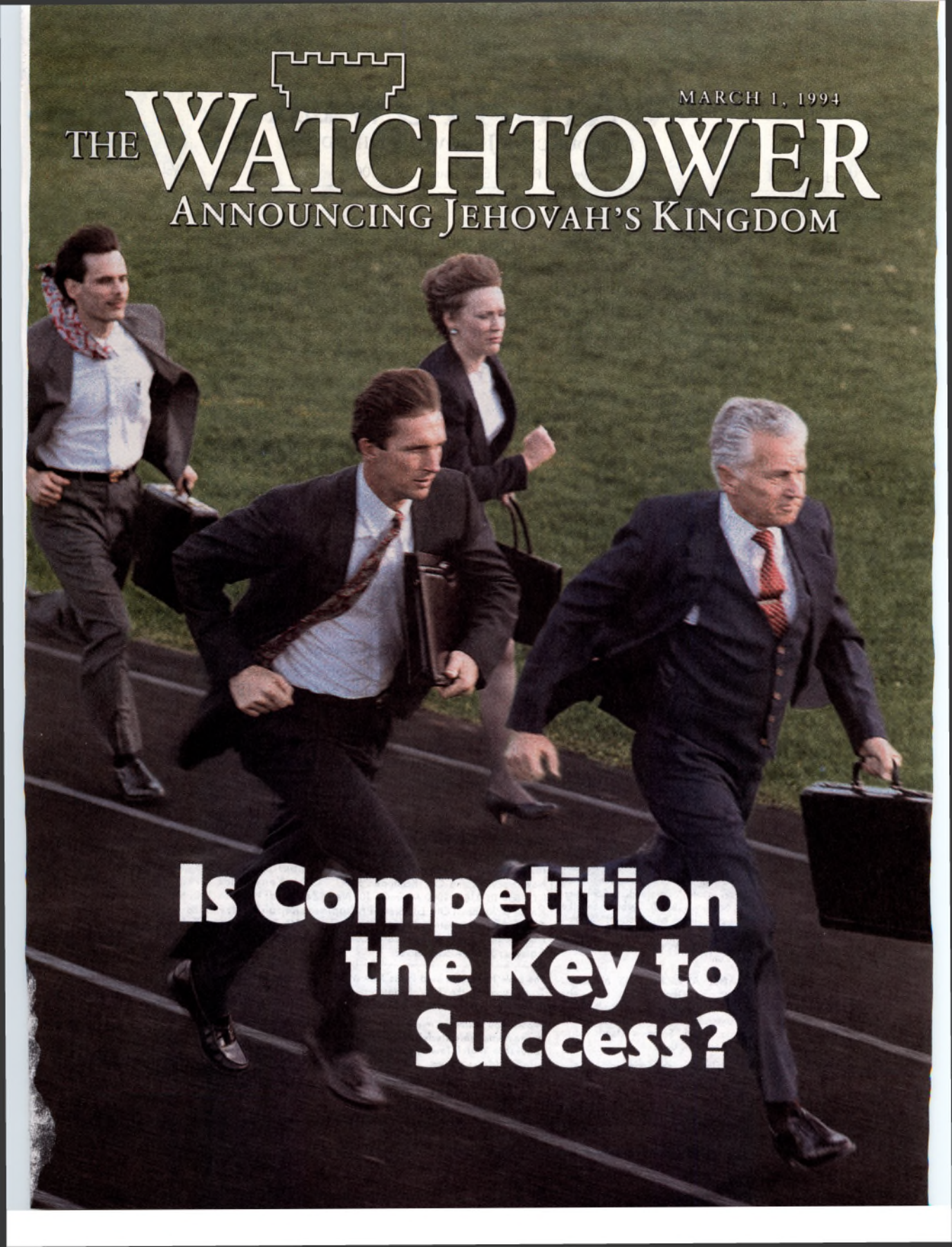




MARCH 1, 1994

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**Is Competition
the Key to
Success?**

THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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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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Is Competition the Key to Success?

“WINNING isn't everything, it's the only thing.” Today many live by these words, often attributed to an American football coach, Vince Lombardi. Now, ex-Communist countries have joined in extolling the principle of competition. Introducing competition into their markets is said to be the ticket to affluence. In the Orient many parents pit their children against others and send them to cram schools that teach them the knack of passing entrance exams. The obsessed parents are convinced that entrance into a prestigious school is the key to future prosperity.

Competition, many firmly believe, is the key to success. According to their belief, humans have progressed by competing with one another. “Competition for promotion is the source of the vitality of Japanese corporations,” said 65.9 percent of the executives of major corporations surveyed by Japan's Federation of Economic Organizations. And it seems Japanese companies have been succeeding for some time. However, is competition really the key to success?

Truly Rewarding?

People who compete against others display a selfish, me-first attitude. They are happy when others fare badly, imagining that it will in turn boost their own rating. For their own selfish gain, they may employ tactics hurtful to others. To what will such pursuit of success through competition lead? Yasuo, who immersed himself in the

race to be somebody in his company, recalls his past course and says: “Full of competitive spirit and promotion-oriented thinking, I compared myself with others and felt superior. When those people were put into a position above me, I would fret and whine every day about the company's personnel management. I had no friends in the true sense of the word.”

A competitive spirit can also lead to an untimely death. How? Japan's *Mainichi Daily News* links *karoshi*, or death from overwork, to type-A behavior. Type A describes a behavioral pattern that copes with stress by time urgency, competitiveness, and hostility. American cardiologists Friedman and Rosenman link type-A behavior to coronary heart disease. Yes, a competitive spirit may be fatal.

Competition in the workplace can lead to other physical and mental disorders too. One example is Keinosuke, who was the top salesman for one of Japan's major car dealers. He established a record by selling a total of 1,250 cars. His picture was framed and hung in the room used by the board of directors at the company's headquarters. Although he loathed using his colleagues as stepping-stones to get promotions, the company pushed him to compete. As a result, in one year he suffered both gastric and duodenal ulcers. That same year, 15 executives in his company were hospitalized, and one committed suicide.

At home, the keep-up-with-the-Joneses attitude drives people to make a showy

display of their means of life in a never-ending rivalry. (1 John 2:16) This benefits commercialism only, putting money into the hands of the merchants of the earth.—Compare Revelation 18:11.

Although rivalry and a competitive spirit may produce proficiency in work, it is no wonder that King Solomon observed: "I my-

self have seen all the hard work and **all the** proficiency in work, that it means the rivalry of one toward another; this also is vanity and a striving after the wind." (Ecclesiastes 4:4) So how can we maintain peace of mind while living in a competitive society? To find out, let us first see where the idea of competition started.

Peace of Mind in a Competitive Society

"IF ANYONE wants to be first," Jesus Christ counseled his apostles, "he must be last of all and minister of all." The apostles were arguing about who was greatest among them. They knew that Jesus detested that kind of spirit. Never did he pit his disciples against one another as a way to promote spiritual progress.—Mark 9:33-37.

Before coming to the earth, Jesus Christ shared in the creation of the first human couple and knew how they were made. (Colossians 1:15, 16) The first humans were created with the capacity to progress without ruthlessly competing with others. Humans had no need to fight among themselves to determine who was their head, nor did they compete with animals in a struggle for survival.—Genesis 1:26; 2:20-24; 1 Corinthians 11:3.

Origin of the Competitive Spirit

How, then, did a cutthroat competitive spirit become such a dominating force in

human society? The first case of murder in human history gives a hint. A competitive spirit on the part of Cain, the eldest son of the first human couple, led to the tragedy. Cain murdered his brother Abel because Abel's sacrifice pleased God, while Cain's did not. And the Bible says that Cain "originated with the wicked one and slaughtered his brother."—1 John 3:12; Genesis 4:4-8.

Yes, the wicked one, Satan the Devil, is the originator and promoter of the competitive spirit. Although he was an angelic son of God with high privileges, he wanted more. (Compare Ezekiel 28:14, 15.) When he seduced Eve, he betrayed his own desire. He said that by eating the forbidden fruit, she was "bound to be like God." (Genesis 3:4, 5) Really, it was Satan who wanted to be like God, rivaling Jehovah. A spirit of competing against God spurred him to rebellion.—James 1:14, 15.

This spirit is contagious. Under Satan's influence, the God-given peace of the original family arrangement was lost. (Genesis

3:6, 16) Ever since his rebellion against God, Satan the Devil has ruled mankind, fostering a spirit of competition, even deceiving men and women into believing that cutthroat competition is the key to success. However, the Bible explains: "Where jealousy and contentiousness are, there disorder and every vile thing are." (James 3:14-16) Satan has thus robbed man of his happiness and peace of mind.

Success Without Competition

In contrast with Satan's persuasion, the Bible gives examples of success apart from competition. Foremost is that of Jesus Christ. Although existing in God's form, he never thought of being equal to God but took a slave's form and came to the earth. More than that, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death on a torture stake. This obedient attitude, devoid of any spirit of rivalry, led to his winning divine favor. "For this very reason also God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name." (Philippians 2:5-9) What greater success could any creature achieve? He pleased his Father to the extent that no other creature could, and this he did without any spirit of rivalry or competition.—Proverbs 27:11.

The numerous faithful angels in heaven show this same attitude. Although Jesus, who was the head of the angels, became a little lower than them when he came to earth, they willingly served his needs. Clearly, they entertained no thought of taking advantage of the situation and trying to supplant him as the Archangel.—Matthew 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; Hebrews 2:7.

Their aversion to competitive attitudes is even more evident when we consider the way they have responded to God's purpose to exalt some imperfect humans to immor-

tal spirit life, in which state they will "judge angels." (1 Corinthians 6:3) Angels have a wealth of experience in serving Jehovah and have far more ability to accomplish good than do imperfect humans. Still, the angels happily minister to anointed ones on earth, never jealous of what these will receive. (Hebrews 1:14) Their fine, noncompetitive attitude enables them to continue serving before the throne of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

Then, think of the ancient faithful servants of God who will be resurrected on earth. Abraham was an outstanding example of faith and was called "the father of all those having faith." (Romans 4:9, 11) Job set a sterling example of endurance. (James 5:11) Moses, "by far the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground," led the nation of Israel to freedom. (Numbers 12:3) Who among imperfect humans has set a better example of faith, endurance, and meekness than these men? However, they are in line for inheriting the earthly realm of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 25:34; Hebrews 11:13-16) They, like John the Baptizer, will be ranked below "a person that is a lesser one in the kingdom of the heavens." (Matthew 11:11) Will they even think of complaining, insisting that their faith, endurance, or meekness equaled or in some cases surpassed that of those given life in heaven? Assuredly not! They will be happy earthly subjects of God's Kingdom.

Today, too, people without a competitive attitude are pleasant to be around. Yasuo, mentioned in the first article, got deeply in debt from speculating in gold and lost all his property. His "friends" left him. As his wife had started to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, he went to their meetings out of a feeling of remorse for the suffering he had caused his family. Eventually, he rid

himself of competitiveness and became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Now he is happy to be surrounded by Christian friends, the kind who are willing to help him in times of distress.

How to Maintain Peace of Mind

It is not always easy to maintain peace of mind in a pitiless, competitive society. We do well to note that the Bible condemns "enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies" as "works of the flesh" that hinder people from inheriting God's Kingdom. All these works go hand in hand with a competitive spirit. No wonder the apostle Paul encouraged the Galatians: "Let us not become egotistical, stirring up competition with one another, envying one another."—Galatians 5:19-21, 26.

In this context, Paul's letter showed the key to coping with egotistical competition. He said: "The fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control. Against such things there is no law." (Galatians 5:22, 23) The fruitage of the spirit helps us to rid our minds of rivalry. Consider, for example, the quality of love. "Love is not jealous," explains Paul. "It does not brag, does not get puffed up, does not behave indecently, does not look for its own interests, does not become provoked." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) By cultivating love, we can root out jealousy, a driving force in the spirit of competition. The other fruits of the spirit also help us to wash away from our hearts and minds any lingering traces of a cutthroat, competitive spirit. Why, with self-control any rising urge to compete against others so as to win at all costs can soon be suppressed!—Proverbs 17:27.

In order to cultivate these qualities, however, we must allow God's spirit to work on us. We can encourage this healthful out-

working of the holy spirit by persevering in prayer and asking for God's spirit to help us. (Luke 11:13) In response to our prayer, what will God grant us? The Bible answers: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus."—Philippians 4:6, 7.

This was evident in the case of Jesus' apostles. Even after Jesus had initiated the Lord's Evening Meal on his last night with the apostles, they were still bickering over which one of them seemed to be greatest. (Luke 22:24-27) Jesus had on different occasions tried to help them to correct their thinking, but this competitive attitude was deeply ingrained in them. (Mark 9:34-37; 10:35-45; John 13:12-17) However, once they received the holy spirit some 50 days after that dispute, their attitude changed. There was no argument over who would represent them in speaking to the curious crowd gathered on that day of Pentecost.—Acts 2:14-21.

There was no place for any human domination over the Christian congregation. When they had to solve a problem concerning circumcision, James, who was not even a disciple at the time of Jesus' death, presided over that important meeting. There is no sign of dispute over who would take the lead in that meeting of the governing body of the Christian congregation. What a change from the time when the apostles were tainted with a competitive spirit! With the help of holy spirit, they recalled Jesus' teachings and began to grasp the meaning of his lessons.—John 14:26.

The same can be true of us. With the help of holy spirit, we can overcome any lingering urge to compete with others so as to



make progress at their expense. Rather, we can gain the peace of mind that excels all thought. The Bible assures us that the source of cutthroat competition, Satan the Devil, will soon be abysed, made inactive. (Revelation 20:1-3) Rivalry between neighbors will no longer exist. Will the result be a society without any progress? By no means! Humans will rise to perfection, not through any competition among themselves, but through application of Jesus' ransom sacrifice toward them.—1 John 2:1, 2.

Keinosuke, mentioned earlier, who had once experienced the glory of worldly success by selling a record number of cars,

Peace and cooperation will be enjoyed by human society in God's new world

wore himself out both mentally and physically, but he finally quit his job. "Now, my life is full of true joy," he says. He came to see why true success marked Jesus' life. He now finds refreshment in whatever he can do in God's worldwide congregation. He is thus being prepared for the new world, which will be without competition. You too can have a preview of this new world society by visiting one of the Kingdom Halls in your area and associating with Jehovah's Witnesses.

JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS

"In the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen horrible things, committing adultery and walking in falsehood . . . To me all of them have become like Sodom, and the inhabitants of her like Gomorrah."—JEREMIAH 23:14.

ANYONE who engages in divine teaching takes on a very heavy responsibility. James 3:1 warns: "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment." Yes, teachers of God's Word are under more serious responsibility to render an acceptable account than are Christians in general. What will this mean for those who prove to be false teachers? Let us look at the situation in Jeremiah's day. We will see how it foreshadowed what is happening today.

² In 647 B.C.E., the 13th year of the reign of King Josiah, Jeremiah was commissioned as Jehovah's prophet. Jehovah had a complaint against Judah, so he sent Jeremiah to declare it. Jerusalem's false prophets, or teachers, were doing "horrible things" in God's eyes. Their badness was so great that God likened Jerusalem and Judah to Sodom and Gomorrah. Jeremiah chapter 23 tells us about this. Verse 14 says:

³ "In the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen horrible things, committing adultery and walking in falsehood; and they have strengthened the hands of evildoers in order that they should not return, each one from his own badness. To me all of them have become like Sodom, and the inhabitants of her like Gomorrah."

1. Why does one who engages in divine teaching take on a very heavy responsibility?
- 2, 3. What judgment did Jehovah render through Jeremiah with regard to Jerusalem's false teachers?

⁴ Yes, these prophets, or teachers, set very bad moral examples themselves and, in effect, encouraged the people to do the same. Look at the conditions in Christendom today! Are they not just like those in Jeremiah's day? Today the clergy let adulterers and homosexuals stay in their ranks and even let them officiate at church services. Is it any

4. How is the bad moral example of Jerusalem's teachers paralleled in Christendom today?

**Jerusalem's prophets committed
"horrible things"**



wonder that so many enrolled church members are also immoral?

⁵ Jehovah likened the inhabitants of Jerusalem to those of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Christendom's immoral condition goes beyond that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Yes, it is even more reprehensible in Jehovah's eyes. Her teachers flout the Christian moral code. And this engenders a climate of moral degradation in which there are insidious enticements of all kinds to do what is bad. So prevalent is this moral situation that badness is today viewed as normal.

"Walking in Falsehood"

⁶ Now note what verse 14 states about the

5. Why does Christendom's immoral condition go beyond that of Sodom and Gomorrah?

6. What did Jeremiah say about the badness of Jerusalem's prophets?

"The vision of their own heart is what they speak"



prophets of Jerusalem. They were "walking in falsehood." And the latter part of verse 15 says: "From the prophets of Jerusalem apostasy has gone forth to all the land." Then verse 16 adds: "This is what Jehovah of armies has said: 'Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you people. They are making you become vain. The vision of their own heart is what they speak—not from the mouth of Jehovah.'"

⁷ Like the false prophets of Jerusalem, Christendom's clergy also walk in falsehood, spreading apostate doctrines, teachings not found in God's Word. What are some of these false teachings? The immortality of the soul, the Trinity, purgatory, and a hell-fire to torment people eternally. They also tickle the ears of their hearers by preaching what people like to hear. They chant that no calamity faces Christendom because she has God's peace. But the clergy are speaking "the vision of their own heart." It is false. Those who believe such lies are being poisoned spiritually. They are being misled to their destruction!

⁸ Consider what Jehovah says of these false teachers in verse 21: "I did not send the prophets, yet they themselves ran. I did not speak to them, yet they themselves prophesied." So today, the clergy have not been sent by God, nor do they teach his truths. The result? An appalling Bible illiteracy exists among churchgoers because their ministers feed them worldly philosophies.

⁹ Furthermore, the clergy today promulgate false hopes. Note verse 25: "I have heard what the prophets who are prophesying falsehood in my own name have said,

7, 8. Why are Christendom's clergy like Jerusalem's false prophets, and how has this affected churchgoers?

9, 10. (a) What kind of dreams did Jerusalem's false teachers have? (b) How have Christendom's clergy similarly taught "false dreams"?



Jerusalem after her destruction illustrates the final destiny of Christendom

saying, 'I have had a dream! I have had a dream!' What kind of dreams are they? Verse 32 tells us: "'Here I am against the prophets of false dreams,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'who relate them and cause my people to wander about because of their falsehoods and because of their boasting. But I myself did not send them or command them. So they will by no means benefit this people,' is the utterance of Jehovah."

¹⁰ What false dreams, or hopes, have the clergy taught? Why, that man's only hope for peace and security today is the United Nations. In recent years they have called the UN "the last hope of concord and peace," "the supreme forum of peace and justice," "the chief temporal hope for world peace." What a delusion! The only hope for mankind is God's Kingdom. But the clergy do not preach and teach the truth about that heavenly government, which was the central theme of Jesus' preaching.

¹¹ Verse 27 tells us more. "They are think-

11. (a) Jerusalem's false teachers had what bad effect on God's own name? (b) In contrast with the Jeremiah class, what have today's false religious teachers done with regard to the divine name?

ing of making my people forget my name by means of their dreams that they keep relating each one to the other, just as their fathers forgot my name by means of Baal." The false prophets of Jerusalem caused the people to forget God's name. Have today's false religious teachers not done the same? Worse, they hide God's name, Je-

hovah. They teach that it is not necessary to use it, and they remove it from their Bible translations. They strongly oppose anyone who teaches the people that God's name is Jehovah. But the Jeremiah class, the remnant of spirit-anointed Christians, along with their companions, have done just as Jesus did. They have taught millions about God's name.—John 17:6.

Exposing Their Reprehensibility

¹² The Jeremiah class has repeatedly exposed the clergy as being false teachers who are leading their flocks down the broad road of destruction. Yes, the remnant have made it clear why those dreamers deserve Jehovah's adverse judgment. For example, Jehovah's servants have often referred to Revelation 18:24, which says that in Babylon the Great was found the blood of "all those who have been slaughtered on the earth." Think of all the wars that have been fought because of religious differences. How great is the bloodguilt upon the false religious teachers! Their teachings have caused division and have furthered the hatred of those of differing faiths and national groups. Concerning World War I, the book *Preachers*

12. (a) Why is there great bloodguilt on the part of the false religious teachers? (b) What has been the clergy's role in two world wars?

Present Arms says: "The clerics [clergymen] gave the war its passionate spiritual significance and drive. . . . The church thereby became part and parcel of the war system." The same was true in World War II. The clergy fully supported the warring nations and blessed their troops. Two world wars began in Christendom in which fellow religionists slaughtered one another. Secular and religious factions within Christendom continue causing bloodshed down to the present time. What horrible effects their false teachings have had!

¹³ Please note Jeremiah chapter 23, verse 22: "If they had stood in my intimate group, then they would have made my people hear my own words, and they would have caused them to turn back from their bad way and from the badness of their dealings." If Christendom's religious prophets were standing in Jehovah's intimate group, in close relationship with him as though a faithful and discreet servant, then they too would be living by God's standards. They too would have been making the peoples of Christendom hear God's own words. Instead, the modern-day false teachers have made their followers blinded servants of God's Adversary, Satan the Devil.

¹⁴ Exposure of the clergy by the Jeremiah class has been powerful. For example, at the 1958 Divine Will International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York City, the vice president of the Watch Tower Society presented a statement that said in part: "Without any double talk or hesitation we declare this root cause of all the crime, delinquency, hatred, strife, prejudice, . . . and mad confusion to be wrong religion, false

religion; behind which is man's unseen enemy, Satan the Devil. The men most responsible for the world condition are the religious instructors and leaders; and the most reprehensible of these are the religious clergy of Christendom. . . . After all these years since World War I, Christendom stands in a relationship toward God like that of Israel in Jeremiah's day. Yes, Christendom faces a destruction more frightful and devastating than that which Jeremiah saw happen to Jerusalem."

Judgment of the False Teachers

¹⁵ Despite this warning, how have the clergy acted since then? Just as verse 17 reports: "They are saying again and again to those who are disrespectful of me, 'Jehovah has spoken: "Peace is what you people will come to have."' And to every one walking in the stubbornness of his heart they have said, 'No calamity will come upon you people.'" Is this true? No! Jehovah will expose the falsehood of these prophecies of the clergy. He will not fulfill what they are saying in his name. However, the clergy's false assurance of peace with God is very deceptive!

¹⁶ Are you thinking, 'What, me fooled by the clergy's false teachings? Never!' Well, do not be so sure! Remember that the clergy's false teachings have promoted an insidious, horrible moral climate. Their permissive teachings justify almost anything, no matter how immoral. And this degenerate moral climate pervades all fields of entertainment, movies, TV, magazines, and music. We, then, must exercise extreme caution, lest we fall under the influence of this

15. What prophecies of peace have the clergy made? Will they be fulfilled?

16. (a) What is the moral climate of this world, and who share responsibility for it? (b) What is the Jeremiah class doing about the debased moral views of this world?

13. How does Jeremiah 23:22 prove that Christendom's clergy have no relationship with Jehovah?

14. What powerful exposé of Christendom's clergy was issued in 1958?

degenerate but subtly appealing moral atmosphere. Young ones can get caught up in debasing videos and music. Remember that this anything-goes attitude of people today is a direct result of the clergy's false teachings and their failure to uphold God's righteous standards. The Jeremiah class is battling these immoral views and is helping Jehovah's servants to reject the badness that is engulfing Christendom.

¹⁷ What judgment will Christendom's false teachers receive from Jehovah, the great Judge? Verses 19, 20, 39, and 40 answer: "Look! The windstorm of Jehovah, rage itself, will certainly go forth, even a whirling tempest. Upon the head of the wicked ones it will whirl itself. The anger of Jehovah will not turn back until he will have carried out and until he will have made the ideas of his heart come true. . . . I will give you people to neglect, with finality, and I will desert you and the city that I gave to you and to your forefathers—from before me. And I will put upon you reproach to time indefinite and humiliation to time indefinite, which will not be forgotten." All of that happened to wicked Jerusalem and its

17. (a) According to Jeremiah, what judgment was to come upon wicked Jerusalem? (b) What will soon happen to Christendom?

Review Questions

- ☐ How bad was ancient Jerusalem from Jehovah's viewpoint?
- ☐ In what ways has Christendom 'walked in falsehood'?
- ☐ How has the reprehensibility of the modern-day clergy been exposed?
- ☐ What "burden of Jehovah" is now being declared?

temple, and now a like calamity will soon befall wicked Christendom!

Declaring "the Burden of Jehovah"

¹⁸ So, what is the responsibility of the Jeremiah class and their companions? Verse 33 tells us: "When this people or the prophet or priest asks you, saying, 'What is the burden of Jehovah?' you must also say to them, 'You people are—O what a burden! And I shall certainly abandon you,' is the utterance of Jehovah.'"

¹⁹ The Hebrew word for "burden" has a double meaning. It can refer to a weighty divine pronouncement or to something that weighs one down and tires one out. Here the expression "burden of Jehovah" refers to a weighty prophecy—the pronouncement that Jerusalem was doomed to destruction. Did the people like hearing such heavy prophetic utterances that Jeremiah repeatedly gave them from Jehovah? No, the people jeered at Jeremiah: 'What prophecy (burden) have you now? We are sure your prophecy will be another tiresome burden!' But what did Jehovah tell them? This: "You people are—O what a burden! And I shall certainly abandon you." Yes, these people were a burden to Jehovah, and he was going to remove them from burdening him any longer.

²⁰ What is "the burden of Jehovah" today? It is the weighty prophetic message from God's Word. It is heavy with doom, announcing Christendom's imminent destruction. As for Jehovah's people, we have the weighty responsibility to declare this "burden of Jehovah." As the end draws near, we must tell all that Christendom's wayward people are a "burden," yes, "O what a burden!" to Jehovah God, and that he is soon going to rid himself of this "burden" by abandoning Christendom to calamity.

18, 19. What "burden of Jehovah" did Jeremiah announce to Judah, with what implications?

20. What is "the burden of Jehovah" today?

²¹ Jehovah's judgment was executed in Jeremiah's day when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. As prophesied, that was a 'reproach and humiliation' for those stubborn, unfaithful Israelites. (Jeremiah 23:39, 40) It showed them that Jehovah, whom they had repeatedly dishonored, had finally deserted them to the consequences of their badness. The mouths of their presumptuous false prophets were finally silenced. Yet, Jeremiah's mouth kept prophesying. Jehovah did not desert him. True to this pattern, Jehovah will not desert the Jeremiah class when his weighty decision leads to crushing the life out of Chris-

21. (a) Why was Jerusalem destroyed in 607 B.C.E.? (b) After Jerusalem's destruction, what happened to the false prophets and to Jehovah's true prophet, giving us what assurance today?

tendom's clergy and those who believe their lies.

²² Yes, the desolated, uninhabited condition of Jerusalem after 607 B.C.E. is exactly what religious Christendom will look like after she is stripped of her wealth and is shamefully exposed. This is the deserved judgment that Jehovah has decreed against false teachers. That judgment will not fail. Just as all of Jeremiah's inspired warning messages came true in the past, they will come true in their modern-day fulfillment. So may we be like Jeremiah. Let us fearlessly declare the prophetic burden of Jehovah to the peoples, so that they will know why the full weight of his righteous judgment is coming upon all false religious teachers!

22. To what condition will Christendom be reduced by Jehovah's judgments?

FRUITAGE—GOOD AND BAD

"Jehovah showed me, and, look! two baskets of figs . . . As for the one basket, the figs were very good, like early figs; and as for the other basket, the figs were very bad, so that they could not be eaten for badness."—JEREMIAH 24:1, 2.

THE year was 617 B.C.E. It was just ten years before Jehovah's deserved judgment was carried out against Jerusalem and its people. Jeremiah had already been preaching strenuously for 30 years. Note Ezra's vivid description of the situation, as found at 2 Chronicles 36:15: "Jehovah the God of their forefathers kept sending against them by means of his messengers, sending again and again, because he felt

compassion for his people and for his dwelling." And the result of all this effort? Sadly, Ezra goes on to relate in verse 16: "But they were continually making jest at the messengers of the true God and despising his words and mocking at his prophets, until the rage of Jehovah came up against his people, until there was no healing."

² Did this mean that the nation of Judah would be completely wiped out? To find the

1. How did Jehovah show compassion for his people, Israel, but how did they respond?

2, 3. Describe the striking vision that Jehovah showed Jeremiah.

answer, let us consider a momentous vision that was now given to Jeremiah and recorded in chapter 24 of the book bearing his name. God used two baskets of figs in this vision to symbolize developments among his covenant people. These would be represented by two distinct kinds of fruitage, good and bad.

³ Jeremiah chapter 24, verses 1 and 2, describes what God's prophet saw: "Jehovah showed me, and, look! two baskets of figs set before the temple of Jehovah, after Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried into exile Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and the princes of Judah and the craftsmen and the builders of bulwarks, from Jerusalem that he might bring them to Babylon. As for the one basket, the figs were very good, like early figs; and as for the other basket, the figs were very bad, so that they could not be eaten for badness."

Visionary Good Figs

⁴ After questioning Jeremiah about what he saw, Jehovah went on to say in verses 5 to 7: "Like these good figs, so I shall regard the exiles of Judah, whom I will send away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans, in a good way. And I will set my eye upon them in a good way, and I shall certainly cause them to return to this land. And I will build them up, and I shall not tear down; and I will plant them, and I shall not uproot. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah; and they must become my people, and I myself shall become their God, for they will return to me with all their heart."

⁵ So it seems from what Jehovah said here that better times were ahead, that the na-

4. What comforting message did the vision of the figs hold for faithful Israelites?

5, 6. (a) How were some Israelites 'sent away in a good way' to Chaldea? (b) How did Jehovah 'set his eye in a good way' on faithful Israelites in exile?

tion of Judah would not be completely wiped out. But what is the significance of this basket of good figs?

⁶ Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, had been king over Judah for just three months and ten days before he willingly surrendered Jerusalem to King Nebuchadnezzar. Among the ones carried captive with him into exile were Daniel and his three Hebrew companions Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, as well as Ezekiel. Their lives were preserved by the king of Babylon, so it could be said that Jehovah looked upon all these captives as being sent away in a good way to the land of the Chaldeans. Did you notice that Jehovah also promised to 'set his eye upon them in a good way'? How was this fulfilled? In 537 B.C.E., 80 years later, Jehovah caused King Cyrus to issue a decree allowing a remnant of their descendants to return to the land of Judah. These faithful Jews rebuilt the city of Jerusalem; they erected a new temple for the worship of their God, Jehovah; and they returned to him with all their heart. So in all of this, to Jehovah these captives and their descendants were like very good early figs.

⁷ You may remember that in the previous article regarding Jeremiah's prophetic words, we learned that they have meaning for our 20th century. And chapter 24 is no exception. During the dark years of World War I, many of Jehovah's dedicated servants came under the influence of Babylon the Great in one way or another. But Jehovah's watchful eye 'was upon them in a good way.' So it was that through the Greater Cyrus, Christ Jesus, Jehovah broke the power of Babylon the Great over them and gradually brought them into a spiritual paradise. These spiritual Israelites responded and returned to Jehovah with all their heart. Then,

7. When and how was Jehovah's eye on the modern Jeremiah class "in a good way"?



Like good figs, God's people have brought forth sweet Kingdom fruitage



Christendom has proved to be like a basket of bad figs

in 1931, they rejoiced to accept the name Jehovah's Witnesses. Truly, it could now be said that they had become like a basket of very good figs in Jehovah's eyes.

⁸ And Jehovah's Witnesses have not missed the purpose of God's undeserved kindness in freeing them from Babylon the Great. They have not kept the figlike sweetness of the Kingdom message of good news to themselves, but they have heralded it abroad in keeping with Jesus' words at Matthew 24:14: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." And the result? More than 4,700,000 sheeplike ones who are not spiritual Israelites have broken free from Babylon the Great!

Visionary Bad Figs

⁹ But what about that basket of bad figs in Jeremiah's vision? Jeremiah now rivets his attention on Jehovah's words found at Jer-

8. In what way have Jehovah's Witnesses heralded abroad the figlike sweetness of the Kingdom message?

9. Who were represented by the bad figs of Jeremiah's vision, and what was to happen to them?

emiah chapter 24, verses 8 to 10: "Like the bad figs that cannot be eaten for badness, this in fact is what Jehovah has said: 'So I shall give Zedekiah the king of Judah and his princes and the remnant of Jerusalem who are remaining over in this land and those who are dwelling in the land of Egypt—I will also give them over for quaking, for calamity, in all the kingdoms of the earth, for reproach and for a proverbial saying, for a taunt and for a malediction, in all the places to which I shall disperse them. And I will send against them the sword, the famine and the pestilence, until they come to their finish off the ground that I gave to them and to their forefathers.'"

¹⁰ So Zedekiah truly turned out to be a 'bad fig' in Jehovah's eyes. Not only did he rebel against King Nebuchadnezzar by breaking the oath of loyalty he had made to that king in Jehovah's name but he also completely rejected Jehovah's compassion extended to him through Jeremiah. In fact, he even went as far as to have Jeremiah put in detention! No wonder Ezra sums up the

10. Why did Jehovah reckon Zedekiah to be a 'bad fig'?

king's attitude as he does at 2 Chronicles 36:12: "He continued to do what was bad in the eyes of Jehovah his God. He did not humble himself." In Jehovah's eyes Zedekiah and those remaining in Jerusalem were like a basket of bad, rotten figs!

Rotten Figurative Figs in Our Day

¹¹ Now look around the world today. Do you think we can find a figurative basket of bad figs? Let us consider the facts by comparing our day with Jeremiah's. In this 20th century, Jehovah has used the Jeremiah class, the anointed remnant, to warn the nations continually of his oncoming fury at the great tribulation. He has urged the national groups to give him the glory due his name, to worship him with spirit and truth, and to acknowledge his reigning Son, Christ Jesus, as earth's rightful Ruler. What has been the reaction? Just the same as in Jeremiah's day. The nations continue doing what is bad in Jehovah's eyes.

¹² Who are the ones fomenting this rebellious attitude? Who keep making jest of

11, 12. Who are identified as bad figs today, and what will happen to them?

Reviewing

"Fruitage—Good and Bad" and paragraphs 1-4 of "Jehovah's Controversy With the Nations"

- ☐ What does the basket of good figs represent?
- ☐ How has the visionary basket of bad figs become apparent?
- ☐ What warning lesson does Jeremiah's message provide for us?
- ☐ What was significant about the year 607 B.C.E.? and 1914 C.E.?

these Jeremiahlike messengers of God by questioning their authority to act as God's ministers? Who keep despising the Word of God? Who today has been behind most of the persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses? The answer is plain for all to see—it is Christendom, especially the clergy! And just look at all of Christendom's rotten, bad fruitage that was discussed in the preceding article. Oh, yes, there certainly is a symbolic basket of bad figs in the earth today. In fact, Jehovah says that they cannot "be eaten for badness." Jehovah's words through Jeremiah echo down to our day: "They will come to their finish"! Jehovah's rage against Christendom will find no healing.

A Warning Lesson for Us

¹³ As we examine the implications of Jeremiah's inspired warning message, the apostle Paul's words at 1 Corinthians 10:11 ring in our ears: "Now these things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived." Have we personally taken to heart the warning conveyed to us by this vision of the two baskets of figs? What we have been discussing is an essential part of the things that befell Israel as a warning example for us.

¹⁴ Finally, let us recall Jehovah's words to King David regarding Israel, as found at 2 Samuel 7:10: "I shall certainly appoint a place for my people Israel and plant them." Jehovah tenderly cared for his people, Israel, in every way. There was every reason for the Israelites to produce good fruitage in their lives. They had but to listen to Jehovah's divine teaching and to keep his commandments. Yet, only a few of them did that. The

13. In view of Paul's words found at 1 Corinthians 10:11, how should we understand the vision of the two baskets of figs?

14. How did Israel respond to Jehovah's tender care?

majority were so stubborn and wayward that they produced bad, rotten fruitage.

¹⁵ Well, then, what about our day? Jehovah has shown much compassion toward his remnant of spiritual Israel and their sheep-like companions. His eye has been upon them constantly since their spiritual deliverance in 1919. As he foretold through Isaiah, they daily receive divine instruction from the greatest Teacher in the universe, Jehovah God. (Isaiah 54:13) This divine teaching, directed through his dear Son, Jesus Christ, has resulted in abundant peace among them and has steadily brought them into a closer relationship with Jehovah. What a wonderful spiritual environment this provides for all of us to know Jehovah,

15. How have spiritual Israel today and their sheeplike companions responded to Jehovah's compassion?

to listen to him, and to continue to produce good fruitage in our lives—fruitage that brings praise to Jehovah! It means our very lives!

¹⁶ But in spite of all of God's undeserved kindness, there are still some who become rebellious and hardhearted, as many did in Judah of old, and who produce bad, rotten fruitage in their lives. How tragic this is! May none of us ever lose sight of the warning lesson brought home to us by these two baskets of figs with their fruitage—good and bad. As Jehovah's deserved judgment against apostate Christendom hastens, may we take to heart the apostle Paul's admonition: "Walk worthily of Jehovah to the end of fully pleasing him as you go on bearing fruit in every good work."—Colossians 1:10.

16. What personal application can each one of us make of the vision of the two baskets of figs?

JEHOVAH'S CONTROVERSY WITH THE NATIONS

"A noise will certainly come clear to the farthest part of the earth, for there is a controversy that Jehovah has with the nations."—JEREMIAH 25:31.

THE land of Judah was confronted with critical times hard to deal with. One good king, Josiah, had temporarily stayed Jehovah's burning anger. But what followed when Josiah was killed in 629 B.C.E.? The kings that succeeded him dishonored Jehovah.

1, 2. (a) What happened in Judah after the death of King Josiah? (b) Who was the last king of Judah, and how did he suffer for his unfaithfulness?

² The last king of Judah, Zedekiah, fourth son of Josiah, continued, as 2 Kings 24:19 states, "to do what was bad in Jehovah's eyes, according to all that [his older brother] Jehoiakim had done." The result? Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, captured Zedekiah, slaughtered his sons before his eyes, blinded him, and took him to Babylon. Moreover, the Babylonians seized as plunder the vessels used in Jehovah's worship, putting the temple and the city to the

flames. The survivors became exiles in Babylon.

³ That year, 607 B.C.E., marked not only a final desolating of Jerusalem but also the start of "the appointed times of the nations," referred to at Luke 21:24. This 2,520-year period ended in our century, in the year 1914. By then the time had come for Jehovah, by his enthroned Son, Jesus Christ, who is greater than Nebuchadnezzar, to pronounce and execute judgment on the corrupt world. This judging starts with the modern-day equivalent of Judah, an equivalent that claims to represent God and Christ on earth.

⁴ Do we see a parallel between the turmoil during the twilight years of Judah under her kings—with ruinous events spilling over into neighbor nations—and the turmoil in Christendom today? Certainly we do! What, then, does Jeremiah's prophecy indicate as to how Jehovah will handle matters today? Let us see.

⁵ British mathematician and philosopher Bertrand Russell commented some 40 years ago: "Ever since 1914, everybody conscious of trends in the world has been deeply troubled by what has seemed like a fated and pre-determined march toward ever greater disaster." And

3. What period began with the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E., and what was due to happen at the end of that period?

4. What questions are now raised in connection with Jeremiah's prophecy?

5, 6. (a) Since 1914, how has the situation in Christendom resembled that in Judah just before its destruction?

(b) What message has the modern Jeremiah carried to Christendom?

German statesman Konrad Adenauer stated: "Security and quiet have disappeared from the lives of men since 1914."

⁶ Today, as in Jeremiah's day, the approach to the end of a system of things is marked by the shedding of oceans of innocent blood, notably in the two world wars of this century.

Jehovah has chosen the instrument of Christendom's destruction



For the most part, these wars were fought by nations of Christendom, which claim to worship the God of the Bible. What hypocrisy! It is no wonder that Jehovah has sent his Witnesses to them, saying, in the words of Jeremiah 25:5, 6: "Turn back, please, every one from his bad way and from the badness of your dealings . . . And do not walk after other gods in order to serve them and to bow down to them, that you may not offend me with the work of your hands, and that I may not cause calamity to you."

⁷ However, the nations of Christendom have failed to turn back. This has been demonstrated in their making further sacrifices to the god of war in Korea and Vietnam. And they continue to finance the merchants of death, the armaments manufacturers. The lands of Christendom provided the greater part of almost one trillion dollars spent on armaments each year during the 1980's. From 1951 to 1991, the military outlay of the United States alone exceeded the net profits of all American corporations combined. Since the loudly proclaimed end of the Cold War, cuts have been made in outdated nuclear weapons, but huge arsenals of other deadly weapons remain and continue to be developed. Someday these may be used.

Judgment Against the Permissive Realm of Christendom

⁸ Jehovah's further words, found at Jeremiah 25:8, 9, now apply specifically to Christendom, which has failed to live up to Christian standards of righteousness: "Therefore this is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'For the reason that you did not obey my words, here I am sending and I will take all the families of the north,' is the utterance of

Jehovah, 'even sending to Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against all these nations round about; and I will devote them to destruction and make them an object of astonishment and something to whistle at and places devastated to time indefinite.'" Thus, starting with God's professed people, Christendom, the great tribulation will get under way, finally extending earth wide, to 'all the nations round about.'

⁹ There was a time in Christendom when the Bible was respected, when marriage and family life were almost universally viewed as a source of happiness, when people rose early and found fulfillment in their daily work. Many refreshed themselves by reading and studying God's Word by evening lamplight. But today, sexual promiscuity, divorce, drug abuse and drunkenness, delinquency, greed, lazy work habits, TV addiction, and other vices have corrupted life to an alarming degree. This is preliminary to the devastation that Jehovah God is about to execute on the permissive realm of Christendom.

¹⁰ Jehovah declares, as we read at Jeremiah chapter 25, verses 10 and 11: "I will destroy out of them the sound of exultation and the sound of rejoicing, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the hand mill and the light of the lamp. And all this land must become a devastated place, an object of astonishment." It will indeed be astonishing when the mighty temples and luxurious palaces of Christendom come crashing to their ruin. How extensive will this destruction be? In Jeremiah's time, the devastation of Judah and neighbor nations lasted through 70 years,

7. What evidence is there that Christendom has ignored Jehovah's warnings?

8. How will the words of Jeremiah 25:8, 9 be fulfilled on Christendom?

9. In what ways has Christendom's spiritual condition become worse in our time?

10. Describe the condition of Christendom after the execution of Jehovah's judgments.

which Psalm 90:10 describes as a typical lifetime. Jehovah's execution of judgment today will be complete, everlasting.

Judgment Against Babylon the Great

¹¹ As foretold at Revelation 17:12-17, the time will come when Jehovah starts his strange act by putting it into the hearts of "the ten horns"—militarized members of the United Nations—"to carry out his thought" of devastating the world empire of false religion. How will this come about? There are numerous ways that "the ten horns" of Revelation chapter 17 may, in the words of verse 16, come to "hate the harlot and . . . completely burn her with fire." True, nuclear arms have proliferated and are still proliferating in many danger spots on earth. But we must wait and see how Jehovah will put it into the hearts of political rulers to execute his vengeance.

¹² In ancient times it became Babylon's turn to experience Jehovah's burning anger. Accordingly, beginning with Jeremiah chapter 25, verse 12, the prophecy views matters from a later, changed standpoint. No longer in the role of Jehovah's Executioner, Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon are now included among all the worldly nations. This is similar to the situation today. "The ten horns" of Revelation chapter 17 will desolate false religion, but later they themselves will suffer destruction along with all other "kings of the earth," as described in Revelation chapter 19. Jeremiah 25:13, 14 describes how Babylon, along with "all the nations" that have exploited Jehovah's people, comes into judgment. Jehovah had used Nebuchadnezzar as executioner in punish-

ing Judah. Yet both he and Babylon's later kings proudly came to exalt themselves against Jehovah himself, as demonstrated, for example, by the desecration of the vessels of Jehovah's temple. (Daniel 5:22, 23) And when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, Judah's neighbor nations—Moab, Ammon, Tyre, Edom, and others—exulted and mocked God's people. They too must reap due recompense from Jehovah.

Judgment Against "All the Nations"

¹³ Hence, Jeremiah declares, as recorded at chapter 25, verses 15 and 16: "This is what Jehovah the God of Israel said to me: 'Take this cup of the wine of rage out of my hand, and you must make all the nations to whom I am sending you drink it. And they must drink and shake back and forth and act like crazed men because of the sword that I am sending among them.'" Why is it a 'cup of the wine of Jehovah's rage'? At Matthew 26:39, 42 and John 18:11, Jesus spoke of a "cup" as symbolizing God's will for him. Similarly, a cup is used to symbolize Jehovah's will for the nations to drink of his divine vengeance. Jeremiah 25:17-26 lists these national groups that foreshadow the nations today.

¹⁴ After Christendom, like Judah, is made "a devastated place, an object of astonishment, something to whistle at and a malediction," destruction is in store for the rest of the world empire of false religion. Next, the entire world, as symbolized by Egypt, must drink from the cup of the wine of Jehovah's rage! Yes, "all the kings of the north who are near and far away, one after the other, and all the other kingdoms of the

11. Who will be instrumental in destroying Christendom? Why?

12. (a) What happened to Babylon after she destroyed Jerusalem? (b) What will happen to the nations after the destruction of Christendom?

13. What is meant by "this cup of the wine of rage," and what happens to those who drink the cup?

14. According to Jeremiah's prophecy, who get to drink from the cup of the wine of Jehovah's rage, and what does this symbolize for our day?

earth that are on the surface of the ground" must drink. Finally, "the king of Sheshach himself will drink after them." And who is this "king of Sheshach"? Sheshach is a symbolic name, a cryptogram, or code, for Babylon. Just as Satan was the invisible king over Babylon, so he is "the ruler of the world" to this day, as indicated by Jesus. (John 14:30) Thus, Jeremiah 25:17-26 parallels Revelation chapters 18 through 20 in clarifying the sequence of events as the cup of Jehovah's rage is passed around. First, the world empire of false religion must go down, next the political powers, and then Satan himself is to be abyssed.—Revelation 18:8; 19:19-21; 20:1-3.

¹⁵ There has been much talk of peace and security since the Cold War supposedly ended, with only one superpower remaining. As stated at Revelation 17:10, that superpower, the seventh head of the wild beast, must "remain a short while." But that "short while" is approaching its end. Soon, all cries of political "peace and security" will give way to "sudden destruction [that will] be instantly upon them." So states the apostle Paul.—1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3.

¹⁶ Satan's entire world system, starting with Christendom, must drink from Jehovah's cup of vengeance. His further command to Jeremiah, recorded at chapter 25, verses 27 to 29, bears this out: "You must say to them, 'This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, has said: "Drink and get drunk and puke and fall so that you cannot get up because of the sword that I am sending among you."' And it must occur that in case they refuse to take the cup out of your hand to drink, you must also say to

them, 'This is what Jehovah of armies has said: "You will drink without fail. For, look! it is upon the city upon which my name is called that I am starting off in bringing calamity, and should you yourselves in any way go free of punishment?"' 'You will not go free of punishment, for there is a sword that I am calling against all the inhabitants of the earth,' is the utterance of Jehovah of armies."

¹⁷ Those are strong words—indeed, fear-inspiring words, for they are spoken by the Sovereign Lord of all the universe, Jehovah God. During millenniums of time, he has patiently endured the blasphemies, the reproaches, and the hatred that have been heaped upon his holy name. The time has at last arrived, though, for him to answer the prayer that his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, taught his disciples while here on earth: "You must pray, then, this way: 'Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.'" (Matthew 6:9, 10) It is Jehovah's will that Jesus act as His sword in executing vengeance.

¹⁸ In Revelation chapter 6, we read first of Jesus' riding forth on a white horse 'to conquer and to complete his conquest.' (Verse 2) This began with his enthronement as heavenly King in 1914. Other horses and riders follow him, depicting the total warfare, famine, and pestilence that have since plagued our earth. But when will all this turmoil end? Revelation chapter 7 informs us that four angels are holding tight "the four winds of the earth" until spiritual Israel and a great crowd out of all nations have been gathered for salvation. (Verse 1) Then what?

15. What will happen when the cry of "peace and security" is heard?

16, 17. (a) If any try to escape Jehovah's judgment, what will result? (b) In what destructive way will Jehovah's will soon take place on earth?

18, 19. (a) Who rides forth to conquer in Jehovah's name, and for what does he wait before completing his conquest? (b) When the angels release the storm wind of Jehovah's rage, what fearsome events will occur on earth?

¹⁹ Jeremiah chapter 25, in verses 30 and 31, continues: "From on high Jehovah himself will roar, and from his holy dwelling he will give forth his voice. Without fail he will roar upon his abiding place. A shout like that of those treading the winepress he will sing out against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise will certainly come clear to the farthest part of the earth, for there is a controversy that Jehovah has with the nations. He must personally put himself in judgment with all flesh. As regards the wicked ones, he must give them to the sword," is the utterance of Jehovah." No nation will escape from thus drinking of the cup of Jehovah's rage. It is high time, therefore, that all righthearted people separate themselves from the wickedness of the nations before the four angels release the tempestuous storm wind of Jehovah's rage. Tempestuous indeed, for Jeremiah's prophecy continues at verses 32 and 33:

²⁰ "This is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'Look! A calamity is going forth from nation to nation, and a great tempest itself

20. What scenario underscores the severity of Jehovah's judgment, but why is this action necessary?

Reviewing paragraphs 5-24 of this article

- ☐ What hypocritical ways of Christendom have now come into judgment?
- ☐ What expanded view of the judgment is taken at Jeremiah 25: 12-38?
- ☐ What cup of vengeance is passed to all the nations?
- ☐ Who are the shepherds that howl and cry out, and why are they disturbed?

will be roused up from the remotest parts of the earth. And those slain by Jehovah will certainly come to be in that day from one end of the earth clear to the other end of the earth. They will not be bewailed, neither will they be gathered up or be buried. As manure on the surface of the ground they will become.'" Truly a gruesome scenario, but this action is necessary in order to cleanse the earth of all wickedness before bringing in the Paradise of God's promise.

Shepherds to Howl and Cry Out

²¹ Verses 34 to 36 speak further of Jehovah's judgment, saying: "Howl, you shepherds, and cry out! And wallow about, you majestic ones of the flock, because your days for slaughtering and for your scatterings have been fulfilled, and you must fall like a desirable vessel! And a place to flee to has perished from the shepherds, and a means of escape from the majestic ones of the flock. Listen! The outcry of the shepherds, and the howling of the majestic ones of the flock, for Jehovah is despoiling their pasturage."

²² Who are these shepherds? They are not the religious leaders, who have already drunk of Jehovah's anger. They are the militaristic shepherds, described also at Jeremiah 6:3, who assemble their armies in droves in defiance of Jehovah. They are the political rulers, who have grown rich at the expense of the ruled. Many of these are wheeler-dealers, masters of corruption. They have been slow to assuage the famines that have decimated entire peoples in disadvantaged lands. They enrich "the majestic ones of the flock," such as armaments barons and greedy destroyers of the environment, while declining to provide the

21, 22. (a) At Jeremiah 25:34-36, who were the "shepherds" of Israel, and why were they forced to howl? (b) Which modern shepherds deserve Jehovah's anger, and why richly so?



After the storm winds of the great tribulation, a cleansed earth will appear

medical help and nourishing food that could at so little cost save tens of millions of dying children.

²³ It is no wonder that Jeremiah chapter 25 concludes, in verses 37 and 38, by saying of these who selfishly sought peace for themselves alone: "The peaceful abiding places have been rendered lifeless because of the burning anger of Jehovah. He has left his covert just like a maned young lion, for their land has become an object of astonishment because of the maltreating sword and because of his burning anger." Astonishment indeed! Yet, Jehovah's burning anger will assuredly be expressed through the One described at Revelation 19:15, 16 as the "King of kings and Lord of lords," who shep-

23. Describe the condition of Satan's domain after Jehovah's destructive acts.

herds the nations with a rod of iron. And what follows?

²⁴ Have you ever lived through a hurricane or a typhoon? It can be a horrifying experience. But on the following morning, though you may see wreckage all around, the air is usually so clear and the calm so refreshing that you can thank Jehovah for an unusually lovely day. Likewise, as the storm winds of the great tribulation abate, you may look forth upon the earth with thankfulness that you are alive and ready to share in Jehovah's further work of making a cleansed earth into a glorious paradise. Jehovah's controversy with the nations will have been brought to its grand conclusion, sanctifying his name and clearing the way for his will to take place on earth under the Millennial Rule of the Messianic Kingdom. May that Kingdom come soon!

24. What blessings will the destruction of false religion and the rest of Satan's world bring to righteous mankind?

“THE HAND OF JEHOVAH” IN MY LIFE

AS TOLD BY LAWRENCE THOMPSON

ONE night in 1946, my dad and I sat in the car watching the northern lights dancing across the heavens. We talked about Jehovah’s grandeur and our smallness. We relived episodes from the years when the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses was banned in Canada. Dad impressed on me how Jehovah had sustained and guided His people through those years.

EVEN though I was only 13, I could appreciate the truth of what Dad was saying. He also impressed on me a sense of the urgency and vastness of the preaching work that was yet to be done. Dad quoted Numbers 11:23 and stressed to me that, really, the hand of Jehovah is never cut short. Only our lack of faith and trust in him limits what he will do for us. It was a precious father-and-son exchange, one that I will never forget.

Studying the Watch Tower publications, especially the book *Salvation*, published in 1939, also greatly influenced my early life. I’ll never forget the book’s dramatic opening illustration: “The streamline express, crowded with passengers, was speeding at one hundred miles per hour. It must cross the river on a bridge which made an almost fifty-percent curve, so that persons on the rear platform of the train could see the engine . . . Two men riding on the rear platform . . . beheld that a span of the bridge at the far end was on fire and falling into the river. They realized that they were facing great danger. That was a real emergency.

Could the train be stopped in time to save the lives of the many passengers aboard?”

Applying the illustration, the book concluded: “Likewise today, all the nations and peoples of earth are face to face with the greatest emergency. They are being warned as God commands, that the disaster of Armageddon is just ahead. . . . Having been warned, each one thus warned must now choose the course he will take.”

The speeding train, the burning bridge, and the urgency of the preaching work were indelibly etched in my mind.

Early Preaching Activity

I began sharing in the preaching work in 1938, when I was five. Henry and Alice Tweed, two pioneers (full-time ministers), would take me along with them, and we would spend from 10 to 12 hours a day talking to people. I thoroughly enjoyed those full days in Jehovah’s service. So I was thrilled the following year when Dad and Mom allowed me to become a publisher and actually report my activity.

In those early days, we engaged in infor-

mation marches, walking down the main street of towns wearing placards bearing slogans that exposed false religion and advertised God's Kingdom. We also used portable phonographs and played Bible-based messages right at the doorstep of householders. We would play speeches of J. F. Rutherford, the Watch Tower Society's president, some of which I knew by heart. I can still hear him say: "It has been often said, Religion is a snare and a rack-et!"

Our Work Banned in Canada

During the second world war, the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was banned in Canada, as it had been in Nazi Germany and other lands. So we used only the Bible but continued our God-authorized work in obedience to Bible instructions. (Matthew 28: 19, 20; Acts 5:29) We learned to cope with police raids on our meetings and our homes. We also became experienced at testifying before judges and answering cross-examiners.

My brother Jim and I became experts at throwing booklets from moving vehicles onto doorsteps and verandas. In addition we acted as couriers and, at times, as sentinels for those crossing the border to attend conventions in the United States.

Our house was on the outskirts of Port Arthur (now Thunder Bay), Ontario, on a couple of acres surrounded by trees and bushes. We had a cow, a calf, pigs, and chickens—all of which served as fine camouflage for our work of assisting young fellow Christians who were being hunted down to be imprisoned for preaching God's Kingdom.

By night, cars, trucks, and trailers carrying young Christians would pull in and out of our secluded yard. We would house,



With my wife, Lucy

hide, disguise, and feed these youths and then send them on their way. My father and mother, along with those other early workers, were whole-souled servants who shaped my young heart to serve and love Jehovah God.

In August 1941, I dedicated my life to Jehovah and was baptized in a small lake deep in the woods. A number of us had assembled for this event late at night in a lamplit cabin. Apparently suspicious, the police patrolled, all the while scanning the lake with searchlights, but did not locate us.

Many Facets of Full-Time Service

In 1951, I graduated from high school and traveled almost a thousand miles to take up a pioneer assignment in Cobourg, Ontario. The congregation was small, and I had no pioneer partner. But remembering that the

hand of Jehovah is not cut short, I rented a room, did my own cooking, and was happy to be serving Jehovah. The following year I was invited to serve at the branch office of the Watch Tower Society in Toronto. There I learned many valuable lessons that refined me for future Kingdom service.

After I served as a pioneer in Toronto for over a year, Lucy Trudeau and I were married, and in the winter of 1954, we received a pioneer assignment in Levis, Quebec. The weather was bitterly cold, the mobs and police harassment were intimidating, and it was a challenge to learn French. Through it all the hand of Jehovah was never cut short, so while there were tough times, we had many blessings as well.

For example, we were asked to inspect two ships (the *Arosa Star* and the *Arosa Kulm*) that the Society planned to use to carry delegates to the large international European conventions in 1955. Anxious to have the Society's business, shipping company executives occasionally showed us hospitality, which was a pleasant respite from the stressful ministry in Quebec at that time.

In the fall of 1955, I was invited to serve as a traveling overseer, and we spent that winter visiting remote congregations in frigid northern Ontario. The following year we attended the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in the United States, and afterward we were assigned as missionaries to Brazil, South America.

We threw our heart and soul into our new assignment and soon were able to preach and teach in the Portuguese language. Early in 1957, I was again assigned to work as a traveling overseer. Now, instead of the frigid cold of the North, we had to contend with blistering heat. Many times we had to stop and remove burning sand from our

shoes or cut sugarcane to chew on to renew our strength. But there were blessings.

In the town of Regente Feijo, I spoke to the chief of police, and he ordered all stores closed and told everyone to go to the town square. Under the shade of a broad-leaved flowering tree, I gave a Bible lecture to all the townspeople. Today there is a congregation of Witnesses there.

Rearing Our Children in Brazil

When Lucy became pregnant in 1958, we settled in Juiz de Fora and served as special pioneers. During the next two years, our daughters, Susan and Kim, were born. They proved to be a real blessing in the ministry, becoming a novelty in town. As we pushed their strollers over the cobblestone streets, people would come out to see them. Since the need was great for Kingdom publishers in Recife, just south of the equator, we moved to that extremely hot place.

In 1961, not only was I able to help arrange air transportation for Witnesses going to the convention in São Paulo but I also got to attend that memorable convention myself. About 20 minutes into the flight, though, the plane abruptly plummeted earthward, throwing passengers around the cabin. The inside of the plane was a wreck; seats were wrenched from their moorings, and passengers were bruised and bleeding. Happily, the pilot was able to pull the plane out of its fall, and we landed safely. None of us were so badly hurt that we could not proceed to São Paulo on another plane. We enjoyed a wonderful convention, but I said that I would never fly again!

However, when I arrived home from the convention, another assignment awaited me. I was to care for a convention deep in the jungle at Teresina, Piauí State. I would

have to fly there. Scared as I was, I took the assignment, relying on the hand of Jehovah.

In 1962 our son, Greg, was born in Recife. Although I was no longer able to pioneer because I now had a growing family, I was able to exert a positive influence on the small congregation. The children were always eager to join us in the ministry, since we made it interesting to them. Each of them, from the age of three, was able to make a presentation at the doors. We made it a habit never to miss attending meetings or sharing in field service. Even when one in the family was sick and another might stay home with that one, the rest would attend the meeting or share in the field ministry.

Over the years, we regularly discussed as a family the children's school courses and their goals in life, preparing them for a career with Jehovah's organization. We were careful not to expose them to weakening influences, such as television. We did not have a TV in our home until the children were in their teens. And although we had the means, we did not spoil them with material things. For example, we bought only one bicycle, to be shared by the three of them.

We did things together as much as possible, playing basketball, swimming, and taking family trips. Our trips were in connection with attending Christian conventions or visiting Bethel homes in various countries. These trips gave us the time to talk freely together so that Lucy and I could learn what was in our children's hearts. We are so grateful to Jehovah for those enjoyable years!

Eventually, our ten years in the Tropics near the equator took its toll on Lucy's health. So we welcomed a change of

assignment to the more moderate climate of the south, at Curitiba, Paraná State.

Return to Canada

In 1977, after about 20 years in Brazil, Lucy and I returned to Canada with our children to help care for my ailing father. What culture shock that was for our family! But it was no shock spiritually, since we maintained our same routine with our loving Christian brotherhood.

In Canada the full-time ministry became a family affair as our daughters each in turn entered the full-time pioneer ministry. All of us contributed to our family enterprise. Any income from part-time employment was put into the expense fund to maintain our home and the three automobiles needed to cover our scattered territory. Every week, after our family Bible study, we discussed our family plans. These discussions helped define for everybody where we were going and what we were doing with our lives.

Our son, Greg, like his older sisters, also had the full-time ministry as his goal. Ever since he was five, he expressed the desire to work at a branch office of the Society, called Bethel. He never lost sight of that goal, and after graduating from high school, he asked

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his mother and me: "Do you think I should apply for Bethel?"

While it tugged at our hearts to let our son leave, we replied without hesitation: "You will never feel the hand of Jehovah as much as you will at Bethel—the very heart of Jehovah's organization." Within two months he was off to the Canada Bethel. That was in 1980, and he has served there ever since.

The 1980's brought new challenges for Lucy and me. We were back where we started—just the two of us. By then Susan was married and was pioneering with her husband, and Kim and Greg were both serving at Bethel. What would we do? That question was quickly answered in 1981 when we were invited to serve a Portuguese circuit, which sprawled across some 1,200 miles of Canada. We are still enjoying the traveling work.

Kim has since married and attended Gilead, and she now serves with her husband in the circuit work in Brazil. Susan and her husband are still in Canada, rearing their two children, and Susan's husband is pioneering. Even though our family in recent years has been separated physically because of our various assignments in the full-time service, we remain close spiritually and emotionally.

Lucy and I look forward to a bright future with our family in the cleansed earth. (2 Peter 3:13) Like Moses of old, we have experienced firsthand the truthfulness of the answer to the rhetorical question at Numbers 11:23: "The hand of Jehovah is cut short, is it? Now you will see whether what I say befalls you or not." Indeed, nothing can prevent Jehovah from blessing his servants for their wholehearted service.

Are You *Doing* God's Will?

IN THEIR house-to-house ministry, two of Jehovah's Witnesses met a priest of the Episcopal Church. He seemed to be a pleasant man, bearded, about 60 years old, wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with the name of his church. In a single breath, he said: "I wish our church members were as zealous as you are in spreading the Word, but I'll have to ask you not to call at my home anymore."

Yes, there are many people who admire the work of Jehovah's Witnesses and commend them for their zeal and enthusiasm. Yet, they are not the least bit interested in

what the Witnesses are doing, nor would they consider doing the work themselves. This apparently contradictory state of affairs, however, is nothing new. It was noted by Jesus in his day, and he drove home the point by means of a thought-provoking illustration.

"What do you think? A man had two children. Going up to the first, he said, 'Child, go work today in the vineyard.' In answer this one said, 'I will, sir,' but did not go out. Approaching the second, he said the same. In reply this one said, 'I will not.' Afterwards he felt regret and went out. Which of

the two did the will of his father?"—Matthew 21:28-31.

The answer is obvious. Like the crowd who heard Jesus, we would reply, "The latter." But beyond the obvious, by means of that illustration, Jesus was calling to our attention that *doing* what the father wanted was what counted. Although the second son said that he did not want to go, he did anyway and was commended for it. Doing the *right kind* of work is equally important. The second son acted by working in the father's vineyard; he did not go out and work in his own vineyard.

What implication does all of this have for us? What does God require of worshipers today? What can we learn from Jesus' life that will help us to do his Father's will? These are important questions, and our finding the right answers will mean our everlasting welfare, since "he that does the will of God remains forever."—1 John 2:17; Ephesians 5:17.

What Is the "Will of God"?

The noun "will" is listed more than 80 times in the *Comprehensive Concordance of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. In about 60 of these instances (or about 75 percent of the time) the reference is to God's will. Expressions such as "will of God," "will of my Father," and "God's will" occur over 20 times. From this we can see that the divine will should be of primary importance to us. The doing of God's will should be the chief concern of our lives.

In English the noun "will" means 'desire, wish, determination, something desired, especially a choice or determination of one having authority or power.' So then, Jehovah, the Supreme Authority, has a will, a desire or determination. What is it? The Scriptures tell us that in part "[God's] will is that all sorts of men should be saved and

come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) Jesus Christ and the early Christians worked whole-souled to bring this accurate knowledge to others.—Matthew 9:35; Acts 5:42; Philippians 2:19, 22.

Who is doing God's will today? Among the nearly two billion people who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ, how many are like the younger son in Jesus' illustration, who went out and did the will of his father? The answer is not hard to find. True footstep followers of Jesus Christ would be doing the work that he said they would do: "In all the nations the good news has to be preached first." (Mark 13:10) Jehovah's Witnesses, numbering over four and a half million worldwide, are actively preaching the good news of God's Kingdom and teaching others, pointing to the Kingdom as mankind's only hope for peace and security. Are you having a full share in doing God's will? Are you preaching the Kingdom good news as Jesus did?—Acts 10:42; Hebrews 10:7.

Finding Joy in Doing God's Will

While there is joy in learning what the Father's will is, there is greater joy in teaching others God's will. Jesus found joy in teaching people about his Father. It was like food to him. (John 4:34) We too will enjoy true happiness if we do as Jesus did, namely, preach and teach the things he taught, the things he received from his Father. (Matthew 28:19, 20) As Jesus promised, "if you know these things, happy you are if you do them."—John 13:17.

To illustrate: A mother who recently reentered the full-time pioneer ministry said: "To see the face of a Bible student light up as various Bible truths touch the heart is so exciting! It is such a joy to me to see one particular student write out in longhand all the scriptures before the study and take notes during the study so that she can

answer any review questions later.” Another of her Bible students had had some contact with the truth in her early teens. Now married and concerned about some personal problems, she was longing to find the Witnesses. How happy she was when the pioneer sister found her! The young woman was elated to resume her Bible study.

Maintaining the Joy of Doing God’s Will

King David of ancient Israel was one who sought to do God’s will all his life. In spite of the many hardships and pressures brought against him, he was inspired to say: “To do your will, O my God, I have delighted, and your law is within my inward parts.” (Psalm 40:8) Doing Jehovah’s will was in David’s very soul, in his very being. That was the secret of his unfading joy in serving Jehovah. Doing God’s will was not a hardship to David. Rather, it was a delight, something that came from his heart. All through his life, he struggled to do his best to serve his God, Jehovah, even though he did sometimes sin and fall short.

On occasion, our joy may wane. We may become fatigued or downhearted. Perhaps our past haunts us, our conscience troubling us over some wrong act committed long in the past. Often, we can conquer these feelings by a more thorough study of God’s Word. We can aim to inscribe God’s law on our “inward parts,” as David did. If we try to do the will of God whole-souled, that is, to the best of our ability, he will reward us accordingly because he is faithful.—Ephesians 6:6; Hebrews 6:10-12; 1 Peter 4:19.

Interestingly, at Hebrews 10:5-7, the apostle Paul quoted David’s words at Psalm 40:6-8 and applied them to Jesus Christ. In doing so, Paul pointed out how close Jesus was to his Father. The Hebrew word for “will” carries the thoughts ‘delight, desire,

favor, or pleasure.’ Therefore, Psalm 40:8 may read concerning the Christ: “To do your pleasure, O my God, I have delighted.”* Jesus wanted to do what pleased his Father. Jesus went beyond doing what was asked of him. He did what was close to his Father’s heart, and he enjoyed doing it.

Jesus’ whole life revolved around teaching others what God’s will is and what they must do to gain God’s blessing. He was a full-time preacher and teacher and found great joy in doing that work. Therefore it follows that the more we do Jehovah’s work, the more joy we will receive. Can you too serve full-time in the preaching work so that your joy may also abound?

A further aid in maintaining joy in doing God’s will is to keep the future in sharp focus. That was what Jesus did. “For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame.” For him, the joy was proving faithful to God to the end and then gaining the reward of kingship at his Father’s right hand.—Hebrews 12:2.

Imagine the future joy that will come to those who continue to do God’s will. They will see the destruction of those who insist on doing their own selfish will even if this causes suffering to those who endeavor to do God’s will. (2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8) Think of the joy of resurrected loved ones in gaining the opportunity to learn and do God’s will. Or consider God’s purpose to restore the earth to Paradise. And finally, imagine the freedom that will result from the complete destruction of Satan, the opposer of Jehovah’s will.

Yes, doing God’s will today can bring much joy now and endless happiness in the future. Regardless of the response that we receive in the preaching work, let us imitate Jesus’ example in taking pleasure in doing his Father’s will.

* See footnote on Psalm 40:8.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

"God Is Not Partial"



NINETEEN hundred years ago, the inspired apostle Peter said: "God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) Among Jehovah's Witnesses are to be found people from all races and religious backgrounds. They desire righteousness, and they fear God. Jehovah welcomes all of them into the new world society, as, for example, he did a certain woman in Chad.

This woman was not satisfied with her religion. Years previously she had accepted a copy of the book *Your Youth—Getting the Best Out Of It*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, and she appreciated the fine counsel the book contained. A Bible study was started, and she was always there for the study. However, when encouraged to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall, she did not respond. Why? Though her husband did not oppose her studying, he refused permission for her to attend meetings at the Kingdom Hall.

When the wife wanted to attend the circuit assembly, the Witness conducting the study showed the husband the program, highlighting the fine counsel to be presented. He consented to his wife going "just once." She attended and thoroughly enjoyed the program. After she explained to her husband what she had learned, he did not oppose her attending other meetings. She was impressed by the fact that the congregation was

composed of people from different ethnic groups who cared deeply for one another. Later she attended the district convention and was overwhelmed at seeing her children sitting on the laps of Witnesses from other countries. The Witnesses shared food with the children and treated them like family. This was the turning point for her.

But opposition followed. Although timid by nature, she began commenting at meetings and standing up to negative comments made by relatives and neighbors. While she had lived many years with her husband, they had only the traditional consensual marriage. How was she to broach the subject of getting legally married? After sincerely praying to Jehovah, she spoke to her husband, who said that he would look into it. Finally he did, and the couple were married legally.

A sister-in-law living with them caused many problems, but the husband took a stand in favor of his wife. Then the husband's father came for a visit. He ordered his son to divorce his wife, as she had changed her religion. The father told his son that he would pay the bride price for a "much better wife." The son's reply was: "No, I will not do that. She is a good wife. If she wants to go, that is different, but I will not tell her to go." The wife was very polite to her father-in-law, and he was ashamed of his conduct. However, when he returned to his village, he wrote his son, this time giving an ultimatum. He said that if his son refused to send his wife away, he was no longer a son. Again the son stood by his wife. Imagine the wife's joy at seeing her husband take such a definite stand.

Now their two small sons love to accompany their mother to the Kingdom Hall. They even asked their father for neckties, since they saw all the brothers who gave talks wearing them. Today this woman is a baptized sister.

She is one of the 345 happy Witnesses in Chad declaring the good news of Jehovah's Kingdom and appreciating that, truly, "God is not partial."

"LET'S READ MORE BEFORE WE MOCK"



THAT is what a person from New Zealand said regarding *The Watchtower*, the magazine you are reading. Concerning an article about the celestial chariot of God that is described in Ezekiel chapter 1, the person wrote:

"Each of these four living creatures, or cherubs, had four wings and four faces. They had a lion's face, denoting Jehovah's justice; a bull's face, representing God's power; an eagle's face, signifying his wisdom; and a man's face, designating Jehovah's love.

"After reading this over and over again, I had a warm feeling inside my heart. Tears came to my eyes, those of joy. My immediate thoughts were, 'How beautiful and pleasant you must be, Jehovah!' I am quite stunned at myself for these new feelings toward this Jehovah God whom I have mocked for many years, being the worldly person that I am. I say 'thank you' to Jehovah's Witnesses, and to the many like me, I say, 'Let's read more before we mock.'"