

The
WATCHTOWER

**Surviving
ON THE
Victorious Side**

at
HAR-MAGEDON

APRIL 15, 1974

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ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

April 15, 1974
Vol. 95, Number 8

A watchtower enables a person to see far into the distance and announce to others what is coming. Can a magazine serve similarly in our day? Yes, from its first issue (July 1879) onward, *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's witnesses, has done just that.

How can it benefit you? Consider: Do you long for a better world, one of true justice and free from sorrow, hatred and war? Do you want to live at a time when genuine peace and love prevail among people of all races? Then this magazine can aid you. Using God's Word, the Bible, as its authority, it points out the clear evidence that the present wicked system of things will soon end, destroyed by God. But it also announces the coming in of a righteous new order. There, under the rule of God's kingdom, his heavenly government, people will enjoy life forever in true peace, health and happiness on a paradise earth.

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We know that many sincere persons would appreciate a discussion of these things in their own home with a qualified person. A minister of Jehovah's witnesses will be glad to call on you free of charge. To arrange for this, simply write the publishers of this magazine or contact Jehovah's witnesses locally.

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Surviving ^{on} the Victorious Side

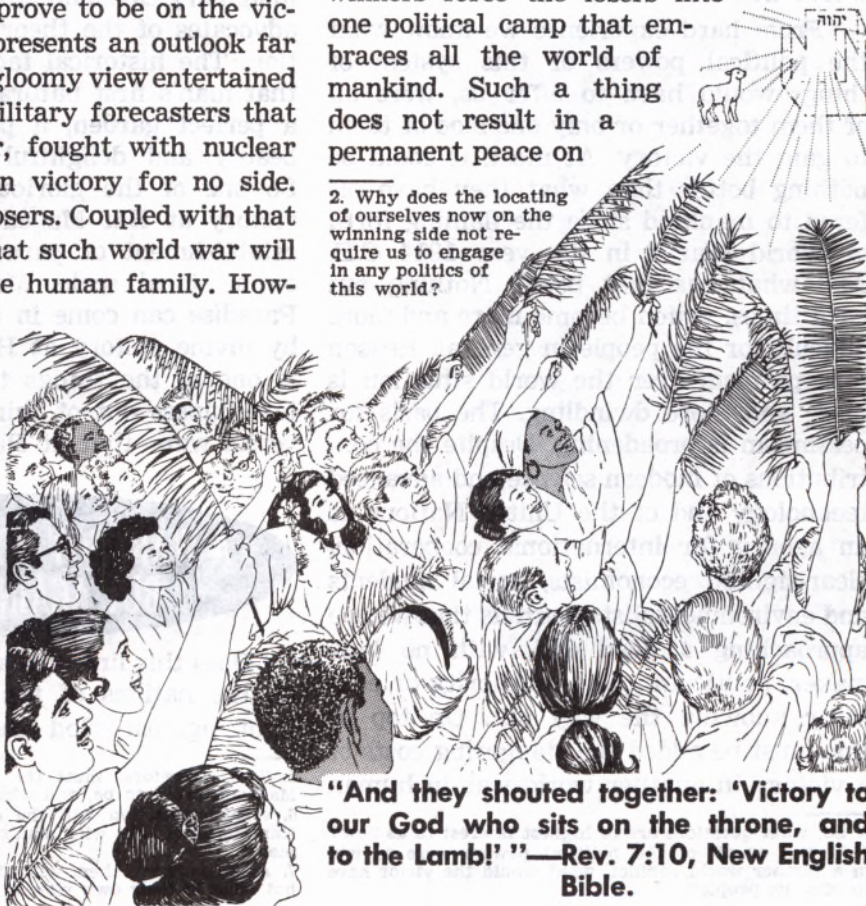
at HAR-MAGEDON

A PEACE of a thousand years will follow the end of the universal war at the battlefield of Har-Magedon. It will be something most desirable to survive that final war of this worldly system of things. Survival will be the happy privilege of those who prove to be on the victorious side. This presents an outlook far different from the gloomy view entertained by political and military forecasters that a third world war, fought with nuclear weapons, will mean victory for no side. Both sides will be losers. Coupled with that is the prediction that such world war will spell suicide for the human family. However, we do not need to be frightened at such human reasonings. In the coming conflict at Har-Magedon there will be a winning side. We do well if we now line up with the side that is bound to win, to enjoy thereafter the fine fruit of victory.

1. What will follow the coming universal war at Har-Magedon, and we do well if we do what now?

² In this case it will not be a winning of one political party or bloc of nations over another political party or bloc of nations. There will be no imposing of one idea of human rulership upon an unwilling defeated people who are wedded to another idea of political rulership. Nor will the winners force the losers into one political camp that embraces all the world of mankind. Such a thing does not result in a permanent peace on

2. Why does the locating of ourselves now on the winning side not require us to engage in any politics of this world?



"And they shouted together: 'Victory to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" —Rev. 7:10, New English Bible.

earth and bring about a willing submission on the part of the conquered people. The victory won will not be a political triumph, but will abolish all human politics from the earth. Our locating ourselves on the winning side will require no engaging in divisive politics of this world.

³ This vital fact is what presents an attractive feature to the coming universal war at Har-Magedon, even though today the subject of war is a thing that more and more people do not like to talk or think about. Questions of the highest interest to us are, What does the winner have to gain from his victory? What will the victory mean for those of us who place ourselves now on the winner's side? Will it make our surviving at Har-Magedon worth while?

⁴ From hard experience we know what the political powers of this system of things would have to offer us, were all of them together or only one bloc of them to gain the victory. At most, it could be nothing better than what they have offered to mankind since the flaming forth of World War I in the year 1914 C.E. And what has that been? Nothing but hard times, which become more and more difficult for the people in general. Reason for optimism over the world situation is more and more dwindling. The basis for pessimism is broadening. Despite the contributions of modern science and advanced technology and of the United Nations as an agency for international cooperation, clear-sighted economists, social students and environmentalists warn us that we are approaching a dead end, with no law-maker, politician, police authority or educator knowing the way out. On top of this must be added the staggering costs of a victory in another world war in human

lives, material properties and environmental effects. There is every likelihood, then, that the political powers would only have what is far worse to offer than what they have furnished us since 1914 till now.

⁵ Certainly, therefore, all right-hearted people must hope and look for victory in the coming war at Har-Magedon to be the prize of someone who can offer us a future for which we would like to survive. That desirable victor at Har-Magedon could be no one else but the Creator of man's original earthly environment, namely, God himself. This is the reasonable thing, for what involves man's natural environment involves God. What affects all mankind affects God.

⁶ Man's original environment was no imaginary caveman stuff as taught by the advocates of the theory of human evolution. The historical facts of the case are that man's first natural environment was a perfect garden, a paradise of natural beauty and delightful living conditions. So one of the glorious fruits of divine victory at Har-Magedon will be the re-establishment of paradise on earth, but on a global scale. Mankind's return to Paradise can come in no other way than by divine victory at Har-Magedon. That is one of the things that takes the distastefulness out of thinking about a universal war—that at Har-Magedon.

A WAR, NOT AGAINST MAN, BUT AGAINST GOD

⁷ Does this line of reasoning signify that all the nations of the earth are due to fight against God the Creator at the

3. So, what questions are of highest interest to us now?

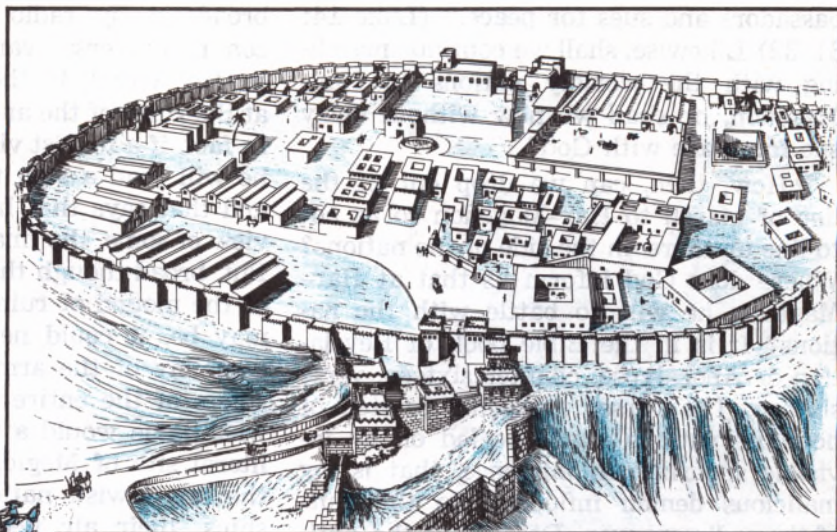
4. If one or all of the political powers were to win in a further world conflict, what would the victor have to offer us people?

5. Who, therefore, must the desirable victor at Har-Magedon prove to be, and why so?

6. What connection will the coming universal war at Har-Magedon have with man's original earthly environment?

7. Against whom, then, will all the nations be fighting, but what is their own view of such a thing?

battlefield of Har-Magedon? Exactly that! But the nations today resent being told that such a confrontation with God is what they are headed for. In fact, it would be hard to convince the political nations, especially those of religious Christendom, that it is against the God of the Holy Bible that they are now



An artist's reconstruction of ancient Megiddo

preparing to fight. Religious clergymen have always assured the nations of Christendom that these have always fought for God, on God's side, in all the international conflicts since the founding of Christendom in the fourth century C.E. They have let themselves be moved in their war efforts by a religious sentiment like that of Roman Emperor Constantine, who, before founding Christendom, fought under the sign of the cross. This Constantine, before fighting a decisive battle with his political rival, claimed to have seen a heavenly vision of a brilliant cross along with the gleaming words, "By this conquer" (in Greek, *En tou'to ni'ka*).

⁸ Nonetheless, it is God himself who warns all the nations that it is against Him that they will be warring. It is He who names the place where the war will be fought to a finish, namely, Har-Magedon. That battlefield must be at the earth, for here is where the nations find themselves, with no escape route into outer space. In fact, that battlefield embraces all the earth—which will make it

8. How has that coming battlefield been named, and how much territory does it cover?

impossible for anybody on earth to escape its effects.

⁹ The nations may not let themselves be convinced that God is the One against whom they will be fighting, but what about us as individuals, no matter of what nation we may be? Do we relish the thought of fighting against God? If not, what shall we do about it, inasmuch as we are all part of the various nations? Are we going to let ourselves be maneuvered by crafty schemes into fighting with the nations against God? If not, well, then, we need to go to God's own written Word, the Holy Bible, to learn what He tells us to do about it. It behooves us to follow the advice of the Son of God, who admonished his disciples to count the cost of their undertakings, saying: "What king, marching to meet another king in war, does not first sit down and take counsel whether he is able with ten thousand troops to cope with the one that comes against him with twenty thousand? If, in fact, he cannot do so, then while that one is yet far away he sends out a body of am-

9. Our continuing to go along with the nations will lead to fighting against whom, but what inspired advice in Luke 14:31, 32 may we well heed?

bassadors and sues for peace." (Luke 14: 31, 32) Likewise, shall we continue marching with the worldly nations to Har-Magedon, or shall we now without delay sue for peace with God?

¹⁰ How, then, can we drop out of the line of march to Har-Magedon so as not to line up there on the side of the nations? Where does God inform us that at Har-Magedon he will do battle with the nations? It is in the Bible book of Revelation or Apocalypse, chapter sixteen, verse sixteen. The verses preceding foretell of how the nations would be led on by invisible superhuman influence, that is, by malicious demon influence, to this out-of-the-ordinary war. Describing the anti-God influences as "expressions inspired" by unseen demons, the Bible writer John the Evangelist says: "They are, in fact, expressions inspired by demons and perform signs, and they go forth to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty. . . . And they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon."

¹¹ Those prophetic words were originally written by John the Evangelist in common Greek. But when they were translated into Hebrew itself in the nineteenth century, verse sixteen read: "And they congregated them to the place that the Hebrews call The Mountain of Megiddo [*Har Megiddon*]."—Rev. 16:16, Hebrew translation by Salkinson-Ginsburg; also, by F. Delitzsch.

¹² It is because the name Har-Magedon means The Mountain of Megiddo that some Bible expositors and some prominent religious clergymen who make worldwide

broadcast by radio have said that the coming universal war will be fought in the land of Israel, in the Valley of Megiddo, at the ruins of the ancient city of Megiddo. In fact, if a tourist visits those ruins today he will read a sign that marks the place and that says that here, according to the view of some, the final war is to be fought. But, broad though the valley plain in front of the mound of ruins of ancient Megiddo may be, it could never accommodate an assembly of the armies of the kings and rulers of the entire inhabited earth. And what issue would a war there before the literal site of Megiddo really settle? Are the non-Jewish nations, with their warships, their air fleets, their war tanks, their intercontinental ballistic missiles and their motorized armies to fight the Republic of Israel at Megiddo as the central strategic battlefield of the entire earth? Will it therefore be the Republic of Israel that will find itself on the victorious side at the place called Har-Magedon?

¹³ Those who take the name Har-Magedon or The Mountain of Megiddo in a literal way provoke such questions as those. They disregard the noteworthy fact that the Bible book Revelation or Apocalypse was written largely in picture language, with the use of a large number of symbolisms or figurative expressions. For example, when verse twelve of this same sixteenth chapter speaks of the sixth plague of God as being emptied out upon the "great river Euphrates," it does not mean that this sixth symbolic plague is fulfilled upon the literal Euphrates River that is now straddled by the land of Iraq. In ancient Bible times, that river's focal point was the city of Babylon, which headed the third world power of Bible history, the Babylonian Empire. The use of the Euphrates as a

10. Where, and with what descriptive language, does God say that he will fight against the nations at Har-Magedon?

11. What does the name of the battleground mean in Hebrew itself?

12. So where do some claim that the final war will be fought, but what questions does such an idea raise?

13. What fact about Revelation do those making such an application disregard, as illustrated in the case of its use of the "great river Euphrates"?

symbol draws attention therefore to the still-existing world empire of false religion, which the book of Revelation calls Babylon the Great, which verse nineteen of this same sixteenth chapter mentions. In the same manner, verse sixteen uses the name Har-Magedon symbolically because of its historical associations.

¹⁴ The name Megiddo is dynamic. In secular history and in Biblical history the name stirred up memories of decisive battles. Why? Because the city then dominated a strategic land passageway between Europe, Asia and Africa, and so invaders could advantageously be challenged and halted there by the inhabitants. So Megiddo took on a double meaning, that of tragic defeat for one side and that of glorious victory for the other side.

¹⁵ The God of the Bible became associated with the place, and with the nearby river of Kishon. This God was with Judge Joshua, who succeeded the prophet Moses, when Joshua was subduing the Promised Land and captured Megiddo. (Josh. 12:21; 17:11) During the period of those judges who followed Joshua, God gave a signal victory to his chosen people in the neighborhood of Megiddo. This was in the days of Judge Barak and the prophetess Deborah.

¹⁶ Compared with the numbers and materials employed in modern battles, the battle back there was a small-scale affair, Judge Barak having only ten thousand men and the prophetess Deborah with him, whereas the enemy General Sisera had, besides ground troops, nine hundred horse-drawn war chariots

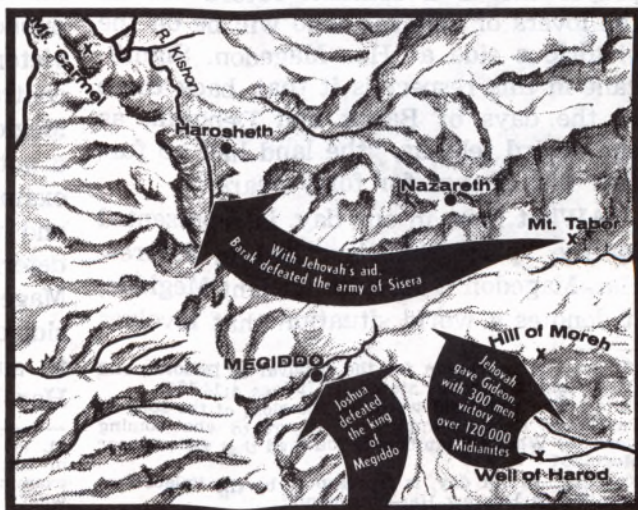
armed with scythes. However, it was no matter of little importance to God, for he stepped into the battle in behalf of his chosen people. Only he could have caused a heavy downpour of rain at the psychological time, to produce a flash flood in the Kishon River valley that immobilized those dreaded nine hundred chariots of the enemy. In the victory song that Barak and Deborah sang to God after the miraculous defeat of the oppressive enemy, they called attention to God's all-necessary part in this overthrow of the enemy, saying:

¹⁷ "Kings came, they fought; it was then that the kings of Canaan fought in Tanach by the waters of Megiddo. No gain of silver did they take. From heaven did the stars fight, from their orbits they fought against Sisera. The torrent of Kishon washed them away, the torrent of ancient days, the torrent of Kishon. You went treading down strength, O my soul. It was then that the hoofs of horses pawed because of dashings upon dashings of his stallions. 'Curse Meroz,' said the angel of Jehovah, 'curse its inhabitants incessantly, for they did not come to the assistance of Jehovah, to the assistance of Jehovah

14. What double meaning did the name Megiddo take on, and why?

15. What personage especially became associated with Megiddo, and how?

16, 17. (a) To whom was the battle of no little importance, and so what was done in behalf of the Israelites? (b) To whom was the victory ascribed by Barak and Deborah in song?



with the mighty ones.'”—Judg. 5:19-23; 4:1-3, 10, 12, 13.

¹⁸ The prophetess Deborah and Judge Barak and his fellow warriors survived the battle on the victorious side at Megiddo. The reason for this is stated also in the account in Judges 4:14-16: “Deborah now said to Barak: ‘Get up, for this is the day that Jehovah will certainly give Sisera into your hand. Is it not Jehovah that has gone out before you?’ And Barak went descending from Mount Tabor [on the side of the valley opposite Megiddo] with ten thousand men behind him. And Jehovah began to throw Sisera and all his war chariots and all the camp into confusion by the edge of the sword before Barak.” After that the pursuit of the disorganized enemy and the destruction of them all was a simple matter for Judge Barak and his troops.

¹⁹ Unquestionably the inspired words that Barak and Deborah sang at the close of their song after that ancient victory at Megiddo apply as a prayer with regard to the coming war at Har-Magedon. They sang: “Thus let all your enemies perish, O Jehovah, and let your lovers be as when the sun goes forth in its mightiness.” (Judg. 5:31) Fulfillment of that inspired prayer means a brilliant future for all the lovers of Jehovah who will be on the victorious side at Har-Magedon. Significant in this respect is it that, back there in the days of Barak and Deborah, as the record tells us, “the land had no further disturbance for forty years.”

²⁰ What now, in our day, is represented by the “place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon”? As with ancient Megiddo, it denotes a world situation that involves

a decisive war. It denotes that stage in world hostility toward God that calls for settling of the issue over which the hostility has arisen. Since ancient Megiddo on its rise of ground strategically commanded the land passageway from one landmass or continent to another, so Har-Magedon denotes that ultimate state to which world affairs come where the political rulers unitedly apply force to make their way through and where God must react with a counterforce according to His purpose. Thus the future of the universe is to be determined by what results from the opposing of contrary forces to each other.

²¹ Having such a Scriptural viewpoint of what Har-Magedon really means will keep us from looking in the wrong direction and from expecting the wrong thing. We will not be looking to the geographical location of ancient Megiddo in the land of Israel. We will not be looking for a converging of all the armed forces of the nations there with the Republic of Israel as their target of attack. We will not be looking for mass conversion of the Jews in the Republic of Israel to acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah. We will not be led to the idea that we must line up with the natural Jews in the Republic of Israel in order to survive on the victorious side at Har-Magedon. To the contrary, we will see that the Valley of Megiddo, yes, the whole Republic of Israel, is not the issue involved. We will diligently examine *all* the inspired sacred Scriptures and will, with the help of God's spirit, determine what the real issue at Har-Magedon is. Then we shall know on which side of the issue to take our stand in order to survive with the victors at the real Har-Magedon.

21. (a) With such a viewpoint of Har-Magedon, at what or for what will we not be looking? (b) Our further examination of the Scriptures will now enable us to do what?

18. How is the reason for the survival of Deborah and Barak and his troops stated in Judges 4:14-16?

19. (a) The prayerful words at the close of the song of Barak and Deborah apply with regard to what coming war? (b) What of significance followed that victory near Megiddo?

20. What, in our day, is represented by the “place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon”?

THE ISSUE AT HAR-MAGEDON

²² Let us make no mistake about it: there is a movement to the real Har-Magedon today. When we see who it is that are on the move in that direction, we can discern what the issue is. Let us read once again Revelation 16:14, which foretold who are the ones that would march to Har-Magedon at the turning point in universal history: "They are, in fact, expressions inspired by demons and perform signs, and they go forth to the kings of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the war of the great day of God the Almighty."

²³ The very fact that the gathering together is to a war indicates that an issue is involved. The war is to be fought to settle the issue. Since this is the "war of the great day of God the Almighty," it means that there are those who are at issue with God the Almighty and who want to fight it out with Him. What do those who take issue with him and want to settle matters by war have to lose? Well, please, note the official position of these with regard to the entire inhabited earth. They are political rulers, "the kings of the entire inhabited earth." Their kingdoms are at stake. Their provoking this war at Har-Magedon is for the purpose of defending their political rule, their kingship, even by force of arms. So, then, KINGDOM is the paramount issue at Har-Magedon! Not "kingdom" over Great Britain, not "kingdom" over Thailand, not "kingdom" over Sweden, but "kingdom" over the "entire inhabited earth."

22. There is a movement of whom today to the real Har-Magedon?

23. (a) That there is to be a war at Har-Magedon indicates what, and this with whom? (b) What, then, is the issue at Har-Magedon, and this to what extent?

²⁴ Why, though, should kingdom over the entire inhabited earth be the thing put at issue at Har-Magedon? Why should kings, emperors, presidents and other political rulers of earth be now disturbed and their continued government be put in question? The world of mankind has got along with these political rulers for so long, in fact, for more than four thousand years or since the days of King Nimrod of Babylon on the Euphrates River. Hence, why not let the *status quo*, the political pattern of earthly government that has survived for so long just keep on going, as long as the people themselves are willing to put up with it or have their democratic elections every so often? Why not, at least, let the people have their way about it? Why bring in a world change as to earth's rulership? Has not the world got enough trouble as it is?

²⁵ However, more and more people today are becoming convinced that "the time has come for a change!" But a "change" from the present world governmental situation to what? Also, are they united on what to change over to, and how this is to be done? In spite of their having that twenty-nine-year-old agency for international action, the United Nations, it cannot be left to the bewildered people to handle the matter of a "change" to something agreeable to all, something adequate to all human needs and certain to endure for all time to come. Moreover, according to Revelation, chapter sixteen, verse fourteen, the presently acting political rulers are by no means in favor of a peaceful change. They insist on making it necessary for the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" to be fought to the

24. What questions arise, therefore, about letting things stay as they are?

25. (a) What questions arise regarding a "change" as desired by those who see it is time for it? (b) But what do the "kings of the entire inhabited earth" insist on, and under what influence?

finish. And behind these rulers are malicious forces superior to man.

²⁶ Consequently, the war must be waged. It cannot be sidestepped or avoided. What informed persons, with the Bible viewpoint, would want to ward it off? They are in favor of victory for the right side. They eagerly look forward to the change for all the inhabited earth that will follow that universal war. Faced with the opportunity that is held out to the people of this generation, they would like to survive the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" and share in the glorious privileges in the postwar period.

26. What, therefore, must be fought, and why would certain persons not want to ward it off?

²⁷ There is now no neutral position with reference to the coming war, which will be universal. Right action is necessary now before that war breaks out in order to find oneself on the victorious side at Har-Magedon. Only by one's being found wholeheartedly on that side can there be survival for anyone on earth to see the change that the surface of our earthly globe so urgently needs. For our guidance and help to right action now, we need to consider what is the issue and which side is in the right in the controversy. That side will be victorious!

27. In view of what facts is there need for right action now, and this with what guidance and help?

Mankind's Benefits

from the VICTORY AT HAR-MAGEDON

MANKIND stands to benefit eternally from the victory gained at Har-Magedon. That victory will be one for mankind, especially the survivors of the war at Har-Magedon, to memorialize forever. It is a victory that will mark a "great day." Till now there has been no day like it, for it will be the "great day of God the Almighty." He will make it a "great day" for Himself by the victory that he gains in the universal war of that day. Mankind could not do otherwise than benefit from the victory of God the Almighty, for He is mankind's very best Friend.

1. Why does mankind stand to benefit eternally from the victory gained at Har-Magedon?

² At Har-Magedon God the Almighty takes on as combatants the "kings of the entire inhabited earth." It is because KINGDOM is the issue to be settled at Har-Magedon. That Kingdom must involve our earth as its realm, for here is where the "kings of the entire inhabited earth" are ruling and are determined to stay ruling. The issue is Kingdom, but not over an earth divided as now between the democratic bloc of nations and the Communist bloc of nations, both blocs coexisting in mutual toleration, or between Christendom and pagandom. The issue is, rather, Kingdom over one whole

2. (a) The kingdom that is at issue includes what as its realm, and why? (b) The issue is rulership with what condition on earth?

undivided earth, one Kingdom for all the earth. Will that not be beneficial for all mankind?

³ It is by no unforeseen turn in human affairs nor by any accident that the Kingdom issue gets to be fought over at the battlefield of Har-Magedon. The matter is all timed in behalf of God and of man. The Almighty God, who provided the sun, moon and stars and the revolutions of the earth for man's timekeeping, has fixed his time for the Kingdom of the entire earth. Has he not put up with human rulership over all the earth for enough time by now? Are human rulers the ones to decide when and how Almighty God may take over the kingdom of the earth, his own creation? Is he going to let helpless mankind flounder around to time indefinite in all the world trouble and anguish of nations that began with World War I of the year 1914 and not come to their help? Happily, No! His sorely needed kingdom over the entire earth will be a vast improvement on anything that imperfect, dying human rulers have been able to give mankind thus far. Certainly any change made by Him in rulership of human creatures could never be for the worse. We can be thankful that it is the Almighty God who will make the change for us, and that his wisely chosen time for this has come.

⁴ For now more than nineteen centuries the Almighty God has listened to the prayer repeatedly offered to him by those who follow the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matt.

3. Does the fight at Har-Magedon over the Kingdom issue occur accidentally, and why can we be thankful that a change is brought about by God?

4, 5. To what prayer for His rulership has God long listened, and what did the teacher of that prayer say and do to further the interests of such rulership?

6:9, 10) Almighty God has not answered that inspired prayer before now because his own appointed time had not come. That prayer was taught by a man who believed in God's kingdom to the very point of sacrificing his life in furtherance of the interests of that kingdom. A false Messiah would not do such a thing. In his Sermon on the Mount he not only taught his hearers to pray for the heavenly Father's kingdom, but also told them: "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness." In his educational work among the inhabitants of Palestine his opening theme was: "Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." (Matt. 4:17; 6:33) And in his prophecy foretelling troubles incidental to the setting up of God's Messianic kingdom, he said:

⁵ "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."—Matt. 24:14.

⁶ That remarkable prophecy has been largely fulfilled, and is still in course of fulfillment, not by means of Christendom with all her earthly kings, wars and political squabbles, but by true believers in Almighty God and in the heavenly kingdom of his Messiah. These know who it was that fulfilled the inspired prophecies in the sacred Hebrew Scriptures as respects God's promised Messiah. They know that this one was the greatest advocate of God's Messianic kingdom ever on earth. With confidence and certainty they can prove from the God-given Scriptures that this Messiah was and is the one whom a former tax collector named Matthew Levi called "Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham." (Matt. 1:1)

6, 7. (a) Those by means of whom that prophecy is undergoing fulfillment have what faith toward the speaker of that prophecy? (b) What did Simon Peter say about him to the Jews on the festival day of Weeks?

This is the one to whom a Galilean named Simon Peter bore witness on the feast day of Shavuoth (Weeks) at ancient Jerusalem, to more than three thousand celebrators, saying to these inquiring Jews:

⁷ "Actually David did not ascend to the heavens, but he himself says, 'Jehovah said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet."' Therefore let all the house of Israel know for a certainty that God made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you impaled."—Acts 2:34-36.

⁸ David was the first Jewish king of Jerusalem, and his descendant Jesus "of the tribe of Judah" is now the heavenly Lord of David and also the Messiah or Anointed One, the Christ. The religious people of Christendom and also the circumcised Jews who look shortly for a Messiah in flesh and blood are looking for the wrong thing. The true Messiah, whom the inspired David said Jehovah God would invite to sit at his right hand in the heavens and who would be a Priest-King like ancient Melchizedek, is now and always will be a heavenly Messiah, a spirit heavenly Son of God. (Ps. 110:1-4) His Messianic kingdom will be more than that of a mortal man on earth. It will be superhuman and so will be able to do what an earthly kingdom by a mere human ruler could never do for mankind. The true Messianic kingdom is heavenly and is able to break the power of Satan the Devil, who is a disobedient heavenly angel, the prince of demon angels. Mankind, who are the pitiful victims of Satan the Devil and his demons, can get lasting liberation and benefit from such a Messianic kingdom.

8. (a) Why are Christendom and the Jews who look for a Messiah of blood and flesh looking for the wrong thing? (b) What will the kingdom of the true Messiah be able to do for mankind?

KINGDOM SET UP ON TIME

⁹ The earthly kingdom of David's family at Jerusalem was overthrown by the armies of Babylon in the year 607 before our Common Era. Shortly before that calamity Jehovah God used his prophet Ezekiel to declare that the promised Messiah would come at God's due time and that He would give the Kingdom to this Messiah because of that one's right to it. (Ezek. 21:25-27) From history, Jews and Gentiles alike know what happened after the destruction of David's throne back there by the Gentile Babylonians. An uninterrupted time of Gentile domination of the earth set in with no kingdom of the royal house of David to interfere with those Gentile rulers. "Gentile Times" they have been called. (Luke 21:24, Authorized Version Bible) But Almighty God would let the Gentile Times of world domination go on for only so long. He set a fixed time for the end of those Gentile Times. He indicated that fact to the king of Babylon, the destroyer of Jerusalem. (Dan. 4:16, 23, 25, 31) So Gentile rule must go; Messiah's rule must come!

¹⁰ By his prophet Daniel, God foretold that a Gentile political power would arise that would try to change God's time and law respecting earth's rulership. (Dan. 7: 25) However, world history of this twentieth century shows that this foretold political power, the most powerful world power of all human history, was not able to change God's date for the close of the Gentile Times from the year 1914 to some

9. (a) The earthly kingdom of David was overturned when, and to continue thus for what period of time? (b) When must Gentile rule go and Messiah's rule come in?

10. What most powerful political power did Daniel foretell, and how has it been unable to change God's time and law regarding rulership?

later date in the indefinite future. True, World War I did break out in the year 1914; but what really marked and spelled the end of the Gentile Times in that year was the birth of God's Messianic kingdom in the heavens by the installation of his Son Jesus Christ as the Anointed King. During all the troublous years since then the mighty Seventh World Power (the Anglo-American Dual World Power) has been unable to change that fact of universal importance. The wrath that all the worldly nations have expressed in the form of persecution upon Jehovah's Christian witnesses who have preached "this good news of the kingdom" in all the inhabited earth has been unable to cancel out God's time for His kingdom.

¹¹ At the close of the Gentile Times in early autumn of 1914 the hour came for the heavenly announcement to be made, as foretold in Revelation 11:15: "The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever." Well, now, were the nations of Christendom thankful for this turn of events in universal history? Did those who were grateful for the birth of the kingdom of the Lord God in the hands of his Christ include those so-called Christian nations? Not at all! For the prophecy of Revelation 11:17, 18 foretold that the grateful persons would say: "We thank

11. (a) When did the time come for thanksgiving to be offered because of God's taking his power to reign? (b) What shows whether the thankful ones included the earthly nations?

you, Jehovah God, the Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and begun ruling as king. But the nations became wrathful, and your own wrath came." History testifies to the fact that those wrathful nations became violent persecutors of the Kingdom preachers.

¹² Not to be expected otherwise, Satan the Devil and his demon angels were not happy about the birth of God's Messianic kingdom in the heavens in 1914. The next chapter of Revelation, chapter twelve, verses seven through twelve, tells us what followed the Kingdom's birth:

¹³ "War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ, because the accuser of our brothers has been hurled down, who accuses them day and night before our God! . . . 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.'"

12, 13. Was Satan happy over the Kingdom's birth, and how does Revelation 12:7-12 indicate whether he was?

**Gentile Times
Ended**

1914

**Messianic Kingdom
Born in Heaven**

¹⁴ Thus Satan the Devil and his demon angels and the nations of the earth experienced the same feelings at the birth of God's Messianic kingdom at the close of the Gentile Times in 1914. It is not surprising, therefore, that the inspired expression out of the mouth of the great dragon, Satan the Devil, would gather the kings of the entire inhabited earth to a war at Har-Magedon over the issue of the Kingdom. Nor is it any cause for surprise that the kings of these wrathful nations would let themselves be gathered there under such demon influences. But the personal question that deserves our close examination is, Are we as individuals letting ourselves be gathered there on the side of those misled "kings of the entire inhabited earth"? If we do so, then we will undeniably show that we are for *their* kingdom, and not for God's Messianic kingdom. Then, too, we shall be obliged to take what those "kings of the entire inhabited earth" will take at Har-Magedon. What is that? Revelation 19:19-21 tells us:

¹⁵ "And I [the apostle John] saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together [that is, at Har-Magedon] to wage the war with the one seated on the horse and with his army. [And upon his outer garment, even upon his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (Verse 16)] And the wild beast was caught, and along with it the false prophet that performed in front of it the signs with which he misled those who received the mark of the wild beast and those who render worship to its image. While still

alive, they both were hurled into the fiery lake that burns with sulphur. But the rest were killed off with the long sword of the one seated on the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth. And all the birds were filled from the fleshy parts of them."

¹⁶ From that prophetic symbolic picture it should not be hard for anyone to determine who emerges as the victor at that "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon. It is the King of kings and Lord of lords, who is pictured as the one seated on the white war-horse. (Rev. 19:11) As if a long sword were protruding out of his mouth, this heavenly Warrior shouts out commands for the execution of the kings of the earth and those lined up on their side at Har-Magedon. The heavenly angelic army do the carrying out of these commands of the King of kings. In this way it is proved that he is a King of kings, that is, a King superior to all those kings of the earth. All those who follow and politically support such kings of the earth will be killed off with such human kings. The followers of the King of kings, who survive that universal war at Har-Magedon, are not here pictured as being commanded to bury the corpses of those earthly kings and their armies. Who, then, will dispose of those exposed stinking corpses? The agencies of disposal are pictured as scavenger birds.

¹⁷ Such an odious death and disposal of the fleshy remains means a death from which there is no hope of a resurrection. This is because they are executed by the Almighty God by means of his heavenly armies under Christ at the battlefield of

14. (a) Where do the earthly kings let themselves be gathered, why and under what influence? (b) What will it mean finally for us to be gathered there with those kings?

15. How does Revelation 19:19-21 pictorially show what befalls the kings of the earth and their backers at Har-Magedon?

16. (a) So who emerges victor at Har-Magedon, and why is he called King of kings? (b) By whom is the execution of the enemies carried out, and how are the corpses of the defeated ones disposed of?

17. What do such death and disposal of bodily remains mean for such executed ones, and why?

Har-Magedon. They prove themselves to be irreformable opposers of Jehovah God and his Messianic kingdom. They will never live again, any more than will the symbolic "wild beast" and the symbolic "false prophet," human political organizations, that are destroyed forever as if hurled while still alive into a "fiery lake that burns with sulphur." Revelation 20:14 and 21:8 calls this fiery sulfurous "lake" a symbol of "the second death," eternal annihilation!

POSTWAR BENEFITS TO SURVIVORS

¹⁸ Because this is such a serious matter for all people of this generation, the Bible is very plain and outspoken as to what awaits those who now line up on the side that is headed for defeat in the universal war at Har-Magedon. True lovers of a perfect righteous government for all mankind shrink back in horror at the fate of those who will deliberately fight the King of kings and who thereby reject God's Messianic kingdom. They love the merciful God from whom this long-promised Kingdom of righteousness, peace and prosperity comes. They hate God's adversary, Satan the Devil, from whom all misgovernment of mankind has come, together with all its unrighteousness, insecurity and hard way of living. They long to see the right of Jehovah God to universal sovereignty over all intelligent creation vindicated by his glorious victory through his Son Jesus Christ at Har-Magedon. Such lovers of the rightful Universal Sovereign are people that will line up now, without further delay, on the side of His Messiah, the King of kings and Lord of lords. On that side only can they survive.

¹⁸ Lovers of righteous government will love whom and hate whom, and on what side will they line up without delay?

¹⁹ Divine Victory at the battlefield of Har-Magedon will be an occasion for unspeakable joy for all the survivors on earth, the place at which the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" takes place. Their songs of exultation in the vindication of Jehovah's universal sovereignty will be something the equal of which this entire earth has never before heard. O to think of seeing in actuality the whole earth rid at last of the beastly political system that Jehovah's great adversary has used since the Babylon of Nimrod's kingdom! Yes, the whole earth cleared for the humane kingdom of Jehovah's Anointed One to exercise loving control for God's glory and mankind's eternal blessing!

²⁰ Added to that incomparable joy will be the joy occasioned by a still mightier triumph on the part of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. This will immediately follow up the end of the war at Har-Magedon. This will be the binding of the Wicked One who has masterminded the visible political system on earth to man's hurt, namely, Satan the Devil, together with all his demon angels. They will be removed from the earth's neighborhood and imprisoned under seal in a distant abyss, powerless to interfere with God's Messianic kingdom.

²¹ This long-desired abyssing of the demons the earthly survivors of Har-Magedon will see only with their eyes of faith, according to the prophetic description given in Revelation 20:1-3, but they are bound to feel the delightful effects thereof in a very realistic way. No longer will they be obliged to keep on the "complete suit of armor" from God in order to

¹⁹ Why will Jehovah's victory at Har-Magedon be an occasion for unspeakable joy on the part of the earthly survivors?

²⁰ In addition to that joy there will be the joy over what still mightier triumph?

²¹ (a) How will the survivors witness the abyssing of the demons, but how will it be made real to these survivors? (b) Why will the survivors feel secure within the embrace of God's Messianic kingdom?

fight and stand firm against the machinations of the Devil. No longer will they have to wrestle with invisible superhuman governments and "wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places." No longer will the adversary, the Devil, go walking around like a roaring lion to seek out someone to devour. (Eph. 6:11-18; 1 Pet. 5:8) There will be freedom from fear of such malicious invisible opponents, and the survivors of earth's greatest tribulation will feel soothingly secure within the embrace of the Messianic "new heavens." That heavenly government will have the tenderness of an Oriental shepherd who lovingly safeguards his sheep. The Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who laid down his life for his human "sheep," will be a royal Shepherd over all men for whom he died. —Rev. 21:1; 7:9-17; John 10:10-16.

²² We do not forget that the wicked aim of Satan and his demons after being ousted from the holy heavens and down to the earth was to bring such "woe" upon earth and sea as to cause the destruction of all humankind, especially the true worshipers of Jehovah God. In the light of this fact the bringing of such worshipers alive through the "great tribulation" and its Har-Magedon climax will be a victorious feat on the part of the Almighty God and his Messianic King. (Matt. 24:21, 22; Mark 13:19, 20) It is another exemplification of the Bible's assurance: "Jehovah is guarding all those loving him, but all the wicked ones he will annihilate." (Ps. 145:20) He has prophesied glorious things for this earth under the thousand-year kingdom of the Messiah Jesus, and the survivors of the "great tribulation" will be the first ones on earth to enter into the realization of those glorious prophecies.

22. (a) What will his bringing of his worshipers alive through the "great tribulation" be for Jehovah, in exemplification of Psalm 145:20? (b) Who on earth will be the first to enter into the grand things prophesied for the Kingdom's realm?

²³ At last the whole earth will be a place of human brotherhood—among those survivors who have faithfully ranged themselves on the side of Almighty God and his Son Jesus Christ. There will be no need for a Peace Conference to draw up a Treaty of Peace and to heal the wounds and patch up the differences between the victors and the defeated. There will be no defeated ones alive on earth. The living, the sharers in Jehovah's divine victory, will no more divide their attention between rendering to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's, for "Caesar" and his political government will be gone for all time. (Matt. 22:21) All things now must be God's, and earth's inhabitants must render these all things to God.—Ps. 103:19; 1 Chron. 29:11.

²⁴ Under the Devil's rule over mankind during the past six thousand years earth has been a realm where sin and its penalty death have reigned. Under the one government earth wide by God through the Savior Jesus Christ earth will become a realm where righteousness and its reward, life, will reign. The tribulation survivors will themselves know the feel of real rejuvenation of body and mind as they carry out the will of the Divine Government.

²⁵ The loving hearts of the survivors will rejoice when life benefits under a perfect heavenly Government are extended to those who sleep in the bosom of the earth, a miraculous thing that will take place when the resurrection of the dead starts at the command of Jesus

23. (a) The earth will then be a place of what relationship between earth's inhabitants? (b) Why will there then be no further rendering of Caesar's things to Caesar?

24. Under Satan's rule earth has been a place where what reigned, but what will reign instead under God's kingdom?

25. (a) The earthly survivors will rejoice to see the benefits of the Kingdom extended to whom else, by what means? (b) What earthly condition will welcome back such returning ones? (c) How will the eyes and hearts of the survivors be blessed for now taking the victorious side?

Christ. (John 5:28, 29) What a transformation of earth's conditions will have taken effect when that return of the ransomed dead begins! Paradise under reconstruction will greet their eyes and welcome their return! The joys of then living and

serving under God's Messianic kingdom can only be imagined. But blessed will be the eyes and hearts of those surviving on the victorious side at Har-Magedon, for they will live and prepare to see these things come in!

Why Do Jehovah's Witnesses

TAKE AN INTEREST IN YOU?

YOU may have had many calls from Jehovah's witnesses and may have obtained several copies of the Watch Tower publications. So you perhaps wonder why the Witnesses keep calling.

Their interest is not in your money. Strange as it may sound in these days, Jehovah's witnesses love you. They sincerely believe that your life is in real, imminent danger. They are trying hard to *get that point across* to you, because they also believe there is something very simple that you can do to protect yourself as well as your family.

You probably know that Jehovah's witnesses are not trying to take some advantage of you. If you have them as neighbors you know that they are in most respects like yourself. They work to support themselves. But they are different from you in that they spend much time in talking to people about God's purposes.

It is not that Jehovah's witnesses would not enjoy spending more time in sitting at home near a warm fire, reading, or watching TV, or sitting in the shade with a cool drink. They could be at a park or resort, at the ocean or in the mountains.

But they spend *hours* in calling on people like you, whom they may not know personally. Why?

They know, as you do, that this world has no love, and very few friendly or cheerful words. But they know the reason and the remedy. They know that this world is coming to a finish very soon. This knowledge is not due to superior wisdom on their part; it is because they read the only book that really makes sense in answering today's problems and in showing what is ahead.

That book is the Bible. Jehovah's witnesses fully believe the Bible and know that it is the *only source* that gives hope — of good government, of health, life, peace on earth, and of freedom from fear and death. Not even a *promise* of all these things comes from anywhere else. Why not at least hear what the Witnesses have to say?

Most people who have an acquaintance with Jehovah's witnesses say they are good people, orderly, having children that are usually well behaved. Their large conventions have been called models of peacefulness and order. Remarks have been made, even in the newspapers, to the ef-

fect that the Witnesses are courteous, clean, an example to the community, though (they often add) what the Witnesses believe is farfetched.

But, think. Is it not what a person believes and follows that makes him what he is? Jehovah's witnesses are from all walks of life, and many of them formerly were not so courteous and peaceable. But what they have learned from God's Word has changed their lives. One of Christ's apostles expressed this truth to early Christians when he wrote:

"Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of those things the wrath of God is coming. In those very things you, too, once walked when you used to live in them. But now really put them all away from you."
—Col. 3:5-8.

This is what Jehovah's witnesses have done by studying the Bible and endeavoring to apply it in their lives.

When Jehovah's witnesses leave literature with you, have they accomplished their objective? Do you take literature to encourage them or to "help" them? The Witnesses appreciate your kindness. But they are not seeking help. It is *what is in the literature* that they want you to get. They know it can *help you* to see what to do in these dangerous times. It is to *save your life*. If you do not see that this present world system is going to pass off the scene, *you and your family need to know it*.

But this is not all. Without a good side to the picture, without a hope, you would not gain much. It is *good news* that the Bible gives—news that this system of things will be replaced by God's government over earth. This change will occur in this generation, when man is at his extremity, as he is now. (Matt. 24:34) Jehovah's witnesses are not establishing that government. God is. They want to survive and live under it. Do you? Those who do must take

a course different from what people in general are taking now.

Jehovah's witnesses do not want you to join some sort of "movement." They are not just a passing religious oddity. They are true Christians. They bring information so that you can act to protect yourself, altogether on your own decision, intelligently.

This kind of activity is nothing really new. Not only have the Witnesses been active for a century now, but earlier witnesses of Jehovah did the same thing at certain times of crisis. This is because God gives warning of what he is going to do.

God gave intensive warning, through Noah, to the preflood world for fifty years or more.—2 Pet. 2:5.

Jesus Christ and his followers appealed to the Jewish people to save themselves from destruction with that generation. (Matt. 23:33-39; Acts 2:40) Why did Jesus do this? Because he loved the honest-hearted people among them. Many heard, fled from Jerusalem and survived that city's destruction by the Roman armies. More than a million persons died in that very small area encompassed by Jerusalem's wall, and 97,000 were taken captives.

Now the clearing out of this world's corrupt, ungodly system of things is at hand, in a severe time of trouble. But what will follow will be righteous living conditions under the heavenly Kingdom. During its rule God will resurrect the dead and set before them the opportunity to live forever. God's blessing will result in perfect health and eternal life for obedient mankind.—Rev. 21:3-5.

Do you want to live in such an earth? Jehovah's witnesses want you to survive to enjoy it. They will do anything they can to help you. They will gladly spend their own time and money to call on you and study the Bible with you, free. Act now to "get a firm hold on the real life" for yourself and your family.—1 Tim. 6:19.

Insight on the News

- Have you noted with what frequency great earthquakes strike? Last summer a much stronger quake hit Mexico than the one that devastated

Earthquake Devastation

Managua, Nicaragua, in 1972 and that killed 12,000 persons. But centered in a less populated area, the Mexico death toll was smaller.

In 1972, a powerful quake in Iran killed some 4,000 persons. In 1971, over 1,000 persons in Turkey died in quakes. The year before, Peru shook so hard that 70,000 were killed in what is called "the worst natural disaster on record in the Western Hemisphere"; the homes of 800,000 persons were destroyed. Less than two years before that, a terrible Iranian quake killed an estimated 15,000 to 30,000 people.

Is there some special significance to all of this? Well, did you know that, when describing conditions that would exist in the last days of this system of things, Jesus said: "There will be great earthquakes"—Luke 21:11.

Think of it—well over 100,000 persons have died in great earthquakes just since 1968! Those injured, homeless or suffering property damage number in the millions. This represents a tremendous increase over what took place in past centuries.

- No one needs to be told that food prices are skyrocketing. They jumped by about 20 percent in the United States last year, and are still climbing rapidly. If this situation exists in one of the world's most prosperous countries, how serious really are food shortages elsewhere?

Food Supplies Dwindle

Agricultural economist Lester Brown warns that world food security hangs by a thread. Grain supplies are very low. If poor weather damages this year's crops, as it did in 1972, the consequences would be disastrous. Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, 1970 Nobel Peace Prize winner and a leading agricultural expert, foresees starvation killing as many as 50 million persons!

Already untold thousands have starved to death in a huge section of Africa. And United Nations Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim warns: "If sufficient action isn't taken in the

next few months, countries could disappear from the face of the map."

Why such shortages in this twentieth century with its mechanized, scientific farming? The situation is significant. The Bible book of Revelation long ago foretold the ride of a symbolic "black horse," with high prices and food scarcity marking its trail. And Jesus Christ prophesied that "food shortages" would mark the "conclusion of the system of things." In recent events many persons see a fulfillment of these Bible prophecies. Do you?—Matt. 24:3, 7; Rev. 6:5, 6.

- Gasoline prices have gone up, up and up—40 cents, 50 cents and 60 cents in New

Gasoline and Self-Control

York city. In West Germany, Japan, France and Italy motorists have paid well over \$1 a gallon in recent months. And by all indications motorists would pay even more if the gasoline were available. They have waited for hours in lines sometimes a mile and more long, and even then some failed to get any. In Stamford, Connecticut, an attendant was shocked when a woman offered to have sex relations with him for \$2 worth of gas. Instead, he gave her four gallons and a fatherly talk.

As motorists jockey for position in lines, tempers explode and both angry words and fists often fly. "Threats are a daily situation," says a station operator on Chicago's South Side. When an Oregon woman was asked what the 38-caliber revolver she was carrying was for, she said: "The next gas station attendant that won't fill up my tank."

The situation is just as the Bible foretold: "In the last days . . . men will be lovers of themselves . . . without self-control, fierce." —2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Adding to the frustration is the widespread belief that the gasoline shortage was deliberately created simply to force prices higher. "People have lost confidence," noted William Simon, director of the Federal Energy Office. "The public is no longer willing to give public officials the benefit of the doubt."

Will you resist any inclinations to copy this violent trend? If you do you will be the happier for it.

- What do you think about the international

efforts being made to establish world peace? Do you think they will succeed?

Is Peace Near?

Consider these developments: Israeli and Arab troops have disengaged in the Sinai; U.N. troops form a buffer between them. Similar disengagement plans between Israel and Syria are being worked out. Steps have been taken to open up the Suez Canal by the end of the year. And progress has been made toward arms limitations.

All of this makes the world leaders optimistic. In a speech on February 24, U.S. Vice-President Gerald Ford said: "An era of peace is within reach." The following day President Nixon declared: "On the peace front we're doing well."

These leaders base their opinions on the belief that for governments to continue to engage in armed conflict would be disastrous to everyone. So the current trend in world affairs is toward détente, that is, peaceful relations between the opposing world powers. But what does Bible prophecy say about this?

It indicates that an apparent peace will be achieved by the nations. But what will that mean? The Bible answers: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them . . . and they will by no means escape." So the present peace effort is only an illusion; it portends a sudden end for this entire system. —1 Thess. 5:3.

● What is behind the current upsurge in lawlessness? Jesus Christ foretold: "Many false prophets will arise and mislead many; and because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off." (Matt. 24:3, 11, 12) This makes one wonder if the clergymen are contributing to the current wave of lawlessness.

Church Role in Lawlessness

Well, reports of subversive activities of clergymen are continually coming in from many lands. "It has become routine," observes the Baltimore "Sun," "for priests to be arrested, tried and sentenced for helping workers to organize, sheltering subversives on the run." But do these clergymen have Church approval?

There is reason to believe so. For example, in the Roman Catholic Church's 1967 encyclical "Development of Peoples," "revolutionary

uprising" was approved "where there is manifest long-standing tyranny." The World Council of Churches, at its meeting in Uppsala in 1968, similarly approved political revolutions.

Some might interpret the large contributions of the World Council of Churches to anti-government organizations as supporting revolution. Rhodesian Prime Minister Ian Smith said about such contributions made to groups in his country: "Behind the rockets that were fired in the night, behind the land mines and the other weapons, stands the money from the World Council of Churches."

Would you not agree that, in promoting such revolution and violence, as well as by their teachings that put human views ahead of God's Word, the churches "mislead many" and hence are responsible for "the increasing of lawlessness"? Believing that they are, many people have withdrawn their support from the church. Are you one of them?

● Muggings, rapes, hijackings, bombings and other acts of violence are constantly occurring in all parts of the world.

Explosions of Terrorism

Terror grips the average citizen, who wonders whether he will be the next victim. Now an increase in kidnappings strikes fear into citizens world wide. Over 320 kidnappings have occurred in Italy since 1960, not to mention the numerous ones in Argentina and other lands. And they are also becoming rather common in the United States. Last year kidnappings reportedly cost U.S. corporations \$90 million in ransoms!

But, really, the present terrorism is only a small preview of what lies ahead. Why so? Well, increasing numbers of persons are demonstrating that it will come quite naturally to them to do what Bible prophecy says they will do in the day when God proceeds to the destruction of the present wicked system. "They will actually grab hold, each one of the hand of his companion, and his hand will actually come up against the hand of his companion."—Zech. 14:13.

Is there any hope that lovers of peace can escape? Yes, there is. We can avoid being thrown with the rest of mankind into that disastrous, every-man's-hand-against-his-neighbor confusion by now coming to an accurate knowledge of Jehovah God and his loving ways.

"TO BE honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand." So wrote William Shakespeare over three hundred years ago. Since then the public's respect for honesty and its worth has shown no real improvement. As you likely know, this is true also among young people. Why is such a low value placed on honesty?

Most people today do not think it makes sense to tell the truth all the time. Many businessmen claim they could not compete successfully without some dishonesty. Daily, advertisements come into our view that exaggerate or misrepresent. Though political leaders bear the serious charge of watching over the public's general welfare, most people view their word as often untrustworthy.

Seeing so much dishonesty among adults, young people often adopt the same course. In school, many cheat at tests or cut classes under false pretenses. With friends, they may boast, brag and otherwise paint false pictures of what they are or have done. At home, they may even deceive their parents—answering questions about their conduct with half-truths, hiding the facts by phrasing their answer so it gives an entirely different impression from the true one. If their parents, or others rightly concerned about their welfare, try to find out how they

WHY BE HONEST?



Helpful facts that young people want to know

feel about immorality or drugs or similar things, they may give them "a snow job" to cover over the facts, saying what they think those questioning them *want* to hear, not necessarily the truth of how they really feel. To get money or permission to do something, they may "butter up" a parent with insincere affection or with flattery. —Compare Psalm 55: 21.

Strange, really, that so many young people today insist they want people to 'tell it to them like it is,' when they themselves spend so much time 'telling it like it isn't.' Yet many feel they are justified in doing this.

Why? Well, it is true that their parents may teach them it is wrong to lie. Yet they may see their parents themselves misrepresent facts in order to get out of some unpleasant situation or to avoid paying some bill, debt or tax. Some parents even use their children to falsify for them in giving excuses.

Where conditions like this prevail, what encouragement is there for young people—or for any of us—to strive to be honest in all things? In a world where lying and cheating are so common, how practical and worthwhile is it for you to hold to what is true? Will it really bring you greater benefit than dishonesty would, and, if so, what kind of benefit?

SHORT-TERM VERSUS LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Ask yourself: What do I want—a quick momentary advantage, an apparent benefit, or that which brings benefits that are enduring? Any apparent benefits from lying and cheating are short term at best. Take, as an example, a businessman who misrepresents some product. He may make a sale, true, but in the process he may lose a customer when the person finds out he was cheated. Or, suppose you were to cheat in school. If not caught, you might get higher grades. But what good would even “straight A’s” be if you finish school with very little knowledge? Why waste those years in school when you could use them to learn things that can prove valuable in later life?

In the end, then, the person who cheats actually cheats himself most of all. (Compare Proverbs 20:17.) Consider some of the things the dishonest person stands to lose and you will see why anyone who thinks that dishonesty helps toward a better or happier life is really very shortsighted indeed.

If you are known for being straightforward and honest in your dealings, you earn the respect and trust of others. The friends you draw are more likely to be genuine because they find you genuine and appreciate this. While it is true that the modern business world is often dishonest, it is also true that employers generally have enough sense to value employees who are honest. They are more willing to entrust greater responsibility to them. A reputation for honesty, then, can bring employment when employment is scarce or aid in holding on to a job when others are losing theirs. At home, honesty contributes to a comfortable, pleasant atmosphere, eliminating doubts or suspicions between marriage partners and between parents and children. (Ps. 34:13, 14) Where children

by this honesty win their parents’ full confidence, the parents usually are willing gradually to widen their area of freedom. Granted, telling the truth about some mistake or wrong act can bring discipline. But that discipline may well be lighter because you were honest. And if, in the future, you truthfully deny having done some wrong, your explanation is more likely to be believed.

Contrast this with the person who gives in to dishonesty to “get out of a pinch” or to gain some advantage. He risks losing all these fine benefits. Because dealing with a dishonest person is like riding in a car with a steering defect—you never know just what it may do. So realize that when you lie to someone or cheat him, the distrust you create may take years to erase. Where a parent or a friend is involved, the wound caused may heal but may leave a bad memory that is like a long-lasting scar. If you make a practice of dishonesty, the time may well come when you seriously want and need others to believe and trust you but they will feel they cannot. (Compare Proverbs 10:9; 17:20.) Is any temporary advantage that dishonesty brings worth this?

WHAT BRINGS GREATER FREEDOM AND HAPPINESS?

Does dishonesty bring greater freedom? Some think so because they see it as an easy way out of unpleasant situations or restrictions. But, actually, lying is like wading into quicksand. Each lie calls for others to back it up, and one soon finds oneself enmeshed in a vicious cycle. (Prov. 12:13) Lying often gets started as does gambling. The person gambling begins betting small amounts, but—usually to cover some losses—he gradually gets drawn into making bigger and bigger bets. Those who lie often begin with half-truths and “little lies,” then gradually go on to worse ones.

If you lie to others, you generally wind up lying to yourself. You can begin to *live a lie*, making yourself think you are something you are not and that your life is really far better and happier than it honestly is. You can convince yourself of being very smart and wise, while really knowing very little. False reasoning helps to justify "pulling a fast one" or "feeding someone a line" with the idea that, after all, you are just getting what rightfully should be yours anyway, as something owed to you. Sooner or later, however, the person doing this meets up with circumstances that force him to face up to reality. He may then feel shocked to see himself as he really is, realizing what a fake his life has been—like a building with nothing but slippery sand as a foundation.—Compare Matthew 7:26, 27; Psalm 36:2.

To tell falsehoods with a straight face may seem bold, daring, and some train themselves to look another straight in the eye while lying. But lying is actually cowardly rather than courageous. What takes courage is to tell the truth and face up to whatever consequences that brings. Rather than imply strength, a lie is like a weak cripple, unable to stand on its own, needing other lies to hold it up, never willing to meet the truth face to face. Why, then, be like a person who spends his life wearing a false face, hiding, ducking and making excuses? Why be like Judas Iscariot, who became a cheat, tried to lead a double life and wound up a failure and a suicide? (John 12:4-6; Matt. 27:3-5) Why not be man or woman enough to be honest? It is the only way to maintain self-respect and a good conscience.

This points to the most important factor of all: God's good will and approval. Jehovah God approves only those who worship him "with spirit and truth," and his Son said that genuine freedom comes only with truth. (John 4:23, 24; 8:31, 32) Je-

hovah detests lying in all its forms—deception, boasting, slander, cheating—because it springs from selfishness, greed and a callous unconcern for the interests of others. (Prov. 6:16, 17; 11:1; Ps. 5:5, 6; 15:1-3) He knows that all mankind's troubles and suffering originally stem from lying—on the part of the "father of the lie," Satan, God's principal enemy. (Gen. 3:1-5; John 8:44) God's Word rightly associates lying with stealing, adultery and other serious wrongs because—either directly or indirectly—practically every kind of wrongdoing gets its start with or involves some form of dishonesty.—Hos. 4:1, 2; Rom. 1:24-32; Rev. 21:8.

Do you sincerely want to hold faithfully to a course of honesty? Then you should realize that you cannot resist severe temptations to dishonesty just by mentally accepting honesty as "the best policy." More is needed. Only genuine love for your Creator and for your neighbor can give you the motivation you need. There must be a heartfelt love of truth for the good it does and an equally intense hatred of lying for the harm it does. (Prov. 4:23, 24) God's approval, too, must mean more to you than that of any other person. Remember, it is only because He himself loves the truth and hates lying that we can have a solid hope for the future, based on His unfailing promises and the proved reliability of His Word.—Compare Joshua 23:14; Hebrews 6:18, 19.

See to it, too, that your friends are lovers of truth. So-called "friends" who lie and cheat others would do the same to you if the situation made it seem worthwhile. Read King David's words as recorded at Psalm 101:5-7 and make his standards for friendship your own. Yes, remember that "it is the lip of truth that will be firmly established forever, but the tongue of falsehood will be only as long as a moment."—Prov. 12:19.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING NOW

to *Prepare?*

NEWSCASTERS predict hard

times ahead. Is there anything you can do to prepare?

Will you fill your freezer with hundreds of pounds of food? Hoard all the canned goods you can buy? Take lessons on a pistol range to protect yourself from criminals? Or buy guns to guard your hoarded food? Will you move to some remote, primitive spot?

But think how easily all this preparation could be a complete waste. When electric current or gas is cut off, frozen food is lost. When food is really in short supply, the hoarders are in danger of losing not only it, but their lives as well. For what will stop hungry people? And guns will not stop criminals. In fact, criminals usually have the "drop" on you when they suddenly attack. Moreover, there is a much greater danger on the horizon.

THE PRIMARY DANGER

That danger is from a higher source. It is the day of reckoning that God holds with the entire system of things—religious, political and commercial. The unsolvable crises on every hand show that the world's system has been 'weighed in the balances and found wanting,' and is soon to pass off the scene.—Dan. 5:27; 1 John 2:17.

Accordingly, the primary thing to prepare for is, not what man can do, but survival through God's destructive acts

against this wicked world. Prepare so as to have his favor and care over you. For if he is not watching over you, all other preparation is futile, wasted. (Ps. 127:1) If you prepare with pleasing God in mind, you need not worry about the hardships incident to this old world's collapse, nor even its opposition and persecution.

COPING WITH ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS

It is certain that all earth's population faces hardships of one kind or another. Nationalism, self-serving factions and political maneuvering, labor-management disputes, rationing, money devaluation, food shortages, famine in places—these have already brought great difficulties and will bring even greater distress. They surround us so universally that we cannot plan ahead to avoid them completely. But we can wisely use what we have now. How?

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, an overseer in the Christian congregation: "Give orders to those who are rich in the present system of things not to be high-minded, and to rest their hope, not on uncertain riches, but on God, who furnishes us all things richly for our enjoyment; to work at good, to be rich in fine works, to be liberal, ready to share, safely treasuring up for themselves a fine foundation for the future, in order that they may get

a firm hold on the real life.”—1 Tim. 6:17-19.

What is here said applies also to those not rich. All must learn to rely heavily on God. At the same time, we must think not only of self. This course is exactly opposite to the world's way of thinking but it gives one a *firm hold on the real life*.

Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, spoke comforting words for those serving God, but who may have worries about their everyday needs. He said: “Stop being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear. Does not the soul mean more than food and the body than clothing?” Then he concluded: “So never be anxious and say, ‘What are we to eat?’ or, ‘What are we to drink?’ or, ‘What are we to put on?’ For all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly Father knows you need all these things. Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you. So, never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties. Sufficient for each day is its own badness.”—Matt. 6:25-34; compare Hebrews 13:5, 6.

So, Christians have their answer to the economic problem as stated by Jesus. It stresses trust in God and thinking of others—being willing to share. When they do these things, God cares for them.

Of course, there are other pressures that must also be faced. Jesus said to his disciples: “You will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name.” (Matt. 24:9) How do you feel about facing persecution?

DO YOU FEAR PERSECUTION?

Of course, no one welcomes persecution, and everyone has fear of it. So if you have a normal fear, do not worry; you are not

abnormal. But do you have a morbid fear, a sickening dread, a fear that makes you feel like shrinking back? (Heb. 10:39) Then you should take steps to orient yourself properly in a spiritual way.

A good thing to do is to look at the Bible examples of men and women who underwent persecution successfully. We find that they gained great strength through prayer. Elijah was one. He was afraid and fled when King Ahab and his wife Jezebel sought to kill him. But in his despair he prayed to God, and Jehovah answered and strengthened him by an angel. Elijah then went back boldly to carry out his prophetic commission. (1 Kings chap. 19) King David maintained strength through many persecutions by prayer. Psalms 55 to 57 are some of such prayers. The writer of the book of Hebrews cites many examples of victorious endurers. He then concludes, calling attention to an even greater example for strong motivation to endurance:

“So, then, because we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, . . . let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, as we look intently at the Chief Agent and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. For the joy that was set before him he endured a torture stake, despising shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”—Hebrews chap. 11; 12: 1, 2.

Do you say, as some do, ‘I don’t know whether I could stand beatings, torture and privations’? Or, ‘When I read what happened to Jehovah’s witnesses in the Nazi concentration camps I’m just afraid I couldn’t hold onto my integrity if it happened to me’?

If you feel this way, ask yourself, What am I doing NOW? Christianity is a way of life; it is an everyday matter. Are you living according to Bible principles? Or are you dallying, putting off something you

know you should do? Are you pursuing material gain to the neglect of Christian responsibilities, associations and activities? Are you holding onto some habit or practice that holds you back? Are your associates those who have little or no interest in God's purposes?

What do you love? "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:21) Do you love ease and leisure to the point that it keeps you from doing what you know you should do? Do you love some form of indulgence that is against your spirituality? If such is the case, *get rid of it now*, or your heart will be wholly, or at least partly, there. Unless you are wholehearted for God you cannot maintain integrity under test.—Jas. 1:5-8.

However, it is not primarily a matter of what you are *not* doing. Rather, the question is, What are you *doing*? (Jas. 1:23-25) Jesus did not say to the "sheep" in the parable of the sheep and goats that they had merely refrained from doing harm to his cause, but what did he say? "I became hungry and *you gave me something to eat*; I got thirsty and *you gave me something to drink*. I was a stranger and *you received me hospitably*; naked, and *you clothed me*. I fell sick and *you looked after me*. I was in prison and *you came to me*. . . . To the extent that you DID it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me."—Matt. 25:35-40.

On the other hand, what did Jesus say to the "goats"? "To the extent that *you did not do it* to one of these least ones, you did not do it to me." (Matt. 25:45) He did not say that the "goats" necessarily practiced great wrongdoing, though, of course, some did. It was enough that they just did not care for Christ, his anointed, spirit-begotten brothers, or their message and work.

APPRECIATE THE SPIRITUAL FOOD NOW

Christian men and women who remained faithful through the fiery crucible of the Nazi concentration camps report that those who had a good foundation through Bible study and association with their brothers were the strong, enduring ones.

One of Jehovah's witnesses who spent more than ten years in Communist prisons, seven of them in solitary confinement in East Germany, said: "I am very thankful to Jehovah that with the help of his spirit I was able to remain spiritually strong these ten years of being cut off from his organization. I would like to encourage everyone to show proper appreciation for *all spiritual food* that is given us, since we do not know just how it will be of value to us at some time. If we regularly consume the spiritual food at the proper time, it will help us in times of special difficulties, in which we stand alone, to put our trust in Jehovah and endure steadfast on his side."

Jesus' advice, "Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness," really gives us the "formula" for survival. (Matt. 6:33) Seeking the Kingdom involves knowing its laws and its work and supporting it loyally. Seeking God's righteousness includes love for God and for those who have his spirit.

If we want God's help in trials, we must associate with his people *now* and listen to what is said at their gatherings, also expressing our own faith before them. We need to engage with Jehovah's people in bearing witness to the Kingdom. At the same time we will be helping other persons to prepare with us for what lies ahead. If we do this now, we can have a good conscience, knowing that we are preparing properly, laying a firm foundation for the real life.—1 Pet. 3:16, 17.

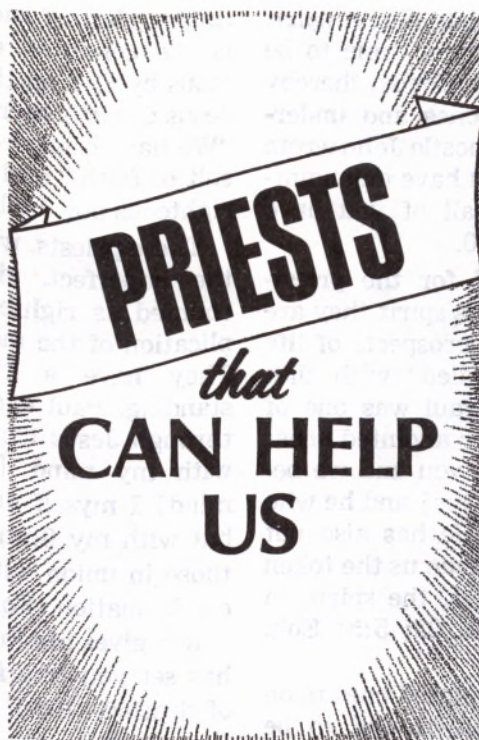
IT IS commonly acknowledged among medical men that the spiritual and mental welfare of the patient is as important to his recovery as is the medical therapy. Accordingly, there is a need for priests of God who can give aid and comfort to the sick as well as the healthy.

Of course, a priest on earth can do little to help a sick person physically. Neither can he remove the physical imperfections of the normally well person. For we are all imperfect, sinners. A priest of God, however, *can* give spiritual aid.

But God has arranged for priests who will restore to mankind both physical and spiritual health. How do we know?

We can know without doubt by taking a brief look into the arrangement that God has made. There we find such strong, conclusive evidence that it leaves no doubt that God's true priesthood is a *reality* and a surety, and that these priests will provide the help humans need. God preserved this record in the Bible for the very purpose of assuring us.

Of first interest to us is the High Priest. God's real High Priest is unique, because this One gave *his own human life* as a sacrifice. (John 6:51) By this means he could have something of real value as a purchasing price for mankind. That is, he could obtain the right to stand in the place that Adam had stepped aside from by his disobedience, giving his children a heritage of death. (Rom. 5:15, 17) Then, being



resurrected in the spirit, Jesus Christ could become a regenerative Father to those of the human race who would accept his sacrifice in faith and obedience.—1 Cor. 15:45; Isa. 53:10; John 3:16.

THE ANOINTING OF THE PRIESTHOOD

God established a priesthood with ancient Israel, primarily in order to foreshadow his real heavenly priesthood. He selected Aaron the brother of Moses, of the tribe of Levi, as high priest. Moses anointed Aaron with oil. Aaron could

then be called "the anointed one" or "Messiah." After this Moses proceeded to anoint Aaron's four sons as underpriests. (Ex. 40:1, 2, 12-16) Thereafter, as the priests died and were succeeded by their sons, only the high priest was anointed; the one anointing of Aaron's sons counted for all later underpriests. Just being invested with the official garments of an underpriest was considered sufficient.—Num. 3:1-3.

Now, all this was pictorial of the fact that Jesus Christ, at the time of his baptism, was anointed, not with oil, but with God's holy spirit. (Matt. 3:16; Acts 10:38) This anointing never had to be repeated, as in the case of ancient Israel's high priests, since Jesus has no successors, due to his being resurrected to immortal life by his Father.—1 Tim. 6:14-16.

Jehovah God, through his Son, poured out holy spirit upon his disciples on Pentecost day of 33 C.E., anointing them. (Mark 1:7, 8; John 1:33; Acts 2:1-4, 16, 17)

Thereafter, through Christ, God's spirit continued to flow, and others came to be immersed into the body of Christ, thereby also becoming anointed ones and underpriests. (Rom. 6:3) The apostle John wrote to fellow Christians: "You have an anointing from the holy one; all of you have knowledge."—1 John 2:20.

When selected by God for the priesthood and anointed by God's spirit they are also spirit-begotten, with prospects of life in heaven. They are "sealed" with that holy spirit. The apostle Paul was one of such and he wrote to other anointed ones: "He who guarantees that you and we belong to Christ [Anointed One] and he who has anointed us is God. He has also put his seal upon us and has given us the token of what is to come, that is, the spirit, in our hearts."—2 Cor. 1:21, 22; 5:5; Eph. 1:13, 14.

The total number of anointed ones upon whom the "seal" is finally found to be permanent is 144,000, according to Revelation 7:1-8. (Rev. 14:1-4) These are a "royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession." They are the ones whom Christ, by his blood, bought for God "out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation," and "made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God."—1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 5:9, 10.

Just as the ancient Hebrew priests had authority to eat certain portions of the sacrifices offered, so these "priests to our God" have authority to eat from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the altar of God's "will," which right the Jewish Levitical priests did not have because they rejected Jesus as the Messiah or Christ.—Heb. 13:10-15; John 6:48-58.

IN THE "COURTYARD"

This means that, while yet on earth, they are in the condition pictured by the courtyard (of the tabernacle and temples approved by God in the past) in which the

copper altar of sacrifice was located. This is the condition of being declared righteous by God on the basis of their faith in Jesus Christ's sacrifice. The apostle wrote: "We have been declared righteous as a result of faith," and "we have been declared righteous now by his blood."—Rom. 5:1, 9.

These priests, while on earth, are still in the imperfect, sin-laden flesh, yet are counted as righteous because of the application of the merit of Christ's sacrifice. They have a righteous, uncondemned standing. Paul exclaims: "Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, then, with my mind [the renewed Christian mind] I myself am a slave to God's law, but with my flesh to sin's law. Therefore those in union with Christ Jesus have no condemnation. For the law of that spirit which gives life in union with Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."—Rom. 7:25-8:2.

Since their righteousness is not in their own merit they cannot add anything to the merit of Christ's sacrifice. It alone has power to atone for sins. But they can offer to God through Christ the 'sacrifices of praise' and the doing of Christian good.—Heb. 13:15, 16.

IN THE "HOLY"

Being accounted as righteous humans, they are accepted by God and begotten as spiritual sons. In this way they are in a standing with God as priests, serving in the Holy compartment of the true spiritual temple not put up by human hands. (Heb. 9:11) While still in the flesh they enjoy spiritual enlightenment, as pictured by the Holy's golden lampstand. They eat spiritual food as typified by the two stacks of loaves of presentation on the golden table. They offer up prayers and fervent service to God as though offering incense on the golden incense altar in the Holy.

Also, while yet on earth, they perform priestly services for others, just as did the ancient Hebrew priests. Being spiritually enlightened and fed, they enlighten others in the understanding of God's Word, and feed them spiritual nourishment. They build up and encourage one another, and now help hundreds of thousands of others to clean up their lives and serve God with the hope of living on earth forever under the thousand-year reign of Christ and his kingly and priestly associates in heaven.

Many people are discouraged, down-trodden, despondent—in a very bad state spiritually. Many see the hopelessness of looking to this present system of things with its worldly religious priests, just as it got to be before ancient Jerusalem was destroyed. (Ezek. 9:4) The good news of the Kingdom as proclaimed by the true priests of God as they offer up zealous service to Him helps others to a hope of life. They are taught how to renew their lives to come into harmony with God. As ambassadors of God these priests help others to become reconciled to him. (2 Cor. 5:20) Thus they do a very valuable, beneficial spiritual healing work.

RESURRECTION TO HEAVEN

These spirit-anointed ones look forward to an actual entrance into heaven in due time. As one of their fellow priests expressed it: "This hope we have as an anchor for the soul, both sure and firm, and it enters in within the curtain, where a forerunner has entered in our behalf, Jesus, who has become a high priest according to the manner of Melchizedek forever." —Heb. 6:19, 20.

Jesus died, giving up his flesh, as represented by the ancient high priest's entering through the curtain into the Most Holy. "Therefore, brothers," says the inspired writer at Hebrews 10:19-22, "since

we have boldness for the way of entry into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, which he inaugurated for us as a new and living way through the curtain, that is, his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with true hearts in the full assurance of faith."

When, after serving faithfully until death, they are brought to life in the "first resurrection," they will be admitted into the heavenly Most Holy. They will enter into the presence of God, not to do like the High Priest Jesus Christ in presenting the merit of his perfect human sacrifice, but to serve with their High Priest in extending the benefits of Christ's sacrifice to needy mankind. (Rev. 20:6) Then they will administer to earthly persons, not only spiritual healing, but also physical healing.

BENEFITS TO ALL MANKIND

This is good news for all mankind, for themselves and for their dead ones, who will be resurrected to live again on earth. For the apostle John wrote assuringly to fellow underpriests: "My little children, I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's."—1 John 2:1, 2.

IN COMING ISSUES

- Preventing a Generation Gap in Your Home.
- Is the Use of the Rosary Scriptural?
- The Purpose of the Transfiguration.

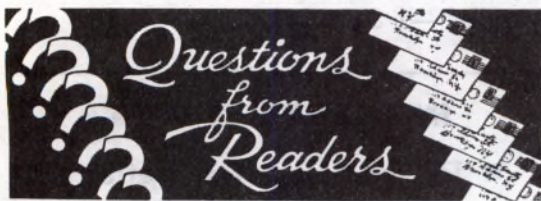
Accordingly, Jesus Christ is not going to stop with the application of the merit of his sacrifice to his 144,000 underpriests. He, like his Father, is not partial. (Acts 10:34) He has purchased the entire human race. He will not let any of his sacrifice go unused. The scales of justice would not be balanced if he applied his sacrificial benefits to only a few. Since he purchased all, it is his joy and obligation to help as many from all mankind as will express faith and obedience to attain to everlasting life in perfection.—John 3:16.

What joy is in store, therefore, for the whole earth, when the righteous, perfected kings and priests minister to mankind! All of them, including their High Priest, have experienced all that living as a human means. (Heb. 4:15) They fully realize mankind's situation, their feelings and desires. No matter what kind of life a person may have lived in the past, he can, when he hears of God's arrangement through Christ, receive priestly help. For "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8) When on earth, his underpriests preached to all sorts of people, including some very vile sinners, who listened to the truth and changed their

lives. They were made clean by faith and they manifested that faith in works according to God's Word.—Col. 3:5-9.

So the priests that God has anointed and whom he glorifies in heaven know mankind's every need. The underpriests have the compassion and mercy that Christ has, because they have been conformed to his image. (Rom. 8:29) They will have the power to see that God's will is carried out, to have the earth peopled in righteousness. (Gen. 1:28; Ps. 150:6) Therefore all who love life and desire what is right and good will receive the full benefits of this priesthood. This means everlasting life.—Rev. 21:1-5.

Right now we need the help of this priesthood to survive the coming "great tribulation," which will destroy this system of things. (Matt. 24:21) If we wish to be among those who start off the new, righteous human society that will receive back the dead and see the earth become a paradise, we must cooperate with God's priestly representatives now. This we can do by listening to the good news of the Kingdom as proclaimed by them, learning of God's purposes and taking action in conforming our lives thereto.



● What does 1 Thessalonians 4:17 mean when it says, 'We the living who are surviving will be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air'?—U.S.A.

The reference here is to the joint heirs of Jesus Christ who are living at the time of his presence in Kingdom power.

The particular verse in question is best understood in the light of the subject the apostle Paul was discussing when writing to the Thessalonians. We read: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant concerning those who are sleeping in death; that you may not sorrow just as the rest also do who have no hope. For if our faith is that Jesus died and rose again, so, too, those who have fallen asleep in death through Jesus God will bring with him. For this is what we tell you by Jehovah's word, that we the living who survive to the presence of the Lord shall in no way precede those who have fallen asleep in death; because the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a com-

manding call, with an archangel's voice and with God's trumpet, and those who are dead in union with Christ will rise first. Afterward we the living who are surviving will, together with them, be caught away in clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord. Consequently keep comforting one another with these words."—1 Thess. 4:13-18.

It can be seen that the point under consideration is the resurrection of Christ's joint heirs. All his joint heirs who died before his presence in Kingdom power remained asleep in death. After the start of his presence, however, all these dead ones would be raised to immortal, spirit life, to be united with their Lord. What a comforting thought this was for Christians at Thessalonica in view of the tribulations they were experiencing!—1 Thess. 1:6.

But there is no Scriptural reason for us to conclude that Jesus was to descend from heaven literally and that the resurrection and glorification of those sleeping in death would be visible to humans on earth. Why not? Because Jesus Christ, as a spirit person in heaven, "dwells in unapproachable light." "Not one of men has seen or can see" him as such. (1 Tim. 6:16) His situation is therefore comparable to that of his heavenly Father. (Heb. 1:2, 3) So Jesus Christ 'descends' or 'comes down' in the same sense that the Bible speaks of Jehovah God as doing so. For example, the Holy Scriptures say about Jehovah: "He proceeded to bend the heavens down and to descend; and thick gloom was beneath his feet." (2 Sam. 22:10) "Look! Jehovah is going forth from his place, and he will certainly come down and tread upon earth's high places." (Mic. 1:3) Manifestly, God did not literally leave his dwelling place in the invisible heavens, but he turned his attention to humans on earth, demonstrating his power toward them. Similarly, at his presence, as the apostle Paul indicated, Jesus Christ would turn his attention downward to this earth and exercise his power to resurrect his joint heirs sleeping in death.

Was their resurrection to be visible to human eyes? This simply could not be. Why not? Because they are 'united with Jesus Christ in the likeness of his resurrection.' (Rom. 6:5) They experience a resurrection like his. And of Jesus' resurrection, the Scriptures tell us that he was "made alive in the spirit." (1 Pet. 3:18) To be seen by his disciples, Jesus had to ma-

terialize a body of flesh. This served to prove to them that he had indeed been made alive. (Acts 1:3) His resurrection, though, was invisible to human eyes. The watchmen at Jesus' tomb "trembled and became as dead men," not on account of seeing Jesus resurrected, but on account of the angel that rolled the stone away from the tomb.—Matt. 28:3, 4.

Likewise, the resurrection of the joint heirs of Jesus Christ is invisible. In their case, however, the Scriptures give no indication that they will remain in the vicinity of the earth and immediately after their resurrection reveal themselves to be alive to fellow believers.

Against this background, we can appreciate that the reference to the living being "caught away" could not mean that their bodies of flesh and blood will begin floating upward to meet the Lord Jesus Christ in what some people speak of as "the rapture." He will not be in the literal air on a literal cloud, for he "dwells in unapproachable light" in the highest heavens, the invisible spirit realm. Nevertheless, the being "caught away" must relate to something that actually happens in connection with the resurrection.

Could this relate to their being "caught away" from the doomed world of mankind? Could it refer to their being elevated, 'seated in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus' because of having been assigned with him to the heavenly inheritance? (Eph. 1:3; 2:6) No, this was not what Paul was discussing in his letter to the Thessalonians.

The reference to being "caught away" was a point that Christians at Thessalonica could use to comfort one another when Jesus' joint heirs would die. Obviously, the fact that the joint heirs are now separated from the doomed world is not the real source of comfort when there is a death in the congregation of God's people. Then, too, being separated in this way and united with Jesus in a spiritual sense simply could not mean being 'always with the Lord.' Once Christ's joint heirs finish their earthly course, that condition is no more, as they will then at resurrection be *personally* with their Lord and that forever. And, of course, the doomed world will also pass away. Furthermore, a person might now on earth be separated from the world for a time but later lose out on the reward of being with the Lord Jesus Christ because of unfaithfulness.—Rev. 2:10.

Accordingly, Paul's words to the Thessalonians point out that there is something different about the resurrection of those dying before Christ's presence in Kingdom power and those completing their earthly course and dying during that presence. This difference may be discerned from Revelation 14:13, where we read: "Happy are the dead who die in union with the Lord from this time onward [that is, since his coming in Kingdom glory]. Yes, says the spirit, let them rest from their labors, for the things they did go right with them." While Christ's joint heirs dying before his presence had to sleep in death, those who finish their earthly course during that presence do not have to do so. They are immediately raised to heavenly life. They cease from their earthly labors and enter right into heavenly service. As invisible spirit persons, they are "caught away," as if in clouds (a symbol of invisibility), to be forever with their invisible Lord. This is also in harmony with the apostle Paul's words to the Corinthians: "We shall not all fall asleep in death [that is, remaining in the death state

while awaiting a resurrection in the future], but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."—1 Cor. 15:51, 52.

Thus, what Paul wrote at 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 was, essentially, this encouraging message: Anointed Christians who die before the presence of the Lord sleep in death. When that awaited presence begins, they are raised to heavenly life as immortal spirit creatures. Anointed Christians alive during that presence, however, do not sleep in death. At death they are immediately changed, being taken to heaven to be with Christ forever.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

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