

The WATCHTOWER

*The INCREASE
OF LAWLESSNESS*
—Why?

RULERS
for the
PEOPLE'S INTERESTS

FEBRUARY 15, 1974

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ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The **WATCHTOWER**

February 15, 1974
Vol. 95, Number 4

A watchtower enables a person to see far into the distance and announce to others what is coming. Can a magazine serve similarly in our day? Yes, from its first issue (July 1879) onward, *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's witnesses, has done just that.

How can it benefit you? Consider: Do you long for a better world, one of true justice and free from sorrow, hatred and war? Do you want to live at a time when genuine peace and love prevail among people of all races? Then this magazine can aid you. Using God's Word, the Bible, as its authority, it points out the clear evidence that the present wicked system of things will soon end, destroyed by God. But it also announces the coming in of a righteous new order. There, under the rule of God's kingdom, his heavenly government, people will enjoy life forever in true peace, health and happiness on a paradise earth.

Faithfulness to the Word of God lifts *The Watchtower* above the contradicting religious teachings and philosophies of men. It stays strictly neutral as regards political affairs. It wholeheartedly upholds the highest moral standard—that of man's Maker, Jehovah God. From this source, it shows solutions to the problems of daily life.

We know that many sincere persons would appreciate a discussion of these things in their own home with a qualified person. A minister of Jehovah's witnesses will be glad to call on you free of charge. To arrange for this, simply write the publishers of this magazine or contact Jehovah's witnesses locally.



PUBLISHED BY
WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
OF PENNSYLVANIA
117 Adams Street, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201, U.S.A.
N. H. KNORR, President GRANT SUITER, Secretary

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Average Printing Each Issue: 8,050,000

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Gun	Marathi	Sepedi	Vietnamese
Hebrew	Melanesean-Pidgin	Serbian	
Hindl		Sillozi	

Five cents a copy

Watch Tower Society offices	Yearly subscription rates for semi-monthly editions in local currency
America, U.S., 117 Adams St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201	\$1.50
Australia, 11 Beresford Rd., Strathfield, N.S.W. 2135	\$1.50
Canada, 150 Bridgeland Ave., Toronto, Ontario M6A 1Z5	\$1.50
England, Watch Tower House, The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN	75p
Ghana, West Africa, Box 780, Accra	\$1.90
New Zealand, 6-A Western Springs Rd., Auckland 3	\$1.50
Nigeria, West Africa, P.O. Box 194, Yaba, Lagos State	\$1.05
Philippines, P.O. Box 2044, Manila D-406	88
South Africa, Private Bag 2, P.O. Elandsfontein 1406	R1.10

(Monthly editions cost half the above rates.)

Remittances for subscriptions should be sent to the office in your country. Otherwise send your remittance to Brooklyn. Notice of expiration is sent at least two issues before subscription expires. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS should reach us thirty days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label). Write Watchtower, 117 Adams St., Brooklyn, New York 11201, U.S.A.

The Bible translation used in "The Watchtower" is the modern-language "New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures," unless otherwise indicated. Printed in U.S.A.

THE INCREASE OF LAWLESSNESS

-Why?

JESUS CHRIST, the Son of God, gave a strikingly detailed prophecy by which we could identify the time when the wicked system of things that has long dominated this earth would be brought to its end. Known as "the sign" of Christ's presence, this prophecy consists of many features, one of which is "the increasing of lawlessness."—Matt. 24:12.

Does the current trend of lawlessness fit his description? Is there sound reason to believe that the time has come when God will intervene in men's affairs and cause righteousness to prevail?

WHAT REALLY IS HAPPENING?

When mention is made of an increase in lawlessness, some persons may call to mind reports saying that this trend is slowing down and may even have been reversed. According to one recent report, during 1972 there was a decrease of almost 2 percent in serious crime reported in the United States, the first decrease in seventeen years. But actually this report gives little reason for comfort. Why? Because the reports show that the more violent crimes greatly *increased* in number. Thus during those same eight months, murder increased 9 percent, aggravated assault and rape each 8 percent. And this is the kind of lawlessness that people fear most, because of its viciousness. Further, the "decrease" in crimes not considered so serious was not necessarily because fewer crimes were committed. Rather, some authorities believe that it is simply because fewer crimes were *reported*.

That crime is still on the increase is evident in how it has affected daily life. A California University psychology professor recently said: "At first the gas station wouldn't accept cash after ten [o'clock]. Then the bus drivers stopped making change any time. Taxi companies installed bulletproof glass [between the drivers and their passengers] . . . The market in home protection devices is booming. There are call buttons to the police station, windows wired to alarm bells and home radar systems; new housing developments boast twenty-four-hour security guards. . . . There are TV cameras everywhere," to spot shoplifters, drug pushers, and bank robbers. Does that sound to you as though crime is decreasing?

And that is not all. What about the anti-theft devices on your car? the locks on your house? the apprehension that prevents you from enjoying a park? the fear that stops you from going out for a walk alone in the evening?



Fear causes people to live behind locked doors

Crime is rampant everywhere—in business, in government, on the streets, in the schools and, all too often, it invades the home. It is not limited to a few nations; they are all affected, and badly so. If the events of our day do not fulfill "the sign" that Jesus gave, what more is needed?

WHY? WHY? WHY?

"But why the increase of lawlessness?" That is the question that is being asked on every hand.

No doubt many factors contribute. Some blame the modern prison system, which all too often seems to harden rather than to reform lawbreakers. Others blame judges, saying that many of them are too lenient.

Among other things that contribute to the increase of lawlessness is corruption in government. Also, motion pictures and TV programs encourage lawlessness by making heroes out of criminals and other unprincipled characters.

However, could it be that all such factors are merely the running sores, as it were, of the problem, and that the causes of the increase of lawlessness are far more deep-seated? A crime investigator for the United States Senate singles out three basic causes: the home, the schools and the churches.

The Bible probes even deeper. It identifies Satan the Devil as the one chief culprit. Some may scoff. But the explanations that they offer for present conditions are not adequate to explain the staggering upsurge in lawlessness. The Bible, on the other hand, long ago pinpointed this generation as one that would experience these things.* It has proved right in that. It also identifies the one chiefly responsible for the increased woe as Satan the Devil, who is infuriated because he knows his time is short. There is every reason to believe what it says on this.—Rev. 12:9-12.

* For details, see the book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCHES

In the face of this, some persons might have expected the churches to be a force that would counteract the lawless trend. But exactly the opposite has been the case.

When interviewed on the crime situation, Senator John McClellan said: "In my judgment, some churches no longer demand a truly high standard of integrity and morality today. They don't have the same ideals of Christian living that were observed and practiced in the past." And when asked whether this was a factor in the increase in crime, he replied: "There's no question about it."—*U.S. News & World Report*.

However, the influence has not been merely passive, merely a matter of neglect. In widely publicized cases religious leaders have set a corrupting example for others. Thus, the wife of the late Paul Tillich, in an autobiography of her life with this eminent Protestant theologian, tells of the many adulterous affairs he had with other women. Yet in the religious world he was admired.

Publicly, from their pulpits and in printed articles, the clergy have undercut respect for the high moral principles set out in the Bible. How so? In that they have discredited as myth the Bible accounts of creation, of the Flood and of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, while endorsing evolution, which knows nothing of morality. And, obviously, when people come to view one part of the Bible as fiction, how seriously are they going to take the rest of it?

These things are significant, especially in view of the fact that, in his prophecy about our day, Jesus Christ linked the activity of "false prophets" with the "increasing of lawlessness." (Matt. 24:11, 12) By allowing pride to cause them to put their own opinions ahead of the Word of God, they allow themselves to be used by

the Devil, and thus contribute to the hard conditions upon mankind.

Clergymen have also contributed to the increase of lawlessness by their rejecting the teaching of the kingdom of God in favor of a "social gospel." Interestingly, the famed English writer H. G. Wells noted this fact: "Remarkable is the enormous prominence given by Jesus to the teaching of what he called the Kingdom of Heaven, and its comparative insignificance in the procedure and teaching of most of the Christian churches."—*The Outline of History*.

Because they do not put their trust in God's kingdom to bring about a condition of justice and righteousness on earth, the clergy, both Catholic and Protestant, have mixed in politics and felt free to resort to violence and to aid and abet others in acts of violence on the premise that the end justifies the means. But do two wrongs make a right? Jesus warned his followers not to resort to violence and pronounced happy those who are peaceable.

—Matt. 5:9; 26:52.

What is the bloodshed in Ireland but the result of religion mixing in politics? And one of the most recent examples involves some of the clergy in Chile, a number of whom were expelled from that country. As one of their group complained: "They [the new military government] hold us responsible for bringing Marxism and class struggle into the country." Whether they acknowledge that the charge is true or not, can the clergy honestly deny that they have been involved in politics instead of preaching the kingdom of God? It is by such activities that they have laid themselves open to the charge that has been laid against them.

Whether prominent men with their pride advocate it or not, the

kingdom of God is the Creator's provision for cleaning lawlessness out of the earth. Reassuringly God's Word says: "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more . . . Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."—Ps. 37:10, 34.

In that new order, now near at hand, "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Pet. 3:13) There will be no need for locks on your home. Whenever anyone approaches, you can be confident that you will be able to welcome him as a friend. Free from fear, you will be able to walk alone, if you choose, even at night, to enjoy the sound of the crickets and the beauty of the starry heavens above. There will be true security earth wide. The Creator of heaven and earth has promised it.

But will you be there? Now is the time to learn Jehovah's requirements and to bring your life into harmony with them. Jehovah's witnesses will be glad to help you.



How grand it will be when no locks are needed,
when everyone can be welcomed as a friend!

Insight on the News

- The centuries-old celibacy rule for Roman Catholic priests is causing trouble again.

It should. Such a requirement is in direct conflict with the teachings of the Bible.

Celibacy Troubles

On December 23, the Vatican newspaper "L'Osservatore Romano," pleading with priests not to abandon their ministry, said that every priest must "do the impossible to remain at his post."

That "impossible" requirement actually stems from the falling away from true worship that began after the death of the apostles of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul foretold that one of the features of that apostasy would be "forbidding to marry." Does that surprise you? Check it for yourself in any version of the Bible, at 1 Timothy 4:1-3. Obviously the Catholic Church has dropped the Bible standard in favor of its own, and that leads to trouble.

The article in "L'Osservatore" went on to say to those who are priests: "If you commit moral errors—you must not, but it may happen, because you too are weak—you have many remedies." According to "Newsweek" (December 3, 1973), some priests, though remaining unmarried, are finding their own 'remedy' in intimate association with women and, at times, in sexual intercourse.

Of course, that is nothing new. Many Catholics have long been aware of priests who do it. But what especially bothers the church is, not the immorality of these priests, but the fact that now many are leaving the priesthood for marriage. The number of priests has dropped by about 20,000 in the past three years.

- More and more the United States is becoming a terror-ridden "armed camp."

Fear of Crime

Fear pervades "all levels of U.S. society," according to a Gallup poll taken in 1973. One person in three in the big cities and one in five in the suburbs has been

mugged or robbed, or has been the victim of burglars or has had his property vandalized in the past year. Four persons in ten are afraid to walk alone at night even in their own neighborhood.

Some people believe that the way to cope with violence is to be ready to use violence

in return. As a result, in Detroit, the nation's top crime city, it has been estimated that there are 500,000 handguns, one for every third man, woman and child. The situation is not much different elsewhere. People live in fear.

Is that what you want? You cannot change the world around you, but you can change your way of dealing with it. The truly safe thing is to 'beat your instruments of warfare into implements of peace, and to learn war no more.' But why? Because that is what the Creator tells us to do. If wrongs are committed against his servants, God assures us that he will repay.—Isa. 2:2-4; Rom. 12:17-19.

True, people around you may want to take matters into their own hands. But if you care about life, which makes more sense—to pay attention to the counsel of the Source and Sustainer of life, or to imitate mortal men?

- Experts in the large metal-consuming nations see trouble ahead, in the form of an exorbitant price boost in vital metals.

Self-Interest Rules

One official advocates stockpiling now so as to have bargaining power in dealing with the metal-producing countries. "With it," he said, "you don't let these bandits hold you up."

The immediate cause for excitement is that the nations supplying vital aluminum ore are planning to establish an organization similar to the Organization of Oil Exporting countries, which hiked oil prices to an all-time high. Other organizations of copper- and tin-producing countries already exist.

Calling the producing nations "bandits" is like the 'pot calling the kettle black.' Consider the position of those nations. Workmen in most of them have subsisted on very low wages. And they remember also how the larger nations have often exploited them.

This situation is but another evidence that this world's economic system is permeated with selfishness. Self-interest rules.

Actually, these distresses are signs that this present system is soon to be superseded by God's kingdom. Under its rule, says God's prophet, "righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn." What a welcome change that will be!—Isa. 26:9.

HOW appealing the words of God's Son: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. . . for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls." (Matt. 11:28, 29) Do we strive to be like him?

Men serving as overseers (elders) in a Christian congregation will recognize that persons' need for refreshment does not automatically end once they have directed themselves to God's Son and become his disciples. Living under the present oppressive world conditions, Christian disciples are buffeted daily by many of the same hard problems that people in general must bear. Added to this, they may be 'suffering for righteousness' sake' in having to endure opposition from unbelieving mates or relatives, from employers, fellow employees, schoolmates or other sources. How much they can benefit from elders who are kind and considerate!

Yes, representing Christ's kingdom government as they do, elders should strive to fit the description of the "princes" given at Isaiah 32:1, 2, being as refreshing as "a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land."

A RIGHT SPIRIT MAKES ONE APPROACHABLE

To be like that we must, of course, be approachable. Perhaps we may personally feel that we are. Yet any of us could rightly ask himself questions like these: 'What kind of persons approach me? Are the humble and even the timid among them? What if those approaching me are mainly those of a more dominant personality—perhaps even persons who tend to flatter or, in the opposite direction, who are prone to voice bold criticisms? This would not

Do People Find You

"Mild-Tempered
and
Lowly in Heart"?

"Prove me truly approachable, would it?"
—Jas. 4:6.

Much depends on the spirit we show. Jesus' words at Matthew 20:25-28 rule out any place among his disciples for the spirit of worldly men of authority. There is no room for their aloof, superior air—not if true brotherhood is to prevail. The same is true of their 'false modesty.' We doubtless have seen men of high worldly position who like to appear as though they are 'putting themselves on a level' with common people. Yet their feeling of superiority shows through in one way or another to remind you of their position, never letting you forget 'just who they are' so as to feel really at ease with them. Are we ever like that?

Though appearing quite good-natured and apparently interested in people, how frequently men of worldly position prove to be like the proverbial "iron hand in a velvet glove"—the closer the contact the less mildness is felt and the harder the person becomes. What a contrast with the example of God's Son! His 'mildness of temper and lowliness of heart' were not in mere words. Those 'coming to him' found the reality equal to all that his invitation implied.

The apostle Paul's fine counsel at Romans 12:16 (*New English Bible*) is surely appropriate here: "Care as much about each other as about yourselves. Do not be

haughty, but go about with humble folk [be led along with the lowly things, *New World Translation*]. Do not keep thinking how wise you are." If persons with positions of responsibility were consistently to associate with only those of like position, or with persons successful in secular affairs, would this not result in a barrier between them and those who are among the "humble folk"? And, for Christian overseers, this could hinder their having a clear understanding of the feelings and needs of their brothers. It could cause them to become 'out of touch' with the real circumstances. Really, the forming of "class distinctions" of any kind is detrimental to the spiritual health of the congregation headed by God's Son.—Jas. 2:1-9.

We must guard against ever becoming wise and 'discreet in our own eyes,' feeling that our judgment, ability and methods surpass those of our fellows, for this would soon show up in our speech and manner. (Rom. 12:16; Luke 6:45) Jesus' lowliness of heart drew people to him. Christian elders have far greater cause for humility, for, unlike God's Son, they are humanly imperfect; they make mistakes.

A test of their lowliness of heart may be when a mistake is brought to their attention or when someone, whether a fellow elder or someone else, presents a suggestion for improvement in some congregational arrangement. The person "lowly in heart" will not incline to take such suggestions as something personal, as a criticism of his motives or manner of handling matters. To do so would cause humble ones to come to fear to approach him. (Eccl. 7:9) He should be willing to receive counsel as well as to give it. (Rom. 2:21) Thereby he shows he is not like those prominent ones of Israel who came to view themselves as "gods" among the people, beyond the need for counsel or correction. (Compare Psalm 82:6, 7; Isaiah 40:13,

14.) "Sheep" will approach truly mild-tempered "shepherds" with confidence of receiving only good.—Ps. 23:1-6.

Certainly none of us want to add to the weight resting on any of our brothers but, rather, to refresh. Yet we might add to their load if we were abrupt, hasty or impatient when approached by them. Knowing that "the heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer," we should not be quick to jump to conclusions, to reprove or reprimand, without hearing the whole of a matter. (Prov. 15:28; 29:20; Jas. 1:19) We could add to any 'weighted-down' feeling of our brothers if we showed ourselves suspicious of their motives or were quick to imply that they have not been doing what they should or as much as they should. We should not incline to 'think the worst' but, moved by love, should 'hope for the best.'—1 Cor. 13:7; Gal. 6:1.

Certainly those elders who become like God's Son in his mildness of temper and lowliness of heart set a splendid example for all the flock. (1 Pet. 5:3) Those approaching congregational elders, therefore, will want to display as well these same fine qualities. They would not want to be insistent or ill-mannered in approaching these brothers, nor claim their time unnecessarily, with no consideration for others who may want such ones' aid. (Heb. 13:17) Rather than be hasty in their words or impatient, they may find it good to meditate on their inquiry or problem beforehand to see if it is really worth bringing to an elder's attention. They may find the answer is actually already available to them, calling for only a little personal effort or study.

How refreshing to be among persons manifesting the admirable qualities of Jehovah God and his Son! Yes, it is a foretaste of what life will be like in God's approaching new order of righteousness.—Ps. 133:1-3.

RULERS for

THE PEOPLE'S INTERESTS

DO YOU feel that the rulers of earth have cared for the interests of the people they serve? Undoubtedly, some have tried. But those who do try usually find that corruption in their own government nullifies their efforts, so that the people's interests are neglected. This has been true ever since the days of Nimrod, some four thousand years ago.

Can an improvement be made? Can rulers be found who can and will serve the interests of all their subjects? Where would you look?

There is one authoritative place to look. That is the Bible. Do you have faith in what it says? Do you believe in God? Do you believe his promise to provide a government that will rule for the good of the people, and do you believe that he can select rulers that will really serve the people's interests?

IDENTIFYING THE CHIEF RULER

If you have read the Bible, you know it says that God will provide a righteous Ruler, a Messiah or anointed King, as Chief Ruler, along with associate rulers. If you believe this, then, whether you are Jew or Gentile, you cannot escape the conclusion that the Chief Ruler has already been made manifest and can unmistakably be identified as Jesus Christ. How so? Because it is impossible for anyone else to fulfill the requirements. How can this be said with such certainty?

Well, consider the facts. The Bible, in the Hebrew Scriptures, set forth certain rigid qualifications for the one to be the

Messiah, the anointed King that would rule the earth in righteousness for a thousand years. Among these requirements, he was to sit on the "throne of David." (Isa. 9:6, 7; Jer. 33:20, 21; Acts 2:29, 30) He had to be a natural heir of King David of the tribe of Judah. And he had to be of the kingly line, inheriting the kingly right, which was in the hands of David's posterity through his son and successor King Solomon.

Does Jesus Christ have proof of this from genealogical records? Yes, he does. He was of the tribe of Judah and the lineage of David by natural birth through his mother, who descended through David's son Nathan. (Luke 3:23-38) And he had the legal right transferred to him through his foster-father Joseph, who was from David through King Solomon. (Matt. 1:1-17) Details of this genealogy are a matter of public record in the Bible. Only the Bible record of this lineage remains. There are absolutely no other records of David's descendants extant, because these were destroyed when the Roman army desolated Jerusalem and burned its temple in 70 C.E. All public records, all archives, were wiped out. No one since then can possibly trace his own ancestry back to David. Since God's purpose cannot fail, this means that Jesus Christ is undeniably the Messiah, the King chosen by God.

How do we know that the record of Jesus' line of descent is accurate? Because those records that appear in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38 agreed with (and were likely taken from) the official public

personalities by the help of God's holy spirit. (Eph. 4:22-24) As brothers of Christ, they are not divided among themselves when on earth, and when he resurrects them to the heavens Jehovah will make them righteous as *perfect spirit persons* in harmony with their righteous personality.—1 Cor. 1:10.

Jesus revealed the principle by which his associate rulers will operate when he corrected a wrong spirit in his apostles, saying: "The kings of the nations lord it over them, and those having authority over them are called Benefactors. You, though, are not to be that way. But let him that is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the one acting as chief as the one ministering. For which one is greater, the one reclining at the table or the one ministering? Is it not the one reclining at the table? But I am in your midst as the one ministering."—Luke 22:24-27.

THE HEAVENLY GOVERNMENT

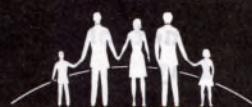
JESUS CHRIST

King over all the earth for a thousand years. He proved his love for mankind by laying down his life for them.

144,000 ASSOCIATE RULERS

Their integrity to God is fully tested on earth. In heaven, God patterns them after the image of his own Son.

EARTHLY SUBJECTS



These associates, while on earth, have received their training for rulership by serving as ambassadors for God's kingdom to the people. They follow their Leader, Christ, who served as direct Ambassador from God to the people. He came to earth, not with a political mission, but to do what no political ruler can do or has done, namely, to reconcile people of all nations to God, to bring them back into peaceful, friendly relations with the great Life-Giver, Jehovah.—Rom. 5:8-11.

Doing the same work as Christ did, these associate rulers can say: "We are therefore ambassadors substituting for Christ, as though God were making entreaty through us. As substitutes for Christ we beg: 'Become reconciled to God.'"—2 Cor. 5:20.

A NONPOLITICAL WORK TODAY

As such ambassadors they do not go to the political nations, trying to bring about the reconciliation of a whole nation at once, neither do they meddle in political affairs. Rather, they go directly to the people—to individuals. But they do not try to turn individuals toward any earthly ruler, or seek to win them over to any political ideology. They confess: "Our citizenship exists in the heavens, from which place also we are eagerly waiting for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." (Phil. 3:20) They appeal to people to look to the kingdom of God for relief. Accordingly, if they should get involved in the affairs of this world, taking part in political activities, holding office or voting, they would lose their status as ambassadors and brothers of Christ, and would never attain to heavenly rulership with him.

Today we see nationalism growing in all countries. More and more is pressure exerted upon people to render worship to the "wild beast," this world's human political organization under the influence and

control of Satan the Devil. (Rev. 13:1, 2, 11, 12) But the Kingdom ambassadors and prospective rulers with Christ do not worship this "wild beast," knowing that it will soon be destroyed, cleared out of the way, so that the Kingdom can have full sway over earth for a thousand years. (Rev. 19:19-21; Dan. 2:44) Still, they respect the governments of earth as long as God allows these governments to remain. This is because they respect the responsible positions the rulers hold and the power and opportunity they have to do good toward their subjects.

These "ambassadors" therefore follow God's command at Romans 13:1-7 to show "subjection to the superior authorities" of this world, paying their taxes and obeying the laws of the nations. Only when the rulers go so far as to make or execute laws that clash with the laws and rulings of the Most High God do these Christians refuse obedience. This they do on the principle and after the pattern set by the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ when before the Supreme Court in Jerusalem. When told to stop preaching the good news of the Kingdom, thereby forsaking their God-ordained ambassadorship, they replied: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

The 144,000 faithful ones will therefore carry none of the political uncleanness of this self-seeking world into the heavenly kingdom of the Christ. They have undergone severe trials and testings on earth and have stood firm for God's sovereignty and for his kingdom, preaching its coming blessings to the people. Of them, it is stated: "These are the ones that did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins." (Rev. 14:4) Yes, they are faithful to Christ, not adulteresses, as some were warned by the disciple James: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with

God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God."—Jas. 4:4.

Also of these associate rulers, it is stated: "No falsehood was found in their mouths; they are without blemish." (Rev. 14:5) Today falsehood is almost considered "stock in trade" for political rulers. This has brought about much corruption and has ruined their credibility among the people. But Christ's associate rulers cannot follow this pattern and be approved by Christ. They are proved truthtellers. All these statements about them, inspired by God himself, give absolute assurance that they are not interested in their own aggrandizement and glory (in fact, as heavenly rulers they could desire no material thing from their subjects), but are concerned with the people's interests and everlasting welfare.

Individuals who want life as subjects of that righteous kingdom, on hearing what these "ambassadors" of God say, must do more than give mere mental assent, merely waiting for the Kingdom to crush this world's system of things. Action motivated by the heart is required. All who believe that God will provide mankind with rulers for the people's interests must support the work of these "ambassadors" by sharing with others the good news of the Kingdom. It is a lifesaving activity that no sincere believer in God can shun.

IN COMING ISSUES

- Sickness and Disease
—Will They Ever End?
- What Is the Quality of Your Prayers?
- Bible Timetables Pinpoint Our Day.

CHRISTIAN MATURITY —NECESSARY FOR LIFE

"Stay awake, stand firm in the faith,
carry on as men, grow mighty."
—1 Cor. 16:13.

GROWING up is natural for all earthly forms of life that are made up of more than one cell. Insects, birds, fishes, amphibians and mammals have their own small beginnings, and then, in their divinely appointed way, grow until they reach maturity, to fulfill the purpose for which their Creator, in his infinite wisdom, gave them existence. Humans, too, are not born full-grown, either physically or mentally. And we expect children to grow up, to reach the physical, mental and emotional stature of responsible adults. Clearly, life in God's arrangement of things involves growth.

² There is also a growth for Christians from spiritual childhood into spiritual adulthood, Christian maturity. This spiritual maturity is not an unattainable, elusive goal, nor something to be reached only by a select few. Just as physical maturity is anticipated as a natural attainment for living creatures, so spiritual maturity should be anticipated and sought after by every Christian "babe." It is within the reach of all who put forth the needed effort. One's place of residence, experience, abilities or educational background are not the determining factors. The apostle Paul exhorted Christians who had not

yet become spiritual adults to "press on to maturity." (Heb. 6:1) In order to do so they first had to recognize their true spiritual condition and then work to make progress.

IDENTIFYING SPIRITUAL IMMATURITY

³ According to the Bible, an immature Christian is "fleshly," that is, he usually acts according to principles followed by men alienated from God and Christ. Back in the first century there were such immature Christians in the congregation at Corinth. Paul was unable to speak to them "as to spiritual men," but had to speak to them "as to fleshly men, as to babes in Christ." He fed them only "milk" of Christian truth, for they were not "strong enough." Because of their being "fleshly," jealousy, strife and sectarianism existed among them.—1 Cor. 3:1-4.

⁴ Are any of us like that—unstable, still inclined to follow men? Are some "fleshly" or worldly in their thinking, usually critical of their brothers and the work they are doing rather than working harmoniously with them under the headship of Christ? Are there some who have not as yet developed the love that motivates one to expend oneself for the upbuilding of the Christian congregation? Then they do in-

1. How is growth related to life?
2. What is the right view about gaining spiritual maturity, and why?

3. Describe an immature, "fleshly" Christian.
4. What questions might we ask ourselves to determine whether we are "fleshly" or not?

deed need to strive to attain Christian maturity.

⁵ Also in the first century, some Christians had failed to progress beyond the "elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God." This was despite the fact that adequate time had passed for them to have grown sufficiently, not only to have acquired a solid and mature faith, but also to have gained the qualifications to teach others in a general way. Note the apostle Paul's strong words to them: "Although you ought to be teachers in view of the time, you again need someone to teach you from the beginning the elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God; and you have become such as need milk, not solid food. For everyone that partakes of milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to mature people, to those who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong. For this reason, now that we have left the primary doctrine about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying a foundation again."—Heb. 5:12-6:1.

⁶ Are there any among us who have been associated with the Christian congregation for years and yet are not able to teach others the basic doctrines of the Bible? After years of association with God's people, do some still have difficulty in letting their conscience distinguish right from wrong? Do they still want others to make decisions for them in matters of conscience? Any who find themselves still needing instruction in the basics of Christian teaching and living should certainly be working hard to acquire maturity. Christians should not be like builders who never get beyond the foundation of the building, the "foundation" in this case being elementary or primary doctrines about Christ. They

should press on to complete the building or the superstructure that rests upon that foundation, namely, the more advanced teaching about God's purpose as revealed through his Son.

⁷ The immature Christian who fails to exert himself to become firm in faith, progressing no farther than the elementary things of God's Word, stands in grave danger. He does not really have the strength to resist the pressure of error and false worldly reasoning and therefore may be "tossed about as by waves" and carried to a disastrous end. (Eph. 4:14; Heb. 6:4-8) Those who remain "fleshly," harboring jealousies, envies and enmities, are likewise in a dangerous position before Jehovah God. Such traits are among the works of the sinful flesh that can keep one from gaining life. As the apostle Paul put it: "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, and they are fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies, drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these. As to these things I am forewarning you, the same way as I did forewarn you, that those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom."—Gal. 5:19-21.

ATTAINING SPIRITUAL MATURITY

⁸ But how can one cease to be a "fleshly" man and attain spiritual maturity? Unlike physical maturity, which is automatic, spiritual adulthood is attained through sincere effort. It requires humility and a genuine desire to conform one's life to the pattern outlined for Christians in God's Word. It involves study and meditation to acquire a deep understanding of God's will and purpose, learning to rely on him instead of on human reasoning. Have you thus applied yourself with a view to spiri-

5. Why did the apostle Paul urge certain Christians to "press on to maturity"?

6. How might some today be in need of similar admonition?

7. Why is the immature Christian who fails to exert himself to grow up spiritually in a dangerous position?

8. How does the attaining of spiritual maturity differ from gaining physical maturity?

tual growth? Are you acting in accord with the Scriptural counsel to "stay awake, stand firm in the faith, carry on as men, grow mighty"?—1 Cor. 16:13; Heb. 5:14.

⁹ As the Christian "babe" continues studying the Scriptures and applies what he learns, his advancement in appreciation of God's truth and more difficult doctrines is accompanied by a corresponding growth in his spiritual outlook and Christian personality. Changes take place in his thinking, in his viewpoint, and in his life. He finds that his interests and motivations are becoming related to spiritual matters, for God's truth is having a profound and beneficial effect on his life. He is following the exhortation from God's Word to "quit being fashioned after this system of things, but be transformed by making your mind over, that you may prove to yourselves the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."—Rom. 12:2.

¹⁰ This 'making over of the mind' has a profound effect on the personality of the maturing Christian. The worldly outlook, with its reasonings, its emphasis on material things and worldly pleasures, is progressively replaced with an interest in spiritual matters and in doing the will of Jehovah God. In place of the works of the flesh, the fruitage of God's spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness and self-control—becomes more and more apparent. A new force or dominant spirit is at work within him. He is heeding the Bible's counsel: "Put away the old personality which conforms to your former course of conduct and which is being corrupted according to his deceptive desires; but . . . you should be made new in the force actuating your mind, and should put on the new personality which was created according to God's

will in true righteousness and loyalty."

—Eph. 4:22-24; Gal. 5:19-23.

¹¹ When the old personality is put away and a new force or dominant spirit is actuating the mind, the Christian has attained maturity. Formerly the force actuating his mind was the one that had resulted from the things taught and experienced in the world. These things fed into the mind developed in him certain patterns of thinking and heart motivation. Thus, when he heard a matter requiring a moral decision, this force within his mind directed him in a worldly direction. But, as a mature Christian, he has a new force or spirit impelling him to act. As a result of his regular, prayerful study of God's Word of truth and the operation of God's spirit, this actuating force inclines him in a righteous direction. Hence, when a matter is presented to him involving a moral decision, his mind is bent by this new "force" or dominant attitude toward a righteous, spiritual course. He thus preserves a fine relationship with Jehovah God and can rest assured of gaining the reward of everlasting life.

¹² One of the primary aims of the Christian congregation, with its "gifts in men," elders serving as shepherds and teachers, is to help all to attain this maturity, to be firmly rooted in Christian truth and to live in harmony therewith. In this regard, note the apostle Paul's words at Ephesians 4: 11-15: "He [Jesus Christ, the head of the Christian congregation] gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ, until we all attain to the oneness in the faith and in the accurate knowledge of the Son

9. What effect does study and application of God's Word have on the Christian "babe"?

10. What changes take place as the maturing Christian 'makes his mind over'?

11. What is the "force" actuating the mind of a mature Christian, and how does it cause him to react to situations calling for moral decisions?

12. What is the role of elders in helping members of the congregation to attain maturity?

of God, to a full-grown man, to the measure of stature that belongs to the fullness of the Christ; in order that we should no longer be babes, tossed about as by waves and carried hither and thither by every wind of teaching by means of the trickery of men, by means of cunning in contriving error. But speaking the truth, let us by love grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ." So, in addition to personal study and application of God's Word, response to the Bible-based teaching of Christian elders can be a real aid in making progress to maturity.

DANGERS TO MATURE AND MATURING CHRISTIANS

¹³ Once having attained maturity, Christians have to be careful that they do not go bad or become delinquent. Just as a man cannot become a child by acting in a childish way, the mature Christian does not become immature through wrong actions. But he can become corrupt and lose his approved standing with God. All Christians, therefore, need to take to heart the inspired words: "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall."

—1 Cor. 10:12.

¹⁴ We must be on guard against letting the world influence our thinking, clouding it and causing us to act foolishly. The Bible exhorts us: "Do not become young children in powers of understanding, but be babes as to badness; yet become full-grown in powers of understanding." (1 Cor. 14:20) Certainly Christians do not need experience in badness and wrongdoing, nor should they want or seek such. When it comes to dishonest dealings with others, playing the role of a hypocrite, or pursuing sexually immoral or perverted

13. (a) Is it possible for a mature Christian to become immature? (b) What can happen to a mature Christian if he does not watch his conduct?

14. In what sense should Christians be as babes and at the same time as adults?

associations, Christians ought to be as babes, innocent and inexperienced. Yet in distinguishing right from wrong, they should be as adults that are firm for what is right and not easily swayed by smooth talk.

¹⁵ Unclean and immoral worldly thinking can ruin even the mature Christian. No one is immune to temptation. All must fight the sinful tendencies of the flesh and avoid things that whip up fleshly desires. It is wise, therefore, to heed the counsel from God's Word: "Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Cor. 15:33) That means avoiding the company of those without faith, persons of evil or perverted inclinations, desires or conduct—fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, drunkards and sadists. Would it not also include keeping them out of one's thoughts by not meditating on such types, by not reading about them for sensual pleasure, by not viewing them for entertainment on the television screen or on a motion-picture screen? Likewise, the use of vulgar speech and the telling of obscene jokes and stories, which many worldlings consider "adult" conduct, would be weakening to mature Christians and detrimental to those seeking to attain Christian maturity. Such things should be shunned, as God's Word counsels: "Let fornication and uncleanness of every sort or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as it befits holy people; neither shameful conduct nor foolish talking nor obscene jesting, things which are not becoming."—Eph. 5:3, 4; 4:29-31; Col. 3:5-10.

¹⁶ The world's insatiable greed for money and material gain is something else that must be resisted. A recognition of the transitoriness of material riches, however,

15. What forms can "bad associations" take, and why can even the mature Christian be corrupted by them?

16. (a) What worldly attitude toward material things must be guarded against? (b) Why is knowledge of the transitoriness of material things not enough to combat greed for money?

is not enough to combat this greed. Many persons in the world know full well and freely admit that beyond the basic necessities of life money cannot buy the really important things—joy, good health, human understanding. Yet they feverishly pursue materialistic goals. Were a Christian to allow this spirit to take hold of him, it would subtly undermine his appreciation for spiritual things. It could even destroy his faith. The Bible says: "The love of money is a root of all sorts of injurious things, and by reaching out for this love some have been led astray from the faith and have stabbed themselves all over with many pains."—1 Tim. 6:10.

¹⁷ To prevent this from happening to us, we must continue to reflect appreciatively on the far greater worth of spiritual riches. We should not let undue concern for the necessities of life rob us of the comforting conviction that Jehovah God cares for his people. Jesus Christ gave this assurance: "Your heavenly Father knows you need all these things [food, clothing and shelter]. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you. So, never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties." (Matt. 6:32-34) Yes, we should be content with the necessities of life. Not perishable material riches, but godly devotion results in lasting gain. Our godly devotion enables us to enjoy spiritual health and contentment and holds forth the promise of everlasting life.—1 Tim. 4:8; 6:6-8.

¹⁸ Doubts, too, can have a damaging effect on mature as well as maturing Christians. Even mature Christians may at times not fully understand a Scriptural

point. If they were to allow this to rob them of their peace of mind and contentment, they could easily be distracted from the truly important thing, that is, serving Jehovah God faithfully. Others sometimes come up with personal theories regarding the explanation of certain scriptures. Because the congregation of God's people today does not acknowledge such explanations as truth, they begin to find fault and to doubt Jehovah's backing of his people. (Compare John 6:53, 66-69; Luke 12:42-44.) Still others get overly concerned about the attitudes or actions of some fellow believers. They start looking at imperfect humans, judge the whole congregation on that basis and soon lose their joy in teaching the truth to others. They begin to doubt that those with whom they enjoyed pleasant spiritual fellowship are really God's devoted people.—Compare Colossians 3:13, 14.

¹⁹ Should doubts of this nature arise in your mind, what can you do? Humbly appeal to Jehovah God for wisdom. You can rest assured that he will give you the needed wisdom to cope with any trialsome situation. As the disciple James wrote: "If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him." (Jas. 1:5) Also, avail yourself of the help that elders in the congregation of Jehovah's Christian witnesses can give. By talking to someone having a good understanding of God's Word, you will often find that his objective comments will aid you to clear away doubts and to find again real joy in your service to God.

²⁰ So, then, if any have not as yet reached Christian maturity, let them "press on" to it, guarding against the unwholesome influence of the world. If we

17. What must be done to resist being ruined by undue concern over the anxieties of life or by a desire for riches?

18. (a) What kind of doubts may arise in the mind of mature and maturing Christians? (b) What effect can such doubts have on the Christian?

19. What can be done if one begins to have doubts about the Christian congregation?

20. What should mature and maturing Christians do because of having everlasting life in view?

are already mature Christians, "let us go on walking orderly in this same routine," not allowing ourselves to become corrupted. Let us use our maturity to good advantage, 'carrying on as men, growing

mighty,' aiding others who have yet to reach the goal of Christian maturity, so that together we may all reach our final goal—God's approval to eternal life.—Phil. 3:12, 14-16; Gal. 6:1, 2; 1 Cor. 16:13, 14.

'MAKE YOUR ADVANCEMENT'

CHISTIAN maturity does not mean the end of advancement in the case of a devoted servant of Jehovah God. It was to a mature Christian, Timothy, that the apostle Paul wrote: "Continue applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching. . . . Ponder over these things; be absorbed in them, that your advancement may be manifest to all persons."—1 Tim. 4:13-15.

² That maturity does not mean an end to progress is obvious from what we see in the normal course of life. Is not a married man with a family of his own looked upon as mature? Yet, can he not continue to gain greater wisdom as he handles adult responsibilities? Can he not learn from his mistakes and from the successes and failures of others? Surely! He may also look to his father or other older men for counsel and guidance, recognizing their greater experience and wisdom.

³ So it is with mature Christians. Through study and application of God's Word, they continue to grow in knowledge, appreciation and discernment. They make improvement in building up a fine spirit

among family members and in affecting other people for good. Mature Christians can also learn from one another, for they vary in their manifestations of spiritual qualifications. One may be outstanding in knowledge. Another may be especially notable for his kindness or his patience. Still another may be exceptional in good judgment or discernment as to problems. Another may be unusually generous or hospitable. Still another may have exceptional directive ability.

⁴ There being room for improvement in various aspects of Christian living, a mature servant of Jehovah God does well to take time to ponder whether he is continuing to make advancement. There are three areas that we might consider: (1) attaining greater knowledge, understanding and wisdom, (2) producing in greater abundance the fruitage of God's spirit and (3) discharging responsibilities as a family member.

INCREASING KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND WISDOM

⁵ Ask yourself: Is my enjoyment of reading and studying the Bible growing as

1. What do the apostle Paul's words to Timothy reveal as to whether a spiritually mature Christian can make advancement?

2. How does a man's normal course of life show that maturity does not end advancement?

3. How can mature Christians continue to advance?

4. Since mature Christians can continue to make progress, what three areas of advancement would it be good for them to consider?

5. How might one analyze whether one is increasing in knowledge, understanding and wisdom?

each year passes? Does it steadily become clearer and more meaningful to me? Am I applying the Bible's admonition better in my life? If you can answer, Yes, to these questions, you are increasing in knowledge, understanding and wisdom. But if you notice little advancement, what should you do?

⁶ You would certainly want to apply yourself in filling your mind and heart with the wisdom found in God's Word. Regardless of the advancement that we may have made, mere reading of the Bible and Bible study aids, even if done regularly, is not in itself enough for us to continue to make progress. The Bible's counsel must reach the heart, that is, the heart must be moved to respond appreciatively. Only then will we be impelled to act wisely. (Ps. 119:11) Hence, there is a need for thoughtful meditation, to think in terms of what effect the things read and studied should be having on our life, and why. As you read and study, you might ponder questions such as: What does the material help me to see about Jehovah God? Am I striving to conform to his personality, ways or dealings as revealed in the passage of Scripture being read? Does the Biblical material point up any weakness in me? What could I do to work on this weakness?

⁷ Attending and listening attentively at meetings also increase our fund of knowledge, deepen our understanding and move us to act wisely. Christian meetings serve to incite us "to love and fine works." (Heb. 10:24, 25) The comments and talks given can stir our hearts to continue showing love for God by conforming ever closer to his Word. What we hear can strengthen our resolve to improve in letting self-sacrificing love have its full expression toward fellow believers, family members and

6. What can we do to make sure that what we read in God's Word is moving our hearts to respond appreciatively?

7. How do Christian meetings incite us "to love and fine works"?

others of the world of mankind. Because of what we hear, we may at times see that our works in a particular area are not truly "fine." (Matt. 5:16; Titus 3:8) This puts us in position to apply what has been called to our attention and to act wisely.

⁸ Furthermore, what we do personally in preparation for meetings can help us to make advancement. Scriptural material is impressed more deeply upon our mind and heart as we consider it beforehand and then hear it repeated at the meetings. Advance preparation puts us in a better position to take note of the details and check whether we understood the specifics of the material when we considered it privately. Because of advance preparation, our comments will be more meaningful. We will be better able to use our own words and not just read points from the printed page without really having given heartfelt consideration to their significance. (Prov. 15:28) This can make us a greater source of encouragement to others, as our heartfelt expressions will have greater appeal to those hearing us.

⁹ Prayer, too, plays a vital role in making advancement. Jesus Christ said: "If you, although being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!" (Luke 11:13) It is by means of this spirit that Jehovah God enables us to understand his Word and apply it correctly. The holy spirit serves as a remembrancer and a teacher. As a remembrancer, it brings back to mind Scriptural principles that we know, and, as a teacher, it helps us to discern their correct application. So when we are faced with problems or have to make weighty decisions, we can appeal to Jehovah God for help. His spirit will then

8. How can preparation for meetings help us to make advancement and be a source of encouragement to others?

9. Why will appealing to Jehovah for the help of his spirit contribute to our making advancement?

aid us to recall what we need to know and prevent us from going astray by helping us to see the proper course to take in the light of what has been recalled to our mind. This is in keeping with Jesus' words to his disciples: "The helper, the holy spirit, . . . will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you."—John 14:26.

¹⁰ Being imperfect, we need to seek God's forgiveness for our sins. The apostle John counseled fellow believers: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) When we are specific in our prayers as to how we transgressed, this impresses upon us the seriousness of what we have done. This can serve to strengthen us in our decision to do better as we seek the help of God's spirit to make improvement in areas wherein we are weak. Thus we are aided to act wisely.

¹¹ The way in which we express ourselves in prayer to Jehovah God can reveal whether we are making advancement in understanding and applying God's Word in our lives. What of your prayers? Have they become more meaningful? Do they reflect a depth of concern for fellow humans? Are they specific? Do they demonstrate an affectionate relationship with our heavenly Father? Do you find yourself wanting to turn to him in prayer, to voice your appreciation for his loving-kindness? If our relationship to Jehovah is a close one, we will delight to approach him in prayer. His guidance, in answer to our prayers, will be very clear to us. In no way will we feel restrained in prayer to him, fearing that he will not hear us because of our thinking he has some black mark against us. Deep love for Jehovah dispels such fear. That is the point the

apostle John made when he wrote: "There is no fear in love, but perfect love throws fear outside, because fear exercises a restraint. Indeed, he that is under fear has not been made perfect in love."—1 John 4:18.

PRODUCING THE SPIRIT'S FRUITAGE

¹² When we yield ourselves to the influence of God's wisdom as set forth in his Word and the guidance of his spirit, we will find that our spirit or dominant feeling will compel us to conform ever closer to God's standard of holiness or purity. We will be moved to want to imitate his fine qualities—his love, justice, wisdom, mercy and loyalty. The good and wholesome effect of the training and discipline received through personal and congregational study of the Bible will be manifest to observers in our attitude, speech and actions. Though the sinful tendencies of our fallen flesh may push us in a wrong direction, our spirit or dominant attitude will cooperate with the leading of God's spirit and restrain the desires of our flesh. As the apostle Paul observed in his letter to the Galatians: "Keep walking by spirit and you will carry out no fleshly desire at all. For the flesh is against the spirit in its desire, and the spirit against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, so that the very things that you would like to do you do not do."—Gal. 5:16, 17.

¹³ In looking objectively at your life as a Christian, what do you see? Do you see this wholesome force or dominant attitude at work in you to a far greater degree than when you were just a spiritual "babe"? Do fellow Christians see your advancement in a fuller manifestation of the spirit's fruitage, especially in your expression of self-sacrificing love? Does your dai-

10. In what way can our prayers for forgiveness of sins aid us in continuing to progress spiritually?

11. What might our prayers reveal about our spiritual advancement and our relationship to Jehovah?

12. What wholesome effect will yielding to the influence of God's wisdom and spirit have on us?

13. What questions might we ask ourselves to determine whether we are making progress in displaying godly qualities?

ly conduct indicate that advancement is taking place in your life? What do people see in you—in your home, at your place of secular employment, in your neighborhood, in your association with others? Is your example one that honors Jehovah by your reflection of kindness, honesty, mild temper and self-control? Are you continuing to make improvement in this regard?

—Gal. 5:22-26.

MAKING ADVANCEMENT AS A FAMILY

¹⁴ As devoted servants of Jehovah God, we, as family groups, should stand out as different from the world of mankind. Is that true of your family? Do all in the family recognize their God-given responsibilities? Are they continuing to make improvement in meeting the divine requirements applying to them personally?

¹⁵ Are you a father?

Then you have the weighty responsibility of exercising proper headship. (1 Cor. 11:3) How are you exercising that headship? Are you conforming more and more to the pattern of Jesus Christ, the head of the Christian congregation? Are you imitating him?

—Eph. 5:25-29.

¹⁶ Jesus Christ took genuine interest in the spiritual welfare of his disciples. Even when they were slow to grasp points, he did not get impatient with them. He took time to make things clear for them and saw to it that they really understood his teaching. (Matt. 16:6-12; John 16:16-30) When they continued to have a problem in getting a right view of themselves, Jesus

14. When it comes to spiritual progress, what should be our desire as Christian families?

15. What weighty responsibility has been given to the father, and whose example should a Christian father imitate in discharging it?

16. How did Jesus show deep concern for the spiritual interests of his disciples?

repeated points on the need for humbly ministering to others. (Mark 9:33-37; 10:42-44; Luke 22:24-27) On his final night with them he fortified the point by means of an object lesson—washing their feet. (John 13:14, 15) Jesus also took into consideration their limitations and did not give them more information than they could comprehend.—John 16:4, 12.

¹⁷ Do you as a father imitate Jesus' example when studying the Bible with your family? Do you make sure they really understand? Do you take into consideration their limitations and watch that you do not require too much? When you note wrong attitudes and actions, do you make it clear to members of your family just why they are wrong and why they should want to change? Are you firm for what is right and do you administer discipline in love?

¹⁸ Jesus Christ was concerned about the physical welfare of his disciples. Thus, when the apostles returned to Jesus from a preaching tour and made report of their activity, he said to them: "Come, you yourselves, privately into a lonely place and rest up a bit." (Mark 6:31) As a family head, are you likewise aware of the needs of your wife and children? Do you treat your wife as the "weaker vessel," taking into consideration her physical and biological limitations? (1 Pet. 3:7) Do you see to it that your family has time to relax from the regular routine of life?

¹⁹ In expression of his deep love for his disciples, Jesus Christ willingly sacrificed his life. (John 15:13) Are you displaying this kind of love for your wife and children? Are you willing to forgo personal preferences and desires for the sake of

17. How might a Christian father question himself to make sure he is imitating Jesus' example in caring for the spiritual welfare of his family?

18. (a) How did Jesus demonstrate his interest in the physical welfare of his disciples? (b) How might a Christian father copy Jesus' example in this?

19. In what other areas might a Christian father check himself to see if he is following Jesus' example of self-sacrificing love?



your family's happiness? Do you show your love for your wife by according her a position of honor and dignity in the home, not making light of her weaknesses, belittling her or otherwise making her feel low and degraded? Are you striving to make each member of the family feel wanted, appreciated and needed? Do you take time to listen to them, find out their feelings on matters and take their viewpoint into consideration when making decisions?

²⁰ Jesus, in exercising his headship, does not dominate the Christian congregation. He does not hem in the individual members by a list of involved rules but allows them to exercise their faculty of conscience. Do you, like Jesus, appeal to your family's love of righteousness and exercise care not to enforce your demands by sheer weight of authority?



²¹ The Scriptures counsel wives: "Be in subjection to your husbands, as it is becoming in the Lord." (Col. 3:18) If you are a wife, do you uphold the decisions of your husband? Do you submit even to decisions that go contrary to your preference and resist the temptation to use feminine influence to get your way? A wife who is truly in subjection to her husband is aware of his attitude and thinking on matters. She, therefore, cares for family affairs in a way that will not conflict with her husband's feeling. If she is uncertain about his view of a certain activity or a major purchase, she does not presumptuously go ahead with it, but consults him, thereby avoiding problems.

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20. What can a Christian father learn from Jesus' exercise of headship over the Christian congregation?
21. How can a Christian wife demonstrate that she is truly in subjection to her husband?

She seeks at all times to discharge her wifely duties in a way that will please her husband and not give him valid reason to find fault.

²² The wife who comports herself in agreement with the headship of her husband gains a position of honor and dignity in the family. As Proverbs 31:11, 28 says of the capable wife: "In her the heart of her owner has put trust, . . . Her sons have risen up and proceeded to pronounce her happy; her owner rises up, and he praises her." Her husband is confident that she will not act foolishly and endanger the welfare of the family. Knowing that his wife will not deliberately ignore his view on matters, the husband who imitates Christ will never feel compelled to exercise such strict supervision of her actions that she does not feel free to use her own initiative. This makes it easier for the wife to care for her responsibilities and contributes to the happiness of the entire family. As a wife, are you continuing to make advancement in getting to know your husband's mind on matters and allowing this to guide your decisions in caring for family affairs?

²³ Another area in which the Bible counsels wives is in the matter of adornment and dress. "Do not let your adornment be that of the external braiding of the hair and of the putting on of gold ornaments or the wearing of outer garments, but let it be the secret person of the heart in the incorruptible apparel of the quiet and mild spirit." (1 Pet. 3:3, 4; compare Proverbs 31:30.) This does not mean that a woman should give no attention to her outward appearance—not at all. Women are admonished in the Scriptures to "adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty and soundness of mind." (1 Tim. 2:9) The emphasis, however, should be on the qualities of the heart, and the out-

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22. What blessings come to the Christian wife who is submissive to her husband?
23. How might a Christian wife's advancement be seen in her choice of dress and adornment?

ward attire and grooming should reflect the fine quality of modesty. Have you as a wife made progress in this regard? Do you find that you are not as enticed by the latest fads and styles as you once were? Are you more inclined to choose what is modest? Have you made advancement in beautifying yourself by displaying the "quiet and mild spirit," that is, displaying a dominant feeling of calmness and even temper although unfavorable circumstances may arise?



²⁴ Though not usually thought of as mature Christians, children, too, can manifest advancement in spiritual values. There comes a time in a child's life when he is expected to outgrow childish views and ways.

views and ways. Of his own experience, the apostle Paul noted: "When I was a babe, I used to speak as a babe, and to think as a babe, to reason as a babe; but now that I have become a man, I have done away with the traits of a babe." (1 Cor. 13:11) Are you, as a child, progressively doing away with the traits of a babe? Are you assuming responsibilities in the home, helping out where you can to make less work for your parents? Do you look for opportunities to do things? Or, do you still have to be asked repeatedly to help with something and then do you respond half-heartedly? Do you show initiative in building yourself up spiritually? On your own, do you read the Bible and Bible study aids and prepare for congregational meetings? Does your use of time show that you believe that 'bodily training is beneficial for a little and that godly devotion is beneficial for all things'? (1 Tim. 4:8) Do you appreciate

24. In what areas might children make advancement?

that obedience to your parents is right and is a major way in which you can please God?—Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20.

²⁵ Obedience to parents is not just a matter of doing what they say but also includes conforming to what you know will reflect favorably on the family. It really means submission to the regulations and counsel of your father and mother, in harmony with God's will. You might ask yourself: When I go out of the house, do I give evidence that I come from a Christian home? Is my spiritual advancement manifest through good manners, a respectful attitude toward older people and those in authority and through firmness for what is right—at school, in the neighborhood and elsewhere? Do I cooperate with my Christian parents in my choice of personal grooming and dress? Or do I seek to adopt immodest and extreme fads and then try to pressure my parents into seeing things my way?

²⁶ Whether you live alone or are part of a family, whether you have attained Christian maturity or are working toward that goal, advancement should be apparent in the spirit or dominating force that motivates you to do God's will. Others should be able to see that adherence to God's Word has made you a better man or woman, a better wife and mother, a better husband and father, a better son or daughter. A Christian home should be one where happiness, peace and love, rather than quarreling and shouting, prevail. It should be neat, clean and well kept. Is that true of your home? Without practical evidence of spiritual growth in the lives of those who are God's servants, our preaching means very little. Our religion, our worship, is judged largely by the results it produces in us and in our daily lives.—Col. 3:8-14.

25. How can children demonstrate progress in being obedient to parents?

26. When it comes to progress in Christian living, what should others be able to see in us?

WIDENING OUT

IN OUR

Love for Mankind

ARE you widening out in expressing a love for fellow humans? Are you making progress in being complete in your love? This involves more than being kind and generous to people who are favorably inclined toward you. Jesus Christ said: "If you love those loving you, of what credit is it to you? For even the sinners [people of bad repute] love those loving them. And if you do good to those doing good to you, really of what credit is it to you? Even the sinners do the same. Also, if you lend without interest to those from whom you hope to receive, of what credit is it to you? Even sinners lend without interest to sinners that they may get back as much. To the contrary, continue to love your enemies and to do good and to lend without interest, not hoping for anything back; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind toward the unthankful and wicked."—Luke 6:32-35.

² Consider how Jehovah God has been kind to the unthankful and wicked. They benefit from the cycles that he has put into operation to make life on earth possible. He does not deprive them of the things vital for their existence—air, sunshine and rain. "He himself gives to all persons life and breath and all things." (Acts 17:25) "He makes his sun rise upon

wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous."

—Matt. 5:45.

³ By choice, Jehovah God is kind and generous. As Creator, he has full control of all things vital for life and can withhold his gifts in a selective way. This is clear from his past activities. In the time of Moses he withheld sunshine from the Egyptians for three days, but during the same period provided light for the Israelites. (Ex. 10:23) Centuries later, when the Israelites were unfaithful to him, Jehovah exercised control of the rainfall. Through his prophet Amos, he reminded them: "As for me, I also withheld from you people the downpour when there were yet three months to the harvest; and I made it rain on one city, but on another city I would not make it rain. There was one tract of land that would be rained on, but a tract of land on which I would not make it rain would be dried up."—Amos 4:7.

⁴ But why has Jehovah God not deprived the wicked of sunshine and rain when he could do so? Why has he been kind and loving even to those having no appreciation for his gifts? He has done this to give them opportunity to change, to choose to serve him. In fact, he has gone far beyond allowing them to receive the necessities of

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1. As shown by Jesus Christ, what is involved in being complete in showing love for fellowmen?
 2. How has Jehovah demonstrated kindness and love toward even the unthankful and wicked?

3. What do Jehovah's past activities reveal about his ability to withhold sunshine and rain?
4. (a) Why has Jehovah God not deprived the unthankful and wicked of life's necessities? (b) How has Jehovah gone far beyond providing necessities in expressing love?

life. He made provision for them and all others of mankind to be freed from sin and death. This he did at great cost to himself, sacrificing his only-begotten Son. (John 3:16) "God," says the Bible, "recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8) This act of love laid a legal basis for redeeming humankind from the enslavement to sin that became their lot when Adam forfeited perfect human life for himself and his unborn offspring.

⁵ The ransom price was Jesus Christ's perfect human life. It being his life that was the price, Jesus shares ownership of the human race with Jehovah God, the Originator of the arrangement. That is why the Scriptures speak both of God and of Christ as doing the purchasing. We read of the "congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son." (Acts 20:28) And of Jesus Christ, Revelation 5:9 declares: "With your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation." That not just the members of the congregation of God are among the bought ones is clear from 1 Timothy 2:6, where Jesus is referred to as giving himself a "corresponding ransom for all." Is your love for fellow humans continuing to widen out because of your appreciating that all humans are really the property of God and of Christ?

⁶ Jehovah God considers life as something highly valuable. He does not want those whom he bought with the precious blood of his Son to perish. It is his desire that people everywhere, regardless of their station in life, learn the truth, accept his provision and gain life. (1 Tim. 2:1-4) "He does not desire any to be destroyed," wrote the apostle Peter, "but desires all to attain to repentance."—2 Pet. 3:9.

5. To whom does the human race belong, and why?
6. How does God value life?

IMITATING GOD'S EXAMPLE

⁷ In your relationship with others, do you reflect God's attitude toward humankind? Jehovah God loathes wickedness, but he loves humans as his property and wants only the best for them. Do you treat people as God's property, wanting them to share in the blessings he has in store for those respecting his ownership rights? If we share God's view of mankind, there should be evidence that we are working hard to be kind, generous and loving.

⁸ In examining this matter further, you might ask yourself: When I am in control of my time, assets and abilities, do I use these almost exclusively to benefit myself, my family and my friends? Or, do I think about what I can do for those in unfortunate circumstances or those who might be lonely, even if their personality does not especially appeal to me? Do I make others feel that they are appreciated? Am I inclined to give of myself in behalf of others with no thought of getting anything in return from them? How do I react when someone who has been very unkind to me comes into great physical need? Do I pity him? Do I try to help the person? Would I be willing to aid him or her with household duties—preparing meals, doing shopping, washing clothes, cleaning the home? Would I be willing to lend him money even if I knew that his financial circumstances were so desperate that he might never be able to repay me?—Compare Exodus 23:4, 5.

⁹ When your generosity, kindness and love go beyond what is expected and include the unfortunate as well as those who may not have treated you well, you are imitating Jehovah God. You are widening out in your love for your fellowmen. You are acting in harmony with the fact that

7, 8. What might we ask ourselves in considering whether we reflect God's attitude toward humankind?
9. As pointed out by Jesus Christ at Luke 14:12-14, of what can we be certain when we imitate God's example of generosity?

they have been bought by God and Christ. You can, therefore, be certain that God will reward you. Jesus Christ called attention to this, saying: "When you spread a dinner or evening meal, do not [exclusively, as a usual practice] call your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors. Perhaps sometime they might also invite you in return and it would become a repayment to you. But when you spread a feast, invite poor people, crippled, lame, blind; and you will be happy, because they have nothing with which to repay you. For you will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous ones."—Luke 14:12-14.

¹⁰ Furthermore, dealing kindly and lovingly toward those manifesting an unkind and unloving spirit can cause them to realize the need to recognize God's ownership of them. Note what Romans 12:20 says about this: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing this you will heap fiery coals upon his head." As fire melts iron, your kindness may soften his hard attitude toward you, cause him to feel ashamed, to regret the way he has treated you and move him to change his ways. It can open his eyes to what real Christianity is and prompt him to begin taking steps to share with you in true worship.

¹¹ Of course, the extent to which we as individuals can do good for others is limited by circumstances. There may be physical and/or financial limitations. So no one needs to feel discouraged because he cannot do as much as someone else. The determining factor of our being complete in expressions of love, generosity and kindness is not quantity. It is a matter of having a dominant spirit of generosity, kind-

ness and love, using to the full our abilities and assets to be a source of encouragement and blessing to others.

¹² As Christians we have prior obligations to our families and fellow believers. The Scriptures say: "If anyone does not provide for those who are his own, and especially for those who are members of his household, he has disowned the faith and is worse than a person without faith." (1 Tim. 5:8) "Let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Gal. 6:10) So, then, it would be wrong to neglect family members and fellow believers while trying to help others of the world of mankind. Our dealings with those related to us in a fleshly and a spiritual sense should be outstanding in reflecting kindness, love and active concern for their welfare.

¹³ There are times, however, when expressions of generosity would not help the recipients. Some people, occasionally even fellow Christians, show themselves to be irresponsible, lazy and unwilling to accept work even when jobs that they would be able to handle are available. Were they to receive material aid, they would not be encouraged to adjust their wrong view of work. In their case the Bible's injunction at 2 Thessalonians 3:10 would apply: "If anyone does not want to work, neither let him eat." Also, Christians rightly refuse to aid those who would use what is given to them for activities and habits that are divinely condemned. Withholding certain things from a person can actually be an expression of love and concern for him when it serves to impress upon his mind and heart the need to change and not to misuse assets that others worked hard to acquire.

10. What good effect can kindness have on an unkind, unloving person?

11. What determines whether one is complete in one's expression of love, generosity and kindness?

12. Is a Christian's main responsibility toward the world of mankind alienated from God?

13. When would withholding material things from a person be an expression of love for him?

THE VITAL WORK OF KINGDOM-PREACHING AND DISCIPLE-MAKING

¹⁴ Of greater importance than material giving is the help Christians can render in a spiritual way. Especially now is this an urgent matter—one involving life and death. How so? Bible prophecy and the physical facts in fulfillment thereof prove that since 1914 C.E. the generation now living is in the “time of the end.” (Matt. 24:3-14, 32-34; Luke 21:25, 26; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Rev. 6:2-8)* This means that all who are not servants of Jehovah God as devoted disciples of his Son stand in danger of losing their lives.

¹⁵ People everywhere need to be made aware of this danger. Their situation is different from that of persons who faced execution during certain earlier divine judgments. For example, the thousands who perished when Jehovah God used the Babylonians to execute judgment upon unfaithful Judah and Jerusalem would have died eventually anyway. Their death did not mean total annihilation. But the judgment expressed against those who refuse to know God and obey the “good news” about Jesus Christ in this generation is final. The Bible tells us: “These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength.” (2 Thess. 1:9) “These will depart into everlasting cutting-off.” (Matt. 25:46) And survivors of the destruction will not live just a few years longer and die. No, before them is the prospect of everlasting life, free from sickness, sorrow and pain. —Rev. 7:14-17; 21:3-5.

* For details establishing the period from 1914 C.E. onward as the “last days” of this system, see the book *True Peace and Security—From What Source?*, pages 73-89.

14. Why is the giving of spiritual aid especially urgent today?

15. In what way does the situation of people today differ from that of those who faced execution during certain earlier divine judgments?

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¹⁶ Considering what is at stake, do not Jehovah’s Christian witnesses today have reason to put forth their best efforts to reach people with the lifesaving message from God’s Word? Their doing so would show proper regard for God’s desire that all men repent and live in harmony with accurate knowledge. Before Jehovah God allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and devastate the land of Judah he had warning given. He considered the few additional years of life to be enjoyed by those heeding the warning as precious. He wanted to spare as many as possible from experiencing a horrible death as a result of war or its effects. He therefore placed a weighty responsibility upon his prophet Ezekiel, saying: “A watchman is what I have made you to the house of Israel, and you must hear from my mouth speech and you must warn them from me. When I say to someone wicked, ‘You will positively die,’ and you do not actually warn him and speak in order to warn the wicked one from his wicked way to preserve him alive, he being wicked, in his error he will die, but his blood I shall ask back from your own hand. But as for you, in case you have warned someone wicked and he does not actually turn back from his wickedness and from his wicked way, he himself for his error will die; but as for you, you will have delivered your own soul.”—Ezek. 3:17-19.

¹⁷ In view of the far greater danger in which humans are today, should we think that our responsibility for the lives of people is less than Ezekiel’s? Surely not! The commission to preach and make disciples given by Jesus Christ over nineteen centuries ago was to continue in force “until the conclusion of the system of things.”

16. What did Jehovah God do before executing his judgment upon unfaithful Judah and Jerusalem in the time of Ezekiel?

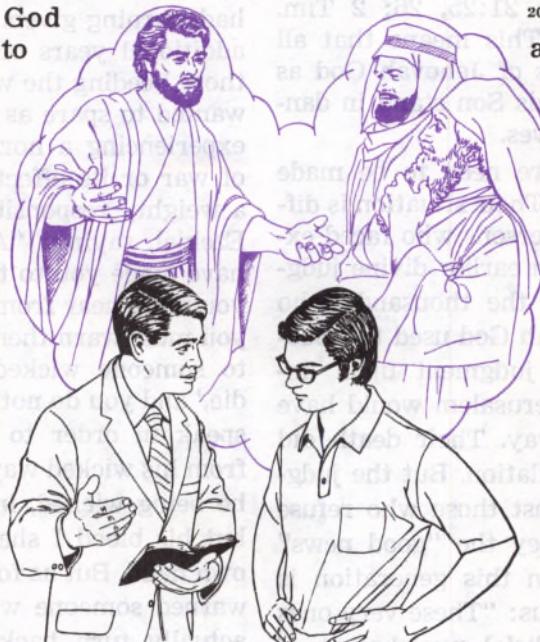
17. What should Ezekiel’s commission help us to appreciate about our commission to preach and make disciples?

(Matt. 28:19, 20) Do you keenly sense your responsibility in carrying out this commission?

¹⁸ Does this mean that people would perish everlastinglly were you to fail as an individual? No, for the work is not man's but God's. He is opening the hearts of individuals, and it is our grand privilege to be his "fellow workers." (Acts 16:14; 1 Cor. 3:9) To sound the warning, Jehovah God could cause the 'stones to cry out.' (Luke 19:40) So while individuals may fail, nothing will prevent God's purpose from being carried out to reach people to the extent he desires before the destruction of the present system of things. And Jehovah's Christian witnesses as a body will not fail to sound the warning. Their love for him and fellowmen is strong enough to move them to do their best in aiding people to find the way of salvation before it is too late. They are willing to arrange their personal affairs, even adjust their circumstances, to accomplish this. No, the stones will not have to cry out.

¹⁹ But this will not free from bloodguilt individuals who fail to show real love and concern for fellowmen. To illustrate, if a father neglected his child so that it came into a perilous situation, he would not be without guilt even if someone else res-

cued the child from death. Similarly, one professing to be a servant of Jehovah but failing in his duty toward others would not be guiltless. His loveless, unconcerned attitude would be tantamount to murder. He would not be able to excuse himself on the basis that he did *some* preaching, for Jehovah God would know the degree of negligence and would pass judgment accordingly.—Rom. 14:12.



Just as Ezekiel delivered God's warning before Jerusalem's destruction, so Jesus' disciples have the responsibility to warn people of the far greater danger that humans face today

forts as long as there is a need and they have a reasonable measure of strength.

²¹ Is that the way you feel about the vital work of Kingdom-preaching? As you call on people at their homes, does your heart move you to keep on as long as you reasonably can, without losing sight of the need for rest and refreshment as well

18. Why will God's purpose to have the warning sounded not fail due to the unfaithfulness of individuals?

19. Why will unfaithful ones not be free from bloodguilt?

20. Why is this no time for token service? Illustrate.
21. What questions might be asked about the way we feel toward Kingdom-preaching?

as fulfilling your other Scriptural obligations? Or, do you look forward to quitting and perhaps engaging in some form of recreation or diversion? At other times, do you make use of opportunities—in school, at work or in other daily contacts—to talk to people about the truth? Are you really concerned about getting the Bible's message to relatives and acquaintances? Are you also alert to discern when it is better to let fine conduct rather than the spoken word give a witness?

²² Be it also remembered that the commission Jesus Christ gave is not just a matter of preaching or declaring God's truth. People need to be taught to become his disciples. Do you make a reasonable effort to revisit those manifesting some interest and try to start home Bible studies with them? People need to know, not only what the Bible says, but also how they can live in harmony with it. Because he had done his utmost in teaching the truth, the apostle Paul could say: "I am clean from the blood of all men, for I have not held back from telling you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:26, 27) Do you, like Paul, make certain that your teaching is not defective in vital areas and that those whom you teach understand God's requirements fully? Surely we would not want to contribute toward someone's wrongdoing by holding back information he needs to know.

²³ Important, too, are deep concern and love for those whom we teach. Of himself and his fellow workers, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "You yourselves are our letter, inscribed on our hearts and known and being read by all mankind.

22. What is involved in making disciples?

23. Using 2 Corinthians 3:2, 3, show the attitude one should have toward those being taught and the good effect of proper teaching.

For you are shown to be a letter of Christ written by us as ministers, inscribed not with ink but with spirit of a living God, not on stone tablets, but on fleshly tablets, on hearts." (2 Cor. 3:2, 3) When we have deep love and concern for those whom we teach, the taught ones will be like 'letters' inscribed on our hearts. As we rely on the help of God's spirit and do our utmost within the limits of our capabilities, responsive ones will become like letters of Christ, inscribed by God's spirit on hearts. Yes, the effect of God's spirit on their hearts will move them to display a Christian personality, which observers can see or "read." Are you exerting yourself vigorously as God's 'fellow worker' in efforts to produce such 'letters'?

²⁴ As you think about your activity as a servant of Jehovah God, you can doubtless recall many joys. True, you may wish you could do more and you may see areas wherein you could improve. You may even feel bad at times because you cannot definitely point to any living 'letters.' But if you have exerted yourself in efforts to fulfill the Christian commission to preach and to teach, you can rest assured that Jehovah God and Jesus Christ are pleased with your devoted service. It is only natural to sense more keenly our responsibilities toward others now than we did when we were spiritual "babes." This is good. If, on the other hand, some among us have been somewhat selfish, they should think seriously about widening out in being complete in showing kindness, generosity and love for fellow humans. Oh, may the day of divine vengeance find us deserving of protection because we have acted in harmony with the love that Jehovah God and Jesus Christ have for mankind!

24. What effect might thinking seriously about our activity as servants of Jehovah have on us?

'Out of the Heart's Abundance'

HUMANS usually cannot keep good news to themselves, can they? They feel compelled to tell others. This is especially true when the good news can be a real blessing to the hearers. That is why Jehovah's Christian witnesses, with hearts filled with appreciation for the precious promises of God, are moved to share Bible truth with others. It is just as Jesus Christ said: 'Out of the heart's abundance the mouth speaks.'—Luke 6:45.

Because of making good use of opportunities that present themselves in daily life to discuss the Scriptures, many Witnesses have had the joy of seeing others take their stand for true worship.

For example, a Witness was doing some shopping at a crowded supermarket in California. At the meat counter the woman next to her remarked: "My! The price of meat is so high. I don't see how anyone with a family can afford to buy meat." The Witness replied: "A lot of families *can't* afford it. Many are going hungry today." The woman agreed and noted that things were getting so bad she did not know where it was all going to end. Commenting on what happened afterward, the Witness writes:

"I told her many people felt the same way she did and were really concerned about the future. We discussed the fact that despite man's efforts things do not improve but continually get worse.

"I continued: 'I don't know if you read your Bible very much, but I read mine all the time. According to Jesus' words, these critical times are in fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Conditions are not going to get any better, but will even get worse.' She thought for a moment, then

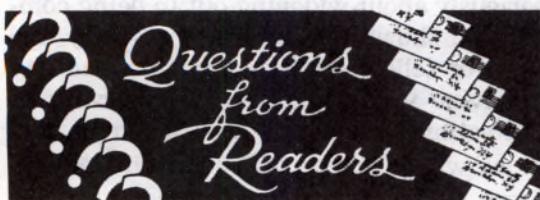
said, 'I've tried to read my Bible, but I just can't understand it.' I told her it was probably because most Bibles are written in archaic English and we don't speak that way in this modern day. That is why I had gotten myself a Bible written in modern English.

"She asked if anyone could buy that Bible. I told her if she would like to have one, I just happened to have an extra one in my car that I could let her have. She was very pleased and said she would wait while I went to the car for it. When I got to the car I found I had placed my last copy.

"I remembered that another Witness lived about three blocks from the store. So I prayed all the way to his house that he would have a Bible. And he did.

"As it took longer than I had expected, I really did not think the woman would still be at the store when I got back. But she was waiting right where I had left her. I read to her from 2 Timothy 3, Matthew 24 and Luke 21. People were wheeling carts all around us as we were reading the Bible. Then she said she wished she knew her Bible like I did. So I asked if she would like to have me come to her home and help her to understand the Bible. She gave me her address, and I made arrangements to call at her home."

A home Bible study was started with this woman. Today, as a baptized witness of Jehovah, she is making public expressions herself to others about her Bible-based hope. Truly there is good reason to use every opportunity to share the comforting message of the Bible with others. Does your heart move you to do so?



- Since Romans 11:26 says that "all Israel will be saved," does this mean that a conversion of all the Jews is to be expected?—England.

No, for the evidence of Scripture points to the full number of spiritual Israelites as the

ones embraced by the expression "all Israel." That fleshly distinctions no longer count with God is clear from Galatians 3:28, where we read: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one person in union with Christ Jesus." And at Galatians 6:16 this composite body of believers, both Jews and non-Jews, is called the "Israel of God."

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul made it clear that the natural descendants of Abraham through his grandson Jacob were in

point becomes the noticeable "T" is established
and now has and does to show off its central
line for being 'adopted' as sons of God. How-
ever, because of their rejecting Jesus as the
Messiah, the majority lost out on this un-
deserved favor. For this reason Jehovah God
extended an opportunity to non-Jews to become
part of the true Israel. Wrote the apostle:
"Not all who spring from Israel are really
'Israel.' Neither because they are Abraham's
seed are they all children, but: 'What will be
called "your seed" will be through Isaac.' That
is, the children in the flesh are not really the
children of God, but the children by the promise
are counted as the seed." (Rom. 9:1-8) "He is
not a Jew who is one on the outside, nor is
circumcision that which is on the outside upon
the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one on the
inside, and his circumcision is that of the heart
by spirit, and not by a written code. The praise
of that one comes, not from men, but from
God."—Rom. 2:28, 29.

Similarly, Jesus Christ pointed out to the religious leaders of Judaism who had rejected him: "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits." (Matt. 21:43) That nation proved to be the nation of spiritual Israel, composed of both Jews and non-Jews who accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord. Concerning this nation, the apostle Paul stated: "You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a *holy nation*, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. For you were once not a people, but are now God's people; you were those who had not been shown mercy, but are now those who have been shown mercy."—1 Pet. 2:9, 10.

According to the book of Revelation, membership in this spiritual nation is limited to 144,000. The apostle John writes: "I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel." (Rev. 7:4) For several reasons this simply could not refer to Israel according to the flesh. Knowing that the revelation was presented to him in "signs" and that Jehovah God was dealing with the new nation of spiritual Israel, John would have understood the reference to every "tribe of the sons of Israel" to be symbolic. The very fact that the listing of the tribes did not fully correspond to that of natural Israel, as set forth in Numbers chapter 1, confirmed this. (Rev. 7:5-8) Moreover, it was revealed to John that

sons of God (Rev. 7:4) and "natural Israel," or
persons of the flesh, were not included in the 144,000 "were bought [not from among natural Israel alone but] from among mankind as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." (Rev. 14:1, 4) Revelation 5:9, 10 makes this yet clearer: "With your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth."

Thus, when the majority of natural Israelites failed to seize the opportunity to become members of spiritual Israel during the time exclusively allotted to them (on the basis of God's covenant with Abraham), Jehovah God opened up the opportunity for non-Jews to gain membership in that nation. (Compare Daniel 9:27; Luke 1:68-79; Acts 3:19-26.) The bringing of the Gentiles into the spiritual nation was the manner by which God purposed to save all "Israel," as the apostle Paul said: "I do not want you, brothers, to be ignorant of this sacred secret, in order for you not to be discreet in your own eyes: that a dulling of sensibilities has happened in part to Israel [the literal Jews] until the full number of people of the nations has come in, and in this manner ['thus,' *Kingdom Interlinear*] all Israel will be saved."—Rom. 11:25, 26.

If the opportunity to become part of spiritual Israel had not been extended to mankind generally, "all Israel" could not have been saved. Why not? This is because, due to the unresponsiveness of natural Israelites, the membership of spiritual Israel would not have been completed within God's fixed time. Jehovah God saw that this would be the case and therefore purposed that the nation of spiritual Israel be taken from among mankind, that is, from among both Jews and non-Jews. This was a "sacred secret." As Ephesians 3:5, 6 tells us: "In other generations this secret was not made known to the sons of men as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by spirit, namely, that people of the nations should be joint heirs and fellow members of the body and partakers with us [believing Jews like the apostle Paul] of the promise in union with Christ Jesus through the good news."

Of course, it should be kept in mind that Jehovah's casting off natural Israel as a chosen nation did not close to *individuals* within that nation the opportunity to become reconciled to him. Along with all other humans, natural Israelites were bought by the precious blood

of Jesus Christ. (1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Heb. 2:9) Hence, these natural Israelites or Jews can be reconciled to God as devoted disciples of his Son. That is why the apostle Paul could say: "If the casting of them away means reconciliation for the world, what will the receiving of them [individual Jews] mean but life from the dead?"—Rom. 11:15.

Manifestly, not all the Gentile world has chosen to be reconciled with God and never will be. Otherwise, there would be no reason for the Lord Jesus Christ and his angels to take action against the ungodly. But such action will be taken. We read: "This takes into account that it is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength." (2 Thess. 1:6-9) It is noteworthy that

Christians at Thessalonica experienced tribulation at the hands of both Jews and non-Jews. (Acts 17:5-9) Hence, there is no basis for claiming that all the Jews will be converted and that therefore only non-Jews will experience adverse judgment at the hands of Jesus Christ.

Until such time as that divine judgment is executed, both Jews and non-Jews have the opportunity to become reconciled to God. Members of spiritual Israel yet on earth and a "great crowd" of other devoted servants of Jehovah God and of his Son Jesus Christ will survive the execution of judgment. (Rev. 7:2, 3, 9-17) Thus the entire nation of spiritual Israel will be saved; nothing will prevent that nation from having its full, foreordained membership.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

- March 17: Christian Maturity—Necessary for Life. Page 109. Songs to Be Used: 63, 55.
March 24: 'Make Your Advancement Manifest.' Page 114. Songs to Be Used: 94, 88.
March 31: Widening Out in Our Love for Mankind. Page 120. Songs to Be Used: 37, 45.

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Insight on the News

● Where are the world's religious leaders directing humanity to put their hope? In God's kingdom? The answer came on the 25th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A joint church communiqué declared: "The World Council of Churches and the Roman Catholic

'Chief Hope for Peace' Church have often stated that the United Nations Organization is the chief temporal hope for world peace."—"L'Osservatore Romano."

Obviously they had not learned from past mistakes. On December 12, 1918, the U.N.'s predecessor, the League of Nations, received a similar religious endorsement. At that time the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America called it "the political expression of the Kingdom of God on earth." But did the League really prove to be God's provision for safeguarding peace?

To those who did not know the answer earlier, World War II made the facts clear. God had nothing to do with the League; neither is the United Nations his.

Catholic and Protestant churches claim to teach God's Word, do they not? Then, instead of "playing politics," should they not advocate as 'the chief hope for peace' the kingdom for which God's Son Jesus Christ taught his followers to pray? (Matt. 6:9, 10) Is it not their responsibility to show people from the Bible that God's kingdom "will not be passed on to any other people," including the membership of the U.N.? (Dan. 2:44) In all honesty, is it not time for all mankind to face up to the fact that human rulers can never bring lasting peace? Only mankind's Creator can do that.

● Hailing gambling as the way to drive criminals out of the business, New York state

legalized and took over off-track gambling on horse races. Did it work? Illegal gambling and criminal involvement skyrocketed by nearly two thirds in one year! Why? Says a police official:

"A climate has been created to gamble. . . . thousands of people who never in the world would have thought of betting on [other sports events] are now betting [illegally] with the bookies."

'Climate to Gamble'

Who is involved? The study reveals that students are betting allowances and housewives are using their grocery money. Some become prostitutes to cover losses. Businessmen raise prices, embezzle or steal securities for gambling money. Others promote their own gambling enterprises to support "charity" or their churches and synagogues. "The compulsive gambler is found," says "Physician's World" magazine, in "virtually every occupation and profession, including the clergy."

This 'climate to gamble' has produced a harvest of self-indulgence, corruption and ruined lives. But "don't delude yourself," the Bible warns. If anyone "sows in the field of self-indulgence he will get a harvest of corruption out of it." Furthermore, those serving "the god of Good Luck" will eventually lose everything, for to such ones Jehovah says, "I will destine you men to the sword."—Gal. 6:7, 8, JB; Isa. 65:11, 12.

● What place does homosexuality have in Judaism? To find out, Temple Beth Chayim Chadashim ("The House of New Life") in Los Angeles, California, has petitioned the Union of American Hebrew Congregations for membership.

Homosexual Synagogue Formed in March of 1972 as the United States' first homosexual synagogue, it now hopes to join the Union. The Union has already provided some assistance to the Los Angeles synagogue. And Rabbi Erwin Herman, director of the Union's Pacific Southwest office, urged a year ago:

"I believe it is incumbent on our liberal movement to admit this congregation" when it applies. Now Rabbi Alexander M. Schindler, president of the Union, agrees: "I don't think the homosexual group should be read out of the body Jewish."

However, the "body Jewish" has in "The Torah" a command given by God to Moses that says: "If a man lies with a male as one lies with a woman, the two of them have done an abhorrent thing; they shall be put to death."—Lev. 20:13, Jewish Pub. Society.

What will the Union of American Hebrew Congregations do? Will they hold to the righteous law of God transmitted through their forefathers? Or will they repudiate it so that in this, too, they can be like the rest of the world?