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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**The Hope
That Conquers
Despair**



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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these 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 God's 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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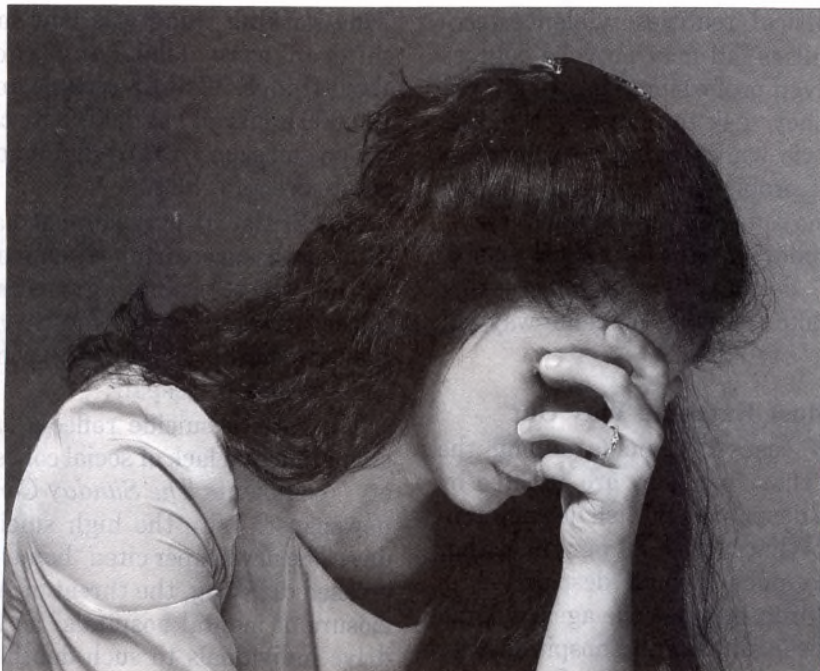
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Why So Much Despair?

HOPE for a better life—realized at last! Many people living in what was then East Germany believed this when the Berlin Wall toppled in November 1989. Little more than a year later, however, they complained of “finding the harsh world of capitalist democracy harder to cope with than life protected by the Berlin Wall.” The result? Disillusionment and growing despair.

Domestic and community violence may force people to leave home in search of security, but few find it. Some may even end up among the homeless who camp on city streets. In some lands many of these end up entangled in red tape. Unable to afford a home because they have no job, they cannot get employment because they have no

home address. Government welfare agencies try to help, but it takes time to unravel the problems. So frustration and despair set in.

Many women are driven by despair to truly desperate measures. In the report *Women and Crime in the 1990s*, law lecturer Dr. Susan Edwards explains: “The involvement of younger women [in prostitution] is as a direct result of economic necessity, not lack of self-discipline or family background.” Similarly, young men who leave home in search of work often find none. Some, in despair, end up as ‘rent-boys,’ making their bodies available to homosexuals in return for food and shelter, becoming pawns in the hands of corrupt vice rings.

Harsh political realities, violence, economic difficulties, all may provoke degrees of despair. Even professional people are not immune as they seek to maintain their affluent life-style while coping with increasing financial problems. The result? "Mere oppression may make a wise one act crazy," as King Solomon of old said!* (Ecclesiastes 7:7) Indeed, despair leads an increasing number to take the most extreme way out—suicide.

The Most Extreme Way Out

The many cases of suicide among the young show that even they are affected by the plague of despair. A British news columnist asked: "What is it about our times that is causing so much teenage despair?" In a study of children between the ages of 8 and 16 who had been admitted to hospitals after trying to poison themselves, Dr. Eric Taylor of London's Institute of Psychiatry reports:

* According to the *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, edited by Harris, Archer, and Waltke, the original language root of the word translated "oppression" relates to "the burdening, trampling, and crushing of those lower in station."

"One striking thing was how many of the children were despairing and hopeless about things." Britain records an estimated 100,000 nonfatal but deliberate cases of taking poison each year in what amount to desperate cries for help.

One British charity launched a campaign to lend the despairing a sympathetic ear. In this way its counselors claimed to offer "alternatives to death." Yet, they admit that they are unable to solve the problems that cause people to despair.

The rate of suicide reflects "the level of alienation and lack of social cohesion in society," comments *The Sunday Correspondent* newspaper. Why the high suicide rate today? The newspaper cited "homelessness, increased drinking, the threat of Aids and the closure of mental hospitals" as factors that drive individuals to such depths of despair that they consider the taking of their own lives to be the only solution to their problems.

Is there any hope to dispel despair? Yes! "Raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up" is Jesus' rallying cry! (Luke 21:28) What did he mean? What hope is there?

Hope Conquers Despair!

IN Webster's *Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, despair is defined as the "utter loss of hope." Clearly, then, to conquer despair, we need hope!

An unfortunate individual reduced to living on a sidewalk will not despair utterly if he has hope. Hope can even give those suffering the torments of clinical depression the courage and strength to endure. But the

hope must be dependable! What does this mean?

The Basis for Hope

Consider what happened to Sarah, the wife of the patriarch Abraham. Approaching 90 years of age, she was still barren and had long despaired of ever producing a child. Yet, when her husband was 99 years

old, Jehovah repeated a promise he had made years before—Abraham would indeed have a “seed,” or heir. Abraham knew that this was a dependable promise. Imagine how happy Sarah must have been when, miraculously, the happy event occurred, and she gave birth to Isaac! (Genesis 12:2, 3; 17: 1-4, 19; 21:2) Abraham’s trust in God had not been misplaced, even as the apostle Paul explained: “Because of the promise of God [Abraham] did not waver in a lack of faith, but became powerful by his faith, giving God glory.”—Romans 4:20.

Writing to Jews who had become Christians in his day, Paul reasoned that they could rely on God’s promise of salvation through Jesus for two sound reasons. Citing God’s promise to Abraham and His accompanying divine oath, the apostle argued: “Men swear by the one greater, and their oath is the end of every dispute, as it is a legal guarantee to them. In this manner God, when he purposed to demonstrate more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of his counsel, stepped in with an oath, in order that, through two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to the refuge may have strong encouragement to lay hold on the hope set before us.” (Hebrews 6:16-18) Yes, God’s promises are true and dependable. Jehovah is almighty and uniquely able to guarantee the fulfillment of his own word.

Hope—“Both Sure and Firm”

Paul wrote that the Christian hope is “both sure and firm.” (Hebrews 6:19) Paul knew where his hope was rooted. He explains: “It [the hope] enters in within the curtain.” What does this mean? Paul was making an obvious reference to the ancient

temple in Jerusalem. In this was a Most Holy compartment, separated from the rest of the structure by a curtain. (Exodus 26: 31, 33; Matthew 27:51) Of course, the literal temple in Jerusalem has long since been destroyed. So, today, to what does this Most Holy correspond?

To heaven itself, where God himself is enthroned! Paul explained this when he said that Jesus after his ascension “entered, not into a holy place made with hands [in the temple in Jerusalem], which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us.” (Hebrews 9:24) So the Christian hope, which helps us fight against despair, depends not on human politicians but on a heavenly arrangement. It depends on the One whom God appointed, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as a ransom for our sins and who now appears before God in our behalf. (1 John 2:1, 2) Further, as frequently shown in the columns of this magazine, this same Jesus is the one divinely appointed to rule as King of God’s heavenly Kingdom and has been doing so since 1914. This heavenly Kingdom will shortly remove the things that drive so many to despair.

Hope—“An Anchor for the Soul”

To convince his readers that their hope of salvation through Jesus was well-founded, Paul used an analogy. “This hope,” he explained, “we have as an anchor for the soul.”—Hebrews 6:19.

Anchors were well-known to travelers like Paul. Ancient anchors were quite similar to modern ones, often made of iron with two toothlike extremities to grip the seabed. En route to Rome about the year 58 C.E., Paul’s ship was in danger of running aground. But as the boat moved into ever

shallower water, the sailors "cast out four anchors from the stern." Thanks to those anchors, the ship safely rode out the storm.—Acts 27:29, 39, 40, 44.

What, then, must you do to make your hope as secure as an anchor so that you can ride out economic hardship, physical or emotional sickness, or whatever other "storms" may come your way? First, assure yourself that the Bible's promises are trustworthy. "Make sure of all things." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) For example, when Jehovah's Witnesses next speak to you, listen to what they say. If they rarely call where you live, search them out at the nearest Kingdom Hall. You will not be coerced to join them, but you will be invited to accept a free course of Bible study, arranged to be conducted wherever and whenever it is convenient for you.

Such a study will assure you that God "becomes the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) You will learn that shortly God's Kingdom under the King, Christ Jesus, will remove the corruption and inequalities that cause so many to despair today. Under that Kingdom, this earth will be restored to a paradise, and God will give eternal life to those who love him. (Psalm 37:29; Revelation 21:4) What a glorious hope!

Read the Bible carefully to see that this hope is true. Then work at developing a close personal relationship with God, becoming his friend just as Abraham was. (James 2:23) Since Jehovah is the "Hearer of prayer," tell him of your concerns. When your approach is sincere, your prayer will help you unload your burdens and conquer your despair. God's spirit may even open up a way to change the situation that distresses you.—Psalm 55:22; 65:2; 1 John 5:14, 15.

"Hold Fast"!

After recommending that his fellow disciples "make sure of all things," Paul added: "Hold fast to what is fine." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) One way to do this is to associate with people who also hold fast to the Christian hope. Wise king Solomon warned: "He that is walking with wise persons will become wise, but he that is having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly." (Proverbs 13:20) Do not let prejudice or feelings of awkwardness prevent you from seeking out good association. For example, among Jehovah's Witnesses are people who in the past were without hope. But their study of the Bible, coupled with the happy association of fellow believers, fortifies their relationship with Jehovah and provides them with a dependable, anchorlike hope. Does this really conquer despair? It certainly does.

Take the case of Annmarie, who was driven to despair because of suffering brutal treatment at her husband's hands. "I decided to end my life," she explains, "but for some reason I decided to pray to God first. I remember saying, 'Why can't you help me? For so long I have hoped in you, but to no avail.' I concluded my prayer thinking there was no purpose to life, so I might as well be dead. At that moment there was a knock on the door. I decided to ignore it, hoping that whoever was there would eventually go away.

"The knocking persisted, and I grew perturbed. I wiped away my tears and went to see who was at the door, hoping to free myself quickly so that I could do what I intended. But," Annmarie says, "thanks to Jehovah, it did not happen that way, for when I opened the door, I found two women standing there. True, I was very confused, and I did not really understand what they were saying. But they offered me a book that



would explain that life has a purpose. It was just what I needed to rekindle my interest in life." Her visitors arranged a regular Bible study with her. Annmarie learned to become a friend of God. This, in turn, gave her a purpose in life. Now she helps others develop trust in God.

Perhaps you have hoped for an end to despair without realizing all that was involved. But if you have ever prayed: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth," then you have prayed for the coming of God's Kingdom under Jesus Christ, which will abolish those

Studying the Bible gives us a hope that acts as "an anchor for the soul"

things that drive righthearted people to despair. (Matthew 6:10) Your personal study of the Bible and regular association with others who have that same confidence will strengthen your grip on the hope for Jehovah's Kingdom to come and bring Paradise to our earth. (1 Timothy 6:12, 19) This glorious hope that this magazine announces in every issue. Embrace the hope he offers to fight against despair. Truly, hope "will not lead to disappointment."—Romans 8:24

THE WATCHTOWER—

8



JEHOVAH, THE IMPARTIAL “JUDGE OF ALL THE EARTH”

“The Father . . . judges impartially according to each one’s work.”—1 PETER 1:17.

JEHOVAH is the great “Judge of all the earth.” (Genesis 18:25) As the Supreme God of the universe, he has the unqualified right to judge his creatures. This is at once a fear-inspiring and a comforting thought. Moses movingly expressed this seeming *paradox*, saying: “Jehovah your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the God great, mighty and fear-inspiring,

1, 2. (a) Why should we be both fearful at and comforted by the thought that Jehovah is the great Judge? (b) In Jehovah’s legal case against the nations, what role do his earthly servants play?

who treats none with partiality nor accepts a bribe, executing judgment for the fatherless boy and the widow and loving the alien resident so as to give him bread and a mantle.”—Deuteronomy 10:17, 18.

² What a striking balance! A great, mighty, fear-inspiring God, yet impartial and lovingly defending the interests of orphans, widows, and alien residents. Who could wish for a more loving Judge than Jehovah? Portraying himself as having a legal case against the nations of Satan’s world, Jehovah calls upon his servants on earth to be his witnesses. (Isaiah 34:8; 43:9-12) He does not depend on their

testimony to prove his godship and legitimate sovereignty. But he grants his witnesses the signal privilege of testifying before all mankind that they recognize his supremacy. His witnesses submit to his righteous sovereignty themselves, and by their public ministry, they move others to place themselves under the authority of the Supreme Judge.

Jehovah's Way of Judging

³ During the early history of mankind, Jehovah personally judged certain offenders. Examples of his way of handling judicial matters set the pattern for those of his servants who later would be responsible to conduct judicial proceedings among his people. (Psalm 77:11, 12) His way of judging might be summed up: *firmness where necessary, mercy where possible*. In the case of Adam and Eve, perfect human creatures who had willfully rebelled, they deserved no mercy. Hence, Jehovah sentenced them to death. But his mercy came into play toward their offspring. Jehovah deferred the execution of the death sentence, thus allowing Adam and Eve to have children. He lovingly provided their descendants with hope of deliverance from bondage to sin and death.—Genesis 3:15; Romans 8:20, 21.

⁴ The way Jehovah dealt with Cain is of particular interest because it is the first recorded case involving one of Adam and Eve's imperfect descendants, "sold under sin." (Romans 7:14) Did Jehovah take this into account and deal differently with Cain from the way He dealt with his parents? And could this case provide a lesson for Christian overseers today? Let us see. Perceiving

3. How might Jehovah's way of judging be summed up, and how was this illustrated in the case of Adam and Eve?

4. How did Jehovah deal with Cain, and why is this case of particular interest?

Cain's wrong reaction when his sacrifice was not accepted favorably, Jehovah lovingly warned him of the danger he was in. An old proverb states: 'Prevention is better than cure.' Jehovah went as far as he could by warning Cain about allowing his sinful tendency to get the mastery over him. He endeavored to help him "turn to doing good." (Genesis 4:5-7) This is the first time God called on a sinful human to repent. After Cain showed an unrepentant attitude and committed his felony, Jehovah sentenced him to banishment, tempering this with a decree forbidding other humans to kill him.—Genesis 4:8-15.

⁵ Before the Flood, when 'Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant in the earth, he felt hurt at his heart.' (Genesis 6:5, 6) He "felt regrets" inasmuch as he regretted that the majority of the pre-Flood generation had misused their free will and that he must execute judgment on them. Yet, he gave them due warning, using Noah for many years as "a preacher of righteousness." Thereafter, Jehovah had no reason to 'hold back from punishing that world of ungodly people.'—2 Peter 2:5.

⁶ Jehovah was likewise obliged to handle a legal case against the corrupt inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. But note how he proceeded. He had heard a "cry of complaint" about the shocking conduct of these people, if only by the prayers of righteous Lot. (Genesis 18:20; 2 Peter 2:7, 8) But before acting, he 'went down' to verify the facts by means of his angels. (Genesis 18:21, 22; 19:1) He also took the time to reassure Abraham that he would not act unjustly.—Genesis 18:23-32.

5, 6. (a) How did Jehovah proceed with the pre-Flood generation? (b) What did Jehovah do before executing judgment against the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah?



In patriarchal times and in Israel, appointed older men administered justice at the city gate

⁷ What can elders today learn from these examples? In the case of Adam and Eve, Jehovah showed love and consideration for those who, while related to the guilty ones, were not blameworthy in the case. He showed mercy toward Adam and Eve's descendants. In Cain's case, Jehovah foresaw the danger Cain was in and kindly reasoned with him, trying to forestall the committing of sin. Even after banishing him, Jehovah was considerate of Cain. Further, Jehovah executed judgment on the pre-Flood generation only after showing much patient endurance. In the face of obstinate wickedness, Jehovah "felt hurt at his heart." He regretted that men rebelled against his righteous rule and that he was obliged to

7. What lessons can elders serving on judicial committees learn from examples of Jehovah's way of judging?

judge them unfavorably. (Genesis 6:6; compare Ezekiel 18:31; 2 Peter 3:9.) In the case of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jehovah acted only after verifying the facts. What excellent examples for those who today have to handle legal cases!

Human Judges in Patriarchal Times

⁸ Although there apparently was no written code at the time, patriarchal society was familiar with Jehovah's basic laws, and his servants were under obligation to observe them. (Compare Genesis 26:5.) The drama in Eden had shown the need for obedience and submission to Jehovah's sovereignty. The case of Cain had revealed Jehovah's disapproval of murder. Immediately after the Flood, God gave mankind laws concerning the sacredness of life, murder, capital punishment, and the eating of blood. (Genesis 9:3-6) Jehovah strongly condemned adul-

8. What basic laws of Jehovah were known in patriarchal times?

tery during the incident involving Abraham, Sarah, and Abimelech, king of Gerar, near Gaza.—Genesis 20:1-7.

⁹ In those days family heads acted as judges and handled legal problems. Jehovah stated regarding Abraham: “I have become acquainted with him in order that he may command his sons and his household after him so that they shall keep Jehovah’s way to do righteousness and judgment.” (Genesis 18:19) Abraham showed unselfishness and discernment in settling a quarrel between his own herders and those of Lot. (Genesis 13:7-11) Acting as patriarchal head and judge, Judah condemned his daughter-in-law Tamar to be stoned to death and burned, believing that she was an adulteress. (Genesis 38:11, 24; compare Joshua 7:25.) When he learned all the facts, however, he pronounced her more righteous than he himself. (Genesis 38:25, 26) How important it is to learn all the facts before making a judicial decision!

¹⁰ The book of Job alludes to a judicial system and shows the desirability of impartial judgment. (Job 13:8, 10; 31:11; 32:21) Job himself reminisces about the time when he was a respected judge who sat at the city gate administering justice and defending the cause of the widow and the fatherless boy. (Job 29:7-16) Thus, there is evidence that within patriarchal society, “older men” were acting as judges among Abraham’s descendants even before the Exodus and the God-given legal constitution of the nation of Israel. (Exodus 3:16, 18) In fact, the terms of the Law covenant were presented by Moses to the “older men,” or elders, of Israel, who represented the people.—Exodus 19:3-7.

9, 10. What examples show that a judicial system existed in patriarchal society?

Israel’s Judicial System

¹¹ The administration of justice in Israel was quite different from the legal procedures followed in the surrounding nations. No distinction was made between civil law and criminal law. Both were intertwined with moral and religious laws. An offense against one’s neighbor was an offense against Jehovah. In his book *The People and the Faith of the Bible*, author André Chouraqui writes: “The juridical tradition of the Hebrews differs from that of its neighbors, not only in its definition of transgressions and penalties but in the very spirit of the laws. . . . The Torah [Law] is not distinct from daily life; it commands the nature and content of daily life by dispensing benediction or malediction. . . . In Israel . . . it is almost impossible to make a clear distinction in the juridical activities of the city. They were hidden in the unity of a life completely oriented toward the fulfillment of the will of the living God.”

¹² This unique situation placed the administration of justice in Israel on a far higher level than in contemporaneous nations. Bible scholar Roland de Vaux writes: “Israelite law, for all its resemblances in form and content, differs radically from the clauses of the Oriental ‘treaties’ and the articles of their ‘codes’. It is a religious law. . . . No Oriental code can be compared with the Israelite law, which is ascribed in its entirety to God as its author. If it contains, and often mingles, ethical and ritual prescriptions, this is because it covers the whole field of the divine Covenant, and because this Covenant governed the relations of men with one another as well as their relations with God.”

11, 12. According to two Bible scholars, what distinguished Israel’s judicial system from that of other nations?

Small wonder that Moses asked: "What great nation is there that has righteous regulations and judicial decisions like all this law that I am putting before you today?" —Deuteronomy 4:8.

Judges in Israel

¹³ With such an elevated judiciary system, what type of man was needed to act as judge? Of the very first judge appointed in Israel, the Bible states: "The man Moses was by far the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground." (Numbers 12:3) He was not overly sure of himself. (Exodus 4:10) Although required to judge the people, at times he became their advocate before Jehovah, pleading with him to forgive them and even offering to sacrifice himself in their behalf. (Exodus 32:11, 30-32) He poetically stated: "My saying will trickle as the dew, as gentle rains upon grass and as copious showers upon vegetation." (Deuteronomy 32:2) Far from judging the people by leaning on his own wisdom, he declared: "In the event that they have a case arise, it must come to me and I must judge between the one party and the other, and *I must make known the decisions of the true God and his laws.*" (Exodus 18:16) When in doubt, he submitted the matter to Jehovah. (Numbers 9:6-8; 15:32-36; 27:1-11) Moses was a fine example for elders who today 'shepherd the flock of God' and make judicial decisions. (Acts 20:28) May their relationship with their brothers likewise prove to be "as gentle rains upon grass."

¹⁴ In time Moses was unable to carry by himself the load of handling judicial cases for the people. (Exodus 18:13, 18) He accept-

13. In what respects was Moses a fine example for elders today?

14. What were the spiritual qualifications of the men appointed by Moses as judges in Israel?

ed his father-in-law's suggestion to enlist help. Again, what kind of men were chosen? We read: "'Select out of all the people capable men, fearing God, trustworthy men, hating unjust profit.' . . . And Moses proceeded to choose capable men out of all Israel and to give them positions as heads over the people, as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties and chiefs of tens. And they judged the people on every proper occasion. A hard case they would bring to Moses, but every small case they themselves would handle as judges." —Exodus 18:21-26.

¹⁵ It can be seen that age was not the sole criterion for selecting men to act as judges. Moses stated: "Get wise and discreet and experienced men of your tribes, that I may set them as heads over you." (Deuteronomy 1:13) Moses was perfectly familiar with what young Elihu had stated many years before: "It is not those merely abundant in days that prove wise, nor those just old that understand judgment." (Job 32:9) Certainly, those appointed had to be "experienced men." But above all they had to be capable, God-fearing, trustworthy men, who hated unjust profit and who were wise and discreet. It seems evident, therefore, that the "heads" and "judges" mentioned at Joshua 23:2 and 24:1 were not distinct from "the older men" mentioned in those same verses but were chosen from among them. —See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 549.

Administering Justice

¹⁶ As to the instructions given to these appointed judges, Moses said: "I went on to

15. What were the qualifications of those who served as judges in Israel?

16. What should we note today about the instructions Moses gave to the newly appointed judges?

command your judges at that particular time, saying, 'When having a hearing between your brothers, you must judge with righteousness between a man and his brother or his alien resident. You must not be partial in judgment. You should hear the little one the same as the great one. You must not become frightened because of a man, for the judgment belongs to God; and the case that is too hard for you, you should present to me [Moses], and I must hear it.'"
—Deuteronomy 1:16, 17.

¹⁷ Of course, a case could be brought to Moses only during his lifetime. So further arrangements were made for difficult cases to be referred to priests, Levites, and specially appointed judges. (Deuteronomy 17:8-12; 1 Chronicles 23:1-4; 2 Chronicles 19:5, 8) To the judges he appointed in the cities of Judah, King Jehoshaphat stated: "See what you are doing, because it is not for man that you judge but it is for Jehovah . . . This is how you should do in the fear of Jehovah with faithfulness and with a complete heart. As for every legal case that will come to you of your brothers who are dwelling in their cities, . . . you must warn them that they may not do wrong against Jehovah and indignation may not have to take place against you and against your brothers. This is how you should do that you may not incur guilt."
—2 Chronicles 19:6-10.

¹⁸ Among the principles that judges in Israel had to apply were the following: equal justice for rich and poor (Exodus 23:3, 6; Leviticus 19:15); strict impartiality (Deuteronomy 1:17); no accepting of bribes.

17. Who were appointed as judges, and what warning did King Jehoshaphat give them?

18. (a) What were some of the principles that judges in Israel had to apply? (b) What did the judges have to keep in mind, and what scriptures show the consequences of their forgetting this?

(Deuteronomy 16:18-20) Judges had to remember constantly that those whom they were judging were Jehovah's sheep. (Psalm 100:3) In fact, one of the reasons why Jehovah rejected fleshly Israel was that their priests and shepherds failed to judge with righteousness and treated the people with harshness.—Jeremiah 22:3, 5, 25; 23:1, 2; Ezekiel 34:1-4; Malachi 2:8, 9.

¹⁹ Jehovah does not change. (Malachi 3:6) This brief review of the way judgment should have been administered in Israel and how Jehovah viewed any denial of justice should give pause to elders who today are responsible for making judicial decisions. Jehovah's example as Judge, and the judicial system he instituted in Israel, established principles that set the pattern for the administration of justice within the Christian congregation. This we shall see in the following article.

19. Of what value to us is this examination of Jehovah's standards of justice before the Common Era, and what will be considered in the following article?

Review Questions

- ☐ How might Jehovah's way of judging be summed up?
- ☐ How was Jehovah's way exemplified in his dealings with Cain and the pre-Flood generation?
- ☐ Who acted as judges in patriarchal times, and how?
- ☐ What distinguished Israel's judicial system from that of other nations?
- ☐ What type of men were appointed as judges in Israel, and what principles should they have followed?

ELDERS, JUDGE WITH RIGHTEOUSNESS

"When having a hearing between your brothers, you must judge with righteousness."—DEUTERONOMY 1:16.

AS SUPREME Judge, Jehovah has delegated judicial authority to his Son. (John 5:27) In turn, as Head of the Christian congregation, Christ uses the faithful and discreet slave class and its Governing Body to appoint elders, who at times have to act as judges. (Matthew 24:45-47; 1 Corinthians 5:12, 13; Titus 1:5, 9) As surrogate judges, these are under an obligation to follow closely the example of the heavenly Judges, Jehovah and Christ Jesus.

Christ—The Exemplary Judge

² Of Christ as Judge, it was written prophetically: "Upon him the spirit of Jehovah must settle down, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of mightiness, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; and there will be enjoyment by him in the fear of Jehovah. And he will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears. And with righteousness he must judge the lowly ones, and with uprightness he must give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth." —Isaiah 11:2-4.

³ Note in that prophecy the qualities that

1. In the matter of judgment, what delegation of authority has taken place, and what does this imply for human judges?
- 2, 3. (a) What Messianic prophecy reveals Christ's qualities as Judge? (b) What points are particularly worthy of note?

enable Christ to "judge the inhabited earth in righteousness." (Acts 17:31) He judges in accordance with Jehovah's spirit, divine wisdom, understanding, counsel, and knowledge. Notice, too, that he judges in the fear of Jehovah. Thus, "the judgment seat of the Christ" is, representatively, "the judgment seat of God." (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 14:10) He is careful to judge matters the way God judges them. (John 8:16) He does not judge simply by appearances or by mere hearsay. He judges with uprightness in behalf of the meek and the lowly ones. What a wonderful Judge! And what a wonderful example for imperfect humans who are called upon to act in a judicial capacity today!

Earthly Judges

⁴ The Scriptures indicate that the relatively small number of anointed Christians, beginning with the 12 apostles, will be associate judges with Christ Jesus during the Millennium. (Luke 22:28-30; 1 Corinthians 6:2; Revelation 20:4) A remnant of anointed members of spiritual Israel on earth were themselves judged and restored in 1918-19. (Malachi 3:2-4) Concerning this restoration of spiritual Israel, it was proph-

4. (a) What will be one of the functions of the 144,000 during the Millennial Reign of Christ? (b) What prophecy shows that some anointed Christians would be appointed as judges while still on earth?

esied: "I will bring back again judges for you as at the first, and counselors for you as at the start." (Isaiah 1:26) Thus, just as he had done "at the start" of fleshly Israel, Jehovah has given the restored remnant righteous judges and counselors.

⁵ To begin with, the 'wise men' who were "put in as judges" were all anointed older men, or elders. (1 Corinthians 6:4, 5) Faithful, respected anointed overseers are depicted in the book of Revelation as being held in Jesus' right hand, that is, under his control and direction. (Revelation 1:16, 20; 2:1) Since 1935 the anointed have received the loyal support of an ever-increasing "great crowd," whose hope is to survive "the great tribulation" and live forever on a paradise earth. (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14-17) As "the marriage of the Lamb" approaches, more and more of these are being appointed by the anointed Governing Body to serve as elders and judges in the upwards of 66,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the earth.* (Revelation 19:7-9) By means of special schools, they are being trained to handle responsibility in the "new earth" society. (2 Peter 3:13) The Kingdom Ministry School, conducted at the end of 1991 in many countries, placed emphasis on the proper handling of judicial cases. Elders who serve as judges are duty bound to imitate Jehovah and Christ Jesus, whose judgments are true and righteous.—John 5:30; 8:16; Revelation 19:1, 2.

* For the position of elders from among the other sheep with regard to Christ's right hand, see the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., page 136, footnote.

5. (a) Who were "put in as judges" after the restoration of spiritual Israel, and how are they depicted in the book of Revelation? (b) By whom are anointed overseers now being assisted in judicial work, and how are these being trained to become better judges?

Judges Who 'Conduct Themselves With Fear'

⁶ If Christ himself judges in the fear of Jehovah and with the help of His spirit, how much more should imperfect elders do so! When assigned to serve on a judicial committee, they need to 'conduct themselves with fear,' calling "upon the Father who judges impartially" to help them judge in righteousness. (1 Peter 1:17) They should remember that they are dealing with people's lives, their "souls," as those who "will render an account." (Hebrews 13:17) In view of this, surely they will also be accountable before Jehovah for any avoidable judicial mistakes they may make. In his commentary on Hebrews 13:17, J. H. A. Ebrard wrote: "It is the duty of the shepherd to *watch* over the souls committed to his care, and . . . he must render an *account* of them all, of those also who have been lost through his fault. This is a solemn word. Let every minister of the word consider, that he has *voluntarily* undertaken this awfully [formidably] responsible office."—Compare John 17:12; James 3:1.

⁷ Elders acting in a judicial capacity should remember that the real Judges of each case are Jehovah and Christ Jesus. Recall what the judges in Israel were told: "It is not for man that you judge but it is for Jehovah; and he is with you in the matter of judgment. And now let the dread of Jehovah come to be upon you. . . . This is how you should do that *you* may not incur guilt." (2 Chronicles 19:6-10) With reverential fear, the elders judging a case should do their utmost to be sure that Jehovah is really 'with them in the matter of

6. Why should elders who serve on judicial committees 'conduct themselves with fear'?

7. (a) What should modern-day judges remember, and what should be their aim? (b) What lessons should elders draw from Matthew 18:18-20?



judgment.' Their decision should accurately reflect the way Jehovah and Christ consider the matter. What they symbolically 'bind' (find guilty) or 'loose' (find innocent) on earth should be what has *already* been bound or loosed in heaven—as revealed by what is written in the inspired Word of God. If they pray to Jehovah in Jesus' name, Jesus will be "in their midst" to help them. (Matthew 18:18-20, footnote; *The Watchtower*, February 15, 1988, page 9) The atmosphere at a judicial hearing should show that Christ is truly in their midst.

Full-Time Shepherds

⁸ Elders do not judge full-time. They *are* full-time shepherds. They are healers, not punishers. (James 5:13-16) The basic idea behind the Greek word for overseer (*e-pi'sko-pos*) is that of protective care. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states:

8. What is the elders' main responsibility toward the flock, as exemplified by Jehovah and Jesus Christ? (Isaiah 40:10, 11; John 10:11, 27-29)

**Where advance shepherding is done,
many judicial cases may be avoided**

"Supplementing shepherd [at 1 Peter 2:25], the term [*e-pi'sko-pos*] suggests the pastoral work of watching over or guarding." Yes, their primary responsibility is watching over the sheep and guarding them, keeping them *inside* the flock.

⁹ Speaking to the elders of the Ephesus congregation, the apostle Paul put the emphasis where it belongs: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you *overseers*, to *shepherd* the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son." (Acts 20:28) Paul highlights shepherding, not punishing. Some elders might do well to ponder over the following question: 'Could we save the considerable amount of time needed to investigate and handle judicial cases if we devoted more time and effort to shepherding?'

¹⁰ True, Paul warned against "oppressive wolves." But did he not reproach these for 'not treating the flock with tenderness'? (Acts 20:29) And while he implied that the faithful overseers should expel these "wolves," do his words not show that the elders should treat the other members of the flock "with tenderness"? When a sheep becomes spiritually weak and falls by the way-side, what does he or she need—beating or healing, punishing or shepherding? (James 5:14, 15) Therefore, elders should regularly schedule time for the shepherding work. This may bring the happy result of less time spent in time-consuming judicial cases involving Christians who have been overtaken

9, 10. (a) How did Paul emphasize the first duty of elders, so what question might well be posed? (b) What do Paul's words at Acts 20:29 imply, so how may elders try to reduce the number of judicial cases?

by sin. Certainly, the elders' first concern should be to provide a source of relief and refreshment, thus promoting peace, tranquillity, and security among Jehovah's people.—Isaiah 32:1, 2.

Serving as Beneficent Shepherds and Judges

¹¹ More intensive shepherding before a Christian takes a false step might well reduce the number of judicial cases among Jehovah's people. (Compare Galatians 6:1.) Nevertheless, because of human sin and imperfection, Christian overseers may from time to time have to deal with cases of wrongdoing. What principles should guide them? These have not changed since the time of Moses or that of the early Christians. Moses' words addressed to the judges in Israel are still valid: "When having a hearing between your brothers, you must judge with righteousness . . . You must not be partial in judgment." (Deuteronomy 1:16, 17) Impartiality is a characteristic of "the wisdom from above," the wisdom that is so vital for elders serving on judicial committees. (James 3:17; Proverbs 24:23) Such wisdom will help them to discern the difference between weakness and wickedness.

¹² Elders "must judge with righteousness," in accordance with Jehovah's standards of right and wrong. (Psalm 19:9) Yet, while endeavoring to be righteous men, they should also try to be good men, in the sense of the distinction Paul makes at Romans 5:7, 8. Commenting on these verses in its article on "Righteousness," the work *Insight on the Scriptures* states: "The use of the Greek term shows that the person noteworthy for, or distinguished by, goodness is one who is

benevolent (disposed to do good or bring benefit to others) and beneficent (actively expressing such goodness). He is not merely concerned with doing what justice requires but goes beyond this, being motivated by wholesome consideration for others and the desire to benefit and help them." (Volume 2, page 809) Elders who are not only righteous but also good will treat wrongdoers with kind consideration. (Romans 2:4) They should want to show mercy and compassion. They should do what they can to help the wrongdoer to see the need to repent, even though he may at first seem not to respond to their efforts.

Proper Attitude at Hearings

¹³ When a situation requires a judicial hearing, overseers should not forget that they are still shepherds, dealing with Jehovah's sheep, under "the fine shepherd." (John 10:11) The counsel Paul gave for regular help given to sheep who are in difficulty applies with equal force at judicial hearings. He wrote: "Brothers, even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness, as you each keep an eye on yourself, for fear you also may be tempted. Go on carrying the burdens of one another, and thus fulfill the law of the Christ."—Galatians 6:1, 2.*

¹⁴ Rather than considering themselves to be superior judges meeting to administer punishment, elders serving on a judicial committee should view the hearing as

* See *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1989, page 19.

11. Why do elders who serve on judicial committees need impartiality and "the wisdom from above"?

12. In what sense do judges need to be not only righteous men but good men?

13. (a) When an elder acts as a judge, what does he not cease to be? (b) What counsel by Paul applies also at judicial hearings?

14. How should overseers view judicial hearings, and what should be their attitude toward a wrongdoer?

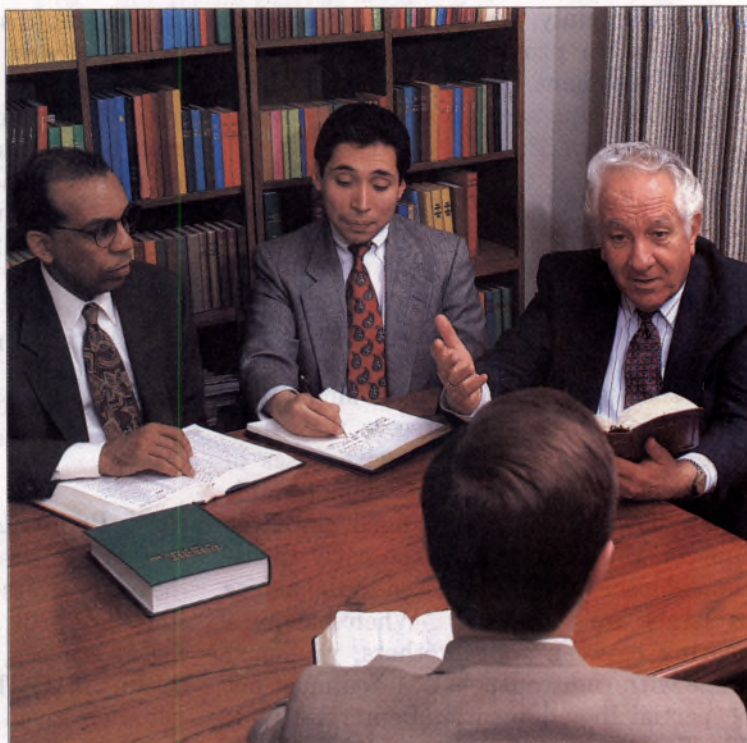
Even during a judicial hearing, elders should try to readjust a wrongdoer in a spirit of mildness

another aspect of their shepherding work. One of Jehovah's sheep is in trouble. What can they do to save him or her? Is it too late to help this sheep that has strayed from the flock? We would hope not. Elders should keep a positive view toward showing mercy where this would be proper. It is not that they should lower Jehovah's standards if a serious sin has been committed. But their being conscious of any mitigating circumstances will help them to extend mercy where possible. (Psalm 103:8-10; 130:3) Sad to say, some wrongdoers are so stubborn in their attitude that the elders are obliged to show firmness, though never harshness.—1 Corinthians 5:13.

The Purpose of Judicial Hearings

¹⁵ When a serious problem arises between individuals, wise elders will first determine whether those involved have tried to settle the matter privately, in the spirit of Matthew 5:23, 24 or Matthew 18:15. If this has failed, perhaps counsel by one or two elders will suffice. Judicial action is necessary only if a gross sin has been committed that could lead to disfellowshipping. (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:11) There must be a sound Scriptural basis for forming a judicial com-

15. When a serious problem arises between individuals, what should first be determined?



mittee. (See *The Watchtower*, September 15, 1989, page 18.) When one is formed, the best qualified elders should be selected for the particular case.

¹⁶ What do elders try to achieve by means of judicial hearings? First, it is impossible to judge with righteousness unless the truth is known. As in Israel, serious matters must be 'searched thoroughly.' (Deuteronomy 13:14; 17:4) So one aim of a hearing is to find out the facts of the case. But this can and *should* be done with love. (1 Corinthians 13:4, 6, 7) Once the facts are known, the elders will do whatever is necessary to protect the congregation and maintain within it Jehovah's high standards and the free flow of his spirit. (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8) However, one of the purposes of a hearing is to save, if at all

16. What do elders try to achieve by means of judicial hearings?

possible, an endangered sinner.—Compare Luke 15:8-10.

¹⁷ An accused person should never be treated otherwise than as a sheep of God. He or she should be treated with tenderness. If a sin (or sins) has been committed, the purpose of the righteous judges will be to help the sinner to readjust, to understand the error of his way, to repent, and thus to be snatched from “the snare of the Devil.” It will require “art of teaching,” “instructing with mildness.” (2 Timothy 2:24-26; 4:2) What if the sinner then recognizes that he has sinned, is truly stabbed to the heart, and asks Jehovah for forgiveness? (Compare Acts 2:37.) If the committee is convinced that he sincerely wants help, generally there would be no need to disfellowship him.—See *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1983, page 31, paragraph 1.

¹⁸ On the other hand, when members of a judicial committee are confronted with a clear case of remorseless apostasy, willful rebellion against Jehovah’s laws, or sheer wickedness, their duty is to protect the other members of the congregation by disfellowshipping the unrepentant offender. The judicial committee is not obliged to meet repeatedly with the wrongdoer or put words in his mouth, trying to force him to repent, if it is obvious he lacks godly sorrow.* In recent years disfellowshippings worldwide have been approximately 1 percent of publishers. That means that out of about a hundred sheep that remain in the fold, one is

* See *The Watchtower*, September 1, 1981, page 26, paragraph 24.

17. (a) How should an accused person be treated during a hearing, and with what purpose? (b) What will this require on the part of the members of the judicial committee?

18. (a) When should a judicial committee show firmness in disfellowshipping a wrongdoer? (b) In view of what heartrending situation should elders exert themselves in behalf of straying sheep?

lost—at least temporarily. Considering the time and effort it takes to bring a person into the fold, is it not heartrending to know that tens of thousands are ‘handed back to Satan’ every year?—1 Corinthians 5:5.

¹⁹ Elders starting out on a judicial case should remember that most cases of sin in the congregation involve weakness, not wickedness. They should never forget Jesus’ illustration of the lost sheep, which he concluded with the words: “I tell you that thus there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine righteous ones who have no need of repentance.” (Luke 15:7) Truly, “Jehovah . . . does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) With Jehovah’s help, may judicial committees throughout the world do their utmost to cause joy in heaven by helping wrongdoers see the need to repent and start their feet back on the narrow road that leads to everlasting life.—Matthew 7:13, 14.

19. What should elders serving on a judicial committee never forget, so what will be their aim?

Review Questions

- ☐ Following the example of the Great Shepherd and the Fine Shepherd, what should be the main interest of the elders?
- ☐ In what way can elders endeavor to reduce the number of judicial cases?
- ☐ In what sense do judges need to be not only righteous but also good?
- ☐ How should a wrongdoer be treated during a hearing, and with what purpose?
- ☐ Why is disfellowshipping a last resort?

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Good News From Eastern Europe



MANY exciting things are happening in the theocratic field in Eastern Europe. Outstanding was the international convention in Zagreb, August 16-18, 1991, when 7,300 Witnesses gave a hearty welcome to their brothers from 15 nations. In all, 14,684 attended. It was a marvelous display of love and unity in a country shaken by unrest!

The Witnesses in Eastern Europe are busy telling others the good news of Jehovah's Kingdom, which they realize is the only hope for real peace. In some parts it is a challenge for them to maintain their neutral stand. Nevertheless, people often listen, and the Witnesses report many fine experiences.

In one town a 16-year-old girl heard the good news from the only Witness of Jehovah in that town. A regular Bible study was started, and her appreciation for the truth grew. Having a great desire to tell others the wonderful things she had learned, she tried to speak with her schoolmates but met up with opposition and ridicule. One schoolmate especially opposed her but was surprised and impressed by her patience, for the young Bible student did not become angry in spite of all the insults. Later, a more thorough witness was given to this girl, and she realized that her attitude had been wrong. A Bible study was started with her, and then the original Bible student and her new companion tried to share their happiness with others, despite opposition from their parents, their teacher, and their schoolmates.

As a result of their witnessing, another schoolmate accepted the truth. Now there were three of them in the classroom, and all three were good examples of willingness to help others and of showing love among themselves. Then another girl joined them.

Now there were four on the bench in the school yard where they discussed the Bible together. And to the surprise of many, their number grew. Another girl from the class, enthused about their fine conduct, decided to join in the Bible study. The five of them continued to invite others, students and teachers, to do the same. Nevertheless, the girls continued to experience great pressure from their parents. The parents tried hard to force the girls to stop their Bible study by destroying their literature and by mistreating them.

What was the result of this witnessing that started with just one young interested person? One of the girls was baptized at the district convention in 1990, and the other four at a circuit assembly in the spring of 1991. This was a cause for great joy! Today, all five girls are serving as regular pioneers! In the town where this happened, there are now 11 publishers, 8 of them in the pioneer service.

Jehovah is sustaining and blessing his Witnesses in Eastern Europe. There is clearly great potential for increase among the honesthearted ones in this part of the world.

I RESPONDED IN HARVEST TIME

AS TOLD BY WINIFRED REMMIE

“THE harvest is great, but the workers are few.” These words of our Lord Jesus were prompted by a deep feeling for people who were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd. I have experienced this same feeling, and for the past 40 years, I have always tried to respond favorably to the Master’s call to work in the harvest.—Matthew 9:36, 37.

I was born in West Africa to a family with seven children, all girls. Our parents were tender, yet strict; they were also very religious. Attending church and Sunday school each week was nonnegotiable. For me this wasn’t a problem because I loved spiritual things. In fact, at the age of 12, I was appointed to conduct Sunday school classes.

Marriage and Adventure

In 1941, at the age of 23, I married Lichfield Rennie, a bookkeeper at the colonial secretariat. Materially, we were well off, but the love of adventure and the desire to accumulate material wealth took us to Liberia in 1944. The turning point in my husband’s life, and eventually in mine, came in 1950 when he met Hoyle Ervin, a missionary of Jehovah’s Witnesses. After just three weeks of study, my husband began to share in the preaching work.

I was upset when my husband stopped attending church. After all, he was a staunch Protestant who even fasted during the Lenten season. The first time I saw him going out to preach, bag in hand, I was furious. “What’s wrong with you?” I demanded. “An

important man like you going out to preach with these foolish people!” He was calm and composed during this tirade.

The following day, Brother Ervin called at our house to study with Lichfield. As usual, I stood aloof during the study. Perhaps it was because of this that Brother Ervin asked me if I was illiterate. What? Me, illiterate? What an insult! I would show him how educated I was! I would expose this false religion!

Accepting the Truth

Not long after this, I noticed the book “*Let God Be True*” on the living-room table. ‘What a ridiculous title,’ I thought. ‘God has always been true, hasn’t he?’ As I browsed through the book, I quickly found another cause for complaint. It said that man doesn’t *have* a soul, he *is* a soul! Even dogs and cats *are* souls! This really vexed me. ‘What a foolish teaching!’ I thought.

When my husband came home, I angrily confronted him. “These deceivers say man doesn’t have a soul. They are false prophets!” My husband didn’t quarrel; rather, he calmly replied: “Winnie, everything is in the Bible.” Later, when Brother Ervin patiently showed me from my own Bible that we *are* souls and that our soul is mortal, I was astounded. (Ezekiel 18:4) What particularly impressed me was the scripture at Genesis 2:7, which states: “The man [Adam] *came to be* a living soul.”

How wrong I had been! I felt cheated by the clergy and never attended church again. Instead, I began attending the Christian

meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. How impressive it was to see the love among them! This had to be the true religion.

Harvesting in Cape Palmas

About three months later, my husband had the opportunity to steal a large sum of money from his company—but he did not. His colleagues taunted him: "Remmie, you will die poor."

However, because of his honesty, he was promoted and sent to Cape Palmas to open a new office there. We preached zealously and after just two months, we had a small group that was keenly interested in the Bible's message. Later, when Lichfield traveled to the capital, Monrovia, to get some supplies for the new office, he was baptized. He also requested help from the Society to care for those in Cape Palmas who were showing interest in the truth.

The Society responded by sending Brother and Sister Faust to Cape Palmas. Sister Faust was of invaluable help to me, and in December 1951, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by getting baptized. Now more than ever, I was determined to 'gather fruit for everlasting life.' (John 4:35, 36) In April 1952, I took up the full-time ministry as a pioneer.

My efforts were immediately blessed by Jehovah; within a year, I helped five people to dedication and baptism. One of them, Louissa Macintosh, was a cousin of then president of Liberia, W. V. S. Tubman. She was baptized and entered the full-time ministry and continued faithful to God until her death in 1984. On several occasions she witnessed to the president.

To Lower Buchanan

In 1957, during the district overseer's visit, my husband and I were invited to become special pioneers. After prayerful discussion, we accepted the assignment. Lichfield need-

ed a few months to wrap up his secular work in Cape Palmas, so I went ahead to Lower Buchanan, a virgin territory, to open up the work there.

Upon arriving, I was accommodated by the Maclean family. The next day, as was the custom, I was taken to the subchief of the Pele tribe. The chief and his family welcomed me warmly, and I witnessed to a small group of people at his home. No fewer than six of the people I spoke to that day, including the subchief and his wife, eventually became Witnesses.

Soon I found myself conducting a *Watchtower* study with more than 20 people in attendance. I had to rely heavily on Jehovah, and he gave me the needed strength and ability to take care of his sheep. When I felt tired or inadequate, I would recall faithful ones of old, especially women like Deborah and Huldah, who were fearless in carrying out Jehovah's commissions.—Judges 4:4-7, 14-16; 2 Kings 22:14-20.

In March 1958, after just three months in Lower Buchanan, I received a letter informing me of the visit of the circuit overseer, John Charuk. I rented the basement of a house that would hold a large crowd. Then I traveled to Upper Buchanan to meet Brother Charuk, but he did not come. After waiting till dusk, I wearily made my way back to Lower Buchanan.

About midnight, I heard a knock on the door. Upon opening it, I saw not only the circuit overseer but also my husband, whose surprise arrival beautifully coincided with that of Brother Charuk. How did they locate me? They had met a hunter and asked him if he knew a lady who preached to people about Jehovah. "Yes," he replied, and then he directed them to my place. How happy I felt that in just three months in Lower Buchanan, my light was shining so brightly!—Matthew 5:14-16.

We enjoyed a peak attendance of 40 during Brother Charuk's visit. In time a thriving congregation was established, and we were able to construct a beautiful Kingdom Hall. However, life was not always trouble free. For example, in 1963 religious persecution broke out in Kolahun, and my husband was arrested and imprisoned. He was so badly beaten that he had to be hospitalized.

Not long after his discharge, in that same year, we had a convention at Gbarnga. On the final day, soldiers rounded up all in attendance and ordered us to salute the flag. When we refused, the soldiers forced us to hold our hands in the air and to look directly at the sun. They also beat some of us with the butts of their rifles. As a help to keep my integrity to God, I sang to myself the Kingdom song "Fear Them Not!" After that the soldiers threw us into a filthy prison. Three days later the foreigners were released, and Lichfield and I were deported to Sierra Leone. The local Witnesses were released the next day.

Further Privileges and Rewards

We were assigned to work with the Bo Congregation, in the south of Sierra Leone. We served there for eight years before being transferred to Njala. While in Njala my husband was appointed to serve as a substitute circuit overseer, and I had the privilege of accompanying him as he engaged in this service. Then, in the mid-1970's, we were reassigned to the East Freetown Congregation.

I have experienced the reward of seeing many of those I studied the Bible with embrace true worship. I have over 60 spiritual children and

grandchildren as "letters of recommendation." (2 Corinthians 3:1) Some have had to make drastic changes, as did Victoria Dyke, who was a prophetess of the Aladura sect. After a consideration of 1 John 5:21, she finally disposed of her many fetishes and objects of veneration. She symbolized her dedication by baptism and eventually became a special pioneer, helping many of her relatives to accept the truth.

In April 1985, I lost my husband in death, just a few months before our 44th wedding anniversary. But I am not left alone. I have continued to serve my Helper, Jehovah, as a full-time minister. And I feel a special bond with those whom I have helped to come to know him. They are family in a special sense. I love them and they love me. When I am sick, they rush to look after me and, of course, I help them too.

No question about it, if I had to do it all over again, I would gladly take my sickle and join in the harvest as Jehovah's fellow worker.



Winifred Remmie today

**Scenes From
the Promised Land**

GERASA
Where Jew
and Greek Met



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

THE apostle Paul wrote that among Abraham's true seed, "there is neither Jew nor Greek." (Galatians 3: 26-29) Yes, national background or culture did not matter as far as God's acceptance was concerned.

Those words might seem fitting for Christians spread around a Roman province, such as in the province of Galatia, where there was a mix of Jews, Greeks, Romans, and local peoples. But what about parts of Israel itself, such as Gilead?

That region is east of the Jordan, between the Salt (Dead) Sea and the Sea of Galilee. About midpoint in this fertile plateau, the Jabbok River descends to the Jordan. The photograph above shows some of the impressive ruins of Gerasa, now called Jerash, which lay near the upper Jabbok.

An ancient north-south trade route called "the king's road" crossed Gilead. Upon leaving Haran, Jacob and his

The photograph above is in large format in the *1992 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses*.

family evidently traveled down this road to the Jabbok. He wrestled with an angel and encountered Esau near where Gerasa would be built. (Genesis 31:17-25, 45-47; 32:22-30; 33: 1-17) At a later time, Israelites moved from the south up the king's road when heading toward the Promised Land. Two and a half tribes settled north and south of the Jabbok along the trade road.—Numbers 20:17; Deuteronomy 2:26, 27.

Did Greeks become involved in this area, and if so, how? Yes, they did when Alexander the Great conquered the region. According to tradition, he founded Gerasa for veterans of his army. Gradually, Greek influence became well established. Ten of the colony-cities east of the Jordan and the Sea of Galilee formed a confederation known as the Decapolis. You may have noted that name in the Bible, which reports that "great crowds followed [Jesus] from Galilee and Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from the other side of the Jordan." Gerasa was one of the Decapolitan cities.—Matthew 4:25.



Based on a map copyrighted by Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est. and Survey of Israel.



'It was part of the plan of Alexander to introduce the Greek people into all parts of the empire. Lower Syria [including the Decapolis], especially, as one of the strategic centres, received a large Hellenic population. To this day no part of the eastern world can show so many and such striking Greek ruins as the country east of the Jordan. The Greek cities displayed, superficially, a complete establishment of Greek institutions and customs—magnificent temples to the Greek gods and goddesses, gymnasia, public baths, annual celebrations of games, and in many cases philosophical schools and academies.'—*Hellenism*, by Norman Bentwich.

If you visit the ruins of Gerasa, you will find ample proof of that. Near the southern entrance, there is a circular forum, or public market, visible in the photograph. You likely will be amazed at the baths, temples, theaters, and public buildings, many of them connected by paved streets lined with columns. Outside the city, you can see milestones or markers along the ancient road that linked Gerasa to other Decapoltan cities and to Mediterranean ports.

Even after Rome took over Gerasa in 63 B.C.E., the Hellenistic flavor persisted. You can imagine how this

flavor could influence Jews living in Gerasa and the region. The book *Hellenism* observes: "Gradually but surely the Jews began to assimilate the religious ideas of the people about them, and to look on the Scriptures under the influence of those ideas."

While Jesus may not have preached in the city, he entered the district of Gerasa, which may have reached to the Sea of Galilee. He expelled demons from a man in that district, allowing them to enter swine. (Mark 5:1-17) Likely, his early disciples preached to Jews in the Decapoltan cities, and after 36 C.E., the good news could be shared with Greeks in Gerasa. Whether a person accepting Christianity had been a strict practitioner of Judaism, a Hellenized Jew, or a Greek, he could be accepted by the true God as part of the spiritual seed of Abraham.



Busy in Dead Works or in Jehovah's Service?

“SORRY, but I’m busy.” This is one of the objections Jehovah’s Witnesses encounter as they publicly preach the good news of the Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) And while the claim “I’m busy” sometimes amounts to nothing more than a handy excuse, the truth is that many people *are* busy. They are virtually consumed by “the anxiety of this system of things”—the pressures of making a living, paying bills, getting to and from work, raising children, taking care of home, car, and other possessions.—Matthew 13:22.

However, while people may indeed be busy, few are engaged in works that are truly fruitful or productive. It is as the wise man Solomon once wrote: “What does a man come to have for all his hard work and for the striving of his heart with which he is working hard under the sun? For all his days his occupation means pains and vexation, also during the night his heart just does not lie down. This too is mere vanity.”—Ecclesiastes 2:22, 23.

The Bible also calls such futile activity “dead works.” (Hebrews 9:14) Do such works dominate your life? This should be of great concern to you as a Christian, inasmuch as God will “pay back to each one according to his work.” (Psalm 62:12) And since “the time left is reduced,” we should especially be concerned that we do not waste time with works that are dead. (1 Corinthians 7:29) But just what are dead

works? How should we view them? And how can we be sure that we are busy with works that are of real value?

Identifying Dead Works

At Hebrews 6:1, 2, Paul wrote: “For this reason, now that we have left the primary doctrine about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying a foundation again, namely, repentance from dead works, and faith toward God, the teaching on baptisms and the laying on of the hands, the resurrection of the dead and everlasting judgment.” Note that “the primary doctrine” included “repentance from dead works.” As Christians, Paul’s readers had already repented from such dead works. How so?

Before accepting Christ, some in the first century had engaged in the dead “works of the flesh,” namely, “fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism,” and other vile deeds. (Galatians 5:19-21) Unchecked, such works would have led to their spiritual death. Mercifully, though, those Christians had turned from their destructive course, repented, and been “washed clean.” They thus enjoyed a clean standing with Jehovah.—1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Not all Christians, though, needed to repent from works that were wicked or immoral. Paul’s letter was primarily addressed to Jewish believers, many of whom had no doubt adhered strictly to the Mosaic

Law before accepting Christ. Of what dead works, then, had they repented? Surely there was nothing wrong with their having followed the rituals and dietary requirements of the Law. Was not the Law “holy and righteous and good”? (Romans 7:12) Yes, but at Romans 10:2, 3, Paul said regarding the Jews: “I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge; for, because of not knowing the righteousness of God but seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God.”

Yes, the Jews erroneously believed that by scrupulously following the Law, they could earn their salvation. Paul, though, explained that “a man is declared righteous, not due to works of law, but only through faith toward Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 2:16) After Christ’s ransom was provided, works of Law—no matter how pious or noble—were dead works and of no value whatsoever in gaining salvation. Righthearted Jews thus sought God’s favor by repenting of such dead works and getting baptized to symbolize their repentance.—Acts 2:38.

What do we learn from this? That dead works may include more than wicked or immoral acts; they encompass *any* work that is spiritually dead, vain, or fruitless. But do not all Christians repent from such dead works before their baptism? True, but some Christians in the first century later lapsed into immoral conduct. (1 Corinthians 5:1) And among Jewish Christians, there was a tendency to revert to practicing the dead works of the Mosaic Law. Paul had to remind such ones not to return to dead works.—Galatians 4:21; 5:1.

Guarding Against Dead Works

Jehovah’s people today must therefore be careful not to lapse into the snare of dead

works. We are assaulted on virtually every side by pressures to compromise morally, to be dishonest, and to engage in acts of sexual misconduct. Sad to say, thousands of Christians each year succumb to such pressures and, if unrepentant, are expelled from the Christian congregation. More than ever before, then, a Christian must heed Paul’s advice at Ephesians 4:22-24: “Put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct and which is being corrupted according to his deceptive desires; but . . . you should be made new in the force actuating your mind, and should put on the new personality which was created according to God’s will in true righteousness and loyalty.”

Of course, the Ephesians to whom Paul wrote had already put on the new personality to a large extent. But Paul helped them appreciate that doing so was a *continuous process*! Without unceasing effort, Christians could be led back to dead works by deceptive desires that persist as a corruptive influence. The same is true of us today. We must constantly strive to put on the new personality, not allowing it to be tainted by any traits acquired in our old way of life. We must shun—hate—any form of the wicked works of the flesh. “O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad,” exhorts the psalmist.—Psalm 97:10.

Commendably, the vast majority of Jehovah’s people today have heeded this counsel and remained morally clean. Some, though, have been sidetracked by works that are not necessarily wrong in themselves but that are ultimately vain and fruitless. For example, some have been swept up in money-making schemes or in the acquisition of material things. But the Bible warns: “Those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires, which plunge men into



Making a realistic schedule helps a Christian to use his time more wisely

sick and the elderly?" The answers to these questions might reveal a need on your part to give greater priority to spiritual works.

Keep Busy in Jehovah's Service

As 1 Corinthians 15:58 says, there is "plenty to do in the work of the Lord." Foremost is the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. At 2 Timothy 4:5, Paul urged:

destruction and ruin." (1 Timothy 6:9) For others, secular education has proved to be a snare. True, a certain level of secular education may be necessary to obtain employment. But in the time-consuming pursuit of advanced worldly education, some have harmed themselves spiritually.

Yes, many works may not be morally wrong in themselves. But they are nonetheless dead if they do not really add to our life now or gain us favor with Jehovah God. Such works consume time and energy but produce no spiritual benefits, no lasting refreshment.—Compare Ecclesiastes 2:11.

No doubt you are striving hard to be busy in worthwhile spiritual activities. It helps, though, to scrutinize yourself regularly. From time to time, you might ask yourself questions such as: 'Is my service participation and meeting attendance suffering because I have taken on unnecessary secular work?' 'Do I have time for recreation but little time for personal and family study?' 'Do I expend much time and energy caring for material possessions but fail to care for needy ones in the congregation, such as the

"Make the preaching of the Good News your life's work, in thoroughgoing service." (*Jerusalem Bible*) Elders and ministerial servants also have much to do in caring for the needs of the flock. (1 Timothy 3:1, 5, 13; 1 Peter 5:2) Family heads—many of whom are single parents—also have weighty responsibilities in caring for their families and helping their children grow in their relationship with God. Such works can be exhausting, even overwhelming, at times. But far from being dead, they bring real satisfaction!

The problem is: How does one find time to accomplish all these necessary worthwhile works? Self-discipline and personal organization are essential. At 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27, Paul wrote: "The way I am running is not uncertainly; the way I am directing my blows is so as not to be striking the air; but I pummel my body and lead it as a slave, that, after I have preached to others, I myself should not become disapproved somehow." One way to apply the principle of this text would be periodically to examine your personal routine and life-style. You may well discover that you can eliminate a num-

ber of unnecessary drains on your time and energy.

For example, is much of your energy and time being expended on TV viewing, recreation, mundane reading, or hobbies? According to an article in *The New York Times*, the average adult in the United States indulges in “just above 30 hours a week” of TV viewing. Surely, such time could be put to better use! The wife of one traveling overseer reports: “I almost completely excluded all time wasters, such as watching television.” The result? She was able to read the two-volume Bible encyclopedia *Insight on the Scriptures* in its entirety!

You may also need to consider to what extent you can simplify your life-style. Said Solomon: “Sweet is the sleep of the one serving, regardless of whether it is little or much that he eats; but the plenty belonging to the rich one is not permitting him to sleep.” (Ecclesiastes 5:12) Is a lot of your time and energy devoted to caring for unnecessary material possessions? Really, the more things we own, the more things we have to maintain, insure, repair, and protect. Might it be to your advantage simply to divest yourself of certain belongings?

Having a realistic schedule is another way to make better use of your time. Such a schedule should take into account one’s need for relaxation or recreation. But spiritual interests should be given priority. Time should be set aside for attending all congregation meetings on a regular basis. You might also determine in advance what days or evenings can be devoted to the evangelizing work. With careful planning, you may even be able to increase your share in the service, perhaps serving as an auxiliary pioneer from time to time. Be sure, though, to schedule time for personal and family study, including thorough preparation for

the meetings. By being prepared, not only will you get more out of the meetings yourself but you will be in a better position to “incite to love and fine works” by means of your comments.—Hebrews 10:24.

Finding time for study may require making some sacrifices. For example, Bethel families worldwide rise early each morning to have a discussion of the day’s text. Would it be possible for you to buy out a little time each morning for personal study? The psalmist said: “I have been up early in the morning twilight, that I may cry for help. For your words I have waited.” (Psalm 119:147) Of course, rising early would require scheduling a reasonable hour for going to bed so that you can begin the next day fit and rested.

The Benefits of Being Busy in Jehovah’s Service

Having “plenty to do in the work of the Lord” does require planning, discipline, and self-sacrifice. But you will enjoy countless benefits as a result. So stay busy, not in dead or vain works that bring only emptiness and pain, but in Jehovah’s service. For it is by such works that you manifest your faith, gain God’s approval, and, ultimately, the reward of everlasting life!

In Our Next Issue

Does the Bible Contradict Itself?

**Reject Worldly Fantasies,
Pursue Kingdom Realities**

**You Can Find Comfort
in Times of Distress**

They Came Despite Discomfort and Danger

THE date was January 2, 1992. The place—Maxixe, Inhambane Province. The African night-sounds of Mozambique were sharply interrupted as a radio was turned on. “Jehovah’s Witnesses are holding their ‘Lovers of Freedom’ Convention in our province,” the broadcaster announced. “Their purpose is to instruct people about how true freedom can be found in today’s world. All are welcome to attend.”

There in that distant corner of Africa, history was being made! For the first time, a district convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses was being held, and 1,024 persons were there to enjoy it. A few years ago, such an event could never have occurred so openly in Mozambique, since the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses was then under ban. Would you like to hear about the courageous sacrifices that were made to attend this convention?

Inhambane Province, like many other parts of Africa, is exquisitely beautiful. Dhowlike fishing boats with triangular sails ply the sea off its coastline. Coconut palms are plentiful. But an ugly specter stalks the countryside: civil war!

For those lying asleep in a palm frond hut in the early hours of the morning, it is not unusual to be wakened by the dull *boom-boom-boom* of heavy artillery in the nearby rurals as the bush war rages through the night. All too often it is the innocent citizens who suffer. Sometimes children are seen hobbling along with missing or mutilated limbs. Even some of Jehovah’s Witnesses carry scars on their faces and bodies from the brutalities they have suffered.

Under these conditions the “Lovers of Freedom” Convention was deeply appreciated by all who attended. Despite the possibility of ambushes en route to the convention, many family groups from the rural areas were determined to come. Getting there was not comfortable either, since public transportation is mostly on the back of large, open trucks. Sometimes up to 400 passengers squeeze onto one truck! A number of these trucks line up to form convoys that are accompanied by armed military escorts.

Nora and her three daughters, ages one, three, and six, were one family who risked their lives by traveling this way. She had saved for months in advance to afford the trip. The fact that there were no fixed accommodations available at the convention did not put her off. Along with many others, Nora and her family simply cooked, ate, and slept on the open ground right at the assembly site.

Not even the fierce tropical heat followed by torrential downpours could dampen the unrestrained delight of brothers enjoying a spiritual feast together. They felt that nothing was more important for them than being at that convention. A total of 17 persons symbolized their dedication in the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. As the baptism took place, a large throng of joyful onlookers was spontaneously moved to sing praises to Jehovah.

This group of worshipers had truly discovered what it means to become lovers of godly freedom. Hans, a representative from the capital, Maputo, said: “We have just seen the start of a new chapter in the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses in this part of Africa.”

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Did the writer of Proverbs 30:19 truly feel that how a man slyly seduces a maiden was "too wonderful"?

That is a possible meaning of Proverbs 30:19, which admittedly is not an easy verse to understand.

In seeking the sense of this verse, we should not ignore the context. Just before this passage, the inspired writer listed four things that in a way are insatiable. (Proverbs 30:15, 16) Then he set out this list: "There are three things that have proved too wonderful for me, and four that I have not come to know: the way of an eagle in the heavens, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the heart of the sea and the way of an able-bodied man with a maiden."—Proverbs 30:18, 19.

What could have been "wonderful" in these four things?

Perhaps feeling that "wonderful" must imply positive or good, some scholars explain that each of the four things displays the wisdom of God's creation: the marvel of how a large bird can fly, how a legless snake can move across a rock, how a heavy ship can stay afloat in a turbulent sea, and how a robust youth can fall hopelessly in love and marry a sweet maiden, and then they produce a wonderful human child. One professor found in the four things another similarity, that each travels a route that is ever new—the going of eagle, serpent, and ship where there is no path and the newness of a couple's developing love.

However, the four things need not be "wonderful" in a good sense, as if what they have in common is something positive. Proverbs 6:16-19 lists "things that Jehovah does hate." And as noted, just before the verses in question, Proverbs 30:15, 16 lists things (Sheol, a childless womb, parched land, and a raging fire) that never say, "Enough!" Certainly they are not wonderfully good.

The Hebrew word rendered "wonderful" at Proverbs 30:18 means "to separate, to distinguish; to make distinguished, extraordinary, wonderful." A thing can be distinguished, extraordinary, or wondered at without being good. Daniel 8:23, 24 fore-

told a fierce king who would cause ruin "in a wonderful way" and "bring mighty ones to ruin," including the holy ones.—Compare Deuteronomy 17:8; 28:59; Zechariah 8:6.

The verse following Proverbs 30:18, 19 may provide a clue as to what the writer found difficult to understand. Verse 20 mentions an adulterous woman who "has eaten and has wiped her mouth and . . . said: 'I have committed no wrong.'" Perhaps with secrecy and artifice she had sinned, but since there was no trace of her crime, she could profess innocence.

There is a similarity to the preceding list. An eagle soars through the sky, a serpent crosses a rock, a ship cuts through the waves—none leaves a trail, and it would be difficult to trace the path of any of the three. If this is the commonality of the three, what of the fourth, "the way of an able-bodied man with a maiden"?

This also can be rather untraceable. A young man may employ guile, smoothness, and cunning ways to slide into the affections of an innocent virgin. Being inexperienced, she may not detect his wiles. Even after being seduced, she might be at a loss to say how he won her; observers too might find it difficult to explain. Still, many young women have lost their virtue to wily seducers. It is hard to trace the path of such slippery men, yet they have a goal, as does an eagle in flight, a gliding serpent, or a ship at sea. With seducers, the objective is sexual exploitation.

In this light the point of Proverbs 30:18, 19 is not about scientific or mechanical things in creation. Rather, the passage offers us a moral warning, just as Proverbs 7:1-27 warns about avoiding the dangers of a persuasive harlot. One way Christian sisters can take to heart the caution of Proverbs 30:18, 19 is regarding men who profess interest in learning the Bible. If a friendly man, even a workmate, seems to show such interest, a sister should direct him to a brother in the congregation. The brother can satisfy any genuine interest without the dangers of "an able-bodied man with a maiden."

The Time to Seek God



THE illustration on this page is of the Athenian Acropolis, once a center of worship of many gods and goddesses. Beneath the Acropolis is the Areopagus, said to have been the location of a court of justice in ancient times. It was on this spot, almost 2,000 years ago, that the apostle Paul stood and delivered a truly remarkable discourse. Following is some of what he said:

"[God] made out of one man every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth, and he decreed the appointed times and the set limits of the dwelling of men, for them to seek God, if they might grope for him and really find him, although, in fact, he is not far off from each one of us. For by him we have life and move and exist." —Acts 17:26-28.

How different history would have been if mankind in general had taken note of Paul's words! How many wars, how much suffering, would have been prevented if humans had recognized their common interest as the progeny of one man created by the Sovereign Lord, Jehovah.

Today, mankind is riven by nationalism, class distinctions, racial hatreds, and social inequities. Yet, Paul's words still apply. All of us are descendants of that one man created by God. All of us are, in that sense, brothers and sisters. And it is still not too late to seek God while he can be found.

Paul's words take on even more seriousness when we consider the final words of his discourse. He said: "[God] has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead."

The resurrection of Jesus is a historical fact, and as Paul shows, it is a guarantee that there will be a judgment day for mankind. When? Well, we know that it is almost 2,000 years closer than when Paul stood on the Areopagus and uttered these words. Indeed, the fulfillment of Bible prophecy indicates that it is very close. What a sobering thought! How urgent that we seek God in all sincerity, since, as Paul told the Athenians, "now he is telling mankind that they should all everywhere repent!" —Acts 17:30, 31.