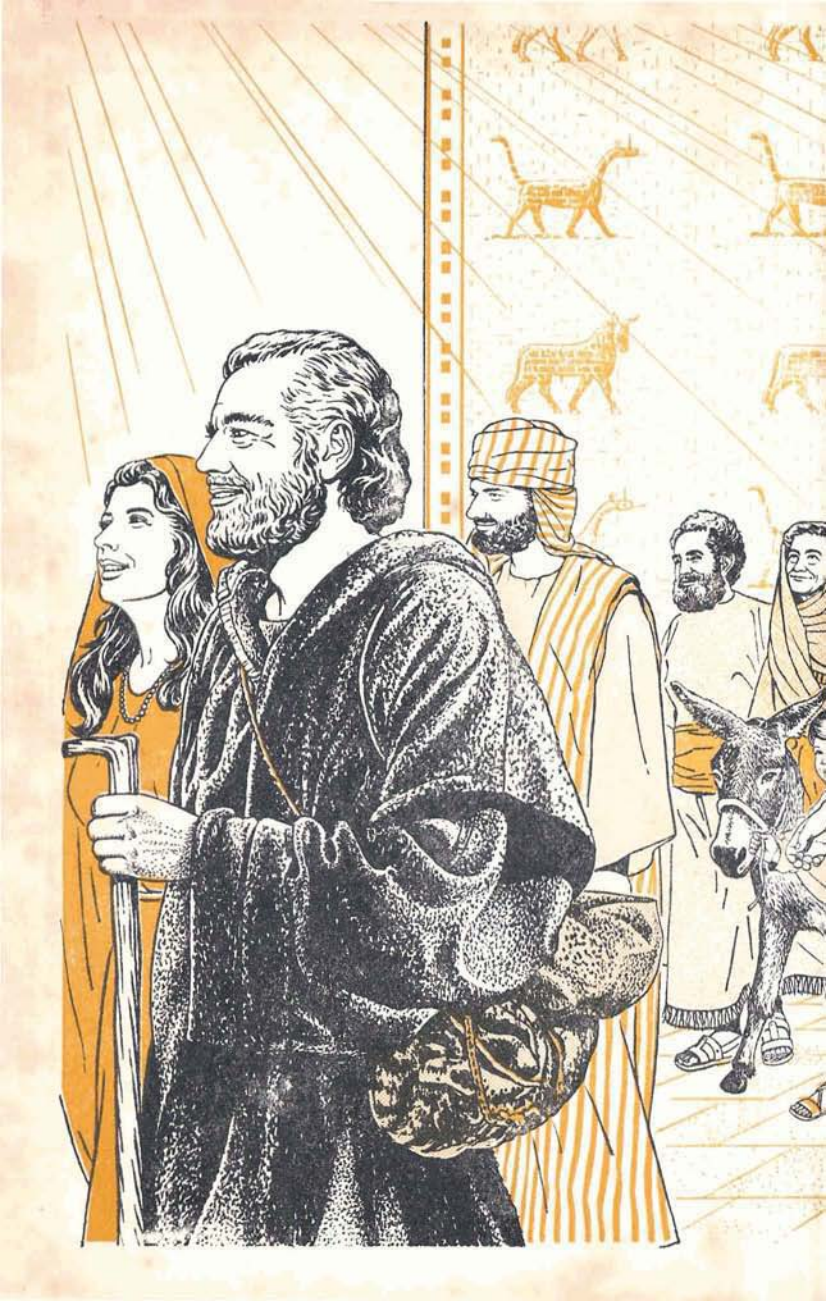
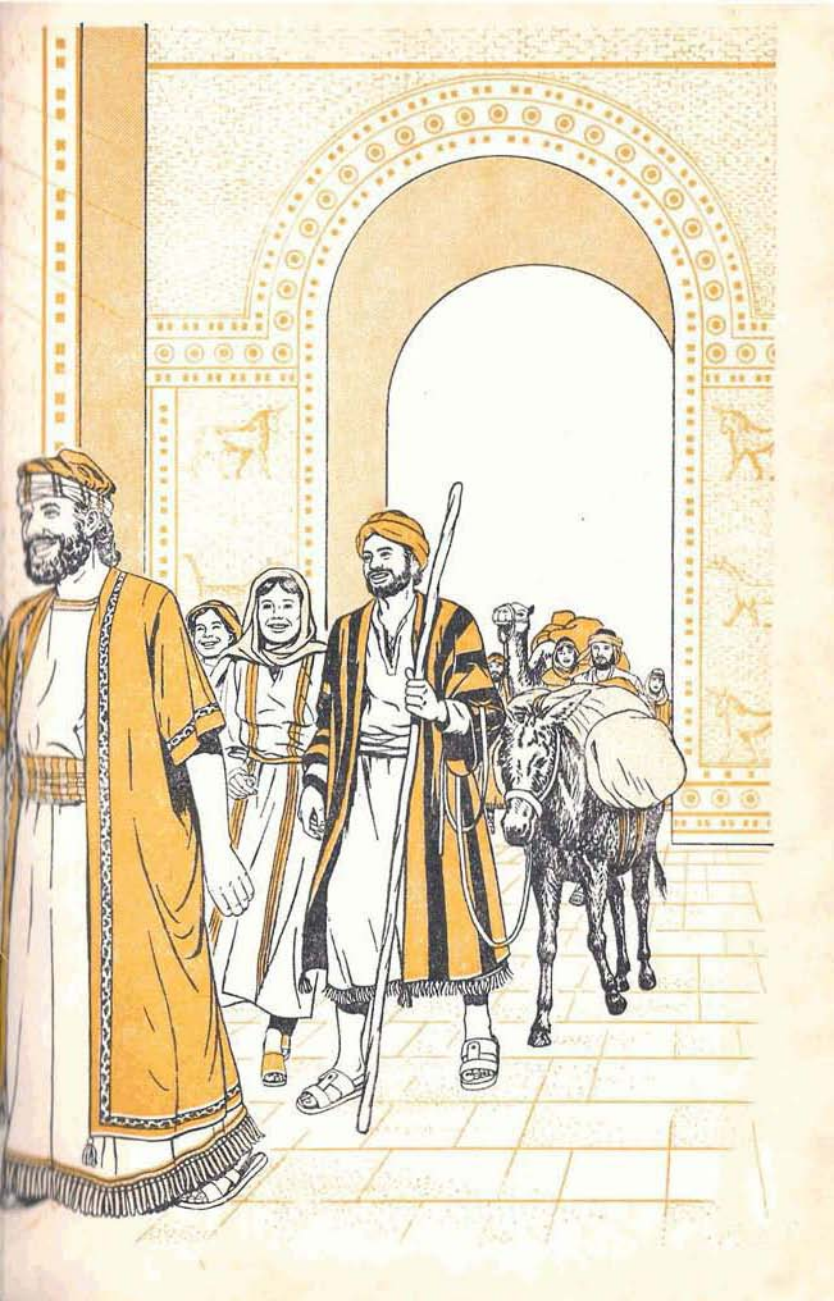
MAN'S SALVATION OUT OF WORLD DISTRESS AT HAND!





MAN'S SALVATION OUT OF WORLD DISTRESS AT HAND!

A candid consideration in the light of Bible prophecy of what is immediately ahead of this generation of mankind, and Scriptural counsel for dealing with these things for our lasting good.

"Jehovah, be gracious to us; we hope in you; be our arm morning by morning, our salvation withal in time of distress."—Isaiah 33:2, according to *The Bible in Living English* by S. T. Byington, 1972 edition.

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DEDICATED

to the God of those who will pass alive through this world distress into His new order

Abbreviations of Scripture translations quoted or cited in this book:

AS – *American Standard Version*
AV – *Authorized Version,* or *King James Version*
ERV – *English Revised Version*
Je – *The Jerusalem Bible* (Roman Catholic), English translation
LXX – The Greek *Septuagint Version*
NE – *The New English Bible*
NW – *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*

NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible quotations and references are according to the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures,* the revised edition of 1971 C.E.

Dates of events before the Common Era are marked by the abbreviation B.C.E. Dates of events during the Common Era are marked by the abbreviation C.E.

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CHAPTER 1

The Outlook After Sixty Years of World Distress

HOW much more will the present generation of mankind have to take of this world distress that has plagued us since 1914 C.E.? How much more *can* we take of it without reaching the worst—the end of mankind? Quite a number of us have managed to reach seventy years of age or more. Fewer of us have attained to eighty years of age or more. In times such as these, such an age attainment is very good, according to the age-old saying that set a reasonable time-length for a generation:

2 "The days of our years in this life are seventy years; and if by uncommon vigour they be eighty, yet is their greatness trouble and mishap; for it soon hasteneth off, and we fly away."*

3 During those seven or eight decades of our lives, oh, what we have experienced! For good reason, then, the announcement "Man's salvation out of world distress at hand!" is good news indeed.

4 The big turning point in our conditions of life was the year 1914 C.E. The things since then about which we have to tell younger persons are not things of the dead past about which we read in history books. No, but they have been a part of our own life. We have seen, felt, endured and survived them, and, thankfully, we are alive to tell about them as real facts of this twentieth century.

* Written by Moses son of Amram, in Psalm 90:10, *Leeser*.

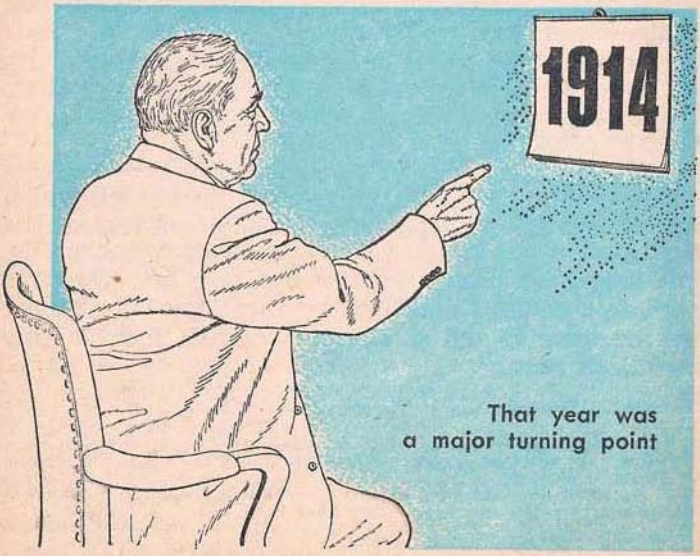
1, 2. (a) What questions do we ask about the world distress since 1914 C.E.? (b) What age group has done quite well as to living, according to Psalm 90:10?

3, 4. (a) What announcement is good news to such older ones? (b) What things can they tell as part of their life?

[5] Today we do not have the peaceful outlook for the future that we had back there up till the summer of 1914. A "peaceful outlook" back there—yes, except for those International Bible Students who had been saying since the year 1876 that the Biblical "times of the Gentiles" would run out in the autumn of 1914 and that this would mean unparalleled trouble for the whole world. Why, about two thousand of them were peacefully met together in general convention in the Memorial Hall, Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A., on that Sunday of June 28, 1914, when the shot rang out that was heard around the earth, the assassin's shot that triggered World War I.* Till then politicians and especially religious clergymen who claimed to know their Bible

* See *The Watch Tower* under date of June 1, 1914 (page 174), and July 15, 1914 (pages 217, 218).

5. What prediction made by certain Bible students since 1876 disturbed the world's "peaceful outlook" that obtained until the summer of 1914?



better than those Bible students were inclined to smile at the prediction and brush it off—life in general had been so genial and promising till then. Besides, did we not have back there the Permanent Court of Arbitration, at The Hague, Netherlands, for the arbitrating of international difficulty peacefully?

[6] World War I was bad enough for us. We saw some new things added to modern warfare—the use of airplanes and the introduction of the armored "tank" moving on a caterpillar tread, as introduced by the British, and poison gas that called for gas masks as part of the regular equipment of a soldier. However, World War II, twenty-one years after the first world war ended, was four times as destructive. It came to a frightening climax with the explosion of two atomic bombs over two populous cities in the Far East. Shortly thereafter came the invention of the hydrogen bomb, with far greater capacity for mass slaughter, and then intercontinental ballistic missiles with warheads to carry such bombs and capable of spanning oceans and arriving at target without advance notice. We well remember the air-raid shelters of World War II. Six nations from East to West are now armed with nuclear bombs, and well into the summer of 1974 test explosions of nuclear bombs were being made in the air over the Pacific Ocean.

[7] The stockpiling of nuclear weapons for missile warfare disquiets the whole world. It threatens the existence of all mankind. Compared with the situation in the first half of 1914, the foundations for preventing international warfare short of a third world war, introduced by nuclear bombs, are very shaky indeed. This holds true in 1975 in spite of the existence of the world organization for peace and security, the United Nations with 138 member nations, and the coordinated International Court of Justice, at The

6. By what new means of warfare were World Wars I and II marked, and what more recent weapons have been added?
7. What now poses a threat to mankind's very existence, and peace of what duration are international statesmen working to establish?

Hague. Well knowing the instability of human relations, international statesmen are grimly working at establishing a "peace for our generation," or, better, "a peace for generations to come." The announcement "Man's salvation out of world distress at hand!" comes not from those statesmen. Peace with endless stability will without fail shortly come to distressed humanity, but not in *their* way. In a better way!

SURVIVAL OF SCOURGES, FOOD DEARTHS

[8] However, there were other factors that contributed to the world distress. The sickle of Death reaped a tremendous harvest of human lives by means of pestilence, the scourge! Well can we remember the scourge that excelled the Black Plague of the Middle Ages. Toward the end of World War I in 1918 it came like a wave that swept over the whole globe. Because of its place of origin it was called "the Spanish flu." Many of us can remember being laid low with this dread fever and being kept away from our working jobs, but, happily for us, we did not prove to be among the 20,000,000 victims that were prostrated in death. Other pestilences have taken a heavy toll of our generation. For example, now, owing to a society (including religious clergymen) that defies the natural laws for sexual health, loathsome sex diseases have become epidemic, baffling the modern medical profession. Unknown to many, the widespread resort to blood transfusions has resulted in the spread of crippling diseases, fatal in many cases, not to speak of deaths directly caused by this medical practice, still pursued by many.

[9] Not alone is world health under attack by pestilences from time to time, in addition to the chronic diseases like malaria, but world health is also being affected by undernourishment on account of food shortages. We vividly remember the devastating fam-

8. How has the disease factor contributed to world distress since 1914?
9. What has led up to the prediction of world famine shortly?

ines that resulted from the ravages of international wars, from droughts, from floods, from pests. Even in the days of good crops by the farming nations, thousands have been poorly fed, or left starving. But today, as never before, the world's breadbasket is threatened. Yearly there are more mouths to feed, by the tens of millions, without more farming land being available or being put under cultivation. The farming population decreases, but the world population increases. In our experience since 1914 C.E., in spite of World War I, pestilence and famine, the world population swelled to 2,000,000,000 in 1930. In just thirty years more, it swarmed up to 3,000,000,000. And now, in just fifteen years, the population growth is reaching four thousand million. So, even world famine shortly is predicted!

[10] All of us like to be secure in our persons and property, do we not? When we oldsters were young people back in the first two decades of this twentieth century, life felt more secure; it *was* more secure. We did not hear much about pollution. We did not know of this thing called "ecology," which has to do with our natural living environment. But now, since some fifteen years ago, we have been hearing more and more insistently about the growing pollution of our natural surroundings upon which the security of our persons, healthwise, depends. Now, to an alarming extent, pollution of the air we breathe, the water depended upon for bodily needs, the soil from which come foodstuffs, also the rivers, lakes and seas that are a source of fish and marine foods, yes, pollution of about every aspect of our natural, life-sustaining environment nears the point of crisis. The damage already done has gone too far to be counteracted within our generation. The way in which our modern industrialized, commercialized, mobilized, concentrated

10. How has the threat to human existence on account of pollution become dangerous?

society has been living for decades is to blame for this recent threat to human existence.

11 Little do most people think of security for their vital natural environment. They are far more aware of their need for physical security and security of properties. We remember the statement of one authoritative voice not so many years ago, that, at the current rate of crime increase, the world would become too dangerous a place in which to live. More and more people are coming to think that we have reached that state of affairs now. One big reason for this is not hard to find. Historians agree that with the engaging in world war with total mobilization in 1914 an age of violence was introduced on the earth. The rise of unprincipled dictators and the six years of World War II with aggravated violence and terror have spread and intensified the spirit of violence. What people learned during wartime they carry over into peacetime. The violent, lawless elements resort to the latest types of weapons, such as machine guns, bombs, as well as unbridled rioting accompanied by looting and wanton destruction of valuable properties.

12 In the lands that, according to what they religiously claim to be, should be models of right conduct and conscientious respect for law and order, namely, in the lands of Christendom, we have observed the worst offenders against moral law and security of others. Why, today Christendom estimates it has more than a quarter of the world's population as members of its churches, and these people are supposed to be examples of Christian living to the so-called "pagan" world. But, in fact, pagandom has learned many bad things from Christendom. Pagandom does not forget that two world wars started in Christendom, that in her the nuclear bomb was developed, and that in her is the birthplace of international Communism. "Pagans" have

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11. How has security for our physical persons and material properties been reduced?
12. How is pagandom impressed with the "Christianity" of Christendom, and why?

not been impressed very much by the "Christianity" of Christendom. According to the Holy Bible of Christendom, her church members are more pagan than the unbelieving pagans themselves!

13 Love of fellowman is becoming a scarce article nowadays. Even some of the popular songs have taken up the theme of love—about What the world needs is more love, and about liking to teach the world to love. As the world distress grows more poignant and the need for self-preservation becomes more acute, inborn human selfishness is bound to rise above any remaining traces of love of fellow humans and to seek primarily physical, material comfort of oneself. For the most part, the adhesive, unifying force of sincere love is gone. What wonder that there is so much rivalry, contentiousness, prejudice, resentment, covetousness, greed, cheating, stealing, taking advantage of others today! And if there is lack of love for fellowman, whom human creatures can see and have contact with directly, how can there be love for the One whom Christendom claims to worship, God, the Creator of man in His image? So, with the loss of the love of fellowman, the love of God has cooled off. Religious hypocrisy takes the ascendancy!

WHAT IT ALL ADDS UP TO AT THIS LATE DATE

14 What does all of this, which we oldsters have observed personally since 1914, total up to as three quarters of this twentieth century closes? Does it add evidence that, after sixty years of acquaintance with world distress, man has learned by experience and now knows how to adjust himself to the distress of nations? Does it add convincing evidence that man is able to solve his problems by himself? Not that we intelligent observers in our seventies and eighties can see. And man himself has come to realize that hard fact. So, when problems are not worked out, then

13. How has the cooling off of love become apparent?
14. To what do all the things thus far considered add up, and so what question arises?

what? Failure! Man cannot encourage himself with the old slogan, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!" The problem at which to try again does not remain the same. It becomes worse! Harder! The question is forced on us, How long will man continue to fail, to the endangerment of his own existence?

15 Where is man to turn for salvation from the disastrous problems of his own making? Materialistic men, believers in the theory of man's self-evolution, see only man to whom to turn. Will such men turn to the once-popular traditional religions that have long been practiced in the temples, mosques, cathedrals and church buildings? For example, Will Russian Communism turn back to the Russian Orthodox religion that it overthrew in 1917 and give up its dictum that "religion is the opium of the people"? Since disestablishing the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian Soviet Union has used what remains of that church system as a mere handmaid of the State, and this weak religious tool has provided no solution for the problems of Communist Russia.

16 In other parts of Christendom outside Communist lands, will the politicians and scientists turn to the religious clergymen, Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, for salvation? These clergymen the State has used as chaplains in its fighting forces and as "men of God" to invoke the divine blessing upon their lawmaking bodies. These religious clergymen, although they have turned from a purely religious Gospel to a social, materialistic Gospel, have come up with no solutions to world problems. Will Communist Red China, now engaged in war on Confucianism, feel obliged at length to go back to dead Confucius for aid? Also, in other lands that still have a large non-Christian religious organization, will the

15. What likelihood is there that materialistic men will turn back to religion for aid in solving problems, as illustrated in the case of Communist Russia?

16. What questions come up with regard to a future appeal to religion, in lands where religion still has some respect?

politicians and rulers of state keep turning to their priests whose religions have till now offered no explanation of the present world distress and so cannot show the way out of it?

17 Many are the political leaders and the economic guides who have found their long-held religions disappointing. They have even lost faith in such. Will they now call for a religious revival as the last resort and act as the ancient proverb has said: "The dog has returned to its own vomit"?*

18 Such a thing is hardly to be expected! Common sense and reason do not argue for such a thing. The faith of those worldly men in what is superhuman, in what is spiritual, has been weakened, or worse, destroyed. Under such circumstances they feel left to only human resources. When, at last, all human resources fail them, they will be at their wits' end!

19 Surely it is now the time to ask ourselves, Do we want to be among such perplexed men when they are reduced to desperation? They will not turn from the course of fighting against their own interests, unfortunately to the endangerment of the eternal interests of everybody else! Will we let ourselves be induced to go along with them? We do not have to do so. On the very best of authority it can confidently be announced, 'Man's salvation out of world distress is at hand!' We have somewhere to turn, without becoming liable to disappointment, frustration, destruction. The increasing stress of the times makes it urgent upon us to be teachable and to inform ourselves where to turn in the hope of complete satisfaction.

* 2 Peter 2:22; Proverbs 26:11.

17. What question here arises regarding any future application of an ancient proverb?
18. What argues against such application of the proverb?
19. In order to avoid being induced to go along with such men, what is the thing about which to inform ourselves teachably?

CHAPTER 2

The Reliable Commentator on This World Distress

THE world distress that man has experienced without letup since 1914 C.E. must have a meaning. Is it left for man himself to figure out its meaning? What is the reason for it, and for it to persist so long? As it had a beginning, so it must have an end, but how will it end? Who has the right, the authority, to say that man will be saved out of it? And that this salvation is at hand? The person able to comment on man's present world distress with answers to these vital questions would have to be an extraordinary person. None of us oldsters who have gone through all this world distress since its inception in 1914 will claim to be that person, even with all the observations each one of us has made and the experience that we have gained. Rather, we prefer to point all men to that qualified person.

[2] Many predictions have been made concerning future times by men and women, by spiritists or fortune-tellers, for example, but of what benefit are such predictions to us as world distress threatens to reach a climax that we do not like to think about?

[3] The foreteller of events whom we would like to consult today, right now, would be the one that has proved to be correct in predicting events and conditions that affect us now at this stage of world distress. Since he proved himself true with regard to what has happened till now, he can be relied upon as being true in what he foretells as being just ahead of us. His prediction of man's salvation out of this world

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1. What questions come up about the world distress since 1914, and regarding the answers, what do oldsters of this generation prefer to do?
2, 3. In the face of predictions by spiritists, whom do we prefer to consult as a foreteller of the future, and why?

distress is something upon which we can confidently base our hopes and plans for the future.

4 We here desire to refer to such a trustworthy person. He was not out to deceive people. He was born into our race as a man. Thus he came to sense man's problems keenly, firsthand. Today all mankind is concerned about what is going on in the Middle East. Mankind knows that the two nuclear-equipped superpowers are involved in what goes on in that sector of the earth. Likewise, the aforementioned man of reliable prophetic ability was keenly interested in the course of events in the Middle East, during the first century of our Common Era. What was to take place there was to set a pattern for the course of world events since the critical year of 1914 C.E. So what he had to predict interests us today.

5 It was on the eleventh day of the spring month that was then locally called Nisan, in the year 33 C.E. At the time when a prophecy that deserves world attention was to be forthcoming, the prophet sat upon what is still called the Mount of Olives, which rears itself up to the east of that controversial city, Jerusalem. As he looked down upon the eastern section of the city he did not see on the sacred area of the city the Mohammedan mosque of today, called the Dome of the Rock. He saw a religious structure built by a non-Jew, the Edomitish king called Herod the Great. It was a gorgeous temple to the God to whose worship Herod and his family had become proselytes. Outside the northwest section of the temple area was the Tower of Antonia, where occupation troops representing the Roman Empire were quartered. Earlier on that day of Nisan 11 and while the prophet was down in the city and at the temple, he predicted the destruction of that awe-inspiring temple, within that generation. This to the consternation of twelve intimate men who were accompanying him then.

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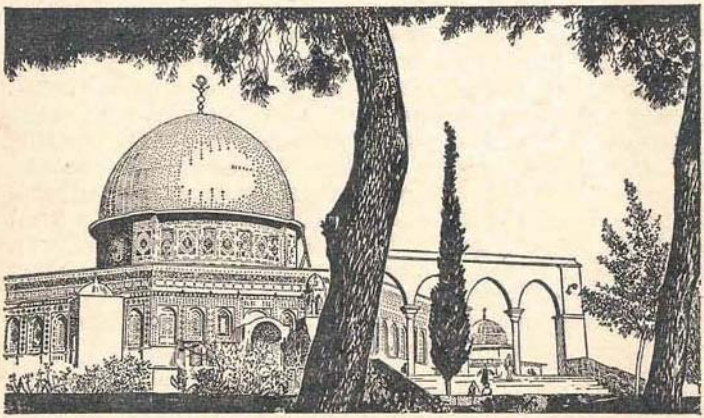
4. In what sector of the earth was that reliable foreteller of events specially interested, and why does what he said interest us today?
5. At the time of giving his prophecy of world importance, where was the prophet, and what had he predicted regarding what he looked at below?

[6] He also intimated that he himself was going away and would return, when he said: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,—how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you. For I say to you, You will by no means see me from henceforth until you say, 'Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah's name!' "*

[7] When, shortly afterward that same day, this man made further prediction about the destruction of that "house" or temple, he did not predict also the rebuilding of that temple. He gave no prophecy that such a thing would ever occur. It is not strange, therefore, that today, nineteen hundred years after the destruc-

* Recorded at Matthew 23:37-39, in the Holy Bible.

6. How, by what he said to Jerusalem, did the prophet indicate that he would go away and return?
7. Why did the prophet not predict the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple, and so to what kind of temple would he not be welcomed back?



Dome of the Rock, in modern-day Jerusalem

tion of Herod's temple, the Mohammedan "Dome of the Rock" stands upon the location of the former Jewish sanctuary. After the destruction of the Jewish temple in the first century C.E., no further temple of stone and wood would ever again be needed there on Mount Moriah of Jerusalem for the worship of Jehovah. The Jerusalem temple of that day was then in its "time of the end." So it would not be to any such material "house" or temple that the prophet then taking his farewell would be welcomed back by people with the jubilant outcry: "Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah's name!" Obviously, the close of an era, the end of a national system of things, was in the offing! It proved to be so!

A PREDICTION TO BE VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN EVENTS

[8] The man that sat there on the Mount of Olives on that Tuesday, Nisan 11, 33 C.E., looked down upon the then holy city of Jerusalem and its temple with more than a feeling of sheer admiration at the beauty of the sight. His twelve intimate associates were greatly disturbed at what they had heard him say. One of those men, named Matthew Levi, has recorded the triple question that was put to that man with confidence in his prophetic ability to give the reliable answers. Are we today, like those men back there, aware that we also are close to the end of an era, to what promises to be the disastrous end of a system of things? If so, then we should be interested in what they asked the man who qualified as a prophet. They asked: "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?"—Matthew 24:3.

[9] By this inquiry the questioners were asking for prophetic information about the destruction of Jeru-

8. What triple question did the prophet's intimate associates put to him, and why should we today be interested?
9. Although those inquirers were asking about Jerusalem's destruction, why may we not dismiss that destruction as of no consequence to us today?

salem, which, because of its temple, was considered "a holy place," "the holy city." (Matthew 24:15; 4:5) Preoccupied as we are today with the pressing problems of a crumbling world, some persons might exclaim: "Oh, just a city in a small country of the world destroyed! Of what consequence to me is that?" So it might seem to some, but—what if, shortly, Vatican City, which occupies 108.7 acres of modern Italy, were violently destroyed? Would that be of little concern, little consequence to hundreds of millions of religious people throughout the earth today? Would such desolation of Vatican City arouse in other millions dread forebodings for other politico-religious organizations with which they are connected and about which they have awe-inspiring views? Likewise, if something that is the modern-day counterpart of that Jerusalem of the first century C.E. ends in a violent way, it will directly affect at least a quarter of the present world's population! It will also forebodingly indicate something as imminent for other hundreds of millions!

[10] Back there, as the inquiring men listened to the "answer man," they had their times in mind. And we today, as we listen in on the answer given to their inquiry, can have our times in mind. To get the proper appreciation of the prophetic answer, we should have in mind the modern-day parallels and counterparts, inasmuch as such things do really exist. As we now read just twenty verses out of the lengthy answer given, let us see whether we of ourselves can see some of the modern-day parallels and counterparts. We shall read from the records made by Matthew Levi and the medical doctor Luke:

PROPHETIC ANSWER

[11] "Look out that nobody misleads you; for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You are going to hear

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10. Having our own times in mind as we now read the prophecy, we should look for what on the modern scene?
11. By whom were the prophet's associates not to be misled, and by what not to be terrified?

of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not terrified. For these things must take place, but the end is not yet. [Why not?]

12 "For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another [and in one place after another pestilences (Luke 21:11)]. All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress.

13 "Then people will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name. Then, also, many will be stumbled and will betray one another and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and mislead many; and because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off. But he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.

14 "Therefore, when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place, (let the reader use discernment,) then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains. Let the man on the housetop not come down to take the goods out of his house; and let the man in the field not return to the house to pick up his outer garment. Woe to the pregnant women and those suckling a baby in those days! Keep praying that your flight may not occur in wintertime, nor on the sabbath day; for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short."—Matthew 24:4-22.

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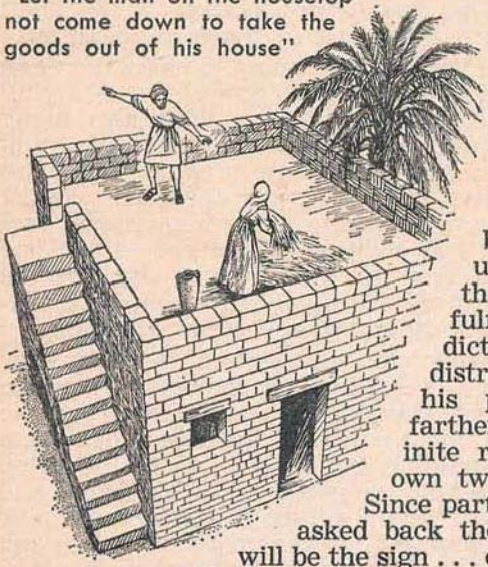
12. "The end" was not to be understood as having been reached just because of the happening of what things?
13. What other things of real significance were to occur before the "end" would come?
14. When those in Judea saw the disgusting thing "standing in a holy place," what were they to do, and why?

15 "They will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led captive among all nations; and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled."—Luke 21:24, The American Revised Standard Version Bible.

"Let the man on the housetop not come down to take the goods out of his house"



PARALLEL SIGNIFICANCE TODAY!

16 In agreement with that prophetic statement that "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled," the predictor of the world distress carried on his prophecy much farther, even with definite reference to our own twentieth century. Since part of the question asked back there was, "What will be the sign . . . of the conclusion of the system of things," the predicted things that reached a high point in the desolation of Jerusalem and the province of Judea in the year 70 C.E. marked the calamitous end of the then system of things, a system that revolved around the "holy place," "the holy city," Jerusalem.

17 Parallelwise, what turning point in history shall we reasonably say is marked by those things that we

15. For how long was Jerusalem to be trodden down by the non-Jewish nations?
16. The things predicted reached a high point in what event, and this marked the end of what system of things?
17. Parallelwise, the oldsters of this generation ask whether there would be a marking of anything by what modern events?

oldsters of this generation have seen occur on a global scale since 1914 C.E., that year which those International Bible Students had been declaring since 1876 C.E. would seal the end of the "times of the Gentiles"?

18 We would be blinding ourselves to the ominous "sign" if we did not discern that the end of the global system of things is marked by such things occurring since 1914 C.E. From that never-to-be-forgotten year onward this world system of things can be impeached before all humanity for the most gory wars of all human history, for food shortages humanly induced to a large extent, for pestilences traceable to human misconduct, for increase of lawlessness, for the cooling off of the divine quality of love, for betrayal of mankind, for outright hatred and persecution in all the nations toward those Christians who were counteracting false prophets by preaching in all the inhabited earth "this good news of the kingdom" for a "witness to all the nations"!

19 This system of things stands guilty according to all those articles of impeachment. All those articles of impeachment are provable by the historical records kept since 1914 C.E. The Highest Court of the Universe is aware of all of this, and this global system of things is answerable to that Supreme Court. Accordingly this Court is left to but one decision to render. Its decision must be consistent with that which it pronounced in the year 70 C.E. on the system of things that had synagogues both inside and outside the Roman Empire. The Court's consistent decision for today must be for the end of this global system of things in the "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." —Matthew 24:21.

18. What do those events mean for this system of things, and for what can it be impeached?
19. According to those articles of impeachment, how does this system of things stand before the Court of the Universe, and what consistent decision must it render toward this system?

20 This is the tribulation that will end the world distress, for it comes according to the judicial decision of the Highest Court of the Universe against this global system of things that has caused so much distress for all mankind. Since the year 1914 this system of things has been undergoing "pangs of distress," which pangs will cease only with the painful death of the system. The outlook is mournful indeed for the system of things and for those who are selfishly wrapped up in it. But we do not need to have their outlook; we do not need to mourn. We know that it is only in *one* respect that the "sign" appearing since 1914 means "the conclusion of the system of things," but we note another significance, an accompanying significance, to that "sign." What the important side effect of this "sign" would be, the first-century prophet on the world distress indicated when he said to his listeners:

21 "Note the fig tree and all the other trees: When they are already in the bud, by observing it you know for yourselves that now the summer is near. In this way you also, when you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, This generation will by no means pass away until all things occur. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away."—Luke 21:29-33.

22 That is it! Not only would the "sign" mean the "conclusion of the system of things" in "pangs of distress," but the calamitous things that combine to make up this "sign" would indirectly indicate that the "kingdom of God," welcome like summer in the Middle East, was near. What wonder, then, that the commentator on world distress had said just before this

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20, 21. (a) Why does that "great tribulation" mean the end of world distress? (b) According to what further words of the prophet do we not need to have the mournful outlook of the world?

22. (a) The prophet told his listeners to assume what posture as they saw these things start to occur? (b) Why do we of this century have the strongest of reasons to adopt this posture?

in his prophecy: "But as these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near"! (Luke 21:28) More than sixty years ago we saw these things start to occur from 1914 onward, and we of this twentieth century, rather than those men of the first century, are the ones that have the strongest of reasons to raise ourselves up out of a dejected posture and lift our heads up with radiant faces. Our deliverance has drawn near, is now nearer than ever before. Yes, "the kingdom of God is near"!

23 There is solid basis for announcing that 'Man's salvation out of world distress is at hand!' In saying this we are not attaching any false meaning to the "pangs of distress" that have been racking the whole system of things since 1914 C.E. These things were foretold nineteen centuries ago in answer to a specific question on what to look for that would indicate a certain thing or set of things. Hence, the things foretold, on coming true, have this certain meaning. In this way the man who foretold them has proved himself to be a reliable commentator on the world distress. He can therefore be considered most reliable in predicting also a salvation of some of mankind alive out of this worsening world distress so as to enjoy on earth the blessings of God's kingdom. This is the government that will bring in a joy-laden righteous new system of things.

24 The man with whose prophecy we have here been dealing said that his disciples would become "objects of hatred by all the nations" on account of his name. (Matthew 24:9) This meant that he himself would be hated, and that anything to which his name was attached would also be hated or discredited. We have

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23. Why can we be certain of the meaning of these "pangs of distress" upon the world system, and why is the prophet's predicting of what is to come reliable?

24. (a) Why has the source of the prophecy been kept nameless till now? (b) Therefore, why must it be said that Jesus Christ was a true prophet of God and a reliable commentator?

thus far let his prophecy go nameless, that the prophecy might speak for itself. For the time being we have avoided causing any favorable or unfavorable reflection to be cast upon the prophecy by naming the source of the prophecy. The point has been, when viewed objectively, has the prophecy proved true or not? Is the prophet, regardless of his name, proved true or false? Prejudice against a person's name or identity should not sway us in our judgment of truth or falsehood. In the light of the facts, both of the first century and of our twentieth century, the prophecy is proved true. So, in all fairness, it must be said that Jesus Christ was a true prophet of God and a reliable commentator on the world distress. We do ourselves harm in not heeding what he has said.

[25] In this time of world perplexity with politicians not knowing which way to turn and the clergymen of Christendom not having any relevant message for the people, it will do us good to remember that the aforementioned prophet is not a dead person of the past. He is a living person of today! Yes, and highly interested in the fulfillment of his own inspired prophecy! His life on earth nineteen hundred years ago was a marked life. It had been foretold, in its vitally important aspects, in the inspired Hebrew Scriptures, in order to identify who the Messiah from God was. Inasmuch as the Messianic prophecies of those Hebrew Scriptures were fulfilled in this Jesus, the descendant of the patriarch Abraham and of King David of Jerusalem, he was proved beyond doubt to be the Messiah or the Christ. In harmony with the inspired Hebrew Scriptures, Jesus Christ foretold his own violent death and his resurrection from the dead on the third day of his death. He, as well as the Hebrew Scriptures, proved to be absolutely true in these regards. That is why he lives today, nineteen centuries later! Psalm 110:1-4 foretold his glorification to God's right hand!

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25. Why is the aforementioned man not now a dead prophet of the past?

[26] It is of no use for us today, almost two thousand years later, to quibble about whether this Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on the third day. We have Jewish witnesses to that fact, not just the two or three witnesses required by the Mosaic Law, but "upward of five hundred" Jews who saw him at one time, on one occasion, before he ascended to God's right hand forty days after his resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:3-6) We have today, in thousands of handwritten copies, the written testimony of seven of these eyewitnesses of his resurrection, namely, Matthew Levi, John Mark, John the son of Zebedee, Peter the son of Jonah (John), James and Jude, both half brothers of Jesus Christ, and Saul of Tarsus, who was surnamed Paul. Their testimony is contained in the inspired Christian Greek Scriptures.

[27] The fact of the matter is that the twenty-seven books of those inspired Greek Scriptures would never have been written if Jesus Christ had not been raised from the dead and thereafter glorified with Jehovah God in the heavens. Furthermore, the inspired Hebrew Scriptures, from the writings of Moses down to the prophecy of Malachi, would have fallen flat to this day if Jesus Christ had not been resurrected from the dead by the almighty power of Jehovah God. (Luke 24:44-48; Revelation 19:10) The eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus Christ were willing to stake their lives upon the actuality of his resurrection. Stephen of Jerusalem suffered stoning to death for testifying to the Messiah's resurrection. James the brother of the apostle John was put to death by the sword by King Herod Agrippa I of Jerusalem. The apostle John was sentenced to exile on the penal island of Patmos by Rome's decree for testifying to Messiah's resurrection.

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26. In view of what testimony is it of no use for any of us today to quibble about whether Jesus Christ was resurrected?

27. (a) What Scriptures would not have been written and what Scriptures would have fallen flat if Jesus Christ had not been resurrected? (b) Who were willing to stake their lives on the actuality of Messiah's resurrection?

28 And what about that former Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, who was surnamed Paul? In synagogue after synagogue in Palestine, Asia Minor and Greece, he testified to his fellow Jews regarding the resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus. Before the pagan Greek judges of the Court of the Areopagus in Athens, Greece, he was bold enough to give like testimony. From the staircase of the Tower of Antonia he faithfully bore testimony to a Jewish mob that had tried to tear him to pieces in the temple courtyard of Jerusalem. To the doctrinally divided Sanhedrin Court of that holy city, he said: "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. Over the hope of resurrection of the dead I am being judged." (Acts 23:6) To successive Roman governors of Judea, Felix and Festus, he emphasized the resurrection hope that was based on Messiah's own resurrection. Later, Paul's graphic testimony about his miraculous encounter with the resurrected Jesus caused faithless Governor Festus to cry out: "You are going mad, Paul! Great learning is driving you into madness!" Then, when the guest of Festus was questioned by Paul about his faith, the Jewish proselyte, King Herod Agrippa II, said:

29 "In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian."—Acts 26:24, 28.

30 The fact of the matter is, that, if the Messiah Jesus were not raised from the dead to heavenly life, there would be no future "resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) So much depended upon Messiah's resurrection, and the apostle Paul had suffered so much persecution for preaching it, that if Paul were a liar, then, as he wrote: "In fact, also, those who fell asleep in death in union with Christ perished. If in this life only we have hoped in

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28, 29. (a) Before whom did Saul of Tarsus (surnamed Paul) boldly testify concerning the resurrection of the dead as based on Christ's resurrection? (b) What were the reactions of Governor Festus and King Agrippa?

30. Who did Paul say would be "most to be pitied" if there were no resurrection of the dead?

Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied." (1 Corinthians 15:18, 19) So, too, with our generation in this twentieth century. After all that we have gone through since 1914, our generation would be, of all generations, the "most to be pitied."

31 Think of it, though! Worthy ones of this generation of mankind will be saved alive out of the rest of this world distress so as to survive the worst of it and enter into God's Messianic new system of things and not need a resurrection from the dead to life here on earth! This is a valid hope well founded on what was said by Jesus Christ in his prophecy on the "sign of [his] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3) But our being thus spared alive through the rest of the world distress under God's protection will mean that we shall yet have to pass through stirring events and trying situations. These we do well to consider now according to Bible prophecy, that we may know better how to react when we encounter these foretold things.

31. (a) How do worthy ones of this generation have a valid hope of not needing a resurrection? (b) What things worthy of consideration will such spared ones yet have to pass through shortly?

CHAPTER 3

A Transformed Messiah with Whom Politicians Must Cope

IN THE near future the political rulers of all nations and peoples will have to decide in a final way what to do about the Messiah. Near the middle of the first century of our Common Era this Messiah, Jesus the Descendant of King David, had direct encounters with a couple of worldly political rulers. King Herod Antipas of Galilee discredited Jesus as being the Messiah and made fun of him in the courtroom and sent him back to the Roman governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, for final trial. Governor Pilate, representing Emperor Tiberius of Rome, yielded to pressure from an anti-Messianic mob and sentenced Jesus to die by being nailed to a stake as a criminal slave. (Luke 23:1-25) But today the political rulers have a Messiah with whom to cope, far different from the self-sacrificing Messiah of the year 33 C.E.

[2] Political rulers, especially those of Christendom, are more or less familiar with the Gospel accounts of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Likely the most familiar mental picture that they have of him is that presented by many religious artists, that of a Jesus with drawn facial features beneath a crown of thorns, nailed hand and foot to a cross. Little, or, rather, not at all, do the political rulers of today count on having a confrontation with Jesus Christ as a mighty heavenly King all equipped to fight with his earthly enemies. To their utter amazement, it will be a transformed Messiah whom they will have to confront shortly.

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1. Like political rulers of 33 C.E., the political rulers of today will have to decide in a final way what to do with whom?
2. Why will political rulers be amazed at their confrontation with the Messiah shortly?

3 This amazing transformation of the Messiah in his position and also what he is commissioned to do officially were foretold in the prophecy of Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12. It is now timely to examine that particular prophecy and also the facts that show how the prophecy has worked out. This is of importance to us today.

4 After Isaiah, chapter 52, tells of the release of the Jews from decades of exile in the foreign land of Babylon in the Mesopotamian valley, verse 13 makes an abrupt turn in what is considered. Note how the closing verses of the chapter read:

5 "Look! My servant will act with insight. He will be in high station and will certainly be elevated and exalted very much. To the extent that many have stared at him in amazement—so much was the disfigurement as respects his appearance more than that of any other man and as respects his stately form more than that of the sons of mankind—he will likewise startle many nations. At him kings will shut their mouth, because what had not been recounted to them they will actually see, and to what they had not heard they must turn their consideration."—Isaiah 52:13-15.

6 Who is it that Jehovah God here speaks of prophetically as "my servant"? Orthodox Jewish opinion is that it is not an individual. The footnote on this in the book of Isaiah, by Dr. I. W. Slotki, M.A., LITT.D., published by The Soncino Press in 1949, reads: "The servant is the ideal Israel or the faithful remnant. That he is not an individual is the opinion of all Jewish and most modern non-Jewish commentators. 'Whatever causes may have tended to stimulate the advocacy of this form of interpretation (viz. the Christological), it is important for Christian exegetes to recognize that this path of Jewish exposition is in

3. Why is it timely and important now to examine the prophecy of Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12?
4, 5. Of whom does Isaiah 52:13-15 abruptly take up a consideration?
6. What is the orthodox Jewish view of the one whom Jehovah calls "my servant," as shown in a Jewish footnote thereon?

the main right, and that the path of Christian interpreters down to the time of Rosenmüller (i.e. 1820) has been in the main wrong.' (Whitehouse)." But is such "path of Jewish exposition" right?

7 In considering the above-expressed Jewish opinion as to the identity of "my servant," we are obliged to ask, Who today or where today is what Dr. Slotki calls "the ideal Israel"? Is it to be found in this generation of natural Jews that has survived the regime of the Nazi dictator Hitler in Europe and Communist oppressions and that yet number some 14,443,925? Do we find the "ideal Israel" or that "servant" of the Most High God in the present-day Republic of Israel, particularly its Jewish population that controls the political government? What Jew, either of the Orthodox religious section or of the Reform religious section, sees in all Jewry or any part of Jewry today "the ideal Israel," over 2,700 years after the giving of the prophecy of Isaiah? So they have no proof at all that the "servant" of Isaiah's prophecy is the "ideal Israel" made up of natural Jews.

8 If we desire to identify the true "ideal Israel," we can find the inspired description of it in the Revelation that was received by the former Jewish fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, John the son of Zebedee, when John was suffering exile and imprisonment on the Roman penal isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. The evidence is that this Revelation was given to John after the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans in the year 70 C.E. This was after the burning of Rome by Emperor Nero, which led to persecution of the falsely accused Christians. In one of the revelatory visions John saw and heard an angel say to the four angels that were holding back the stormy winds of the earth: "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves

7. After so long a time from Isaiah's prophecy, what proof can Orthodox and Reform Jews offer of the existence of such an "ideal Israel" among Jewry of today?
8. Where can we find the inspired description of the true "ideal Israel," and how is it there described?

of our God in their foreheads." (Revelation 7:1-3) Then John proceeds to write:

> And I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel:
> Out of the tribe of Judah twelve thousand sealed;
> out of the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Gad twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Asher twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Levi twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand;
> out of the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand sealed.
> —Revelation 7:4-8.

9 The number of those sealed Israelites is certainly an ideal number, that is to say, twelve times twelve thousand, or one hundred and forty-four thousand, a perfectly balanced number. But what makes them an "ideal Israel" is not entirely their number, but, rather, their moral, religious qualities. In an inspired comment on those qualities, John writes:

10 "And I saw, and, look! the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound out of heaven as the sound of many waters and as the sound of loud thunder; and the sound that I heard was as of singers who accompany themselves on the harp playing on their harps. And they are singing as if a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one was able to master that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been bought from the earth. These are the ones that did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins. These are the ones that keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes. These

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9, 10. What is there about those sealed Israelites that makes them ideal?

were bought from among mankind as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, and no falsehood was found in their mouths; they are without blemish."—Revelation 14:1-5.

[11] These are *spiritual* Israelites, those who have done what the prophet Moses told the ancient nation of Israel to do: "You must circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and not harden your necks any longer." Also: "Jehovah your God will have to circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, that you may love Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul for the sake of your life." (Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6) Even if some of these spiritual Israelites were Jews naturally, they must have the circumcision of the heart and be Jews inwardly like all the rest of spiritual Israel. (Romans 2:28, 29) Even the one whom they follow, "the Lamb," Jesus Christ, became a spiritual Israelite, when he was anointed with God's spirit right after being baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist.—Matthew 3:13-17.

[12] That the "ideal Israel" is, in fact, the spiritual Israel is illustrated further in Revelation 21:2, 9-14. There the twelve tribes of Israel, composed of the 144,000 sealed "slaves of our God," are likened to the New Jerusalem, "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Concerning this heavenly, spiritual New Jerusalem, it is written: "He showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God and having the glory of God. Its radiance was like a most precious stone, as a jasper stone shining crystal-clear. It had a great and lofty wall and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names were inscribed which are those of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. On the east were three gates, and on the north three gates, and on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. The wall of the city also had

11. (a) What kind of Israelites are these, and what kind of circumcision have they undergone? (b) When did Jesus Christ himself become a spiritual Israelite?
12, 13. (a) How does Revelation 21:2, 9-14 identify the "ideal Israel" with "the Lamb's wife"? (b) In what way are the "foundation stones" of this heavenly city significant in identifying the "ideal Israel"?

twelve foundation stones, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."

13 Natural, fleshly Israel was founded upon the twelve sons of the patriarch Jacob, but it is the spiritual Israel, the Christian Israel, that is founded on the twelve apostles of the Lamb Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:20) So, without question, it is this spiritual Israel that is "the ideal Israel." But that by no means proves that it is the "servant" described in chapter fifty-three of Isaiah's prophecy.

INSPIRED IDENTIFICATION OF "MY SERVANT"

14 So, then, who exactly is the one to whom God refers as "my servant," not only in Isaiah 52:13 but also in Isaiah 53:11? Instead of taking the opinions of such men as Dr. I. W. Slotki of 1949 C.E. and of the German Orientalist Ernst F. K. Rosenmüller of 1820 C.E., we shall be left in no uncertainty by taking the identification of "my servant" as given in the inspired Holy Scriptures. This interpretation of God's words, "my servant," was given to a Jewish proselyte, an Ethiopian, who had gone up to Jerusalem of the first century C.E. to worship at the temple there. The inspired account of the incident reads:

15 "Jehovah's angel spoke to Philip, saying: 'Rise and go to the south to the road that runs down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a desert road.) With that he rose and went, and, look! an Ethiopian eunuch, a man in power under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, and who was over all her treasure. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship, but he was returning and was sitting in his chariot and reading aloud the prophet Isaiah. So the spirit said to Philip: 'Approach and join yourself to this chariot.' Philip ran alongside and heard him reading aloud Isaiah the prophet, and he said: 'Do you actually know what you are reading?' He said: 'Really, how could I ever do so, unless some-

14. To what source do we look for a sure identification of the one whom God calls "my servant"?
15, 16. In regard to Isaiah's prophecy, what conversation took place between Philip and an Ethiopian eunuch?

one guided me?' And he entreated Philip to get on and sit down with him. Now the passage of Scripture that he was reading aloud was this: 'As a sheep he was brought to the slaughter, and as a lamb that is voiceless before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. During his humiliation the judgment was taken away from him. Who will tell the details of his generation? Because his life is taken away from the earth.'

16 "In answer the eunuch said to Philip: 'I beg you, About whom does the prophet say this? About himself or about some other man?' Philip opened his mouth and, starting with this Scripture, he declared to him the good news about Jesus. Now as they were going over the road, they came to a certain body of water, and the eunuch said: 'Look! A body of water; what prevents me from getting baptized?' With that he commanded the chariot to halt, and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. When they had come up out of the water, Jehovah's spirit quickly led Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him anymore, for he kept going on his way rejoicing. But

Philip explains Isaiah's prophecy to an Ethiopian eunuch

Philip was found to be in Ashdod, and he went through the territory and kept on declaring the good news to all the cities until he got to Caesarea."—Acts 8:26-40.

17 The Scripture passage that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading aloud is today numbered as the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, verses seven and eight. This has reference to the one whom God calls "my servant," in Isaiah 52:13; 53:11. The Jews in the temple at Jerusalem had not pointed out to this Ethiopian convert to Judaism just who that "servant" was. Who, then, was Scripturally qualified to identify that "servant" for the Ethiopian eunuch back there about 34 C.E. and for us today? Certainly it was Philip, "the evangelizer," whom Jehovah's angel had directed to the chariot of this Ethiopian Bible student. And who did this Philip say that the "servant" was? It must have been Jesus Christ, for Acts 8:35 says: "Starting with this Scripture, he [Philip] declared to him the good news about Jesus." It is true that this Jesus is the heavenly Head of the spiritual Israel, but Philip did not apply the Isaian prophecy about Jehovah's "servant" to the congregation of spiritual Israelites but applied it only to the Head, Jesus Christ.—Acts 21:8; Colossians 1:18.

18 Philip was not alone in making this application of the prophecy. Other inspired writers made the same application, as we shall see. With this correct identification of this particular "servant" of Jehovah, we can proceed to examine the prophecy in detail. This will help us to appreciate more the Messiah with whom worldly politicians will have to deal in the near future.

19 If we omit that latter part of verse fourteen, which is between dashes because of being a parenthetical

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17. (a) From what portion of Isaiah's prophecy was the Ethiopian eunuch reading? (b) How did he learn the identification of the "servant" referred to in that prophecy?

18. In what way are we helped by correct identification of the "servant" referred to in this prophecy?

19, 20. (a) How does the wording of Isaiah 52:13-15 indicate that its fulfillment would affect twentieth-century politicians? (b) In the first century, how did Jesus "act with insight," and since when has he come to be "in high station"?

thought and comment, the prophecy opens up, saying: "Look! My servant will act with insight. He will be in high station and will certainly be elevated and exalted very much. To the extent that many have stared at him in amazement . . . he will likewise startle many nations. At him kings will shut their mouth, because what had not been recounted to them they will actually see, and to what they had not heard they must turn their consideration."—Isaiah 52:13-15.

[20] Does that not sound as though the fulfillment of this prophecy would affect all the politicians of this twentieth century? There can be no question about that! A transformed Messiah is what the nations and their political rulers will have to deal with in the near future, a Messiah different in his position and commission from the Messiah with whom the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Gentile nations and King Herod Antipas and Roman Governor Pontius Pilate dealt in the year 33 C.E. Back there Jesus the Messiah did "act with insight" into the Bible prophecies that applied to him, to guide him into doing the will of Jehovah God. Since his resurrection from the dead and later his ascension to heaven, he has come to be "in high station." Has he been "elevated and exalted very much"? As an answer we can take what the Christian apostle Peter said to thousands of Jews who were celebrating the festival day of Pentecost ten days after Peter saw Jesus Christ ascend heavenward:

[21] "Actually David did not ascend to the heavens, but he himself says, 'Jehovah said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet." ' Therefore let all the house of Israel know for a certainty that God made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you impaled."—Acts 2:34-36.

[22] Years later, in an inspired letter, Peter wrote: "He is at God's right hand, for he went his way to heaven; and angels and authorities and powers were made

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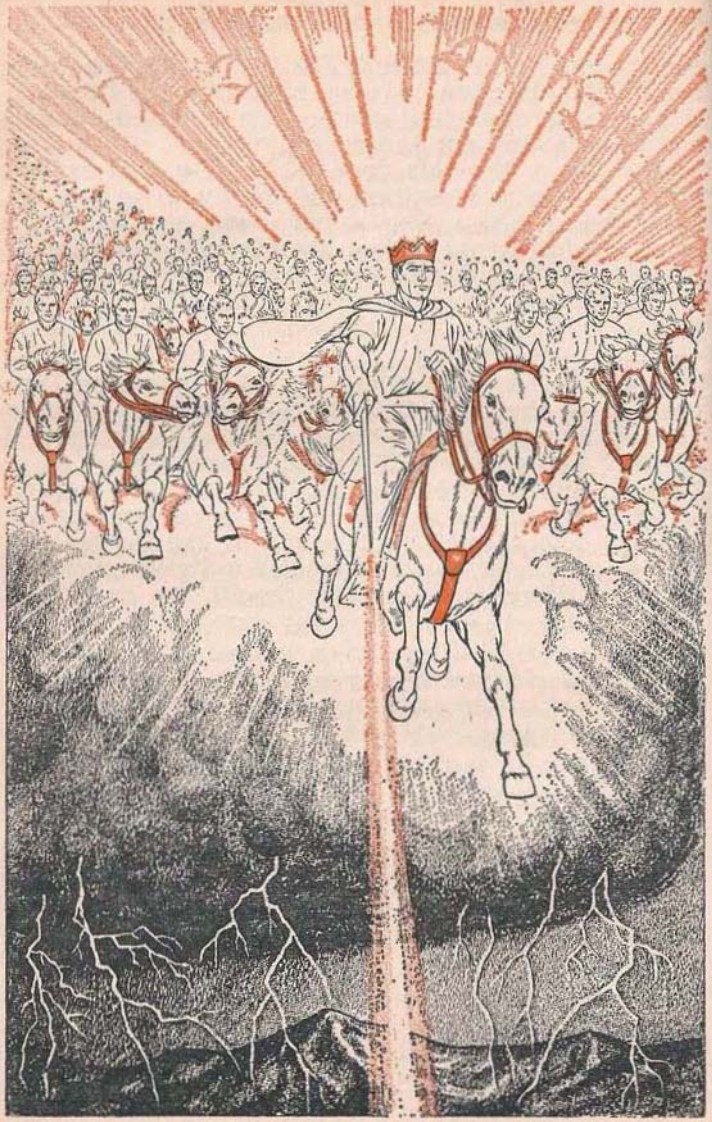
21, 22. How do the Scriptures show that Jesus the Messiah has been "elevated and exalted very much"?

subject to him." (1 Peter 3:22) Concerning the highness of the elevation and exaltation of Jesus the Messiah, the apostle Paul wrote: "He humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake. For this very reason also God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name, so that in the name of Jesus every knee should bend of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the ground, and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." —Philippians 2:8-11.

23 What effect should all of this have upon the position of the politicians of this world? Not for a moment should anybody think that the elevating and exalting of Jehovah's "Servant," Jesus Christ, very high, in fulfillment of Isaiah 52:13, would be without effect upon earthly nations and their political rulers! The politicians should not shrug off the matter and say: 'Jesus Christ has been exalted to heaven, has he? So what?' They should not take the attitude that, 'Now since he is in heaven, he is out of our way. And let him take care of things up in heaven, while we take care of things down here on earth; this is our responsibility. We are not going to hear from him again as to how we rule the earth!'

24 A political attitude such as that is absolutely wrongly based. The elevating and exalting of Jehovah's "Servant" very high will have the most serious consequences for them and their continuing in earthly office. They must remember that, when Jesus Christ ascended back to Jehovah God in heaven, he did so still in possession of the right and title to the royal government of King David over all the land in Palestine that was promised to his forefathers Abraham, Isaac

23. What attitude toward the fact that it is in heaven that Jesus has been exalted would be a serious error on the part of political rulers?
24. How does the governmental right that Jesus had at the time of his ascension back to heaven indicate that his exaltation will have serious consequences for political rulers?



and Jacob.—Luke 1:31-33; 2 Samuel 7:11-16; 1 Chronicles 17:10-14; Luke 22:29, 30; Psalm 89:27-37.

25 Moreover, he ascended firmly in possession of the value of his human sacrifice by means of which he could buy all the human family that descended from Adam and Eve. (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) Presenting the merit of his ransom sacrifice to God in heaven, he bought back the human family that had been sold under sin, condemnation and its penalty death. (Hebrews 9:24-28; Matthew 20:28) Consequently, the common people over whom all the politicians rule belong to Jehovah's "Servant," Jesus Christ, by right of purchase, and politicians do have to settle with him as to how they rule.

26 Especially today, in this critical period of human history, let us not forget or discount that Jesus Christ the royal Descendant of David has certain established legal rights with respect to this earth. These were not to be set aside forever without being acted upon. National governments and their political rulers were to be granted only a fixed, limited period of time during which to exercise political control over the earth. A "time of the end" was fixed by Jehovah God for man-made governments and their kings, emperors, presidents, shahs, sheikhs and other governors. The 2,520 years that began counting from the first desolation of Jerusalem, in 607 B.C.E., and that are called "the times of the Gentiles" ran out in the autumn of 1914 C.E. Since that date the man-made governments on earth have been in their "time of the end." Their end is now in sight.—Luke 21:24; Daniel 12:4.

27 In contrast with that, the time of waiting at God's right hand in heaven ended for the "Servant," Jesus Christ, in that autumn of 1914 C.E. (Psalm 110:1, 2;

25. In what way does the effect of Jesus' ransom sacrifice indicate that politicians must account to Jesus Christ for the way they rule?
26. For what time period fixed by God were political rulers of the Gentile nations allowed to exercise control over the earth, but since when have man-made governments been in their "time of the end"?
27. (a) For God's "Servant," Jesus Christ, what arrived in the autumn of 1914 C.E.? (b) What action foretold in Psalm 2:8, 9 was now due to take place?

Hebrews 10:12, 13) For him the year 1914 marked the commencement of a 'time of *beginning*' in the active exercise of his kingly rights. Then, right on time, the Messianic kingdom of God was born in the heavens, too high above the feet of the Gentiles for them to trample upon in defiance of God. (Revelation 12:1-5; Luke 21:24; Ezekiel 21:25-27) The time then came for the newly enthroned King, Jesus the Messiah, to act upon the prophetic invitation contained in Psalm 2:8, 9: "Ask of me, that I may give nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your own possession. You will break them with an iron scepter, as though a potter's vessel you will dash them to pieces."—Revelation 2:27; 12:5; Daniel 2:44.

AMAZEMENT OF POLITICIANS

[28] In the light of those prophetic statements of Jehovah concerning his "Servant," it will indeed be a transformed Messiah with whom all the politicians of earth will have to deal in the near future. The transformation will be so great as to amaze them. When the final confrontation between them and him comes shortly, they will 'stare at him in amazement.' Not that they will literally see him with the naked eye, but they will see the visible evidences of his power as a Battler for Jehovah God and they will know that these evidences are from this elevated, exalted Messiah. This will be far different from the way in which the clergy of Christendom have played Jesus Christ up.

[29] By their crucifixes and their church Masses the clergy of Christendom have caused the political element of the world to view Jesus Christ as a bedraggled figure. They claim that at his ascending to heaven he even took along with him the human body in which

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28. When the final confrontation takes place between Jesus Christ and all the politicians of earth, why will they 'stare at him in amazement'?
29, 30. (a) What kind of representation of Jesus Christ have the clergy of Christendom presented to the political element of the world? (b) As foretold at Isaiah 52:14, how was there a "disfigurement" of the Messiah by what took place even in the first century?

he was nailed to the stake, still bearing the scratches of the crown of thorns in his forehead and the gory nail holes in his hands and feet and the spear gash in his side. True, Jesus Christ did suffer an excruciatingly painful and disgraceful death, for certain reasons. But before that, he was discredited, grossly misrepresented, accused of being a lawbreaker, a Sabbath violator, mad, possessed of a demon, a blasphemer, a false Christ, a deceiver, a menace to the Jewish nation, a seditionist against pagan Rome. Certainly his reputation was distorted, the image of him that was painted by his false accusers was altogether disfigured; and it is in this sense in particular that Isaiah 52:14 is to be understood:

30 "So much was the disfigurement as respects his appearance more than that of any other man and as respects his stately form more than that of the sons of mankind."

31 The discrediting, maligning and misrepresenting of Jesus Christ *in absentia* has continued to this very day. But today, nineteen hundred years later, he is no longer a "baby Jesus" (*bambino Gesù*); he is no longer a 'suffering Servant' upon earth, nonresistant to his malicious enemies. He is now the elevated, exalted "Servant," the accredited Messiah of God. Whatever the politicians under the misguidance of their religious clergy may have said against Jehovah's "Servant" and in defiance of him, they will cease to be so loudmouthed in saying words of contempt when they confront the once-humiliated "servant" in the coming test of power over the question, Who shall rule the earth? For then the politicians will actually see the exhibition of what their religious clergy have not recounted to them; they will be forced to turn their consideration to what they had not heard in warning from their highly respected religious leaders. As Isaiah 52:15 says:

31, 32. (a) How is Jesus Christ different today from when he was a man on earth? (b) How will Isaiah 52:15 soon be fulfilled upon the politicians?

32 "He will likewise startle many nations. At him kings will shut their mouth, because what had not been recounted to them they will actually see, and to what they had not heard they must turn their consideration."

33 Not that the faithful Christian witnesses of Jehovah have not been recounting such things to the nations and their kings and trying to get nations and their political rulers to turn their consideration to such things. But these, for the most part, have turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to what these faithful followers of Jehovah's "Servant" have proclaimed world wide and have delineated in descriptive language. To the contrary, the paid clergymen are the ones from whom the nations and their political rulers have not heard recounted the real facts about how Jehovah's "Servant" will actually war against them in execution of Jehovah's judgments. It is the paid religious leaders who have kept nations and kings blind as to what is in store for them when Jehovah, by his "Servant," takes action against them to settle the issue, Who shall rule the earth and the people on it? Hence, they are bound to 'stare at him in amazement' and "shut their mouth" as they encounter something altogether different from what they had expected.

34 In this "time of the end" since 1914 C.E. it has not been the clergy of Christendom whom Jehovah God has used to transmit this warning: "And now, O kings, exercise insight; let yourselves be corrected, O judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear and be joyful with trembling. Kiss the son, that He may not become incensed and you may not perish from the way, for his anger flares up easily. Happy are all those taking refuge in him." (Psalm 2:7, 10-12) Because of depending upon their paid clergymen, the political

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33. Since the Christian witnesses of Jehovah have publicly recounted the truth about Jesus the Messiah, why is it that the politicians have "not heard" and so 'stare at him in amazement'?

34. What warning does the second Psalm give to the political rulers, but why have they failed to act on it?

rulers of Jewry and the political rulers of Christendom have not 'kissed the Son.' That is, they have not expressed any affection for Jehovah's "Servant," his heavenly Son Jesus the Messiah, whom He has seated upon the heavenly Mount Zion and to whom he has given 'nations as an inheritance and the ends of the earth as a possession.'

[35] It has been His Christian witnesses by means of whom Jehovah has been transmitting this warning to political rulers and to judges of the law courts. These witnesses themselves "kiss the son," and because of this they have become an object of hatred to all the nations and there has been a disfigurement of their appearance in the view of misinformed people. (Matthew 24:9) Jehovah will not become incensed against his faithful, obedient witnesses, nor will his anger flare up against them so that they perish in the midst of their course. He will not turn upon those who have taken refuge in Him, and so His witnesses are the happiest people on earth today, in spite of the world's hatred and the malicious disfigurement of their reputation. With heightening interest they watch to see how the "kings" or political rulers of the nations will stare in amazement and shut their mouths at the awesome manifestation of a transformed Messiah, Jehovah's exalted "Servant."

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35. (a) By means of whom has Jehovah transmitted this inspired warning to rulers and judges? (b) Because these witnesses themselves "kiss the son," how are they viewed by men, and what is their position before God?

CHAPTER 4

The Transforming of the Messianic "Servant"

THE kings of this present generation of mankind will 'stare in amazement' at the coming display that will be presented by the Messianic "Servant" of his changed position in God's organization. They will shut their mouth in silence as they turn their consideration to the fear-inspiring demonstration that verifies the transformation of Jehovah's "Servant," the Messiah. —Isaiah 52:13-15.

[2] The transformation of the Messianic "Servant" is of the highest importance; otherwise Jehovah would not have called special attention to it by his prophet Isaiah in the eighth century before our Common Era. It really should be good news for everybody on earth. But it does not prove to be so for the "kings" of the nations. To these political rulers it is a case of either holding on to their political power or of being displaced by the heavenly kingdom of Jehovah's exalted "Servant," Jesus the Messiah. They do not relish the thought of being displaced by a better government for all the people. Not strange, then, that the transformation of Jehovah's once self-sacrificing "Servant" into His highest-ranking officer in the universe is no good news to them! For that matter, to whom out of earth's four thousand million inhabitants today is this something to believe as good news? Who out of all these millions puts faith in this startling news that is today being proclaimed world wide by Jehovah's Christian witnesses?

1. How will the kings of the present generation react to the demonstration of power by Jehovah's Messianic "Servant"?
2. Why is the transformation of the Messianic "Servant" not good news either to the "kings" of the nations or to the majority of the others of earth's inhabitants?

[3] The question of putting faith in this surprising report was raised even in the eighth century B.C.E., when Jehovah inspired Isaiah to foretell the marvelous change in the condition of the "Servant." That is why, right after telling about the miraculous transformation in the status of the "Servant," the prophet Isaiah goes on to raise the question: "Who has put faith in the thing heard by us? And as for the arm of Jehovah, to whom has it been revealed?"—Isaiah 53:1.

[4] Back there in the eighth century before our Common Era, the question was, Is the information given to Isaiah and reported on by him to the nation of Israel true? Would the vast transformation as regards Jehovah's "Servant" come true? Would the "arm of Jehovah," his mighty power for accomplishing things, reveal itself and make the publicized information prove true? More than seven hundred and sixty years later, the question raised was, Had the information reported on by Isaiah proved true? Could its fulfillment be reported to everybody as a fact accomplished by the invincible "arm of Jehovah"? Has His "arm" revealed itself to all persons with eyes to see?

[5] The question on all of this was thus raised in the first century C.E., because the controversy raged about Jesus Christ the Descendant of Abraham and of David. That is why the apostle Paul wrote about the matter and showed that the information heard by Isaiah had come true in Jesus Christ as the "Servant" mentioned in Isaiah 52:13 and 53:11. The glorification of Jesus Christ in heaven after his extraordinary sufferings as a man on earth was good news, Gospel, Evangel. "Nevertheless," writes the apostle Paul with special reference to his own people, "they did not all obey the good news. For Isaiah says: 'Jehovah, who put faith in the thing heard [from] us?' So faith follows the

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3. In fact, away back when Isaiah's prophecy was recorded, what question was raised?

4, 5. In the first century C.E., what question arose as to Isaiah's prophecy, and why?

thing heard. In turn the thing heard is through the word about Christ."—Romans 10:16, 17.

6 A similar thing can be said today. "They did not all obey the good news." This, even after the Christian witnesses of Jehovah have spent more than sixty years in proclaiming that the "times of the Gentiles" ended in the autumn of 1914 C.E. amid the first world war and that then Jehovah's "Servant" received a new elevation by being exalted to the throne of the Messianic kingdom. (Hebrews 10:12, 13; Psalm 110:1, 2; Luke 21:24; Revelation 12:5-10) The overwhelming evidence that has accumulated since 1914 C.E. in proof of this glorious fact has been pointed out by these witnesses of Jehovah. The good news about the Messianic kingdom of Jehovah's "Servant" is better news today than it was nineteen hundred years ago, in apostolic times. In the face of the relatively small proportion of the world's population that has put faith in the "thing heard [from] us" or proclaimed by us, it can truthfully be said: "They did not all obey the good news." This explains the saddening state of the world of mankind today.

A START WITH NO PROMISING PROSPECTS

7 What the prophet Isaiah now proceeds to tell us in chapter fifty-three, after asking the opening questions, required that Jehovah's "Servant" should be down here on earth for a while. Jehovah knew that, and at his due time he sent his most trustworthy Son from heaven to be born into our race and become a human creature, a man, the son of a woman. More than that, Jehovah gave this transferred Son such a low, poorly appearing start that it seemed unlikely that he would ever amount to much, that the glowing prophecy about Jehovah's "Servant" would be fulfilled in him. So

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6. Despite what facts is it true even today that "they did not all obey the good news"?

7, 8. (a) To fulfill Isaiah's inspired prophecy, where did Jehovah send his Son? (b) How does Isaiah 53:2 describe the kind of start that God's Son would be given as a human?

Isaiah explains the reason for his opening questions by next saying:

[8] "And he will come up like a twig before one [an observer], and like a root out of waterless land. No stately form does he have, nor any splendor; and when we shall see him, there is not the appearance so that we should desire him."—Isaiah 53:2.

[9] Like a "twig," a slip, a sapling, he comes up, yes, like a water-dependent "root" out of dry, arid, parched ground. Think of it! Would it not be a great humiliation for Jehovah's "Servant" to be given such a poor start on earth as a man? And yet that was the way it was with the earthly start of Jesus Christ. Regardless of whether there were prominent, highly esteemed families back there in the year 2 B.C.E. that had a royal connection with King David, Jesus was born by a virgin Jewess who came to be married to a lowly carpenter in the obscure Galilean town of Nazareth. When Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, Jesus, she was in a stable in Bethlehem and she laid the newborn infant in a manger. As visitors to Bethlehem, they found the town so crowded with others who were registering according to Caesar's decree, that there was not even room for them in an inn.

[10] After Mary and her carpenter husband Joseph did get established in a house in Bethlehem, they had to flee to preserve Jesus' life against the orders of King Herod the Great to have all boy babies two years old and younger in Bethlehem killed by soldiers. After returning from the refugee land of Egypt, they did not return to their native city of Bethlehem, but settled in the little-esteemed Galilean town of Nazareth. There Jesus grew up and became a carpenter like his foster-father Joseph. So, naturally, when it was later reported that Jesus was from that town, a seeker for the Messiah asked: "Can anything good come out of

9. How was it true that the start that Jesus was given as a human was a lowly one?
10. How did it come about that Jesus grew up in Nazareth, and what effect did this have on the attitude of people toward him?

Nazareth?" Also, in a dispute the question was asked: "The Christ is not actually coming out of Galilee, is he?" And the challenge was made: "Search and see that no prophet is to be raised up out of Galilee." —John 1:46; 7:41, 52.

[11] So Jesus did not seem to have his earthly roots in the right ground as far as locality was concerned. Though he was born as a perfect man by the miraculous operation of God's spirit, the lowliness of his connection with the royal family of David did not impart to him any "stately form" in the eyes of those who were looking for a majestic Messiah having a very impressive background according to worldly standards. Neither was there any outward "splendor" about Jesus in putting on great style so as to magnify his royal connections and his legitimate claim to David's throne in Jerusalem. Jesus knew that he was Jehovah's "Servant" sent from heaven and made "a little less than godlike ones," "a little lower than angels," temporarily, and that, after his return to heaven, it would be the time for God to fulfill Psalm 8:5 and crown him "with glory and honor" and to subject to him "the inhabited earth to come."—Hebrews 2:5-9.

[12] The Holy Scriptures give us no inspired description of Jesus' perfect physical appearance, but evidently, by himself, he could pass for an ordinary man. Thus he could go up to Jerusalem incognito, without being identified in the crowd. (John 7:9-13) Most handsome though Jesus Christ was, yet it was what he represented and what he preached and taught that gave him a different appearance in the eyes of the people. Public opinion about him was divided: "There was a lot of subdued talk about him among the crowds. Some would say: 'He is a good man.' Others would say: 'He is not, but he misleads the crowd.' No one, of course, would

11. In what way did it prove true that Jehovah's "Servant," Jesus Christ, had no "stately form" or "splendor"?
12. (a) What indicates that it was not Jesus' physical appearance that made him unusual? (b) Then what was there about his "appearance" that made the Jewish religious leaders not desire him?

speak about him publicly because of the fear of the Jews." And why such "fear of the Jews"? Because the crowd knew that Jesus was a wanted man: "The Jews were seeking to kill him." (John 7:1, 12, 13) Ah, yes, to the Jewish religious leaders in ancient Jerusalem there was "not the appearance so that we should desire him," that is, desire Jesus the Messiah.

13 In the first century C.E. the Jewish religious leaders, who practiced the Judaism of the day, were the ones that controlled the religious thinking of the mass of the people. They caused the people to look at things in the way in which they themselves looked at them. It was these religious leaders that called Jesus a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. (Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34; 19:1-7) It was these religious leaders that charged Jesus before Governor Pontius Pilate with being a blasphemer, a false Christ and a seditionist against the Roman Empire, and also, later, an "impostor." (Matthew 27:11-26, 62-64) In this way Jesus was made just as unattractive as possible in the eyes of the general public, Jewish and Gentile. There was no beauty imparted to him by those who dominated public opinion. The purpose of this was to kill all public desire for him as the true Messiah, the Descendant of Abraham and of King David. Only a small Jewish remnant saw the beauty of the true Messiah in Jesus.

GIVEN A REPULSIVE APPEARANCE

14 The extent to which Jesus Christ was defamed among his own people according to the flesh is further described in Isaiah's prophecy about the "Servant" of Jehovah: "He was despised and was avoided by men, a man meant for pains and for having acquaintance with sickness. And there was as if the concealing

13. (a) How did the Jewish religious leaders in the first century make Jesus very unattractive to both Jews and Gentiles? (b) What was their objective?

14. What further description did Isaiah 53:3 give as to how Jehovah's "Servant" would be treated?

of one's face from us. He was despised, and we held him as of no account."—Isaiah 53:3.

15 To match this prophecy concerning Jehovah's "Servant," by whom was it that Jesus was despised and avoided? The record is that, even down to the last week of his earthly life, the common people were hearing Jesus gladly: "And the great crowd was listening to him with pleasure." (Mark 12:37) But among a gathering of the Pharisees and the chief priests, it was said: "Not one of the rulers or of the Pharisees has put faith in him, has he? But this crowd that does not know the Law are accursed people." (John 7:48, 49) The self-righteous religious leaders and their adherents were the ones that despised Jesus and avoided him, except to come and attack him verbally or to try to catch him in his words and thus have something with which to level accusations against him to further their own designs.—Matthew 12:22-30; Mark 12:13; Luke 11:53, 54; 20:20-26.

16 Under such religious influence as this, it was no wonder that the majority of Jesus' own people were induced to despise him and avoid him and his followers as if he were a false prophet, a false Messiah, a pseudo-Christ. As a result, the statement of John 1:10, 11 turned out to be the case: "He was in the world, and the world came into existence through him, but the world did not know him. He came to his own home, but his own people did not take him in." It was just as Jesus said to his own townspeople there in the synagogue of Nazareth, Galilee: "Truly I tell you that no prophet is accepted in his home territory." (Luke 4:24) Also, "A prophet is not unhonored except in his home territory and in his own house." (Matthew 13:57; Mark 6:4; John 4:43, 44) But just think what people missed by despising and avoiding God's "Servant"!

15, 16. Who was it that "despised" and "avoided" Jesus, and why?

17 As a perfect human creature, born without inherited sin and infirmity, Jesus never had a sick day in his earthly life. And yet Isaiah 53:3 had said: "He was . . . a man meant for pains and for having acquaintance with sickness." But such pains were not his own, and such sickness was not his own. He came from a healthy heaven but into a sick world, racked with pains and familiar with sickness of all kinds, to the death. He came like a loving physician. Many did he cure of their physical sickness and relieve of their bodily pains. But he came especially to relieve the sin-laden people of their spiritual maladies and to relieve them of their pains of a condemning conscience. He did not shun either the physically ailing or the spiritually ailing. When lodging with tax collector Zacchaeus of Jericho and helping him back to spiritual health, Jesus said: "The Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost." (Luke 19:1-10) When criticized by the Jewish scribes and Pharisees for eating with tax collectors and sinners who were seeking spiritual cure, Jesus said: "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but those who are ailing do. I have come to call, not righteous persons, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:27-32) However, the Jewish chief priests and scribes and Pharisees viewed Jesus as being the sick and ailing one, who needed their religious ministrations.

18 Respecting Jehovah's "Servant" in this regard, the prophecy of Isaiah 53:3 says: "There was as if the concealing of one's face from us." The "Servant's" face is what is concealed. But the question is, Who does the concealing? Is it the "Servant" that conceals his own face, like a leper whom the Mosaic law commanded to conceal the face and to call out, "Unclean!"? That

17. Since Jesus himself never got sick, how did he prove to be "a man meant for pains and for having acquaintance with sickness"?
18. (a) As referred to in Isaiah 53:3, whose face is 'concealed'? (b) A comparison of Bible translations indicates that who, evidently, does the "concealing"?

is the way Young's literal Bible translation renders the passage, saying: "And as one hiding the face from us." But Rotherham's *Emphasised Bible* reads: "Yea, like one from whom the face is hidden." So, whose is the face hidden? Does the unsightly one hide his own face? Or do we hide the face from that one? Then the unsightly one would know that we are refusing to look at him because of horror or because of disdain, contempt. As *The New English Bible* words it: "A thing from which men turn away their eyes." Or, according to *The Jerusalem Bible:* "A man to make people screen their faces." Of course, we ourselves can conceal the unsightly one's face from us by just turning our heads or covering our eyes.

19 Jesus Christ, however, had nothing of which to be ashamed and for which to hide his face from us in embarrassment. He looked people in the face. (Mark 3:5; 10:21) It was his opposers and enemies who refused to look upon him with favor and to recognize him as the foretold "Servant," the Messiah of God. As Isaiah 53:3 continues on to say: "He was despised, and we held him as of no account." He was not esteemed as the Messiah; he was not considered to have the precious value of the Messiah. He was rated as worth no more than a mere salable slave. (Exodus 21:32) Thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave in Israel, was the payment that the chief priests of Jerusalem stipulated to Judas Iscariot for betraying his Master Jesus Christ to them. (Matthew 26:14-16; 27:3-10) In the prophecy of Zechariah 11:12, 13, thirty pieces of silver are called, in sarcasm, a "majestic value" with which to value a spiritual shepherd such as Jesus Christ was.

20 Moreover, when it came to making a choice before the provincial judge, Pontius Pilate, the religious leaders held Jesus Christ as of less account than the

19, 20. (a) Did Jesus have anything for which to hide his face in embarrassment? (b) Who was it that "despised" him and "held him as of no account," and in what ways did they show this?

criminal robber Barabbas. This murderer they clamored for Governor Pontius Pilate to release to them on that Passover Day instead of Jehovah's "Servant," Jesus Christ. (Matthew 27:15-26) To what greater extreme could matters go to show how much Jesus Christ was despised by those desiring to get him out of their way? Thus, in Jesus Christ, Jehovah's "Servant" was valued as being "of no account."

THE ONES WHO CONFESS TO THEIR ACCOUNTABILITY

21 Have we noticed whom the inspired prophet Isaiah implicates in all of this? He does not say, 'He was despised, and the Gentiles held him as of no account.' He does not say that there was a concealing of the face from the Gentiles, the non-Jewish nations. Under inspiration Isaiah says that the concealing of the face was "from us," and that "we held him as of no account." (Isaiah 53:3) It is Isaiah's own people whom he implicates in this wrong attitude and procedure toward Jehovah's "Servant." Isaiah here, as it were, makes confession for his own people, the nation of Israel. That is why the apostle Peter, some days after the festival of Pentecost of 33 C.E., said to a crowd of worshipers in Solomon's colonnade of the temple in Jerusalem:

22 "Men of Israel, why are you wondering over this [the miraculous cure just performed by Peter and John], or why are you gazing at us as though by personal power or godly devotion we have made him [the healed man] walk? The God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our forefathers, has glorified his Servant, Jesus, whom you, for your part, delivered up and disowned before Pilate's face, when he had decided to release him. Yes, you disowned that holy and righteous one, and you asked for a man, a murderer, to be freely granted to you, whereas you

21, 22. (a) The people of what nation are implicated by Isaiah as having the wrong attitude toward Jehovah's "Servant"? (b) What did the apostle Peter say that "men of Israel" had done to Jehovah's "Servant"?

killed the Chief Agent of life. But God raised him up from the dead, of which fact we are witnesses. Consequently his name, by our faith in his name, has made this man strong whom you behold and know, and the faith that is through him has given the man this complete soundness in the sight of all of you. And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers also did. But in this way God has fulfilled the things he announced beforehand through the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer. To you first God, after raising up his Servant, sent him forth to bless you by turning each one away from your wicked deeds."—Acts 3:12-18, 26; Luke 23:18-25.

23 It is true, of course, that the Gentiles joined the Jews in showing of how little account they valued Jesus. In Matthew 27:27-31 we read: "Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's palace and gathered the whole body of troops together to him. And disrobing him, they draped him with a scarlet cloak, and they braided a crown out of thorns and put it on his head and a reed in his right hand. And, kneeling before him, they made fun of him, saying: 'Good day, you King of the Jews!' And they spit upon him and took the reed and began hitting him upon his head. Finally, when they had made fun of him, they took the cloak off and put his outer garments upon him and led him off for impaling."

24 However, those Gentiles merely followed up on the lead that had been taken for them by the Jewish religious leaders. According to Matthew 26:63-68, after Jesus refused to answer to the charges made against him by many witnesses before the Jewish Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, with the high priest presiding, here is what happened:

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23. How did the Gentiles join the Jews in showing that they viewed Jesus as of little account?

24, 25. (a) But whose lead in this were those Gentiles following? (b) How had Jesus already been treated before the Jewish Sanhedrin?

25 "So the high priest said to him: 'By the living God I put you under oath to tell us whether you are the Christ the Son of God!' Jesus said to him: 'You yourself said it. Yet I say to you men, From henceforth you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest ripped his outer garments, saying: 'He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? See! Now you have heard the blasphemy. What is your opinion?' They returned answer: 'He is liable to death.' Then they spit into his face and hit him with their fists. Others slapped him in the face, saying: 'Prophesy to us, you Christ. Who is it that struck you?' "

26 After that night session of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, there was an early morning meeting of the chief priests and the elders of the people for consultation as to how to dispose of Jesus, whom the Sanhedrin had condemned to death as a blasphemer. Not because of any demand of the Gentile authority, Roman governor Pontius Pilate, but of their own accord they decided to hand Jesus over to Pilate and file political charges against him.—Matthew 27:1, 2.

27 Nobody can correctly deny that Isaiah was a natural, circumcised Jew. In his inspired prophecy he does not exculpate his own people or predict that his own people would be free from guilt in connection with the mistreatment of Jehovah's suffering "Servant." As one of his own people, Isaiah uses the pronoun "we" in foretelling the indignities to be heaped upon that "Servant." It was to Isaiah's people that this remarkable "Servant" of Jehovah was to be sent, and the facts of history prove that it was to Isaiah's people that this "Servant," the Messiah, came in Jehovah's due time. How these were to treat that Messianic "Ser-

26. Who initiated the action that brought Jesus to trial before the Roman governor?

27. So, according to the facts, at whose hands did the Messiah suffer all this mistreatment?

vant" the prophet Isaiah foretold. And the historic facts show that the Gentiles also became involved. There was a vital reason for this, as Isaiah's own prophecy reveals.

[28] Here the question seems almost forced upon us, Just why would Jehovah subject his outstanding "Servant" to all this suffering and disgrace? Doubtless a certain point had to be made. An issue had to be settled that called for Almighty God's permission of all this suffering. For one thing, Jesus Christ, as sent in the capacity of the foretold "Servant," proved that he could take all this suffering and indignity, even to a painful, ignominious death on an execution stake. He proved that he could be completely submissive to Jehovah God under all this suffering, without a whimper of complaint. Through it all he maintained his perfect innocence, in flawless loyalty and faithfulness to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah God. Well, now, this was the very point to be made. This was the dominant issue to be settled by means of this "Servant" of Jehovah.

[29] In clear, stated terms the question of the submissiveness, loyal devotion and faithfulness of Jehovah's servants and worshipers had been raised in connection with the man Job, not long before the birth of the prophet Moses in the sixteenth century B.C.E. What made this question so serious, with universal application, was that a heavenly spirit person, Jehovah's chief adversary, Satan the Devil, had raised it. Job was not a Hebrew, Israelite or Jew, but he was a devout worshiper of Jehovah as the one living and true God. Satan the Devil had his own following in heaven, the demon angels, and he did not like to see Jehovah point to this Job of the land of Uz as an exemplary case of sincere, purehearted, worshipful

28. Why was it necessary for Jesus Christ to undergo all this suffering and disgrace?
29. (a) When was it that the issue regarding the submissiveness, loyalty and faithfulness of Jehovah's servants had earlier been raised? (b) Why was the issue raised in connection with Job?

devotion to Jehovah. Satan had no confidence in the honesty and unselfishness of Job's worship of Jehovah nor in that of any other intelligent creature in existence, either in heaven or on earth. Satan wanted to work on an outstanding case. By it he wanted to prove that he was right in having no confidence in any creature's sticking to Jehovah as God and Universal Sovereign without self-interest.

30 So Satan set out to prove the wrongness of Jehovah's confidence in Job and, by this as a test case, the wrongness of Jehovah's confidence in all other servants and worshipers of him in heaven and on earth. Had not Satan the Devil himself rebelled against Jehovah's universal sovereignty? Did he not also have fellow rebels, the demon angels? Why, then, he reasoned, should any other creature be different from him and his demon angels? All of those who were still keeping submissive to Jehovah's universal sovereignty had been bought off by Him, so Satan felt and argued. Just give him the permission and opportunity and he could prove this in the case of this man Job, who rated as faultless in devotion to Jehovah.

31 In the presence of the assembled heavenly sons of God, Satan said right to the face of God concerning the then prospering Job: "But, for a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch everything he has and see whether he will not curse you to your very face." So strong was Jehovah's confidence in the man Job, that He was not afraid to let Job be tested in this way so as to hurl back Satan's challenge. Jehovah himself did not touch Job's vast possessions. He let the malicious Satan do the touching and thus reduce Job from being "the greatest of all the Orientals" to the poorest of them all, even bereaved of his seven sons and three daughters. Under the pressure of this

30. What was Satan trying to prove in regard to all of Jehovah's servants in heaven and on earth?
31. (a) Where did Satan bring up the challenge regarding Job? (b) How did Jehovah show his confidence in the man Job?

extreme adversity, did Job rebel against the universal sovereignty of Jehovah?

[32] There is no tinge of rebellion in Job's words: "Naked I came out of my mother's belly, and naked shall I return there [to the ground]. Jehovah himself has given, and Jehovah himself has taken away. Let the name of Jehovah continue to be blessed." And the historian adds the comment: "In all this Job did not sin or ascribe anything improper to God."—Job 1:1-22.

[33] Unconvinced about Job, Satan challenged Jehovah to another test of him. Again in the presence of the assembled heavenly sons of God, Satan said to God: "Skin in behalf of skin, and everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul. For a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch as far as his bone and his flesh and see whether he will not curse you to your very face." Jehovah did not back down before this challenge, but let Satan smite Job with a terrible, loathsome disease, from head to foot. His flesh corrupted. Losing all hope of her husband's recovery, Job's wife said to him: "Are you yet holding fast your integrity? Curse God and die!" Under prompting by his wife who had lost her ten children at one stroke, did Job now break his exemplary integrity and curse the Universal Sovereign? No, for the historian records: "But he said to her: 'As one of the senseless women speaks, you speak also. Shall we accept merely what is good from the true God and not accept also what is bad?' In all this Job did not sin with his lips."—Job 2:1-10.

[34] In course of time three would-be comforters called as friends on the deathly sick Job. Miserable comforters they turned out to be. One after the other, all three argued with Job to convince him that he was a religious hypocrite just as Satan had argued before

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32. How do the facts show whether Job proved to be a rebel under such pressure?
33. How was Job further afflicted as to his health and in his home, and what was his reaction?
34. What effect did the arguments of three would-be comforters have on Job?

God. They pressed their argument that Job had all along been a sinner and therefore God was punishing him. Job rightly denied this. He refused to give up his claim on his past integrity and said to these accusers: "It is unthinkable on my part that I should declare you men righteous! Until I expire I shall not take away my integrity from myself!" (Job 27:5) In spite of Job's claim to having been a man of integrity all along till this time of his illness, Job did not feel that Jehovah was exercising His universal sovereignty in a wrong, oppressive way. Job did not rebel against God for letting him suffer loss, sickness and false accusations in this way, in spite of the fact that he had faithfully served and worshiped the Universal Sovereign, Jehovah.

35 Consequently, Satan did not see and hear Job curse God to his face. He lost out in this crucial test case. In the case of even this imperfect man, Satan's challenge to God proved to be without basis. Satan's hand was forced back from touching Job's bones and skin, and Almighty God cured Job. His flesh became fresher than that of a youth. (Job 33:25) He became so rejuvenated that he became father to ten more children, seven sons and three daughters. He also became twice as wealthy as before. He had a hundred and forty years added to his life, and saw his great-grandsons. (Job 42:10-17) This was, of course, a vindication of Job as a man of unbreakable integrity toward the Universal Sovereign Jehovah God. Yes, but it was particularly a vindication of Jehovah himself as the Universal Sovereign. He is rightly in this position. He exercises his sovereignty in such a way that even human creatures on earth can see the rightness of it and will stick to it inseparably despite suffering.

36 However, the issue was not settled with Job. Neither was the issue a new one that arose first in

35. What was the outcome of the test case involving Job, and how did it result in vindication?

36. (a) When and how was the issue of universal sovereignty first raised? (b) How far reaching was the question involving the integrity of God's creatures?

the days of Job. By then it was more than 2,400 years old. How so? Because the issue had been raised in the Garden of Eden, shortly after the creation of the perfect Adam and Eve. At that time the spirit son of God who is now Satan the Devil saw what he thought was an opportunity to establish a sovereignty of his own, over mankind at least, if not also over angels. He rebelled against his heavenly Father Jehovah and broke away from that One's sovereignty. Then, by means of Eve as a temptress, Satan put the pressure upon the perfect man Adam to join him in rebellion against the Universal Sovereign Jehovah. In this way the issue of universal sovereignty was raised for the first time. The question now was, not just, Who among mankind will adhere to Jehovah's universal sovereignty, but, more critically, Who in heaven will keep integrity toward the Most High God and remain loyal and faithful to His universal sovereignty as the right thing for all creation?

[37] For this reason, the paramount issue reached as high up as to the foremost heavenly son of God, Jehovah's chief official, "the firstborn of all creation." (Colossians 1:15; Revelation 3:14) His official position in heaven was that of Logos, or Word, Spokesman. (John 1:1-3) Above all other creations of Jehovah God, this highest official of God needed to be tested and proved on this issue of unselfish devotion to Jehovah's universal sovereignty. Till Job's time and for more than fifteen centuries afterward he had kept his integrity to his heavenly Father Jehovah. He had conducted himself faultlessly as his Father's principal official, The Word. Ah, yes, but that was without suffering bodily pain, that was without undergoing the deepest humiliation and undeserved dishonor. That was not down here on this earth as a man like the perfect Adam in the Garden of Eden. But now, let this highly honored and respected official of God experience

37. Why was it particularly appropriate that Jehovah's foremost heavenly Son be tested—and as a man on earth—in regard to the issue of unselfish devotion to Jehovah's universal sovereignty?

such adverse things here on earth—at the hands of Satan the Devil—and then let us see whether he will keep his integrity to God and remain submissive to His universal sovereignty! Logically, that was Satan's line of reasoning.

38 To meet Satan's challenge on this score, it would require the Almighty God to bring down his only-begotten Son, the Logos, to the earth by birth as a human creature. With complete confidence in this beloved Son and his unbreakable devotion to his heavenly Father, Jehovah purposed to do this. This became his purpose right after Satan the Devil had succeeded in breaking the integrity of the perfect man Adam. This purpose is contained in God's words addressed to the symbolic Serpent in the Garden of Eden:

39 "And I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel."—Genesis 3:15.

40 The bruising of the heel of the woman's "seed" meant intense suffering for Jehovah's chief heavenly official at the earth, and that at the hands of the very one who had brought all the unjust suffering upon faithful Job. But Satan the Devil would be satisfied with nothing less than this. He would never feel that a satisfactory test had been made that would allow him to prove his point. His challenge to Jehovah's universal sovereignty would never be fully met without allowance for such a thing. Jehovah realized this. He was determined to settle the issue by means of his dearest heavenly treasure, his only-begotten Son, his chief executive officer. His determination to do so is expressed in this remarkable prophecy concerning "my servant," as set out in Isaiah 52:13 through 53:12.

38, 39. Right after the rebellion in Eden, how did Jehovah indicate that it was his purpose that such a test take place?
40. The intense suffering that would be involved for God's Son in undergoing this test is portrayed in what prophecy?

CHAPTER 5

The Tested Integrity of the "Servant" Rewarded

IT IS not an easy thing to suffer as a scapegoat and at the same time maintain one's integrity toward the God of Justice. An individual who serves as a scapegoat is an innocent person and yet he is made to bear the blame for others or to suffer in the place of them. The test of one's integrity in such a position is not made any lighter when one has to bear the blame and suffer even to the death for the whole world of mankind. As one inspired writer presented the case: "For hardly will anyone die for a righteous man; indeed, for the good man, perhaps, someone even dares to die."—Romans 5:7.

[2] And yet, as early as the sixteenth century before our Common Era, it was revealed for the first time that someone would serve as a scapegoat for the entire race of mankind. In the code of laws that was given to the nation of Israel through Moses at Mount Sinai in 1513 B.C.E., Jehovah God made provision for the Israelites to hold a solemn Day of Atonement on the tenth day of the seventh lunar month (Tishri) each year. In connection with the atonement for sins that was made through the blood of a bull and a goat, which was taken into the Most Holy of the tabernacle and sprinkled before the golden ark of God's covenant, there was a goat that was made a scapegoat. How this goat was determined upon and what was done with it is described for us in chapter sixteen of the third book of Moses, in the following way:

1. (a) What is a scapegoat? (b) Is the suffering involved made easier by one's having to die for all mankind?
2. In its instructions concerning the ancient Jewish Day of Atonement, what does the Bible say about a scapegoat?

And [Aaron] shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.

And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.—Leviticus 16:5-10, 20-22, *Authorized Version.*

[3] Modern translations render "the scapegoat" as 'the goat for Azazel.' The ancient *Septuagint Version* as made by Jews of Alexandria, Egypt, and as translated by Charles Thomson, speaks of the lot for this goat as "one lot, *'For escape.'*" Also: "to make atonement on it, so as to let it escape." (Leviticus 16:8-10) The ancient Latin *Vulgate* renders it as "the emissary goat" (*caper emissarius*), which corresponds with "scapegoat." Now this goat, which was a feature of the annual Atonement Day of ancient Israel, had a typical significance. It typified something good to come for mankind. In Hebrews 10:1 it is written: "The Law has a shadow of the good things to come." And, speaking about the sacrificial victims of the Atonement Day, Hebrews 13:11-14 says:

[4] "The bodies of those animals whose blood is taken

3, 4. How do we know that the Atonement Day scapegoat had a typical significance?

into the holy place by the high priest for sin are burned up outside the camp. Hence Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered outside the gate. Let us, then, go forth to him outside the camp, bearing the reproach he bore, for we do not have here a city that continues."

[5] According to Isaiah's prophecy, chapter fifty-three, Jehovah's "Servant" is the sin-bearer who was typified by the scapegoat of the Atonement Day that continued being observed at Jehovah's temple until the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E. That the Messianic "Servant" was to serve as the antitypical "scapegoat," the prophet Isaiah proceeds to show, saying: "Truly our sicknesses were what he himself carried; and as for our pains, he bore them. But we ourselves accounted him as plagued, stricken by God and afflicted. But he was being pierced for our transgression; he was being crushed for our errors. The chastisement meant for our peace was upon him, and because of his wounds there has been a healing for us."—Isaiah 53:4, 5.

[6] There is another inspired Bible writer who applies Isaiah's prophecy concerning Jehovah's "Servant" to Jesus Christ, and that is Matthew Levi, the aforetime tax collector. Telling of Jesus' miracles of curing human sickness, Matthew 8:14-17 says: "Jesus, on coming into Peter's house, saw his mother-in-law lying down and sick with fever. So he touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began ministering to him. But after it became evening, people brought him many demon-possessed persons; and he expelled the spirits with a word, and he cured all who were faring badly; that there might be fulfilled what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He himself took our sicknesses and carried our diseases.'" —Isaiah 53:4.

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5. How does the language of Isaiah 53:4, 5 indicate that Jehovah's "Servant" was to serve as the antitypical "scapegoat"?
6. With what activity on Jesus' part did the apostle Matthew connect the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:4?

[7] Just how much this performance of miraculous cures drew upon Jesus' vitality, we cannot say. But it is written, at Luke 6:18, 19: "Even those troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd were seeking to touch him, because power was going out of him and healing them all." That Jesus was sensitive to this outflow of vitality from his body, in the case of even one cure, is evident from this instance recorded in Luke 8:42-48: "As he was going the crowds thronged him. And a woman, subject to a flow of blood for twelve years, who had not been able to get a cure from anyone, approached from behind and touched the fringe of his outer garment, and instantly her flow of blood stopped. So Jesus said: 'Who was it that touched me?' When they were all denying it, Peter said: 'Instructor, the crowds are hemming you in and closely pressing you.' Yet Jesus said: 'Someone touched me, for I perceived that power went out of me.' Seeing that she had not escaped notice, the woman came trembling and fell down before him and disclosed before all the people the cause for which she touched him and how she was healed instantly. But he said to her: 'Daughter, your faith has made you well; go your way in peace.' "—Compare Mark 5:25-34.

[8] In the case of Jehovah's "Servant," the cures that Jesus thus miraculously performed were an evidence that he was the Sin-bearer. For example, when religious critics accused Jesus of blaspheming for saying to a paralyzed man: "Take courage, child; your sins are forgiven," this is what followed: "And Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said: 'Why are you thinking wicked things in your hearts? For instance, which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Get up and walk? However, in order for you to know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins—' then he said to the paralytic: 'Get up, pick up your bed,

7. How do the Scriptures indicate that there was an outflow of vitality from Jesus' body when he performed cures?
8. What incident indicates that the cures that Jesus performed had something to do with his role as Sin-bearer?

and go to your home.' And he got up and went off to his home. At the sight of this the crowds were struck with fear, and they glorified God, who gave such authority to men."—Matthew 9:2-8.

[9] Although the many marvelous miracles testified to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, the Anointed One (Acts 10:38), he was more concerned about healing all mankind of that which was the root cause for all this sickness. The chief cure needed was the curing of sin, the wages of which is death with all its associated bodily infirmities and ailments. (Romans 6:23) The spiritual healing was more vital than the physical healing, for one's having a bodily cure performed upon one by Jesus or by his authorized disciples did not mean the eternal salvation of the cured one. The cleansing from sin required the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ in sacrificial death on the antitypical Day of Atonement.—Hebrews 9:22.

[10] Because of the religious persecution heaped upon him by those who were legitimately serving at the temple in Jerusalem and by other highly esteemed religious leaders, it appeared as if Jesus were "plagued" by God himself. He appeared to have wounding stripes laid upon him by God through those who were apparently engaged in God's true service. But the uncomplaining endurance of this was excellent discipline for Jesus from his heavenly Father. In view of its severity, it was like chastisement for him. (Hebrews 12:2-8) But this chastisement was "meant for our peace," that is to say, the endurance of this chastisement by Jesus was meant to work for our coming into peaceful relationship with God.

[11] If Jesus had rebelled against this disciplinary experience on earth, all would have been lost for us. But

9. (a) Why is cleansing from sin more vitally needed by mankind than physical healing? (b) As a basis for such cleansing, what provision was required?
10. (a) What made it appear as if Jesus were "plagued" by God? (b) How was the chastisement upon him "meant for our peace"?
11. How did Jesus react to the suffering heaped upon him, and with what benefit to us?

one of his most intimate apostles, Simon Peter, writes to us, saying: "Christ suffered for you, leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely. He committed no sin, nor was deception found in his mouth. When he was being reviled, he did not go reviling in return. When he was suffering, he did not go threatening, but kept on committing himself to the one who judges righteously. He himself bore our sins in his own body upon the stake, in order that we might be done with sins and live to righteousness. And 'by his stripes you were healed.'" (1 Peter 2:21-24) Here the apostle Peter quotes from Isaiah 53:5, and thus becomes another Jew who, under divine inspiration, identifies Jesus Christ as the "Servant" foretold in Isaiah's prophecy.

LIKE AN UNRESISTING SHEEP

12 Jesus Christ would have to be very submissive to Jehovah's universal sovereignty, if he was to fulfill what Isaiah says further about the "Servant" when making comparisons with sheep. Showing the difference between us and the "Servant," Isaiah 53:6, 7 says: "Like sheep we have all of us wandered about; it was each one to his own way that we have turned; and Jehovah himself has caused the error of us all to meet up with that one. He was hard pressed, and he was letting himself be afflicted; yet he would not open his mouth. He was being brought just like a sheep to the slaughtering; and like a ewe that before her shearers has become mute, he also would not open his mouth."

13 When an Ethiopian eunuch asked about whom the prophet Isaiah was here speaking, whether about himself or some other man, Philip the evangelizer applied the scripture to Jesus Christ. (Acts 8:26-35) Also, Peter doubtless had this scripture in mind when

12. How was the submissiveness of Jesus Christ to what Jehovah permitted foretold in Isaiah 53:6, 7?
13. (a) To whom did Philip the evangelizer apply this scripture? (b) Spiritually speaking, how were we like sheep wandering about, and what was needed in order to bring us relief?

he wrote to fellow Christians: "And 'by his stripes you were healed.' For you were like sheep, going astray; but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls." (1 Peter 2:24, 25) Yes, because we were spiritually like sheep wandering about, going astray in ignorance, error and sin, we needed to be recovered. This called for an unblemished substitute "sheep" to be slaughtered for us, because of our erroneous course. In fine harmony with Isaiah's prophecy, John the Baptist pointed to the baptized, anointed Jesus and said: "See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!"—John 1:29, 36.

[14] Repeatedly, in the book that is listed last in the Holy Scriptures, Revelation, Jesus Christ is referred to as "the Lamb," and to him it is said: "You were slaughtered and with your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth."—Revelation 5:8-10; 22:1; compare 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

[15] When, finally, on trial for his earthly life, this "Lamb" refused to answer the false accusations of those witnessing against him. He remained "mute," for he did not desire to say anything that would interfere with the carrying out of his heavenly Father's will, as expressed, for instance, in Isaiah 53:5. He chose to let the public record that he had made for himself before the nation of Israel speak for itself. If his earthly judges did not choose to abide by this true and valid testimony, then the responsibility was theirs before the Supreme Judge, Jehovah God. They showed, however, that they would not be guided by the true facts, even if Jesus had broken his purposeful silence. He did not fight against dying like a slaughtered lamb for the redemption of all mankind from sin, sickness

14. How does Revelation 5:8-10 indicate who that 'sheep brought to the slaughtering' proved to be?
15. (a) When brought to trial, how was it true that Jesus was "mute," like a ewe before her shearers? (b) Why did he choose this course?

and death. He trusted in the power of Almighty God to resurrect him from the dead to life immortal. —Matthew 26:65; Luke 23:8-11; John 19:8-11.

DEATH AND BURIAL OF THE "SERVANT"

16 There was no restraint imposed by the Almighty God upon the enemies when the due time came for Jehovah's "Servant" to be given over to them. He let them go to the limit and thereby show the degree of their viciousness and maliciousness. As Jesus said to those who had come to the Garden of Gethsemane on Passover night to arrest him: "Did you come out with swords and clubs as against a robber? While I was with you in the temple day after day you did not stretch out your hands against me. But this is your hour and the authority of darkness."—Luke 22:52, 53.

17 By whom, then, is there a *restraint* applied and upon whom or upon what is it applied, according to what the prophet Isaiah now proceeds to say about Jehovah's "Servant"? "Because of restraint and of judgment he was taken away; and who will concern himself even with the details of his generation? For he was severed from the land of the living ones. Because of the transgression of my people he had the stroke. And he will make his burial place even with the wicked ones, and with the rich class in his death, despite the fact that he had done no violence and there was no deception in his mouth."—Isaiah 53:8, 9, *NW; Young.*

18 It is evident from this that the restraint was applied by the foes of the "Servant" of Jehovah. Also, it was a restraint upon justice, fairness, so that this should not be respected and carried out. (Compare Psalm 40:11; Isaiah 63:15) This is in agreement with the way in which this verse (Isaiah 53:8) is quoted in Acts 8:33, where the reading of the Greek *Septuagint*

16. Why did God not impose a restraint upon the enemies who seized his "Servant"?
17, 18. By whom was "restraint" applied, as foretold in Isaiah 53:8, and in what way?

Version (LXX) is quoted. This reads: "During his humiliation the judgment was taken away from him. Who will tell the details of his generation? Because his life is taken away from the earth." Thus "humiliation" is the word used instead of "restraint." But we note that the verse does not say, 'During his humility,' to refer to the "Servant's" humility and submissiveness; but it says, "During his humiliation." So the enemies of Jesus humiliated him by restraining justice. While they were thus withholding justice and equity, the "judgment" of a fair trial and of a correct, unbiased ruling was "taken away from him."

19 Thus, as Isaiah 53:8 foretold, "because of restraint and of judgment he was taken away." The substance of what actually took place is simply given in the Bible translation by S. T. Byington, which reads: "He was taken out of law and order." Of course, everything seemed to be legal, not brushing aside the legal courts; but the way in which the case of Jehovah's "Servant" was handled was an outrage to justice. As *The Jerusalem Bible* reads: "By force and by law he was taken." Correspondingly, *The New English Bible* reads: "Without protection, without justice [or, in the marginal reading: After arrest and sentence], he was taken away."

20 Then, Isaiah 53:8 goes on to ask the question: "And who will concern himself even with [the details of] his generation?" The Greek *LXX* rendering of this reads: "Who will tell the details of [or, relate in full] his generation?"—Acts 8:33.

21 The word "generation" here does not apply to the "crooked generation" of people, according to Acts 2:40, in the midst of which Jesus Christ lived. The prophet Isaiah is not turning our attention away from the suffering "Servant" to the contemporaries of the "Ser-

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19. How do other Bible translations convey the idea there expressed?
20. In connection with this, what question does the prophet Isaiah go on to ask?
21, 22. (a) To whom does the word "generation" here not apply? (b) How do various Bible translations show this?

vant" who caused his sufferings; as is suggested in the reading by the Jewish Publication Society translation, "And with his generation who did reason?" to which reading the footnote comment is added: "No one. The martyrdom was inflicted upon him without interference or protest from anybody."—See the book *Isaiah,* by The Soncino Press, page 263, published 1949.

22 Rather than such a thing, the prophet Isaiah keeps our attention focused upon the "Servant" even when using the Hebrew word for "generation." This is stressed in a number of modern translations: "And who gave a thought to his fate?" (*NE*) "Would anyone plead his cause?" (*Je*) "And who would have thought any more of his destiny?" (*The New American Bible*) "And who gave thought to his fate?" (*An American Translation*) "And who heeded how he fell?" (*Moffatt*) And the translation from the ancient Peshitta Aramaic Version reads: "And who can describe his anguish?" (*Lamsa*) In this way our attention is not shifted from the "Servant."

23 Jehovah's "Servant" was to have no earthly children naturally. So the word "generation" does not ask about any offspring of the "Servant," the Messiah. The word "generation" may have the thought of "birthright," or "descent," one's natural background. In this sense, then, is to be understood the question raised by Isaiah: "And who will concern himself even with [the details of] his generation?" "Who will tell the details of his generation?" (Isaiah 53:8; Acts 8:33) Accordingly, at the time of the court trials of Jesus the Messiah, could not this question have been raised? Who of the Jewish Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem, took into account who this man on trial before them was? Did they honestly concern themselves with getting at the true facts of this man's background—that he fulfilled all the requirements that proved that he was in all verity the promised Messiah? When the high priest, as president of the Sanhedrin,

23. In what sense, then, are we to understand the question raised at Isaiah 53:8?

put Jesus under oath to make a true admission of his identity, the whole court joined in accusing him of blasphemy and therefore of being deserving of death by the Mosaic Law.—Matthew 26:59-68.

24 The Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, on learning that Jesus was held by many to be the Messiah, the Christ, became concerned and took steps to ascertain something of his original background. But in spite of his misgivings, he yielded to the pressure of the fanatical mob that was clamoring for the impalement of Jesus the Messiah, and sentenced him to death on an execution stake. (Matthew 27:24-26; Luke 23:6-25; John 18:33 through 19:16) In this way "the details of his generation" were not fairly examined and given due weight, and due concern was not felt by those handling the Messiah's case. Since the answer to Isaiah's question was, No one in temporal authority, it is no wonder that the rest of Isaiah 53:8 goes on to make this observation: "For he was severed from the land of the living ones. Because of the transgression of my people he had the stroke."

25 This signified that the earthly life of the Messiah was to be cut short. And it was even so, for Jesus Christ was put to death at the age of thirty-three and a half years. He got the stroke that others deserved because of their transgression. However, this was not before God's fixed time for his Messianic "Servant" to be cut off from the midst of those living on the earth. In the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, Jehovah said concerning the seventieth and last week out of the seventy weeks of years that were involved with the Messiah: "And after the sixty-two weeks [that followed the previous seven weeks] Messiah will be cut off, with nothing for himself. . . . And he must keep the covenant in force for the many for one week

24. (a) When Jesus was before Pontius Pilate, how did Pilate too fail to give due weight to "the details of his generation"? (b) So, as foretold at Isaiah 53:8, what was the outcome?

25. When was Jesus Christ "severed from the land of the living ones," thus getting the "stroke" that others deserved?

[from autumn of 29 C.E. to autumn of 36 C.E.]; and at the half of the week [in spring of 33 C.E.] he will cause sacrifice and gift offering to cease [by virtue of his own perfect human sacrifice]."

[26] Again the prophet Isaiah, at chapter 53, verse 8, implicates his own people, by saying "my people," which people were also then God's chosen people. So, too, Isaiah admits to the "transgression" of his own nation and points to the innocence of the Messianic "Servant," Jesus Christ. However, this Messiah was willing to suffer innocently for the sake of the Jewish nation, "my people," as Isaiah calls them. This nation in particular was guilty of transgression against Jehovah their God. Through the mediator Moses they had been brought into a covenant of Law at Mount Sinai in Arabia in 1513 B.C.E. For not keeping that Law covenant perfectly, they became a cursed nation, subject to all the curses of which Moses had forewarned them in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. This was a curse that did not rest upon the remainder of the human family inasmuch as none of these Gentiles were taken into the Mosaic Law covenant.

MESSIAH IS MADE A CURSE FOR A NATION

[27] How would this curse be lifted from the Jewish nation? By the death of someone of their own nation upon an execution stake or tree. In Deuteronomy 21:22, 23 it is written:

[28] "And in case there comes to be in a man a sin deserving the sentence of death, and he has been put to death, and you have hung him upon a stake, his dead body should not stay all night on the stake; but you should by all means bury him on that day, because something accursed of God is the one hung up; and you must not defile your soil, which Jehovah your God is giving you as an inheritance."

26. To whose "transgression" does Isaiah refer in chapter 53, verse 8? 27, 28. (a) How could the curse for violation of the Law covenant be lifted from the Jewish nation? (b) What did the Law say about how God viewed one who was hung upon a stake?

29 It was necessary for Jesus, not just to die as a ransom sacrifice, but also to die on an execution stake. "For," says the apostle Paul, "all those who depend upon works of law are under a curse; for it is written: 'Cursed is every one that does not continue in all the things written in the scroll of the Law in order to do them.' Moreover, that by law no one is declared righteous with God is evident, because 'the righteous one will live by reason of faith.' Now the Law does not adhere to faith, but 'he that does them shall live by means of them.' Christ by purchase released us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse instead of us, because it is written: 'Accursed is every man hanged upon a stake.' The purpose was that the blessing of Abraham might come to be by means of Jesus Christ for the nations, that we might receive the promised spirit through our faith."—Galatians 3:10-14; Deuteronomy 27:26; Leviticus 18:5.

30 Jesus the Messiah became a curse in place of the Jewish nation when he died on the execution stake at Calvary, outside of Jerusalem, on Passover Day of 33 C.E. The dead Jesus had no control over where he was to be buried. His body might have been taken, like that of an accursed criminal undeserving of a resurrection and pitched into Gehenna, the Valley of Hinnom to the south and southwest of Jerusalem where the incinerator fires for the refuse of the holy city were kept burning, even being mingled with sulphur. But the prophecy of Isaiah 53:9 had to be fulfilled in him: "And he will make his burial place even with the wicked ones, and with the rich class in his death, despite the fact that he had done no violence and there was no deception in his mouth."

31 The fact that Jesus died between two known criminals on stakes would class Jesus' burial as being "with

29. Thus, as the apostle Paul explains, how did Jesus provide a means of release for the Jewish nation from the curse for violation of the Law?
30. As to Messiah's place of burial, what did Isaiah 53:9 foretell?
31. How was it true that Jesus' burial was "with the wicked ones" and "with the rich class"?

the wicked ones," even though he was not buried right alongside them. According to God's law through Moses, Jesus had to be taken down from the stake and buried that same day before sundown. Time was running out, and the Jews requested Pilate to have his soldiers take down the bodies of all three men before the Passover Day ended. (John 19:31-37) Anticipating such a thing, a secret disciple of Jesus Christ, a rich man called Joseph of Arimathea, went and got permission from Governor Pilate to take down Jesus' body and bury it. So Jesus was buried in a newly cut tomb in which no corpse had yet lain. When having this done, this rich man Joseph did not realize that he was having a part in the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9 that Jehovah's "Servant" would make his burial place "with the rich class in his death."—John 19:38-42; Matthew 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53.

[32] This burial of Jesus the Messiah "with the rich class" did not take away the stigma of his dying with wicked ones and being buried as a wicked one. The enemy Jews found out where Jesus' body was buried, and they had Governor Pilate seal the tombstone and allow a soldier guard to be posted at the tomb, because they rated Jesus as a wicked impostor. They feared that Jesus' disciples would otherwise steal his body and then say that he had been resurrected, and thus "this last imposture will be worse than the first." Although on the third day the soldier guard reported that it was a glorious angel from heaven that broke the governor's seal and rolled away the tombstone, the chief priests and the elders bribed the soldier guards to tell people that Jesus' disciples had performed this "last imposture" and were worse impostors than Jesus himself was.—Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15.

[33] All this humiliation of Jesus the Messiah took

32. Even after Jesus' death, how did the enemy Jews show that they rated Jesus as a wicked impostor?

33, 34. (a) Why did Jehovah permit all this humiliation of his "Servant"? (b) How did the prophecy at Isaiah 53:10 indicate that the Messiah's maintaining of integrity would not be in vain?

place at the hands of his enemies although, as Isaiah 53:9 foretold, "he had done no violence and there was no deception in his mouth." Why did the Almighty God permit this? It was because the challenge that Satan the Devil had raised involving even Jehovah's "Servant" had to be stifled forever. His "Servant" had to be tested right here on earth and shown to be unswervingly loyal to Jehovah's universal sovereignty regardless of all the suffering and humiliation that Satan the Devil would be allowed to bring upon the "Servant." The maintaining of godly integrity under this unparalleled testing of Jehovah's "Servant" would not be in vain or without a satisfying reward. Hence, Isaiah 53:10 says:

34 "But Jehovah himself took delight in crushing him; he made him sick. If you will set his soul as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and in his hand what is the delight of Jehovah will succeed."

THE REWARD FOR TESTED INTEGRITY

35 Jehovah God did not personally and directly 'crush' his Messianic "Servant." He did not directly make him "sick," to all appearances, figuratively speaking. More than four millenniums earlier, at the Garden of Eden, Jehovah had said to the serpent in the hearing of the invisible one who had manipulated that serpent: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Genesis 3:15) In fulfillment of that prophecy, Jehovah had to permit the Great Serpent, Satan the Devil, to bruise the Messianic "Servant" in the heel, even to the death. He was perfectly pleased in having the Great Serpent do this. In the sense that He *allowed* it according to his purpose, Jehovah "made him sick," even to the death. The thing that was proved

35. (a) In what sense did Jehovah 'crush' his "Servant" and 'make him sick'? (b) Actually, in what was it that "Jehovah himself took delight"?

under the crushing and the mortal sickness was what delighted Jehovah God, namely, Jesus' integrity.

36 In the light of what Isaiah chapter fifty-three says about Jehovah's "Servant," this one provides a "guilt offering" for others. Says the American *Revised Standard Version:* "When he makes himself [marginal reading: "Hebrew, *thou makest his soul"*] an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand." (Isaiah 53:10b) In saying, "If you will set his soul as a guilt offering," as the Hebrew reads, the person thus spoken to would have to be Jehovah God, inasmuch as to Him the typical guilt offerings were offered by ancient Israel and to him also the antitypical guilt offering is offered by Jesus Christ for all mankind. (Hebrews 9:24 through 10:14) Jehovah is the One who determines the value of a sacrifice, as to whether it meets the requirements for freeing sinners from their guilt and its consequences.

37 That the acceptable guilt offering might be presented to Him in the heavens, Jehovah raised his "Servant" from the dead on the third day. Since he laid down his human soul as a guilt offering, the Messianic "Servant" was prevented from being raised to life again as a human soul with a body of flesh and blood and bones. So the Almighty God resurrected him as a spirit person, but still in possession of the merit or value of his perfect human sacrifice. So, when Jesus the Messiah ascended finally to heaven and entered into the presence of his heavenly Father, he did not enter empty-handed. He had in hand that which corresponded with the blood of animal victims on the Jewish Day of Atonement, namely, the merit of his sacrificed human life as a guilt offering. This is what he presented on the great antitypical Day of Atonement, and Jehovah accepted it in behalf of all mankind.

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36. Why must it be Jehovah who, as the scripture says, "will set . . . as a guilt offering" the soul of his "Servant"?
37. In fulfillment of what was foreshadowed on the Jewish Day of Atonement, how did Jesus present an acceptable guilt offering to God?

OFFSPRING

[38] As far as Isaiah chapter fifty-three shows, the Messianic "Servant" would die without offspring. That is the way that Jesus Christ died, childless, unmarried. In contrast with the first Adam, who sinned and forfeited life for his offspring, it is written concerning Jesus the Messiah: "The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." (1 Corinthians 15:45) By means of his guilt offering he could purchase back from sin and death all the offspring of Adam and Eve and could restore life to them, perfect life free from divine condemnation. Will the "life-giving spirit," Jesus the Messiah, do this wonderful thing? Yes, and that is the significance of the words of Isaiah 53:10: "If you will set his soul as a guilt offering, he will see his offspring, he will prolong his days, and in his hand what is the delight of Jehovah will succeed." This promises "offspring" to the "Servant."

[39] Parallel to that promise of offspring is the one made to the Messianic King in these words in the prophetic psalm: "In place of your forefathers there will come to be your sons, whom you will appoint as princes in all the earth." (Psalm 45:16) And as for the associated promise in Isaiah 53:10, "he will prolong his days," this would mean that Jehovah's resurrected "Servant" would be a father of offspring for a long time. For how long? Everlastingly, according to the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6 with respect to the Messianic descendant of King David. There we read: "There has been a child born to us, there has been a son given to us; and the princely rule will come to be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace." So this Messianic King would have children, but not to become his successors in office,

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38. By what means does Jesus the Messiah come to have "offspring," as referred to at Isaiah 53:10?
39. What other scriptures indicate that the Messianic King would have offspring?

for he would be an Eternal Father, one giving eternal life to children.

40 This resurrected "Servant" of Jehovah would not only be successful in restoring the purchased, adopted offspring of the first Adam to life for eternity but also be successful in all other things that Jehovah would entrust to his hand of control. The Messianic "Servant" will be careful to carry out conscientiously "what is the delight of Jehovah." So under God's assured blessing, what the "Servant" puts his hand to will succeed, for the glory of Jehovah and for the benefit of all others concerned.

"SATISFIED" AFTER THE TROUBLE OF HIS SOUL

41 A joyous prospect was set before the Messianic "Servant." After all the trouble that he would go through as a human soul, he was to be satisfied with what he would see realized. He would have no grounds for being resentful over all that he had been permitted to suffer on earth. The prospect set out in Isaiah 53:11 was: "Because of the trouble of his soul he will see, he will be satisfied. By means of his knowledge the righteous one, my servant, will bring a righteous standing to many people; and their errors he himself will bear."

42 The most satisfying thing that this "Servant" of integrity would see was the vindication of the universal sovereignty of Jehovah God, his heavenly Father. The maintaining of his integrity to the Universal Sovereign under the most severe testing down here on earth provided his heavenly Father with a valid reply to Satan the Devil, who was taunting Jehovah God. Never again could this Adversary open his vile mouth in an attack upon the highest servant in the universal organization of Jehovah.—Proverbs 27:11.

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40. Why is it that "the delight of Jehovah will succeed" in the hand of the Messianic "Servant"?
41. After all the trouble that he experienced as a human soul, how would Jehovah's "Servant" feel, as foretold at Isaiah 53:11?
42. What would be particularly satisfying to this "Servant"?

43 Associated with the vindication of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah would be the giving of a righteous standing to many here on earth who had inherited unrighteousness and condemnation from sinner Adam. (Romans 5:12) The "knowledge" by means of which he brings this about is evidently an acquired knowledge. This was the knowledge that he acquired by becoming a man on earth and suffering unjustly in contact with sick and sinful mankind. He became a "man meant for pains and for having acquaintance with sickness." (Isaiah 53:3) His "knowledge" here denotes or implies suffering under a test of integrity down to the bitter death. What he had not known in his prehuman life up in heaven, namely, painful suffering for his faithfulness to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, he got to experience and really know down here on earth during the time that Satan the Devil is "the god of this system of things," "the ruler of this world." (2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31) By getting to know suffering to the death in this personal experience he was able to provide the atoning sacrifice for making many righteous.

44 This righteousness or righteous standing before God comes first to the 144,000 joint heirs of Jesus Christ, in an imputed way. To such ones as these the apostle Paul wrote, in 2 Corinthians 5:21, saying: "The one who did not know sin he made to be sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness by means of him." Also, in Romans 5:19: "For just as through the disobedience of the one man many were constituted sinners, likewise also through the obedience of the one person many will be constituted righteous." In due time the righteous standing will come to the children of the Eternal Father, Jesus Christ. During his reign over the earth for a thousand years he will uplift his earthly "offspring" to a righteous standing in perfection, that they may prove themselves loyal

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43. By means of what "knowledge" would the Messiah bring a righteous standing to many who had inherited sin from Adam, and how so?
44. To whom does this "righteous standing" come, and when?

and faithful to Jehovah's universal sovereignty in a perfect sense, to their gaining the gift of eternal life. —Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15.

45 In behalf of the many who will thus be brought to a righteous standing, the prophecy of Isaiah 53:11 is fulfilled: "And their errors he himself will bear." That is, he himself as the Messianic "Servant" of Jehovah would bear the penalty for their errors, and thereby relieve them of condemnation to death. How this was done, the apostle Peter describes, saying with reference to the "Servant" of Jehovah: "He himself bore our sins in his own body upon the stake, in order that we might be done with sins and live to righteousness. And 'by his stripes you were healed.' For you were like sheep, going astray; but now you have returned to the shepherd and overseer of your souls." (1 Peter 2:24, 25) How grateful we should be for what this Messianic "Servant" has done for us! How thankful we should be to Jehovah for providing such a "Servant" of integrity!—Romans 3:24-26.

"A PORTION AMONG THE MANY" FOR THE "SERVANT"

46 Prior to the coming of Jehovah's Messianic "Servant" there were "many" faithful servants of Jehovah who had remained faithful to the Sovereign Lord Jehovah and to whom Jehovah dealt an appropriate portion even during this life. Take, for instance, the cases of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, and Job. A portion is reserved for those many persons of godly integrity in Jehovah's coming new system of things under the kingdom of the Messianic "Servant" over all the earth. Those faithful worshipers of Jehovah were among the "many people" for whom His "Servant" carried the load of sin. Just as Jehovah showed appreciation in this way for the integrity maintained by those "many" loyal ones of earlier times, so he

45. Why do we have reason to be very grateful to Jehovah for providing such an integrity-keeping "Servant"?
46, 47. Explain the prophetic promise, "I shall deal him a portion among the many."

would consistently deal out a portion to his Messianic "Servant" among those "many" faithful ones of old. Hence, Isaiah 53:12 says:

47 "For that reason I shall deal him a portion among the many, and it will be with the mighty ones that he will apportion the spoil, due to the fact that he poured out his soul to the very death, and it was with the transgressors that he was counted in; and he himself carried the very sin of many people, and for the transgressors he proceeded to interpose."—*NW; Young; Leeser.*

48 Not only does the "Servant" receive from Jehovah a "portion among the many," but he also gains the spoils of war by a victory over his enemies and the enemies of the God to whom he is the principal servant. His apportioning of spoils with the "mighty ones" indicates that he himself is also "mighty." Who, now, are these "mighty ones"? The mighty ones with whom he apportions the spoils are those who participate in the warfare with him. (Isaiah 60:22) The "mighty ones" do not appear to be the heavenly angels with whom the Messianic "Servant" will fight the coming war at Har-Magedon against the enemies of Jehovah God. (Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:11-14) Rather, the "mighty ones" are those who share in the same kind of warfare that the "Servant" fought here at the earth. Isaiah 53:12 ties in his apportioning the spoil with others because of what he did at the earth down to the time that he was cut off from the earth, "from the land of the living ones."—Isaiah 53:8.

49 On Passover night of the year 33 C.E., shortly before Jesus was arrested and brought to trial and sentenced to death, he said to his faithful apostles: "In the world you are having tribulation, but take courage! I have conquered the world." (John 16:33) Also, with evident reference to a victory procession, the apostle

48. Who are the "mighty ones" with whom Jehovah's "Servant" apportions spoils, and as a result of warfare fought where?
49. What do the Scriptures say as to victories enjoyed by Jesus and his followers here on earth?

Paul writes, in 2 Corinthians 2:14: "Thanks be to God who always leads us in a triumphal procession in company with the Christ and makes the odor of the knowledge of him perceptible through us in every place!" Further, in speaking of what God did through Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul writes: "He has taken it [the handwritten document against us] out of the way by nailing it to the torture stake. Stripping the governments and the authorities bare, he exhibited them in open public as conquered, leading them in a triumphal procession by means of it."—Colossians 2:14, 15.

50 Since, therefore, the reference of Isaiah 53:12 is obviously to a spiritual warfare that the Messianic "Servant" had to fight, what is the "spoil" that he apportions with the 144,000 "mighty ones" of his congregation? Scripturally, it would be the "gifts in men," "gifts in the form of men," that he bestowed upon his congregation from Pentecost of 33 C.E. forward. With reference to the warlike sixty-eighth Psalm, and quoting verse eighteen, the apostle Paul writes with regard to Jesus Christ:

51 "Wherefore he says: 'When he ascended on high he carried away captives; he gave gifts in men.' Now the expression 'he ascended,' what does it mean but that he also descended into the lower regions, that is, the earth? The very one that descended is also the one that ascended far above all the heavens, that he might give fullness to all things. And he gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelizers, some as shepherds and teachers, with a view to the readjustment of the holy ones, for ministerial work, for the building up of the body of the Christ."—Ephesians 4:8-12.

52 These "gifts in men" were among the captives that he led away as a result of his giving his human soul as

50, 51. Since the warfare is spiritual, what is the "spoil" that Jesus apportions with his congregation?
52, 53. (a) How do Christ's joint heirs prove to be "mighty ones"? (b) As referred to at Isaiah 53:12, what is a "spoil" that they seize from the enemy, and why so?

a ransom for the condemned world of mankind. (Matthew 20:28; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6) Such "gifts in men," the resurrected, ascended Jesus Christ bestows upon his congregation of 144,000 anointed joint heirs, to strengthen them all to fight a triumphant warfare against this world and its god and thereby to share with Jesus in vindicating the universal sovereignty of Jehovah God. To them he says, in Revelation 3:21: "To the one that conquers I will grant to sit down with me on my throne, even as I conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne." By reason of their conquest over the wicked world and its god they prove themselves to be "mighty ones," and the Messianic "Servant" of Jehovah apportions also to them a share in the Kingdom privileges. What they have wrested from the conquered enemy is the enemy's basis for taunting Jehovah with regard to the unselfishness of the devotion of Jehovah's worshipers to his universal sovereignty.—Proverbs 27:11.

53 This sharing in the vindication of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah with Jesus Christ the "Servant" is a precious "spoil" in which the 144,000 conquerors are given a portion. This, of course, does not mean that they will not share the glorious spoils of victory that Jehovah's "Servant" gains in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon. (Revelation 19:11-21; 2:26, 27) However, this is not what is particularly dealt with in Isaiah 53:12, which refers plainly to a propitiatory or intercessory work on the part of Jehovah's Messianic "Servant."

54 Why is it that the "Servant" is rewarded in this exalted way? The verse answers: "Due to the fact that he poured out his soul to the very death, and it was with the transgressors that he was counted in; and he himself carried the very sin of many people, and for the transgressors he proceeded to interpose."

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54. According to the explanation recorded by Isaiah, why is the "Servant" rewarded in this way?

55 In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus said to his faithful apostles before his arrest there: "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death." (Matthew 26:38) Nevertheless, he bared his human soul to death, and held fast to the purpose of his becoming a human soul: "The Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many." He gave his human soul in an exchange by dying as a man. (Matthew 20:28) He emptied himself, pouring out his soul to death itself. This enabled Jehovah God to "set his soul as a guilt offering," that a righteous standing might be given to those accepting the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ.—Isaiah 53:10, 11.

56 Jesus Christ recognized himself as being the "Servant" foretold in Isaiah, chapter fifty-three. He admitted that he was the "Servant," when he said to his faithful apostles on the Passover night of his betrayal and arrest: "But now let the one that has a purse take it up, likewise also a food pouch; and let the one having no sword sell his outer garment and buy one. For I tell you that this which is written must be accomplished in me, namely, 'And he was reckoned with lawless ones.' For that which concerns me is having an accomplishment." (Luke 22:36, 37) So it was that, later that night, when the mob came to the garden to arrest him, they came armed with clubs and swords as if to apprehend a lawless man, a transgressor, a robber. (Mark 14:48, 49) That was a secret action by the mob, under cover of night. But later, during the daylight hours, Jesus was publicly exposed as being counted in among the transgressors by being impaled as a lawbreaker, and, to intensify this reckoning of him among the transgressors, "they impaled two robbers with him, one on his right and one on his

55. With what objective in view did Jesus 'pour out his soul to the very death'?

56, 57. (a) Was Jesus aware that he was fulfilling what was foretold in Isaiah chapter 53 concerning Jehovah's "Servant"? (b) By whom was he counted in "with the transgressors," and why did he endure such humiliation?

left." (Mark 15:27) But Jesus endured this humiliation of himself, that Jehovah's Word might be vindicated as true and infallible and that for the transgression of his own people he might have the stroke of the penalty. —Isaiah 53:8.

57 The fact that Jehovah God rewarded and highly exalted his Messianic "Servant" proves that He himself did not count this "Servant" in with the transgressors. He merely foretold that the world would classify the Messianic "Servant" in that way. Yet Jesus Christ endured such a humiliation, which would be hard for a faithful servant of God to bear, seemingly to the reproach of his God and to the credit of the one taunting God. But Jesus drank such a cup of public humiliation, that he might prove himself to be merciful toward condemned and dying mankind. This is the very thing that Isaiah 53:12 calls to our attention in saying: "And he himself carried the very sin of many people, and for the transgressors he proceeded to interpose."—Compare Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15.

58 He himself interposed and carried the very sin of the many transgressors, in order that the mercy of Jehovah God himself might be extended to all mankind. In sending his Messianic "Servant" and letting him endure all this suffering and humiliation to the very death, Jehovah was displaying his own boundless mercy toward us transgressors. The whole idea of mercy toward condemned mankind originated with Jehovah God. His mercy was so great that he did not spare even his most loved heavenly Son in this behalf. (Romans 8:31, 32) He did not desire his purpose for extending mercy to fail because of his depending upon an agent of whom he could not be absolutely sure. He did have the highest confidence in his only-begotten Son, that this Son would not fail Him under any and

58. (a) Whose mercy outstandingly was thus being displayed toward human transgressors, and to what extent? (b) Why was it his only-begotten Son that he chose to fulfill the role of his "Servant"?

all circumstances, and so he chose this Son to fulfill the role of "My Servant." (Isaiah 52:13; 53:11) In putting this Son through the severe discipline that was prescribed for this "Servant," God showed that he loved him most dearly.—Hebrews 12:3-6.

59 All thanks to Jehovah God for raising up such a dependable "Servant," by means of whom His own love and mercy are magnified. This action was indeed a display of His own philanthropy; just as it is written: "When the kindness and the love for man on the part of our Savior, God, was manifested, owing to no works in righteousness that we had performed, but according to his mercy he saved us through the bath that brought us to life and through the making of us new by holy spirit. This spirit he poured out richly upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior."—Titus 3:4-6.

60 We rejoice that the tested integrity of the faithful "Servant," Jesus Christ, has been so worthily rewarded, with higher rank and greater responsibility in Jehovah's universal organization. As an illustration of this in advance, for unbreakably maintaining his integrity the patient Job of ancient times was rewarded with double the amount he had had before his severe test. (Job 42:10) Vastly more was involved in the testing of Jesus Christ on earth and in the keeping of his integrity, and properly his reward was far greater. Just as certainly as he was faithful under so severe a test of his integrity when on earth, he will be fully faithful in the discharge of his grander responsibilities now at this critical time and in all the future.—Luke 16:10.

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59. To whom do the Scriptures ascribe this marvelous expression of "love for man"?

60. (a) Though Job was richly rewarded for maintaining his integrity, why was Jesus Christ given a far greater reward? (b) Of what does Jesus' faithfulness under test when on earth give assurance for the future?

CHAPTER 6

The Promise of a Spiritual Paradise

THE Messianic Servant of Jehovah God plays a very important role in our gaining a paradise. Even on that sad day nineteen hundred years ago, when Jesus Christ was being counted in with the transgressors in fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12, he had Paradise in mind for mankind. When one of the two robbers, who were impaled on each side of him, said to him, "Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom," he answered: "Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43; Mark 15:25-27) Sixty-three years later, when speaking to the Christian congregation in Ephesus, Asia Minor, the resurrected Jesus said: "To him that conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:7) Since these promises were made to different kinds of persons, the first to a non-Christian and the second to a victorious Christian, two different paradises must here be meant, the first an earthly one, the second a heavenly one. Jehovah's "Servant" has to do with both.

[2] Each of those paradises was future at the time of Jesus' mention of them. Also, they were to be enjoyed only after the death of the individual and his resurrection from the dead in God's due time. But there is a paradise that is being enjoyed by those who are now living on the earth. Since mankind's

1. (a) What shows that, even when he was facing death, Jesus had Paradise in mind for mankind? (b) Years later, to the Ephesus congregation, what did Jesus say about Paradise? (c) Were both of these references to the same paradise?
2. What kind of paradise, foretold by Isaiah, can be enjoyed today, without one's experiencing physical death and resurrection?

earthly environment is more and more being polluted and the surface of the earth is no paradise today, the paradise at present being enjoyed on earth by true Christian worshipers of Jehovah must be a figurative one, a spiritual paradise. The prophecy of Isaiah with reference to Jehovah's Messianic Servant foretold the establishment of this spiritual paradise for faithful worshipers of Jehovah.

[3] According to Isaiah's prophecy, the Messianic Servant has to do with the bringing of the spiritual paradise on earth. Before performing his role on earth as prophesied in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, he was a member of Jehovah's heavenly organization of faithful "sons of God." (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Daniel 3:25) That heavenly spirit organization acts the role of a "wife" who is married to Jehovah the Creator, just as the ancient nation of Israel, when taken into the Law covenant with him through the mediator Moses, was as married to Jehovah and was pictured as an earthly wife of His. So He plays the role of Husband in this heavenly union. (Isaiah 54:5; 50:1; Jeremiah 31:31-34) Since the heavenly "sons of God" were looked upon as being the children of God's heavenly organization because of being members of it, the heavenly organization was viewed as their mother, the wife of their heavenly Father. So the Servant mentioned in Isaiah 53:11 is one of her sons.

[4] Jehovah selected his principal heavenly son to serve as the Messianic Servant on earth. (Isaiah 52:13; 53:11) So Jehovah's motherly organization in heaven furnished this one to be the prime vindicator of her Husband's universal sovereignty. After this one when on earth was baptized in the Jordan River at the hands of John the Baptist, her Husband, Jehovah, poured out

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3. (a) Who that was foretold by Isaiah was to have an important role in producing the spiritual paradise on earth? (b) As a 'son of God,' what was his relationship to the heavenly organization as a whole?

4. (a) How did Jehovah's motherly organization in heaven bring forth the promised Messiah? (b) What must have been the reaction in heaven when Jesus was anointed, and later when he was raised from the dead?

His holy spirit upon the baptized Jesus, making him the anointed one, the Christ. In this manner the promised Messiah or Christ was brought forth. What an unspeakable joy that must have been to the heavenly Mother as well as to her Husband! If the angelic sons of God rejoiced at the birth of the babe Jesus in Bethlehem-Judah, they must have had still more joy when he thus became the promised Christ, the Messianic Servant of their God Jehovah. (Luke 2:10, 13, 14; Matthew 3:13-17; John 16:21) When his life was taken away from the earth and he was resurrected from the dead, the motherly organization in heaven received him back as the "firstborn from the dead" and rejoiced to have him once again among her heavenly sons. (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5, 17, 18) Her joy was foretold!

5 "'Cry out joyfully,'" says Isaiah 54:1, "'you barren woman that did not give birth! Become cheerful with a joyful outcry and cry shrilly, you that had no childbirth pains, for the sons of the desolated one are more numerous than the sons of the woman with a husbandly owner,' Jehovah has said."

6 This inspired scripture is applied by the Christian apostle Paul, not to the Jewish nation after its exile in Babylon, but to Jehovah's wifely organization in heaven. According to Isaiah's prophecy, God's heavenly organization was to have more children than the Messiah Jesus, for whom she had long waited as if in barrenness. She was therefore to become the spiritual mother of the 144,000 associates of the Messiah Jesus. He was to be the Firstborn among these further spiritual sons of hers. Her joy would start when she brought forth or produced the firstborn, the Messiah Jesus, but she would continue on bringing forth all the Kingdom joint heirs of the Messiah Jesus. The apostle Paul was one of these prospective joint heirs of Christ,

5, 6. (a) At Isaiah 54:1, what reason was given for joy on the part of this heavenly "woman"? (b) Of how many "sons" was she to become the spiritual mother?

and he is the one that made the application of Isaiah 54:1 under inspiration.

7 Contrasting the Jewish nation that had been married to Jehovah God by the Mosaic Law covenant (but that had rejected Jesus Christ) with God's heavenly wifely organization, the apostle Paul writes: "For example, it is written that Abraham acquired two sons, one by the servant girl [Hagar the Egyptian] and one by the free woman [Sarah his wife]; but the one [named Ishmael] by the servant girl was actually born in the manner of flesh [before Abraham had become impotent], the other [named Isaac] by the free woman through a promise [from God]. These things stand as a symbolic drama; for these women [Hagar and Sarah] mean two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai [through Moses], which brings forth children for slavery, and which is Hagar [the slave girl]. Now this Hagar means Sinai, a mountain in Arabia, and she corresponds with the Jerusalem today, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

8 "For it is written [in Isaiah 54:1]: 'Be glad, you barren woman [the Jerusalem above] who does not give birth; break out and cry aloud, you woman who does not have childbirth pains; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than those of her who has the husband.' Now we, brothers, are children belonging to the promise the same as Isaac was. But just as then the one [Ishmael] born in the manner of flesh began persecuting the one [Isaac] born in the manner of spirit, so also now. Nevertheless, what does the Scripture say? 'Drive out the servant girl and her son, for by no means shall the son of the servant girl be an heir with the son of the free woman.' Wherefore, brothers, we are children, not of a servant girl, but of the free woman.

7-9. In contrasting the Jewish nation with God's heavenly organization, what application does the apostle Paul make of Isaiah 54:1?

9 "For such freedom Christ set us free."—Galatians 4:22 through 5:1.

10 That the "Jerusalem above," of which her Grand Maker Jehovah is the "husbandly owner," was to have many more spiritual children than the Messiah Jesus, her firstborn, is why in Isaiah 54:13 it is said to her: "And all your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant."

11 Jesus Christ applied that scripture to his own disciples, when he said to the Jews: "It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by Jehovah.' Everyone that has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me." (John 6:45) It was the Father's purpose that Jesus should become "the firstborn among many brothers." (Romans 8:29) The "Jerusalem above" is the heavenly mother also of all these spiritual brothers of Jesus Christ. With good reason, then, her "husbandly owner," Jehovah, calls out to her, rather than to the earthly Jerusalem that rejected the Messiah, to "cry out joyfully" and "become cheerful with a joyful outcry" because of finally becoming mother to so many spiritual sons together with the Messiah Jesus.—Isaiah 54:1.

12 To these spiritual sons the assurance of divine protection and preservation belongs as expressed in these words to the "Jerusalem above": " 'Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success, and any tongue at all that will rise up against you in the judgment you will condemn. This is the hereditary possession of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness is from me,' is the utterance of Jehovah." With such a strong encouragement the fifty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, addressed to "Jerusalem above," closes.—Isaiah 54:17.

10, 11. (a) How does Isaiah 54:13 show that the "Jerusalem above" would have more spiritual children than just Jesus? (b) To whom did Jesus Christ apply that scripture?
12. With what strong encouragement to these spiritual sons does Isaiah chapter 54 conclude?

AN INVITATION TO DRINK AND EAT WHAT IS WORTH WHILE

13 In the light of all the good things that are to follow from the fulfillment of that beautiful prophecy, a fitting invitation is called out for all to hear: "Hey there, all you thirsty ones! Come to the water. And the ones that have no money! Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk even without money and without price. Why do you people keep paying out money for what is not bread, and why is your toil for what results in no satisfaction? Listen intently to me, and eat what is good, and let your soul find its exquisite delight in fatness itself. Incline your ear and come to me. Listen, and your soul will keep alive, and I shall readily conclude with you people an indefinitely lasting covenant respecting the loving-kindnesses to David that are faithful. Look! As a witness to the national groups I have given him, as a leader and commander to the national groups."—Isaiah 55:1-4.

14 Who alone but Jehovah God the Source of all life could issue such a marvelous invitation and promise? It involves his Messianic Servant, whom he gives as a "leader and commander to the national groups." Those national groups should become interested in the divine invitation. But, first of all, the invitation is directed to Jehovah's people who are in a covenant with him but who find themselves in unsatisfying circumstances. Why? Because they are toiling and buying and eating and drinking, but continuing to die hopeless. We get the clue to the situation when we recall that the prophet Isaiah foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, the desolating of the land of Judah, and the exile of the Jews in the pagan land of Babylon. The desolation of the land while its native inhabitants were in exile was to last for seventy years, from 607 to 537 before our Common Era.

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13. With what appealing invitation does the next chapter of Isaiah begin?
14. (a) From whom does that invitation come? (b) To whom is it directed, and why?

15 Babylon, with its false gods and worship, its imperialism and commercialism, offered the exiled Jews nothing. It offered no hope of release with an opportunity to resume the worship of the true and living God in their homeland: "Is this the man [the king of Babylon] that . . . did not open the way homeward even for his prisoners?" (Isaiah 14:16, 17) Who could break the grip of this World Power, Babylon, and let its Jewish prisoners go free, to return to their homeland and the renewed worship of Jehovah at a rebuilt temple in a restored Jerusalem? This God himself could do so, and he had a servant whom he could use to that end. That earthly servant was Cyrus the Persian, whose very name Jehovah foretold long before his birth. (Isaiah 44:28 through 45:6) This ancient Persian conqueror of Babylon was not merely a historic figure but also a prophetic type of Jehovah's Messianic Servant, whom He would use to overthrow and destroy modern Babylon the Great, namely, the world empire of false religion.

16 Water, bread, wine and milk are available on which to feed and refresh oneself, even for those who do not have the money with which to pay for what they eat and drink! So says Jehovah God. Of course, he is not speaking about such things in a literal way. He speaks of what corresponds to these things, to keep a person spiritually alive with that which will result in real life, everlasting life with a real zest for living and a purpose for living. Anciently, the vital thing was the provisions made by Jehovah God for the deliverance of his exiled people from Babylon and for their restoration to their God-given homeland. First in order, there was the message of liberation on which to feed an exile's hope. Then there was the decree of Jehovah God by means of his earthly servant, upon which decree of liberation action must

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15. Jehovah had foretold that he would provide release for the Jewish people by means of whom, and why is his role of special interest to us?
16. Anciently, what were the things that, in a spiritual sense, were like food and drink for the exiled Jews?

be taken. Then when the action was taken there would be the return to the homeland and the realization of the glorious divine prophecies in their reoccupied beloved land. The joy to be experienced would be like that from drinking the best of wines.—Psalm 104:15.

17 Today, billions of earth's inhabitants find themselves under religious, moral, intellectual and social oppressions of Babylon the Great, not just in so-called pagandom but equally as much in Christendom. They are paying money for their religion, according to the commercializing of religion by their many sects and cults. Their religions have not separated them from this world, but have encouraged and approved of their being an active part of this world. Their religions have not turned them away from putting their reliance upon men and man-made institutions. Even the people of Christendom have no outlook except to depend further upon men to work out world problems and bring relief. They are, in effect, modern-day Babylonians, and what they feed upon religiously does not really satisfy or bring true relief.

18 Back in the sixth century B.C.E. those who should not have been the "prisoners" of ancient Babylon were those who were in the Mosaic Law covenant with Jehovah God. If they had lovingly carried out their covenant obligations to Him, they would not have been exiles in heathen Babylonia, far away from their desolated homeland. Today, Jehovah still has a people in relationship with Him by a national covenant. Of this covenant, Jehovah's Messianic Servant is the Mediator, one greater than the prophet Moses. Theirs is the covenant that replaced the Mosaic Law covenant in the year 33 C.E. It is the new covenant, as foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34. When setting up the Lord's Supper in remembrance of his sacrificial death, Jesus

17. Who are, in effect, modern-day Babylonians, and on what do they feed?
18. (a) By means of what covenant does Jehovah have a people in relationship with him today? (b) Who are the people that stick faithfully to this new covenant?

Christ spoke of his blood as providing the means to seal and validate that new covenant. (Matthew 26:26-30; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 11:20-26) Obediently Jehovah's Christian witnesses celebrate this Lord's Supper each year on its anniversary date. They stick faithfully to Jehovah's new covenant.

19 All of Babylon the Great as a world empire of false religion has unceasingly opposed Jehovah's Christian witnesses. During the course of World War I in 1914-1918 C.E., she really got them in her power by means of her worldly, secular paramours. By means of political, military and judicial authorities Babylon the Great brought upon these worshipers of Jehovah all manner of persecution, including bans upon their religious literature by means of which they studied the Holy Bible. Their organization for openly spreading the good news of the Bible was badly crippled, particularly when members of the governing body of Jehovah's visible organization were imprisoned under charges that, after the war, were reversed and thrown out of court. The prospects for a change in the situation were very dim, and the worst was awaited with feelings of resignation and submission to Jehovah's will. Providentially, the official magazine, *The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, continued to be published semimonthly, for the spiritual upbuilding of those to whom it was available, despite wartime conditions.

20 However, suddenly, there came an end to World War I. It did not lead on, as Bible students expected, into world revolution and anarchy or the battle of Armageddon. And the sincere worshipers of Jehovah, who were in the new covenant with him through his Mediator Jesus Christ, found themselves still in the flesh on the earth. But still in captivity to Babylon the Great and her political, military, judicial paramours!

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19. By what means did Babylon the Great get Jehovah's Christian witnesses in her power during the course of World War I, and how did the prospects for them appear?

20, 21. How did the circumstances of Jehovah's worshipers on earth make the time after World War I an appropriate one for a modern-day application of Isaiah 55:1, 2?

An unexpected postwar period opened before them, with possibilities for renewing and carrying forward the proclamation of the good news of God's Word. Here, now, was a most appropriate time for the God whom they worshiped in spite of all the opposition and oppression by Babylon the Great to do something in their behalf and for His own name's sake. Here was the due time for the modern equivalent of Isaiah's life-renewing message to be sent forth:

21 "Hey there, all you thirsty ones! Come to the water. And the ones that have no money! Come, buy [grain] and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk even without money and without price. Why do you people keep paying out money for what is not bread, and why is your toil for what results in no satisfaction? Listen intently to me, and eat what is good, and let your soul find its exquisite delight in fatness itself." —Isaiah 55:1, 2.

22 Such a message did come from Jehovah God, through his Messianic Servant, Jesus Christ. It was meant to lift His people out of their depressed, negative state of mind and to infuse life and hope into them. What, then, would be like water, to quench their raging thirst for truth and righteousness? Like bread, to feed and strengthen their heartfelt devotion to God? Like wine, to make their hearts rejoice with health-giving joy? Like milk, to fatten and enrich their state of well-being in relationship with the one living and true God? (Psalm 104:15) It was the Scriptural message of deliverance from Babylon the Great by means of the established Messianic kingdom of God! It was the message of their liberation from the slavish bondage to this world, which is the "friend" of Babylon the Great, in order for them to fight for freedom of worship and to proclaim world wide the good news of God's kingdom for the blessing of all distressed humanity.

22. What was it that then proved to be like water, bread, wine and milk to Jehovah's modern-day people?

[23] The oppressed worshipers of Jehovah God did not have to pay for this message of liberation! They did not have to buy their way out of captivity and bondage to Babylon the Great! The message was offered to them freely to accept, and they must act upon it with courage and conviction! Then it would be like refreshing water, strengthening bread, joy-giving wine and fattening milk. "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—John 8:32.

[24] A concrete symbol of this liberation came in the spring of 1919, the first postwar year, with the release of the members of the governing body of Jehovah's Christian worshipers from imprisonment in the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A. Shortly afterward the federal charges against these accused Christians were reversed, and later thrown out of court. Thus the members of the governing body of Jehovah's Christian worshipers were relieved of the false charges of being lawless citizens, dangerous to the security of the country. Now, in appreciation of Christian freedom that comes from Jehovah through Jesus Christ his Servant, a more advanced study of His Holy Scriptures was made to ascertain what was the divine will for His people in this unexpected postwar period.

[25] Bible study left no uncertainty regarding the divine will. It pointed unerringly to the Kingdom work that was ahead for the worshipers of Jehovah that had survived the persecutions and hard times of World War I. So, in order to infuse courage into their hearts, the leading article entitled "Blessed Are the Fearless," in two parts, appeared in the issues of August 1 and 15, 1919, of *The Watch Tower*. This theme was the keynote of the General Convention of these worshipers for eight days, September 1-8, at Cedar Point,

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23. How did it prove true that this provision was made available "without money and without price"?
24. In the spring of 1919, what evidence of the liberation was there?
25. (a) To infuse God's servants with courage, what was done in 1919? (b) Of what was announcement of the release of the magazine *The Golden Age* a sign?

Ohio. As a sign that there was more spiritual food in store for them and also more and greater work ahead, a thrilling announcement was made to the 6,000 conventioners by the president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society on September 5, 1919. To what effect? That the Society was going to publish another magazine besides *The Watch Tower*. This new biweekly magazine was to be called "The Golden Age" and would be complementary to the official magazine of Jehovah's Christian worshipers. It too was meant to announce God's kingdom.

[26] Showing the then-existing background in front of which this new magazine made its debut on October 1, 1919, the salutation in the opening issue said, in part:

> Its purpose is to explain in the light of Divine wisdom the true meaning of the great phenomena of the present day and to prove to thinking minds by evidence incontrovertible and convincing that the time of a greater blessing of mankind is now at hand. Like a voice in the wilderness of confusion, its mission is to announce the incoming of the Golden Age.
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> There are more sad hearts in the world to-day than at any time of its history. A devastating war has afflicted the nations until they are torn and bleeding to death. Accompanying the war came the great pestilential influenza, claiming double the number of victims that fell as a result of the war. In the past few years, millions have gone down into death and other millions bemoan the loss of their loved ones.
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> Everywhere the cost of living mounts higher and higher and conditions of real want and famine stare many people in the face. In practically all the trades of the world the laborers are on strike or threatening to strike and thereby stop the wheels of commerce. There is a general unrest everywhere.
>
> The financiers are no less in perplexity. . . .
>
> THE GOLDEN AGE will carry into the homes of the people the desired message which will tend to restore calmness to the disturbed minds and comfort to the saddened hearts. We do not expect to accomplish this by human wisdom, because that has been tried and failed and such

26. As stated in its first issue, for what reason was *The Golden Age* published?

wisdom is foolishness in the sight of Jehovah. But we will point the people to the clear and indisputable evidence in the light of present-day events, disclosing the divinely expressed remedy for the reconstruction of human affairs that will bring the desire of all nations, assuring to the people life, liberty and happiness. We invite all order-loving, law-abiding, God-fearing persons to aid in passing this message of comfort on to those who desire to be comforted.

27 Here, then, was a brand-new magazine pointing fearlessly forward to the restoration of paradise to this earth and the making of it earth wide for the enjoyment of all people of whatever race, color or national extraction. However, before this literal earthly paradise is introduced to mankind by God's Messianic kingdom, there must be established a *spiritual* paradise among Jehovah's Christian worshipers now restored to his favor. This was why, after extending the invitation to partake of God's life-giving provisions, the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah said:

28 "Incline your ear and come to me. Listen, and your soul will keep alive, and I shall readily conclude with you people an indefinitely lasting covenant respecting the loving-kindnesses to David that are faithful. Look! As a witness to the national groups I have given him, as a leader and commander to the national groups."—Isaiah 55:3, 4.

THE EVERLASTING KINGDOM COVENANT

29 Those who inclined their ear and came to Jehovah in the postwar year of 1919 C.E. would have their spiritual life renewed and sustained by the spiritual provisions that Jehovah now invited his people to partake of and enjoy. Their soul would keep alive with spiritual health. The channel for all these restoration blessings for his faithful Christian worshipers

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27, 28. To what grand hope did this magazine point, but what must come first?

29. (a) What would be the effect on those who inclined their ear and came to Jehovah, in response to the invitation found at Isaiah 55:3, 4? (b) What connection is there between these blessings and "the loving-kindnesses to David that are faithful"?

would be the Messianic kingdom that had been born in the heavens in the year 1914 at the close of the "times of the Gentiles." (Luke 21:24, *AV;* Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32; Revelation 12:1-10) This was what was meant by Jehovah's promise to conclude with the Kingdom proclaimers the indefinitely lasting covenant "respecting the loving-kindnesses to David that are faithful." Those divine loving-kindnesses meant that the right to the kingdom would continue in the family line of King David of Jerusalem down to his most illustrious Descendant, the promised Messiah, and then the Messianic kingdom would belong to this One forever.

30 In being "faithful" those loving-kindnesses to David were lasting, firmly established. (2 Samuel 7:11-16) In confirmation of this, it was said, in Psalm 89:28, 29: "To time indefinite I shall preserve my loving-kindness toward him, and my covenant will be faithful to him. And I shall certainly set up his seed forever and his throne as the days of heaven." (Also, Jeremiah 33:19-21) Those divine loving-kindnesses as promised to King David did prove to be faithful, for they came to their culmination upon one who was to be an everlasting King, the Messiah. There is no room for question as to who this was, for the apostle Paul applied to Jesus Christ the promise of Isaiah 55:3.

31 Speaking in the Jewish synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia, Asia Minor, the apostle Paul said to his audience: "We are declaring to you the good news about the promise made to the forefathers, that God has entirely fulfilled it to us their children in that he resurrected Jesus; even as it is written in the second psalm, 'You are my son, I have become your Father this day.' And that fact that he resurrected him from the dead destined no more to return to corruption, he has stated in this way, 'I will give you people the loving-

30, 31. (a) How did those loving-kindnesses as promised to David prove to be "faithful"? (b) What application of the promise at Isaiah 55:3 did the apostle Paul make when speaking in Antioch of Pisidia?

kindnesses to David that are faithful.' Hence he also says in another psalm, 'You will not allow your loyal one to see corruption.' For David, on the one hand, served the express will of God in his own generation and fell asleep in death and was laid with his forefathers and did see corruption. On the other hand, he whom God raised up did not see corruption."—Acts 13:32-37.

32 So that Messianic kingdom which was established in the heavens in 1914 in the hands of the resurrected, incorruptible Jesus Christ has continued in operation down till now and will carry on for a thousand years to come for the blessing of mankind in an earthly paradise. Consequently, Jehovah God was not referring to the still-dead David when he went on to say, in Isaiah 55:4: "Look! As a witness to the national groups I have given him, as a leader and commander to the national groups." No, but Jehovah is there referring to David's promised Descendant, Jesus Christ, in whom the covenant with David for an everlasting kingdom comes to rest.

33 This one is given as a "witness to the national groups" in behalf of whom? In behalf of the Giver himself, Jehovah. Jesus Christ was His witness on earth, Jehovah's witness. In Isaiah 43:9, Jehovah challenges all the gods of the nations to prove that they are really living gods who can correctly predict the things ahead of us. Let these false gods produce their witnesses so that the people can hear from these witnesses about what their gods have said in prophesying and then say, "It is the truth!" Those false gods could not do this. But Jehovah as the living and truthful God can produce witnesses for his side, and His greatest witness ever on earth was his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. He was a fleshly member of the nation to whom Isaiah 43:10 is directed, saying: " 'You are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'even my servant whom I have chosen.' "

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32. In whom does Isaiah 55:4 find its fulfillment?
33. In behalf of whom is he a "witness to the national groups"?

[34] As a perfect man on earth, Jesus Christ repeatedly said that he was bearing witness to his heavenly Father, Jehovah God. At that time, this witness was particularly to the Jewish nation. In Revelation 1:5 the apostle John speaks of him as "Jesus Christ, 'the Faithful Witness,' 'The firstborn from the dead,' and 'The Ruler of the kings of the earth.'" Also, in Revelation 3:14, the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ introduces himself to the congregation in Laodicea, Asia Minor, saying: "These are the things that the Amen says, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation by God." But Jehovah was to give the Messiah Jesus as a witness, not just to the Jewish nation alone, but also "to the national groups." His witness concerning the God of whom he is the Messianic Servant is for all mankind regardless of nationality, color or race. By means of his faithful fellow witnesses on earth today he is giving this vital witness. Today, Jehovah's Christian witnesses are very pleased to give the same witness that Jesus Christ did, in more than two hundred lands and island groups, "to the national groups."

[35] A true and reliable witness needs to be given first before action is taken toward those to whom the witness has been given. (Matthew 24:14) Jesus Christ was faithful on earth as a witness to divine truth. (John 18:37) He died for the cause of such truth.

[36] We can be sure that he will be just as faithful in the executive capacities that are bestowed upon him in the heavens. His God gives him as more than a "witness to the national groups." He gives him thereafter as a "leader and commander to the national groups." Jehovah raised up David from being a mere shepherd boy at Bethlehem-Judah to be a "leader" to God's people. (2 Samuel 7:8) As he was a member of the tribe of Judah, then, when David became king

34. (a) To whom first, when a man on earth, was Jesus a witness? (b) As foretold, who else would hear his witness, and how has this been accomplished?

35, 36. (a) The faithfulness that Jesus has demonstrated as a witness gives assurance of what? (b) As to Jesus' being a "leader and commander," what parallels do we observe in the case of David?

over all Israel, the "commander's staff" came to be placed between the feet of a descendant of Judah as he sat upon his royal throne. (Genesis 49:10) It was then never to turn aside from the possession of the tribe of Judah until the Messiah came, the Shiloh, or, "the one whose it is."

37 Although being a descendant of King David, the promised Messiah or Shiloh was to be greater than King David. He was to be the Lord even of King David. (Psalm 110:1, 2) This would call for the Messiah to be nothing less also than a "leader and commander," as David had been to his nation, and this, not only to Israel, but also "to the national groups." This is what the people of all the nations need, a "leader and commander" who has been given by Jehovah God to be a true Representative of Him. Then the people can be certain that this Messianic "leader and commander" will lead and direct them in a way in harmony with God's will, for their everlasting good. This is what they will have in the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ, who sat down at God's right hand in the heavens. This is why he is now called in heaven a lionlike Ruler, for it is said up there: "The Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has conquered."—Revelation 5:5.

38 Those who accept the witness that the Messiah Jesus gives and who follow his leadership and obey his commands are blessed. For this reason the "indefinitely lasting covenant" that Jehovah made with King David for an everlasting kingdom takes effect toward those who willingly become the subjects of the Messiah Jesus. This Messianic government is established over them. So they get the lasting benefits from the fact that Jehovah has faithfully stuck to his promised "loving-kindnesses to David" down to the coming of the promised Messiah, yes, down to the

37. What kind of "leader and commander" does Jesus Christ prove to be?
38. How is it possible for us to receive the lasting benefits that were covenanted for Messiah's subjects?

end of the Gentile Times in the autumn of the year 1914 C.E. In such a way these loving-kindnesses were covenanted for Messiah's subjects. These obedient subjects get the grand blessings of the Messianic kingdom that God's loving-kindnesses have brought about, especially in the case of those spiritual Israelites who will become joint heirs with Christ in the heavenly kingdom.

39 Those who first get the benefits of this kingdom that was brought to birth in the heavens in 1914 C.E. are those who, in 1919 C.E., acted upon the divine invitation to come and partake of the water, the bread, the milk and the wine that Jehovah had provided for them in a spiritual way. (Revelation 12:1-6, 14) Their subjecting themselves to the newly born kingdom of the Messiah meant liberation for them from Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. The remnant of spiritual Israelites on earth, who had become captives of Babylon the Great during World War I, were the first to respond to Jehovah's cordial invitation to the spiritual feast of Kingdom blessings in freedom. Since the spring of the year 1935 a "great crowd" of people of all nationalities, who were seeking to get free from Babylon the Great and worship the true God, have joined the remnant of spiritual Israelites in enjoying the grand spiritual feast. (Revelation 7:9-17) From this fact we can discern how the invitation to the soul-satisfying feast is linked with the established Messianic kingdom.

THE SEARCH FOR JEHOVAH AS GOD

40 An increase of worshipers of Jehovah as the God of the Bible was predicted, an increase that would take in a "great crowd" from people not belonging to spiritual Israel. (Revelation 7:1-8) "Look!" Isaiah 55:5

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39. (a) Who received the benefits first, and in what way? (b) Who else are now joining in the spiritual feast?
40. How do the Scriptures foretell an increase of worshipers of Jehovah who do not belong to spiritual Israel?

continues on to say, "A nation that you do not know you will call, and those of a nation who have not known you will run even to you, for the sake of Jehovah your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he will have beautified you."

41 What delightful surprises this promise indicates! During the Babylonish captivity of the remnant of spiritual Israel, they had no idea that they would call a "nation" outside of themselves. Such a nation they did not know according to their understanding of the Scriptures at that time. During their captivity such a thing seemed out of the question and not within the purpose of God. Yet in His due time they would "call" or invite a "nation," any nation outside of spiritual Israel. Their issuing such a call would require that they themselves first be liberated from bondage to Babylon the Great! But would there be a response to such a call to indiscriminate nations? Particularly in the case of people of a "nation who have not known you," people who have not hitherto given any due recognition to the remnant of spiritual Israel? Yes, says Isaiah 55:5 to spiritual Israel, they "will run even to you." Ah, yes, they will hasten to come to the remnant of spiritual Israel that survived World War I.

42 How, though, could this come about? This in the face of the fact that the remnant of spiritual Israel would be "objects of hatred by all the nations"? (Matthew 24:9) It would take place "for the sake of Jehovah your God." Not the hated remnant of spiritual Israel in itself, but "Jehovah your God" would be the attraction. He was going to do something for them because they had not adopted the false gods of Babylon the Great but had stuck to Him as the true Deity to worship. What, then, would He do for them? This is specified in the further words, "and for the Holy One of Israel, because he will have beautified you."

41. (a) During the time of their Babylonish captivity, did the spiritual Israelites know about the ingathering of these other worshipers? (b) To whom would these worshipers from outside spiritual Israel come?
42. Who really would be the attraction, though, as stated in the prophecy?

43 Instead of having any longer the appearance of downcast, ill-fed, ill-clothed captives of Babylon the Great, they would now have an attractive beauty about them as spiritual Israelites. This did not mean that they would cease to be "objects of hatred by all the nations." It meant that they would become a spiritually free people in Christ. The Holy One of Israel would clothe them with a spiritual beauty, by their being well fed on the spiritual feast that he was now spreading for them. He would clothe them with spiritual beauty by making them His representatives for the newly born kingdom of his Messiah. They would be recognized by honest-hearted ones as being the people who have the true God for worship, and that this God is among them. They would have His truth and be the bearers of the good news of the Kingdom to all the nations for a witness. Because of no longer being under divine disfavor on account of their recent failure, now that they had shown their repentance toward God, they would be ushered into a spiritual paradise, which would stand out in stark contrast to the religious condition of Babylon the Great. Thus these internationally hated ones would be graced with a spiritual attractiveness, to Jehovah's praise.

44 So from 1919 C.E. forward, the remnant of spiritual Israel began calling the "nation" that they at first did not know about by preaching "this good news of the kingdom" to more and more nations. (Matthew 24:14) They did not fear that they would be shunned because of having God's name called upon them, but, after years of witnessing to Him world wide, they embraced the fitting name for themselves, Jehovah's witnesses, his Christian witnesses. This began on Sunday, July 26, 1931, at the international convention that

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43. (a) How has Jehovah "beautified" his spiritual Israelites, thus making them attractive to honest-hearted ones? (b) Into what condition did God thus usher his earthly worshipers, and why?

44. (a) In what way has the remnant of spiritual Israel 'called' the "nation" that they at first did not know about? (b) In doing so, how did they give due prominence to the name of their God? (c) What moved others to run to the remnant of spiritual Israel and to become Jehovah's Christian witnesses?

they held in Columbus, Ohio. Despite the prejudice against the divine name, even in Christendom, many searchers for God began running to the remnant of spiritual Israel. They saw in the remnant of spiritual Israelites a spiritual beauty that Christendom and pagandom did not discern or recognize. They came running by the hundreds from the spring of 1935 onward. They desired to enjoy the spiritual paradise that the members of the remnant were enjoying since their restoration to the favor of Jehovah. Without fear of reproach, they too accepted the designation Jehovah's Christian witnesses.

45 The running of all nationalities to the remnant has continued throughout the years since then. Not even the greater world conflict, World War II, stopped the running of those searching for the right God to adore and serve. With the help that these have given to the remnant, the "call" has widened out to more and more lands and territories, and increasing thousands have had their attention called to the spiritual feast in the spiritual paradise by the commanding call: "Hey there, all you thirsty ones! Come."

46 Those who have come running have increased to a "great crowd," the final number of which is not now known. (Revelation 7:9, 10) They have become spiritually alive, just as Isaiah 55:3 urges: "Listen, and your soul will keep alive." This may include their being preserved alive in the flesh through the coming "great tribulation" in which Babylon the Great and the whole worldly system of things will pass out of existence. The spiritual paradise and its happy inhabiters will survive, to Jehovah's praise and to the honor of his Messianic kingdom.—Matthew 24:21, 22; Revelation 7:14.

45, 46. (a) Despite world conflict, to what extent has there been increase in the number of worshipers of Jehovah? (b) What present blessing and future prospect is theirs?

CHAPTER 7

Requirements for Entering the Spiritual Paradise

THE way into the spiritual paradise is still open! The invitation to enter and enjoy it is still sounding out world wide! What does it call for if a hearer of the invitation desires to enter? The requirements are beautifully set out in the further words of the inspired prophecy of Isaiah chapter fifty-five:

[2] "Search for Jehovah, you people, while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near. Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will forgive in a large way."—Isaiah 55:6, 7.

[3] Since we have been living in the "time of the end" of this worldly system of things since the year 1914 C.E., the time that is left during which Jehovah may be found in a favorable way is by now very short. So *now* is the favorable time in which to search for him. A person does not have to go far in this search in order to find him. He is still near, within reach of sincere searchers for him. So *now* is also the time to call to him. He is not beyond hearing distance. Now, before "the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah," is when the reassuring words apply: "It must occur that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe."—Joel 2:31, 32; Romans 10:13.

[4] We are told what to do in this searching for Je-

1, 2. To enter the spiritual paradise, what requirements, set out in Isaiah 55:6, 7, must be met?
3. (a) Why is *now* the time to "search for Jehovah"? (b) In what sense is he "near"?
4. (a) Explain the requirement, "let the wicked man leave his way." (b) What is involved in leaving 'harmful thoughts,' and why is it important to do so?

hovah and in order to call upon his name. Attention must be given to one's ways of life and also to one's thinking, which has much to do with the condition of one's heart. This is indicated in the exhortation: "Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah." (Isaiah 55:7) Certainly, if a man who was wicked desired to search for Jehovah and find him and call upon him with acceptance, he would have to leave his way that is wicked. Jehovah hates wickedness. The wicked man would also be harmful, and so his thoughts would be of doing harm to others. In order, then, to search for Jehovah, who is a God of benevolence, he would have to change his thoughts from harmful intents to helpful, beneficial thinking. He must take seriously what God says in Proverbs 21:27: "The sacrifice of the wicked ones is something detestable. How much more so when one brings it along with loose conduct." Ways and thoughts approved by the God of righteousness are a requirement for gaining entrance to the spiritual paradise of His worshipers and servants.

[5] Concerning the wicked and harmful man, it is said: "And let him return to Jehovah." This signifies that the wicked and harmful man had got away from Jehovah and had turned bad. He had once had good, peaceful, intimate relationship with Jehovah. This was the way that it had been with ancient Israel down to the time of their exile in Babylon, which the prophet Isaiah had predicted earlier in his prophecy. So, in its first and direct application, the exhortation, "Let him return to Jehovah," was addressed to the Jewish exiles in Babylon. They had to repent of their misconduct and misdeeds that had resulted in the desolation of their homeland and their exile in pagan Babylonia. Their homeland was to lie desolate for a limited time, seventy years, and then was to be reoccupied by a faithful, God-fearing remnant of Jews released from

5. (a) How did the requirement, "Let him return to Jehovah," apply to the ancient Jewish exiles? (b) What prospect lay before those who heeded that requirement?

Babylon. More and more as the fixed time for the liberation from Babylon drew near, it would become advisable, yes, urgent, for exiled Jews to prepare themselves to be among those privileged to return to their homeland and transform it into a paradise.

6 The aged prophet Daniel, who had been an exile in Babylon even eleven years before the desolation of Jerusalem and Judah, took to heart the exhortation of Isaiah 55:7. Ancient Babylon on the Euphrates River had just fallen to the Persian conqueror, Cyrus the Great, which was in 539 B.C.E. Cyrus' associate, Darius the Mede, was now ruling as temporary king over Babylon. "In the first year of his reigning," says Daniel, "I myself, Daniel, discerned by the books the number of the years concerning which the word of Jehovah had occurred to Jeremiah the prophet, for fulfilling the devastations of Jerusalem, namely, seventy years. And I proceeded to set my face to Jehovah the true God, in order to seek him with prayer and with entreaties, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes. And I began to pray to Jehovah my God and to make confession." (Daniel 9:1-4) In his prayer Daniel confessed to being a member of the rebellious nation and his bearing a share in its iniquity and disobedience to God.

7 Personally, Daniel had not been wicked in his way and harmful in his thoughts, and so his prayer in behalf of the exiled Jews found favor in God's eyes. The aged Daniel, who was retained in the service of King Darius and then King Cyrus, did not return to the land of Judah, but he had the unspeakable joy of seeing a repentant, reformed Jewish remnant, together with thousands of non-Jewish servants of theirs, return to the homeland to rebuild Jerusalem and its temple. This occurred at the end of the seventy years of desolation in 537 B.C.E.

6, 7. (a) What action did the prophet Daniel take in harmony with Isaiah 55:7, and why was such action appropriate? (b) In what year did the Jewish remnant and their servants return to their homeland?

[8] In similar fashion, the modern-day remnant of spiritual Israel had to do some reforming as to their way and thoughts as World War I ended on November 11, 1918, and they entered still alive on earth into the postwar period. Their exile from God's full favor in Babylon the Great's realm was about to end, and it became the proper time for them to think about their failings and shortcomings with regard to God's worship and service. They had come under a community responsibility because of the bloodshed and violence of World War I. They needed to search for Jehovah and to call upon His name in prayer. In harmony with this Godward movement of theirs, the prophetic exhortation applied to them: "Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah."—Isaiah 55:7.

[9] In their search, accompanied by calling upon the divine name in prayer, the remnant of spiritual Israel made a reexamination of the Holy Scriptures, now that things had turned out in a manner different from the way that they had understood Bible prophecies. They needed to readjust their thinking and their way to the new and unexpected situation that now opened up before them. They had been "consecrated" to their God, not to a certain date such as 1914 or 1918 C.E., but for eternity. This obliged them to continue serving the true God as long as he preserved them alive on earth. Through His written Word and His organization, He revealed to the remnant that there was a highly important work for them to do on earth in connection with His newly born Messianic kingdom. So there was every reason for them to "return to Jehovah." But would such an endeavor on their part be in vain, in view of their past failings?

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8. How was the situation that confronted the remnant of spiritual Israel at the end of World War I similar to that of the natural Jews near the end of their period of exile in Babylon?
9. (a) In their searching for Jehovah, what action did the remnant of spiritual Israel take? (b) For how long were they obliged to serve God, and what work needed to be done?

[10] Just like the exiled Jews in ancient Babylon, the remnant of spiritual Israel had every reason to take heart and be of good courage in their Godward movement. Why? Because of these reassuring words of Isaiah 55:7: "And let him return to Jehovah, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will forgive in a large way."

THE LARGENESS OF GOD'S WAY OF FORGIVENESS

[11] There is no stinginess about God's forgiveness. His abundant mercy makes him forgiving "in a large way." He expressed his forgiveness toward the exiled Jews in Babylon by performing a miracle of mercy toward them. He broke open the prison in which imperial Babylon had been holding them captive and he provided the way for them to return to their homeland that had lain desolate without man or domestic animal for seven decades! This amazed the ancient nations roundabout that observed this, and they could ascribe this miracle only to the God of Israel. "At that time they proceeded to say among the nations: 'Jehovah has done a great thing in what he has done with them.' Jehovah has done a great thing in what he has done with us. We have become joyful. Do gather back, O Jehovah, our company of captives, like stream beds in the Negeb [parched land]." (Psalm 126:2-4) In the face of their past sins and transgressions, the exiled Jews did not deserve this, but God was forgiving them "in a large way" because of their sincere repentance.

[12] The like was true in the case of the modern-day remnant of spiritual Israel. Because of their heartfelt repentance God freed them from the power of Babylon the Great by means of his Greater Cyrus, Jesus Christ the King, and brought them back to their right-

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10. In view of their past failings, did they have any good reason to believe that God would accept them?
11. How was it true that God forgave the exiles of natural Israel "in a large way"?
12. What gave evidence that Jehovah likewise restored the remnant of spiritual Israel to his favor?

ful spiritual estate on earth, the estate of divine favor and peaceful relations. He resumed using them in the proclaiming of the message of the hour, "this good news of the kingdom," world wide. Thus he reintroduced them upon the stage of fearless public activity, and the hostile nations became aware that Jehovah God had done something great for them, something that proved that he had restored them to his favor and service.

13 These acts of deliverance, the one from ancient Babylon and the other from her modern-day counterpart, were things unimaginable to the human mind. All of this was so contrary to imperfect human thinking. It was so contrary to human ways of dealing with people in this present wicked system of things. Why did the God against whom such offense had been committed show such mercy and forgive in so large a way? He explains, as his prophecy through Isaiah goes on to say: " 'For the thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, nor are my ways your ways,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For just as the pouring rain descends, and the snow, from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout, and seed is actually given to the sower and bread to the eater, so my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it.' "—Isaiah 55:8-11.

14 Our thoughts and ways can never be as high as those of God the Creator, and especially so during our sinful imperfection. And so there is no comparison between our thoughts and ways and His. However, we cannot for that reason presume upon his mercy. We

13. Through his prophet Isaiah, how does Jehovah explain his reason for displaying such outstanding mercy?
14. Why is it not safe to presume upon God's mercy?

cannot, with immunity, become like those hypocritical men described in Jude 4, "ungodly men, turning the undeserved kindness of our God into an excuse for loose conduct and proving false to our only Owner and Lord, Jesus Christ." We cannot safely presume upon the magnanimity of God. We deserve nothing from him, and we have no right to demand anything from him. We cannot go beyond what his given word allows.

15 Whatever it is that Jehovah God has done in such mercy to us, he has previously given his word for it in writing in his prophecies of the Holy Bible. He means what he says, and he says what he purposes to do. So his given word is reliable, as reliable as the rain and the snow from heaven are in accomplishing the divine purpose for which they are deposited upon the earth. For that reason his stated word will not boomerang at him because of having accomplished no results. If he has given his word, then he will see to it that it is carried out by means of his almighty spirit and by means of his chosen servants. What he pleases or delights in will be done without fail according to his word. He has sent forth his word on a mission, and it will not prove to be mere empty talk. It will certainly have success in the stated mission for which he sent it.

16 So God's own honor is at stake in connection with his word. He cannot let it come short of its purpose, for that would mean that he is not almighty. It would mean that he is not true and is not "the God of truth." (Psalm 31:5) His word did not fail when it came to delivering the exiled Israelites from imperial Babylon and restoring the remnant of them to their desolated homeland right on time. Nor did his word return to him without results in modern times when it came to liberating the remnant of spiritual Israel from the power of Babylon the Great and restoring them to

15. (a) With what record is God's display of mercy in full harmony? (b) How is God's stated word like the rain and snow from heaven?
16. In his dealings with natural Israel and with spiritual Israel, how did Jehovah prove himself to be "the God of truth"?

his favor and service on earth from 1919 C.E. onward. Many other historic examples, ancient and modern, could be cited to prove the truth of his word as expressed in Isaiah 55:10, 11.

PROPHECY OF A PARADISE

17 What Jehovah God has thus said about the absolute certainty that his word will come true, strengthens us to accept with confidence the glowing prophecy now forthcoming. He addresses it to those who search for him and call upon his name and return to him in repentance and righteousness. (Isaiah 55:6, 7) Revealing how elevated his thoughts and ways are above those of imperfect, mortal man, he continues on to say: "*For* with rejoicing you people will go forth, and with peace you will be brought in. The mountains and the hills themselves will become cheerful before you with a joyful outcry, and the very trees of the field will all clap their hands. Instead of the thicket of thorns the juniper tree will come up. Instead of the stinging nettle the myrtle tree will come up. And it must become for Jehovah something famous, a sign to time indefinite that will not be cut off."—Isaiah 55:12, 13, *NW; Young; The New American Bible; Leeser.*

18 Do not those prophetic words beautifully describe a thrilling deliverance of an exiled people and a homecoming with a joyful welcome! "For," that is, in verification of what was just said by Jehovah about his exalted thoughts and ways toward his people, "with rejoicing you people will go forth." It was from the land of Babylon that they were to be brought out, a liberated people. This deliverance was to be with rejoicing, not on the part of the Gentile nations in any show of sympathy toward Jehovah's exiled people, but on the part of His people whom He was delivering in such a remarkable way, so contrary to what the Gentile

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17. After having emphasized the absolute certainty of the fulfillment of his word, what does Jehovah promise, as recorded in Isaiah 55:12, 13? 18, 19. (a) What grand deliverance is there being described? (b) Who was to do the "rejoicing," and how does Psalm 126:1, 2 delightfully describe their feelings?

nations expected or desired. The joyful emotion of the Israelite remnant and their devoted companions at such a marvelous release from pagan Babylon is caught up and echoed in the opening words of Psalm 126:

19 "When Jehovah gathered back the captive ones of Zion, we became like those who were dreaming. At that time our mouth came to be filled with laughter, and our tongue with a joyful cry. At that time they proceeded to say among the nations: 'Jehovah has done a great thing in what he has done with them.'" —Psalm 126:1, 2; 2 Chronicles 36:20-23.

20 When the deliverance came in the year 537 B.C.E., the faithful Jewish remnant could turn to the inspired prophecy of Isaiah 44:28 through 45:3, written two centuries previously, and could see how their God had vindicated his Word by using his anointed servant, Cyrus the Persian, in liberating them. The historic record of Ezra 1:1-5 matches up with Isaiah's prophecy by reporting:

21 "In the first year of Cyrus the king of Persia, that Jehovah's word from the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, Jehovah roused the spirit of Cyrus the king of Persia so that he caused a cry to pass through all his realm, and also in writing, saying: 'This is what Cyrus the king of Persia has said, "All the kingdoms of the earth Jehovah the God of the heavens has given me, and he himself has commissioned me to build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God prove to be with him. So let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—he is the true God—which was in Jerusalem. As for anyone that is left from all the places where he is residing as an alien, let the men of his place assist him with silver and with gold and with goods and with domestic animals along with

20, 21. In the deliverance that they experienced in 537 B.C.E., how could faithful Jews see powerful evidence that Jehovah had vindicated the truthfulness of his word?

the voluntary offering for the house of the true God, which was in Jerusalem." ' Then the heads of the fathers of Judah and of Benjamin and the priests and the Levites rose up, even everyone whose spirit the true God had roused, to go up and rebuild the house of Jehovah, which was in Jerusalem."

22 Consequently it was in no panic or disorderly flight that the Jewish remnant and their companions left Babylon in the year 537 B.C.E. It could not be that way if they were to go out "with rejoicing," just as it had been prophesied. They went out in orderly fashion, with no shrieks of terror at the sight of pursuers. They went out with full confidence that the God who had procured their release would go before them to lead them in the way and that he would protect them from the rear. To this effect he had given them the promise: "Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her, keep yourselves clean, you who are carrying the utensils of Jehovah. For you people will get out in no panic, and you will go in no flight. For Jehovah will be going even before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard."—Isaiah 52:11, 12.

23 Peacefully, with good organization among themselves, they left ancient Babylon, and peacefully, under divine protection and guidance, they would reach their destination. That was what the divine infallible word assured them: "For with rejoicing you people will go forth, and with peace you will be brought in." (Isaiah 55:12) They would be "brought in" upon their homeland that had lain desolate for seventy years. As Rabbi Leeser's translation of the Hebrew text reads: "For in joy shall ye go out, and in peace shall ye be brought home." Or, as *The New American Bible* words it: "Yes, in joy you shall depart, in peace you shall be brought

22. Why was it not in any disorderly flight that the Jews left Babylon?
23. (a) What reason did they have for confidence that they would safely reach their destination? (b) By when were they back in their homeland, and how does this give evidence that Jehovah's word does not return to him without results?

back." It proved to be even that way, and, in the seventh month (Tishri) of the year 537 B.C.E., the returned Jewish remnant and their loyal companions had taken up residence on their city sites, and they began restoring the worship of their God in their homeland. (Ezra 2:68 through 3:2) Just as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and carry out God's purpose, so Jehovah's prophetic word did not return to him without results to its credit.—Isaiah 55:10, 11.

24 The route that the Jewish remnant and their God-fearing companions took out of Babylon was not through a paradise, nor did the countryside along the way miraculously turn into a paradise before them to cheer them along during the journey of several months. Neither did their long-desolate, thicket-overgrown homeland suddenly take on a paradisaic appearance before their eyes. But what were their prospects according to God's promise after they were replanted upon their beloved native land and diligently went to work, without expecting any direct miracles of transformation? Ah, regarding this their high priest Jeshua the son of Jehozadak or their appointed governor Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel could read to them the stimulating, encouraging words of Isaiah 55:12, 13:

25 "The mountains and the hills themselves will become cheerful before you with a joyful outcry, and the very trees of the field will all clap their hands. Instead of the thicket of thorns the juniper tree will come up. Instead of the stinging nettle the myrtle tree will come up. And it must become for Jehovah something famous, a sign to time indefinite that will not be cut off."—See Haggai 1:1.

26 A lovely transformation of the long-untended, uncultivated land there *would be* indeed! This, however,

24, 25. (a) On arrival at their destination, did the former exiles find that their homeland was a paradise? (b) What had God promised would take place in due time after they went to work?

26. As indicated in the prophecy, to whom would go the credit for the transformation of the land, and why appropriately so?

would not occur without first the zealous, earnest work on the part of the repatriated people. Yet, to Jehovah should and would go the credit for the marvelous transformation, for He was the One that would bless their sincere endeavors. His blessing upon their efforts was the necessary thing, and his blessing would attend them provided that they put the worship of Him in the first place and carried out the purpose for which He had released them from oppressive Babylon and had restored them to their beloved homeland.

27 Doubtless on their arrival back on the land thickets of thorns abounded, and stinging nettles flourished on the long-neglected land. Such plants had not been an outstanding, inviting feature of man's original paradise. Rather, when God sentenced the first man and woman as sinners to life outside the Garden of Eden, he said to the man: "Cursed is the ground on your account. In pain you will eat its produce all the days of your life. And thorns and thistles it will grow for you." (Genesis 3:17, 18) So the land of Judah, during its seventy years of desolation, had become like cursed ground: "If it produces thorns and thistles, it is rejected and is near to being cursed; and it ends up with being burned."—Hebrews 6:8; compare Deuteronomy 28:15-18; Isaiah 24:6.

"A SIGN TO TIME INDEFINITE"

28 Look, now, to the evidence of the restoring of God's blessing upon his worshipful people who had searched for him and who had called upon his name in repentance and with righteous fruit that befits repentance! "Instead of the thicket of thorns the juniper tree will come up. Instead of the stinging nettle the myrtle tree will come up." (Isaiah 55:13) Instead of the low prickly plants to be shunned, there come up the evergreen trees, like the myrtle and the juniper that grows up to a

27. What gave evidence that the land of Judah, during its years of desolation, had been like cursed ground?
28. How does the language employed in the portion of Isaiah 55:13 here quoted reflect a restoration of God's blessing upon his people?

height of sixty-five feet. There the birds of the heavens, even the stork, can make their homes. (Psalm 104:16, 17) From the myrtle tree the restored Israelites could take leafy branches and build booths for themselves when celebrating the festival of the booths (or, tabernacles) during the third week of the lunar month of Tishri. (Nehemiah 8:15, 16; Zechariah 1:8-11) What a refreshing, eye-pleasing change from prickly, stinging plants to evergreen trees like the juniper and the myrtle!

Storks in their nest atop a juniper tree

[29] There were other trees to adorn the reworked land. Why, "the very trees of the field will all clap their hands." They will applaud their heavenly Creator, who makes them grow. They, together with other verdure studded with wild flowers, will clothe the slopes of the mountains and the hills. The appearance of these heights of the land of Judah will take on cheerfulness. They will tell a message of praise to God, and it will be as if they had become vocal "with a joyful outcry." The natural environment takes on the look of happiness, reflecting the happiness of God over the restoration of his people to freedom of worship at Jerusalem and throughout all the land of Judah. (Isaiah 55:12) How could the occupants of this transformed land keep from being cheerful themselves and breaking forth in outcries of thanksgiving and praise to Him?

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29. Explain the meaning of the promise: "the very trees of the field will all clap their hands" and "the mountains and the hills themselves will become cheerful before you with a joyful outcry."

30 The beauty that was to crown the reoccupied land could not do otherwise than stir up comparisons of it with the Garden of Eden, man's original paradise home. Observers of the beautification of the once-desolate land would now make such comparisons. Such a thing was foretold in the prophecy that God inspired Ezekiel to utter after Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed in 607 B.C.E. and the land of Judah began to lie desolate.

31 "This is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'In the day of my cleansing you from all your errors I will also cause the cities to be inhabited, and the devastated places must be rebuilt. And the desolated land itself will be cultivated, whereas it had become a desolate waste before the eyes of every passerby. And people will certainly say: "That land yonder which was laid desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the cities that were a waste and that were laid desolate and that were torn down are fortified; they have become inhabited." And the nations that will be left remaining round about you will have to know that I myself, Jehovah, have built the things torn down, I have planted what has been laid desolate. I myself, Jehovah, have spoken and I have done it.' " —Ezekiel 36:33-36.

32 Nobody could have brought all this reversal of matters in behalf of the internationally hated and exiled nation of Israel but their God, who was keeping his covenant with them. So, for bringing it about in accordance with his promise, he had made himself famous throughout the earth. His name, his fame, his renown, was at stake in this vital matter, for the people that were involved in this turn of events were the people called by his own name. What befell them reflected upon his name. The wrong conclusions that

30, 31. (a) With what would the appearance of the reoccupied land move a person to compare it? (b) What had God inspired Ezekiel to prophesy concerning just such a thing?
32. How was God's own name, his reputation, involved in what was happening with the people of Israel?

the Gentile nations had drawn from the way that he chastised and disciplined his covenant people had to be corrected. This would affect the view that the non-Jewish nations took of him as a god. In self-respect and for his own honor he needed to prove to all nations that he was the true, reliable, word-keeping God!

33 Not primarily for the sake of his covenant people Israel, who had brought his name into reproach among the nations, but for his own name's sake, he freed them from ancient Babylon and brought them back to the land to which he had given a sabbath period of seventy years. (Leviticus 26:41-45; 2 Chronicles 36:20, 21) When this sabbath period was over, in 537 B.C.E., then he restored the rightful cultivators of it. By his blessing upon them, he transformed it into a beauteous land, whose appearance approached that of the Paradise of Pleasure, the Garden of Eden. This had great significance. There was a purpose behind it.

34 God makes known the motive behind this, he himself saying: "And it must become for Jehovah something famous [literally, for a name, *Young*], a sign to time indefinite that will not be cut off." (Isaiah 55:13) This clothing of the long-desolate land with paradisaic loveliness won begrudged acknowledgment from the observing Gentile nations and raised their respect for him.

35 As the land stood there, reclaimed and glorified, it was a "sign" of something highly important. It must be remembered that, first of all, it was a God-given land, for Jehovah had given it to his chosen people in the fifteenth century B.C.E., in fulfillment of his promise made to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (or, Israel). Then, because of the persistent disobedience and unfaithfulness of his people, he had,

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33. (a) What was his primary purpose in bringing his people Israel back to their land? (b) What was it that made it possible to convert that land into a paradise?
34. What was the purpose behind this, as stated in Isaiah 55:13?
35. In understanding the "sign" referred to in Isaiah 55:13, what must be remembered about the land and its inhabitants?

as it were, turned the land upside down like a pot and emptied it of its inhabitants, exiling them to the land of Babylon and letting the polluted land lie desolate in sabbath keeping for seventy years. (Isaiah 24:1-6; 2 Kings 21:13) And now he had caused the rebirth of a populous land and also brought about the rebirth of a nation by restoring his long-exiled people to their God-given estate. In whose honor, then, would the transformation of the land to a paradise be a "sign"?

[36] By the mouth of his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah himself gives the true answer, saying: "And this will make Yahweh famous, a sign for ever, ineffaceable." (Isaiah 55:13, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Or, "All this shall win the LORD a great name, imperishable, a sign for all time." (*The New English Bible*) In His case it disproved that "God is dead." His marvelous works with respect to the land proved that He is a living God, and that the prophecies given over his name Jehovah are true. Great and glorious was the name that he thus made for himself. And the paradise-like, repopulated land of Judah was a "sign" of his Godship, of his universal sovereignty, of his almightiness, of his faithfulness, and of his heaven-high mercy to repentant people who were in a covenant with him. This became a "sign to time indefinite," even till now; it is a sign that has not been "cut off," even after the Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem and laid the land of Judea waste in the year 70 of our Common Era. Why not? Because the record of God's carrying out of his prophecy has been put in the imperishable record of the Bible.

[37] Because this is an imperishable, ineffaceable sign, one "to time indefinite," we look for a modern-day counterpart of it. To fit the ancient pattern, this would involve the modern-time remnant of spiritual Israel, who are in the "new covenant" through the Greater

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36. (a) How was the transformation of the land to a paradise a "sign" that honored Jehovah? (b) What has made it a "sign to time indefinite"?
37. (a) With what people do we find a modern-day counterpart for that "sign"? (b) At the time of their deliverance from Babylon the Great, what was the condition of their symbolic land?

Mediator, Jesus Christ. Modern history confirms that this remnant was delivered from Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, in the spring of the year 1919 C.E. Their religious or spiritual estate on earth had been rendered quite desolate by the depredations committed upon them and their working organization by Babylon the Great and her political, military and judicial patronizers. Their symbolic land, their spiritual estate, had, as it were, become forbidding because things that were like thickets of thorns and stinging nettles marred the looks of it. It did not present an inviting, attractive appearance that would draw religiously inclined people to take part with these worshipers of Jehovah God in their beliefs and activities.

[38] Nevertheless, when their living God opened the way for them, it was "with rejoicing" that the remnant of spiritual Israel did "go forth" from bondage to Babylon the Great. They were filled with hope, seeing the religious possibilities of the future although realizing that it would require courage to take advantage of them in the face of a hostile world. Global warfare had ended and a patched-up peace had come in, and so it was "with peace" that they were "brought in" upon their rightful spiritual estate, their restoration to God's favor, their reconciliation with him, their becoming approved again for his service as ambassadors of his now established Messianic kingdom. (2 Corinthians 5:20) They reorganized for the work ahead that had been foretold by Jesus Christ for the "conclusion of the system of things," namely: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." They began clearing out the things that were objectionable and hindersome to true worship of God.—Matthew 24:3, 14.

38. When Jehovah opened the way for their return, how did the remnant of spiritual Israel respond?

[39] Faithful to his written promises and consistent with the ancient prototype, Jehovah blessed the efforts of the restored remnant of spiritual Israelites. A spiritual paradise has resulted, that is a worldwide marvel today. It is as if the mountains and hills of their spiritual estate had become cheerful before them with a joyful outcry, and as if the trees of Christian fruitfulness were clapping their hands. Figuratively, the thornbush thickets and the stinging nettle have been replaced by beautiful juniper and myrtle evergreens. Its appearance of being cursed by God has vanished! It has become a habitable place for the true Christians, who really follow the example of Jehovah's anointed Servant, Jesus Christ. There are also hundreds of thousands of righteously inclined people who were searching for Jehovah, the God of the restored remnant of spiritual Israel. These have become the loyal companions of the faithful anointed remnant.

[40] This remarkable transformation in the spiritual estate of the remnant has resulted in Jehovah's becoming famous throughout the earth. God's personal name has become known around the globe. The revived, beautified estate of the spiritual remnant has become a "sign," and the time of its continuance is indefinite. It has persisted till now in spite of World War II and other world turmoil and disasters. It has not been "cut off" till the present time, and it will never be cut off.—Isaiah 55:12, 13.

[41] Especially in the eyes of the restored remnant of spiritual Israel this has all been so wonderful, amazing. Back there during the oppressions of World War I and during their bondage to Babylon the Great, never did they imagine that such a thing would take place. According to the ways that they understood the Bible

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39. How has a worldwide spiritual paradise been produced for the habitation of God's people in modern times?
40. How has the beautified estate of the spiritual remnant become a "sign" that honors Jehovah, and that is not "cut off"?
41, 42. In this matter of the restoration of spiritual Israel, how did matters turn out as expressed at Isaiah 55:8, 9?

prophecies, such a thing was unimaginable! It would have been thought to be presumptuous to expect or predict that such a thing would take place with this captive, exiled remnant of spiritual Israel while still on earth. Certainly their thoughts were not on a level with God's thoughts nor their ways of proceeding on a plane with his ways. It turned out to be just as Jehovah himself expressed it:

42 " 'The thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, nor are my ways your ways,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' "—Isaiah 55:8, 9.

43 It all tends to prove that this thing is not of man, but is of the Almighty God. In this regard the rule is true today that was stated by the lawyer Gamaliel to the Jerusalem Sanhedrin back in the apostolic days of the first century C.E.: "If this scheme or this work is from men, it will be overthrown; but if it is from God, you will not be able to overthrow them [the scheme or the work]." (Acts 5:38, 39) Consequently, the spiritual paradise that has not been cut off from Jehovah's Christian witnesses down to this day is a "sign" for which the Almighty God is responsible. By it He has become famous earth wide. He has won for himself a great name. Thankful can all those God-fearing people be who have met the requirements for entering the spiritual paradise that he has established by their searching for him while he can be found and calling upon his personal name while he is yet near during this "conclusion of the system of things." —Isaiah 55:6; Matthew 24:3.

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43. What does all the evidence indicate as to who is responsible for this spiritual paradise?

CHAPTER 8

A Spiritual Paradise on a Polluted Earth

THERE are still some spots on this earth that are like a miniature earthly paradise. However, their continued existence is threatened. Within the last twenty years the scientific study of the polluting of all mankind's natural environment has been given serious consideration. Efforts have been made to cut down on the polluting of earth, water and air, but the process of pollution still continues and increases.

[2] Certain ecological plans have been found to be impractical or economically out of the question. Various projects for preserving the beauty and healthfulness of nature in selected areas have had to give way to the needs created by the energy crisis. The whole earth is becoming more unhealthy as the habitat for fish, bird, land animal and man to live in. Due to man's manner of life and his mismanagement of the earth, the survival of all live creature existence on our planet is threatened by environmental pollution alone.

[3] Unaffected by such blighting pollution earth wide, a spiritual paradise flourishes and extends itself out farther and farther. As it expands, more and more spiritually minded persons are enjoying it and leading happier lives. They are even entertaining hopes of living forever in an unpolluted earthly paradise. The earthly natural paradise is still future, of course; otherwise, the present polluting of man's natural environment would not be allowed to continue. It is beyond man's own ability and wisdom to restore man's

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1, 2. To what extent have man's efforts to cut down on the polluting of the earth met with success?
3. Despite the polluting of the natural environment, what paradise is spreading out, and since what year?

original paradise home to this earth. But since the first year of peace after World War I, a spiritual paradise has been planted here at the earth. Doubtless this is the paradise about which the Christian apostle Paul writes in his second letter to the first-century congregation in Corinth, Greece.

4 Writing near the middle of the first century, about the year 55 C.E., he said to this congregation of fellow believers: "I have to boast. It is not beneficial; but I shall pass on to supernatural visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in union with Christ who, fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know; God knows—was caught away as such to the third heaven. Yes, I know such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body, I do not know, God knows—that he was caught away into paradise and heard unutterable words which it is not lawful for a man to speak. Over such a man I will boast, but I will not boast over myself." —2 Corinthians 12:1-5.

5 The apostle Paul was here talking, not about some other man, but about himself. However, he speaks of himself, when having the above-described unique experience, as a man specially favored of God; and about the man that he was when in that highly favored position he can rightly boast. But of himself as an ordinary man minus such rare privileges from God he cannot properly boast. His experience was so realistic that it was as if he were right there in his physical body, but reasonably his physical body stayed on the earth and what he experienced was a trance and what he heard was when he was in this trance. If this experience occurred fourteen years before he wrote his second letter to the Corinthian congregation, then it

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4. Concerning this paradise, what did the apostle Paul say in his second letter to the Corinthian Christians?

5. (a) Who is the "man in union with Christ" to whom Paul refers? (b) In view of that, what did he mean when he said, "Over such a man I will boast, but I will not boast over myself"? (c) As regards his condition when having the experience, why did he say, "whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know"?

occurred about the year 41 C.E., which was before his first missionary trip with Barnabas, which was about 47/48 C.E. Whether what he heard was in Hebrew or Greek, languages known to him, or in some foreign language that cannot be translated in known human languages, the apostle Paul does not specify.

[6] In being caught away to the third heaven, Paul was not caught up and carried down the stream of time to the third of a series of heavens that followed one another in succession. He was caught up and borne vertically, and, as the number three or third is used in the Bible as a mark of intensity or emphasis, the "third heaven" would indicate the height of his elevation, the exalted quality of it. It did not acquaint him with the things in the heavens of spirit persons in the sense that Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven and returned to the spirit heavens, is acquainted with the invisible heavenly things. Figuratively, Paul was already seated with fellow Christians on earth "in the heavenly places in union with Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:6) So his being caught away to the "third heaven" would indicate a spiritually exalted elevating of Paul above the spiritual position of his fellow Christians. It doubtless gave him insight such as he had not had before, and this would evidence itself in how he spoke and wrote.

[7] As for his being caught away to "paradise," this is here associated with the "third heaven." This would suggest something spiritual. But this would not indicate that the paradise to which Paul was caught away was the one referred to in the message sent by the glorified Jesus Christ to the congregation in Ephesus, Asia Minor: "Let the one who has an ear hear what the spirit says to the congregations: To him that conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God." (Revelation 2:7) This "paradise of

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6. His reference to the "third heaven" indicates what?
7, 8. (a) Why is the "paradise" to which Paul refers not the same as the one mentioned in Revelation 2:7? (b) Why was that "paradise" to which Paul was caught away not the "garden of Eden"?

God" is a figurative one in the invisible spirit heavens, into which flesh and blood cannot enter and into which fleshly eye cannot see. (1 Corinthians 15:50) Nor is there any intimation that the apostle Paul saw symbols of things that are in the invisible spirit heavens in the way that the apostle John saw such, of which John gives us a description in Revelation, chapter four. So it is very unlikely that the apostle Paul was caught away to the "paradise of God" to see its "tree of life."

8 As far as the original earthly paradise, the "garden of Eden," is concerned, there is nothing mysterious to human creatures about such a paradise. It is nothing beyond human experience, and the restoration of it to earth under God's Messianic kingdom has long been understood according to the Bible prophecies. (Genesis 3:8-24) Hence, the apostle Paul would not have to receive "supernatural visions and revelations of the Lord" in order to learn and know that.—2 Corinthians 12:1.

9 There is, however, another paradise that the Holy Scriptures picture prophetically, even giving us a historic prototype of this, in the land of Judah after the Babylonian exile of the Jews. This paradise is the spiritual one in our day, nineteen centuries after the apostle Paul was caught away to the "third heaven" and to "paradise" in a supernatural vision. What Paul heard during that realistic experience, the "unutterable words which it is not lawful for a man to speak," were about this then future spiritual paradise. This blessed estate of Christ's true disciples would come into existence during his "presence" or parousia at the "conclusion of the system of things."—Matthew 24:3.

10 Paul was inspired to foretell the religious "apostasy" that would befall the Christian congregation before the "presence of our Lord Jesus Christ," but it was not lawful for him as a man to speak about this

9, 10. (a) The vision given to the apostle Paul was concerning what paradise, existing at what time? (b) The "unutterable words" that Paul heard involved what, and speaking those words would have meant what?

spiritual paradise, about which he heard in "unutterable words." To do so would have meant for him to interpret the Bible prophecies that have to do with this spiritual paradise.—2 Thessalonians 2:1-3; 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

THE "WAY OF HOLINESS" TO THE SPIRITUAL PARADISE

[11] In earlier publications of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society it has been Scripturally proved that the "presence of our Lord Jesus Christ" began at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914, when God's Messianic kingdom was brought to birth in the invisible heavens. (Revelation 12:1-10) At that time the newly enthroned Jesus Christ became like God's ancient anointed "servant," Cyrus the Great, the conqueror of imperial Babylon and the liberator of the captive Jews and their loyal non-Jewish companions. Acting that part in modern style, Jesus Christ liberated the anointed remnant of his faithful followers who had been taken captive by Babylon the Great and her worldly paramours during World War I of 1914-1918 C.E. Breaking the power of that world empire of false religion, he brought about the restoration of the remnant of spiritual Israelites in the year 1919 C.E. This astonished and chagrined the entire religious world of that time.—Revelation 11:7-13.

[12] It may well be asked by many of our readers, Why and how does it come that Jehovah's anointed remnant of spiritual Israel entered into the spiritual paradise first from 1919 C.E. forward? Were they not in a spiritual paradise on earth prior to the outbreak of World War I in 1914 C.E.? Were they not enjoying such a blessed spiritual estate in God's favor from, say, the publication of *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence* in July of 1879 C.E. onward? We oldsters who were living for some time prior to World

11. (a) When did the "presence" of Jesus Christ begin? (b) At that time Jesus Christ became like what ancient ruler, and in what sense?
12. What questions are here raised as to the spiritual paradise?

War I and who were then part of the remnant of spiritual Israel can answer No! to such questions. On what basis?

[13] Well, such a thing as a spiritual paradise for the remnant of spiritual Israel on earth was unheard of. The only future paradise that was thought of was the literal, material paradise that was to be restored to our earthly planet during the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ and into which there was to be a resurrection of the impaled sympathetic evildoer to whom Jesus said: "Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43) Even the paradise to which the apostle Paul referred in 2 Corinthians 12:4 was understood to be that paradise, 'the restored earth.' —See paragraph 2, page 648, of the book *The Battle of Armageddon,* published in 1897.

[14] Also, Bible prophecies that had an ancient miniature fulfillment on the nation of Israel in the sixth century before our Common Era were expected to have a modern final fulfillment upon the natural circumcised Jews by a regathering of them to the land of Palestine. (For example, see page 63 of the issues of *The Watch Tower* of 1892, on Ezekiel 36:22-36.) Or, prophecies that were fulfilled upon ancient Israel in miniature were thought to have their major, complete fulfillment during the thousand-year reign of Christ after the binding of Satan the Devil and the imprisoning of him in the bottomless pit. (Take, for instance, Isaiah, chapter thirty-five.) So it was that the modern-day fulfillment of such prophecies upon the remnant of spiritual Israel was entirely missed, obscured, not discerned—just as is the case with the churches of Christendom down till now. In fact, down into the year 1932 the Christian witnesses of Jehovah were themselves under the impression that the restoration

13. Prior to 1919, what was the only paradise that God's servants on earth were thinking about?
14. (a) How were the prophecies regarding a paradise that had an application to the ancient nation of Israel understood during those years? (b) So what application of these prophecies was not then discerned?

of fleshly Jews to Palestine and the setting up of a Jewish State would be a fulfillment of divine prophecy.

15 Furthermore, the remnant of spiritual Israel had for decades, yes, since the year 1876, been looking forward to the ending of the Times of the Gentiles in the autumn of 1914. They were expecting God's Messianic kingdom to be fully established in the heavens by then and also for the remnant of spiritual Israel to be glorified with Jesus Christ in the heavenly kingdom at that time. All understanding of the Holy Scriptures was slanted in that direction or adjusted to that idea. And when the year 1914 ended amid the flames of World War I and the remnant of spiritual Israel found themselves still here on earth, then they were inclined to think that they would be glorified in the year 1918, three and a half years after the end of the Gentile Times. (Luke 21:24; Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32) Their hard experiences under ban and persecution during World War I were not viewed as a Babylonian exile from which they were to be liberated after World War I. They did not expect a restoration to Jehovah's full favor on earth for a witness work world wide.

16 Thus, prior to their liberation in the year 1919, the remnant of spiritual Israel was conscious of no spiritual paradise. Such a work as has been carried on since that year to the farthest reaches of the earth was farthest from their thoughts! They had not yet discerned by their study of the Bible that the time had come for Jehovah to make a name for himself. (Isaiah 63:14; Jeremiah 32:20; 2 Samuel 7:23) They did not realize that they themselves were the ones to be used to make the personal name of God known to the far corners of the earth and to announce the established Messianic kingdom of God to all the nations inside and outside Christendom. (Matthew 24:14) They did

15. What expectations did the remnant have concerning the year 1914, and, later, the year 1918?
16. What developments since the year 1919 did the remnant not foresee prior to that year?

not foresee the marvelous fulfillments of Bible prophecy that they would witness and the continually growing comprehension of the Holy Scriptures that they would gain. They did not anticipate that they would be used to gather a "great crowd" of sheeplike believers out of all nations to their blessed state of God's favor.—Revelation 7:9-17.

17 Awareness of being in a spiritual paradise did not flood the minds of the remnant of spiritual Israel at once in that year of liberation and restoration—1919 C.E. But today, at this late date in the "time of the end" of this system of things, they can appreciate how grandly the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter thirty-five, has been fulfilled upon them in a spiritual sense since 1919. As pictured in that glowing prophecy, they have come over a 'highway of holiness' into a spiritual paradise despite man's polluting of the earth.

THE PARADISAIC PROPHECY COMES TO LIFE

18 The prophecy of Isaiah, chapter thirty-five, beautiful in itself, has its beauty greatly enhanced for the reason that it comes immediately after a solemn prophecy of extreme, never-ending desolation and wildness. That mournful state was to come as an expression of divine vengeance upon a certain reprehensible nation, a brother nation of the Israelites. That nation was descended from Esau, the older twin-brother of the patriarch Jacob or Israel. Because of selling his birthright to Jacob for a helping of red stew, Esau was given the nickname Edom (meaning "Red"), and this name stuck to the nation that descended from him. (Genesis 25:30) The ancient land of Edom lay between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of 'Aqaba and straddled the Arabah.—Isaiah 34:5-17.

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17. (a) So did the remnant have any awareness of being in a spiritual paradise prior to 1919 C.E.? (b) Now, however, what fulfillment of Isaiah chapter 35 do they appreciate?

18. What contrast greatly enhances the beauty of the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 35?

19 A far different "wilderness" is referred to in Isaiah chapter thirty-five as with poetic beauty it opens up and says: "The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron. Without fail it will blossom, and it will really be joyful with joyousness and with glad crying out. The glory of Lebanon itself must be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and of Sharon. There will be those who will see the glory of Jehovah, the splendor of our God."—Isaiah 35:1, 2.

20 Here the transformation of a land is foretold, the recovery of a land to paradise-like loveliness. Whose land? The land of those of whom it is said in the closing verse of the chapter: "And the very ones redeemed by Jehovah will return and certainly come to Zion with a joyful cry; and rejoicing to time indefinite will be upon their head. To exultation and rejoicing they will attain, and grief and sighing must flee away." (Isaiah 35:10) In the first fulfillment, or ancient fulfillment, of the prophecy, the redeemed ones who returned to Zion or Jerusalem were the prophet Isaiah's own people, the people of the land of ancient Judah. In Isaiah's time an anointed king still sat on what was called "Jehovah's throne" at Jerusalem. In fact, Isaiah prophesied during the successive reigns of four Jewish kings, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.—Isaiah 1:1.

21 In Isaiah's day the land of Judah had not been reduced to the state indicated in the thirty-fifth chapter of his prophecy. True, the Assyrian emperor, King Sennacherib, had invaded the land and had reduced a number of cities and caused considerable devastation. When this pagan invader boastfully threatened to capture Jerusalem, Jehovah miraculously caused him to flee back home in disgrace. Though badly damaged, the land of Judah was not left depopulated by the Assyrian,

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19, 20. (a) The transformation of whose land is foretold in Isaiah 35:1, 2, and what shows this? (b) Upon whom did the prophecy have its first fulfillment?

21, 22. (a) Was the land of Judah a desolate wilderness in Isaiah's day? (b) When was it that the land was desolated, and for how long?

so that, in course of time, its former occupants would have to return from a land of exile and come to a rebuilt Zion.

22 Also, the "rejoicing" that the Jews experienced over the marvelous expulsion of the Assyrian from the land of Judah was not "to time indefinite." Why not? Because in the following century Jerusalem and its temple were destroyed, "Jehovah's throne" as occupied by Jewish kings was overturned, and the whole land of Judah became desolate without human inhabitant and domestic animal. The deported survivors mourned heavily in the foreign land of Babylon as their beloved homeland lay thus desolate for seventy years. So their return from exile in Babylon was what Isaiah had foretold.

23 It was after the exiled Jews returned from Babylon in 537 B.C.E. that the prophecy of the beautification of the Judean "wilderness," "waterless region" and "desert" had a miniature fulfillment. The larger and final fulfillment, the spiritual fulfillment, began to take place upon the remnant of spiritual Israelites after they returned from their exile from God's favor in Babylon the Great in the year 1919 C.E. Besides suffering the ill effects of the religious and political influence of Babylon the Great prior to the first world war, the spiritual estate of the spiritual Israelites was reduced to a desolate wilderness and desert by World War I, for which Babylon the Great was primarily responsible and which war she used against the remnant of spiritual Israelites. But when Almighty God Jehovah began conducting his remnant of worshipers out of Babylonian bondage in the year 1919, what a transformation of their spiritual estate on earth set in!

24 During World War I the lack of rainfall of God's blessings and expressed approval had resulted in

23. (a) When did the prophecy regarding beautification of the land have its miniature fulfillment? (b) When did the larger fulfillment of the prophecy begin to take place, and what parallel is evident in a comparison of the land of ancient Israel and the spiritual estate of the remnant of spiritual Israel?
24. Why had the "land" of spiritual Israel become parched and unproductive during World War I?

parched, unproductive areas in their privileges and the carrying out of their spiritual obligations to Jehovah God. He was in no position to bless the measure of fear of men that they displayed and the religious restraints that this imposed upon them. He could not bless the measure of contamination with the warring world with which they allowed themselves to be infected, especially by not taking the course of absolute neutrality toward the international wrangles of this world. He could not bless their being preoccupied more with their promised glorification in the heavenly kingdom than with the worldwide witness work that he had for them to do on earth in behalf of his newborn Messianic kingdom. Under such faulty conditions they could not produce the "fruits" of the Kingdom at the due time for fruits.—Matthew 21:43.

25 However, the delinquent remnant of spiritual Israelites could repent of their faulty course, when once it came to their attention. They could take note of their shortcomings and failings with regard to doing the divine will and could then proceed to correct matters as soon as they discerned the right course to take. Their doing this would remove the reason for God's disapproval and for his withholding of timely blessings for them. The ancient prophecy regarding the restoration of Jehovah's chosen people had said: "And I will make them and the surroundings of my hill a blessing, and I will cause the pouring rain to descend in its time. Pouring rains of blessing there will prove to be."—Ezekiel 34:26.

26 This downpour of blessings would have to occur before there could be any transformation in the estate of the restored remnant, whose estate had become like a "wilderness," a "waterless region," a "desert plain." The grandeur of the spiritual estate of Jehovah's re-

25. What change was possible for the remnant, however, as indicated in the Scriptures?
26. (a) So what had to occur before there could be a spiritual paradise? (b) How does the promise that "the glory of Lebanon itself must be given to it" help us to appreciate the condition of the spiritual estate of Jehovah's restored remnant?

stored remnant can today be appreciated by the prophetic comparisons that are made. For instance: "The glory of Lebanon itself must be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and of Sharon." (Isaiah 35:1, 2) A person merely has to think of the mountains of Lebanon that were clothed at that ancient time with magnificent evergreen trees, concerning which Jehovah inspired his prophet to say: "To you [Zion] the very glory of Lebanon will come, the juniper tree, the ash tree and the cypress at the same time, in order to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I shall glorify the very place of my feet." (Isaiah 60:13) Ancient Lebanon was so beautiful that Jehovah compared it to the Garden of Eden, saying to the king of Tyre, which city is located in Lebanon: "In Eden, the garden of God, you proved to be."—Ezekiel 28:11-13.

27 Other beautiful scenes with which comparisons could be made by Isaiah were "the splendor of Carmel and of Sharon." The mountain range of Carmel runs westward to terminate in an impressive headland that almost drops into the Mediterranean Sea at Haifa. Very fittingly the admiring lover in the Song of Solomon could say to his beloved Shulammitess: "Your head upon you is like Carmel." (Song of Solomon 7:5; compare Jeremiah 46:18.) The name Carmel means "orchard," or, "fruitful land." The mountain well matched its name when it was adorned with vineyards and orchards, as in the days of King Uzziah of Jerusalem.—2 Chronicles 26:10.

28 Indeed, anciently, the "splendor of Carmel" was widely known. But what about the "splendor . . . of Sharon"? Mention of the name stirs up a mental vision of the coastal plain that stretched northward from the seaport city of Joppa (meaning "beautiful") and that was studded with colorful flowers. (Acts 9:35) There come also to mind the words of the beloved Shulam-

27. What does the expression "the splendor of Carmel" add to the picture?
28. When we hear that the spiritual estate of the restored remnant is like the "splendor . . . of Sharon," what should come to our mind?

mite girl: "A mere saffron of the coastal plain [or, of Sharon] I am." (Song of Solomon 2:1, *margin*) Or, as *The Jerusalem Bible* quotes her words: "I am the rose of Sharon." And *The New English Bible:* "I am an asphodel in Sharon." (Also, *NW*, margin) Truly ancient Sharon had a "splendor" of its own.

29 When, to all this visualizing of the beautiful, we add the opening words of the prophet Isaiah: "The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron," a picture of sheer beauty is painted for us, in well-chosen inspired words. (Isaiah 35:1) Such is the transformed appearance that the once-desolate spiritual estate of the remnant of spiritual Israel is to take on after their restoration to Jehovah's favor.

30 Whose marvelous doings will this transformed appearance of an estate reflect? The inspired Isaiah answers with the words: "There will be those who will see the glory of Jehovah, the splendor of our God." (Isaiah 35:2) Only the God with the highest sense of beauty, the Creator, could do such a thing, change the mournful sight of seventy years of desolation to a scene of loveliness by means of a restored nation. The repatriated Israelites of ancient times saw the fulfillment of this prophecy in miniature. Those of today who have seen the prophecy carried out on a major scale that embraces the entire globe have been the Christian worshipers of Jehovah restored from religious bondage to Babylon the Great back to their proper spiritual estate on earth. In the eyes of the ancient frustrated Babylonians the beautification of the land of Judah that they had desolated was not a delightful sight. In the eyes of modern Babylon the Great the beautification of the spiritual estate of the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites is not a happifying sight either.

29. Thus, by means of the prophet Isaiah, what kind of picture is painted of the restored estate of the remnant?
30. (a) To whom is credit due for this marvelous transformation? (b) Who are the ones that see the prophecy's fulfillment and give glory to God for it?

31 It may be, however, that by the expression "There will be those" we are to understand "the wilderness and the waterless region . . . and the desert plain" of the desolate state of God's people. These places had lain in their sorry condition for so long, for seven decades, that they never expected to see better things for themselves once again. But by being altered in their condition and being given the glory and splendor like those of Lebanon and Carmel and Sharon, these places saw in their own transformed state "the glory of Jehovah, the splendor of our God."

32 What words of hope, then, Isaiah's prophecy contained for God's people with a temporarily desolated estate! At the time of their devastated state during World War I of 1914-1918 C.E., the captive remnant of spiritual Israelites did not discern the proper application of the prophecy and so did not draw from it the comfort that was in it for them. But now, especially since the explanations of prophecy as given in the book *Vindication,* Volume II, published in the year 1932 C.E., they see in the transformation of their spiritual estate "the glory of Jehovah, the splendor of our God."

STRENGTHENED FOR THE POSTEXILIC KINGDOM WORK

33 The hope-kindling words of the prophet Isaiah would naturally be hard for God's afflicted people to believe. Particularly so, as the fixed time for fulfillment of those words drew near, and the need arose to prepare for action. Hence, the exhortation that now interrupts the prophetic delineation of the beautiful restoration picture is very much in place: "Strengthen the weak hands, you people, and make the knees that are wobbling firm. Say to those who are anxious at

31. How else might that expression "There will be those" be understood?
32. Since when have the remnant seen in the transformation of their spiritual estate "the splendor of our God"?
33. What made the exhortation recorded at Isaiah 35:3, 4 especially appropriate?

heart: 'Be strong. Do not be afraid. Look! Your own God will come with vengeance itself, God even with a repayment. He himself will come and save you people.' "—Isaiah 35:3, 4.

34 Away back in the first century of our Common Era, the apostle Paul quoted from that prophetic exhortation when writing to the Christianized Hebrews in Jerusalem. He said: "Hence straighten up the hands that hang down and the enfeebled knees, and keep making straight paths for your feet, that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather that it may be healed." (Hebrews 12:12, 13) Those Christianized Hebrews then needed to do this strengthening work among themselves. They had passed through experiences as Christians that were quite disciplinary. Paul speaks of this when he says:

35 "Keep on remembering the former days in which, after you were enlightened, you endured a great contest under sufferings, sometimes while you were being exposed as in a theater both to reproaches and tribulations, and sometimes while you became sharers with those who were having such an experience. For you both expressed sympathy for those in prison and joyfully took the plundering of your belongings, knowing you yourselves have a better and an abiding possession."—Hebrews 10:32-34.

36 The apostle Paul likens such rough treatment at the hands of the persecutors to discipline that the heavenly Father, by his permission of such persecution, administers to his devoted children on earth. Even Jesus Christ, as our Exemplar, received such discipline from his heavenly Father. (Hebrews 12:1-6) In further explanation, Paul goes on to say: "It is for discipline you are enduring. God is dealing with you as with sons. For what son is he that a father does not discipline?

34, 35. (a) When the apostle Paul quoted that prophecy, where was a strengthening work needed? (b) What kind of experiences had those Christianized Hebrews been undergoing?

36. How is such treatment at the hands of persecutors like discipline from the heavenly Father, and with what objective in view?

But if you are without the discipline of which all have become partakers, you are really illegitimate children, and not sons. Furthermore, we used to have fathers who were of our flesh to discipline us, and we used to give them respect. Shall we not much more subject ourselves to the Father of our spiritual life and live? For they for a few days used to discipline us according to what seemed good to them, but he does so for our profit that we may partake of his holiness. True, no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness." —Hebrews 12:7-11.

[37] Because of the severe disciplining that those Christianized Hebrews had been receiving, the apostle Paul next quotes from Isaiah 35:3 and applies it to them. By thus strengthening one another, they would not give up on their endurance of discipline, but would enter into their reward in God's due time.—Hebrews 12:12.

[38] Likewise, in modern times, by enduring persecutions and hardships at the hands of Babylon the Great and her worldly accomplices, the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites went through severe disciplinary experiences. Naturally, when World War I ended on November 11, 1918, and they entered into a postwar period, the length of which they did not then know, they needed to strengthen the weak hands and make the wobbling knees firm. The greatest work in the history of the Christian congregation since Pentecost of 33 C.E. was now to be taken hold of. They needed to enter into the postwar work with a firm step, not limping between two opinions, but convinced that God was leading them in the right direction. The Times of the Gentiles had ended in 1914 C.E. The Messianic kingdom had been born in the heavens, and all the

37. Why, then, were they being encouraged to strengthen one another?
38. Following World War I, why was there a special need for the anointed remnant to strengthen weak hands and make wobbling knees firm?

foretold signs that were accumulating lent proof to that fact. Now was the time to march forward, unitedly, as witnesses of Jehovah's Messianic kingdom.

39 As we oldsters well know, something amazing was happening with this remnant of joint heirs of Christ's kingdom, something wholly unexpected according to our then understanding of the Bible prophecies. We were inclined to be "anxious at heart." But to us it was indeed said: "Be strong. Do not be afraid." (Isaiah 35:4) This exhortation was mightily conveyed in the two-part article entitled "Blessed Are the Fearless," which was published in the issues of *The Watch Tower* for August 1 and 15, 1919. On top of this the holding of the eight-day general assembly at Cedar Point, Ohio, on September 1-8, 1919, was a rousing experience, and the challenging assertion "Blessed Are the Fearless" was emphasized there.

40 Quite differently from what was the case with the regional four-day assemblies that were held by the anointed remnant during 1918 C.E. while World War I was still raging, at which no public discourses were advertised and delivered, the high feature of the 1919 Cedar Point Convention was the open-air public talk delivered by the Watch Tower Society's president, J. F. Rutherford, on the subject "The Hope for Distressed Humanity." Fearlessly, in that lecture, the public speaker declared that the League of Nations that was then proposed for establishing world peace and plenty would have God's displeasure. It was not "the political expression of the Kingdom of God on earth," that the clergy of Christendom claimed it to be. Those individuals in that audience of 7,000 at Cedar Point, Ohio, who survived to the outbreak of World War II in September of 1939 saw that the public speaker had told them the truth. The League of Nations as sponsored by the religious clergy had

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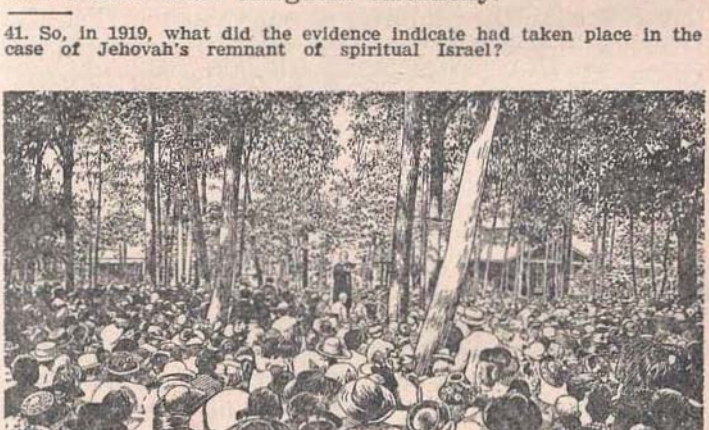
39, 40. (a) How, in 1919, were the anointed remnant told: "Be strong. Do not be afraid"? (b) In the public talk at the Cedar Point assembly, what evidence of fearlessness was there?

failed as a protector of world peace. World War II dealt it a deathblow and shoved it into an abyss. But the true Messianic kingdom that had been born in the heavens in 1914 continues to reign and to be advertised on earth by Jehovah's Christian witnesses.

[41] So, in 1919, the time had come for Jehovah's remnant of spiritual Israel to demonstrate to the world that they had been liberated from Babylon the Great. The evidences began to accumulate that they had been reinstated in His favor and that He had designated them to be his Christian witnesses. On the other hand, the evidences of God's displeasure at Babylon the Great began to multiply, finally massing up even to heaven. Never again would she be able, even in wartime, to take Jehovah's Christian witnesses into exile and silence their Kingdom testimony.

41. So, in 1919, what did the evidence indicate had taken place in the case of Jehovah's remnant of spiritual Israel?



J. F. Rutherford addressing convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, in 1919

42 The strengthening exhortation from Isaiah's prophecy carried with it the assurance: "Look! Your own God will come with vengeance itself, God even with a repayment. He himself will come and save you people." (Isaiah 35:4) The first postwar general convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, in 1919, and the resumption of the public witness work in that same year, constituted a plainly visible symbol that Jehovah God had saved his remnant of spiritual Israelites from fearful bondage in Babylon the Great. It was now the occasion for Him to come with vengeance against that world empire of the false religion that comes from Satan the Devil through ancient Babylon on the Euphrates River. The time was now due for Jehovah to come with a repayment to Babylon the Great for what she had done to his nation of spiritual Israel down through the centuries of our Common Era. The remnant of spiritual Israel he would now use in declaring the day of His vengeance and the way in which He would make repayment to Babylon the Great and her political, military accomplices.—Isaiah 61:1, 2; 2 Thessalonians 1:6.

THE TRANSFORMING OF THE RELIGIOUSLY CRIPPLED ONES

43 What response did the prophet Isaiah foresee to the rousing exhortation that he was used to convey to Jehovah's worshipers whose religious estate had for a time been made like a "wilderness," a "waterless region" and a "desert plain"? What would be the effect upon them of God's coming and saving them, whereas at the same time he was bringing vengeance and a repayment to their oppressors and desolators? "At that time," replies the prophet, "the eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will

42. (a) Against whom was it now time for God to come with "vengeance," and why? (b) What part would the remnant of spiritual Israel have in this?
43. What effect of God's action on behalf of his people did the prophet Isaiah foresee?

be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness. For in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain. And the heat-parched ground will have become as a reedy pool, and the thirsty ground as springs of water. In the abiding place of jackals, a resting-place for them, there will be green grass with reeds and papyrus plants."—Isaiah 35:5-7.

44 Release from the darksome dungeon—that was what the opening of the eyes of the blind ones meant! Such lightening of the eyes that comes through liberation was the work for which Jehovah reserved his Messianic Servant at the due time, saying to him: "I kept safeguarding you that I might give you as a covenant [or, pledge] for the people, to rehabilitate the land, to bring about the repossessing of the desolated hereditary possessions, to say to the prisoners, 'Come out!' to those who are in the darkness, 'Reveal yourselves!' " (Isaiah 49:8, 9) So in the year 537 B.C.E., after ancient Babylon had fallen to the Persian conqueror Cyrus the Great, God brought forth his exiled people from their long imprisonment in Babylon, to see the light of freedom in their "hereditary possessions," their beloved homeland.

45 Likewise, in the year 1919 C.E., Jehovah brought forth his anointed remnant whose eyes had been blinded by imprisonment in Babylon the Great in order for them to see the light of his favor in their restored spiritual estate. More and more, as time went on, their eyes took in the increasing beauty of their spiritual estate.

46 As regards their ears of spiritual understanding, these had been deafened to the Bible prophecies about a restoration for them and about a worldwide witness

44. What is meant by opening "the eyes of the blind ones," and how was this done in 537 B.C.E.?
45. What opening of "the eyes of the blind ones" took place in 1919?
46. In what way were their ears 'deaf,' but in what has the unstopping of their ears resulted?

work for them after their release from Babylon the Great. They had not heard explained to them the correct meaning of those prophecies. Now, after their return to their revived spiritual estate, they began to hear such prophecies as explained through God's organization and to get the sense of such prophecies now undergoing fulfillment. Faithfully has been fulfilled the divine promise: "In that day the deaf ones will certainly hear the words of the book, and out of the gloom and out of the darkness even the eyes of the blind ones will see. And the meek ones will certainly increase their rejoicing in Jehovah himself, and even the poor ones of mankind will be joyful in the Holy One of Israel himself." (Isaiah 29:18, 19) To this day the ears of Jehovah's Christian worshipers remain unstopped to the messages that come from the unfolding prophecies. They keep their ears unstopped to the divine commands that come from his written Word with respect to the Kingdom work now to be done throughout the earth.

47 A spiritual miracle has also taken place with regard to the "lame one." The remnant of spiritual Israel had been lamed by Babylon the Great and through her use of the political, judicial and military authorities of the land. Their going about in full public and with the fullest freedom of religion had been seriously hampered. But when God's exhortation through Isaiah was heard and the strengthening of the weak hands and the making firm of the wobbling knees took place, steady, firm and sure-footed walking was restored to the responding spiritual Israelites. As it had been foretold: "At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does." Uphill kinds of work in Jehovah's Kingdom service were vigorously undertaken. There was a leaping, a bounding, into the work to be done in the preaching of "this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness to

47. (a) What kind of lameness had the remnant experienced? (b) As foretold, how do they "climb up just as a stag does"?

all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) Figuratively speaking, it was a climb to organize all the restored spiritual Israelites for preaching the Kingdom message from house to house.

48 "And the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness." (Isaiah 35:6) This, too, came into fulfillment at the restoration of the remnant of spiritual Israel to their proper spiritual estate in the postwar era. They had much for which to praise the God of their salvation as they beheld the transformation of their station on earth. Rather than continuing to pine for their heavenly home, they found life more livable in their spiritual estate on earth. "For in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain." Life in God's Kingdom service here on earth became refreshing to them spiritually. Water of life started flowing forth from the Holy Bible as God's spirit made it more understandable, and the meaning of its prophecies became fuller and thrillingly encouraging. So, was this not a stimulating reason for Jehovah's restored worshipers, whose tongue had been "speechless" because of the spiritual desolation that had previously confronted them, to "cry out in gladness"? Yes, indeed!

49 As a result of the showers of blessings that God caused to pour down upon his restored remnant of spiritual Israel, the further gladdening features of Isaiah's prophecy came to life in a figurative sense before their eyes: "And the heat-parched ground will have become as a reedy pool, and the thirsty ground as springs of water. In the abiding place of jackals, a resting-place for them, there will be green grass with reeds and papyrus plants."—Isaiah 35:7.

50 The mention of jackals calls to mind scenes of

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48. When did the "tongue of the speechless one" begin to "cry out," and what caused this?
49. As foretold in Isaiah 35:7, what else was to result from Jehovah's blessing upon his people?
50. (a) What is suggested by the mention of "jackals"? (b) The appearance of "green grass with reeds and papyrus plants" indicates what change?

desolation. The jackal is a sort of scavenger wild dog that frequents lonely, wild regions and even areas that resemble deserts. Their presence would suggest dry regions, barren-looking. If left in such a dry state, the abiding place and resting-place for jackals would not be a desirable place for humans to live. They would cry out and pray for water, for springs, for rainfall. With such irrigation supplied, there would form reedy pools in depressions. Even papyrus plants would grow there. And carpets of green grass would cover the onetime desert plain. Humans would move in, and no longer would the wailing and yelping of the jackals add weirdness to the gathering gloom of night. A remarkable change of that kind began in 537 B.C.E.

51 Before the desolating of the land of the kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians, who came down by the northern route, the prophet Jeremiah foretold what their coming would lead to, saying: "Listen! A report! Here it has come, also a great pounding from the land of the north, in order to make the cities of Judah a desolate waste, the lair of jackals." Also, as the mouthpiece of Jehovah, he says: "I will make Jerusalem piles of stones, the lair of jackals; and the cities of Judah I shall make a desolate waste, without an inhabitant." —Jeremiah 10:22; 9:11.

52 Consequently, when the exiled Jews left Babylon and came back to their homeland after it had lain as an uninhabited wasteland for seventy years, there were lairs, abiding places, resting-places of jackals that needed to be transformed to grassy areas, with placid pools at the edges of which reeds and papyrus plants could grow. So the repatriated Jews conquered the wasteland, and the jackals moved out. In a similar manner, figuratively speaking, there began a change in outward aspects of the spiritual estate of the liberated remnant of spiritual Israel from 1919 C.E. onward.

51, 52. (a) How was this portion of the prophecy fulfilled in the case of the homeland of the exiled Jews? (b) In a similar manner, what has occurred since 1919 C.E.?

From then on, any pollutants of their spiritual estate that were discovered were purged away. But as regards the worldly nations, they went on polluting the earthly globe as never before. In spite of this world pollution, behold! a spiritual paradise has been cultivated by Jehovah's Christian witnesses, under His blessing and to the honor of His name.

CHAPTER 9

The "Way of Holiness" to the Spiritual Paradise

A LAND like a paradise in a literal sense! This is what the Jewish exiles hoped to make out of their long-desolate homeland, as they departed from Babylon in the year 537 B.C.E. Before them lay the prospect of realizing the fulfillment of the glowing words that the prophet Isaiah had spoken regarding their homeland: "The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron. Without fail it will blossom, and it will really be joyful with joyousness and with glad crying out. The glory of Lebanon itself must be given to it, the splendor of Carmel and of Sharon. There will be those who will see the glory of Jehovah, the splendor of our God."—Isaiah 35:1, 2.

[2] With such a grand prospect before them, how heart-satisfying it must have felt to the liberated Jewish remnant and their loyal companions when they got on the march out of Babylon and were really

1. What grand prospect lay ahead of the Jewish exiles when they left Babylon in 537 B.C.E.?
2. How had God given them assurance of a safe, successful return to their homeland?

homeward bound! Comfortingly, they were assured from God that he would make a special way for them for a safe, successful return to their longed-for homeland. To this effect were his words by his prophet Isaiah: "And there will certainly come to be a highway there, even a way; and the Way of Holiness it will be called. The unclean one will not pass over it. And it will be for the one walking on the way, and no foolish ones will wander about on it. No lion will prove to be there, and the rapacious sort of wild beasts will not come up on it. None will be found there; and the repurchased ones must walk there."—Isaiah 35:8, 9.

[3] Pagan Babylon, to which the surviving Jews had been deported after Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C.E., was religiously unclean, unholy. Its land was filled with idols and temples of false worship. The homeland to which the liberated Jews were to return was to be a religiously clean ground, a holy land, for there the temple of Jehovah God was to be rebuilt on its original site and the repeopled province of Judah was to be a land where the pure worship of the one living and true God flourished. Certainly, then, the way back had to be a "Way of Holiness" in fact, and not in name only. The returnees using this God-provided way had to have a holy motivation, that of restoring to their long-desolate homeland the clean worship of the God of Holiness. That was the main reason why they had been released from Babylon. —Ezra 1:1-4.

[4] "The unclean one will not pass over it." An Israelite unclean with Babylonian religious contamination would have no rightful passage on the Sacred Way back to Judah and Jerusalem. Nothing of a Babylonish religious nature was to be carried back with him to be transplanted on the holy soil where exclusive devotion

3. (a) What made Babylon, from which the Jews were departing, religiously unclean? (b) How was the way back to the land of Judah to be, in fact, a "Way of Holiness"?
4. (a) In what way would it prove true that, as foretold, "the unclean one will not pass over it"? (b) What special obligation did Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua have in this regard?

to Jehovah God was to prevail. The divine command to those who were carrying back the holy utensils for restoration to Jehovah's temple that was to be rebuilt in Jerusalem was: "Turn away, turn away, get out of there, touch nothing unclean; get out from the midst of her [Babylon], keep yourselves clean, you who are carrying the utensils of Jehovah." (Isaiah 52:11) The worship of Jehovah does not mix agreeably with Babylonian false religion. So the Way of Holiness must not be defiled by an apostate Israelite who would scheme to introduce Babylonish idolatrous religion into the restored homeland. And the Jewish governor, Zerubbabel, and the Aaronic high priest, Joshua (or, Jeshua), who would be in charge of the march back to the province of Judah, were obliged to see to it that no apostate, evil-designing Israelite should accompany the truly repentant, clean-hearted remnant back to Jerusalem.

[5] "And it will be for the one walking on the way." Who could *that* be? It could never prove to be an unclean person, who is excluded from passing over the way. Since the way in which this one must walk is the Way of Holiness, it must be the individual who is living up to Jehovah's holiness, who is seeking to be holy just as He is holy. (Leviticus 11:44, 45) Of course, Jehovah himself was the One who was going ahead of the liberated Israelites whose faces were set toward the holy mountain of worship at Jerusalem, and He outstandingly would be The One walking on the way; never would He walk on an unholy way or lead His people on an unholy way. (Isaiah 52:12) Necessarily, those following on the way after him need to be holy like Him, not touching the unclean things pertaining to false Babylonish religion.

[6] This fact is further proved by the next sentence identifying the one who is debarred from the Way of Holiness: "And no foolish ones will wander about on

5. Who is spoken of in Isaiah 35:8 as "the one walking on the way"?
6, 7. Who are the "foolish ones" who were not to be permitted to wander on the Way of Holiness?

it." (Isaiah 35:8) By the designation "foolish" here is not meant one who is just silly, inexperienced, ignorantly doing what is unwise. He is, rather, the perverse fool, the one who is stubbornly committed to the course of unwisdom.

7 Jehovah gave a true description of this kind of foolish person, when He said to the prophet Jeremiah: "My people is foolish. Of me they have not taken note. They are unwise sons; and they are not those having understanding. Wise they are for doing bad, but for doing good they actually have no knowledge." (Jeremiah 4:22) Because of their ingrained, persistent foolishness they suffered the desolating of Judah and Jerusalem and their deportation to the pagan land of Babylon. So now, on the return of the faithful remnant to their desolated homeland, such "foolish" ones were not to be permitted to wander about freely on the Highway of Holiness, nor to stray in upon it.

8 Not only would there be freedom from contact with such undesirable elements on the road back to their homeland far off from religiously polluted Babylon, but no wild, flesh-eating beasts would lie in wait alongside the road to prey upon the ones using that way back to Jehovah's favor. The divine promise was: "No lion will prove to be there, and the rapacious sort of wild beasts will not come up on it. None will be found there; and the repurchased ones must walk there." —Isaiah 35:9.

9 Thus no man-eating wild beasts would infest the Way of Holiness. If no such dangerous animals add terror to the way back to Jehovah's worship in His chosen land, then no beastlike men or packs of men would be allowed to leap out suddenly and raid the line of marchers, to plunder and to kill. So there should be no fear in the hearts of the liberated remnant of Jehovah's people about setting out on the return

8. As shown in Isaiah 35:9, from what else were the Jews promised freedom en route back to their homeland?
9. Was this a promise of safety only against animal attack, or what?

journey over the way that He provided. Courageously, and with full trust in Almighty God, there was a remnant that volunteered to pioneer the way. As it was written: "And the repurchased ones must walk there."

10 These were the ones repurchased, redeemed, by Jehovah God. Because of disobedience to Him and rebellion against his pure worship, the people of the kingdom of Judah had been "sold" to the Babylonians for deportation to the land of their captors. Long before their deportation to Babylon, Jehovah had said to them: "Which one of my creditors is it to whom I have sold you people? Look! Because of your own errors you have been sold, and because of your own transgressions your mother has been sent away." Also: "For this is what Jehovah has said: 'It was for nothing that you people were sold, and it will be without money that you will be repurchased.'" (Isaiah 50:1; 52:3) That is to say, Jehovah did not get any personal benefit from selling them to the Babylonians, nor does he receive any material benefit from repurchasing them from the land of their captors, their Babylonian masters.

A LIBERATION NOT PAID FOR

11 The deported Jews did not pay Jehovah any money for him to repurchase them, neither did they pay money to the Babylonians to buy back their own freedom. It was Jehovah that unselfishly bought them back from the consequences of their own errors and transgressions. He did not owe the Babylonians anything for having taken captive his people and removing them from their God-given land. So He did not have to pay the Babylonians to take possession of His chosen people once again, except to pay vengeance to the Babylonians for their depredations against his holy city Jerusalem and its temple and its throne of

10. Why had these people been "sold" to the Babylonians, and on what basis were they being "repurchased"?
11. Were the Babylonians paid in some way when God took possession of his chosen people again?

the kingdom of David.—Jeremiah 51:11, 36, 37; 1 Chronicles 29:23.

12 In modern likeness, Jehovah God owed nothing to Babylon the Great and her worldly accomplices for liberating the remnant of spiritual Israel from their control in the year 1919 C.E. Neither did the anointed remnant pay any money to Babylon the Great or to the kings and rulers of the world with whom she commits spiritual fornication, to purchase their own liberation. The credit for their liberation in 1919 was to Jehovah alone, for he "repurchased" them from the consequences of their shortcomings by the satisfaction of his own justice through his Anointed Servant, Jesus Christ.

13 Thus it was that, as a repurchased people, the remnant of spiritual Israel turned their backs upon Babylon the Great and entered upon the Highway of Holiness. Theirs was an attitude of repentance as they came more and more to appreciate their past faults, failings and delinquencies, especially during World War I. Ever keener became their discernment that they must render holiness to their divine Liberator, that to Him they must render exclusive devotion. This entailed upon them their keeping separate from this world, the Devil's visible organization. To His sovereignty, as represented now in the Messianic kingdom newly born in the heavens in 1914 C.E., they must give their fullest allegiance. Accordingly, they must preach the Kingdom, advertise it, world wide.

14 Since the Highway of Holiness was for only the clean ones, they needed to clean up from any and all contaminations and soils that they had suffered from captivity and bondage to Babylon the Great, the world

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12. How was it "without money" that the modern-day remnant of spiritual Israel was "repurchased"?
13. Following their liberation from Babylon the Great, the discernment of the remnant as to what became ever keener, and what did this involve?
14. (a) What taints of uncleanness did God's people need to clear out of their lives? (b) To what should those who desire to serve God conform their conduct and their attitude?

empire of false religion. So—out with her religious festivals! Out with the nationalistic festivals of this world, of which Babylon the Great is a friend! (James 4:4) Out with any kind of conformity with her and her traditions! God's Holy Word, the Bible, is the thing to which to conform. Its teachings are the things with which to make our minds over so as to discern God's will and have the right attitude of mind and heart.

15 By such a course alone could the remnant of spiritual Israel come into the full favor of the God of the Holy Bible and enter into the spiritual paradise that he had in reserve for them. Let the so-called Christian realm, Christendom, and all the rest of Babylon the Great go on in their "foolish" way during the postwar period, but, as for the anointed remnant, they would have nothing to do with such "foolish ones." They would not tolerate any "foolish ones" in their midst, inasmuch as God's Word had specified that "no foolish ones will wander about on it [on the Highway of Holiness]." (Isaiah 35:8) Furthermore, they would not allow men or man-made organizations to menace the Highway of Holiness like lions or like any rapacious sort of wild beasts. Fear of such terrifying men and organizations would not frighten off the repentant seekers of God's favor from entering and passing over his Highway of Holiness. Fear of Him would minimize or nullify the fear of ferocious men, especially since Jehovah himself was the main one, the leading one, "walking on the way."

16 With an increasing appreciation of God's requirements for them in this postwar period of restoration and reconstruction, Jehovah's "repurchased ones" started off in 1919 C.E. in their walk over his Highway

15. (a) If they personally conducted themselves properly, would it make any difference if they tolerated in their midst any persistently "foolish ones"? (b) Why would beastlike men not menace the Highway of Holiness?

16. (a) In what year did the anointed remnant start out over the Highway of Holiness? (b) Were they aware that they were leaving Babylon the Great behind?

of Holiness. They definitely knew that they were parting from any company with or bondage to that religious harlot, Babylon the Great, for, after their bad treatment at the hands of her and her worldly paramours during World War I, they had all the more reason to hate her and to be opposed to her. They recognized her as bloodguilty and unclean, and they did not want to touch her in any religious fraternizing way. They were familiar with the divine command in Isaiah 52:11: "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD." (King James *Authorized Version*) (See the *Watch Tower* issue of November 1, 1918, page 333, under the title "Purity a Qualification of the Royal Priesthood" —*"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." —Isaiah 52:11.*) So the anointed remnant carried out that command.

17 Back in the year 537 B.C.E., that command applied to the exiled Jews, captive in ancient Babylon. But after the year 33 of our Common Era, when the natural, circumcised Jews were cast off by Jehovah God for their rejection of his Messiah, the Christian apostle Paul applied that divine command to the spiritual Israelites, the Christian Israel. Quoting from Isaiah 52:11, Paul wrote to the Christian congregation in Corinth, Achaia (Greece), and said: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? . . . Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:14-18, *AV*) Accordingly, back there in the first century of our

17. (a) To whom did the apostle Paul apply that divine command at Isaiah 52:11? (b) So what action must be taken before a person can become a true Christian?

Common Era, before they could become true Christians, the believers had to leave Babylon the Great. So, too, in this twentieth century C.E.

[18] The divine requirement of this kind for one to become a true Christian was pointedly set out in the year 1923 C.E. On August 18-26 of that year one of a number of regional assemblies of the International Bible Students Association was held in Los Angeles, California, U.S.A. On Saturday afternoon of this convention, J. F. Rutherford as president of the I.B.S.A. addressed the gathering (approximately 2,500 attending this convention), and he spoke on the subject "Sheep and Goats," this being based on Jesus' parable recorded in Matthew 25:31-46. At the close of this discourse, the speaker read a pertinent resolution and moved its adoption by his audience. Except for a couple of abstainers, the audience stood up in adoption of this timely resolution. The last two paragraphs of the resolution are of special interest at this time. The two paragraphs read:

> We, therefore, in the spirit of love sound the warning to all such peace and order loving and God-fearing ones who are associated with the denominational churches, and point them to the fact that they can have no part in nor fellowship with that class of pretending Christians who repudiate the Word of God and deny the Lord Jesus Christ and his kingdom; and we call upon them to heed the Word of God and separate themselves from the unclean thing (2 Corinthians 6:17), to withdraw themselves from the unrighteous ecclesiastical systems designated by the Lord as "Babylon", and to "come out from her, lest they be partakers of her sins and receive of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4); and
>
> We appeal to all such to recognize Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, and that his kingdom now at hand is the hope and salvation of the peoples; and that they individually and collectively declare themselves on the side of the Lord and in sympathy with his cause, and be ready to receive the blessings of God's

18, 19. In a resolution adopted at a Christian assembly in 1923 C.E., what action were God-fearing persons in Babylon the Great urged to take?

kingdom which he has prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

19 Thereafter this Resolution was published in tract form, in a number of principal languages, and circulated throughout the earth by the tens of millions of copies.—See *The Watch Tower* under date of November 1, 1923, pages 326, 327.

20 This Resolution did not instruct these sheeplike people to make a full dedication of themselves to God through Christ and to get baptized in symbol of that dedication. That came later, first in the year 1934. (See *The Watchtower* under date of August 15, 1934, page 250, paragraph 34.) Nevertheless, the Resolution of 1923 was one of the progressive steps in preparing this sheeplike class to take the course that would in due time put them on the Highway of Holiness with the remnant of spiritual Israel. These sheeplike well-doers toward the anointed remnant were like the Nethinim (Given Ones) that left the land of Babylon in 537 B.C.E. and returned with the faithful remnant of natural Israel to the desolated land of Judah and to the former location of Jerusalem (or, Zion). Those ancient Nethinim not only had some menial service in connection with the temple of Jerusalem but also had a share in the reconstruction of that holy city. (1 Chronicles 9:2; Ezra 2:43-54, 58, 70; 7:24; 8:17-20; Nehemiah 3:26, 31; 7:46-56, 60, 73) Like those of old, the sheeplike Nethinim of today have been very helpful to the anointed remnant of Christ's spiritual brothers.

THE JOYFUL RETURN

21 Release from a pagan religious organization and the resumption of pure religious worship under the

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20. (a) In 1934, what further step was taken to aid the sheeplike ones to get on the Highway of Holiness with the anointed remnant? (b) To what group that left Babylon with the Jewish exiles do the sheeplike ones correspond?

21. With what attitude of mind did the Israelite remnant return to Zion in 537 B.C.E., and why appropriately so?

renewed favor and blessing of the one true and living God ought to be a joy-inspiring event for any seeker of the right religion. This is exactly what such a thing was for the Israelite remnant back there in the year 537 B.C.E. The prophet Isaiah was inspired to foretell the joy of the occasion, saying: "And the very ones redeemed by Jehovah will return and certainly come to Zion with a joyful cry; and rejoicing to time indefinite will be upon their head. To exultation and rejoicing they will attain, and grief and sighing must flee away."—Isaiah 35:10.

22 For the ancient Israelites the miniature fulfillment of this gladdening prophecy began in the year 537 B.C.E., in the first year of the reign of the Persian king, Cyrus the Great. (2 Chronicles 36:20-23; Ezra 1:1-4; Isaiah 44:26 through 45:7) Just as back there Jehovah God used his foretold anointed servant, King Cyrus, to bring about the deliverance and release of the Jewish remnant from Babylon, so, in this twentieth century, this same God has used the Greater Cyrus, the reigning King Jesus Christ, in effecting the deliverance and release of the remnant of spiritual Israel from Babylon the Great.—Revelation 14:1-8.

23 Those who returned over the Highway of Holiness to Zion (or, Jerusalem) were called "the repurchased ones," "the very ones redeemed by Jehovah." (Isaiah 35:9, 10) The repurchase price, the redemption price, in this case was prophetically referred to in Isaiah 43:1-4, in these words: "And now this is what Jehovah has said, your Creator, O Jacob, and your Former, O Israel: 'Do not be afraid, for I have repurchased you. I have called you by your name. You are mine. In

22. Whom did Jehovah use to bring about the deliverance (a) of the Jewish remnant in 537 B.C.E.? (b) of the remnant of spiritual Israel in this twentieth century?

23, 24. (a) What is the price for the "repurchased ones" that is referred to in Isaiah 43:1-4? (b) So what did Cyrus the Great receive in place of the natural Israelites whom he restored to their homeland? (c) How is it that the remnant of spiritual Israel since 1919 C.E. are "repurchased ones"?

case you should pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not flood over you. In case you should walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, neither will the flame itself singe you. For I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel your Savior. I have given Egypt as a ransom for you, Ethiopia and Seba in place of you. Owing to the fact that you have been precious in my eyes, you have been considered honorable, and I myself have loved you. And I shall give men in place of you, and national groups in place of your soul.'"

[24] In place of the remnant of natural Israel whom Cyrus the Great restored to their homeland, the God of Justice gave to him and his descendants African territories and their peoples and national groups, by conquest. These constituted the repurchase price, the redemption value, the ransom. (Esther 1:1-4) In this twentieth century of ours, in behalf of the remnant of spiritual Israel and the "great crowd" of sheeplike ones who resemble the ancient Nethinim, Jehovah says to his Greater Cyrus, Jesus Christ: "Ask of me, that I may give nations as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your own possession. You will break them with an iron scepter, as though a potter's vessel you will dash them to pieces." (Psalm 2:8, 9) Accordingly, the repentant remnant of spiritual Israel, who have been released from Babylon the Great since 1919 C.E., may Scripturally be spoken of as the "repurchased ones," "the very ones redeemed by Jehovah." In a particular sense, then, they belong to Jehovah God through Christ.

[25] The first group of exiles that left Babylon and headed for Zion in 537 B.C.E. comprised, at most, 49,942 persons, of which 42,360 were Israelites. The

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25. (a) Did the exiled Israelites all return from Babylon to Jerusalem at the same time? (b) In modern times, did all those who came to make up the remnant of spiritual Israel leave Babylon the Great in the year 1919?

rest were slaves and professional singers. (Nehemiah 7:66, 67; Ezra 2:64, 65) Sixty-nine years later, or in 468 B.C.E., about 1,500 men and their families joined the faithful Aaronic priest Ezra in returning to Jerusalem with the permission of the Persian king, Artaxerxes (Longimanus). This must have been of great encouragement to the first contingent of returned Jewish exiles who were endeavoring to cultivate and beautify the beloved homeland to which they had been restored. (Ezra 7:1 through 8:15) In our twentieth century, it was from 1919 C.E. onward that the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel began departing from bondage to Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. During the years following World War I and particularly down to 1935 C.E., the number of the anointed remnant increased as more left Babylon the Great to make up the remnant. So, not all the members of today's remnant left Babylon the Great and got restored to Jehovah's favor and service in 1919. Continually throughout the years after 1919, individuals were breaking loose from Babylon the Great to enter into the paradise-like spiritual estate of Jehovah's restored remnant.

[26] Different from the case of the Jewish exiles in 537 B.C.E., the modern-day remnant of spiritual Israel did not have to travel from one geographical location on earth to another. They traversed the Highway of Holiness from Babylon the Great to the spiritual paradise by obeying God's command to cast off bondage to unholy Babylon the Great and by taking their stand in the free spiritual estate of Jehovah's restored remnant. An observer simply had to attend the international convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A., September 1-8, 1919, to appreciate that it was "with a

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26. (a) How has the modern-day remnant traveled on the Highway of Holiness away from Babylon the Great and to the spiritual paradise? (b) Where was their joy over their changed situation evident at an early date, and how long-lived did that joy prove to be?

joyful cry" that the remnant of spiritual Israelites had set out over the Highway of Holiness and had returned to God's favor and had "come to Zion." The joy and renewed zeal of that first postwar general convention of Jehovah's worshipers spread to the congregations of His dedicated people in all parts of the earth. The joy at religious freedom from Babylon the Great and at reinstatement in their God-given spiritual estate was not fleeting, short-lived. As Isaiah 35:10 foretold, "rejoicing to time indefinite will be upon their head." As they intensified their efforts in preaching world wide "this good news of the kingdom" and as they discerned more and more the spiritual paradise that was being cultivated in their spiritual estate, they lifted up their heads with augmented rejoicing.

[27] The words of divine prophecy had to be fulfilled: "To exultation and rejoicing they will attain, and grief and sighing must flee away." (Isaiah 35:10) In the year 537 B.C.E., at the beginning of the seventh lunar month (Tishri), the repatriated Jews gathered to Jerusalem and rebuilt the altar to Jehovah at the temple site, to renew the offering of sacrifices to him there. Then, on the fifteenth day of Tishri, they began celebrating the seven-day festival of the booths, which was regularly the most joyful festival of the year in all the Jewish calendar of annual events. (Ezra 3:1-6) In the second year of their return from exile, in the second lunar month of the sacred calendar, their joy was heightened still more, when the foundation of the temple of Jehovah was laid at its original site on Mount Moriah. The emotions of some stirred them to tears, but others rejoiced:

[28] "Hence the people were not distinguishing the sound of the shout of rejoicing from the sound of the

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27, 28. In 537 B.C.E., what happened in fulfillment of the latter part of Isaiah 35:10?

weeping of the people, for the people were shouting with a loud shout, and the sound itself was heard even to a great distance."—Ezra 3:8-13.

29 All of that was a miniature pattern of the unspeakable exultation and rejoicing to which the restored remnant of spiritual Israel attained after their liberation from Babylon the Great. Grief over what they had suffered at the hands of Babylon the Great and her worldly paramours during World War I was swallowed up in joy at the blessings of their transformed spiritual estate. The sighing to which they had given way because of religious bondage and restraints fled away. The hardships of the world's post-war era, including even the horrors and persecutions of World War II, could not stifle their exultation and rejoicing in Jehovah and his reigning Messianic kingdom. They did not grieve over these mundane things, and never again did they submit to religious bondage to Babylon the Great, so as to cause them to sigh at further oppressions by her.

30 To the contrary, their joy was enhanced by the flocking to their side of an increasing "great crowd" of sheeplike worshipers of Jehovah God. This "great crowd" of "other sheep," like the Nethinim of ancient Israel, began following the anointed remnant over the Highway of Holiness from the year 1935 C.E. forward. (Revelation 7:9-17; John 10:16; Matthew 25:31-46) In loyalty to Jehovah God and his heavenly kingdom by his Son Jesus Christ, these sheeplike escapees from Babylon the Great gave active aid and comfort to the remnant of spiritual Israelites, the spiritual "brothers" of the King Jesus Christ. Their joy abounds at their own religious freedom, and they share fully in the rejoicing of the anointed remnant in their trans-

29. In the case of the remnant of spiritual Israel, how did "grief and sighing" flee away?

30, 31. (a) Starting in 1935 C.E., who joined the remnant on the Highway of Holiness? (b) What reasons for joy have they experienced as foretold in Revelation 7:16, 17?

formed spiritual estate. As it is written concerning the "great crowd" in Revelation 7:16, 17:

31 "They will hunger [spiritually] no more nor thirst [spiritually] anymore, neither will the sun beat down upon them [in divine disapproval] nor any scorching heat, because the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes."

32 To this "great crowd" of sheeplike followers of the Lamb Jesus Christ there is extended the hope of surviving the oncoming "great tribulation" in which this worldly system of things will be brought to an eternal end. (Revelation 7:14) With the faithful anointed remnant of spiritual Israel they expect to survive into the promised new system of things under God's Messianic kingdom. To have this experience, will it not be a joy for them? Truly it may be said concerning both the anointed remnant and the "great crowd" that "rejoicing to time indefinite will be upon their head." (Isaiah 35:10) As the earth becomes more and more polluted by the ruinous things of selfish mankind today, the spiritual paradise enjoyed by the divinely blessed remnant and the "great crowd" of loving companions flourishes with exhilarating healthiness.

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32. What further reasons for "rejoicing to time indefinite" are there ahead of the "great crowd" and the remnant of spiritual Israel?

CHAPTER 10

The God-fearing King of the Spiritual Paradise

WHEN our first parents, Eve and Adam, disobediently ate the forbidden fruit, God sentenced them to death and drove them out of the Garden of Eden. The Paradise of Pleasure was no place for rebels against the Planter and Owner of the garden. (Genesis 2:8 through 3:24) This set the pattern regarding those whom Jehovah God counts worthy to dwell in the spiritual paradise today.

[2] A person's natural environment might be ever so much like a paradise, yet if one's neighbors on all sides were self-seeking, lawless, vicious, godless people, it would not be a pleasant place in which to live. People like that could make life miserable, insecure, and unfavorable to spirituality and godliness. Life on earth today, with its increasing rate of crime, has become like that, even in suburban areas that the residents try to keep looking beautiful to the eye. Jehovah God kept the original paradise of mankind clean of such an undesirable human element. Today he keeps the spiritual paradise of the remnant of spiritual Israel and their sheeplike Christian companions free of such harmful, ruinous human elements.

[3] The approved residents of the spiritual paradise, regardless of whether they are of the remnant of spiritual Israel or of the "great crowd" of sheeplike com-

1. As to those counted worthy to dwell in the spiritual paradise today, what do we learn from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Eden?
2. (a) How do the attitude and conduct of other people affect one's enjoyment of life, even in surroundings that are beautiful to the eye? (b) So what elements does Jehovah exclude from the spiritual paradise?
3. (a) From what backgrounds do the residents of the spiritual paradise come? (b) Consequently, what changes are required in them?

panions, are drawn from people of all races, nationalities, colors and languages, naturally. (Revelation 5:9, 10; 7:9, 10) As natural descendants of Adam and Eve, they have inherited imperfection and sinfulness. They have cultivated various attitudes and dispositions according to the circumstances under which they were born and brought up and morally influenced. In that condition the message of God's Messianic kingdom found them and was preached to them. (Matthew 24:14) Consequently, for people of such widely different types to live together peacefully and lovingly in a spiritual paradise, it would first require an amazing transformation of personalities, to make the residents of the paradise homogeneous, like-minded, of like disposition. To bring this about would call for more than a mere human influence. It would need the irresistible spirit of God.

4 Very vital to the transformation of personalities for life in the spiritual paradise on earth would be a ruler who himself had the spirit of Jehovah God and who delighted in imparting that spirit to his subjects in Paradise. Necessarily, this Paradise ruler has to be a heavenly, superhuman ruler, under whom all the Paradise residents would willingly unite according to God's will. Such a heavenly spirit ruler the Almighty God has already provided, in fulfillment of the inspired prophecy of Isaiah 11:1-10. The prophecy, recorded three hundred years after the successful reign of King David the son of Jesse of Bethlehem, points to the source from which this spirit-filled ruler would come. The Christian apostle Paul leaves no question as to who that ruler is, when, at the climax of his argument, he quotes the prophecy of Isaiah 11:10, saying to the mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles in Rome:

5 "That with one accord you may with one mouth

4, 5. (a) To bring about such a transformation would require what kind of ruler? (b) In what Biblical prophecy is this ruler foretold, and how does the apostle Paul identify him?

glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore welcome one another, just as the Christ also welcomed us, with glory to God in view. For I say that Christ actually became a minister . . . that the nations might glorify God for his mercy. Just as it is written: . . . And again Isaiah says: 'There will be the root of Jesse, and there will be one arising to rule nations; on him nations will rest their hope.' "—Romans 15:6-12; Isaiah 11:10, *LXX*.

[6] Because of his descent from King David the son of Jesse, who belonged to the tribe of Judah, Jesus Christ was also a descendant of this Jesse of Bethlehem-Judah. (Matthew 1:1-6; 2:4-6; Micah 5:2) However, Jesus Christ came on the earthly scene more than six hundred years after the overthrow of the kingdom of David at Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E., and at that time the vast majority of the Jews were not inclined to think that he was the Messiah, the foretold Anointed One through whom all the nations would be blessed eternally. To those unbelieving Jews he seemed to be a very unlikely prospect for kingship in the Messianic kingdom of God. He was not very impressive-looking according to their worldly view. But the very prophecy of Isaiah indicated that this would be so. In comparison with the haughty, pretentious-looking rulers of the earth, he appeared to be very unpromising. So, in order to point up this lopsided comparison, the opening verse of Isaiah, chapter eleven, is preceded by these final two verses of chapter ten:

[7] "Look! The true Lord, Jehovah of armies, is lopping off boughs with a terrible crash; and those tall in growth are being cut down, and the high ones themselves become low. And he has struck down the thickets

6, 7. (a) As indicated in the prophecy, of whom was Jesus a descendant? (b) When Jesus Christ came on the earthly scene, how were the majority of the Jews inclined to view him? (c) How had the prophet Isaiah indicated that, from a worldly view, the Messiah would not be impressive-looking?

of the forest with an iron tool, and by a powerful one Lebanon itself will fall."—Isaiah 10:33, 34.

8 In Isaiah's day the Assyrian World Power was the greatest worldly threat to Jerusalem and the reigning line of kings that descended from David the son of Jesse. Apparently, then, the prophecy of Isaiah was comparing the Assyrian king and his mighty military forces to the massive trees of the mountains of Lebanon. When, during Isaiah's lifetime, King Sennacherib of Assyria and his terrifying armies were devastating the land of Judah, even the royal city of Jerusalem seemed to be within his grasp as a prize. At this crisis the Almighty and Most High God took action. By means of a "powerful one," a heavenly angel, Jehovah put to sleep in death 185,000 of Sennacherib's troops in one night. Down Assyria's "boughs" came with a crash as if the evergreen forest of Mount Lebanon were falling, and the humiliated Assyrian king Sennacherib was obliged to flee home, with a violent death in view in course of time.—Isaiah 37:33-38.

9 Not by the Assyrians, therefore, but by the later Babylonian conquest of the land of Judah in 607 B.C.E., the reigning line of the successors of King David became like the stump of a tree that had been cut down. As the centuries passed over that symbolic tree stump, the questions became more and more urgent: Will anything ever come of that tree stump again? Will that royal tree ever grow again as the prophecies inspired by God indicated? Has the royal scepter at last turned aside from the tribe of Judah for all time to come? (Genesis 49:10) Has the kingdom, for which God made a covenant with David, proved to be only long-lasting, but not eternal, not endless? (2 Samuel 7:8-16) Isaiah's prophecy, chapter eleven, gave an infallible response.

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8. (a) There in Isaiah 10:33, 34, who is likened to the massive trees of Lebanon? (b) How did it prove true that "by a powerful one Lebanon itself" fell?

9. By means of whom was the Davidic line of kings cut down, and, as a result, in time, what questions pressed for answer?

THE KING UPON WHOM JEHOVAH'S SPIRIT SETTLES DOWN

10 In God's arrangement, the day of small things is not to be despised; and the humble beginning of the true Messiah was not to be viewed as having no great possibilities. Just as the rulers "tall in growth" of the Assyrian World Power were chopped down to the ground, so the Almighty God could make a small one, lowly in growth, become a lofty one and bear much fruit. What is a small twig or tiny sprout compared to a massive cedar on a mountain of Lebanon? It is most insignificant; and yet Isaiah 11:1, 2 proceeds to say:

11 "And there must go forth a twig out of the stump of Jesse; and out of his roots a sprout will be fruitful. And upon him the spirit of Jehovah must settle down, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of mightiness, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah."

12 That the "twig" and the "sprout" represent one and the same thing and that they represent a person is evident from the fact that the prophecy states that "upon him the spirit of Jehovah must settle down." The "twig" and the "sprout" from the same source picture a king anointed with the spirit of Jehovah God, hence the Messiah. In the prophet Isaiah's day the royal tree with its roots in Jesse the father of King David had not yet been cut down, with only a stump and its roots left in the ground. That royal tree was made up of the line of kings in the royal family of David and it stood until the year 607 B.C.E. Then it was chopped down by the Babylonians when they deported the king to Babylon and destroyed his royal city, Jerusalem. Then the divine command to that last reigning Davidic king, Zedekiah, was carried out under

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10, 11. What did the prophet Isaiah say about a certain "twig," and why was it nothing to be despised because of its smallness?
12. (a) Who is pictured by the "twig" and the "sprout"? (b) In Isaiah's day, what was the condition of the royal tree with its roots in Jesse, but what happened to it in 607 B.C.E.?

force of circumstances: "Remove the turban, and lift off the crown. This will not be the same. Put on high even what is low [the series of Gentile world powers, one after another], and bring low even the high one [the Messianic kingdom in David's family line]. A ruin, a ruin, a ruin I shall make it. As for this also, it will certainly become no one's until he comes who has the legal right, and I must give it to him."—Ezekiel 21:25-27.

13 When, in 537 B.C.E., the Persian conqueror of Babylon, Cyrus the Great, restored the exiled Jews to the land of Judah, Zerubbabel of the royal line of David was not crowned and installed upon a regal throne at rebuilt Jerusalem. King Cyrus made him merely the governor of the Persian province of Judah. (Luke 3:27-32; Matthew 1:6-13) Hence, Zerubbabel was not the one with the legal right to whom the kingdom, with its royal turban and crown, was given. He did not fulfill the prophecy concerning the "twig" and the "sprout" that sprang from the stump and roots of Jesse.

14 When, and in the person of whom, did the "twig" and "sprout" go forth and become fruitful? This was more than half a millennium after Zerubbabel, in the year 29 of our Common Era and during the reign of the Roman emperor Tiberius Caesar. In early autumn of that year a royal descendant of David, namely, Jesus the son of Mary of Bethlehem was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist. It was then that this Jesus became a spiritual Son of God, for then God's spirit descended upon him and God's voice was heard from heaven, saying: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matthew 3:13-17) In this way Jesus was not only begotten by God's spirit

13. Did Zerubbabel, in 537 B.C.E., fulfill the prophecy concerning the "twig" and the "sprout"?
14. (a) When did the "twig" and "sprout" go forth and become fruitful, and how so? (b) Shortly afterward, what did Nathanael say regarding the office to which Jesus had been anointed?

to be a spiritual Son of God but also anointed with God's spirit to be the King-Designate in the royal line of David. In recognition of this fact, just about two months after this, Nathanael, as a prospective disciple of Jesus the Messiah, said to him: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are King of Israel."—John 1:29-49.

15 In the last year of his thirty-three and a half years as a man on earth, Jesus asked his twelve apostles as to whom they had discerned him to be. Simon Peter promptly responded: "You are the Messiah, the son of the living God." (Matthew 16:13-16; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21, *Byington*) So Peter called Jesus "God's Messiah." Those speaking Greek called him "The Christ of God." As the newly appointed Messiah or Christ, this Jesus was the symbolic "twig out of the stump of Jesse" and the symbolic "sprout" that shot forth from the roots of Jesse by way of the "stump." Still that "stump" continued without a trunk for many centuries longer, till early autumn of 1914 C.E., and then that "twig" or "sprout" really became a full-grown fruit-bearing tree, a reigning King, the reigning Messiah. That was because the Gentile Times ended then and the time for a reversal of things arrived. The series of Gentile world powers that had been "put on high" in 607 B.C.E. must again become low, whereas the Messianic kingdom in the royal line of David that had been 'brought low' must once more become "the high one."—Luke 21:24, *Authorized Version.*

16 From the time of Jesus' being anointed after his water baptism, the spirit of Jehovah did indeed settle down upon him. It did prove to be the "spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of mightiness, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear

15. (a) Toward the end of Jesus' earthly life, whom did Peter say that he discerned Jesus to be? (b) The "twig" or "sprout" that had appeared in 29 C.E. became a full-grown tree in what year, and what happened at that time?

16. (a) From the time of Jesus' being anointed, what qualities were imparted to him by Jehovah's spirit? (b) Had like qualities been imparted prior to this to any human by means of God's spirit?

of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:2) Those qualities that were imparted to Jesus Christ by the spirit of Jehovah correspond with the qualities imparted to the constructor of the sacred tent of meeting in the days of the prophet Moses. We note this fact from Exodus 31:1-3: "And Jehovah continued to speak to Moses, saying: 'See, I do call by name Bezalel the son of Uri the son of Hur of the tribe of Judah. And I shall fill him with the spirit of God in wisdom and in understanding and in knowledge and in every kind of craftsmanship.'" (Also, Exodus 35:31; see *Zion's Watch Tower,* under date of November 15, 1907, pages 349, 350.) Now if Bezalel the constructor of the sacred tabernacle of worship needed God's spirit in wisdom, understanding, knowledge and craftsmanship, most certainly Jesus the Messiah would need those same qualities in his more responsible office of King.

17 We remember that, after the prophet Samuel anointed the shepherd boy David of Bethlehem to be the king-designate of Israel, then, as 1 Samuel 16:13 informs us, "the spirit of Jehovah began to be operative upon David from that day forward." Similarly, after Jesus' anointing with God's active force at the Jordan River, God's spirit specially became operative upon him.

18 "Now Jesus, full of holy spirit, turned away from the Jordan, and he was led about by the spirit in the wilderness for forty days, while being tempted by the Devil. Furthermore, he ate nothing in those days." With the wisdom, understanding and knowledge imparted to him by God's spirit, Jesus successfully resisted the propositions presented to him by the Devil as temptations. "Now Jesus returned in the power of the spirit into Galilee. And good talk concerning him spread out through all the surrounding country. Also,

17. In the operation of God's spirit on David and on Jesus following their individual anointings, what parallel do you observe?
18. Give examples showing that, in what Jesus did, there was evidence that special wisdom, understanding and knowledge had been imparted to him by God's spirit.

he began to teach in their synagogues, being held in honor by all." (Luke 4:1-15) In the synagogue of Nazareth, his former associates marveled at his speech and asked: "Where did this man get this wisdom and these powerful works? Is this not the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:53-55; Mark 6:1-3) Jesus' special abilities were now his because, as he had earlier told them, God had anointed him with holy spirit to be Messiah. —Luke 4:16-22.

19 Years after the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven, the apostle Peter emphasized the effect of God's spirit upon his Son by saying: "God anointed him with holy spirit and power, and he went through the land doing good and healing all those oppressed by the Devil; because God was with him." (Acts 10:38) The apostle Paul wrote with reference to the glorified Jesus Christ in heaven, when he said: "It is due to [God] that you are in union with Christ Jesus, who has become to us wisdom from God." (1 Corinthians 1:29, 30) The philosophies of the so-called wise men of our much vaunted Brain Age are not to be compared with the intellectual powers of the glorified Jesus Christ, for "carefully concealed in him are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." (Colossians 2:3, 8) So, due to the spirit of the All-wise God upon him, the one who began on earth as an unimpressive "twig out of the stump of Jesse" has become the Messianic King superior to all past earthly rulers inside and outside of Israel.

20 In God's eyes, it all depends upon that of which one is a "twig" or "sprout" as to whether one is of importance and value or not. The fact that Jehovah's Servant was a "sprout" out of the roots of Jesse of

19. (a) How did the apostles Peter and Paul further emphasize the effect of God's spirit upon his Son? (b) So, as a result of the operation of God's spirit, what has become of the one who used to be an unimpressive "twig"?

20, 21. The anointed followers of Jesus Christ are also spoken of as a "sprout"—of whom?

Bethlehem was of vital importance to God. Of whom is one a "sprout"? The answer to this question is what determines matters. This is so in the case of the footstep followers of the anointed Servant.

21 Because the Servant and his disciples are members of God's universal organization, his figurative "woman" or "wife," God says to her with reference to her members, these disciples: "And as for your people, all of them will be righteous; to time indefinite they will hold possession of the land, the sprout [*ne'tser*] of my planting, the work of my hands, for me to be beautified. The little one himself [like a sprout] will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time." (Isaiah 60:21, 22) For this reason neither the Servant nor his faithful disciples turn out to be a "detested sprout," like the last dynasty of kings of ancient Babylon.—Isaiah 14:19.

22 This Messianic King will not act like an irresponsible ruler over the human family, over whom he is appointed to reign for a thousand years after the binding and abyssing of Satan the Devil and his demons. (Revelation 20:1-6) The spirit that has settled down upon the King operates against a ruling by him as though he were not accountable to anyone higher. The spirit upon him is not only that of wisdom, understanding, counsel and mightiness, but that of knowledge and "of the fear of Jehovah." He fears Jehovah, and such fear will control in the exercise of his Messianic rulership.

23 This "fear of Jehovah" is not a bothersome thing to the King, interfering with his free, unrestrained action as King. He enjoys having such fear, and it is a pleasure for him also to see such "fear of Jehovah" in the hearts of his subjects. Isaiah's prophecy goes on

22. How can we be sure that the Messianic King will not be an irresponsible ruler, acting as if he were not accountable to anyone higher?
23. How does he personally view this "fear of Jehovah"?

to say: "And there will be enjoyment by him in the fear of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:3) Byington's translation reads: "And he will scent by fear of Jehovah." *The Jerusalem Bible* reads: "The fear of Yahweh is his breath." Rotherham's translation reads: "So will he find fragrance [draw breath] in the reverence of Yahweh."—*Margin.*

A JUDGE WHO DELIVERS THE OPPRESSED

24 A judge who renders his decisions in the fear of Jehovah God can be depended on to see that justice is done. Righteously disposed people of the whole earth have been waiting and longing for such a judge. That is the kind of judge that Jehovah's Messianic King proves to be. After telling of the King's "fear of Jehovah," the prophet Isaiah continues on to say:

25 "And he will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears. And with righteousness he must judge the lowly ones, and with uprightness he must give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth. And he must strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; and with the spirit of his lips he will put the wicked one to death. And righteousness must prove to be the belt of his hips, and faithfulness the belt of his loins."—Isaiah 11:3-5.

26 Think of what the earth will be with a global judge as the one here described, the exalted Jesus Christ! There will be no fooling of him. He will be able to see beneath the surface appearance of things, beneath all pretense. He will not be misguided by deceptive talk, as by the specious arguments of defense attorneys. Mere words will not count with him; the condition of the heart will count, and this he will be

24, 25. As further described by Isaiah, what kind of judge does the Messianic King prove to be?

26. How will the fact that "he will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears" assure justice?

able to read. He will not depend upon a petit jury or a grand jury of imperfect men and women to determine the innocence or guilt of the one on trial. He will have that same spirit that operated in the case of the Christian apostle Peter, when he saw through the deceitful appearance and words of the hypocritical Ananias and Sapphira and informed them that they must suffer death for trying to lie to God's holy spirit. —Acts 5:1-11; compare Matthew 22:15-22.

27 This Messianic Judge is a Godsend for the "lowly ones" and "meek ones of the earth." He is not afraid to reprove the oppressor of those who are defenseless under the present system of things. He will refute the justifying arguments of the oppressors and will prove to them where they are wrong and unjust. He will correct matters, set matters the way that they should be. This will be the righteous thing, the upright thing to do, with no unfairness to oppressors. No crime syndicate will flourish under his reign; he will smash organized crime.

28 The decisions of the Messianic Judge will take effect. They are not something unenforceable, something that can be overruled and annulled by appeal to a high court. (John 5:22-24) What issues out of his mouth in sentence upon the wrongdoer will be like a rod of punishment. It will be executed without fail and without delay. The guilty will feel it. What goes out from between his lips will be like a death-dealing active force against which the wicked ones have no shield. They will die from the operation of that spirit that comes from between his lips as these lips pronounce the death sentence. Wickedness will no longer be permitted; the Messianic King-Judge is not in league with it.

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27. In what way will his judging benefit the "lowly ones" and "the meek ones of the earth"?

28. What are the "rod of his mouth" and the "spirit of his lips" that the Messianic Judge will direct against the wicked ones?

29 The moral quality that strengthens the Judge upon whom Jehovah's spirit has settled down is like a belt for his hips or his loins. It is a belt of righteousness, a belt of faithfulness. He has no weakness in the way of unrighteous inclinations. Righteousness according to God's perfect standard is what dominates him, motivates him. He is faithful to his trust from Jehovah God. He knows no other course but that of faithfulness to Jehovah the Supreme Judge. When he was here on earth as a perfect man, he proved his faithfulness to God even in spite of dying in a most unjust manner. He thus hurled back into the face of the Great False Accuser, Satan, a lie that had long stood against Jehovah's worshipers. Satan the Devil had insisted that Jehovah's highest officer, his only-begotten Son, would not prove faithful to God if he were tested to the limit by the Chief Adversary of God and angels and men. —Job 1:1 through 2:5.

30 So, instead of going after the weaker wicked ones on earth, "the small fry," the Messianic Judge went first after the top powerful one of all organized wickedness, Satan the Devil. That was what happened in heaven, immediately after the birth of the Messianic kingdom up there just as soon as the Gentile Times had ended in 1914 C.E. Knowing right where to take action, the installed Messianic King waged war against Satan the Devil and his demon angels. This war ended with the ouster of those wicked ones from the holy heavens. Now the victorious King holds them down to the neighborhood of our earth. Just as soon as the "short period of time" for their restraint here is up, the Messianic King will chain them and imprison them in an abyss away from the vicinity of our earth. —Revelation 12:7-13; 20:1-3.

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29. How do righteousness and faithfulness prove to be like a belt to him, and with what effect upon his activities?
30. When the Gentile Times ended, against whom did the Messianic Judge take action first, and with what result?

31 Since that is the way the God-fearing King treats the devilish ringleaders of all organized wickedness, what logically follows? Well, to make matters complete, the King must put to death on earth those who have hardened themselves in sin and steadfastly stuck to the Devil's visible organization. In this manner the ungodly human society that is outside the spiritual paradise of Jehovah's worshipers will feel the blow administered by the "rod" of his judicial mouth. His decree of punishment will be executed upon them. His own intrinsic righteousness will strengthen him, like a belt, to do this. His faithfulness to the God of righteousness will sustain him, like a belt, in doing this.

32 This courageous action against all organized wickedness in heaven and on earth will mean great relief for Jehovah's worshipers who now enjoy his favor and protection within their spiritual paradise. They are grateful to him for providing such a righteous King over their spiritual paradise. The qualities that are an evidence of the spirit of God that has settled down upon this Messianic King, they seek to cultivate more and more in themselves. Thus they beautify their spiritual paradise.

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31. What further action will the King take against all who are outside the spiritual paradise?

32. (a) What effect will that action have on those who are now within the spiritual paradise? (b) Even now, what do they personally do to beautify their spiritual paradise?

CHAPTER 11

No Harming nor Ruining in the Spiritual Paradise

IT HAS been said that the moral quality of any human government represents what the governed people themselves are. This has been the observation made by worldly statesmen themselves. That, however, is not the case among those who now occupy the spiritual paradise that the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has established for his worshipers on earth. As Universal Sovereign, He is the One that has put their ruler, their King, over them. They did not select and install their King over themselves, a King patterned after themselves and hence one who would be indulgent with their materialistic, selfish, sinful way of life. Rather, those in the spiritual paradise want a King that images Jehovah God, and they want to imitate, to be like, their God-given King. Morally and religiously, they want to be what they are because of what their God-fearing King is. Yes, what they are they want to represent that which their Messianic King is, to his honor.

2 The personality of the Messianic King affects the personalities of his subjects in the spiritual paradise in an excellent, upbuilding way. The prophecy of Isaiah points in that direction. Right after describing the qualities and acts of the Messianic King raised up by Jehovah God, the prophet Isaiah goes on to say:

3 "And the wolf will actually reside for a while with the male lamb, and with the kid the leopard itself will

1. Whose moral qualities are reflected by the one who is King over the spiritual paradise?
2, 3. With what kind of language does Isaiah 11:6-8 describe the personality changes brought about in the subjects of the Messianic King?

lie down, and the calf and the maned young lion and the well-fed animal all together; and a mere little boy will be leader over them. And the cow and the bear themselves will feed; together their young ones will lie down. And even the lion will eat straw just like the bull. And the sucking child will certainly play upon the hole of the cobra; and upon the light aperture of a poisonous snake will a weaned child actually put his own hand."—Isaiah 11:6-8.

4 In that amazing prophetic picture, something has radically affected the animals, particularly the wild beasts of the field. The wild animals are no longer preying upon and devouring the domesticated animals. They have become tame and harmless, leaving their carnivorous ways and becoming vegetarians. Why, that was the way it was in the earth, yes, in the Garden of Eden, before Jehovah God put perfect man and woman there. And even though created in the midst of an earth swarming with animal life, Adam and Eve were not afraid of being molested by them, and both of them also were vegetarian eaters. So why is such a transformation in the animal realm pictured in the prophecy? Why is this picture of harmlessness and sense of security prophetically drawn for us?

5 Evidently to portray what takes place in human society when under the rule of the Messianic King-Judge, Jesus Christ enthroned in the heavens. But certainly things would not be one way in the animal realm and another way in the human realm. The one must reflect the other. The lower sphere must mirror the higher sphere. A paradise relationship must obtain among them.

6 Such a transformation of long-inbred characteristics has not yet taken place in the animal realm. No, even though the Messianic King has been reigning

4. (a) What is unusual about that description, particularly as to the wild beasts? (b) Have such conditions ever existed on earth?
5. What is evidently the purpose of this delightful description?
6. (a) Where has such a transformation taken place, and since when? (b) What accounts for the change?

in the heavens since the end of the Gentile Times in the year 1914 C.E. However, such a transformation of characteristics in the animal world was meant to mirror the transformation occurring in human society. In harmony with that intention, such a transformation as is foretold by the prophecy regarding the animal world has actually taken place in the spiritual paradise of Jehovah's restored worshipers. This has been true since their deliverance from bloodguilty Babylon the Great, beginning with the year 1919 C.E. All this transformation is owing to the operation of the "spirit of Jehovah," and is also because the residents of the spiritual paradise have reigning over them the Messianic King upon whom the "spirit of Jehovah" has settled down.—Isaiah 11:1, 2.

7 Not all of those now residing in the spiritual paradise of God's favor were formerly peacefully disposed like the domesticated lamb or kid or cow or fattened animal. Many, likely the vast majority, had dispositions like that of the predatory wolf or leopard or maned young lion or bear or cobra or other poisonous snake. Particularly so, since the world entered what has been called "the Age of Violence" in 1914, the year marked by the outbreak of war on a global scale, world war. This did not work for the improvement in the disposition and inclinations of people as a whole. Even decent morality began to decline to what it is today. To all those resident in the spiritual paradise it can equally as well be said as it was to the Christian congregation in Ephesus, Asia Minor, nineteen hundred years ago:

8 "You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you at one time walked according to the system of things of this world, according to the ruler of the authority of the air, the spirit that now operates in the sons of disobedience. Yes, among them we all at

7, 8. (a) What sort of dispositions did many who are now in the spiritual paradise use to have, and what contributed to this condition? (b) How does Ephesians 2:1-3 well apply to those in the spiritual paradise?

one time conducted ourselves in harmony with the desires of our flesh, doing the things willed by the flesh and the thoughts, and we were naturally children of wrath even as the rest."—Ephesians 2:1-3.

9 Plainly stating what kind of worldly people members of the Christian congregation at Corinth, Greece, used to be, the apostle Paul wrote to them: "What! Do you not know that unrighteous persons will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be misled. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men kept for unnatural purposes, nor men who lie with men, nor thieves, nor greedy persons, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit God's kingdom. And yet that is what some of you were. But you have been washed clean, but you have been sanctified, but you have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God." —1 Corinthians 6:9-11; see also Colossians 3:5-8.

10 Also, when warning Christians not to slip back into their former worldly ways, the apostle Paul wrote the congregation in Rome, Italy: "You people know the season, that it is already the hour for you to awake from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than at the time when we became believers. The night is well along; the day has drawn near. Let us therefore put off the works belonging to darkness and let us put on the weapons of the light. As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be planning ahead for the desires of the flesh." —Romans 13:11-14.

11 So, in all likelihood, many of the more than two million who are enjoying the spiritual paradise of God's provision today, once had and still have to fight

9, 10. What did the apostle Paul state as to the former way of life of those in the Christian congregations at Corinth and at Rome?
11. (a) How did many who are now in the spiritual paradise at one time reflect traits that are like those of predatory animals? (b) What has brought about a change in their personalities?

against the predatory disposition, the animalistic tendencies, associated with the predatory animals mentioned in Isaiah 11:6-8. In this era of world wars, some of the residents were engaged literally in those world conflicts and in the lesser wars in between, and actually acted like hungry wild beasts in killing or seeking to kill fellowmen. Other residents were in enterprises or operations that make it their business to exploit the weaknesses of victimized persons for selfish profit, regardless of the physical and mental hurt done to their victims. But now with the aid of Jehovah's holy spirit they have undergone a change of personality. His appointed King of the spiritual paradise, the Messianic King upon whom Jehovah's spirit has settled down, does not permit such animalistic preying upon one another inside this spiritual estate of Jehovah's worshipers. (Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 3:10, 11) Christian brotherly love pervades the Paradise.

12 Thus, in a figurative way, the tamed wolf lies down with the lamb, also the leopard with the kid, the calf and the well-fed animal and the maned young lion mingle together at any time. Instead of the bear feeding upon the cow and its young ones, the bear and the cow and their young ones feed together on a vegetarian diet. Even the lion is seen eating straw just like the bull. In the spiritual paradise the words of Jesus Christ the King have been heeded: "Unless you turn around and become as young children, you will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens. Therefore, whoever will humble himself like this young child is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens." (Matthew 18:1-4) So it is now as if a mere young boy were a leader of wild beasts of the field.

13 What helps in this peaceableness and this absence of preying animalistically upon one another in the

12. How have the words of Jesus, as recorded at Matthew 18:1-4, affected those in the spiritual paradise?
13. Application of what Scriptural rule has helped them to achieve the condition foretold by the prophet Isaiah, and how so?

spiritual paradise is the fact that its residents live by the rule that they are no part of this world. (John 15:19; 17:14-16) During World War I of 1914-1918 C.E., some of the remnant of spiritual Israel accepted non-combatant service in the fighting armies, and thus they came under bloodguilt because of their sharing in community responsibility for the blood spilled in war. However, in 1939, the year in which World War II erupted, all the remnant of spiritual Israel and also those of the "great crowd" of sheeplike companions declared themselves in favor of absolute neutrality toward all worldly conflicts, regardless of nationality. The publication of the article "Neutrality" in the issue of November 1, 1939, of *The Watchtower* set forth their position. They have not budged from this stand at any time since. Consistent with this, also, they have never meddled in or even taken part in the politics of any nation, with which there is so much mudslinging and the stirring up of so many hostilities and divisive hatreds.

[14] The fruitage of Jehovah's spirit is cultivated, in harmony with the apostle Paul's counsel: "The fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control. Against such things there is no law. Moreover, those who belong to Christ Jesus impaled the flesh together with its passions and desires. If we are living by spirit, let us go on walking orderly also by spirit. Let us not become egotistical, stirring up competition with one another, envying one another." (Galatians 5:22-26) There being no competitions, rivalries, ambitious self-exalting over others, there is no venomous backbiting or spitefulness. It is as when the venomous snake, even the cobra, feels secure and chooses not to use its poisonous venom, so that a sucking child may play upon the hole of the cobra, and the recently weaned child may put his hand over the light aperture of the den of a poisonous snake.

14. What fruitage is cultivated in the spiritual paradise, and how does this contribute to the fulfillment of what was foretold in Isaiah 11:6-8?

THE PREVALENCE OF LIFE-GIVING KNOWLEDGE

15 A parallel prophecy in the inspired book of Isaiah locates the time for this peaceful, secure spiritual paradise. To get the timing of the fulfillment of the prophecy, we have to consider the verses leading up to this parallel prophecy. Hence, we read as follows:

16 " 'Because the former distresses will actually be forgotten and because they will actually be concealed from my eyes. For here I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart. But exult, you people, and be joyful forever in what I am creating. For here I am creating Jerusalem a cause for joyfulness and her people a cause for exultation. And I will be joyful in Jerusalem and exult in my people; and no more will there be heard in her the sound of weeping or the sound of a plaintive cry. . . . They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring made up of the chosen ones of Jehovah, and their descendants with them. And it will actually occur that before they call out I myself shall answer; while they are yet speaking, I myself shall hear. The wolf and the lamb themselves will feed as one, and the lion will eat straw just like the bull; and as for the serpent, his food will be dust. They will do no harm nor cause any ruin in all my holy mountain,' Jehovah has said." —Isaiah 65:16-25.

17 The first or miniature fulfillment of this magnificent prophecy serves as a prophetic pattern to prefigure the final, full-scale realization of the prophecy. The small-scale or miniature fulfillment of the Isaian prophecy took place after the restoration of the exiled Jews to their homeland, the land of Judah, in the days of the Persian conqueror Cyrus the Great. In course of time Jerusalem was rebuilt on its former site, and this

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15, 16. Where else in the book of Isaiah is a parallel prophecy found, and what indications are there here as to the time of fulfillment?
17. When did this prophecy have its first fulfillment, and what was the "cause for joyfulness" then?

holy city became a "cause for joyfulness" when Jehovah's temple was rebuilt there on its previous location and his revived worship was carried on by the reinstated priests and Levites. The account of this is recorded in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

18 The major and final fulfillment comes, therefore, in a similar period of restoration. It is in the time when there is a restoration of the remnant of spiritual Israel from bondage under modern Babylon the Great to their rightful spiritual estate in Jehovah's renewed favor. According to twentieth-century history, this took place in the year following the close of World War I. The courageous revival of the free and open proclaiming of "this good news of the kingdom" world wide in the year 1919 C.E. indicated that there had come a restoration of the liberated remnant of spiritual Israel to their God-given spiritual estate on earth. Under divine blessing and under the operation of Jehovah's holy spirit, this spiritual estate of the anointed remnant was transformed into a spiritual paradise. In that estate is where the spiritual beauty of His worshipers glorifies Jehovah God and there are brotherly peace, unity and security.

19 The Jerusalem that Jehovah God has created as a "cause for joyfulness" and in which he himself is joyful is, not the capital city of the Jewish Republic of Israel, but the heavenly Jerusalem, to which the remnant of spiritual Israel are approaching. (Hebrews 12:22-29) It is the seat of the Messianic kingdom that was born in the heavens at the close of the Gentile Times in 1914 C.E. (Revelation 12:1-5) This city is located on the heavenly Mount Zion, Jehovah's "holy mountain," where the Messianic King, Jesus Christ, has stood up in royal power.—Psalm 2:6; Revelation 14:1-5.

20 Therefore the time for the fulfillment of Isaiah's

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18. When is the final fulfillment of this prophecy, and at that time what works to bring about the foretold transformation?
19. Identify the Jerusalem that is a "cause for joyfulness" in this final fulfillment of the prophecy.
20. On the part of the remnant of spiritual Israel, from 1919 onward why were there corrections in their understanding of Bible prophecies?

prophecy concerning the transformation of the disposition of animal life dates from the postwar year 1919 C.E. onward. This marked the beginning of a period of education in the written Word of God from the standpoint that Bible prophecy is best understood after it has been fulfilled. So there needed to be a correction of our previous views, and the surviving remnant of spiritual Israel needed to be readjusted to the postwar realities and opportunities. The preaching of "this good news of the kingdom" now was to be, not of a *coming* heavenly government, but of God's Messianic kingdom now established in the heavens since the end of the "appointed times of the [Gentile] nations" in the autumn of 1914. The liberated remnant were henceforth to be witnesses of the Lord God, the One who had taken his great power to reign in 1914 by means of the kingdom of his Christ. (Matthew 24:14; Luke 21:24; Revelation 11:15-17) This revised program of Bible education had a profound effect on the remnant. It oriented their work in the right direction.

21 This educational work along with its transforming effects is referred to in the further part of Isaiah's prophecy, in these words: "They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea." (Isaiah 11:9) The pronoun "they" in this verse may refer to the wild animals that were just referred to in the preceding three verses. Those verses described the wolf, the leopard, the lion, the bear, the cobra, the poisonous snake as doing no harm either to domesticated animals or to innocent children.

22 However, here these potentially harmful animals must be used as illustrations in the prophecy, for such animals could not be mentally affected by the filling

21. How was the effect of this educational work foretold in Isaiah 11:9?
22. Who really are the ones who, as a result of this education, no longer harm or cause ruin?

of the earth with the knowledge of Jehovah. So the real application of the pronoun "they" is to the residents of God's spiritual paradise for his restored remnant of spiritual Israel on earth. These intelligent God-fearing persons are the ones that would be transformed in their dispositions and pursuits by receiving the "knowledge of Jehovah."

23 Accordingly, in Watch Tower Society publications, the personal name of the Most High God, Jehovah, began to come to the fore, so as to identify more sharply the One who had previously been spoken of under the general title Lord or Lord God. For example, in the sixth paragraph of the leading article "Blessed Are the Fearless," in the issue of August 1, 1919, of *The Watch Tower,* the situation of the liberated remnant of spiritual Israel was likened to that of ancient Israel when about to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land under the leadership of Moses' successor, Joshua. The Israelites needed encouragement to go forward, and the paragraph went on to say:

24 "Joshua, like Moses, was a meek man, having little confidence in his own strength, but he had great faith in God and manifested such faith by encouraging the people to go forward and possess that which God had promised them. But Joshua needed encouragement and the people whom he would lead needed encouragement to perform the deeds which Jehovah had set before them. God began such encouragement by saying: 'Now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, . . .' "

25 Paragraph eight (page 228) of the same article spoke of the triumph gained by Judge Gideon and said: "The Israelites had been slack in their faith and obedience to Jehovah, and the Midianites were permitted to come and threatened to take possession of the most fertile part of their land. Faithfulness on the part of Israel would have prevented this threatened invasion.

23-26. (a) In harmony with the prophecy, to what name did the Watch Tower publications give increasing emphasis? (b) Illustrate this from *The Watch Tower* of August 1, 1919.

The Midianites came in a great host, more than 200,000 strong and encamped preparatory for battle against the Israelites. Jehovah purposed to achieve a great victory over these enemies of his people and to drive them out of the promised land. . . . Jehovah afforded Gideon the great honor of being the instrument in his hand for the deliverance of Israel. . . . At the direction of Jehovah, Gideon then called for volunteers from amongst the Israelites to fight the hosts of Midian. . . ."

[26] Speaking about Gideon's little band of 300 volunteers specially selected, the following paragraph says: "This little band of 300 possessed the very elements of character pleasing to Jehovah." And so on through the article down to the last paragraph, which said, in part: "It is only the pure in heart that are perfect in love, therefore it follows according to Jesus' words, that the fearless—perfect in love—pure in heart, are the ones who will be received into the kingdom and see Jehovah."—Page 233.

[27] Thus the "knowledge of Jehovah" began to spread and fill "the earth," that is to say, the spiritual estate of the restored remnant of spiritual Israel, "the Israel of God." (Galatians 6:16) This remnant is in the new covenant that was mediated by Jesus Christ between God and the "holy nation" of spiritual Israel. One of the features of this better covenant is set forth in these prophetic words: " 'And they will no more teach each one his companion and each one his brother, saying, "Know Jehovah!" for they will all of them know me, from the least one of them even to the greatest one of them,' is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more.' " (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:7-12) Hence, it was only proper that the spiritual estate of the remnant of the Christian "Israel of God"

27. (a) What is "the earth" that is filled with the knowledge of Jehovah, as foretold at Isaiah 11:9? (b) With what feature of the new covenant is this increase of the "knowledge of Jehovah" consistent?

should become filled with the "knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."

[28] The "knowledge of Jehovah" does something for its possessor. It is said to be responsible for the fact that "they will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain," according to what Jehovah says in Isaiah 11:9. Since the "holy mountain" is the seat of government and was typified by Mount Zion, where King David sat on "Jehovah's throne," the expression "all my holy mountain" is used in a representative sense. It does not refer to just the heavenly Mount Zion, but means all the realm of spiritual Israel here on earth. It means the present spiritual estate of the liberated and restored remnant since 1919 C.E. They acknowledge and obey as the Messianic King the onetime "twig out of the stump of Jesse," whom the Lord God has installed upon the heavenly Mount Zion, His "holy mountain."—Isaiah 11:1; Hebrews 12:22; Psalm 2:6.

[29] Why is it that the "knowledge of Jehovah" transforms the inhabitants of the spiritual paradise to be harmless and not ruinous? It is because there is much more to it than merely having information about him. Knowing him means acknowledging Him to the extent of living according to His will. "By this," says the Christian apostle John, "we have the knowledge that we have come to know him, namely, if we continue observing his commandments. He that says: 'I have come to know him,' and yet is not observing his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in this person. He that does not love has not come to know God, because God is love. And we ourselves have come to know and have believed the love that God has in our case. God is love, and he that remains in love remains in union with God and God remains in union with him. For this

28. (a) How is the individual who possesses the "knowledge of Jehovah" affected by it? (b) What is represented by the "holy mountain," referred to at Isaiah 11:9, where they cause no harm or ruin?
29. Why does the "knowledge of Jehovah" transform the personalities of those who possess it?

is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome."—1 John 2:3, 4; 4:8, 16; 5:3.

CONSEQUENCES FROM LACK OF KNOWING JEHOVAH

30 The sad consequences that follow upon one's not knowing Jehovah, not acknowledging him, not taking note of him, are declared by the mouth of His prophets. For instance, during the last forty years before the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and the deportation of the surviving Jews to Babylon, Jehovah declared by the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah: "My people is foolish. Of me they have not taken note. They are unwise sons; and they are not those having understanding. Wise they are for doing bad, but for doing good they actually have no knowledge." (Jeremiah 4:22) "Let the one bragging about himself brag about himself because of this very thing, the having of insight and the having of knowledge of me, that I am Jehovah, the One exercising loving-kindness, justice and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I do take delight."—Jeremiah 9:24; 1 Corinthians 1:21.

31 Also, sometime before the overthrow of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel by the Assyrian World Power in 740 B.C.E., the prophet Hosea was inspired to say to the Israelites: "Hear the word of Jehovah, O sons of Israel, for Jehovah has a legal case with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth nor loving-kindness nor knowledge of God in the land. [With what consequences?] There are the pronouncing of curses and practicing of deception and murdering and stealing and committing of adultery that have broken forth, and acts of bloodshed have touched other acts of bloodshed. That is why the land will mourn and

30. What did Jeremiah say about those not knowing Jehovah, in contrast to those who do?
31, 32. At an earlier time, what did the prophet Hosea say about the consequences of the lack of knowledge of God in Israel?

every inhabitant in it will have to fade away with the wild beast of the field and with the flying creature of the heavens, and even the fishes of the sea themselves will be gathered in death. My people will certainly be silenced [in death], because there is no knowledge. Because the knowledge is what you yourself have rejected, I shall also reject you from serving as a priest to me; and because you keep forgetting the law of your God, I shall forget your sons, even I."

32 "That is why I shall have to hew them by the prophets; I shall have to kill them by the sayings of my mouth. And the judgments upon you will be as the light that goes forth. For in loving-kindness I have taken delight, and not in sacrifice; and in the knowledge of God rather than in whole burnt offerings." —Hosea 4:1-3, 6; 6:5, 6.

33 Serious and disastrous were the consequences to the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel and to the kingdom of Judah for rejecting the "knowledge of God." When we see the bad side effects that accompanied such a rejection of the most vital knowledge, we can appreciate why, among those residing in the spiritual paradise of the remnant of spiritual Israel, there is no doing of harm or causing of any ruin. It is because the wholesome "knowledge of Jehovah" is filling their blessed spiritual estate just as the waters are covering the very sea. This knowledge is sea deep, ocean deep, like the "seven seas" that embrace the whole globe.

34 Jesus Christ, when offering prayer in behalf of his faithful apostles, rightly said to Jehovah his heavenly Father: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) In the spiritual paradise of today, the residents are still taking in the knowledge of Jehovah and of his

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33. Why are the conditions in the spiritual paradise so different from those in ancient Israel as described by the prophet Hosea?
34. In prayer to his Father, what did Jesus emphasize as a prime requirement for everlasting life?

Messianic King, Jesus Christ, and consequently spiritual life in the paradisaic estate of those who know Jehovah is peaceful and secure.

"A SIGNAL FOR THE PEOPLES"

35 At present, particularly since the marked year of 1935 C.E., the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel are not the only residents of this figurative paradise where there is no harming or causing of ruin to man or animal. Now there is also with the remnant a constantly increasing "great crowd" of transformed sheeplike seekers of the knowledge of Jehovah. The further prophecy of Isaiah foretold that this would take place. Following up the lovely description of the spiritual paradise, Isaiah 11:10 adds: "And it must occur in that day that there will be the root of Jesse that will be standing up as a signal for the peoples. To him even the nations will turn inquiringly, and his resting-place must become glorious."

36 It is "in that day," since the Gentile Times ended in 1914 C.E., that this must occur. The symbolic "root of Jesse" is the glorified Messianic King, Jesus Christ. The Christian apostle Paul leaves no room for doubt about this, for he quotes this prophecy of Isaiah 11:10, according to the Greek *Septuagint Version's* rendering, to show God's generosity and magnanimity in holding out a grand hope for the non-Jewish nations. So, in Romans 15:12 Paul writes: "And again Isaiah says: 'There will be the root of Jesse, and there will be one arising to rule nations; on him nations will rest their hope.' "*

* According to the English translation of the Greek *Septuagint Version*, by Charles Thomson (1954 printing, revised), Isaiah 11:10 reads: "Therefore there shall be in that day the root of Jessai, even he who riseth up to rule nations: in him nations will put their trust, and his resting place shall be glorious."

35. (a) Who beside the anointed remnant are now in the spiritual paradise, and particularly since when? (b) How does the language of Isaiah 11:10 indicate that this would take place?
36. (a) What time is referred to by the expression "in that day"? (b) Who is the "root of Jesse" mentioned in this prophecy?

[37] It was appropriate for the apostle Paul to quote and use that prophecy of Isaiah 11:10 in behalf of non-Jewish or Gentile believers. It was then about twenty years after the conversion of the Italian centurion Cornelius of Caesarea to Christianity, at which time Jehovah God began admitting Gentile believers to the Christian congregation. So the circumcised Jewish believers had to suppress their former prejudices against the Gentiles, the people of the non-Jewish nations, and to welcome them as brothers in the congregation of disciples of Jesus Christ.

[38] However, the prophecy applies more particularly "in that day." We have been in that day since the birth of God's Messianic kingdom in the heavens in 1914 C.E. Then the glorified Jesus Christ, "the root of Jesse," stood up in Kingdom authority to deal with all the nations of the earth. (Matthew 25:31, 32) He was a descendant of Jesse of Bethlehem through King David, and yet he could properly be called a "root of Jesse." This was because in him the royal lineage that sprang from Jesse the father of David was revitalized. Had it not been for Jesus Christ, who came more than six hundred years after the overthrow of the Davidic kings at Jerusalem by the Babylonians, the royal lineage from Jesse would have died out in time. And in 1914 C.E., when Jesus Christ was enthroned in heaven, it was the full length of the Gentile Times (2,520 years) after the overturning of the throne of Davidic kings in 607 B.C.E.

[39] Thus Jesus Christ gave new vitality to that line of Messianic kings that came forth at first from Jesse. And, also, when we remember that Jesus Christ said: "I am the resurrection and the life," he will have to be a life-giving "root" to Jesse by raising him from the dead.—John 11:25.

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37. Why was the apostle Paul's reference to Isaiah 11:10 appropriate even back there in the first century?

38, 39. (a) But when was it, as foretold, that there was a "standing up" of "the root of Jesse"? (b) In what ways is it true that Jesus Christ really is the "root of Jesse"?

[40] For the same reason, in the revelation given to the apostle John about the year 96 C.E., Jesus Christ could speak of his relationship with Jesse's son David by saying: "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright morning star." (Revelation 22:16) The hopes of the long-dead David hang from this starlike Descendant and offspring, his Permanent Heir, Jesus Christ.

[41] In active Kingdom authority since 1914 C.E., Jesus Christ has arisen, "standing up as a signal for the peoples." Jehovah God, the heavenly King-Maker, has stood him up for all the peoples to see as the Messianic King in whom all the families and nations of the earth will be blessed. He is the One to whom all the peoples must gather if they expect to get a righteous government with life in peace, happiness and security.

[42] How, though, are the peoples of the nations to gather to the exalted "root of Jesse," whom Jehovah God has raised up like a signal pole on top of the heavenly Mount Zion? They cannot see him with their natural eyes, so as to assemble to him as the focal point. So it is required that this elevated Signal be pointed out to them, that information about him be given to them, to enable them to see him with their eyes of understanding and faith. The apostle Paul, who made an application of Isaiah 11:10 in the first century of our Common Era, realized that fact. Accordingly he accepted the divine commission to go to the non-Jewish or Gentile nations and preach the good news of God's Messianic kingdom. At the time of his conversion from traditional Judaism to Christianity it was said concerning him by the glorified Jesus Christ: "This man is a chosen vessel to me to bear

40. Similarly, how is Jesus the "root . . . of David"?
41. How is it true that, since 1914, Jesus Christ has been caused to stand up "as a signal for the peoples"?
42. But how are the peoples of the nations to gather to this Messianic King whom they cannot see with their natural eyes?

my name to the nations as well as to kings and the sons of Israel."—Acts 9:1-15; 22:6-21; 26:12-18.

43 To the Gentile members of the Christian congregation in Rome, the apostle Paul wrote in his letter: "Now I speak to you who are people of the nations. Forasmuch as I am, in reality, an apostle to the nations, I glorify my ministry." (Romans 11:13) In thus bearing the name of the Messianic "root of Jesse" to the non-Jewish nations, this "apostle to the nations" is today an example to the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel since the close of World War I on November 11, 1918. It is now the time of the major and final fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 11:10 concerning the "signal for the peoples." The apostle Paul was sent to "peoples," to those who were naturally Gentiles in comparison with the natural fleshly circumcised Jews, descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Israel) by birth. Paul aided these Gentile believers to put their trust and hope in the Messianic "root of Jesse" who was to be the royal Signal for the peoples of all sorts. These believers also got baptized in obedience to Christ's command at Matthew 28:18, 19, and in this way they became members of the first-century Christian congregation, the spiritual "Israel of God," and also joint heirs of the kingdom of the Messiah.

44 From 1919 onward the remnant of spiritual Israel vigorously renewed its public activity, keenly appreciating that it was now the time for the prophecy of Jesus Christ to be carried out, namely: "Also, in all the nations the good news has to be preached first." (Mark 13:10; Matthew 24:14) This signified that the "good news" of God's newborn Messianic kingdom had to be preached to not only the natural Jews but also the non-Jewish nations. This was because the unbelieving natural Jews had been cast off and were no longer

43. How did the apostle Paul set a fine example for the anointed remnant since World War I?
44. Into what areas have the remnant therefore pressed the preaching of the good news since 1919?

the chosen people of Jehovah God. Particularly since the conversion of the Gentile Cornelius in 36 C.E., the Jews have been on a par, on a level, with the natural uncircumcised Gentiles before God.

45 According to Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24:31, there had to be a gathering of the members of the remnant of *spiritual* Israel *first* in this "time of the end," during this "conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3; Daniel 12:4) For sixteen years the liberated remnant concentrated on their witnessing to the established Kingdom, or from the spring of 1919 to the spring of 1935 C.E., and this time period allowed for the general gathering of the remnant of spiritual Israel to practically a completion. So now the attention of the gathered remnant was specially directed to a gathering of another kind, a gathering for which the time was then due. This was the gathering of the "great crowd" foretold in Revelation 7:9-17. At the convention of Jehovah's Christian witnesses in Washington, D.C., in the spring of 1935, the feature talk specialized on Revelation 7:9-17, and the then president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society identified the "great crowd." It was not, as had long been thought, a heaven-bound spiritual class of Christians, and consequently the "great crowd" did not belong to the remnant of spiritual Israelites who belong to the class mentioned in Revelation 7:1-8.

46 On the contrary, this "great crowd" was to be made up of "other sheep" of the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ. Their hopes were of an earthly kind, to survive the approaching "great tribulation" and to enjoy perfect human life on earth under the Messianic kingdom of the glorified Son of God. Compared with the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites, all those of that "great

45. (a) From 1919 to 1935 C.E., who were being gathered in response to the preaching work? (b) In the year 1935, how was the attention of Jehovah's Christian witnesses directed to another group of persons?
46. (a) What grand hope do the Scriptures set before this "great crowd"? (b) Why do certain prophecies about non-Israelite nations apply to this "great crowd"?

crowd" would, figuratively speaking, be Gentiles. Revelation 7:9 classifies them as such, speaking of them as a "great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." Consistently, then, certain Bible prophecies about non-Israelite nations (Gentiles) could properly be applied to this "great crowd."

47 In view of this the Messianic "root of Jesse" on the heavenly Mount Zion was now "standing up as a signal for the peoples," as never before. From then on, the further part of Isaiah 11:10 went into fulfillment: "To him even the nations will turn inquiringly, and his resting-place must become glorious." In spite of World War II, more and more people of the nations have kept turning inquiringly to the royal Signal. With the eyes of faith they have caught sight of that Messianic Signal because of the Kingdom witness given by the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel.

48 According to reports received from 207 lands in which the people's attention is being turned to the Signal by the preaching of "this good news of the kingdom," more than two million have responded. They have inquired concerning the divine requirements for them to become the approved subjects of Jehovah's now installed Messianic King. On having their inquiries Scripturally answered to their satisfaction and conviction, they have dedicated themselves to Jehovah God through the Messiah Jesus. They have publicly symbolized such dedication by being baptized in water, 297,872 of them in the service year of 1974 alone. —Matthew 28:19, 20.

49 All these "other sheep" who have been flocking to the Messianic Shepherd, the "Signal," have been ush-

47. Since when have "the nations," as foretold, turned inquiringly to the Messianic Signal?

48. On having their inquiries concerning the divine requirements answered, what action have these people from "the nations" appropriately taken?

49, 50. (a) Who and what are now located in the spiritual paradise? (b) So how has the "resting-place" of the Messianic Signal become glorious?

ered into the spiritual paradise, in which the remnant of spiritual Israel have resided since 1919 C.E. There are now more than 35,000 congregations of the Christian witnesses of Jehovah in this spiritual paradise, where life and personality have been transformed and where they neither do harm nor cause any ruin. Since the Messianic "root of Jesse," the royal "Signal," resides there in spirit, truly his "resting-place" or residence has become glorious. (Matthew 28:20) This gloriousness has gone along with the fulfillment of Jehovah's prophecy, in Haggai 2:7: " 'I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory,' Jehovah of armies has said." Jehovah's "house" or spiritual temple has been filled with glory by the bringing in of these "desirable things of all the nations," namely, the members of the "great crowd." In this way his temple is now becoming, as never previously, "even a house of prayer for all the peoples."—Isaiah 56:7.

50 There, in that spiritual "house of prayer," those of the "great crowd" render sacred service to Jehovah God day and night. (Revelation 7:15) There they offer prayer to God acceptably through the "root of Jesse," Jesus Christ. There, in his name, they bend the knee to God, and every tongue openly acknowledges that "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." —Philippians 2:10, 11.

51 The spiritual paradise is not an imaginary thing. It is real and exists today as the spiritual estate of the restored remnant of spiritual Israelites and those already gathered of the "great crowd," all of these together being the Christian witnesses of Jehovah. (Isaiah 43:10-12; 44:8) In sharp contrast with the style and quality of life lived by the earthly human society of this present system of things, life in the spiritual paradise is blessed indeed. Here there is a

51. What conditions that you experience in the spiritual paradise make it evident to you that the paradise is no imaginary thing?

freedom from any such thing as harm being done or ruin being caused by the Christlike residents who are filled with the "knowledge of Jehovah." Here, too, there is spiritual security, such as is described in Psalm 91. The spiritual and moral plagues and dangers that infest this degraded world of mankind are not permitted to invade the spiritual paradise and make the divinely protected residents religiously and morally sick, diseased and subject to God's disapproval and disfavor. It is a spiritually healthful place, in which the fruits of God's holy spirit are produced in abundance.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

52 The spiritual paradise of Jehovah's worshipers is here to stay! Because Jehovah himself delights in it, it will not be destroyed from the earth in the now close "great tribulation," the like of which the world of mankind has never experienced before. (Matthew 24: 21, 22; Daniel 12:1) It is the forerunner of the material earthly paradise that will robe the literal earth with glory and beauty after the polluters and ruiners of the earth have been brought to their end in the "great tribulation" and after the one who caused the entrance of sin into man's original paradise in Eden is bound and hurled with all his demon horde into the prison abyss.—Revelation 19:11 through 20:3; Psalm 37: 37-40; 67:5-7.

53 Then the combining of the spiritual paradise with the literal earthly paradise will make the entire earth a most pleasant location for the "great crowd" of "other sheep" to live under the blessed kingdom of their heavenly Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

52, 53. For how long will the spiritual paradise endure, and of what is it the forerunner?

CHAPTER 12

Christendom and Judaism Now Facing Desolation

1975 of our Common Era—the year marked in the religious calendar of the Roman Catholic Church for celebration as a Holy Year, which really began on Christmas Eve, December 24, of the year 1974. In this twentieth century three such Holy Year celebrations were observed, in 1925, in 1933 in commemoration of the nineteen hundredth anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ in 33 C.E., and in 1950. On this subject the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume 7, pages 108, 109, has this to say, in part:

> A year during which a solemn plenary indulgence is granted to the faithful under certain conditions, and special faculties are given to confessors. Holy Years are ordinary when they occur at regular intervals (every 25 years in modern times) and extraordinary when they are proclaimed for some very special reason, e.g., in 1933, to celebrate the anniversary of the Redemption. Twenty-five general Holy Years were celebrated between 1300 and 1950. . . .
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> The first Holy Year in 1300 began on the evening of December 24-25 . . . Pope Boniface VIII issued the bull . . . which determined that every 100 years a universal jubilee should be celebrated. . . . In 1342 Clement VI decreed a jubilee every 50 years; . . . In 1389 Urban VI reduced the time to 33 years . . . and proclaimed the third Holy Year for 1390. . . . The fourth jubilee was the centenary year 1400, and the fifth was held in 1425 . . . Finally, in 1470, Paul II reduced the time to 25 years, so that the next Holy Year was in 1475, and up to our days this custom has remained. . . .

[2] The Roman Catholic Church entered the Holy Year

1. What is the year 1975 on the religious calendar of the Roman Catholic Church, and how often are such celebrations held?
2. Current statistics show what as to the size of Christendom?

for 1975 with an estimated Roman Catholic population of 551,949,000, making it the largest religious organization on earth today. The next-largest religious organization, that of the Hindus, numbers 515,580,500 members. If we add to the Roman Catholic population the estimated 91,580,700 members of the Eastern Orthodox group and the 324,263,750 reported members of the Protestant denominations, it gives to Christendom a membership of at least 967,793,450—a formidable religious organization that it would ordinarily seem impossible to overthrow or to eradicate from the earth. (See *The World Almanac* 1975, page 322.)

[3] Measured by the size of Christendom at its beginning in the fourth century of our Common Era, her claimed population today bespeaks indeed a tremendous growth. It creates the impression that the One after whom Christendom takes its name has been blessing Christendom. The statistics regarding her growth to nearly a thousand million members would give the impression that Christendom has been flourishing with the luxuriousness of a spiritual paradise. Some may think that she is on her way to her onetime goal, that of world conversion. Her growth to her present numerical proportions should not be surprising, for it was foretold by Jesus Christ himself. In the midst of a series of prophetic illustrations or parables, he gave pictures drawn from everyday life to foretell Christendom's growth. For example, he said:

[4] "The kingdom of the heavens is like a mustard grain, which a man took and planted in his field; which is, in fact, the tiniest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the largest of the vegetables and becomes a tree, so that the birds of heaven come and find lodging among its branches."—Matthew 13:31, 32; Mark 4:30-32.

3, 4. The extent of Christendom's numerical growth was foretold by Jesus in what illustration?

[5] In this parable, Jesus Christ was referring to "the kingdom of the heavens" with its counterfeit in mind. This was not strange, for, in the parable just preceding this one, he illustrated how imitation Christians in great numbers would be produced. He, like the sower of the fine wheat seed in the field, was sowing the figurative "fine seed," the "sons of the kingdom." However, as, in the parable, the enemy came by night when men slept and oversowed the same field with weed seed, or bearded darnel seed, so later on, when baptized professing Christians did not keep awake and on the watch against the invasion of error and pretenders, Satan the Devil would sow imitation Christians in among the true "sons of the kingdom." This would call for a separation of the true from the false at God's appointed time, in the "conclusion of the system of things," where we find ourselves today. —Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43; compare verses 47-50.

[6] The Lord Jesus Christ did not expect and did not predict world conversion to true Christianity. He did not predict that all the world of mankind would one day become "sons of the kingdom" in fact. To the prospective "sons of the kingdom," he said: "Your Father knows you need these things. Nevertheless, seek continually his kingdom, and these things will be added to you. Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom." (Luke 12:30-32) About sixty-five years after the giving of the parable of the mustard seed, the resurrected, glorified Jesus Christ transmitted a revelation to the apostle John and plainly stated that the "sons of the kingdom," the spiritual Israelites, would number twelve times twelve thousand. Compare this with the present-day membership of Christendom, or 144,000 compared with 967,793,450.—Revelation 7:4-8.

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5. (a) When referring here to "the kingdom of the heavens," what did Jesus have in mind? (b) Why should this not seem strange, in view of the parable preceding this one?

6. Instead of predicting world conversion, what did Jesus foretell as to the number of the "sons of the kingdom"?

[7] So Jesus Christ well knew that true Christianity, "the kingdom of the heavens," was not to become a figurative "tree," on the branches of which the birds could lodge or under which they could find ample shadow. In the earlier parable on the four types of soil upon which the fine seed, picturing the "word of the kingdom," is sown, Jesus brought birds into the picture. Whom did he explain those "birds" to be like? "The wicked one," "the Devil." That is to say, the earthly agents of the wicked Devil. (Matthew 13:1-8, 18-23; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15) Mark 4:15 calls him Satan. Reasonably, then, birds mentioned in the same context, in the same series of parables, would picture similar things. So the birds that find lodging in the mustard tree would picture the agents of the "wicked one," "Satan the Devil." They would correspond with the "weeds," the imitation wheat, in the parable of the wheat and the weeds. They are the "sons of the wicked one."

[8] It is the fake "kingdom of the heavens," the counterfeit, namely, Christendom, that is filled with these symbolic birds, "the sons of the wicked one." Today it is big enough to hold them all. In the parable, the "man" that sowed the mustard grain pictures the "wicked one," Satan the Devil. Outstandingly in the fourth century C.E. Satan the Devil planted or specially cultivated this symbolic "mustard grain" of contaminated, adulterated, imitation Christianity. He did so by then using a man who became the leading politician of the Roman Empire, namely, Constantine the Great. In 312 C.E. this bloodstained army man professed to be converted to Christianity, really, though, to the apostate Christianity of his day as professed by soldiers in the army. This ambitious man conquered his political rivals and gained the position of emperor of the Roman Empire. In this capacity he acted as the Pontifex

7. How does the Scriptural context help us to identify the "birds" that find lodging in the mustard tree of Jesus' illustration?
8. Who, then, in the parable, is the "man" that sowed the mustard seed, and whom did he outstandingly use as an agent in the fourth century?

Maximus or chief priest of the pagan Roman religion. He held onto this pagan religious title and position and authority despite claiming to be a Christian.

[9] As Pontifex Maximus, Emperor Constantine acted as if he were the visible head of the Christian Church and called a council of so-called "bishops," the presiding overseers of congregations of professed Christians, at Nicea, Asia Minor, in 325 C.E. At that Council the Pontifex Maximus Constantine settled the episcopal wrangling over who and what God is by taking the trinitarian side and decreeing that God is a triune God, a God in three indivisible persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. To this day the unscriptural doctrine of the "Trinity" is the fundamental doctrine of the sectarian churches of Christendom. To this trinitarian mustard "tree" all the trinitarian "birds" flock to roost thereon. They all expect to go to heaven, like "sons of the kingdom," and to see this mysterious, unexplainable triune God. Truly in Christendom, the mock "kingdom of God," is fulfilled the parable of the "mustard grain."

RELIGIOUS CORRUPTION

[10] According to Matthew 13:33, immediately after the parable of the mustard grain Jesus Christ gave another illustration to show something further about the imitation "kingdom of the heavens." We read: "Another illustration he spoke to them: 'The kingdom of the heavens is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three large measures of flour, until the whole mass was fermented.'" (Also, Luke 13:18-21) How, now, has this illustration been fulfilled?

[11] Leaven, in Bible times, was a piece of sour dough that had been preserved and that was added to a new

9. (a) What kind of God do all the "birds" in this symbolic "tree" worship? (b) Where do they all eventually expect to go, thus making it fitting to associate them in the illustration with the "kingdom of the heavens"?
10. In Matthew 13:33, what further illustration did Jesus give about the "kingdom of the heavens"?
11. (a) In Bible times, what was leaven, and what effect does it have? (b) In the Scriptures, how is leaven used figuratively? Illustrate.

batch of dough to make it ferment and form gas bubbles that would leaven or lighten the whole mass. The fermentation is really a breaking-down process, a corrupting, so that it often causes spoilage. For this reason it is generally used in the Holy Scriptures in a bad way figuratively. For instance, the unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees were purveyors of spiritual leaven, regarding which Jesus told his disciples: "Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." The disciples grasped this to mean the "teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matthew 16:6-12) According to Luke 12:1, Jesus told his disciples: "Watch out for the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." This doctrinal and ritualistic leaven could also have a political tinge, as represented by the Jewish party followers of King Herod; so that Jesus said: "Keep your eyes open, look out for the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod."—Mark 8:15.

[12] Fully in obedience to that warning, the first-century Christians were celebrating in their daily lives the antitype of the ancient Jewish festival of unleavened bread or cakes, the festival that was celebrated for seven days after the annual Passover. Quite appropriately, then, the apostle Paul warned them against the figurative leaven, saying: "Your cause for boasting is not fine. Do you not know that a little leaven ferments the whole lump? Clear away the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, according as you are free from ferment. For, indeed, Christ our passover has been sacrificed. Consequently let us keep the festival, not with old leaven, neither with leaven of badness and wickedness, but with unfermented cakes of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:6-8) This statement of the apostle contrasted the figurative leaven of badness and wickedness, false sectarian teaching and religious hypocrisy, with sincerity, genuineness and truth.

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12. In 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, leaven was used to represent what, and in contrast with what?

13 As, back there, the agricultural field was the realm of the man, so the kitchen was the realm of the woman. (2 Samuel 13:6-8; 1 Kings 17:11-13; Jeremiah 7:18; Luke 17:35) Appropriately, then, Jesus used a woman in his illustration as the one putting the little piece of leaven in a big batch of dough in order to leaven it. The lump of dough contained "three large measures of flour." *The New English Bible* indicates the quantity of flour that this amounted to by rendering Matthew 13:33 as follows: "The kingdom of Heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and mixed with half a hundredweight of flour till it was all leavened." *The New American Bible* describes the process, saying: "The reign of God is like yeast which a woman took and kneaded into three measures of flour. Eventually the whole mass of dough began to rise." Byington's translation also emphasizes the quantity that was leavened, saying: "The Reign of Heaven is like a bit of yeast which a woman took and buried in forty quarts of flour till it all grew yeasty." This illustrates just how figurative yeast acts.

14 Like literal leaven or yeast, figurative leaven causes a souring of a religious organization. It is an agency that corrupts religiously. It is prepared by Satan the Devil, and he uses earthly human agents to introduce the figurative leaven into a clean religious organization with the design of corrupting it and making it unfit for God's use and making it a reproach or discredit to God. In a letter written about thirty-one years after the founding of the true Christian congregation on the day of Pentecost in 33 C.E., the apostle Peter warned against such an insertion of religious leaven among the congregation, saying:

15 "Consequently we have the prophetic word made more sure; and you are doing well in paying attention

13. Why did Jesus refer to a woman in his illustration, and how did the amount of leaven compare with the quantity of flour?
14, 15. (a) What effect does figurative leaven have on a religious organization? (b) With what language did the apostle Peter warn against such an influence in the congregation?

to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and a daystar rises, in your hearts. For you know this first, that no prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit. However, there also came to be false prophets among the people, as there will also be false teachers among you. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects and will disown even the owner that bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves. Furthermore, many will follow their acts of loose conduct, and on account of these the way of the truth will be spoken of abusively. Also, with covetousness they will exploit you with counterfeit words. But as for them, the judgment from of old is not moving slowly, and the destruction of them is not slumbering."—2 Peter 1:19 through 2:3.

16 By word of mouth the apostle Paul warned the elders of the congregation of Ephesus, Asia Minor, about the very same thing, saying: "I have not held back from telling you all the counsel of God. 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. I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." —Acts 20:27-30.

17 These false teachers and prophets, wolfish men in sheep's clothing, would gradually build up and form a composite "man of lawlessness." This human agency of Satan the Devil would cause a rebellion or "apostasy"

16. Similarly, of what did the apostle Paul warn the congregation at Ephesus?

17, 18. (a) In time, what did these false teachers and prophets become? (b) Why were they rightly called the "son of destruction"?

in the religious organization that claims to be Christian. For this reason, this clerical body of religious leaders would be destined for destruction, so that this composite "man" could rightly be called the "son of destruction." Of course, the religious organization over which this "man of lawlessness" would assume control would not get God's favor but would be marked for destruction in His due time. Why?

18 "Because they did not accept the love of the truth that they might be saved. So that is why God lets an operation of error go to them, that they may get to believing the lie, in order that they all may be judged because they did not believe the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness."—2 Thessalonians 2:3-12.

19 Although the "mystery of this lawlessness" was already at work in the days of the apostles, this composite "man of lawlessness" did not take a clearly identifiable form until in the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great in the first quarter of the fourth century C.E. This pagan Pontifex Maximus tried to create a "fusion religion" by making a blend. True Christianity can never blend or fuse with any of the false religions of this world. (2 Corinthians 6:14 through 7:1) However, the religious-political head of the Roman Empire forced the so-called "bishops" that negotiated with him to compromise. So the adulterated Christianity that these "bishops" supervised was merged with the pagan Roman religion, so as to create a "fusion religion" that would be less objectionable, more acceptable to those who were still pagan at heart and who desired to hold onto certain pagan religious ideas and practices of theirs. Like what they were used to in their former pagan religion, they allowed the "bishops" to form a clergy class over them, to govern them as a laity class. This fusion religion became the State religion.

19. How did the "man of lawlessness" become clearly identifiable in the fourth century C.E.?

20 In this manner Christendom was founded, and, during the centuries since, it has grown to be what it is today. It is a huge religious mass today, and yet, from a bit of religious "leaven" kneaded into the organization at its beginning, it has become thoroughly leavened with paganism, worldliness, badness, wickedness, traditions of men, hypocrisy, doctrines of demons. Christendom made herself a part of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, and has grown to be the dominant single unit in that religious empire. (Revelation 17:3-6) The name Christendom may give the idea that her religious members are destined for the heavenly kingdom at their death. But today, more than at any time previous, Christendom is full of the "works of the flesh," and what these works are and whether they are the basis for admission into the heavenly kingdom is stated by the apostle Paul:

21 "A little leaven ferments the whole lump. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, and they are fornication, uncleanness, loose conduct, idolatry, practice of spiritism, enmities, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, contentions, divisions, sects, envies, drunken bouts, revelries, and things like these. As to these things I am forewarning you, the same way as I did forewarn you, that those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom."—Galatians 5:9, 19-21.

22 In view of all the oft-mentioned facts, will any honest-hearted person say that Christendom today, with her great membership, is enjoying a spiritual paradise such as is described in the Holy Bible? Are her members destined, at death, to go to heaven and eat of the "tree of life, which is in the paradise of God"? (Revelation 2:7) Or will Christendom be spared by Jehovah God because of her religious name and

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20, 21. (a) As a result of the religious "leaven" kneaded into Christendom at its beginning, what has developed? (b) Though the members of Christendom's churches think that they are going to heaven at their death, what is indicated by the prevalence of the "works of the flesh" among them?

22. Is Christendom today enjoying a spiritual paradise, and what are her prospects for entering into any other paradise of God?

professions and outlive the present world distress and enjoy the literal earthly paradise during the approaching thousand-year reign of the Son of God, Jesus Christ? (Luke 23:43) There is no Scriptural basis for saying Yes to these questions. Rather, what awaits Christendom was prefigured by what befell the land of Edom in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, chapter thirty-four.

THE MODERN-DAY COUNTERPART OF EDOM

23 The three verses that precede the opening of this thirty-fourth chapter of Isaiah make a declaration of a religious position that has not been taken either by Christendom or by Judaism. The verses read: "Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Statute-giver, Jehovah is our King; he himself will save us. Your ropes [of the attacking enemy's sailing fleet] must hang loose; their mast they will not hold firmly erect; they have not spread a sail. At that time even spoil in abundance will have to be divided up; the lame ones themselves [of Jehovah's delivered people] will actually take a big plunder. And no resident will say: 'I am sick [spiritually].' The people that are dwelling in the land will be those pardoned for their error." (Isaiah 33:22-24) In sharp contrast to Christendom and Judaism, Jehovah's Christian witnesses, who are residing in the spiritual paradise of his favor and protection, are the ones that have taken Jehovah as their King, their Statute-giver, their Judge, their Savior. They are therefore the ones that are safeguarded from the spiritual sicknesses and maladies and plagues that afflict Christendom and Judaism.—Psalm 91:1-10.

24 Following right on the heels of that prophecy, chapter thirty-four of Isaiah's prophecy presents a horrifying outlook for the worldly nations. This out-

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23. Who today look to Jehovah as their Judge, Statute-giver and King, as foretold by Isaiah, and therefore from what sicknesses are they safeguarded?

24, 25. (a) In Isaiah chapter 34, Jehovah notifies the nations that they are involved in what? (b) What are they notified that the outcome of this legal case will be?

look furnishes a contrast background against which the bright spiritual paradise described in the next chapter (35) stands out in bolder relief. Because what is so calamitous is ahead of the nations and because it proceeds forth from Him, Jehovah serves advance notice upon the nations and national groups. The nations today may think that God has nothing to do with the matter, that they are not involved with God in any matter, that as materialistic humans they are running their own affairs and have no responsibility to a Supreme Being, to a Creator. But through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah God jerks the nations to attention and reminds them that they really do have part in a legal case that is before the Court of the Universe, and that, therefore, they will experience the execution of judgment.

25 So, opening up chapter thirty-four, God's spokesman says: "Come up close, you nations, to hear; and you national groups, pay attention. Let the earth and that which fills it listen, the productive land and all its produce. For Jehovah has indignation against all the nations, and rage against all their army. He must devote them to destruction [he has vowed them to destruction]; he must give them to the slaughter. And their slain ones will be thrown out; and as for their carcasses, their stink will ascend; and the mountains must melt because of their blood. And all those of the army of the heavens must rot away. And the heavens must be rolled up, just like a book scroll; and their army will all shrivel away, just as the leafage shrivels off the vine and like a shriveled fig off the fig tree." —Isaiah 34:1-4, *NW; Je.*

26 What is here called to our attention is the blood-guiltiness of the nations, among whom the nations of Christendom have been the most guilty of all. They have soaked the earth, not only with the blood of wild animals wantonly slain, but particularly with the blood

26. For what are the nations here being called to account by God, and which nations outstandingly so?

of humans. Who is the logical one that should rightly require of the nations all this blood that they have spilled, asking it back from the nations because this blood stands for God-given life? It is no one else but the Creator himself, the Life-Giver, who gifted mankind with a life-sustaining bloodstream. All the nations of today have their standing armies, in greater abundance than ever before, and all equipped, prepared and trained to spill more human blood in international conflicts.

27 Not in mere idle talk did Jehovah God state his just law, Life must go for life; soul must go for soul. (Genesis 9:4-6; Exodus 21:23-25) True to this irrevocable law, He will cause the blood of the nations to flow to their death. The increasing bloodguilt of the nations is so great that the blood asked back in repayment to the Life-Giver would provide enough liquid to melt, to dissolve, as it were, the mountains. Of course, with the complete destruction of the military forces of the worldly nations there would come the fall of their governments, which, sometimes in Bible prophecy, are pictured as "mountains."

28 By the prophet's expression, "all those of the army of the heavens," he does not mean the stars and planets of our skies such as the sun, the moon and the milky way, and the far distant galaxies of stars. Rather, the governments over mankind are, because of their loftiness as superior authorities, likened to a heavens over earthly human society. (Romans 13:1-4) So the "army of the heavens" would be the combined armies of these heavenlike governments of mankind. This "army," seemingly the strongest part of the heaven-high governments, will "rot away," molder away, like something perishable. The literal heavens above us seem to be arched, curved, like an ancient book

27. (a) How serious is God's law that soul must go for soul? (b) What is indicated by the statement that "the mountains must melt because of their blood"?

28. In this prophecy, the expression "all those of the army of the heavens" refers to what, and what happens to them?

scroll, the writing on which was generally on the concave side, the inner side. The sun, moon and stars of our skies appear on the stretched-out arch of our skies, like the things written upon the inner side of a book scroll.

29 When the material written on the inner side of the scroll has passed before the eyes of the reader, then the finished scroll is rolled up and put away. Similarly, "the heavens must be rolled up, just like a book scroll," in that the heavenlike governments whose "army" has played its part visibly on the pages of human history must come to their end, must come to the last page of their history, and, hence, must be brought to their finish, done away with, put away with no further permission from God to exist. Those of their impressive-looking "army" lose the freshness of life and fall, disappear from sight of those who have read their history, just like shriveled leaves that fall off the grapevine and like the shriveled fig that drops off the fig tree. Their season is over.—Compare the language of Revelation 6:12-14.

CHRISTENDOM, MODERN COUNTERPART OF EDOM

30 That the "heavens," the "army" of which rots away or shrivels away, are not to be understood as the invisible spirit heavens of God's residence is indicated by the further part of Isaiah's prophecy. Expressing himself therein, Jehovah says:

31 " 'For in the heavens my sword will certainly be drenched. Look! Upon Edom [Idumea, Greek *LXX*] it will descend, and upon the people devoted by me to destruction in justice. Jehovah has a sword; it must be filled with blood; it must be made greasy with the fat, with the blood of young rams and he-goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For Jehovah has

29. How do the symbolic heavens prove to be "just like a book scroll" and "like a shriveled fig"?

30, 31. How do the following verses of Isaiah's prophecy show that the "heavens" here referred to are not the invisible spirit heavens of God's residence?

a sacrifice in Bozrah [capital city of Edom or Idumea], and a great slaughtering in the land of Edom. And the wild bulls must come down with them, and young bulls with the powerful ones; and their land must be drenched with blood, and their very dust will be made greasy with the fat.' For Jehovah has a day of vengeance, a year of retributions for the legal case over Zion."—Isaiah 34:5-8, *NW; Septuagint* translation by Thomson.

32 The territory of the Edomites, which straddled the Arabah between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of 'Aqaba, was called "the mountainous region of Esau." (Obadiah 8, 9, 19, 21) Esau was the original name of the man called Edom. The nickname Edom, meaning "Red," was given to Esau because he sold his Abrahamic birthright to his younger twin-brother Jacob (Israel) for a meal of reddish stew. (Genesis 25:29-34; Hebrews 12:16, 17) Because Jacob supplanted him in the precious birthright, Esau (or Edom) became filled with murderous hate toward his spiritually minded twin-brother. (Genesis 27:30-45) Because of Esau's taking up residence in the mountainous region, he dwelt high up, as in heaven. Jehovah spoke of matters from that standpoint when, by the mouth of his prophet Obadiah, he said to the Esauites (Edomites):

> " 'The presumptuousness of your heart is what has deceived you, you who are residing in the retreats of the crag, the height where he dwells, saying in his heart, "Who will bring me down to the earth?" If you should make your position high like the eagle, or if among the stars there were a placing of your nest, down from there I would bring you,' is the utterance of Jehovah."—Obadiah 3, 4.

33 Therefore in speaking of his destruction of the nation of Edom by the "sword" of warfare, Jehovah could figuratively say that "in the heavens" his sword

32. Who were the Edomites, and in what kind of region did they dwell?
33. (a) At Isaiah 34:5, what is meant by the statement that God's sword would be drenched "in the heavens"? (b) By what terms is reference made to the greater ones and lesser ones in Edom?

would be drenched, filled with blood. He had devoted or vowed the Edomites to destruction in justice, and this destruction would reach to the highest-ranking part of the nation of Edom, as pictured by its capital of Bozrah. The slaughter of this enemy nation Jehovah speaks of as a sacrifice, for it is in execution of his judgment and in vindication of him as the Universal Sovereign. The greater ones and the lesser ones Jehovah speaks of as symbolic "wild bulls" and "young bulls" and as "young rams" and "he-goats." The land of this murder-minded bloodguilty nation must be drenched with their own blood by means of the slaughtering "sword" of Jehovah.

34 This drastic treatment of the land of Edom was deserved; otherwise, it would not have been an act of divine justice. "For Jehovah has a day of vengeance, a year of retributions for the legal case over Zion." (Isaiah 34:8) It was not over so-called "Zionism." Rather, ancient Zion, where "Jehovah's throne" had been occupied by the anointed kings of Jehovah's chosen people, was involved. In the year 607 B.C.E., the armies of Babylon had destroyed the holy city of Jerusalem and overthrown the Kingdom of Judah and deported the surviving Jews to the pagan land of Babylon. On this occasion the attitude of the nation of Edom toward the disciplined people of Jehovah displayed itself unmistakably. How?

35 Jehovah calls it to their attention by means of his prophet Obadiah, saying:

> "In the day when you stood off on the side, in the day when strangers [Babylonians] took his [Israel's] military force into captivity and when outright foreigners entered his gate and over Jerusalem they cast lots, you also were like one of them.
>
> "And you ought not to watch the sight in the day of your brother, in the day of his misfortune; and you ought not to rejoice at the sons of Judah in the day of their perishing; and you ought not to maintain a big mouth in the day of their distress. You ought not to

34-36. What had the Edomites done to deserve this drastic treatment at the hands of God?

come into the gate of my people in the day of their disaster. You, even you, ought not to peer at his calamity in the day of his disaster; and you ought not to thrust out a hand upon his wealth in the day of his disaster. And you ought not to stand at the parting of the ways, in order to cut off his escapees; and you ought not to hand over his survivors in the day of distress. For the day of Jehovah against all the nations is near. In the way that you have done, it will be done to you. Your sort of treatment will return upon your own head. For in the way that you people have drunk upon my holy mountain, all the nations will keep drinking constantly. And they will certainly drink and gulp down and become as though they had never happened to be."—Obadiah 11-16.

36 The inspired psalmist recalled the same malicious conduct on the part of a brother nation, when he prayed to Jehovah and said: "Remember, O Jehovah, regarding the sons of Edom the day of Jerusalem, who were saying: 'Lay it bare! Lay it bare to the foundation within it!' O daughter of Babylon, who are to be despoiled, happy will he be that rewards you with your own treatment with which you treated us." —Psalm 137:7, 8.

37 What the Edomites did to his chosen people in the day of their disaster in 607 B.C.E., Jehovah counted as being done to him. For this reason he had a "legal case over Zion." So the year must come when he would mete out "retributions for the legal case over Zion" and express his vengeance upon the offending Edomites. (Isaiah 34:8) Jehovah did begin expressing this righteous vengeance upon the Edomites by means of the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, not long after the destruction of Jerusalem.—Jeremiah 25:17-21.

ACTS OF THE EDOMITE HERODS

38 The descendants of Edom (Esau), the Idumeans, as the Greeks called them, continued to be guilty of

37. (a) Why did Jehovah count the "legal case over Zion" with Edom as being his? (b) When did Jehovah's expression of vengeance upon the Edomites begin?

38. Of what further acts against Jehovah's people were such Edomite rulers as King Herod the Great, Herod Antipas and King Herod Agrippa I guilty?

acts against Jehovah's chosen people. The family of King Herod the Great were Idumeans or Edomites. To his shame, the Bible record discloses that this king who built the gorgeous temple at Jerusalem feared for his kingdom in his family and tried to murder the young child Jesus at Bethlehem-Judah. (Matthew 2:1-22) About thirty years later, at his birthday celebration, foxlike Herod Antipas the district ruler had Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist, beheaded. (Matthew 14:1-11; Luke 13:31, 32) In 33 C.E., when Jesus was on trial for his life and was sent by Governor Pilate to the then king of Galilee, Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, this ruler was disappointed in Jesus and discredited him as the Messiah and sent him back to Pilate and to his death. (Luke 23:6-12) Some years later, King Herod Agrippa I tried to please the Jews and executed James the brother of John, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, by the sword and then imprisoned the apostle Peter with the intention of having him executed after the Jewish Passover. (Acts 12:1-6) And, finally, what about King Herod Agrippa II?

[39] In a special session the apostle Paul was brought before him at Caesarea by arrangement of Governor Festus. When, at the climax of his legal defense of himself, Paul said to the king, "Do you, King Agrippa, believe the Prophets? I know you believe," what did this Idumean say to Paul? "In a short time you would persuade me to become a Christian." (Acts 26:27, 28) Although then a circumcised Jewish proselyte, King Agrippa never became a spiritual Israelite, a Christian. He remained in politics as an agent of the pagan Roman Empire.

[40] During the lifetime of Jesus, the party followers of Herod cooperated with the Pharisees in trying to

39. Although given an opportunity to become a Christian, of what did King Herod Agrippa II remain an agent?
40. (a) In what conspiracy against Jesus did the party followers of Herod participate? (b) Following what event do the Edomites disappear from history, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy?

trap Jesus in his remarks on whether it was Scripturally lawful for Jews to pay tax to Caesar. They tried to put him on the "horns of a dilemma," and so bring him into trouble either with the Romans or with the nationalistic party of the Jews. (Matthew 22:15-22) Thus the Herodians did not take a favorable attitude toward Christianity at its beginning. The same was true, according to the Bible record, with regard to the Edomites or Idumeans, headed by the royal family of the Herods. They clung to Judaism. During the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 C.E., the Idumeans answered a summons from the Jewish faction that was holding the temple area against the opposing faction of the Jews. But the Idumean (Edomite) help proved to be in vain, and Jerusalem fell to the Romans and was destroyed along with its temple of Herod. After this disaster, the Idumeans or Edomites disappear from the scene of Middle Eastern history. Bible prophecy did not fail as to them.

ANCIENT EDOM AND MODERN ANTITYPE

41 Jehovah's prophecy will likewise not fail in fulfillment upon the modern-day counterpart, the antitype, of the "land of Edom." What is that antitype? It is Christendom. Just as the ancient Jewish nation and Jerusalem were used by Jehovah God in a typical way, to foreshadow things with regard to Christendom, so the brother nation of Edom was used by Him in a typical way. (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; Colossians 2:16, 17) The people of Edom were fleshly descendants of Esau, who was nicknamed Edom ("Red"). Their national forefather was the older twin-brother of Jacob, who became surnamed Israel. Because of his being the firstborn of Isaac and Rebekah, Esau felt that he had a natural right to the birthright that his grandfather Abraham handed down.

41. What is the modern-day counterpart of the "land of Edom"?

42 However, Jehovah God disregarded the natural right of a firstborn son, and, before the birth of the twins, he declared in favor of the second-born twin, Jacob ("Supplanter"). Even though this was the case, Esau treated the birthright in a profane way or with a lack of appreciation for spiritual things. In a time of fatigue and hunger, he was willing to sell this birthright to his appreciative brother Jacob for just one meal. Later on, when the time came for his father Isaac to bestow the Abrahamic blessing, Esau disregarded the oath with which he had sworn in order to validate the sale of his birthright and he made preparations to receive the birthright blessing, to which he was no longer entitled. It was only right that he was outwitted in this matter and the blessing went to the one to whom it rightly belonged according to God's will, Jacob. But Esau felt that he had been unjustly supplanted, cheated. So, in hatred, he purposed to kill Jacob at the earliest convenience.—Genesis 25:29 through 27:45; Hebrews 12:16, 17.

43 In these regards, Jacob became a picture of the heirs of the Abrahamic promise, the ones who become the spiritual "seed" of Abraham, namely, the anointed disciples of Jesus Christ, who is the principal one of the "seed" of Abraham. (Galatians 3:16-29) As regards the materialistic Esau, he became a type of the nation of natural Israel, who were fleshly descendants of Abraham and who thought that the Abrahamic blessing belonged naturally to them.

44 However, these natural, circumcised Israelites failed to qualify for becoming the spiritual seed of Abraham. They rejected the main one of Abraham's promised "seed," namely, Jesus Christ, and had him killed and thereafter persecuted his faithful footstep

42. What developments in connection with the birthright led to Esau's feeling hatred for Jacob?
43. (a) In this matter, of whom did Jacob become a picture? (b) What about Esau?
44. How did the natural, circumcised Israelites, as a whole, prove that they were indeed like Esau?

followers. Only a small remnant of the natural Jews met the requirements and became part of the spiritual seed of Abraham. So the remaining needed members of the spiritual seed of Abraham have had to be taken from non-Jews who meet the qualifications. (Romans 2:28, 29; 11:1-29) Thus the majority of the Jewish nation made themselves like their distant uncle Esau or Edom.

45 Due to his profaneness or lack of spiritual appreciation, Esau was not in position to hand down the Abrahamic birthright to the nation that descended from him, the Esauites or Edomites. (Hebrews 12:15-17) These Edomites were the descendants of Esau by pagan, unbelieving wives. (Genesis 26:34, 35; 27:46; 28:6-9) Naturally they would have reason to think that they had been deprived of being the natural seed of Abraham with a right to the promised blessing, because of the action of their uncle Jacob or Israel. So they easily learned to harbor the hatred that their national ancestor Esau had felt toward Jacob, and this hatred manifested itself in hostility toward their brother nation, the Israelites. During the course of the centuries that followed, the Edomites or Idumeans were made to feel the disfavor of Jehovah God.—Ezekiel 35:1-9; Malachi 1:2-4.

46 During the period of the Maccabean rulers of the repatriated Jews in the land of Judah, the surviving Edomites were obliged to become Jewish proselytes. Approximately between the years 130-120 B.C.E. John Hyrcanus of the Maccabean line subjugated the Edomites and forced them to submit to circumcision as proselytes to Judaism. This accounts for the Jewish toleration of the rulership of the Edomite (Idumean) king, Herod the Great, and members of his royal family. (See *Antiquities of the Jews,* by Flavius Josephus, Book 13, chapter 9, paragraph 1; Book 15,

45. How did those who were descendants of Esau or Edom come to manifest hostility toward their brother nation, the Israelites?
46. During the time of the Maccabees, how did the Edomites become amalgamated with the Jewish nation?

chapter 7, paragraph 9.) In this way the Edomites (Idumeans) became amalgamated with the Jewish nation of the first century of our Common Era, which Jewish nation was used as a Bible type of Christendom.

47 Similar to Esau or Edom, Christendom has laid claim to the Abrahamic promise and considers itself to be the spiritual seed of Abraham, the heirs to the heavenly kingdom with Jesus Christ. According to their religious claims, the members of Christendom make themselves twin-brothers of those who are the real Christian heirs of God's Messianic kingdom, the true disciples of Jesus the Messiah. Nevertheless, Christendom does not love these faithful spirit-anointed disciples of Christ. She hates them with a murderous hate. (1 John 3:12-15) Ever since the founding of Christendom in the fourth century C.E., she has persecuted those who are not imitation Christians. These follow Jesus' words and example in being no part of this world, but Christendom has made herself a friend of this world by becoming a part of it. Therefore what the world hates, she hates. (1 John 2:15-17; John 15:19; 17:14, 16; James 4:4) By persecuting the true Christians, she imagines that she is rendering to God a sacred service.—John 16:2.

48 Modern twentieth-century history testifies to this fact. During World War I the faithful remnant of spiritual Israel came to be hated by all the nations, just as Jesus Christ had foretold regarding his true footstep followers. (Matthew 24:9; 10:7-22) The reason for this world hatred was the fact that the anointed remnant proclaimed God's Messianic kingdom as the rightful rule for all the earth, the only hope for all mankind. (Mark 13:10-13) During all the persecution and suffering upon the faithful remnant, Christendom did not express a word of sympathy for them. In fact,

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47. In what ways has Christendom proved herself to be similar to Esau or Edom?

48. Just like the Edomites at the time of Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C.E., how did Christendom act toward spiritual Israel during World War I?

the documented evidence shows that Christendom's religious clergy instigated this persecution upon these proclaimers of the "good news" of God's Messianic kingdom. She rejoiced with the warring nations of Christendom over the suppression of these Kingdom proclaimers and the killing of their public witness work, just as the Edomites rejoiced with the Babylonians over the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E.—Revelation 11:7-10.

[49] Nursing her hatred of the remnant of spiritual Israelites who stood out as true Christians in contrast to her church members who engaged in bloodspilling in violent warfare, Christendom did not rejoice when the suppressed Kingdom witnesses were revived by God's spirit in 1919 C.E. She did not rejoice at the spiritual paradise into which those restored spiritual Israelites were brought. (Isaiah 35:10) During World War II of 1939-1945 C.E., which broke out within her own borders, Christendom again stirred up religious persecution and fiercely endeavored to wipe out the spiritual paradise of the remnant of spiritual Israel and their companion worshipers of Jehovah God. But all in vain! Jehovah's Christian witnesses survived and came forth from the second world conflict with greater force of numbers than ever before. In view of such violent hatred on the part of Christendom toward His Christian witnesses, does Jehovah God have a "legal case over Zion"? Has His "year of retributions" arrived upon the modern-day Edomites, Jehovah's "day of vengeance"?—Isaiah 34:8.

[50] The answer is Yes! And so Christendom now faces desolation. Judaism faces the same thing!

49, 50. (a) During World War II, how did Christendom further show that she had the spirit of ancient Edom? (b) In fulfillment of God's word through Isaiah, what now faces the modern-day Edomites, the people of Christendom, as well as Judaism?

CHAPTER 13

When Christendom and Judaism Are No More!

THE ancient nation of Edom (Idumea) was against the faithful worshipers of Jehovah God. Even in the days of the apostles of Jesus Christ, in the first century C.E., the staunch adherents to Judaism were one with the Edomites (Idumeans) in fighting against the newly begun Christianity. (Acts 4:25-28; 12:1-6) In the course of time the nation of Edom disappeared from the pages of history, but, for the major and complete fulfillment of Bible prophecy, that notorious nation has her modern counterpart. It is Christendom. So the Bible prophecies concerning Edom must today be understood from the standpoint of what befalls this modern-day counterpart.

2 In the outstanding prophecy against Edom as contained in Isaiah, chapter thirty-four, we read this ominous statement: "For Jehovah has a day of vengeance, a year of retributions for the legal case over Zion." (Isaiah 34:8) Jehovah's "day of vengeance," his "year of retributions," is at hand with reference to the modern-day counterpart of ancient Edom. So, as we consider the further part of this prophecy of Isaiah, we can have Christendom of today in mind. Foretelling the "retributions" that were to come for the hateful misconduct of Edom against ancient Zion or Jerusalem, the prophet Isaiah proceeds to say:

3 "And her torrents must be changed into pitch, and her dust into sulphur; and her land must become as

1. (a) In the first century C.E., were the adherents to Judaism and the Edomites in agreement on their attitude toward Christianity? (b) Why are the Bible prophecies concerning Edom of interest to us today?
2, 3. (a) Against whom is Jehovah's "day of vengeance," as foretold in Isaiah 34:8, now at hand? (b) In the following verses of Isaiah chapter 34, what "retributions" are foretold?

burning pitch. By night or by day it will not be extinguished; to time indefinite its smoke will keep ascending. From generation to generation she will be parched; forever and ever no one will be passing across her. And the pelican and the porcupine must take possession of her, and long-eared owls and ravens themselves will reside in her; and he must stretch out over her the measuring line of emptiness and the stones [the plumb stones] of wasteness. Her nobles—there are none there whom they will call to the kingship itself, and her very princes will all become nothing. On her dwelling towers thorns must come up, nettles and thorny weeds in her fortified places; and she must become an abiding place of jackals, the courtyard for the ostriches. And haunters of waterless regions must meet up with howling animals, and even the goat-shaped demon will call to its companion. Yes, there the nightjar will certainly take its ease and find for itself a resting-place. There the arrow snake has made its nest and lays eggs, and it must hatch them and gather them together under its shadow. Yes, there the gledes must collect themselves together, each one with her mate."—Isaiah 34:9-15.

[4] That is anything but a description of a "garden of Eden" or "paradise of pleasure." Rather, it is nothing less than a picture of utter desolation and ruin, a region unfit for humans to live in, but a well-suited haunt for wild animals and birds. The land of Edom is thus portrayed as becoming so parched that it appears as if its torrent valleys were running with pitch, and its dust were sulphur and then these combustible substances were set afire. This parched state of the land of Edom was to continue "forever and ever," and there was to be no restoration of its former residents or their descendants. The "smoke" ascending from the symbolic burning of the land of Edom will be like the "smoke" from the fiery destruction of Babylon the

4. (a) In brief, what is the condition there described? (b) For how long was this condition to continue?

Great, concerning which it is written: "The smoke from her goes on ascending forever and ever."—Revelation 19:3; 18:18.

5 In an application of this prophecy to Christendom's coming destruction, the restored remnant of spiritual Israelites have the commission from God to declare this divine "vengeance" upon Christendom, as indicated in Obadiah's corresponding prophecy, which reads: "And the house of Jacob [Israel] must become a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau as stubble; and they must set them ablaze and devour them. And there will prove to be no survivor to the house of Esau; for Jehovah himself has spoken it." (Obadiah 18) For declaring such a fiery message against modern-day Edom, Christendom, the spiritual Israelite remnant of today incur her hatred all the more.

6 After painting a prophetic picture of how the "land of Edom" was to become a wild wasteland with only wild beasts and birds and snakes in it, the prophet Isaiah assures us that there will be no failure on Jehovah's part in having this prophecy come true. He says to the students of Bible prophecies: "Search for yourselves in the book of Jehovah and read out loud: not one has been missing of them; they actually do not fail to have each one her mate, for it is the mouth of Jehovah that has given the command, and it is his spirit that has collected them together. And it is He that has cast for them the lot, and his own hand has apportioned the place to them by the measuring line. To time indefinite they will take possession of it; for generation after generation they will reside in it." —Isaiah 34:16, 17.

7 Thus, instead of male and female Edomites pairing up again in their former land and producing one

5. How does Obadiah 18 indicate what the spiritual Israelite remnant of today are to do with this fiery message against modern-day Edom?
6. What assurance is embodied in the language of Isaiah 34:16, 17?
7. In detail, what is the meaning of the language of Isaiah 34:16, 17?

generation of Edomites after another, the wild beasts and birds will pair up. The females will not fail to have their mates. Jehovah God is the One who makes the once-populous land of Edom now an ideal place for such wild creature life. His hand of active power is the one that appointed this place for them and brought them together there. It is as if He were an architect and had stretched out the measuring line and dropped down the plumb line to measure off and guide straight the construction of the situation in the "land of Edom." According to his measuring and guiding of things, it was to be a land of "emptiness" as far as humans are concerned and an area of "wasteness" as far as new human structures of any height are concerned. There was to be no rebirth of that land as the homeland of the Edomites, "the people devoted by me to destruction in justice."—Isaiah 34:5, 11.

[8] What an awe-striking end that prophecy portends for the modern-day "land of Edom," namely, Christendom! It may strike the religionists with horror to think that Christendom, with her tremendous church population, her wealth and her religious buildings and institutions should come to such an end, with no hope of reconstruction. But just as certainly as the prophecy had its miniature fulfillment upon that now extinct people of Edom, just so surely will prophecy have a final and complete major fulfillment upon Edomitish Christendom. For, just as it is said with respect to the destruction of Babylon the Great, "Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong."—Revelation 18:8.

[9] How different in outlook is the situation for the restored remnant of spiritual Israelites! The prophecy of Obadiah regarding the "mountainous region of Esau" follows the pattern of Isaiah's prophecy in contrasting the outcome of things for the Edomites and

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8. (a) What does that portend for Christendom? (b) How certain is it that this will happen to Christendom?
9, 10. At the close of the prophecy, what outlook for the restored remnant of spiritual Israel is foretold by Obadiah?

for the Israelites whom the Edomites rejoiced to see deported to Babylon. Turning from his description of the divine punishment to come upon the unbrotherly, malicious Edomites, the prophet Obadiah proceeds on to the close of his prophecy, saying:

10 "And in Mount Zion is where those escaping will prove to be, and it must become something holy; and the house of Jacob [Israel] must take possession of the things for them to possess. . . . And saviors will certainly come up onto Mount Zion, in order to judge the mountainous region of Esau; and the kingship must become Jehovah's."—Obadiah 17-21.

11 It is upon the heavenly Mount Zion that Jehovah, in fulfillment of Psalm 2:5, 6, installs his Messianic King of the royal house of David, namely, Jesus Christ. It is upon the heavenly Mount Zion that the Savior, the Lamb of God, assembles to him the 144,000 spiritual Israelites, to reign with him for a thousand years. (Revelation 14:1-3; 7:4-8) It is the anointed remnant yet on earth of the 144,000 spiritual Israelites that now declares the judgment message of Jehovah against the modern-day "mountainous region of Esau," the "land of Edom," namely, Christendom. As these proclaimers of Jehovah's judgments that foretell his vengeance and retributions to be executed upon the antitypical Edomites, they appreciate all the more fully the beauteous spiritual paradise into which He has ushered them since 1919 C.E.—Isaiah 35:1-10.

THE END OF CHRISTENDOM AND JUDAISM

12 Understandably when Christendom, who is boasting today of nearly a thousand million church members, is reduced to the desolated estate once predicted for the land of Edom, it will cause great wonderment. How could such an almost unbelievable thing occur?

11. (a) What is the "Mount Zion" onto which "saviors will certainly come up"? (b) How does the contrast of spiritual conditions emphasize the beauty of the spiritual paradise?
12. Where does the Bible describe how the end of Christendom and Judaism will occur?

Especially within this generation that experienced the end of the Gentile Times more than sixty years ago —in 1914 C.E. Also, how will the end of Christendom and of its close religious associate, Judaism, occur? Jehovah God, who inspired the prophecies of Isaiah and of Obadiah against Edom, has inspired the prophecy that tells us how. That prophecy is specifically recorded for us in the last book of the Holy Bible, Revelation, chapter seventeen.

[13] In objection to such an idea, a defender of Christendom might argue that Christendom is not mentioned at all in Revelation, chapter seventeen. That is true, for Christendom was not in existence at the time that the apostle John wrote the book called Revelation. Instead of trying to create a fusion religion by bringing about a compromise between Rome's pagan religion, and Christianity, and thus providing a suitable State religion, the Roman Empire was in the apostle John's time trying to stamp out Christianity by cruel persecution. That was why the apostle John was an exile on the penal island of Patmos. (Revelation 1:9) So Christendom was not established until more than two centuries later, by Emperor Constantine the Great. However, something already existing is made the chief figure in Revelation, chapter seventeen, and that is Babylon the Great.

[14] In the book of Revelation two symbolic women are set in contrast with each other. The one is this Babylon the Great, and the other is the "wife" of the Lamb of God. (Revelation 19:1-8) The one, Babylon the Great, is branded as a "harlot." The other, "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is a virgin. (Revelation 17:1-5; 21:9) Both are religious organizations, the one unclean, the other clean. The "bride, the Lamb's wife," is the congregation of the 144,000 virginlike faithful followers of the Lamb Jesus Christ, all of them being

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13. Why was Christendom not mentioned by name in Revelation, chapter 17, but, significantly, what is there named?
14. In the book of Revelation, what two symbolic women are set in contrast with each other, and what do they represent?

spiritual Israelites. (Revelation 7:4-8; 14:1-5) Babylon the Great is composed of those who practice religions in opposition to true Christianity as practiced by the 144,000 spiritual Israelites. That is why the apostle John "saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." (Revelation 17:6) The religion of the members of Babylon the Great is, therefore, not Christian, but Babylonish, hence false.—Isaiah 47:1, 12-15.

15 Concerning Babylon the Great, it was explained to the apostle John: "The woman whom you saw means the great city that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth." (Revelation 17:18) Because she thus sits as a "queen" over the kings of the earth, Babylon the Great stands for the world empire of false religion. (Revelation 18:7) She has exercised such imperial kingship, not merely over the earth's kings during any given period or century, but also over a series of world powers (symbolic "kings") down through millenniums of time. Down till the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 C.E., there was a succession of seven such world powers, namely, (1) the ancient Egyptian Empire, (2) the Assyrian Empire, (3) the neo-Babylonian Empire, (4) the Médo-Persian Empire, (5) the Grecian Empire, (6) the Roman Empire, and (7) the Anglo-American Dual World Power. This is portrayed by the fact that the beast ridden by the "harlot" has seven "heads."

16 Telling the meaning of the various parts of this "scarlet-colored wild beast," the angel said to John: "The seven heads mean seven mountains, where the woman sits on top. And there are seven kings: five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet arrived, but when he does arrive he must remain a short while."

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15. Who are the "kings of the earth" over whom Babylon the Great has exercised kingship?
16. When saying, with regard to the heads of the "scarlet-colored wild beast" ridden by the "harlot," that "one is," what did the angel mean?

(Revelation 17:9, 10) By the expression "one is," the angel meant the sixth world power, the Roman Empire, that was holding the Christian apostle John a prisoner on the isle of Patmos.

17 In the fourth century of our Common Era this sixth world power, by means of Emperor Constantine the Great as its Pontifex Maximus, brought about a fusion of the Roman pagan religion and the apostate Christian religion of some hundreds of "bishops" of religious congregations. By imperial decree, Constantine made the fusion religion the State religion. Thus nominal Christianity, which was Christian in name only, became the established religion of the Roman Empire. In this manner Christendom was brought to birth. By becoming the dominant religious organization of the Roman World Power, over which world power Babylon the Great had her kingdom, Christendom was made a part of Babylon the Great. Christendom was thus, in effect, a daughter organization of Babylon the Great, of whom it is said:

18 "Upon her forehead was written a name, a mystery: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth.' "—Revelation 17:5.

19 It is no wonder, therefore, that the outstanding doctrines of the religious sects of Christendom and also her practices are pagan, Babylonish, stemming from ancient Babylon on the river Euphrates of Mesopotamia. Neither is it any wonder that Christendom imitates her religious mother, of whom it is said: "With whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, whereas those who inhabit the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." (Revelation 17:1, 2) Spiritually speaking, Christendom is a "har-

17, 18. How was Christendom, right from her beginning, a part of Babylon the Great?

19. (a) From what source do the outstanding doctrines and practices of Christendom come? (b) How, in imitating her religious mother, has Christendom shown herself to be a "harlot"?

lot," for she has intimate friendship with this wicked world, concerning which unclean friendship James 4:4 says: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." The State churches of Christendom, her unions of Church and State, do not stand to her credit. They brand her as a spiritual fornicatrix, a meddler in world politics.

20 Can there be any question that Christendom is a part of Babylon the Great, with a church membership that makes her the dominant part of that world empire of false religion? None! Hence, even though Christendom is not mentioned by name in Revelation, chapter seventeen, she is included, and is to be understood, in that chapter. Consequently, what is there pictured as happening to the "great harlot," Babylon the Great, must happen also to Christendom. Revelation, chapter seventeen, does show, then, how Christendom is to be destroyed. This must be so, because no part of Babylon the Great will escape destruction. The religious "harlots" that she has mothered must perish with her. So, then, as we now consider the divine "judgment upon the great harlot who sits on many waters," we must keep Christendom in mind as being inseparably involved, included.—Revelation 17:1, 5.

THE ROLE OF THE EIGHTH WORLD POWER

21 To the wondering apostle John, God's angel said: "I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the wild beast that is carrying her and that has the seven heads and the ten horns: The wild beast that you saw was, but is not, and yet is about to ascend out of the abyss, and it is to go off into destruction. And when they see how the wild beast was, but is not, and yet

20. (a) So why is Christendom, though not named, to be understood as included in Revelation, chapter 17? (b) What does the future hold for her?

21. What did God's angel tell the apostle John about "an eighth king"?

will be present, those who dwell on the earth will wonder admiringly, but their names have not been written upon the scroll of life from the founding of the world. . . . And the wild beast that was but is not, it is also itself an eighth king, but springs from the seven, and it goes off into destruction."—Revelation 17:7-11.

22 The symbolic wild beast with seven heads and ten horns pictures "an eighth king," that is to say, an eighth world power. This world power came into existence after the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 C.E. and after World War I. Modern history identifies this Eighth World Power as being the international organization for world peace and security. This was formed in 1919 and went into operation early in 1920. The Seventh World Power, namely, the Anglo-American World Power, was largely responsible for the formation of that organization for world peace and security. (Revelation 13:11-15) It began under the name "The League of Nations." It sprang from the preceding seven world powers in that it combined in itself the Seventh World Power and all the relics of the preceding six world powers.

23 In 1939 C.E. the League of Nations went into the abyss of deathlike impotency because of the outbreak of World War II. After the close of World War II in the summer of 1945, this Eighth World Power that was assigned to safeguarding world peace and security ascended out of the wartime abyss, especially by the aid of the Seventh World Power, the dual world power of Britain and America. It took on a new name, United Nations. Beginning with fifty-one member nations, it today has one hundred and thirty-eight member nations. Christendom has a large representation in the United Nations by its many nations that are mem-

22. What is that "eighth king," and how did it 'spring from the seven'?
23. (a) When did that "wild beast . . . ascend out of the abyss," and with what name? (b) What part do Christendom and Judaism have in the United Nations?

bers of that world organization. Judaism, with its worldwide membership of 14,443,925 Orthodox and Reform Jews, has its representation in the United Nations by means of the Republic of Israel since the year 1949. So Babylon the Great dominates Judaism.

24 When the scarlet-colored wild beast with seven heads and ten horns ascended out of the abyss in the form of the United Nations, Babylon the Great immediately got on its back again as a "queen" with a "kingdom over the kings of the earth." She took this action by putting her faith in that man-made organization for world peace and security rather than in the Messianic kingdom of God that was being proclaimed world wide by Jehovah's Christian witnesses. She put her dependence upon this antichrist organization for her preservation from annihilation in the postwar period. Confidently, riding that symbolic wild beast, Babylon the Great "keeps saying, 'I sit a queen, and I am no widow, and I shall never see mourning.' " (Revelation 18:7) But she has miscalculated!

25 The "ten horns" of that symbolic scarlet-colored wild beast are destined to turn upon the harlotrous world empire of false religion. Said God's angel to the apostle John as he watched the prophetic vision: "And the ten horns that you saw mean ten kings, who have not yet [in John's day] received a kingdom, but they do receive authority as kings one hour with the wild beast [by joining the modern world organization for peace and security]. These have one thought, and so they give their power and authority to the wild beast [now the United Nations]. . . . The waters that you saw, where the harlot is sitting, mean peoples and crowds and nations and tongues. And the ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and

24. How did Babylon the Great get on the back of the "scarlet-colored wild beast," and how does she view her position there?
25. By what means, as God's angel told the apostle John, would the harlotrous world empire of false religion come to its end?

will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire. . . . And the woman whom you saw means the great city [Babylon the Great] that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth."—Revelation 17:12-18.

26 The symbolic "ten horns" (the member nations of the world organization for peace and security) will lose their passionate attraction to the harlotrous world empire of false religion and will gore her to death. In fact, the whole symbolic wild beast (now the United Nations) will cease to find satisfaction in their lustful relationship with the "great harlot," Babylon the Great, and the mouths of the "seven heads" of the scarlet-colored "wild beast" will "eat up her fleshy parts." To the whole "wild beast" organization, "ten horns" and all, she will become as a worn-out old harlot, no longer desirable for greedy, selfish use. Realistically, under stress of the global crisis, the political rulers, whose nations are members in the United Nations, will become hardheaded in the light of the worsening world conditions. Ignoring all sentimentality, they will be forced to take drastic, heartless action for the preservation of their political institutions and social, economic structure. They will see that the world empire of false religion is an international nuisance and a hindrance to their emergency operations because of the Babylonish religious beliefs, practices and customs.

27 The many gods and goddesses that Babylon the Great has worshiped will not come to the aid of the world empire of false religion, to save her from action by her former lustful paramours. Her former lovers, the political and military elements, will realize that those deities of Babylon the Great are helpless and have been of no saving power to them when prayed to by the priests, chaplains, clergymen and religious potentates of the world empire of false religion. Those po-

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26, 27. (a) What change in attitude on the part of the political rulers will evidently lead up to this violent action? (b) Why is their 'burning her with fire' appropriate?

litical and military elements will feel deceived, tricked, fooled and will lose respect for worldly religion. They will not have to turn Communist in order to "hate the harlot," but will simply turn radical and thus be able to cooperate with "godless Communism" in doing away with the hypocritical religious organization. They will give her the treatment that was meted out to some harlots in ancient times, "completely burn her with fire."—Genesis 38:24.

[28] We can imagine what this will mean to the Vatican and its Basilica of Saint Peter, to the religious cathedrals, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, shrines, and to other religious structures! We can imagine what is in store for those who officiate in impressive vestments in those religious buildings. Let not Christendom imagine that she will escape because she parades before the world in the name of Christ. She, too, has played the religious "harlot" like her mother, Babylon the Great. The friendship that she has cultivated and maintained with the political and military elements of this world will fail her. She will be shocked at finding that adulterous friendship with this world made her an "enemy of God" and of his Christ. (James 4:4) Even the celebrating of the Holy Year of 1975 does not alter her status before Jehovah God. She must be reduced to the state of emptiness and wasteness like that foretold for ancient Edom.—Isaiah 34:11-13; compare Revelation 18:2, 8.

[29] As respects Judaism, it has taken its stand with Babylon the Great. The Republic of Israel, as one of the 138 Jewish, Arab, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, so-called "Christian," Communist members of the United Nations, has been under the rider of that Eighth World Power, namely, Babylon the Great. (Revelation 17:3-6)

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28. When all of Babylon the Great is brought to desolation, why will Christendom not be exempt?

29. (a) In what way has Judaism identified itself with Babylon the Great? (b) Are there any who have come out of Judaism, so as to avoid its fate?

In the first century of our Common Era the Jewish Pharisee named Saul of Tarsus came out of Judaism and became the Christian apostle surnamed Paul. (Galatians 1:1, 13-17; Philippians 3:3-6) Dissimilar to this Saul of Tarsus, the vast majority of the natural, circumcised Jews have clung to the traditional Judaism.

30 In the year of 70 C.E., their stronghold of Judaism, Jerusalem, was destroyed by the pagan Romans, just as Jesus Christ foretold. (Matthew 24:1-3, 15-22; Luke 21:20-24) That destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and the desolation of the land of Judah by the Romans became a prophetic type of the destruction and desolation now due to come upon Christendom in the "great tribulation" ahead. Since Judaism holds to the stand that it took in the first century C.E., and that brought disaster on it in 70 C.E., it will suffer the same fate as its antitype, Christendom, will suffer.

31 So, the time is approaching when Babylon the Great is no more! This means that the time must come when Christendom and Judaism are no more! But what about the proclaimers of the established Messianic kingdom of God, namely, Jehovah's Christian witnesses? What about the spiritual paradise in which they are now residing? The inspired prophetic Scriptures reveal to them what to expect.—Amos 3:7; Revelation 1:1-3.

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30. What lies ahead for both Christendom and Judaism, and how do events of the first century indicate that?
31. Who are the people that stand out as separate and distinct from Christendom and Judaism, and what conditions do they enjoy even now?

CHAPTER 14

When Man's Old Order Makes Way for God's New Order

WHEN the "great harlot," Babylon the Great, is destroyed in the impending "great tribulation," a longtime part of man's old order will pass away. That Babylonish world empire of false religion is destroyed by former lovers. That is to say, her destruction will come by the agency of the symbolic "ten horns" on the "seven heads" of the scarlet-colored "wild beast," namely, the international organization for world peace and security. That postwar organization was formed in the year 1919 C.E. and operated first under the name The League of Nations.

[2] As regards the "ten horns" that give the symbolic "wild beast" a formidable appearance, Revelation 17:17 says: "For God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought, even to carry out their one thought by giving their kingdom to the wild beast, until the words of God will have been accomplished."

[3] By the peace conference of 1919 new political states were created. Thus there were more symbolic "horns" after World War I than immediately before it. The question then became urgent, namely, What was to be the relationship between all the political states of the world? (All of them were symbolized by the "ten horns," inasmuch as the number ten is used in the Bible to mean allness, the complete number.) As respects this question, "God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought." How could that be?

1, 2. (a) By what agency will Babylon the Great be destroyed? (b) What does Revelation 17:17 say about the "ten horns" of that scarlet-colored "wild beast"?

3. (a) What is symbolized by the "ten horns"? (b) As respects the relationship that would exist between the political states, what does Revelation 17:17 say?

4 Well, for decades the obedient remnant of spiritual Israelites had been declaring the end of the Gentile Times in the year 1914. At that date God's permission of the Gentile nations to exercise world control without interference from his Messianic kingdom stopped. He signalized such an end of his permission by establishing the Messianic kingdom in the heavens, in the hands of the everlasting Heir of King David, Jesus Christ. Never again was the Messianic kingdom in David's royal line to be trampled underfoot, as it had been trampled underfoot 2,520 years previously, in 607 B.C.E. —Luke 21:24.

5 To the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites, the raging of World War I in 1914, with food shortages and pestilences accompanying it, was a confirmation that God's Messianic kingdom was fully established, fully brought to birth in the heavens, at the end of the Gentile Times in that year. So they went preaching the good news of God's established kingdom until war conditions and bitter persecution practically stopped them. This Kingdom-preaching was a notification to all the Gentile political powers of the earth, the symbolic "ten horns." It notified them that God's authorizing them to rule the world uninterruptedly had expired. The time had come for them to recognize his universal sovereignty and to surrender their ruling power to God's Messiah enthroned in the heavens.

6 However, God had thought out and foretold that the symbolic "ten horns" would not do this. For example, Psalm Two expressed his thought on this, that the Gentile kings of the earth and high officials would mass up together in opposition to Him and his installed king. (Compare Acts 4:24-30.) Already, in Daniel 2:44, he had foretold the destruction of them all as unchangeable resisters of his universal sover-

4. As to government, what took place in the year 1914?
5. What notification was given to the political powers of the earth that the time had come for them to surrender their ruling power to God's ruling Messiah?
6. How had God already expressed "his thought" as to what the Gentile nations would do, and what was that thought?

eignty. His thought now was that the Gentile nations, represented by the "ten horns," should definitely adopt a certain course of action that would justify him before all creation in destroying such nations. His thought was that they should take united action as a consolidated group of nations, so that he might destroy them all together at one time. This is the very thing that they did. Thus we can see how God, by his own course of action, put it into the hearts of the symbolic "ten horns" to carry out his thought.

[7] In proof of this, Revelation 17:17 continues on to say: "Even to carry out their one thought by giving their kingdom to the wild beast." Even so, they did not give their kingdom to God's Messianic kingdom as proclaimed by the remnant of spiritual Israel. Instead, they gave it to the symbolic "wild beast," the man-made organization for world peace and security, at that time called The League of Nations. As time went on, more and more nations entered the League, in that way giving their "kingdom" to it. In that way it was true, "they do receive authority as kings one hour with the wild beast." These have one thought, and so "they give their power and authority to the wild beast." (Revelation 17:12, 13) Since they are to "receive authority as kings one hour with the wild beast," the existence

7. (a) How did the "ten horns" 'give their kingdom to the wild beast'? (b) What is the "one hour" during which they are to have authority with the "wild beast"?

of the symbolic "wild beast" is to be relatively short, as it were, "one hour." Thus far the "wild beast" organization has been in existence only fifty-five years, less time than that of the neo-Babylonian World Power (607-539 B.C.E.).

[8] The symbolic "ten horns," the member nations of the world peace and security organization, have a task to perform as the agents of Jehovah God. What is that? It is to destroy the world empire of false religion, symbolized by Babylon the Great. Says God's angel to the apostle John: "The ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire." —Revelation 17:16.

[9] This signifies that what marriages of Religion and State, Church and State, have existed till then, will be dissolved. What national or State churches still exist will be disestablished. Tax exemption for religious organizations will be discontinued. Even Bible publishing and distributing societies of Christendom will be suppressed. Missionary work by the churches of Christendom will come to a halt. Army and congressional chaplains will be discharged. The celebration of Easter and Christmas and Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) and Passover will be discontinued. The tremendous material wealth of the religious institutions, what may be left of it after the looters take what they want by force, will be expropriated by the political governments in their dire financial straits. For anyone, man or woman, to wear a distinctive religious garb identifying such a one as a member of a religious organization of Christendom, will expose one to assault or arrest as being hostile or a menace to the State. Amazing as it may yet seem to many, Christendom will be gone—forever!

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8. As foretold, what task do the "ten horns" have to perform as the agents of Jehovah God?
9. In practical terms, what will that mean?

10 Since that will be the case with Christendom, the most powerful part of Babylon the Great, what is to be expected in the case of all the other long-established, deeply entrenched religious organizations outside of Christendom? All of Babylon the Great must disappear from the earth! It will be the foretold day of judgment of Jehovah God the Almighty, regarding which we read:

11 "Enter into the rock and hide yourself in the dust because of the dreadfulness of Jehovah, and from his splendid superiority. The haughty eyes of earthling man must become low, and the loftiness of men must bow down; and Jehovah alone must be put on high in that day. For it is the day belonging to Jehovah of armies. It is upon everyone self-exalted and lofty and upon everyone lifted up or low; . . .

12 "And the valueless gods themselves will pass away completely. And people will enter into the caves of the rocks and into the holes of the dust because of the dreadfulness of Jehovah and from his splendid superiority, when he rises up for the earth to suffer shocks. In that day the earthling man will throw his worthless gods of silver and his valueless gods of gold that they had made for him to bow before to the shrewmice and to the bats, in order to enter into the holes in the rocks and into the clefts of the crags, because of the dreadfulness of Jehovah and from his splendid superiority, when he rises up for the earth to suffer shocks. For your own sakes, hold off from the earthling man, whose breath is in his nostrils, for on what basis is he himself to be taken into account?"—Isaiah 2:10-22; compare Revelation 6:15-17.

13 On that day of Jehovah's judgment against man's old order, what will worldly-minded men do? Being faced with the deteriorating earth-wide conditions, they will lose faith in and turn away from religious

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10-12. (a) Is it only Christendom that will be destroyed? (b) In Isaiah 2:10-22, what effects on humans as a result of Jehovah's day of judgment are foretold?

13. (a) As indicated in that prophecy, how will they then treat things that pertain to religion? (b) Where will worldly-minded men seek refuge, and with what language did Isaiah foretell this?

things and will discard them as worthless, valueless. They will consider as being of no account the professional religionists, who are nothing more than men dependent upon the air they breathe in through their nostrils. Being now disillusioned about such ones, men will turn exclusively to materialistic things. Abandoning religion of all worldly kinds, they will seek refuge, protection and preservation in nonspiritual, earthly organizations that they hope will shield them like mountains and crags. They will trust no longer in religious men whom they once regarded as gods, as having connections with the superhuman spirit realm. One of the mountainlike organizations in which they will take refuge is the United Nations, the "Eighth" World Power, for that symbolic "wild beast" with its "ten horns" will destroy Babylon the Great.

14 Although the devastating, denuding, consuming and burning of Babylon the Great may be the direct work of the symbolic "ten horns" of the scarlet-colored "wild beast," it is nonetheless the execution of the judgment from Jehovah God. In line with that view of matters, it is written in Revelation 18:8 concerning the world empire of false religion: "That is why in one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be completely burned with fire, because Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong." So, to Jehovah God the Almighty goes the credit for liberating mankind from the reign of the religious "great harlot," Babylon the Great. It will be a vindication of Him as not being the Author of the world empire of false Babylonish religion, not even of Christendom.

JOY OVER DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON THE GREAT

15 Whereas for Babylon the Great one of the plagues coming upon her from God's hand is to be "mourning," great joy will be experienced by those on the side of

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14. Whose judgment really is it that is expressed in the destruction of Babylon the Great, and how does this serve as a vindication of him?
15-19. Among whom will there be rejoicing when Babylon the Great is destroyed, and what did the apostle John write about this?

Jehovah God and of His pure form of worship. The inspired apostle John describes this rejoicing on the part of Jehovah's worshipers. After seeing a prophetic picture of how "Babylon the great city [will] be hurled down, and she will never be found again," the apostle John writes:

16 "After these things I heard what was as a loud voice of a great crowd in heaven. They said: 'Praise Jah, you people [*Greek:* Hallelujah]! The salvation and the glory and the power belong to our God, because his judgments are true and righteous. For he has executed judgment upon the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his slaves at her hand.' And right away for the second time they said: 'Praise Jah, you people [Hallelujah]! And the smoke from her goes on ascending forever and ever.'

17 "And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God seated upon the throne, and said: 'Amen! Praise Jah, you people [Hallelujah]!'

18 "Also, a voice issued forth from the throne and said: 'Be praising our God, all you his slaves, who fear him, the small ones and the great.'

19 "And I heard what was as a voice of a great crowd and as a sound of many waters and as a sound of heavy thunders. They said: 'Praise Jah, you people [Hallelujah!], because Jehovah our God, the Almighty, has begun to rule as king.' "—Revelation 19:1-6; 18:21-24.

20 All such praising of Jehovah because of his executing upon the "great harlot" the foretold judgments is represented, apparently, as taking place up in heaven among the holy angels. However, the voice that was heard from the heavenly throne after the third Hallelujah said: "Be praising our God, all you his slaves, who

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20. Where does that praising of Jehovah take place, but who else participates?

fear him, the small ones and the great." This command from the throne embraces the "slaves" of Jah Jehovah who still remain on earth after the destruction of the "great harlot," Babylon the Great. These "slaves" are the ones that obeyed the earlier divine command from heaven: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind. Render to her even as she herself rendered, and do to her twice as much, yes, twice the number of the things she did; in the cup in which she put a mixture put twice as much of the mixture for her. To the extent that she glorified herself and lived in shameless luxury, to that extent give her torment and mourning."—Revelation 18:4-7.

[21] Jehovah's Christian witnesses, both the remnant of spiritual Israelites and the "great crowd" of sheep-like companions, are the ones that, since 1919 C.E., have got out of Babylon the Great, in order to prove themselves to be Jehovah's "people." They did not "want to share with her in her sins," and they did not "want to receive part of her plagues." Accordingly they will not share with Babylon the Great in her plagues of "death and mourning and famine" and in being "completely burned with fire." (Revelation 18:8) So these obedient Christian witnesses of Jehovah will survive the destruction of the Babylonish world empire of false religion. They will be witnesses of that destruction. And since the heavenly hosts, including those symbolized by the "twenty-four elders," will praise Jah Jehovah over his executing of divine vengeance upon that "old harlot," these surviving Christian witnesses of His on earth will be justified in their rejoicing and shouting out "Hallelujah!" But then what?

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21. Who are the ones that, since 1919 C.E., have got out of Babylon the Great, and so what fine prospect do they have?

BATTLE OF "TEN HORNS" AND "BEAST" AGAINST THE LAMB

[22] Then—a confrontation between those then left on the earth. The seven-headed, ten-horned scarlet-colored wild beast and earth's inhabitants who still "wonder admiringly" at the beast will be on the one side of the controversy. The surviving Christian witnesses of Jehovah will be on the other side. Inasmuch as the scarlet-colored wild beast is merely an "image" of the seven-headed, ten-horned wild beast that ascended out of the sea and that is worshiped by the people who think that nobody "can do battle with it," this means that the Christian witnesses of Jehovah will really be confronting this symbolic "wild beast" of which an image was made. This wild beast out of the sea symbolized the worldwide political system of human rulership, to which system Satan the Devil gave "its power and its throne and great authority." (Revelation 13:1-8) This earth-wide political system has 138 nations that represent it in the present-day United Nations, the international organization that is now the "image" of the wild beast that ascended out of the "sea" of humankind. This is what Jehovah's witnesses must then confront!

[23] Among those national groups that have members in the "image" of the wild beast are the former British Empire (which, since 1931 C.E., has been reorganized as the British Commonwealth of Nations), and the United States of North America. These two English-speaking groups have acted together in world crises, so that the two make up a dual world power, an Anglo-American world power, the Seventh World Power of Bible prophecy. In a general way this Seventh World Power has worked along with the symbolic wild beast,

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22. (a) Following the destruction of Babylon the Great, what confrontation will take place? (b) What is it that Jehovah's Christian witnesses will really be confronting at that time?

23. (a) What is the two-horned "wild beast" that 'speaks as a dragon,' as foretold at Revelation 13:11-13? (b) The United Nations is referred to as an "image" of what "wild beast," and who proposed the making of this political "image"?

and has acted as a mouthpiece or prophet for the beastly worldwide political system. For this reason it is pictured in Revelation 13:11-13 as a dragon-mouthed wild beast that ascends out of the "earth" and that has two horns like those of a lamb. Quite properly this two-horned or dual world power has membership in the United Nations of today, for it was this Anglo-American World Power that proposed and put through the making of a political "image" of the "wild beast" that ascended out of the "sea."—Revelation 13:14, 15.

24 During the throes of World War I, the then British Prime Minister Lloyd George thought of the formation of a postwar League of Nations to act as an impediment to another world war. America's wartime president, T. W. Wilson, worked hard to set up the League. Similarly, in the closing months of the second world war, the United States as the other member of the two-horned "wild beast" promoted the formation of a successor to the then defunct League of Nations. In October of 1945 this revised organization for world peace and security emerged as the United Nations. It was, in effect, the same old "image" of the political "wild beast," but under a new name. It was proposed and put in operation by worldly politicians in defiance of God's Messianic kingdom that Jehovah's Christian witnesses had been proclaiming and recommending since the end of the Gentile Times in 1914.

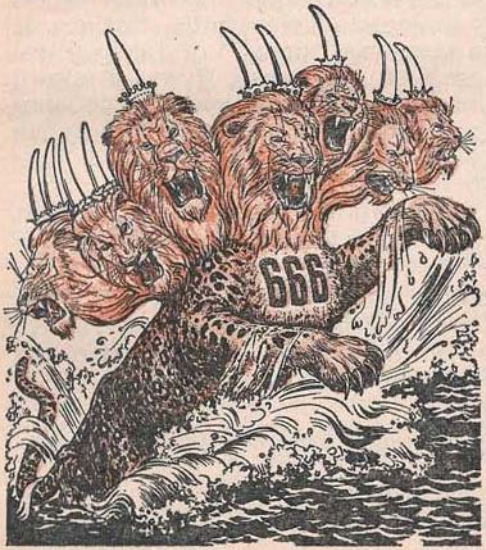
25 In the light of the foregoing, when Revelation, chapter seventeen, speaks of the scarlet-colored, seven-headed, ten-horned "wild beast," we should think of the real power that is behind this symbolic "image," namely, the worldwide political system of government symbolized by the wild beast that ascended out of the sea. The two-horned wild beast that ascended out of

24. (a) According to the facts of history, how did the formation of the League of Nations and of the United Nations come about? (b) In reality, the United Nations is an expression of what on the part of worldly politicians?

25. (a) Thus, according to the real significance of Revelation, chapter 17, what is it that Jehovah's Christian witnesses will have to confront after Babylon the Great is destroyed? (b) What government is it that these Witnesses represent?

the earth, namely, the Anglo-American Dual World Power, is the dominant section of the larger political system pictured by the sea beast. Consequently, after the nations that are members of the symbolic "image" have destroyed religious Babylon the Great, it is the irreligious worldwide system of political government that the Christian witnesses of Jehovah will have to confront. They will still be standing firm for God's Messianic kingdom as the only rightful rulership for the world of mankind. It is this heavenly government that they represent. In fact, the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites are the "ambassadors" of the Messianic government.—2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20.

[26] With the destruction of religious Babylon the Great, the first part of the "great tribulation" predicted by Jesus Christ closes. (Matthew 24:21, 22; see also Daniel 12:1.) The critical point of time on earth will now have been reached! The surviving Christian witnesses of Jehovah will stand as the only worshipers of the one living and true God, Creator of heaven and earth. Their form of worship is the only



26. (a) What will be the only "kind of religion" remaining after Babylon the Great is destroyed? (b) How does this religion affect one's attitude toward involvement in the world's political affairs, and why?

"religion" that the now radical political governments have been unable to wipe out; and that will be so because this is "the kind of religion which is without stain or fault in the sight of God our Father." (James 1:27, *The New English Bible*) Till this "kind of religion" is effaced from the earth the ungodly nations will feel dissatisfied with themselves. It is this "kind of religion" that has kept the surviving Christian witnesses of Jehovah from amalgamating with the new political setup, from making themselves a "part of the world." (John 15:19; 17:14, 16) They stand first, last and all the time for the universal sovereignty of the Most High and Almighty God, Jehovah.

[27] The hot question, Who shall rule the earth without rivalry? has now reached the burning point. The irreligious nations are determined that God's Messianic kingdom shall not take over the control of all the earth, which they claim as *their* territory. Unitedly, as by the agency of the United Nations organization, they will manifest their do-or-die opposition to the Messianic kingdom of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, which is in the hands of his Lamb, Jesus Christ. The end of the "times of the Gentiles" in 1914 means nothing to them. They will refuse to get out, refuse to surrender their national sovereignties to God's installed Messianic King, the Lamb. They will never give in without a fight, and for such a last-ditch fight the nuclear-powered nations feel at the height of their battle strength. So, now, to the showdown fight!

[28] Says Revelation 17:12-14 concerning this war of the ages: "The ten horns that you saw mean ten kings [all earthly political powers], who have not yet [in the apostle John's day] received a kingdom [by membership in the League of Nations–United Nations], but they do receive authority as kings one hour with the wild beast. These have one thought, and so they

27. (a) What question will then press for settlement? (b) How will the nations show that they are united in their opposition to Jehovah's Messianic kingdom?

28. Explain the description of these matters as found at Revelation 17:12-14.

give their power and authority to the wild beast [the world organization for peace and security]. These will battle with the Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them. Also, those called and chosen and faithful with him will do so."

29 The apostle Paul describes this once-sacrificed Lamb of God in his present glorified state, when he writes to his missionary companion Timothy and says: "In the sight of God, who preserves all things alive, and of Christ Jesus, who as a witness made the fine public declaration before Pontius Pilate [the Roman governor of Judea], I give you orders that you observe the commandment in a spotless and irreprehensible way until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ. This manifestation the happy and only Potentate will show in its own appointed times, he the King of those who rule as kings and Lord of those who rule as lords, the one alone [out of all those lords and kings] having immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom not one of men has seen [in his glorified immortal state] or can see." (1 Timothy 6:13-16) Consequently, the symbolic "ten horns" of the United Nations "wild beast" will be unable to see the Lamb Jesus Christ to fight against him directly over world domination.

30 However, the battle that the "ten kings" will carry on will be directed against those who are the visible earthly representatives of the royal Lamb, Jesus Christ. These will be the Christian witnesses of Jehovah, including the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites and the "great crowd" of dedicated proclaimers of "this good news of the kingdom." (Matthew 24:14) These, in spite of world pollution and distress of nations, will still be enjoying the spiritual paradise of God's favor, protection and pure worship along with all the fruits of His spirit in their lives.

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29. Will the political rulers be able to see the Lamb Jesus Christ in order to fight against him directly, and how does the apostle Paul show this?
30. Against whom, then, will the "ten kings" direct their assault?

31 For their encouragement, the Lamb Jesus Christ made a statement in his prophecy concerning the "conclusion of the system of things," and the statement was that whatever was done to "one of the least of these my [spiritual] brothers" was as if done directly to him the King. (Matthew 24:3; 25:40) Now, when we are actually in that "conclusion of the system of things," that rule still applies. So, in making war on the faithful disciples of Jesus Christ for the purpose of exterminating them, the nations are making war upon the glorified Lamb of God. So Jehovah's Christian witnesses will appreciate that the war is, not against them fundamentally, but against God and his Lamb.

BATTLING UNDER "GOG OF THE LAND OF MAGOG"

32 In this final war upon the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites and their loyal companions who make up a "great crowd" of the Fine Shepherd's "other sheep," there will be one former assailant of them missing. That is Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. In the past she used the "arm of the State" as her agency for waging spiritual warfare in a violent way against Jehovah's "holy ones" who follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. The apostle John put her criminal record into the Holy Scriptures, when he wrote: "I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." (Revelation 17:6) But now, because of her destruction by the "ten horns," she no longer rides the scarlet-colored "wild beast" to influence it in any way. Nevertheless, there is an invisible power that urges on the "ten horns" to battle with the Lamb as represented by his faithful disciples surviving on earth. That unseen superhuman power is Satan the Devil.—Revelation 13:1, 2.

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31. Against whom, in reality, are the nations making war when they attack Jesus' faithful disciples?

32. (a) What long-time enemy of true worshipers will be missing when that final war takes place? (b) Nevertheless, who urges on the "ten horns" to fight?

33 The destruction of religious Babylon the Great has not deposed Satan the Devil from being what Jesus called him, "the ruler of this world," or from being what the apostle Paul called him, "the god of this system of things." (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 13:3, 4) After the destruction of Babylon the Great, who had promoted Devil worship, his wrath against Jehovah's Christian worshipers on earth is hotter than ever. He intensifies the warfare that he has waged against them ever since his being ousted from heaven, which warfare is reported on prophetically in these words: "The dragon grew wrathful at the woman [God's heavenly organization that gave birth to the Messianic kingdom], and went off to wage war with the remaining ones of her seed, who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus."—Revelation 12:17.

34 So now the time comes for the outbreak of the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at that stage of world developments called Har-Magedon. Satan's pushing the worldly nations into that final war is indicated, in Revelation 16:12-16, where the apostle John writes: "I saw three unclean inspired expressions that looked like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan the Devil] and out of the mouth of the wild beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet [those who proposed and forwarded the making of a political 'image' to the wild beast]. They are, in fact, expressions inspired by demons and perform signs, and they go forth to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty. . . . And they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon." So the worldwide political system and the Anglo-American World Power work together with

33. (a) What position will Satan the Devil still occupy at that time? (b) How do the Scriptures show that the Devil is really the one responsible for the war waged against worshipers of Jehovah on earth?
34. How does Revelation 16:12-16 show that the Devil and his political system are promoters of war against God at Har-Magedon?

the Dragon in promoting all-out war with God at Har–Magedon.

35 The role that the ousted Devil plays after the destruction of Babylon the Great in assembling what remains of his earthly visible organization to battle with the Lamb of God is vividly pictured in the prophecy of Ezekiel 38:1 through 39:16. In that prophecy the ousted Satan the Devil at the earth's vicinity is addressed as "Gog of the land of Magog." That land is pictured as being located in the far north, in "the remotest parts of the north," and it pictures the debased condition far removed from God's favor, the vicinity of our earth to which Satan the Devil and his demons have been restrained for a short period of time before being hurled into an abyss of complete inactivity. (Ezekiel 38:6, 15; 39:2; Revelation 20:1-3) As the symbolic Gog of the land of Magog, Satan the Devil is pictured as gathering together a great military force of troops from north and south and from Persia, east of where Babylon once stood on the Euphrates River.

36 The time for the attack by Satan the Devil as Gog of the land of Magog is timed by Jehovah God and is due to occur "in the final part of the years," "in the final part of the days." (Ezekiel 38:8, 16) This signifies a time close to the end of the Devil's visible organization on earth. It therefore locates his attack as coming a considerable period of time after the restoration of the repentant remnant of spiritual Israel to their rightful spiritual estate in Jehovah's favor. This means years after 1919 C.E., when the remnant of spiritual Israelites were delivered by God's power from bondage to Babylon the Great and were reinstated in his free Kingdom service. Not to the Republic of Israel in the Middle East, but to the restored spiritual estate of

35. (a) The role that the Devil plays in the developments after the destruction of Babylon the Great is described in what prophecy? (b) Who is there referred to as "Gog," and what is "the land of Magog"?

36, 37. (a) When does Gog's attack take place? (b) What is the "land" against which Gog directs his attack, as referred to in Ezekiel 38:8, 9?

the Christian "Israel of God" he refers, when he says to Satan the Devil, alias Gog of the land of Magog:

37 "After many days you will be given attention. In the final part of the years you will come to the land of people brought back from the sword, collected together out of many peoples, onto the mountains of Israel, that have proved to be a constantly devastated place; even a land that has been brought forth from the peoples, where they have dwelt in security, all of them. And you will be bound to come up. Like a storm you will come in. Like clouds to cover the land you will become, you and all your bands and many peoples with you."—Ezekiel 38:8, 9.

38 What will be the reason for this final attack upon the restored remnant of spiritual Israelites? It will be the fact that their prosperous spiritual estate on earth under divine blessing is a worldwide testimony to the universal sovereignty of Jehovah God. Added to that is the fact that they have boldly come forward as being no part of this world and as keeping absolute Christian neutrality toward worldly dissensions and are relying upon no deadly weapons of war for defense and protection. Also, they are enjoying the worship and active service of Jehovah in a spiritual paradise. That is why the following words are put into Gog's mouth:

39 "I shall go up against the land of open rural country. I shall come in upon those having no disturbance, dwelling in security, all of them dwelling without wall, and they do not have even bar and doors."—Ezekiel 38:10, 11.

40 Testifying to the spiritual paradise of his restored worshipers, Jehovah says to Gog of the land of Magog: "It will be to get a big spoil and to do much plundering, in order to turn your hand back upon devastated places

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38, 39. (a) For what reasons will this attack upon the remnant of spiritual Israel take place? (b) How is the spiritual condition of God's people at this time depicted in Ezekiel 38:10, 11?

40. What further evidence do the following verses in the prophecy contain showing that Jehovah's worshipers on earth are then enjoying a spiritual paradise?

reinhabited and upon a people gathered together out of the nations, one that is accumulating wealth and property, those who are dwelling in the center of the earth." This is why the worldly observers ask the invading Gog of the land of Magog: "Is it to get a big spoil that you are coming in? Is it to do much plundering that you have congregated your congregation, in order to carry off silver and gold, to take wealth and property, to get a very great spoil?"—Ezekiel 38:12, 13.

41 The restored remnant of spiritual Israelites and the "great crowd" of fellow inhabitants of the spiritual paradise do not have material wealth to compare with the tremendous material wealth and property that Babylon the Great has accumulated over the centuries. They have followed the counsel of Jesus Christ and sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness rather than the material goods of this materialistic world. (Matthew 6:33) So what in the way of earthly goods would they have to invite such an international attack by the military forces under the invisible command of the modern-day Gog of the land of Magog?

42 Not material wealth, but what the spiritual paradise of the Christian witnesses of Jehovah represents is the valuable thing that invites a worldwide invasion by the visible earthly organization of Satan the Devil after Babylon the Great is reduced to ashes. Their spiritual paradise that Jehovah God has planted on the earth represents God's claim to sovereignty over all the earth. But sovereignty over the earth is what the worldly nations claim for themselves, each member nation in the United Nations still continuing to insist upon its own national sovereignty. The inhabitants of the spiritual paradise form the foundation for a "new earth," a new earthly society; hence, the worldly nations under modern-day Gog of Magog want to despoil that foundation of a "new earth" and thereby keep the

41. Why is it not material wealth of the inhabitants of the spiritual paradise that invites this international attack?
42. (a) What does the spiritual paradise of Jehovah's Christian witnesses really represent, and how so? (b) What are the worldly nations determined to do about this?

old earthly society going for its own selfish benefit, independent of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. To accomplish this means more than silver and gold and material wealth and property to the self-governing nations.

43 What the coming in of Gog's hordes upon the "soil of Israel" after the destruction of Babylon the Great will mean for Jehovah's Christian witnesses, the developments on earth will then eloquently tell. It should not be surprising if the ninety-seven branches of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania should be shut down and even the properties thereof be expropriated by the antireligious governments. What will happen to the thousands of Kingdom Halls that Jehovah's Christian witnesses have built around the globe in which to meet for spiritual edification, the future will disclose. State or national governments that issued charters and registrations to the various corporations that Jehovah's witnesses use as agencies for carrying on the printing and distributing of Bibles and Bible literature could hardly be expected to recognize or authorize such corporations then. The antagonistic political governments cannot, of course, dissolve Jehovah's Christian witnesses world wide, for these are not incorporated under the man-made laws of "Caesar" in any land.

44 Likewise, the national and state governments under the leadership of the modern-day Gog of Magog cannot disincorporate the "faithful and discreet slave" whom the reigning King Jesus Christ has found reliable and has appointed "over all his belongings" on the earth. They cannot do so, for this corporate "slave" was never incorporated under the laws of any political government of the world. (Matthew 24:45-47; Luke 12:42-44) This "slave" class has existed from

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43. (a) What effect can the invasion of Gog's hordes be expected to have on the legal corporations used by Jehovah's Christian witnesses and the properties that these hold? (b) Does this mean that Jehovah's Christian witnesses will cease to exist?

44. Why will the political governments not be able to dissolve the "faithful and discreet slave" and its governing body?

the first century C.E., when the royal Master, Jesus Christ, organized it, and it has continued active in his service down to this time and is responsible to him and not to "Caesar" or to Gog of the land of Magog. This holds true, also, with respect to the Scriptural governing body of the anointed "faithful and discreet slave" class. The political governments of the symbolic "wild beast" may dissolve the corporation of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania and its Board of Directors and also other legal corporations of Jehovah's Christian witnesses in various lands, but they cannot dissolve or revoke the theocratic appointment of the governing body that represents the "faithful and discreet slave" class.

45 It will be no new experience for Jehovah's Christian witnesses to go underground in carrying on their spiritual activities. In the first century of our Common Era, according to secular history, the faithful Christians met together in the catacombs of the Roman Empire during its beastly persecution. In this twentieth century the Christian witnesses of Jehovah have carried on with their disciple-making operations in spite of bans and proscriptions, maintaining a successful underground system.

46 For decades now, they have continued their worship and service of their God behind the so-called Iron Curtain that screens off the Communist lands. Even if, during the invasion of the hordes of Gog of Magog, they are obliged to go underground world wide, they will keep organized. They will try to keep in communication with one another. Especially will they pray for one another when physically scattered from fellow worshipers of Jehovah. They will continue to rejoice in their spiritual paradise, for they know that

45. Will it be anything new for Jehovah's Christian witnesses to carry on their activities underground?

46. (a) Even if driven underground, what will Jehovah's people do, out of concern for one another? (b) Will that attack by Gog of Magog result in destruction of the spiritual paradise?

the violent persecution at the hands of Gog of Magog does not mean that they have lost divine favor, approval and blessing. Their spiritual qualities will shine more brightly than ever before, and they will not permit their spiritual lives to be snuffed out by men who can kill only the body, but, after that, can do no more to a faithful Christian who keeps his integrity to Jehovah God.—Luke 12:4; Matthew 10:28.

47 Just how far in depth Jehovah God the Almighty will permit the hordes under the modern-day Gog of Magog to penetrate, the alerted witnesses of Jehovah must wait and see. That there will be an invasion, the prophecy given through Ezekiel shows. " 'And it must occur in that day, in the day when Gog comes in upon the soil of Israel,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'that my rage will come up into my nose. And in my ardor, in the fire of my fury, I shall have to speak. Surely in that day a great quaking will occur in the soil of Israel. And because of me the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and the wild beasts of the field and all the creeping things that are creeping on the ground and all mankind that are upon the surface of the ground will be bound to shiver, and the mountains will actually be thrown down and the steep ways will have to fall, and to the earth even every wall will fall.' "—Ezekiel 38:18-20.

48 Although under violent attack by the "military forces" of Gog of Magog, the Christian witnesses of Jehovah will have spiritual security, they being within his love and under his approval. "Dwelling," according to the prophecy, "in security, all of them dwelling without wall," and not having "even bar and doors," these worshipers of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not raise a hand in violent action against the heavily armed forces of Gog of Magog. They will let their God manifest his protective power over them. They

47. How does the prophecy given through Ezekiel show that there will be an actual invasion under Gog of Magog?
48. When under attack by the armed forces of Gog of Magog, how will the Christian witnesses of Jehovah react, and why?

will remember and put faith in the words of the prophet spoken under stress of a similar invasion against Jehovah's worshipers: "Do not you be afraid or be terrified because of this large crowd; for the battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Chronicles 20:15) Their trust in the Almighty God will not be misplaced. He will make it His battle, for the fight is really, not against them, but against Him their God. Now he is truly angry, and he is fully justified in expressing his anger!

[49] Now the "great day of God the Almighty" has arrived, and it is the time for the "war" that will mark that day for the vindication of Jehovah's universal sovereignty. That figurative "place," that explosive stage of hostilities between God the Almighty and Gog's forces, called in Hebrew Har–Magedon, has been reached. (Revelation 16:14, 16) Not Jehovah's Christian witnesses on earth, but Jehovah himself starts the battle against the earthly enemies now drawn up in battle formation. Jehovah signals to his Grand Field Marshal, the Warrior King Jesus Christ. Immediately acting upon the signal, in the name of Jehovah he and his heavenly forces plunge into the battle as if riding upon war horses. The war of universal importance that follows, and what happens to the worldwide lineup of military forces under the present-day Gog of Magog, are pictured for us in the last book of the inspired Holy Scriptures.

THE WAR AT "HAR–MAGEDON"

[50] The battlefield is symbolically called Har–Magedon. The time is located after the fiery destruction of Babylon the Great by the symbolic "ten horns . . . and the wild beast." (Revelation 17:16 through 19:9) Like a war correspondent for some newspaper or news-

49. (a) What is that "place" referred to in the Bible as Har–Magedon? (b) At his appointed time, whom does Jehovah use to carry out the war against his earthly enemies?

50. In an advance report on the war at Har–Magedon, what description did the apostle John give of those who would be fighting on the side of righteousness?

magazine, the apostle John gives us an advance report on the war at "Har-Magedon," writing: "And I saw the heaven opened, and, look! a white horse. And the one seated upon it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and carries on war in righteousness. His eyes are a fiery flame, and upon his head are many diadems. He has a name written that no one knows but he himself, and he is arrayed with an outer garment sprinkled with blood, and the name he is called is The Word of God. Also, the armies that were in heaven were following him on white horses, and they were clothed in white, clean, fine linen. And out of his mouth there protrudes a sharp long sword, that he may strike the nations with it, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. He treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty. And upon his outer garment, even upon his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."—Revelation 19:11-16.

[51] These "armies that were in heaven," under the command of the King of kings, will not make themselves visible to the embattled nations on earth. So it will take faith on the part of the harmless, unarmed witnesses of Jehovah on earth to believe that these heavenly armies will come to their rescue in their direst need. Yet those invisible armies will make their activity in battle felt by all the nations under the leadership of Gog of Magog, Satan the Devil. The King of kings will "shepherd" the nations "with a rod of iron," and they will feel it as they are shattered like earthenware vessels of a potter. He is the Word of God, and so the "sharp long sword" that protrudes out of his mouth is the words of judgment that issue out of his mouth for the execution of the nations; and what his mouth says will be executed upon the nations, striking them fatally.

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51. (a) Why will great faith be needed on the part of the witnesses of Jehovah on earth at that time? (b) What is the "sharp long sword" that protrudes out of the mouth of the King of kings?

52 Since the King of kings "treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty," this signifies that the nations will be squashed, as it were. To fit the picture, they will be dumped like ripe grapes into the tremendous "winepress" where the "anger of the wrath of God the Almighty" will be brought to bear upon them with crushing effect. The King of kings and his heavenly armies on horseback will join in the crushing work, the treading of this symbolic winepress. The form that the symbolic treading will take will correspond with how Jehovah God the Almighty says that he will express his wrath and fiery fury against the hordes of Gog of Magog, as it were with earthquake, pestilence, a flooding downpour, hailstones, fire and sulphur, with much bloodshed.—Ezekiel 38:18-22; compare Joel 3:9-16; Revelation 14:18-20.

53 How can the multination armies in battle array under their spiritual Gog of Magog expect to stand their ground against the King of kings and Lord of lords, who fights for the universal sovereignty of the Most High and Almighty God, Jehovah? Never, even as a United Nations organization and as nuclear-powered nations, can they possibly do so! Who the victor in the universal war at Har–Magedon will be is a foregone conclusion. The corpses of the enemy dead with which God the Almighty causes the battlefield to be strewn provide what is called "the great evening meal of God" for all the carrion-eating birds that fly in midheaven. Before ever the war is fought to a conclusion, a heavenly angel arrayed with sunlight is pictured as extending an invitation to all these birds to come to the grand meal that God spreads for them at Har–Magedon. Concerning this, our news reporter John says:

52. (a) How will the experience of the nations be like that of grapes in a winepress? (b) Jehovah's wrath will be expressed by what means, as it were, according to the Scriptures?

53, 54. (a) Who, obviously, will be the victor in the universal war at Har–Magedon? (b) Even before the conclusion of the war, what invitation is extended to "all the birds that fly in midheaven"?

54 "I saw also an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice and said to all the birds that fly in midheaven: 'Come here, be gathered together to the great evening meal of God, that you may eat the fleshy parts of kings and the fleshy parts of military commanders and the fleshy parts of strong men and the fleshy parts of horses and of those seated upon them, and the fleshy parts of all, of freemen as well as of slaves and of small ones and great.' "—Revelation 19:17, 18.

55 We note that "all the birds that fly in midheaven" are not invited to feed upon the carcasses of the political "wild beast" and the political "false prophet." (Revelation 13:1-8, 11-13; 16:13) The picture here drawn is strictly that of a battlefield strewn with the carcasses of the fighting forces of an army. It is not a picture of the pursuit of a savage wild beast and of a military attack upon a lone "false prophet." In the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the attack by the forces of Gog upon Jehovah's restored people in their spiritual paradise, more than the "birds of every sort of wing" are invited to feed upon the carcasses of the defeated enemies. "All the wild beasts of the field" are also invited to feed upon the "flesh of mighty ones," upon "horses and charioteers, mighty persons and all sorts of warriors." (Ezekiel 39:17-20) Jehovah's disdain and contempt for those crushed by his heavenly armies in the "winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty" are shown by letting the carcasses of the slain enemies lie unburied as carrion food for birds and beasts.

56 The entire combined visible organization of Satan the Devil will be in the fight. The combining of the earthly forces under Gog of Magog against Jehovah's

55. (a) Why is it not upon the "wild beast" and the "false prophet" that the birds are invited to feed? (b) In Ezekiel's prophecy, what creatures besides the birds are invited to the feast?
56. How does Revelation chapter 17 depict the combined earthly forces under Gog of Magog in their attack against Jehovah's King?

King of kings is pictured as an attack by a lone, collective "wild beast" with its seven heads and ten horns. This scarlet-colored "wild beast" is pictured as first destroying Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. Concerning the antireligious political rulers that are pictured by the ten horns of the collective "wild beast," it was said to the apostle John: "These have one thought, and so they give their power and authority to the wild beast [to the United Nations]. These will battle with the Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them. Also, those called and chosen and faithful with him will do so."—Revelation 17:13, 14.

[57] The fight of a seven-headed, ten-horned wild beast against a lamb seems like an unequally matched warfare. But the symbolic Lamb in this prophecy is Jehovah's appointed Lord of lords and King of kings, superior therefore to all the lords and kings that are combined in the symbolic "wild beast," the 138-member United Nations. Being earthly, they cannot see the Lamb with their human eyes so as to fight directly against him. But they can see on earth in the flesh the anointed remnant of "those called and chosen and faithful with him." Because these represent the King of kings and Lord of lords, the member nations of the United Nations battle with him by warring expressly with the anointed remnant of his Kingdom joint heirs. Associated with this faithful remnant are the unnumbered members of the "great crowd," who firmly take their stand on the side of Jehovah's universal sovereignty and who follow the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ the royal Son of Jehovah. So those disciples belonging to the "great crowd" also share with the anointed remnant the onslaught of the antireligious United Nations.

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57. (a) What is the significance of the fact that the Lamb is called "Lord of lords and King of kings"? (b) Who will be the objects of that assault by the "wild beast" that represents the United Nations?

58 The symbolic "ten horns" and the scarlet-colored "wild beast" will fail to destroy all the faithful representatives on earth of the King of kings. As in the prophetic picture of the attack by Gog of Magog, they will fail to wipe out the spiritual paradise in which the "called and chosen and faithful" and the "great crowd" find themselves under protection of the King of kings. (Revelation 7:9-17; 12:17) With his celestial angelic armies the King of kings will literally conquer the battling "ten horns" belonging to the world organization of the "wild beast." On earth "those called and chosen and faithful with him [the King of kings]" will conquer by Christian faith, never renouncing the right of the King of kings to rule all the earth, never denying the universal sovereignty of the King of Eternity, Jehovah God. (Revelation 15:3) The "great crowd" of fellow inhabitants in the spiritual paradise will likewise refuse to compromise and to yield to the claim of the ten-horned, seven-headed "wild beast" to world domination over all the earth.

59 Some of those who conquer by faith may be permitted by God the Almighty to prove their loyalty to His universal sovereignty by suffering death at the hands of the violent opposers of Jehovah's Messianic kingdom. This, however, will not signify their being executed by Jehovah's angelic armies under his Field Marshal, Jesus Christ.

60 These faithful martyrs for divine sovereignty of the universe will die faithful, as vindicators of Jehovah's rightful rule by Christ. They will die within Jehovah's favor and appreciation. They will not be cast into the "second death" of everlasting destruction as

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58. What kind of conquest will take place at that time (a) on the part of the King of kings? (b) on the part of his earthly subjects?
59, 60. (a) May some who conquer by faith nevertheless die at the hands of the enemy at that time? (b) What hope will strengthen them to prove their loyalty to Jehovah's sovereignty in this way? (c) Is there any possibility that the anointed remnant and the "great crowd" will be completely wiped out by the enemy at that time?

symbolized by the "fiery lake that burns with sulphur." (Revelation 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8) They will die unconquered as Jesus Christ himself did, with the strengthening hope of a resurrection from the dead in God's due time. (Revelation 2:10; 14:13; 20:4, 6, 11-13) However, the *full* membership of the anointed remnant will not be killed off by the battling opposers of Jehovah's Messianic kingdom. Also, Revelation 7:9-14 assures us that other survivors of this climax of the "great tribulation" will be the unnumbered members of the "great crowd." Individuals may be permitted to die, but not the remnant and "great crowd" as a whole.

ANNIHILATION OF THE KING'S OPPOSERS

[61] Those on earth who are executed as unfit for everlasting life, in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon, are reported on by the apostle John in Revelation 19:19-21. In that advance-news report, John writes: "And I saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage the war with the one [the King of kings and the Lord of lords] seated on the horse and with his army. And the wild beast [Satan's worldwide political system] was caught, and along with it the false prophet that performed in front of it the signs with which he misled those who received the mark of the wild beast and those who render worship to its image [the United Nations]. While still alive, they both were hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulphur. But the rest were killed off with the long sword of the one seated on the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth. And all the birds were filled from the fleshy parts of them."

[62] By the time of the waging of this war at Har–

61. At Revelation 19:19-21, what description does the apostle John give of those who are executed at Har–Magedon?
62. To what extent will irreligiousness characterize the nations at that time?

Magedon, Babylon the Great will have been killed off. This is why the destruction of that world empire of false religion is not here described. By this time also when total irreligiousness pervades the nations, there will have disappeared any "kings" who might for a while weep because of not being able to commit fornication with Babylon the Great any longer, likewise any "traveling merchants" that wept and mourned because of no more being able to do selfish commercial business with her, also "every ship captain and every man that voyages anywhere, and sailors and all those who make a living by the sea," all of whom weep and mourn because they can no longer ply their selfish trade with Babylon the Great. (Revelation 18:9-19) Such ones, if they want to survive after the destruction of Babylon the Great, will be obliged to turn radically antireligious, with the exception of worship to the political "image" of the seven-headed, ten-horned "wild beast" to which Satan the Dragon gave power, authority and a throne.—Revelation 13:1-8; 14:9-11; 16:2.

[63] So at the time for the fulfillment of the battle vision of Revelation 19:19-21, the symbolic "wild beast" and the "kings of the earth and their armies" have disposed of Babylon the Great in expression of their hatred of that religious "harlot." She never did represent Jehovah's theocratic government, not even that part of her called Christendom did so. Destruction of Babylon the Great as false religion does not bespeak, however, any love on the part of the "kings of the earth and their armies" for God's Messianic kingdom. Those earthly kings and their armies hate that kingdom because of love for their own political sovereignty over all the earth. So now, with Babylon the Great gone, they can concentrate on waging the war against Jesus Christ and the heavenly kingdom that he operates.

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63. Does the destruction of the world empire of false religion by the earthly rulers indicate love for God's Messianic kingdom on their part, and how do they show this?

64 The surviving remnant of Christ's anointed joint heirs and also the "great crowd" of their loyal companions have made themselves the target of the worldly nations because of having proclaimed in all the inhabited earth the good news of the Messianic kingdom for a witness to all the nations down to the end. (Matthew 24:14) Such advocates of Jehovah's universal sovereignty are offensive, obnoxious to the "kings of the earth and their armies." So they express their hostility to the invisible King of kings by waging war with what political, military, judicial, economic means that they have at their disposal. *Exterminate them!* will be the slogan of the "kings of the earth and their armies." The heavenly King of kings will count their hostile action against the anointed remnant and the "great crowd" as being against himself. At the precisely timed signal from the Supreme Commander, Jehovah God, he and his angelic armies will charge into the battle against the God-defying enemies on earth.

65 The first move is to break up the unity of the earthly enemies. This means breaking to pieces the world political system as symbolized by the "wild beast" out of the sea. With the dissolution of that comes the breaking up of the Eighth World Power, the United Nations as the global organization for world peace and security, which was symbolized by the "image of the wild beast," and also the Seventh World Power, namely, the Anglo-American Dual World Power, as symbolized by the "false prophet." Hence, the apostle John tells us:

66 "And the wild beast was caught, and along with

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64. (a) Why are the remnant and the "great crowd" offensive to the "kings of the earth and their armies"? (b) By what means can the enemies of Jehovah's people be expected to war against them?

65, 66. (a) How is the unity of God's earthly enemies broken up at Har-Magedon, as described at Revelation 19:20? (b) What is indicated by the fact that the "wild beast" and the "false prophet" are "still alive" when this action takes place? (c) What is indicated by the fact that they are hurled into "the fiery lake that burns with sulphur"?

it the false prophet that performed in front of it the signs with which he misled those who received the mark of the wild beast and those who render worship to its image. While still alive, they both were hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulphur." (Revelation 19:20) These political organizations being "still alive" when this action takes place, it indicates that these worldly organizations of today will still be functioning when the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon starts. Both the world-dominating "wild beast" and the Anglo-American "false prophet" will be caught in the midst of their destructive efforts against the anointed remnant and the "great crowd" within their spiritual paradise. Disorganization of them will follow, and, instead of destroying the remnant and the "great crowd," these political organizations of God-defying men will be annihilated for all time to come. Their violent death will be a "second death" from which there is no reorganization. So they are pictured as being hurled into the fiery "lake that burns with sulphur."

[67] Thus it is seen that, even at the time of the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon and before the abyssing of Satan the Devil and the beginning of Christ's reign of a thousand years over mankind, there is an enforcement of the "second death" upon those who wage war at Har–Magedon against the King of kings and his Messianic kingdom. The penalty of the "second death" is symbolized by the "fiery lake that burns with sulphur." In God's due time, after the close of Christ's thousand-year reign, the man-made political organizations pictured by the "wild beast" and the "false prophet" will be joined in that "fiery lake" by Satan the Devil and all his demon angels. (Revelation 20:10) That will be the "everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels."—Matthew 25:41.

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67. When will Satan the Devil and his demons join the "wild beast" and the "false prophet" in that "fiery lake"?

[68] Thus with the violent passing away of religious Babylon the Great and the political organizations pictured by the seven-headed "wild beast" and the "false prophet," man's visible old order will give way to God's new order for the earth. It will be the hardest period of human history through which to live. (Matthew 24:21, 22; Daniel 12:1) Yet there will be survivors of it on earth. Happy will these be who survive into God's blessed new order!

68. With the removal of man's visible old order, what will be the grand prospect of the survivors?

CHAPTER 15

Disaster for Fighters Against God's New Order

IN THE "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon the Devil's visible organization on earth will be destroyed. This will signify the violent end of the governmental organizations established by worldly men under the unsuspected supervision of Satan the Devil. (Revelation 13:1, 2; 16:14, 16; John 14:30) Just as might be expected, the rulers and the supporters of those human governments battle against God's Messianic kingdom at Har–Magedon.

[2] What about the political rulers and their backers and subjects who made those governmental organizations function? They must suffer destruction with their political organizations that they have operated in defiance of God's Messianic kingdom as proclaimed

1. What will come to its end at Har–Magedon?
2. What will happen to those who operated and supported those organizations?

by Jehovah's Christian witnesses world wide. Their destruction is the thing signified by what the Revelation to John says about the outcome of the battle: "But the rest [that is, the kings of the earth and their armies] were killed off with the long sword of the one seated on the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth. And all the birds were filled from the fleshy parts of them."—Revelation 19:21.

3 The "birds that fly in midheaven" fill themselves from the decaying flesh of the slain kings, military commanders, strong men, horses, cavalrymen, freemen and slaves, great ones and small. (Revelation 19:17, 18) Their active support of the war against the King of kings is far worse than a mere failing to do something helpful toward Jesus Christ and his faithful disciples. If anything, these are all symbolic "goats" as portrayed in Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats. By the symbolic "long sword" that proceeds out of the mouth of the warring King of kings, they are ordered to depart into the "everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels." At the swordlike orders that proceed out of the King's mouth, these "cursed" fighters against God and his Christ will "depart into everlasting cutting-off," a wiping out of existence as an eternal punishment.—Matthew 25:31-46.

4 That is why the apostle John did not see the carcasses of these goatlike slain ones buried in graves in hope of a resurrection for them from the dead. But why are all these dead bodies not "hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulphur," the lake that is mentioned in Revelation 19:20? We recall that in the Jerusalem of the days of Jesus and his apostles, the dead bodies of executed criminals who were considered as being so vile that they were not worthy of a resur-

3. As shown at Revelation 19:17, 18, who are included among the dead ones on the battlefield at Har-Magedon, and what kind of destruction is it in their case?

4. In view of what is known about the fiery Gehenna outside of ancient Jerusalem, why might a question be raised as to what is said about the disposal of carcasses at Har-Magedon?

rection were hurled over the southern walls of the city to land in the Valley of Hinnom, into "Gehenna," to be consumed there in the incinerating fires mingled with sulphur. Or, if the bodies did not land directly in the sulphurous fires, they would lie exposed in the warm neighborhood to be consumed by the maggots that would breed and swarm and wriggle all over the bodies. Just as Jesus said: "And if your eye makes you stumble, throw it away; it is finer for you to enter one-eyed into the kingdom of God than with two eyes to be pitched into Gehenna, where their maggot does not die and the fire is not put out."—Mark 9:43-48.

5 Since the bodies of condemned criminals that were pitched into the fires of the Valley of Hinnom (or, into Gehenna) were dead bodies, it is remarkable that when the symbolic "wild beast" and the "false prophet" are hurled into the "fiery lake that burns with sulphur," it occurs that, "while still alive, they both were hurled" there. (Revelation 19:20) Evidently this means that they come to an abrupt end. While still actively in operation, those political organizations are suddenly halted, disintegrated, dissolved, forever, with no vestiges, no remains of them around. They leave no carcasses of themselves on the battlefield for scavenger birds to feast upon, picking their bony skeletons clean.

6 However, the everlasting destruction of persons warring against the Kingdom at Har-Magedon was pictured in another way. How? Well, with the dead bodies of these opposers and fighters against Jehovah's universal sovereignty he purposed to make a gory feast for "all the birds that fly in midheaven." (Revelation 19:17, 18) The bodies of the slain will not molder in honorable burial places. Unburied, their flesh will be picked away clean to the bone, beyond identifying the

5. What is unusual about the fact that the "wild beast" and the "false prophet" are hurled into the lake of fire "while still alive," and, evidently, what does this indicate?

6, 7. (a) As for *persons* who war against the Kingdom at Har-Magedon, how is their everlasting destruction pictured? (b) How does the Bible describe the means for disposing of the flesh of all the dead bodies?

bare skeletons. Because of the multitude of the slain, it will be a huge feast for the scavengers. Directing his words to the King of kings, the Lord Jesus Christ who was foreshadowed by ancient King Melchizedek, King David said in Psalm 110:5, 6: "Jehovah himself at your right hand will certainly break kings to pieces on the day of his anger. He will execute judgment among the nations; he will cause a fullness of dead bodies." Or: "smashing their skulls, he heaps the wide world with corpses." (*Je*) Quite evidently there will be many more bodies strewn over the earth as a result of the war at Har–Magedon than there will be scavenger birds enough to dispose of them all in a reasonable time for human health reasons. So it is reasonable to expect that God will dispose of excess bodies by other means.

7 We remember that, in the corresponding prophecy of the attack of Prince Gog of the land of Magog and his hordes upon the restored remnant of Jehovah's people, the "birds of every sort of wing" will be assisted by "all the wild beasts of the field" in disposing of the dead corpses of the defeated fighters against God. To these scavenger creatures, it is prophetically said: " 'And you must get satisfied at my table on horses and charioteers, mighty persons and all sorts of warriors,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah." (Ezekiel 39:17-20) So, instead of having their bones eaten clean of all decaying flesh by the maggots at the Valley of Hinnom (or, at Gehenna), the carcasses of the slain enemies at Har–Magedon will, as it were, be eaten clear to the bone by nature's sanitation force, the carrion-eating birds and wild beasts.

8 What a well-deserved, contemptible end for all these opposers of Jehovah and his Messianic kingdom at Har–Magedon! But what about their bones that are

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8-12. (a) In Ezekiel 39:11-20, what provision for the disposal of the *bones* of the onetime opposers of the Messianic kingdom is described? (b) What is indicated by the fact that this burying is said to go on for "seven months"?

left to bleach in the sun or to disintegrate as perishable, unclean, hideous relics of once-living opposers of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah? In Ezekiel 39:11-20 it is indicated with reference to the slain hordes of Gog of Magog that an odious place, of foul memory, is reserved for the bones of those executed by the Lord God Almighty at Har–Magedon. This is implied by His words:

9 " 'And it must occur in that day that I shall give to Gog a place there [a place of name (renown), Greek *Septuagint;* Latin *Vulgate*], a burial place in Israel, the valley of those passing through on the east of the sea [the Dead Sea], and it will be stopping up those passing through. And there they will have to bury Gog and all his crowd, and they will be certain to call it the Valley of Gog's Crowd. And those of the house of Israel will have to bury them for the purpose of cleansing the land, for seven months. [This indicates a tremendous number of bones.] And all the people of the land will have to do the burying, and it will certainly become for them a matter of fame in the day that I glorify myself,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah.

10 " 'And there will be men for continual employment whom they will divide off, passing along through the land, burying, with those passing through, those left remaining on the surface of the earth, in order to cleanse it. To the end of seven months they will keep making search. And those passing through must pass along through the land, and should one actually see the bone of a man he must also build beside it a marker, until those who do the burying will have buried it in the Valley of Gog's Crowd [or, Valley of Hamon-Gog]. And the name of the city will also be Hamonah [this name meaning "Crowd," as *Ha·mo·nah'* is the feminine form of the Hebrew word *Ha·mon'* in verses 11, 15]. And they will have to cleanse the land.'

11 "And as regards you [Ezekiel], O son of man, this is what the Sovereign Lord Jehovah has said, 'Say

to the birds of every sort of wing and to all the wild beasts of the field: "Collect yourselves together and come. Gather yourselves together all around to my sacrifice, which I am sacrificing for you, a great sacrifice on the mountains of Israel. And you will certainly eat flesh and drink blood. The flesh of mighty ones you will eat, and the blood of the chieftains of the earth you will drink, rams, young male sheep, and he-goats, young bulls, the fatlings of Bashan all of them. And you will be certain to eat fat to satisfaction and to drink blood to drunkenness, from my sacrifice that I will sacrifice for you." '

12 " 'And you must get satisfied at my table on horses and charioteers, mighty persons and all sorts of warriors,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah." —See marginal reading.

GLORY VERSUS EVERLASTING SHAME

13 Thus Jehovah God, as Commander-in-Chief, by means of his acting Field Marshal, Jesus Christ, will gain undying glory for himself, whereas the symbolic Gog and his earthly hordes will earn everlasting shame for themselves. As it were, the scrambled mass of bones of Gog's human hordes will be given a mass burial, without identifiable individual graves. The "Valley of Hamon-Gog" will be a reproachful name to serve as an inglorious memorial of them. This will also be true of the name Hamonah, which might be the name of any citylike marker that is established to memorialize the historical associations of the place. With regard to the lasting contempt that is in store for these transgressors who oppose Jehovah's worship, Isaiah's prophecy speaks of the survivors who worship Jehovah and says:

14 " 'And it will certainly occur that from new moon

13, 14. (a) What names, reflecting a reproachful memory, are associated with the place of burial of Gog's human hordes? (b) In Isaiah 66:23, 24, how is the lasting contempt that will be felt for those opposers of Jehovah's worship described?

to new moon [or, from month to month] and from sabbath to sabbath [or, from week to week] all flesh will come in to bow down before me,' Jehovah has said. 'And they will actually go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that were transgressing against me; for the very worms upon them will not die and their fire itself will not be extinguished, and they must become something repulsive to all flesh.'" —Isaiah 66:23, 24.

15 All things considered, it is evident that, in waging the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon, Jehovah is not going through just a military exercise, merely fighting a sham battle for training purposes, for mere display and not for permanent effects upon those who fight against Him. No, but Jehovah's military action signifies an "everlasting cutting-off" for all those on earth upon whom He thus executes divine judgment for the vindication of his universal sovereignty. How he views those whom he exterminates at Har–Magedon, he further emphasizes in Malachi's prophecy:

16 " 'For, look! the day is coming that is burning like the furnace, and all the presumptuous ones and all those doing wickedness must become as stubble. And the day that is coming will certainly devour them,' Jehovah of armies has said, 'so that it will not leave to them either root or bough [as a complete extermination]. And to you who are in fear of my name the sun of righteousness will certainly shine forth, with healing in its wings; and you [survivors] will actually go forth and paw the ground like fattened calves. And you people will certainly tread down the wicked ones, for they will become as powder under the soles of your feet in the day on which I am acting,' Jehovah of armies has said."—Malachi 4:1-3.

15, 16. (a) What does destruction as an expression of divine judgment at Har–Magedon mean for all those who experience it? (b) In Malachi's prophecy, how is this further emphasized?

17 The surviving worshipers of the Most High God will rejoice that the way has then been cleared for the full establishment of God's righteous new order. Man's old order will not give way peacefully and submissively to God's new order. By the coming "great tribulation" it will be forced to make way for God's promised new order. This is because the "ruler of this world," "the god of this system of things," namely, Satan the Devil, who is the modern-day Prince Gog of the land of Magog, is opposed to God's new order. But his unrelenting opposition will fail. Just as the prophetic Gog of Magog met defeat and could not prevent Jehovah God from carrying out his declared purpose to "send fire upon Magog," so Satan the Devil will see his entire visible organization destroyed in the "great tribulation," and immediately afterward his invisible location at the vicinity of the earth will be desolated. He and his legions of demon angels will be bound as with chains and hurled into an abyss remote from earth's neighborhood.—John 16:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ezekiel 39:1-6; Revelation 20:1-3.

18 The destruction of man's Satan-controlled old order will provide an occasion for spiritual feasting on the part of the surviving remnant of spiritual Israelites and the "great crowd" lined up with them on the side of Jehovah's universal sovereignty. Why should they not rejoice then? At the coming fiery destruction of Babylon the Great the holy angels of heaven will shout "Hallelujah!" and a voice out of the heavenly throne will issue the command: "Be praising our God, all you his slaves, who fear him, the small ones and the great." (Revelation 19:1-5) Much more reason will there be for the surviving worshipers of Jehovah God on earth to rejoice and cry out "Hallelujah!" when he

17. Following the violent end of Satan's entire visible organization, what will happen to him and his demon angels?
18. Why will there certainly be occasion for spiritual feasting and rejoicing after the destruction of man's old order controlled by Satan?

gloriously completes the destruction of man's old order in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon. The greatest event of universal history will then have been accomplished, the vindication of Jehovah's universal sovereignty and the sanctification of his sacred name.—Ezekiel 38:23; 39:6, 7.

19 In the Revelation picture of that war at Har–Magedon, "all the birds that fly in midheaven" obeyed the command of God's radiant angel and gathered expectantly at the battlefield of Har–Magedon. They were promised a feast there, and they certainly got it. They feasted upon the carcasses of those slain by Jehovah's appointed King of kings and his heavenly armies: "And all the birds were filled from the fleshy parts of them." (Revelation 19:17-21) No less so will the war-surviving remnant of spiritual Israel and the "great crowd" feast spiritually to complete satisfaction upon the God-honoring outcome of the "war of the great day of God the Almighty." Just as it is said to the survivors:

20 "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the wagons he burns in the fire. 'Give in, you people, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'" —Psalm 46:8-10.

21 In profound awe at the marvelous activities of the Almighty Sovereign of the universe at Har–Magedon, the surviving remnant of spiritual Israelites will sing to Him. By the time of his glorious victory in the war of all wars this faithful remnant will have

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19, 20. Even as the birds are invited to feast upon the carcasses of those slain at Har–Magedon, what does Psalm 46 describe on which the human survivors will surely feast?

21-23. (a) What victory will have been gained by the human survivors of Har–Magedon? (b) As described in Revelation 15:2-4, in the singing of what words will those survivors unite their voices?

come off completely victorious over the symbolic "wild beast" numbered 666 and over its idolatrous "image." At that triumphant time those two political organizations that were prominent parts of man's old order will be sunk in eternal death, plunged into the death-dealing "fiery lake that burns with sulphur." (Revelation 19:20; 17:8, 14) The post-Har–Magedon singing of this victorious remnant, reinforced by the singing of the "great crowd" of fellow worshipers at God's spiritual temple, was so spectacular a prospect for our near future, that the apostle John was given a preview of that grand musical event. Happily for us today he penned an inspired description of it, saying:

22 "And I saw what seemed to be a glassy sea [a large glassy laver at God's spiritual temple] mingled with fire, and those who come off victorious from the wild beast and from its image and from the number of its name [666] standing by the glassy sea, having harps of God. And they are singing the song of Moses the slave of God and the song of the Lamb [Jesus Christ], saying:

23 " 'Great and wonderful are your works, Jehovah God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are your ways, King of eternity. Who will not really fear you, Jehovah, and glorify your name, because you alone are loyal? For all the nations will come and worship before you, because your righteous decrees have been made manifest.' "—Revelation 15:2-4.

CHAPTER 16

Awaiting the "New Heavens and a New Earth"

A NEW and better world is at hand—as this generation nears its end. There is no room for doubt about this. By the word "world" we mean a human society living under a form of government. (Matthew 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32) We older folks of "this generation" in our seventies or in our eighties have seen the present "world" change for the worse, steadily deteriorating since that epoch-making year of 1914 C.E. We, of all persons alive on earth today, can bear witness to the truthfulness of Christ's prediction of the first century C.E. concerning the "conclusion of the system of things." From the start of it in 1914 we have observed what he foretold:

2 "On the earth anguish of nations, not knowing the way out because of the roaring of the sea and its agitation, while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken." (Luke 21:25, 26) It is a vain, desperate hope to expect the present world to improve and save itself. Righteously disposed persons long for a better world, a better human society. Happily it is at hand!

3 Faithful footstep followers of the Great Prophet, Jesus Christ, have done what his apostle Peter wrote and told them to do. They have paid attention to the fully assured "prophetic word" as they would do to a lamp shining in a dark place, illuminating their hearts.

1, 2. (a) Persons in their seventies or eighties have seen what changes in the world since the year 1914? (b) How has what they have observed matched what Jesus foretold, as recorded at Luke 21:25, 26, concerning the "conclusion of the system of things"?

3. How have the faithful followers of Jesus Christ managed to hold to the right course, despite the deterioration of the world around them?

As the apostle Peter wrote in his second letter to fellow Christian believers: "Consequently we have the prophetic word made more sure; and you are doing well in paying attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until day dawns and a daystar rises, in your hearts. For you know this first, that no prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit." (2 Peter 1:19-21, *NW; Knox*) Their unswerving attention to such inspired prophecy has held them true to the right course till now. And now the new day is dawning and the daystar has risen, and their eyes are blessed with seeing the modern-day fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

4 Although we have seen and experienced so many faith-strengthening evidences of the infallibility of Bible prophecies, we still need to safeguard our faith and confidence in those inspired prophecies that are not yet fulfilled or that are in course of fulfillment. This is the case even though we are living in the "last days" of this old order of things and have been since the end of the "appointed times of the [Gentile] nations" in 1914 C.E. The apostle looked ahead to those "last days" and saw good to write his second letter to warn fellow believers concerning assaults upon their Christian faith that were due to come in those perilous days. After warning of the coming of false teachers and the introducing of "destructive [religious] sects" among Jehovah's people, Peter went on to explain the purpose of writing his second letter, saying:

5 "Beloved ones, this is now the second letter I am writing you, in which, as in my first one, I am arousing your clear thinking faculties by way of a reminder, that you should remember the sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles. For you

4, 5. (a) As to those inspired prophecies, what does each one of us need to do? (b) What reason for doing so is given by the apostle Peter?

know this first, that in the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.' "—2 Peter 3:1-4; 2:1, 2.

6 In order for us today to counteract the ridicule of the ridiculers whose arising was foretold for these "last days," it is very urgent that we believers recall what Jehovah's inspired prophets said, even though this was long before the appearing of these modern-time ridiculers, scoffers, mockers. All the way from the antediluvian prophet Enoch down through almost three thousand years to the postexilic Jewish prophet Malachi, Jehovah's prophets who preceded Jesus Christ have foretold events and conditions due to mark these "last days." (Genesis 5:18-24; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14, 15; Malachi, chapter four) So it is really nothing unexpected that faith-destroying ridiculers should arise in these "last days" of this wicked system of things. Rather, their arising simply confirms the accuracy of the prophecies by fulfilling them.

7 According to the apostle Peter, another thing to be recalled at this late date in human history is the "commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles." (2 Peter 3:2) Jesus Christ is that "Lord and Savior" to whom reference is here made. (2 Peter 3:18) Through his chosen apostles, that is, "the twelve apostles of the Lamb," and also the apostle Paul, he gave a commandment for all his footstep followers that they should keep continually on the watch and beware of false prophets and false Messiahs or Christs. Since he left his disciples without the knowledge of the precise day and hour that he would come again for the

6. (a) If we review "the sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets" regarding these "last days," we will be considering prophecies given over a period of how many years? (b) Does the presence of "ridiculers" prove the prophecies to be wrong?

7. (a) Who is the "Lord and Savior" to whom Peter refers? (b) Through his apostles, what "commandment" did he give, and why considerately so?

execution of God's judgments upon the unfaithful and the wicked, he was very considerate in commanding them to keep themselves ready and to stay on the watch. (Revelation 21:14; Matthew 24:36-44; 25:13) They should not let the ridicule of any who have lost faith affect them.

[8] The ridiculers were to raise the challenging question, "Where is this promised presence of his?" Yes, they would say, what about this promise of his presence? Where is the evidence of its fulfillment?

[9] To whose "presence" would they be referring? Evidently to the "presence" of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, about which the apostle Peter spoke toward the beginning of his second letter. The apostle Peter did not expect that "presence" of Jesus Christ in his own day on earth, and yet he did not want to be negligent about keeping alive in the hearts of his fellow believers the earnest expectation of that promised presence. Hence, he wrote:

[10] "So I will do my utmost also at every time that, after my departure, you may be able to make mention of these things for yourselves. No, it was not by following artfully contrived false stories that we acquainted you with the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it was by having become eyewitnesses of his magnificence. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when words such as these were borne to him by the magnificent glory: 'This is my son, my beloved, whom I myself have approved.' Yes, these words we heard borne from heaven while we were with him in the holy mountain. Consequently we have the prophetic word made more sure."—2 Peter 1:15-19; Matthew 17:1-9.

[11] If the modern-time ridiculers have in mind a visible

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8. When asking, "*Where* is this promised presence of his?" what would the ridiculers mean?
9, 10. (a) To whose "presence" would they be referring? (b) What did the apostle Peter do to keep alive in the hearts of fellow believers the earnest expectation of Christ's "presence"?
11. (a) How have wrong expectations concerning the "presence" of Jesus Christ given rise to much skepticism? (b) In the 1870's, what did Charles Taze Russell discern concerning the second coming of Christ and his "presence"?

arrival and presence of Jesus Christ in the flesh, they are grossly mistaken. They were deceived by a misinterpretation of the prophecies such as is widespread throughout Christendom today. During the nineteenth century C.E. there were a number of predictions about the visible coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh in certain years. The failure of such predictions to materialize on the dates announced doubtless brought much reproach upon the Bible doctrine of the second coming of Jesus Christ and his "presence" as a heavenly King. It roused much skepticism, doubt, as to the validity of such a doctrine, the certainty of such a coming and presence of Christ at all. In the 1870's Charles Taze Russell and his fellow unsectarian students of the inspired Scriptures discerned that the second coming of Christ would be invisible to human eyes, in the spirit, and that this coming would begin the period known as his "presence," or *pa·rou·si'a* (Greek).—Matthew 24:3, margin, *ERV* (1881).

[12] According to an inaccurate chronology that had been worked out from the King James Authorized Version Bible, Russell calculated that Christ's "presence" had begun in the year 1874 C.E., unseen to human eyes and seen only by the eye of faith. This was why, when he began publishing a new religious magazine in defense of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Russell entitled it "Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence." However, events on earth since the end of the "appointed times of the [Gentile] nations" have been fulfilling Bible prophecy and prove that the promised "presence" or parousia of Christ in Kingdom power began first about October 4/5, 1914 C.E. Only since then has it been correct to speak of the invisible, royal "presence" of Christ as being in effect. We older folks of seventy or eighty years of age have seen come to reality practically all the things predicted by Jesus Christ in answer to the question submitted to him by his apostles:

12, 13. (a) When, according to Russell's calculations, had Christ's "presence" begun, but what is the correct date? (b) Who have seen the "sign" testifying to Christ's presence beginning with 1914 C.E.?

13 "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence [Greek: *pa·rou·si'a*] and of the conclusion of the system of things?"—Matthew 24:3, *NW; Rotherham; Young; Diaglott; AS,* margin.

14 To this day the sectarian churches of Christendom hang onto the common translation of the Greek term *pa·rou·si'a* as "coming." Expecting his coming, if expecting it at all, visibly in the flesh, they refuse to discern the invisible, spiritual "presence" of Jesus Christ in Kingdom power since the close of the Gentile Times in 1914. This has opened the way for ridiculers to ridicule the idea of Christ's promised "presence" and to offer the reason for their refusing to believe it, saying: "Where is this promised presence [*pa·rou·si'a*] of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning."—2 Peter 3:4.

15 Such ridiculers see men marrying and women being given in marriage, just as from the days of Adam's immediate family onward. They see babies being born as from Cain's birth onward. Men continue dying, just the same as our forefathers have died. There is no stoppage of the dying process, such as is due to occur on earth after the thousand-year reign of Christ begins. There is no resurrection as yet to life on a Paradise earth, such as is promised for the earthly dead that have been ransomed by Jesus Christ. Sin as well as death continue reigning over mankind. So, to the faithless ridiculers, since as far back as their forefathers who died, all things continue exactly as from the beginning of human creation forward. So, according to their view, we are not yet in the "time of the end"; Jesus Christ has not yet made his return; he has not begun such a thing as a presence. All of this, despite all the fulfillment of Bible prophecy since 1914 C.E. that verifies his in-

14. What has hindered those who adhere to the churches of Christendom from discerning the invisible "presence" of Jesus Christ?
15. (a) On what basis do the ridiculers argue that Jesus Christ has not yet returned? (b) Why are they wrong?

visible presence since then. So it is only in their own minds that those ridiculers postpone the promised "presence" of the Lord Jesus Christ.—Daniel 12:4; Matthew 24:3.

16 The foretold ridiculers of the "last days" include prominent clergymen of Christendom. The idea of the ridicule is to cast doubt upon Bible prophecy or to unsettle the faith and conviction of Jehovah's Christian witnesses, both the remnant of spiritual Israel and the "great crowd" of loyal fellow believers. But, taking heed to the apostle Peter's warning, these heralds of Christ's presence in heavenly Kingdom power refuse to be upset in their faith. They rely on the inability of God's word to fail, even if it is given in the form of prophecy or prediction of things to come. They know that when God says something by way of command, it must be done, it must occur. They believe what Psalm 115:3 says: "But our God is in the heavens; everything that he delighted to do he has done." And since the ridiculers refer to "creation" in their argument, the faithful believers in Jehovah know that, when he was pleased to create the heavens and the earth, his expressed word came true, produced effects.

THE POWER OF THE SPOKEN "WORD OF GOD"

17 According to the account of creation as given in Genesis, chapter one, it worked out just as stated in Psalm 33:9: "He himself said, and it came to be; he himself commanded, and it proceeded to stand so." As back there at creation, that "word of God" is just as potent today, after thousands of years. In connection with divine prophecy, that "word of God" is just as much an active cause for producing results as it was back there in creation. The ridiculers of today, who scoff with respect to the fulfillment of God's

16. What is the intent of the ridicule, but why does it fail to achieve its objective?

17, 18. (a) How do the results produced by the "word of God" in connection with creation provide a basis for confidence in the fulfillment of prophecy? (b) So, what are those who scoff with respect to the fulfillment of God's prophetic word failing to take into account?

prophetic word, cannot escape the operation of God's expressed word for the fulfillment of prophecy about the "presence" of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In their *minds* they may put off, postpone, the "presence" of Christ, but their ignoring of the evidence of his "presence" will not alter matters. In trying to cast doubt upon the reliability of God's prophetic word by their ridicule, they are leaving out of account the operational power of God's word with respect to creation of the heavens and the earth. This is the reason for their ridicule:

18 "For, according to their wish, this fact escapes their notice, that there were heavens from of old and an earth standing compactly out of water and in the midst of water by the word of God; and by those means the world of that time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water."—2 Peter 3:5, 6.

19 "The world of that time," that is, the world up to the year 2370 B.C.E., was destroyed by the "word of God" just as much as the creation of the heavens and the earth had been thus accomplished. The expressed "word of God" created the possibilities for such a global deluge, for the creation account says: "God went on to say: 'Let an expanse come to be in between the waters and let a dividing occur between the waters and the waters.' Then God proceeded to make the expanse and to make a division between the waters that should be beneath the expanse and the waters that should be above the expanse. And it came to be so. And God began to call the expanse Heaven. And there came to be evening and there came to be morning, a second day." And on the fifth creative day "God went on to say: 'Let the waters swarm forth a swarm of living souls and let flying creatures fly over the earth upon the face of the expanse of the heavens.'" (Genesis 1:6-8, 20) Those heavens and the waters above and beneath were the means that God's

19. (a) To what does Peter refer by the expression "the world of that time"? (b) What were "those means" by which the world of that time suffered destruction?

word called into operation and "by those means" He deluged the "world of that time."

[20] The global deluge came at the word of God, for he timed it. "After that [after the preparing of the ark of survival] Jehovah said to Noah: 'Go, you and all your household, into the ark, because you are the one I have seen to be righteous before me among this generation. . . . For in just seven days more I am making it rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and I will wipe every existing thing that I have made off the surface of the ground.' " That occurred in the year 2370 B.C.E. "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on this day all the springs of the vast watery deep were broken open and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. And the downpour upon the earth went on for forty days and forty nights. On this very day Noah went in, and Shem and Ham and Japheth, Noah's sons, and the wife of Noah and the three wives of his sons with him, into the ark. . . . After that Jehovah shut the door behind him."—Genesis 7:1-4, 11-16.

[21] The "world of that time" that "suffered destruction when it was deluged with water" is identified for us in 2 Peter 2:5. There we read: "He [that is, God] did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people." That ancient "world of ungodly people" paid no attention to how God was using Noah and his family during the time of the construction of the huge ark for flood survival. Jesus Christ used that indifference of the "world of ungodly people" toward the "word of God" as an illustration of what would be the case during this "conclusion of the system of things," saying:

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20. What shows that it was really in response to the "word of God" that the global deluge came?

21, 22. (a) What was the "world" that was destroyed in the global deluge? (b) How did Jesus use what happened then as the basis for a warning that applies in our day?

22 "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father. For just as the days of Noah were, so the presence [*pa·rou·si'a*] of the Son of man will be. For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be."—Matthew 24:36-39.

23 By his course of action in faith Noah condemned that "world of ungodly people." Noah paid attention to the spoken "word of God" and obeyed it; the "world of ungodly people" did not do so and proved deserving of being condemned to destruction. "By faith Noah, after being given divine warning of things not yet beheld, showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; and through this faith he condemned the world, and he became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith." (Hebrews 11:7) The "world" that Noah's course of faith condemned did not include invisible spirit creatures, wicked demons. In 2 Peter 3:6 the "world of that time" that suffered destruction in the Deluge is not set off in contrast with invisible heavenly spirits, the demons, the angels disobedient to Jehovah God; and these are not there figuratively referred to as "the heavens." The spirit demons were not destroyed by the Deluge. Ungodly people on earth suffered death.

END OF "THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH THAT ARE NOW"

24 In the light of that destruction of the "world of that time" by the global deluge, the ridiculers of this twentieth century C.E. are acting disastrously for them-

23. (a) In what way was it true that Noah "condemned the world"? (b) Does the expression "world," in 2 Peter 3:6, include invisible spirits as a "heavens"?
24. Why is it foolish for anyone today, in this twentieth century, to scoff at the Bible account of what happened to the "world of ungodly people" in Noah's day?

selves in allowing to "escape their notice" what happened to the antediluvian "world of ungodly people" according to the "word of God." They are acting against their own eternal interests by not remembering or by ignoring the "sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets" with respect to this time of Christ's invisible "presence," this "conclusion of the system of things." (2 Peter 3:2; Matthew 24:3) Not only did the "word of God" have to do with the existence of the "heavens from of old and an earth," then populated by the "world of that time," but that same "word of God" has to do also with the "heavens and the earth that are now" and with which these twentieth-century ridiculers are associated. This fact should not escape the notice of those ridiculers of today who mockingly scoff at the promise of Christ's "presence," in order to embarrass Jehovah's Christian witnesses.

25 "But," the apostle Peter goes on to say in warning, "by the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men. However, let this one fact not be escaping your notice, beloved ones, that one day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day." —2 Peter 3:7, 8.

26 The prophet Moses was the first man to be inspired to equate a thousand years of human existence with a twenty-four-hour day in the experience of the everlasting Creator of heaven and earth. This first such comparison is found in Psalm 90:1-4, as written by Moses, in these words addressed to the Creator: "O Jehovah, you yourself have proved to be a real dwelling for us during generation after generation. Before the mountains themselves were born, or you proceeded to bring forth as with labor pains the earth and the productive land, even from time indefinite to time in-

25, 26. (a) To what time factor does the apostle Peter draw attention in warning? (b) Who had earlier made mention of such a thing, and of what should it make us aware?

definite you are God. You make mortal man go back to crushed matter, and you say: 'Go back, you sons of men.' For [in view of God's turning sinful man back to the dust of the ground in death after such a short life-span] a thousand years are in your eyes but as yesterday [of twenty-four hours' length] when it is past, and as a watch [of four hours] during the night." (Note the superscription of Psalm 90.) Jehovah God inspired Moses also to speak of the seven-thousand-year-long creative periods as "days." (Genesis 1:1-31; Exodus 20:11) What is quite long in time for mortal man is infinitesimally short to the immortal God.

27 When God brought the global deluge in the days of Noah, he did not destroy our literal earthly globe. It survived the Flood and formed catch basins for all the water deluged upon it.

"THE HEAVENS AND THE EARTH THAT ARE NOW"

28 So, when 2 Peter 3:7 speaks of "the heavens and the earth that are now," it could not mean a new earthly sphere with a new atmospheric "expanse" around it. It is also to be noted that, in verses 5 and 6, the apostle Peter did not say that the "heavens from of old and an earth standing compactly" were stored up for water and were to be reserved for the day of judgment. God did not have such a thing in mind when he originally made the literal heavens and earth and settled man on earth. At that time God gave the perfect man and woman the opportunity to live in an earthly paradise forever without a day of judgment. —Genesis 2:17-25.

29 Accordingly, "the heavens and the earth that are now" are stored up, not for waters of a global flood, but for fire and are reserved to the day of judgment

27. What effect did the deluge of Noah's day have on the globe itself?
28. (a) So are "the heavens and the earth that are now" a new earthly sphere with a new atmosphere, different from those that existed before the Flood? (b) How do we know that, when God created man, he did not have in mind using for destructive purposes the waters that were suspended above the earth?
29. (a) Are "the heavens and the earth that are now" the same kind of heavens and earth as are referred to in 2 Peter 3:5? (b) So why must the "fire" referred to in verse 7 also be figurative?

and of "destruction of the ungodly men." Evidently this means a heavens and an earth of a kind different from that of the original literal heaven and earth. This being so, then the "fire" here mentioned must be different from literal fire, hence a figurative "fire," such as is often spoken of in the inspired Scriptures.

30 Zephaniah 3:8, 9 speaks of such a figurative "fire" in that it says: " 'Therefore keep yourselves in expectation of me,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'till the day of my rising up to the booty, for my judicial decision is to gather nations, for me to collect together kingdoms, in order to pour out upon them my denunciation, all my burning anger; for by the fire of my zeal all the earth will be devoured. For then I shall give to peoples the change to a pure language, in order for them all to call upon the name of Jehovah, in order to serve him shoulder to shoulder.' "

31 Also, after the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the armies of Babylon in the year 607 B.C.E., the prophet Jeremiah made this lamentation concerning the action taken by Jehovah God: "In the heat of anger he has cut down every horn of Israel. He has turned his right hand back from before the enemy; and in Jacob he keeps burning like a flaming fire that has devoured all around. He has trodden his bow like an enemy. His right hand has taken its position like an adversary, and he kept killing all those desirable to the eyes. Into the tent of the daughter of Zion he has poured out his rage, just like fire."—Lamentations 2:3, 4.

32 Immediately after the deluge of Noah's day God caused the rainbow to appear and said to Noah and his family: "Yes, I do establish my covenant with you: No more will all flesh be cut off by waters of a deluge, and no more will there occur a deluge to bring the earth to ruin." And God added: "This is the sign of the covenant that I am giving between me and you

30, 31. (a) At Zephaniah 3:8, 9, to what kind of "fire" is reference made? (b) What reference to "fire" is found in Lamentations 2:3, 4?

32, 33. After the flood of Noah's day, what reassuring promise did God make, of which the rainbow is a reminder?

and every living soul that is with you, for the generations to time indefinite. My rainbow I do give in the cloud, and it must serve as a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. And it shall occur that when I bring a cloud over the earth, then the rainbow will certainly appear in the cloud. And I shall certainly remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living soul among all flesh; and no more will the waters become a deluge to bring all flesh to ruin. And the rainbow must occur in the cloud, and I shall certainly see it to remember the covenant to time indefinite between God and every living soul among all flesh that is upon the earth."—Genesis 9:11-16.

33 In Isaiah 54:9 Jehovah God added this assurance: "I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more pass over the earth."

"STORED UP FOR FIRE"

34 Such a sworn statement against another global flood would be of little comfort to humanity if, instead, God purposed to engulf all the earth with a literal fire, to have a literal worldwide conflagration. Also, if the expression "the heavens and the earth that are now" included the stars of heaven that are visible to the human eye, what would such a literal fire do to the sun of our solar system and to all the other stars in our Milky Way and all the other galaxies that are already balls of fire of a temperature higher than fires generated here on earth? Reducing our earth to a charred cinder by a global conflagration would hardly harmonize with God's declared purpose to convert this earth into a global paradise by his Messianic kingdom.

35 Evidently, then, the "fire" for which the "heavens and the earth that are now" are stored up is a symbolic fire that brings about a destruction of condemned

34. What several facts make it unreasonable to view the fire referred to in 2 Peter 3:7 as being literal?
35. (a) What, then, is the meaning of "fire" in that scripture? (b) And what are "the heavens" that are "stored up for fire"?

things just as efficiently as a literal fire does to combustible things. This being the case, the expression "the heavens and the earth that are now" takes on a symbolic meaning. So "the heavens" symbolize the governmental systems, the governing authorities "that are now" and to which mankind is subject. In Romans 13:1 the Christian apostle Paul calls these "the superior authorities," saying: "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities, for there is no authority except by God; the existing authorities stand placed in their relative positions by God."

36 Accordingly, the "earth" that is under these heavens symbolizes the human society that is under and in subjection to the "superior authorities." At one time, for more than a century after the deluge of Noah's day, this human society spoke but one language. Genesis 11:1 calls attention to this, saying: "Now all the *earth* continued to be of one language and of one set of words."

37 In full keeping with the reference to the "superior authorities" as "heavens" is the Biblical likening of such political governments to "mountains." As an example, in Isaiah 34:2-5 the Sovereign Lord God says: "Jehovah has indignation against all the nations, and rage against all their army. He must devote them to destruction; he must give them to the slaughter. And their slain ones will be thrown out; and as for their carcasses, their stink will ascend; and the mountains must melt because of their blood. And all those of the army of the heavens must rot away. And the heavens must be rolled up, just like a book scroll; and their army will all shrivel away, just as the leafage shrivels off the vine and like a shriveled fig off the fig tree. For in the heavens my sword will certainly be drenched. Look! Upon Edom it will descend, and upon

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36. (a) In harmony with that, what is the "earth" that is "stored up for fire"? (b) Give a Scriptural example of such use of the term "earth."
37, 38. (a) To what else that is high or lofty are the political governments likened in the Scriptures? (b) Illustrate this from Isaiah chapter 34 and Micah chapter 1.

the people devoted by me to destruction in justice." With the destruction of the armies in the coming "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon, the governments that they have supported will melt, dissolve, like mountains melting in the blood of slain armies.

38 Another picture of the dissolving of the symbolic heaven-high mountains is given in Micah 1:3, 4 in these words: "For, look! Jehovah is going forth from his place, and he will certainly come down and tread upon earth's high places. And the mountains must melt under him, and the low plains themselves will split apart, like wax because of the fire, like waters being poured down a steep place." When, shortly, Jehovah God the Almighty, by means of his heavenly executional forces, comes in contact with the governmental mountains of this system of things, it will be like subjecting them to incandescent heat. Their solidity will melt!

39 So the "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men" to which the "heavens and the earth that are now" are reserved will be, figuratively speaking, a fiery one for all the destruction that it will cause. It will be the day of the executing of divine judgments upon the entire visible system of things. Also, it will be a day for "destruction of the ungodly men," inasmuch as they do not view and treat Jehovah God as the August One, the Universal Sovereign. They are irreverential toward Him, the Holy One.

NOT A TARDILY MOVING GOD

40 It is "by the same word," that is to say, "the word of God," that the "heavens and the earth that are now" are unchangeably "stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of

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39. So what does the future hold for the "heavens and the earth that are now" and for "ungodly men," and why?

40, 41. Though the coming of Jehovah's "day of judgment" may seem slow to the ridiculers, what fact about time ought to be taken into account?

the ungodly men." This is something for the modern-day ridiculers, who treat the "presence" of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as not yet in effect, to think about. That "same word" of God, which authoritatively declared the purpose for which the "heavens and the earth that are now" have been permitted to exist so long, will without fail be carried out. This will not be long now! To the ridiculers and the "ungodly men," it may have seemed like a long time in the coming of that "day," but for the God who is without beginning and without end, eternal, it has not been a long time. That is why the apostle Peter now says:

41 "However, let this one fact not be escaping your notice, beloved ones, that one day is with Jehovah as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance. Yet Jehovah's day will come as a thief."—2 Peter 3:8-10.

42 What is such a long time to men is really a short time to God. Hence, he can allow to men a seemingly long period of time in their interest. What is a "thousand years" to Him, when it is like a mere twenty-four-hour day in comparison with his eternity of existence? Conversely, one twenty-four-hour day for God is like a thousand years for men, when men consider that what would take them a thousand years to accomplish could be packed by the Almighty God Jehovah into "one day." Dissatisfied men have for thousands of years been trying to improve this system of things or trying to overturn it for something better, but have till now been unable to do it. However, Jehovah will do it in his "day," in the brief time period in which he will execute his judgments upon this system of things as by fire and will destroy all those who are in

42. (a) Has God's allowance of a seemingly long time been without concern for humankind? (b) How is 'one day with Jehovah as a thousand years' with man?

sympathy with it and support it. This indeed is something for the ridiculers to think about.

43 It betrays a lack of understanding of God's way of handling matters, when a person says, impatiently: 'Why has not God done something about the bad world situation before now? He ought to hurry up and do something for human relief, so that I can get the benefit of it—quick!' The main question that such an impatient person should ask himself is: 'Have I as yet attained to repentance toward God?' Or: 'Am I taking advantage of the time to help as many others as possible to attain to repentance?'

44 Who can rightly accuse God of being slow about his promise to cleanse this earth of wickedness and establish a lasting righteous government, when a thousand years of man's time are as but one twenty-four-hour day to the Eternal God? He has his set day for taking action, and the day set has allowed ample time for countless numbers of men to attain to repentance. Instead of their viewing it as 'slowness' on God's part, they should recognize his having set his "day" for action so far in the future from the beginning of the "heavens and the earth that are now" as incomparable "patience" on his part. This divine patience has been because He does not desire any to perish, be destroyed. So, during the thousands of years that he has allowed till his unchangeably fixed "day," he sent his beloved Son from heaven to act as a Great Teacher on earth and to die as a ransom sacrifice for all mankind, that there might be salvation of as many as possible. (Galatians 4:4) Since that first coming of his faithful beloved Son to earth, repentance for forgiveness of sins has been preached in all the inhabited earth. For over nineteen centuries such repentance has been preached.

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43. Instead of being impatient about God's way of handling matters, to what questions ought humans to give serious consideration?

44. (a) How have God's dealings with mankind really displayed incomparable "patience" on his part, and with what objective in view? (b) During this period of time, what has God done with a view to the salvation of as many as possible?

45 The ridiculers of today do not take advantage of the time of God's patience in order to attain to repentance that they might not be destroyed. Although they do not appreciate it, God has acted very kindly toward them with a view to their repenting. As the apostle Paul wrote, in his inspired letter to the Roman congregation that was made up of Christianized Jews and Gentiles: "Do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, because you do not know that the kindly quality of God is trying to lead you to repentance?"—Romans 2:4.

46 The patience that God has exercised during this time of the "presence" of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in Kingdom power since 1914 C.E. has not been in vain. It has allowed for and resulted in the gathering of the final remnant of spiritual Israelites and also in the gathering of the unnumbered members of the "great crowd," who are faithful companions of the anointed remnant. The self-restraint and patience of God for the sake of those who can be induced to repent is pictured in Revelation, chapter seven. With reference to the oncoming storm of destruction world wide, the apostle John writes:

47 "After this I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding tight the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow upon the earth or upon the sea or upon any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the sunrising, having a seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying: 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.'" (Revelation 7:1-3) This was according to God's patience.

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45. Although ridiculers do not appreciate it, how has God dealt even with them?

46, 47. (a) How has God's patience, even since the year 1914, proved to be not in vain? (b) In Revelation 7:1-3, how is God's self-restraint and patience pictured?

48 What was the benefit of this manifestation of patience on God's part? The needed remnant of spiritual Israelites were sealed in their foreheads, so that there would finally be the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed spiritual Israelites as foreordained by Jehovah God. (Revelation 7:4-8) However, more than spiritual Israelites who are to reign with Christ on the heavenly Mount Zion have been benefited by God's patience in this "time of the end." People with the Scriptural hope of everlasting life in an earthly paradise have been benefited. Since the momentous year of 1935 C.E., they have come out of all nations and tribes and peoples and languages and have dedicated themselves to Jehovah as their God. So they have gotten baptized in symbol of this dedication as Jesus Christ commanded should be done with those who become his disciples. Before this unlimited "great crowd" that is now forming, the remarkable prospect has been set of going through and coming out alive from the stormy "great tribulation" that brings this "time of the end" to a close. The prophetic picture, in Revelation 7:9-17, of this "great crowd" as having safely come out of the "great tribulation" now moves on to glorious realization!

THE COMING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD GOD CERTAIN

49 Men who mistake God's exercise of long-suffering and patience as slackness, tardiness, slowness on His part and who are themselves slow in taking action for salvation will be suddenly overtaken by destruction from God. The apostle Peter warned against such a mistaken, careless, unwise course of action by saying: "Yet Jehovah's day [*he·me'ra Ky·ri'ou,* Greek; day of

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48. (a) What has resulted from this manifestation of patience on God's part? (b) What action is taken by those who are now coming to appreciate God's patience, and what remarkable prospect has been set before them?

49. What will suddenly overtake men who, while counting God slow, are themselves slow in taking action for salvation?

the Lord]* will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be discovered."—2 Peter 3:10, *NW*, marginal reading.

50 The day for the end of the "heavens and the earth that are now" will come without fail, for it is part of God's declared purpose. His time for its arrival is fixed in his own timetable. Clergymen of Christendom who continue to use religion as a means to exploit credulous people will find that they are the ones slumbering and asleep to the order of events, and not God himself. "Also, with covetousness they will exploit you with counterfeit words. But as for them, the judgment from of old is not moving slowly, and the destruction of them is not slumbering."—2 Peter 2:3.

51 The coming of Jehovah's day as a thief in the night is commented on also by the apostle Paul, when he writes to the Christians in Thessalonica, Macedonia: "Now as for the times and the seasons, brothers, you need nothing to be written to you. For you yourselves know quite well that Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night. Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape." (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3) As Jesus Christ himself will be used by Jehovah God as an executional agent on Jehovah's day, he warned his disciples of the thieflike approach of the day for execution of judgment to begin, saying: "But know one thing, that

* "These words express the certainty of the coming of the day of judgment, and *hos kle'ptes* [as a thief] its unexpected suddenness; . . . *tes tou Theou hemeras* [of the day of the God], ver. 12, shows that *kyriou* [Lord] is here [verse 10] also equivalent to *Theou* [of God] (not to *Khristou* [of Christ]; . . .)."—Lines 3-6, paragraph 1, page 428, of *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude*, by J. E. Huther (1887).

50. In this connection, what warning is sounded with regard to clergymen who use religion as a means to exploit credulous people?

51. Like what did both the apostle Paul and Jesus Christ say that the day of execution for divine judgment would come?

if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have kept awake and not allowed his house to be broken into. On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming."—Matthew 24:43, 44; Luke 12:39, 40.

52 On Jehovah's day mankind will find itself enveloped in a fiery situation for this ungodly system of things. The "heavens," "elements," and "earth" that mankind has known for thousands of years will be affected ruinously. The "heavens" that will pass away are the political governments that have served as "the superior authorities" by God's permission and that have prolonged their operation in spite of the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 C.E. They have loomed high like mountains on earth's scene and have overshadowed the affairs of human society. The priests, prophets and clergymen of religion have meddled with the governments and have tried to involve themselves as an integral part of governments, in many lands producing a marriage of State and Church. In marriages of Church and State that still continue in this "time of the end," the religious partner is the lesser, the subordinate one and is merely tolerated, not passionately courted.

53 Those governmental "heavens" will pass away "with a hissing noise," like the prolonged sounding of the letter "s." This could mean a whizzing sound, like that caused by the rapid passing of an object through the air, as when an eagle nosedives toward its prey. This hissing noise could, accordingly, denote a rapid passing away of these governmental "heavens." This rapid passing of the governmental heavens will not come about by the action of radical, revolutionary parties among men, for they themselves would only substitute the overthrown government with one of their

52. As referred to at 2 Peter 3:10, what are the "heavens" that will pass away?
53. What is indicated by the fact that it is "with a hissing noise" that the "heavens" will pass away?

own. Rather, the passing of political "heavens" will be by the act of Jehovah God. Since they have overlived the "appointed times of the [Gentile] nations," it would only be fitting for them to be rushed off the scene as in an action that is long overdue. The "hissing noise," regardless of whatever sound sensation it produces, will be heard by the inhabitants of the earth.

54 The "elements" that will become "intensely hot" and then "be dissolved" are not the so-called "four elements" of the alchemists of the Middle Ages, namely, fire, water, earth and air. "Elements" mean the basic parts of which something, as an organism, is composed. "Elements" could suggest certain things lined up in a certain order, like the letters of the alphabet of a language. The "elements" are mentioned as being distinct from the "heavens" and the "earth," and as not being primary component parts of such. Between our literal heavens and earth there is the atmosphere, in which mankind lives, breathing it for sustenance of life. This atmosphere is composed of a mixture of gases and so has elemental parts. Similarly, there is a spirit that pervades the earthly realm of mankind, which mankind breathes and which animates them, moving them as by an invisible force to act, think, speak and plan the way that they do. This is the spirit of the world. It has nothing to do with the spirit of God but is at enmity with it. Hence, God is against that worldly spirit in all its elemental parts. On His day he must dissolve it, destroy it in the heat of his anger. All the doctrines, arrangements and schemes that express this worldly spirit and result from it must be dissolved, reduced to nothing, with it.

55 Not only the "heavens" and the "elements" come in for divine attention, but "earth and the works in it" must also. These "will be discovered." (2 Peter 3:10) They will be found out. "Earth" in this case symbolizes

54. Identify the "elements" that, according to 2 Peter 3:10, are to be dissolved.

55. (a) The "earth" here referred to means what? (b) To what does the expression "the works in it" refer?

human society that is separate and distinct from the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites and from the "great crowd" who are in the spiritual paradise and who are worshiping Jehovah in his spiritual temple. (Revelation 7:15) The expression "the works in it" refers, not to the deeds or acts of conduct of the earthly human society, but to their works of construction, the things that human society builds and produces in the way of structures. Such "works" show the materialistic viewpoint, the earthly tendencies, of this human society, this symbolic "earth."

56 Why, though, is it said, "and earth and the works in it will be discovered [literally, will be found]"? Why "be discovered," "be found," instead of "be burned up," as in the old King James *Authorized Version* reading of 2 Peter 3:10? Their being "discovered" or "found" does not mean that on Jehovah's day they will merely be laid bare to view and be left lying thus exposed. In 2 Peter 3:7 it is stated that, by God's word, "the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire." Accordingly, the "earth and the works in it" will not escape the "fire" of destruction any more than the "heavens" and the "elements" will do so. They will be "discovered" or "found" by the fire. The fire will overtake the "earth and the works in it" also. They will be "discovered" or "found" to be combustible, just as the symbolic "heavens" and the symbolic "elements" are combustible. The destructive "fire" of Jehovah's day will prove that. So the sense of the discovery or finding is like that in 1 Corinthians 3:13-15, where the apostle Paul writes:

57 "Each one's work will become manifest, for the day will show it up, because it will be revealed by means of fire; and the fire itself will prove what sort of work each one's is. If anyone's work that he has

56, 57. (a) In what sense are earth and the works in it "discovered," as stated at 2 Peter 3:10? (b) How is the thought similar to that expressed at 1 Corinthians 3:13-15?

built on it remains, he will receive a reward; if anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss. . . ."

58 Jehovah's "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men" will come as a thief upon the symbolic "earth and the works in it," and the "fire" of that day for executing divine judgment will prove them to be inflammable, subject to incineration. They will go up in flames. They will not withstand, survive the fiery day of the Lord God Jehovah. The prophetic words of Zephaniah 1:14-18 have solemn significance for our day: "The great day of Jehovah is near. It is near, and there is a hurrying of it very much. The sound of the day of Jehovah is bitter. There a mighty man is letting out a cry. . . . Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of Jehovah's fury; but by the fire of his zeal the whole earth will be devoured, because he will make an extermination, indeed a terrible one, of all the inhabitants of the earth."

'SPEEDING UP THE PRESENCE OF THE DAY OF GOD'

59 In contrast with the ridiculers that were foretold for our time, what sort of persons are we proving ourselves to be in the face of the impending doom of this ungodly system of things? The exhortation of the apostle Peter to the first-century Christians applies with the greatest force to us today: "Since all these things [the symbolic heavens, elements, earth and the works in it] are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind [literally, awaiting and speeding up] the presence of the day of Jehovah [*Greek,* of the God], through which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt!

58. So what is due to happen to the symbolic "earth and the works in it," and how is this further shown by the prophetic words of Zephaniah?
59. What exhortation of the apostle Peter with regard to expectations and conduct applies with special force to us today?

But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:11-13; *Kingdom Interlinear Translation.*

[60] True believers in the certain fulfillment of God's word of prophecy ought to live in harmony with their expectations. They will not selfishly live for this present system of things, that is to say, for the "heavens" and "elements" and "earth" that are to be dissolved, destroyed, in the way that God's Word describes. Why live for what is soon to perish? And perish with it? Dedicated, baptized Christians, in particular, have "obtained a faith, held in equal privilege with [the apostle Peter's], by the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:1, *NW; Weymouth; American Standard*) To such Christians as have the call to the heavenly kingdom, the apostle Peter goes on to say: "Do your utmost to make the calling and choosing of you sure for yourselves; for if you keep on doing these things you will by no means ever fail. In fact, thus there will be richly supplied to you the entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10, 11) The apostle Peter says that they are "aliens and temporary residents," and, hence, they are not part of the symbolic "heavens," "elements," and "earth" that are "thus to be dissolved."—1 Peter 2:11.

[61] Consequently, those who take heed to Peter's exhortation have nothing to do with the "false teachers" who "quietly bring in destructive sects" and who "disown even the owner that bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves." Christians holding to true prophecy do not follow these false teachers. Such faithful Christians are not among the many who "will follow their acts of loose conduct" and on account of whom "the way of the truth will be spoken of abusive-

60. (a) If we really believe what God's Word says, how should we live? (b) To those who have been called to heavenly life, what exhortation does the apostle Peter give?
61. (a) In harmony with Peter's exhortation, what sort of persons and practices do true Christians shun? (b) What is necessary in order to stay in the spiritual paradise?

ly." (2 Peter 2:1, 2) To avoid causing the way of the Bible truth to be spoken of abusively by ridiculers and other worldlings, Christians who heed the apostle Peter's words pay constant attention to what sort of persons they ought to be "in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion." By this course they will escape from "bringing speedy destruction upon themselves" along with "the heavens and the earth that are now" and that are "stored up for fire." (2 Peter 3:7) By "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion," Jehovah's Christian witnesses today stay in their spiritual paradise.

62 They do not let themselves be affected by any ridicule of those who postpone in their minds the thieflike coming of Jehovah's day of judgment. They have long awaited it and, until it arrives, they will keep awaiting the "presence of the day of Jehovah." Unlike the ridiculers, they are "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." They never let it out of their minds. They keep it constantly in mind as an event that is close at hand. The longer they live on earth, the closer it gets. They cannot hurry it, hasten it or speed it up in a literal way, for they know that Jehovah has his own fixed date for its arrival. But they keep steadily on the watch in order that, no matter how soon and unexpectedly it may come, they will be fit to enter into it in a condition approved by Jehovah God. So their continuing on in "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion" is in agreement with their "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." They know what the presence of that day means. What?

CLEARING THE WAY FOR "NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH"

63 The "presence of the day of Jehovah" is the means "through which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt!"

62. (a) Is there anything that we can do to make the "day of Jehovah" come sooner? (b) How can we show that we 'keep it close in mind'?
63. When the "heavens" are dissolved, what will this mean for them?

(2 Peter 3:12) The governmental "heavens," to which the worldly religious leaders have clung for support and protection, will be set on fire by Jehovah God. "For," says Hebrews 12:29, "our God is also a consuming fire." (Deuteronomy 4:24) This will signify the dissolving, the destroying, of those governmental "heavens." How this will be brought about as by fire the apostle Peter does not explain. However, the "sayings previously spoken by the holy prophets" describe how this will be.—2 Peter 3:2; 1:21.

64 In the prophetic dream of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon during the days of the prophet Daniel, there was given a picture of those symbolic "heavens" as from the date of 607 B.C.E., when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, down to the "presence of the day of Jehovah." The prophetic dream was sent to the king of Babylon by Jehovah God, for the king forgot the dream and it was Jehovah's prophet Daniel that was the only one who could recall the dream to the king's mind and then explain it to him. —Daniel 2:1-30.

65 In his dream the king of Babylon saw the representation of a continuous series of political world powers, from the Babylonian World Power of Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty down to and including the Biblically Seventh World Power, the Anglo-American World Power of our twentieth century. Consequently, the dream image, which was used to portray this series of governmental world powers, consisted of a number of basic materials. The head was of gold, the breasts and arms were of silver, the abdomen and sides of copper, the legs of iron and the feet and toes of iron mingled with clay.—Daniel 2:31-33.

66 "This is the dream," said Daniel to Nebuchad-

64. Through what inspired prophet was an explanation given as to how those symbolic "heavens" will be destroyed as by fire?
65. What did the king of Babylon see in his dream, and what did it represent?
66. Explain the significance of the various parts of the dream image.

nezzar, "and its interpretation we shall say before the king. You, O king, the king of kings [and hence an emperor over a world power], you to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, . . . whom he has made ruler over all of them, you yourself are the head of gold." (Daniel 2:36-38) Accordingly, the golden head symbolized the Babylonian World Power in Nebuchadnezzar's dynasty. The silver breasts and arms symbolized the succeeding Medo-Persian World Power. The copper belly and thighs symbolized the Macedonian-Grecian World Power. The iron legs symbolized the Roman World Power and the outgrowth therefrom, the British-American Dual World Power. The feet partly of iron and partly of clay symbolized the present-day or final governmental powers that have become partly radical (socialistic; communistic) or partly imperial. During the more than twenty-five centuries since the Gentile Times began at Jerusalem's desolation in 607 B.C.E., the other political governments on earth have been dominated by that succession of world powers.—Daniel 2:39-43.

[67] According to the king's prophetic dream, that world-power "image" continues standing, in its historical fulfillment, in the "conclusion of the system of things," in which we today find ourselves. (Matthew 24:3; 28:20; 13:39, 49) That "conclusion of the system of things" is brought to a grand climax by the "presence of the day of Jehovah," during which the symbolic "heavens," "elements," and "earth and the works in it" are destroyed as by fire. That is the "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:7-12) Ominous, therefore, is that part of the king's dream which presents motion and action and which Daniel recalled to the king's mind by saying:

[68] "You kept on looking until a stone was cut out not by hands, and it struck the image on its feet of

67, 68. Until what period of history does that world-power image continue standing, and what happens to it then?

iron and of molded clay and crushed them. At that time the iron, the molded clay, the copper, the silver and the gold were, all together, crushed and became like the chaff from the summer threshing floor, and the wind carried them away so that no trace at all was found of them. And as for the stone that struck the image, it became a large mountain and filled the whole earth."—Daniel 2:34, 35.

69 The fulfillment of this dramatic part of the prophetic dream is immediately ahead of us. According to this, every vestige or trace of the political world powers of human history, including the Eighth World Power, the United Nations, must forcibly be dissipated beyond reconstruction. All subsidiary kingdoms and human rulerships must likewise be cleared off the earth.

70 That is God's word, not man's. It is not the work of the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites, neither the work of the "great crowd" of fellow worshipers of Jehovah. The agency that the Almighty God Jehovah will use in bringing about that worldwide destruction was pictured in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as a "stone" that was cut out of a mountain without the aid of human hands. Hence, the "stone" must picture something that is produced by the Creator, the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. What the "stone" symbolized He inspired Daniel to explain, saying:

71 "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people [as successors]. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite; forasmuch as you beheld that out of the mountain a stone was cut not by hands, and that it crushed the iron, the copper, the molded clay, the silver and the gold."—Daniel 2:44, 45.

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69. What does that mean for all human rulerships?
70, 71. By what agency does Jehovah bring about that worldwide destruction?

72 As the "stone" pictures a kingdom that the God of heaven sets up, the "mountain" must picture the source of kingdom power and authority, namely, the Universal Sovereignty of the King of Eternity, Jehovah God. The stonelike kingdom thus becomes a subsidiary part and agency of His universal sovereignty. It is his Messianic kingdom in the hands of his only-begotten Son, who became the Lord Jesus Christ. (Daniel 7:13, 14) This kingdom is the one concerning which Jesus Christ made the following prediction in his prophecy on the "conclusion of the system of things": "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) In that same prophecy Jesus Christ envisioned himself as being in that kingdom, when he said:

73 "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him."—Matthew 25:31, 32.

74 All hail to the Messianic kingdom of the Son of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah! It is the heavenly government that is entrusted with ushering out "the heavens and the earth that are now" and introducing the promised "new heavens and a new earth" for the glory of God and the endless blessing of all the obedient of mankind.

72, 73. (a) What is the "mountain" from which the "stone" is cut without hands? (b) The "stone" itself represents what, and what is taking place in connection with it now?

74. With what assignments has that Messianic kingdom been entrusted by Jehovah?

CHAPTER 17

The Creating of "New Heavens and a New Earth"

WHAT the imperial ruler of the Babylonian World Power saw in a prophetic dream more than two thousand five hundred years ago, we are seeing fulfilled today! That God-sent dream helps us to understand what is taking place in our time of deepening world distress. Thankful can we be that this dream, which Emperor Nebuchadnezzar completely forgot beyond recall, was revealed to the prophet Daniel for him to recall and interpret with Almighty God's help to the much-disturbed emperor. In reaching the climax of his account of the dream "image" that pictured the succession of political superpowers of world history, from the Babylonian Empire to the Anglo-American Dual World Power of today, Daniel went on to say:

> "You kept on looking until a stone was cut out not by hands, and it struck the image on its feet of iron and of molded clay and crushed them. At that time the iron, the molded clay, the copper, the silver and the gold were, all together, crushed and became like the chaff from the summer threshing floor, and the wind carried them away so that no trace at all was found of them. And as for the stone that struck the image, it became a large mountain and filled the whole earth."—Daniel 2:34, 35.

[2] There can be no other explanation of the matter. That "stone" symbolized the Messianic kingdom in the hands of the anointed Son of the Sovereign Lord of the universe, Jehovah God.

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1. (a) Why are we today interested in a dream had by Emperor Nebuchadnezzar of ancient Babylon? (b) In reminding the emperor of the details of the dream, what did Daniel say about a particular "stone" and what it would accomplish?
2. What was symbolized by that "stone"?

[3] This Messianic kingdom had its roots in the earthly kingdom of David, whom Jehovah caused to be anointed as king over the nation of Israel. The seat of his government came to be, finally, Jerusalem or Zion. With him Jehovah God made a covenant for the Messianic kingdom to continue in his family line and to become an everlasting kingdom. In due time this kingdom took on the aspect of a spiritual kingdom when David's Permanent Heir arrived on the earthly scene. This was because the heavenly Son of God was miraculously born as Jesus into the royal line of David. By taking on this natural connection, he became the natural heir of the title to the throne of King David. (Matthew 1:1 through 2:6) In harmony with this, immediately after Jesus was baptized in water at the age of thirty years, Jehovah God anointed him with holy spirit to be future King over Israel, "the house of Jacob." God also begot him to be a spiritual Son of God and acknowledged him as such.—Matthew 3:13-17; Luke 1:32, 33; 3:21-23; Acts 10:38.

[4] Jesus Christ died as a martyr for preaching the kingdom of God, "the kingdom of the heavens." He died in the flesh, as a perfect human sacrifice; but, says the apostle Peter, "Christ died once for all time concerning sins, a righteous person for unrighteous ones, that he might lead you to God, he being put to death in the flesh, but being made alive in the spirit." (1 Peter 3:18) Israel, "the house of Jacob," was therefore to have a heavenly king over it, an invisible spirit king, namely, the resurrected Jesus Christ, immortal in the heavens. (Romans 1:3, 4) Thus the resurrected Jesus Christ is the Permanent Heir or Kingly Heir of David, and his kingdom is an everlasting one. This Messianic kingdom is the one that is cut out of the "mountain" of Jehovah's sovereignty without help of human hands.

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3. Explain the connections of this Messianic kingdom with King David, also how the kingdom took on a spiritual aspect.
4. How did the Permanent Heir of David actually become a king in the spirit realm?

5 When was this royal "stone" cut out and sent on its way against the symbolic "image" of earthly world powers? It was "cut out" at the end of the Gentile Times about October 4/5, 1914, when Jehovah, the King-Maker, installed the resurrected Jesus Christ as empowered King in the heavens. (Luke 21:24; Psalm 2:1-6; Revelation 11:15; 12:5-10) Then it was that the prophetic words of Psalm 110:2 applied to the installed Jesus Christ: "The rod of your strength Jehovah will send out of Zion, saying: 'Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.'" For that reason the "time of the end" began for this wicked earthly system of things. (Daniel 12:4) Correspondingly, the things foretold by Jesus Christ to happen during the "conclusion of the system of things" have been taking place since the end of the Gentile Times in 1914.—Matthew 24:3 through 25:33.

6 The fact that, in the king's dream, the stone strikes the manlike image "on its feet of iron and of molded clay" is significant. It shows that the Messianic kingdom of God strikes the real world-power "image" in the days of the Seventh World Power, the Anglo-American Dual World Power, in the final days thereof. This is the time when human rulerships of this world are divided between the imperial ironlike governments and the radical claylike governments. The two kinds do not mix. The symbolic "image" is not struck at the beginning of the now imminent "great tribulation," at the time when religious Babylon the Great is destroyed. Rather, it is struck thereafter in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon. (Matthew 24:21, 22; Revelation 7:14; 16:14, 16; 17:1-18; 18:20 through 19:3) It is then that the worldly nations, no longer under the religious influence of

5. (a) When was the symbolic "stone" cut out of the mountain? (b) When the "stone" was cut out and sent on its way against the symbolic "image," what time period began for this wicked earthly system of things?

6. (a) What is significant about the fact that the stone strikes the image "on its feet of iron and of molded clay"? (b) When does this stone strike the symbolic "image"?

Babylon the Great, stand unitedly in outright, declared opposition to the Universal Sovereignty of Jehovah God and his Messianic kingdom.

7 Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream does not show the "stone" or the Messianic kingdom as striking against political enemies in the invisible spirit heavens, such as the spirit "prince of the royal realm of Persia" and the spirit "prince of Greece." (Daniel 10:13, 20) The royal "stone" strikes at something earthly, visible, human, namely, the polit-

7. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, is the "stone" shown as striking and crushing rulers in the spirit realm?

ical governments of this world, whether imperial, democratic, radical, socialistic or communistic.

[8] So, too, Revelation 17:12-14 reveals the royal Messianic "stone" as fighting against the militarized representatives of the Eighth World Power, the United Nations, then rid of any domination by Babylon the Great: "These will battle with the Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them." Likewise, the detailed account of the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon as given in Revelation 19:11-21 reveals that the royal Messianic "stone" moves in warfare, not against spirit forces in the invisible heavens, but against the worldwide political system on earth, with all its human rulers and their armies, and henchmen.

[9] This warfare results in the worst time of distress that the inhabited earth ever experiences. In foretelling this, Daniel 12:1 says: "And during that time [of the end] Michael will stand up, the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of your people [Daniel's people, Israel]. 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."

[10] Then it is that the final part of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is fulfilled, that the "stone . . . crushed the iron, the copper, the molded clay, the silver and the gold." These substances were, "all together, crushed and became like the chaff from the summer threshing floor, and the wind carried them away so that no trace at all was found of them." (Daniel 2:45, 35) That is the climax of the "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." That day is the "day of Jehovah, through which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt!" Also, the "earth and the works in it will be discovered

8. Similarly, in Revelation chapters 17 and 19, against whom and what is the royal "stone" shown as fighting?
9. How will all this warfare affect the inhabited earth?
10. (a) At the climax of the "day of Jehovah," what will happen to the symbolic "image"? (b) When is it that Satan and his demons are to be chained and hurled into the abyss?

[as combustible]." (2 Peter 3:7, 10, 12) It is first after this "destruction of the ungodly men," according to the book of Revelation, that Satan the Devil and his demon angels are chained and hurled into the abyss for a thousand years. This binding and abyssing of them is pictured as occurring after and separate from the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon.—Revelation 19:11 through 20:3.

11 It is true that Satan the Devil has been what Jesus Christ called him, "the ruler of this world." (John 14:30; 16:11) Besides that, the apostle Paul referred to Satan the Devil as "the god of this system of things" and as "the ruler of the authority of the air." (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2) Paul also said that Christians have a wrestling match with the "wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) Undeniably they have been the controllers and the invisible power behind those governmental "heavens" among men.—Revelation 13:1, 2; Luke 4:5-7.

12 Nevertheless, it remains true that Satan and his demon angels do not suffer the dissolution that is described in 2 Peter 3:10-12. They are not destroyed in the "great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon. Thereafter they are simply put out of the way in a deactivated state, in the abyss, out of reach of the earth. The binding and abyssing of these wicked spirit forces are not described as a fight or war, in the way that the ousting of Satan and his demon angels from heaven is described.—Revelation 12:7-13.

"NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH" AWAITED

13 Jehovah's Christian witnesses are now doing more than "keeping close in mind the presence of the day

11. How do the Scriptures show who have been the invisible power behind the governmental "heavens" among men?
12. (a) Does the description found at 2 Peter 3:10-12 match what happens to Satan and his demons when they are hurled into the abyss? (b) What does their being bound and abyssed mean?
13. To what is it that Jehovah's Christian witnesses are now looking forward with eager anticipation?

of Jehovah" during which the symbolic "heavens," "elements," and "earth and the works in it" are dissolved, destroyed. They are looking forward eagerly in faith to what immediately follows this "day" of the dissolution of this system of things and the abyssing of Satan and his demon angels. They say with the apostle Peter: "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:13.

14 The coming in of the "new heavens and a new earth" is where the fulfillment of the final part of Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream occurs, namely: "And as for the stone that struck the image, it became a large mountain and filled the whole earth." (Daniel 2:35) In this way the heavenly Messianic kingdom is pictured as a mountain on the earth, 'filling the whole earth.'

15 The apostle Peter says that the awaited "new heavens and a new earth" are "according to his promise," the promise of Jehovah, to whom Peter made reference in the preceding verse. A divine promise of this kind, in which the expression used by Peter is specifically found, is located in Isaiah 65:17, 18 and 66:22. There it is written under divine inspiration:

16 "For here I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart. But exult, you people, and be joyful forever in what I am creating. For here I am creating Jerusalem a cause for joyfulness and her people a cause for exultation." " 'For just as the new heavens and the new earth that I am making are standing before me,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'so the offspring of you people and the name of you people will keep standing.' "

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14. How does the fulfillment of that promise recorded by Peter fit in with the fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream?

15, 16. In what way are the new heavens and a new earth "according to his promise," that is, Jehovah's promise?

17 This prophecy of Isaiah, written about 732 B.C.E., although applied by the apostle Peter to the future, had a small-scale or miniature fulfillment a couple of centuries after Isaiah's prophecy. This was when the seventy years of desolation and sabbathkeeping of the land of Judah and of Jerusalem came to an end and a faithful remnant of exiled Jews returned from Babylon to their God-given homeland in 537 B.C.E. Jerusalem was rebuilt and its temple was reconstructed by the year 515 B.C.E., on the third day of the month Adar. (Ezra 6:13-22) In the year 455 B.C.E. the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt under the governorship of Nehemiah, and this was the occasion of a joyful celebration. (Nehemiah 6:15) In course of time Jerusalem again became a world-renowned city.—Daniel 9:24, 25.

18 In this miniature fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, the "new heavens" were the new righteous government of Governor Zerubbabel and his successors. This government with its headquarters at the restored Jerusalem replaced the corrupted government of Kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, which was overturned by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E. Governor Zerubbabel was used as the type of the Greater Zerubbabel in the following prophecy of Haggai 2:23: " 'In that day,' is the utterance of Jehovah of armies, 'I shall take you, O Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, my servant,' is the utterance of Jehovah; 'and I shall certainly set you as a seal ring, because you are the one whom I have chosen,' is the utterance of Jehovah of armies."

19 Those typical "new heavens" that spread out as a government over the reinhabited land of Judah had a "new earth" beneath them. Such "new earth" was the cleansed, restored Jewish remnant that had left Bab-

17. Where and when did that prophecy of Isaiah have a small-scale fulfillment?
18. In that miniature fulfillment, what were the "new heavens"?
19. (a) What was the "new earth" back then? (b) Was the prophecy fulfilled to its complete extent there in the reinhabited land of Judah?

ylon and that rebuilt Jerusalem and its holy temple through which to render pure Mosaic Law worship to Jehovah in harmony with His covenant. (Isaiah 66:8) Inasmuch as that ancient fulfillment of the prophecy was merely an illustrative, small-scale fulfillment, it was only to a limited extent that the prophecy concerning the living conditions under the "new heavens" and in the "new earth" was realized: " 'They will do no harm nor cause any ruin in all my holy mountain,' Jehovah has said." (Isaiah 65:19-25) The "new heavens" and the "new earth" in the larger-scale fulfillment of Isaiah 66:22 were the ones that were to remain standing before Jehovah God permanently.

[20] So, the "new heavens" that Jehovah's Christian witnesses were long awaiting according to His promise are realized in the Messianic kingdom of God, in the hands of the Permanent Heir of King David. Since this kingdom is the royal "stone" that crushes all the earthly kings and their governments in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon, it leaves no human political rulership existent upon our earthly globe. Hence, that stonelike kingdom of the Messiah must become like a great mountain that fills and covers the whole earth. Does this mean that the Israelite kingdom of David will be reestablished by Christ right here on the earth? No! There will not be even an earthly manifestation of the kingdom of David on the surface of the earth. Jesus Christ, his Permanent Heir, will not reign in the flesh, visibly, in a city of Jerusalem over in the Middle East.

[21] His seat of government will be the "city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem." (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 14:1) His mountainlike government takes the place of all the human political governments that were the symbolic "heavens" of the old system of things. (Isaiah 34:3-5) Thus there will be a new govern-

20, 21. (a) What are the "new heavens" that we are awaiting according to God's promise? (b) How does the Messianic kingdom become 'a large mountain that fills the whole earth,' as foretold by Daniel?

mental "heavens" that will actually be in the invisible, spirit heavens.

22 Satan the Devil has been the invisible "ruler" who has dominated those governmental "heavens" of this system of things on earth. The destructive "fire" of the "day of Jehovah" will dissolve, destroy, those governmental "heavens" and will leave Satan the Devil without such "heavens" over which he has dominated for millenniums. (Revelation 13:1, 2; 19:19-21) He will certainly not rule over the "new heavens." His invisible position of rule over things earthly will be replaced by the invisible superhuman rule of David's Permanent Heir, Jesus Christ, who, by resurrection from the dead, was made an immortal, incorruptible spirit vastly more powerful than Satan the Devil and all his demon angels. Satan and his angels are to be removed from their location in the neighborhood of the earth under restraint and are to be imprisoned in the abyss from which they can exercise no control over any "heavens" that dominate the earth. (Revelation 20:1-3) Since Jesus Christ is now a heavenly spirit King, his "new heavens" will be a heavens in a very literal sense. No other governmental heavens will exist. The apostle Peter and fellow anointed, spirit-begotten Christians could await with eager expectation the establishment of those promised "new heavens." Why? Because they have the 'precious and very grand promise' from God that they will, if faithful to the death, form a part of those "new heavens" with Jesus Christ. They are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:4; Romans 8:16, 17) The whole congregation of them will make up the queenly "bride" of the King Jesus Christ. Thus, more than eight centuries after God used Isaiah to prophesy about the "new

22, 23. (a) How will Jesus Christ eliminate the Satanic influence that has dominated the governmental "heavens" of this system of things? (b) Why is the promise of "new heavens" especially precious to those who are spirit-anointed Christians? (c) In Revelation 21:1-4, what are the "former heaven," the "former earth" and the "sea," to which reference is made, and what replaces them?

heavens and a new earth," God gave a further promise of such glorious things by the apostle John, who wrote:

23 "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven [the political governments along with Satan and his demon angels] and the former earth [ungodly human society] had passed away, and the sea [restless, agitated masses of mankind] is no more. I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: 'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.' . . . He spoke with me and said: 'Come here, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.' So he carried me away in the power of the spirit to a great and lofty mountain, and he showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God."—Revelation 21:1-4, 9, 10.

A RIGHTEOUS "NEW EARTH"

24 With eager anticipation, the "great crowd" of prospective survivors of the "great tribulation" are also awaiting the "new heavens and a new earth." This "new earth" will be the new human society living under the "new heavens." (Revelation 7:9-14) Just as Noah and his family survived the global deluge and formed the nucleus of the new human society on earth, so the "great crowd" will survive the approaching "great tribulation" and will form the permanent nucleus of the new human society, the symbolic "new earth." They will start off in the spiritual paradise that sur-

24. What will the "great crowd" be in the "new earth," and with what favorable circumstances will they set to work?

vives the "great tribulation" with them, but they will then set themselves to the work of converting the literal earth into a paradise all around the globe. Animals, wild and domestic, will be at peace with them.

25 The privilege of then living on the cleansed earth without pollution under the righteous "new heavens" will be one without compare, far surpassing what the restored Israelites experienced in the miniature fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in the Persian province of Judah. Oh, just think of living on earth when the "former things" have passed away, when death will be no more, when mourning over dead ones will be no more, neither outcry nor pain of heart!

26 Under the reign of the Eternal Father, Jesus Christ, and his Kingdom joint heirs, the members of the "great crowd" will be on their way to endless life in a global paradise of beauty, plenty, happiness and peace. There will be no need to mourn over dead loved ones, for by means of the "new heavens" Almighty God Jehovah will bring about a resurrection of the human dead for whom the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ avails. (John 11:25, 26; 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15; Revelation 20:11-14) These resurrected ones, including the men and women of faith from Abel to John the Baptist, will have the opportunity of becoming part of that "new earth."

27 It seems almost unbelievable that such a heart-consoling prospect should be immediately ahead of us of this generation. And yet it is! World conditions never looked blacker. World distress is deepening. Man's helplessness becomes more and more evident. Relief from human sources becomes impossible. Still there will be a salvation of mankind out of earth's

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25. How will the situation then be far more favorable than was that of the restored Israelites when Isaiah's prophecy had its miniature fulfillment?
26. At that time, what will Jehovah do even on behalf of the dead?
27. (a) How can we be sure that, despite the bleakness of world conditions, there will really be such a salvation of mankind? (b) What do we individually need to do now to prepare to benefit from that salvation?

distress at its worst. The human family will not die off. It will not be killed off. There will be those of the human family who will emerge from the world distress and pass into a righteous new order in which suchlike world distress will never rise again. We have Almighty God's own word for that. Our now living with full faith in that divine word will prepare the way for us to be saved out of the world distress. That salvation is at hand!—Matthew 24:21, 22; Nahum 1:9.

CHAPTER 18

On Whose Side Are We When World Distress Climaxes?

THE world distress that has gripped the man-made system of things since the year 1914 C.E. has caused incalculable damage. But it has not brought about the dissolution of the political "superior authorities" and of human society organized under such political authorities. (Romans 13:1; Titus 3:1) Symbolically speaking, the old "heavens" and "elements" and "earth and the works in it" are still with us. The absolute dissolution or destruction of such age-old things will be brought about only by the "presence of the day of Jehovah." Although all Biblical and historical indications are that it is at hand, yet "Jehovah's day will come as a thief."—2 Peter 3:10-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:2.

[2] The sure evidence from the Bible is that the final

1. (a) Only by what means will the absolute destruction of the present wicked earthly system of things come about? (b) Why is watchfulness important for all of us?
2. Having in mind that there would still be anointed Christians on earth when Jehovah's day arrives, what admonition did the apostle Peter write?

members of the congregation of the Kingdom joint heirs of Christ would still be here on earth when Jehovah's day arrives upon this system of things. This fact the apostle Peter took into account. That is why, after describing the effect of that "day" upon the symbolic old "heavens," "elements" and "earth," the apostle added this admonition: "Hence, beloved ones, since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace. Furthermore, consider the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul according to the wisdom given him also wrote you, speaking about these things as he does also in all his letters. In them, however, are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unsteady are twisting, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction."—2 Peter 3:14-16.

[3] Since they are still awaiting Jehovah's day and its destruction upon this ungodly system of things, the final members of the remnant of spiritual Israel are doing their utmost to be found spotless, unblemished and peaceful in the sight of the Supreme Judge, the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. Despite all the increasing pressures from this distressed world, they hold to the "pure religion and undefiled"; they hold to the pure "form of worship" by keeping themselves without spot from the unclean world. (James 1:27, *AV; NW*) They refuse to worship the political "wild beast" and its man-made "image," the United Nations. (Revelation 13:1-15; 15:2-4) They keep from being stained with bloodguilt, for they keep strictly neutral and non-participating with respect to the sanguinary wars of nations and political parties of this world. They copy Jesus Christ their Leader in being no part of this world.—John 15:19; 17:14, 16.

[4] They obey the exhortation of the apostle Peter:

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3. In line with that admonition, what have the remnant of spiritual Israel done so as to keep "spotless and unblemished and in peace"?
4. How has it worked out that the "patience of our Lord" has meant "salvation"?

"Consider the patience of our Lord as salvation." (2 Peter 3:15) They recognize that the patience of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah in not bringing the "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men" sooner has allowed for their own salvation to be worked out. (2 Peter 3:7) It has also allowed for the means of salvation to be offered to others.

5 Taking proper advantage of this time allowance for salvation, they have carried out the command of the resurrected Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in water and teaching them to observe all the things that he commanded them. (Matthew 28:18-20) They have shown what they believe to be the only hope and the only rightful government for all mankind by acting in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10) By this course they have kept "seeking first the kingdom [of the heavenly Father] and his righteousness," instead of butting in on worldly politics along with the clergymen of Christendom and the priests of pagandom. (Matthew 6:33) Thus they have carried out their commission to be "ambassadors substituting for Christ."—2 Corinthians 5:20.

6 By undeviatingly carrying forward this disciple-making activity world wide according to the patience of the Supreme Judge Jehovah, the anointed remnant of those Kingdom-seekers have been privileged to do more than gather together the last remaining ones of the Kingdom heirs. Since the year 1935 C.E. they have been directed by Jehovah's Word into gathering together to His spiritual temple of worship the "great crowd" of sheeplike persons foretold in Revelation 7:9-17. That prophecy sets no limit on the number of such sheeplike ones that are to make up the "great

5. To what work have the members of the remnant of spiritual Israel applied themselves, in harmony with the spirit of Peter's exhortation?
6. Whom have they been aiding to avail themselves of "the patience of our Lord," and how many will yet be gathered?

crowd," and so the work goes on of gathering into the spiritual temple as many as possible during the time allowed for by the patience of God, who "does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Just how many of these will be gathered before the "presence of the day of Jehovah" no man can now predict; but after this "great crowd" comes forth as survivors, out of the "great tribulation," then it can be learned by a direct count or census just how many the "great crowd" finally includes.

[7] All the dedicated, baptized sheeplike ones already gathered and also the anointed remnant of the 144,000 spiritual Israelites have declared themselves before the whole world to be Jehovah's Christian witnesses. (Isaiah 43:10-12; 44:8) By word of mouth and by distributing printed Biblical publications they are sincerely endeavoring to live up to that name, measuring up to the responsibility of that name. The organized congregations of these Christian witnesses of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah run up into the tens of thousands around the globe, the 1975 *Yearbook* reporting 34,576 congregations as of August 31, 1974. As many as 207 lands and island groups are reporting preaching and discipling activities by zealous witnesses.

[8] They heed the warning of the apostle Peter, who foretold the coming of false teachers, who profess to be Christian but who "disown even the owner that bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves." (2 Peter 2:1) The anointed remnant of Christ's kingdom joint heirs and those of the "great crowd" who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" loyally acknowledge the ownership of 'the one that bought them,' namely, the Lamb Jesus Christ. In obedience to his command

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7. (a) All of these, along with the anointed remnant, have accepted what name? (b) How do they endeavor to live up to that name, and in how many lands are they carrying on their activity?

8. (a) Whose ownership of them do they all acknowledge, and how does this serve as a protection? (b) Obediently, what anniversary do they keep in remembrance of him, and how long will they continue to do this?

for them to act in remembrance of him, they assembled on Thursday, March 27, 1975, which was the anniversary of his death on Passover day of 33 C.E., and they observed the Lord's Supper that he established as a memorial of his sacrificial death. (Matthew 26: 20-30; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:20-26) They are determined to "keep proclaiming the death of the Lord" in this prescribed manner "until he arrives" to take the remnant of his "bride" class to be with him in his heavenly Father's home above.—Ephesians 5:23-27.

[9] In harmony with the exhortation of the apostle Peter, all these Christian witnesses of Jehovah do their utmost to be found finally "in peace" among themselves. Hence, they do not go along with the false teachers who "quietly bring in destructive sects." (2 Peter 3:14; 2:1, 2) Thus they avoid coming into the religious condition of Christendom, which is split up into a thousand sects or more. It is true that the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites have the heavenly Kingdom hope and the unnumbered "great crowd" has the hope of eternal life in the Paradise earth, but still they all, of both classes, worship peacefully together in Jehovah's spiritual temple, as "one flock" under the "one shepherd," Jesus Christ.—John 10:11, 16; Revelation 7:17; Micah 2:12.

[10] In behalf of true Christian peace, the anointed remnant with the heavenly inheritance and the "other sheep" of the "great crowd" with the earthly hope submit to God's "administration," which he has been carrying on since the day of Pentecost of 33 C.E. This "administration" or managerial procedure that God has carried on according to his purpose is explained to us in Ephesians 1:9-14. Let us note the objective

9. How do the Christian witnesses of Jehovah show that they take to heart the importance of being found "in peace" among themselves?

10, 11. (a) What is the "administration" to which the apostle Paul refers and to which both the anointed remnant and the "other sheep" submit? (b) As shown in Ephesians 1:9-14, what is the objective of that "administration"?

of that "administration" or managerial procedure, as we read these words concerning Jehovah God:

[11] "He made known to us the sacred secret of his will. It is according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for an administration at the full limit of the appointed times [or, from Pentecost of 33 C.E. onward], namely, to gather all things together again in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. Yes, in him [Christ], in union with whom we were also assigned as heirs [of God], in that we were foreordained according to the purpose of him who operates all things according to the way his will counsels, that we should serve for the praise of his glory, we who have been first to hope in the Christ. But you also hoped in him after you heard the word of truth, the good news about your salvation. By means of him also, after you believed, you were sealed with the promised holy spirit, which is a token in advance of our inheritance, for the purpose of releasing by a ransom God's own possession, to his glorious praise."

[12] What is "God's own possession" that is released "by a ransom"? It is the congregation of Kingdom heirs, and these have a heavenly inheritance, the gift of God's holy spirit to them being a token in advance of this heavenly inheritance. They are "the things in the heavens" that are to be gathered together again in the Christ, lined up under Jesus Christ as the spiritual Head. They were assigned as "heirs" of God and joint heirs of Jesus Christ. The gathering together again of these under Jesus Christ as the Head is the first phase of God's "administration" according to which he will bring about unity in all the universe. —Romans 8:16, 17.

[13] However, God's "administration" or *modus ope-*

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12. (a) What is "God's own possession," referred to in the latter part of that scripture? (b) What are "the things in the heavens," referred to in Ephesians 1:10, and what does their being gathered together in the Christ mean?

13. (a) What further step is there to be taken toward the unification of God's universe? (b) Is the United Nations contributing to the accomplishment of that purpose?

randi does not achieve its full purpose by the gathering together again of "the things in the heavens" into the Christ. Unity throughout God's universe is not fully accomplished by that first step. There are "the things on the earth" that also need to be gathered together again in the Christ. This earthly gathering is the second and final step toward the unification of God's universe. Satan the Devil and his demon angels are opposed to this unification of the universe under the headship of the one whom God appointed, Jesus Christ. Likewise, the political governments of this world are opposed to that unification. Their highest conception of the unification of "the things on the earth" is the man-made United Nations, the successor to the League of Nations. Nonetheless, nothing can thwart the purpose of Almighty God, "who operates all things according to the way his will counsels." His *modus operandi* or "administration" will prove successful.

[14] It is apparent, now, that Jehovah God is proceeding with the second phase of his "administration" for universal unification. The establishment of the Messianic kingdom in the heavens at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 C.E. came at an appointed time, following which the gathering together again of "the things on the earth" could go ahead. The gathering of the anointed remnant of Christ's joint heirs went forward after the close of World War I and moved on toward the completion of the first phase of the "administration" for unification. Rather surprisingly, however, and to the great joy of the anointed remnant, the gathering together again of "the things on the earth" under Christ the Head began in the year 1935 C.E. In the spring of that year the identifying of the long-misunderstood "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9-17 took place according to God's purpose and time. Even the international commotion caused by

14. Since when has the gathering together again of "the things on the earth" under Christ been evident, and to what extent has it proceeded?

World War II did not halt the gathering of the "great crowd" with its earthly Paradise hope. Today, more than forty years later, more than two million are identifying themselves with that "great crowd" at Jehovah's spiritual temple.

15 Thankful can all of us be today that Jehovah God has kindly made known to us the "sacred secret of his will," or "his hidden purpose," for the unification of all his created universe. Especially thankful can we be that our own eyes are seeing how his purposed way of managing things in behalf of unification has entered into its second stage by the gathering of the "great crowd" of earthlings who hope for an earthly paradise. Along with the apostle Paul, we can gratefully say with regard to God's grace or undeserved kindness:

16 "He has made known to us his hidden purpose—such was his will and pleasure determined beforehand in Christ—to be put into effect [or, for an administration] when the time was ripe: namely, that the universe, all in heaven and on earth, might be brought into a unity in Christ."—Ephesians 1:9, 10, *The New English Bible; Luther* (German); *NW; Rotherham.*

17 A universe unified under Jesus Christ as Head will mean unity of heaven and earth. This will mean a peaceful universe under Jehovah God the Universal Sovereign. It will therefore mean "upon earth peace among men of goodwill," among men toward whom God has goodwill.—Luke 2:14.

UNITEDLY FACING THE ONCOMING ONSLAUGHTS

18 In sharp contrast with the increasing turbulence on the earth, those of the anointed remnant of spiritual Israelites and those of the "great crowd" of "other

15, 16. What, then, is the 'sacred secret of God's will,' as referred to at Ephesians 1:9, 10?
17. What will such unification really mean?
18. (a) In contrast with the world around them, what is the condition that exists among the anointed remnant and those of the "other sheep," and why? (b) So how do they feel about the closeness of the "presence of the day of Jehovah" and what it will mean?

sheep" are found to be "in peace" among themselves in all lands. They are enjoying a spiritual paradise under God's favor and blessing although the natural environment of man is being polluted more and more. They are enjoying the spiritual security that is picturesquely described in Psalm 91 of the Bible. Together, both the anointed remnant and the "great crowd" are dwelling "in the secret place of the Most High" and have procured for themselves "lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One." (Psalm 91:1) They trust in Jehovah their God for protection and rescue. Without fear they await the "presence of the day of Jehovah" with its execution of divine judgments and the "destruction of the ungodly men." Dissolution of this old worldly system will then occur, but their Christian unity will not be dissolved as they keep gathered together under Christ the Head.

[19] If the people, even those in Christendom, do not believe what has already been said about the matter on a worldwide scale, there is plainly given warning for them to read in the pages of the Holy Bible. Warning of what? This: That during the "presence of the day of Jehovah" will come the shock of a lifetime —first, the astonishing shock to the religious sensibilities of hundreds of millions of people around the globe! Will those shocked ones include the anointed remnant and the "great crowd" of fellow worshipers in their spiritual paradise? No, indeed! Why, they have been expecting the religiously shocking event! They are in harmony with that event, for it will be the judgment of Jehovah God. For decades they have been serving notice upon the people about it. They have not failed in their duty to forewarn the people who are directly involved about the surprisingly sudden destruction of that internationally notorious religious harlot, Babylon the Great.

19. Why will the events associated with the "presence of the day of Jehovah" not come as a shock to the anointed remnant and the "great crowd"?

[20] Jehovah's Christian witnesses are the ones that have identified who Babylon the Great is, what she symbolizes. And so they have made plain to the people just who are the ones immediately to be hurt. They have not tried to do just a lot of "calamity howling." It has not been merely a religious scare that they have created, when they broadcast to the world the urgent counsel of the Apocalypse: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues." —Revelation (Apocalypse) 18:2-4, *NW; Douay Version.*

[21] The whole religious realm on earth is involved, for, after much study of the situation, Jehovah's Christian witnesses have identified Babylon the Great as being, not the Roman Catholic Church, no, not organized Christendom, but the world empire of false religion. The chief component member and mouthpiece in that religious world empire is Christendom! She is the most reprehensible member thereof because she claims to be "Christian." Her blasphemies exceed those of "pagandom"! Her persecution of religious minorities (including the true Christians) exceeds that of "heathendom"! Her bloodguilt exceeds that of all the non-Christian religious realm! Not out of line with this, Christendom will be given first attention in the execution of divine judgment upon Babylon the Great, according to what appears from the inspired Scriptures. —Jeremiah 25:13-29.

GOD'S STRANGE DEED AND UNUSUAL WORK

[22] Christendom of today finds an ancient parallel of herself in unfaithful Judah and Jerusalem in her final years before the utter desolation of that Jewish religious center and its territory by pagan armies of

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20. What urgent counsel from Revelation 18:2-4 have the Christian witnesses of Jehovah broadcast to the world?

21. (a) Whom have Jehovah's Christian witnesses identified Babylon the Great as being? (b) Against what part of Babylon the Great will the execution of divine judgment come first, and why?

22. (a) Where do we find a historic parallel of modern-day Christendom? (b) How does the language of Isaiah 28:15 well describe the course of the rulers of ancient Jerusalem?

Babylon in the year 607 B.C.E. As the inspired warnings of Jehovah's prophets continued to multiply against unfaithful Jerusalem, she tried worldly methods to preserve herself and to prove the divine prophecies to be a lie. She felt that she had made a covenant with Death according to the terms of which Death would not lay her low. She kept persuading herself that she had come to a common "vision" with Sheol, according to which Sheol (the common grave of mankind) would not behold or look upon her going down into the grave like a lifeless corpse. She took refuge in a deceitful worldly arrangement that was to prove a "lie." She concealed herself from predicted destruction in a scheme that would not prove true to claims and expectations, thus concealing herself in a "falsehood." She did not take refuge in Jehovah as God and find concealment in Him.—Isaiah 28:14-16.

23 Modern-day Christendom has done similarly. She has made adulterous friendly arrangements with the secular political powers for her own perpetuation. She has not put her faith and trust in the heavenly Messianic kingdom of God that Jehovah's Christian witnesses have been proclaiming world wide since particularly the postwar year of 1919 C.E. Therefore what became true of ancient Jerusalem and Judah in miniature fulfillment of Bible prophecy will now become true in a major, complete fulfillment of the same Bible prophecy. Ancient history shows how true Jehovah's prophecy proved to be, in which he said of unbelieving Jerusalem:

24 "And I will make justice the measuring line and righteousness the leveling instrument [in framing things according to his purpose]; and the hail must sweep away the refuge of a lie, and the waters themselves will flood out the very place of concealment. And your covenant with Death will certainly be dis-

23, 24. (a) In what way has modern-day Christendom followed a similar course? (b) So what will come upon Christendom, as foretold by the prophet Isaiah?

solved, and that vision of yours with Sheol will not stand. The overflowing flash flood, when it passes through—you must also become for it a trampling place. As often as it passes through, it will take you men away, because morning by morning it will pass through, during the day and during the night; and it must become nothing but a reason for quaking to make others understand what has been heard."—Isaiah 28:17-19, 2, 3.

[25] Why will it be a reason for one to quake on merely hearing the report? Because the report will declare that all the worldly-wise schemes made by unfaithful professed worshipers of God have proved to be inadequate for covering one and for giving one a comfortable ease as in a bed with a sheet over it. "For," the prophecy through Isaiah goes on to explain, "the couch has proved too short for stretching oneself on, and the woven sheet itself is too narrow when wrapping oneself up. For Jehovah will rise up just as at Mount Perazim [where, after making a frontal attack upon the enemy Philistines, King David said: 'The true God has broken through my enemies by my hand like a gap made by waters'], he will be agitated just as in the low plain near Gibeon [where, before giving King David a second victory over the Philistines, Jehovah said to him: 'The true God will have gone out before you to strike the camp of the Philistines down,' this time from their rear], that he may do his deed—his deed is strange—and that he may work his work—his work is unusual. And now do not show yourselves scoffers, in order that your bands may not grow strong, for there is an extermination, even something decided upon, that I [Isaiah] have heard of from the Sovereign Lord, Jehovah of armies, for all the land." —Isaiah 28:20-22; 1 Chronicles 14:8-16; 2 Samuel 5:17-25; also Joshua 10:1-14.

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25. (a) Why, as the prophet says, will hearing the report of what is taking place be a "reason for quaking"? (b) Jehovah's action at that time will be like what he did on what previous occasions?

[26] What more "strange" deed could there be, what more "unusual" work could there be, on the part of Jehovah God, than His bringing about the destruction of Christendom? Nothing else could be, for a person could ask: Has Christendom not claimed to rule "by the grace of God" over her religious realm, and does she not claim to represent the Christ of God on earth? Yes! And so, should Jehovah not be expected to preserve Christendom, which, by her Bible societies, has spread the Holy Bible throughout the earth in hundreds of languages and by more than a thousand million copies? In the face of these things, the fact that the Almighty God does not preserve Christendom during the "presence of the day of Jehovah" will appear "strange" to the millions of churchgoers of Christendom! The fact that He brings about Christendom's violent destruction at the beginning of the approaching "great tribulation" will seem to be "unusual" indeed.

DOWN WITH BABYLON THE GREAT AS WITH A SWIFT PITCH!

[27] The just reason for the annihilation of Christendom first on the list of false religious organizations is that she is not "found finally by him [Jehovah] spotless and unblemished and in peace." (2 Peter 3:14) This, in spite of all her claims to be God's one true and only Church! She is found to be hypocritical, parading under the name of Christianity, while at the same time being Babylonish in teaching and practice. Because her fiery destruction on Jehovah's day for the execution of divine judgment will be a "strange" deed and an "unusual" work, it will come upon her "as a thief." —2 Peter 3:10.

[28] By His destruction of Christendom the Sovereign Lord Jehovah must absolve himself from all responsi-

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26. What is the 'strange deed,' the 'unusual work,' that Jehovah will soon perform, and why is it aptly described in that way?
27. (a) For what reason does Jehovah annihilate Christendom first? (b) Why will her destruction come "as a thief"?
28. Why is the destruction of Christendom necessary in order for Jehovah to be vindicated?

bility for her shameful course throughout the centuries of her existence. He must vindicate himself as never having had any connection with her and as never having engaged her for a spiritual wedlock with his beloved Son to be 'the bride of Christ.' A religious harlot she has been; and Jehovah God must show that he recognized her as an "enemy of God" because she was a "friend of the world."—James 4:4.

29 The divine judgment upon false religion does not come to a halt with the wiping out of Christendom. If the foremost member of that false religious world empire, Babylon the Great, must go, so must all the remaining component parts of her. All of her must go, without any traces of her being left. All the fleshy parts of this international harlot must be eaten up as by a wild beast. She must be made devastated, naked! The consuming of her as by fire must be complete, for so it is decreed in God's unfailing Word: "And the ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast [the political Eighth World Power of today], these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire." (Revelation 17:16) Ironically, her former worldly friends will be the very ones to destroy her, not out of love for God and Christ, but out of disgust and contempt toward her.

30 The Eighth World Power, being a globe-embracing political organization with 138 member nations today, will take action against whatever purports to be religious, spiritual, throughout the earth. Even Jehovah's Christian witnesses cannot escape from being affected. True, the 138 members of the United Nations organization know that Jehovah's Christian witnesses are no part of Christendom, no, no part of harlotrous Babylon the Great as a whole. They know that Jehovah's

29. (a) Does the divine judgment upon false religion stop with the wiping out of Christendom, or what? (b) By what means will Babylon the Great be destroyed, and why do they do it?

30. When the political powers in the United Nations proceed to strip and destroy Babylon the Great, may Jehovah's witnesses also feel the effects to some extent?

witnesses have not messed themselves up with the dirty politics of this world and have not tried to ride the symbolic scarlet-colored "wild beast" having seven heads and ten horns. So, when getting Babylon the Great off its back and stripping and cremating her, this political "wild beast" will not aim at Jehovah's witnesses directly when it settles accounts with the hated "mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth." (Revelation 17:5) Nevertheless, it could hardly be otherwise than that, when the political powers represented in the United Nations of today take what they believe are needed measures against all religions, Jehovah's witnesses will be touched to some extent. For example, by the emergency taxation of all religious property. Or, even the expropriation of all religious valuables and properties. Or the withdrawing of State charters to religious corporations, so as to accomplish their destruction.

31 However, the prophetic Scriptures picture the Christian witnesses of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah as being spectators to the terror-striking annihilation of millenniums-old Babylon the Great. Apparently, the aged apostle John on the penal isle of Patmos was a representative of the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel today. By one of the seven angels that were charged with pouring out the "seven last plagues" upon the Devil's visible organization, the apostle John was requested: "Come, I will show you the judgment upon the great harlot who sits on many waters [peoples, crowds, nations], with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, whereas those who inhabit the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."—Revelation 17:1, 2; 21:9.

32 To what did John then become a spectator? John answers: "And he carried me away in the power of

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31. As illustrated in the case of the apostle John, what position will Jehovah's anointed witnesses occupy while Babylon the Great is being destroyed?

32, 33. (a) To what did John then become a spectator? (b) Whom did John not see being destroyed with Babylon the Great, but, instead, who is avenged by that act of divine justice?

the spirit into a wilderness. And I caught sight of a woman sitting upon a scarlet-colored wild beast that was full of blasphemous names [accumulated down through the existence of the Seven World Powers] and that had seven heads and ten horns. And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and was adorned with gold and precious stone and pearls and had in her hand a golden cup that was full of disgusting things and the unclean things of her fornication. And upon her forehead was written a name, a mystery: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth.' And I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus. . . . 'And the woman whom you saw means the great city [Babylon] that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth.' "—Revelation 17:3-6, 18.

33 At his observation point out there in the "wilderness" the apostle John became a spectator to the "judgment upon the great harlot," the destruction of Babylon the Great by the scarlet-colored wild beast with seven heads and ten horns. John did not see the "witnesses of Jesus" being destroyed with blood-drunk Babylon the Great. (Revelation 17:15, 16) After the apostle John next sees Babylon the Great pictured as a Big Business city laid in ruins, he hears the cry from heaven to the observers: "Be glad over her, O heaven, also you holy ones and you apostles and you prophets, because God has judicially exacted punishment for you from her!" (Revelation 18:20) Thus the God of justice avenges his faithful worshipers who have suffered at the hands of Babylon the Great. A rightful cause for gladness!

34 Finally, the apostle John sees in prophetic vision what will be witnessed by modern-day spectators, those who have heeded the divine command to "get out" of Babylon the Great and become the people of

34, 35. How does the prophetic vision seen by the apostle John indicate that the destruction of Babylon the Great will not be a long-dragged-out affair?

Jehovah God the Almighty. The action-packed scene that John sees indicates that the bringing of Babylon the Great down to utter ruin will not be a long-dragged-out affair. John describes this prophetic tableau, saying:

35 "And a strong angel lifted up a stone like a great millstone and hurled it into the sea, saying: 'Thus with a swift pitch will Babylon the great city be hurled down, and she will never be found again. And the sound of singers who accompany themselves on the harp and of musicians and of flutists and of trumpeters will never be heard in you again, and no craftsman of any trade will ever be found in you again, and no sound of a millstone will ever be heard in you again, and no light of a lamp will ever shine in you again, and no voice of a bridegroom and of a bride will ever be heard in you again; because your traveling merchants were the top-ranking men of the earth, for by your spiritistic practice all the nations were misled. Yes, in her was found the blood of prophets and of holy ones and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth.' "—Revelation 18:21-24.

36 At the approaching fulfillment of that prophetic vision, Jehovah's Christian witnesses will take no part in the violent plunging of Babylon the Great into the depths of destruction. They themselves will not be iconoclasts who enter forcibly into religious buildings and smash religious images and pictures to pieces. They will keep in mind that Jehovah God claims the executing of vengeance as his prerogative. They will let him do the avenging, and so will not vindictively try to avenge themselves. Let the Supreme Judge and God of justice use whatever other agencies he desires to use in heaven or on earth, such as the symbolic scarlet-colored "wild beast" with the seven heads and ten horns, but Jehovah's Christian witnesses find no authorization in God's written Word for them them-

36. Why will Jehovah's Christian witnesses themselves take no part in the violent destruction of Babylon the Great?

selves to take violent action against Babylon the Great. With credit and praise to Jehovah let it be said: "He has executed judgment upon the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his slaves at her hand." —Revelation 19:2.

DISSOLUTION OF HER ALIENATED LOVERS AT HAR-MAGEDON

37 Only under protection from the Almighty God will Jehovah's Christian witnesses be able to survive the violent removal of Babylon the Great from the face of the earth. Their being preserved spectators of this world-shaking event will make them witnesses to that "strange" act of the God of pure worship, and this will obligate them to tell others about it in due time. By this time their preaching "this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations" will be ended. Their work from house to house, from door to door, from store to store, and on the streets as heralds, as commanded by the Son of God, will be finished. (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10) Now they must stand firm for that Messianic kingdom of God which they have persistently preached during the decades of this "conclusion of the system of things." Why? Because now they stand face to face with the unreligionized political powers that represent "all the kingdoms of the world."

38 Challenging indeed the situation will be! The worldly political powers, now divorced from all Babylonish religion, will now dispute as never before the right of such a thing as "the kingdom of God" to take over control of the earth. They do not believe in such an invisible, heavenly government. The fact that they

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37. (a) Only by what means will Jehovah's Christian witnesses be able to survive the destruction of Babylon the Great? (b) Will there still be more work for them to do at that time in preaching "this good news of the kingdom" for a witness? (c) Instead, what situation will confront them?
38. To what wrong conclusions will the worldly political powers now come?

have been permitted to destroy the Babylonish world empire of false religion will lead them to wrong conclusions—that there is no one living and true God and that they are more powerful than whatever claims to represent him on earth and that they can assault even the proclaimers of "this good news of the kingdom" without fear of suffering divine punishment.

39 Their view will be entirely materialistic, taking into account nothing but what is material: The rule of the earth henceforth should be entirely by visible human rulers. The earth belongs to man who occupies it. The teaching that they have been under the invisible control of Satan the Devil and his demons is incredible. They do not owe their political power to the Devil as invisible ruler, and they have not ruled the earth for all these centuries merely by permission of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. So they will not recognize any end of the Gentile Times in 1914 C.E. as a meaningful fact, and they will not surrender their political power and national sovereignty to a God in whom they do not believe. All alive on earth must conform to this their line of thinking. All nonconformists, all dissident persons, must be put out of the way, effaced from the earth. By these nonconformists the political destroyers of Babylon the Great mean the surviving witnesses of Jehovah.

40 What will make Jehovah's Christian witnesses not conform at that crucial time is their recognition of the Most High God Jehovah as the Universal Sovereign. To Him as the Creator belong both the earth and the heavens. As the rightful King-Maker, he has appointed his resurrected Son Jesus Christ to reign over the earth for a thousand years in behalf of mankind for whom he died as a ransom sacrifice. The time for that millennial reign of Christ has approached, and Jehovah's witnesses are awaiting it with full faith in

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39. What is it reasonable to believe that the thinking of worldly political rulers will be at that time?
40. Why will Jehovah's witnesses not compromise their position at that time and conform to the world?

the Holy Scriptures. Under no circumstances will they renounce that theocratic government of which they have been the ambassadors and envoys on earth during the "time of the end." As such they have not been any "part of the world," and they refuse now to be forced into becoming part of a world that now stands at Har–Magedon, where the issue over Universal Sovereignty will be decided by a fight to the finish!

41 Such an obstacle to an undisputed claim to human world domination the materialistic political powers will resent. Out of the way with it! will be their attitude. Furthermore, what does that small band of Jehovah's Christian witnesses have to back up their position except the Holy Bible, a mere book written by the hand of men. Where is their military backing, where are their carnal weapons with which to fight for their God and their Messianic King? Reasoning like the Gog of the land of Magog in Ezekiel's prophecy, they will conclude that the unarmed, politically powerless witnesses of Jehovah are defenseless, helpless. (Ezekiel 38:10-12) Apparently, according to the materialistic view of things, it will be a cinch to destroy them, to wipe out their spiritual paradise, to despoil them of their claim to represent the "kingdom of the heavens"!

42 Forward, then, to the attack, you united national members of the world organization for international peace and security! Forward, yes, but not really against the surviving witnesses of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah; rather, against their heavenly Leader, Jesus Christ, the once-sacrificed "Lamb of God"! For, respecting the political powers that gave their earthly "power and authority" to the world organization for domination of mankind, it is written: "These will battle with the

41. (a) In view of the position taken by Jehovah's Christian witnesses, what will be the attitude of the materialistic political powers toward them at that time? (b) How does what is foretold concerning Gog of the land of Magog give an indication of how they will view matters?
42. When the members of the United Nations move in to attack Jehovah's witnesses, against whom, in reality, will they be expressing their defiance?

Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them. Also, those called and chosen and faithful with him will do so."—Revelation 17:13, 14.

43 By such prophetic words Jehovah God discloses his confidence in the faithfulness of his Christian witnesses whom he preserves for this supreme moment of their earthly experience. Whatever form the attack takes world wide, in whatever ways it comes, it will test the faith and devotion of his anointed remnant and the "great crowd" of loyal associates. They will have to recall other occasions as recorded in the Holy Bible where the Almighty God let the enemies attack *en masse* his seemingly helpless people but he stopped the enemy dead in their tracks. Appropriate it will be for them to remember the words of King David:

44 "Jehovah is my light and my salvation. Of whom shall I be in fear? Jehovah is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be in dread? When the evildoers approached against me to eat up my flesh, they being my adversaries and my enemies personally, they themselves stumbled and fell. Though against me an encampment should pitch tent, my heart will not fear. Though against me war should rise, even then I shall be trusting. One thing I have asked from Jehovah—it is what I shall look for, that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all the days of my life, to behold the pleasantness of Jehovah and to look with appreciation upon his temple. For he will hide me in his covert in the day of calamity; he will conceal me in the secret place of his tent; high on a rock he will put me. And now my head will be high above my enemies all around me; and I will sacrifice at his tent sacrifices of joyful shouting; I will sing and make melody to Jehovah." —Psalm 27:1-6.

43, 44. (a) Confronted with that attack, what accounts will Jehovah's servants here on earth need to call to mind? (b) How could the twenty-seventh Psalm encourage them?

45 All the holy heavens and all the holy ones on earth are watching what now takes place! Now at last has been reached the culminating point of the brazen defiance and challenge by the nations on earth with respect to the universal sovereignty of the Most High God, the Producer of heaven and earth! Now the heavenly Claimant to Universal Sovereignty must decide as to whose position is right, that of his Christian witnesses on earth or that of the self-glorifying nations of mortal creature men. The nations have not only 'ruined the earth' by their pollutions and violations of the Creator's laws but also now set themselves to destroying His "people for special possession," the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel, along with the "great crowd" of God-fearing persons who do good to that "people for special possession." (Revelation 11:18; 1 Peter 2:9) What further reason does the Universal Sovereign need in his seeking for a cause to destroy the ungodly nations? None!

46 Stubbornly, during all the worldwide preaching of the "good news of the kingdom" for a witness since 1914 C.E., the nations have refused to heed the inspired counsel: "And now, O kings, exercise insight; let yourselves be corrected, O judges of the earth. Serve Jehovah with fear and be joyful with trembling. Kiss the Son [the Messiah] that He [Jehovah] may not become incensed and you may not perish from the way, for his anger flares up easily." (Psalm 2:7, 10-12) The nations have persistently held back from kissing the King whom Jehovah has universally announced to be his only-begotten Son, for the nations have done nothing to soften his face toward a reconciliation. They have refused to surrender to him their sovereignties over their claimed territories. The clock of God's timetable strikes the hour for Him to

45. What reasons will the ungodly nations have given the Universal Sovereign for destroying them?

46. (a) How have the nations shown that they have refused to heed the inspired counsel recorded at Psalm 2:10-12? (b) So, in harmony with Psalm 2:5-9, for what action does the time arrive?

'speak to the nations in his anger and disturb them in his hot displeasure.' So now let the rule of the "iron scepter" go into operation. Let Jehovah's installed royal Son break the nations, dash them to pieces like a potter's earthenware vessel. (Psalm 2:5-9) At once, then, let the Son of God with the iron scepter engage the enemy forces in battle!

47 Just as King David at the low plain of Gibeon awaited the battle signal from Jehovah, so Jehovah's warrior King who is to "shepherd all the nations with an iron rod" has awaited the signal from his heavenly Commander in Chief. (Revelation 12:5) Look! The signal! Instantly the royal Field Marshal spurs his white war horse into action, leading his heavenly armies on white war horses in a victorious charge against all the combined enemies in battle array at the battlefield of Har-Magedon on earth. Treat those enemy kings and their armies and henchmen like grapes gathered to be crushed. Turn that battlefield of Har-Magedon into a winepress! There let the King of kings tread the "winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty." Let the lifeblood of those "grapes" rise higher and higher in the winepress vat, yes, "as high up as the bridles of the horses." (Revelation 19:11-16; 14:18-20) Let the long-pent-up anger of the wrath of God the Almighty now at last expend itself fully. Let there remain no need for him to bring such distress of nations a second time.—Nahum 1:6-9.

48 Surely now is the time for all heaven and earth to take note! "For Jehovah has indignation against all the nations, and rage against all their army. He must devote them to destruction; he must give them to the slaughter. And their slain ones will be thrown out; and as for their carcasses, their stink will ascend; and the mountains must melt because of their blood.

47. (a) Who gives the signal for the heavenly armies to go into action at Har-Magedon? (b) Like what does the Revelation account describe the battlefield as being on that day of slaughter?
48. In what way does Isaiah 34:1-6 describe what will take place then?

And all those of the army of the heavens must rot away. And the heavens must be rolled up, just like a book scroll; and their army will all shrivel away, just as the leafage shrivels off the vine and like a shriveled fig off the fig tree. 'For in the heavens my sword will certainly be drenched. Look! Upon Edom it will descend, and upon the people devoted by me to destruction in justice. Jehovah has a sword; it must be filled with blood.' " (Isaiah 34:1-6) Not in idle jest did Jehovah inspire the writing of those prophetic words. The time nears for them to be fulfilled. The old system of things must die!

[49] Shall we die with the old system of things? Do we choose to be executed along with the political rulers, their armies and their henchmen in that "day" when Jehovah God by his warrior Son Jesus Christ wields his judicial sword for executing all his enemies on earth? Very short must be the time that remains in which we are allowed to make the personal decision that counts for life or for death when the Sovereign Lord God settles accounts with this old system of things. Our being spared alive or our being executed as condemned worldlings will depend upon the side where we now choose to stand. Now is not too soon to decide the question, On whose side shall I find myself when world distress comes to its fearful climax? In wisdom and with good sense may we all make our choice for life in God's new system of things!

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49. What urgent decision now faces each one of us?

CHAPTER 19

From World Distress into a Peaceful "New Earth"

ONCE before in human history a "world of ungodly people" ended! The common forefather of us all survived that end of such a "world." This ancestral forefather of ours was Noah the son of Lamech. Because of taking his stand on the right side, Noah survived, and along with him his wife and three sons and three daughters-in-law. This makes all of us today the descendants of those eight survivors of a world's end. The world's end came in a global deluge, the like of which mankind will never see again. Noah came to be called "a preacher of righteousness." The Bible record says: "Noah walked with the true God." This was the One on whose side Noah took his stand in the world crisis of his day. That is why he and his family were preserved in the massive ark that he built in obedience to God's command for the preservation of himself and his household.—2 Peter 2:5; Genesis 6:9; Hebrews 11:7.

[2] Now, once again, mankind faces the end of a "world of ungodly people." Regardless of those who ridicule such a tremendous idea, there are many individuals who are taking their stand on the right side, just as Noah did before the global deluge of 2370 B.C.E. Noah was one of Jehovah's early witnesses. That fact is significant for our critical day. In what way? In this: Like Noah under divine protection, Jehovah's Christian witnesses of today will survive the coming

1. Why were Noah and his family preserved when the "world of ungodly people" of that time ended, and why is their survival important to us?
2. (a) Who will survive the end of the "world of ungodly people" that now faces mankind, and what basis is there for such assurance? (b) What are the "heavens" that they will see destroyed as by fire?

end of the "world of ungodly people." On earth they will personally see demonstrated that, as 2 Peter 2:9 says, "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off." As a class they will be preserved through the "presence of the day of Jehovah, through which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt!" "And earth and the works in it will be discovered [for burning]." (2 Peter 3:12, 10) They will see the visible governmental "heavens" set aflame by the fiery means that the miracle-working God will then use. They will hear the hissing noise with which those flaming "heavens" will pass away for all time. The "elements" that go along with this worldly system of things will be dissolved, "will melt," because of the unendurable heat to which they are exposed.

[3] "Elements," which make up the figurative atmosphere of this transitory system of things, will not be able to hold together and endure under the fire of test. The worldly attitude that man is able to rule the earth independently of God will not stand the fiery test. The desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life, as dominant selfish features of this system of things, will prove as short-lived as this "world of ungodly people." They go up in smoke in the fiery testing of the judgment day of Jehovah. The "weak and beggarly elements," that is, the impotent theories, philosophies, practices and rites by which men have sought to gain their own salvation and prove themselves to be self-righteous, all such "elements" will melt in the fiery-hot crucible of test. They will prove to be without strength, impractical, ineffective, having no worth, as worthless as beggars. (1 John 2:15-17; Galatians 4:9, *AV*) Those "elements" will have to dis-

3. Identify the "elements" that "will melt" at that time, according to 2 Peter 3:12.

appear as being no climate, no atmosphere, no natural expanse or vault under which worshipers of God on earth should live.

4 Fire-resistant materials will be found to be missing in the "earth and the works in it" during that superheated "day of Jehovah." They will show themselves to be just as combustible as the accompanying "heavens" and the "elements." Human society as a living base for the system of things of which Satan the Devil has been the god will perish by the execution of God's righteous judgments. In this way a whole world will end, the "world of ungodly people" that corresponds with such a world in the Noachian deluge. The works that this ungodly earthly human society has built up will not save it, will not serve as any haven of safety for it. The fiery expression of God's anger, indignation and denunciation will reduce all these things to ashes.

5 With the figurative "heavens" and "elements" and "earth and the works in it" undergoing destruction, it might appear to Jehovah's worshipers who are caught within this world distress without equal that the whole universe is crashing about them. Yes, as though the very ground were moving out from beneath their feet. To the earthly spectators the course of events may take on a frightful aspect. It will become manifest that only by a miracle of the Almighty God can anyone in the flesh on earth possibly survive. Only by reposing full trust in the Universal Sovereign Jehovah will earthly beholders keep from letting terror grip their hearts. Reserved for such an unsettling experience as that is the temple psalm of the sons of Korah, who survived the fiery destruction of their rebellious father and his presumptuous fellow Levites:

6 "God is for us a refuge and strength, a help that

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4. What are the "earth and the works in it" that will perish in the fiery "day of Jehovah"?

5, 6. (a) During that time of destruction, how may the situation appear to Jehovah's own worshipers on earth? (b) Only by what means will any come through that time of distress, and what encouragement can they find in the forty-sixth Psalm?

is readily to be found during distresses. That is why we shall not fear, though the earth undergo change and though the mountains totter into the heart of the vast sea; though its waters be boisterous, foam over, though the mountains rock at its uproar. . . . There is a river the streams of which make the city of God rejoice, the holiest grand tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it will not be made to totter. God will help it at the appearance of morning. The nations became boisterous, the kingdoms tottered; He sounded with his voice, the earth proceeded to melt. Jehovah of armies is with us; the God of Jacob is a secure height for us."—Psalm 46:1-7 and superscription.

7 That there could and would be survivors of such an awe-inspiring upheaval in the natural world, the psalm writers (sons of Korah) immediately go on to indicate, by their next words:

8 "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the [war] wagons he burns in the fire. 'Give in [Let be then,], you people, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' Jehovah of armies is with us; the God of Jacob is a secure height for us."—Psalm 46:8-11, *NW; NE;* Numbers 16:1-35; 26:10, 11; 27:2, 3; Jude 11.

9 Being found in Jehovah God as a refuge then during such world-shaking commotion requires our taking refuge in Him in advance, even now. His power for the shaking of "heaven" and "earth" to destruction was demonstrated in 1513 B.C.E., at his making Mount Sinai quake on the occasion of giving his Ten Com-

7, 8. In the further verses of the psalm, what assurance do you find that there will be survivors of that world upheaval?
9. (a) What must we do *now* if Jehovah is to be a refuge for us then? (b) To what historic occurrence does Hebrews 12:26-29 point as a reminder when it speaks of the destruction of "heaven" and "earth"?

mandments to the ancient sons of Israel. (Exodus 20:1-18) "At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, saying: 'Yet once more I will set in commotion not only the earth but also the heaven.' Now the expression 'Yet once more' signifies the removal of the things being shaken as things that have been made, in order that the things not being shaken may remain. Wherefore, seeing that we [of spiritual Israel] are to receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us continue to have undeserved kindness, through which we may acceptably render God sacred service with godly fear and awe. For our God is also a consuming fire."—Hebrews 12:26-29; Haggai 2:6, 7.

10 Let the artificial "heaven" and "earth" be shaken to their complete removal in fiery destruction during the "presence of the day of Jehovah," yet the Messianic kingdom of God in the hands of his Son victorious in battle will remain standing. As an expression of his unshakable Universal Sovereignty, it will stay standing to the eternal vindication of Him as the Sovereign Lord of all. Satan the Devil, "the ruler of this world," and all his demon angels have long dominated this artificial "heaven" and "earth" of the present wicked system of things. But, despite all their superhuman might, they will be unable to keep the doomed "heaven" and "earth" from being shaken to pieces and being wiped out from the universe. The "short period of time" during which these "wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places" have been restrained here at the neighborhood of the earth will be ended. Immediately after the eternal victory of Jehovah God by Jesus Christ has been won in the "great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon, Satan the Devil and his demon angels will be seized,

10. (a) At that time of intense shaking, what will remain standing, and as an expression of what? (b) Is there anything that Satan and his demons will be able to do to prevent the destruction of the "heaven" and "earth" of the present wicked system of things?

chained and hurled into the abyss away from the vicinity of this earth.—Revelation 20:1-3.

11 Although that chaining and abyssing of Satan and his demon angels will be invisible to the eyes of the surviving witnesses of Jehovah, and likely noiseless to their natural ears, they will feel the liberating effects of it. No longer will it be true that "Satan cut across our path," as we may seek to carry on Jehovah's reconstruction work on the cleansed earth after the abysmal imprisonment of those spirit forces with whom we now have to wrestle and to fight with spiritual weapons. (1 Thessalonians 2:18; Ephesians 6:12-18) Such wrestling and spiritual fighting will be a thing of the past for them during the thousand-year reign of Christ.—Revelation 20:1-6; Romans 16:20.

"NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH"

12 Oh, that blessed day, the day that we are so eagerly awaiting! Then it will be all fulfilled prophecy —that which the prophet Daniel foretold when he said: "And during that time Michael [the glorified Christ] 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." And Jesus Christ, in quoting from those words of Daniel, when giving his prophecy on the "conclusion of the system of things," added the words: "No, nor will occur again. In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short." —Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:3, 21, 22; Mark 13:19, 20.

13 The physical and environmental condition in which the faithful remnant of spiritual Israel and the "great

11. Will the surviving witnesses of Jehovah be aware that the chaining and abyssing of Satan and his demons has taken place?
12. At that time, what things foretold by Daniel and by Jesus Christ will be fulfilled prophecy?
13. What thrilling realization, what rare privilege, will the remnant and their fellow worshipers have after going through that world's distress?

crowd" of loyal fellow worshipers will emerge from that worst world distress of all human experience remains yet to be seen and appreciated. But, oh, the thrilling realization then that at last God's New Order of righteousness has begun! Oh, the rare privilege of seeing in actuality what the aged apostle John saw long ago only in vision! "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away, and the sea is no more." (Revelation 21:1) Fulfilled is Jehovah's prophecy holding out hope of such a thing even back in the ancient days of the prophet Isaiah: "Here I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart. But exult, you people, and be joyful forever in what I am creating."—Isaiah 65:17, 18.

[14] That promise of the God who does not lie was called to the attention of even the first-century Christians. Having the standpoint of spiritual Israelites, they strengthened themselves in their Christian endurance by awaiting God's carrying out of his precious promise. In contrast to the sobering description of the fiery dissolution of the existing "heavens," "elements," and "earth and the works in it" that he has just written for the recipients of his letter, the apostle Peter adds the cheering words: "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) Today Jehovah's Christian witnesses of this twentieth century are also awaiting those same new heavens and new earth. But they know that they are living in the last days of the "heavens and the earth that are now." The generation that was not to pass away until "all these things" foretold by Jesus Christ had occurred has survived since the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 and has seen practically

14. (a) In the first century, how were Christians affected by the promise of "new heavens and a new earth"? (b) Why is it that the expectations of Jehovah's Christian witnesses concerning that promise are running high now?

all "these things" occur. (Matthew 24:3, 34) So now their expectations run high!

15 More inducement than ever before exists for Jehovah's Christian witnesses of "this generation" to be fully occupied in "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion" and to be particularly earnest about "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah" in which the old unrighteous order will be dissolved in destruction. (2 Peter 3:11, 12) That day is unavoidable. It must come in order to clear the way for the fulfillment of God's golden promise of "new heavens and a new earth," in which righteousness is to dwell. The day approaches when those promised new creations will beautify the realm that has so long been marred by the presence of unrighteous heavens and earth of the Devil's making. What a lovely time in which to be living on earth *then!*

16 The reign of the Lord Jesus Christ with his glorified congregational "bride" will usher in an uninterrupted era of righteous rule and peace and happiness for earth's inhabitants. That heavenly Messianic kingdom will replace the heartless misrule of mankind by devils and men for these past six thousand years. That Messianic government will occupy the place of the wicked old "heavens." It will be an expression of the infinite love of Jehovah God for man who was created as a "son of God," in God's own image and likeness. (Genesis 1:26-28; Luke 3:38) Jehovah God loved the world of mankind so much that he, at great cost to himself, provided his beloved only-begotten Son to be the King in that Messianic government.—John 3:16.

17 With the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon in the past and with the imprisoning of the "wicked spirit forces" of Satan and

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15. With what activity should all of us be fully occupied?
16. (a) What will that heavenly Messianic kingdom mean for earth's inhabitants? (b) Of what will it be an expression on Jehovah's part for mankind?
17. Ahead of the survivors of Har–Magedon will rise what prospect, and, in fact, they are already enjoying what condition?

his demons in the abyss accomplished, the favored survivors on earth will fill up with heartfelt elation at realizing that the long-awaited "new heavens" of God's creation are truly reigning over them. As they look out over the cleansed land that stretches out before them, they will be filled with a pioneer spirit. There is a millennium of work to do throughout the land! The prospect of a global paradise rises before their eyes. They are already enjoying a spiritual paradise by God's spirit and favor. As in an ark of survival they were preserved in this spiritual paradise during the great cataclysm that dissolved the old system in destruction. That is why God's promised "new earth" begins with them. O joy, they themselves are the nucleus of the "new earth," the new human society, the new world of godly people!

18 Here starts the coming true of what the apostle John heard announced from heaven: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

MARRIAGE OF THE BRIDAL REMNANT WITH THE BRIDEGROOM

19 At beholding such a happy start of things on the cleansed earth, the surviving remnant of spiritual Israelites will exult and rejoice to overflowing. They will be instrumental in God's hands in getting the "new earth" off functioning in harmony with the "new heavens" government. But their ultimate hopes are not earthward; rather, they are heavenward. The spirit-begotten remnant expect that, in the due time, the heavenly Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, will take them

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18. That is the time for fulfillment of what precious promise recorded at Revelation 21:3, 4?

19. (a) Why will the surviving remnant of spiritual Israelites not remain indefinitely here on earth? (b) What will their gaining of heavenly life mean for them?

to his heavenly Father's home to complete his bridal congregation and thus form the final part of the "holy city, New Jerusalem." (Revelation 21:2, 9, 10; 20:4, 6; John 14:2, 3; 17:24) Then their departure from association personally with the "new earth" will take place, and they will be united in heavenly wedlock with their beloved Bridegroom along with the others of his bridal congregation. Thereby they will be part of the "new heavens" in its proper location.—Ephesians 5:25-27.

20 The "great crowd" of fellow worshipers at God's spiritual temple will be glad for the marital union of the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel, with whom they have survived the "presence of the day of Jehovah." All along, during this time of personal association with the bridal remnant since 1935 C.E., they have attended upon the prospective bride class just like bridesmaids. They have done so in loving loyalty to the Bridegroom King. Not being members of his bride class, they will not be taken to heaven. However, they are taken into the Bridegroom King's realm, to enjoy his reign of a thousand years. They are preserved along with the remnant of the bride class through the "great tribulation" and come out of it into the earthly part of his royal realm, this earthly part necessarily including the territory of ancient Israel where the King's famous ancestor, King David, used to reign.—Psalm 72:6, 7; Luke 1:31-33.

21 When the Bridegroom King fulfills the parable of the sheep and the goats, it will be the earthly part of his kingly realm that he has in mind when he says to the sheeplike ones at his right hand: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." (Matthew 25:31-34) His warmly welcoming

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20. (a) Ever since the year 1935, the "great crowd" have been giving loving aid to the prospective bride class for what reason? (b) Where in his royal realm will the "great crowd" have a place?

21. (a) So what does the King mean when he tells them, as recorded at Matthew 25:34, "Inherit the kingdom . . ."? (b) In what manner are they appropriately described in Psalm 45:14, 15?

these sheeplike doers of good, who have been like attentive bridesmaids to his bride class, will correspond with what is said about the virgin bridesmaids in Psalm 45:14, 15: "The virgins in her train as her companions are being brought in to you [the Bridegroom King]. They will be brought with rejoicing and joyfulness; they will enter into the palace of the king." Not in vain will they have been like attentive bridesmaids to the bride class of Christ. Their reward of being assigned to the earthly paradise of his royal realm will be a most happifying one. There, in loving unselfishness, they will rejoice over the celestial marriage of their heavenly King to his bridal congregation, the final remnant of which they knew personally and to whom they did good for the Bridegroom's sake.

[22] Adding to their joyfulness on earth will be the special privileges of service accorded to the "great crowd" of sheeplike subjects of the Bridegroom King Jesus Christ. Such outstanding privileges of earthly service are alluded to in the next verse of Psalm 45, which is addressed to the Bridegroom King into whose palace the bridesmaids are brought. To him this verse (16) says: "In place of your forefathers there will come to be your sons, whom you will appoint as princes in all the earth."

[23] In order to impart great respectableness and dignity to his active role as Messianic King, the wedded Lord Jesus Christ will not have to appeal strictly to his illustrious forefathers in his earthly ancestry. (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38) His being called "the Son of David" does reflect glory upon him. His being called "the son of Abraham," the patriarch out of whose loins God promised that kings would come, this also imparted fame to the name of the Bridegroom King. (Genesis 17:6, 15, 16) But these widely known

22. As indicated at Psalm 45:16, what privileges will be open to earthly subjects of the King Jesus Christ?

23. Although the association of the name of Jesus with those of his illustrious forefathers does reflect some glory upon him, in order for them to make a *living* contribution to his reign, what must they become?

forefathers, like other men of faith and devotion to Jehovah God, have long been dead, and, in that condition, they cannot make any living contribution to the glory of his Millennial reign. Those who will be able to do so will therefore be living sons, even his sons in the earthly realm.

24 Earthly sons? Yes! For, among the grand titles that were foretold for him in Isaiah 9:6 the title Eternal Father is not a mere honorary one, a title given merely for honor but not assigning the duties of such an office. He will really live up to this title by becoming father to children who will live eternally. The first to become his earthly sons and daughters will be the members of the "great crowd" of those who will say after coming out of the "great tribulation": "Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14) They will ascribe their salvation to Jehovah God through his Lamb, Jesus Christ.

"PRINCES IN ALL THE EARTH"

25 Being the survivors on earth of the world distress in which the "world of ungodly people" will be destroyed, they will be right on hand, immediately available, for the reigning Eternal Father to select from among them the qualified men, his "sons," to be appointed as "princes in all the earth." Even among the tens of thousands of congregations of Jehovah's Christian witnesses today there are thousands of dedicated, baptized men who have been theocratically appointed to the position of official elders. They serve as "overseers" and do pastoral work among the congregations of which they are members. (Acts 20:17-28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4) They are also taking the lead in the work

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24. (a) How will Jesus live up to his title "Eternal Father"? (b) Who will be the first to become his earthly sons and daughters?
25. Among the survivors of Har-Magedon will be what qualified men from among whom the King could select "princes in all the earth," and what experience will they have had?

foretold by Jesus Christ for this "conclusion of the system of things," namely: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) In this manner they endeavor to fulfill their responsibility to the heavenly Messianic kingdom that was established when the Gentile Times ended in 1914.

[26] These congregational elders or overseers are faithfully fulfilling the prophetic picture of the "princes" described in Isaiah 32:1, 2: "Look! A king will reign for righteousness itself; and as respects princes, they will rule as princes for justice itself. And each one must prove to be like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land." Thus they are not oppressive religious "princes," like those in the religious sects of Christendom who are called "Princes of the Church." Rather, each one of these congregational elders seeks to be a relief giver, a refreshment, to the members of his congregation. He is careful to serve just as princely elders in ancient Israel would serve, "for justice itself." Thus he copies his heavenly King, who reigns "for righteousness itself."—Luke 22:25-27.

[27] As the "new earth," human society organized under the "new heavens" kingdom, gets under way, there will be need for overseers, superintendents, supervisors of communities and operations. Elders who survive the "great tribulation" and form part of the "new earth" will have gained much experience by their services rendered now in the congregations of Jehovah's Christian witnesses. The "great tribulation" will not have discharged or dismissed them from the theocratic position of elders and overseers among the

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26. Already, what role are these congregational elders filling, as foretold in Isaiah 32:1, 2?

27, 28. (a) Will elders be discharged from their theocratic position by the "great tribulation"? (b) So, subject to the will of the heavenly King Jesus Christ, for what service will they be available?

members of the congregations that survive with them into God's righteous New Order. They can carry right on in this capacity, if the will of the heavenly King Jesus Christ is in favor of that.

[28] At any rate, the experienced elders and overseers will be available for the Messianic King to appoint as "princes in all the earth," from the very start of his thousand-year reign onward. What a privilege that will be for them to be the visible princely representatives on earth of the millennial Kingdom!

[29] All the survivors of the "great tribulation" will look ahead eagerly to the beginning of the resurrection of the ransomed human dead. They will look ahead to that "hour" in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear the voice of the glorified Son of man, Jesus, and all these hearing will come forth to a resurrection of life-affording opportunities under the millennial Kingdom. (John 5:28, 29; 11:25, 26; Acts 24:15; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6) They will particularly look forward to the resurrection of the faithful "forefathers" of the Bridegroom King. Oh, how they will hail the restoring to life on earth of Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Boaz, David, Hezekiah and Josiah! Excellent material these will be for the appointed service of "princes in all the earth." Being once again in the land of the living and now in princely service, they will add further honor to the Messianic King whose earthly ancestors they were privileged to be.

[30] What, also, about all the other prophets and exemplars of faith, such as Abel, Job, Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others, all the way down to John the Baptist, the earthly forerunner and "friend of the Bridegroom," Jesus Christ? In the light of the favorable Bible testimony regarding these men, they have proved themselves worthy of appointment

29, 30. (a) When they return from the dead by means of resurrection, who else will no doubt be included among the "princes in all the earth"? (b) Why is it not to be expected that they will have any great difficulty in adjusting themselves to the new circumstances on earth?

as "princes in all the earth" by the one to whose coming as Messiah they looked, many of them even foretelling it. Without great difficulty, and with assistance of God's holy spirit, these capable men should be able to fit themselves to the new circumstances on earth during the seventh millennium of man's existence on earth. The Bible credentials are all in favor of their being honored with the service of "princes in all the earth." The congregational elders and overseers who survive the "great tribulation" can be of up-to-date help to all of these.

31 The having of "princes in all the earth" who will rule "for justice itself" gives assurance that in the "new earth" righteousness will indeed dwell, come to stay forever. With the Messianic "new heavens" above, and with "princes" such as these serving as visible representatives of those "new heavens," the work of beautification of the earth will go forward for mankind's everlasting paradise home. The thousands of millions of resurrected dead will participate in thus robing all the earth with the glory of Paradise. (Luke 23:43) Ever expanding will the worldwide educational work prove to be as generation after generation of the human dead return from the memorial tombs. They will have to be shown how the Holy Bible is a true history of God's dealings with mankind and how all the Bible prophecies have come true and are still coming true. They will have to be informed of what is contained in the "scrolls" of divine instruction that will then be opened.—Revelation 20:12.

32 Happy, indeed, are the prospects for all dedicated, baptized witnesses of Jehovah who today are zealously engaged in Bible educational work in all the inhabited earth. It is a life-imparting work that will enable countless persons to escape the destructive execution

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31. (a) Of whom will those "princes" be representatives as they carry out their work? (b) Why will there be a huge educational work carried out then?

32. (a) What happy prospects are there before witnesses of Jehovah who zealously share in the work of Bible education now? (b) In what ways will the Eternal Father Jesus Christ prove to be "a life-giving spirit"?

of God's judgments in the oncoming "great tribulation." It is a work that is preparing and fitting them for the far vaster educational work in behalf of all the ransomed human dead whom the reigning King Jesus Christ will call forth to become their Eternal Father. He is the one to whom 1 Corinthians 15:45 applies: "The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." As such, he will impart life to them, not just by giving them a new start in life by their resurrection, but by rearing them for life during his millennial reign.

33 By the end of his life-giving reign all the responsive and obedient ones will attain the glorious estate of human perfection such as the first Adam had in the original paradise, the Garden of Eden. If, then, in the decisive test, they prove loyal to his Heavenly Father as Universal Sovereign, their reward will be life eternal. Earth, then everywhere arrayed in Paradise beauty, will again be at unity with the holy heavens. Jehovah's program of "administration" will have been carried out to the successful accomplishment of his grand purpose. "All things" without exception, "the things in the heavens and the things on the earth," will have been gathered together again "in the Christ," in the one whom Jehovah God has made the Head of his capital organization, his Son Jesus Christ. Man on earth, enjoying both a spiritual paradise and an Edenic paradise, will again be part of Jehovah's universal organization. Unity and peace will reign among all his creatures in heaven and on earth. (Ephesians 1:9, 10) Earthly animals will be subject to man.

WHAT SHALL WE DO NOW?

34 The view of the future that the sure Word of God presents to our eyes of faith is magnificent! The thing to do now is not to lose sight of it. Never may we let

33. (a) When will all obedient ones on earth be rewarded with life eternal? (b) How will Jehovah's "administration," referred to in Ephesians 1:9, 10, then successfully have accomplished his grand purpose?
34. On what do we need to keep our eyes of faith firmly fixed, and why can we be confident of its realization?

our eyes be distracted from it. It is no hallucination, no mirage, no pipe dream. Over the endorsement of God's own name the grand things to come—soon—stand fully guaranteed in prophecies of his indestructible Word. As certainly as time moves on, we are moving forward to them. They are the goal set before us by the God who is "the rewarder of those earnestly seeking him." (Hebrews 11:6) If we hold onto our faith and live and act in harmony with it, nothing is going to obstruct us from gaining the prize that God holds out and promises to us.

35 Would-be obstructors are sure to present themselves in our pathway that lies ahead of us. Notwithstanding that the day and the hour of the outbreak of the "great tribulation" has not been revealed to us, it is timed by God and will not delay. (Habakkuk 2:3) The "great tribulation" is in the declared purpose of God and it is bound to come. Let us keep in mind that the destruction of religious Babylon the Great in the forepart of the tribulation will not completely clear the way for us. It merely frees the hand of the final remaining obstructors to give undivided attention to interference with our reaching our God-ordained goal. What shall we then do?

36 The crucial situation that is then to shape itself before us stirs up the memory of the apparently trapped Israelites on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea shortly after Passover of 1513 B.C.E. Before them the sea blocks their direct passage to the Mountain of God, Mount Sinai, on the Arabian peninsula. Their encampment at the sea is menaced from the rear. The Egyptians are coming! Under leadership of the royal Pharaoh of Egypt the war chariots and the cavalrymen are bearing down upon the Israelite camp. How long will it be before the military forces of

35. Will the destruction of Babylon the Great clear all obstructions out of our way, or what will be the situation?
36. The crucial situation that will then exist reminds us of what historical situation?

Pharaoh are upon them? The look of things is most alarming indeed! What shall they do? Under the circumstances cries go up to God, whose leading of them into this perilous situation they cannot understand.

37 What is the command that they now hear? It is unbelievable, impossible, according to the appearance of things! The divine command is to break camp, not in a panicky stampede before the onrushing enemy, but to march away from them. That meant—into the sea! That is right, Forward march! "The Eternal said to Moses, 'Why cry to me? Tell the Israelites to march forward. And as for you, raise your stick and stretch your hand over the sea; part it in two, that the Israelites may march on dry ground through the sea. I am going to make the Egyptians so stubborn that they will pass in after them, and I will gain honour out of the Pharaoh and all his army, his chariots and cavalry—to teach the Egyptians that I am the Eternal, when I gain honour out of the Pharaoh and his chariots and his cavalry.' "—Exodus 14:15-18, *Moffatt; Byington; Jerusalem Bible; An American Translation; Revised Standard Version.*

38 Through the corridor that the Almighty God miraculously cut through the Red Sea his threatened people march forward after striking camp. Clear across they march to the shores of the Sinaitic peninsula. Enticingly the escape corridor is left open. The Egyptians, temporarily blocked from charging into the camp of the Israelites, now resume their furious charge. Into the water-walled corridor they roll and gallop in hot pursuit. They are at last all inside the corridor. Then chariot troubles impede progress. So—beat a retreat before the God of the Israelites who fights for them! But it is too late. At the signal from Moses with his prophet's stick, the trap is sprung. The

37. Faced with this alarming situation, what seemingly impossible thing did God command them to do?

38. (a) How was the enemy caught in the trap and completely destroyed? (b) What did the Israelites then have good reason to do?

waters of the parted sea rush together. Pharaoh's entire military forces are engulfed. Dead bodies of them are washed up upon the shores of the Sinaitic peninsula. Sing and dance now, you Israelites, over your deliverance by Jehovah's hand.—Exodus 14:19 through 15:21.

39 Those things, put on record aforetime, were written for our instruction at the most critical time. (Romans 15:4) The future attack of the symbolic ten horns and the then-riderless scarlet-colored wild beast will pose a great threat to our existence and our spiritual paradise, after they have hatefully disposed of the Babylonish world empire of false religion. (Revelation 17:14) The all-out attack by the symbolic Gog of the land of Magog (Satan the Devil) and his international hordes will be aimed at our restored relations with Jehovah God and our intransigent stand for his universal sovereignty and his Messianic kingdom. (Ezekiel 38:10-17) Hatred of Jehovah's Christian witnesses by all nonreligious nations will be at its highest intensity. What is there then for us to do—lose hope? Under no circumstances! Our determination, already now formed for that extreme situation, is to stick to the course that will lead to the vindication of Jehovah as the Universal Sovereign!

40 Though it may appear to call for the impossible, the command from the Sovereign Lord Jehovah through his Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, will ring out sharp and clear in our ears, 'Go forward! March unitedly forward!' That means, Keep on doing the will of Jehovah God as ruler rather than obey men. Keep on being a disciple of the one whom He has anointed to be the Messianic King over mankind for a thousand years to come! So, then, forward, with eyes still fixed on the goal. It is still ahead. Moving

39. (a) For whose instruction were those things recorded in the Bible? (b) When confronted with the all-out attack by Satan the Devil and his international hordes, to what determination must we stick?
40. In our case, what will the command to march unitedly forward mean?

forward undeviatingly will bring us triumphantly to it. (Hebrews 10:39) Try all that the enemy might to drag us back into slavery to this ungodly world, he will fail. The Almighty God will open up for us the corridor to the shores of freedom. The enemy, persisting in the vengeful pursuit of the forward-marching worshipers of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, will enter a trap of destruction.

41 Glorious it will then be when we can imitate the prophet Moses and the Israelites after their deliverance at the Red Sea and sing our own song recounting the exploits of the "manly person of war," Jehovah, at Har–Magedon and climaxing the celebration song by saying: "Jehovah will rule as king to time indefinite, even forever." (Exodus 15:1-18) Doubtless heaven as well as the surviving spectators on earth of Jehovah's all-crowning victory will unitedly sing the praises of the now undisputed King of all the universe. What an unrepeatable privilege it will be to find ourselves among those victory singers!

42 Unequaled world distress lies just ahead of us, but let us face it undaunted. We oldsters of "this generation" who have passed through two world wars since 1914 C.E. and also experienced the religious persecution of Jehovah's Christian witnesses that has marked all the years since 1914, we indeed can say with the Bible psalmist of old: "You have examined us, O God; you have refined us as when refining silver. You have brought us into a hunting net; you have put pressure on our hips. You have made mortal man to ride over our head; we have come through fire and through water, and you proceeded to bring us forth to relief." (Psalm 66:10-12) We may still have to go "through fire and through water" amid the severest

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41. What unrepeatable privilege will be the portion of those who are then alive?

42, 43. (a) How do the words of Psalm 66:10-12 fit the experiences of those who, as Jehovah's Christian witnesses, have lived through the events since 1914 C.E.? (b) Regardless of what difficult circumstances may lie ahead for the remnant of spiritual Israel, what grand reassurance do they have in Isaiah 43?

world distress just ahead. But the anointed remnant of spiritual Israel have this grand reassurance from Jehovah God:

43 "And now this is what Jehovah has said, your Creator, O Jacob, and your Former, O Israel: 'Do not be afraid, for I have repurchased you. I have called you by your name. You are mine. In case you should pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they will not flood over you. In case you should walk through the fire, you will not be scorched, neither will the flame itself singe you. For I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel your Savior. . . .' 'You are my witnesses,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'even my servant whom I have chosen, in order that you may know and have faith in me, and that you may understand that I am the same One.' "—Isaiah 43:1-3, 10.

44 Be it, then, that Jehovah's Christian witnesses still have to pass through what corresponds with fire and water, he will be with them. He will prove himself to be the same God of deliverance. There is no basis for now slacking our hand and our pace in service as his Kingdom witnesses. Fear of the immediate future on earth should not chill us with fear and stiffen us into inaction. He is happy over what we have done in his Kingdom service until now, for which reason he has marvelously blessed us. For our sakes the prophetic words were written and now have an application to us: "In that day it will be said to Jerusalem: 'Do not be afraid, O Zion. May your hands not drop down. Jehovah your God is in the midst of you. As a mighty One, he will save. He will exult over you with rejoicing. He will become silent [quiet; at ease; satisfied] in his love. He will be joyful over you with happy cries.' "—Zephaniah 3:16, 17.

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44. Despite what the future may hold, what does Zephaniah 3:16, 17 urge Jehovah's servants to do, and with what confidence?

45 May we continue to give the living God of the "heavenly Jerusalem" great cause for being happy and rejoicing over us. So may these hands of ours that have been so active till now in ministering to Jehovah God at his spiritual temple—may they not now drop down, be slack. Let us courageously apply them to lifesaving work that yet remains to be done before the current world distress reaches its culmination in the "great tribulation."

46 "This good news of the kingdom" was foretold by Jesus Christ to be preached till the end of this system of things comes. (Matthew 24:14) For us, as his faithful and obedient disciples, there offers itself no other right course but to keep preaching world wide until the "new heavens" kingdom is no longer mere "good news" but, O joy! a glorious reality along with a "new earth," the new human society that will fill Paradise restored with righteousness. Then all thanks will be offered to the tender-hearted God, Jehovah, who saves obedient mankind out of world distress into his peaceful "new earth."

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45. So, to what work should we courageously apply our hands?
46. (a) How long is "this good news of the kingdom" to be preached? (b) To whom will all thanks be given for salvation of obedient mankind from world distress?

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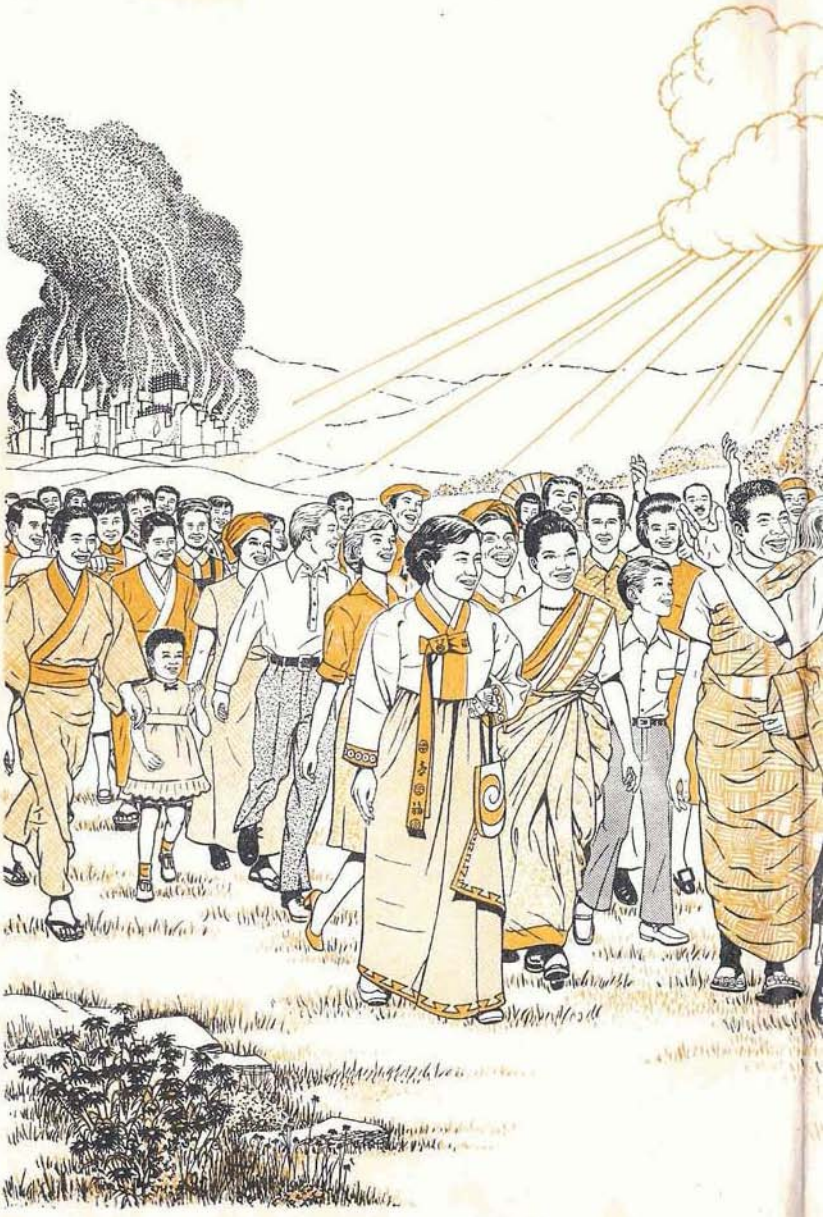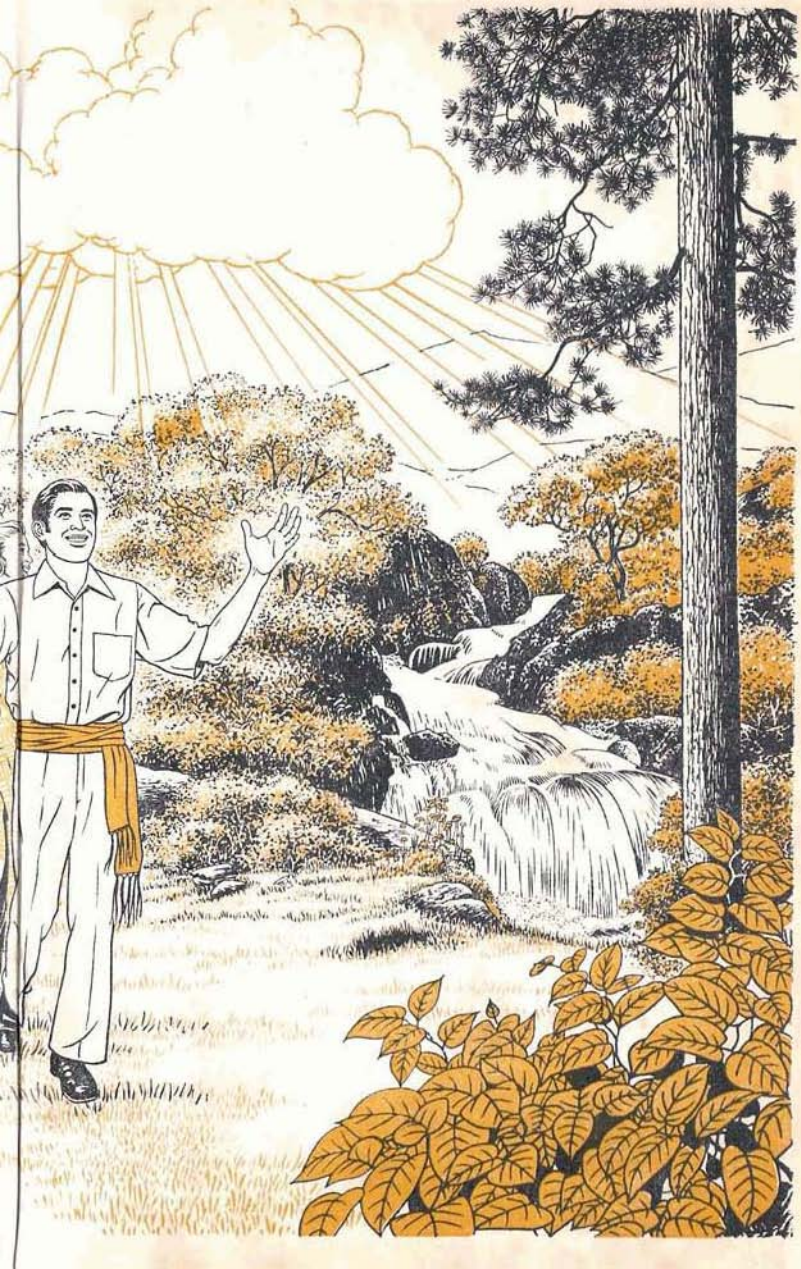
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