

Awake!

SPECIAL ISSUE

WHY

**DOES GOD
PERMIT**

Wickedness?

OCTOBER 8, 1966

THE REASON FOR THIS MAGAZINE

News sources that are able to keep you awake to the vital issues of our times must be unfettered by censorship and selfish interests. "Awake!" has no fetters. It recognizes facts, faces facts, is free to publish facts. It is not bound by political ties; it is unhampered by traditional creeds. This magazine keeps itself free, that it may speak freely to you. But it does not abuse its freedom. It maintains integrity to truth.

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CONTENTS

A Question That Needs Answering	3	What God Has Been Doing on Our Behalf	21
Man Created Free	4	What God Will Do for Man in Paradise	23
Is God to Blame for Man's Wrongs?	7	What You Should Do Now	26
Who Is Principally Responsible?	10	"Your Word Is Truth"	
Why Has Wickedness Been Permitted for So Long?	13	Why, Then, Does God Permit Wickedness?	28
How Much Longer Will It Be?	17	Watching the World	

Awake!

"It is already the hour for you to awake."

—Romans 13:11

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A Question That Needs Answering

THE history of the human family is not a particularly pleasant one. It is filled with the record of man's inhumanity to man. Over and over again individual or collective acts of wickedness have plunged large segments of humankind into brutality and bloodshed. As man's inventiveness has progressed, so has his capacity to cause grief.

In all this record of wickedness, the innocent, decent people all too often suffer. They are frequently victims of violence, perhaps losing homes, loved ones, or their own lives. You may or may not have experienced these things personally. Yet mental suffering due to injustices, unkindness and disloyalty may produce even greater misery, and you are not likely to have escaped such.

Thinking men and women throughout the ages have wondered why it is this way. Sooner or later they ask the all-important question: "If there is a God, why does he permit all this wickedness?" Because of not having found the answer to this critical question, many have abandoned belief in God. In fact, today some are even saying that "God is dead."

Philosophers and religious leaders throughout the ages have pondered the problem. Yet, their accumulated ideas are conflicting. As the book *Basic Teachings of the Great Philosophers* (1945 edition,

page 296) describes it, "One philosopher will offer his solution and many will hail it as *the* answer. But it will not be long before another philosopher will discover and point to errors in his patterns, will reveal gaps and distortions, and will propose a somewhat different solution, one which seems to him more nearly perfect."

And why is this? Because, as the same book comments, even a great philosopher "does not fashion a perfect picture. Only a God who knows all experiences of all men and can detect the finest relations can weave a perfect pattern. No philosopher, however great, is such a God."

The fundamental truth of that cannot be denied. No man, of himself, however wise, can answer the question as to why God permits wickedness. But God *can*. And he does!

Consider this for a moment: If you wanted to know the views of someone, would it not be best to let him express himself instead of listening to hearsay about him? Then, since it is God who permits wickedness, it would only be fair and right to listen to his explanation as to why he has allowed wickedness to exist.

To begin with, let us examine the matter of how man was created. This will aid us in determining how wickedness could ever arise within the human family in the first place.

MAN CREATED *Free*

WOULD you like someone to dictate your every move in life? Would you appreciate it if someone scheduled your every living minute and then forced you never to deviate from that course by even a hair's breadth? Or do you prefer to have the freedom to choose what kind of work you will do, where you will live, what you will eat and what you will wear?

The answers to those questions are obvious. No balanced human wants to lose complete control of his life. This can be seen even on a national scale where people are dominated by harsh, dictatorial governments. These oppressive governments stifle happiness and initiative. They also cause such pressures of resentment to build up that often an outbreak is made for freedom.

Freedom a Marvelous Gift

The desire for freedom is no accident. The Bible tells us that, in addition to life, God gave Adam, his first human creation, a most precious gift. That marvelous gift was free moral agency. Man was not to be a human robot, an automaton. He was endowed with the ability to choose, and that is an ability that we all use each day.—Josh. 24:15; Gen. 1:1, 26-28.

If God had purposed that humans be merely automatons, machinelike, he would not have equipped them with intellectual powers, powers of perception, judgment, decision and reason. As a robot, man would no more have need for such mental faculties than would a piece of machinery or a vegetable.

Was the freedom with which man was



created a bad thing? No, it was a good thing. The Bible is explicit in informing us that *all the things* God created were good. It states: "God saw everything that he had made and, look! it was *very good*." (Gen. 1:31) Centuries later the man Moses stated of the Creator: "Perfect is his activity."—Deut. 32:4.

What Human Perfection Means

God created the first man and woman perfect, that is, complete, without a defect in their physical organism. But did this perfection mean that they could do nothing but good? No, for while perfect, complete in their mental and physical faculties, they still had freedom of choice. If they were compelled to do what was good, then it could not be said that they were truly free to choose.

In addition, Adam was still a man, an earthling, made of flesh and blood. He was perfect, it is true, but perfect in his *limited sphere* as a human. For instance, man could not live in outer space without oxygen, for he was not a spirit creature. Nor could he stay underwater indefinitely without special equipment, for he was not

a sea creature. Also, he must always eat food and drink liquids to stay alive. But these and other human limitations did not mean he was less than perfect. He was still perfect, but within the limits of humankind.

Nor did his perfection mean he knew everything. He would have to learn many things. All learning did not come automatically with perfection. In fact, even of Jesus Christ, God's Son, who as a man was also perfect, we read: "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience." So under God's direction Adam could learn many things as time progressed. He could also come to appreciate more fully why God is the only one worthy of his worship, and that serving God is, without exception, the right and best thing to do. He could see how wonderful God is, what a marvelous gift his free moral agency was, and, of his own free will, could want to serve such a God.—Heb. 5:8.

But if Adam was perfect, how was it possible for him to go wrong, to sin? Remember, he was a free moral agent. He could choose to ignore vital facts of a question, or to arrive at a decision based on one-sided testimony. He could also meditate long enough on what was wrong to have this motivate him to wrong action, as the Bible says: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin." Adam's perfection would not immunize him from error if he deliberately refused to ponder well both sides of a matter, or if he continued to entertain desires that were in opposition to God's law. His perfection did not mean he was infallible.—Jas. 1:14, 15.

That the creature's individual will and choice, rather than perfection, are the determining factors readily becomes evident. If we were to insist that a perfect

man could not take a wrong course where a moral issue was involved, should we not also logically argue that an *imperfect* creature could not take a *right* course where such moral issue was involved? Yet today some imperfect creatures *do* take a right course on moral issues involving obedience to God, even choosing to suffer persecution rather than change from such a course; while at the same time others deliberately engage in doing what they know is wrong. Thus not all *wrong* actions can be excused by human imperfection. The deciding factors are the individual's will and choice. In the same way, it was not human perfection alone that would guarantee *right* action by the first man, but, rather, his own will and choice motivated by love for his God and for what is right.

God's Guidance Vital

For his own protection, man needed God's guidance and direction. He was not to be free from God and His regulations. The reason why is so vital, so fundamental, that unless man appreciated its significance, he would come into grave difficulty. It is this: *Man was not made to govern independently of God.* In fact, he could not live without God.

God did not give man the right or the ability to govern without Him, because it was never purposed that man be independent from God, his Creator. Freedom was to be relative, maintained within proper limits, limits that would work for man's good and contribute to his happiness. That is why God inspired his prophet Jeremiah to write: "I well know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step. Correct me, O Jehovah." It also explains why the Bible counsels: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean

upon your own understanding."—Jer. 10: 23, 24; Prov. 3:5.

So while man was perfect as a physical organism, he must have the guidance of his God and Creator to live life successfully and manage his affairs properly. If he ever stopped accepting divine guidance and direction, his mind and intellect, though perfect, would no more resist deterioration than would his perfect body if he deprived it of organic food. Man's positive dependence on spiritual food was not in the least less vital than his dependence on material food, a fact declared both in the Mosaic law and by God's own Son. (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4) If man were to refuse to accept the guidance of Almighty God over his life, then chaos would result in the human ranks, as has happened.

How was God's guidance expressed? By His regularly communicating with the human creation, as the first and second chapters of Genesis show. Their Maker would direct them by talking with them and by giving them his laws, laws that would work for their own welfare.

Hence, man's freedom was to be regulated by wise, just and loving laws, laws that would result in the happiness of the entire human family. These laws were to serve as a constant reminder that the welfare of men was ever dependent upon obedience to their Creator. Because free moral agents could deviate in their thinking and go in a way that would be hurtful to themselves, they would forever need their Creator to lead them in the paths of right knowledge and happiness.

If man were to stop trusting in God and start trusting in his own wisdom alone, then he would lose his happiness. Has this occurred? Well, what do we see on earth? Do we see the entire human family of free moral agents united in a bond of love, happy and thrilled with each day of life?

Or, instead, do we see earth filled with suffering, divided, perplexed, confused and unhappy people? The judgment of history and of our own time is that the latter is true. Man has lost genuine happiness, and the reason why is that he has abandoned the guidance of God.

The Wrong Choice

With the freedom to choose, our first parents, Adam and his wife Eve, chose to turn their backs on God. Why, Eve even believed that by departing from God's law she and her husband would become God-like! So they broke God's plainly stated regulation and turned aside from his direction. This was nothing less than outright rebellion against Almighty God.—Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:1-6.

However, choosing to rebel against God would mean that they would now have to get along without the blessing and guidance of God. That is what they chose, and that is what God granted them. But man's rejection of God as his governor meant that the Creator would no longer sustain him in perfection. Outside God's care, the human organism would begin to break down, until eventually death overtook it. God said: "In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." He having turned to sin, his body was bound to degenerate. The close relation between the emotional state and the physical state, as relates to human health, is, medically, scientifically, and Scripturally, undeniable. Compare Genesis 44:22, 29-34; Proverbs 3:7, 8; 4:20-22; 13:12; 14:30; 15:30; 16:24; 17:22.

It is evident, then, that the Bible's explanation of matters fits the facts. Man was created perfect, but this did not mean that, as a free moral agent, he could not choose to sin.

IS GOD TO BLAME

for
**MAN'S
WRONGS?**

THE calamity that came upon Adam and Eve was their own fault. God had clearly warned them of the result if they failed to obey his righteous law; yet they chose a course of lawlessness toward God. But what about all the wickedness committed in the thousands of years since then? Whose fault is that? Is it God's?

The Bible shows that the blame for wickedness lies in two places; one is with man himself. Let us examine his responsibility first.

When a person commits a crime, who is apprehended? Would it be right to put the innocent victim on trial and convict him and let the criminal go free? No, it is the criminal who is responsible for the crime he committed. We cannot hold the innocent one responsible for a crime he did not commit. In like manner, we must not hold God responsible for crimes he did not commit. We must put the blame where it belongs, on the criminals.

Remember that, although Adam's offspring, born in sin, were not perfect, they were still free moral agents. They were

free to choose to do right or wrong, just as you are to this day. Though by nature they would commit many errors, yet when they *chose* to do wrong, it would be their own fault. That is why the Bible, at Deuteronomy 32:5, says: "They have acted ruinously on their own part; they are not [God's] children, the defect is their own."

True, many innocent people who try to do good are victimized by the wicked deeds of others. But here again, the innocent must appreciate that it is the wicked criminal who is responsible for their hurt, not God. Furthermore, God is not oblivious to their plight, and we will later see how he has taken action to deliver them from their unfortunate circumstances, and to erase any hurt they have unjustly received.

Tendency to Shift Blame

So, then, much of the wickedness perpetrated for the past thousands of years can be traced to man's own doing. He cannot shift the responsibility for his own wrongdoing onto God, although this is what many try to do. Why, even Adam, when called to account for his transgression, tried to avoid responsibility by saying the cause for his dereliction was "the woman whom *you* [God] gave to be with me." Since God gave him the woman who later induced him to rebel, Adam selfishly reasoned that, not only the woman, but God himself must bear responsibility for his wrong action. However, it was not God who did the wrong. And the Bible assures us that "Adam was not deceived." He was competent to make a choice. His wrongdoing was his own fault.—Gen. 3: 12; 1 Tim. 2:14.

Throughout history humans have been plagued by a tendency similar to Adam's, to blame God for the evil that befalls them. In the case of some, they follow the dictates of their own will and violate

God's laws. When they are apprehended for their lawlessness, they may feel that God is at fault for not preventing the outcome. But why did they break God's law?

While there can be no doubt that some persons are genuinely perplexed and are seeking to know the reason for God's permission of wickedness, the sincerity of many others who strongly criticize God is open to question. Are they really honest in their insistence that God is at fault because he did not forcibly prevent man's deviation from righteousness at its very inception? Where, then, is the proof that they as individuals personally desire stricter control by God or where is the proof that even a sizable majority of mankind at any time has manifested a desire that God use his power to inhibit their wrong ways or block them in their wrong pursuits? If they do not want this for themselves, why should we believe they really would want it for our first parents? Are they not like the person who heartily cheers law enforcement but reacts resentfully when a traffic policeman approaches him?—Ezek. 18:29-32.

When entire nations behave criminally, can they blame God if disaster befalls them? If they cast out God's commandments, can they blame God for their suffering? When human governments fail because they are not doing God's will, they are to blame for the unhappiness they bring upon the people.

Sickness and Disease

But what about all the suffering that comes from sickness and disease? Even persons who try to do good get sick, through no fault of their own. And an infant can get some illness and be maimed for life, or even die. Certainly it was no fault of the infant.

In regard to all such sickness, disease and pain, we must put the blame where

it belongs, on the rebellion of Adam and Eve. Note what Romans 5:12 says: "Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men." Also, Job 14:4 declares: "Who can produce someone clean out of someone unclean?"—Ps. 51:5; Luke 5:18-25.

If, as an example, certain human parents ignore the divine law and live immorally, and so contract venereal disease, whose fault is it if their children are born physically or mentally impaired? It is the fault of such "unclean" parents.

So, too, our first parents became "unclean," imperfect, prone to sickness, and finally death. They could only pass on to their offspring what they themselves had: imperfection, sickness and liability to death. That is why we all suffer from illness and disease today.

False Religion Shares Blame

The traditional religions have often attributed to God the calamities that man experiences. Many of earth's population are taught that poverty, filth and ignorance are God's will for them. Religious tradition tells hundreds of millions in some countries that a cow is more sacred than a man, and that, even though the man may be starving, the cow cannot be used for food. But God's Word says it can. (Gen. 9:3; 1 Cor. 10:25) Thus, religions that are not based on God's Word increase man's difficulties, while, at the same time, saying that such difficulties are the will of God.

Other millions learn from different systems of religious tradition that it is God's will for a few political and religious rulers to dominate, while the rest of the population must render them unquestioned obedience, even if it means sacrificing their lives in unrighteous warfare. The people attribute the resulting carnage to

God, since their religion teaches them it is God's will for them to kill. But God's Word does not so teach.—Acts 5:27-29; Jer. 2:34.

No, God is not to blame for the hurt and injustice resulting from man's own wrongdoing, even if it is religious, even if it is claimed that this is from God. Religious systems instituted fiendish inquisitions during the "dark ages," causing the torture of men and women. But where does God authorize such horrible crimes? Nowhere! For example, in regard to the pagan practice in ancient Israel of burning children to false gods, Jehovah stated: "They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, in order to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, *a thing that I had not commanded and that had not come up into my heart.*" When God condemns what men do, he can hardly be charged with the blame for it.—Jer. 7:31.

Wrongs committed in the name of religion are especially disgusting to God. As Jesus said to the religious leaders in his day: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you resemble whitewashed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men's bones and of every sort of uncleanness. In that way you also, outwardly indeed, appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."—Matt. 23:27, 28.

The lawless deeds of false religion cannot be blamed on God, for he does not sanction religious hypocrisy and cruelty. The mere fact that a religious movement claims a long history of hundreds of years should not be allowed to blind us to the truth. If it is operating contrary to the clearly expressed will of God in his Word, then the hurt they cause is strictly of their own making.

Proper Attitude

It is not the course of wisdom for innocent victims of wicked deeds to blame God instead of those guilty. There are thousands of men and women who desire to do good and who share the troubles produced by wicked men, but who patiently wait upon God for the realization of all the good promises he has made. They know that God has tolerated wickedness and wicked people for a reason, but that when his time limit is up the wicked ones will be called to account. The patient, righteously disposed ones will then benefit. The Bible counsels: "Do not show yourself heated up because of the evil-doers . . . Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."—Ps. 37:1, 34.

How refreshing it is to know that throughout the centuries, and especially today, there are men and women who, despite their endurance of trouble and oppression, do not blame God! Instead, they declare as did the apostle Paul: "What shall we say, then? Is there injustice with God? Never may that become so!"—Rom. 9:14.

This attitude is the right one. We must not accuse God of acts of which he is not guilty. It is not God who passed imperfection on to us, but our first human parents. So, too, when men today, of their own free will, do wrong, they are to blame, not God.

However, it was previously stated that the blame for wickedness lies in two places. We have discussed the responsibility of man for his own freewill acts of wrongdoing. But who else is responsible for the wickedness that has prevailed on earth for so long?

Who IS PRINCIPALLY RESPONSIBLE



WHEN criminals operate behind a well-planned organizational setup, with numerous fronts that appear to be quite law-abiding, it is difficult for the man in the street to penetrate the deception or believe that the unseen master schemers even exist.

The principal wicked ones whose criminal actions and policies have helped bring untold miseries upon the human family also work behind the scenes. But we do not have to be in ignorance of them, because God has exposed their workings so that all who desire can know of them for their own information and protection.

Origin of the Principal Wicked One

God helps us to identify the principal wicked one, the cunning, behind-the-scenes criminal responsible for Eve's violating God's clearly stated law. Who was this tempter of Adam's wife Eve? Who induced her to rebel against her righteous Creator? Who started wickedness in the universe?

The one mainly responsible for wickedness is an invisible wicked one. His invisibility should not make you doubt his

existence. The very existence of germs as disease-causing factors was once doubted. Though beyond the range of the naked eye, time and research established their existence. Today the precise cause of cancer is still unknown, but scientists do not simply shrug their shoulders and say, "Cancer is caused by cancer." They are certain that a causative factor exists. So, too, wickedness is not just caused by wickedness. It had a start, and its spread and plaguelike proportions also indicate an active infecting source.

When did this invisible one first make himself evident? In the third chapter of Genesis we read of a serpent's speaking to the first woman Eve, and speaking in direct opposition to Jehovah God. God had said that disobedience to his laws would mean death. Now the serpent said the opposite: "You positively will not die." In fact, the serpent went on to tell Eve: "Your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God." Eve believed this wicked, lying speech and disobeyed God. Then she induced her husband to join her in rebellion.—Gen. 3:4, 5.

But who actually instilled the idea of rebellion in the mind of Eve? Was it a mere reptile, a snake that has no speech organs? No, there must have been someone behind the serpent making it appear as if the snake were talking. We know that a skilled ventriloquist can make it appear as if an animal or even a dummy is talking, when this is not the case at all. How much more could a superhuman invisible intelligent creature do so! The Bible, at Revelation 12:9, identifies that powerful spirit creature, speaking of him as "the original serpent." He is clearly identified as being Satan the Devil!

Here, then, is man's hated enemy and the one mainly responsible for all wickedness throughout the earth today!

Succumbed to Wrong Desire

Obviously, the God 'whose activity is perfect' would not deliberately create a wicked one. (Deut. 32:4) He would not create intelligent creatures with whom he could not associate. Such would be contrary to reason.—Ps. 5:4-6; 15:1, 2.

When God created that invisible spirit, as he did many others, that creature was perfect. He was complete, without defect as a spirit creation, though, like Adam, not infallible. This particular creature apparently was interested in Adam and Eve and the Bible shows that he got in touch with them.—Job 38:7; Gen. 3:1-15.

But how could a perfect creature of high intelligence turn to wickedness, since that spirit creature had no tempter, as did the woman Eve? The Bible answers that it was by the entertaining of a wrong idea. There is nothing wrong in itself with seeing the possibilities in a certain situation. For example, a person in someone else's home may see a watch lying on a table. The possibility of his picking that watch up and putting it in his pocket is evident, but he may not even consider it; or, if the idea does suggest itself, he may immediately dismiss it. But if he retains the idea and allows it to develop and grow, then the process of wrongdoing has been initiated and he may well commit the act of wickedness it suggests.

So, too, with the perfect spirit creature. The possibility of using the human pair for his own purpose rather than that indicated by God was there, and he not only considered it but also failed to dismiss it from his mind, and it led to sin.—Jas. 1:14, 15; 1 Tim. 3:6.

The fact that God granted a generous measure of intellectual freedom does not make him responsible for everything a creature does. Does any creature need to view freedom as a license to do wrong? Do you feel that it entitles you to rob

or to kill your neighbor, or vice versa? Freedom is a wonderful thing, but it should not be perverted. The Bible says: "Be as free people, and yet holding your freedom, not as a blind for moral badness, but as slaves of God."—1 Pet. 2:16.

The Ones Principally Responsible

Responsibility for world wickedness, then, rests primarily with Satan the Devil. He is the one to blame, as the Bible explicitly shows at 1 John 5:19: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." But the Devil is not the only invisible wicked one. The Holy Scriptures also make clear that Christians "have a fight, not against blood and flesh, but against . . . the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." (Eph. 6:12) So other wicked spirits, demons, are also responsible for oppressive wickedness.—Rev. 12:9.

But why did angels of God turn themselves into demons? Again it was a matter of wrong desire. The Bible informs us that a minority of angels left their assigned duties due to improper desire and then came under the leadership of their fellow rebel, the Devil. (Gen. 6:2; 2 Pet. 2:4, 5; Jude 6) Together, they have caused all manner of woes for men, women and children. What oppression has come upon mankind because of the Devil and his demons! The Bible tells us, for instance, that Jesus Christ "went through the land doing good and healing all those oppressed by the Devil." (Acts 10:38) Yes, the Devil was the one mainly responsible for their unhappy plight. So, too, dishonesty, cheating, deception, lying and terrible crimes of violence have been perpetrated and wars instigated throughout the earth because of the Devil and demons! (John 8:44; Heb. 2:14) They are the ones principally responsible for wickedness on earth!

Responsibility for Present Woes

The Bible foretold that there would be a vast increase in every kind of crime in our day. And the reason for this is shown clearly by the Bible to be that Satan and his demons have been cast right down to the vicinity of the earth: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." —Rev. 12:12.

Other prophecies concerning the time in which we live, such as at Second Timothy chapter 3, and Matthew chapter 24, tell of the vast wickedness we now see on every hand. This has come about because demon-inspired men have permitted their minds to be led into the course of wrongdoing. Knowing that they have "a short period of time," the great criminal Satan and his demon hordes are viciously trying to drag down with them as many humans as they can overreach and coerce into rebelling against God.

A principal means of doing this on a mass scale is wicked governments that have the power to hurt millions at a time. In fact, the Holy Bible fittingly speaks of human governments under the symbol of injurious and destructive wild beasts. (Dan. 8:1-8, 20-25) As noted in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation, Satan himself has been the one who has empowered these ruling authorities. He is the "god of this system of things." (2 Cor. 4:4) He it is who has instigated their oppressive rule, their horrible wars, and their persecutions of God-fearing persons. He has caused these governments to take to themselves rights and powers that only God can safely exercise. He has promoted all the blasphemies against God that those national sovereignties have uttered. Thus, when we see nations at one another's throats today, it is not because God is their ruler. It is because they are part

of Satan's organization.—Luke 4:5-8.

So the terrible woes of wickedness we see at the present time are not from Almighty God. They are mainly caused by mankind's great enemies, Satan the Devil and his hordes of demon angels.

Influence over Man Not Unlimited

While the self-made Satan the Devil induced Adam and Eve to join in his wicked rebellion against God's authority, we must remember that he could not compel them to do wrong. Adam and Eve were not so weak and incompetent that they were unable to resist. The Bible says: "Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you." Our first parents were completely capable of telling this lying spirit creature that they would not go along with him. Centuries later the perfect man Jesus proved that this could be done, for he said to Satan: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'"—Jas. 4:7; Matt. 4:10.

Had Adam and Eve said to Satan what Jesus did, the human family would not find itself plagued with such wickedness today. Hence, while Satan was the chief culprit, responsible for the eventual death of Adam and Eve, they were also responsible, for they could have turned aside his wrong suggestions. But they did not. What they did caused all their offspring, including us, to inherit imperfection, which brought with it sickness and death.—Heb. 2:14.

Yes, Satan and his demons are the ones principally responsible for past and present wickedness. But the fact that all this chaos has gone on for such a long time causes thinking persons to wonder why. Why has God permitted wickedness *for so long*? Why has it gone on for nearly 6,000 years now?

Why

HAS WICKEDNESS BEEN PERMITTED

FOR So Long?

ALMOST six thousand years of human history have produced a long record of suffering, tears and death. The sympathetic mind cannot but feel for the tormented generations of the past, as well as for our own.

Why has all this been permitted for so long? God's Word gives the definite and satisfying answers. It tells us of the various issues involved that needed settling. It shows us, too, that in God's unsurpassed wisdom he is following a course that will work out for the greatest good to all creation.

Are you sincerely interested in learning why God has permitted wickedness for so long? Then appreciate that there are a number of interrelated reasons, and that only a full explanation truly satisfies. If your own reputation were at stake, would you feel that others were fair if they demanded an explanation but then walked away almost as soon as you started to talk? Of course not! So, then, let's consider carefully what the Bible says about why God has permitted wickedness for so long.—Prov. 18:13.

Not an Issue of Superior Force

When rebellion broke out in Eden, God did not delay in taking action. The third chapter of Genesis shows that God promptly called to account all who were involved and passed sentence on them in harmony with his righteous law. (Gen. 3:8-19) However, God did not immediately carry out the death penalty against Adam and

Eve, but, with a view to the future blessing of their then-unborn offspring, allowed them to produce children. (Gen. 22:18; Gal. 3:8) How grateful we should be that he did so!

In passing judgment on that rebel spirit creature who had made a Devil out of himself by lying against God, Jehovah stated in symbolic language his purpose for the future. (Gen. 3:15) The Devil would not be immediately destroyed but would be allowed to exist for a time period that God himself determined, in order to settle for all time the issues that had been raised there in Eden.

Had the issue been simply one of superior power, it could have been settled by a fight to the finish right then. But there is no evidence that Satan challenged God's strength. Rather, the account in Genesis shows that it was a moral issue. He disputed God's truthfulness, and, as revealed later in the Bible, he called into question the integrity of all God's creatures toward God's universal sovereignty. (Gen. 3:1-5; Job 1:7-12) The settling of such an issue in a satisfying way would require time.

A Set Time

As we look back on the history of God's dealings with mankind revealed in the Bible, it is clear that, though God did not

in Eden tell those who were in rebellion against him how long he would tolerate wickedness, he himself set a time limit. Centuries later he indicated that to his prophet Daniel in a message through one of His holy angels. At that time, long before the start of our Common Era, he said concerning the end of this wicked system: "The end is yet for the time appointed." —Dan. 11:27.

Nearly six thousand years from Adam's rebellion until our day may seem like an extremely long period of time when viewed from the standpoint of humans who live only about seventy years. But, remember, it is God who set the time, so it is his viewpoint that counts. Concerning his concept of time, the Bible tells us at Psalm 90:4: "A thousand years are in your eyes but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch during the night." A year is a long time to a child who has lived only five years, but to a man who is sixty it is comparatively short. Likewise, to God, who lives for eternity, a thousand years is like a day! From his standpoint, his toleration of wickedness has not yet lasted six full days.

Certainly that has been no injustice to us. It is because of God's long-suffering that we have had opportunity to live at all, because all of us are descendants of Adam. And even under imperfect conditions life is cherished; yes, even in sickness we cling to it. But the fact that God did not cut short his long-suffering at some earlier time, but has allowed it to continue until our day, affords opportunity for more than a brief existence for us under imperfect conditions.

To help us appreciate this, the apostle Peter wrote: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repen-

tance. Furthermore, consider the patience of our Lord as salvation." (2 Pet. 3:9, 15) So it becomes evident that God's long-suffering has worked for our blessing, not our harm. Something else has been accomplished, too, and it is likewise for our benefit.

Would the Way of Rebellion Produce Good Results?

During the past six thousand years the Devil and men alienated from God have had full opportunity to work out their wicked schemes. By his course of action Satan set himself up as a rival ruler, challenging God's rulership. By inducing men to serve him, he has become their ruler and their god. For that reason he is called in the Bible "the ruler of this world" and "the god of this system of things." (John 12:31; 2 Cor. 4:4) It is not just a few particularly wicked persons who come under his control; rather, the Bible says that "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) Also, by inducing other angels to follow his rebellious course he became "ruler of the demons."—Matt. 9:34.

Would this way of rebellion prove successful? Would rulership that endeavored to ignore God ever bring lasting benefits to anyone? True, God could have wiped out the rebellion at its start, but that would not have satisfactorily settled matters. Therefore, God has permitted a full measure of time for Satan to build up his organization, and for men to arrive at their peak of military might, material prosperity and scientific achievement. In this way God has enabled all intelligent creation to see the consequences of rebellion.

What is the result? What has nearly six thousand years of rule by the Devil and men alienated from God shown? Has the

course of rebellion against God brought lasting happiness?

When the honest person ponders past history and the present tragic state of affairs in the world, he must realize how devoid of genuine progress the record is. All kinds of government have been tried, but still man lacks security and enduring happiness. Can one speak of true progress when the arrow has been replaced by the atomic bomb, and when the world now staggers on the brink of another global war? What kind of progress is it when men send rockets to the moon but cannot live together in peace on earth? What good is it for man to build homes equipped with every convenience, only to have a family torn apart by divorce and delinquency? Are riots in the streets, destruction of property and life, and widespread lawlessness, something to be proud of? Not at all! But they are the fruitage of rule that endeavors to ignore God.

Surely God's long permission of rebellion and its resulting wickedness prove to all reasonable men that satisfactory rule of earth's affairs is impossible apart from God. The long time that has elapsed has proved rebellious men and angels a dismal failure, that Satan has no right to rule anywhere, and that men surely were not created with the ability to direct their affairs apart from God. Now, with the record of six thousand years of failure, never can it be said that the Creator did not allow sufficient time for rebels to experiment. Never can anyone rightfully claim: 'They did not get a chance.' Nor can anyone say: 'If only they had had more time.' The allotted time has been ample to prove their failure. The way of rebellion has proved to be an absolute disaster! But God will not allow them to wreck this earth. Instead, for the benefit of decent people, he will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Rev. 11:18.

Legal Precedent Established

In thus allowing the Devil and rebellious men time to carry their schemes to their limit, God has taken a long-range view of matters. Should the situation ever arise at any future time that any free moral agent abuses his freedom of choice and calls into question God's way of doing things, would it be necessary for God to grant him time to make good his theories or charges? Would God allow wickedness to exist again for thousands of additional years? Absolutely not!

Having on this occasion allowed rebels to continue for their allotted time of six thousand years, God will have established a legal precedent that can be applied anywhere in the universe and throughout all eternity. It will already have been amply proved that nothing that is out of harmony with Jehovah God can prosper. God will then be fully justified before all intelligent creatures in swiftly crushing any rebel. "The wicked ones he will annihilate."—Ps. 145:20; Rom. 3:4.

Satan Proved a Liar

In the days of the Oriental patriarch Job, about the sixteenth century B.C.E., it was made unmistakably clear that man's integrity toward God was at issue, in addition to the matter of rulership. Jehovah said that there was no one like Job in the earth, yet the Devil sneered: "Is it for nothing that Job has feared God? Have not you yourself put up a hedge about him and about his house and about everything that he has all around? The work of his hands you have blessed, and his livestock itself has spread abroad in the earth. But, for a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch everything he has and see whether he will not curse you to your very face." (Job 1:6-12) Yes, Satan challenged that he could turn all men away from God, even the one of whom

God would say "there is no one like him in the earth."

Already Satan had been trying to prove his boast since Eden. Adam failed God, but men of faith such as Abel, Enoch and Noah proved faithful to God. They served God out of love, not for material gain. Job too declared: "Until I expire I shall not take away my integrity." (Job 27:5) Yet Satan, his mind warped by proud ambition, refused to slow down in his insane course. When the perfect man Jesus was on earth, Satan endeavored to bribe him to commit just one act that would be a breach of integrity to God. (Matt. 4:9-11) Even when slapped around by soldier guards and then nailed to a stake to die, Jesus held fast. The Devil used his agents to put Jesus to death, but he could not induce him to break his integrity to God. (Phil. 2:8) His maintaining integrity as a perfect human proved that Adam could have done it too.

Satan has continued to bring pressure on those who are followers of Christ. (Luke 22:31) Clear on down to our day he has 'waged war' with those "who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus." (Rev. 12:17) These have been joined by "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," who, though living at a time of "great tribulation," give heartfelt thanks and praise to Jehovah God and to his Son. (Rev. 7:9, 10, 14) They appreciate the moral issue at stake and even under the most adverse circumstances are glad to have a part in contributing to the overwhelming evidence that God's way is right, that his creatures endowed with free moral agency are able to maintain integrity to him, and that they do so out of love.

God's Name and Power Proclaimed

Because of his great love for mankind, God will bring an end to wickedness. At his set time, he will end the rebellion of man and the Devil. The display of power he will unleash, and the good it will accomplish, will be the talk of ages to come!

On a universal scale it will happen as it did in ancient Egypt when God told a haughty ruler: "For this cause I have kept you in existence, for the sake of showing you my power and in order to have my name declared in all the earth." (Ex. 9:16) When God smashed the proud Egyptians and all their military might, the news of it spread far and wide. Years later, a person living in distant Jericho said: "We have heard how Jehovah dried up the waters of the Red Sea from before you when you came out of Egypt, . . . Jehovah your God is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." —Josh. 2:9-11.

Throughout the universe will that be said when God crushes wickedness. For all eternity men and angels will recount what God did to rid the universe of wickedness and how he brought blessings to all who love and serve him. His name will be proclaimed throughout heaven and earth when he settles accounts with Satan, his demons, and wicked people on earth. Then "they will have to know that [he is] Jehovah." —Ezek. 38:23.

Proved for all time will be the fact that the way of rebellion against God does not work for the good of anyone. Satan will be proved to be the most monstrous liar of all time, and no god to follow. A legal precedent will have been established once and for all time for the benefit of men and angels.

But when will God thus act to wipe out wickedness? How much longer will it be?

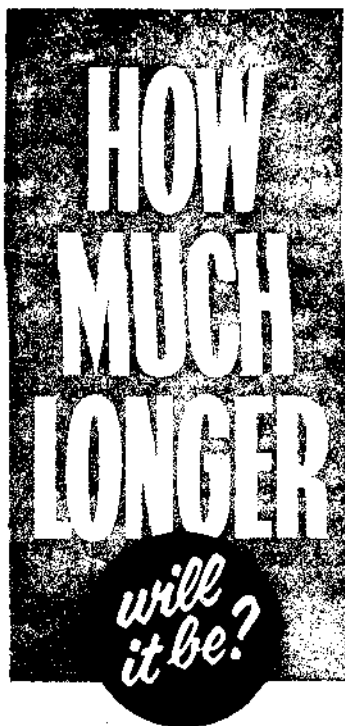
ALL honest-hearted men and women everywhere keenly desire to know when God will bring an end to wickedness. How much longer will it be?

The disciples of Jesus Christ were keenly interested in this too. They pointedly asked Jesus: "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" Since his second presence was to be invisible, heavenly, Jesus gave them visible signs that would combine to mark the period of the "time of the end," known also as the "last days." Persons living when these events occurred could know that they were living in the "last days." —Matt. 24:3; Dan. 11:40; 2 Tim. 3:1.

However, what Jesus prophesied did not occur in his day on earth, or even for hundreds of years afterward, nor did the end come. But Jesus realized that many centuries would pass before he would come again, this time in Kingdom power, and bring an end to wickedness. During all this time he knew that men would fight many wars. That is why, before giving the visible evidences that would mark his second presence, he explained: "You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not terrified. For these things must take place, but the end is not yet." Certainly such wars did occur during the nineteen hundred years down to our day. —Matt. 24:6.

"Time of the End" Begins

Next, Jesus began enumerating the



world-shaking events that would mark his invisible second presence and the fact that mankind had entered the "time of the end." Have we in this generation seen what Jesus said to look for? Yes, we have!

First, Jesus said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom." Has this prophecy seen fulfillment? By all means! In our generation the world has been involved in a war that saw the mobilizing of entire nations and kingdoms in such a way that it stood out as different from any preceding war. In recognition of the fact that the war of 1914-1918 was different from any previous one in

human history, historians called it The Great War or The World War. It was the first war of its kind in history.—Matt. 24:7, 8.

Indicating the tremendous change that the first world war made in human history, the *New York Times Magazine* of August 1, 1954, said: "The first war . . . closed a long era of general peace and began a new age of violence in which the second war is simply an episode. Since 1914 the world has had a new character . . . Thus the first World War marks a turning point in modern history." This generation alone has experienced the fulfillment of this part of the sign Jesus gave.

Jesus included other features to look for, too, saying: "There will be great earthquakes, and in one place after another pestilences and food shortages." (Luke 21:11) How true has this description of events been since 1914! What an increase

we have experienced in these calamities!

Major earthquakes have become regular occurrences. On March 6, 1960, the *New York Times* reported: "Ten or more major earthquakes shake the earth every year. The smallest of them releases about a thousand times more energy than an atomic bomb of the type that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki." Peru, Morocco, Algeria, Japan, Chile, Iran, Colombia, Libya, Yugoslavia, India, Alaska and numerous other places have suffered severely from earthquakes in just the past few years.

And what about pestilences? Following World War I the Spanish influenza alone took about 20,000,000 lives. And of food shortages a report in *Look* magazine of June 11, 1946, observed: "A fourth of the world is starving today. Tomorrow will even be worse. Famine over most of the world now is more terrible than most of us can imagine. . . . There are now more people hunting desperately for food than at any other time in history." And, because of the population explosion that has taken place since 1946, the Director General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization reported in 1964 that half of the world's population was then suffering from hunger or malnutrition. Since then the situation has not improved.

All the other features of the sign Jesus gave have also found fulfillment since 1914. For a certainty then, 1914 marked the beginning of the last days! This beginning coincided with Satan's ouster from heaven by the enthroned King Jesus Christ. Speaking of this unparalleled time of distress, the Bible says: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." —Rev. 12:12.

We are in this "short period" of woe

right now! Satan, knowing his time is limited, turns his fury upon all. In every field of endeavor he influences leaders and common man alike to acts of selfishness and violence, and all the world is in confusion. Anyone who reads a newspaper or listens to the news can see the fulfillment of Bible prophecy in our day. Of this time the Bible foretold: "In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power; . . . wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse." —2 Tim. 3:1-13.

When? This Generation!

So it was to our generation that Jesus referred when he added the key thought: "This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matt. 24:34) The generation that saw the beginning of woes in 1914 would also see the end of Satan and his entire wicked system of things. Some who were alive then would still be alive when "the end" comes.

It is to be carefully noted that the youngest of those who saw with understanding the developing sign of the end of this system of things from its start in 1914 are now well over sixty years of age! In fact, the greater part of the adult generation that experienced the start of the "last days" has already passed away in death. The generation to which they belonged is now well along toward its complete passing away.

The time left, then, is definitely limited, and it is very short. Note, too, that Jesus pointedly said "this generation *will by no means* pass away until all these things occur." So we should not look for the passing away of all members of that generation. The end of this wicked system of things will come before all members could pass away.

"Times of the Nations"

Bible chronology also verifies that the "last days" began in 1914. One prophecy based on chronology has to do with what Jesus mentioned when he stated that "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled." (Luke 21:24) What Jesus referred to was a definite period of time when God would have no representative government in the earth. The last such was ancient Israel, with its capital in Jerusalem.

In the year 607 B.C.E. Jerusalem was trampled on by the Babylonians. Daniel 4:16 notes that "seven times" would pass. At the end of those "times" God would set up his heavenly government, his Kingdom, under Christ "in the midst of [his] enemies."—Ps. 110:2.

Those "seven times," according to the Bible timetable, would be a period of 2,520 years, beginning its count from 607 B.C.E. This reckoning of time brings us to the year 1914.* And that is no accident! It harmonizes completely with the visible sign Jesus gave, which we have seen fulfilled since 1914.

6,000 Years Completed in 1975

There is another chronological indication that we are rapidly nearing the closing time for this wicked system of things. It is the fact that shortly, according to reliable Bible chronology, 6,000 years of

human history will come to an end.

The Bible shows that when God began to shape the earth for human habitation, he worked for six "days," or time periods. From the indications in God's Word, each was apparently 7,000 years in length. Then, Genesis 2:2 states, Jehovah "proceeded to rest on the seventh day from all his work that he had made." This seventh day, God's rest day, has progressed nearly 6,000 years, and there is still the 1,000-year reign of Christ to go before its end. (Rev. 20:3, 7) This seventh 1,000-year period of human existence could well be likened to a great sabbath day, pictured by the sabbath day God commanded ancient Israel to keep after working for six days. (Ex. 20:8-10; 2 Pet. 3:8) After six thousand years of toil and bondage to sin, sickness, death and Satan, mankind is due to enjoy a rest and is in dire need of a rest. (Heb. 4:1-11) Hence, the fact that we are nearing the end of the first 6,000 years of man's existence is of great significance.

Does God's rest day parallel the time man has been on earth since his creation? Apparently so. From the most reliable investigations of Bible chronology, harmonizing with many accepted dates of secular history, we find that Adam was created in the autumn of the year 4026 B.C.E. Sometime in that same year Eve could well have been created, directly after which God's rest day commenced. In what year, then, would the first 6,000 years of man's existence and also the first 6,000 years of God's rest day come to an end? The year 1975.* This is worthy of notice, particularly in view of the fact that the "last days" began in 1914, and that the physical facts of our day in fulfillment of prophecy mark this as the last generation of this wicked world. So we can expect

* For details, see "Your Will Be Done on Earth," Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, pages 94-103.

* See the book *Life Everlasting—in Freedom of the Sons of God*, Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, pages 29-35.

the immediate future to be filled with thrilling events for those who rest their faith in God and his promises. It means that within relatively few years we will witness the fulfillment of the remaining prophecies that have to do with the "time of the end."

Which prophecies are yet to be fulfilled? According to the Bible book of Daniel, the "king of the north"

(the ruling factors of totalitarianism, particularly world communism) and the "king of the south" (the ruling factors of democracy, particu-

larly the Anglo-American combine) are to climax their struggle for world domination, resulting in considerable agitation and substantial loss, particularly for the "king of the south." (Dan. 11:40-43) The Bible also foretells that God's servants will be the focus of a final all-out attack by Satan and his entire organization of demons and earthlings. (Ezek. 38:1-16) Additionally, that great empire of false religion, called in the Bible "Babylon the great," is to experience God's adverse judgment when it is ripped to pieces. (Rev. 18:2, 8) After that the other elements of Satan's system will go down in destruction, his commercial and political systems, both of which have contributed heavily toward the suffering of mankind. Finally, Satan and his demons will be abyssed.—Rev. 19:19-21; 16:16; 20:1-3.

End Near

What cataclysmic times are fast approaching! A climax in man's history is at the door! How vital, then, for each one who loves life to take note of these evidences of history that point to the near end of this wicked system!

Of course, as to the precise day and hour of the end, Jesus noted that knowledge of this was in the province of his heavenly Father alone. (Matt. 24:36) But when a brief period of years at the most separates us from the great windup of this old system, the vital thing is to stay spiritually awake.—Luke 21:34-36.

So how much longer will it be? The

answer is: 'Not long, for the end of wickedness is near.' Not much longer will Jehovah God tolerate the wicked system of things that has continually reproached

his name and often blamed him for its failures. Not much longer will he permit false religious systems and godless politicians to deceive the people and run things to suit their selfish inclinations. Not much longer will the Almighty permit Satan and his demons to stay active at the earth.

To escape the threshing that God will inflict upon this wicked system of things it is vital that we quickly heed his word of warning given through the prophet Zephaniah: "Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah's anger." (Zeph. 2:3) And as we do so let us put our trust and confidence in our Great Creator, for he is not merely the Thrower Down of enemies. He is also the Builder Up of those who look to him for direction.

In fact, he has from ancient times been doing things on behalf of all those who would eventually receive the gift of life at his hands. He has been showing love for us long before we could ever begin to demonstrate love for him. Let us note what he has been doing in our behalf during the long period of wicked rule on earth.

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- What Remedy for a World Torn with Violence?
- The Battle Against Mind-twisting LSD.
- When Speech Becomes Pleasurable.
- Earth's Giant Seesaw—the Monsoon.

THE rule of rebellious men and demons has been dragging the human family steadily downward these many centuries. On the other hand, Jehovah has been taking positive steps to uplift and save mankind!

Our Creator has not callously ignored the sufferings of honest-hearted persons. Rather, during all the centuries of wickedness, he has been making loving provisions to release humans from the grip of sin and death.

The Ransom

As a result of his rebellion, Adam lost the right to perfect life and eventually died. His descendants inherited sin and death. But God has provided a way to restore life to deserving ones of Adam's offspring, while at the same time upholding His own law.

How? By a ransom, by having a human creature with the right to perfect life surrender it so that his right could be applied on behalf of others. This would proceed in harmony with a legal principle that God himself later embodied in the Mosaic law—"life for life." This would provide relief, not for the willful sinner Adam, but for his offspring, who, through no choice of their own, suffered the effects of his wrong.—Deut. 19:21, *Rev. Stan. Ver.*

But is this not an awkward, roundabout way of going about it? Could not God merely have decreed to free Adam's offspring from the effects of Adam's sin? No, not without going contrary to his own laws. And nothing causes greater disrespect for law and contributes more to a breakdown of law observance than for high officials to sidestep the law. The high-



er the official, the greater the damage. So the highest official, Jehovah, set the example for all creation by upholding his law. By providing a ransom, God acknowledges the claims of his own justice in sentencing Adam to death, and the laws of inheritance by which we inherit sin as Adam's offspring. At the same time he makes provision for relieving deserving ones.

Since the life that Adam lost was a perfect one, only a perfect human could provide the ransom. But no natural offspring of Adam could do so, for all were born imperfect.—Ps. 49:7.

Shortly after man's rebellion, God began giving clues regarding the one he would use to free mankind from sin and death. Through the inspired prophets he revealed much information about this coming Ransomer. Then, nineteen centuries ago, God transferred the life of his only-begotten spirit Son to the womb of a Jewish virgin. God's Son was thus born without Adam's imperfection.

When he reached maturity, this Son of God, Jesus Christ, maintained integrity to his Father under the severest test that Satan could bring upon him, death upon a torture stake. He willingly laid down his right to the perfect human life he had as one who kept all of God's laws. Jesus could then offer the value of that life to God to redeem what Adam lost—life, perfect human life. Jesus thus "gave himself a corresponding ransom for all."—1 Tim. 2:6.

What a wonderful thing God has done for man! He offered his dearest creation so that humans could receive everlasting

life! As the Bible puts it: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

The Kingdom

In addition to providing a ransom, God has been making preparations for a heavenly government that will carry out his purpose to make earth a paradise home for righteous people. Knowing that man was not made to govern independently from him, God began developing this government to administer man's affairs in righteousness.

Jehovah inspired the recording of many prophecies about the ruler of that government, and what he would accomplish. When Jesus Christ came to earth he fulfilled all the many prophecies about that king-to-be. Hence, he proved to be, not only the Ransomer, but also the future ruler in the heavenly government over mankind. And what ruler ever accomplished in a lifetime as much good as Jesus did in his brief ministry? He even healed the sick and raised the dead. No wonder God-fearing persons could look forward to his heavenly rule over mankind!

A kingdom, or government, also has administrators. Will any others share with Jesus in ruling over earth? Yes. The evening before his death Jesus promised his close earthly associates: "I am coming again and will receive you home to myself." Those who join Jesus in heaven become with him "a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will rule as kings over the earth." Together with Jesus, this limited number make up the heavenly government that will bring eternal blessings to humankind.—John 14:2, 3; Rev. 5:10; 14:1-3; 20:6.

So down through the ages, Jehovah God has laid all the necessary groundwork for

the everlasting happiness of the human family. And now, in our day, he has taken a direct hand in earth's affairs!

Kingdom Established in Heaven

All the evidence in fulfillment of Bible prophecy indicates that God's heavenly kingdom under Christ began to rule in 1914, coinciding with the beginning of the "time of the end." The first act of the Kingdom was to cast Satan and his demons out of heaven down to the vicinity of the earth.—Ps. 110:1, 2; Rev. 12:7-12.

Since that time God has caused to be carried out a worldwide preaching work in fulfillment of the prophecy at Matthew 24:14. As a result, many thousands of persons from all nations are being liberated from bondage to Satan's organization, particularly the false religious part.

These persons acknowledge themselves loyal subjects of the heavenly kingdom and are demonstrating the effectiveness of that government. Under its direction they have learned to become law-abiding, moral and upright, persons of integrity. They no longer war against one another. The rioting, hatred, crime and hypocrisy that disrupt this world have ceased to be problems within the ranks of the more than one million witnesses of Jehovah, subjects of God's now-ruling heavenly government.—Isa. 2:4.

The United Nations, with its more than a hundred member nations, has not been able to accomplish what God's kingdom has accomplished among its subjects in nearly two hundred lands today! Why is this so? Because, "unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it."—Ps. 127:1.

Yes, God's government is the only right way, and it is working marvelously now! But what God has done so far is only the beginning. Much more will come shortly!

WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR MAN in Paradise



HOW different will be the future, when God brings an end to wickedness! Instead of sorrow, sickness and death, there will be happiness, vibrant health and everlasting life! The nightmare of the past will be gone forever. The joy at that time will far outweigh all the agony man has ever experienced. All this God will do for man in paradise. As Psalm 145:16 says: "You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing."

Could anyone else make such a promise and then keep it? Be assured that when God promises such things he fulfills them for a certainty. Without fail, earth will be transformed into a paradise of pleasure for man's eternal delight!—Isa. 55:11.

The Wicked Removed

All this will be made possible by the removal of the wicked at the end of this system of things. No more will there be murder, rape and robbery, or any other

crime. Think of it! No more wickedness! No more will righteously disposed persons have to suffer at the hands of wicked ones. As Proverbs 10:30 promises: "As for the righteous one, to time indefinite he will not be caused to stagger; but as for the wicked ones, they will not keep residing on the earth."

With wicked humans and wicked demons gone, righteousness will prevail earth-wide. Under the benevolent administration of God's kingdom, earth's inhabitants will no more learn what is bad. On the contrary, "righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn."—Isa. 26:9; Acts 17:31.

Not only will those promoting wickedness be removed but there will also be a rolling back of all the accompanying effects and the resultant evils of the original rebellion and its introduction of wickedness.

Health Restored

Yes, God will also eliminate the great unhappiness brought to humans by poor health. How many lives have been taken by cancer, heart trouble and other diseases! Thousands, yes, millions of others have suffered by being crippled, blind or deaf. Even if you enjoy a measure of health, the distressing reality in this system is that as you grow old, your eyes dim, your teeth decay, your hearing dulls, your skin wrinkles, your internal organs break down, until finally death claims another victim.

However, these distressing things that we inherited from our first parents will soon be a thing of the past! How can we

be sure? Do you remember what Jesus Christ demonstrated regarding health while he was on earth? The Bible relates: "Great crowds approached him, having *along with them people that were lame, maimed, blind, dumb, and many otherwise, and they fairly threw them at his feet, and he cured them*; so that the crowd felt amazement as they saw the dumb speaking and the lame walking and the blind seeing."—Matt. 15:30, 31.

Imagine the overwhelming happiness that will come in God's new order as all human ills are eliminated, not just in one small area, but earth-wide! The Creator's promise is: "No resident will say: 'I am sick.'" "At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness."—Isa. 33:24; 35:5, 6.

Will it not be thrilling to wake up each morning to a new day and realize that you are healthier than you were the day before? And will it not be gratifying for elderly persons to know that they will be more youthful as each twenty-four-hour period passes, until they gradually reach the perfection of body and mind that Adam and Eve originally enjoyed?

Persons who enjoy that kind of health and happiness will not want to die, for life then will be a real blessing. And they will not have to die! Why not? Because even death will be done away with, since mankind will no longer be in the grip of inherited sin. Jesus Christ "must rule as king until God has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing." We also read: "He will actually swallow up death forever." Thus will God's promises concerning everlasting life be realized, for we are told: "The gift God gives is everlasting life by

Christ Jesus our Lord."—1 Cor. 15:25, 26; Isa. 25:8; Rom. 6:23.

Summing up the benefits that will flow to the human family in paradise, the last book of the Bible says: "And [God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be any more. The former things have passed away."¹—Rev. 21:3, 4.

Bringing Back Dead Ones

But what of all those who are in the graves? What of your dear ones who have already died, such as a mother or father, perhaps even a young child?

Keep in mind that, while on earth, Jesus not only cured the sick and maimed, but also brought back dead persons from the sleep of death to demonstrate the wonderful power of resurrection God had given him. Perhaps you recall the occasion when Jesus came to the house of a man whose twelve-year-old daughter had died. Addressing himself to the dead girl, Jesus declared: "Maiden, I say to you, Get up!" What was the result? The Bible tells us: "And immediately the maiden rose and began walking." How did the people that saw this marvelous miracle react? "At once they were beside themselves with great ecstasy." They were overjoyed. Their happiness could hardly be contained!—Mark 5:41, 42.

In paradise Jesus will use this God-given power to raise the dead, because "there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) How great will be the joy earth-wide when group after group of dead persons comes back to join their loved ones! No longer will there be obituary columns to bring sadness. Instead, there may well be just the opposite: announcements of newly resurrected ones to bring joy to those who have loved them.

Perfect Peace

Peace in all areas of life will be realized. Wars will be a thing of the past, for divisive national interests will disappear. "They will not lift up sword, nation against nation, neither will they learn war any more." (Mic. 4:3) This may sound astonishing in view of the growing international crisis today, but note the Bible's promise: "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the wagons he burns in the fire."—Ps. 46:8, 9.

Peace will also be restored between man and beast. In this regard God declares: "For them I shall certainly conclude a covenant in that day in connection with the wild beast of the field and with the flying creature of the heavens and the creeping thing of the ground, and . . . I will make them lie down in security."—Hos. 2:18.

Just how great the restored peace between man and beast will be can be noted in this prophecy: "The wolf will actually reside for a while with the male lamb, and with the kid the leopard itself will lie down, and the calf and the maned young lion and the well-fed animal all together; and a mere little boy will be leader over them." Never again will these animals be a threat to man, as "even the lion will eat straw just like the bull."—Isa. 11:6-9.

Earth Transformed

And what of the earth itself? It will be transformed into a luxuriant paradise. That is why Jesus could promise the evildoer that was executed with him: "You will be with me in Paradise."—Luke 23:43.

Under the direction of God's kingdom,

earth will produce plenty of good things to eat, so that hunger will never again stalk millions. "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow." "The earth itself will certainly give its produce; God, our God, will bless us." "The tree of the field must give its fruitage, and the land itself will give its yield, and they will actually prove to be on their soil in security."—Ps. 72:16; 67:6; Ezek. 34:27.

No more will there be slums or overcrowded dwellings. Never again will people live in fear because their neighborhood is overrun with crime and rioting. "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating." "They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble."—Isa. 65:21, 22; Mic. 4:4.

All these things, and more, God will do for man in paradise. It is why the Bible can say: "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace. . . . The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Ps. 37:11, 29.

That is how God will more than compensate for the wickedness people have suffered during their lifetime, particularly the innocent. Throughout eternity God will shower down blessings on mankind, so that any hurt they have received in the past will fade to a dim memory, if they remember it at all.—Isa. 65:17.

Surely you want to live in that marvelous earthly paradise. But to live at that time and enjoy all those benefits, what must you do now?

WHAT *You should do* **NOW**

ARE you appreciative when someone gives you something of great value? Do you not try in some way to express that appreciation? Undoubtedly you do, for it is a natural response.

Really, when you stop to consider it, has anyone given us more than our loving Creator? Think of it! "God sent forth his only-begotten Son into the world that we might gain life through him." And what glorious prospects that has provided—an eternity of happiness in an earth-wide paradise! Truly, we have every reason to show God our appreciation, both in words and in deeds.—1 John 4:9.

But how? What can we give God in return for his goodness to us? As the Creator of heaven and earth, he owns everything, so there is no material thing we can give him. However, there is something we have that he will accept: our devotion, our love, our obedience. As free moral agents we can choose to give these to whomever we wish.—Ps. 50:10-15.

Take God's Side

In these "last days" you have a grand opportunity to show love for the God who has made so many provisions for your benefit. You can make God's heart glad by upholding his side of the issue regarding man's integrity. How? By being firm in applying Bible principles in your home and everywhere else, and doing it even when confronted with wicked deeds. By proving yourself unwavering in your devotion to Jehovah God and to his kingdom, rather than to the schemes of men for running the world. God's invitation is: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice,

that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." Satan, Jehovah's chief adversary, is the one taunting him. His endeavor is to break down the integrity of anyone who worships Jehovah. By your faithful course, share

in proving that Satan is a liar and that God is true.—Prov. 27:11.

When Satan tried to turn that ancient man of faith Job away from God, deluging him with troubles, how did he react? We read: "In all this Job did not sin with his lips." What a delight to see a man like that! Such a resister of the Devil brings pleasure to God's heart.—Job 2:10.

You can be like him. And if you are, what can you expect from God? Note what happened in Job's case after the matter of his integrity was settled: "As for Jehovah, he blessed the end of Job afterward more than his beginning." That can be your happy lot, too, if you choose to serve God and uphold his righteousness.—Job 42:12.

Take In Knowledge

In order to uphold God's side of matters and make his heart glad, you must first learn what he wants you to do. You cannot obey God if you do not know his requirements. Where will you get the knowledge to obey God and resist Satan and his wicked crowd? The answer is: "By keeping on guard according to [God's] word." (Ps. 119:9) Yes, it is God's Word, the Holy Bible, that provides the knowledge you need of his purposes and requirements.

However, having a Bible in your home, and taking in the knowledge it contains, are two different things. If you do not gain an accurate understanding of it and apply it, it will not affect your life for good. It is like having the most delicious and nutritious food in your refrigerator.

If you never eat it, it will do you no good whatsoever. In the same way, the Bible must be used, digested, to equip you to do the will of God.

True, study of the Bible requires time and effort. But so does anything worth while in life. And could there be anything more worth while than working toward everlasting life? Is there anything greater than doing the will of God and making his heart glad?

But do you find the Bible difficult to understand by yourself? Do not think it strange. God knows that assistance is required to understand the deeper things of his Word. The Bible itself tells us about a high court official who had difficulty understanding God's Word. A servant of God, Philip, noted him reading aloud from the Scriptures and asked him: "Do you actually know what you are reading?" The official answered: "Really, how could I ever do so, unless someone guided me?" He did not think it beneath his dignity to ask for help. You, too, will want to have his mental attitude.—Acts 8:30, 31.

Ask for assistance in learning the truths contained in the Bible. Ask Jehovah's witnesses to study the Bible with you free of charge. They will consider it a privilege.

Disassociate from Wicked System

Another thing you should do now to show your appreciation for God's loving provisions is to disassociate yourself from this wicked system of things. God's Word warns: "Do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." One way to avoid being a friend of the world is to "abstain from every form of wickedness." When confronted with wrongdoing, say as did the man of God who wrote: "Get away from me, you evildoers, that I may observe the

commandments of my God."—Jas. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:22; Ps. 119:115.

Disassociating yourself from this wicked system also means abandoning the false religions that are part of this world. The Bible sharply warns: "Get out of her [the world empire of false religion], my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues." Hence, you must analyze your religion to see if what it teaches and practices is in harmony with God's requirements. "Make sure of all things," the Bible urges. Do not assume that your religion must be right, for the Word of God clearly shows that most religions are wrong.—Rev. 18:4; 1 Thess. 5:21; Matt. 7:13, 14, 21-23.

Not only should you abandon false religion, but you will want to associate with those who practice true religion, with those who put Jehovah God first in their lives and prove it by being his witnesses. This will work for your upbuilding and protection, particularly as the end draws near. It is "in the congregation of loyal ones" that you will be able to do as Psalm 111:1 declares: "I shall laud Jehovah with all my heart in the intimate group of upright ones and the assembly."—Ps. 149:1; Heb. 10:25.

Act Now!

This wicked system is fast approaching its end. That is why it is urgent for you to learn God's will and then do it, for Jehovah "is guarding the souls of his loyal ones; out of the hand of the wicked ones he delivers them."—Ps. 97:10.

Do not put off lining yourself up on God's side. Act now, for his day for executing the wicked is near. Do not let it catch you unprepared! Instead, let your attitude be like that of the psalmist when he said: "Make me understand, that I may keep living."—Ps. 119:144.



Why, Then, Does God Permit Wickedness?

IT CANNOT be avoided. No matter where you may look, wickedness exists, and people are suffering and dying. Throughout the ages thinking persons have wondered why this is so. How did wickedness get started? Why has God permitted it to continue for so long? Will he tolerate wickedness indefinitely? Or will he end it soon? It is likely that you have asked these very questions.

To understand how wickedness began, it is vital to know how man was created. He was not made a robot, without freedom of choice, but was given the grand gift of free moral agency.—Josh. 24:15.

But was not the first man made perfect? Yes, at Deuteronomy 32:4 the Bible states: "The works of God are perfect." (Catholic *Douay* Version) However, that did not mean man knew everything or could do everything, but he was perfect in that he was without a defect in his physical organism. For instance, man could not live in outer space without oxygen, or live underwater indefinitely without special equipment. He was perfect, but within the limits of mankind.—Gen. 1:31.

Just as man was created with the need of oxygen to breathe, so he was also made with the need of God's guidance. He was not made to govern independently of God. Why not locate your own copy of the Bible and turn in it to Jeremiah 10:23. If it is the *Authorized* or *King James Version*, you will notice there how a humble ser-

vant of God expresses the need of God's direction: "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Though not created with the ability to govern successfully without God's guidance, man was a free moral agent and could choose to ignore what God said and meditate on wrong thoughts. That is what the first human pair did, and, as a result, sin, wickedness and death were introduced into the world.—Jas. 1:13-15; Gen. 2:17; 3:6.

Who was to blame for this? Certainly not God. When humans choose to ignore God's laws and do wrong, they are responsible for the consequences. That is why the Bible, at Deuteronomy 32:5 says: "They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation." (AV) Adam and Eve by their own wrong choice brought sin and death upon themselves. And since all humankind were born from their degenerating bodies, the sickness and death we all experience were inherited from them.—Job 14:4; Rom. 5:12.

Man, however, is not alone in responsibility for wickedness. Someone else is even more to blame. He is the invisible spirit creature who, in contradiction of what God said would be the penalty for disobedience, enticed Eve to disobey, saying: "You positively will not die."—Gen. 3:1-4; Rev. 12:9.

But what caused this perfect spirit creature to rebel against God, and then induce the first human pair to join in the rebellion? As with man, it was due to entertaining, continually, improper desires. At James 1:14, 15 the Bible explains: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin, when it has

been accomplished, brings forth death." The improper desires of this perfect spirit were, in time, translated into improper actions. He came to be known as the Devil and Satan.—John 8:44.

Yet, why has God permitted Satan and wickedness to continue for so long? For several reasons. By his rebellion Satan the Devil challenged God's rulership and at the same time raised an issue as to whether any humans would remain true to their Creator-Ruler under test. Also, who spoke the truth there in Eden as to the result of disobedience? Was it God or Satan? Furthermore, could rebellious creatures attain to lasting blessings and happiness while ignoring God's rulership? Time would be required to settle these issues, and God allowed such time. So no intelligent creatures could ever rightly accuse God of not giving the rebels opportunity to work out their own purposes. And what has the record of nearly 6,000 years proved? It has proved God to be right when he said: "There exists a way that is upright before a man, but the ways of death are the end of it afterward."—Prov. 16:25.

But how much longer will God tolerate wickedness? Jesus' disciples also wanted to know, and so they asked him about it. In answer Jesus gave many visible evidences that would mark the "time of the end" of this wicked system. These included worldwide war, famines, pestilences, widespread earthquakes and an increase of lawlessness. Are not these the things that are reported on almost daily in the news? Yes, indeed; and historians report that they are the characteristics of the generation that began with the first world war in 1914. But why such an increase of woe in our time? The Bible explains: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he

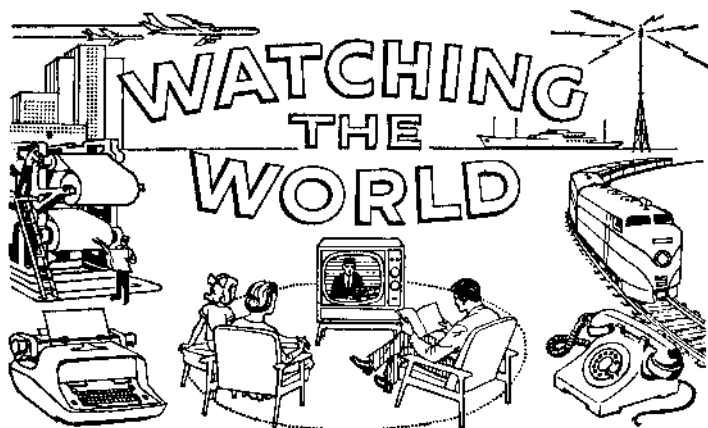
knoweth that he hath but a short time." —Matt. 24:7, 12, 34; Rev. 12:12, 17.

This means that very soon now all the wicked will be destroyed by God! (Ps. 145:20) After that, God's heavenly government will shower down upon its earthly subjects blessings beyond compare. Perfect health, boundless vigor and freedom from the onslaughts of old age and death will be realized. (Isa. 35:5, 6) Even dead ones will be resurrected to enjoy these blessings. (Acts 24:15) Perfect peace and happiness will be enjoyed by all who live in that restored paradise.—Ps. 37:11, 29.

What should you do in view of the wonderful things God will do in your behalf? Why, show appreciation! How? First, by learning about God and his requirements. This means regularly studying his Word. (John 17:3) Then separate yourself from this wicked system that is doomed to destruction. Find out whether the religion you practice is really in harmony with God's Word, for, to please God, you must abandon any false religion that is part of this wicked world. Do God's will, and in this way add your testimony to the fact that Satan is a liar and is incapable of turning all men from serving Jehovah.—Prov. 27:11.

Can you answer these questions? For answers, read the article above.

(1) What questions do people raise concerning the permission of wickedness? (2) Was the first man a robot or did God give him freedom of choice? (3) In what sense was he perfect? (4) How is man's need for God's guidance expressed in the Bible? (5) Why is God not to blame for the sin of our first parents, and for our present imperfections? (6) Who is even more to blame for wickedness than man? (7) How was it possible for a perfect spirit creature to become the Devil? (8) Why has God permitted wickedness to continue for so long? (9) Is the end of wickedness near? (10) What blessings will God's kingdom bring to mankind? (11) How can we show our appreciation for what God has done for us?



Era of Lawlessness

◆ David Lawrence, in *U.S. News & World Report* for August 29, said editorially: "Historians some day will write that the United States in the 1960s experienced an era of anarchy unparalleled in a free country governed originally by a written Constitution and once dedicated to the principle of law and order. We are today on the verge of a complete breakdown of our governmental structure." Federal and state governments, he said, face severe financial crises. He went on to say that city governments appear to be unable to protect human life; they are plagued by street demonstrations and criminal violence. "Even clergymen, who are supposed to preach doctrines of human love and conciliation, have joined the mob," he pointed out. What does it mean? Jesus Christ long ago foretold that this "increasing of lawlessness" would mark the last days of this wicked system of things. —Matt. 24:12.

Suicide Rise

◆ Saigonese know that these are critical times hard to deal with, as the Christian apostle Paul long ago foretold for our day, at 2 Timothy 3:1. In Saigon, South Vietnam, the rate of suicide and attempted sui-

cide is almost 50 percent higher this year than last, it was reported on August 27. "Many of these are young people whose psychology has been deformed, somehow, by the war," said Lieut. Col. Nguyen Van Luan.

\$130,000,000,000 for Arms

◆ A published United Press International report stated that "the cost of the global arms race has reached staggering dimensions—more than \$130 billion a year. This is more than the \$125 billion being spent annually in the world on public health and education." The arms' race amounts to \$40 for every man, woman and child in the world. Readiness for war seems to have become the principal concern of humankind. Two world wars, the first of their kind in human history, have already marked this generation. Jesus foretold this for the "conclusion of the system of things." —Matt. 24:3, 7.

Earthquake Jolts Turkey

◆ Eastern Turkey was struck by a devastating earthquake on August 20. The unofficial death toll passed the 2,000 mark the next day. There were estimates that the final toll might top 5,000. Hundreds of villages were reduced to rubble. "Great earthquakes" were a sign foretold for our day.

(Luke 21:11) In Turkey official statistics put the quake toll for the twentieth century so far at more than 40,000 dead. The world's most catastrophic earthquake of modern times was in China in 1920, when 180,000 people died. Three years later a quake razed Tokyo, killing 143,000.

Food Shortage

◆ At the 1966 annual meeting of the American Institute of Biological Sciences, a group of scientists agreed, on August 15, that man was multiplying faster than the food supply and that a catastrophe was in sight. Dr. Harrison Brown of California Institute of Technology stated that the world population would be at least 4,300,000,000 by 1980, if no major disaster strikes before that time; but food production is not keeping pace. The Bible writer Luke long ago recorded under divine inspiration that unprecedented "food shortages" would be part of the composite sign that, not only is the present selfish system on its way out, but also "the kingdom of God is near." —Luke 21:11, 31.

Dishonest Employees

◆ Former president of the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, Derek Lukin, said that there has been an enormous increase in the last few years in thievery among trusted employees. He pointed out that apparently honest and trustworthy employees have embezzled or defrauded \$150,000,000 from Canadian businesses. "Lovers of money," "disloyal"—that is what the Bible, at 2 Timothy 3:1, 2, said would characterize ungodly men in the "last days."

"Devil in Us"

◆ In a special report to the *New York Times*, August 24, a correspondent in southeast Asia stated that "from the terraced rice fields of Central

Java to the exquisite island of Bali, from the rubber plantations of Sumatra to the fishing villages of remote Timor, the Indonesian people are troubled by the heritage of violence bequeathed by the staggering mass slaughter of Communists," which followed the abortive Communist-supported bid for greater power in Jakarta last September 30. It has been estimated that 400,000 were killed. "There is a devil in us and when it gets loose, we can run amok en masse," one of Indonesia's most distinguished writers said. Yes, the Bible agrees that there is "a devil" in back of the world's violence. "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." (Rev. 12:12) And why? Because God's kingdom has been established in the heavens and will soon put out of action both the Devil

and persons who choose to manifest his spirit.

'There Will Be Pestilences'

◆ The dreaded sleeping sickness called encephalitis has taken 384 lives so far this year in Japan and 399 in South Korea.

In South Vietnam a plague, known as the Black Death in the Middle Ages, is spreading throughout the country. The spread of the disease has been described as "very, very serious."

Heart disease and cancer remain foremost among the killers in spite of medical research, and venereal disease has reached epidemic proportions in many large cities. Yes, pestilences, too, were foretold as part of the "sign."—Luke 21:11.

Preaching Though Persecuted

◆ In nearly two hundred lands around the earth Jehovah's witnesses are preaching

the good news that God's kingdom has been established. For this they are persecuted, as Jesus foretold. (Matt. 24:9) Recently Greece's Orthodox primate, Archbishop Chrysostomos, said: "The Greek Orthodox Church regards the members of [Jehovah's witnesses] as enemy No. 1." He went on to say: "We have repeatedly appealed to the authorities to intervene and prosecute or arrest those of them who engage in proselytism." But they continue to preach. In Greece today there are 10,668 of Jehovah's witnesses active in preaching about God's kingdom. World wide there are over a million, and they have been devoting over 14,000,000 hours each month to their preaching work. As Jesus foretold for these "last days," this good news of the Kingdom established in the heavens is being preached in all the world for a witness.—Matt. 24:14.

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own home. Accepting this service does not make you a member of any organization, nor does it in any way obligate you to become such. What course you take when you learn what the Bible says is for you to decide. We will be glad to use your own Bible, or, if you do not have one, and prefer, we will be glad to supply an easy-to-read modern translation. The one conducting the study does not do all the talking; rather, he guides you to information that will answer your questions and encourages you to express yourself on it. This service involves one hour each week at a time that is mutually convenient. We urge you to study as a family, but our service is provided for individuals as well. And, remember, it is *absolutely free and without obligation*.

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