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THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



TRAVELING OVERSEERS BRING BENEFITS

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Throughout the earth today, Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists and others are showing increased interest in spiritistic communication. What is the source of spiritistic messages? What does the Bible say? Commencing on page 5, our Brazilian correspondent presents facts of interest

A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds. Since it began publication in 1879, "The Watchtower" has held faithfully to God's Word as its authority. It stays clear of all political involvement. It points to the Bible prophecies showing that Jesus Christ is God's means for restoring peace and harmony to this globe. It shows that this Son of God, on the basis of his shed blood, will release mankind from sin and death to enjoy eternal life in happiness on a paradise earth. Because Jehovah God will accomplish all this soon through his kingdom by Jesus Christ, "The Watchtower" announces that kingdom as the real hope for mankind.

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ARE YOU



SUPPORTIVE? You can be!

ON A lovely spring morning a group of travelers were motoring through a beautiful countryside. Among them was an elderly couple who, over the years, had learned the art of give and take. The subject of the conversation furnished an opportunity for the husband to do some good-natured teasing of his wife. Responding in kind, his wife called out: "Tell me, what'll I do with this man?" One of their traveling companions, who had come through difficult marital problems, replied in a serious, understanding tone: "Love him and support him."

"Support him"? Do we not usually think of its being the husband's role to support his wife? Yes, generally the laws of the land require the father and husband to support his wife and children financially. One of the ways in which a man demonstrates that he 'loves his wife as his own body' is by providing for her.—Eph. 5:28, 29.

But there is also another kind of support that people can give to one another. It is emotional,

mental and moral support. This kind of support is the obligation of each member of a family toward the other. Curiously, some modern students of human nature feel that husbands have more need of this than do their wives. That is, as they face a hostile world they need to feel that the "little woman" at home is backing them up loyally.

Just how much a wife can help her husband in this respect can be seen from the pages of history. There is no question about Sir Winston Churchill's accomplishing a great deal, performing a prodigious task as England's prime minister during World War II. He is reported to have stated on one occasion: "It would not have been possible for any man in public life to get through what I have gone through without the devoted assistance of what we in England call one's better half." This source goes on to say that she was a very charming woman, one who could well have had a career of her own, but she made her husband's life and well-being her career. Not, however, that this required her to flatter him, to humor him, to be a "yes" woman. Not at all. In fact, it appears that she was frank with him and stood up to him when she felt the need of doing so.

Furnishing us an even finer example of wifely support is Sarah, the wife of the patriarch Abraham. There is no record that she complained at his being required to do so much wandering around in a foreign land. She did not even complain when he asked her to pose as

his sister for his safety. Moreover, we read that when speaking to herself she referred to him as "my lord." That she was not a wishy-washy wife can be seen from her speaking up to Abraham when the well-being of her son Isaac was threatened by his older half brother Ishmael.—Gen. 18:12; 21:8-14.

In what ways can a wife today be supportive of her husband? One way is noted in a recently published book on making family life happy. In discussing the wife's role, it says: "What a husband needs is a wife who not only loves and respects him but also is a real helper, *supporting* him in the decisions that he makes. This is not difficult when decisions are mutually agreed upon after discussion together. But it may not be so easy if you were not consulted or if you do not happen to agree. . . [But] if he sees you working hard for the success of the project, in spite of your misgivings, don't you think such loyal *support* on your part will cause him to love you all the more?" (Italics added.)

What else can a wife watch if she wants to be truly supportive? She must guard against a common weakness that many wives have, namely, that of nagging. Not without good reason does King Solomon of old allude to this. (Prov. 21:19; 25:24) Why do some women engage in it despite really loving their husbands? It could well be due to an unconscious rebellion against the husband's headship—either because of wanting to have more of a say in matters or to remind the husband that he also is not perfect. Then, again, it may be due to exaggeration of the importance of details. At a social gathering the wife may be mortified by some social faux pas on the part of her husband. Or he may have made some slip in grammar, and so she feels called on to correct him. A wife may make some criticism of his grooming, his tie not having been straight or his hair not

having been properly combed when he appeared before the public. To be nagging or harping on such details is doing the opposite of giving support. It is actually breaking down a husband.

Not that giving support is primarily the wife's role. As already noted, both husbands and wives, yes, both parents and children, have obligations along these lines. One might even be said to be supportively refraining from saying anything if one has nothing positive to say. Why make issues about things that do not really matter? There is a saying to the effect that a little kettle or pot boils over quickly. But if we are big in heart we will not be quick to express displeasure regarding trifles.

On the other hand, there are ever so many ways in which husbands and wives can give positive support to each other. Of course, the most obvious is by expressions of appreciation or commendation. You can be supportive simply by an encouraging and friendly smile, by paying close attention when the other is talking, whether to you or in public. Just by the matter of physical closeness, by being in each other's presence, preferring it to the company of others, by a squeeze of the hand—mates can be supportive of each other. Especially when things have gone wrong, sympathetic words of love and loyalty, minimizing the damage, seeing some redeeming feature in it, are supportive. All of this can have a most wholesome effect on both, because 'he who waters will be watered.'—Prov. 11:25.

Besides, are not family members, in being supportive of one another, simply obeying the Golden Rule in doing to others what they would have others do to them? Surely they are.—Luke 6:31.

So are you supportive? You not only CAN be but SHOULD be, for your own sake as well as that of others.



"YOU! At my door preaching the Bible! I cannot believe my eyes. . . . my *Mae-de-Santo* [Brazilian voodoo priestess], now one of Jehovah's Witnesses!"

This was the greeting that a Christian witness of Jehovah in Rio de Janeiro received in her door-to-door preaching activity. She had been one of thousands of Brazilian Catholics who practice some form of spiritism. However, she had given up both Catholicism and spiritism to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Why? Was she dissatisfied with her work as a voodoo priestess? Did she not derive satisfaction from spiritistic communication? These were questions raised by the householder in the interesting conversation that followed their initial encounter.

It is estimated that in Brazil about 70 percent of nominal Catholics also practice some form of spiritism. Evidently they feel that something is missing in their Catholic religion, prompting them to look elsewhere. But what is it in spiritism that interests them? For many it may be the

appeal of the mysticism in spiritistic sessions. For others, the attraction may be the hope of communicating with some dead loved one or of inquiring about the illicit love life of their husband or wife.

In the case just cited, however, it was a quest for the truth that led to the investigation of spiritism when this woman was 22 years of age. She made rapid progress, and within a short time she was in charge of the voodoo center. For 24 years she continued in that position. Much of her contact with the spirit world resulted superficially in some good for her clients, whether financially, socially or physically. But, by her own admission, in many instances her work as a medium resulted in divided families and unfaithfulness.

Yet if some "good" is accomplished by spiritistic communication, why not practice it? Is it proper for a Christian to become involved in such activities, even for some supposed "good" purpose?

BENEFICIAL COMMUNICATION WITH THE SPIRIT REALM

Looking into the Scriptures for guidance, we find that early in man's history

he had communication with the invisible realm. Concerning the first human pair, we read: "Later they heard the voice of Jehovah God walking in the garden about the breezy part of the day." (Gen. 3:8) During those periods of communication, the first man learned much that was for his good. Had he heeded such counsel, he would have been spared much suffering and even death itself.

During the period of the Hebrew patriarchs, also, there was direct communication between God's servants and the invisible realm. From an invisible source, Noah received instructions to build a huge ark for preservation during a coming Deluge. Listening to his invisible Counselor resulted in much good for Noah and his family—and also for us. If Noah had not heeded the instructions that he was given, we would not be here to listen to any voices, whether from invisible or visible sources.—Gen. 6:9-22.

After the patriarch Abraham received similar communication, he and his family moved to another land. (Gen. 12:1-4) Sometime later, God put this man to the test by telling him to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. He followed such instruction explicitly, even to the point of raising the knife to kill his son. However, Abraham was stopped by a voice from the invisible heavens. (Gen. 22:1-18) Comparable direct communication with God was in evidence during the long period of Israel's judges and was experienced later by those chosen by God to serve as prophets for that nation. Heeding such communications from a superhuman source brought much good to all those involved.

KING SAUL CONDEMNED FOR SPIRITISTIC COMMUNICATION

However, not all communication with the invisible realm resulted in good. When Israel's first king, Saul, had to face up to a decisive battle with the Philistines,

"he became afraid, and his heart began to tremble very much." Saul felt in need of help, but Jehovah would not answer the unfaithful king. Saul then ordered: "Seek for me a woman who is a mistress of spirit mediumship, and I will go to her and consult her." The result? Talking through the medium, the supposed spirit of the deceased prophet Samuel told the troubled king: "Jehovah will also give Israel with you into the hand of the Philistines, and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me."—1 Sam. 28:4-19.

Did this prediction come true? Yes, but only in part. The Israelites were given into the hand of the Philistines and suffered a terrible defeat. Saul and three of his sons died in the battle. Contrary to the prediction, however, Saul's son Ish-bosheth did not die that day. True, if Saul had heeded the prediction and retreated from the field of battle, it would have been "good" for him and his three sons. At least they may have lived a little longer. But it would have been much better if Saul had never consulted the spirit medium at Endor. Consider the reason why this is true.

Earlier, Saul "had removed the spirit mediums and the professional foretellers of events from the land." (1 Sam. 28:3) Why? Because he knew that God's law stated: "There should not be found in you . . . anyone who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead." The reason? Because "everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah." (Deut. 18:10-12) Hence, by consulting a spirit medium, the unfaithful Saul came under a further condemnation from Jehovah according to the very law that he, as king, was to uphold. Well, then, since Jehovah God condemned spirit mediums and never

answered Saul because of the king's previous misdeeds, you might ask: Who sent the message to Saul through the medium?

THE SOURCE OF SPIRITISTIC MESSAGES

The answer will become clear as we continue searching the Bible record. Centuries after Saul's death, the prophet Isaiah wrote: "In case they should say to you people: 'Apply to the spiritistic mediums or to those having a spirit of prediction who are chirping and making utterances in low tones,' is it not to its God that any people should apply? Should there be application to dead persons in behalf of living persons?" Then it is stated emphatically: "To the law and to the attestation!" (Isa. 8:19, 20) Clearly, then, those who apply to spiritistic mediums are not applying to the Almighty God, Jehovah. So, what is the source of the messages received by those "making utterances in low tones"?

The same question may have occurred to persons of the first century C.E. as they heard the predictions made by professional mediums. For example, consider the case of "a certain servant girl" in Philippi. She had a "spirit" and furnished "her masters with much gain by practicing the art of prediction." In fact, she kept following the apostle Paul and his associates and crying out: "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are publishing to you the way of salvation." Well, she was telling the truth. But were her words from God? No, for Paul ultimately got tired of hearing that message and "said to the spirit: 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour." In no uncertain terms, the inspired account identifies that "spirit" as "a *demon* of divination."—Acts 16:16-18.

It may have been difficult for some onlookers to determine just who that girl had been serving. Yet, Paul knew that

she had received her powers, not from God, but from another superhuman source. A demon had been responsible. That there existed such spirits who used humans for occult purposes is evident from what happened in Ephesus a short time later.

Concerning the apostle Paul's activities in that city, we read: "God kept performing extraordinary works of power through the hands of Paul, so that even cloths and aprons were borne from his body to the ailing people, and the diseases left them, and the *wicked spirits* came out." When seven sons of the Jewish chief priest Sceva tried to expel a "wicked spirit," the demon-possessed man leaped upon the would-be exorcists, so that they had to flee "naked and wounded."—Acts 19:11-16.

"This became known to all, both the Jews and the Greeks that dwelt in Ephesus," says the inspired account, "and a fear fell upon them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus went on being magnified." Consequently, "many of those who had become believers would come and confess and report their practices openly. Indeed, quite a number of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them up before everybody," even though such books were worth a considerable sum of money. Those individuals knew that they had to rid themselves of both their magical practices and the associated books. They turned from the wicked, demonic source of occult prediction to the true Source of life-giving wisdom, Jehovah God.—Acts 19:17-20.

DO "GOOD" RESULTS ALWAYS INDICATE A GOOD SOURCE?

Doubtless, any occult messages that those Ephesians had received previously were not always incorrect. At times, those messages may have been true and may have resulted in some apparent "good" to certain individuals, either financially or physically. By occult means, certain Eph-

sians may even have been directed to some cure for their serious ailments or diseases. But did this make the practice right? On another occasion, the apostle Paul warned that "Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light." So, in order to deceive the unwary, Satan the Devil can do things that seem good. Paul adds that Satan's ministers act in the same way.—2 Cor. 11:14, 15.

Therefore, Christians wisely remain alert and avoid contact with this wicked "angel of light" and his ministers. Godly persons "test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God" or with his great archenemy, Satan the Devil. (1 John 4:1) Moreover, Jesus Christ declared: "Not everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens . . . Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not . . . expel demons in your name . . . ?' And yet then I will confess to them: I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness." (Matt. 7:21-23) Strong words these, but they can apply even to persons who feel that they can communicate with or exorcise evil spirits. It is evident that such individuals could easily be deceived into serving Satan rather than the true God.

RESIST WICKED SPIRIT FORCES

To Christians in Ephesus, the apostle Paul wrote: "Put on the complete suit of armor from God . . . because we have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against . . . the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:11, 12) If a Christian were to consult such forces through a spirit medium, could it be said that he was fighting them? No, indeed. Rather, would he not have to destroy any objects associated with such spiritistic communication, following the example of those first-century believers in Ephesus

who burned even the books that dealt with occultism?

The former voodoo priestess mentioned earlier followed this course when she learned Bible truth. She destroyed all her paraphernalia related to occultism, burning all her images and the fancy clothes that she once wore during spiritistic sessions. This she did openly, before those who were convinced that such a thing could endanger her life. And she has kept on living an active life, devoting over 140 hours a month to declaring the good news of God's kingdom. Why, even the astonished householder who greeted her with the words cited earlier followed her example, abandoning the fusion of Catholicism and spiritism! Both of them now realize that the name of Jehovah is a strong tower, into which the righteous one runs and is given protection.—Prov. 18:10.

Christians do not expect to receive direct communication from God, as did Adam, Abraham and others in early times. They realize that "God, who long ago spoke on many occasions and in many ways to our forefathers by means of the prophets, has at the end of these days spoken . . . by means of a Son," Jesus Christ. (Heb. 1:1, 2) What Jehovah speaks to us through his Son is set out for our benefit in the Holy Scriptures. So Christians do not need, nor do they expect to receive, direct personal communication from God.

Therefore, true Christians avoid any presumptuous efforts to communicate with the invisible world. They resist Satanic efforts to deceive them into believing that a person can have spiritistic communication and still enjoy God's favor. Rather, they heed Paul's counsel: "Take up the complete suit of [spiritual] armor from God, that you may be able to resist in the wicked day and, after you have done all things thoroughly, to stand firm."—Eph. 6:13.

J E H O V A H

GOD is always desirous of giving good things to his people. (Luke 11:13; Jas. 1:17) But sometimes he has to discipline them in ways not so joyous to him or to them. (Heb. 12:11) It hurts him to do so, and if there existed any other way that would accomplish betterment for an individual or a nation, he would use that way. (Gen. 6:6; Isa. 63:10) In every case, however, the results prove him to be right in his action.

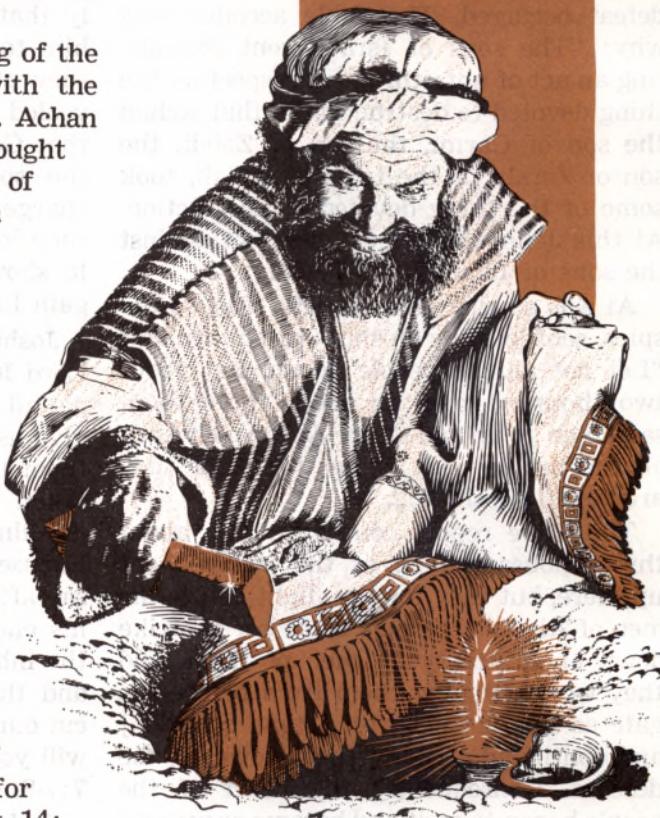
A case in point is his disciplining of the nation of Israel in connection with the man Achan of the tribe of Judah. Achan was in the Israelite army that fought under Joshua for the possession of the Promised Land. It was then occupied by Canaanites, Amorites and other peoples hostile to Jehovah and his worship.

These nations carried on very corrupt, idolatrous forms of worship and immoral practices. God had commanded Israel to clean them out of the land.—Lev. 18:24, 28.

God had performed miracles in bringing Israel across the Red Sea under Moses' leadership, giving the people food and preventing their clothing from wearing out during 40 years of life in the wilderness. He fought for them, defeating their enemies. (Ex. 14:21-28; Deut. 8:3-5; 29:5) The news of these things caused a spirit of dejection and a fear of Jehovah to fall on all the cities of Canaan.—Josh. 2:8-11; 5:1.

Now they had crossed the Jordan River and had experienced a marvelous demonstration of God's care and direction in their conquest of Jericho. There Jehovah the God of armies miraculously caused Jeri-

ACHAN a man who troubled his entire nation



cho's walls to fall down flat. Not a single Israelite soldier was lost.—Josh. 6:20, 21.

As God had commanded, Jericho, as the firstfruits of Canaanland, was to be wholly devoted to Jehovah; everything in it was to be destroyed and burned with fire. The metal objects—gold, silver, copper and iron—after the burning, were to be turned over

to the treasury at the tabernacle of God. (Josh. 6:17-19, 24) According to the covenant that God had made with Israel, everything "devoted" was under a ban or a curse. For any person to take a banned thing would cause him to be "devoted" or cursed like it—devoted to destruction.—Deut. 7:25, 26.

DEFEAT AT AI

The city of Ai was next in the path of Israel's armies. But here a humiliating defeat occurred. The Bible account tells why: "The sons of Israel went committing an act of unfaithfulness respecting the thing devoted to destruction in that Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took some of the thing devoted to destruction. At this Jehovah's anger grew hot against the sons of Israel."—Josh. 7:1.

Ai was smaller than Jericho was, so the spies sent out by Joshua recommended: "Let not all the people go up. Let about two thousand men or about three thousand men go up and strike Ai. Do not weary all the people with going there, for they are few."—Josh. 7:2, 3.

The Bible report continues: "So about three thousand men of the people went up there, but they took to flight before the men of Ai. And the men of Ai got to strike down about thirty-six men of them, and they went pursuing them from before the gate as far as Shebarim [stone quarries] and continued striking them down on the descent. Consequently the heart of the people began to melt and became as water."—Josh. 7:4, 5.

What had gone wrong? Had Jehovah forsaken them? It was not primarily the loss of 36 soldiers that had been so crushing, for there were normally at least a few casualties to be expected in any battle. The real calamity was that Israel, the army of Jehovah, had fled in defeat before his enemies.—Josh. 7:8.

JOSHUA APPEALS TO JEHOVAH

Consequently, Joshua was in great distress. He "ripped his mantles and fell upon his face to the earth before the ark of Jehovah until the evening, he and the older men of Israel, and they kept putting dust upon their heads." (Josh. 7:6) These leading men of the nation had great sorrow and dread that, for some reason, God may have been displeased; they not only mourned, but, more than that, showed their penitence before God, feeling strongly that it was some sin that had caused him to withdraw his help. The fact that they stayed there until the evening revealed their deep concern and their fear that God was angry. They did not blame the spies for their recommendation or charge the soldiers with cowardice, but they looked to God to find the cause and to show them what they could do to regain his favor.

Joshua spoke to God: "Alas, Sovereign Lord Jehovah, why did you bring this people all the way across the Jordan, just to give us into the hand of the Amorites for them to destroy us? And if only we had taken it upon ourselves and continued dwelling on the other side of the Jordan! Excuse me, O Jehovah, but what can I say after Israel has turned his back before his enemies? And the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will certainly surround us and cut our name off from the earth; and what will you do for your great name?"—Josh. 7:7-9.

Joshua cannot rightly be accused of complaining against Jehovah on this occasion. As Bible commentators Keil and Delitzsch remark, Joshua was simply using the bold language of faith in wrestling with God in prayer—faith that could not comprehend the ways of the Lord—and in making the most urgent appeal to the Lord to carry out His work in the same glorious manner in which it had begun. (Compare Genesis

18:23-26.) Joshua may have felt that the longing the people had before crossing into Canaan was mixed with selfishness, and was not a completely wholehearted desire to do God's will. He wished for Israel's good relationship with God to be reestablished as it was on the other side of the Jordan.

We see here that Joshua poured out his heart and feelings without reservation, as should be done in prayer. (Compare Hebrews 10:19-22.) Then, feeling that what he was about to say might sound like a reproaching of Jehovah—as though God had forgotten His own honor, Joshua asked God how He himself could now uphold His "great name" before the world. The name of Jehovah was tied up with the Israelite nation, and, to Joshua, the reproach that the news of Israel's defeat would bring upon Jehovah's name was the most grievous part of the entire matter.—Compare Moses' words in interceding for Israel after they had sinned seriously.—Ex. 32: 11-14.

GOD REVEALS THE CAUSE OF HIS ANGER

God's answer to Joshua was: "Get up, you! Why is it that you are falling upon your face?" It was as if to say, 'You have lain there long enough. You should realize that it is not a change on my part. It is time to find out where the trouble lies, namely, in the sin of the people.' God then

said, plainly: "Israel has sinned, and they have also overstepped my covenant that I laid as a command upon them; and they have also taken some of the thing devoted to destruction and have also stolen and also kept it secret and have also put it among their own articles."—Josh. 7:10, 11.

Israel had (1) broken the covenant in disobeying God's commands (Ex. 24:7, 8), (2) taken the forbidden thing, (3) actually stolen that which belonged to God, (4) kept the fact hidden, as though Jehovah could not see (Joshua likely had asked all the people, after Jericho's fall, if they had obeyed by devoting everything to destruction, but, if Joshua did so, then Achan kept hiding his wrong), (5) and put the forbidden material in among their own things, just as though it belonged to them, and thereby made themselves a detestable thing like the thing they took.—Josh. 6: 18, 19.

Since the guilty party or parties did not come forth and acknowledge their sin, an exposure had to be made. Even then, Jehovah had Joshua uncover the criminal in a gradual way, giving this one opportunity to lessen his guilt to an extent by a voluntary confession. God could have named the wrongdoer at once, of course. But he had Joshua call the people by tribe, family, household and individual. This was done by lot, Jehovah directing the procedure.—Josh. 7:14; Prov. 16:33.

Someone may ask, Why did God get angry with the nation for what one man did? Bible scholars agree that it was a matter of community sin before God. The Israelites as a nation had God's name upon them. What they did represented their God and his ways, in the eyes of the other nations. An act of greed, theft and lying on the part of one individual reflected on the reputation of the whole nation, and therefore on the name of the God whom they served.—Deut. 21:1-9.

In Coming Issues

- **When Things Are Not Right**
- **Should You Follow the Custom?**
- **Youths—Are You on the Road to Real Success?**

SIN OF ONE MEMBER ENDANGERS THE WHOLE BODY

Furthermore, such a sin, if allowed to go uncorrected, would infect the whole body of people. The nation would deteriorate into fighting battles, not to uphold God's name and true worship, but for mere selfish conquest. The apostle Paul showed that allowance or condoning of serious sin is insidious and perilous when he wrote to the Christian congregation in Jerusalem to beware "that no poisonous root may spring up and cause trouble and that many may not be defiled by it; that there may be no fornicator nor anyone not appreciating sacred things, like Esau, who in exchange for one meal gave away his rights as firstborn."—Heb. 12:15, 16; compare 1 Corinthians 5:6, 7, 13.

When the casting of lots pointed directly to Achan, Joshua was kind, even though he knew that Achan was guilty. He said to Achan: "My son, render, please, glory to Jehovah the God of Israel and make confession to him, and tell me, please, What have you done? Do not hide it from me." (Josh. 7:19) Achan then 'rendered glory to God' in that he acknowledged that Jehovah's direction of the lots was right and that God was justly angry at him. Achan had "committed a disgraceful folly in Israel," a crime bringing great dishonor on God as it disgraced Israel who then represented God in the earth.—Josh. 7:15.

GUILT REMOVED FROM THE NATION

Then, to demonstrate before all Israel the cause of their disaster at Ai, and to prove that Achan was the guilty party, Joshua had the stolen articles brought

from Achan's tent and laid before the people. (Josh. 7:22, 23) According to the command of God, Achan had to be put to death. His family, tent and belongings had to be burned to ashes also, so that this contaminated, leaven-like element would be cleared out from Israel, for even the mention of Achan's name would be abhorrent. After Achan was stoned to death, then burned, the account says that a big pile of stones was heaped over his ashes and the place was called Achor (ostracism, trouble) as a reminder of the calamity that he had brought upon Israel.—Josh. 7:24-26.

Some persons may feel that the execution of Achan's family and the destruction of his property was unjust. But consider the reproach and trouble that this greedy desire of Achan brought. Not only this, but 36 men had lost their lives. Furthermore, the family of Achan could hardly have been ignorant of the fact that the cursed, stolen things were in the earth under Achan's tent.—Josh. 7:21.

That Joshua did the right thing is made evident by Jehovah's subsequent action in bringing the defeat of Ai. Jehovah's judgment proved to be a blessing and protection to Israel as they went ahead with the six-year fight to conquer the land, defeating king after king. There is no record that anyone repeated a deed like Achan's. Even later, in the time of the judges, when serious sin appeared, the nation exhibited great zeal in clearing themselves before God by removing the wickedness, even at the cost of many lives. —Judg., chap. 20.

Laying the Hands on a Sacrificial Victim

When presenting an animal sacrifice at the sanctuary, an Israelite would place his hand on the head of the bull, sheep or goat. (Lev. 1:4) This act signified that the individual acknowledged the offering as his and that it was being presented in his behalf.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● "Conditions are now ripe for a new plague of desert locusts that could extend across all of North Africa, through the Arabian Peninsula, and into India by the end of

'Locusts Go Forth by Bands' into India by the end of 1979," reports "Natural History" magazine. Weather especially suited to propagation of the hungry insects has pre-

vailed during the past two years in North Africa and India. The magazine states that "the desert locust has long been considered one of the world's most destructive agricultural pests," noting that "the Bible records that the eighth plague visited upon the Egyptians was of locusts (Exodus, chapter 10)."

"Natural History" also calls attention to the Bible's accurate description of the insects: "'The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands' (Proverbs 30:27). Unlike ants and bees, locusts are not social insects, and there is no leadership in a swarm. Swarms go with the wind, moving toward areas where low level winds meet and, consequently, rain falls," thus bringing them to the best breeding grounds. The Bible's accuracy in detail gives testimony to its Divine authorship.—December 1978, pp. 6, 8, 12.

● What is behind this world's seemingly irrational self-destructiveness? The Belgian

'Ancient Prophecies Proved True?' newspaper "Het Nieuwsblad" recently published observations on this by Professor V. Werck, a former North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) delegate.

"We live in a possessed world," he wrote. "Everybody knows it. Nobody believes it." Noting the "mad armaments race," terrorism, poverty and other problems, he declared: "It would not be surprising if suddenly madness were to break out and leave mankind in a dazed and stunned condition." Then Werck cited one of his reasons for saying this: "Some twenty centuries ago [the apostle] Paul warned in his letter to the Ephesians (6:12): 'Because we have a wrestling, not against blood and flesh, but against the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked

spirit forces in the heavenly places.'" The professor then continued:

"Before he died, [former U.N. Secretary General U] Thant put it into modern phraseology and predicted: 'Mankind has ten years left to solve the world's greatest problems . . . and if they don't chaos will follow quickly.' Again, everybody knows it, nobody believes it: the thermo-nuclear Armageddon, the death of the oceans, pollution of the atmosphere, world-wide famine, the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, the threat of self-destruction, the failure of traditional ethics. Such terror really belongs in nightmares—or are ancient prophecies gradually being proved true?"

● News columnists recently commented on the end of World War I 60 years ago. Gwynne

Dyer of the Montreal "Gazette" wrote:

"Watershed of Modern History"

—simply The Great War to its survivors—remains the watershed of modern history in men's minds. Before 1914, the figures in

the fading photographs live in another world . . . marked by a peculiar innocence. . . . It was the period before 1914 that was the island in time, when men could believe that progress was changing us as quickly as it was changing our machines. Then World War I tumbled us back into reality."

Barry Renfrew of the "Associated Press" adds: "War has never been easy to explain and World War I is perhaps the hardest of all. Beneath the dry accounts of rivalries and alliances which historians use to explain the war, there lies a sense of something far greater, a sense of restlessness troubling the world." Renfrew then notes that an assassination "inspired a world which had hardly heard of the murdered prince to go to war over his death without knowing why."

But Christians do know why. Through their Bible-based insight, they know that World War I was timed with the birth of God's kingdom in the heavens, which was to result in "woe for the earth." Why? "Because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." —Rev. 12:9-12; compare Matthew 24:3, 7, 8.

Bringing the Good News to



THE mention of Samoa may bring to your mind visions of a Polynesian paradise: blue skies rimmed with puff-ball clouds, aqua-blue seas and palm trees gently waved by perfumed South Pacific breezes. And, indeed, Samoa is all of that for beauty, located as it is in the heart of Polynesia.

To find Samoa on the map, fix your eye on Hawaii and then draw an imaginary line to New Zealand. A little more than halfway, you will be able to locate the Samoan group of islands. The entire chain of islands stretches about 290 miles (470 kilometers). Western Samoa has a population of about 160,000 people on 1,140 square miles (2,953 square kilometers) of land, whereas American Samoa has about 30,000 people, with a total land area of only 76 square miles (197 square kilometers).

IN WESTERN SAMOA

Western Samoa clings more tenaciously to the ancient customs than does American Samoa, which, to an extent, is "modernized." Modern views clash at times with the ancient Samoan laws and way of life, so that change is slow—but sure. Some are dissatisfied with change, others are happy about it.

Teaching the Bible to the people of Samoa has been hard work. Not that the Samoans are disinterested in the Bible. They are glad to hear its message. But there are problems in

traveling between the scattered islands, and in arranging to spend the desired time with individuals. Also, until recently it has been difficult to get permission for missionaries to enter Western Samoa.

In the early 1950's John Croxford, of England, stayed in Samoa for a short time, acquainting the people with the Bible's "good news of the kingdom." Thus, when Ronald and Olive Sellars, a married couple from Australia, arrived in Western Samoa in May 1953, they found some people interested in Bible study. Later, some families from New Zealand and Australia decided to move in, on government or business contract work, to help the local Witnesses in reaching the people with the "good news." All of these have contributed greatly to the spread of the "good news."

AMERICAN SAMOA AND THE "GOOD NEWS"

American Samoa is made up of six small, picturesque mountainous islands. The people, like those of Western Samoa, are very outgoing, hospitable and have a love of life.

In the spring of 1938, when the Watch Tower Society's president, J. F. Rutherford, and his party were returning from his public activity in Australia, they put in port in American Samoa and brought ashore pieces of the Society's literature. Then in 1952, a young

woman from Fiji, Lydia Pedro, visited her relatives in American Samoa. She explained many things about the "good news" but was able to remain only a short time. Then, in 1954, Ronald and Olive Sellars moved in from Western Samoa. Being successful in getting a permit to remain, they started right away to help others to appreciate the Kingdom good news.

In the following year, 1955, two missionary couples, Gordon and Patricia Scott and Paul and Frances Evans, arrived from the United States. They traveled by ship to Hawaii and on to Fiji, then to Western Samoa by ocean freighter. From Western Samoa they caught a boat named the "Sulimoni." It was a small interisland vessel about 40 feet (12 meters) in length. Many refer to these vessels as "chicken and pig boats." At first the missionaries wondered about the reason for this, but after the eight-hour voyage to American Samoa among the livestock that the people carry with them on such trips, they realized how fitting the term really is.

A big help in promoting interest in Bible study was the movie "The New World Society in Action." This film dealt with a history of the modern-day preaching activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in many lands of the earth. The local Witnesses borrowed a portable power plant from the government and assembled, in sections, an eight-by-eight-foot (2.5-by-2.5-meter) screen. They piled this, together with the projector and other needed equipment, on Ron Sellars' old army jeep and set out to show this film in as many places as possible in the islands.

At 15 showings of the film in various localities there was an attendance of 3,227. When the missionaries later called at the homes in the area, the people would ask if they were of the same religion as the one represented in the film. After receiving an affirmative answer, they would really pay close attention to what the missionaries had to say.

WRESTLING WITH THE LANGUAGE

In the process of learning a language many humorous and sometimes embarrassing mistakes are made. One missionary tried asking an elderly native, in Samoan, "How is your wife?" The native replied in English, "But I don't have a beard." Then he went on to explain that the words for wife and beard are

spelled the same in Samoan but must be pronounced differently. Just a slight inflection of the voice and you find yourself in an awkward situation.

Another missionary, with a Samoan companion, made a trip to visit a family in the village of Afono. The woman of the house asked if they wanted something to eat, this being a kind custom of the people. The missionary replied as she always did in her home country, "Thank you," but in Samoan. The woman went away and never returned with food. Knowing something was amiss, the missionary asked her Samoan partner what she had said wrong. The partner told her that when you say, "Thank you," to an invitation to eat, you mean you don't want anything. Needless to say, the missionary did not make that mistake again.

BUILDING FOR EXPANSION

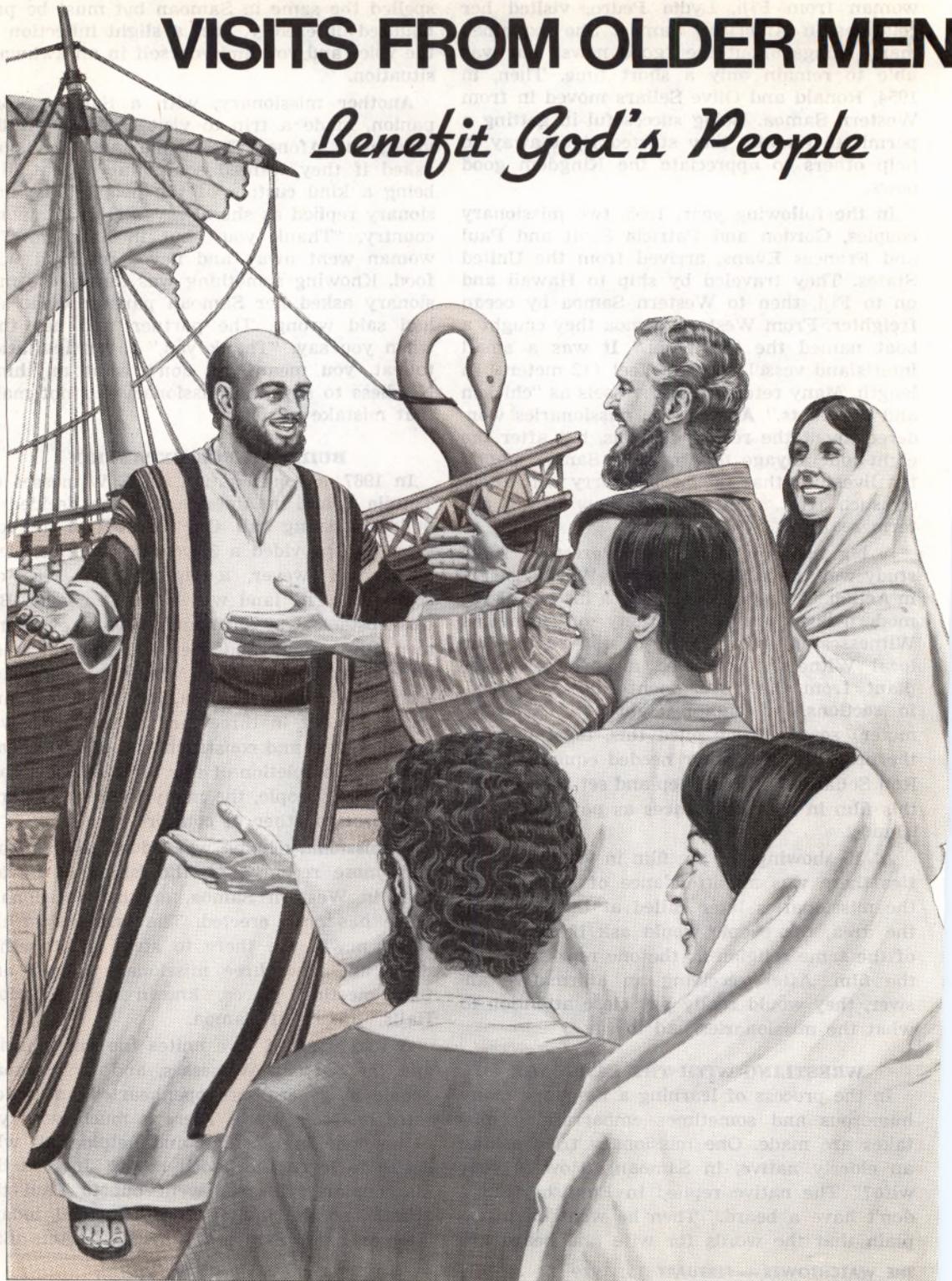
In 1967, a congregation of 28 Witnesses on Tutuila Island in American Samoa decided to build a meeting hall. One member of the congregation provided a 30-year lease on a piece of land. However, a big problem was encountered. The land was below sea level. But this obstacle was surmounted when everyone, men and women and even the younger ones, pitched in to fill the land. With only one pickup truck in the congregation, it was a slow and hard job. But in three months the work was accomplished and construction could go ahead. With the completion of this beautiful new hall, seating 130 people, the many interested people can meet together in comfort.

A missionary home was added to this hall, and, more recently, on the island of Savaii, over in Western Samoa, another missionary home has been erected. The bringers of the "good news" are there to stay! All together there are now three missionary homes and four meeting places, known as "Kingdom Halls," in all of Samoa.

A real bond of love unites the missionaries and the Samoan Witnesses, and the Samoan people in general are openhearted and interested in God's Word. There is much work yet to be done in reaching and helping all who desire to learn the "good news." Just as the Macedonian call once went out to Paul the apostle, so the invitation is extended today: 'Step over into Samoa and help us.'—Acts 16:9.

VISITS FROM OLDER MEN

Benefit God's People



IN THE first century, the apostles and other older men made timely visits as traveling overseers to the Christian congregations. Today traveling overseers regularly visit more than 42,000 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the world. Do such visits, ancient and modern, have much in common? Yes, indeed! For the needs of Christians today are much the same as they were in apostolic times. We need the encouragement and practical help of these visits in order to keep on doing God's will under trying conditions.

² Due to inherited imperfections, early Christians experienced problems similar to ours. (Rom. 3:23) Temptations that they faced were much like the ones we are called on to resist. (1 Cor. 10:13) They lived amid a wicked system of things that is still present today and from which we all long for deliverance. (Gal. 1:4) Their chief adversary, the Devil, we also must oppose. (1 Pet. 5:8) In the face of their fleshly weaknesses, pressures from the world and opposition from invisible wicked spirit forces, those first-century believers had a work to do. Their commission was to preach the "good news" and make disciples. That commission also applies to Jehovah's Witnesses today and must be carried out to completion before the coming end of this ungodly world. (Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8) Both then and now, visits from spiritual men have been welcome as a provision to strengthen, encourage and otherwise help God's people.

³ These visits in apostolic times provide helpful guidance for us today. (Acts 14:21-23; 15:36) As we examine some Scriptural accounts and draw modern-day parallels,

"They returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to remain in the faith and saying: 'We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations.'"

—Acts 14:21, 22.

we should be able to deepen our appreciation for the provision of such "gifts in men," who serve and meet our needs. —Eph. 4:8, 11, 12.

HOW VISITS BY OLDER MEN WERE VIEWED

⁴ It was following the Jerusalem Council of 49 C.E. that Judas and Silas were sent along with Paul and Barnabas to Antioch. If you had been there, what would you have experienced? According to Acts 15:32 the two "prophets" Judas and Silas "encouraged the brothers with many a discourse and strengthened them." Previously, there had been some dissension in Antioch over the question of circumcision. But now the receipt by the Antioch congregation of a spirit-directed letter, coupled with this visit of the two "prophets," had settled the matter. The congregation had reason to rejoice.—Acts 15:2, 22-31.

⁵ It was their humble, self-sacrificing spirit that made "older men" such an encouragement to their brothers. For example, there was Paul's missionary companion Timothy, concerning whom Paul wrote: "I have no one else of a disposition like his who will genuinely care for the things pertaining to you. For all the others are seeking their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus." Timothy's co-worker Paul had no hesitation about sending him to the Philippian congregation, as one who would slave among them for the "furtherance of the good news."—Phil. 2:20-22.

1. Why are the visits of traveling overseers necessary today, as they were in the first century?
2. (a) What problems have Christians faced, both in the first century and now, requiring what work to be done?
(b) Why have visits from older men been welcome?
3. What benefit may we derive from reviewing accounts of visits in apostolic times and drawing modern-day parallels?

4. How did a visit to the Antioch congregation help the brothers?
5. What does Philippians 2:20-22 tell us about Timothy's qualifications?

⁶ Commonly, older men who were sent to a particular area stayed there for an extended period to strengthen the brothers. There was a pressing need for Titus to assist in resolving problems in Crete. He was told to "correct the things that were defective and . . . make appointments of older men in city after city." Also, in view of the unruliness, profitless talk and misleading ideas that some were teaching, Titus was to keep on reproofing disorderly ones with severity, that they might be "healthy in the faith." (Titus 1:5-14) He was to counsel and exhort aged men and women, along with younger men and women, as well as slaves, so that their way of life might "adorn the teaching of our Savior, God, in all things."—Titus 2:1-10.

⁷ It is evident that well-qualified visiting overseers conveyed needed instruction to the congregations in the first century. All of them had years of experience in the preaching work, in handling responsibility as elders and in enduring hardship. After enumerating the persecutions and dangers that he encountered, Paul disclosed his keen sense of responsibility, saying: "Besides those things of an external kind, there is what rushes in on me from day to day, the anxiety for all the congregations." (2 Cor. 11:23-28) Titus, Timothy and others were closely associated with him in these experiences. (2 Cor. 8:23; 2 Tim. 3:10, 11) Exemplary faith made them worthy examples to imitate.—1 Cor. 11:1.

⁸ Not only did the brothers highly respect these exemplary visiting "older men" for their fine work but they also expressed great personal affection for them. An outstanding case was when Paul met with the older men from Ephesus. He admonished

6. (a) How would the brothers in Crete benefit from Titus' carrying out Paul's instructions? (b) What effect would Titus' counsel have on young and old, men and women?

7. (a) What qualifications did visiting overseers have back then? (b) According to 1 Corinthians 11:1, how were faithful older men like Paul to be viewed?

8. What admonition did the elders from Ephesus receive, and how did they feel about Paul?

them: "Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the holy spirit has appointed you overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God, which he purchased with the blood of his own Son." (Acts 20:28) Then he warned of an approaching apostasy, and exhorted them to keep awake and assist the weak. After offering prayer together, those older men were moved emotionally as they bade farewell to Paul, being especially pained to learn that they would see his face no more. —Acts 20:29-38.

PRACTICAL HELP GIVEN TO CONGREGATIONS

⁹ Visiting overseers often commended those early believers for the fine qualities that they displayed. This was so with the "holy ones" at Colossae. Epaphras had spoken of their fine works and of their love in a spiritual way, and for this Paul expressed thanks to God. (Col. 1:2-8) Paul's visit to Thessalonica brought outstanding results. Later he wrote to the believers there taking note of their faithful work, loving labor and endurance. They had accepted the word under tribulation and had become worthy imitators of men like Paul, Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy. (1 Thess. 1:1-7) By word and example, those older men taught the early disciples and showed them how the fruitage of God's spirit could be displayed in their everyday lives. They were encouraged to place implicit trust in Jehovah and to rely constantly upon him in prayer. Congregations rejoiced in such visits, acknowledging that they were strengthened and encouraged "to remain in the faith."—Acts 14:22.

¹⁰ Unquestionably, the apostles and older men took steps to see that congregations back there functioned in an orderly, harmonious way, under the headship of Christ.

9. How did visiting overseers commend and encourage the congregations?

10. (a) Why could there be no compromise in regard to spiritual and moral cleanliness? (b) What encouragement did those older men give to local appointed shepherds?

(Eph. 4:15, 16) They knew that spiritual and moral cleanliness had to be maintained. There could be no compromise in this regard. Otherwise, how could the Christian congregation keep separate from the world and be used as an honorable vessel in carrying out Jehovah's work? (2 Cor. 6:14-17; 1 Thess. 4:3-8; 2 Tim. 2:20-22) To emphasize the importance of obedience to divine requirements, those older men made visits and wrote letters to help local appointed shepherds and the flock in their care.—1 Pet. 5:1-5.

¹¹ Paul admonished the young overseer Timothy: "Become an example to the faithful ones . . . applying yourself to public reading, to exhortation, to teaching . . . that your advancement may be manifest to all persons." (1 Tim. 4:12-15) On their visits, traveling overseers today give similar advices. And even as Paul charged Timothy, they encourage all congregational overseers to "preach the word, be at it urgently in favorable season, in troublesome season, reprove, reprimand, exhort, with all long-suffering and art of teaching," and to "do the work of an evangelizer," fully accomplishing this ministry.

—2 Tim. 4:1-5.

¹² The apostles did not hesitate to express what should be done with regard to judging matters. When Paul encountered a situation involving wrongdoing that had gone uncorrected, he advised by letter what he would have done if personally present, firmly directing those responsible at Corinth to "remove the wicked man" from among them. (1 Cor. 5:3, 13) He also encouraged that personal differences among the brothers should be handled by men competent to judge. (1 Cor. 6:1-6) Such counsel helped the responsible brothers to adjust their thinking.

11. In line with Paul's advice to Timothy, what encouragement may visiting overseers give to all congregational overseers today?

12. What counsel that involved judging was given to the Corinthian congregation?

A LOVING PROVISION TO STRENGTHEN US

¹³ Today, because the spirit of Jehovah is operating on his people, hardworking qualified men of many years' experience are available for visiting the congregations. (Compare Ephesians 4:11, 12.) Though they are imperfect men, they demonstrate many of the fine qualities that characterized Paul, Silas, Barnabas, Timothy and others. At the present time, there are numerous traveling overseers who have more than 30 years' experience in the full-time work. One currently active circuit overseer took up the full-time service 55 years ago at the age of 18. (Eccl. 12:1) He has served continuously since then, spending the last 30 years in visiting the congregations. Almost all of these men have served also as overseers in local congregations and as pioneers. Others have spent years in the missionary field or at a branch office of the Watch Tower Society. The presence of such men in a congregation is a blessing, enabling all to derive strength from the spiritual things that they have to share. Their visits can help us in our service and worship as well as in cultivating Christian personalities.

¹⁴ Representatives sent out to the congregations invariably are men who take the lead in the work of Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making. They have gotten the sense of the word and are bearing fine fruit. (Matt. 13:23) Imbued with a feeling of urgency born of genuine appreciation for what God's kingdom means, and recognizing the seriousness of these last days, they do not loiter at their business. (Rom. 12:11) Having this attitude, they endeavor to build up in others the same evangelistic spirit that identified the early Christian congregation.—Acts 5:42; 8:1-4.

13. (a) Why can we be grateful for Jehovah's provision of faithful overseers, including those who regularly visit congregations? (b) What experience have many traveling overseers had?

14. What shows these older men to be qualified, and what do they endeavor to build up in others?

¹⁵ The traveling overseers' high regard for Jesus' command to preach the "good news" and make disciples moves them to stress this twofold commission as a sacred trust, a divine requirement. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) They recall what happened following the day of Pentecost in 33 C.E., and also later, after the conversion of Cornelius and his household, namely, that believers increased rapidly and were fully instructed, so that they could live according to the "good news" and declare it effectively to others. (Acts 2:46, 47; 5:14; 6:7; 10:44-48; 20:20) Today, for the multiplying of further believers, traveling overseers invite as many as possible to share with them in witnessing. They give help to those who lack experience. The zeal and fine lead of visiting elders contribute toward expansion of the witness work. They say, with Paul: "Woe is me if I did not declare the good news!"—1 Cor. 9:16.

¹⁶ Moreover, there is much work to be done in aiding those associated with the congregations to make advancement in Christian living. (2 Pet. 1:5-10) Some who are not yet free of worldliness may try to bring in practices that would relax the high standards of conduct established in God's Word. To guard against infiltration of worldliness, traveling overseers need to show discernment in observing subtle trends. They will want to encourage God's people to adhere closely to Scriptural principles with regard to their living habits, morality and dealings with others, whether in personal or social matters. (1 Cor. 10:31-33; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; Heb. 13:18) They may need to remind elders to act decisively in maintaining moral, doctrinal and spiritual cleanliness in the congregations.

15. (a) How do traveling overseers regard Jesus' commands at Matthew 24:14 and 28:19, 20? (b) In line with what happened after Pentecost of 33 C.E., what aid and example do they provide congregations today?

16, 17. (a) In guarding against the infiltration of worldliness, what encouragement may traveling overseers give? (b) In what ways may they aid the brothers in combating the subtle influence of materialism?

¹⁷ In line with the advice Timothy received, traveling overseers are urged to warn Christians against the encroaching influences of materialism. (1 Tim. 6:9, 10, 17-19) By their own example in putting spiritual things first they encourage others to 'seek first God's kingdom.'—Matt. 6:33.

¹⁸ In a world where people are tossed about by confusing winds of religious doctrine, Jehovah's people need to be stable, full-grown Christians. (Eph. 4:13, 14) Their position must be steadfast, not shifting quickly because of independent thinking or emotional pressures. (Col. 1:23; 2:6, 7) Rightly, then, traveling overseers should emphasize the need for all Christians to grow constantly in accurate knowledge of God. (Phil. 1:9, 10; Col. 1:9-11) They encourage personal, family and congregational study so that Christians will feed, not just on 'the milk of the word,' but on "solid food," in order to appreciate fully "the word of righteousness," and to "have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong." (Heb. 5:12-14) When they inspect a congregation's spiritual condition, traveling overseers will counsel Scripturally on such points.

¹⁹ These older men may make visits on the sick, aged and others, as opportunity affords. (Prov. 16:31; Matt. 18:12-14; contrast Ezekiel 34:4.) When approached by individuals at variance with one another on personal matters, they may lovingly but firmly admonish them from the Scriptures, with a view to restoring peace. (1 Thess. 5:14, 15) In ways often unnoticed, they may impart spiritual upbuilding to those who have doubts regarding Christian conduct or who otherwise need to be 'snatched out of the fire.'—Jude 22, 23.

²⁰ As in the first century, these traveling

18. Why is the attainment of spiritual stability and maturity so essential, and how can this be encouraged?

19. How do traveling overseers aid various ones according to their individual need? (Jas. 5:19, 20)

20. How have traveling overseers and their wives been self-sacrificing?

overseers and their wives serve under a variety of circumstances. In many parts of the earth they move from place to place each week. To reach isolated areas or jungle territory, some travel by horseback or canoe, or walk long distances over mountain trails or passes. In the interests of the congregations they endure great hardships. Many have accepted assignments far away from their families and close acquaintances. But regardless of their situation, they willingly put themselves out, being ready to adapt for the sake of the "good news."—1 Cor. 9:23.

²¹ A review of the many ways in which

21. (a) Our review of the ministry of these older men should help us to what appreciation? (b) So what question are we moved to ask?

visits from faithful older men have strengthened the congregations, in apostolic as well as modern times, cannot help but make us appreciate their efforts. Truly such self-expending older men are among those of whom the apostle Paul wrote: "Now we request you, brothers, to have regard for those who are working hard among you and presiding over you in the Lord and admonishing you; and to give them more than extraordinary consideration in love because of their work." (1 Thess. 5:12, 13) Though we have this regard for the traveling overseers, how can we personally derive greater benefits from their visits in the days ahead? Let us now see.

TRAVELING OVERSEERS

Bring Benefits Today



"I indeed bear him witness that he puts himself to great effort in behalf of you and of those at Laodicea and of those at Hierapolis."

—Col. 4:13.

We

LIVE in "critical times," the closing period of the foretold "last days." Students of God's Word know this. (2 Tim. 3:1) Nevertheless, timely reminders often can help us to ward off any creeping indifference toward the dangers that confront us. An enemy world and its invisible ruler continue to exert increasing pressures to weaken faith, to mislead and to ruin. (John 14:30; Rev. 12:9, 12) Truly, "the whole world is lying in the power of the

1, 2. (a) What dangers confront us today? (b) How may we be equipped to resist the Devil? (c) What outstanding provision has Jehovah made for "strengthening the congregations"?

wicked one." (1 John 5:19) In his wrath, he is intensifying his war against those who observe the commandments of God. (Rev. 12:17) Subtly he endeavors to draw Jehovah's people away from the living God into a fruitless, worldly way of life, thus cutting them off from the 'shepherd and overseer of their souls,' Jehovah God. The Devil's aim is to devour someone.—Heb. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:25; 5:8.

² To avoid such a tragic outcome, we need every provision Jehovah makes to keep ourselves spiritually strong. Thus we can resist the Devil and continue to render sacred service to Jehovah alone. (Matt. 4:8-11; Jas. 4:7) Among the provisions that greatly benefit God's people is the arrangement for traveling overseers to serve them and "see how they are." Such visits contribute toward "strengthening the congregations" to take a stand against the adversary, and stirring them to greater activity in serving God.—Acts 15:36, 41; 1 Pet. 5:9; 1 Cor. 16:9.

³ There can be no mistaking the seriousness and the importance of the work of these traveling overseers. They should take to heart the principle of Proverbs 27:23, which says: "You ought to know positively the appearance of your flock. Set your heart to your droves." These traveling undershepherds should closely observe the spiritual condition of the flock, in order to protect it from danger. They should endeavor also to minister to its needs, taking an interest in each individual "sheep." (Compare 1 Samuel 17:34, 35; Philippians 2:4.) Being concerned about benefiting their brothers, they will want to put forth earnest effort in teaching them and encouraging them in the evangelizing work. (1 Tim. 5:17; 2 Tim. 4:5) In thus expending themselves they should be like Epaphras, who 'put himself to great effort' in behalf of the congregation.—Col. 4:12, 13.

3. How should traveling overseers view the flock, and what efforts should they put forth in its behalf?

⁴ By taking full advantage of these visits, each of us can gain great benefits from the counsel, encouragement and assistance of these older men. To gain such blessings, however, requires cooperation and a diligent effort on the part of each one of us.

PREPARATION ESSENTIAL

⁵ A variety of activities is scheduled for the traveling overseer's visit with a congregation. The success of the visit depends, in large part, on the preparations made by the congregation beforehand. There is a need for planning times and locations for service, setting aside territory for group activity, and bringing congregation records up-to-date and making them available for checking. Publishers would benefit greatly by making arrangements to share in the work. Some may be able to serve as auxiliary pioneers. A number of elders and ministerial servants may be able to adjust their affairs to share in group activity during the midweek. The elders can give careful thought to the agenda for the elders' meeting that week. Enthusiastic prior announcement of the week's arrangements can contribute toward a full period of stimulating association and activity.

⁶ Traveling overseers and their wives should appreciate the hospitality extended by the congregation. (Heb. 13:1, 2) They must learn to adjust to the varying circumstances in their assignments. They are subject to limitations, just like those of us who may have some health problems, and need sufficient rest in order to maintain their pace each day. So due consideration needs to be given to such matters in advance. Of course, the traveling overseers and their wives should not expect anything elaborate. Whatever may thoughtfully be arranged in the way of modest,

4. What can we individually do to benefit from visits by these older men?

5. What preparations have a great bearing on the success of the traveling overseer's visit? (1 Cor. 14:40)

6. What hospitality and consideration can be shown?

suitable accommodations and wholesome meals should be received with genuine appreciation.—Rom. 12:13.

⁷ To the extent that elders and the rest of the congregation properly prepare and build up enthusiasm for the visit, to that extent everyone will benefit. If preparation is inadequate or left to the last minute, maximum results will not be gained.

WAYS TO BENEFIT PERSONALLY

⁸ When the visit begins there are things each one can do to receive the most benefit from it. The traveling overseer's talks cover matters of worship, Christian living and more effective ways to preach and teach the "good news." Those who have taken to heart the Scriptural encouragement and exhortation have often been aided to make decisions and adjustments in their lives that have resulted in their advancement. (1 Tim. 4:15) Appreciating this, we should want to share fully in each meeting, taking in points of counsel that apply to us personally.—Heb. 10:23-25.

⁹ Our attitude toward the visiting overseer can also help us to benefit from his presence. Some may be hesitant to approach him because of his busy schedule. However, he is there to help. So all should feel free to get acquainted. (2 Cor. 6:11-13) We can discuss with him what we have learned at meetings, points of interest in the publications, field experiences and questions about improving our personal service activity.—Phil. 4:8, 9.

¹⁰ Nor should we be fearful, nor hold back from accompanying him in the field service. His sole aim is to give us encouragement and help rather than criticize what we do. (Acts 18:27, 28) Of course,

if he has some suggestion to offer, then we are pleased to accept it. He is not to take himself too seriously, but should be mindful of dealing with others in a kind, loving manner. (1 Thess. 2:7, 8) If some of us have been hesitant about fully benefiting from his visit in the past, let us make it a point to do something about it the next time he comes. It will greatly add to his joy and ours.

¹¹ Most of the traveling overseers are married and their wives accompany them. While he is the one with whom to talk about serious problems, sisters in the congregation especially can benefit from his wife's association and example in the field. She works under her husband's direction and will be pleased to accept invitations from such sisters to accompany them in various features of the service. Always, it is appreciated if the fine support for field activity in the morning can be continued during the afternoon, when perhaps local sisters can provide transportation and share in the work. This often frees the husband to make additional appointments. So sisters have a fine opportunity in this way to add to the effectiveness of the visit.

¹² Are you interested in having a fuller share in the Kingdom work elsewhere? If the territory in your own congregation is well worked, ask the traveling overseer for suggestions as to where your assistance could be used to better advantage in another area. (2 Cor. 10:15, 16) In each country throughout the earth, those looking after the work are desirous of helping you to expand your efforts.

¹³ Very likely, the traveling overseer has

7. How may the congregation gain maximum benefits from the visit?

8. How can we personally benefit from the talks that are given? (Prov. 19:20; 20:18)

9. Why should we not feel hesitant about approaching the traveling overseer, and what might we discuss with him?

10. In what ways can we benefit by accompanying the traveling overseer in field activity?

11. What benefits may be derived through the sisters' association and wholehearted cooperation with a traveling overseer's wife?

12. What might those do who desire to serve where there is a greater need?

13. (a) Why and how have pioneers been helped by discussing their particular problems with the traveling overseer? (b) What appreciation have some pioneers expressed about his visit? (c) Do the pioneers in your congregation have any similar comment?

been a pioneer field worker for many years, and is well acquainted with problems that often tend to discourage one. Other pioneers who spend some time with him discussing their particular problems, regardless of whether these involve economic difficulty, health, family obligations, and so forth, often are given a fresh outlook and are helped to renew their determination to continue on in this service. (Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Thess. 3:7-10; Gal. 4:13; 1 Tim. 5:8) Two pioneers who recently received help from a traveling overseer wrote:

"We appreciated [his] visit to our congregation. He was of much encouragement to both of us as well as the entire congregation. We were encouraged to stick to the pioneer ser-



Preaching at the Homes

Teaching in
the Congregation



vice despite the nature of our problems." A special pioneer who had been ill and bedridden for two weeks stated:

"I was feeling very discouraged because I have not had a very good month. But we had a visit from the circuit overseer and he was very encouraging to us all. We enjoyed his visit so much and we all (especially me) feel ready to try harder to improve our service to Jehovah."

Yes, pioneers, as well as everyone in the congregation, stand to benefit from his visit.—Phil. 3:16.

BENEFITING THOSE APPOINTED TO RESPONSIBLE POSITIONS

¹⁴ In the first century Paul took a special interest in elders and ministerial servants. (Phil. 1:1) He outlined their qualifications at 1 Timothy 3:1-10, 12, 13 and Titus 1:5-9 and gave them much fine counsel. Likewise, traveling overseers today benefit the responsible brothers in the congregation by providing specific counsel and assistance.

¹⁵ At their meeting with the elders, traveling overseers have given encouraging suggestions and advice. Their background in handling congregational responsibility, along with the experience gained

^{14, 15. (a)} What shows that Paul took an interest in elders and ministerial servants? (b) What important matters can be discussed with the traveling overseer, and how can elders use time with him wisely?

in serving scores of congregations, enables them to offer practical observations and counsel on various aspects of the evangelizing and disciple-making work, on shepherding activity and on improving meetings. However, if time is consumed on incidental matters at this meeting, elders will miss the benefits of discussing these more important matters that affect the congregation. Hence, local elders should prepare an agenda tailored for the coming visit, providing opportunity to cover what would be most vital to the spiritual well-being and progress of the congregation.—Prov. 21:5; Phil. 1:9-11.

¹⁶ If anyone is a ministerial servant there may be aspects of his work in a congregation book study group, in his assignments of handling records or with respect to other duties at the Kingdom Hall that the traveling overseer can help him to fulfill. The ministerial servant should take advantage of opportunities to receive help so as to make improvements. (Luke 16:10) By proving himself dependable and progressive, he will give evidence of his de-

sire to serve the brothers and to be worthy of greater privileges in the future.—1 Cor. 4:1, 2.

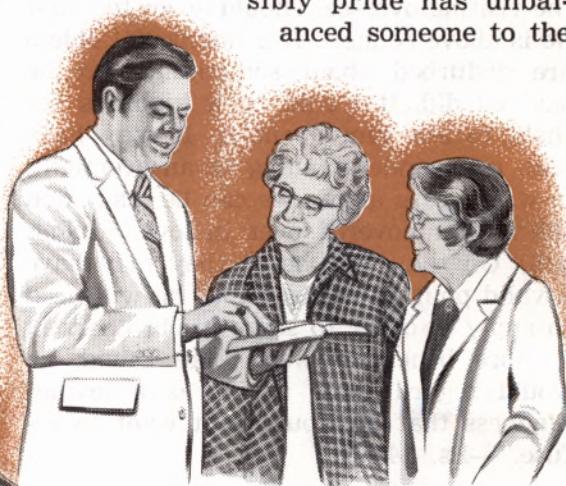
¹⁷ Elders may also find the traveling overseer's observation and counsel to be very helpful in dealing with serious problems. (Prov. 13:10) They may have experienced some difficulty in handling a recent case of wrongdoing or a case that is pending. The visitor's Scriptural counsel may aid them to weigh matters carefully before making a decision.—Prov. 15:22.

¹⁸ Due to human imperfections, elders or ministerial servants may occasionally have some problems among themselves. (Jas. 3:2) There may have been some unnecessary faultfinding or misunderstandings. One of the elders may have failed to keep a confidence, resulting in hurt feelings and an undermining of respect for him and other elders. (Prov. 25:9) Possibly pride has unbalanced someone to the

16. How and why should ministerial servants use opportunities to receive help during the visit?



Encouraging Young People



Comforting the Aged

point that he takes himself too seriously and becomes unreasonable. (Rom. 12:3) What if these or similar

17. How may elders handling serious problems benefit from the visit?

18, 19. (a) What problems among elders may occasionally develop due to human imperfections? (b) In such event, how may the traveling overseer help?

difficulties have disrupted cooperation, and local responsible brothers have been unable to resolve matters?

¹⁹ The elders should take the traveling overseer into their confidence, seeking his assistance to restore harmony in their dealings with one another. (Eph. 4:1-3) He may be able to aid them in reasoning things out on the basis of God's Word. (Prov. 20:3) By thus endeavoring to resolve matters promptly and peacefully, the elders may show their appreciation of this provision to talk things over with a visiting older brother in the Lord and let God's Word set things straight.—2 Tim. 3:16.

²⁰ By the same token, elders should recognize that the traveling overseer is also imperfect. On occasion it may seem to the local elders that he has erred in judgment, even as the apostle Peter was not without fault. (Gal. 2:11-14) Like any other elder, the visiting overseer should never feel that he is above counsel. If a number of elders are disturbed about something that he said or did, it would be a kindness for them to ask him about it. It may have been a misunderstanding or an oversight, in which case allowance can be made and the matter covered over in love. (1 Pet. 4:8) On the other hand, they may have a valid point of counsel that he will need to apply in order to serve his brothers in a more beneficial way. Like David, he would regard their advice as a loving-kindness that he would "not want to refuse."—Ps. 141:5.

COUNSELOR IN CONSIDERING RECOMMENDATIONS

²¹ Bodies of elders have endeavored to fulfill their responsibility properly in recommending new elders and ministerial servants, or in initiating the removal of those

20. If a traveling overseer has erred in judgment, how might the matter be handled?

21, 22. (a) Why is it a serious responsibility to recommend elders and ministerial servants? (b) How are elders benefited in having the traveling overseer sit in as a counselor when they consider recommendations?

already appointed. Weighing the qualifications of a man for congregational responsibility is a serious matter. Emphasizing this are the apostle Paul's words at 1 Timothy 5:22: "Never lay your hands hastily upon any man; neither be a sharer in the sins of others; preserve yourself chaste."

²² Hence, another way in which the traveling overseer benefits the congregation is by sitting in with the local body of elders to consider recommendations. It is essential that each recommended individual measure up to the Scriptural qualifications. (1 Tim. 3:1-10, 12; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4) For instance, is he truly a spiritual man? Is he exemplary in 'bearing much fruit and proving himself Jesus' disciple'? (John 15:8) In his role as counselor, the visiting overseer can assist elders faced with such questions, doing so objectively. This provides the elders opportunity to benefit from his counsel and observations. Similarly, he may bring up questions to clarify matters in his own mind. Such discussion should be aimed toward making a balanced determination as to whether individuals really qualify for responsibility.

²³ Traveling overseers truly put forth great effort in our behalf. Let us benefit from their service. Let us accept any due counsel that they give to help us to overcome or endure personal problems or to draw closer to the brotherhood in love. (1 Pet. 2:17) They can indeed help to strengthen our resolve to withstand pressures from this world, and to keep fully clad with spiritual armor as we stand firm in our fight against the Devil. (Eph. 6:11-18) Yes, let us appreciate the visits of the traveling overseers as another provision to help us to cultivate that tested quality of faith that will be "found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. 1:7.

23. (a) How may we gain the greatest benefit from the traveling overseers' visits? (b) What may result from our appreciating these visits?

JEHOVAH, A DEPENDABLE REFUGE

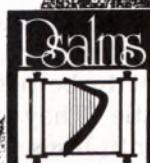
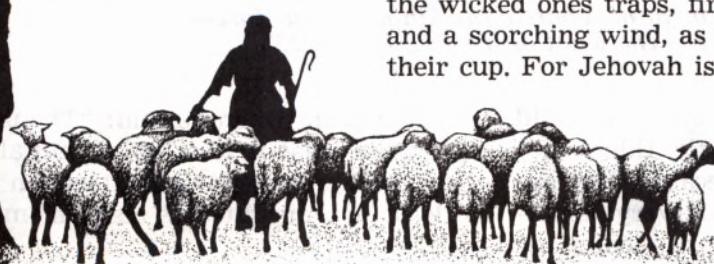
WHAT can you do when there is a serious breakdown of law and order, when there seems to be no possibility of getting justice? Where can you turn? The psalmist David once faced such a situation. He placed his complete trust in the Most High, saying: "In Jehovah I have taken refuge." (Ps. 11:1) But was this practical?

Others did not think so. They advised David and his associates to flee to the mountains, perhaps taking refuge in a cave, doing so quickly as does a bird when in danger. But the psalmist would not hear of it, evidently because the circumstances at the time were such that flight would have indicated a lack of faith in Jehovah as a provider of security. To his advisers he said: "How dare you men say to my soul [to me]: 'Flee as a bird to your [plural, manifestly referring to David and his associates] mountain!'"—Ps. 11:1.

Why were certain men giving such counsel to David? Their reasoning was: "For, look! the wicked ones themselves bend the bow, they do make ready their arrow upon the bowstring, to shoot in the gloom at the ones upright in heart. When the foundations themselves are torn down, what must anyone righteous do?" (Ps. 11:2, 3) According to them, the wicked had their bow ready to shoot at righteous persons, doing so "in the gloom," under the cover of darkness. They were not just holding the bow but already had the arrow in the bowstring, aimed at those of upright heart. In effect, David's advisers could further argue: 'The foundations on which society rests—justice, law and order—are torn down. So, what choice does a righteous person have but to flee? He cannot change matters; he cannot get just treatment.'

What was David's answer? "Jehovah is in his holy temple. Jehovah—in the heavens is his throne. His own eyes behold, his own beaming eyes examine the sons of men. Jehovah himself examines the righteous one as well as the wicked one, and anyone loving violence His soul certainly hates. He will rain down upon

the wicked ones traps, fire and sulphur and a scorching wind, as the portion of their cup. For Jehovah is righteous; he



does love righteous acts. The upright are the ones that will behold his face."—Ps. 11:4-7.

David was certain that his looking to Jehovah as his refuge would not be in vain. He realized that the Most High, the One who has his throne in the highest heavens, is watching. Jehovah's eyes penetrate to the very heart of things. Nothing escapes his notice. Since Jehovah's eyes are on the righteous, he knows what they need and, therefore, can come to their rescue. On the other hand, the Most High hates men of violence and, hence, his examining them makes their calamity certain. The time is bound to come when the wicked will be forced to drink the death-dealing potion of Jehovah's judgments, comparable to traps, fire, sulphur and a scorching wind that withers vegetation. There will be no escaping from the execution of God's judgments. It will be as

if traps or snares are falling like rain from the sky above. Because Jehovah is himself righteous and loves righteous acts, the upright will experience a grand salvation. It will prove to be as if God's face is turned toward them in an expression of love and approval. Thus they will see God's face as persons enjoying his blessing and favor.

Truly, the words of the psalmist can be a real source of comfort to us in times of hardship. Of course, there are times when we wisely flee from danger, as did David when leaving Jerusalem on account of Absalom's revolt. (2 Sam. 15:14) Even Jesus Christ instructed his followers: "When they persecute you in one city, flee to another." (Matt. 10:23) The psalmist's expressions, however, encourage us to avoid rash action that reflects lack of faith in Jehovah. Our continuing to look to the Most High as our refuge will secure for us his approval. He will not fail us.—Rom. 8:38, 39.

GOD'S REQUIREMENT THAT HIS WORK BE DONE "JUST SO"

Some two hundred years ago, one of the founding fathers of the United States wrote, in a vein similar to others before him:

"For the want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For the want of a shoe the horse was lost,
For the want of a horse the rider was lost,
For the want of a rider the battle was lost,
For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost—
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail."

This incident certainly states a valid principle, namely, that little things are not to be neglected just because they are little. They can at times be very important. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made

a similar point when he said: "The person faithful in what is least is faithful also in much, and the person unrighteous in what is least is unrighteous also in much." —Luke 16:10.

The patriarch Noah exemplified this principle. Jehovah God commanded him to build an ark, or a huge chest, something like a barn able to float, and gave him the exact measurements. (Gen. 6:13-21) He took that command most seriously. How do we know? Because we repeatedly read that Noah did *all* that God commanded him and that he did it *just so*.—Gen. 6:22; 7:5, 9, 16.

The prophet Moses gives us both a positive and a negative example along this line. God had given him explicit instructions as to the building of a tabernacle or tentlike temporary structure for the worship of Jehovah and for the furniture that was to go into it. Exodus chapters 39 and 40 tell of Moses completing this work, and in those two chapters we read 17 times that Moses did things "just so" or "just as Jehovah had commanded Moses." That is the positive example Moses gives us.

However, once when the Israelites grumbled because of a lack of water, Jehovah God told Moses simply to speak to a certain crag and water would come out. But the people had so exasperated Moses by their grumbling that Moses lost his temper and instead of just speaking to the crag he presumptuously struck the crag with his rod, shouting: "Hear, now, you rebels! Is it from this crag that *we* shall bring out water for you?" Because Moses did not carry out God's command "just so," he lost the privilege of leading His people into the Promised Land.—Num. 20:10-12.

A much sadder example of the consequences of not doing God's work "just so" is furnished us by King Saul, Israel's first king. Jehovah God had commanded him to wipe out utterly the Amalekites because of their dastardly attack on the Israelites in the wilderness. Returning from the battle with Amalek, Saul met the prophet Samuel and greeted him with the words: "Blessed are you of Jehovah. I have

carried out the word of Jehovah." But had he carried out Jehovah's word "just so"? No, for he and the people spared King Agag. Also, they spared the choicest of the flocks, the excuse being that they would offer these as sacrifices to Jehovah. But was that what Jehovah wanted? No, it was not. As Samuel told Saul: "Look! To obey is better than a sacrifice, to pay attention than the fat of rams. . . . Since you have rejected the word of Jehovah, he accordingly rejects you from being king." What a price to pay for not doing Jehovah's work "just so"!—1 Sam. 15:13-23.

David, the king of Israel that followed Saul, also had this lesson impressed upon him, although not so drastically. The time was not long after the 12 tribes recognized David as their king. Being zealous for Jehovah's worship, he ordered the sacred ark of the covenant to be brought to Jerusalem accompanied by a truly grand procession, military might, orchestra and songs. However, the ark was being transported on a new wagon instead of being carried on the shoulders of Levites as required by God's law. As the procession moved forward, "the bulls nearly caused an upset." To keep the ark from crashing to the ground, a man by the name of Uzzah grabbed the ark. Because it was forbidden that anyone even touch the ark, Jehovah struck Uzzah dead for his irreverent act.—1 Chron. 13:1-12.

Great rejoicing was at once changed to great consternation and grief. Extremely puzzled, King David ordered the ark of the covenant to be left at the nearby home of Obed-edom, the Gittite. But then something unusual happened. Jehovah God greatly blessed Obed-edom because of his having the ark at his home. (1 Chron. 13:13, 14) When this was reported to King David, he resolved to bring the ark to Jerusalem. But this time he had the ark carried on the shoulders of Levites as re-

quired by God's law. Now the bringing of the ark proved to be truly a time of great rejoicing, causing King David to commemorate the occasion by a psalm in which he exulted: "Jehovah himself has become king!"—1 Chron. 15:15, 16; 16:1-37.

Good King David had also to learn that while it was a fine thing to bring Jehovah's ark of the covenant to Jerusalem, to please God it had to be done "just as Moses had commanded by Jehovah's word." In fact, David himself admitted as much, saying: "You [Levites] must bring the ark of Jehovah the God of Israel up to the place that I have prepared for it. Because at the first time you did not, Jehovah our God broke through against us, for we did not search after him according to the custom."—1 Chron. 15:12, 13, 15.

DOING JEHOVAH'S WORK "JUST SO" IN OUR DAY

God's Word shows that he has ever had just one visible agency directing his work on earth. At the time of the Deluge it was Noah. In later years it was the nation of Israel; he recognized it alone. (Amos 3:2) That is why King Solomon asked Jehovah God to hear the foreigner that prayed toward his house. (1 Ki. 8:41-43) When the Son of God came to earth he became the sole agency that his Father used and all had to recognize that fact. (Matt. 12:30; John 14:6) With the outpouring of God's spirit upon the waiting disciples in Jerusalem a "faithful and discreet slave" class came into being. This body of Christ's dis-

ciples was used by Jehovah to provide spiritual food, and to give direction to the work that Jesus commanded his disciples to do.—Matt. 24:45-47; Acts 2:1-42.

Whom today is Jehovah God using to carry out his work in the earth? It must be a group of people who follow closely in Jesus' footsteps as to being faithful witnesses of God (Rev. 3:14); as respects preaching the good news of God's kingdom (Matt. 4:17); as respects accepting God's Word as truth and being familiar with it and using it (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10; John 17:17); as respects keeping separate from the world (John 15:18, 19; 17:16); and as respects their having self-sacrificing love among themselves. (John 13:34, 35) The facts show that it is the Christian witnesses of Jehovah alone who, in all these respects, imitate Jesus Christ. In fact, they have been organized for the very purpose of carrying on the work that Jesus began, namely, preaching the good news of God's kingdom and making disciples. They do "just so," in obedience to Jesus' instruction at Matthew 24:14 and 28:19. They work conscientiously in Kingdom activity.

Being conscientious in everything that relates to God's work requires much of Christians. But it is worth it. It is rewarding. First of all, it means being pleasing to one's heavenly Father, Jehovah God. It means being able to do the most good for others. And it also means benefiting ourselves most, and that in every way, even as the Scriptures make clear: "He that sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

—2 Cor. 9:6.

Why Offerings of Honey Were Unacceptable

God's law to Israel stated: "You must make no sour dough and no honey at all smoke as an offering made by fire to Jehovah." (Lev. 2:11) The particular honey referred to is evidently the syrup of fruits, since such honey, not bees' honey, could be spoken of as being firstfruits. (Lev. 2:12; 2 Chron. 31:5) The honey of fruits could ferment and, therefore, was rightly prohibited as an offering upon the altar.

QUESTIONS from READERS

- Why did God's servant Samson go to a prostitute's place in the Philistine city of Gaza?

The account about Samson and the prostitute at the Philistine city of Gaza reads: "Once Samson went to Gaza and saw a prostitute woman there and came in to her." (Judg. 16:1) Nothing in this record suggests that Samson's purpose in going to Gaza was to see a prostitute. Instead, while in the city, he recognized a woman of her class, and, since he was in enemy Philistine territory, her home was the only place where he could find accommodations for the night. That his intent was merely to have a place to sleep is evident from what we read thereafter: "Samson kept lying till midnight and then rose at midnight." (Judg. 16:3) Note that the account does not say that he kept lying *with her* till midnight.

The Philistines, however, may well have concluded that Samson hired the prostitute for her services. If that was their conclusion, they would have been reasonably sure of being able to seize him in the morning. This, too, could have served Samson's purpose to act against them by ripping out the gates of Gaza and thus leaving the city defenseless.

- Daniel 12:1 places Michael's 'standing up' as coming before an unprecedented time of distress. Has Michael already 'stood up,' or will that occur just before the "great tribulation"?

The indications are that Michael has already 'stood up.'

Daniel chapter eleven presents the extended prophecy about the king of the north and the king of the south. We understand that this prophecy describes historical developments from Daniel's time down to the present.* Then the 12th chapter opens: "And during that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who is

standing in behalf of the sons of your people. And there will certainly occur a time of distress such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation until that time."—Dan. 12:1.

How did Michael "stand up," and when was it to occur?

The book of Daniel a number of times uses the action of 'standing up' to describe someone's taking authority or power. For example, a prophecy about Alexander the Great's assuming authority reads: "A mighty king will certainly stand up and rule with extensive dominion and do according to his will." (Dan. 11:3; compare Daniel 11:7, 21; 8:22, 23.) Accordingly, Michael's 'standing up' would mean his taking authority or beginning to reign.

After his resurrection Jesus Christ, whom we understand from the Scriptures to be Michael the archangel, was to 'sit at God's right hand' until it was time for him to "go subduing in the midst of [his] enemies." (Ps. 110:1, 2; Heb. 10:12, 13) Jehovah's Witnesses have often shown from the Bible and its fulfillment in history that Jesus' period of 'sitting' ended during the raging of World War I in the autumn of 1914 C.E. Then it was time for him to "stand up" or accept Kingdom rulership in heaven, which is referred to in the first part of Daniel 12:1.

That verse goes on to relate what else would occur. There would come "a time of distress such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation." In Matthew 24:21, Jesus called this the "great tribulation."

During the interval since Michael's 'standing up,' the nations have had opportunity to acknowledge and submit to his Kingdom rule. But they have refused to do so and even have persecuted Christians who proclaim that Jesus is the authorized ruler of the 'kingdom of the world.' (Rev. 11:17, 18) The massing together of the national groups against him and his people has not caused Michael to relinquish his rulership. No, he has persisted in it. The result of the nations' course will be disastrous for them. It will lead them to the outbreak of the "great tribulation," in which they will be broken to pieces just as a potter's vessel might be broken with an iron rod. (Ps. 2:1, 2, 8, 9) Happily, Daniel 12:1, 2 indicates that God's people as a group will survive that "time of distress" into the New Order where even the righteous ones who have died will be raised.—Acts 24:15.

* See "Your Will Be Done on Earth" (1958), pp. 220-307.

A Miracle Comparable to a Resurrection

At the age of 99, Abraham was too old to father a child. But his advanced years were no obstacle to the Creator's reviving his reproductive powers, making it possible for Abraham to have Isaac by his beloved Sarah whose reproductive powers were also restored. (Gen. 17:17; 21:1, 2; Rom. 4:19) Since this miracle involved the restoration of living cells, it was indeed comparable to a resurrection.

Amazingly, this was no temporary revival of Abraham's ability to father children. After Sarah's death, when Abraham took another wife, Keturah, he had six more sons—Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and

Ishmael. (Gen. 25:1-3) Thus, though Abraham was past the age of procreation, he still had six sons and could beget at least 36 grandchildren. All this occurred before he died at the ripe old age of 175.

It is interesting to note that, while the life spans of all the patriarchs were relatively short, the life spans of all the apostles and saints were much longer, averaging about 42 years. (See the chart on page 16.) Moreover, the apostles' lives spanned a period of 150 years, from 27 C.E. to 100 C.E., while the patriarchs' lives spanned only 200 years, from 2000 B.C.E. to 100 B.C.E.

It is significant that the apostles' lives spanned a period of 150 years, during which time they traveled to nearly every nation in the world. (See "The Apostles' Travels," page 16.) This fact is particularly remarkable when compared with the patriarchs' lives, which spanned only 200 years, during which time Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph traveled only to Egypt, Canaan and Mesopotamia. (See "The Patriarchs' Travels," page 16.) Thus, while the apostles' lives spanned nearly twice as long as the patriarchs', the apostles traveled five times as far.

Shuah. Hence, more than 40 years after his reproductive powers were revived Abraham still had the ability to procreate. (Gen. 23:1; 25:1, 2) This well illustrates what the angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary many centuries later: "With God no declaration will be an impossibility." (Luke 1:37) The miracle also provides assurance respecting the certainty of the resurrection hope.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

March 25: Visits from Older Men Benefit God's People. Page 16. Songs to Be Used: 85, 36.

April 1: Traveling Overseers Bring Benefits Today. Page 21. Songs to Be Used: 63, 24.