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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



How Reliable Are Bible Predictions?

THE WATCHTOWER®

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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.

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3 In Search of Reliable Predictions</p> <p>4 How Reliable Are Bible Predictions?</p> <p>8 Why Serve Jehovah?</p> <p>12 "Call the Older Men"</p> <p>17 Shepherd the Flock of God Willingly</p> <p>23 Finding True Riches in Hong Kong</p> | <p>26 Do You Follow Jehovah Fully?</p> <p>30 Avoid a Haughty Spirit!</p> <p>31 Questions From Readers</p> <p>32 Why "Go to the Ant"?</p> |
|---|--|

WATCHTOWER STUDIES FOR WEEKS OF

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In Search of Reliable Predictions

“HE WHO could foresee affairs three days in advance would be rich for thousands of years.” So says a Chinese proverb.

People do want to know what tomorrow will bring, and many would gladly pay a great deal for dependable information of that kind. They search for reliable predictions. As seen from weather forecasts and economic indicators, we have an interest in events that lie ahead. Moreover, reliable knowledge of the future would enable us to plan and arrange our lives.

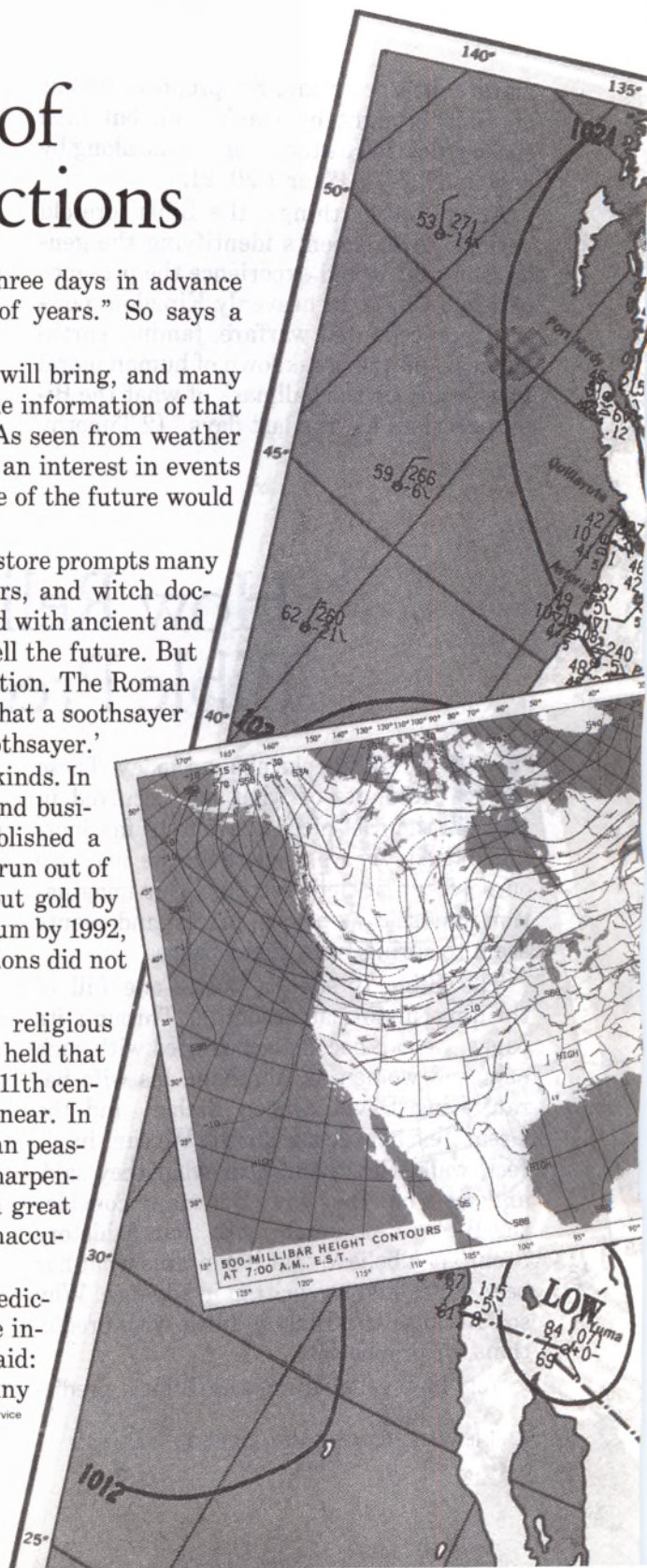
A desire to know what the future holds in store prompts many to consult fortune-tellers, gurus, astrologers, and witch doctors. Bookstores and magazine racks abound with ancient and modern writings of those claiming to foretell the future. But skepticism surrounds these forms of prediction. The Roman statesman Cato reportedly said: ‘I wonder that a soothsayer doesn’t laugh whenever he sees another soothsayer.’

There are, of course, predictions of many kinds. In 1972 an international group of academics and businessmen known as the Club of Rome published a study predicting that the world would soon run out of nonrenewable resources. It would be without gold by 1981, mercury by 1985, zinc by 1990, petroleum by 1992, and so forth. We now see that these predictions did not come true.

Many predictions have been based on religious views. To illustrate: Saxon bishop Wulfstan held that the Danish invasion of England early in the 11th century was a sign that the world’s end was near. In 1525, Thomas Münzer led a revolt of German peasants because in a vision he saw the angels sharpening sickles for what he thought would be a great harvest. Clearly, these predictions were inaccurate.

As you may know, the Bible contains predictions. Moreover, Bible writers claimed to be inspired by God. The Christian apostle Peter said: “No prophecy of Scripture springs from any

Courtesy National Weather Service



private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit."—2 Peter 1:20, 21.

Among other things, the Bible foretold various developments identifying the generation that would experience the presence of Jesus Christ in heavenly Kingdom power. Unprecedented warfare, famine, earthquakes, and the breakdown of human moral fiber would be the hallmark of what the Bible describes as "the last days." (2 Timothy

3:1-5; Matthew 24:3-14, 34) According to the Bible, the removal of the present system of things would pave the way for mankind's happiness in a new world of endless blessings.—2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1-4.

How do you view such Bible predictions? Like many other forecasts, are they mere speculations? We can test the reliability of yet unfulfilled Bible prophecies by determining whether the Bible's predictions concerning past events were reliable. In the next article, we will consider some of these.

How Reliable Are Bible Predictions?

HISTORY books abound today. These accounts of what has occurred in the past often prove to be fascinating indeed. As we read them, we may see ourselves in ancient settings. Our imagination may soar as people, places, and events seem to spring from silent pages.

The Bible is such a book—one full of thrilling historical accounts. Through its pages, we can become acquainted with such men and women as Abraham, his wife Sarah, King David, Queen Esther, and the Great Teacher, Jesus Christ. We can, in effect, walk with them, hear what they said, and see what they saw. But many consider the Bible to be much more than a history book. They believe that it contains what has been called history written in advance. Why so? Because the Bible is filled with predictions, or prophecies.

Yet, how reliable are the Bible's predic-

tions? If Bible prophecies were fulfilled in events of the past, should we not expect such predictions about future events to come true? Let us now consider some examples to see if Bible predictions are reliable.

Israel and Assyria on the World Stage

God's prophet Isaiah, who began to prophesy about 778 B.C.E., foretold: "With the feet the eminent crowns of the drunkards of Ephraim [Israel] will be trampled down. And the fading flower of its decoration of beauty that is upon the head of the fertile valley must become like the early fig before summer, that, when the seer sees it, while it is yet in his palm, he swallows it down." (Isaiah 28:3, 4) As thus predicted, by the mid-eighth century B.C.E., Israel's capital, Samaria, had become like a ripe fig ready to be plucked and swallowed by the military forces of Assyria. That is just what hap-

pened when Samaria was conquered by the Assyrians in 740 B.C.E.—2 Kings 17:6, 13, 18.

In time it was Assyria's turn to march into history. Its capital was Nineveh, so infamous for cruel treatment of captives that it was called "the city of bloodshed." (Nahum 3:1) Jehovah God himself had decreed Nineveh's ruin. For instance, through the prophet Nahum, God said: "Look! I am against you . . . I will make you despicable; and I will set you as a spectacle. And it must occur that everyone seeing you will flee away from you and will certainly say, 'Nineveh has been despoiled!'" (Nahum 3:5-7) Zephaniah also foretold the destruction of Assyria and the desolating of Nineveh. (Zephaniah 2:13-15) These prophecies were fulfilled in 632 B.C.E. when, surprisingly, the combined forces of Babylonian king Nabopolassar and Cyaxares the Mede plundered and razed Nineveh—so thoroughly that even the location of the city became unknown for over 2,000 years. The Babylonian Empire was next on the world stage.

Babylon's Ruin Predicted

The Bible predicted that the Babylonian Empire would be overthrown and foretold how its capital city, Babylon, would fall. Almost two centuries in advance, the prophet Isaiah warned that the Euphrates River would be dried up. It flowed through Babylon, and gates along the river were a vital part of the city's defenses. The prophecy named Cyrus as the conqueror and noted that Babylon's "two-leaved doors" would not be shut to the invaders. (Isaiah 44:27-45:7) Accordingly, God saw to it that Babylon's two-leaved doors along the Euphrates were left open during a festival on the night that the forces of Cyrus the Great made their assault. Without difficulty, therefore, they



Do you know the meaning of Daniel's vision involving a male goat and a ram?

entered the city by way of the riverbed and captured Babylon.

The historian Herodotus wrote: "Cyrus . . . stationed part of his force at the point where the Euphrates flows into [Babylon] and another contingent at the opposite end where it flows out, with orders to both to force an entrance along the river-bed as soon as they saw that the water was shallow enough. . . . By means of a cutting he diverted the river into the lake (which was then a marsh) and in this way so greatly reduced the depth of water in the actual bed of the river that it became fordable, and the Persian army, which had been left at Babylon for the purpose, entered the river, now only deep enough to reach about the middle of a man's thigh, and, making their way along it, got into the town. . . . There was a festival going on, and even while the city was falling they continued to dance and enjoy themselves, until hard facts brought them to their senses."—*Herodotus—The Histories*, translated by Aubrey de Selincourt.

On that very night, God's prophet Daniel warned Babylon's ruler of impending disaster. (Daniel, chapter 5) An inferior Babylon did exist for some centuries thereafter. From there, for instance, the apostle Peter wrote his first inspired letter in the first century C.E. (1 Peter 5:13) But Isaiah's prophecy had stated: "Babylon . . . must become as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited." God had also said: "I will cut off from Babylon name and remnant and progeny and posterity." (Isaiah 13:19-22; 14:22) As predicted, Babylon eventually became a heap of ruins. Any possible restoration of that ancient city might lure tourists but would still leave it bereft of its "progeny and posterity."

Daniel—Jehovah's prophet present in Babylon when it fell—had a vision involving the conquering Medes and Persians. He beheld a two-horned ram and a male goat that had a great horn between its eyes. The goat assaulted the ram and struck it down, breaking its two horns. Then the goat's great horn was broken, and four horns came up in its place. (Daniel 8:1-8) As the Bible predicted and history has confirmed, the two-horned ram stood for Medo-Persia. The male goat represented Greece. And what of its "great horn"? This proved to be Alexander the Great. When that figurative great horn was broken, four symbolic horns (or, kingdoms) replaced it. True to the prophecy, after Alexander died, four of his generals established themselves in power—Ptolemy Lagus in Egypt and Palestine; Seleucus Nicator in Mesopotamia and Syria; Cassander in Macedonia and Greece; and Lysimachus in Thrace and Asia Minor.—Daniel 8:20-22.

Predictions of a Bright Future

Bible predictions regarding such events as the desolation of Babylon and the overthrow of Medo-Persia are merely examples

of the many Scriptural prophecies that have come true in the past. The Bible also contains predictions of a bright future that would come to realization because of the Messiah, the Anointed One of God.

Some Messianic predictions in the Hebrew Scriptures were applied to Jesus Christ by Christian Greek Scripture penmen. For instance, Gospel writers pointed out that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, as foretold by the prophet Micah. (Micah 5:2; Luke 2:4-11; John 7:42) In fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, babes were killed after Jesus' birth. (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:16-18) The words of Zechariah (9:9) found fulfillment when Christ entered Jerusalem on the colt of an ass. (John 12:12-15) And when soldiers apportioned Jesus' clothing after his impalement, this fulfilled the psalmist's words: "They apportion my garments among themselves, and upon my clothing they cast lots."—Psalm 22:18.

Other Messianic predictions point to a happy time for the human race. In vision, Daniel beheld "someone like a son of man" receiving "rulership and dignity and kingdom" from Jehovah, "the Ancient of Days." (Daniel 7:13, 14) Regarding the Messianic rule of that heavenly King, Jesus Christ, Isaiah declared: "His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom in order to establish it firmly and to sustain it by means of justice and by means of righteousness, from now on and to time indefinite. The very zeal of Jehovah of armies will do this."—Isaiah 9:6, 7.

Before Messiah's righteous rule has full sway, something of vital significance must occur. This too was predicted in the Bible. Concerning the Messianic King, the psalmist sang: "Gird your sword upon your thigh,



O mighty one . . . In your splendor go on to success; ride in the cause of truth and humility and righteousness.” (Psalm 45:3, 4) Pointing to our day, the Scriptures also foretold: “In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite.”—Daniel 2:44.

Psalm 72 provides a foregleam of conditions under Messianic rule. For instance, “in his days the righteous one will sprout, and the abundance of peace until the moon is no more.” (Verse 7) There will then be no oppression or violence. (Verse 14) Nobody will hunger, for “there will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the moun-

Will you be there to enjoy the fulfillment of the Bible's predictions about happy life on a paradise earth?

tains there will be an overflow.” (Verse 16) And just think! You can enjoy these and other blessings in an earthly paradise when the present system of things is replaced by God's promised new world.—Luke 23:43; 2 Peter 3:11-13; Revelation 21:1-5.

Surely, then, Bible predictions merit your investigation. Therefore, why not ask Jehovah's Witnesses for more information? An examination of Bible prophecies can help you to see where we are in the stream of time. It may also promote within your heart a deep appreciation for Jehovah God and his wonderful arrangement for the eternal blessing of all who love and obey him.

Why Serve Jehovah?

“JEHOVAH’S day is at hand! The ‘great tribulation’ is near, and you will not survive it if you do not serve God.” If someone told you that, how would you react?—Zephaniah 2:2, 3; Matthew 24:21.

True, we should keep Jehovah’s day in mind, and survival through the imminent great tribulation does depend on faithful service to God. But should these facts be the main reasons why we render sacred service to Jehovah God? Why do *you* serve Jehovah?

Need for Proper Motive

If a person does not serve God with the right motive, he may quit if his expectations are not realized within a certain period of time. For instance, some people expected Jesus Christ to return in 1843 or 1844, dates that passed without the realization of their hopes. Interesting in this regard is what was written by George Storrs, publisher of the *Bible Examiner* and a later acquaintance of Charles Taze Russell, first president of the Watch Tower Society. In the *Bible Examiner* of September 1846, Storrs wrote:

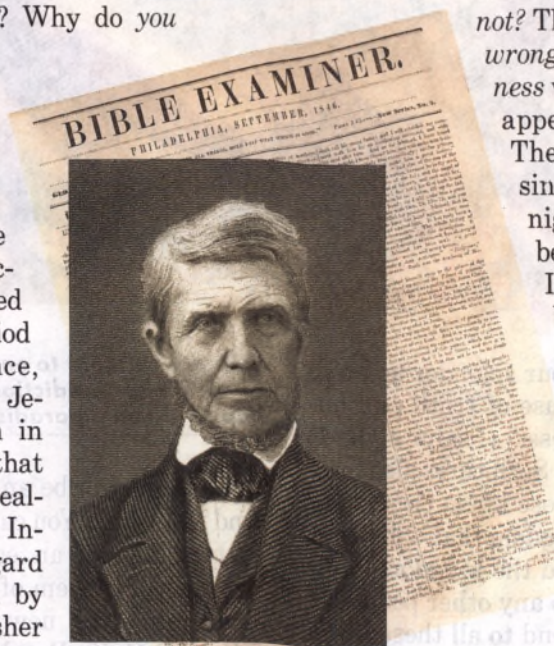
“The obligation to serve God lies much higher than the mere fact that the day is most over. . . . The *reaction* that will take place if ’46 and ’47 pass by as they may,

without witnessing the advent, will be disastrous beyond all conception. Experience proves this—I mean the experience of ’43 and ’44. Where are the great majority of those now who, professedly, were ‘aroused to serve God’ as *they ought* by that cry of *time* for the Lord’s coming? And *echo* says—WHERE!!! Scarcely one in ten of them are now found walking so as to honor their Christian profession. *Why not?* They were stimulated by *wrong motives*. Their *selfishness* was the principal thing appealed to and excited. They were just like the sinner who thinks himself nigh to death on a sick bed or in a storm at sea. If he *must die*, he will become a *Christian*. If he knew he was out of danger, he would be as indifferent as ever.”

Serving With the Right Motives

Selfishness and fear of destruction might move some to go through the motions of doing Jehovah’s will. Others might be so enthralled with the hope of life in Paradise that they would serve God simply for that reason. Yet, if people driven primarily by such motives thought that Jehovah’s day and the great tribulation were not so near, they might not be inclined to serve God zealously.

Of course, it is not selfish to rejoice in



Magazine: Courtesy of American Antiquarian Society. Photo: SIX SERMONS, by George Storrs (1855)

God's promises and foretold blessings. He wants us to be happy about the prospects set before us as followers of his Son, Jesus Christ. "Rejoice in the hope," said the apostle Paul, adding: "Endure under tribulation. Persevere in prayer." (Romans 12:12) Coupled with prayer, "the joy of Jehovah" helps us to endure trials and patiently await the realization of God's promises. (Nehemiah 8:10) Meanwhile, we have many reasons to serve Jehovah. What are some of these?

Duty and Privilege

As the Universal Sovereign, Jehovah deserves and exacts exclusive devotion. (Exodus 20:4, 5) So each Christian has the same degree of obligation to God whether the great tribulation begins tomorrow, next year, or later. He is obliged to serve Jehovah unselfishly because of loving God with his whole heart, soul, mind, and strength. (Mark 12:30) Some early Christians thought that Jehovah's day was imminent, but their expectation was not realized, and they died without seeing that event. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5) If they were faithful to death, however, those anointed followers of Christ eventually received the reward of a resurrection to heavenly life.—Revelation 2:10.

Baptized Witnesses of Jehovah should serve him in faithfulness because they have voluntarily assumed the obligation to do his will. Just think! Like the holy angels, we

can do the will of the Universal Sovereign. (Psalm 103:20, 21) Jesus so highly esteemed such a privilege that he said: "My food is for me to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work." (John 4:34) If we have the same spirit, we will zealously declare Jehovah's praises and tell others about his purposes, as revealed in the Scriptures. In this way, we are also privileged to help others spiritually. And surely, doing God's will out of love for him is a wonderful privilege, regardless of when Jehovah's day begins.



Thousands serve Jehovah in Japan

Gratitude Supplies Motivation

Gratitude for God's love in providing the ransom sacrifice of his Son should also move us to serve Jehovah. At one time we were alienated from Jehovah God because of sin. However, Jesus said: "God loved the world [of mankind] so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Jehovah took the initiative in this regard, as Paul wrote: "God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Gratitude for this expression of God's love should move us to serve him wholeheartedly.

Appreciation for Jehovah's spiritual and material provisions gives us further reason to serve him faithfully. God's Word is a sure guide—a light to our roadway. Publications

provided through “the faithful and discreet slave” help us to harmonize our lives with the divine will. (Matthew 24:45-47; Psalm 119:105) And because we seek first the Kingdom, Jehovah also provides for us materially. (Matthew 6:25-34) Are you showing your appreciation for these things?

Gratitude for God-given freedom from false religion furnishes another reason to serve Jehovah faithfully. The religious harlot Babylon the Great “sits on many waters,” meaning “peoples and crowds and nations and tongues.” (Revelation 17:1, 15) Yet, she does not sit on Jehovah’s servants, religiously influencing and controlling them. For instance, they reject the false religious doctrine that the human soul is immortal. They know that man was created “a living soul,” that the dead “are conscious of nothing at all,” and that there will be a resurrection. (Genesis 2:7; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Acts 24:15) So they neither fear nor worship the dead. Does gratitude for such spiritual freedom make you resist apostasy and cling to the pure worship of Jehovah?—John 8:32.

Appreciation for Jehovah’s daily support should increase our determination to serve him loyally. The psalmist David declared: “Blessed be Jehovah, who daily carries the load for us.” (Psalm 68:19) Elsewhere the psalmist said: “In case my own father and

my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up.” (Psalm 27:10) Yes, a person faithfully serving Jehovah can throw his figurative burden, such as cares and trials, upon God. Are you showing appreciation for Jehovah’s unfailing support by serving him faithfully?—Psalm 145:14.



Serving Jehovah in Côte d'Ivoire

Extol Jehovah and His Kingship

A desire to glorify Jehovah should also move us to serve him. Heavenly creatures are represented as glorifying God with the words: “You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11) King David extolled God by saying: “Yours, O Jehovah, are the greatness and the mightiness and the beauty and the excellency and the dignity . . . Yours is the kingdom,

O Jehovah . . . The riches and the glory are on account of you, and you are dominating everything . . . O our God, we are thanking you and praising your beauteous name.” (1 Chronicles 29:10-13) As Jehovah’s servants, can we do less than glorify him in word and in deed while awaiting the fulfillment of his promises?—1 Corinthians 10:31.

A strong urge to speak about God’s Kingdom furnishes yet another incentive to serve

Jehovah. That wholesome motive is well expressed in the psalmist's words: "All your works will laud you, O Jehovah, and your loyal ones will bless you. About the glory of your kingship they will talk, and about your mightiness they will speak, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts and the glory of the splendor of his kingship. Your kingship is a kingship for all times indefinite, and your dominion is throughout all successive generations." (Psalm 145:10-13) Declaring the Kingdom message is the Christian's commission and the most important work being done in our day. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Do you have a burning desire to laud Jehovah and tell others about his Kingdom?

The sanctification of Jehovah's name and the vindication of his sovereignty should be of such importance to us that we want to serve him faithfully. We may pray for the sanctification of Jehovah's name and for the vindication of his sovereignty. (Matthew 6:9) We can back up our prayers by engaging in the Christian ministry regularly and by spreading the truth about such vitally important matters.—Ezekiel 36:23; 39:7.

Joy and Satisfaction

By serving Jehovah faithfully, we have the satisfaction of making his heart rejoice and proving the Devil to be a liar. Though Satan falsely holds that people serve God for selfish reasons, our loyal service to Jehovah, rendered out of love, proves that taunter's contention to be false. (Job 1:8-12) This gives us good reason to go on doing what is said at Proverbs 27:11: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." Furthermore, when we serve Jehovah loyally despite all that Satan does to hinder us, our integrity-keeping course is likely to

strengthen fellow believers.—Philippians 1:12-14.

The joy and satisfaction of sharing in the spiritual harvest should also prompt us to serve Jehovah faithfully. Jesus found happiness in helping people, especially in spiritual ways. Says Matthew 9:35-38: "Jesus set out on a tour of all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the good news of the kingdom and curing every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity. On seeing the crowds he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples: 'Yes, the harvest is great, but the workers are few. Therefore, beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.'" If the harvest work lasts longer than we expected, this will give us more opportunity to find joy and satisfaction in helping others spiritually. This is also a way to show the love of neighbor that is expected of us.—Matthew 22:39.

Why Do You Serve God?

We have considered only a few of many compelling reasons to serve Jehovah faithfully. It is good to give prayerful thought to our personal reasons for serving God, for each one of us will have to render an account to him. (Romans 14:12; Hebrews 4:13) And those who persist in having merely selfish motives will not enjoy divine favor.

What can be expected if we are primarily concerned with the sanctification of Jehovah's name and are rendering sacred service to God with unselfish motives? Why, Jehovah will bless us and our ministry! (Proverbs 10:22) We will also receive life eternal because we have served Jehovah faithfully.



“CALL THE OLDER MEN”

“Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him.”—JAMES 5:14.

“CRITICAL times hard to deal with” are here. People are acting selfishly, materialistically, proudly, often provoking unrest in these “last days.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) As Christians living in the present wicked system of things, we find ourselves menaced by three great dangers: Satan the Devil, the world of ungodly mankind, and our own inherited sinful tendencies.—Romans 5:12; 1 Peter 5:8; 1 John 5:19.

1, 2. (a) In what perilous situation do Jehovah’s servants now find themselves, and how may they feel? (b) What questions now require answers?

² Threatened by these dangers, we may at times feel overwhelmed. Where, then, can we find support to help us endure faithfully? To whom can we turn for guidance when faced with decisions about our Christian activities and our worship?

Help At Hand

³ Knowledge that Jehovah is the Source of our strength gives us comforting reassurance. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; Philippians 4:13) The psalmist David, who experienced

3. From whom can we gain comforting reassurance, and how?

divine help, declared: "Roll upon Jehovah your way, and rely upon him, and he himself will act." "Throw your burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain you. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter." (Psalm 37:5; 55:22) How grateful we can be for such support!

⁴ We can also draw comfort from the knowledge that we are not alone in facing trials and dangers. The apostle Peter urged fellow Christians: "Take your stand against [Satan the Devil], solid in the faith, knowing that the same things in the way of sufferings are being accomplished in the entire association of your brothers in the world." (1 Peter 5:9) Surely, all Christians desire to stand firm in the faith. True, we may often feel "pressed in every way," as did the apostle Paul. Yet, he was not "cramped beyond movement." Like him, we may be perplexed "but not absolutely with no way out." Even if we are persecuted, we are "not left in the lurch." If "thrown down," we are "not destroyed." Consequently, "we do not give up." We strive to "keep our eyes, not on the things seen, but on the things unseen." (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9, 16, 18) How can we do this?

⁵ Jehovah, the "Hearer of prayer," provides threefold aid. (Psalm 65:2; 1 John 5:14) First, he offers direction through his inspired Word, the Bible. (Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16) Second, his holy spirit empowers us to do his will. (Compare Acts 4:29-31.) And third, Jehovah's earthly organization stands ready to help us. What must we do to receive assistance?

"Gifts in Men"

⁶ An incident in the prophet Moses' day helps us to appreciate Jehovah's loving con-

cern in providing help for His servants. It happened at Taberah, meaning "burning; conflagration; blaze." At this location in the wilderness of Sinai, God caused fire to blaze against the complaining Israelites. "The mixed crowd" that accompanied the people of Israel out of Egypt had joined them in expressing dissatisfaction over the divinely provided diet. Noting God's anger and feeling overwhelmed with responsibility for the people and their needs, Moses cried out: "I am not able, I by myself, to carry all this people, because they are too heavy for me. So if this is the way you are doing to me, please kill me off altogether, if I have found favor in your eyes, and let me not look upon my calamity." (Numbers 11:1-15) How did Jehovah respond? He appointed "seventy men of the older men of Israel" and put his spirit upon them so that they could suitably share the administrative work with Moses. (Numbers 11:16, 17, 24, 25) With such qualified men assigned, help became more readily available to the Israelites and the "vast mixed company."—Exodus 12:38.

⁷ After the Israelites had been in the Promised Land for many years, Jehovah figuratively ascended Mount Zion and made Jerusalem the capital of a typical kingdom with David as its king. In praise of God, "the Almighty One," David lifted his voice to sing: "You have ascended on high; you have carried away captives; you have taken gifts in the form of men." (Psalm 68:14, 18) Indeed, men taken captive during the conquest of the Promised Land became available to help the Levites with their duties.—Ezra 8:20.

⁸ In the first century C.E., the Christian apostle Paul called attention to a prophetic

4. How do both Peter and Paul offer comfort?

5. What threefold aid does Jehovah provide?

6. What help did Jehovah provide at Taberah, and how?

7, 8. (a) How did Jehovah provide "gifts in the form of men" in ancient Israel? (b) What first-century application of Psalm 68:18 did Paul make?

fulfillment of the psalmist's words. Paul wrote: "To each one of us undeserved kindness was given according to how the Christ measured out the free gift. Wherefore he says: 'When he ascended on high he carried away captives; he gave gifts in men.' Now the expression 'he ascended,' what does it mean but that he also descended into the lower regions, that is, the earth? The very one that descended is also the one that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might give fullness to all things." (Ephesians 4:7-10) Who is this "very one"? None other than Jehovah's representative, the Greater David and Messianic King, Jesus Christ. He is the one God resurrected and exalted to "a superior position."—Philippians 2:5-11.

⁹ Who, then, are these "gifts in men" (or, "consisting of men")? Paul explains that God's Chief Representative "gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ." (Ephesians 4:11, 12) All of Christ's followers who served as apostles, prophets, evangelizers, shepherds, and teachers did so under theocratic direction. (Luke 6:12-16; Acts 8:12; 11:27, 28; 15:22; 1 Peter 5:1-3) In our day, spiritually qualified older men appointed by holy spirit serve as overseers in some 70,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide. They are our gifts in men. (Acts 20:28) With the worldwide expansion of the Kingdom-preaching work continuing apace, more and more brothers are "reaching out" and shouldering the responsibilities associated with "an office of overseer." (1 Timothy 3:1) Upon being appointed, they too become gifts in men.

9. (a) Who were the first-century gifts in men? (b) Who are the modern-day gifts in men?

¹⁰ These Christian elders, or gifts in men, fit the description the prophet Isaiah gave when foretelling the role of the "princes," the administrators under Kingdom rule. Each one must be "like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land." (Isaiah 32:1, 2) This reveals how supportive the loving oversight of these appointed men should be. How can you benefit from it to the fullest extent?

Taking the Initiative

¹¹ A drowning man instinctively cries for help. There is no hesitation. When life is at stake, no one needs prompting to call for assistance. Did not King David repeatedly call for help from Jehovah? (Psalm 3:4; 4:1; 5:1-3; 17:1, 6; 34:6, 17-19; 39:12) When spiritually low, perhaps sinking into despair, we likewise turn to Jehovah in prayer and beseech him to guide us by his holy spirit. (Psalm 55:22; Philippians 4:6, 7) We seek comfort from the Scriptures. (Romans 15:4) We consult the Christian publications of the Watch Tower Society for practical advice. This often enables us to solve our own problems. If we seem overwhelmed with difficulties, though, we can also seek the counsel of the appointed congregation elders. In fact, there may be times when we really need to "call the older men." Why call Christian elders? How can they help those in need of spiritual assistance?

¹² When we become sick, we rest in order

10. How does Isaiah's description of "princes" fit the role of Christian elders today?

11. When spiritually low, how can we receive help?

12-14. (a) What is the wise course to follow when one is sick? (b) According to James 5:14, what are "sick" Christians advised to do? (c) To what kind of sickness does James 5:14 refer, and why do you so answer?



Do you enjoy the spiritual benefits of prayer, Bible study, and help from Christian elders?

“Older men [elders, *King James Version*] of the congregation,” not doctors or even those who had the miraculous gift of healing, were to be called. And what were they to do? Said James: “Let them pray over him. . . . And the prayer of faith will make the indisposed one well.” (James 5:14, 15; compare Psalm 119:9-16.) Proving conclusively that James is referring to spiritual illness is the fact that he encourages confession of sins in connection with the hoped-for healing. He writes: “Openly confess your sins to one another and pray for one another,

to give the body’s recuperative powers opportunity to act. But if our sickness persists, we wisely seek qualified medical help. Should we not also do the same if we become spiritually weak?

¹³ Note what the disciple James advises us in this regard. He says: “Is there anyone sick among you? Let him call the older men of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, greasing him with oil in the name of Jehovah.” (James 5:14) To what kind of sickness does James here refer? Some Bible commentators conclude that it is physical illness, reasoning that greasing with oil was a common medical practice in that day. (Luke 10:34) They also believe that James had in mind a miraculous cure through the gift of healing. What, though, does the context indicate?

¹⁴ “Good spirits” are contrasted with “suffering evil.” This implies that James was discussing spiritual sickness. (James 5:13)

that you may get healed.” If grave sin is the cause of the spiritual illness, the sick person can be expected to recover only if he responds favorably to exhortation based on God’s Word, repents, and turns away from his sinful course.—James 5:16; Acts 3:19.

¹⁵ There is something else to note from the counsel James gives. When suffering evil, a Christian should “carry on prayer.” If he is in good spirits, “let him sing psalms.” Each situation—whether one is suffering evil or is in good spirits—calls for action. Prayer is needed on one hand, gladsome outcries on the other. So, then, what should we expect when James asks: “Is there anyone sick among you?” Again he recommends positive action, yes, taking the initiative. “Let him call the older men of the congregation to him.”—Psalm 50:15; Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16.

15. What kind of action is recommended at James 5:13, 14?

How “the Older Men” Help

¹⁶ It is sometimes difficult for us to know how to apply Bible principles to our personal circumstances. Here Christian elders can prove to be an invaluable source of help. For instance, they pray over the spiritually sick one and ‘grease him with oil in the name of Jehovah’ by skillfully applying soothing instruction from God’s Word. Elders can thus contribute much to our spiritual recovery. (Psalm 141:5) Often, all we need is confirmation that we are reasoning in the right way. Talking matters over with an experienced Christian elder will strengthen our determination to do what is right.—Proverbs 27:17.

¹⁷ When called to visit, Christian elders need to “speak consolingly to the depressed souls.” They will also “support the weak, [and] be long-suffering toward all.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Such an intimate, understanding relationship between “the older men” and “the weak” bodes well for a complete recovery of spiritual health.

Personal Responsibility and Prayer

¹⁸ Christian elders must shoulder their responsibility toward God’s flock. They must be supportive. For instance, Paul said: “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.” The apostle also wrote: “Each one will carry his own load.”—Galatians 6:1, 2, 5.

¹⁹ How can we carry one another’s burdens and yet be carrying our own load? The

16, 17. How do older men help us to apply Bible principles?

18, 19. What role do Christian elders play in connection with Galatians 6:2, 5?

difference in the meaning of the Greek words translated “burdens” and “load” furnishes the key. If a Christian gets into spiritual difficulty that is very burdensome to him, elders and other fellow believers would aid him, thus helping him carry his “burdens.” However, the individual himself is expected to carry his own “load” of responsibility to God.* The elders gladly carry “the burdens” of their brothers through encouragement, Scriptural counsel, and prayer. Yet, elders do not take away our personal “load” of spiritual responsibility.—Romans 15:1.

²⁰ Prayer is essential and should not be neglected. But many spiritually sick Christians find praying difficult. When elders offer prayers of faith on behalf of a spiritually ailing one, what is the intent? “Jehovah will raise him up,” as out of despondency, and will strengthen him to pursue a course of truth and righteousness. A spiritually sick Christian may have a wrong attitude but may not necessarily have committed some grave sin, for James says: “Also, if he has committed sins, it will be forgiven him.” The elders’ Scriptural counsel coupled with ear-

* A *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, by Fritz Rienecker, defines *phor-ti-on* as “a load which one is expected to bear” and adds: “It was used as a military term for a man’s pack or a soldier’s kit.”

20. Why should prayer not be neglected?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ When we need help, what threefold aid does Jehovah provide?
- ☐ Who are the modern-day gifts in men?
- ☐ When should we call the older men?
- ☐ What help can we expect from Christian elders?

nest prayer sometimes prompts the spiritually weak person to confess serious sins he may have committed and to manifest a repentant spirit. This, in turn, evokes forgiveness on God's part.—James 5:15, 16.

²¹ Faced with the challenge of caring for the throngs of new ones coming into the Christian congregation, conscientious older

21. (a) Why are some Christians reluctant to call the older men? (b) What will be considered in the next article?

men have much to do in providing adequate oversight. Truly, these gifts in men are a fine provision from Jehovah to help us endure in these critical times. Yet, some Christians hold back from calling for their help, thinking that these brothers are too busy or are overburdened with problems. The next article will help us to appreciate that these men are happy to be of assistance, for they willingly serve as undershepherds in the Christian congregation.

SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD WILLINGLY

"Shepherd the flock of God in your care, not under compulsion, but willingly."

—1 PETER 5:2.

JEHOVAH shepherds his people willingly. (Psalm 23:1-4) "The fine shepherd," Jesus Christ, willingly gave his perfect human life for sheeplike people. (John 10:11-15) Hence, the apostle Peter exhorted Christian elders to 'shepherd God's flock willingly.'—1 Peter 5:2.

² Willingness is a mark of God's servants. (Psalm 110:3) But more than a Christian man's willingness is required for appointment as an overseer, or undershepherd. Who qualify to be such shepherds? What does their shepherding involve? How is it best accomplished?

1. Why should we expect Christian elders to 'shepherd God's flock willingly'?
2. What questions merit consideration regarding the shepherding activities of Christian elders?

Presiding Over a Household

³ Before a man can be appointed to "an office of overseer," he must meet Scriptural requirements. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) For one thing, the apostle Paul said that an overseer should be "a man presiding over his own household in a fine manner, having children in subjection with all seriousness." There is good reason for this, for Paul said: "If indeed any man does not know how to preside over his own household, how will he take care of God's congregation?" (1 Timothy 3:4, 5) When appointing older men in the congregations on the island of Crete, Titus was told to look for "any man

3. Why can it be said that the way a Christian man cares for his family has a bearing on whether he qualifies to be a shepherd in the congregation?



free from accusation, a husband of one wife, having believing children that were not under a charge of debauchery nor unruly.” (Titus 1:6) Yes, the way a Christian man cares for his family must be considered in determining whether he qualifies to assume the heavier responsibility of shepherding the congregation.

⁴ Men who preside over their households in a fine manner do more than pray and study the Bible with their families on a regular basis. They are always ready to help their loved ones. For those who become parents, this starts the day a child is born. Christian parents know that the more closely they adhere to a godly routine, the sooner their young one will fit into their schedule of Christian activities in daily life. How well the Christian father presides in these circumstances reflects on his qualifications as an elder.—Ephesians 5:15, 16; Philippians 3:16.

4. In addition to having regular Bible study and prayer, how do Christian parents show love for their families?

A Christian elder must preside over his household in a fine manner

⁵ In presiding over his household, a conscientious Christian father heeds Paul’s counsel: “Do not be irritating your children, but go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah.” (Ephesians 6:4) Regular Bible study with the family, both wife and children, offers fine opportunities for loving instruction. The children thus receive “discipline,” or corrective instruction. “Mental-regulating” that then takes place helps each child to come to know Jehovah’s view of matters. (Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:6, 7; Proverbs 3:11; 22:6) In the relaxed atmosphere of this spiritual get-together, the caring father listens carefully as his children speak. Kind leading questions are used to elicit honest expressions from them about their concerns and attitudes. The father does not assume that he

5. How can a Christian father rear his children “in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah”?

knows all that is going on in their young minds. Indeed, "when anyone is replying to a matter before he hears it, that is foolishness on his part and a humiliation," says Proverbs 18:13. Today, most parents find that the situations their children encounter differ greatly from those they themselves experienced when young. Consequently, a father will endeavor to learn the background and details of a problem before saying how it should be handled.—Compare James 1:19.

⁶ What occurs after the problems, anxieties, and attitudes of one's children are known? The father who presides in a fine manner consults the Scriptures, which are "beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." He teaches his children how to apply the Bible's inspired guidelines. In this way, those young in years become "fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Psalm 78:1-4.

⁷ Godly youths face hard times in connection with worldly schoolmates. So how can Christian fathers allay their children's fears? One way is by regularly praying with them and for them. When these young people face trialsome situations, they will likely imitate their parents' reliance on God. One 13-year-old girl, interviewed before being baptized in symbol of her dedication to God, related that she had experienced mockery and abuse from her schoolmates. When she defended her Bible-based belief in the sanctity of blood, other girls beat her and spit at her. (Acts 15:28, 29) Did she retaliate? No. "I kept praying to Jehovah to help me keep calm," she explained. "I also remembered

what my parents had taught me in our family study about the need to keep ourselves restrained under evil."—2 Timothy 2:24.

⁸ An elder who does not have children may also make adequate spiritual and material provisions for those in his household. This includes his marriage mate and perhaps dependent Christian relatives living in his home. (1 Timothy 5:8) Presiding thus in a fine manner is one of the requirements that must be met by a man appointed to shoulder responsibility as a congregation elder. How, then, should appointed older men view their privileged responsibilities in the congregation?

Preside "in Real Earnest"

⁹ In the first century of our Common Era, the apostle Paul served as a steward in God's household, the Christian congregation under Christ's headship. (Ephesians 3:2, 7; 4:15) In turn, Paul exhorted his fellow believers in Rome: "Since . . . we have gifts differing according to the undeserved kindness given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the faith proportioned to us; or a ministry, let us be at this ministry; or he that teaches, let him be at his teaching; or he that exhorts, let him be at his exhortation; he that distributes, let him do it with liberality; he that presides, let him do it in real earnest; he that shows mercy, let him do it with cheerfulness."—Romans 12:6-8.

¹⁰ Paul reminded the Thessalonians: "As a father does his children, we kept exhorting each one of you, and consoling and bearing witness to you, to the end that you

8. How can an elder who does not have children preside over his household in a fine manner?

9. What attitude should Christian elders have toward their assignments of service?

10. In caring for God's flock, what example did Paul set for elders today?

6. Why should a Christian father consult God's Word when helping his family?

7. What example should Christian fathers set with regard to prayer?

should go on walking worthily of God who is calling you to his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:11, 12) The exhortation had been given in such a tender, loving way that Paul could write: “We became gentle in the midst of you, as when a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, having a tender affection for you, we were well pleased to impart to you, not only the good news of God, but also our own souls, because you became beloved to us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 8) In harmony with Paul’s fatherly example, loyal older men have deep concern for all in the congregation.

¹¹ Tenderness, together with eagerness, must characterize the loving oversight that our faithful Christian shepherds exercise. Their manner conveys much. Peter counsels elders to shepherd the flock of God “not under compulsion” or “for love of dishonest gain.” (1 Peter 5:2) On this point, scholar William Barclay expressed a cautionary note, writing: “There is a way of accepting office and of rendering service as if it was a grim and unpleasant duty, as if it was a weariness, as if it was a burden to be resented. It is quite possible for a man to be asked to do something, and for him to do it, but to do it in such an ungracious way that the whole action is spoiled. . . . But [Peter] does say that every Christian should be tremblingly eager to render such service as he can, although he is fully aware how unworthy he is to render it.”

Willing Shepherds

¹² “Shepherd the flock of God in your care . . . willingly,” Peter also urges. A Christian overseer who cares for the sheep does so willingly, of his own free will, under the direction of the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

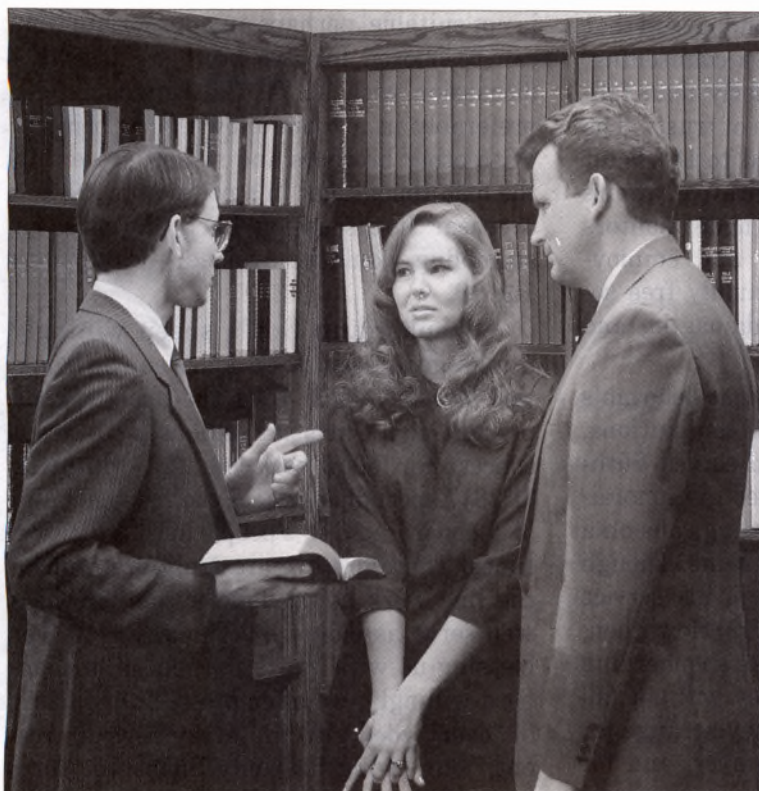
11. How can appointed elders show eagerness?

12. How can Christian elders manifest willingness?

Serving willingly also means that a Christian shepherd submits to the authority of Jehovah, ‘the shepherd and overseer of our souls.’ (1 Peter 2:25) A Christian under-shepherd willingly manifests respect for the theocratic arrangement. He does so when he directs those seeking advice to God’s Word, the Bible. Though experience will help an elder to build a storehouse of Bible-based counsel, this does not mean that he will have the Scriptural solution to every problem at his fingertips. Even when he knows the answer to a question, he may find it wise along with the inquirer to consult the *Watch Tower Publications Index* or similar indexes. He thus teaches in two ways: He demonstrates how to find helpful information and humbly shows respect for Jehovah by directing attention to what God’s organization has published.

¹³ What can an elder do if nothing has been published in the Society’s literature on the specific problem at hand? No doubt, he will pray for insight and will search for some Biblical principles that have a bearing on the matter. He may also find it beneficial to suggest that the person seeking help consider Jesus’ example. The elder might ask: “If Jesus, the Great Teacher, were in your situation, what do you think he would do?” (1 Corinthians 2:16) Such reasoning may help an inquirer to make a wise decision. But how unwise it would be for an elder to offer a mere personal opinion as though it were sound Scriptural advice! Rather, elders can discuss difficult problems with one another. They may even submit important matters for discussion at a meeting of the body of elders. (Proverbs 11:14) The resulting decisions will enable all of them to speak in agreement.—1 Corinthians 1:10.

13. What steps can be taken to help elders give sound advice?



**Christian shepherding
should be done with
mildness and good
judgment**

located member of the spiritual body." Alternate renderings are, "to restore to proper position; to bring into proper alignment."

¹⁵ Readjusting one's own thinking is not easy, and it can be very difficult to bring an erring person's thoughts into proper alignment. But help offered in a spirit of mildness is likely to be received with gratitude. Consequently, Christian elders should heed Paul's counsel: "Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of

Mildness Essential

¹⁴ A Christian elder needs to display mildness when teaching others, especially when counseling them. "Brothers," Paul counsels, "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." (Galatians 6:1) Interestingly, the Greek word here translated "readjust" relates to a surgical term used to describe the setting of a bone so as to prevent a lifelong handicap. Lexicographer W. E. Vine relates this to restoration "by those who are spiritual, of one overtaken in a trespass, such a one being as a dis-

mind, mildness, and long-suffering." (Colossians 3:12) What should elders do when an individual needing readjustment has a bad attitude? They should "pursue . . . mildness of temper."—1 Timothy 6:11.

Shepherding With Caution

¹⁶ There is more to Paul's counsel at Galatians 6:1. He urges spiritually qualified men: "Try to readjust [an erring one] in a spirit of mildness, *as you each keep an eye on yourself, for fear you also may be tempted.*" What serious consequences there can be if such advice goes unheeded! Prompted by reports of an Anglican clergyman found guilty of committing adultery with two

16, 17. Against what dangers should elders guard when counseling others?

14, 15. What is required of elders when readjusting a Christian who 'took some false step before he was aware of it'?

parishioners, *The Times* of London said that this is “a timeless situation: a counselling, apparently fatherly or brotherly man falling victim to the temptations of trust.” The news columnist then referred to Dr. Peter Rutter’s claims that “exploitative affairs between patients and their male mentors—doctors, lawyers, priests and employers—had become, in our sexually free society, an unacknowledged, damaging and disgraceful epidemic.”

¹⁷ We should not imagine that Jehovah’s people are immune to such temptations. One respected elder who had served faithfully for years became involved in immorality because he made shepherding calls on a married sister when she was alone. Though repentant, the brother lost all his service privileges. (1 Corinthians 10:12) How, then, can appointed older men make shepherding visits in such a way that they will not fall into temptation? How can they arrange for a measure of privacy, for prayer, and for an opportunity to consult God’s Word and Christian publications?

¹⁸ One factor for elders to take into account is the principle of headship. (1 Corinthians 11:3) If a young person seeks guidance, endeavor to involve his parents in the discussion when appropriate. When a married sister requests spiritual help, can you arrange for her husband to be present during the visit? What if this is impossible or he is an unbeliever who has been abusive to her in some way? Then make the same arrangements you would when a shepherding call is made on an unmarried sister. It would be wise for two spiritually qualified brothers to visit the sister together. If this

18. (a) How can applying the principle of headship help elders to avoid compromising situations? (b) What arrangements can be made for making a shepherding call on a sister?

is not suitable, perhaps an appropriate time can be chosen for two brothers to have a discussion with her at the Kingdom Hall, preferably in a room allowing for privacy. With other brothers and sisters present in the hall, though not in a position to see and overhear the discussion, likely any cause for stumbling would be avoided.—Philippians 1:9, 10.

¹⁹ Shepherding God’s sheep willingly brings good results—a spiritually strong, well-directed flock. Like the apostle Paul, present-day Christian elders have great concern for fellow believers. (2 Corinthians 11:28) Especially heavy is the responsibility of shepherding God’s people in these critical times. Therefore, we are truly grateful for the fine work being done by our brothers who serve as elders. (1 Timothy 5:17) For blessing us with “gifts in men” who shepherd willingly, we offer praise to the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect present,” our loving heavenly Shepherd, Jehovah.—Ephesians 4:8; James 1:17.

19. Shepherding God’s sheep willingly brings what good results, and to whom do we express gratitude for willing shepherds?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ How can a man preside over his household in a fine manner?
- ☐ What qualities should characterize oversight by Christian elders?
- ☐ How may elders show humility and mildness in giving counsel?
- ☐ What helps to make spiritual re-adjustment effective?
- ☐ How can elders avoid compromising situations when shepherding the flock?

Finding True Riches in

H · O · N · G

K · O · N · G

HONG KONG is a place where a lot of money can be made in a short time—if all factors are in your favor. In the last 40 years or so, that British colony has grown from a sleepy port to an economic force to be reckoned with not only in Southeast Asia but also on the worldwide business scene.

A low tax rate attracts foreign investors and provides incentive for the industrious work force found among Hong Kong's six million residents. Favorable, too, is its location as the gateway between southern China and the Asian-Pacific region and beyond. With modern transportation and communications systems and a well-developed wholesale and retail network, Hong Kong is geared to respond quickly to the demands of international trade.

Economic success has given Hong Kong one of the highest living standards in the world. However, has all the material prosperity brought contentment and lasting happiness to Hong Kong's residents? No, but some have sought and found riches of a far better kind.

They Found Spiritual Riches

Among those who have found priceless spiritual riches is Hong Kong-born Alfred. He had a successful career as a director of an international business conglomerate with headquarters in Britain. Like many others in Hong Kong, his goal in life was to earn a



lot of money, to have his own house, to eat well, and to live a good life. With his position and income, he seemed to have achieved all of that. But was he happy? "I learned through experience that money really does have its limitations," Alfred lamented. He constantly worried about how long his savings would last if he lost his job. When he devoted more time to his

job, family problems began to develop. His wife, Emily, was distressed when their son suddenly died. "I wanted to know where he was so I could do something to help him," she said. Since she could do nothing, she became very depressed.

Justina lost her father at an early age. But by applying herself she graduated from prestigious Hong Kong University. This led to a job with the government. In Cantonese this is called *gum fan woon*, a golden rice bowl—job security and good pay. Yet, Justina was neither happy nor satisfied. She often wondered what the purpose of life was and what the future would hold. Her husband, Francis, also felt that life was purposeless. He felt like a cog in a giant machine, a nobody, caught in an endless routine.

Then there is Ricky, the manager of a business. Though he was making a lot of money, he began to see another side of life—cutthroat competition among fellow

workers and problems in his marriage. Money could not help him solve these problems. To his wife, Wendy, a respectable career, plenty of money, and living in a politically stable society meant security. But how long would her seemingly secure life last? That troubled her because the



reality of death left her feeling that her life was meaningless and purposeless.

David has his story to tell. His university education brought him a good job and economic security, but he found no satisfaction. Why? He was steeped in evolution and philosophy, and he believed that life does not go beyond this present existence. David felt that he had nothing to look forward to, and all his material riches did not prevent him from feeling helpless.

Although these individuals had rather different backgrounds, they had one thing in common. All of them had achieved what they thought would bring a life of happiness and satisfaction. However, when they reached the point where they thought their dreams would be fulfilled, their lives were empty.

Becoming Rich Toward God

The situation of Alfred, Justina, and the others just mentioned was much like that of the rich man in Jesus' parable. He 'laid up treasure for himself but was not rich toward God.' (Luke 12:21) Happily, however, they did find something better—a life filled with real riches. Those who desire true happiness and satisfaction must "rest their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God, who furnishes us all things richly for our enjoyment." (1 Timothy 6:17) Yes, coming to know the true God, Jehovah, and putting their trust in him made the difference in the life of each of these individuals. Let us see how all of this came about.

Alfred and Emily were devastated when their son died suddenly, and all their material things could not relieve their pain. They went to church but still felt empty and dissatisfied. Then one of Jehovah's Witnesses came to their door and asked: "What is man's hope for the future?" Alfred replied according to what he had been told in church about heaven and hell. However, from the Bible he was shown that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all" and that those in God's memory are in the common grave of mankind awaiting a resurrection. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 5:28, 29) This sounded logical and reasonable to Alfred. Now he realized that his son was not suffering somewhere but was asleep in death, with the hope of perhaps being reunited with his family through a resurrection. What a comfort and relief! In time Alfred and his wife accepted a home Bible study and started on the way to getting a firm hold on the real riches the Bible offers.

Justina was disillusioned when she failed to find among her fellow workers a willing spirit to help care for people. A devout Catholic, she was frustrated when she noted that the priest would smoke and go dancing, just like other men. Then she came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses and began to get satisfying Scriptural answers to many questions. The priest had given her nothing but his personal opinion, and she had not opened a Bible in 16 years, even though she was a regular church attender and had been a lay worker for 10 years.

As the Witnesses studied the Bible with Justina and her husband, Francis, he was impressed by their worldwide unity in belief and action. Francis became convinced that God is real. After all, only a living, true God could wield such influence over an international group of people. How happy this married couple are that they have found real riches!

Ricky and Wendy knew that they had to do something when they saw that they were gradually becoming engulfed in serious personal problems. Since both of them had been in touch with Jehovah's Witnesses in the past, they separately took the initiative to find them again. Through earnest effort, Ricky and Wendy found not only practical solutions to their problems but also true riches in a personal relationship with "the happy God," Jehovah.—1 Timothy 1:11.

David's life also changed when Jehovah's Witnesses called on him. With the intention of exposing their errors, he agreed to have them come back. In time, however,

his eyes were opened, for he began to see that the Bible is accurate scientifically, historically, and otherwise. All of this helped David to view the Bible as a book of truth that gave him real purpose in life. What a happy and enriching transformation for him!

Helping Many Others to Find Real Riches

In the teeming population of Hong Kong, Alfred, Emily, Justina, Francis, and the others mentioned here are merely a few of



those who have found the real riches of Bible truth and faith in Jehovah God. In 1992 some 2,600 Witnesses of Jehovah spent a total of nearly 900,000 hours calling on the people of Hong Kong and conducting over 3,800 home Bible studies with them. However, the pace of life in Hong Kong is fast, and people are busy. In addition to calling from house to house, therefore,

Kingdom proclaimers are having much success in street witnessing. They also contact people at their places of work by calling on office workers, storekeepers, farmers, and men returning from fishing trips in the South China Sea.

It can truly be said that "the harvest is great, but the workers are few" in Hong Kong. (Matthew 9:37) At present, the ratio of Witnesses to the population is 1 to 2,300.

Appreciating the urgency of the harvest work, nearly 600 of the 2,600 Kingdom publishers there are pioneers, or full-time preachers of the good news. Jehovah's Witnesses in Hong Kong, like those elsewhere, realize that 'the blessing of Jehovah makes one rich.' (Proverbs 10:22) Hence, they are working very hard to help many more people in that prosperous community to find true riches.

Do You Follow Jehovah Fully?

"THE righteous are like a young lion that is confident." (Proverbs 28:1) They exercise faith, confidently rely on God's Word, and boldly go forward in Jehovah's service in the face of any danger.

While the Israelites were in Sinai after God delivered them from Egyptian bondage in the 16th century B.C.E., two men especially showed that they were as confident as lions. They also displayed faithfulness to Jehovah under adverse circumstances. One of



these men was the Ephraimite Joshua, who was Moses' attendant and who was later appointed as his successor. (Exodus 33:11; Numbers 13:8, 16; Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 1:1, 2) The other was Caleb, the son of Jephunneh of the tribe of Judah.—Numbers 13:6; 32:12.

Caleb loyally and zealously did Jehovah's will. His long life of faithful service to God enabled him to say that he had 'followed Jehovah fully.' (Joshua 14:8) "I was completely loyal to the LORD, my God," says *The New American Bible*. Caleb "faithfully obeyed," or "loyally carried out the purpose of," Jehovah God. (*Today's English Version; The New English Bible*) Put another way, Caleb declared: "I . . . followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly." (*New International Version*) What about you? Are you following Jehovah fully?

Spying Out the Land

Imagine yourself among the Israelites shortly after Jehovah has freed them from slavery to the Egyptians. See how the prophet Moses faithfully follows God-given instructions. Yes, and note Caleb's confidence that Jehovah is with His people.

It is the second year after the Exodus from Egypt, and the Israelites are camped at Kadesh-barnea in the wilderness of Paran. They are poised at the border of the Promised Land. At God's command, Moses is about to send 12 spies into Canaan. He says: "Go up here into the Negeb, and you must go up into the mountainous region. And you must see what the land is and the people who are dwelling on it, whether they are strong or weak, whether they are few or many; and what the land is in which they are dwelling, whether it is good or bad, and

what the cities are in which they are dwelling, whether it is in encampments or in fortifications; and what the land is, whether it is fat or lean, whether there are trees in it or not. And you must show yourselves courageous and take some of the fruitage of the land."—Numbers 13:17-20.

The 12 men begin their perilous journey. Their expedition lasts for 40 days. At Hebron they see men of great size. In the valley of Eshcol, they note the land's productivity and decide to carry back some of its fruitage. So heavy is one cluster of grapes that it must be borne on a bar between two men!—Numbers 13:21-25.

Returning to the Israelite encampment, the spies report: "We entered into the land to which you sent us out, and it is indeed flowing with milk and honey, and this is its fruitage. Nevertheless, the facts are that the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the fortified cities are very great; and, too, those born of Anak we saw there. The Amalekites are dwelling in the land of the Negeb, and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are dwelling in the mountainous region, and the Canaanites are dwelling by the sea and by the side of the Jordan." (Numbers 13:26-29) Ten spies are not ready to accept God's orders and march into the Promised Land.

"Jehovah Is With Us"

With faith in Jehovah God, however, the fearless spy Caleb urges: "Let us go up directly, and we are bound to take possession of it, because we can surely prevail over it." But the ten spies dissent, saying that Canaan's inhabitants are stronger than the Israelites. The terrified and faithless spies view themselves as mere grasshoppers by comparison.—Numbers 13:30-33.

"Jehovah is with us. Do not fear them," urge Caleb and Joshua. Their words fall on

◀ **Caleb and Joshua were faithful to Jehovah under test. Are you?**

deaf ears. When the people speak of pelting them with stones, God intervenes and pronounces sentence on the murmurers: "You will not enter into the land in which I lifted up my hand in oath to reside with you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. And your little ones . . . I shall certainly bring in, and they will indeed know the land that you have rejected. . . . And your sons will become shepherds in the wilderness forty years, . . . until your carcasses come to their end in the wilderness. By the number of the days that you spied out the land, forty days, a day for a year, a day for a year, you will answer for your errors forty years."—Numbers 14:9, 30-34.

Still Faithful Years Later

The 40-year sentence runs its course, and death claims a whole generation of murmurers. But Caleb and Joshua are still faithful to God. On the plains of Moab, Moses and High Priest Eleazar have numbered the men of military age 20 years old and upward. God names one man from each tribe of Israel to be entrusted with the division of the Promised Land. Caleb, Joshua, and Eleazar are among them. (Numbers 34:17-29) Though now 79 years old, Caleb is still vigorous, loyal, and courageous.

When Moses and Aaron numbered the people at Sinai shortly before they fearfully refused to enter the land of Canaan, Israel's fighting men numbered 603,550. After four decades in the wilderness, there was a smaller army of 601,730. (Numbers 1:44-46; 26:51) Yet, with Joshua at their head and faithful Caleb in their ranks, the Israelites entered the Promised Land and enjoyed one victory after another. As Joshua and Caleb had always expected, Jehovah was winning battles for his people.

Crossing the Jordan River with Israel's fighting men, elderly Joshua and Caleb bear

their burdens in the ensuing battles. After six years of warfare, however, much land remains to be occupied. Jehovah will drive out the inhabitants but now decrees that the land be apportioned by lot among Israel's tribes.—Joshua 13:1-7.

He Followed Jehovah Fully

As a veteran of many battles, Caleb stands before Joshua and says: "Forty years old I was when Moses the servant of Jehovah sent me out of Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I came bringing him back word just as it was in my heart. And my brothers who went up with me caused the heart of the people to melt; but as for me, I followed Jehovah my God fully." (Joshua 14:6-8) Yes, Caleb has followed Jehovah fully, loyally doing God's will.

"Consequently," Caleb adds, "Moses swore on that day, saying, 'The land upon which your foot has trod will become yours and your sons' as an inheritance to time indefinite, because you have followed Jehovah my God fully.' And now here Jehovah has preserved me alive, just as he promised, these forty-five years since Jehovah made this promise to Moses when Israel walked in the wilderness, and now here I am today eighty-five years old. Yet I am today as strong as on the day of Moses' sending me out. As my power was then, so my power is now for the war, both to go out and to come in. And now do give me this mountainous region that Jehovah promised on that day, for you yourself heard on that day that there were Anakim there and great fortified cities. Likely Jehovah will be with me, and I shall certainly dispossess them, just as Jehovah promised." Caleb now gets Hebron as an inheritance.—Joshua 14:9-15.

Aged Caleb has received the toughest of assignments—a region infested with men of unusual size. But this is not too hard for

this 85-year-old warrior. In time the bullies inhabiting Hebron are vanquished. Othniel, the son of Caleb's younger brother and a judge in Israel, captures Debir. Both cities are later occupied by Levites, and Hebron becomes a city of refuge for the unintentional manslayer.—Joshua 15:13-19; 21:3, 11-16; Judges 1:9-15, 20.

Always Follow Jehovah Fully

Caleb and Joshua were imperfect humans. Nevertheless, they faithfully did Jehovah's will. Their faith did not wane during the 40 years of hardship in the wilderness that resulted from Israel's failure to obey God. Similarly, Jehovah's modern-day servants let nothing interfere with their service to God's praise. Aware that a fight is on between God's organization and that of Satan the Devil, they are steadfast, consistently seeking to please their heavenly Father in all things.

For example, many of Jehovah's people have risked brutal treatment and even death to celebrate the Lord's Evening Meal, or Memorial of Jesus Christ's death. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) In this regard a Christian woman confined in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II reported:

"Everyone was told to be in the laundry at 11 p.m. Exactly at 11 p.m. we were assembled, 105 in number. We stood close together in a circle, in the midst [of which was] a footstool with a white cloth bearing the emblems. A candle lit the room, as electric light might have betrayed us. We felt like the primitive Christians in the catacombs. It was a solemn feast. We expressed anew our fervent vows to our Father to use all our strength for the vindication of His holy name, to stand faithfully for The Theocracy."

Despite our trials as Jehovah's persecuted servants, we can rely on God-given strength to serve him courageously and bring honor to his holy name. (Philippians 4:13) As we endeavor to please Jehovah, it will do us good to remember Caleb. His example in following Jehovah fully made quite an impression on a young man who entered the full-time preaching work back in 1921. He wrote:

"Although becoming a pioneer meant leaving behind my comfortable job at a modern printing works in Coventry [England], there were no regrets. My dedication had already settled the matter; my life was dedicated to God. I remembered Caleb, who entered the Promised Land with Joshua and of whom it was said, 'He followed Jehovah fully.' (Josh. 14:8) That seemed to me to be the desirable attitude. I knew that serving God 'fully' would make my dedicated life more vital; it would afford me greater opportunity to produce the fruitage that marks a Christian."

Caleb was surely blessed for loyally following Jehovah fully, always seeking to do the divine will. Like him, others have had great joy and rich blessings in God's service. May that be your experience as a person who continually follows Jehovah fully.

In Our Next Issue

How Accurate Is Bible History?

Be Sound in Mind—The End Is Close

**What Does It Take
to Make You Happy?**

Avoid a Haughty Spirit!

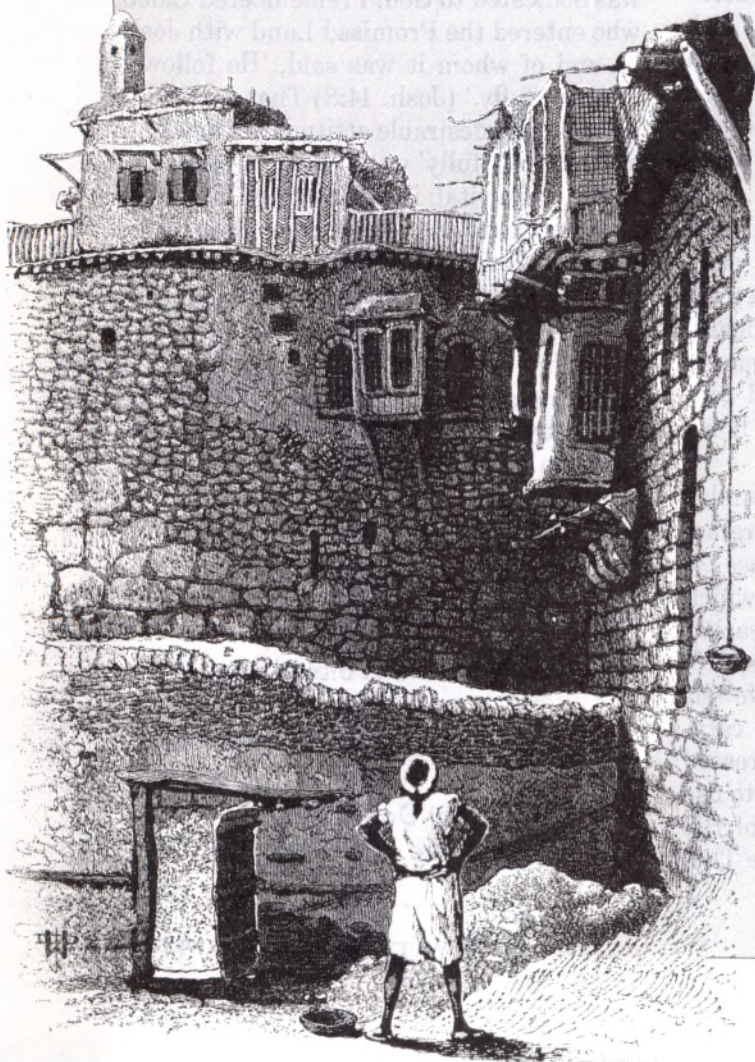
A wise Bible proverb says: "Anyone making his entryway high is seeking a crash." (Proverbs 17:19) What is wrong with a high entryway? And what is the main point of this proverb?

IN ancient times individuals and marauding bands on horseback were not uncommon. Unprotected homes in open country were vulnerable to thieves. To prevent the theft of their possessions,

some homeowners built a wall with a special gate. The wall was high, but the gateway was low. In fact, some were no more than three feet high—too low for entry by a horse and its rider. Those who did not make the entryway to their courts low risked having men on horseback ride in and plunder their goods.

In cities courtyard entryways were generally low and unattractive, giving no indication of wealth that might lie within a walled compound. However, in Persia a lofty gate was one of the signs of royalty, which some subjects tried to imitate at great risk. Anyone that made a high gate for his house was inviting robbery because of his show of prosperity.

Proverbs 17:19 thus shows that those making their entryway high are courting disaster by prizing themselves above their real worth. This proverb could also allude to the mouth as an entryway raised high by boastful and arrogant speech. Such talk fosters strife and can eventually lead the proud person to disaster. How wise it is, then, to avoid a haughty spirit!



Picturesque Palestine, Sinai and Egypt, Volume 1, by Colonel Wilson (1861)

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Will people be resurrected if they do not accept true Christianity now and die before the start of the great tribulation?

It is good for all of us to resist any inclination to act as judges, recognizing that in the final analysis, Jehovah's judgment by means of Jesus Christ is what counts. (John 5:22; Acts 10:42; 2 Timothy 4:1) But the Scriptures do provide some helpful information in answer to the foregoing question.

Worldwide preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom is a vital aspect of 'the sign of Jesus' presence.' This sign has been in evidence since early in this century. The preaching work is resulting in a dividing of the people of all nations in fulfillment of Jesus' illustration of "the sheep" and "the goats." With the completion of this preaching and dividing activity, the "great tribulation" will bring the present wicked system of things to an end.—Matthew 24:3, 21, 22; 25:31-46.

Jehovah, along with his Son, will judge whether any who reject the Kingdom message and die prior to the outbreak of the great tribulation are classed as goats. Jesus said that the goats "will depart into everlasting cutting-off." Therefore, we can conclude that those who are determined by God to be goats will not receive a resurrection. They have a judgment similar to that of those who "undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction" at the time of the great tribulation.—2 Thessalonians 1:9.

But what about those who may not seem to have been sufficiently exposed to the Kingdom message so as to have been able to make an intelligent choice for or against the truth before they died during these "last days"?—2 Timothy 3:1.

Many who die while the preaching work is in progress prior to the great tribulation will evidently receive a resurrection. This is indicated by what we read at Revelation 6:7, 8 concerning the ride of the symbolic horsemen. Many people have died as victims of wars, food shortages, and deadly plagues. Since it is "Hades" that claims these

victims of "Death," they will be resurrected during Christ's Millennial Reign, when Hades gives up all the dead in it. (Revelation 20:13) A number of those raised to life may have had some contact with the Kingdom message before they died.

How grateful we can be that Jesus did not leave it up to humans to determine who are like sheep and who are like goats! Imperfect humans cannot properly evaluate how much of an opportunity a certain person had to hear and accept the good news. Can we know what his heart condition was or whether he truly loved righteousness? Can we measure how much his response might have been



Leicester sheep, Meyers

affected by his family, his religious background, or other influences? Obviously not. Yet, we can be sure that Jehovah God and Jesus Christ can evaluate such matters and then reach judgments that are perfect, just, and righteous.—Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 11:1-5.

Hence, there is no reason for us to speculate about who among those who have died recently may or may not be resurrected. This is something we have not been authorized to do. (Compare Luke 12:13, 14.) It is far wiser for us to wait on the decisions of the righteous Judges, Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. This will give us more peace of mind as Jehovah's servants. It will also help us to give better attention to what we have been assigned to do—'go and make disciples of people of all the nations, teaching them to observe all the things Jesus commanded.'—Matthew 28:19, 20.

Why "Go to the Ant"?

WISE King Solomon of ancient Israel gave this advice: "Go to the ant." Why did he say this? What can we learn from ants?

Solomon added: "See [the ant's] ways and become wise. Although it has no commander, officer or ruler, it prepares its food even in the summer; it has gathered its food supplies even in the harvest." (Proverbs 6:6-8) Those words of long ago express truths discovered by modern-day naturalists.

The proverbialist Agur indicates that ants are "instinctively wise." (Proverbs 30:24, 25) Of course, their wisdom is not the product of intelligent reasoning but results from the instincts with which the Creator has endowed them. Because of instinct, for example, ants gather their food at the right time.

Ants are marvelously organized. Remarkably cooperative and attentive to fellow workers, they assist injured or exhausted ants back to the nest. They instinctively prepare for the future and do everything possible to fulfill their tasks.

The ant's natural course implies that humans should plan ahead and be hard workers. This applies in school, at work, and in spiritual activities. As the ant benefits from its industriousness, so God wants humans to 'see good for all their hard work.' (Ecclesiastes 3:13, 22; 5:18) Like busy ants, true Christians do a good day's work. They 'do with their might what their hands find to do,' not because a boss is watching, but out of honesty and with a desire to be industrious, profitable workers.—Ecclesiastes 9:10; compare Proverbs 6:9-11; see also Titus 2:9, 10.

We will be happy, indeed, if we "go to the ant" and apply what we learn from it. And the greatest happiness will be ours if we diligently do the will of Jehovah God, as revealed in the Bible.

