word of God deserves our closer, heart-concentrated attention. For do we not observe, just as God declared in his prophetic word, the difficulties now being experienced by the world? And do we not see the expansion of the good news throughout the earth, with millions gathering together to make up that "great crowd" of survivors of the "great tribulation"?

BE CAREFUL TO KEEP A BALANCED VIEW

10 Jehovah's word or message is true when it speaks about our entering into God's rest now and remaining in it through the "great tribulation," after which Christ's thousand-year reign will transform the earth into a paradise garden. God's word is indeed 'sharp like a two-edged sword.' It will show what we really are, revealing what our thoughts and the intentions of our heart are. Are we serving Jehovah God because we love him, trust him and have full confidence in what he says? Or are we 'becoming weary in well-doing,' looking for a certain date primarily as bringing a relief to ourselves, with little concern for the lives of other people? (Gal. 6:9) Are we appreciative of all the good things we have had from Jehovah and from association with his people? Have not the things we have learned helped us in our family lives? Do we not love our genuine friends we have now gained as a result of knowing the truth?—Mark 10:29, 30.

11 It may be that some who have been serving God have planned their lives according to a mistaken view of just what was to happen on a certain date or in a certain year. They may have, for this reason, put off or neglected things that they otherwise would have cared for. But they have missed the point of the Bible's warnings concerning the end of this system of things, thinking that Bible chronology reveals the specific date.

12 What do Jesus' own words show concerning the proper attitude as to the end—to look for a date, or what? He said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth. Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:34-36.

13 Did Jesus mean that we should adjust our financial and secular affairs so that our resources would just carry us to a certain date that we might think marks the end? If our house is suffering serious deterioration, should we let it go, on the assumption that we would need it only a few months longer? Or, if someone in the family possibly needs special medical care, should we say, 'Well, we'll put it off because the time is so near for this system of things to go'? This is not the kind of thinking that Jesus advised.

14 Then what did Jesus and the apostles mean when they spoke of being alert as to the signs of the end, or as to "waiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah"? They meant for us to be absolutely confident that the day will not come one moment later than Jehovah purposes. Peter said that this should prompt us to "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion," being watchful that we are living by Bible principles and that we are busy proclaiming the

10. (a) What does God's word reveal about us? (b) What questions can we ask ourselves in this connection? 11. What mistakes may some persons have made as to their Christian course?

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Kingdom message and convincing people of the urgency of turning to God. (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) All of us can make improvements in our worship of God, cementing a closer relationship with him. Perhaps we have up to this time done the best we can, and have made improvements as we went along. Does the fact that the end is very near, then, mean to us that we should make big changes in our way of living and serving God? Not necessarily so. However, there may be major improvements that we Scripturally need to make. Also, if there are areas in our life in which we can 'buy out' time from vain pursuits in this system we should do it. In this way, many have continued to experience the joy of full-time "pioneer" service over the years. All of us can check to see what we can do.—Eph. 5:15, 16.

But it is not advisable for us to set our sights on a certain date, neglecting everyday things we would ordinarily care for as Christians, such as things that we and our families really need. We may be forgetting that, when the "day" comes, it will not change the principle that Christians must at all times take care of all their responsibilities. If anyone has been disappointed through not following this line of thought, he should now concentrate on adjusting his viewpoint, seeing that it was not the word of God that failed or deceived him and brought disappointment, but that his own understanding was based on wrong premises.

However, say that you are one who counted heavily on a date, and commendably, set your attention more strictly on the urgency of the times and the need of the people to hear. And say you now, temporarily, feel somewhat disappointed; are you really the loser? Are you really hurt?

We believe you can say that you have gained and profited by taking this conscientious course. Also, you have been enabled to get a really mature, more reasonable viewpoint.—Eph. 5:1-17.

The Scriptures repeatedly tell us that the end will come as a complete surprise upon the world. The apostle spoke of this, saying: "You yourselves know quite well that Jehovah's day [for judgment] is coming exactly as a thief in the night." (1 Thess. 5:2) So that true Christians would not be "overtaken as thieves," Jesus said even to his disciples back there, and to us today: "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." Thereafter he said: "Prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming." (Matt. 24:42-44) These clear statements of Jesus indicate that God's servants will never be given the date of Christ's "coming" for judgment until it actually takes place. In fact, it will come at what appears to them an 'unlikely' time.—Luke 12:39, 40.

DO NOT BE DECEIVED BY THE NATIONS' SURVIVAL THROUGH CRISIS

Note, though, what Jesus actually warned about. His words do not indicate that, as the "great tribulation" draws close, the world situation will get to be such that everybody, everywhere, will be in a state of near starvation. Otherwise, how could there be any danger of Jesus' disciples becoming "weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking" at that time? Remember, too, that Jesus used as examples the conditions in Noah's day before the flood and in Lot's day before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He showed that at that time there was an

17. How do we know that we will not be given, in advance, the precise date of Christ's "coming" for judgment?
18. Why should we not think that all the nations, everywhere, will get to an almost starved state before the "great tribulation" breaks?