provisions and will show it. How? By buying out time for personal Bible study and by disciplining ourselves while at the meetings so as to get the most out of them.

What might be said to have posed another challenge to our spirituality was

#### "Divine Peace" Convention Releases

First released was a revision of the booklet "Look! I Am Making All Things New," at the conclusion of a talk on that subject. It is now a four-color brochure, printed in large type and containing additional information. It should be ideal for starting home Bible studies.

*Jehovah's Witnesses—Unitedly Doing God's Will Worldwide*, a four-color magazine-size brochure, was the second release. It is a fine instrument to acquaint others with our various activities and gives much historical information about Jehovah's Witnesses.

The third release was a 192-page Bible study aid for initial use at our Congregation Book Studies. It is entitled *Worldwide Security Under the "Prince of Peace."*

*Kingdom Melodies* No. 7 was the fourth release, an excerpt from which delighted all the conventioners.

When listening to the concluding remarks, all greatly rejoiced to hear that the *Watch Tower Publications Index* for 1930-1985 would be available by September 1. What a blessing to all earnest Bible students!

mentioned in the talk "How Meaningful Are Your Prayers?" It was suggested that we ask ourselves: Have I let my prayers become repetitious, stereotyped, or hurried, as though I am too busy to do justice to my talking with God? In prayer, we come to the greatest Personage in the universe. For our prayers to be meaningful, God must be very real to us. They must come from the heart and be specific, and we must give them thought.

Another treat was the baptism talk, "Gaining Peace With God Through Dedication and Baptism." The speaker showed that our baptism is at one and the same time a most serious and a most joyous occasion. By means of it, we gain peace with God and become ordained ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses. And our dedication is no mere commitment, for we can have and care for a number of commitments at the same time. Rather, to be dedicated means for us to be exclusively devoted to the Divine Being, Jehovah God.

The two Bible dramas were among the most popular convention features. *Preserving Life in Time of Famine* dealt with the touching story of Joseph and his brothers, which brought forth many a tear. Joseph's bighearted, forgiving spirit is a fine example for all of us to imitate. The account also has prophetic significance. The second drama, *Seek God's Righteousness for Survival*, gave forceful and dramatic counsel regarding the problems of our young people. It stressed the need to watch our conduct, put Kingdom interests first, and not be quick in judging the motives of others.

Right in line with the theme of the convention was the public talk, "Peace at Last!—When God Speaks." First, we heard exposed the folly of all the nuclear preparations and the hopelessness of the world situation from any human stand-



1. Joseph sold by his brothers in drama at a convention of Korean Witnesses in the United States
2. Watch Tower Society's president, F. W. Franz, addressing a convention audience
3. Part of attentive audience at Yankee Stadium, New York City
4. Thousands were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah God

point. Only God's Kingdom offers any real hope. What does it mean to listen when God speaks? It means not only that we listen carefully and understand what God is saying but also that we do something about what he says. Then we will not be deceived by the deceptive cry "Peace and security!"

The concluding talk, "Equipped by the God of Peace to Do His Will," sent all the conventioners home feeling good at heart for all the spiritual feasting they enjoyed during the four days. As never before, the

convention truly has equipped us for the doing of God's will. So "let us go forward fully resolved to do what? To press ahead in the grand work of Kingdom preaching, truly appreciating our divine peace and all it means to us!"

In the United States, 135 conventions were held in 65 different locations and in 11 languages. The peak attendance was 1,276,578, with 12,603 baptized. The three conventions at Yankee Stadium in New York City had a peak attendance of 95,091, with 1,110 baptized.



# Dealing With Feelings

To deal with our feelings successfully is a real challenge. A youth tells her experience: "I was feeling happy, but the next minute I was in a deep depression. Sometimes I didn't even know what I was feeling. It was as if I was completely lost in the dark. I couldn't express myself and what my emotions were no matter who I talked to, not even to myself. I felt like I wasn't getting attention from people around me, especially my schoolmates, because I wasn't attractive enough. Eventually all these feelings were killing me inside, and I began hating myself and my personality."

The girl got a copy of the book *Your Youth—Getting the Best out of It*. "It was all very interesting," she writes, "so I wanted to read the chapter 'Moving into Womanhood.' I couldn't believe what I was reading because the chapter described exactly how I've felt lately, and it gave the answer. It

was so encouraging to read that it was not so unusual to feel this way. I just have to know the *right* way to handle it."