

SURVIVAL

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EARTH

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Survival has become a major concern in our times. But what confronts mankind is far more awesome than a nuclear war. It is an accounting with the Creator himself. Astounding Bible prophecies show clearly that there will be survivors and that grand prospects await them right on this earth. This book has been published to help you to be among them.

—The Publishers

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Publishers
WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY
OF NEW YORK, INC.
INTERNATIONAL BIBLE STUDENTS ASSOCIATION
BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, U.S.A.

This Book Is Published in 38 Languages
Total Books Printed of All Editions
12,800,000 Copies

Survival Into a New Earth
English (su-E)
Made in the United States of America

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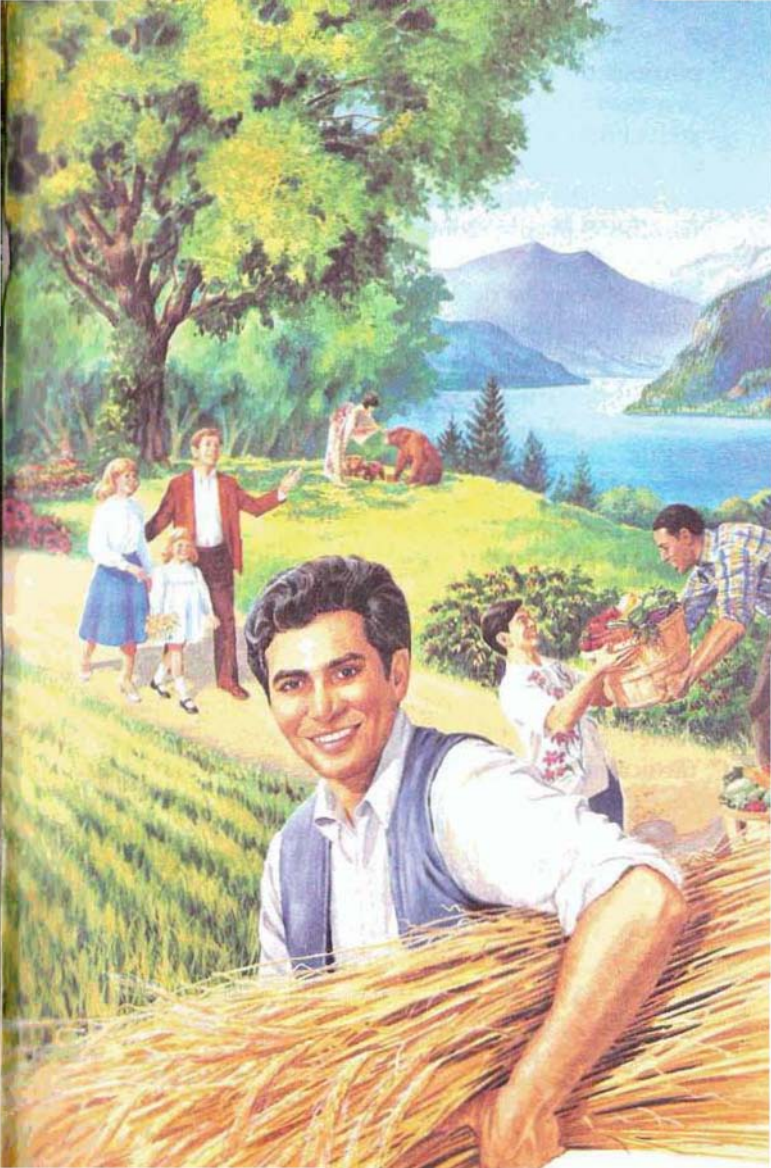


What Will Become of Planet Earth?

WHAT does the future hold for you as one of the billions of persons now living on planet Earth? Would you like it to be a life of peace and security, among people who really love one another? That and much more can be yours. But it is not the future that the majority expect. Why not?

² Threat of nuclear war has raised serious doubts as to whether there will be any future at all for vast

1. What kind of future do you anticipate, and why?
- 2, 3. How does the threat of nuclear war influence the way many people view the future?



portions of the human race. When an atom bomb was first used in warfare in 1945, over 70,000 men, women and children were killed instantly. Many thousands more experienced agonizing deaths during the following days and years. But today a single typical warhead has the explosive content of all the bombs dropped during World War II. There are tens of thousands of nuclear weapons deployed for immediate use. Still the world spends some \$2,000,000,000 a day on an arms race that leaves many people gasping in horror.

³ But what if there is only a "limited nuclear war"? The results would still be appalling. According to Carl Sagan, a well-known scientist, if the nations were to use even a fraction of their nuclear capacity, "there is little question that our global civilization would be destroyed. . . . And there seems to be a real possibility of the extinction of the human species." Many people try to put such prospects out of their minds, but that does not remove the danger. A rapidly growing number of others have formed survivalist societies. In the hope that some will survive, they have built places of refuge in isolated areas and stocked these with food and medical supplies, also with guns to drive off unwanted intruders.

⁴ Apart from nuclear war, scientists warn of possible global disaster from the way the environment is being abused. Pollution of the air we breathe is a source of serious concern. Forests are being decimated at an appalling rate; yet these are important to the earth's oxygen cycle, its rain cycle and soil conservation. Through ignorance and greed, vital cropland is being ruined. Water supplies are being polluted, often with

4. Why is abuse of the environment viewed as a serious threat?

deadly chemicals. Yet these resources are necessities for sustaining human life.

⁵ Of more immediate concern, you may feel, is the fact that violent crime is making people prisoners in their own homes. Political and social unrest makes life hazardous. Widespread unemployment and soaring inflation result in privation and frustration. The homelife of many is far from satisfying; the bonds of love that should hold a family together are often missing. Everywhere the attitude of people is "Me first!"

⁶ Where, then, can anyone find a sound basis for expecting to enjoy a life of security? If our future as inhabitants of the earth depended solely on what men and nations that share responsibility for these problems are willing and able to do, the outlook would truly be bleak. But is that the case?

FACTS THAT SHOULD NOT BE IGNORED

⁷ In their calculations, humans all too often leave out of account the Creator of the earth and of humankind. But how can we know what His purpose is? The Bible tells us. Repeatedly this Book states that what it contains is of divine origin, inspired by God. Is this claim true? If it is, your life depends on acting in harmony with it. Because of the importance of this matter, we urge you to examine the Bible personally. You will find outstanding its many prophecies reflecting detailed knowledge of the future. Unmatched is its wisdom when it is discussing matters that are most important to your lasting happiness. We feel confident that, if you open-mindedly consider the evidence, you will

5, 6. What other situations prevent people from expecting life to be secure and happy?

7. (a) What evidence shows that the Bible is God's Word?

(b) Why is it vital for people to know what the Bible says?

realize that the Bible could only have come from a supernatural source, from a God who truly loves mankind.* The Bible contains information that is vital to our survival at this critical time in human history. Appropriately, it is the most widely circulated book on earth.—See 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 3:11-14; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, 14-17.

⁸ The opening verse of the Bible states as a fundamental truth that “God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1)[#] Although some people prefer to leave God nameless, the Bible does not. Identifying the Creator by name, Genesis 2:4 informs us that “Jehovah God made earth and heaven.” (See also Genesis 14:22; Exodus 6:3; 20:11.) Much of the Bible was written originally in Hebrew, and in the Hebrew Bible text God’s personal name appears nearly 7,000 times as a sacred tetragrammaton (יהוה). Some translators render it as Yahweh, but in English the most commonly used form of the name is Jehovah.

⁹ This name was not devised by devout humans. It was chosen by the Creator himself. (Exodus 3:13-15; Isaiah 42:8) It is not a name to be used interchangeably with Buddha, Brahma, Allah or Jesus. Appropriately the prophet Moses reminded the ancient nation of Israel: “You well know today, and you must call back

* See the book *Is the Bible Really the Word of God?*, published by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

[#] Unless otherwise indicated, Bible texts in this book are quoted from the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, 1981 edition.

8. By what name does the Bible identify the Creator of planet Earth?

9. (a) With whom did that name for God originate? (b) How important is God’s name to us? (Joel 2:32; Micah 4:5)

to your heart that Jehovah [Hebrew: יהוה] is the true God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath. There is no other." (Deuteronomy 4:39) This is the God to whom Jesus Christ prayed, the One whom he addressed as "the only true God." Today He is worshiped by informed persons out of every nation on earth.—John 17:3; Matthew 4:8-10; 26:39; Romans 3:29.

¹⁰ By virtue of the fact that Jehovah is the earth's Creator, the entire planet belongs to him, and its future rests in his hands. (Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 89:11) The problems of mankind are not beyond God's ability to handle. The prospect of nuclear war terrifies humans. But whose laws control the nuclear reactions that take place on an awesome scale in the countless billions of stars? Does God not have the knowledge and the power needed to safeguard life on planet Earth? Likewise, the problems that have developed because humans have both ignorantly and selfishly polluted their environment will not block the purpose of Almighty God. The One who had the wisdom and the power needed to create the earth and the fascinating life forms on it can also give them a cleaned-up start if that is his will. (Isaiah 40:26; Psalm 104:24) What, then, is Jehovah's purpose in connection with our planet home?

HOW LONG WILL THE EARTH REMAIN?

¹¹ Is it God's purpose to destroy the earth and all living things on it? Some astronomers theorize that

10. Why will the threat of nuclear war and the damage done by pollution not thwart God's purpose for the earth?

11. (a) What do some scientists believe will eventually happen to the earth? (b) Who knows more about these matters than they do, and why?

eventually our sun will experience an explosive enlargement in size and will engulf the earth. There are those who reason that, because of the very nature of the physical universe, the time must come when the sun will no longer shine and the earth will no longer sustain life. But are they correct? What does the Creator say—the One who brought into existence energy and matter, the One who originated the laws on which our existence depends?—Job 38:1-6, 21; Psalm 146:3-6.

¹² Jehovah inspired wise King Solomon to write about man's life span as compared with the duration of the earth itself. At Ecclesiastes 1:4 Solomon penned these words: "A generation is going, and a generation is coming; but the earth is standing even to time indefinite." Human history testifies to the truthfulness of this. Although one generation of mankind has been replaced by another, the earth, the globe on which we live, remains standing. But for how long? According to the literal rendering of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, it will be "to time indefinite." What does that mean?

¹³ The Hebrew word '*oh-lam*', here rendered "time indefinite," basically means a period of time that, from the standpoint of the present, is indefinite or hidden from sight but of long duration. That can mean forever. Does it in this instance? Or does this expression indicate that perhaps at some indefinite future time, now hidden from us, the earth will come to its end? Some things that the Bible says would continue "to time indefinite" did eventually end. (Compare Num-

12. How have the words of Ecclesiastes 1:4 proved true?

13. (a) What can "time indefinite" mean? (b) How can we be sure, then, that the earth will endure forever?

bers 25:13; Hebrews 7:12.) But the Scriptures also associate '*oh-lam*' with that which is eternal—for example, the Creator himself. (Compare Psalm 90:2 and 1 Timothy 1:17.) As to what the expression means in connection with the earth, we are not left in doubt. At Psalm 104:5 we are told: "He has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, *or forever*."^{*}—See also Psalm 119:90.

¹⁴ What will endure forever is not merely a barren, unproductive globe. At Jeremiah 10:10-12 we are informed: "Jehovah is in truth God. . . . He is the Maker of the earth by his power, the One firmly establishing the productive land by his wisdom, and the One who by his understanding stretched out the heavens." Notice that he not only made "the earth" but also firmly established "the productive land." In place of this latter expression, many translators render the Hebrew word *te-vel* simply "world." However, according to *Old Testament Word Studies* by William Wilson, *te-vel* means "the earth, as fertile and inhabited, the habitable globe, world." As to Jehovah's purpose regarding this fertile, inhabited earth, Psalm 96:10 reassuringly declares: "Jehovah himself has become king. The productive land also becomes firmly established so that it cannot be made to totter."—See also Isaiah 45:18.

¹⁵ Thus it is regarding the planet Earth on which we

* Some lexicographers therefore understand '*oh-lam*' as used at Ecclesiastes 1:4 to mean "for ever." *The New English Bible, Revised Standard Version, The Jerusalem Bible, The Bible in Living English, King James Version* and others render it in that way.

14. How do we know that the globe will not someday become a barren waste?

15. How do these facts agree with the prayer that Jesus taught his followers?

live that Jesus Christ taught his followers to pray to God: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, *also upon earth*."—Matthew 6:9, 10.

¹⁶ Jehovah's will is not for the earth to be inhabited by people who have no regard for its Owner and little love for one another. Long ago he promised: "Evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth. The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." (Psalm 37:9, 29) "The inhabited earth to come," of which the Bible speaks, will be populated by people who fear God and sincerely love their fellowmen. (Hebrews 2:5; compare Luke 10:25-28.) So great will be the changes that take place under God's heavenly Kingdom that the Bible speaks of "a new earth"—not a different globe, but a new human society that will live amid the paradisaic conditions that mankind's Creator purposed from the time he began his earthly creation.—Revelation 21:1-5; Genesis 2:7-9, 15.

¹⁷ The establishing of that "new earth" will, of necessity, be preceded by great destruction—one surpassing anything that mankind has yet experienced. For the good of the earth itself and all who are truly grateful to its Creator, he will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:17, 18) God's time for doing this is very near! When it is completed, will you be found among the survivors?—1 John 2:17; Proverbs 2:21, 22.

16. (a) What kind of people will then live on earth? (b) What is the "new earth" of which the Bible speaks?

17. Why is it important to learn God's requirements for survival now?

The Issues That Determine Our Future

IN RECENT years burning issues that involve our future have been thrust upon us one after another in rapid succession. Conditions are such that people everywhere desperately want relief. Perhaps they believe in God, but it may seem to them that if the situation here on earth is going to improve, humans are going to have to bring it about. Some try to do it through existing governments or by mass protests against the decisions of these governments. Others believe that revolution is the only way. They feel that changing laws, replacing rulers or even entire governments will surely improve conditions. But what do the facts show? After trying for thousands of years, men have not produced even one government that has brought impartial justice, true security and lasting happiness to all its subjects. What accounts for this?

² No matter how noble the objectives of persons in authority, all human governments are manipulated by forces beyond the control of the men in office. By whom? By superhuman spirits, Satan the Devil and his demons. True, many people scoff at belief in such spirit persons. But Jesus Christ did not. He personally knew the background of Satan and spoke of him as "the ruler of this world." (John 12:31) In symbolic language, the

1. (a) What current issues dominate the thinking of many people, and where do they look for solutions? (b) What are they often failing to consider?
2. Why are conditions in the world so bad?

Bible depicts the global political system as a wild beast and reveals that “the dragon [Satan] gave to the beast its power and its throne and great authority.” (Revelation 13:1, 2; compare Daniel 7:2-8, 12, 23-26.) And for our day the Bible foretold increased “woe for the earth . . . because the Devil has come down to you.” (Revelation 12:12) Nothing else can satisfactorily account for the chaos into which human society has been thrust. But how did it come about? What can we do to get relief?

THE ISSUE OF SOVEREIGNTY

³ The opening chapters of the Bible inform us that when Jehovah God created the first human pair, Adam and Eve, and placed them in the garden of Eden he instructed them about their relationship to him. He was their Father, their generous Provider, also the Universal Sovereign. For their own good, they needed to appreciate that their continued life depended on obedience to God.—Genesis 2:16, 17; compare Acts 17:24, 25.

⁴ At that time all creation was perfect. Unlike the animals, angels and humans had the faculty of free will. But soon after man’s creation one of the angels, abusing the wonderful ability to make personal decisions, rebelled against Jehovah’s sovereignty. He thus made himself an adversary, or resister, which is the literal meaning of the name Satan. (Compare James 1:14, 15; Revelation 12:9.) Motivated by ambition, Satan sought to entice the first human pair away from Jehovah God and to bring them under his own influence. He saw in them the potential for an earth filled with humans

3. What does Genesis 2:16, 17 show as to mankind’s proper relationship to God?

4. (a) From where did Satan come? (b) What wrong desire did he allow to develop?

honoring him as their god. (Compare Isaiah 14:12-14; Luke 4:5-7.) The account of what took place in Eden is no mere fable. Jesus Christ referred to it as historical fact.—Matthew 19:4, 5.

⁵ Jesus said of the Devil: “He did not stand fast in the truth . . . He is a liar and the father of the lie.” (John 8:44) The Devil’s first recorded lie was to Eve when he called into question God’s truthfulness. He urged rejection of God’s law and argued that it would be beneficial for each one to set his own standards in life. (Genesis 3:1-5; compare Jeremiah 10:23.) Jehovah’s sovereignty was thus challenged there in Eden. As later events showed, the integrity toward God of all intelligent creatures was also called into question. Did they serve God because they really loved him, or could they be induced to turn away from him? (Job 1:7-12; 2:3-5; Luke 22:31) These issues would affect everyone in heaven and on earth. What action did the Universal Sovereign take?

⁶ Instead of immediately destroying the rebels, Jehovah wisely allowed a certain time period for the issues to be settled once and for all. This God did, not to prove any point to himself, but to allow creatures with free will to see for themselves the bad fruitage produced by rebellion against his sovereignty, also to afford them opportunity to demonstrate where they personally stand on these vital matters. With the issues settled, never again would anyone be permitted to disrupt the peace.

⁷ Jehovah God, being mankind’s Creator, was also

5. (a) What issues were raised in Eden? (b) Who is affected by them?

6. Why did Jehovah not immediately destroy the rebels?

7. (a) How did human governments begin? (b) What kind of record have they made?

their rightful Ruler. (Revelation 4:11) In time, however, Satan and his demons began to stir up in men the desire not only to set their own standards as to good and bad but also to rule over their fellowmen. Nimrod was the first to establish himself as a king, ruling over cities in Mesopotamia. He was "a mighty hunter [both of animals and of men] in opposition to Jehovah." (Genesis 10:8-12) From the days of Nimrod down to the present, every possible kind of human government has been tried. But the overall record, as any student of history knows, has been one of corruption and bloodshed.—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

⁸ When Jesus Christ was on earth, Satan tried to bring even him under his influence. He offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the inhabited earth" in exchange for one act of worship. Jesus refused. (Luke 4:1-13) Later the people wanted to make him king, but Jesus withdrew. (John 6:15) He knew what the world's political system was, and he realized that it was not God's will for him to try to improve it.

⁹ Jesus demonstrated complete loyalty to Jehovah, his God and Father. He loved his Father's ways and always did the things pleasing to him. (John 8:29) He knew that the solutions to the problems of mankind would come by means of God's Kingdom, a real government that would rule from heaven and would provide the righteous and loving direction needed by mankind. That Kingdom alone could remove the influence of Satan and his demons. It alone could unite people of all races and nations into one global family living in peace. Only it could relieve mankind of bondage to sin and

8. Why did Jesus refuse to get involved in the world's political system?

9. (a) To solve mankind's problems, what must be done that only God's Kingdom can do? (b) What is that Kingdom?

death. Only it could bring lasting happiness to mankind. This Kingdom is not some arrangement set up by politicians and blessed by the clergy. True Christians do not resort to weapons of carnal warfare to further its interests. It is God's own government, with a perfect heavenly King enthroned by God himself. This is the Kingdom about which Jesus preached and for which he taught his followers to pray.—Daniel 2:44; Revelation 20:1, 2; 21:3, 4.

WHICH SIDE WILL YOU CHOOSE?

¹⁰ The issue that you must face is this: Do you recognize that Jehovah God, the Creator of the universe, is also its rightful Sovereign, its Supreme Ruler? Have you taken time to learn his purpose and his requirements as set out in the Bible? Out of respect for his position and in appreciation for his ways, are you proving yourself lovingly obedient to him?—Psalm 24:1, 10; John 17:3; 1 John 5:3.

¹¹ Are people who choose some other course happier? What has resulted from Satan's argument that humans would be benefited by asserting their independence instead of listening to God? Refusal to acknowledge that God owns the earth and that all mankind, as descendants of the original pair, are meant to be brothers has resulted in the slaughter of at least 99 million men, women and children in wars in this century alone. Failure to apply the Bible's moral standards has produced broken families, epidemics of venereal disease, the ruining of health by drug addiction, and violent crime. Even persons who escape a violent end are confronted with death because of sin inherited from

10. (a) What is the big issue that each one of us must face?
(b) What should we be doing about it?

11. Why does choosing a different course not bring happiness?

Adam. All the evidence shows that people only hurt themselves and those around them when they ignore the wise and loving requirements of the Creator. (Romans 5:12; compare Isaiah 48:17, 18.) Surely that is not the kind of life that you want. You can choose something far better.

¹² With warm appeal, the Bible extends the invitation: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good, O you people; happy is the able-bodied man that takes refuge in him." (Psalm 34:8) To do that, you must come to know Jehovah and then apply his counsel. As you do so, your life will become filled with meaning. Instead of grasping for brief moments of pleasure that may help you momentarily to forget problems but that often produce heartache later, you will learn how to cope successfully with problems of life and how to have enduring joy. (Proverbs 3:5, 6; 4:10-13; 1:30-33) You will also have the prospect of sharing in the marvelous blessings that will come by means of God's Kingdom. If this is the kind of life that you long for, it is vital to act now. Why?

ALL NATIONS HEADED FOR ARMAGEDDON

¹³ Jehovah will not forever tolerate men and organizations that either deliberately or indifferently follow Satan's lead. They will not be permitted to continue disregarding God's law, misusing the earth and spoiling life for others. They face a day of reckoning in what the Bible calls "the great day of Jehovah."—Zephaniah 1:2, 3, 14-18.

12. (a) What warm invitation does the Bible extend to us?
(b) As we progressively apply God's Word in our lives, what will we experience?

13. Why is it important to take a firm stand on Jehovah's side now?

¹⁴ In a revelation of events that would take place during the closing days of the present system of things, Jesus Christ disclosed that “expressions inspired by demons” would “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.” As that revelation showed, “they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon [or, Armageddon].” That gathering is now under way!—Revelation 16:14, 16; *Authorized Version*.

¹⁵ The Armageddon of which the Bible speaks is not something that can be avoided by a nuclear freeze. International negotiations will not head it off. The name is apparently drawn from the ancient city of Megiddo, but far more is involved than a location in the Middle East. Egged on by the invisible “ruler of this world,” all nations, despite their varied political ideologies, are being gathered to a worldwide situation that demonstrates their opposition to Jehovah God. “The kings of the entire inhabited earth,” along with all their followers, are being made to take their stand. Immediately before Armageddon their opposition to God’s Kingdom and to all who proclaim it will greatly intensify earth wide. Whether they acknowledge the existence of Satan or not, “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one,” as God’s Word declares. The entire wicked world and all who put their trust in it, yes, all who imitate its ways, must go.—1 John 5:19; 2:15-17.

¹⁶ From top to bottom, this world is riddled with corruption. Not just notorious criminals but average citizens display callous disregard for law and lack of

14. To what are all nations now being gathered?

15, 16. (a) What is Armageddon? (b) Why is it necessary?

concern for the person and property of their fellow-man. Above all, they refuse to take heed to what God himself says in his Word, the Bible. They do not respect his sovereignty. It is necessary for God to take action in order to clear his name of the reproach that has been brought upon it, also to prepare the way for making the earth a Paradise where lovers of righteousness will be able to enjoy genuine peace and security.

¹⁷ When destruction comes, there will be no doubt that it is from Jehovah. Desolation will sweep around the globe. The nations will know that Jehovah is taking action as his forces of execution go into operation. As governmental authority crumbles, every man's hand will turn against his companion. From the heavens, God's own Son will direct the outcome.—Revelation 6:16, 17; 19:11-13; Zechariah 14:13.

¹⁸ Unlike the results of nuclear war waged by men, this destruction will not be indiscriminate. But who will the survivors be? Will they be all who profess some sort of religion, or perhaps all who claim to be Christians? Jesus labels "many" of such as "workers of lawlessness." (Matthew 7:21-23) The survivors into the "new earth" will be only those who have really cultivated an intimate relationship with Jehovah and his kingly Son, Christ Jesus. By their way of life and their witnessing concerning the Kingdom, they will have demonstrated that they truly "know God" and that they "obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." Are you proving yourself to be such a person?—2 Thessalonians 1:8; John 17:3; Zephaniah 2:2, 3.

17. (a) How great will the destruction be? (b) Who will be directing the outcome?

18. Who will the survivors be?

How Long Will the Present System Last?

IT IS only natural to want to know how long it will be until the events so vividly described in the Bible and that culminate in Armageddon take place. When will the present wicked system be destroyed? Will we live to see the earth become a place where lovers of righteousness can enjoy complete peace and security?

² Jesus Christ provided remarkable details that answer those questions. He did so when his apostles asked: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" With regard to the actual destruction of the present wicked system, Jesus plainly said: "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." (Matthew 24:3, 36) Yet he did describe in considerable detail *the generation* that would see "the conclusion [Greek: *syn-te'lei-a*] of the system of things," the time period leading up to "the end [Greek: *te'los*]." Read it for yourself in your Bible at Matthew 24:3-25:46, also in the parallel accounts at Mark 13:4-37 and Luke 21:7-36.

³ As you read these accounts, you will realize that, only in part, Jesus was describing events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem and its

1. Regarding the Bible's promises, what have many of us asked?
2. (a) What similar question did Jesus' apostles ask? (b) Do we know exactly when the present wicked system will end? (c) But what very helpful information did Jesus provide?
3. How do we know that Jesus' answer was not merely describing first-century events?

temple in 70 C.E. It is evident that he also had something more far-reaching in mind. Why? Because at Matthew 24:21 he speaks of "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." That calls for much more than the destruction of one city and the people trapped in it. And at Luke 21:31 the events described are said to point to the coming of the long-awaited "kingdom of God." What is the noteworthy "sign" for which Jesus said to watch?

A COMPOSITE SIGN

⁴ He foretold wars, food shortages, widespread pestilences, great earthquakes, and a loveless spirit during a time of increasing lawlessness, but no one of these alone is "the sign." All the features foretold must be fulfilled in the lifetime of one generation for the picture to be complete. Included, too, would be "anguish of nations, not knowing the way out . . . while men become faint out of fear" because of events taking place in the heavens above and in the seas around them. (Luke 21:10, 11, 25-32; Matthew 24:12; compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5.) In contrast to all of this, but as part of the sign, Jesus foretold a global preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom despite international persecution of his followers. (Mark 13:9-13) Does that composite description specifically fit the time in which we are living?

⁵ Ridiculers may scoff, saying that there have been wars, famines, earthquakes, and so forth, repeatedly in human history. But such events take on special significance when they all appear together, not merely in a

4. What is "the sign" that Jesus gave?

5. What would make these events more than a repetition of history?

few isolated places, but on a global scale over an extended period of time that begins with a year foretold long in advance.

⁶ Consider these facts: The war that broke out in 1914 was of such proportions that it came to be known as the first *world* war, and since then peace has never truly returned to the earth. Following World War I came one of the greatest famines that mankind has ever experienced, and even today some 40 million persons a year are dying from food shortages. The Spanish flu of 1918 claimed lives at a rate unparalleled in the history of disease, and despite scientific research, tens of millions of persons are even now plagued with cancer, heart disease, loathsome venereal diseases, malaria, snail fever and river blindness. The frequency of major earthquakes has increased to about 20 times what it was on an average during the two thousand years before 1914. Fear and anguish on a global scale afflict people of all ages. Among the reasons are economic turmoil, violent crime and the threat of annihilation in nuclear war with weapons launched from submarines or streaking down from the heavens—something never possible before the 20th century.

⁷ Amid all of this an extraordinary worldwide proclamation of the good news of God's Kingdom is being made, as Jesus foretold. In upwards of 200 lands and islands of the seas, Jehovah's Witnesses devote hundreds of millions of hours each year, free of charge, to help people from all walks of life to understand the meaning of these world events in the light of God's Word. Earnestly the Witnesses point people to the way of survival through the "great tribulation" as subjects

6, 7. What events and conditions of the 20th century definitely match that composite sign? (When answering, use your Bible and show which portions of Jesus' prophecy you are discussing.)

of the Kingdom of God. And the Witnesses do this despite the fact that, as one Canadian news report observed, they “probably endure more persecution for less offence than any other religious group in the world.”

⁸ We must also take into consideration that, as part of his prophecy, Jesus pointed to the expiration of a specific time period, saying: “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.” (Luke 21:24) Have those “appointed times” ended?

“THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE NATIONS”

⁹ To appreciate the answer, we must understand the significance of Jerusalem itself. The city with its royal residence on Mount Zion was spoken of as “the town of the grand King . . . the city of Jehovah.” (Psalm 48:2, 8; Matthew 5:34, 35) The kings of the royal house of David were said to sit “upon Jehovah’s throne.” Therefore Jerusalem was a visible symbol that Jehovah exercised rulership in the earth. (1 Chronicles 29:23) Thus when the Babylonian armies were permitted by God to destroy Jerusalem, take its king into exile and leave the land desolate, they were trampling upon God’s Kingdom as exercised through a royal descendant of King David. When that took place, in 607 B.C.E., it marked the beginning of “the appointed times of the [Gentile] nations.” Never since then has a descendant of David ruled as king in Jerusalem.

¹⁰ What, then, would the end of that ‘trampling on Jerusalem’ mean? That Jehovah had again enthroned a

8. What time period was also included in this prophecy?

9. (a) What is the “Jerusalem” that was “trampled on” by the nations? (b) When did that ‘trampling’ begin?

10. (a) What would the end of the ‘trampling’ mean? (b) From what “Jerusalem” would Jesus then rule, and why?

king of his own choice, a descendant of David, now to exercise authority, not merely among the Jews, but in the affairs of mankind as a whole. That one is the Lord Jesus Christ. (Luke 1:30-33) But from where would he rule? Would it be from the earthly city of Jerusalem? Jesus clearly stated that privileges in connection with the Kingdom of God were going to be taken away from fleshly Israel. (Matthew 21:43; see also 23:37, 38.) Thereafter, worshipers of the true God looked to "the Jerusalem above," God's heavenly organization of loyal spirit creatures, as their mother. (Galatians 4:26) It would be in that heavenly Jerusalem that Jesus would be enthroned, to exercise ruling authority toward the earth. (Psalm 110:1, 2) That would take place at the end of "the appointed times of the nations." When would that be?

¹¹ Decades in advance it was known that this would come in 1914 at the end of the major fulfillment of the "seven times" of Daniel 4:10-17.* But full realization of its significance came gradually during the years that followed. Progressively Bible students saw unfolding before their eyes details of the composite sign that Jesus said would indicate his heavenly presence in Kingdom power. It became evident that they had, indeed, entered "the conclusion of the system of things," that Christ had begun to rule as King in 1914 and that the end of this wicked world would come within the generation that saw the beginning of these things.

* For details, see the book *"Let Your Kingdom Come,"* pages 127-39, 186-9.

11, and chart (page 27). (a) How is the expiration of the "appointed times" calculated? (b) So, what began when those "appointed times" ended? (c) How do historians view 1914? (See page 29.)

HOW SOUND ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

¹² Some who are aware of these facts in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy find it difficult to accept the conclusion toward which these point. Why? Because they expect something else. They were taught that Christ's second coming would be visible and would result in mass conversion of mankind. In the first century the Jews also had expectations that were not fulfilled. They hoped that Messiah's coming would be with a display of power that would liberate them from Rome. Clinging to their wrong expectations, they rejected God's own Son. How unwise it would be to repeat that error when Christ is present in Kingdom power! How much better to see what the Scriptures themselves really say!

¹³ The Bible shows that it would be amid his enemies that Christ would begin to rule. (Psalm 110:1, 2) It tells of the ousting of Satan and his demons from heaven to the vicinity of the earth after Christ would be given Kingdom authority; so there would be a period of increased woe for the earth. (Revelation 12:7-12) During that time there would be intensified preaching of the Kingdom message, to give persons opportunity to take action with a view to survival. (Matthew 24:14; Revelation 12:17) But would that result in world conversion? On the contrary, the Bible shows that it would be followed by a destruction unequalled in human history. Though humans will never see the glorified Jesus Christ with their physical eyes, all who have not willingly accepted the facts regarding Christ's royal presence will be forced to "see" that it is he who, as foretold, is bringing destruction

12. What wrong expectations make this conclusion difficult for some to accept? (Matthew 24:26, 27; John 14:3, 19)

13. What events does the Bible itself associate with Christ's presence?

1914

—A Year Marked by Bible Chronology and World Events

Chronology

- Bible foretold period of “seven times,” after which God would give world rulership to the one he chose (Daniel 4:3-17)
- “Seven times” = 2,520 years (Compare Revelation 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; Ezekiel 4:6.)
- Beginning of “seven times”: 607 B.C.E. (Ezekiel 21:25-27; Luke 21:24)
- End of “seven times”: 1914 C.E.
Jesus Christ was then enthroned in heaven, began to rule amid his enemies (Psalm 110:1, 2)
Satan was ousted from heaven; woe to mankind (Revelation 12:7-12)
Last days began (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Events Foretold to Mark Last Days

- War (First world war began in 1914; peace has never really returned)
- Famine (Now claims some 40 million lives per year)
- Disease epidemics (Despite advanced scientific research)
- Earthquakes (On an average, about 20 times as many major ones per year since 1914)
- Fear (Of crime, economic collapse, nuclear annihilation)

Present wicked world to be destroyed by God before the generation that saw 1914 passes away (Matthew 24:3-34; Luke 21:7-32)

upon them.—Revelation 1:7; Matthew 24:30; compare 1 Timothy 6:15, 16; John 14:19.

¹⁴ But does not now the passing of 70 years since 1914 indicate that there may be some doubt about whether we really have been in “the last days” since that year and whether Christ’s coming as executioner is near? Not at all! Regarding those who would see the fulfillment of “the sign” from its beginning, starting with 1914, Jesus said: “Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen.” (Mark 13:30) Members of that generation are still here, though rapidly decreasing in number.

¹⁵ It is true that statistics indicate that the average life expectancy on a global basis is now only 60 years, but millions of persons live beyond that age. According to available statistics, in 1980 approximately 250,000,000 of those who were alive in 1914 were still living. That generation is not yet gone. Interestingly, however, of those born in 1900 or earlier, figures published by the United Nations indicate that only an estimated 35,316,000 were still alive in 1980. So the number drops quickly as individuals reach their seventies and eighties. When considered along with all the details of Jesus’ prophetic sign, these facts strongly indicate that the end is near.—Luke 21:28.

¹⁶ Now is not the time to be apathetic. It is a time to act with urgency! As Jesus cautioned his disciples: “Prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man [Jesus Christ] is coming.”—Matthew 24:44.

14, 15. Why does not the passing of years since 1914 give reason to doubt that we really are in “the last days”?

16. So, what should our attitude be?

How Historians View 1914

For good reasons, the war that began in 1914 has been called the Great War and World War I. No war as devastating had ever been fought before. Wars since then have only continued what began in 1914. Consider these comments about the effects of that momentous year:

● "Not only had the war changed the map of Europe and set off revolutions that destroyed three empires, but its direct and indirect effects went far beyond that in almost every field. After the war both politicians and others tried to slow down or halt the evolution and bring things back to 'normal' again, to the world that had existed before 1914. But that was impossible. The earthquake had been so violent and so prolonged that the old world had been torn down to its foundation. There was no one that could rebuild it the way it had been, with its social systems, its world of ideas and its moral principles.

"... Not of least importance was the change of values that had taken place and which had established a completely new standard of values in so many fields. ... It was not only the soldiers at the front that had become brutalized and careless with the neighbor's property. Not only had many illusions, much prejudice and many false values been shattered but also many traditional standards for life and social behavior. Values were changing, everything seemed to be drifting, as if things no longer had any deep roots—so it was in the financial system as well as with sexual morality, with the political principles as well as the laws of art. ...

"The fundamental insecurity that characterized the time was especially noticeable in the economic field. Here the war had brutally destroyed a complex, flexible and well-balanced system with strict laws and steady values. ... Neither in this field was it possible to return to 'the normal.'"—*Världshistoria—Folkens liv och Kultur*

(Stockholm; 1958), Vol. VII, pages 421, 422.

● "Half a century has gone by, yet the mark that the tragedy of the Great War left on the body and soul of the nations has not faded. ... The physical and moral magnitude of this ordeal was such that nothing left was the same as before. Society in its entirety: systems of government, national borders, laws, armed forces, interstate relations, but also ideologies, family life, fortunes, positions, personal relations—everything was changed from top to bottom. ... Humanity finally lost its balance, never to recover it to this day."—General Charles de Gaulle, speaking in 1968 (*Le Monde*, November 12, 1968).

● "Ever since 1914, everybody conscious of trends in the world has been deeply troubled by what has seemed like a fated and predetermined march toward ever greater disaster. Many serious people have come to feel that nothing can be done to avert the plunge towards ruin. They see the human race, like the hero of a Greek tragedy, driven on by angry gods and no longer the master of fate."—Bertrand Russell, *New York Times Magazine*, September 27, 1953.

● "Looking back from the vantage point of the present we see clearly today that the outbreak of World War I ushered in a twentieth-century 'Time of Troubles'—in the expressive term of the British historian Arnold Toynbee—from which our civilization has by no means yet emerged. Directly or indirectly all the convulsions of the last half century stem back to 1914."—*The Fall of the Dynasties: The Collapse of the Old Order* (New York; 1963), by Edmond Taylor, page 16.

But what accounts for such a world-shattering turn of events? Only the Bible gives a satisfying explanation.

The Kind of Life That Awaits Survivors

FEAR-INSPIRING though the coming “day of Jehovah” will be, it will not leave the earth ruined for habitation. Its effects will not be like those of a nuclear holocaust, which it is feared would throw the ecology into chaos and cause survivors to suffer hideous effects from radiation. Instead of his spoiling the earth for human habitation, the Creator is going to “bring to ruin those ruining the earth.”—Joel 2:30, 31; Revelation 11:18.

² There is not a shred of doubt in the minds of Jehovah’s faithful servants that God can deliver them regardless of the destructive forces he will then unleash around them. They know that when morally corrupt Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by ‘sulphur and fire from heaven,’ angels of Jehovah delivered Lot and his two daughters. (Genesis 19:15-17, 24-26) They are also aware that when the firstborn of all Egypt were destroyed in the days of Moses, Jehovah’s angel of execution passed over the homes of the Israelites, those homes marked with the blood of the Passover lamb. (Exodus 12:21-29) So, too, when the destructive fury of the great tribulation breaks out, Jehovah will deliver those who have made him their refuge.—Psalm 91:1, 2, 14-16; Isaiah 26:20.

1. Why will the coming “day of Jehovah” not leave the earth a desolate ruin? (Isaiah 45:18)

2. What gives us confidence that Jehovah will deliver faithful ones through the great tribulation?

³ True, as a result of the great destruction, the earth will be strewn with those slain by Jehovah. But no one knows better than God what needs to be done to safeguard the health of the survivors. He tells us that he will invite the birds of heaven and the beasts of the field to his “great evening meal” and that they will have their fill from the fleshy parts of those slain. (Revelation 19:17, 18; Ezekiel 39:17-20) What they do not consume he can dispose of by other means. God’s purpose for the earth as stated in Eden will then move forward to its fulfillment.

WHAT GOD’S ORIGINAL PURPOSE REVEALS

⁴ An indication of what the future holds for survivors of the great tribulation is found in the kind of start that Jehovah gave the human family in Eden. In preparing the earth for habitation by mankind, the Creator produced abundant vegetation, also fish, birds and land animals in delightful variety. “Jehovah God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed.” (Genesis 2:8) But God did not make all the earth a paradise and then maintain it as a park for man. Instead, Jehovah gave the first human pair a wonderful start, bestowed his blessing on them and gave them an assignment of work. He set before them projects that would enable them to use to the full their abilities and to find satisfaction in their accomplishments. This would fill their lives with meaning. What a fascinating assignment was theirs—rearing children to reflect godly qual-

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3. Why will the vast number of dead bodies not endanger the health of survivors?
 4. What kind of start did Jehovah give the first human pair, and why is that of special interest to us?

ities, extending Paradise to the ends of the earth and caring for it with its teeming creature life! If Adam and Eve continued to respect Jehovah's sovereignty, they would never die. They would enjoy perfect life on earth forever.—Genesis 1:26-28; 2:16, 17.

⁵ Of course, conditions on earth immediately after the great tribulation will not be like those in Eden. But God's original purpose for the earth and mankind will remain unchanged. Paradise is to encompass the globe, humankind will be its caretakers, and they will all be united in worship of the true God. Before them will lie the opportunity to live forever, enjoying the glorious freedom of the children of God.—Luke 23:42, 43; Revelation 21:3, 4; Romans 8:20, 21.

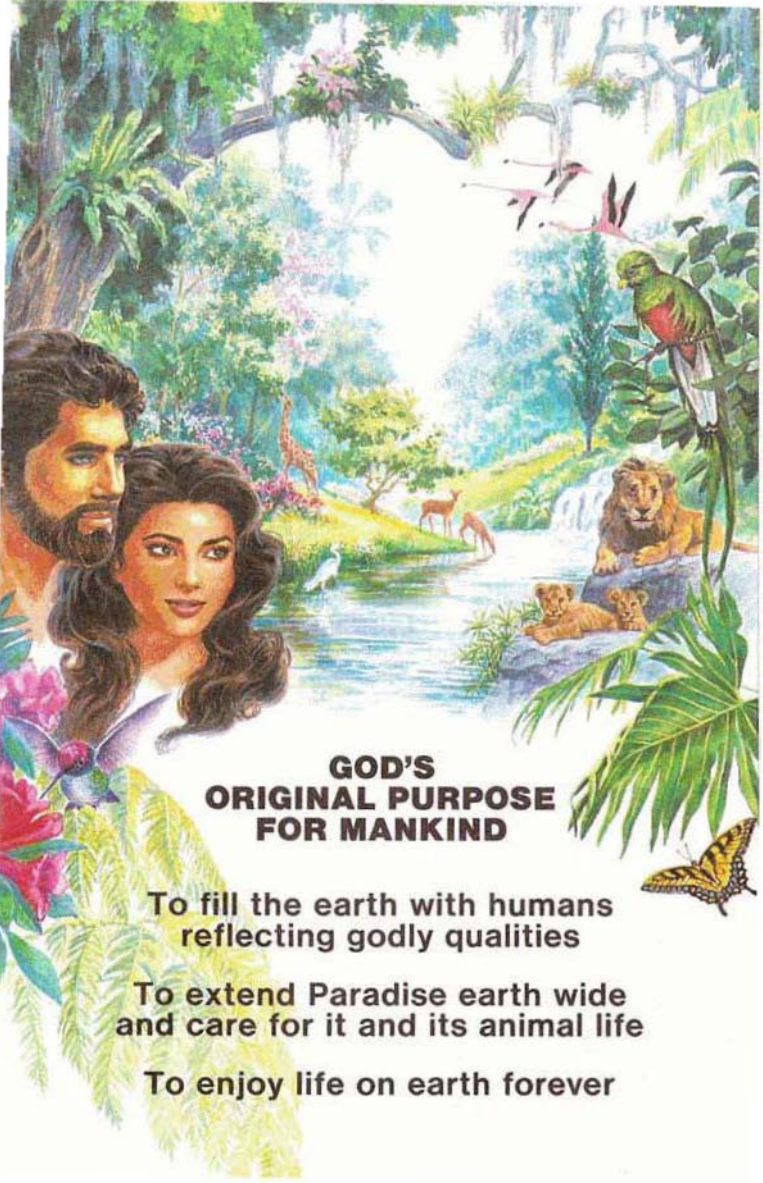
⁶ At the outset, the ruins of the old system will undoubtedly need to be cleared away. Military equipment that remains will be converted to peaceful uses. (Ezekiel 39:8-10; compare Micah 4:3.) Crops still in the fields will no doubt be harvested to sustain the survivors. Then as seed is sown and new harvests are reaped, the promise will come true: "The earth itself will certainly give its produce; God, our God, will bless us." (Psalm 67:6; compare Deuteronomy 28:8.) With the selfish and divisive elements of the old system gone, never again will anyone be obliged to go to bed hungry at night.—Psalm 72:16.

⁷ This will be a world made up of people who appreciate the importance of having Jehovah's direction and blessing. And these will be provided in a

5. So, what prospects will lie before survivors of the great tribulation?

6. (a) What will become of any military equipment? (b) Why will no one ever be obliged to go hungry again?

7. How does Jehovah's selection of earth's new King reflect God's own wisdom and love?



**GOD'S
ORIGINAL PURPOSE
FOR MANKIND**

**To fill the earth with humans
reflecting godly qualities**

**To extend Paradise earth wide
and care for it and its animal life**

To enjoy life on earth forever

manner that reflects God's own wisdom and love. The one whom Jehovah has assigned as earth's new King is his own Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible reveals that by means of him God created the earth and all the various kinds of life upon it. (Colossians 1:15-17) The Son of God thoroughly understands what the perpetuation of life on earth requires and he has a special fondness for the things pertaining to mankind.—Proverbs 8:30, 31.

⁸ Above all, the Son loyally upholds Jehovah's sovereignty. Concerning Jesus it was foretold: "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; and there will be enjoyment by him in the fear of Jehovah." (Isaiah 11:2, 3) He will help his earthly subjects to find similar enjoyment in conforming their lives to Jehovah's ways. Under his kingship, the survivors of the great tribulation will be restored to the kind of life that God purposed for mankind when our first parents were given Eden as their home.

WHAT JESUS' MINISTRY REVEALS

⁹ To enjoy that kind of life, however, we need relief from the grievous effects of sin. All of us have inherited sin from Adam, who lost his perfection when he showed lawless disregard for Jehovah's sovereignty. The results of sin are manifest in a variety of ways. It can give rise to illness, physical defects, also a tendency to think and say and do things out of wrong motives.

8. What response to Jehovah's sovereignty will Christ help his earthly subjects to cultivate?

9. (a) What are some of the grievous effects of inherited sin?

(b) What hope do Jesus' miracles hold out?

Finally it produces death. (Romans 5:12; 6:23) During his earthly ministry, Jesus performed many miracles that demonstrated what he will do to bring relief to those who are subjects of God's Kingdom.

¹⁰ But when some persons read the thrilling Bible accounts about the miracles of Jesus, they express doubt. Why? Because we live in a world where skepticism has become popular. Skeptics may feel that for miracles to be believable, scientists today should be able to repeat them or explain them. But why do scientists continue to devote great amounts of time and money to research? Because there is much that they do not understand. What is really at issue in our attitude toward Jesus' ministry is a willingness to acknowledge divine intervention in human affairs.

¹¹ To a crowd in Jerusalem in 33 C.E., the apostle Peter spoke of Jesus as "a man publicly shown by God to you through powerful works and portents and signs that God did through him." (Acts 2:22) The miracles were, as Peter here indicated, "powerful works," not deeds that other men could duplicate or explain, but evidence that God's power was operating through Jesus. They were "signs" that he truly was the Messiah, God's own Son. They were also "portents," occurrences that pointed to heartwarming future events.

¹² Read the Gospel accounts in the Bible, and as you do so, keep in mind that the miracles performed by Jesus give a preview of what he will do for mankind

10. Why is it not unreasonable that Jesus could perform miracles that scientists cannot duplicate?

11. At Acts 2:22, what expressions are used to describe Jesus' miracles, and what do these indicate?

12. (a) Why do you find the accounts about the cleansing of persons who had leprosy to be encouraging? (b) What was especially noteworthy about Jesus' healing of a paralytic?

who will live on earth under God's Messianic Kingdom. That will be a time when persons with such disfiguring diseases as leprosy will be made clean—just as Jesus cleansed ten leprous men while he was en route to Jerusalem in the year 33 C.E. He demonstrated that he can help such persons and that he really wants to do so. (Luke 17:11-19; Mark 1:40-42) Many have been victims of paralysis. For them, too, healing will be available—as it was for a bedfast paralytic whom Jesus healed, associating this with forgiving the man's sins.—Mark 2:1-12.

¹³ Blind eyes will be opened, deaf ears will be unstopped and those with speech defects will have their tongues loosed—even as Jesus did these things for persons in Galilee and in the Decapolis in the first century. (Matthew 9:27-30; Mark 7:31-37) For many persons today, doctors can provide no cure. That was the situation of a woman in Capernaum who “had been put to many pains by many physicians and had spent all her resources and had not been benefited.” But Jesus healed her, and he will do the same for many more like her. (Mark 5:25-29) Cancer, heart disease, malaria, snail fever—none will be too difficult, as he demonstrated when he cured “every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity” during his ministry in Galilee.—Matthew 9:35.

¹⁴ That will also be a time when there will be opportunity for the dead—not those destroyed by God

13. Tell about one of Jesus' miracles that holds out hope for (a) the blind, (b) those who are deaf or have a speech defect, (c) persons who have been treated by many doctors without getting relief. (d) How do you know that Jesus will be able to cure *all kinds* of diseases and infirmities?

14. How do accounts about Jesus' raising the dead indicate what resurrection will mean to survivors?

in the great tribulation, but for billions of others who have died through the centuries—to live again, and with prospects that were never before within their grasp. What will that mean to the survivors? Near the village of Nain, Jesus dried the tears of grief of a widowed mother by restoring her only son to life. In Capernaum he brought great ecstasy to the parents of a young girl by awakening their child from the dead. (Luke 7:11-16; Mark 5:35-42) Would you like to be on hand when your loved ones return from the dead? That will be the thrilling experience of survivors into the “new earth.”

¹⁵ Life then will not be a repetition of the heartache and grief that so often burden down people now. This is shown not only by Jesus’ miracles but also by his teachings, because only those who truly are his disciples will survive into the “new earth.” (John 3:36) He taught his followers to put spiritual values ahead of material pursuits, to rely on Jehovah, to look to Him for guidance and to be appreciative of His blessings. By word and example, Jesus emphasized the importance of love and humility, caring deeply about other people and giving of oneself in their behalf. Already, those who become Christ’s disciples and who truly apply these principles find great refreshment for their souls and they, in turn, bring refreshment to others. (Matthew 11:28, 29; John 13:34, 35) This is but a foretaste of the kind of life that will be enjoyed by those who are still alive when the present loveless world is gone. If you act wisely now, that life can be yours.

15. (a) How do Jesus’ teachings indicate the kind of people that will live on earth then? (b) In what way can we have a foretaste of that kind of life now?

Reliable Foregleams of Mankind's Future

WE HAVE sound reasons for confidence in what the Bible tells us regarding the future. Its prophecies are not based on the guesswork of men who have studied trends and then made predictions. "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 1:20, 21) Because of that, Bible prophecy has proved to be accurate in every detail.

² It foretold the rise and fall of world empires by name—Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece. It announced nearly two centuries in advance how Babylon would fall and the name of its conqueror. This was fulfilled in detail. It predicted that the city of Babylon would eventually become a desolate waste, never again to be inhabited. That condition continues to our day. (Daniel 8:3-8, 20-22; Isaiah 44:27-45:2; 13:1, 17-20) Other nations not named in the Bible were described in advance in such detail that well-informed persons can readily identify them.

³ It should be realized, however, that there is more than one kind of prophetic information in the Bible. We have already observed this in connection with the

1. Why does Bible prophecy always prove to be accurate?
2. Give examples of prophecies about world affairs.
3. Are there prophecies that are not stated in the form of predictions?

miracles of Jesus, which served as portents of what mankind will experience under God's Kingdom. Other portions of the Scriptures that may not use language that sounds like prediction also contain prophetic elements.

FASCINATING PROPHETIC PATTERNS

⁴ The Bible book of Hebrews, for example, opens our eyes to the prophetic significance of matters that a casual reader might view as being simply history. It reveals that "the [Mosaic] Law has a shadow of the good things to come."—Hebrews 10:1.

⁵ At times *objects* were used to make prophetic patterns. For example, with regard to the sacred tent, or tabernacle, built by Moses at Jehovah's direction, along with the services performed at it, the divinely inspired writer of Hebrews explains that it was "a typical representation and a shadow of the heavenly things." It pictured Jehovah's great spiritual temple, the Most Holy of which is in the heavens. Thus, "when Christ came as a high priest of the good things that have come to pass, through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, he entered, no, not with the blood of goats and of young bulls, but with his own blood, once for all time into the holy place and obtained an everlasting deliverance for us. . . . Christ entered, not into a holy place made with hands, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us." (Hebrews 8:1-5; 9:1-14, 24-28) Great benefits come to Christians from the spiritual realities here described, and appreciation for these should be reflect-

4. How are we alerted to the prophetic significance of the Mosaic Law?

5. What illustrates that *objects* may typify something greater?

ed in our course of life.—Hebrews 9:14; 10:19-29; 13:11-16.

⁶ *Persons* referred to in the Scriptures also served as prophetic types. At Galatians 4:21-31 a detailed example of this is explained in the case of Abraham's wife Sarah (said to correspond to "Jerusalem above") and the servant girl Hagar (identified with the earthly "Jerusalem today") and their children. In another case Jesus helped his disciples to perceive that Elijah the prophet had his counterpart in John the Baptist, who, like Elijah, was fearless in exposing hypocritical religious practices.—Matthew 17:10-13.

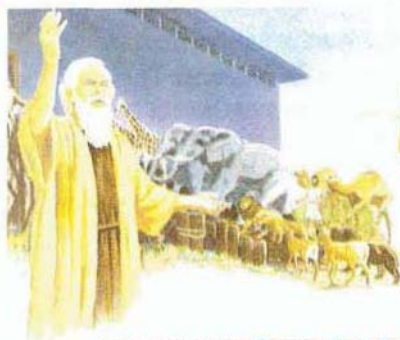
⁷ Solomon, renowned for his wisdom and the prosperity and peace of his reign, aptly prefigured Jesus Christ. (1 Kings 3:28; 4:25; Luke 11:31; Colossians 2:3) Although the account in Genesis concerning Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek is very brief, Psalm 110:1-4 indicates that it, too, is filled with meaning, because the Messiah would become "a priest to time indefinite according to the manner of Melchizedek," that is, he would receive his priesthood by direct appointment of God, not because of the family in which he would be born. Later, the letter to the Hebrews enlarges on this and associates appreciation for such truths with Christian maturity, an important quality for those who are seeking to please God.—Hebrews 5:10-14; 7:1-17.

⁸ It is evident that the prophetic parallels involve

6. What prophetic significance is ascribed to *persons* at (a) Galatians 4:21-31? (b) Matthew 17:10-13?

7. In what respects was Jesus Christ prefigured by (a) Solomon? (b) Melchizedek?

8. (a) What example shows that *experiences in life* may be prophetic? (b) Does every aspect of such an experience necessarily have a parallel in the fulfillment?



PROPHETIC PATTERNS —Pointing to What?

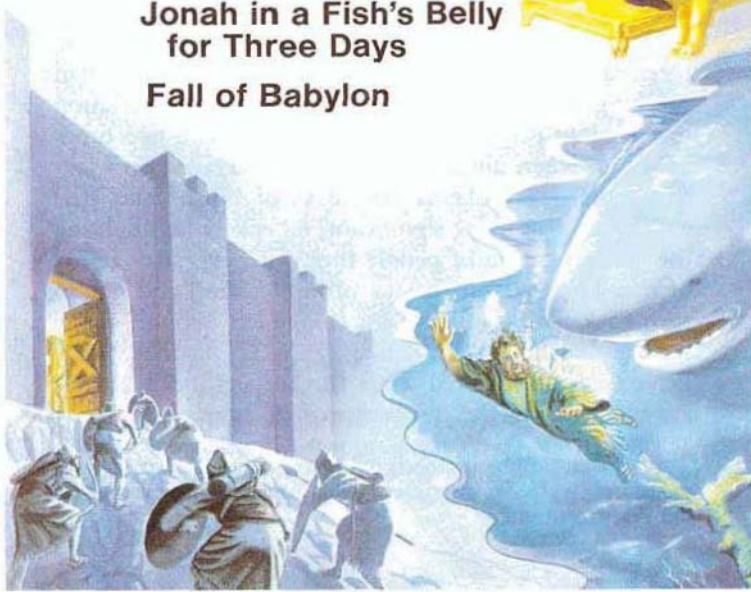
The Days of Noah

The Tabernacle

King Solomon

**Jonah in a Fish's Belly
for Three Days**

Fall of Babylon



more than the office or position of persons. They also include their *experiences in life*. On one occasion when the Jewish religious leaders displayed their unbelief, Jesus said to them: "A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights, so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights." (Matthew 12:38-40; Jonah 1:17; 2:10) However, Jesus did not say that everything in Jonah's life foreshadowed what he himself would experience. When given an assignment by Jehovah, Jesus did not run away, as Jonah had tried to flee to Tarshish. But as Jesus indicated, Jonah's experience in the belly of the big fish was included in the Bible record because it served to provide prophetic details about Jesus' own death and resurrection.—Matthew 16:4, 21.

⁹ Certain *periods of history* also provide prophetic foregleams that are of particular interest to us. When speaking of the time leading up to his own revelation in Kingdom power, Jesus drew parallels with two other occasions when divine judgment was executed on wicked people. He spoke of "the days of Noah" and "the days of Lot" as being significant, especially highlighting the preoccupation of people then with everyday affairs of life. He urged us to take prompt action and not to turn back with a longing for things left behind, as the wife of Lot had done. (Luke 17:26-32) In the apostle Peter's second inspired letter further significant details are mentioned—the disobedience of angels before the

9. (a) What prophetic aspects did Jesus point out in two *periods of history*? (b) Under inspiration, what further significant details did Peter mention?

Flood, Noah's preaching activity, the distress that Lot felt because of the law-defying indulgence of the people of Sodom, the fact that by cutting off the wicked in his due time God was setting a pattern of things to come, and the evidence that God can and without fail will deliver his faithful servants.—2 Peter 2:4-9.

¹⁰ When prophecies have been fulfilled, this does not mean that they are now of mere historical interest. Both *the advance notification of what was to take place and the way it was fulfilled* are often prophetic of even more far-reaching events in the future. This is true of what is recorded about ancient Babylon, an empire that was outstandingly religious and whose influence is still felt around the world in our day. Although Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians in 539 B.C.E., the book of Revelation, written at the end of the first century C.E., draws on the language of the prophet Jeremiah and points to a yet future application of the prophecies, in connection with Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. As examples of this, compare Revelation 18:4 with Jeremiah 51:6, 45; Revelation 17:1, 15 and 16:12 with Jeremiah 51:13 and 50:38; Revelation 18:21 with Jeremiah 51:63, 64.

¹¹ In like manner, Jehovah's dealings with the apostate ten-tribe kingdom of Israel and with the faithless kings and priests of the two-tribe kingdom of Judah are prophetic. Both the prophecies that applied to those ancient kingdoms and their fulfillment, recorded in the Scriptures, paint a vivid picture of how God will deal

10. By comparing Jeremiah with Revelation, show that fulfilled prophecies may have further prophetic value.

11. What prophetic significance is there in the record of Jehovah's dealings with apostate Israel and with Judah when unfaithful? Why?

with modern-day Christendom, which also claims to serve the God of the Bible but flagrantly violates his righteous commandments.

¹² All these accounts, therefore, are of significance today. They help us to understand how God views situations in our day and what we personally must do in order to survive the coming great tribulation. We are thus helped to appreciate more fully the fact that "all Scripture is . . . beneficial for teaching, for reproof, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

WAS IT ALL PREARRANGED?

¹³ Are we to understand from all of this that the conduct of people and nations recorded in the Bible was all prearranged by God so that it would have prophetic import? It is evident that God himself dealt with his servants in the past in a certain manner so as to provide a pattern of greater things that he had in mind for the future. But what about the actions of humans? Some of them committed serious sins. Did God induce them to commit these in order to make up the Bible record? The Christian Bible writer James answers: "With evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." (James 1:13) God did not cause them to do wrong so that prophetic patterns could be made.

¹⁴ Do not forget that Jehovah is mankind's Creator.

12. How are we personally benefited by such accounts?

13. How do we know that God did not induce people to commit sins so that prophetic patterns could be made?

14. (a) How does Jehovah know what humans, or even Satan, will do at a future time? (b) In what ways does Jehovah's knowledge of himself and of his purpose enter into Bible prophecy?

He knows how we are made and what causes people to act the way they do. (Genesis 6:5; Deuteronomy 31:21) He can accurately foretell the outcome for people who live in harmony with his righteous principles and what the results will be for those who try to ignore their need for God or who pervert his ways. (Galatians 6:7, 8) He knows that the Devil will continue to use tactics similar to those he used in the past. Jehovah also knows what he himself will do under given circumstances, that he will act in harmony with the lofty qualities of justice, impartiality, love and mercy, which he has always manifested. (Malachi 3:6) Since Jehovah's purposes are certain to be accomplished, he can foretell the results and the steps that he will take to accomplish them. (Isaiah 14:24, 27) So he could select events from the lives of individuals and nations and have these incorporated in the Bible to provide foregleams of what the future will bring.

¹⁵ Appropriately, therefore, after relating events from Israel's history, the apostle Paul said to fellow Christians: "Now these things went on befalling them as examples, and they were written for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived." (1 Corinthians 10:11) And to the Christian congregation in Rome he wrote: "All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) When we thus appreciate that Bible accounts are more than mere history, we can begin to draw from them marvelous foregleams of mankind's future.

15. How did the apostle Paul emphasize that Bible accounts are much more than mere history?

A World That Was Destroyed

ONCE before, world destruction was impending. People of all nations can be grateful that among their ancestors there was a man who did not scoff at God's warning of a global flood. Because Noah listened and obeyed, he and his wife, his three sons and their wives survived. From them, all of us have descended.—Genesis 10:1, 32.

² God destroyed that world because he saw that the earth was full of violence. "The badness of man was abundant in the earth." (Genesis 6:3, 5, 13) Conditions were very much like those in our 20th century.

³ What had caused the situation in Noah's day to become so serious? A significant factor is disclosed at Genesis 6:2, which reports: "The sons of the true God began to notice the daughters of men, that they were good-looking; and they went taking wives for themselves, namely, all whom they chose." But what was wrong with that? Well, these were not merely human males who decided to get married. These "sons of the true God" were angels, spirit creatures, who observed the beautiful women on earth and the pleasures of marriage and who took on human form. (Compare Job 1:6.) Their materializing human bodies and marrying were acts of disobedience to God. The Scriptures state

1. (a) Has world destruction ever before faced mankind?
(b) Why should we be grateful that Noah did not scoff at warning of it?
2. Why did God destroy that world?
3. What had caused the situation to become so serious?

that they “forsook their own proper dwelling place” and that their relations with women were “unnatural,” a perversion. (Jude 6, 7; 1 Peter 3:19, 20) Their hybrid offspring were abnormally large. These were called Nephilim, or “fellers,” because they were bullies. —Genesis 6:4.

⁴ Though living in the midst of that corrupt world, Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah. Why? Because “Noah was a righteous man.” He was acquainted with the issues raised in Eden, and he proved to be faultless, “a man of integrity.” (Genesis 6:8, 9; *The Jerusalem Bible*) With a view to the preservation of Noah and his family, as well as specimens of every kind of land animal and flying creature, Jehovah instructed him to build an ark, a huge chestlike structure. As God explained: “Here I am bringing the deluge of waters upon the earth to bring to ruin all flesh in which the force of life is active from under the heavens. Everything that is in the earth will expire.” (Genesis 6:13-17) Wisely, Noah listened to God and obeyed.

⁵ The Deluge came in the year 2370 B.C.E., as indicated by the Bible’s detailed chronology. It was the greatest cataclysm in human history, even down to the present time. So overwhelming was it that “all the tall mountains that were under the whole heavens came to be covered.” (Genesis 7:19) By means of the Deluge “the world of that time suffered destruction.” (2 Peter 3:6) But someone may ask, ‘If even the highest mountains were covered with water, where is all that water now?’ Evidently it is right here on the earth.

⁶ It should be realized that the Bible does not say that

4. (a) Why was Noah shown favor by God? (b) What preparation was made for the preservation of life?

5. How extensive was the Flood?

6. After the Flood, where did all the water go?

any mountains in Noah's day were as tall as Mount Everest. Scientists have said that in the past many of the mountains were much lower than at present and that some have even been pushed up from under the seas. Furthermore, it is believed that there was a time when the oceans themselves were smaller and the continents were larger than they are now, as testified to by river channels extending far out under the oceans. But regarding the present situation, *National Geographic* magazine, in its issue of January 1945, reported: "There is ten times as much water by volume in the ocean as there is land above sea level. Dump all this land evenly into the sea, and water would cover the entire earth, one and one-half miles deep." So, after the floodwaters fell, but before the raising of mountains and the lowering of seabeds caused water to drain off the land and before the buildup of polar ice caps, there was ample water to cover "all the tall mountains," as the Bible states.—Genesis 7:17-20; 8:1-3; compare Psalm 104:8, 9.

⁷ Such an overwhelming global deluge surely must have made a never-to-be-forgotten impression on those who lived through it. Future generations would be told about it. Since the Bible record states that all nations have descended from the same group of Flood survivors, it is reasonable to expect that in all parts of the earth there would be evidence of some early memory of that great cataclysm. Is this the case? Yes, indeed!

⁸ As the offspring of the Flood survivors migrated to distant places and as time elapsed, details became distorted and the account was adapted to local religious concepts. But it can hardly be a coincidence that in primitive legends around the world there is recollection of a great flood that destroyed mankind with the

7, 8. What record of the Flood is there apart from the Bible?

exception of a few who were preserved together. Memory of this is found in Mesopotamia and other parts of Asia, in Australia and the Pacific islands, among scores of Indian tribes in North and South America, in stories told among the ancient Greeks and the Romans, in Scandinavia, and among African tribes. Many of these accounts make mention of animals' being preserved in a boat along with humans. Paralleling the Bible record, some relate that birds were sent out to determine when the water had receded. (Compare Genesis 7:7-10; 8:6-12.) No other ancient event is so widely recollected.

⁹ Historical details associated with the Flood have affected customs even down till our day. How? Well, the Bible reports that the Flood began "in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month." That "second month" corresponds to the latter part of October and the first part of November on our calendar. (Genesis 7:11) It is therefore noteworthy that many people around the world commemorate a Day of the Dead or Feast of Ancestors at that time of year. Why then? Because these customs reflect a memory of the destruction caused by the Deluge.*

¹⁰ It is the Bible itself, however, that contains uncorrupted testimony about what occurred. What Noah saw and experienced was later incorporated in the Bible. Centuries later, God himself, when speaking through the prophet Isaiah, referred to "the waters of Noah."

* *The Worship of the Dead* (London; 1904), by Colonel J. Garnier, pages 3-8; *Life and Work at the Great Pyramid* (Edinburgh; 1867), Vol. II, by Professor C. Piazzzi Smyth, pages 371-424.

9. What practices reflect a recollection of the events of "the second month" on Noah's calendar?

10. Why is the Bible account of the Flood most reliable and of the greatest personal value?

(Isaiah 54:9) God's firstborn Son observed the events of Noah's day. Later, when on earth, this One, Jesus Christ, spoke of the Flood as a historical fact and he also explained why so many died at that time.

"THEY TOOK NO NOTE"

¹¹ Jesus did not say that everyone apart from Noah's household was criminally violent. Instead, he stated: "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 [Jesus Christ] will be."—Matthew 24:37-39.

¹² It was not wrong for them to eat and drink in moderation or to marry honorably. But when warned of global disaster, their continuing to center their lives on such personal pursuits demonstrated that they did not really believe either Noah or Jehovah God, whose message of warning Noah proclaimed. If they had believed, they would have earnestly inquired how survival was possible and then taken urgent action to meet the requirements. Perhaps some of the people agreed that something ought to be done to put a stop to the widespread violence of those days, but a global flood no doubt seemed very unlikely to them. So, as Jesus stated, "*they took no note* [of God's message through Noah] until the flood came and swept them all away." That was recorded as a warning example for us.

¹³ The inspired apostle Peter likewise sounded a warn-

11. Why were so many people destroyed in the Flood?

12. Why was their 'taking no note' so serious?

13. (a) As foretold, how do many people today react when told that Christ is invisibly present, and why? (b) What does Peter say they are ignoring?

ing when he wrote: "In the last days [where we now are] 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.'" Such persons do not want to feel accountable to anyone. So they push out of their minds the idea of Christ's presence and what it will mean to those who pursue an ungodly way of life. But Peter continues: "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. But 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."—2 Peter 3:3-7.

¹⁴ Those who ridicule are ignoring the fact that "the word of God" does not go unfulfilled. To refute their viewpoint, the apostle Peter refers us back to the time of creation. At that time God said: "Let an expanse come to be in between the waters and let a dividing occur between the waters and the waters." Having made that pronouncement, "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." Thus "the word of God," his statement of purpose, was fulfilled. (Genesis 1:6, 7) His word was also fulfilled when he decreed a global deluge in Noah's day and used those waters to destroy "the world of that time." And it will be by that same

14. Why should fulfillment of "the word of God" at the time of creation and in Noah's day make us think seriously today?

irresistible word of God that destruction will come upon the present ungodly system of things.

¹⁵ What took place at the time of the Flood was a pattern of things to come. The earth was not destroyed back then, but ungodly people were. What, then, is meant by the statement that “the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire”? (2 Peter 3:7; 2:5) Well, what effect would literal fire have on the already intensely hot sun and stars in the physical heavens? And how would burning up the literal earth fit in with God’s purpose to make it a Paradise? Clearly, “the heavens and the earth that are now,” as here referred to, must be symbolic. (Compare Genesis 11:1; 1 Kings 2:1, 2; 1 Chronicles 16:31.) “The heavens” represent the governmental powers raised up above mankind in general, and “the earth” is ungodly human society. In the great day of Jehovah they will be destroyed as completely as if burned in fire. Those who continue to scoff at the divine warning of this put their lives in serious jeopardy.

DELIVERANCE FOR PERSONS OF GODLY DEVOTION

¹⁶ The account of the Flood dramatically illustrates a point that we today need to take to heart. What is that? After referring to what God did in Noah’s day, the apostle Peter concludes: “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.” (2 Peter 2:9) The key to deliverance, then, is being a person of godly devotion.

15. (a) Why is 2 Peter 3:7 not predicting the burning up of planet Earth? (b) Then what are “the heavens” and “the earth” that are “stored up for fire”?

16. As shown at 2 Peter 2:9, what is the key to deliverance?

¹⁷ What does that mean? Noah obviously was a man of godly devotion. "Noah walked with the true God." (Genesis 6:9) He pursued a course of life that harmonized with Jehovah's revealed will. He had a close personal relationship with God. Building the ark and gathering specimens of all the birds and animals was a colossal job. Noah did not take a wait-and-see attitude. He had faith. Noah "proceeded to do according to all that God had commanded him. He did just so." (Genesis 6:22; Hebrews 11:7) People needed to be reminded of Jehovah's righteous ways and warned of coming destruction of the ungodly. Noah did that too as "a preacher of righteousness."—2 Peter 2:5.

¹⁸ What about Noah's wife, his sons and their wives—what was required of them? The Bible account focuses special attention on Noah because he was the family head, but the others also must have been persons of godly devotion. Why so? The case of Noah's children was later cited by Jehovah to his prophet Ezekiel to show that, if Noah were living in Israel at that time, his children could not expect deliverance on the basis of their father's righteousness. They were old enough to obey or to disobey, so they personally needed to give evidence of their devotion to Jehovah and his righteous ways.—Ezekiel 14:19, 20.

¹⁹ In view of the certainty of the impending world destruction, the Bible urges us to keep it close in mind and to prove that we, too, are persons of godly devotion. (2 Peter 3:11-13) From among the descendants of Noah, there are people today in all parts of the earth who are heeding that wise counsel and who will be survivors into the "new earth."

17. How did Noah give evidence of godly devotion?

18. Why must each one who survived the Flood have had such devotion?

19. So, what should we be doing, and how?

Act Wisely in the Face of Calamity

WHEN warned by a reliable source that disaster is impending, wise persons take action to safeguard their lives. (Proverbs 22:3) But countless thousands have perished needlessly because their confidence was misplaced. Despite warnings to get into lifeboats, hundreds of passengers went down with the ocean liner *Titanic* in 1912 because they believed the claim that it was unsinkable. When Mount Pelée in Martinique began to spew out volcanic ash and rock in 1902, the populace of nearby Saint-Pierre was apprehensive, but since the selfish interests of prominent members of the community were at stake, local politicians and the editor of the local newspaper sought to calm the fears of the people, urging them not to leave. Suddenly the mountain exploded, and 30,000 persons perished.

² In our day an even more urgent warning is being sounded—not about some local disaster but concerning the nearness of God’s universal war of Armageddon. (Isaiah 34:1, 2; Jeremiah 25:32, 33) Jehovah’s Witnesses have repeatedly called at the homes of people worldwide, urging them to act wisely, with a view to the preservation of their lives. Do you love life enough to take the needed action, and to do so promptly, without delay?

1. Why did people perish needlessly (a) when the *Titanic* sank? (b) when Mount Pelée exploded?
2. (a) What urgent warning is being sounded in our day? (b) Why is the situation serious?

“THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY”

³ A critical factor in your prospect for survival is your attitude toward the world. As long as you are alive as a human you are in the world. But you do not have to share its wrong desires and imitate its ungodly deeds. You do not have to identify yourself with it by putting your confidence in men and their schemes instead of in God and his purpose. But you must make a choice; you cannot be on both sides. “Whoever . . . wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God.” Why? Because, as God’s Word tells us, “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.”—James 4:4; 1 John 5:19; Psalm 146:3-5.

⁴ Understandably, Jehovah will not preserve into his righteous New Order persons whose way of life gives evidence that they cling to what God condemns. What are some of these things? Many are activities and attitudes that the world takes for granted. But if we want to survive the end of this wicked world, then, regardless of what other people do and think, we will heed the Bible’s warning that fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals and those who indulge in immoral uncleanness and loose conduct will not be among the survivors. No matter how often others resort to lies or theft, we will reject such a way of life. Despite the popularity of occult practices, we will avoid them. Though others may become jealous, stir up strife, give in to fits of anger, or try to escape from frustrations with drugs or excessive use of alcoholic beverages, we

3. Why will our attitude toward the world affect our prospect for survival?

4. (a) Using your Bible, explain what practices and attitudes will bar people from life under God’s Kingdom. (b) Why should any who have indulged in these things abandon them quickly?

will not imitate them. And if we have indulged in these things, we will face up to the need to change. Even if some of these seemed “normal” to us in the past, we will abandon them. Why? Because we truly love God, we love life, and God’s Word warns that “those who practice such things will not inherit God’s kingdom.”—Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-7; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Revelation 22:15.

⁵ If an opportunity to live forever in happiness is important to us, we need to learn how to please the Giver of life, Jehovah God. (Acts 17:24-28; Revelation 4:11) Progressively we must apply his Word to every aspect of our lives. As we do that, we will soon take a serious look at our attitude toward ourselves and other people, toward personal possessions and attainments, and consider how this affects our standing before God. People around us may have an exalted opinion of themselves, of their own tribe or race or nation, but we will think seriously about the scripture that says: “God opposes the haughty ones, but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble ones.”—James 4:6; Zephaniah 2:2, 3; Psalm 149:4.

⁶ Even though others allow themselves to be enslaved by the desires stimulated by a materialistic society or are motivated by a desire for personal prominence, we will examine our own life in the light of 1 John 2:15-17, which says: “Do not be loving either the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because

5. (a) If life is precious to us, what must we learn to do?
(b) What fine qualities are mentioned in the scriptures at the end of this paragraph? How important are they? How can we develop them?

6, 7. Why should we examine our own lives in the light of 1 John 2:15-17?

everything in the world—the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the showy display of one's means of life—does not originate with the Father, but originates with the world. Furthermore, the world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.” If we need to make changes, this is the time to do it.

⁷ This world and its way of life will not go on forever. It is not “unsinkable.” Worldly men may try to hold on to their followers, making them feel that their efforts can improve the world. But the only way to be spared from impending calamity is to heed God's message of warning. In this the Ninevites in the days of the prophet Jonah set an example that we do well to take to heart.

“THEY REPENTED AT WHAT JONAH PREACHED”

⁸ In the ninth century B.C.E., Jehovah commissioned Jonah to go to the people of Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, to proclaim that, because of their badness, Nineveh was to be overthrown. When Jonah warned that in just 40 days they would perish, how did they react? Instead of scoffing, they “began to put faith in God, and they proceeded to proclaim a fast and to put on sackcloth.” The king himself joined them and urged all the people to call out earnestly to God and to turn back from their bad way and from their violence. He reasoned: “Who is there knowing whether the true God may . . . turn back from his burning anger, so that we may not perish?” Because they abandoned their bad way, Jehovah showed them mercy. Their lives were spared.—Jonah 3:2-10.

8. How did the Ninevites show wisdom when Jonah delivered God's warning to them, and with what results?

⁹ As a reproof to unbelieving Jews in the first century C.E., Jesus drew attention to that historical incident, saying: "Men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it; because they repented at what Jonah preached, but, look! something more than Jonah is here."—Matthew 12:41.

¹⁰ What about our day? Is anyone showing such repentance? Yes; there are many thousands worldwide who, like the Ninevites, may never have professed to worship the God of the Bible but who are now heeding Jehovah's message of warning. When they learn why destruction is coming upon this world, they seek God's mercy. They have a genuine change of mind and heart regarding their former way of life and now apply themselves to doing "works that befit repentance." (Acts 26:20; see also Romans 2:4.) Is it your desire to be one of them? If so, do not delay.

URGENTLY SUE FOR PEACE

¹¹ The Gibeonites in the days of Joshua also acted wisely so that their lives would be spared. They were Canaanites whose way of life was immoral and materialistic, idolatrous and demonistic. Jehovah had decreed their destruction. They knew how Jehovah had delivered Israel from Egypt 40 years earlier and that powerful Amorite kings east of the Jordan River had been unable to stand before them. Everyone was aware that, without the use of battering rams, the massive walls of Jericho had fallen flat before them and that the city of Ai had been reduced to a desolate mound.

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- 9, 10. (a) In what respect did Jesus say that the Ninevites were an example to imitate? (b) Who today are like those Ninevites?
11. (a) What was the background of the Gibeonites? (b) Why did they sue for peace with Israel?

(Joshua 9:3, 9, 10) The inhabitants of the city of Gibeon wanted to live, but they realized that they could never win in a war against the God of Israel. Something needed to be done quickly. What? They could not insist on a treaty with Israel, but they thought they should at least try to obtain one. How?

¹² They acted shrewdly, sending to Joshua men whose appearance indicated that they had made a very long trip. Approaching Joshua, they said that they were from a distant land, that they had heard of the great things that Jehovah had done and, as representatives of their people, they had come to offer themselves as servants and to request that a covenant be made with them. Joshua and the chieftains of Israel agreed. Later, when the deception came to light, the Gibeonites humbly confessed that they were afraid for their lives and they showed a willingness to do anything required of them. (Joshua 9:4-25) Jehovah had observed the entire matter. He was not deceived. He could see that they were not trying to corrupt his people, as the Moabites had done earlier, and he appreciated their earnest desire to live. So he permitted them to be assigned to work under the Levites at the sacred tabernacle, gathering wood and drawing water, thus supporting Jehovah's worship. To be acceptable for such service, of course, they had to abandon their former unclean practices.—Joshua 9:27; Leviticus 18:26-30.

¹³ In view of the fact that we live close to the end of the "last days," it is vital for all persons who want

12. (a) Despite the method they used, why were the Gibeonites spared? (b) What changes did they have to make, and what work was given them to do?

13. (a) How can we benefit from that prophetic drama involving the Gibeonites? (b) To be spared by the Greater Joshua, what is required of people today?

to survive to act without delay, and with complete sincerity. Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah's executioner today, cannot be tricked as Joshua was. The only way that such persons can enter into an arrangement with him to spare them from execution is for them publicly to declare their faith in Jehovah as the true God. (Compare Acts 2:17-21.) They must also accept Jesus Christ in the roles that God has assigned to him and live thereafter as persons who are not lovers of the way of life of this condemned world. Then they must become humble servants of God, rendering sacred service to him in association with the congregation of his people.—John 17:16; Revelation 7:14, 15.

¹⁴ Soon after the Gibeonites took their stand with Jehovah's people, they came under great pressure. Five kings of the Amorites laid siege to Gibeon to force the inhabitants back onto their side, in opposition to Israel. The Gibeonites dispatched an urgent plea to Joshua for help, and the deliverance that they experienced was one of the most spectacular in all history. Jehovah threw the enemy into confusion, hurled hailstones on them from heaven, and caused the daylight to be extended miraculously until Israel had completely routed the enemy. (Joshua 10:1-14) That rescue of the Gibeonites was prophetic of an even more marvelous deliverance of a great crowd of worshipers of the true God at the universal war of Armageddon. The opportunity to benefit from that deliverance is open to people of every nation if they act wisely now. Are you availing yourself of that opportunity?—Revelation 7:9, 10.

14. Why is Jehovah's deliverance of the Gibeonites from enemy forces significant for us?

Survivors out of All the Nations

JEHOVAH is lovingly interested in people of all nations and tribes. He has made provision so that all the families of the earth can enjoy his approval and blessing. To Abram (Abraham), a descendant of Noah's son Shem, Jehovah said: "Go your way out of your country and from your relatives and from the house of your father to the country that I shall show you; and I shall make a great nation out of you and I shall bless you and I will make your name great; and prove yourself a blessing. And I will bless those who bless you, and him that calls down evil upon you I shall curse, and all the families of the ground will certainly bless themselves by means of you." (Genesis 12:1-3; Acts 7:2-4) "All the families of the ground"—that includes us today, no matter the nation into which we were born or the language we speak.—Psalm 65:2.

² The one to whom Jehovah stated this promise was a man of faith, even as we must have faith if we would share in the blessing from God here promised. (James 2:23; Hebrews 11:6) Abraham's faith was not merely a passive belief but was accompanied by action. It caused him to move out of Mesopotamia into a distant

1. What promise made to Abraham shows that God's approval is possible for "all the families" of mankind?
2. (a) Like Abraham, what quality do we need? (b) As shown at Hebrews 11:8-10, how did Abraham give evidence of this quality?

land that he had never seen before. "By faith he resided as an alien in the land of the promise as in a foreign land," not attaching himself to any of the city-kingdoms there. "For he was awaiting the city [God's Kingdom] having real foundations, the builder and maker of which city is God."—Hebrews 11:8-10.

³ When Abraham reached 100 years of age and his wife Sarah was 90, Jehovah miraculously blessed them with a son, Isaac. In connection with this son, Abraham underwent a searching test of faith and obedience toward God. Jehovah directed Abraham to take Isaac, now a young man, to the land of Moriah and there offer him up as a burnt offering. With faith in God's ability to restore his son to life by a resurrection, Abraham proceeded to obey. (Hebrews 11:17-19) Isaac, submissive to his father, was already bound on the altar and Abraham had in his hand the knife with which to kill him when Jehovah's angel intervened. The test had gone far enough to prove that Abraham would not withhold anything from God. Therefore God confirmed his covenant with Abraham, as the Bible states:

⁴ "‘By myself I do swear,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘that by reason of the fact that you have done this thing and you have not withheld your son, your only one, I shall surely bless you and I shall surely multiply your seed like the stars of the heavens and like the grains of sand that are on the seashore; and your seed will take possession of the gate of his enemies. And by means of your seed all nations of the earth will certainly bless themselves due to the fact

3. What searching test of faith did Abraham undergo regarding Isaac?

4. On that occasion, what further important promise did God make regarding people of all nations?

that you have listened to my voice.’”—Genesis 22:15-18.

⁵ When we discern that the Greater Abraham is Jehovah and that Isaac foreshadowed Jesus Christ, we can begin to appreciate how these events are of importance to us personally. In reality, it is how we act toward Jehovah God that determines our future. The prospect of eternal life is possible for us because God actually gave his only-begotten Son as a sacrifice for our sins, as illustrated by Abraham’s attempting to offer up Isaac. (John 3:16) Any who persist in ‘calling down evil’ on Jehovah, despising him or making light of his loving purposes, come under a curse that will mean their eternal destruction. (Compare 1 Samuel 3:12-14; 2:12.) But if we are appreciative persons, we will “bless” the Greater Abraham. How? By freely acknowledging that from Jehovah come all good things, including the undeserved gift of life through his Son. Also, we will tell others about Jehovah’s goodness and the splendid qualities of his kingship. (James 1:17; Psalm 145:7-13) In this way we put ourselves in line to receive blessings from him forever.

THE PROMISED “SEED” OF ABRAHAM

⁶ As part of his arrangement for blessing mankind Jehovah purposed a righteous heavenly government. Jesus Christ was born as a descendant of Abraham, as his most important offspring, or “seed,” and it is upon him that Jehovah has conferred kingship. (Galatians 3:16; Matthew 1:1) So, as indicated by God’s sworn

5. (a) What was foreshadowed by Abraham’s attempting to offer up Isaac? (b) In fulfillment of Genesis 12:3, how do people ‘call down evil’ on the Greater Abraham, and with what result? (c) How can we “bless” him?

6. (a) Who is the primary “seed” of Abraham? (b) How can we obtain the blessing that comes by means of him?

oath to Abraham, it is by means of Jesus Christ that people out of all nations of the earth will be blessed. Are you doing what is required in order to procure that blessing for yourself? For example, does your course of life demonstrate that you appreciate how important to you the sacrifice of Jesus' life is? Are you truly submitting to his authority as King?—John 3:36; Acts 4:12.

⁷ The apostle John was given a prophetic foreview of heavenly events in which he saw others associated with Jesus Christ on heavenly Mount Zion. They, too, are part of "Abraham's seed." As stated at Revelation 14:1-5, they are "bought from among mankind" and number 144,000. (Galatians 3:26-29) Whom do they include? The Bible makes it very clear that it has never been God's purpose to take all righteously disposed persons to heaven. (Matthew 11:11; Acts 2:34; Psalm 37:29) The grand privilege of sharing with Christ in the Kingdom of heaven is limited to a "little flock" who will be kings and priests with him for a thousand years.—Luke 12:32; Revelation 5:9, 10; 20:6.

⁸ How did the selection of that "little flock" proceed? The gracious invitation to share in the heavenly Kingdom was first extended to the natural Israelites. But because of their lack of faith, they did not provide the full 144,000. So Samaritans and, later, people of all nations were invited. (Acts 1:8) The first of Christ's joint heirs were anointed with holy spirit at Pentecost of 33 C.E. The selecting of this group continues until 144,000 have been sealed by God as

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7. (a) Who else is included in "Abraham's seed"? (b) How do we know that not all who faithfully serve God will go to heaven?
8. When did the selection of the "little flock" begin, and how long does it continue?

approved. Then attention is directed to gathering persons who will live on earth as appreciative subjects of the heavenly government.

⁹ Those who are heirs of the heavenly Kingdom with Christ are referred to in the Scriptures as “chosen ones,” “holy ones,” persons “anointed . . . [by] God.” (2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Corinthians 6:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 1:21) They are also described collectively as the “bride” of Christ. (Revelation 21:2, 9; Ephesians 5:22-32) Viewed from other standpoints, they are called “brothers” of Christ, “joint heirs with Christ” and “sons” of God. (Hebrews 2:10, 11; Romans 8:15-17; Ephesians 1:5) Regardless of their nationality, they are, spiritually speaking, “the Israel of God.” (Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28, 29; 9:6-8) When Jehovah terminated his Law covenant with fleshly Israel, he brought spiritual Israel into a new covenant with himself. But his dealings with fleshly Israel while they were under the Law set a pattern of things to come. (Hebrews 10:1) Who, then, was foreshadowed by the nation of fleshly Israel, which was chosen by God as his “special property”? The facts point to spiritual Israel, those whom God has chosen to rule with Christ in heaven. (Compare Exodus 19:5, 6 with 1 Peter 1:3, 4 and 2:9.) With Christ they make up the agency by means of which blessings will be extended to all other obedient ones among mankind. Appreciation of this is a key to understanding the Bible.

THOSE BLESSED BY MEANS OF THE “SEED”

¹⁰ During the time that God was dealing in a special way with the nation of Israel, he also made loving

9. (a) What expressions in the Bible apply to this heavenly class? (b) Who were foreshadowed by the natural Israelites?

10. Who are pictured by non-Israelite worshipers of Jehovah?

provisions for persons not of that nation but whose hearts moved them to share in true worship in association with the Israelites. Noteworthy mention is made of them in the Bible record. Do they, too, have modern-day counterparts? Yes, indeed. They picture in many ways those who are not spiritual Israelites but who cherish the marvelous prospect of eternal life as earthly subjects of God's Kingdom. These are the ones of whom God spoke to Abraham, saying that people out of "all nations of the earth" would bless themselves by means of his "seed."—Genesis 22:18; Deuteronomy 32:43.

¹¹ It has always been God's purpose for all mankind to be united in true worship. Appropriately, at the dedication of the temple built by Solomon in Jerusalem, the king prayed that Jehovah would hear the prayer of foreigners who sought to offer acceptable worship along with Israel. (2 Chronicles 6:32, 33) And, at Isaiah 56:6, 7, God promised: "The foreigners that have joined themselves to Jehovah to minister to him and to love the name of Jehovah, in order to become servants to him, . . . I will also bring them to my holy mountain and make them rejoice inside my house of prayer. . . . For my own house will be called even a house of prayer for all the peoples." Reflecting the spirit here conveyed, the modern-day "foreigners" are now gathering from all nations, not simply as casual observers, but as persons who 'join themselves to Jehovah.' They do this by dedicating their lives to him, symbolizing this by water immersion and then serving in a manner that demonstrates

11. (a) What mention was made of this group at the dedication of Solomon's temple? (b) How are "foreigners" 'joining themselves to Jehovah' in our day, as foretold at Isaiah 56:6, 7?

their love for “the name of Jehovah” and all that it represents.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

¹² No less faithfulness is required of them than of those who are spirit-anointed Christians. Under the Mosaic Law, Jehovah required the “alien resident” who took up true worship to conform to the same law that was binding on Israel. (Numbers 15:15, 16) The relationship between them was not to be one of mere toleration but of genuine love. (Leviticus 19:34) Likewise, those foreshadowed by the alien residents seek to bring their lives into full harmony with Jehovah’s requirements and to serve in loving unity with the remaining ones of spiritual Israel.—Isaiah 61:5.

¹³ By means of his prophet Isaiah, Jehovah described the eager throng of persons out of “all the nations” who today are flocking to Jehovah’s universal house of worship. He foretold: “Many peoples will certainly go and say: ‘Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.’” As a result, they have ‘beaten their swords into plowshares’ and, even amid this strife-torn world, they ‘learn war no more.’ (Isaiah 2:1-4) Do you see yourself in that happy throng? Do you share their desire to learn Jehovah’s requirements, to apply these in your life and to cease relying on weapons of war? God has promised that a great crowd who pursue this course will “come out of the great tribulation” as survivors into his peaceful “new earth.”—Revelation 7:9, 10, 14; Psalm 46:8, 9.

12. How does the Mosaic Law indicate whether those who hope to be earthly subjects of God’s Kingdom must conform to the high standards that apply to spiritual Israel?

13. What details at Isaiah 2:1-4 should we take to heart if we want to survive into the “new earth”?

Who Leads the Way to Deliverance?

ONLY if we accept the leadership of Jesus Christ and give convincing evidence that we truly listen to him and walk in his footsteps can we be saved from this wicked world and be preserved alive through the coming “great tribulation.” (Acts 4:12) This was well illustrated in events surrounding the deliverance of the natural Israelites from Egypt in 1513 B.C.E. Miraculously Jehovah ushered Israel to safety through the Red Sea and destroyed the pursuing Egyptian army. In all of this, God used Moses to lead his people.—Joshua 24:5-7; Exodus 3:10.

² When the Israelites marched out of Egypt with the prospect of entering the Promised Land, others joined their ranks. As Moses later wrote: “A vast mixed company also went up with them.” (Exodus 12:38) Who were these? They were Egyptians or other foreigners who threw in their lot with Israel. They had seen the fear-inspiring plagues that Jehovah had brought upon the oppressive nation of Egypt to demonstrate that he was the only true God and that the gods of Egypt were false and could not deliver those who worshiped them. No doubt, too, what they heard from the Israelites about the prospect of life in “a land

1. (a) To what must we submit in order to be delivered safely through the “great tribulation”? (b) How was this illustrated by the way that God used Moses?
2. (a) Who were the “vast mixed company” that left Egypt with Israel? (b) What no doubt attracted many of them? (c) On what matter were they soon put to the test?

flowing with milk and honey” sounded good to them. (Exodus 3:7, 8; 12:12) But did they also fully recognize Moses as the one raised up by God to be ruler and deliverer of His people? They were soon put to the test. —Acts 7:34, 35.

³ As Israel, along with the “vast mixed company,” neared the shores of the Red Sea, the king of Egypt and his military forces chased after them to drag them back into slavery. To be delivered, they must stay together and follow Moses’ directions, because Jehovah was using Moses to lead them. By means of a supernatural cloud Jehovah held back the enemy while he split apart the waters of the sea and dried out the seabed. In striking contrast to what happened to the Egyptians later, all Israel and the “vast mixed company” escaped with Moses across that dry seabed. (Exodus 14:9, 19-31) As they marched through, with walls of water on their right and on their left and the cloud of God’s presence overhead, something significant took place. The Bible speaks of it as a baptism—not a literal baptism in water, but a symbolic one into Moses as Jehovah’s prophet, the one sent by God to be their Deliverer. (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2) Likewise, all spiritual Israelites who will survive the destruction of this wicked world must undergo a similar baptism into Christ as deliverer and give convincing evidence that they closely adhere to his leadership. The modern-day “mixed company” must accompany them.

⁴ Jehovah has conferred great authority on his Son, Jesus Christ. By means of him God has made it possible for us to be ‘delivered from the present wicked system

3. (a) Why was it vital to follow Moses’ directions? (b) What was the meaning of ‘baptism into Moses’? (c) Why is that important to spiritual Israelites?

4. How great is the authority that Jehovah has given to Christ?

of things,' so that we need not share its dismal fate. (Galatians 1:3-5; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10) Through Moses, Jehovah gave to Israel laws that affected the immediate life prospects of the people. When they obeyed those laws they were greatly benefited. But some laws also carried the death penalty for disobedience. Later, Jesus became a prophet greater than Moses. What he taught were "sayings of everlasting life," and deliberate failure to obey these sayings leads to death from which there is no deliverance. How important, therefore, that we take to heart what he says!—John 6:66-69; 3:36; Acts 3:19-23.

⁵ To some persons, the idea of submission to a leader does not seem desirable. They have seen too much abuse of authority. But Jesus' own words reflect a spirit that is reassuring. He warmly invites us: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light." (Matthew 11:28-30) What an appealing prospect! Those who heed that warm invitation, putting their full confidence in him, will not be disappointed. (Romans 10:11) They will experience security such as that of sheep in the flock of a loving shepherd.

THE GENUINE FINE SHEPHERD

⁶ The nation of Israel was like a flock of sheep that belonged to Jehovah. He provided the Law covenant, which served like the protective walls of a sheepfold,

5. What makes submission to Jesus very appealing?

6. (a) How was the nation of Israel like sheep in a sheepfold?
(b) What promise did Jehovah make concerning a shepherd for these "sheep," and how was it fulfilled?

fencing them off from the way of life of ungodly Gentile nations. It also directed responsive ones to the Messiah. (Ephesians 2:14-16; Galatians 3:24) Concerning that Messianic Shepherd-King, Jehovah foretold: "I will raise up over [my sheep] one shepherd, and he must feed them, even my servant David." (Ezekiel 34:23, 31) This did not mean that David, who was then dead, would again personally rule as king over God's people. Rather, from David's royal line Jehovah would raise up a shepherd-king through whom God would provide security. (Jeremiah 23:5, 6) At various times men falsely claimed to be the Messianic deliverer, but in the year 29 C.E., Jehovah used John the Baptizer to introduce Jesus Christ to the "sheep" of Israel as the one truly sent by God, the Messiah with authentic credentials. This was the heavenly Son of God, whose life principle had been transferred to the womb of a Jewish virgin so that he might be born into the royal line of David. The name David means "beloved," so, appropriately, after Jesus' baptism in water, Jehovah declared audibly from heaven: "You are my Son, *the beloved*; I have approved you."—Mark 1:11.

⁷ Less than four months before his death, Jesus said: "I am the fine shepherd; the fine shepherd surrenders his soul in behalf of the sheep." (John 10:11) He contrasted his role with that of false messiahs who had come earlier, saying: "He that does not enter into the sheepfold through the door but climbs up some other place, that one is a thief and a plunderer. But he that enters through the door is shepherd of the sheep. The doorkeeper opens to this one, and the sheep listen to his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads

7. (a) As "the fine shepherd," how did Jesus demonstrate the depth of his loving concern for the "sheep"? (b) How did that contrast with the conduct of earlier, false messiahs?

them out. When he has got all his own out, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. A stranger they will by no means follow but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”—John 10:1-5, 8.

⁸ Those in the Jewish sheepfold who responded to the leading of the Law covenant accepted Jesus as the Messiah when John the Baptizer as “doorkeeper” introduced him. They proved to be Jesus’ “own sheep,” and he led them to a new figurative sheepfold, or pen, belonging to Jehovah. This fold represented a favored relationship with Jehovah on the basis of the new covenant, which was made with spiritual Israel and was validated by Jesus’ own blood. By means of this covenant it became possible for them to gain heavenly life with Christ as the “seed” of Abraham through whom blessings would come to people of all nations. (Hebrews 8:6; 9:24; 10:19-22; Genesis 22:18) Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead and restored to heavenly life, is the “door” of this new-covenant sheepfold. In harmony with his Father’s purpose, he has brought into this fold only a limited number—just 144,000—first from among the Jews, and later from among the Samaritans and the Gentiles. As the Fine Shepherd, Jesus knows each of his sheep by name and gives them loving personal care and attention.—John 10:7, 9; Revelation 14:1-3.

⁹ However, Jesus does not limit his shepherding to this “little flock” who gain the heavenly Kingdom. (Luke 12:32) He also said: “I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they

8. (a) Into what new “sheepfold” did Jesus lead the Jews who followed him? (b) How many has he brought into this fold?

9. Who are the “other sheep” to whom Jesus refers, and when are they gathered?

will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one shepherd.” (John 10:16) Who are these? They are persons who are not in the new covenant; they are not spiritual Israelites. But they are brought into close association with the members of spiritual Israel while these are still on earth and in need of the kind of shepherding that Jesus describes. The “other sheep” are persons who, during these last days, are being gathered within Jehovah’s provision for eternal life on earth on the basis of their faith in the sacrificial value of Jesus’ blood. They are the same as the “great crowd” of Revelation 7:9, 10, 14, and so they have the prospect of surviving the coming great tribulation.

¹⁰ To fit the Bible’s description of such “other sheep” who are safeguarded and preserved by the Fine Shepherd, a person must “listen” to His voice and give evidence of truly being part of the “one flock” that includes the genuine heirs of the heavenly Kingdom. Are you doing that? How carefully are you listening to his voice?

¹¹ You no doubt know that Jesus said: “This is my commandment, that you love one another just as I have loved you.” (John 15:12) How is that commandment affecting your life? Is the love that you show the kind that Jesus exemplified? Is it truly self-sacrificing? Do your actions and feelings give evidence of such love toward all in the Christian congregation and toward members of your own household?

¹² The apostle Paul states that if we truly ‘hear’ Jesus

10. To be one of those “other sheep,” what is required?

11. What will give evidence that we truly “listen” to what Jesus said at John 15:12?

12. (a) If we are really ‘taught by means of Jesus,’ how much of a change will it make in us? (b) So, what should we be doing with the things we learn from the Bible?

and are “taught by means of him,” our entire personality will change. We will put away the personality that conforms to our former way of life and will put on “the new personality,” which reflects Jehovah’s fine qualities. (Ephesians 4:17-24; Colossians 3:8-14) As you study the Bible, are you thinking seriously about areas in which you personally need to make adjustments in order to please God? Are you conscientiously making such changes? Are you taking note of the vital work that Jesus commanded for our day—the preaching of the good news of God’s established Kingdom—and are you seeking ways to share in it? Does appreciation for God’s undeserved kindness toward you stir in you a heartfelt desire to do so?—Matthew 24:14.

¹³ We have to be careful not to let our hearts mislead us. Millions of persons profess to believe in Jesus Christ, and perhaps they can quote some of the things he taught, but they apply only what they find convenient. Some may avoid indulging in conduct that they consider grossly wrong. The prospect of life on a Paradise earth under the Kingdom of God may sound good to them, and they may enjoy associating now with those who are sincerely endeavoring to apply Christian principles in their lives. But if we want to be among those who survive into the “new earth,” we must listen attentively to *everything* that Jesus says. It is vital to appreciate that we cannot successfully direct our own steps. We must listen to God’s Son, the one commissioned by Jehovah as Deliverer of His people, and walk carefully in his steps.—Jeremiah 10:23; Matthew 7:21-27; 1 Peter 2:21.

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13. (a) If we are not careful, how might our hearts mislead us?
(b) To what extent, then, must we follow in the footsteps of Christ?

“They Will Hunger No More”

ONE of the principal problems facing the world today concerns food. High prices cause difficulties for many. Actual starvation confronts others. It was recently reported that each year 40 million people—in some years as many as 50 million—die because they do not have the food they need. About ten times that number suffer severe malnutrition. Although some countries produce much more than they can eat, political rivalry and commercial greed often thwart efforts to make the surplus available to those who need it most.—Compare Revelation 6:5, 6.

² Even lands that seem to have an abundance face a disturbing future. Why? The current methods of farming often depend on petroleum, and the global supply is not unlimited. Heavy reliance on commercial fertilizers is polluting their water supplies. The excessive use of pesticides, meant to safeguard crops, is also destroying organisms on which future productivity of the soil depends. In nearly every field of human endeavor, serious problems continue to multiply. Aurelio Peccei, president of an international forum of intellectuals, likened the world to “a ricocheting bullet as it careens from disaster to disaster.” Is it being realistic to pin one’s hopes for the future on a world with such a record?—Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 14:12.

1. How serious is the world’s concern over food?
2. Even in lands where there is an abundance, why do people have reason to be concerned?

³ Sensibly, millions of persons have faced up to their need for the help that only God can give. Having examined Bible prophecy, they know that Jehovah God has already enthroned his heavenly Son Jesus Christ and has given him all the earth as his possession. (Psalm 2:7, 8) He has the wisdom and the ability to guarantee that all mankind will be generously supplied from earth's produce. (Psalm 72:7, 8, 16; Colossians 1:15-17) When the present selfish system is removed, Christ will direct the efforts of human survivors so that all the earth will become a fruitful Paradise.

⁴ The ones who will lastingly benefit from his rule, however, are those who discern that man does not live on bread alone, persons who appreciate spiritual values and the vital need to draw strength from learning and doing God's will. The Bible repeatedly highlights the importance of this. (John 4:34; 6:27; Jeremiah 15:16) Jesus emphasized it when he said: "It is written, 'Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth.'" (Matthew 4:4) We need such spiritual food now, if we would survive the end of the present world. How we can obtain it is illustrated for us in the Bible account concerning Joseph and his brothers.

"GO TO JOSEPH"

⁵ God gave to Joseph, a great-grandson of Abraham, dreams indicating that Joseph would have a prominent role in life. Because of this, as well as the fact that he

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3. Who is able to guarantee plenty of food for all mankind, and what gives you that confidence?
 4. To benefit from those physical provisions, what must we do now?
 5. How did Joseph come to be a slave in Egypt?

was specially loved by his father, Joseph's ten half brothers hated Joseph. They plotted to kill him but finally sold him as a slave, and he was taken to Egypt. How was God's purpose regarding Joseph going to work out now?—Genesis 37:3-11, 28.

⁶ When Joseph was 30 years of age, Jehovah caused Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, to have two dreams that troubled him. In the first he saw seven cows "beautiful in appearance and fat-fleshed," also seven other cows "ugly in appearance and thin-fleshed." The skinny cows proceeded to eat the fat ones. In another dream Pharaoh saw seven ears of grain on one stalk, "fat and good," and seven other ears that were "thin and scorched by the east wind." Again, the thin ones consumed the fat ones. What did it all mean? None of the wise men of Egypt were able to interpret the dreams. But Pharaoh's cupbearer recalled that, when he had been in prison, a fellow prisoner, Joseph, had correctly interpreted dreams. Promptly Pharaoh summoned Joseph.—Genesis 41:1-15.

⁷ Claiming no credit for himself, Joseph told Pharaoh: "The dream of Pharaoh is but one. What the true God is doing he has told to Pharaoh." (Genesis 41:16, 25) Joseph explained that the second dream meant the same as the first and emphasized its certainty. Seven years of plenty in Egypt were to be followed by seven of famine. He advised Pharaoh to put a capable man in charge of storing grain during the years of plenty in preparation for the famine. Recognizing that God

6. (a) How was Pharaoh's attention directed to Joseph?
(b) What were the dreams that disturbed Pharaoh?

7. (a) How did Joseph become the food administrator for Egypt? (b) When the famine became severe, what did the Egyptians do in order to keep living?

himself had evidently disclosed all of this to Joseph, Pharaoh appointed Joseph as food administrator, giving him authority in Egypt second only to that of Pharaoh himself. Just as predicted, the seven years of unusual abundance came, and Joseph had tremendous quantities of foodstuffs stored away. Then the foretold famine tightened its grip on the land. When the people pleaded with Pharaoh for bread, he answered: "Go to Joseph. Whatever he says to you, you are to do." So Joseph sold them grain—first paid for with money, then with their livestock, and finally in exchange for themselves and their land. To continue living, they had to give themselves over completely to the service of Pharaoh.—Genesis 41:26-49, 53-56; 47:13-26.

⁸ The famine also affected the lands around Egypt. Eventually Joseph's own half brothers came down from Canaan. Over 20 years had passed since they had sold him into slavery, and they did not recognize him. They bowed before him, as Joseph's dreams had long previously foretold, and sought to obtain foodstuffs. (Genesis 37:6, 7; 42:5-7) Skillfully Joseph put them to the test and saw convincing evidence that their attitude toward him and their father had indeed changed. Finally he identified himself and explained that it was actually "for the preservation of life" that God had sent him to Egypt ahead of them. At his direction, they moved their father and their families into Egypt. (Genesis 45:1-11) All of this was recorded for our benefit, and its prophetic significance involves events in our day.—Romans 15:4.

8. (a) To obtain needed foodstuffs, what was required of Joseph's half brothers? (b) Why has the record of this been preserved?

SATISFYING OUR HUNGER AND THIRST NOW

⁹ One of the root causes of mankind's problems is spiritual famine. Because they have abandoned Jehovah, he does not favor them with understanding of his Word, and, as a result, they experience "a famine, not for bread, and a thirst, not for water, but for hearing the words of Jehovah." (Amos 8:11) Spiritually famished people grope for answers to such vital questions as: What is the meaning of life? Why do people die? Is there any real hope for the future? Crazy from spiritual hunger, such people often hurt themselves and others as they engage in immoral and criminal conduct to satisfy their cravings.

¹⁰ In contrast, Jehovah has given spiritual abundance to his loyal servants, and genuine love exists among them. He has opened to their understanding the satisfying spiritual truths in his inspired Word and has given them work to do as his witnesses. They gladly share these truths with others who are spiritually hungry and seeking life in relationship with God. (Isaiah 65:13, 14; Luke 6:21) Back in ancient Egypt the seven years of famine followed the seven of plenty. But in our day the periods of spiritual famine and of spiritual abundance run concurrently.

¹¹ Today it is not Pharaoh who is ruler. Jehovah God, the Greater Pharaoh, is Universal Sovereign. He

9. (a) What accounts for the spiritual famine in the world today? (b) Why is this one of the root causes of mankind's problems?

10. (a) In fulfillment of Isaiah 65:13, 14, what condition exists among Jehovah's servants? (b) When are the periods of spiritual famine and of spiritual plenty?

11. (a) Who are pictured by Pharaoh and by Joseph, and why so? (b) How is the course taken by the "great crowd" like that of the famine-stricken Egyptians?

has granted to Jesus Christ authority second only to his own. As the Greater Joseph, Jesus is the One to whom Jehovah has entrusted responsibility to dispense life-sustaining spiritual food. The religious and secular philosophies of the world have left mankind with gnawing spiritual hunger. Only by turning to Jesus Christ and obtaining spiritual food in the way that he directs can they be sustained. Millions of persons, pictured by the famine-stricken Egyptians, are doing that. Through Jesus Christ they are fully dedicating themselves to Jehovah for all time, and thus they are included in the great crowd of prospective survivors of the coming day of divine wrath.

¹² But Jesus is in heaven. How does he provide spiritual food to benefit us here on earth? He foretold that he would do so through his "faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) This is a composite "slave," made up of his congregation of spirit-anointed ones while still on earth. (Compare Isaiah 43:10.) A remnant of these are still on the earthly scene. This true Christian congregation is easily identifiable by comparison of its teachings and practices with the Bible. It genuinely teaches what Jesus commanded. Therefore it is not involved in the political affairs of the world, but all its members are public proclaimers of God's Kingdom. They are not split up among the sects of Christendom. They are united, as Jesus said they would be—all of them Jehovah's Witnesses in imitation of their Lord. (See John 17:16, 20, 21; Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; Revelation 1:5.) They enjoy spiritual abundance and are very willing to share it with others.

12. (a) How does Jesus in heaven make spiritual food available to us here on earth? (b) What convinces you as to the identity of "the faithful and discreet slave"?

¹³ Many people have ridiculed these anointed Christians, saying: 'Do you think you are better than we are? Do you think you are the only ones who are right?' But in time some humbly recognize that Jehovah truly does have witnesses on the earth and that they really proclaim His word. They come to appreciate that the Bible shows there would be only one true Christian congregation and that its members would be united. (Ephesians 4:5; Romans 12:5) An honest and humble examination of the facts has led them to that organization. Joseph's ten half brothers foreshadowed such persons, who previously persecuted Jesus' anointed followers or who gave moral support to such persecutors but who now demonstrate a genuine change of heart. (John 13:20) Gratefully they accept the spiritual food provided by Jesus Christ through his 'faithful slave' class. They gain spiritual strength as they feed on Bible truths discussed in Watch Tower publications, regularly attend the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses and share actively in doing God's will. Are you one of these humble ones?—Hebrews 10:23-25; compare John 4:34.

¹⁴ Happy refreshment is enjoyed by all who thus lovingly put their lives at the disposal of their Creator through Jesus Christ. Spiritually, "they will hunger no more nor thirst anymore, . . . because the Lamb [Jesus Christ], who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life."—Revelation 7:16, 17; Isaiah 25:6-9.

13. (a) In what ways have many persons shown themselves to be like Joseph's ten half brothers? (b) How can all of us benefit from the spiritual food provided by Christ through the "slave" class?

14. What spiritual conditions are enjoyed by those who live in harmony with the principles learned from this Bible drama?

“Flee out of the Midst of Babylon”

MANY persons have gone from one religion to another, searching for satisfying answers to their questions about life. They find certain similarities in beliefs and practices, also many differences. But it is only by using God’s own Word as the guide that anyone can be sure which answers are true and what practices are really pleasing to God. By means of the Bible, the Creator acquaints us with himself and his purpose. He also exposes to our view the roots of false worship. In so doing, he warns us against what he describes as “Babylon the Great” and urges us to “flee” out of the midst of her. Have you heeded that warning?—Revelation 18:4, 21; Jeremiah 51:6.

² What is “Babylon the Great”? Viewed collectively, all religions that advocate attitudes, beliefs or practices that have their roots in the religion of ancient Babylon make up Babylon the Great. Its identifying traits can therefore be determined by examining the origin and religion of ancient Babylon itself.

³ Well over a century after the Flood of Noah’s day, the city of Babel (later called Babylon) was built around a tower—a project evidently promoted by

1. (a) How can we know what kind of worship is pleasing to God? (b) From what does God urge us to flee?

2. What is “Babylon the Great”?

3. (a) How did ancient Babylon get its start, and what spirit did its founder encourage? (b) In what ways is that spirit reflected in religions today?

Nimrod. This Nimrod engendered in his associates a spirit of rebellion against Jehovah and a desire to seek prominence for themselves. (Genesis 10:9, 10; 11:1-9) Do you observe that spirit today—a disregard for God's Word, even on the part of those claiming to be religious, and the use of religion to draw attention to self or even to gain prominence?

⁴ Triads of gods were prominent in Babylonian religion. There was the triad made up of Anu, Bel and Ea; another included Sin, Shamash and Ishtar. Additionally, images filled Babylon's places of worship. All of this diverted attention from the fact that there is only one true God, whose name is Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 4:39; John 17:3) The qualities and conduct attributed to their gods, together with the use of lifeless images, gave many people a distorted view of the Creator.—Jeremiah 10:10, 14; 50:1, 38; 1 Corinthians 10:14, 19-22.

⁵ The Babylonians believed that death was merely passage to another kind of life, but this contradicted what God had told our first parents. Greek philosophers enlarged on this idea, saying that humans have an immortal soul. The Devil's first lie was that if Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they 'positively would not die' in the flesh. Now people were being told that what lived forever was an inside part of them that they could not see. This false teaching led to belief in hellfire, purgatory, ancestor worship and much more.—Genesis 3:1-5; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; Ezekiel 18:4.

4. How has Babylonish religion distorted the truth about God himself?

5. (a) How was Babylonian belief about death really an embellishment of Satan's lie to Eve? (b) To what other teachings has this led?

⁶ Babylonian religion also included the practice of astrology, divination, magic and sorcery, by means of which people have sought supernatural guidance that could be used to enrich themselves and control others. (Daniel 2:27; Ezekiel 21:21) How common these practices are today, though all of them are warned against in the Bible! By engaging in them, people have played directly into the hands of demonic spirits, who exact a cruel price for the favors they grant.—Deuteronomy 18:10-12; Isaiah 8:19; Acts 16:16; Revelation 18:21, 23.

⁷ Further identifying Babylon the Great, the Bible tells of her illicit relations with political rulers, her wealth and her responsibility for bloodshed, including that of God's true servants. (Revelation 17:1-6; 18:24) The record of the world's religions in these respects is well known.

HOW GREAT IS YOUR LOVE FOR TRUTH?

⁸ If a person belongs to any part of Babylon the Great, shares in her celebrations or imitates her ways, who is thus honored? Certainly not Jehovah. Instead, such a person is, in effect, bowing before "the god of this system of things," the one who has blinded the minds of mankind.—2 Corinthians 4:4.

⁹ But how has it been possible for so many people to be misled in this manner? The Bible answers that

6. (a) What other practices that are common today have their roots in Babylonian religion? (b) How serious is this?

7. What evidence do you see that Babylon the Great (a) has illicit relations with political rulers? (b) has great riches? (c) is responsible for bloodshed?

8. Who really is the god of Babylon the Great?

9. How has it been possible for Satan to mislead so many people religiously?

they have fallen victim to Satan's snare "because they did not accept the love of the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12) This should not surprise us. How many people do you know who always speak the truth—at home, in business, when confronted with their own shortcomings? When shown what the Bible, God's word of truth, says, how many are willing to abandon their former beliefs or customs, even to change their life-style, to conform to it? Are you?

¹⁰ Jehovah is looking for people who have such love for the truth. He himself is "the God of truth." (Psalm 31:5) The teachings of his Word are not imagination. They are the truth. To a woman in Samaria, Jesus said: "True worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him. God is a Spirit, and those worshiping him must worship with spirit and truth." (John 4:23, 24) Is that the kind of person you want to be?

GOD'S PROVISION FOR LIBERATION

¹¹ To provide guidance for us, Jehovah long ago had recorded in the Bible a promise of deliverance from the oppressive control of Babylon. It had a fulfillment when Cyrus the Great liberated the Jews, as well as the non-Israelite Nethinim, so they could return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of Jehovah. But that was not all there was to it. What took place then pointed to further deliverance through the Greater Cyrus, the Lord Jesus Christ. Our following his directions safe-

10. (a) For what kind of persons is Jehovah looking? (b) How can we show that we are that kind of person?

11. (a) What is foretold at Isaiah 49:8, 9? (b) When did that have its first fulfillment? (c) Why is it of interest to us?

guards us against being misled by men who seek only prominence for themselves. To Jesus in particular applied the prophecy that says: "This is what Jehovah has said: 'In a time of goodwill I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you; and I kept safeguarding you that I might give you as a covenant 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) How was this fulfilled in Jesus?

¹² Jehovah answered Jesus' prayers. He did help and safeguard his Son as Jesus courageously exposed religious falsehood and made known 'the truth that would set men free.' (John 8:32) Despite satanic efforts to destroy Jesus, Jehovah preserved his Son until his work on earth was done. Then he raised Jesus to immortal life in heaven, there to continue his work of liberation. God gave him as a "covenant," or pledge, that there would be a freeing of people from bondage to Babylon the Great. Just as surely as there is a resurrected and glorified Jesus Christ in heaven, so too it is certain that right-hearted people will be delivered from the religious darkness of Babylon the Great. Will you benefit from that deliverance?

¹³ Regarding the extent of the liberation, Jehovah foretold: "I also have given you for a light of the nations, that my salvation may come to be to the extremity of the earth." (Isaiah 49:6) Hence, in

12. (a) How was that prophecy fulfilled in Jesus? (Luke 4:16-18) (b) What encouragement is there in this for us?

13. From 36 C.E. onward, how did Jesus prove to be "a light of the nations"?

36 C.E. Gentiles, or people of non-Jewish nations, began to be brought into the congregation of spiritual Israel. The adding of Gentiles to the spirit-anointed Christian congregation, however, was not the full extent to which Jesus would serve as "a light of the nations."

¹⁴ Jesus knew that he would also gather "other sheep" who would enjoy eternal life on earth. (John 10:16) They were foreshadowed by the non-Israelite Nethinim and sons of the servants of Solomon who joined the Jews in 537 B.C.E. in their exodus from Babylon. (Ezra 2:1, 43-58) Already a great crowd of these in modern times have heeded the command to "come out" of Babylon the Great. These now enjoy the refreshing spiritual blessings foretold at Isaiah 49:10: "They will not go hungry, neither will they go thirsty, nor will parching heat or sun strike them. For the One who is having pity upon them will lead them, and by the springs of water he will conduct them." At Revelation 7:9, 16, 17, these blessings are appropriately applied to the "great crowd" of "other sheep."

"GET OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE"

¹⁵ In an inspired vision the apostle John was shown what execution of God's judgment would mean for Babylon the Great. In view of the certainty of it, an angel out of heaven, speaking for God, urged: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share

14. (a) For whom else from "the nations" was Jesus to be a light? (b) By what groups that left ancient Babylon were these foreshadowed? (c) What spiritual blessings do they already enjoy, in fulfillment of Isaiah 49:10?

15. Why does the Bible urge those who would be God's people to get out of Babylon the Great?

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.”—Revelation 18:4, 5.

¹⁶ The members of spiritual Israel have heeded that command, and now they urge others to do the same. They know that if a person is mixing true worship with false, he cannot please God. If anyone associates with Jehovah’s Witnesses but still has not cut his ties with Babylon the Great, how can he say that he is no part of her? Even if he never attends her religious services, yet if he shares in her religious holidays at his place of employment or with his relatives, he is still touching what is unclean. (Isaiah 52:11) If he participates in family traditions that reflect belief in immortality of the soul or superstitious fear of evil spirits, he still is sharing in her sins. We cannot sit on the fence. If we believe that Jehovah is the true God, then we must serve only him.—1 Kings 18:21.

¹⁷ To people of every nation and tribe and tongue the appealing invitation is being extended: Join in the worship of Jehovah, the only true God! (Revelation 14:6, 7) To do so, you must also imitate God’s ancient servants who heeded the command: “Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and provide escape each one for his own soul.”—Jeremiah 51:6.

16. What may indicate whether we have really heeded that command?

17. (a) As shown at Revelation 14:6, 7, what are people everywhere being invited to do? (b) To worship Jehovah acceptably, what other command must they obey?

Identified for Destruction or Survival?

THE religious situation that exists today calls on us to show what really is in our hearts. Do we truly love Jehovah and his ways? Are we like his Son, Jesus Christ, to whom it was said: "You loved righteousness, and you hated lawlessness"? (Hebrews 1:9) Are we willing to manifest this openly so that others know where we stand? The Bible record concerning Jehu and Jehonadab the son of Re'chab helps us to examine our position.

² In the tenth century B.C.E., Jehu was anointed to be king over the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, which had its capital at Samaria. He was commissioned to destroy all who belonged to the wicked house of King Ahab, including Queen Jezebel, who had promoted Baal worship in Israel and had endeavored to stamp out the worship of Jehovah. Jehonadab, a Kenite (hence, not an Israelite), doubtless knew of Jehu's executorial program when he went out to meet Jehu. But how strong was Jehonadab's love for Jehovah? Would he openly identify himself as one who firmly believed that only Jehovah, the true God, should be worshiped?

"IS YOUR HEART UPRIGHT WITH ME?"

³ After the two men had exchanged greetings, Jehu called on Jehonadab to make clear his position. "Is your heart upright with me," Jehu asked, "just as my own

1. What questions does this lesson encourage us to consider?
2. Who were Jehu and Jehonadab?
3. How did Jehonadab make known publicly his position regarding worship of Jehovah?

heart is with your heart?" Without hesitation Jehonadab responded: "It is." "If it is, do give me your hand," Jehu replied. So he took Jehonadab up into his chariot and said: "Do go along with me and look upon my toleration of no rivalry toward Jehovah." Jehonadab did not fearfully hold back.—2 Kings 10:15, 16; see Deuteronomy 6:13-15.

⁴ Arriving in Samaria, Jehu took measures that would require all who worshiped Baal to identify themselves. The prophets, the priests and all worshipers of Baal were called to a grand sacrifice at the house of Baal. They were notified that any persons failing to attend would forfeit their lives. Jehu directed that garments be issued for all worshipers of Baal to wear so that they would be clearly identified. Any who claimed also to worship Jehovah were thus made to show whom they really served. It seemed to be a glorious hour for Baal and for Satan the Devil, the false god whom Baal really represented.

⁵ This was no place for true worshipers of Jehovah. A search was made to be sure that only the worshipers of Baal were present. Then the ceremony proceeded. Meanwhile, outside, Jehu's men prepared, and at his signal they went into action. "Strike them down! Do not let a single one go out," he commanded. Every worshiper of Baal was destroyed. The house of Baal was pulled down. "Thus Jehu annihilated Baal out of Israel." Jehonadab was at Jehu's side to witness those events. (2 Kings 10:18-28) How do you personally react to what took place? While none of us delight in the death of others, even of wicked persons, do we

4, 5. (a) By what means did Jehu make the Baal worshipers identify themselves? (b) What action did Jehu then take, and where was Jehonadab? (c) How do you react to that destruction of Baal worshipers?

appreciate why it was necessary and why it is recorded in the Bible for us to read today?—Compare Ezekiel 33:11.

⁶ The account is not authorizing us to destroy either buildings that belong to religious groups or people devoted to false worship. Jehovah has appointed, not his modern-day witnesses, but the glorified Jesus Christ, as the Greater Jehu, to execute His righteous judgments. By permitting the combined political powers to express their own hatred for Babylon the Great, the heavenly King will bring about the annihilation of the world empire of false religion. (Revelation 6:2; 17:16; 19:1, 2) When on earth, Jesus refused to perform even one act of worship that would honor the Devil. He denounced the setting aside of Jehovah's Word for human tradition and the using of worship of God for commercial gain. He tolerated no rivalry toward Jehovah.—Luke 4:5-8; Matthew 15:3-9; 21:12, 13.

⁷ Why, then, does Christ, now ruling in the midst of his enemies, permit modern Baalism seemingly to prosper? Why does he allow people apparently to get away with honoring the god of this system of things by shoving aside Jehovah's requirements? Why does he tolerate their acting as if God had no objection to their sexual immorality, their glorifying a materialistic way of life, their indulging in spiritistic practices while professing to be Christians, and their teaching Babylonish doctrines as if these were the word of God? The ancient drama shows that this is to put people to the test, to let them show outwardly whom they worship,

6. (a) How will Babylon the Great be destroyed? (b) When on earth, how did Jesus show that he tolerated no rivalry toward Jehovah?

7. (a) What are some of the modern-day evidences of Baalism? (b) Why has Christ as King tolerated these things?

and thus whether they deserve preservation or execution.

⁸ What course have you chosen? Have you abandoned all practices that might identify you as a practitioner of modern Baalism? Have you separated yourself from the world and taken your stand as a true worshiper of Jehovah?—2 Corinthians 6:17.

⁹ Jehonadab, as a non-Israelite worshiper of Jehovah, foreshadowed the “other sheep” who are now being gathered with the hope of eternal life on earth. Do you reflect Jehonadab’s spirit? Are you willing to identify yourself publicly with the Greater Jehu and with his anointed followers on earth who are proclaiming the approaching “day of vengeance on the part of our God”? Are you sharing with them in that urgent work? (Isaiah 61:1, 2; Luke 9:26; Zechariah 8:23) Do you give Jehovah your exclusive devotion, allowing nothing to infringe on the place that he should hold in your heart? (Matthew 6:24; 1 John 2:15-17) Does your life demonstrate that your relationship with him is your most precious possession, that everything else is built around it?—Psalm 37:4; Proverbs 3:1-6.

DO YOU HAVE THE MARK?

¹⁰ It would be a serious mistake to conclude that if a person tries to lead a “good” life and if he shuns religions that are doing things clearly condemned in God’s Word, nothing more is required of him. All who hope to survive into the “new earth” must also be

8. What serious questions do *we* need to ask ourselves?

9. (a) If we truly are like Jehonadab, what will we be doing?
 (b) How do the cited scriptures emphasize the importance of these things?

10. How does the Bible show that only worshipers of Jehovah will survive?

unmistakably identified as worshipers of Jehovah. (Revelation 14:6, 7; Psalm 37:34; Joel 2:32) This message is conveyed in a vision given to the prophet Ezekiel before Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E.

¹¹ Ezekiel heard Jehovah summon those appointed to bring unfaithful Jerusalem and its inhabitants to ruin. He saw six men armed with weapons for smashing, and there was also one man clothed in linen, with a secretary's inkhorn at his hips. First to this linen-clad man Jehovah said: "Pass through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and you must put a mark on the foreheads of the men that are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the midst of it." Then to the six others he said: "Pass through the city after him and strike. Let not your eye feel sorry, and do not feel any compassion. Old man, young man and virgin and little child and women you should kill off—to a ruination. But to any man upon whom there is the mark do not go near, and from my sanctuary you should start." Ezekiel saw in vision the destruction that followed—so extensive that it seemed that all Israel still in the land was being brought to ruin. (Ezekiel 9:1-11) What was the key to survival? It was the mark placed on one's forehead by the man with the secretary's inkhorn.

¹² Only persons "sighing and groaning over all the detestable things" being done in Jerusalem were marked for survival. What were those "detestable things"? Five are listed: (1) A "symbol of jealousy" at the entrance to the inner court of Jehovah's temple. Whatever form

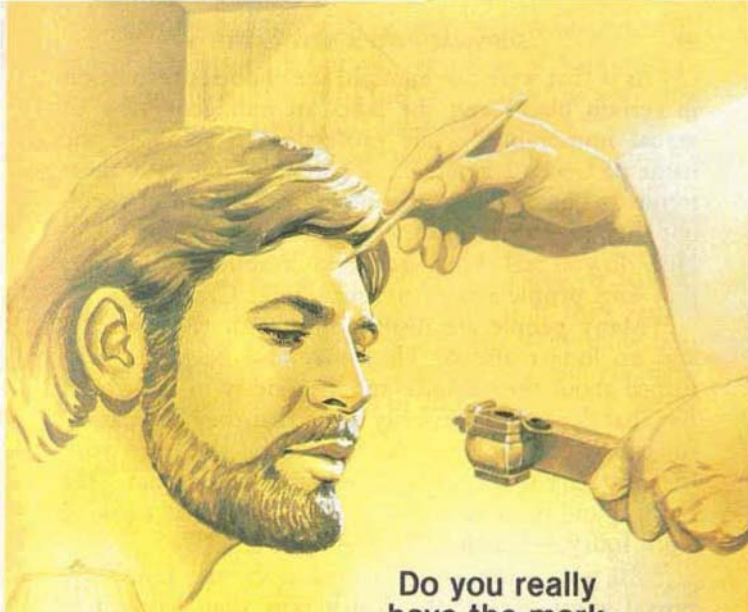
11. (a) Describe the vision recorded at Ezekiel 9:1-11.
(b) What was the key to survival?

12. (a) What were the detestable things over which the marked ones were "sighing and groaning"? (b) Why would Jehovah be disgusted with such things?

it took, this object was being given devotion that the Israelites owed to Jehovah. (1 Kings 14:22-24) (2) Wall carvings of creeping things and of beasts, before which incense was being offered right in the temple enclosure. (3) Women weeping over the death of the god Tammuz, which was another name for Nimrod, that rebel against Jehovah. (Genesis 10:9) (4) Men displaying outrageous disrespect by turning their backs to Jehovah's temple and bowing to the sun. (Deuteronomy 4:15-19) (5) As a final indignity, people filling the land with violence as well as holding out a "shoot," possibly a sex symbol, to Jehovah's nose. Can you appreciate why Jehovah was disgusted with them?—Ezekiel 8:5-17.

¹³ How do you personally react to the modern-day practices of Christendom that are comparable to these "detestable things"? (1) In many of her churches are images before which people bow in worship, although the Bible warns against doing so. (1 Corinthians 10:14; compare 2 Kings 17:40, 41.) (2) She goes along with the trend to put the evolution of man from animals in the place of creation by God; also she shares in displaying fervent devotion before representations of animals and birds used as national symbols. (3) In her worship she features the cross, which from antiquity was a religious symbol of Tammuz, and she joins in ceremonies to mourn those who have died in blood-spilling wars that reflect the spirit of Nimrod. (But see John 17:16, 17.) (4) She turns her back on what God says through his Word and, instead, chooses the "enlightenment" offered by modern science and human philosophy. (1 Timothy 6:20, 21; compare Jeremiah 2:13.)

13. (a) Taking one at a time, comment on the modern-day practices that are comparable to those "detestable things."
 (b) How do you feel about these practices?



**Do you really
have the mark
needed for survival?**



(5) As if that were not enough, she endorses revolution in certain places and she takes an indulgent view of sexual immorality, while professing to speak in the name of God. (2 Peter 2:1, 2) Some people view these trends as liberal. They may not agree with all of them, but they may share in others or at least condone them. How do you feel about such God-dishonoring practices that turn people away from mankind's Creator?

¹⁴ Many people are disillusioned with the churches and no longer attend. They may also be greatly disturbed about the violence and dishonesty in the world. But that does not necessarily mean that they are marked for survival. They must be marked by the 'man with the secretary's inkhorn.' The facts show that "the faithful and discreet slave" class is doing that marking work today.—Matthew 24:45-47.

¹⁵ All who want to be marked as having God's approval must accept the instruction that Jehovah is providing through that "slave" class and become true worshipers of Jehovah. They must not be persons who honor Jehovah with their mouths but who really love the world's ways. (Isaiah 29:13, 14; 1 John 2:15) They must love Jehovah and his standards and feel grieved at heart, "sighing and groaning," over teachings and practices that dishonor him. No one will put a literal ink mark on their forehead. But when they have the symbolic mark it will be obvious to all that, as dedicated, baptized Christians, they have put on the "new personality" described at Ephesians 4:24. They have a living faith. Publicly and privately they endeavor to do what will honor Jehovah. Not only persons who have come

14. Why does the fact that a person is disillusioned with the churches not necessarily mean that he will be a survivor?

15. (a) What is the mark? (b) How does a person get it?

out of Christendom but all, regardless of background, who hope to survive into the "new earth" as associates of the anointed class must have this mark.

¹⁶ Particularly significant is the fact that Jehovah's executioners were told that age, sex, singleness or marriage relationship was no reason to spare an offender against Jehovah. A married person must individually have his or her mark in order to be spared. If parents resist having their children marked or if they fail to bring them up as servants of Jehovah, they must bear the responsibility for what happens to those children. Although obedient children of godly parents are viewed as "holy" by Jehovah, rebellious ones are not. (1 Corinthians 7:14; Psalm 102:28; Proverbs 20:11; 30:17) If children are old enough to become baptized Christians but do not want to live up to the requirements, whether they are baptized or not, their age will not result in their being spared. How vital, then, for each individual of responsible age to be clearly marked as a person dedicated to God and doing his will!

¹⁷ Jehovah has shown great compassion for mankind by sending his witnesses to warn them of impending destruction and to point the way to safety. But he well knows the record of false religion and the rotten fruitage that it has produced. When Babylon the Great is destroyed, no compassion will be shown for any who insist on clinging to it. To survive the coming execution of divine judgment, we must walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ as true worshipers of Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth.

16. Why is this vision particularly important for children and their parents?

17. What have we learned here as to Jehovah's compassion?

A Time of Re-Creation

SURVIVAL through the end of the present corrupt world is a grand prospect. We long to get away from the injustices, the greed and the violence of this world. But something else makes it even more desirable that we survive. What is it? The fact that all who become part of the "new earth" will also have opportunity to be liberated from their own imperfections, from sickness and a life of pain, yes, even from death. (Revelation 21:1-5) For this to take place, however, sin itself must be completely rooted out. How is that possible? It is associated with what Jesus Christ described as "the re-creation."

² To his apostles, Jesus said: "In the re-creation, when the Son of man sits down upon his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also yourselves sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Matthew 19:28) The re-creation will be a time of "regeneration," a time "when all is made new," as other Bible translations express it. (*The Emphasised Bible*, by Rotherham; *The Jerusalem Bible*) By means of this re-creation, it will be possible for humans to enjoy again the perfection that mankind had at the start.

³ Because of sin inherited from Adam, all of his offspring have had to die, and many have suffered

1. (a) What marvelous opportunity will await survivors into the "new earth"? (b) But what will that require?
2. What is "the re-creation" referred to at Matthew 19:28?
3. (a) What has resulted from the sin of Adam? (b) Why have none of Adam's offspring been able to free themselves of the effects of inherited sin?

grievous sickness leading to death. (Romans 5:12) No exemption from death could be bought with money. No works of which an imperfect human was capable could earn a release for himself or anyone else. Divine justice required that if mankind was to regain the opportunity to enjoy eternal life, a sacrifice must be offered equal in value to what Adam lost, namely, perfect human life. None of Adam's offspring had such a life to offer.—Psalm 49:7-9; Ecclesiastes 7:20.

⁴ Mercifully, Jehovah himself made the needed provision by sending his only-begotten Son, Jesus, to earth as a perfect human to lay down his life as "a corresponding ransom." (1 Timothy 2:5, 6) What a magnificent demonstration of undeserved kindness and of God's love for humankind! The life that is possible as a result is not something that we can earn like wages but is a gift from God. However, it is given only to those who genuinely recognize their need of this divine provision, exercise faith in it and demonstrate that faith by obedience to God's Son. (Romans 6:23; John 3:16, 36) But when were benefits of that sacrifice to be experienced by mankind?

BENEFITS NOW FROM CHRIST'S SACRIFICE

⁵ Benefits began to affect human lives immediately after Jesus Christ (in the role of God's great High Priest) presented the value of his sacrifice before God in heaven. First, starting at Pentecost of 33 C.E., these benefits began to be experienced by those who, called to be heirs with Christ, would serve as kings and priests

4. (a) How was the needed ransom provided? (b) How can we benefit from it?

5. (a) Who were first to benefit from Christ's sacrifice? (b) What other group has benefited, and particularly since when?

with him in heaven. (Acts 2:32, 33; Colossians 1:13, 14) Then, outstandingly in 1935, persons who embraced the hope of eternal life on earth began to manifest themselves. Their hope, too, was made possible by Christ's sacrifice. (1 John 2:1, 2) This progressive application of the value of that sacrifice was indicated by events that took place on ancient Israel's Atonement Day.

⁶ Officiating at Israel's sacred tabernacle, and later at the temple, was a high priest who was a member of the Levite house of Aaron. Other males of Aaron's house were underpriests, and the rest of the males of the tribe of Levi served as assistants. To provide a covering for sins, the high priest sacrificed two animals, the blood of each of which was presented separately in the Most Holy, as prescribed by Jehovah. First was a young bull offered up by the Aaronic high priest for "himself and his house," which included the entire tribe of Levi. (Leviticus 16:11, 14) Next was the goat that was presented as a sin offering "for the people," the other twelve tribes. (Leviticus 16:15) Additionally, the sins of all Israel were confessed over the head of a live goat, and it was led away into the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:21, 22) What did all of this mean?

⁷ The apostle Paul explains that its fulfillment centers on the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ. "Christ entered, not into a holy place made with hands, which is a copy of the reality, but into heaven itself, now to appear before the person of God for us . . . to put sin away through the sacrifice of himself." (Hebrews 9:24-26) Then why was the blood of more than one animal

6. Briefly outline what took place on Atonement Day.

7. (a) What one sacrifice was there foreshadowed? (b) Why was more than one sacrificial animal used?

taken into the Most Holy on Israel's Atonement Day? This was to draw attention to different aspects of what Jesus' perfect human sacrifice accomplishes. And one more aspect was highlighted by the confessing of the sins of the nation over the head of a live goat and then leading it away into the wilderness.

⁸ Even as blood from the bull offered for the house of Aaron was taken first into the Most Holy, so the benefits of Jesus' sacrifice were applied first on behalf of those who would be associated with Christ in the heavenly priesthood. This was done from 33 C.E. onward. Jesus Christ had no sins for which atonement must be made, as did Aaron, but those who would be underpriests with Christ did. These were pictured by the tribe of Levi. (1 Peter 2:4, 5) Presentation of blood from a second sacrifice, the goat of the sin offering "for the people," indicated that others of mankind would benefit from Jesus' sacrifice after the heavenly class. These would be persons who would gain life in the restored Paradise on earth. They were pictured by "the twelve [nonpriestly] tribes of Israel" on Atonement Day. (Matthew 19:28; Psalm 37:29) Not only did Jesus *die* on behalf of all of these, but he actually *carries away the sins* of those for whom he died sacrificially, bringing relief to them. This was indicated by the fact that, finally, after the sins of Israel were confessed over a live goat, it was led away into the wilderness, never to be seen again.—Psalm 103:12; Isaiah 53:4-6.

8. (a) How did Atonement Day procedures indicate who would benefit first from Christ's sacrifice? (b) What application of Jesus' sacrifice was indicated by the sin offering "for the people"? (c) What further fact was illustrated by the leading away of a goat into the wilderness?

⁹ For all who exercise faith in Jehovah's loving provision through Christ, true forgiveness of sins, a clean standing before God, is possible now regardless of their former way of life. They can enjoy the priceless blessing of rendering sacred service to God with a clean conscience. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Hebrews 9:13, 14) But this does not mean that they are at present granted life free from all effects of sin. (1 John 1:8-10; Romans 7:21-25) For those who are to rule in heaven with Christ, such a life will be realized only when they have finished their earthly course and are raised to immortality in the heavens. For others of mankind, complete relief from sin will be made possible by means of the re-creation.

"IN THE RE-CREATION"

¹⁰ As Jesus said, the re-creation is "when the Son of man [Jesus Christ] sits down upon his glorious throne." (Matthew 19:28) Of course, not everything took place immediately when he was enthroned. After Jesus' enthronement in 1914 C.E., he first cleansed the heavens, ousting Satan and his demons. Then he proceeded to resurrect his anointed followers to heavenly glory. (Revelation 12:5, 7-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17) Not only were the faithful apostles of Christ given the "twelve thrones" promised to them, but progressively all the others of the 144,000 are enthroned in heaven on their resurrection from the dead. —Revelation 3:21.

¹¹ As the selecting of persons to make up the heaven-

9. (a) What blessings do those who exercise faith in Christ's sacrifice enjoy now? (b) What further benefits will come later?

10. (a) When did the re-creation begin? (b) Have any yet been given thrones in fulfillment of Jesus' promise?

11. In what way are the "other sheep" already feeling the effects of the re-creation?

ly class drew to its close, the gathering of the great crowd of "other sheep" began, especially from 1935 onward. These, too, began to enjoy benefits from Christ's sacrifice, 'washing their robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb.' They are being helped to "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14; Ephesians 4:20-24) In ever-growing numbers they are benefiting from God's provisions through Christ that can lead to their living forever in the restored Paradise.—Revelation 7:17; 22:17.

¹² Soon, now, the wicked world will be destroyed. Satan and his demons will be abyssed. The millennial Judgment Day for mankind will begin. Jesus Christ will be the Presiding Judge, and he will see that all are given full opportunity and ample help so that they can learn Jehovah's righteous ways and comply with them. Those anointed followers of Christ who proved themselves integrity keepers till death will share with him in the work, 'judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' (Luke 22:28-30; Revelation 20:4, 6) This does not mean that they will judge only the natural offspring of Israel. Rather, they will judge all who were foreshadowed by "the twelve [nonpriestly] tribes of Israel" on Atonement Day. This includes the entire world of redeemed mankind. (1 Corinthians 6:2) Survivors of the great tribulation will be the first to benefit from this program to uplift mankind. But billions more will also share, because those to be judged include "the living and the dead." (2 Timothy 4:1; Acts 24:15) How

12. (a) Who were represented by "the twelve tribes of Israel" to which Jesus here referred? (b) Who besides survivors will benefit from the re-creation?

thrilling it will be when the dead who are covered by the ransom sacrifice of Christ return! What tears of joy as loved ones are reunited!

¹³ This will be the time when, at long last, mankind is relieved of the physical and mental disabilities produced by sin. When on earth, Jesus instantly healed persons who were paralytics, those who were blind or deaf or who could not speak, and persons whose flesh was disfigured or whose strength had been sapped by disease. Those powerful works were just a foretaste of what he will do for all mankind during his Millennial Reign. With good reason, any who witness or experience such marvelous evidence of Jehovah's kindness and who then spurn his sovereignty will be destroyed forever. But by means of education in Jehovah's righteous ways, the thinking and motivations of those who demonstrate sincere faith and obedience will gradually improve until they attain to full perfection. Such lovers of Jehovah will truly have experienced a regeneration, a re-creation. It will be as if they were given a new start in life with a new father, the Eternal Father, Jesus Christ.—Isaiah 26:9; 9:6.

¹⁴ Then, after passing a final test at the end of the thousand years, they will be adopted by Jehovah God through Christ as God's own sons, as part of His perfect universal family. What an encouraging prospect this is—not only for survivors of the great tribulation but also for all the dead who are brought forth to share in the joy of life in a Paradise earth!—Romans 8:20, 21.

13. How will the effects of the millennial Judgment Day truly be a re-creation?

14. What precious relationship will all who pass the final test be privileged to enjoy?

How “New Heavens and a New Earth” Begin

MENTION of the heavens makes many persons think of outer space, the moon and the stars. The Bible also associates “heaven” with rulership. (Acts 7:49) At times it uses the expression “the heavens” to refer to God himself as Universal Sovereign. (Daniel 4:26; Matthew 4:17) Even governments of men are referred to as “heavens,” because these hold a position above their subjects. (2 Peter 3:7) Similarly, “earth” often means the globe, but it can also refer to human society. (Genesis 11:1; Psalm 96:1) An awareness of this can help you to appreciate the significance of the fascinating promises regarding “new heavens and a new earth.” Some of these promises had an initial fulfillment in the days of ancient Israel.

‘BE JOYFUL IN WHAT I AM CREATING’

² The nation of Israel was in a covenant with God, having solemnly agreed to obey him. But they became disloyal. Because of this, Jehovah made it known that he would withdraw his protection, allow Jerusalem to be destroyed and the people to be taken into exile in Babylon. (Isaiah 1:2-4; 39:5-7) But he also mercifully foretold the restoration of a repentant remnant.—Isaiah 43:14, 15; 48:20.

³ Because of the certainty of this, Jehovah spoke of

1. (a) In the Bible, what is often referred to as “heavens”?
- (b) In some passages, what is the meaning of “earth”?
2. Why did Jehovah allow Israel to be taken into exile, but what did he foretell?
3. What did the promise at Isaiah 65:17 mean?

that future restoration as if it were already taking place, saying: "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." (Isaiah 65:17, 18) This would mean deliverance for those repentant Israelites.

⁴ Impossible though such a thing had seemed from a human standpoint, powerful Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians in 539 B.C.E. The Jews came under a new government, "new heavens." Cyrus the Great filled a prominent role in that "new heavens." Though Cyrus did not become a Jewish proselyte, he acknowledged that Jehovah permitted him to have the authority he exercised and that Jehovah had commissioned him to get the temple in Jerusalem rebuilt. (2 Chronicles 36:23; see Isaiah 44:28.) Back in Jerusalem in 537 B.C.E., Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Jeshua also served prominently in that governmental "new heavens," and the restored Jewish remnant made up "a new earth," a cleansed society that reestablished pure worship in the land.—Ezra 5:1, 2.

⁵ As evidence that in both mind and heart they were a changed people, they needed to put the interests of pure worship first in their lives, truly respect Jehovah's sovereignty and listen to his prophets. Consistent with this, among the first things they did when they reached

4. (a) When did the foretold deliverance come? (b) What were the "new heavens" and the "new earth" back then?

5, 6. (a) What would give evidence that they truly were a changed people? (b) When Jehovah reproved them, how was their response different from that before the exile?

Judah was to "build the altar of the God of Israel" and to offer sacrifices.—Ezra 3:1-6.

⁶ When materialistic tendencies and fear of man hindered the completion of the temple building, Jehovah reproved the people by means of his prophets, and they took heed. (Haggai 1:2, 7, 8, 12; 2:4, 5) Later, when serious failure to conform to the Law requirements regarding marriage was pointed out, the people corrected their ways. (Ezra 10:10-12) Instead of having eyes that, figuratively, did not see and ears that were deaf to God's word, they experienced spiritual healing and used their faculties in harmony with Jehovah's will. (Compare Isaiah 6:9, 10 with 35:5, 6.) As a result, God prospered them in harmony with the promises found at Isaiah 65:20-25.

⁷ But was that all there was to the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding "new heavens and a new earth"? Certainly not. The Christian apostle Peter stated that first-century Christians were eagerly anticipating a further fulfillment. (2 Peter 3:13) What they were awaiting is now unfolding before our eyes. In what way? In connection with events that involve the enthronement of the Greater Cyrus, the glorified Jesus Christ.

⁸ As we have already seen, it was in 1914 that Jehovah God conferred upon his Son authority to begin ruling in the midst of his enemies. The long-awaited "new heavens" then came into existence. What occurred was far more magnificent than the events associated with the deliverance of ancient Israel. (Psalm 110:2; Daniel

7. How do we know there was to be a further fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy?

8. (a) When did Jehovah bring this "new heavens" into existence, and how does this compare with the prophecy's first fulfillment? (b) How has the membership of the "new heavens" been progressively enlarged?

7:13, 14) The government brought to birth in 1914 actually rules from heaven itself, and God has given it authority over all the earth. The enlarging of this government occurred later with the resurrection of Christ's spirit-anointed followers (who had already died) to be kings and priests in heaven with their Lord. As other members of that Kingdom class have finished their earthly life, they too have been added to the growing membership of the "new heavens." (1 Thessalonians 4: 14-17; Revelation 14:13) By far the great majority of Christ's joint heirs are now active in that heavenly Kingdom. The spirit-born Christians thus joined with Christ make up the New Jerusalem, concerning which Jehovah said: "Here I am creating Jerusalem a cause for joyfulness and her people a cause for exultation."—Isaiah 65:18.

⁹ It is not only in the heavens but also on the earth that Jehovah has produced "a cause for exultation." A remnant of the Kingdom heirs are still on the earthly scene. During World War I the clergy of Christendom seized upon wartime hysteria to lay false charges against these Bible Students and to cause members of their Governing Body to be sentenced to long prison terms. But in 1919 they were liberated, actually being released from captivity instigated by Babylon the Great. With Jehovah's spirit backing them up, they reorganized as a people devoted exclusively to pure worship and the interests of God's Kingdom.

¹⁰ Their hopes and expectations, however, were dif-

9. What "cause for exultation" did Jehovah produce right here on earth in 1919?

10. (a) How were the expectations of these spiritual Israelites different from those of the repatriated Jews in 537 B.C.E.? (b) What work did Jehovah give them to do? (c) How has he richly blessed them while they are still on earth, and how do the cited scriptures describe the conditions they enjoy?

ferent from those of the Jews who returned to their homeland in 537 B.C.E. The members of spiritual Israel were looking forward to an inheritance "reserved in the heavens" for them. (1 Peter 1:3-5) But before they actually received that reward, Jehovah had a work for them to do. Concerning this, he prophetically said: "I shall put my words in your mouth, and with the shadow of my hand I shall certainly cover you, in order to plant the heavens and lay the foundation of the earth and say to Zion, 'You are my people.'" (Isaiah 51:16) He put his "words," his message, into the mouth of his servants for them to proclaim earth wide. With confidence they began to make known that God has planted the "new heavens" so firmly that neither men nor demons can uproot them. The way in which Jehovah has dealt with the representatives of heavenly Zion has clearly identified them as his people. In contrast with the spiritually and morally desolate condition of the world, the "land" occupied by spiritual Israel, their field of activity, has become a place where spiritual values and activities thrive. It is a spiritual paradise! (Isaiah 32:1-4; 35:1-7; 65:13, 14; Psalm 85:1, 8-13) But what about the "new earth" foretold at Isaiah 65:17?

PREPARATION FOR THE "NEW EARTH"

¹¹ Beginning especially in 1935, Jehovah caused the members of spiritual Israel to see that the time had come for the gathering of a great crowd of persons with expectation of eternal life on a Paradise earth. Compared with the "little flock" of Kingdom heirs, they have indeed become a great crowd. (Revelation 7:9, 10) These, too, have been brought into the spiritual para-

11. (a) Especially since when has Jehovah been preparing prospective members of the "new earth"? (b) By what people that left ancient Babylon were they foreshadowed?

dise. They were foreshadowed by the non-Israelites who left Babylon with the Jews in 537 B.C.E. as well as those who did so later. (Ezra 2:58, 64, 65; 8:17, 20) All this great crowd of modern-day witnesses of Jehovah with earthly hopes are prospective members of the "new earth."

¹² Those who survive the great tribulation and have before them the prospect of perfect human life will actually constitute the foundation of that "new earth," being the first members of it. It is important that the foundation be sound. So, right now they are being instructed thoroughly in Jehovah's ways. They are being helped to gain heartfelt appreciation of the issue of universal sovereignty. They are learning how vital it is to 'trust in Jehovah with all their heart and not to lean on their own understanding.' (Proverbs 3:5, 6) They have opportunity to prove themselves zealous and loyal supporters of God's Kingdom by sharing to the full in preaching "this good news of the kingdom" now. (Matthew 24:14) They are experiencing what it means to be part of a global society in which people out of all nations and languages and races work together in loving brotherhood. (John 13:35; Acts 10:34, 35) Are you personally applying yourself so as to benefit fully from this program of education? For all who do so, marvelous prospects lie ahead.

THE "NEW EARTH" BECOMES A REALITY

¹³ The final, complete fulfillment of Jehovah's promise to bring into existence "a new earth" will be far

12. How are people being prepared now so that they can be a suitable foundation of the "new earth"?

13. How will the coming "new earth" be a far grander fulfillment of Jehovah's promise than what took place in 537 B.C.E.?

grander than what took place back in 537 B.C.E. Not only will those who make up the "new earth" be people who were liberated from Babylon the Great, but that entire world empire of false religion will have been destroyed forever. (Revelation 18:21) This righteous human society—the "new earth"—will not be surrounded by nations that reproach Jehovah and persecute his servants, as was true in the first fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. All human governments, because of their refusal to submit to Jehovah's sovereignty, will have been crushed out of existence, and the present wicked human society will have been completely cut off from the earth. (Daniel 2:44; Proverbs 2:21, 22) As God's righteous New Order begins, the only people who will inhabit planet Earth will be those who honor Jehovah, finding exquisite delight in his ways.—Psalm 37:4, 9.

¹⁴ It is to that glorious time that the apostle Peter directed attention in his second inspired letter. (2 Peter 3:13) Pointing to the same exciting prospect, the apostle John reported details of the revelation given to him, saying: "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) When the great tribulation has passed and Satan and his demons have been abyssed, a new epoch will begin. The vile influence of Satan and his demons will be gone. His entire system of things will have been destroyed. The "new heaven" will then carry out Jehovah's loving purpose for his creatures without any interference from governments that ignore Jehovah's sovereignty. Under

14. (a) When will 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1 be fulfilled? (b) What will be different about the circumstances in which the "new heaven" then functions? (c) Who will be included in the "new earth"?

that “new heaven” will be a truly “new earth,” made up of the “great crowd” to whom God extends the precious prospect of endless life in a global Paradise of beauty, plenty, happiness and peace. When God’s appointed time comes for the human dead to be raised, these too will have the opportunity to become part of that “new earth” in which righteousness will dwell. —Revelation 20:12, 13.

¹⁵ Concerning what God has in store for mankind then, the apostle John heard this announcement 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) How exhilarating life will be!

¹⁶ Conditions that existed in Eden and the miracles performed by Jesus provide delightful previews of what life will be like in that “new earth.” Additionally, features of the prophecies at Isaiah 11:6-9 and 35:1-7 and 65:20-25 will find physical fulfillment then, to the great blessing of obedient mankind. How refreshing it will be when the vitally necessary conditions of spiritual health and prosperity can be enjoyed along with physical and mental perfection in an earth that in every way has become Paradise! With such a marvelous prospect before us, how can we do otherwise than raise our voices in gratitude to Jehovah, the Grand Creator of it all!

15. Why is the promise at Revelation 21:3, 4 important to you?

16. What expectations as to the future are stirred in our hearts by the promises at (a) Isaiah 11:6-9? (b) Isaiah 35:1-7? (c) Isaiah 65:20-25? (d) Who makes these delightful prospects possible for us?

Dividing of People Over the Kingdom Issue

EACH ONE of us is faced with a crucial decision. At issue is our attitude toward Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ. Over this issue a dividing of people of all nations is taking place. On the basis of each person's course of action he is being put into one of two groups. Only one of these groups will survive the impending world destruction.—Matthew 24:40, 41.

² Jehovah has already enthroned his anointed Son, his Messiah, in the heavens. At the end of the "appointed times of the nations" in 1914, God gave Jesus Christ the nations as his inheritance—all the earth as his possession. (Psalm 2:6, 8) The Messianic government, with Jehovah's anointed King on the throne, is God's means for carrying out his own wise and loving purpose regarding the earth. Your attitude toward the Kingdom, therefore, demonstrates how you feel about Jehovah's universal sovereignty. Soon that Messianic Kingdom will "crush and put an end" to the entire political system now dominating human affairs and will become the one government over all the earth. (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 19:11-21) When it proceeds to transform the earth into a Paradise, where will you be? Will you

1. Why is the division over the Kingdom issue a crucial matter for each one of us?

2. (a) How is this Messianic Kingdom related to the issue of Jehovah's sovereignty? (b) What will the Kingdom soon become, and so what should we be seriously thinking about?

be among those guided by it to the enjoyment of perfection of life? Jesus stated the basis on which people now living could share in such a prospect.

THE KING AND HIS "BROTHERS"

³ When telling his apostles about "the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus used several parables, or illustrations. In the final one he said: "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, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left." —Matthew 24:3; 25:31-33.

⁴ Notice that Jesus here speaks of himself as "the Son of man," as he had already done repeatedly earlier in this prophecy. (Matthew 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44) His use of this expression was a reminder of the prophetic vision given to Daniel nearly six centuries earlier, concerning which the prophet wrote: "I kept on beholding in the visions of the night, and, see there! with the clouds of the heavens someone like a son of man [Jesus Christ] happened to be coming; and to the Ancient of Days [Jehovah God] he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One. And to him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him. His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin." (Daniel 7:13, 14; He-

3. At Matthew 25:31-33, what did Jesus describe?

4. (a) How is this parable related to Daniel 7:13, 14? (b) What questions might we beneficially ask ourselves?

brews 2:5-8) That ruling authority has already been given to Jesus Christ. Since 1914 he rules from his heavenly throne. How have you personally responded to his rulership? Does your way of life give evidence of proper respect for this One whom God himself has made Ruler of all the earth?

⁵ Mere words are not enough. It is easy for a person to say that he believes in God's Kingdom and that he loves Jesus Christ. But in his parable of the sheep and the goats Jesus showed that, since he would be invisible in the heavens, a key factor that he would take into account in determining the genuineness of a person's claims would be his treatment of those who represent Christ on earth, his "brothers."—Matthew 25:40, 45.

⁶ Who are they? The ones whom God has chosen from among mankind to be heirs with Christ of the heavenly Kingdom. These number 144,000, of whom only a remnant are yet on earth. (Revelation 14:1, 4) Because they have been "born again" by means of the operation of God's spirit, they are sons of God, and for that reason they are spoken of in the Scriptures as "brothers" of Jesus Christ. (John 3:3; Hebrews 2:10, 11) Jesus counts what people do to these "brothers," even to "the least" of them, as being done to himself.

⁷ Where are these "brothers" of Christ in our day? Are you going to find them among the churchgoers of Christendom? Well, what did Jesus say about his true followers? "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:16) Can that really be

5. How does Christ determine the genuineness of one's claim of devotion to him as King?

6. Who are these "brothers" of Christ?

7. Why are Christ's "brothers" not members of the churches of Christendom?

said of the churches of Christendom and their members? In large measure, their attitudes and conduct simply mirror those that are common in the part of the world where they are found. The involvement of the churches in politics is well known. When the United Nations Charter was being formulated in 1945, Protestant, Catholic and Jewish delegations were on hand as consultants. In recent years, popes of Rome have lauded the United Nations as "the last hope of concord and peace" and "the supreme forum of peace and justice." The World Council of Churches, with membership of some 300 religious groups, has even provided funds used to finance political revolutions. Yet, Jesus Christ said to the Roman governor Pilate: "My kingdom is no part of this world."—John 18:36.

⁸ The facts show that only one group has taken a firm stand for the Kingdom, devoting vigorous effort to proclaiming it worldwide, while avoiding involvement of any kind in the political affairs of the world. This group is Jehovah's Witnesses. Among them are found the remaining ones of Christ's "brothers." In imitation of their Lord and of his apostles, they have devoted themselves to going from city to city and from house to house, telling people the good news of the Kingdom of God. (Luke 8:1; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:20, 25) In 1919, at a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses (then known as International Bible Students) in Cedar Point, Ohio, the conventioners were reminded that their "vocation was and is to announce the incoming glorious kingdom of Messiah." At a similar convention in 1922 this was again emphasized, and they were urged: "Ad-

8. (a) What has helped you to identify the "brothers" of Christ? (b) How important to them is the work of Kingdom preaching?

vertise, advertise, advertise, the King and his kingdom." Using every means at their disposal, they have continued to do that worldwide right down to this day. (Matthew 24:14) Because of their activity, the Kingdom issue has been presented to you. What are you doing about it?

'YOU DID IT TO ONE OF MY BROTHERS'

⁹ The spirit-anointed "brothers" of Christ have come under severe tests because of boldly preaching God's Kingdom, while maintaining separateness from the world. (John 15:19, 21) Some have experienced hunger, thirst and lack of clothing. Many have left their homes to serve in areas where they were strangers. While performing their ministry, they have undergone sickness and imprisonment, even death at the hands of persecutors. These experiences of Christ's "brothers" have caused people of all nations to be confronted with a test. Would love for God and Christ cause them to come to the aid of these ambassadors of the heavenly Kingdom? (Matthew 25:35-40; compare 2 Corinthians 5:20.) Not primarily humanitarian kindness but help rendered because they belong to Christ is counted by the King as done to himself personally.—Mark 9:41; Matthew 10:42.

¹⁰ Those who render such aid are likened by Jesus to sheep. People who fail to give help to his "brothers" are referred to in Jesus' parable as goats. The "goats" may protest that they did not see Jesus Christ. But he has sent his servants to them, and these have clearly

9. (a) How are the circumstances described at Matthew 25:35-40 related to the Kingdom ministry? (b) With what test have people everywhere thus been confronted?

10. (a) Why is the protest raised by the "goats" not valid? (b) By contrast, what position have the "sheep" taken?

identified themselves. All the “goats” may not persecute Christ’s “brothers,” but neither are they moved by love for the heavenly King to come to the aid of his representatives. (Matthew 25:41-45) They cling to the world of which Satan the Devil is the invisible ruler. The “sheep” cannot literally see Christ either. But, in contrast to the “goats,” these prove that they are not afraid to identify themselves with Christ’s “brothers,” supporting these proclaimers of God’s Kingdom. The “sheep” know what they are doing, and they make a positive choice in favor of the Kingdom of God by means of Jesus Christ. That is why their action has merit in the eyes of the King.

¹¹ How, though, is it possible for people of *all nations* to be judged on this basis? Did not Jesus say that his “brothers,” to whom the Father would give the heavenly Kingdom, would be just a “little flock”? (Luke 12:32) Many people never personally come in contact with one of them. True, but the “brothers” of Christ make up the nucleus of the international organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses. By means of this organized people, the vital Kingdom issue is being presented to people everywhere. All of this is being directed by Christ himself from his heavenly throne and with the aid of the angels. In some 200 lands and island groups around the globe—even where the preaching of God’s Kingdom is under government ban—the dividing work moves irresistibly forward, and a great crowd of persons are taking their stand on the side of God’s Kingdom.

¹² How do they show this? By working right along

11. (a) Since many people have never met one of Christ’s “brothers,” how can they be judged on the basis here described? (b) What assures the success of this work?

12. (a) How do the “sheep” make clear the stand they have taken? (b) Why do they do it?

with the anointed ones, zealously proclaiming that the Kingdom rules and that it will soon bring the worldly system to its end. Thus they openly identify themselves as having taken their stand for Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom and they lovingly urge others to do the same. Far more than a desire for survival motivates these right-hearted persons. They truly love Jehovah and his ways. The provision of his Kingdom with Christ as King fills their hearts with gratitude, and they want others to benefit from it. So they share to the fullest extent that they are able in giving the Kingdom witness. As Jesus instructed his disciples, they 'seek first the kingdom,' not allowing anxiety over material needs to push it into second place. In this way they come in line for a grand blessing.—Matthew 6:31-33.

WILL YOU "INHERIT THE KINGDOM"?

¹³ What is in store for those who prove to be the "sheep" of Jesus' parable is marvelous indeed. From his heavenly throne, he says to them: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." (Matthew 25:34) Ever since "the founding of the world," at the time when Adam and Eve first produced children who could benefit from God's provision to redeem mankind, according to Genesis 3:15, 16, Jehovah had in mind a reward for these "sheep." (Compare Luke 11:50, 51.) Theirs is the opportunity to enjoy in the restored Paradise the perfection of human life that Adam lost. Their 'inheriting the kingdom' does not mean that they will go to heaven, because the parable

13. (a) Since when has Jehovah had in mind a reward for these sheeplike ones? (b) What does it mean for them to "inherit the kingdom"?

shows that the "sheep" are not the same as the King's "brothers," who are heirs of the heavenly Kingdom. So the "sheep" must be earthly subjects of that heavenly government. Liddell and Scott's *Greek-English Lexicon* states that the Greek term *basilei'a*, which is here translated "kingdom," can be understood in a passive sense, meaning one's "being ruled by a king." It is this sense that obviously applies here.

¹⁴ When the "goats" depart into "everlasting cutting-off," into a destruction as complete as if by fire, the "sheep" will be safeguarded by the Messianic King. (Matthew 25:41, 46; compare Revelation 21:8.) Without any need to die, they will be preserved through the great tribulation into the glorious "new earth" that will be free from the vile influence of Satan and his wicked system of things. That blessing will be theirs because they are making the right decision on the Kingdom issue *now*.

¹⁵ It would be a serious mistake to reason that, because the destruction of the "goats" is everlasting, the parable could not apply until later on, perhaps during the Millennial Reign of Christ. On the contrary, Jesus gave this parable as part of the sign of "the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3) What he describes takes place after he is enthroned but also while his "brothers" are still in the flesh and experiencing the hardships that he mentions. We are living in that time, and it is fast running out. How vital it is, therefore, not only to put full confidence in the Kingdom but to help others to see the importance of doing so now.

14. How will the judgment passed on the "goats" contrast with the inheritance of the "sheep"?

15. (a) How do we know that this parable applies now? (b) So, what work is of vital importance?

What Will You Personally Do?

THE decision to serve Jehovah is not one that anyone else can make for you. If your marriage mate is a faithful servant of God, that can be a priceless blessing. Similarly, if your parents love Jehovah, you are in a favored position. Such home circumstances may provide an impetus toward association with those who worship Jehovah "with spirit and truth." (John 4: 23, 24) But in time *you* must make a personal decision. Do you truly love Jehovah and want to be one of his servants? Do you really want to live in a world where righteousness will prevail?

² If you are a parent, surely you want your children to enjoy the blessing of eternal life under God's Kingdom. You cannot control what they will do when they grow old enough to chart their own course in life. But what you personally do about true worship can exercise a powerful influence—either for good or for bad. If you were to hold back from serving Jehovah, that would deprive your offspring of what could well be their best opportunity to get started on the way to eternal life. Or if you were to make a dedication to God and then prove indifferent about living up to it, this might lead to spiritual disaster for the entire family, with the loss of everything in the great tribulation. But if you set an

1. What decision must be made on a personal basis?
2. (a) Why is the attitude of a parent toward serving Jehovah especially important? (b) What are five things that parents can do to give their children a fine start?

example of faithfulness, if you personally help your children to study God's Word, if you cultivate in yourself and in them love for Jehovah and respect for his visible organization, if you help them to realize how they are safeguarded by doing God's will, if you show them how to find joy in sacred service, then you are giving them an excellent start on the road leading to life. Only with Jehovah's blessing is this possible. (Compare 2 Timothy 1:5.) Pray for it incessantly. Much effort is also required on your part. But how worth while the outcome will be!

³ Perhaps the situation that confronts you is that other members of your family do not share your love for Jehovah. Do they try to discourage you from "getting involved"? Or is there outright opposition? What could you do to help them to share your joy in understanding God's purpose? Oftentimes obstacles can be overcome by inviting family members to go with you to the Kingdom Hall to see for themselves what takes place there. While there, they might speak with one of the elders to clear up questions they have as to the beliefs and practices of Jehovah's Witnesses. But what if opposition continues? Then you need to ask yourself: 'Do I really love Jehovah and his Son Jesus Christ and am I sufficiently grateful for all the things that they have done for us so that I am willing to put up with some hardship in order to show my love and gratitude? Do I love my own family enough to set a right example so that, if possible, they too might be helped to take hold of God's provisions for eternal life?' —Matthew 10:36-38; 1 Corinthians 7:12, 13, 16.

3. (a) If you encounter opposition from family members, what might be done? (b) But what if the opposition continues?

THE SIGNAL TO WHICH NATIONS ARE TURNING

⁴ The opportunity is now being extended to people everywhere to demonstrate their love for Jehovah by aligning themselves with his Messianic Kingdom. That government is the means by which Jehovah's name will be vindicated. Our attitude toward the Kingdom gives evidence of how we feel about Jehovah himself.

⁵ Jehovah inspired the prophet Isaiah to write: "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." (Isaiah 11:10) That "root of Jesse" is the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. When he began to exercise kingly authority, as a life-giving "root" he gave new vitality to the line of Messianic kings that came from Jesse through his son King David. (Revelation 5:5; 22:16) Since 1914 he has been "standing up as a signal for the peoples," a rallying point for people who long for righteous government. Jehovah himself has raised him up as that Signal, the true Messianic King.—Isaiah 11:12.

⁶ But how could humans here on earth gather around a heavenly King? They need to be given information from the Bible so that they can see him with eyes of understanding. Under the direction of holy spirit, the remnant of spiritual Israel has been vigorously carrying out this activity, proclaiming earth wide the good news of the established Messianic Kingdom of God. Individ-

4. How can we show that we truly love Jehovah?

5. (a) At Isaiah 11:10, what was foretold for our day?
(b) What does it mean?

6. (a) What has enabled humans to gather around a heavenly King? (b) As a result of 'turning inquiringly' to the "signal," what have people learned?

uals out of all nations have listened appreciatively. They have inquired about the divine requirements for them to be subjects of the Kingdom, enjoying an eternity of life on a Paradise earth. Satisfied with the answers provided from the Bible, they have acted in harmony with these and have taken their stand on the side of Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom. Have you done that?

'THEY WILL HEAR BUT NOT DO'

⁷ Because of the zealous activity of Jehovah's Witnesses, they are a frequent topic for discussion among people. But how do these people feel about the message that Jehovah's Witnesses proclaim? The reaction of many is like that of the prophet Ezekiel's fellow exiles in Babylon. Concerning them, Jehovah said: "As for you, O son of man, the sons of your people are speaking with one another . . . saying, 'Come, please, and hear what the word is that is going forth from Jehovah.' And they will come in to you, like the coming in of my people, and sit before you as my people; and they will certainly hear your words but these they will not do, for with their mouth they are expressing lustful desires and after their unjust gain is where their heart is going. And, look! you are to them like a song of sensuous loves, like one with a pretty voice and playing a stringed instrument well. And they will certainly hear your words, but there are none doing them. And when it comes true—look! it must come true—they will also have to know that a prophet had proved to be in the midst of them."—Ezekiel 33:30-33.

⁸ There are many people who admire Jehovah's Witnesses and who like their Bible literature. They may

7. What reaction to the Bible's message was foretold at Ezekiel 33:30-33?

8. How do some persons give evidence of that attitude?

even accept the offer of a free home Bible study. Some come with their friends to special meetings held by the Witnesses. At the annual Memorial of the death of Jesus Christ, for example, it is not unusual for the number in attendance to be double the number of active witnesses of Jehovah. In some lands, the attendance runs as high as five times the number of Witnesses. But what are they going to do about the Bible truths they hear? Upwards of two and a half million have personally taken these to heart and brought their lives into harmony with them. But others treat it all as if it were merely pleasant music, something to entertain them. They stay on the sidelines, perhaps offering words of encouragement but not making a dedication of their lives to God and not sharing in his sacred service.

⁹ What is to be gained by doubting and waiting? Certainly not Jehovah's favor and protection during the coming day of vengeance. To be among the survivors, you must give convincing evidence now that you have 'joined yourself to Jehovah' and that you belong to him.—Zechariah 2:11; Matthew 7:21.

THEY MADE THE RIGHT DECISION

¹⁰ All who have become worshipers of Jehovah as followers of Jesus Christ have made a personal decision to do so. This is true of all who are heirs of the heavenly Kingdom. Now the precious opportunity is open for others to make their choice, with the prospect of surviving the great tribulation and living in perfection on earth. Hobab set an example worthy of their imitation.

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9. Instead of doubting and waiting, what will wise persons do?
10, 11. (a) Who was Hobab, and what invitation was extended to him? (b) How do we know what decision he made?

¹¹ Hobab was Moses' brother-in-law. He was not an Israelite but a member of the tribe of Kenites living in Midianite territory. After Israel had received the Law through Moses and had built the sacred tabernacle for Jehovah's worship, the time came to move north toward the Promised Land. The pillar of cloud representing Jehovah's presence was to go ahead of them, indicating the route to take and where to camp. But it would be helpful to have with them someone who knew the terrain and where to find things needed by the encampment. Moses invited Hobab to join them, but at first Hobab declined, thinking it would be better to stay with his relatives in the place of his birth. However, Moses urged him to reconsider and to go with them to "serve as eyes" for Israel and thus to be in line to share the blessings that Jehovah would bestow on his people. Wisely Hobab did so, as indicated at Judges 1:16.—Numbers 10:29-32.

¹² There are persons today who were pictured by Hobab. Though not spiritual Israelites, they throw in their lot with these as they travel toward God's New Order. To do this, they must cut ties with worldly relatives and human governments. Under the leadership of the Greater Moses, Jesus Christ, they have gladly served with the remnant of Christ's "brothers," often scouting out new territories for the preaching of the good news. Many of them have moved into areas where the need for Kingdom proclaimers was specially great, often as pioneers or missionaries, using their time to the full to publicize God's Kingdom as mankind's only real hope. There are still many opportunities to share in

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12. (a) Who today are like Hobab, and in what ways?
(b) What invitation today is like that of Moses to Hobab?

such sacred service. Qualified persons are invited to make themselves available and thus to share in the blessings that go with such enlarged service. Can you?

¹³ Some 180 years after Hobab decided to go with Israel, one of his descendants, a man named Heber, was living with his wife, Jael, not far from Megiddo. Heber had separated himself from the rest of the Kenites and had entered into peaceful relations with Jabin, a Canaanite king who harshly oppressed Israel. When Jehovah raised up Barak as a deliverer of Israel, Jabin's army chief, Sisera, mustered his army and nine hundred war chariots with iron scythes fixed to the wheels. But Jehovah fought for his people, causing confusion in the enemy camp, and a flash flood to bog down the chariots. Sisera himself abandoned his chariot and fled on foot toward the tent of Jael the wife of Heber. As Sisera had hoped, she invited him into the tent. —Judges 4:4-17; 5:20, 21.

¹⁴ Now the test was on. What would she do to this enemy of Jehovah's people? She covered Sisera with a blanket, quenched his thirst with curdled milk and waited until he fell asleep. At that she "proceeded to take a pin of the tent and to put the hammer into her hand. Then she went to him stealthily and drove the pin into his temples and beat it into the earth, while he was fast asleep and weary. So he died." What she did required courage, and love for Jehovah and his people. It also involved positive action and exertion on her part. —Judges 4:18-22; 5:24-27, 31.

13. (a) Who was Jael, and what was her husband's position regarding Jehovah's servants? (b) How was Jael confronted with a test?

14. What decision did Jael make, and of what did this give evidence?

¹⁵ As is true of other non-Israelite worshipers of Jehovah, Jael pictures the “other sheep” who do good to Christ’s spiritual brothers. Regardless of what ties their close relatives may have to the world and its ruling class, the “other sheep” do not approve of oppression of Jehovah’s people by worldly rulers. Their loyalty is to the Greater Barak, the Lord Jesus Christ, and to his true followers. These of the Jael class do not personally raise a hand against the worldly rulers, but they use whatever is at their disposal to counteract efforts to oppress Jehovah’s servants. They do not hold back from making known that they are in full harmony with Jehovah’s purpose to destroy all of his enemies.

¹⁶ There is no time to lose. If you truly have faith in Jehovah and his Messianic Kingdom and if you have brought your life into harmony with the Bible’s requirements, then, without delay, openly manifest that. Reflect the spirit of the Ethiopian eunuch reported on in Acts chapter 8. As soon as he understood what was required of him, he asked Philip, who had explained to him the good news about Jesus: “What prevents me from getting baptized?” And he was promptly immersed in water.

¹⁷ Having thus made a fine beginning, daily strengthen your relationship with Jehovah, seek ways to apply his Word more fully in your life, and share as fully as possible in the vital work of Kingdom proclamation being done during the final days of this system of things.

15. How are people today proving that they are like Jael?

16, 17. (a) What example worthy of our imitation is recorded in Acts chapter 8? (b) Thereafter what should we continue to do?

A Different Attitude Toward Obedience

FOR many years before Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, Jehovah warned the Jews of what was coming, and why. They were following the inclinations of their own stubborn hearts instead of obeying God. —Jeremiah 25:8, 9; 7:24-28.

² Jehovah does not force anyone to serve him, but, reasonably, he does require obedience of all who want his approval and the blessings of life that go with it. After delivering Israel from Egypt, Jehovah told them: "If you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Exodus 19:5, 6) After God had stated his requirements for them and they had heard a reading of "the book of the covenant," they of their own free will accepted the responsibility that went with such a relationship with God. —Exodus 24:7.

³ However, it was only a short time until a rebellious spirit began to manifest itself. The sons of Israel did not openly renounce their faith in Jehovah; but, in viola-

1. Why did Jehovah allow the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem?
2. (a) Reasonably, what benefits are dependent on obedience to God? (b) How did Israel come to be in a covenant relationship with Jehovah?
3. (a) In what ways did Israel thereafter manifest a rebellious spirit toward Jehovah? (b) Why are those events recorded in the Bible?

tion of his law, many tried to mix Egyptian practices with the worship of Jehovah. (Exodus 32:1-8) Later some found fault with the men whom Jehovah was using as his visible representatives. (Numbers 12:1-10; 16:1-3, 31-35) As a nation, Israel showed a lack of faith to act on God's word, being motivated by fear of man. (Numbers 13:2, 31-33; 14:1-4; Hebrews 3:17-19) When errors were unintentional, humbly repentant ones could obtain forgiveness. But over a period of nine centuries the nation deliberately disregarded first one divine requirement, then another, and often many of them. The things they did and the outcome are recorded in the Bible as warning examples for us.—2 Chronicles 36:15-17; 1 Corinthians 10:6-11.

⁴ In the days of Jeremiah, after repeated warnings had been given as to the dire consequences of their course, Jehovah set before the Jews an example—the Re'chabites. These were non-Israelites, descendants of the Jehonadab who had demonstrated that he was in full harmony with Jehu's toleration of no rivalry toward Jehovah. This Jehonadab (or, Jonadab) as patriarchal head of the tribe of Re'chabites had commanded them to abstain from wine to time indefinite, also not to live in houses or to engage in agriculture but to dwell in tents as nomads. Thus they would lead a sober, simple life, free from self-indulgence and the vices of city life, while worshiping Jehovah with the Israelites, among whom they lived.

⁵ Since the Jews were refusing to listen to Jehovah, the Universal Sovereign, could it be expected that the Re'chabites would obey their human forefather? They did, and in an exemplary manner. Although the

4. (a) Who were the Re'chabites? (b) What obligations had Jehonadab laid upon them?

5. How were the Re'chabites exemplary in obedience?

Re'chabites sought refuge in Jerusalem when Babylonian and Syrian military forces invaded Judah, they continued to dwell in tents. But how firm was their resolve to touch no wine, even though the people among whom they lived were permitted to drink it? Jehovah had Jeremiah bring the Re'chabites into a temple dining room, set out cups of wine and invite them to drink. They refused. Why? Evidently they appreciated the devotion of their forefather to Jehovah, they discerned his loving concern for their welfare, and so they obeyed his command. Jehovah was pleased with this fine example of obedience that showed up the lack of obedience to Jehovah exhibited by the Jews.—Jeremiah 35:1-11.

⁶ There are people today who are like the Re'chabites. These are the Lord's "other sheep." Whether they will drink wine is not at issue today. (Compare 1 Timothy 5:23.) This is a personal matter as long as they do not become heavy drinkers or perhaps drunkards. (Proverbs 23:20; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) But godly obedience is vital. In contrast to Christendom, which is the antitypical apostate Israel, the modern-day Re'chabite class show by their actions that they know the value of godly obedience. How will this benefit them?

⁷ For their devotion, Jehovah gave the Re'chabites a promise that has powerful prophetic significance for our day, saying: "For the reason that you have obeyed the commandment of Jehonadab your forefather and continue keeping all his commandments and doing according to all that he commanded you, therefore this

6. (a) Who today are like the Re'chabites? (b) Who has proved to be the antitype of disobedient Israel?

7. (a) What encouraging promise did Jehovah make to the Re'chabites? (b) What hope does that hold out for the modern-day Re'chabite class?

is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, has said: 'There will not be cut off from Jonadab the son of Re'chab a man to stand before me always.'” (Jeremiah 35:18, 19) They were among the survivors of Jerusalem's destruction in 607 B.C.E. And the class foreshadowed by them will survive the coming destruction of Christendom and all the rest of the world that independently goes its own way, refusing to acknowledge Jehovah's sovereignty.

WHY OBEDIENCE MAY NOT BE EASY

⁸ Many people find obedience difficult to learn. They have grown up in a world where everyone is 'doing his own thing.' They may like what they learn about life under God's Kingdom. But if pride clouds their thinking, they may balk at some of God's requirements or find fault with the manner in which these are conveyed. (Proverbs 8:13; 16:18) Naaman, the chief of the Syrian army in the days of the prophet Elisha, had that problem.

⁹ Naaman was plagued with leprosy. But because a young Israelite captive boldly expressed her faith that Naaman would be healed if only he would go to Jehovah's prophet Elisha, Naaman traveled to Israel. With horses and war chariots he drove up to the house of Elisha. Now, Naaman was a prominent person and he expected Elisha to come out to meet him and then go through a ceremony, calling on Jehovah and moving his hand to and fro over the diseased flesh until it was healed. Instead, Elisha simply sent a messenger to tell him to go to the Jordan River and there to bathe seven times.—2 Kings 5:1-12.

8. Why do many people find obedience difficult?

9. (a) How did it come about that Naaman went to see Elisha?

(b) What did he expect, but what actually happened?

¹⁰ Naaman's pride was offended. He left in a rage. But after his attendants reasoned with him, he humbled himself in faith. "At that he went down and began to plunge into the Jordan seven times according to the word of the man of the true God; after which his flesh came back like the flesh of a little boy and he became clean." Naaman became convinced that Jehovah is the only true God, and he realized that, despite his initial reaction, the directions given by Elisha really were from God.—2 Kings 5:13-15.

¹¹ Do you perhaps see some of Naaman's traits in yourself? As is true of other non-Israelites who exercised faith, Naaman is used in the Scriptures to picture the "other sheep" who join in true worship. All of these, being born in sin, were once spiritually diseased. They all have had to seek the help of Jehovah's anointed servant class and then act obediently on what this "slave" has taught them from God's Word. (Matthew 24:45) Some at one time did not appreciate all the Scriptural counsel given them—such as the need to attend congregation meetings regularly, the importance of separateness from the world or of Christian water baptism. They may have held back from dedication and water baptism because their heart resisted the need to 'disown self' in order to be a follower of Christ. In some cases they criticized the manner in which counsel was given to them by responsible ones in the congregation. But in time all who would truly be the Lord's "other sheep" need to learn the importance of humility and loving obedience.—James 4:6; Matthew 16:24.

10. (a) How did Naaman react? (b) What finally moved him to obey? (c) What was the result?

11. (a) In what ways were the "other sheep" pictured by Naaman? (b) What important lessons must all of us learn?

COMMANDS THAT BENEFIT US

¹² As we get to know Jehovah and his ways, we come to appreciate how true are the words that he spoke to his servants in times past: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk. O if only you would actually pay attention to my commandments!" (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Jehovah's earnest desire is for his people to avoid calamity and to enjoy life by paying attention to his commandments. He knows how we are made and what will bring us genuine happiness. He warns us against conduct that could degrade us or damage our relations with others.

¹³ Those who have heeded his warning against fornication and adultery have been spared the emotional turmoil, disease and illegitimate births that these produce. (1 Corinthians 6:18; Hebrews 13:4) By applying counsel such as that at 2 Corinthians 7:1, they have kept free from addiction to tobacco and other drugs, which damage one's health and can result in an early death. His command to 'abstain from blood' has helped his servants to strengthen their reliance on him as the One upon whom all their prospects for future life depend, and at the same time it has safeguarded them against fearful diseases that can be spread by blood transfusions.—Acts 15:28, 29.

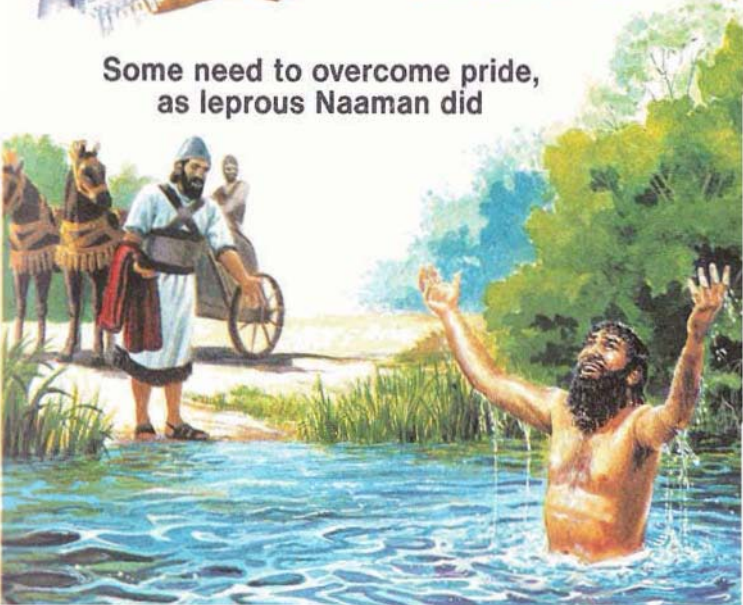
¹⁴ As long as we are in the world, there is a certain amount of necessary contact with it. But Jehovah warns us not to pin our hopes on it, not to be a part of it. He knows what the future holds for the world. How foolish it would be to spend one's life building up what

12, 13. (a) Why does obedience to Jehovah's commands benefit us? (b) How can this be illustrated?

14. How are we benefited by seeking first the Kingdom instead of involving ourselves unnecessarily with the world?



**Some need to overcome pride,
as leprous Naaman did**



God is going to tear down! Worse yet, those who do so will find that they share the fate of the world to which they have devoted their lives. How beneficial, therefore, the counsel given by God's Son: Seek God's Kingdom! Put it first in your life!—1 John 2:17; Matthew 6:33.

¹⁵ With full awareness of what we need, Jehovah is preparing his people for life in his righteous new system of things. Disobedience on the part of Adam led to human imperfection, loss of eternal life and expulsion from Paradise. Surely if we are to be among those who are blessed with what Adam lost, we must give evidence that we pay attention when God speaks. And how will he speak to us during the Millennium to come, while mankind is being brought to perfection? Through the Messianic Kingdom. Will that government also have visible earthly representatives? Yes. The King will have in his service "princes in all the earth." (Psalm 45:16; compare Isaiah 32:1, 2.) By loving obedience to these princes, mankind will demonstrate subjection to their heavenly King.

¹⁶ In preparation for that time, Jehovah now provides training through his visible theocratic organization. Within the congregations he has raised up spiritually older men, or elders. They provide needed supervision for congregation meetings and take the lead in the preaching of the Kingdom message. They help all who want to serve Jehovah to learn how to apply Bible principles in their lives and they lovingly warn against snares that could damage one's relationship with God.

15. (a) To be among those who will regain what Adam lost, what must we learn to do? (b) How will Jehovah speak to us during the Millennium?

16. Why is obedience to the elders a protection now, and how is it good preparation for life in God's New Order?

Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide also have become aware that heeding the elders' directions has often resulted in preservation of life during storms, earthquakes and outbreaks of armed violence. The congregation does not belong to the elders; it is God's. The elders do not claim to be inspired. But, as the Scriptures show, God uses them to take the lead, and obedience to them demonstrates respect for the arrangement that Jehovah is using to prepare his servants for survival into his New Order.—Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17.

¹⁷ However, it is not simply a desire to be among the survivors of the coming world destruction that motivates to such obedience. There is much more. What? Appreciation for life and all the provisions that God has made to sustain it. Gratitude for his gifts that enrich our lives—the ability to reason, to appreciate beauty and spiritual values, the capacity to know and worship our Creator. Also, awareness of the great love on God's own part that moved him to give his own Son to lay down his life in sacrifice so that we could have the opportunity to live forever.

¹⁸ For those who have come to know God well, obedience is not an unpleasant duty. An accurate understanding of his purposes and requirements, along with experiencing the good results from applying these, leaves no doubt in their minds that doing things in God's way is the only reasonable and sensible course. They recognize it to be a protection. It is also a way to show their love for God. They find great pleasure in obeying him.—1 John 5:3; Psalm 119:129.

17. What should motivate us to be obedient?

18. When we come to know God well, how do we view obedience to him and his organization?

Are You Loyal to Earth's New King?

ON Nisan 9 of 33 C.E., Jesus Christ presented himself to the Jews as their King, the foretold Messiah. As he came down the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem, the multitude of disciples rejoiced and praised God because of the powerful works Jesus had performed. (Luke 19:37, 38; Zechariah 9:9) But would they prove loyal to that One whom they hailed as King? Their loyalty was soon put to the test.

² Since 1914 the glorified Jesus Christ actively ruling from heaven has been presented to all mankind as earth's new King. The prospect of life under a government in the hands of Christ, with genuine solutions to the problems of mankind, has caused people out of all nations to rejoice. But will they prove loyal? What about each of us individually?

THE KING'S OWN RECORD OF LOYALTY

³ Jesus Christ has given abundant evidence that his own loyalty to Jehovah, the Universal Sovereign, is unwavering. He is appropriately referred to in the Scriptures as Jehovah's "loyal one." (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:24-27) The Hebrew word for "loyalty" here used

1. When Jesus was presented as King in 33 C.E., how did the crowd respond?
2. (a) How are many people today responding to the announcement that Christ is earth's new King? (b) But what questions deserve serious consideration?
3. (a) Why is Jesus himself referred to as Jehovah's "loyal one"? (b) What is loyalty?

contains the thought of being lovingly kind. It is not something cold, based merely on law or justice, but is motivated also by love and appreciation.—Compare Psalm 40:8; John 14:31.

⁴ In heaven, when Satan began to seek for himself honor that belonged only to God and when others of the angels forsook their proper places in Jehovah's heavenly organization, God's firstborn Son did not imitate their spirit. To do so was unthinkable on his part! Such was his self-sacrificing devotion that, in carrying out his Father's will, this loyal Son left behind his heavenly glory, became a human and even submitted to death on a torture stake. Lovingly, he made sure that, as far as it depended on him, no detail of what the Scriptures outlined for him would go unfulfilled.—Philippians 2:5-8; Luke 24:44-48.

⁵ While Jesus was on earth, Satan brought great pressure on him to turn him aside from the work that God had given him to do—if possible, to entice him to do something that would cause God himself to reject his Son. He urged Jesus to do things that could result in prominence and power—but as part of the world of which Satan was ruler. Jesus refused, quoting the Sacred Scriptures as his guide. (Matthew 4:1-10) Jesus had outstanding abilities and he used them well, but always in harmony with his Father's will. He occupied himself fully in doing the work that God had sent him to do. (John 7:16-18; 8:28, 29; 14:10) What a fine example of loyalty!

⁶ Because of Jesus' proved loyalty, Jehovah raised him

4, 5. (a) How was Jesus' loyalty shown in heaven, following Satan's rebellion? (b) How was that loyalty also shown on earth?
6. In what way does the reward given to Jesus require loyalty of us?

from the dead, “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 . . . and every tongue should openly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Philippians 2:9-11) This “name that is above every other name” represents the power and authority conferred on Jesus so that he can fulfill Jehovah’s will. ‘Bending the knee’ to him means recognizing his position and submitting to his authority. It includes being loyally subject to him as King.

LOYAL LOVE FOR JEHOVAH’S ANOINTED ONES

⁷ The fact that, after his ascension to heaven, Jesus could no longer be seen with human eyes would result in heart-searching tests of loyalty for his followers. Would they live by the principles that he had taught them? Would they keep separate from the world? Would they respect those upon whom holy spirit conferred responsibilities of oversight? Would they be whole-souled in doing the work he had assigned them?

⁸ In due time the “other sheep” were to be gathered into association with the “little flock” of heirs of the heavenly Kingdom. Would they truly appreciate their assigned positions in relationship to Christ as King and to one another? The facts show that genuine mutual love has developed among all who are part of the “one flock” under Jesus Christ. This was foreshadowed by the unbreakable, undying love of Jonathan, the son of King Saul, for David. Upon witnessing David’s com-

7. Regarding what matters are Jesus’ followers tested as to their loyalty?

8. What was foreshadowed by the loyal love between Jonathan and David?

plete devotion to Jehovah and his reliance on God in slaying the giant Goliath, Jonathan was deeply moved and his "very soul became bound up with the soul of David, and Jonathan began to love him as his own soul." His love did not lessen when it became apparent that Jehovah would bestow the kingship on David and not on Jonathan. Jonathan even repeatedly risked his life for David.—1 Samuel 17:45-47; 18:1; 23:16, 17.

⁹ Besides Jonathan, there were non-Israelites who attached themselves to David. They were not mercenaries but valiant men who acted out of devotion to David as Jehovah's anointed. Cherethites, Pelethites and former natives of the Philistine city of Gath were among these. They loyally stuck with David when his son Absalom deceitfully sought to steal the hearts of the men of Israel. Despite Absalom's prominence and cunning, they were not led into a traitorous course by his smooth talk.—2 Samuel 15:6, 10, 18-22.

¹⁰ Another heartwarming description of the relationship among Christ, the anointed remnant and the "other sheep" is found in Psalm 45. This is not merely beautiful poetry but is prophetic of the Messianic Kingdom—God himself being the "throne," that is, the foundation and support of Jesus' kingship. (Psalm 45:1-7; Hebrews 1:8, 9) The psalmist describes the bride of Christ, "the king's daughter," being brought to the King on his wedding day. With her are "the virgins . . . her companions." Who are these? They are

9. How was similar loyalty shown by non-Israelites who served in David's army?

10. (a) How is the close relationship among Christ, the anointed remnant and the "other sheep" depicted in Psalm 45? (b) In what sense do 'the virgin companions enter the palace of the king'?

the ones who look forward to being earthly subjects of God's Kingdom. "With rejoicing and joyfulness" they accompany the "bride" class until the very last of these is united with Christ in heaven. With them, they "enter into the palace of the king," not by ascending to heaven, but by offering themselves for the King's service. Have you become part of that happy procession?—Psalm 45:13-15.

WHAT DOES LOYALTY REQUIRE OF US?

¹¹ Countless situations in life show what kind of persons we are. Do we really believe in Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom? Is it real to us? Jesus said that his true followers would be "no part of the world." Is that true of you?—John 17:15, 16.

¹² In the case of us imperfect humans, loyalty does not demand perfection. But it does require that we avoid deliberately violating Bible commands, whether other humans see us or not. It will move us to endeavor to apply Bible principles fully, rather than to see how close we can come to the world's ways. It will cause us to cultivate genuine hatred for what is bad.—Psalm 97:10.

¹³ If we truly hate what is bad, we are not going to allow curiosity to entice us to get close to it. Being curious about the life of sexually immoral persons can lead one to ruin. (Proverbs 7:6-23) So, too, spiritual ruin may overtake those who out of curiosity buy and read literature produced by apostates, persons who have

11. What situations put us to the test as to being "no part of the world"?

12. Even though we are imperfect, in what further ways can we give evidence of loyalty?

13. How will loyalty safeguard us against the smooth talk of apostates?

abandoned Jehovah and his organization and who then verbally "beat" their former associates. (Matthew 24: 48-51) Proverbs 11:9 warns: "By his mouth the one who is an apostate brings his fellowman to ruin." But loyalty will safeguard us against being misled by their smooth talk.—2 John 8-11.

¹⁴ One of the most important ways we can show loyalty is by being whole-souled in the work that Jesus taught his disciples to do. He personally set the example by going from city to city and village to village, preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. (Luke 8:1) Jesus foretold what true Christians would be doing today when he said: "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) It is by means of this preaching of the good news that the Kingdom issue is being presented to people everywhere so that they can make a personal decision. For a great crowd, that decision will lead to preservation through the great tribulation. (Revelation 7:9, 10) Are you loyally sharing in this urgent work?

¹⁵ Long ago the psalmist David wrote: "All your works will laud you, O Jehovah, and your loyal ones will bless you. About the glory of your kingship they will talk, and about your mightiness they will speak, to make known to the sons of men his mighty acts and the glory of the splendor of his kingship. Your kingship is a kingship for all times indefinite, and your dominion

14. (a) What is one of the most important ways in which we can demonstrate our loyalty to Christ as King? (b) Why is this work so important?

15. (a) What does Psalm 145:10-13 say that Jehovah's loyal ones would be talking about? (b) How does that apply to us?

is throughout all successive generations.” (Psalm 145: 10-13) That kingship is now being exercised through the Messianic Kingdom in the loyal hands of Jesus Christ, and we demonstrate our loyalty to both God and Christ by speaking freely and enthusiastically about it.

¹⁶ What prominence in your own life have you given to this work of Kingdom witnessing? Do you really put it ahead of other pursuits? What you personally do may be more or may be less than what others do. The circumstances of individuals differ. But we can all benefit by asking ourselves questions such as these: ‘Does my share reflect merely a sense of duty, a token offering? Do I view it simply as a requirement for survival? Or does love for Jehovah, devotion to his Messianic King and genuine concern for my fellowman move me to give it first place so that other interests in my life are built around it?’ Loyalty will move us to seek ways to demonstrate that this work is as important to us as it is to our King.

¹⁷ Soon the One who was jubilantly hailed as King by his disciples as he entered Jerusalem in 33 C.E. will destroy all who reject Jehovah’s sovereignty as expressed through His Messianic King. But he will “speak peace” to that “great crowd” of persons out of all nations who have imitated his own example of loyalty. Will you be among them?—Zechariah 9:10; Ephesians 4:20-24.

16. How should loyalty influence the extent to which we share in Kingdom preaching and the motive with which we do it?

17. To whom will Jesus “speak peace” when he destroys the wicked?

“We Have Heard That God Is With You People”

“WE WILL go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people.” That is what the Bible foretold that people out of all nations would be saying in our day. (Zechariah 8:23) And who is this God to whom the prophecy of Zechariah refers? We are left in no doubt. In this one relatively small book of the Bible his personal name appears 135 times. It is JEHOVAH!

² He himself said of his personal name, Jehovah: “This is my name to time indefinite, and this is the memorial of me to generation after generation.” (Exodus 3:15) The importance of that name is indicated by the fact that it appears nearly 7,000 times in the complete Hebrew Bible text—far more than the combined total for such titles as Lord and God. As foretold, in these “last days” that name has come to be associated outstandingly with one group of people.

“WE WILL GO WITH YOU PEOPLE”

³ Concerning this, the prophet Zechariah, at the time of the rebuilding of Jehovah’s temple in ancient Jerusalem, was inspired by God to write: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘It will yet be that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come; and the inhabitants of one city will certainly go to those of

1, 2. (a) What does Zechariah 8:23 foretell for our day? (b) Who is the God here referred to, and how does the Bible emphasize his personal name?

3. As foretold at Zechariah 8:20-23, (a) who would seek Jehovah? (b) and by associating with whom?

another, saying: "Let us earnestly go to soften the face of Jehovah and to seek Jehovah of armies. I myself will go also." And many peoples and mighty nations will actually come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to soften the face of Jehovah.' This is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'It will be in those days that ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will actually take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew, saying: "We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people."'"—Zechariah 8:20-23.

⁴ The limited fulfillment that this prophecy had in connection with the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, starting in the days of Zerubbabel, pointed forward to a far grander fulfillment in our day. In connection with what people? Surely it would not be reasonable for those who "seek Jehovah" to turn to people who superstitiously refuse even to pronounce God's name, as do the natural Jews who cling to their traditional worship. Nor to Christendom, which imitates the Jewish custom of avoiding the use of the divine name. It is not to earthly Jerusalem that people in our day are turning to worship Jehovah. As Jesus foretold, God abandoned his temple there, and it was destroyed in 70 C.E., never to be rebuilt down to this day. This indicates to any reasonable person that God is not with non-Christian Israel.—Matthew 23:37, 38; compare 1 Kings 9:8, 9.

⁵ The "Jerusalem" that today represents Jehovah is described at Hebrews 12:22 as "a city of the living God, *heavenly* Jerusalem." Even as ancient Jerusalem was a

4. Why does this prophecy not apply to Judaism or to Christendom?

5. How do the Scriptures identify (a) the "Jerusalem" that represents Jehovah today? (b) the "man who is a Jew" concerning whom Zechariah prophesied?

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visible symbol of Jehovah's rulership, the "heavenly Jerusalem" is God's Messianic Kingdom in which Jesus Christ was enthroned as King at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914. (1 Chronicles 29:23; Luke 21:24) That government has representatives here on earth, those who are loyally proclaiming it as the only sure hope of mankind. The first ones to announce that the Kingdom had been established in 1914 were the remaining ones of the "little flock." These are "the Israel of God," spiritually speaking. They are the spiritual 'Jews' concerning whom Zechariah prophesied. (Luke 12:32; Galatians 6:16; Romans 2:28, 29) Since 1931, because of their love for God and their appreciation of the responsibility to make known that Jehovah is the true and Almighty God, they have adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses. —Isaiah 43:10-12.

HOW IDENTIFIED?

⁶ As a result of the fact that these spiritual Jews have faithfully fulfilled their responsibility as Jehovah's Witnesses, millions of sincere persons around the globe have been helped to "seek Jehovah." They have come to realize that Jehovah is truly with these people who bear his name. What convinces them of this? Many things, among which these are prominent:

(1) The beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses are all based on the Bible—not simply on isolated texts but on the entire Word of God. Instead of teaching things that are of their own originality, Jehovah's Witnesses answer questions by pointing out what the Bible says. They honor Jehovah by letting him speak. (Compare John 7:16-18.)

6. (a) What has convinced millions of persons as to the identity of the people that God is with today? (Consider one point at a time; read the scriptures.) (b) Which point(s) have been most impressive to you personally?

(2) The Bible states that God himself would take out of the nations “a people for his name.” (Acts 15:14) They personally would call upon his name and would exert themselves to make it known in all the earth. (Isaiah 12:4, 5) Worldwide, Jehovah’s Witnesses are the people who are significantly associated with God’s personal name, Jehovah.

(3) Jehovah’s Witnesses have an abundance of satisfying spiritual food. What they learn from the Scriptures and the effect that this has on their outlook on life make them a happy people, in contrast to the world in general. This is what Jehovah said would be true of his servants. (Isaiah 65:13, 14; compare Matthew 4:4.)

(4) Jehovah’s Witnesses use God’s Word to set their standard of conduct and to guide their decisions in everyday affairs of life—in their families, at work, in school, in choice of recreation, in identifying practices to be shunned, in determining the most worthwhile activities in which to engage. Jehovah promised that ‘he himself would make straight the paths’ of those doing this. (Proverbs 3:5, 6)

(5) The oversight of the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses is patterned after that of the first-century congregation of God, in which elders were examples to the flock and fellow workers for the Kingdom of God instead of being an exalted clergy class. (1 Peter 5:2, 3; 2 Corinthians 1:24)

(6) Jehovah’s Witnesses are not involved in the political affairs of the world but are doing the work that the Bible sets out for true Christians, namely, preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom in all the world for a witness before the end comes. (Matthew 24:14; compare John 17:16; 18:36.)

(7) Jehovah’s Witnesses really love one another, as Jesus said his true disciples would do. Skin color, tribal origin, economic circumstances, nationality, language—none of

these cause one to look down upon the other. Despite human imperfections, they are all truly united as an international brotherhood, and for this they give all credit to God. (John 13:35; compare Acts 10:34, 35.)

(8) Like the early Christians, Jehovah's Witnesses in modern times keep right on serving God in spite of persecution. Trusting in God, they do not retaliate against opposers. As was true in the past, God has proved to be with his servants to deliver them. (Jeremiah 1:8; Isaiah 54:17)

⁷ These are just a few of the reasons why, as foretold, "ten men out of all the languages of the nations" are saying with genuine conviction to the remnant of Kingdom heirs: "We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people." (Zechariah 8:23) The Scriptures use "ten" to represent completeness as to earthly matters, so these "ten men" represent all who are taking up true worship now in company with Christ's spirit-anointed "brothers." They do not merely associate with the remnant at their meetings but identify themselves as worshipers of their God, Jehovah. They dedicate their lives to him through Jesus Christ and symbolize this by water baptism, thus demonstrating that they want to "become joined to Jehovah." Then they share gladly in the work being done earth wide by his witnesses.—Zechariah 2:11; Isaiah 61:5, 6.

EXAMPLES WORTHY OF IMITATION

⁸ Some who take this action are like the queen of

7. (a) Who are the "ten men"? (b) How do they give evidence that Jehovah really has become their God?

8. (a) What caused the queen of Sheba to travel to Jerusalem? (b) What did she do when she arrived, and with what outcome? (c) How have there proved to be people like her in our day? (Psalm 2:10-12)

Sheba in the days of Solomon. From far away she “was hearing the report about Solomon in connection with the name of Jehovah.” She had never personally spoken with Solomon nor had she been to Jehovah’s temple in Jerusalem. She had some doubts as to whether it could all be as good as she had heard. But she put forth the effort to find out, traveling perhaps 1,400 miles (2,250 km) by camel to do so. She found answers to all of her “perplexing questions” and exclaimed: “Look! I had not been told the half.” She could not help but conclude that Jehovah loved his worshipers. (1 Kings 10:1-9) Some who have been prominent in the world have imitated her example today, and many from more humble circumstances have done so. They see evidence that Jehovah’s Witnesses look to no man but to Jesus Christ, the Greater Solomon, as their King. The answers they are given from God’s Word satisfy their minds and hearts, and they feel moved to join their voices in blessing Jehovah.—Compare Luke 11:31.

⁹ Others are like Rahab of Jericho, who already was convinced from reports received that the God of Israel was “God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.” (Joshua 2:11) When spies from Israel entered the land, she welcomed them, concealed them and endangered her life to protect them. She had faith and gave evidence of it by her works, taking her stand with Jehovah’s people. (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25) She carefully followed the instructions given for her preservation. Rahab also showed loving concern for her father and mother, her brothers and sisters, opening the way

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9. (a) In what way was Rahab’s attitude different from that of the queen of Sheba? (b) What was noteworthy about the events leading to the preservation of Rahab and her household? (c) What identifies persons who are like Rahab today?

for them to be spared if they would obey the requirements for survival. (Joshua 2:12, 13, 18, 19) As a result she and her household were delivered when Jericho and its Baal-worshiping inhabitants were annihilated. (Joshua 6:22, 23) This has powerful significance in our day. It demonstrates that Jehovah will spare persons who are like Rahab. What shows them to be like her? They put faith in Jehovah, identify themselves with the members of spiritual Israel, closely follow the directions given through this channel and earnestly endeavor to help close family members and other relatives to see the wisdom of doing the same.

¹⁰ Of course, the real attraction, what is drawing people of all nations into association with Jehovah's Witnesses, is Jehovah God himself. His Word appeals to them. The fruitage of his spirit in the lives of his servants is inviting to them. As they become well acquainted with his qualities and his dealings with mankind, they long for the time when God's name will be vindicated of all the reproach heaped upon it by Satan and by faithless humans. They themselves endeavor to conduct their affairs in a way that will be pleasing to their Creator and that will move others to glorify him. (1 Peter 2:12) With all their hearts they pray, as Jesus taught his disciples: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:9, 10) And, in harmony with their prayer, they render sacred service to God in full unity with those who give unmistakable evidence that they are the "people for [Jehovah's] name."

10. (a) As Zechariah's prophecy shows, what is really attracting people so that they associate with Jehovah's Witnesses? (b) How can we show, in attitude and in actions, that love for Jehovah is truly what fills our hearts?

‘The Small One Becomes a Mighty Nation’

THOSE who are worshipers of Jehovah have long been relatively few in number when compared with the population of all mankind. But in our day their number is increasing at a rate that is thrilling to lovers of righteousness. As to the magnitude of the increase, Jehovah himself foretold: “The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time.” (Isaiah 60:22) As that scripture states, Jehovah himself brings this to pass. How? By his causing to exist among his servants a condition that sets them in sharp contrast to the national groups around them and that strongly attracts honest-hearted ones.

² This was foretold at Isaiah 60:1, 2, where Jehovah addresses his “woman,” his organization made up of loyal spirit creatures as well as spirit-begotten sons on earth, saying: “Arise, O woman, shed forth light, for your light has come and upon you the very glory of Jehovah has shone forth. For, look! darkness itself will cover the earth, and thick gloom the national groups; but upon you Jehovah will shine forth, and upon you his own glory will be seen.” The basis for this contrast

1. (a) As to the magnitude of increase of true worshipers, what did Jehovah foretell? (b) Who actually brings this about, and how?

2. (a) To whom is Isaiah 60:1, 2 addressed? (b) In what way was the “glory of Jehovah” made to shine on her? (c) How have the remnant “shed forth light”?

is the birth of the Messianic Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ in 1914. Then it was that the "glory of Jehovah" shone forth on his heavenly organization, which brought the Kingdom to birth. There was cause for great rejoicing among them. (Revelation 12:1, 2, 5, 10-12) And on earth the anointed remnant of Kingdom heirs shared in that joy. Beginning in 1919, they "shed forth light" as they undertook the worldwide proclamation of God's Kingdom as the real and only hope of mankind.—1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 5:14-16.

³ In contrast, in 1914 the world's national groups, fighting to maintain their own sovereignty, entered into an era of violence and insecurity from which they have never recovered. The lack of stability since then has caused many to realize that, despite "scientific progress," they have no secure future on which to count. Truly, 'darkness covers the earth.' Why can they find no way out? Because the nations have rejected Jehovah as Sovereign. At most, a few rulers pay lip service to a "God" whose name they never use. They are determined to run things themselves, but the problems they face are beyond man's ability to solve. (Jeremiah 8:9; Psalm 146:3-6) The present world, with its greed and corruption, has entered its "last days." There is no way that it can avoid the destruction that awaits it. Only people who put their full faith in God's Kingdom can look to the future with confidence. In growing numbers, honest-hearted ones are realizing this and they are becoming actively associated with Jehovah's Witnesses, who not only talk about the Kingdom but earnestly endeavor to live in harmony with what they preach.

3. (a) Why, especially since 1914, has 'darkness covered the earth'? (b) What is the only real solution?

'THE LITTLE ONE BECOMES A THOUSAND'

⁴ When World War I ended, the gathering of the Kingdom heirs had not yet been completed. There were still more "sons" and "daughters" of heavenly Jerusalem needed to fill out the foretold 144,000 that would rule with Christ in heaven. However, Jehovah foretold the windup of this work, saying: "Raise your eyes all around and see! They have all of them been collected together; they have come to you. From far away your own sons keep coming, and your daughters who will be taken care of on the flank." (Isaiah 60:4) As a result of the Kingdom proclamation made from and after 1919, thousands more dedicated themselves to Jehovah, got baptized and were anointed with holy spirit. All together, however, the entire group of Kingdom heirs was spoken of by Jesus as being only a "little flock." (Luke 12:32) To fulfill what was foretold at Isaiah 60:22, surely there would be more who would be gathered to true worship. Indeed that has been so!

⁵ They are spoken of at Isaiah 55:5 in this way: "Look! 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." These are people from outside spiritual Israel. They come from many nations but they become a united people, all giving loyal support to God's Kingdom. They are "a nation" that the remnant of spiritual Israel did not then "know" according to their understanding of the Scriptures, nor had this people formerly given due recognition to God's servants. But

4. In fulfillment of Isaiah 60:4, what gathering work was given first attention?

5. How has the source of further increase been as described at Isaiah 55:5?

as a result of the preaching of the good news, they are attracted because they realize that these spiritual Israelites worship the true God and because they discern in them a spiritual beauty that can result only from God's blessing.

⁶ Despite all that Satan has done to prevent the preaching of the Kingdom message and to divert the attention of people to other pursuits, the light of truth continues to reach out even to remote parts of the earth. The result has been as God long ago prophetically said to his "woman": "At that time you will see and certainly become radiant, and your heart will actually quiver and expand, because to you the wealthiness of the sea will direct itself; the very resources of the nations will come to you. . . . And the praises of Jehovah they will announce." (Isaiah 60:5, 6) Yes, a "great crowd" of persons who were once a part of the "sea" of mankind alienated from God, people whose lives were darkened by the "thick gloom" that covers the nations, have joined themselves to spiritual Israel. In the eyes of God, these are truly the precious ones out of all the nations.

⁷ At the time of the rebuilding of Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem, he moved his prophet Haggai to announce: "'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." (Haggai 2:7) That rocking and shaking of the nations eventually leads on to their destruction, but before that takes place "the desirable things of all the nations"

6. How far is the Kingdom message being carried, and with what thrilling results?

7. By the way in which the increase is foretold, how does Jehovah show what is truly precious in his eyes?

must be gathered out from among them and be brought into Jehovah's great spiritual temple, his universal house of worship. Here they will find safety when the world crashes in ruins. It is such living worshipers that are precious to Jehovah. Their material wealth is not what he wants. (Micah 6:6-8) The thing of greatest value that they can give to Jehovah is their whole-souled worship. They come with offerings of heart devotion and zealous service, all of them 'announcing the praises of Jehovah.' What joy their appearance has brought to Jehovah's loyal servants both in heaven and on earth!

⁸ How many of these worshipers of Jehovah who cherish hope of life on a Paradise earth will there be? The Bible fixes no number. It is left open to as many persons out of all nations as will take hold of Jehovah's loving provisions. An indication of what to expect, however, is found in Isaiah 60:8, which describes them as doves "flying just like a cloud"—a cloud that fairly darkens the earth beneath. This points to the movement of a large number of persons in a short time. With this great influx of worshipers of Jehovah, it was foretold, "the little one" of spiritual Israel would "become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation," and Jehovah said that he would "speed it up in its own time." (Isaiah 60:22) Does that fit what has actually taken place?

⁹ After the first world war there were only a few thousand actively sharing in giving a public witness about the Kingdom. By 1935 they totaled fewer than 60,000 worldwide. In 1941 the number of Kingdom

8. What indications does the Bible give as to the extent of the ingathering of prospective earthly heirs of the Kingdom?

9. To what extent has such increase taken place since 1935?

proclaimers passed the 100,000 mark. By 1953, there were over 500,000. Ten years later they numbered a million. By the beginning of 1984, there were 2,652,323. On an average, they devote far more than a million hours a day to showing others why only God's Kingdom offers real hope for the future. In comparison with the number who, as Jehovah's Witnesses, give evidence that they are subjects of Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom, it is noteworthy that some 60 nations of the world today have individual populations that are smaller in number than this growing "nation." This unique "nation," however, has no part in worldly politics but is devoted exclusively to the service of the true God.

¹⁰ Is this the full extent to which this prophecy will be fulfilled? What has already taken place is ample to fit the Bible's description. And it is marvelous, too, when we consider the circumstances under which this work has been done—the obstacles overcome, the evidence of divine direction to bring it to success, the devotion shown by those who share in it. Wonderful, too, are the changes that it has produced in the lives of people. But the increase of persons openly taking their stand for Jehovah is not stopping, nor is it slowing down. During recent years there have been, on an average, well over 10,000 each month presenting themselves for water immersion, and the total has been going up each year. All of these, by living up to what their baptism symbolizes, may have the reassuring prospect of survival into the "new earth."

¹¹ These millions of persons are not merely indepen-

10. (a) What circumstances make this growth marvelous in our eyes? (b) What indicates that more is yet to come?

11. (a) How does the Bible indicate that these millions become part of an organization? (b) What is the principal purpose of that organization?

dent Bible students, each serving God in his own way. They are persons who submissively become part of Jehovah's visible organization. As we have seen, first the Kingdom heirs were "collected together." Now others out of the nations, with the hope of earthly life, are 'coming to them.' (Isaiah 60:4, 5) They have become united in "one flock" under "one shepherd," Jesus Christ. (John 10:16) The apostle Peter described true Christians as a worldwide 'association of brothers,' and Paul urged them not to isolate themselves but to 'gather together,' and all the more so as the day for the execution of divine judgment draws near. (1 Peter 5:9; Hebrews 10:23-25) In that way they are strengthened and equipped to share in the grand purpose for which this organization exists. And what is that? To magnify Jehovah's name.—1 Peter 2:9; Isaiah 12:4, 5.

A WORK TO BE DONE

¹² All who come into association with Jehovah's organization soon realize that those who are in it are workers. In imitation of Jesus Christ they are all active preachers of the Kingdom of God, which is the means by which Jehovah's name will be vindicated. Jesus himself said: "I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth." (Luke 4:43) He spoke earnestly about the need for others to build their lives around the doing of God's will. He taught his followers to do the same work he was doing. For the time in which we are living, he foretold that "this good news of the kingdom" would be "preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) This is the most important work that any of us can do today. Why so?

12. (a) How did Jesus indicate the work in which all of us should be sharing? (b) How important is it, and why?

Because by means of it we uphold the rightful sovereignty of Jehovah God, upon which the well-being of all creation depends. By sharing wholeheartedly in this activity, we demonstrate our appreciation for Jehovah's abundant undeserved kindness. We also help fellow humans to avail themselves of the only means by which it is possible for them to survive the impending great tribulation.—Compare 1 Timothy 4:15, 16.

¹³ The circumstances that they find within Jehovah's organization warm their hearts. As Jehovah foretold through Isaiah: "I will appoint peace as your overseers and righteousness as your task assigners." (Isaiah 60:17) The peace that prevails is not mere theory but reality, a fruit of God's holy spirit. This does not mean that an individual experiences that peace to the full simply because he associates with the organization. He personally must learn to "pursue the things making for peace and the things that are upbuilding to one another." (Romans 14:19) He needs to learn to manifest godly wisdom in coping with the imperfections of others, to give evidence of long-suffering and self-control, to be forgiving toward others even as he wants God to forgive him. Yes, he also must 'make peace.' (James 3:17, 18; Galatians 5:22, 23; Colossians 3:12-14) Those who do so find great joy in being part of the "mighty nation" that is now taking shape and that is devoted to the service of Jehovah, "the happy God." (1 Timothy 1:11) It is the members of this "nation" who will be preserved when Jehovah executes judgment against the entire world that submits to Satan as its ruler.

13. (a) At Isaiah 60:17, what condition was foretold for Jehovah's organization? (b) What must we do in order to experience it fully? (c) What prospect lies before those who do?

A Warm Welcome for Those Who Return

THERE are many persons who at some time have had enough contact with Bible truth to know that Jehovah is the true God and to understand something about his purposes. Although they are not Jehovah's Witnesses, they may have studied the Bible with the Witnesses. Or perhaps their parents were Witnesses. Many of these have attended some meetings at a Kingdom Hall. They may even have had some part in sharing the Kingdom message with others. But they have not devoted their lives to the doing of God's will. Why not?

² The world offers attractions that they think they want, things that they feel will add to their enjoyment of life, and they wander away from Jehovah's organization in their quest for such things. In time, however, some of these realize that they have not found the kind of life they expected. They wake up to the fact that if they continue as they are, they are going to perish with the world. They have not forgotten the security and spiritual abundance in Jehovah's "house," and they want to be there again. But will Jehovah accept them?

A PRODIGAL SON RETURNS

³ The answer is indicated in Jesus' well-known par-

1. What kind of persons are being discussed in this chapter?
2. (a) Why did they wander away from Jehovah's organization? (b) Why do they begin to wish they were back again?
3. (a) In the parable of the prodigal son, what description did Jesus give of a similar situation? (b) Whom does the father picture?

able of the prodigal son. As an illustration, Jesus told about a man who had two sons. The younger son asked his father for his share of the property. Having obtained this, he went to a distant country, where he recklessly squandered everything in a life of debauchery. He thus acted prodigally. When famine hit that country, the young man, in desperate need, was forced to herd swine, but he was not even permitted to eat their fodder. Shaken by the problems that overwhelmed him, he came to his senses. He called to mind how good life was for even hired men in his father's house, and he determined to return. He would acknowledge his sinful course and ask to be received back, not as a son, but as a hired servant. (Luke 15:11-19) But after all the things he had done, would his father let him return? How would Jehovah, who was represented by the father in this parable, view the return of such a person?

⁴ Vividly portraying Jehovah's feelings in the matter, Jesus continued: "While [the younger son] was yet a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was moved with pity, and he ran and fell upon his neck and tenderly kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Make me as one of your hired men.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quick! bring out a robe, the best one, and clothe him with it, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fattened young bull, slaughter it and let us eat and enjoy ourselves, because this my son was dead and came to life again; he was lost and was found.' And they started to enjoy themselves."—Luke 15:20-24.

4. How did the father receive his son when he returned?

HOW DOES THE PARABLE APPLY TODAY?

⁵ In this illustration the elder son, the firstborn, appropriately corresponds to “the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens.” (Hebrews 12:23) What about the younger son? He must represent a group other than the “little flock” who have the heavenly hope. Not all of the Lord’s “other sheep” fit the description of the younger son, but some do. Even before the ingathering of the “other sheep” became especially noteworthy, starting in 1935, there were persons who knew that Jehovah is the only true God. They knew of the hope of earthly life under his Kingdom, and they did not entertain for themselves any thought of being of “the congregation of the firstborn” with heavenly hopes. But instead of devoting themselves to Jehovah’s service, they became immersed in worldly pursuits. They took the “means of living” that God granted them, the time and the life that he allowed them to have, and used these for selfish personal gratification. But in 1935 when Jehovah’s servants first clearly understood the identity of the “great crowd,” many who corresponded to the younger son wholeheartedly offered themselves for service in the Father’s house. It was a time of rejoicing such as Jesus described in his parable.

⁶ It is true that, at that time, not everyone shared in this rejoicing over the arrival of the class represented by the younger son. In his parable Jesus indicated that this would be the case. But not all the remaining ones of the “little flock” manifested such a spirit, and in his

5. (a) Who was pictured by the elder son in Jesus’ parable?
(b) Who, then, was represented by the younger son, the prodigal?

6. In the fulfillment, how did some persons manifest the attitude of the older son, but was that true of all the remnant?

illustration Jesus left the way open for even those who were at first displeased, to share in the joy that Jehovah himself has when such sinners truly repent.—Luke 15:7, 10, 25-32.

⁷ Since those events of the mid-1930's, however, others have realized that they, too, are in certain respects like that prodigal son. They are well acquainted with Jehovah's spiritual household, his visible organization, but their way of life has taken them far from it, as if to "a distant country." They have not opposed Jehovah's servants, but their own way of life has not been in accord with the standards of God's Word. They may have built their entire life around their secular work and themselves but failed to give proper weight to their obligations before God and to the seriousness of the times in which we live. Some were offended by the imperfections of others then associated with the congregation and they did not patiently wait for Jehovah to correct matters. But into what conditions have all of these come when they isolated themselves from the household of faith?

⁸ In time, some have realized that they have become spiritually impoverished. They can see that whatever brief periods of pleasure they have are not bringing them lasting happiness. They may also find that their way of life is taking its toll physically, emotionally and spiritually. Inside they feel empty, as do all who are without God and have no hope. (Ephesians 2:12) They realize that the only time they were really happy was in Jehovah's "house." They want to return. Should they? What possible benefit can there be from continuing in their impoverished condition? Delay could be disas-

7, 8. (a) In more recent years, what has caused others to get far away from Jehovah's household? (b) In what ways have some felt like the prodigal son? (c) Why should they return?

trous. If they keep clinging to the world, when it is destroyed they are going to lose their life.

⁹ But can such persons return? Warmly Jehovah invites them to come back, and his visible organization extends loving help to those who do. (Zechariah 1: 3, 4) What is required? As shown in Jesus' parable, they must come to their senses, take the initiative to return and acknowledge that they have sinned against God. If they engaged in grossly unchristian conduct, they must give convincing evidence to the elders that they have now abandoned that way of life and are genuinely repentant. Their earnest desire must now be to serve Jehovah as part of his visible organization. (Luke 15:18-21; Proverbs 28:13) If that truly is what is in their heart, they can be sure that their leaving their bad ways and thoughts and returning to Jehovah will bring great joy. (Isaiah 55:7) However, for their own joy to extend beyond the pleasure of being warmly welcomed again at the Kingdom Hall, sound spiritual rebuilding is needed.

BUILDING ON A SOUND FOUNDATION

¹⁰ Especially is it important for any who return to Jehovah's household to become well acquainted with the various features of Jehovah's personality and to cultivate a close personal relationship with him. They need to realize that all that Jehovah requires of us is really for our own benefit. His commandments do not take the joy out of life but, instead, safeguard us against doing things that might bring a momentary thrill but

9. (a) Why does Jehovah want such persons to return? (Ezekiel 18:23) (b) What is required on their part?

10. (a) What attitude toward Jehovah's requirements do repentant ones need to develop? (b) How can they cultivate a close personal relationship with Jehovah?

lead to a bitter harvest. (Isaiah 48:17; Galatians 6:7, 8) When he disciplines us, it is because of his love for us. (Proverbs 3:11, 12) Personal study followed by meditation on what is learned, earnest prayer and regular meeting attendance will help us to learn to put our full trust in Jehovah, to look to him for direction in everything we do.—Proverbs 3:5, 6.

¹¹ Those who strayed may have known what was right and what was wrong. But now they must also develop hatred for badness and they must continue to do so as long as it surrounds them. (Psalm 97:10) They will be helped in this if they seek not only knowledge but also understanding. First of all, this involves seeing things in relation to God. We need to recognize the various means by which he instructs us and how our reaction to his counsel affects our relationship with him. (Proverbs 4:7; 9:10) We must appreciate the importance of being consistent, applying Jehovah's standards all the time, in everything we do. (Titus 2:11, 12; 1 Thessalonians 4:7) Care should also be exercised to consider not just momentary pleasure but what the outcome of our decisions may prove to be. (Compare Proverbs 20:21; 23:17, 18; Hebrews 11:24-26.) We should also be lovingly concerned about the effect on others of things we say and do.—Romans 15:1, 2.

¹² As Christians we will be greatly strengthened by realizing that we are in the midst of a spiritual warfare.

11. How will those who had strayed be helped by (a) developing hatred for badness? (b) seeking understanding? (c) being consistent in applying godly standards? (d) learning to consider the outcome of anything they plan to do? (e) showing loving concern for others?

12. (a) Awareness of what as to Satan and his methods will help to safeguard us? (b) What is needed to win in this fight?

Our principal adversary is Satan the Devil, along with his demons. By every means possible he seeks to divert us from the vital Kingdom work that Jehovah has given us to do. His objective is to entice us to set aside Jehovah's standards, to become part of the world of which he is ruler. His snares often appeal to normal desires (for happiness, physical comfort, love and affection), but he urges us to give such desires a prominence that distorts their purpose or to satisfy them in improper ways. Only by making full use of the spiritual armor that God provides can we come off winners in this fight for our spiritual lives.—Ephesians 6:11-18.

¹³ Jesus said that if we would come to him and take his "yoke," we would find refreshment for our souls. (Matthew 11:29, 30) Taking a "yoke" upon oneself means serving. But serving Jehovah in imitation of his Son brings true refreshment. How so? Because it brings real freedom. We no longer are *slaves* of sin, in bondage to it, doing things we know we should not do and perhaps wish we were not doing. (John 8:32, 34-36) If our Christian personality is built on Jesus Christ as the foundation, we will appreciate his role in Jehovah's purpose, we will listen to him and learn from him. He delighted to do his Father's will. We will learn to do that too. (John 4:34; Psalm 40:8) Because of adhering to God's moral standards we will be able to enjoy a clean conscience. Instead of living only for self, we will experience the happiness that comes from giving. (Acts 20:35) Life will come to have real purpose for us. Above all, we will have the joy of knowing that we have the approval of Jehovah himself, the Father of all who become his sons.—Proverbs 10:22.

13. (a) How can we find refreshment for our souls? (b) Why does serving Jehovah in imitation of Christ really bring us happiness?

Do Not Long for What Was Left Behind!

FULFILLMENT of Bible prophecy unmistakably shows that we are today at the very threshold of God's glorious new system of things. Soon the wicked world will be gone, and with it the heartache, the frustration and grief that it has caused. The earth will be transformed into a Paradise in which worshipers of the true God will be able to enjoy perfect human life forever. Regarding the certainty of his promises about these things, Jehovah said to the apostle John: "Write, because these words are faithful and true." (Revelation 21:1-5) Yet, strange though it may seem, some persons who know these truths turn back to the way of life of the world that God says he is going to destroy. How sad! Why do they do it?

² When they first heard the good news about God's Kingdom and what it will do, they gladly embraced it. But it is also important to press on to Christian maturity, deepening one's understanding of God's Word and seeking ways to apply it fully in one's own life. (Hebrews 6:1, 11, 12) If lack of appreciation causes anyone to neglect doing this, he will not continue to regard as precious the privilege of serving God. Such a person may become impatient for the physical

1. (a) What blessings lie immediately ahead for faithful servants of God? (b) Yet, what have some persons done?
2. (a) To avoid such an outcome, what should a person do after first learning the truth? (b) If he fails to do this, what may dominate his thinking, and with what result?

blessings that God has promised, while failing to appreciate his need for spiritual growth and the importance of sharing as fully as possible in the preaching and disciple-making work that God has given us to do now. Satisfying desires for material possessions and for what appears to be fun may begin to take more and more of his time. He puts spiritual interests in second place. Not all at once, but a little at a time, he gravitates back into the world.—1 Timothy 6:9, 10.

³ A person may say that he wants to survive into the “new earth,” to live in a world where righteousness dwells. But does his choice of associates back up what he says? Of course, every day there is unavoidable contact with people who do not serve Jehovah—at work, at school, when shopping, even at home. But during breaks at work, before and after school, when phoning or visiting friends, during times of recreation, whose company does he *choose*? Does it really make a difference? The Bible cautions: “*Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits.*” (1 Corinthians 15:33) But what are “bad associations”? Does it make any difference that certain people do not worship Jehovah, that they simply do what seems right in their own eyes? On the basis of what we have already learned, we know that persons of that sort will not survive into the “new earth.” Any who minimize Jehovah’s standards when choosing friends will soon find themselves back in the world that they once thought they were leaving behind. But the warning examples recorded in the Scriptures can protect us against such a course if we take them to heart.—1 Corinthians 10:11.

3. (a) Why is it dangerous to choose as friends persons who do not worship Jehovah? (b) When might a person easily find himself in relaxed association with such persons?

“WRITTEN FOR A WARNING TO US”

⁴ When Jehovah delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, what a relief it must have been for them! The cruel oppression they had experienced after the death of Joseph made Egypt seem like a hot furnace into which they had been hurled. (Exodus 1:13, 14; Deuteronomy 4:20) But then Jehovah brought ten blows, or plagues, on Egypt. The contrast between the true God and the gods of Egypt became evident. So, when Israel left the land, “a vast mixed company” of non-Israelites went with them, just as today the “great crowd” separates itself from the world and associates with the remnant of spiritual Israel. (Exodus 12:38) But what happened in the camp soon after the Exodus?

⁵ The Christian disciple Stephen explained: “In their hearts they turned back to Egypt.” This was only a few months after their deliverance. (Acts 7:39, 40) What gave evidence of it? They made a golden calf—the sort of thing they were accustomed to in Egypt—and declared they were having “a festival to Jehovah.” But they were imitating the Egyptians. (Exodus 32:1-6) Jehovah was severely displeased with them. Their conduct was in direct conflict with the Law given at Mount Sinai. Thousands lost their lives. Why did it happen? Although they knew Jehovah’s commandments, they obviously had not built up heart appreciation for these and for the fact that the true God was in fact leading them.

4. (a) What kind of life did Israel have in Egypt after the death of Joseph? (b) Why did “a vast mixed company” join Israel when they were delivered from Egypt? (c) How has that prophetic drama been fulfilled in our day?

5. (a) Shortly after their deliverance, how did they ‘turn back to Egypt’? (b) Why did it happen?

⁶ When they left Egypt, both Israel and the “mixed company” that went with them knew it was the right thing to do. But after a year had passed they were not yet in the Promised Land; they did not yet have homes in the “land flowing with milk and honey.” They all had ample to eat physically, and especially was there spiritual abundance. The pillar of cloud and of fire gave constant evidence that Jehovah was leading them. At the Red Sea and at Mount Sinai they had seen awe-inspiring evidence of Jehovah’s power. The Law covenant gave them spiritual nourishment and refreshment. It also provided much for them to do personally, showing them where they needed to adjust their conduct, their thinking, their motives, so that these would be pleasing to Jehovah. But instead of appreciating all that Jehovah was doing for them, they began to long for the physical things they had in Egypt. Selfish longing led to ruin for many.—Numbers 11:4-6, 31-34.

⁷ Shortly after this, Moses sent men to spy out the Promised Land. When they returned they all agreed that it was indeed “flowing with milk and honey.” But ten of the spies were afraid of the people there and were intimidated by their fortified cities. They did not trust in Jehovah with all their heart and they caused the hearts of others to quake with fear. Once again their thoughts went back to Egypt, and they spoke of plans to return there. For their lack of faith, that entire generation 20 years of age and older eventually died in

6. (a) What provisions did Jehovah make for them in the wilderness? (1 Corinthians 10:3, 4) (b) Why did some begin to long for what they used to have in Egypt?

7. (a) When the spies brought back their reports, why did the people speak of returning to Egypt? (b) What was the outcome? (Hebrews 3:17, 19)

the wilderness, never entering the Promised Land.—Numbers 13:27-33; 14:1-4, 29.

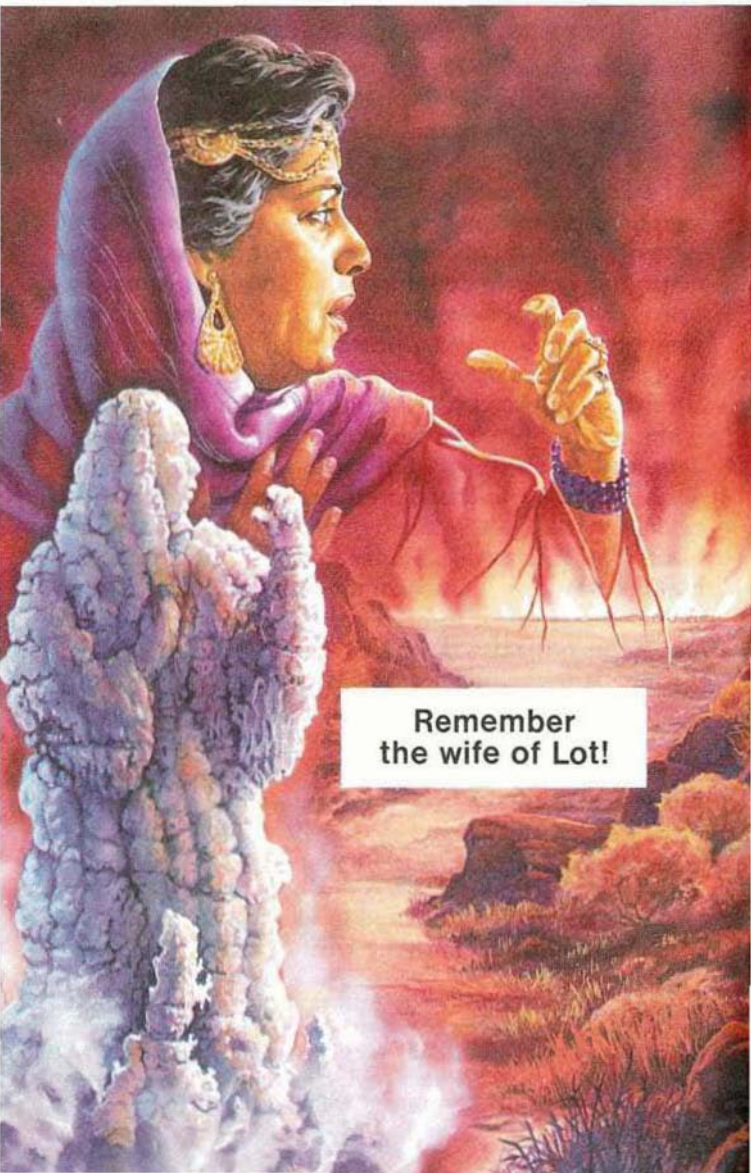
⁸ Over 400 years earlier, that same lesson was highlighted in a different setting. Abraham's nephew Lot had taken up living in Sodom, a morally corrupt but materially prosperous city. So gross was the immorality in Sodom and its district that Jehovah determined to destroy it, never to be built again. Angels were sent to deliver Lot and his household. When Lot warned his prospective sons-in-law, in their eyes "he seemed like a man who was joking." But it was no joke. At dawn the angels hurried Lot and his family outside the city and told them to flee without looking back. Their lives depended on obedience. Lot and his two daughters did what they were told and were spared. But Lot's wife evidently was reluctant to tear herself away from the material things being left behind. Turning to look back, she lost her life, becoming a pillar of salt. Have we personally taken to heart what that means? So that we would not miss the point, Jesus included it in a warning as to the urgency of flight from the old system in our day. It was when cautioning against being overly concerned about material possessions that he tersely said: "Remember the wife of Lot." (Genesis 19:12-26; Luke 17:31, 32) What can protect us against the pitfalls that ensnared the Israelites and Lot's wife?

"REACHING OUT FOR A BETTER PLACE"

⁹ To avoid being influenced to look back, we need to cultivate increasing faith in what is ahead. Hebrews

8. (a) For Lot and his family to be spared when Sodom was destroyed, what did they have to do? (b) Why was Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt? (c) What warning message does that contain for us?

9. What is faith, and how can we cultivate it?



**Remember
the wife of Lot!**

11:1 defines faith as “the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld.” It is an assurance or a guarantee, like a title deed, that we will come into possession of what God has promised. Faith is based on powerful evidence, and as a result we have strong reasons for belief in that which cannot be seen with the physical eye. It is not credulity, or a readiness to believe simply because something sounds good. To have real faith, we must care enough to become personally familiar with the evidence that is the basis for it. We also need to consider carefully how what we are learning relates to our own lives and to cultivate genuine heartfelt appreciation for it.

¹⁰ Abraham had such faith. As a result, at Jehovah’s direction Abraham left behind the prosperous city of Ur in Chaldea and moved into distant Canaan, a land that he had never seen before. There he lived as an alien resident, not attaching himself for security to any of the city-kingdoms. “He was awaiting the city having real foundations [Jehovah’s Messianic Kingdom], the builder and maker of which city is God.” If he had kept longing for the life in Chaldea, he doubtless would have returned. Instead, he was “reaching out for a better place, that is, one belonging to heaven.” (Hebrews 11:8-16) It was not for just a few years, or even ten or twenty years, that Abraham reached out for that “better place.” He continued to do so right down to his death, 100 years or more after he had left Ur. He did not simply say he had faith; he showed it by his works. As a result his reward is assured. So certain is the prospect of a resurrection for him that, as Jesus

10. (a) How did Abraham give evidence of his faith, and for how long? (b) How do we know that what he did was right?

said, 'to God, Abraham is living.'—Luke 20:37, 38; James 2:18.

¹¹ But what about Abraham's son Isaac, and Isaac's son Jacob? They had never tasted the Chaldean way of life. But they did not view this as a reason to find out for themselves what it was like. When they learned from their parents about Jehovah's promises they took these to heart. They cultivated faith like Abraham's. They, too, were "reaching out for a better place." God was not ashamed of them.—Hebrews 11:9, 16, 20, 21; Genesis 26:24, 25; 28:20-22.

¹² On the other hand, Jacob's brother Esau did not appreciate spiritual things. He married women who were not worshipers of Jehovah. Instead of treasuring sacred things, he sold his birthright for one meal. (Genesis 25:29-34; 26:34, 35; Hebrews 12:14-17) He was a person who wanted physical gratification *now*. Jacob's daughter, Dinah, also got into serious difficulty. Why? Because she liked to associate with the pagan "daughters of the land."—Genesis 34:1, 2.

¹³ If, like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, you are really "reaching out for a better place," for life under Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom, do not allow yourself to be drawn back into the world. Remember, the world offers no lasting future. "But he that does the will of God remains forever." And what a richly satisfying life that will be!—1 John 2:17.

11. How did Isaac and Jacob show that they, too, had faith?

12. What led Esau and Dinah into serious difficulties?

13. (a) What is life really like for people who are part of the world today? (b) What will safeguard us against being drawn back into it?

“You Have Need of Endurance”

THOSE who have made Jehovah their confidence are the most genuinely happy people on earth today. They know where the very best counsel on how to cope with problems of life can be found—in God’s own Word. They are not fearful as they look to the future, because they know what God’s purpose is for this earth. (Jeremiah 17:7, 8; Psalm 46:1, 2) Nevertheless, the apostle Paul wrote to fellow Christians: “You have need of endurance, in order that, after you have done the will of God, you may receive the fulfillment of the promise.” (Hebrews 10:36) What is it that gives rise to this need for endurance?

² Before his own death, Jesus alerted his apostles to what lay ahead, saying: “If you were part of the world, the world would be fond of what is its own. Now because you are no part of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on this account the world hates you. Bear in mind the word I said to you, A slave is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will persecute you also; if they have observed my word, they will observe yours also. But they will do all these things against you on account of my name, because they do not know him that sent me.” (John 15:19-21) How true that has proved to be!

1. (a) Why are Jehovah’s Witnesses truly happy people?
- (b) But what counsel at Hebrews 10:36 applies to all of us?
2. Why would Jesus’ disciples need endurance?

³ Jesus' followers are objects of hostility because they live in the midst of a world that rejects what real Christianity represents. Christ means "Anointed One." Jesus Christ is the one anointed by Jehovah to be King, ruling the entire earth. Thus when Jesus said that his disciples would be persecuted 'on account of his name,' he meant that the persecution would be because of their adhering to him as Jehovah's Messianic King, because of their obeying Christ ahead of any earthly ruler, because of their loyally adhering to his Kingdom and not becoming involved in the affairs of human governments. Jesus added that the opposition would be because the persecutors "do not know him that sent me"—that is, they refuse to recognize Jehovah God as Universal Sovereign. (Compare Exodus 5:2.) Who is the chief instigator of this persecution? Satan the Devil.—Revelation 2:10.

⁴ Especially since Satan was cast out of heaven following the birth of Jehovah's Messianic Kingdom in 1914, the pressure upon true Christians has intensified. Do not underestimate it. There is all-out warfare on the part of the Devil and his demons against all who have taken their stand on the side of God's Kingdom in the hands of Jesus Christ. Concerning this, Revelation 12:17 states: "And the dragon [Satan the Devil] grew wrathful at the woman [God's heavenly wifelike organization], and went off to wage war with the remaining ones of her seed [the spirit-anointed followers of Christ

3. (a) How is it 'on account of Jesus' name' that his disciples are persecuted? (b) In what sense do persecutors "not know" the One who sent Jesus? (c) Who is chiefly responsible for the persecution?

4. (a) How does the fulfillment of Revelation 12:17 affect our lives? (b) What is Satan's objective?

on earth], who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus." The "other sheep," too, find themselves in the thick of the fight. By cunning means, Satan endeavors to entice or force them to quit obeying the commandments of God. He wants to weaken and then completely destroy their spirituality. His objective is to silence the proclamation regarding Jesus as Jehovah's Messianic King. But in this spiritual warfare loyal servants of God are coming off victorious.

HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS REACT?

⁵ Many government officials recognize that Jehovah's Witnesses are law-abiding persons and that they exercise a wholesome influence in the community. Nevertheless, all human governments are part of Satan's world system of things. (1 John 5:19; Revelation 13:2) So it should come as no surprise when some governments prohibit the meetings of those who worship the true God, ban their Bible literature, forbid their preaching about God's Kingdom, yes, even imprison and physically abuse them. If you personally come under such pressure, what will you do?

⁶ The apostles of Jesus Christ were respectful of government officials. When persecuted, they did not retaliate. But when ordered to stop doing what God commanded, they firmly replied: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29; Romans 12:19; 1 Peter 3:15) Even when their lives were threatened,

5. What actions have governments taken against Jehovah's Witnesses?

6. (a) What attitude should we have toward government officials? (b) But what are we firmly resolved to do? (c) Even though persecuted, how can we continue to be happy?

fear of death did not make them compromise. They knew they were serving “the God who raises up the dead.” (2 Corinthians 1:9; Hebrews 2:14, 15) Though persecuted, they were happy—happy because they knew they were pleasing God, happy to have the opportunity to share in the vindication of his name and to prove their loyalty to his anointed King. (Acts 5:41, 42; Matthew 5:11, 12) Is that the kind of person you are? Do you openly identify yourself with those who are undergoing such experiences? E’bed-mel’ech was one who did not fearfully hold back. Who was he?

⁷ E’bed-mel’ech was a God-fearing Ethiopian who lived in Jerusalem during the period leading up to its destruction by the Babylonians. He was employed in the household of King Zedekiah. At that time Jeremiah was serving as a prophet of Jehovah to the Kingdom of Judah and surrounding nations. Because he uncompromisingly delivered God’s message of warning, he became an object of intense persecution. At the instigation of certain princes in Jerusalem, he was even thrown into a cistern to sink into the mire and die. Although E’bed-mel’ech was a non-Israelite, he recognized Jeremiah as being Jehovah’s prophet. Upon hearing what had been done, E’bed-mel’ech promptly sought out the king at the gate of the city to intercede on Jeremiah’s behalf. Acting on the king’s orders, he quickly got 30 men, as well as ropes and old rags. He directed Jeremiah to put the rags under his armpits to ease chafing from the ropes, and then they hoisted the prophet out of the cistern.—Jeremiah 38:4-13.

7. (a) Who was E’bed-mel’ech, and why is he of interest to us now? (b) When he heard that Jeremiah had been thrown into a miry cistern, what action did E’bed-mel’ech take, and why?

⁸ E'bed-mel'ech was understandably worried about what the princes might do to him because of his frustrating their plot, but his concern was outweighed by his respect for Jehovah's prophet and his own trust in God. As a result, Jehovah assured E'bed-mel'ech through Jeremiah: "'Here I am bringing true my words upon this city for calamity and not for good, and they will certainly happen before you in that day. And I will deliver you in that day,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and you will not be given into the hand of the men of whom you yourself are scared. For I shall without fail furnish you an escape, and by the sword you will not fall; and you will certainly come to have your soul as a spoil, because you have trusted in me,' is the utterance of Jehovah."—Jeremiah 39:16-18.

⁹ How precious that promise is to Jehovah's servants today! Like E'bed-mel'ech, the "other sheep" see the injustices done to the modern-day Jeremiah class, the anointed remnant, and the efforts made to stop their preaching of Jehovah's message. They have not hesitated to take whatever action they could to safeguard and support the anointed class. Rightly, therefore, Jehovah's promise to E'bed-mel'ech strengthens them, fortifying their confidence that God will not allow opposers to destroy them but that He will preserve them as a class through the impending world destruction into His righteous "new earth."

¹⁰ Not all who walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ

8. What reassuring promise did Jehovah send to E'bed-mel'ech, and why?

9. (a) How have the "other sheep" been like E'bed-mel'ech?
 (b) So, what does Jehovah's promise to E'bed-mel'ech mean to the "other sheep" today?

10. In what areas of life do Christians experience persecution?

are threatened with imprisonment, but all do experience persecution in one way or another. (2 Timothy 3:12) Thousands of Christian wives, and husbands, have for many years faithfully endured intense opposition right in their own homes. Children, too, because of their desire to serve Jehovah, have been disowned by parents. (Matthew 10:36-38) Christian youths may also encounter persecution at school; older persons, at their places of employment. All of Jehovah's Witnesses get a taste of it as they share in witnessing publicly about God's Kingdom. To all such, Jesus' words apply: "By endurance on your part you will acquire your souls."—Luke 21:19.

¹¹ For not a few, there are other situations that put them to the test. They may have a serious illness, one that robs life of much of its joy. Or, perhaps they are confronted with very difficult economic conditions. It may be that, at times, the comments of close companions are unfair and unkind. In the case of the patriarch Job, Satan used all these means in an effort to break his integrity. How will we react if we find ourselves in similar situations?—James 5:11.

¹² On the other hand, what if we personally find very little favorable response to our efforts to witness about Jehovah's purposes? That, too, calls for endurance. Remember, during all the years that Noah preached before the Flood, only his wife and sons and their wives joined him in serving Jehovah. All the rest of mankind "took no note." (Matthew 24:39) Similarly, today, the majority 'take no note.' In some areas,

11. (a) What other situations present a severe test to many?
(b) Who else experienced these things, and why?

12. (a) Why did Noah especially need endurance in his ministry? (b) How has the situation been similar in our day?

however, where once there was little favorable response to the Kingdom message, now there is an abundant harvest of worshipers of the true God. Happy are those who endured the years of indifference or outright opposition and are now sharing in this splendid ingathering!

'HAPPY THOSE WHO KEEP ON ENDURING'

¹³ To avoid losing out on the marvelous prospect of life in the "new earth," it is vital to keep clearly in focus the great issue confronting all creation—the issue of universal sovereignty. Are we uncompromisingly on Jehovah's side? Do we fully appreciate that there are only two sides, that there is no middle ground? If we are not going to be casualties in this war, we need to recognize that both hostility and enticement are methods used by Satan to break our integrity, to cause us to quit obeying God, to turn us aside from the vital work of bearing witness to the Messianic Kingdom.—1 Peter 5:8, 9; Mark 4:17-19.

¹⁴ We must also cultivate complete reliance on Jehovah. How foolish it would be to try in our own strength alone to avoid the subtle snares of a superhuman foe! But if we trust in Jehovah with all our heart, then when we undergo hardship and face temptation we will draw closer to him. (Ephesians 6:10, 11; Proverbs 3:5, 6) Jehovah does not force us to go in a certain way. He will not lead us against our will. But if we turn to his Word for guidance, pray to him for strength and stay close to his organization, he will

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13. (a) To keep on enduring, what must we keep in focus?
 (b) What do we need to recognize as to Satan's methods?
 14. (a) What relationship must we cultivate, and with whom?
 (b) How will he help us?

direct our steps. And he will fortify us with renewed evidence of his own unfailing love.—Romans 8:38, 39.

¹⁵ The hardships and temptations that you undergo will put you to the test. Whom do you put first in your life? Satan's contention is that all of us are mainly concerned about self. Most people are like that. Jesus Christ was different. Are you? Have you learned to put first the magnifying of Jehovah's name? If so, then, instead of evading situations that test your faith, you will be able to meet them squarely, praying to Jehovah to give you the wisdom to use these to honor him. The tribulation that you undergo will produce endurance; endurance because of your love for Jehovah will call forth his approval. "Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial, because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life, which Jehovah promised to those who continue loving him."—James 1:2-4, 12; Romans 5:3, 4.

¹⁶ It is not enough merely to start out in Jehovah's service or to endure for a short while. We are in a race, and the prize goes to those who cross the finish line. Happy will all those be who are still exerting themselves with their eyes firmly fixed on the prize when this old system crashes in ruins! What glorious prospects then await them!—Hebrews 12:1-3; Matthew 24:13.

15. (a) Who should come first in our lives? (b) How should we view situations that test our faith?

16. What goal should we be reaching out to attain?

The Countdown Nears Its Zero Hour!

BACK in 1947, scientists devised a “doomsday clock.” It appears on the cover of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and is used to dramatize how perilously close they believe the world is to nuclear annihilation. Repeatedly the hands of that “clock” have been moved—sometimes forward, sometimes back, depending on how dangerous the international situation was perceived to be. Early in 1984 those hands were advanced to three minutes before midnight. Should they reach midnight, it would mean that dreaded nuclear war had begun.

² But it was some 6,000 years ago that Jehovah God began a countdown that has moved irresistibly forward, never turning back. In that countdown the zero hour is the time that God has set for the vindication of his sovereignty, upon which the peace and well-being of all the universe depend. He has openly stated his purpose and provided time markers that enable us to discern its progress. Immediately following the rebellion in Eden, Jehovah promised that he would bring forth from his “woman,” his organization of loyal spirit creatures, a “seed” that would bruise Satan, “the original serpent,” in the head and finally crush him out of existence forever. (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:9; Romans 16:20) How lovers of righteousness long for that time!

1. According to prominent scientists, how close is “doomsday”?
2. When did Jehovah begin his countdown, and what will its zero hour mean?

³ At God's appointed time, foretold long in advance, the promised "seed," the Messiah, God's own Son, appeared on earth. As a resounding answer to Satan's defiant challenge, Jesus maintained perfect godly devotion right down to death. And by his death as a sinless human he also provided the means to redeem Adam's offspring from sin and death. Thus the basis was laid for eventually 'breaking up the works of the Devil.'—1 John 3:8; Daniel 9:25; Galatians 4:4, 5.

⁴ While Jesus was still on earth, he began to gather men and women who would become joint heirs with him in his heavenly Kingdom. Just 144,000 chosen, tested and loyal ones would be included. As the time for the gathering of the final members of this group arrived, "rulership and dignity and kingdom" were conferred upon Jesus himself in heaven. (Daniel 7:13, 14) Right on schedule, in 1914, he went into action as ruling King. Satan and his demons were promptly hurled out of heaven, this act cleansing the seat of government. (Revelation 12:7-12) The present world system had entered its final days.

⁵ The countdown that has proceeded for some six millenniums now nears its zero hour. So close is it that people who were alive in 1914, and who are now well along in years, will not all pass off the scene before the thrilling events marking the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty come to pass.—Mark 13:30.

3. (a) What shows that the coming of the Messiah was carefully timed? (b) For what was the basis then laid?

4. (a) What group did Jesus begin to gather while he was on earth? (b) In harmony with the divine schedule, when did Christ begin to rule as King? (c) What was one of the first actions he took?

5. Who will be alive to witness the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty?

⁶ Other loyal servants of God, too, will be on hand to witness the events of that great day. Especially beginning in 1935, when the identity of the “great multitude,” or “great crowd,” was clearly understood, large numbers of these began to manifest themselves. At first there were hundreds, then thousands, later hundreds of thousands, and now there are millions spread around the globe. God’s infallible Word depicts this group as ‘coming out of the great tribulation,’ being survivors of it, living right on into God’s New Order without ever having to die. (Revelation 7:9, 10, 14; John 11:26) The early members of this group are now in their 60’s or 70’s or older. Jehovah did not allow the ingathering of this group to begin too soon. The “great crowd,” including many of the earliest members thereof, will survive into the “new earth.”

⁷ The hope of the “great crowd” will not be thwarted by any nuclear holocaust that would destroy all mankind. With good reason they are optimistic and courageous. As the events of the “last days” have unfolded, they have watched them with keen anticipation, applying to themselves Jesus’ counsel: “Raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near.” (Luke 21:28) But during the remaining time before that deliverance, further events of world-shaking significance are to occur.

EVENTS YET AHEAD

⁸ Pointing to one of these, the apostle Paul wrote:

6, 7. (a) What facts about the “great crowd” indicate that the great tribulation must be very close? (b) Why do they look to the future with keen anticipation?

8. (a) What very significant event foretold at 1 Thessalonians 5:3 is yet to come? (b) Many years ago, how was the stage set for this? (c) In recent years, what great pressure has there been to assure world peace?

“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 5:3) What form that proclamation will take remains to be seen. But it is noteworthy that the stage was set soon after the world entered the “last days.” In 1919 the purpose of the League of Nations was declared to be the achieving of “peace and security.” After World War II, the Charter of the United Nations again set forth “peace and security” as the principal goal of that international body. It has not achieved that objective. However, in recent years people of all walks of life have shared in gigantic public demonstrations in many lands, urging the world’s leaders to put a stop to all production, testing and deployment of nuclear weapons. They want assurance of world peace and are terrified at what they believe the alternative to be.

⁹ Whether as a result of this or some other initiative, human leaders will soon make a very significant proclamation of “Peace and security!” It will be only a veneer. But those who endorse it will be declaring that they have attained their goal by their own means, without the need of God’s Kingdom. At this repudiation of Jehovah’s sovereignty, “sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them.”

¹⁰ Events will move swiftly. Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, will be desolated by her former political lovers. Already, rulers have become keenly aware that religion is an agitating force that has provoked hatred, bloodshed and war around the globe.

9. Why will sudden destruction come upon those endorsing that foretold proclamation of “Peace and security”?

10. How is the situation already shaping up for the destruction of Babylon the Great?

Politicians are getting tired of being pressured by the clergy. In much of the world, attendance at places of worship has greatly decreased. An atheistic outlook, whether blatant or veiled, dictates public opinion. Also, many member countries of the United Nations have strong antireligious policies. When Jehovah's own appointed hour arrives for the execution of judgment, he will permit the political rulers, in a sweeping international move, to turn against Babylon the Great and completely destroy her.—Revelation 17:15, 16; 19:1, 2.

¹¹ Intoxicated by that victory and goaded on by their invisible ruler, Satan the Devil, the nations will then attack Jehovah's own faithful witnesses in the earth. (Ezekiel 38:14-16) The fact that these are peaceable, law-abiding people who do not meddle in politics or bear responsibility for war will be given no consideration. The nations will demand total support, worship of the political system. But when they move to crush Jehovah's visible organization, God will act decisively in behalf of his loyal servants, rescuing them. The armies of heaven will completely annihilate every vestige of Satan's visible organization, destroying all who cling to it. Then, the archenemy, Satan the Devil himself, will be seized and completely put out of operation for a thousand years, during which all the effects of his vile influence will be completely removed and the earth will be transformed into a Paradise. After that, Satan will be released for a short period of time, to test restored mankind. All humans that choose to follow him will be annihilated, together with Satan and his demons.—Revelation 19:19-21; 20:1-3, 7-10.

11. (a) Against whom will the nations turn next? (b) To what further events will that lead?

USHERED INTO A SPLENDID “NEW EARTH”

¹² With the fear-inspiring events of the end of the present world behind them and the Millennial Reign of Christ before them, the favored survivors on earth will be filled with intense gratitude as they raise their voices in thanks to God. With heartfelt depth of feeling the “great crowd” will cry out with a loud voice: “Salvation we owe to our God [Jehovah], who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb [Jesus Christ].” And all of God’s loyal heavenly organization, moved by appreciation of the grand significance of these events, will join with them in worship, saying: “Amen! The blessing and the glory and the wisdom and the thanksgiving and the honor and the power and the strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”—Revelation 7:10-12.

¹³ All mankind will at last form a united human society that honors the true God, “a new earth” under “a new heaven” that gives expression to Jehovah’s loving sovereignty. Using delightful symbolism, the final book of the Bible depicts the marvelous benefits that will flow to mankind then as being “a river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb” down the middle of the broad way of the heavenly New Jerusalem. Along the banks of this river are “trees of life” that produce fruit to sustain those who eat it and leaves for the curing of the nations. Represented here is the entire provision made by God for healing and sustaining believing, obedient mankind and enabling them to enjoy eternal life through Jesus Christ.—Revelation 21:1, 2; 22:1, 2.

12. (a) To whom will the “great crowd” ascribe their deliverance? (b) Who will join them in praising God?

13. How does the Bible depict the provision made to sustain and heal mankind?

¹⁴ Conditions then prevailing on earth will be refreshingly different from anything that the old world has ever produced. Through application of the benefits of Christ's sacrifice and by means of education in the will of God, obedient ones, including those resurrected from the dead, will be freed from every trace of sin and will be helped to progress physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually until they attain to perfection. Instead of producing the divisive "works of the flesh," everyone will learn to produce abundantly such godly fruitage as love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness and self-control. (Galatians 5:19-23) With such a spirit prevailing, the earth's produce will be used to supply generously the needs of all mankind. Life will take on greater richness of meaning than ever before as mankind work together to fulfill the Creator's original purpose for this earth and its inhabitants.

¹⁵ In joyful anticipation of all of this, God's spirit and the bride of Christ now extend an earnest invitation to people everywhere, saying: "'Come!' And let anyone hearing say: 'Come!' And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free." (Revelation 22:17) Now, therefore, is no time simply to wait until the countdown to Jehovah's great day reaches its zero hour at the great tribulation. Having accepted the gracious invitation to "take life's water free," you now have the privilege to extend that invitation to others. It is a time for zealous activity on the part of all whose eager desire is to be survivors into God's splendid "new earth."

14. In what ways will conditions in the "new earth" be different from those in the world today?

15. (a) What appealing invitation is already being extended to humankind? (b) So, what should we individually be doing?

Prophetic Patterns and Descriptions of People Now Living Who Will Inherit the Earthly Realm of God's Kingdom

Foreshadowed by the following groups or individuals:

(1) Noah's sons and daughters-in-law (Genesis 6-9). (2) Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19). (3) Joseph's ten repentant half brothers (Genesis 37, 42-45). (4) Famine-stricken Egyptians who sold themselves to Joseph (Genesis 41; 47:13-26). (5) Mixed company that left Egypt with Israel (Exodus 12:38). (6) Twelve non-Levite tribes of Israel on Atonement Day (Leviticus 16; Matthew 19:28). (7) Alien residents in Israel (Leviticus 19:34). (8) Hobab the brother-in-law of Moses (Numbers 10:29-32). (9) Rahab of Jericho (Joshua 2, 6). (10) Gibeonites who sought peace with Israel (Joshua 9, 10). (11) Jael the wife of Heber the Kenite (Judges 4, 5). (12) Jonathan son of King Saul (1 Samuel 18; 23:16, 17). (13) Foreigners who fought along with David (2 Samuel 15:18-22). (14) Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10). (15) Naaman cleansed of leprosy (2 Kings 5). (16) Jehonadab the son of Rechab (2 Kings 10:15-28). (17) Foreigners who prayed toward Jehovah's temple (2 Chronicles 6:32, 33). (18) Nethinim and sons of non-Israelite servants of Solomon (Ezra 2, 8). (19) Rechabites (Jeremiah 35). (20) Ebed-melech the Ethiopian (Jeremiah 38; 39:16-18). (21) Repentant Ninevites (Jonah 3).

Additionally, described prophetically as follows:

(1) Families of the ground that bless themselves by means of Abraham through his seed (Genesis 12:3; 22:18). (2) Nations that are glad with Jehovah's people (Deuteronomy 32:43). (3) Righteous ones, those hoping in Jehovah (Psalm 37:9, 29). (4) Virgin companions of the bride (Psalm 45:14). (5) Upright and blameless ones (Proverbs 2:21). (6) Nations being taught at Jehovah's house and walk-

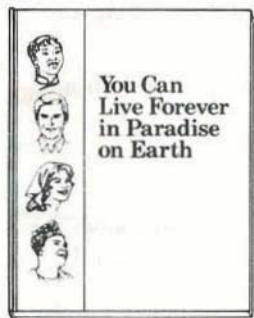
ing in his paths (Isaiah 2:2-4). (7) Nations that turn inquiringly to the Signal (Isaiah 11:10). (8) Nations that come out of darkness (Isaiah 49:6, 9, 10). (9) Nation not previously known (Isaiah 55:5). (10) Foreigners ministering to Jehovah and loving his name (Isaiah 56:6). (11) "Wealthiness of the sea," "resources of the nations," those that come 'flying like a cloud of doves' (Isaiah 60:5, 6, 8). (12) Strangers that shepherd Israel's flocks, foreigners that are its farmers and vinedressers (Isaiah 61:5). (13) Those marked in forehead by man with secretary's inkhorn (Ezekiel 9). (14) Persons who call on the name of Jehovah and get away safe on his fear-inspiring day (Joel 2:32). (15) Desirable things of all nations (Haggai 2:7). (16) Nations that become "joined to Jehovah" (Zechariah 2:11). (17) 'Ten men who take hold of skirt of a Jew' (Zechariah 8:23). (18) Nations to whom King speaks peace (Zechariah 9:10). (19) "Sheep" who do good to King's brothers (Matthew 25:31-46). (20) Repentant prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). (21) "Other sheep" who listen to the Fine Shepherd's voice (John 10:16). (22) Persons who exercise faith in Christ and "never die at all" (John 11:26). (23) Creation that will be freed from enslavement to corruption and have glorious freedom of children of God (Romans 8:20, 21). (24) Those of the world who gain everlasting life because they exercise faith in God's Son (1 John 2:2; John 3:16, 36). (25) "Great crowd" that serve day and night in Jehovah's temple (Revelation 7:9-17). (26) Anyone drinking life's water and himself saying to others, "Come!" (Revelation 22:17).

The above are only the ones that are discussed or referred to in this book.

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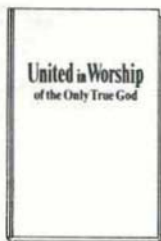
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