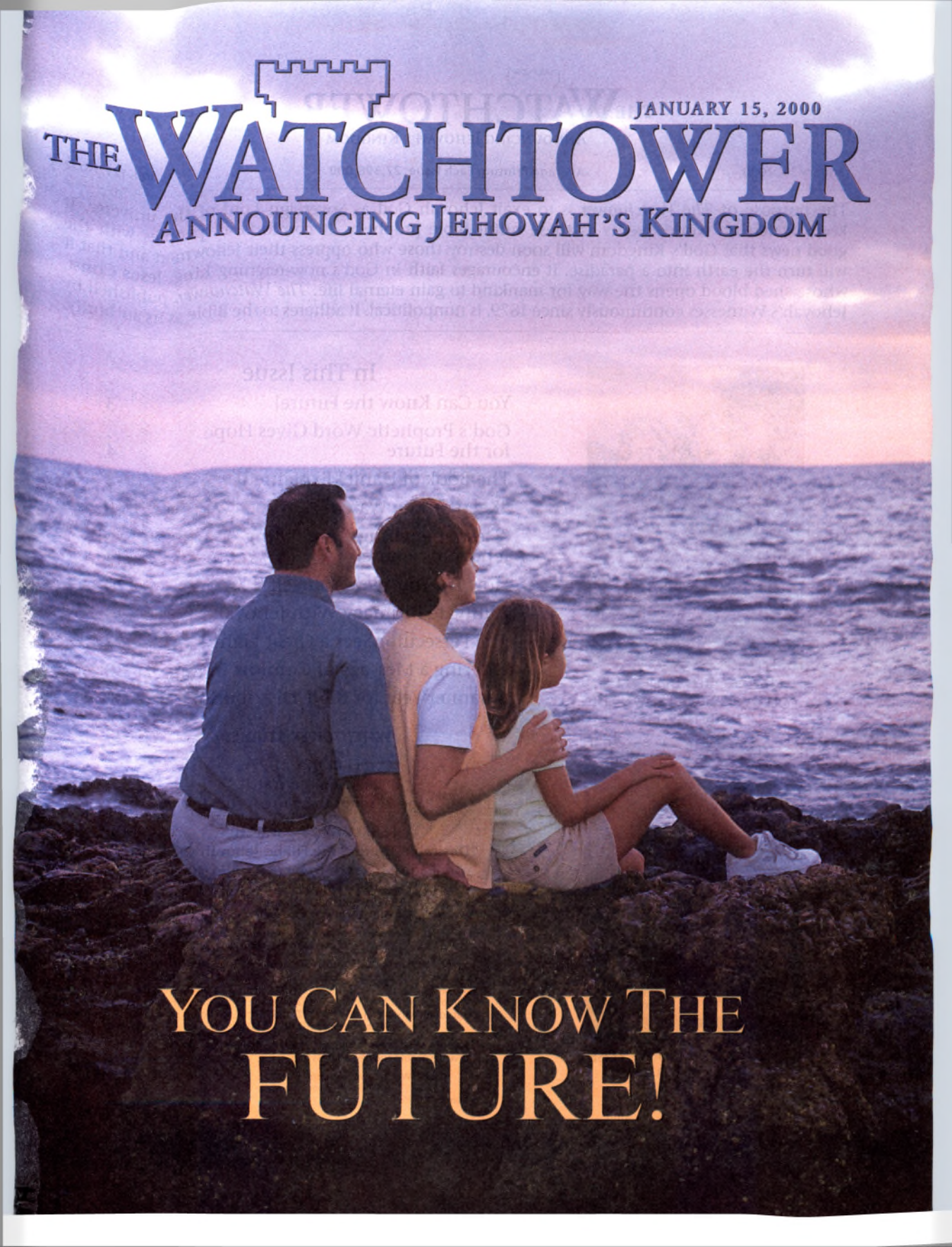


A photograph of a family of three—a man, a woman, and a young girl—sitting on a dark, rocky shore. They are all looking out at the ocean towards the horizon. The sky is a mix of purple, pink, and blue, indicating a sunset or sunrise. The water is dark with some whitecaps. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

THE WATCHTOWER

JANUARY 15, 2000

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

In This Issue

You Can Know the Future!

God's Prophetic Word Gives Hope
for the Future

YOU CAN KNOW THE FUTURE!

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

January 15, 2000

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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.



WHAT WOULD HELP JESUS' FOLLOWERS TO KEEP ON THE WATCH? 9-14



HOW CAN YOU DRAW CLOSE TO GOD? 23-6

In This Issue

You Can Know the Future!	3
God's Prophetic Word Gives Hope for the Future	4
The Book of Daniel Explained!	8
"Keep on the Watch"	9
"Desirable Things" Are Filling Jehovah's House	14
How Do You View Yourself?	20
Cultivate Intimacy With Jehovah	23
The Persecutor Sees a Great Light	27
Offering a Message of Comfort in Italy	30
A Banner Year for Bible Distribution	32

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

FEBRUARY 21-27:

"Keep on the Watch."

Page 9. Songs to be used: 106, 129.

FEBRUARY 28—MARCH 5:

"Desirable Things" Are Filling Jehovah's House.

Page 14. Songs to be used: 194, 107.

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ENGLISH



YOU CAN KNOW the Future!

Most people think seriously about the future. They like to plan, to invest wisely, and to feel secure. But is there any way to be sure about what tomorrow holds?

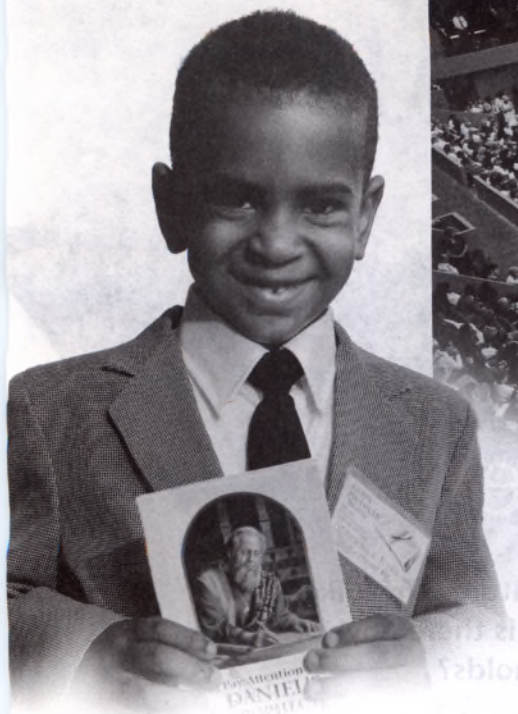
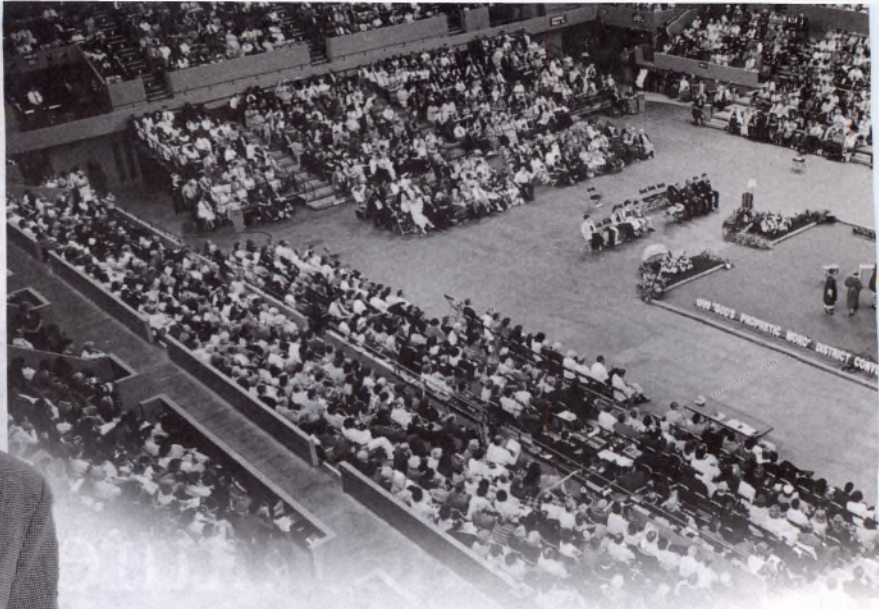
IN AN effort to find out what the future holds, humans have experimented with all kinds of things. Social scientists called futurologists analyze current trends and make their forecasts on the basis of these. Economists do likewise in their own field. Astrologers and diviners look to horoscopes, crystal balls, and the occult, and they have a huge following. For example, French astrologer Nostradamus continues to be popular, though he has been dead for centuries.

All of these would-be prophets have proved to be most unreliable and disappointing. Why? Because they ignore Jehovah God and his Word, the Bible. For this reason they fail to answer such basic questions as these: 'Why can I be sure that the things foretold in the Bible are going to happen? How do they fit into God's purpose for humans? How can my family and I benefit from these prophecies?' The Bible answers these questions.

Bible prophecy is also superior in many other ways. Unlike astrological predictions, it

allows for personal free will. Hence, nobody is a victim of fate. (Deuteronomy 30:19) Writings such as those of Nostradamus are morally void, and they cover this void with mystery and sensationalism. But Bible prophecy has a firm moral basis. It explains *why* God is going to do as he has purposed. (2 Chronicles 36:15) And Jehovah's prophecies never fail, for "God . . . cannot lie." (Titus 1:2) Thus, individuals guided by God's Word live enlightened, purposeful, and happy lives without squandering their precious time and resources on futile pursuits.—Psalm 25:12, 13.

These and many other points have been discussed at the 1999/2000 "God's Prophetic Word" District Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses held around the world. Talks, interviews, demonstrations, and a Bible drama have drawn the attention of the audience to the wonderful spiritual heritage enjoyed by those who study and apply God's prophetic word. The following article will review some exciting convention highlights.



GOD'S PROPHETIC WORD Gives Hope for

THANKS to God's Word, the Holy Bible, true Christians view the future with faith, hope, and optimism. Secure in their relationship with Jehovah God, they look forward to tomorrow. As the opening talk at the "God's Prophetic Word" District Conventions explained, Jehovah's Witnesses have been keen students of Bible prophecy for many years. So, what did Jehovah have in store for his people at these conventions? With Bibles at the ready, all in attendance were eager to find out. The theme for each day of the convention is set out as a separate subheading.

DAY ONE:

Walking in the Light of God's Word

The talk "God's Word Has Led Us" explained that Jehovah's people are like a man who starts out on a journey in the darkness of night. As the sun rises, he sees shadows, but when the sun shines directly overhead, he sees clear detail. As foretold at Proverbs 4:18, Jeho-

vah's people have come to see their way clearly under the bright sunlight of truth from God's prophetic word. They are not left to stumble in spiritual darkness.

The keynote address, "Pay Attention to God's Prophetic Word," reminded the listeners that those looking to Jehovah are spared the disappointment and disillusionment experienced by people who follow false messiahs and false prophets. In sharp contrast, the credentials of the true Messiah, Jesus Christ, are overwhelming! For example, Jesus' miraculous transfiguration provided a foregleam of him as the enthroned King of God's Kingdom. Since coming into Kingdom power in 1914, Jesus is also the "daystar" mentioned at 2 Peter 1:19. "As the Messianic Daystar, he heralds a new day, or era, that dawns for all obedient mankind," said the speaker.

Introducing the afternoon program, the talk "Shining as Illuminators" enlarged on Ephesians 5:8, where the apostle Paul coun-



the Future

sels us to "go on walking as children of light." Christians are illuminators, not simply by sharing God's Word with others but also by applying the Bible in their lives in imitation of Jesus.

To be an illuminator of this kind, we must "Take Delight in Reading God's Word." This topic was developed in a three-part symposium. After quoting Abraham Lincoln, who called the Bible "the best gift God has ever given to man," the first speaker asked the audience what their reading habits revealed about their depth of appreciation for Jehovah's Word. Listeners were encouraged to read the Bible carefully, taking the time to visualize Scriptural accounts and to associate new points with things already learned.

The next part of the symposium stressed the need for study, not casual reading, if we are going to assimilate "solid food." (Hebrews 5: 13, 14) Study is especially upbuilding, said the speaker, if we 'prepare our hearts' before-

hand, as did the Israelite priest Ezra. (Ezra 7: 10) But why is study so important? Because it has a direct bearing on our relationship with Jehovah. Hence, Bible study ought to be precious, delightful, and refreshing, even though it involves mental discipline and effort. How do we find the time for meaningful study? By "buying out the opportune time" from less important activities, said the final speaker of the symposium. (Ephesians 5:16) Yes, the key to finding time is to make the best use of the time we have.

The talk "God Empowers the Tired One" acknowledged that many people are tired nowadays. So that we may have "power beyond what is normal" for the Christian ministry, we need to rely on Jehovah, who "is giving to the tired one power." (2 Corinthians 4:7; Isaiah 40:29) Strengthening aids include God's Word, prayer, the Christian congregation, regular participation in the ministry, Christian overseers, and the faithful example of others. The theme "Be Teachers in View of the Time" highlighted the need for Christians to be teachers as well as preachers and to work hard at developing the "art of teaching."—2 Timothy 4:2.

The day's final talk, "Fighters Against God Will Not Prevail," mentioned recent misguided efforts in some lands to have Jehovah's Witnesses branded a dangerous cult. But we need not fear, for Isaiah 54:17 says: "'Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success, and any tongue at all that will rise up against you in the judgment you will condemn. This is the hereditary possession of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness is from me,' is the utterance of Jehovah."

DAY TWO:

Things Made Known Through the Prophetic Scriptures

After a discussion of the day's Bible text, those assembled enjoyed the second symposium of the convention, entitled "Glorifying

Jehovah as Light Bearers.” The first talk showed that a Christian’s goal is to glorify Jehovah by preaching everywhere. The following part mentioned the need to direct responsive ones to God’s organization. How? By our taking five or ten minutes before or after each home Bible study to show how God’s organization functions. The third talk of this symposium stressed the need to glorify God by fine works.

The talk “Love Jehovah’s Reminders Exceedingly” covered selected verses in Psalm 119. Certainly, we need reminders, for we are all inclined to forget. How important, then, that we develop a love for Jehovah’s reminders, just as the psalmist did!

Then came a special treat—the baptism talk entitled “Heeding the Prophetic Word Leads to Baptism.” Candidates for baptism were reminded that they imitate Christ not just by being baptized but also by following his steps closely. (1 Peter 2:21) What a privilege these new ones have to share in the fulfillment of John 10:16, where Jesus foretold that he would gather “other sheep” to serve alongside his spirit-anointed disciples!

Beginning the afternoon program, the talk “Hear What the Spirit Has to Say” explained that Jehovah’s spirit speaks to us through the Bible, “the faithful and discreet slave,” and our Bible-trained conscience. (Matthew 24:45) Hence, Christians do not need to hear a literal voice from heaven in order to know how to please God. The following discussion, “Firm for Teaching That Accords With Godly Devotion,” exhorted Christians not to look into demoralizing ideas propagated by this world. Indeed, an unbridled curiosity could expose us to harmful information planted by apostates and other agents of Satan. How much better it is regularly to read the Bible as well as all the articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*

Entitled “Keep Holding the Pattern of

Healthful Words,” the next talk stressed the importance of being thoroughly familiar with the Scriptural “pattern,” or framework, of truth. (2 Timothy 1:13) Grasping this pattern is the key not only to having godly devotion but also to identifying that which does not harmonize with truth.

Imagine being viewed by Jehovah as desirable. What an honor! Based on the prophecy of Haggai, the talk “‘Desirable Things’ Are Filling Jehovah’s House” was most encouraging because it assured the listeners that each member of the “great crowd” is truly desirable to Jehovah. (Revelation 7:9) Therefore, Jehovah will spare them through his final “rocking” of the nations during the coming “great tribulation.” (Haggai 2:7, 21, 22; Matthew 24:21) Meanwhile, however, Jehovah’s people must keep on the watch spiritually, as explained in the part “Prophetic Scriptures Alert Us to Watchfulness.” The speaker quoted Jesus’ words: “Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” (Matthew 24:42) How do we maintain spiritual vigilance? By keeping busy in Jehovah’s service, praying continually, and remaining in expectation of Jehovah’s great day.

The final talk of the day was entitled “The Prophetic Word in the Time of the End.” It will be remembered for years to come. Why? Because the speaker announced the release of a new book—*Pay Attention to Daniel’s Prophecy!* “This beautifully-illustrated 320-page publication covers every part of the book of Daniel,” said the speaker. What faith-strengthening evidence that Jehovah is shedding light on his prophetic Word!

DAY THREE:

God’s Prophetic Word Never Fails

The final day of the convention began with the symposium “Prophetic Words for the Appointed Time.” The three parts examined the

prophet Habakkuk's three pronouncements of Jehovah's executorial judgments. The first was against wayward Judah and the second against oppressive Babylon. The final one, yet to be fulfilled, applies to the imminent destruction of all wicked humans. Speaking about Armageddon, the last brother on the symposium evoked a healthy measure of godly fear in his listeners when he said: "Truly, it will be awe-inspiring when Jehovah unleashes the full force of his great power."

"Appreciating Our Spiritual Heritage" was the title of the convention's moving Bible drama.

This soul-searching presentation contrasted the attitudes of Jacob and Esau toward spiritual things. Esau despised his spiritual heritage, so that it was given to Jacob, who treasured it. "What [spiritual heritage] has Jehovah given us?" the conventioners were asked.

"The truth of his Word, the Bible; the hope of everlasting life; and the honor to represent him as proclaimers of the good news," answered the speaker.

The next part was entitled "What Does Our Precious Heritage Mean to You?" We show the right attitude toward our spiritual heritage by putting Jehovah's service and spiritual privileges before personal or material interests. In this way we build our life around our relationship with Jehovah, in sharp contrast with Adam, Esau, and the unfaithful Israelites.

The public discourse, "Making All Things New—As Foretold," wove together four key prophecies regarding the "new heavens" and the "new earth." (Isaiah 65:17-25; 66:22-24; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:1, 3-5) Clearly, Jehovah had in mind a greater fulfillment of these prophecies than that upon his restored



A stirring drama heightened appreciation for the spiritual heritage of Jehovah's servants

Many who heeded God's prophetic word were baptized

people in 537 B.C.E. Yes, he had in mind his Kingdom government (the "new heavens") and its earthly subjects (the "new earth"), who would inhabit a glorious global paradise.

Bringing the convention to a thrilling and motivating conclusion was the talk "Our Expectations as God's Word Guides Us." It reminded all that "the time left is reduced" for completing the work of Kingdom proclamation. (1 Corinthians 7:29) Yes, we stand at the very threshold of the fulfillment of Jehovah's decree against Satan and his entire wicked system. May our sentiments be those of the psalmist who sang: "Our very soul has been in expectation of Jehovah. Our helper and our shield he is." (Psalm 33:20) What a glorious prospect lies ahead for those whose expectations are based on God's prophetic word!

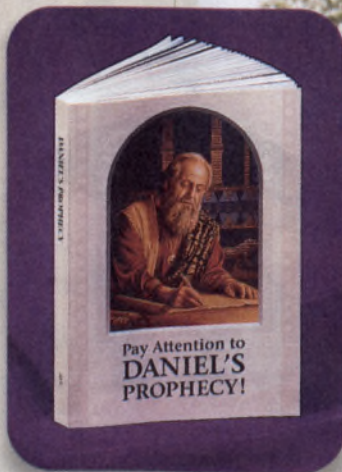
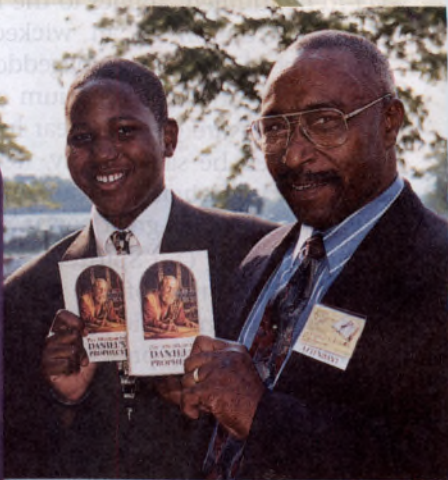
THE BOOK OF DANIEL EXPLAINED!

CONVENTIONERS were eager to obtain their copy of the newly released 320-page book, *Pay Attention to Daniel's Prophecy!* How did they feel about the book? Consider what some said.

"Like most teenagers, I have a difficult time enjoying the study of ancient history. So when I received my personal copy of the new book, *Pay Attention to Daniel's Prophecy!* I wasn't exactly thrilled about reading it, but I gave it a try. Boy, did I have the wrong attitude! This is one of the best books I've ever encountered. It is a real page-turner! I no longer feel that I'm reading about an account that happened thousands of years ago. For the first time, I feel that I can put myself in Daniel's place. I can truly visualize what it would be like to be taken from your family, be sent to a foreign land, and have your integrity tested time and again. Thank you so much for this book."—*Anya*.

"What helps me most is the unmistakable message that Jehovah is in absolute control of matters that affect his people. Through Daniel's visions and dreams and those of others that he interpreted, it is clear that our God will never allow events to become any more or any less than what he has purposed. This strengthens the hope we have in the prophetic pictures found in the Bible regarding the new world of his making."—*Chester*.

"I loved the way you made Daniel come alive. I felt better acquainted with him by the way you highlighted his cares and concerns. I could better understand why Jehovah found him so desirable. During all his trials and persecutions, he wasn't concerned about himself. His utmost concern was for Jehovah and His beautiful name. Thank you for making these points stand out."—*Joy*.



"This is what we have been waiting for! Never before has it been shown how much of Daniel's book actually applies to each

of us. After reading much of the new book the evening after I received it, I just had to stop and thank Jehovah in prayer."—*Mark*.

"What we didn't expect was the impact it would have on our children. They are five and three years old. . . . While the stories of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah have always been among their favorites in *My Book of Bible Stories*, the presentation in the *Daniel's Prophecy* book has affected them in a way we didn't anticipate. Even at their young age, they seem to be able to identify with these righteous young men. What wonderful role models for our children! What a fabulous tool you have given us! Thank you, thank you so much!"—*Bethel*.

"I felt I was right there with the young Hebrew boys as they underwent tests of their faith; and that encouraged me to examine my own faith. The review box entitled 'What Did You Discern?' sounds the chapter's content into the heart. Thank you again for another masterpiece."—*Lydia*.

"KEEP ON THE WATCH"

"Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."—MATTHEW 24:42.

MANY longtime servants of Jehovah learned the truth when they were young men and women. Like the merchant who discovered a pearl of high value and sold everything he owned in order to buy it, those eager Bible students disowned themselves and dedicated their lives to Jehovah. (Matthew 13:45, 46; Mark 8:34) How do they feel about having had to wait longer than they may have expected in order to see God's purposes fulfilled toward the earth? They have no regrets! They agree with Brother A. H. Macmillan, who after over six decades of dedicated service to God, said: "I am more determined than ever to keep on in my faith. It has made life worth living for me. It is still helping me to face the future without fear."

² What about you? Regardless of your age, consider Jesus' words: "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." (Matthew 24:42) That simple statement contains a profound



A. H. Macmillan served Jehovah faithfully for over six decades

truth. We do not know on what day the Lord will come to execute judgment on this wicked system, and it is not necessary for us to know. But we need to live in such a way that when he does come, we will have no regrets. In this regard, what examples do we find in the Bible that will help us to keep on the watch? How did Jesus illustrate this need? And what evidence do we have today that proves that we are living in the last days of this ungodly world?

A Warning Example

³ In many respects, people today are like the men and women who lived in Noah's day. At that time the earth was filled with violence, and the inclination of the heart of man was "only bad all the time." (Genesis 6:5) Most were consumed with the daily affairs of life. Before he brought the great Deluge, though, Jeho-

vah gave people an opportunity to repent. He commissioned Noah to preach, and Noah obeyed—serving as "a preacher of righteousness" perhaps for 40 or 50 years or more. (2 Peter 2:5) However, the people ignored Noah's warning message. They were not on

3. How do many people today resemble those of Noah's day?

1. How do longtime servants of Jehovah feel about their many years of dedicated service? Cite an example.
2. (a) What timely counsel did Jesus give his followers? (b) What questions will we consider in this article?

the watch. In the end, therefore, only Noah and his family survived the execution of Jehovah's judgment.—Matthew 24:37-39.

⁴ Was Noah's ministry a success? Do not judge by the small number that responded. Really, Noah's preaching fulfilled its purpose regardless of the response. Why? Because it gave people ample opportunity to choose whether they would serve Jehovah or not. What about your preaching territory? Even if there is little positive response, you are having great success. Why? Because by preaching, you are sounding God's warning, and thus you are fulfilling the commission that Jesus gave his followers.—Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20.

Ignoring God's Prophets

⁵ Centuries after the Deluge, the kingdom of Judah faced a serious state of affairs. Idolatry, injustice, oppression, and even murder were common. Jehovah raised up Habakkuk

4. In what sense can Noah's ministry be called a success, and how can the same be said of your preaching work?

5. (a) What conditions were prevalent in Judah in Habakkuk's day, and how did the people respond to his prophetic message? (b) How did the people of Judah display hostility toward Jehovah's prophets?

Jesus compared his disciples to slaves who keep on the watch

to warn the people that if they did not repent, calamity would befall them at the hands of the Chaldeans, or Babylonians. (Habakkuk 1:5-7) But the people refused to listen. Perhaps they reasoned, 'Why, over a hundred years ago, the prophet Isaiah sounded a similar warning, but nothing has yet happened!' (Isaiah 39:6, 7) Many of the officials of Judah were not only indifferent to the message but also hostile to the messengers. On one occasion, they tried to put the prophet Jeremiah to death, and they would have succeeded were it not for the intervention of Ahikam. Angered by yet another prophetic message, King Jehoiakim had the prophet Urijah slain.—Jeremiah 26:21-24.

⁶ Habakkuk's message was no less bold, and it was just as unpopular as that of Jeremiah, who was divinely inspired to foretell the 70-year desolation of Judah. (Jeremiah 25:8-11) Therefore, we can understand Habakkuk's distress as he cried out: "How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, and you do not hear? How long shall I call to you for aid from violence, and you do not save?" (Habakkuk 1:2) Jehovah graciously answered Habakkuk with these faith-strengthening words: "The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it keeps panting on to the end, and it will not tell a lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late." (Habakkuk 2:3) So Jehovah had an "appointed time" for bringing an end to injustice and oppression. If there seemed to be a delay, Habakkuk was not to be discouraged, nor was he to slow down. Instead, he was to "keep in expectation," living each day with a sense of urgency. Jehovah's day would not be late!

6. How did Jehovah strengthen Habakkuk?



⁷ About 20 years after Jehovah spoke to Habakkuk, Judah's capital city, Jerusalem, was destroyed. Later it was rebuilt, and many of the wrongs that so distressed Habakkuk were set right. In the first century C.E., however, the city was once again slated for destruction because of the unfaithfulness of its inhabitants. Mercifully, Jehovah arranged for right-hearted ones to survive. This time, he used no less a prophet than Jesus Christ to deliver the message. In 33 C.E., Jesus told his followers: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains."—Luke 21:20, 21.

⁸ As the years passed, some Christians in Jerusalem may have wondered just when Jesus' prophecy was going to be fulfilled. After all, consider the sacrifices some of them had undoubtedly made. Perhaps they had turned down attractive business offers because of their determination to keep on the watch. As time wore on, did they grow weary? Did they conclude that they were wasting their time, reasoning that Jesus' words applied to a future generation, not to their own? In 66 C.E., Jesus' prophecy began to be fulfilled when the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem. Those who kept on the watch recognized the sign, fled the city, and were spared experiencing the desolating of Jerusalem.

Illustrating the Need to Be Watchful

⁹ In emphasizing the need to be watchful,

7. Why was another destruction slated for Jerusalem in the first century C.E.?

8. (a) What may have happened to some Christians as time elapsed after Jesus' death? (b) How were Jesus' prophetic words about Jerusalem fulfilled?

9, 10. (a) How would you summarize Jesus' illustration of the slaves who waited for their master to return from his marriage? (b) Why might waiting for their master have been difficult for the slaves? (c) Why was it beneficial for the slaves to be patient?

Jesus compared his disciples to slaves awaiting their master's return from his marriage. They knew that he would return on a certain night—but at what hour? During the first watch of the night? The second? The third? They did not know. Jesus said: "If [the master] arrives in the second watch, even if in the third, and finds them thus [watchful], happy are they!" (Luke 12:35-38) Just imagine the anticipation of these slaves. Every sound, every flickering shadow would surely heighten their expectation: 'Could this be our master?'

¹⁰ What if the master arrived during the second watch of the night, which extended from about nine o'clock till midnight? Would all the slaves, including those who had worked hard since early morning, be poised to greet him, or would some be asleep? What if the master returned during the third watch of the night—the period from midnight till about three in the morning? Would some of the slaves have become discouraged, even disgruntled at their master's seeming delay?* Only those who were found watching when the master arrived would be pronounced happy. To them the words of Proverbs 13:12 would certainly apply: "Expectation postponed is making the heart sick, but the thing desired is a tree of life when it does come."

¹¹ During the period of seeming delay, what would help Jesus' followers to keep on the watch? While in the garden of Gethsemane shortly before his arrest, Jesus told three of his apostles: "Keep on the watch and pray continually, that you may not enter into temptation." (Matthew 26:41) Years later, Peter, who was present on that occasion, gave similar counsel to fellow Christians. He wrote: "The

* The master had made no appointment with his slaves. Hence, he did not have to account for his comings and goings, nor did he owe his slaves an explanation for any seeming delay.

11. How can prayer help us to keep on the watch?

end of all things has drawn close. Be sound in mind, therefore, and be vigilant with a view to prayers." (1 Peter 4:7) Clearly, fervent prayer should be a part of our Christian routine. Indeed, we continually need to beg Jehovah to help us keep on the watch.—Romans 12:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

¹² Note that Peter also said: "The end of all things has drawn close." How close? There is no way for humans to pinpoint the exact day and hour. (Matthew 24:36) But there is a difference between indulging in speculation, which the Bible does not encourage, and keeping in expectation of the end, which it does encourage. (Compare 2 Timothy 4:3, 4; Titus 3:9.) What is one way that we can keep in expectation of the end? It is by paying close attention to the evidence that the end is near. Let us therefore review six lines of evidence proving that we are living in the last days of this ungodly world.

Six Convincing Lines of Evidence

¹³ First, we clearly see the fulfillment of the apostle Paul's prophecy concerning "the last days." Paul wrote: "In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power; and from these turn away. But wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse, misleading and being misled." (2 Tim-

othy 3:1-5, 13) Do we not see this prophecy being fulfilled in our day? Only those who ignore the facts can deny it!*

¹⁴ Second, we see the effects of the ouster of Satan and his demons from heaven, in fulfillment of Revelation 12:9. There, we read: "Down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him." This has resulted in great woe for the earth. Truly, there has been much woe for mankind, particularly since 1914. But the prophecy in Revelation adds that when the Devil is cast down to the earth, he knows that "he has a short period of time." (Revelation 12:12) During this period, Satan wages war with the anointed followers of Christ. (Revelation 12:17) We certainly have seen the effects of his attack in our time.[#] Soon, however, Satan will be confined in the abyss so that "he might not mislead the nations anymore."—Revelation 20:1-3.

¹⁵ Third, we are living in the time of the eighth and final "king" mentioned in the prophecy recorded at Revelation 17:9-11. Here the apostle John mentions seven kings, representing seven world powers—Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the Anglo-American dual world power. He also sees "an eighth king" that "springs from the seven." This eighth king—the last one that

* For a detailed discussion of this prophecy, see chapter 11 of the book *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

[#] For more information, see pages 180-6 of the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

12. What is the difference between speculation and watchfulness?

13. How does Paul's prophecy recorded in 2 Timothy chapter 3 convince you that we are living in "the last days"?

14. How are the words of Revelation 12:9 regarding the Devil being fulfilled today, and what will soon happen to him?

15. How does Revelation 17:9-11 supply evidence that we are living in the time of the end?

John envisions—now represents the United Nations. John says that this eighth king “goes off into destruction,” after which no further earthly kings are mentioned.*

¹⁶ *Fourth, we are living in the period symbolized by the feet of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image.* The prophet Daniel interpreted this mysterious dream of an enormous image in human form. (Daniel 2:36-43) The four metallic parts of the image represent various world powers, beginning with the head (the Babylonian Empire) and extending down to the feet and toes (the governments that are ruling today). All the world powers represented in that image have made their appearance. We are living in the period symbolized by the feet of the image. No mention is made of other powers to come.[#]

¹⁷ *Fifth, we see a global preaching work being accomplished, which Jesus said would take place just before the end of this system.* Jesus stated: “This good news of the kingdom

* See *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, pages 251-4.

[#] See chapter 4 of the book *Pay Attention to Daniel’s Prophecy!*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

16. How do the facts in fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream image indicate that we are living in the last days?

17. How does our Kingdom-preaching activity provide further evidence that we are living in the time of the end?

Do You Recall?

- What Scriptural examples can help us to keep on the watch?
- How did Jesus illustrate the need for watchfulness?
- What six lines of evidence prove that we are living in the last days?

will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) Today, that prophecy is in the course of fulfillment on an unprecedented scale. True, untouched territories still exist, and it may be that in Jehovah’s due time, a large door leading to greater activity will open. (1 Corinthians 16:9) Nevertheless, the Bible does not state that Jehovah will wait until every individual on earth has received a personal witness. Rather, the good news must be preached to Jehovah’s satisfaction. Then the end will come.—Compare Matthew 10:23.

¹⁸ *Sixth, the number of genuine anointed disciples of Christ is dwindling, though some will evidently still be on earth when the great tribulation begins.* Most of the remnant are quite elderly, and over the years the number of those who are truly anointed has been getting smaller. Yet, referring to the great tribulation, Jesus stated: “Unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short.” (Matthew 24:21, 22) Evidently, then, some of Christ’s “chosen ones” will still be on earth when the great tribulation begins.*

What Lies Ahead?

¹⁹ What does the future hold for us? Exciting times are yet to come. Paul warned that

* In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Son of man arrives in his glory in the period of the great tribulation and sits in judgment. He judges people on the basis of whether they gave support to Christ’s anointed brothers. This standard for judgment would be meaningless if at the time of judgment, all of Christ’s brothers had long since left the earthly scene.—Matthew 25:31-46.

18. Evidently, what will be true of some of the anointed when the great tribulation begins, and how may this be determined?

19, 20. Why is it more urgent for us now than ever before to stay awake and keep on the watch?

"Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night." Referring to men who appear to be worldly-wise, he says: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them." Hence, Paul urges his readers: "Let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses." (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3, 6) Truly, those who look to hu-

man institutions to bring peace and security are ignoring reality. Such individuals are fast asleep!

²⁰ The destruction of this system of things will come with striking suddenness. Therefore, keep in expectation of Jehovah's day. God himself told Habakkuk: "It will not be late"! Indeed, it has never been more urgent for us to keep on the watch.

"DESIRABLE THINGS" ARE FILLING JEHOVAH'S HOUSE

"I [Jehovah] will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory."—HAGGAI 2:7.

WHAT desirable things fill your house? Do you have plush furniture, a state-of-the-art computer, a new car in your garage? Even if you have all these things, would you not agree that the most precious things in your home are the people—the members of your family? Imagine that one night you awake to the smell of smoke. Your house is on fire, and you have just minutes to escape! What is your first concern? Your furniture? Your computer? Your car? Would you not, rather, think of your loved ones? Of course you would, for people are more valuable than things.

² Now think about Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Jehovah is "the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them." (Acts 4:24) His Son, the "master worker," was the

agent through whom Jehovah made all other things. (Proverbs 8:30, 31; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17) Surely both Jehovah and Jesus value all that was created. (Compare Genesis 1:31.) But which aspect of creation do you think means the most to them—things or people? In the role of wisdom personified, Jesus states: "The things I was fond of were with the sons of men," or as William F. Beck's translation renders it, Jesus was "delighted with human beings."

³ Jehovah unquestionably places high value on people. One indication of this is found in the prophetic words that he spoke in the year 520 B.C.E. through his prophet Haggai. Jehovah declared: "I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory. . . . Greater will the glory of this later house become than that of the former."—Haggai 2:7, 9.

3. What prophecy did Jehovah utter through Haggai?

1. In a time of emergency, why do we think first of our loved ones?
2. What is the extent of Jehovah's creation, and what aspect of it was Jesus most fond of?

⁴ What “desirable things” would fill Jehovah’s house and bring it unprecedented glory? Lavish furnishings and ornate decorations? Gold, silver, and precious stones? This would hardly seem reasonable. Remember, the former temple, inaugurated some five centuries earlier, was a multibillion-dollar edifice!* Surely, Jehovah would not expect the temple built by this relatively small band of repatriated Jews to surpass Solomon’s temple in material splendor!

⁵ What, then, are the “desirable things” that would fill Jehovah’s house? Clearly, they must be people. After all, what makes Jehovah’s heart rejoice is not silver and gold but people who serve him out of love. (Proverbs 27:11; 1 Corinthians 10:26) Yes, Jehovah treasures all the men, women, and children who worship him acceptably. (John 4:23, 24) These are “desirable things,” and they are far more precious to Jehovah than all the finery that adorned Solomon’s temple.

⁶ Despite relentless opposition, the temple was completed in 515 B.C.E. Until the time of Jesus’ sacrifice, the temple in Jerusalem remained the center of pure worship for many “desirable things,” consisting of natural Jews and Gentile proselytes. But the temple represented something far grander, as we shall see.

A First-Century Fulfillment

⁷ The temple in Jerusalem foreshadowed a

* The amount contributed for the construction of Solomon’s temple would be the equivalent of nearly 40 billion dollars in current values. Whatever was not used for the building work was put into the temple treasury.—1 Kings 7:51.

4. 5. (a) Why would it not be reasonable to conclude that the expression “desirable things” refers to material splendor? (b) How would you define “desirable things,” and why?

6. What purpose did God’s ancient temple serve?

7. (a) What did God’s ancient temple in Jerusalem foreshadow? (b) Describe the actions of the high priest on Atonement Day.

greater arrangement for worship. It is God’s spiritual temple, which Jehovah established in 29 C.E. with Jesus as High Priest. (Hebrews 5:4-10; 9:11, 12) Consider a parallel between the duties of Israel’s high priest and the actions of Jesus. Each year on Atonement Day, the high priest approached the altar in the temple courtyard and offered up a bull to atone for the sins of the priests. Later, he entered the temple with the blood of the bull, passed through the doors that separated the courtyard from the Holy and then through the curtain separating the Holy from the Most Holy. Once inside the Most Holy, the high priest spattered the blood before the ark of the covenant. Then, following the same procedure, he offered up a goat to atone for Israel’s 12 nonpriestly tribes. (Leviticus 16:5-15) How does this observance relate to God’s spiritual temple?

⁸ In effect, Jesus was offered up on the altar of God’s will when he was baptized and anointed by God’s holy spirit in 29 C.E. (Luke 3:21, 22) Indeed, this event marked the beginning of a sacrificial life course for Jesus that lasted for three and a half years. (Hebrews 10:5-10) During that period, Jesus enjoyed a spirit-begotten relationship with God. This unique standing that Jesus had with his heavenly Father could not be fully comprehended by other humans. It was as if a screen blocked their eyes of discernment, just as a screen shielded the Holy from the view of those in the tabernacle courtyard.—Exodus 40:28.

⁹ Despite his being a spirit-anointed Son of God, the man Jesus could not attain to life in heaven. Why not? Because flesh and blood cannot inherit God’s heavenly Kingdom.

8. (a) In what sense was Jesus offered up beginning in 29 C.E.? (b) What special relationship did Jesus enjoy with Jehovah throughout the course of his ministry on earth?

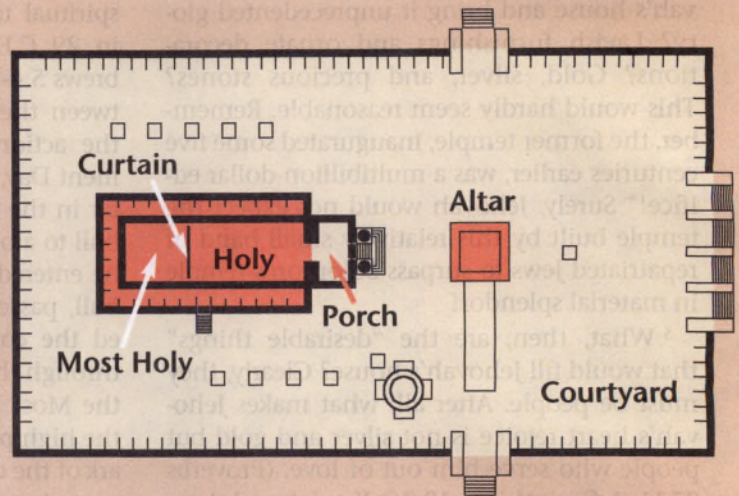
9. Why could Jesus not enter heaven as a human, and how was this situation resolved?

**Do you know
the symbolic significance of
Jehovah's ancient temple?**

(1 Corinthians 15:44, 50) Since Jesus' human flesh was a barrier, it was well symbolized by the curtain that separated the Holy from the Most Holy in God's ancient temple. (Hebrews 10:20) But three days after his death, Jesus was resurrected by God as a spirit. (1 Peter 3:18) Then he could enter the Most Holy compartment of God's spiritual temple—heaven itself. And this is precisely what happened. Paul writes: "Christ entered, not into a holy place [evidently referring to the Most Holy] made with hands, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us."—Hebrews 9:24.

¹⁰ In heaven, Jesus 'spattered the blood' of his sacrifice by presenting the ransoming value of his lifeblood to Jehovah. Yet, Jesus did more. Shortly before his death, he had told his followers: "I am going my way to prepare a place for you. Also, if I go my way and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be." (John 14:2, 3) So by gaining entrance into the Most Holy, or heaven, Jesus opened the way for others to follow. (Hebrews 6:19, 20) These individuals, who would number 144,000, would serve as underpriests in God's spiritual temple arrangement. (Revelation 7:4; 14:1; 20:6) Just as the high priest of Israel first took the blood of the bull into the Most Holy to atone for the sins of the priests, the value of Jesus' shed

10. What did Jesus do upon returning to heaven?



blood was first applied to these 144,000 underpriests.*

Modern-Day "Desirable Things"

¹¹ It seems that by the year 1935, the general ingathering of the anointed was complete.[#] But Jehovah was not finished glorifying his house. No, "desirable things" would yet come into it. Remember that the high priest in Israel offered two animals—a bull for the sins of the priests and a goat for the sins of the non-priestly tribes. Since the priests pictured the anointed ones who would be with Jesus in the heavenly Kingdom, whom did the nonpriestly tribes represent? The answer is found in Jesus' words recorded at John 10:16: "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one

* Unlike the high priest of Israel, Jesus had no sins for which atonement was needed. However, his associate priests did have sins because they were bought from among sinful mankind.—Revelation 5:9, 10.

[#] See *The Watchtower*, February 15, 1998, pages 17-22.

11. In whose behalf did Israel's high priest offer up a goat, and what did this foreshadow?

shepherd." Hence, Jesus' shed blood benefits two groups of people—first, those Christians whose hope is to rule with Jesus in heaven and second, those who look forward to everlasting life on a paradise earth. Evidently, it is this second group that is pictured by the "desirable things" of Haggai's prophecy.—Micah 4:1, 2; 1 John 2:1, 2.

¹² These "desirable things" are still filling Jehovah's house. In recent years, restrictions have been lifted in Eastern Europe, parts of Africa, and other lands, allowing the good news of God's established Kingdom to flourish in hitherto untouched territories. As desirable ones come into God's temple arrangement, they in turn strive to make further disciples, in obedience to Jesus' command. (Matthew 28:19, 20) As they do so, they encounter

12. How are many "desirable things" being drawn to God's house today?

many individuals, both young and old, who have the potential for becoming "desirable things" that will glorify Jehovah's house. Consider just a few examples of how this is taking place.

¹³ In Bolivia, a five-year-old girl being raised by Witness parents asked her teacher for permission to be excused from school during the week of the circuit overseer's visit. Why? She wanted to share in the ministry during this entire special week of activity. This surprised her parents, but they were happy that she had such a fine attitude. The little girl now conducts five home Bible studies, and some of these students attend Christian meetings. She has even brought her schoolteacher to the Kingdom Hall. Perhaps in time, some of her Bible students will show themselves to be

13. How has a little girl in Bolivia demonstrated her zeal for spreading the Kingdom message?

The high priest offered a bull for the sins of the priests and a goat for the sins of Israel's nonpriestly tribes



“desirable things” that will glorify Jehovah’s house.

¹⁴ While waiting at a train station, a Christian woman in Korea approached a student who was listening to music on his headphones. “Do you have a religion?” she asked. “I am not interested in any religion,” the student replied. The sister was not deterred. “With the passing of time,” she continued, “a person may want to choose a religion. But if he has no knowledge about religion, he might choose the wrong one.” The student’s expression changed, and he began to listen to our sister with interest. She offered him the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* and said that this publication would be a great help when the time came for him to choose a religion. He readily accepted the book. The next week, he began studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses, and now he attends all congregation meetings.

¹⁵ In Japan, 12-year-old Megumi views her school as a rich field for preaching and teaching. She has even been able to start many Bible studies. How does Megumi do it? Since she reads the Bible or prepares for meetings during the lunch break, her classmates often ask her what she is doing. Some ask Megumi why she does not participate in certain school activities. Megumi answers their questions and tells them that God has a name. This often stimulates the interest of her listeners. She

14. In Korea, how was a sister’s perseverance with a seemingly uninterested individual rewarded?

15. How does one young girl in Japan start Bible studies, and how have her efforts been rewarded?



The worldwide Kingdom-preaching work is drawing multitudes to Jehovah’s house

then offers them a Bible study. Megumi now conducts 20 studies—18 of them with her classmates.

¹⁶ In Cameroon, a group of eight men working at a job site called out to a brother who was offering Bible literature to passersby. Wanting to ridicule the brother, they asked him why he did not believe in the Trinity, hellfire, or the immortality of the soul. Using the Bible, our brother answered their questions. As a result, three of the men accepted Bible studies. One of them, Daniel, began attending the meetings and even destroyed all of his possessions relating to spiritism. (Revelation 21:8) In less than a year, he was baptized.

¹⁷ In El Salvador, one man tied his vicious dog in front of the door whenever he saw Jehovah’s Witnesses nearby. The man would wait for the Witnesses to move on, and then he would bring the dog back into the house. The brothers were never able to speak to the man. So one day they decided to try a different approach. Knowing that the man could hear what they were saying, they decided to preach to the dog. They came to the house, greeted the dog, and said how glad they were for the opportunity to speak to it. They talked about the time when there would be a paradise on earth, when no one would be angry—yes, when even the animals would be peaceable. Then they said a polite good-bye

16. How was a brother in Cameroon able to start Bible studies with some among a group of ridiculers?

17. How did certain brothers in El Salvador use ingenuity to preach to a man who at first did not want to hear the Kingdom message?

to the dog and started down the path. Much to their surprise, the man came out of his house and apologized for never having given the Witnesses the opportunity to speak to him. He accepted the magazines, and a Bible study was started. This man is now our brother—one of the “desirable things”!

“Do Not Be Afraid”

¹⁸ Are you having a share in the vital Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work? If so, you are truly privileged. Indeed, it is through this work that “desirable things” are being drawn by Jehovah into his house. (John 6:44) True, you may occasionally be a bit tired or discouraged. At times, some—even among faithful servants of Jehovah—struggle with feelings of worthlessness. But take heart! Jehovah views each one of his worshipers as desirable, and he has a keen interest in your salvation.—2 Peter 3:9.

¹⁹ When we feel discouraged, whether because of opposition or other unpleasant circumstances, Jehovah’s words to the repatriated Jews can be a source of strength. At Haggai 2:4-6, we read: “‘But now be strong, O Zerubbabel,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘and be strong, O Joshua the son of Jehozadak the high priest. And be strong, all you people of the land,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘and work. For I am with you people,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies. ‘Remember the thing that I concluded with you people when you came forth from Egypt, and when my spirit was standing in among you. Do not be afraid.’ For this is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Yet once—it is a little while—and I am rocking the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry ground.’” Observe that Jehovah not only exhorts us to be strong but also pro-

vides us with the means for gaining strength. How? Note the reassuring words: “I am with you people.” How faith-strengthening it is to realize that no matter what obstacles we face, Jehovah is with us!—Romans 8:31.

²⁰ Jehovah has certainly proved that he is with his people. Indeed, it is just as he stated through the prophet Haggai: “Greater will the glory of this later house become than that of the former . . . And in this place I shall give peace.” (Haggai 2:9) Truly, the greatest glory today is to be found in Jehovah’s spiritual temple. Why, hundreds of thousands flock to true worship each year. These are being well fed spiritually, and even in this turbulent world, they enjoy a peace that will be surpassed only by that experienced in God’s new world.—Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 12:42.

²¹ Jehovah’s rocking of the nations at Armageddon is just ahead. (Revelation 16:14, 16) Let us therefore use the remaining time to help save more lives. May we be strong and have complete trust in Jehovah. Let it be our determination to continue worshiping at his great spiritual temple, filling it with still more “desirable things” until Jehovah says that our work has been completed.

20. In what way is unprecedented glory now filling Jehovah’s house?

21. What should be our determination?

Do You Recall?

- What is more precious to Jehovah than material things?
- Jesus’ shed blood benefits what two groups of people?
- Who are the “desirable things” that were to fill Jehovah’s house with glory?
- What evidence do we have that Haggai’s prophecy is being fulfilled today?

18. What challenges do many Christians face, but how does Jehovah view his worshipers?

19. What encouragement did Jehovah provide through Haggai, and how can these words be a source of strength to us?

How Do You View Yourself?

HE WAS a proud man. Having been promoted to a lofty government position, he gloated over the adulation and admiration heaped upon him. But to his great annoyance, another official refused to accord him such honor. In revenge, the haughty official schemed to destroy all the people in the empire who were of the same ethnic background as the offender. What a distorted sense of self-importance!

The schemer was Haman, a high official in the court of Persian King Ahasuerus. And the object of his hostility? A Jew named Mordecai. Although Haman's genocidal reaction was extreme, it illustrates the danger and grave consequences of pride. Not only did his arrogant spirit create a crisis for others but it also led to his public humiliation and finally to his death.—Esther 3:1-9; 5:8-14; 6:4-10; 7:1-10.

True Worshipers Are Not Immune to Pride

Jehovah requires that we be 'modest in walking with our God.' (Micah 6:8) The Bible contains various accounts of individuals who failed to maintain a modest view of themselves. This brought them problems and grief. Considering some of these examples can help us to see the folly and danger of unbalanced thinking.

The thinking of God's prophet Jonah became so unbalanced that he tried to run away when he was divinely commissioned to warn the wicked people of Nineveh about Jehovah's judgment against them. (Jonah 1:1-3) Later, when his preaching activity had succeeded in causing the Ninevites to repent, Jonah sulked. He was so concerned about his own reputa-

tion as a prophet that the lives of thousands of Ninevites were of little or no concern to him. (Jonah 4:1-3) If we immodestly take ourselves too seriously, we may find it difficult to maintain a fair and accurate perspective of people and events around us.

Consider also Uzziah, who had been a good king of Judah. When he became unbalanced in his thinking, he arrogantly tried to usurp certain priestly duties. For his immodest and highly presumptuous actions, he paid with his health and loss of divine approval.—2 Chronicles 26:3, 16-21.

Unbalanced thinking nearly ensnared Jesus' apostles. They became very concerned with personal glory and power. When the time of great test came, they abandoned Jesus and fled. (Matthew 18:1; 20:20-28; 26:56; Mark 9:33, 34; Luke 22:24) Their lack of modesty and their thoughts of self-importance almost caused them to lose sight of Jehovah's purpose and of their role in connection with his will.

Harmful Effects of Self-Importance

An unbalanced view of ourselves can cause pain and can damage our relationship with others. For example, we may be sitting in a room and may notice a couple whispering to each other and laughing. If we are self-centered, we might incorrectly assume that they are making fun of us because they are speaking so softly. Our mind may not allow us to consider any other possible explanation for their conduct. After all, whom else could they be talking about? We may become upset and decide never to speak to that couple again. In that way an unbalanced view of our own importance can lead to misunderstand-

ings and damaged relationships with friends, family members, and others.

Those who take themselves too seriously may become braggarts, perpetually boasting about their supposedly great talents, deeds, or possessions. Or they may dominate conversations, always having to bring in something about themselves. Such speech betrays a lack of genuine love and can be very annoying. Thus, conceited ones often alienate themselves from others.—1 Corinthians 13:4.

As Jehovah's Witnesses, we may meet with ridicule and rejection in our public ministry. We need to remember that such opposition is really directed, not against us personally, but against Jehovah, the Source of our message. However, a distorted view of our own importance can lead to serious consequences. Years ago, a brother took a householder's verbal attack personally and spoke abusively in return. (Ephesians 4:29) After that, the brother never again shared in the door-to-door ministry. Yes, pride might prompt us to lose our temper when preaching. Let us strive never to allow that to happen. Instead, let us humbly seek Jehovah's help to maintain proper appreciation for the privilege of engaging in the Christian ministry.—2 Corinthians 4:1, 7; 10:4, 5.

Having a self-important attitude could also prevent us from accepting much-needed counsel. In a Central American country some years ago, a teenage boy gave a talk in the Theocratic Ministry School in the Christian congregation. When the school overseer gave him some rather blunt counsel, the irate youngster hurled his Bible to the floor and stomped out of the Kingdom Hall with the intention of never returning. But after a few days, he swallowed his pride, reconciled with the school overseer, and humbly accepted his counsel. In time, this young man grew to Christian maturity.

Being immodest and taking ourselves too seriously can lead to the damaging of our

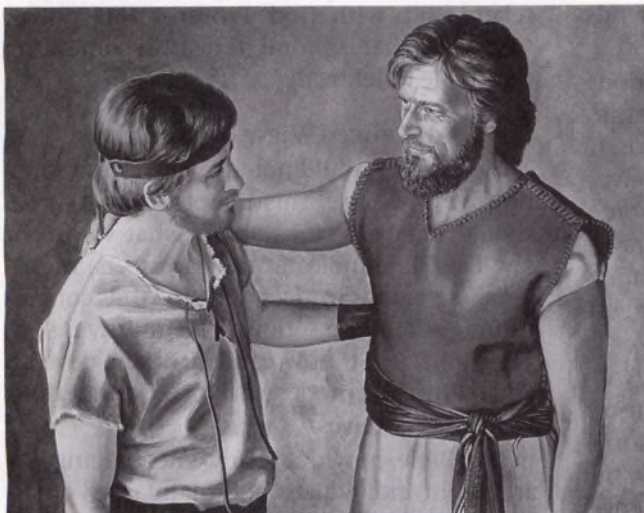
relationship with God. Proverbs 16:5 warns: "Everyone that is proud in heart is something detestable to Jehovah."

A Balanced View of Ourselves

Clearly, we should not take ourselves too seriously. Of course, this is not to say that we should not be serious about what we do or say. The Bible indicates that overseers, ministerial servants—in fact, all in the congregation—should be serious. (1 Timothy 3:4, 8, 11; Titus 2:2) So how can Christians develop and maintain a modest, balanced, and serious view of themselves?

The Bible provides many encouraging examples of individuals who maintained a balanced view of themselves. Outstanding is Jesus Christ's example of humility. To do his Father's will and to bring salvation to mankind, God's Son willingly left his glorious heavenly position and became a lowly human on earth. Despite insults, abuse, and an ignominious death, he maintained self-control and dignity. (Matthew 20:28; Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Peter 2:23, 24) How was Jesus able to do this? He relied completely on Jehovah and was determined to do the divine will. Jesus studied God's Word diligently, prayed fervently, and exerted himself vigorously in the ministry. (Matthew 4:1-10; 26:36-44; Luke 8:1; John 4:34; 8:28; Hebrews 5:7) Following Jesus' example can help us to develop and maintain a balanced view of ourselves.—1 Peter 2:21.

Consider also the fine example of King Saul's son Jonathan. Because of his father's disobedience, Jonathan lost the opportunity to succeed Saul as king. (1 Samuel 15:10-29) Was Jonathan bitter over his loss? Did he become jealous of David, the young man who was to rule in his place? Although Jonathan was much older and probably more experienced than David, he modestly and humbly complied with Jehovah's arrangement and loyally supported David. (1 Samuel 23:16-18) Having a clear perspective of God's will and a willingness to submit to



Jonathan humbly supported David

it will help us 'not to think more of ourselves than it is necessary to think.'—Romans 12:3.

Jesus taught the value of displaying modesty and humility. He illustrated this by saying that when his disciples were at a marriage feast, they should not take "the most prominent place" because someone more distinguished might come and they might suffer the humiliation of having to go to the lowest place. Making the lesson quite clear, Jesus added: "For everyone that exalts himself will be humbled and he that humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 14:7-11) We are wise to heed Jesus' counsel and to 'clothe ourselves with lowliness of mind.'—Colossians 3:12; 1 Corinthians 1:31.

Blessings of a Balanced View

Having a modest and humble spirit enables Jehovah's servants to find true joy in their ministry. Elders are more approachable when they humbly "treat the flock with tenderness." (Acts 20:28, 29) Then all in the congregation feel more comfortable talking to them and seeking their help. The congregation may thereby be drawn closer together in a spirit of love, warmth, and trust.

Not taking ourselves too seriously enables us to make good friends. Modesty and humility will keep us from developing a competitive spirit and trying to outshine others in deeds or in material things. These godly qualities will help to make us more considerate, and thus we will be in a better position to comfort and support those in need. (Philippians 2:3, 4) When people are touched by love and kindness, they usually respond well. And does not such an unselfish relationship become the foundation on which strong friendships are built? What a blessing for not immodestly taking ourselves too seriously!—Romans 12:10.

A balanced view of ourselves also makes it easier to admit our mistake when we have offended someone. (Matthew 5:23, 24) This results in better relationships, allowing for reconciliation and mutual respect. If they are humble and modest, those in positions of oversight, such as Christian elders, have the opportunity to do much good for others. (Proverbs 3:27; Matthew 11:29) A humble person will also find it easier to forgive others who sin against him. (Matthew 6:12-15) He will not overreact to perceived slights, and he will trust in Jehovah to rectify matters that cannot be corrected in any other way.—Psalm 37:5; Proverbs 3:5, 6.

The greatest blessing gained by having a modest and humble view of ourselves is that of enjoying Jehovah's favor and approval. "God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones." (1 Peter 5:5) May we never fall into the snare of thinking that we are better than we actually are. Instead, let us humbly recognize our position in Jehovah's arrangement of things. Grand blessings are in store for all who meet his requirement 'to be modest in walking with God.'

Cultivate Intimacy With Jehovah

"DRAW close to God, and he will draw close to you," wrote the disciple James. (James 4:8) And the psalmist David sang: "The intimacy with Jehovah belongs to those fearful of him." (Psalm 25:14) Clearly, Jehovah God wants us to have an intimate relationship with him. Yet, not everyone worshipping God and obeying his laws necessarily feels close to him.

What about you? Do you have a close personal relationship with God? Undoubtedly, you want to draw closer to him. How may we cultivate intimacy with God? What would this mean for us? The third chapter of the Bible book of Proverbs provides answers.

Manifest Loving-Kindness and Trueness

King Solomon of ancient Israel commences the third chapter of Proverbs with the words: *"My son, my law do not forget, and my commandments may your heart observe, because length of days and years of life and peace will be added to you."* (Proverbs 3:1, 2) Since Solomon wrote under divine inspiration, this fatherly advice is really coming from Jehovah God and is directed to us. We are counseled here to abide by God's reminders—his law, or teaching, and his commandments—recorded in the Bible. If we do this, "length of days and years of life and peace will be added" to us. Yes, even now we can enjoy a peaceful life and can avoid pursuits that expose us to the danger of early death that often befalls evildoers.



Moreover, we can entertain the hope of eternal life in a peaceful new world.—Proverbs 1:24-31; 2:21, 22.

Continuing, Solomon says: *"May loving-kindness and trueness themselves not leave you. Tie them about your throat. Write them upon the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and good insight in the eyes of God and of earthling man."* —Proverbs 3:3, 4.

The original-language word for "loving-kindness" is alternatively rendered "loyal love" and entails fidelity, solidarity, and loyalty. Are we determined to remain attached to Jehovah come what may? Do we display loving-kindness in our relationships with fellow believers? Do we work to remain close to them? In day-to-day dealings with them, do we keep 'the law of loving-kindness upon our tongue' even under trying conditions?—Proverbs 31:26.

Being abundant in loving-kindness, Jehovah is "ready to forgive." (Psalm 86:5) If we have repented of our past sins and are now making straight paths for our feet, we are assured that "seasons of refreshing" will come from Jehovah. (Acts 3:19) Should we not imitate our God by forgiving others of their trespasses?—Matthew 6:14, 15.

Jehovah is "the God of truth," and he wants "trueness" from those seeking intimacy with him. (Psalm 31:5) Can we really expect Jehovah to be our Friend if we lead a double life—acting one way around Christian associates and another way when out of their sight—like

"men of untruth" who hide what kind of people they are? (Psalm 26:4) How foolish that would be, since "all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes" of Jehovah!—Hebrews 4:13.

Loving-kindness and trueness are to be valued as a priceless necklace 'tied about our throat,' for they help us 'find favor in the eyes of God and earthling man.' We need not only to display these qualities outwardly but also to engrave them 'on the tablet of our heart,' making them an intrinsic part of our personality.

Cultivate Implicit Trust in Jehovah

The wise king continues: *"Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight."*—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Jehovah is certainly worthy of our complete trust. As the Creator, he is "vigorous in power" and is the Source of "dynamic energy." (Isaiah 40:26, 29) He is able to carry out all that he has purposed. Why, his very name literally means "He Causes to Become," and it builds our confidence in his ability to fulfill what he has promised! The fact that "it is impossible for God to lie" makes him the very epitome of truth. (Hebrews 6:18) His dominant quality is love. (1 John 4:8) He is "righteous in all his ways and loyal in all his works." (Psalm 145:17) If we cannot trust God, whom can we trust? Of course, to cultivate trust in him, we need to "taste and see that Jehovah is good" by applying what we learn from the Bible in our personal life and by reflecting upon the good that this produces.—Psalm 34:8.

How may we 'take notice of Jehovah in all our ways'? The inspired psalmist says: "I shall certainly meditate on all your activity, and with your dealings I will concern myself." (Psalm 77:12) Since God is invisible, meditation on his great acts and on his dealings

with his people is vital for cultivating intimacy with him.

Prayer is also an important way of taking notice of Jehovah. King David kept calling on Jehovah "all day long." (Psalm 86:3) David often prayed through the night, as when he was a fugitive in the wilderness. (Psalm 63:6, 7) "Carry on prayer on every occasion in spirit," exhorted the apostle Paul. (Ephesians 6:18) How often do we pray? Do we enjoy having personal heartfelt communication with God? When faced with trying situations, do we petition him for help? Do we prayerfully seek his guidance before making important decisions? Our sincere prayers to Jehovah endear us to him. And we have the assurance that he will listen to our prayer and 'make our paths straight.'

How foolish it is to 'lean upon our own understanding' or that of prominent people in the world when we can place our complete confidence in Jehovah! *"Do not become wise in your own eyes,"* says Solomon. On the contrary, he admonishes: *"Fear Jehovah and turn away from bad. May it become a healing to your navel and a refreshment to your bones."* (Proverbs 3:7, 8) The healthy fear of displeasing God ought to govern all our actions, thoughts, and emotions. Such reverential fear prevents us from doing what is bad and is spiritually healing and refreshing.

Give Jehovah Your Best

In what other way may we draw close to God? *"Honor Jehovah with your valuable things and with the firstfruits of all your produce,"* instructs the king. (Proverbs 3:9) To honor Jehovah means to show him high regard and to exalt him publicly by sharing in and supporting the public proclamation of his name. The valuable things with which we honor Jehovah are our time, our talents, our strength, and our material possessions. These must be the firstfruits—our very best. Should



"Honor Jehovah with your valuable things"

loving heavenly Father. Jehovah will pour out further blessings to the extent that we use our valuable things

to his praise.—1 Corinthians 4:7.

not the way we use our personal resources reflect our resolve to 'keep on seeking first the kingdom and God's righteousness'?—Matthew 6:33.

Honoring Jehovah with our valuable things does not go unrewarded. *"Then your stores of supply will be filled with plenty,"* assures Solomon, *"and with new wine your own press vats will overflow."* (Proverbs 3:10) While spiritual prosperity in itself does not lead to material prosperity, generously using our resources to honor Jehovah brings rich blessings. The doing of God's will was sustaining "food" for Jesus. (John 4:34) Likewise, having a share in the preaching and disciple-making work that glorifies Jehovah nourishes us. If we persist in that work, our spiritual stores of supply will be filled with plenty. Our joy—symbolized by new wine—will overflow.

Do we not also look to Jehovah and pray to him for a sufficiency of material food for each day? (Matthew 6:11) Everything that we possess has, in fact, come to us from our

Welcome Jehovah's Discipline

Noting the importance of discipline in gaining intimacy with Jehovah, the king of Israel advises us: *"The discipline of Jehovah, O my son, do not reject; and do not abhor his reproof, because the one whom Jehovah loves he reproofs, even as a father does a son in whom he finds pleasure."*—Proverbs 3:11, 12.

Discipline, though, may not be easy for us to accept. "No discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous," wrote the apostle Paul, "yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness." (Hebrews 12:11) Reproof and discipline are a necessary part of the training that brings us closer to God. Correction from Jehovah—whether we receive it from parents, through the Christian congregation, or by meditating on the Scriptures during our personal study—is an expression of his love for us. We are wise to welcome it.

Hold Fast to Wisdom and Discernment

Next, Solomon emphasizes the importance of wisdom and discernment in cultivating a close relationship with God. He declares: *"Happy is the man that has found wisdom, and the man that gets discernment, for having it as gain is better than having silver as gain and having it as produce than gold itself. . . . It is a tree of life to those taking hold of it, and those keeping fast hold of it are to be called happy."*—Proverbs 3:13-18.

Reminding us of the display of wisdom and discernment in Jehovah's marvelous works of creation, the king states: *"Jehovah himself in wisdom founded the earth. He solidly fixed the heavens in discernment. . . . My son, may they not get away from your eyes. Safeguard practical wisdom and thinking ability, and they will prove to be life to your soul and charm to your throat."*—Proverbs 3:19-22.

Wisdom and discernment are godly qualities. We need not only to cultivate them but also to hold fast to them by never slacking off in our diligent study of the Scriptures and application of what we learn. *"In that case you will walk in security on your way,"* continues Solomon, *"and even your foot will not strike against anything."* He adds: *"Whenever you lie down you will feel no dread; and you will certainly lie down, and your sleep must be pleasurable."*—Proverbs 3:23, 24.

Yes, we can walk in security and sleep with peace of mind as we await the thieflike approach of the day of "sudden destruction" upon Satan's wicked world. (1 Thessalonians 5:2, 3; 1 John 5:19) Even during the imminent great tribulation, we can have this assurance: *"You will not need to be afraid of any sudden dreadful thing, nor of the storm upon the wicked ones, because it is coming. For Jehovah himself will prove to be, in effect, your confidence, and he will certainly keep your foot against capture."*—Proverbs 3:25, 26; Matthew 24:21.

Do What Is Good

"Do not hold back good from those to whom it is owing," admonishes Solomon, *"when it happens to be in the power of your hand to do it."* (Proverbs 3:27) Doing good to others involves generously using our resources in their behalf, and this has many facets. But is not helping others to gain a close relationship with the true God the very best thing we can do for them during this "time of the end"? (Daniel 12:4) These, then, are the days for showing zeal in the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

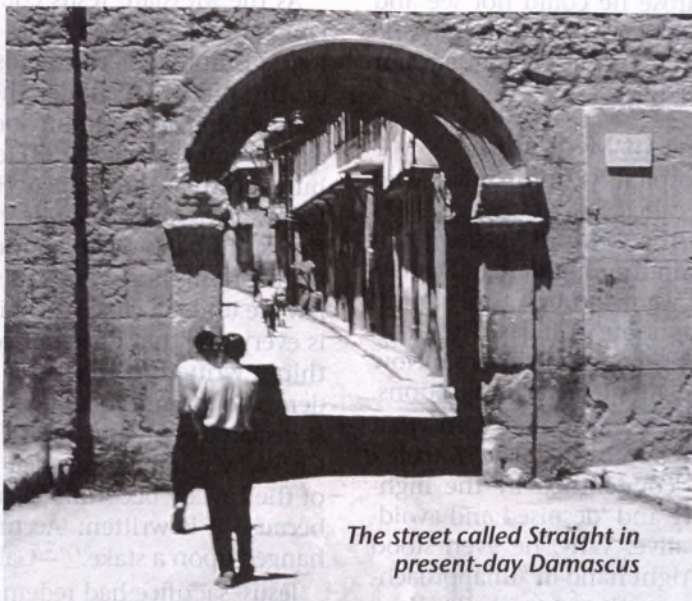
The wise king also lists some practices to shun, saying: *"Do not say to your fellowman: 'Go, and come back and tomorrow I shall give,' when there is something with you. Do not fabricate against your fellowman anything bad, when he is dwelling in a sense of security with you. Do not quarrel with a man without cause, if he has rendered no bad to you. Do not become envious of the man of violence, nor choose any of his ways."*—Proverbs 3:28-31.

Summing up the reason for his counsel, Solomon says: *"For the devious person is a detestable thing to Jehovah, but His intimacy is with the upright ones. The curse of Jehovah is on the house of the wicked one, but the abiding place of the righteous ones he blesses. If it has to do with ridiculers, he himself will deride; but to the meek ones he will show favor. Honor is what the wise ones will come to possess, but the stupid ones are exalting dishonor."*—Proverbs 3:32-35.

If we are to enjoy intimacy with Jehovah, we must not fabricate devious and hurtful schemes. (Proverbs 6:16-19) Only if we do what is right in God's eyes will we have his favor and blessing. We may also receive unsought honor when others observe that we act in harmony with divine wisdom. Let us therefore reject the devious ways of this wicked and violent world. Indeed, let us pursue an upright course and cultivate intimacy with Jehovah!

THE PERSECUTOR

Sees a Great Light



The street called Straight in present-day Damascus

Photo by ROLOC Color Slides

SAUL was seething with rage at Jesus' followers. Not content with the persecution already meted out to them in Jerusalem, including the stoning of Stephen, he now sought to extend the repression. "Still breathing threat and murder against the disciples [Saul] went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, in order that he might bring bound to Jerusalem any whom he found who belonged to The Way, both men and women."—Acts 9:1, 2.

As Saul walked toward Damascus, he must have been contemplating how he could carry out his mandate most effectively. The authority granted him by the high priest would undoubtedly secure cooperation from the leaders of the large Jewish community in that city. Saul would seek their help.

Saul's excitement must have been mount-

ing as he neared his destination. The journey from Jerusalem to Damascus—a seven- or eight-day walk of some 140 miles—had been taxing. Suddenly about midday, a light brighter than the sun flashed around Saul, and he fell to the ground. He heard a voice say to him in Hebrew: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? To keep kicking against the goads makes it hard for you." "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," came the reply. "Nevertheless, rise and stand on your feet. For to this end I have made myself visible to you, in order to choose you as an attendant and a witness both of things you have seen and things I shall make you see respecting me; while I deliver you from this people and from the nations, to whom I am sending you." "What shall I do Lord?" asked Saul. "Rise, go your way into Damascus, and there you will be told about

everything it is appointed for you to do.”—Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-10; 26:13-17.

Those traveling with Saul heard a voice, but they did not see the speaker or understand what he said. Because of the brilliance of the light, when Saul arose he could not see and had to be led by the hand. “For three days he did not see anything, and he neither ate nor drank.”—Acts 9:7-9; 22:11.

Three Days of Meditation

Saul received hospitality from Judas, who lived on the street called Straight.* (Acts 9:11) This street—called the *Darb al-Mustaqim* in Arabic—is still a main thoroughfare in Damascus. Imagine what went through Saul’s mind while he was in the home of Judas. The experience had left Saul blind and shocked. Now there was time to meditate on its implications.

The persecutor was confronted with what he had dismissed as absurd. The impaired Lord Jesus Christ—condemned by the highest Jewish authority and ‘despised and avoided by men’—was alive. Why, he even stood approved at God’s right hand in “unapproachable light”! Jesus was the Messiah. Stephen and others were right. (Isaiah 53:3; Acts 7:56; 1 Timothy 6:16) Saul had been utterly wrong, for Jesus identified himself with the very ones whom Saul was persecuting! In the face of the evidence, how could Saul keep “kick-

* One scholar thinks that Judas may have been a leader of the local Jewish community or the proprietor of an inn for Jews.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

What Is the Key to Success?

Jehovah Will Not Delay

A Mother’s Wise Counsel

ing against the goads”? Even a stubborn bull is eventually prodded in the direction its owner wants. By refusing to cooperate with Jesus’ urgings, therefore, Saul would be hurting himself.

As the Messiah, Jesus could not have been condemned by God. Yet, Jehovah had allowed him to suffer the most ignominious of deaths and to fall under the Law’s sentence: “Something accursed of God is the one hung up.” (Deuteronomy 21:23) Jesus died while he hung on the torture stake. He was cursed, not for his own sins, since he had none, but for the sinfulness of mankind. Saul later explained: “All those who depend upon works of law are under a curse; for it is written: ‘Cursed is every one that does not continue in all the things written in the scroll of the Law in order to do them.’ Moreover, that by law no one is declared righteous with God is evident . . . Christ by purchase released us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse instead of us, because it is written: ‘Accursed is every man hanged upon a stake.’”—Galatians 3:10-13.

Jesus’ sacrifice had redemptive value. By accepting that sacrifice, Jehovah figuratively nailed the Law and its curse to the stake. On grasping that fact, Saul could esteem as “wisdom of God” the torture stake that was “to the Jews a cause for stumbling.” (1 Corinthians 1:18-25; Colossians 2:14) So, then, if salvation was not to be had by works of law but through God’s exercise of undeserved kindness toward sinners like Saul himself, potentially it was open to those outside the Law. And it was to the Gentiles that Jesus was sending Saul.—Ephesians 3:3-7.

We cannot tell just how much of this Saul understood at the time of his conversion. Jesus was to speak to him again, perhaps more than once, about his mission to the nations. Moreover, several years passed before Saul set all of this down in writing under divine inspiration. (Acts 22:17-21; Galatians 1:15-18; 2:1, 2) However, mere days passed before Saul received further directions from his new Lord.

A Visit From Ananias

After appearing to Saul, Jesus also appeared to Ananias, telling him: "Go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man named Saul, from Tarsus. For, look! he is praying, and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands upon him that he might recover sight."—Acts 9:11, 12.

Since Ananias knew of Saul, his surprise at Jesus' words is understandable. He said: "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how many injurious things he did to your holy ones in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to put in bonds all those calling upon your name." However, Jesus told Ananias: "Be on your way, because this man is a chosen vessel to me to bear my name to the nations as well as to kings and the sons of Israel."—Acts 9:13-15.

Reassured, Ananias went to the address Jesus had given him. Upon finding and greeting Saul, Ananias laid his hands on him. "And immediately," says the account, "there fell from [Saul's] eyes what looked like scales, and he recovered sight." Saul was now ready to listen. Ananias' words confirmed what Saul probably had understood from the words of Jesus: "The God of our forefathers has chosen you to come to know his will and to see the righteous One and to hear the voice of his mouth, because you are to be a witness for him to all men of things you have seen and heard. And now why are you delaying? Rise, get baptized and wash your sins away by your calling upon his name." The result? Saul "rose and was baptized, and he took food and gained strength."—Acts 9:17-19; 22:12-16.

After fulfilling his commission, faithful Ananias disappeared from the scene as quickly as he entered it, and we are told no more about him. But Saul astonished all who heard him! The former persecutor, who came to Damascus to arrest Jesus' disciples, began to preach in the synagogues and to prove that Jesus was the Christ.—Acts 9:20-22.

"Apostle to the Nations"

Saul's encounter on the road to Damascus halted the persecutor in his tracks. Realizing the Messiah's identity, Saul could apply many concepts and prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures to Jesus. Awareness that Jesus had appeared to him and 'laid hold on him' and commissioned him as "apostle to the nations" profoundly transformed Saul's life. (Philippians 3:12; Romans 11:13) Now as the apostle Paul, he had a privilege and authority that were to shape not only the rest of his days on earth but also the course of Christian history.

Years later, when Paul's apostleship was disputed, he defended his authority by referring to his experience on the road to Damascus. "Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?" he asked. And after mentioning the resurrected Jesus' appearances to others, Saul (Paul) stated: "Last of all he appeared also to me as if to one born prematurely." (1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:8) It was as if Saul, by his vision of Jesus' heavenly glory, had been granted the honor of being born, or resurrected, to spirit life ahead of time.

Saul acknowledged his privilege and exerted himself to live up to it. "I am the least of the apostles, and I am not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the congregation of God," he wrote. "But . . . [God's] undeserved kindness that was toward me did not prove to be in vain, but I labored in excess of [all the other apostles]."—1 Corinthians 15:9, 10.

Perhaps like Saul you remember the time when you realized that to have God's favor, you needed to modify long-held religious views. No doubt you were very grateful that Jehovah helped you to grasp the truth. When Saul saw the light and realized what was required of him, he did not hesitate to do it. And he kept on doing it with zeal and determination for the rest of his life on earth. What an excellent example for all who desire Jehovah's favor today!

Offering a Message of Comfort in Italy

JEHOVAH is "the God of all comfort." By learning to imitate him, his servants are "able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; Ephesians 5:1) This is one of the main objectives of the preaching work performed by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Helping a Woman in Need

Particularly in recent years have poverty, war, and the desire to find a better life moved many to immigrate to more affluent countries. But it is not easy to adapt to new surroundings. Manjola was living with fellow Albanians in Borgomanero. Since she was residing in Italy illegally, she hesitated to speak with Wanda, who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Nevertheless, Wanda finally arranged an appointment with Manjola, who quickly showed great interest in studying God's Word, even though the language barrier made this difficult. After a few visits, however, Wanda could no longer find anyone at home. What had happened? Wanda learned that all the occupants of that house had fled because

one of them—Manjola's boyfriend—was wanted for murder!

Four months later, Wanda again encountered Manjola. "Pale and thin, she had the air of someone who really had a difficult time," recalls Wanda. Manjola explained that her former boyfriend was in prison and that friends to whom she had turned for help had bitterly disappointed her. In desperation, she prayed to God for help. Then she remembered Wanda, who had spoken about the Bible. How happy Manjola was to see her again!

A Bible study was resumed, and soon Manjola began to attend Christian meetings. She succeeded in obtaining legal permission to remain in Italy. After one year, Manjola became a baptized Witness. Comforted by divine promises, she has returned to Albania to share the Bible's comforting message with her fellow countrymen.

Witnessing at an Immigrant Campsite

Many Italian congregations have made arrangements to witness to immigrants like Man-

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jola. For example, a congregation in Florence made arrangements to visit an immigrant campsite regularly. The residents of the camp—many from Eastern Europe, Macedonia, and Kosovo—were experiencing various hardships. Some had problems with drugs or alcohol. Many supported themselves by petty theft.

Preaching in this community was a challenge. However, a full-time evangelizer named Paola eventually contacted Jaklina, a Macedonian lady. After a few conversations, Jaklina encouraged her friend Susanna to examine the Bible. In turn, Susanna spoke with other relatives. Soon, five of the family were regularly studying the Bible, attending Christian meetings, and putting what they were learning into practice. Despite the problems they have to face, they draw comfort from Jehovah and his Word.

A Nun Accepts Comfort From Jehovah

In the town of Formia, a full-time evangelizer named Assunta spoke to a woman who was walking with some difficulty. The woman was a nun belonging to a religious order that gives assistance to the sick and infirm both in hospitals and in private homes.

Assunta said to the nun: "You're suffering, too, aren't you? Sadly, we all have problems to put

up with." At that the nun burst into tears and explained that she had serious health problems. Assunta encouraged her, saying that the God of the Bible could comfort her. The nun accepted the Bible-based magazines Assunta offered her.

During their next conversation, the nun, whose name was Palmira, admitted that she was suffering a great deal. She had lived for a long time in an institute run by nuns. When she had to leave temporarily for health reasons, she was not allowed to return. Nevertheless, Palmira felt bound to God by the vows she had made as a nun. She turned to healers for "treatment" but was traumatized by the experience. Palmira agreed to study the Bible, and she attended Christian meetings for a year. Then she moved to a different area, and the Witness lost contact with her. Two years passed before Assunta found her again. Palmira experienced great opposition from her family and the clergy. Nevertheless, she resumed her Bible study, made spiritual progress, and got baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Yes, many are encouraged by the message of 'the God who supplies comfort.' (Romans 15: 4, 5) Hence, Italian Witnesses of Jehovah are determined to continue imitating God by offering others his wonderful message of comfort.

A Banner Year for Bible Distribution



Home Bible studies in (clockwise from top left) Bolivia, Ghana, Sri Lanka, and England

MORE people than ever before have a Bible. That is what a report from the United Bible Societies suggests, for Bible distribution in 1998 rose by more than half a million over the previous year. In all, more than 57,200,000 Bibles—in whole or in part—were distributed around the globe. “This is some cause for encouragement,” the report states. “More people are being reached with the Word of God today.”

Of course, there is a difference between having a Bible and reading it. One survey, for example, revealed that more than 90 percent of Americans own at least one Bible, and an equal

number believe that the Bible is a good source of moral teaching. However, only 59 percent said that they turn to the Bible for advice. And 29 percent admitted that they are either “not very” or “not at all” familiar with the Bible.

Jehovah’s Witnesses not only print and distribute Bibles but also conduct free home Bible studies with people in more than 230 lands. Millions worldwide are now benefiting from this Bible educational program. They are helped to cope with the problems they face now, and they learn what the Bible says about a bright future under God’s Kingdom.—Isaiah 48:17, 18; Matthew 6:9, 10.