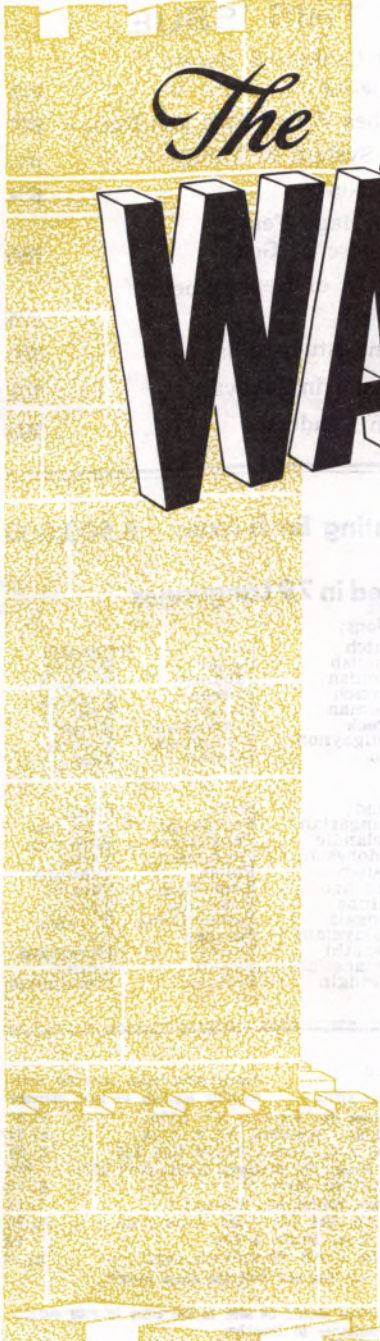




The **WATCHTOWER**

**Concern About Others
—A Sorely Needed Quality**

**Africa's Churches Weigh
Past and Future**

**The King's Marriage Feast
in the Purpose of God**

NOVEMBER 15, 1974

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

November 15, 1974
Vol. 95, Number 22

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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Concern About Others

—A SORELY NEEDED QUALITY

SINCERE concern about the needs or well-being of others is becoming ever more rare these days. What accounts for this unhappy state of affairs?

Doubtless, some people have become less concerned about others because of the wrongs they themselves suffer. Others may once have tried to be helpful, only to have their efforts misunderstood. As a result, they now take the attitude, "What's the use?" Further, not a few envy the success of greedy persons and so imitate their lack of concern. And no doubt the selfishness continually portrayed in movies, on TV, in newspapers and magazines tends to make people become less concerned about others.

This lack of concern commonly manifests itself right within the family circle. For example, women are known to be more often plagued with insomnia than are men. Yet who has not seen men who manifest little concern about this problem of their wives? Could it be that you, if a husband, come short in this or in some similar respect?

On the other hand, it must be admitted that many wives fall short in showing real concern for their husbands. If you are a wife, are you among those women who put their luxuries ahead of their husband's necessities? Such lack of concern adds to a husband's burdens and, in some cases, has caused him to have a heart attack.

And who has not observed parents betraying a lack of concern as to the habits their children are cultivating? Not that youths are wholly free from blame, but the problems all too often find their roots in parental indifference.

There are many other areas where concern for

others is lacking. It shows up so often in bad manners. Women rudely push ahead in mad scrambles

at department-store sales; younger folks push aside the elderly and the infirm. And what is widespread graffiti and vandalism but gross lack of concern for the property and interests of others?

Some persons are very choosy as to those for whom they show concern. They express it only when a close friend or one of their immediate family is involved. Others fence in their concern by boundaries of nationality, color or race. Thus many whites are quite unconcerned about the plight of blacks, even as many blacks evince unconcern as to what may be happening to a white person. And too often we read of an individual beaten by muggers right on a public street, with a crowd standing around without raising a voice or a hand in defense of the victim.

In fact, all such lack of concern for others goes back to the very first human family. Certainly Adam had little concern for his wife's feelings when he referred to Eve as "the woman you gave me," blaming her for his eating of the forbidden fruit. And who is not familiar with the expression "Am I my brother's keeper?" That callous remark was made by Cain, the firstborn son of Adam, when God asked him about the whereabouts of his brother Abel, whom he had killed. True, few would think of committing murder, but what about harboring hatred? It is easy to do that if you have been treated unjustly by someone. But did you

know that the Bible says that "everyone who hates his brother is a murderer"? —Gen. 3:12; 4:3-11; 1 John 3:15, *New English Bible*.

No doubt the ideal of showing concern for others in need is the "good Samaritan," of one of Jesus' parables. He stands in striking contrast to two smug religionists who had no pity nor empathy for a fellow human who had been beaten and robbed and left helpless by the roadside. The good Samaritan showed genuine concern. He treated the wounds of the victim, put him on his donkey, brought him to an inn and agreed to pay for the expenses involved. —Luke 10:29-37.

WHY SO VITAL?

Why is concern for others so vitally important? Because God commands that we love our neighbors as we love ourselves, even as the "good Samaritan" did. Surely we appreciate concern being shown to us when we are in need. Should we not, therefore, also show concern for others when they are in need? —Mark 12:31; Luke 6:31.

More than that, being concerned about others gives us a good conscience. It also gives us a sense of satisfaction of having done our duty. It is a form of giving, and giving brings with it great happiness. —Acts 20:35.

Showing concern in little things as well as in big things makes for good relations with others. We can help others in danger, or when illness or other tragedy strikes. But we can also show concern in our everyday relations. For example, when driving an auto, concern will make us careful to avoid accidents; it will keep us from being a "road hog"; and it will cause us to show consideration, as when we slow down so that a driver can enter into our main thoroughfare from a side street.

Are we living in an apartment? Then we can show concern for others by not playing our record player, radio or TV too loud; also by being careful that our parties do not get too noisy late at night. And in wintertime we can show concern by keeping our sidewalks free from ice and snow.

A fine example of concern for others was given by the German witnesses of Jehovah when released from concentration camps back in 1945. To mention but one instance: When 220 of them left the Sachsenhausen concentration camp under heavy guard, they faced a 120-mile trek. Circumstances were such that they traveled in a group. They managed to get a few small carts on which they placed the weakest of their members, and which the stronger ones pulled along. As a result, in a death march in which more than 10,000 inmates lost their lives, not one of the Witnesses died. —1974 *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*.

It is because of their unselfish concern that Christian witnesses of Jehovah keep calling at the doors of their neighbors. They know that these are the "last days" and so they urge people to flee to a place of safety before it is too late. In this they are like ancient Lot, who warned his sons-in-law to flee with him from Sodom and Gomorrah. The record tells us that "in the eyes of his sons-in-law he seemed like a man who was joking." But Lot was not joking and neither are the Christian witnesses of Jehovah joking today! —Gen. 19: 12-29; Rev. 18:4.

So we encourage you, not only to show concern for others, but also to benefit from the concern that these Witnesses manifest regarding your prospect for survival of the coming "great tribulation" to an opportunity for everlasting life.



AFRICA'S CHURCHES WEIGH PAST AND FUTURE

"WE HAVE had people professing to be Christians—holding the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other. These are the people who have been responsible for the human suffering this continent has experienced since the days of the slave trade."

This statement was made by Zambian president Dr. K. D. Kaunda in the opening address of the All-Africa Conference of Churches, held in Lusaka, Zambia, in the late spring of this year.

WHAT THE PAST REVEALS

History shows the background against which this expression was made. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, so-called Christian nations of Europe began a scramble for territory in Africa, eventually resulting in their slicing up almost the entire continent into colonies.

By 1920 every square mile of the African continent—with the exception of the independent states of Ethiopia, Liberia and South Africa—was under colonial rule or dominance or was claimed by one or the other of the European colonial powers.

The pattern for opening up the African continent to colonization was similar to the earlier pattern in the western hemisphere. Religious missionaries often served as pioneers for the political state that followed.

Pointing this up is a review in the *New York Times* (August 15, 1974) of a recent book on the life of missionary and

African explorer David Livingstone. It shows that Livingstone urged the establishing of white communities in Africa to 'spread Christianity' and to open up the country for trade. He lectured English merchants "on the opportunities for profit in Africa." Though Livingstone opposed slavery, the book review sums up the result of this missionary's nineteenth-century explorations, saying: "Instead of opening Africa for Christianity, he paved the way, at first, for the slavers who followed him into previously undiscovered territories. Also, 'the introduction of God's word was to presage the destruction of God's creatures.' After the Bible, came the gun."

Colonization brought many serious problems, some of them having enduring effects for the peoples of Africa. As the 1974 *Encyclopædia Britannica* states:

"Christians of the West had often exploited the developing nations, looted their resources, enslaved or demeaned their populations. . . ." "Boundary lines between colonies were often drawn arbitrarily, with little or no attention to ethnic unity, regional economic ties, tribal migratory patterns, or even natural boundaries." "[This] had long-lasting effects harmful to [African] unity and an even more inhibiting effect on African economic development."

Although, particularly since the end of World War II, the European colonies have largely disappeared and there are now over forty independent states in Africa, many

Africans retain a sense of distrust of the religions that helped to open the way for such colonization efforts and domination.

CONFERENCE STRESSES INDEPENDENCE

All of this may explain why there is such a large number of independent denominations within the All-Africa Conference of Churches. The total number of churches represented at the Lusaka meeting was 103, including major Protestant bodies, the Greek Orthodox and Coptic churches, and numerous other, smaller religions.

Religious independence was, in fact, encouraged at this Conference assembly, the first one organized entirely by African church leaders with no outside direction. Many speakers urged that an authentic African religion, one that could not be viewed as a "foreign importation" or a "white man's religion," was needed. A Nigerian member, Mr. Kofi Appiah-Kubi, said:

"If churches in Africa are to grow and develop as African churches and not as mere extensions of foreign churches, as many are today, then they must be allowed to take root in the soil of Africa where they are planted."

In the same vein, a recent bulletin of the Conference states that "the people of Africa, particularly the people of the church, must break off the shackles of cultural domination, reach into the depths of mother Africa and awaken her creative genius. When this is done, Africa will be ready to assert herself to the world and contribute something new and different towards the salvation of humanity."

Showing the extent to which some feel this Africanization process should go, one churchman in Zambia has suggested that in place of the bread and wine customarily used at the "Lord's Evening Meal," the use of *nshima*, a locally made maize-meal porridge, and *munkoyo*, a locally brewed

beverage made from a root, should be substituted. Noteworthy, too, was the resolve by the Conference to urge its member churches to undertake a serious study of Islam, of African traditional religions and other ideologies, in their development of distinctive African worship.

What about financial dependence on foreign sources? The finance committee told the assembly that the Conference would have to look to outside sources for 80 percent of its 1975 budget. But there was also a call to break free from such dependence on foreign benefactors. An assembly statement declared that "the contribution of the African church cannot be adequately made in our world if the church is not liberated and truly national. To achieve this liberation, the church will have to bring a halt to the financial and manpower resources—the receiving of money and personnel—from its foreign relationships. Only then can the church firmly assert itself in its mission to Africa."

The *Zambia Daily Mail* reported Cannon Burgess Carr of Liberia, the secretary-general of the Conference, as putting matters even more bluntly, saying: "Churches in Africa can do without the services of missionaries and expatriate church workers."

'UNEQUIVOCAL SUPPORT TO THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS'

A major conference topic was the issue of 'African liberation,' including the support of revolutionary armies. These operate in parts of Africa that are under the rule of governments formed principally of whites (who usually are a minority group in the country). Secretary-General Carr, according to the *Daily Mail*, said that 'the church must give its unequivocal support to the liberation movements because they had helped it to re-discover a new and radical appreciation of the cross.' In the past four years the Conference has donated

\$125,000 to such liberation movements. The assembly made a formal statement, saying:

"We affirm our solidarity with the liberation movement in the oppressed countries and call upon Christians both within and outside our continent to end all political, economic, military and any other support or structure of oppression in these countries."

The Roman Catholic Church, which has millions of members in Africa, is not a member of the All-Africa Conference of Churches. It came in for criticism as not being in harmony with the liberation movements espoused by the Conference. Interestingly, the National Council of Lay Apostolates (a Catholic organization) responded to this charge by publishing a statement to the effect that most of the liberation movements were financed by Catholics and that the Conference should understand that on such matters as social justice and national independence there was total agreement between the Catholic Church and the churches that are members of the Conference.—*Times of Zambia*, May 16, 1974.

SEARCH FOR UNITY

Church union and cooperation also received serious attention at the assembly. Although agreed on the need for a distinctively African church and on their support of liberation movements, the delegates gave little indication of any definite step toward actual religious unification among the more than 100 members of the Conference.

Dr. Phillip Potter, secretary-general of the World Council of Churches, addressed the Lusaka assembly, and the *Times of Zambia* reports him as saying that 'much of Africa's history has been bedeviled by tribalism and tribal wars—even up to today. Many allowed themselves to continue the unjust colonial system by pursuit of

self-gain and power at the expense of the vast majority of the people.' He added that 'some churches were continuing the divisions brought to Africa,' and that 'it was common to hear a churchman saying to another of a different denomination: "You worship God in your way, but we worship in this way."'

FINDING THE WAY TO TRUE FREEDOM AND UNITY

The Conference reflected concern over conditions that have developed especially since the nineteenth century. Actually, Christianity reached Africa long before the nineteenth century. Back in the first century, the Bible book of Acts shows, an Ethiopian official, evidently an educated and intelligent man, accepted Christianity while on his way back to Africa from Jerusalem. (Acts 8:26-38) There is nothing to show that this early introduction of genuine Christianity to Africa was used by the Christians of that time as a springboard for commercial or political exploitation.

Does the past history of Africa really call for the future development of a distinctive brand of Christianity, a special continental variety? Is true Christianity to be held responsible for the grave wrongs committed during the past one hundred years? Or are those wrongs really the by-product of a departure from genuine Christianity by organizations merely claiming to represent Christ? The theme of the Lusaka assembly of the All-Africa Conference of Churches was: "Living No Longer for Ourselves . . . but for Christ." What, then, were Christ's own example and teachings by which his true disciples should live?

Christ Jesus said that 'his kingdom was no part of this world,' and he nowhere authorized his disciples to serve as fore-runners for the world's political systems

or their style of "civilization." (John 18: 36; 15:19) They were, instead, to point to God's kingdom through Christ Jesus as the means by which all lovers of righteousness, of whatever family, tribe, nation or continent, "will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Rom. 8:21; Rev. 7:9, 10; 14:6.

Those true disciples thus pointed to a marvelous liberation, one that will not only free persons from human oppression and exploitation, but also free them from the enslavement to imperfection, sickness and death itself. (Rev. 21:4) In announcing and advocating God's Messianic government of liberation, Christ's true disciples would use, not carnal, but spiritual weapons, weapons that never harm the innocent nor ever bring brutal suffering and grief. (2 Cor. 10:4, 5; Eph. 6:10-17) As 'fine soldiers of Christ Jesus' they would not try to mix Christianity with commer-

cialism, even as the inspired apostle Paul counseled his coworker and fellow missionary Timothy.—2 Tim. 2:3, 4.

Are there persons today in Africa and throughout the rest of this planet who live by these principles of true Christianity and who dwell in unity, with no barriers of tribalism, racism, nationalism or sectarianism?

Thousands of Africans of all tribes and of all parts of the continent today are associating with Jehovah's Christian witnesses for the very reason that they see them putting these principles to work in their lives. By so doing they are not embracing the "foreign importation" of a "white man's religion," but are embracing the worship of the Creator of heaven and earth, Jehovah God, the One who makes no distinctions and "is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him." —Acts 10:34, 35.

THE END OF A SYSTEM OF THINGS

IT IS no small event for a system of things to be destroyed after lasting for 1,582 years. This is especially true when the system is one that God himself established. The system we speak of is that of the ancient Jewish nation. Why did it end, and what brought about that end in the way that it came?

It is common knowledge that God established the system of things under the Law covenant through the lawgiver Moses in

1513 B.C.E. This system included many features—its various sabbaths, its regulations for religious cleanness, its inheritance arrangements, the temple at Jerusalem with its priesthood and sacrifices and other things. All of this was completely destroyed in the year 70 of our Common Era. With it went the Jewish hope that a king of the line of David

would sit on the throne again in Jerusalem and defeat oppressive Gentile forces.

The reasons for and the manner of Jerusalem's destruction were explained in a prophetic statement by God's greatest prophet, Jesus Christ, only a few days before he was put to death by the very power that later destroyed the Jewish system of things. But, paradoxically, it was the Jews who delivered him over to that power and who cried out for his execution.

A TERRIBLE END

Jesus' prophecy was given as a result of a question posed by his apostles. They were showing Jesus the magnificence of the temple buildings. Viewing them, he replied: "Do you not behold all these things? Truly I say to you, By no means will a stone be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down."—Matt. 24:1, 2.

Two days prior to this, Jesus had foretold the manner in which the city with its temple would be destroyed. He addressed Jerusalem, saying:

"The days will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side, and they will dash you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in you, because you did not discern the time of your being inspected."—Luke 19:43, 44.

This was disturbing even to Christ's apostles, who were circumcised Jews. They did not yet understand that Christ would reign, not from an earthly throne in Jerusalem, but from heaven. Jesus' statement indicated that God would no longer deal with earthly Jerusalem, but they did not yet fully grasp it. (Acts 1:6) Also, Jesus' words meant that the priests of the house of Aaron would be put out of their jobs. Why?

The reason why the end of all these things was drawing near was that Jehovah purposed to bring in better things

through his Messiah. The animal sacrifices and the other features of the Law, with the prophecies, had pointed the faithful Israelites to Jesus Christ and served to provide unmistakable credentials and identification of him as the Messiah. But such sacrifices were not the things Jehovah *really* desired, because they could not remove sins. (Heb. 10:5-10) They had to come to an end. Christ's sacrifice would make them obsolete.

That the end of the Jewish priesthood would come during the conclusion of the Jewish systems of things is further supported at Hebrews 9:26-28, which points out that Jesus did not have to make repeated sacrifices of himself, and says: "Otherwise, he would have to suffer often from the founding of the world. But now he has manifested himself once for all time *at the conclusion of the systems of things* to put sin away through the sacrifice of himself."—Compare 1 Corinthians 10:11.

But why such a terrible end for Jerusalem? God's purpose to end the Law with Christ did not require this drastic action. (Rom. 10:4) In fact, faithful Christians from Pentecost onward (after Christ's sacrifice had been accepted by Jehovah in heaven) did not think it their duty to tear down the temple or the city of Jerusalem. They recognized the temple as an instrument of God that had fulfilled his purpose. They did not disrespect it. But they knew that Jesus Christ in heaven was their High Priest, because a new covenant had been instituted, and consequently there was a change of the priesthood. (Heb. 7:11-14) Even many of the Jewish priests accepted Christ as the real sacrifice for sins and realized that their job at the temple had fulfilled its purpose and was no longer operative in Jehovah's eyes. (Acts 6:7) Why, then, such a *violent* destruction for the Jews' city and temple?

Jesus had shown why when he said to Jerusalem, while in the temple:

"Here I am sending forth to you prophets and wise men and public instructors. Some of them you will kill and impale, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city; that there may come upon you all the righteous blood spilled on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly I say to you, All these things will come upon this generation. Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her,—how often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks together under her wings! But you people did not want it. Look! Your house is abandoned to you. For I say to you, You will by no means see me from henceforth until you say, 'Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah's name!'"—Matt. 23:34-39.

THINGS POINTING TO THE END

Naturally, this declaration by Jesus brought to the apostles' minds the question: "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matt. 24:3) Jesus, in answer, described the events that would lead up to the destruction of Jerusalem:

"Look out that nobody misleads you; for many will come on the basis of my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will mislead many. You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars; see that you are not terrified. For these things must take place, but the end is not yet."—Matt. 24:4-6.

Jews would arise, not claiming to be Jesus returned in the flesh, but holding themselves forth as the promised Messiah or Christ. The Jewish revolt against the Romans in 66 C.E. was such a messianic effort. But none of these were evidences of the "presence" or *parousia* of Christ (which term is applied in the Greek Scriptures to his return in Kingdom power).

Also, there would be a number of wars

during this period that would affect the Jewish nation. But Christ's disciples were not to be terrified into taking premature action. Jesus went on to say of this period:

"For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another. All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress."—Matt. 24:7, 8.

These things would be unmistakable indications to Christians that the end was getting near. Also, specific things would come upon his disciples because they announced the true Messiah and followed his example. Jesus continued:

"Then people will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name. Then, also, many will be stumbled and will betray one another and will hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and mislead many; and because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off. But he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved. And this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."—Matt. 24:9-14.

This was fulfilled as the general lawlessness and lack of love for God increased. The Jews, wherever they had been scattered, claimed to serve God when they persecuted Christ's disciples. Nevertheless, the Christians preached the good news of the kingdom in all the inhabited earth, particularly in the nations to which the Jews had been dispersed.—Col. 1:6, 23.

THE EVIDENCE OF THE END'S IMMINENCE

Then Jesus specified the particular thing that would indicate the close nearness of the end of the Jewish system of things. He said:

"Therefore, when you catch sight of the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in a holy place, (let the reader use

discernment,) then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains. . . . for then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short."—Matt. 24:15-22.

This would be a sure warning for Christians to get out of Jerusalem and the province of Judea *then*, at top speed, with no unnecessary burdens, by direct route.

What was this "disgusting thing," and how did it stand in a "holy place"? In reaction to the Jews' revolt in October 66 C.E., the Roman general Gallus came down from Syria during the Jewish Festival of Booths and surrounded Jerusalem with "encamped armies." After a fight, he brought his troops into the city of Jerusalem, in fact, he went so far as to undermine a section of the temple wall. This certainly was an attack on that which the Jews considered holy. But Gallus withdrew suddenly and unexpectedly. The Jews, coming out of the city, followed and harassed his army, capturing siege weapons and returning to Jerusalem even more confident of their security.

As soon as Gallus withdrew, the Christians in Jerusalem left the city for the mountainous region across the Jordan River in the province of Perea. They were saved from death when, four years later, General Titus captured Jerusalem.

SOME "FLESH" SAVED

In the interim period between 66 and 70 C.E., there was great turmoil in Jerusalem, several factions fighting to control the city. Then, in 70 C.E. General Titus, son of Emperor Vespasian, came up against the city, surrounded it with a fortification of pointed stakes, as Jesus had foretold, and brought the inhabitants to a pitiable state of starvation. It appeared that, if the siege lasted much longer, "no flesh" inside

the city would survive. But, as Jesus had prophesied concerning this "great tribulation," the greatest Jerusalem had ever experienced, "unless Jehovah had cut short the days, no flesh would be saved. But on account of the chosen ones whom he has chosen he has cut short the days."—Mark 13:19, 20.

Providentially, the siege lasted only 142 days. But even then, plague, pestilence and the sword devoured 1,100,000, leaving 97,000 survivors to suffer being sold into slavery or into gladiatorship in the Roman arena. Thus, Jehovah's "chosen ones" had fled from the doomed city. On that account Jehovah did not have to prolong the time of distress, but could execute vengeance in a short time, sparing 97,000 persons, thus saving some "flesh."

In this manner the Jewish system of things came to its end. No longer did they have their temple. All their records were destroyed, so that no Jew today can prove a priestly lineage for himself, or that he is of the kingly tribe of Judah. Jesus Christ stands out as the only one who has his lineage proven to be from Judah through David. He alone is the rightful King. (Ezek. 21:27) He holds the office of High Priesthood for all humankind, not according to descent from Aaron, but "according to the manner of Melchizedek," by direct appointment from his Father Jehovah God.—Heb. 7:15-17.

But the answer to the apostles' question, "When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" required even further answer, because Jesus' *parousia*, his "presence" in Kingdom power, did not occur at the time of Jerusalem's destruction. Therefore, Jesus spoke about the end of a greater system of things, giving much more information as to the "sign." This will be discussed in a subsequent issue.

Insight on the News

● The Young Men's Christian Association, better known as the YMCA or the Y, began as a means for providing rooming and recreation amid "Christian" surroundings. A report in the "National Observer" (September 7, 1974), however, indicates that the YMCA faces a serious problem: homosexuality.

YMCA Rooming— How Safe?

One prominent homosexual is quoted as saying: "Ys are ideal because there's a largely male atmosphere, often younger men, . . . and often men who are open—and not merely receptive but willing—to seek sexual encounters." One reader's comment (in a later issue of the newspaper) indicates the problem is not new. A member of the YMCA for six years in the 1920's, he writes that he gave up the membership "after I was robbed several times, assaulted twice, and propositioned many times."

Though protesting any implication that the problem is major, one Executive Director of the YMCA wrote: "I, as well as all other YMCA professionals, recognize that we do have the problem of the homosexual in the ranks of the YMCA membership." A New York director said: "We can't make room checks every night. . . . Sometimes we gulp and admit those we might disapprove of, realizing that we can provide them not only with a bed but with a chance for counseling and other help."

Counseling immoral persons is one thing, but inviting them to sleep in your midst while they carry on their immorality is another. Did the officials of the Y never read that the apostle Paul warned: "A little leaven ferments the whole lump"?—1 Cor. 5:6.

● Scriptural evidence indicates that Abraham's son Isaac was not weaned until the age of five.* Some find that hard to believe. Interesting, therefore, is a report in "Science" magazine (September 13, 1974) on the practice among nursing mothers of the !Kung people of southern Africa today. (The exclamation point represents a clicking sound in their language.) The report says that, being a nomadic people and having no soft food for their babies, !Kung mothers

Weaning— At What Age?

* See the book "Aid to Bible Understanding."

"nurse them for 3 or 4 years." Accompanying the article is a picture of one mother nursing a child who is "nearly 5 years old." Yes, even in minor details the Bible record is sound.

● Decades ago, the transfusing of one person's blood into another's veins became a common practice. Then the transplanting of organs came into vogue. Where might this all lead? An article by the president of the Institute of Society, Ethics and the Life Sciences, entitled "Harvesting

One Thing Leads to Another

the Dead," gives some idea.

According to the article, many "scientific and theological groups" favor a redefining of death. The new definition would label as "dead" anyone whose brain functions had fully ceased, producing a state of "irreversible coma." What then? The suggestion is made that, although now legally "dead," the bodies could still be kept breathing and functioning through respirators in special hospitals, if desired, for a period of years. This could open the way for "farms of cadavers which require feeding and maintenance, in order to be harvested." These "neomorts"—legally "dead," but actually living bodies—could then be used, the article says, for training medical students and interns, who could practice surgical procedures, including amputations. Major organs could be catalogued and computerized for ready availability in transplants. The 'legally dead' persons could be "drained periodically" to supply blood for transfusion.

Admittedly, the article presents these only as possibilities. However, interestingly, the author says that the initial precedent for all this is the "blood donation" and the "precedent in blood of commercialization." In contrast, the Bible inculcates respect for people's bodies, even for those actually dead (not just in an "irreversible coma"). (Gen. 23:1-6; 49:29; 50:24-26; 1 Sam. 31:8-13) But men today contemplate wholesale 'cannibalizing' of bodies. And even that seems too mild a term—for cannibals never maintained "farms" of human bodies to be "harvested." This shows where things can lead once men begin to violate Bible standards, including its prohibition of taking the blood of another creature into one's own body.—See Deuteronomy 12:23; Acts 15:28, 29.

THE whole world is in trouble. There is no reason to doubt that the system of things under which it lives is in the foretold "time of the end."

For the past sixty years the "kingdom of the heavens," the "kingdom of God," has been proclaimed in all quarters of the globe as the "only hope" for distressed mankind. But the vast majority of mankind does not believe in this divine remedy. The people in general do not want it. They are like a nation of people that, nineteen hundred years ago, did not want the "kingdom of the heavens," when it was offered to them. Their turning down this valid offer did not result in good for their nation. In the light of their national experience, the turning away from the "kingdom of the heavens" today will be of no benefit to those who prefer human schemes and arrangements to this "only hope" for our troubled world.—Dan. 12:4; Matt. 3:1, 2; 4:17; Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 6:20.

² Long ago, the Roman Empire was only in its first century of rule over the Middle East when the "kingdom of the heavens," the "kingdom of God," began to be proclaimed there. The year 33 of our Com-

1. What has been preached to the nations for sixty years now, and what historic example shows whether their reaction to this will be of benefit?

2. When, where and to whom did the "kingdom of the heavens" begin to be preached, and to what nation was it to be given?

THE KING'S MARRIAGE FEAST

IN

The Purpose of God

"The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man, a king, that made a marriage feast for his son. And he sent forth his slaves to call those invited to the marriage feast, but they were unwilling to come."
—Matt. 22:2, 3.

mon Era was the fourth year of its proclamation. This kingdom was the subject of heated discussion in the Jewish city of Jerusalem. Discussion of it reached even into the world-famous temple in that holy city. In the course of a discussion, the leading Proclaimer of the good news of the Kingdom said to his many listeners, who included the chief priests and men of the sect of the Pharisees: "The kingdom of God will be

taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits." (Matt. 21:43-46) According to

those words, the kingdom of God was then soon to be taken away from their nation and be given over to a newly formed nation that would produce fruitage identifying it as being ruled by the kingdom of God. The speaker's words came true, for to this day the once favored nation does not have the kingdom of God.

³ What was the reason for this to come about? The speaker of those prophetic words went on to illustrate by telling another one of his meaning-packed parables. A man who heard it made a record of it for us, and he starts off this particular account by saying: "In further reply Jesus again spoke to them with illustrations, saying: 'The kingdom of the heavens has be-

3. How did the speaker start off the illustration that bears upon his prophetic words?

come like a man, a king, that made a marriage feast for his son. And he sent forth his slaves to call those invited to the marriage feast, but they were unwilling to come.'"—Matt. 22:1-3.

⁴ The chief figure in this illustration was the "man, a king." Of whom, then, was he an illustration? He illustrated God himself, for the whole parabolic illustration started off by saying, "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man, a king," in taking certain action that met up with a certain reaction. The expression "the kingdom of the heavens" means the same as "the kingdom of God," for God rules supreme in the invisible spirit heavens. For instance, the ancient ruler of Babylon was put through a humiliating experience for this stated purpose: "until you know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind, and that to the one whom he wants to he gives it . . . after you know that the heavens are ruling." (Dan. 4:25, 26) Jesus was referring to God when he said concerning Jerusalem: "Do not swear . . . by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King." To this heavenly King, Jesus taught his disciples to pray, saying: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matt. 5:34, 35; 6:9, 10.

⁵ The king in Jesus' illustration is said to have a son. However, God the heavenly King has hundreds of millions of spirit sons, who are Scripturally called "sons of God." (Job 38:7; Dan. 7:9, 10) Which of these many sons is the one meant in Jesus' parable? It is the Son of sons in God's heavenly family. It is for this foremost son that the heavenly King makes a "marriage feast," and the Sacred Scriptures show that this son is the speaker of the parabolic illustration, Jesus Christ himself. John the Baptizer, who baptized Jesus,

said with reference to the baptized Jesus: "I am not the Christ, but, I have been sent forth in advance of that one. He that has the bride is the bridegroom. However, the friend of the bridegroom, when he stands and hears him, has a great deal of joy on account of the voice of the bridegroom. Therefore this joy of mine has been made full." (John 3:28, 29) In another illustration, Jesus meant himself, when he said: "Then the kingdom of the heavens will become like ten virgins that took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom."—Matt. 25:1; 9:15.

⁶ Like any prospective bridegroom, Jesus must have had great pleasure when thinking and speaking about this "bride" whom the King, his heavenly Father, would give him. The "bride" is, of course, not an individual person, not an individual disciple of Jesus Christ. To the contrary, it is a composite or collective person, his whole body or congregation of faithful anointed disciples. This should not appear strange. In the prophecies of the Bible the ancient nation of Israel is likened to the wife of Jehovah God, because the nation was, as it were, married to Him by accepting the Law covenant that was mediated by the prophet Moses at Mount Sinai in Arabia. (Isa 54:5; Jer. 3:14; 31:31, 32) So the relationship between the Son of God and his anointed congregation is likened to that of a husband and wife; as we read:

⁷ "A husband is head of his wife as the Christ also is head of the congregation, he being a savior of this body. Husbands, continue loving your wives, just as the Christ also loved the congregation and delivered up himself for it. This sacred secret is great. Now I am speaking with respect to Christ and the congregation."—Eph. 5:23, 25, 32.

4. What shows whom the "man, a king," in Jesus' illustration, pictured?

5. Who is the "son" for whom the heavenly King makes the "marriage feast," and what is the proof of this?

6, 7. (a) Who is the "bride" of this Son of the heavenly King? (b) Ephesians 5:23-32 likens the relationship between Jesus Christ and his congregation to what?

⁸ The consummating of the marriage between the King's Son and his figurative "bride" will be by the uniting of Jesus Christ and his faithful congregation in the spirit heavens in connection with the "kingdom of the heavens." The members of this anointed congregation must be faithful, like an espoused virgin, to Jesus Christ down to their death. In reward for their virgin faithfulness till the end of their earthly course, they will be resurrected from the dead to be his heavenly "bride," his Bridal congregation, forever in the house of the Heavenly Father and King.—2 Cor. 11:2, 3.

"THOSE INVITED TO THE MARRIAGE FEAST"

⁹ An invitation to the marriage feast of his son was a great favor on the part of the king. Those whom he invited were persons over whom he was the king. They were his subjects. He knew them by name. He knew where they lived within his realm, and so he could send his slaves to their address to notify them at the time that the feast was ready, to which feast they had already been invited. Favorable action of these invited persons when they got notification of the readiness of the feast would display due respect for their king. Whom, then, did "those invited to the marriage feast" in Jesus' illustration picture?

¹⁰ Well, since the king pictures Jehovah God, who, then, were the people over whom He was the king at that time? To whom was it that Jesus said, "The kingdom of God will be taken from you and be given to a nation producing its fruits"? It was the Jewish nation. In the year 1513 B.C.E. Jehovah God had brought them into a covenant with him through the mediatorship of his prophet Moses, at Mount

Sinai. They willingly entered this covenant, to keep its Law code, the foundation laws of which were the famous Ten Commandments. (Ex. 19:1 through 24:8) Especially by this covenant arrangement, Jehovah became the heavenly King over this people, and this meant that they were now a "nation" subject to Him. (Deut. 33:5) The Israelites had already sung His praises as their King, after he had delivered them from death in the Red Sea, singing out: "Jehovah will rule as king to time indefinite, even forever."—Ex. 15:18.

¹¹ This heavenly King has a name—Jehovah—and, by virtue of bringing the nation of Israel into a Law covenant with him as their God, they became his Name people. His name was called upon them. Said the mediator Moses to the covenant people of Israel: "Jehovah will establish you as a holy people to himself, just as he swore to you, because you continue to keep the commandments of Jehovah your God, and you have walked in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth will have to see that Jehovah's name has been called upon you, and they will indeed be afraid of you." (Deut. 28:9, 10) To this chosen nation, Jehovah said, by the mouth of his prophet Amos: "You people only have I known out of all the families of the ground." (Amos 3:2) Not only was the nation identified by His name, but He knew the nation by name.

¹² To it, He said, by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah: "And now this is what Jehovah has said, your Creator, O Jacob, and your Former, O Israel: 'Do not be afraid, for I have repurchased you. I have called you by your name. You are mine.'" (Isa. 43:1) So, if He desired to send an invitation to them or give them a standing invitation, He could do so by the national name.

11, 12. (a) How had the nation of Israel become the Name people of God? (b) How was it that God could send an invitation to them by their national name?

8. Where and how will the marriage of the heavenly King's Son and his "bride" be consummated?

9. In Jesus' illustration, what relationship did those invited to the 'marriage feast' bear to the king, and what would their favorable action toward the invitation show?

10. At the time of the illustration, Jehovah God was King over what people, and by what arrangement?

¹³ The king of Jesus' illustration knew the addresses of those whom he had invited to the marriage feast. Likewise Jehovah knew the "address" of his chosen people, his invited people. He knew where they lived. It was the land that He had promised to their forefathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the land to which He had faithfully brought them. Even after their exile in the land of Babylon, Jehovah restored them to that same land. Under no misdirection, Jehovah the King sent his Son Jesus to that land. It was no mistake or accident that Jesus the Descendant of Abraham and of King David was born in the city of Bethlehem in the Province of Judea, in the autumn of the year 2 B.C.E. Centuries in advance, by His prophet Micah, Jehovah the King had foretold the address for this miraculous birth.—Mic. 5:2.

¹⁴ In fulfillment of Jesus' illustration, Jehovah the King knew the addresses or locations of "those invited to the marriage feast." Naturally, then, he knew where to send his messengers of notification at the time that the marriage feast, to which they had already been invited, was ready and it was the hour for them to come with keen appetites. The invitation to the feast was not first extended to them when the messengers of notification called at their homes to tell them the feast was now ready and they should come at once. Such a call was merely something supplementary, not the original invitation. Well, now, when and in what way had they already been "invited" or been given the initial call?

¹⁵ This was, in fact, in the year 1513

13. How did the heavenly King know the address of "those invited to the marriage feast," and this fact was shown in the case of whose birth?

14. Was it first when the messengers of notification arrived that the initial invitation was given to "those invited," or what relation did notification bear to invitation?

15. (a) In what year was the invitation to the "marriage feast" extended, and to whom? (b) On that occasion, the invitation was contained in what, and in what terms?

B.C.E., and the way in which it was done was by the action of God the King, by his bringing the people of Israel into the Law covenant through Moses as mediator. The initial call or "invitation" was extended to the Israelites as a nation, not as individuals, for the nation rather than the individual members was what would continue to exist until the King's "wedding feast" was prepared and ready to be served. The initial call or "invitation" to the nation of Israel was included in God's terms that set forth the benefit to the nation of Israel for entering and keeping the Law covenant with Jehovah God. When proposing the covenant to Israel at Mount Sinai, God told Moses to say: "And now if you will strictly obey my voice and will indeed keep my covenant, then you will certainly become my special property out of all other peoples, because the whole earth belongs to me. And you yourselves will become to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."—Ex. 19:1-6.

¹⁶ Kingdom prospects were thus set before the nation of Israel, the opportunity, really the invitation, to become a "kingdom of priests." Such a priestly kingdom would act as God's servant for the benefit of all the rest of mankind. The people of Israel accepted this invitation from their heavenly King by accepting His proposals and saying: "All that Jehovah has spoken we are willing to do." Accordingly, God the King concluded the Law covenant with the nation of Israel over sacrifices carried out by the mediator Moses. (Ex. 19:7, 8; 24:1-12) Not only the obligations of that Mosaic Law covenant, but also the invitation to become a "kingdom of priests" extended to the natural descendants of those covenant-making Israelites down to

16. (a) On what basis was the Law covenant concluded with the nation of Israel, and how? (b) To whom did both the obligations and the invitation contained in that covenant extend, till when?



In a parable about a king who spread a marriage feast, Jesus showed that some who think they are going to heaven are not going to make it

the first century of our Common Era. (Rom. 9:4, 5; Acts 3:25, 26) Because those natural descendants of the first century C.E. were an "invited" nation, God the King was acting in line with the terms of his covenant by raising up John the Baptist and sending him to preach to the nation of Israel: "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." —Matt. 3:1, 2.

¹⁷ What, though, does a "kingdom of priests" have to do with a king's wedding feast for his son? That there is a connection between the two things Jesus Christ himself inferred by introducing his illustration with the words: "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man, a king, that made a marriage feast for his son." (Matt. 22:1, 2) Naturally the "bride" whom the king's son married would become a princess and, ordinarily, a queen elect, a queen designate. Correspondingly, the "bride" whom God the King marries to his Son Jesus Christ is his anointed congregation of faithful disciples. In the heavens these faithful anointed disciples are to be more than a "bride" to Jesus Christ as the one who will become the "Eternal Father" to the redeemed race of mankind. They are also to be joint heirs with their heavenly Bridegroom in the Kingdom that God the King assigns to his Son Jesus Christ over all mankind.

¹⁸ Jesus Christ constantly set this Kingdom hope before his true disciples. In his Sermon on the Mount, he said to them: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need, since the kingdom of the heavens belongs to them. Happy are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, since the kingdom of the heavens

belongs to them. . . . 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." (Matt. 5:3, 10; 6:32, 33) And on the night of the last Passover with his faithful apostles and after Jesus had set up the Lord's Supper, he said to them: "You are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials; and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." —Luke 22:23-30.

¹⁹ So the Bridal congregation of Jesus Christ is to share with him, they being his joint heirs in the heavenly kingdom and he being their Bridegroom head. He is to be a Ruler like the ancient Melchizedek, who was both the king of Salem and the priest of the Most High God and hence a king-priest. (Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:1-4; Heb. 5:5, 6; 6:20 through 7:28) Jesus Christ serves as Jehovah's High Priest, and the Bridal congregation of Christ provides the underpriests. In this way the true Christian congregation becomes a "kingdom of priests." To this congregation, the apostle Peter wrote, saying: "You are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." (1 Pet. 2:9) Thus Jesus Christ the Son of God does not remain a royal Son without a kingdom, but God the King assigns to the Son a special kingdom over all mankind, and his Bride class shares this Messianic kingdom with him.—Rom. 8:16, 17.

17. (a) How does a "marriage feast" for the king's son have a connection with a kingdom? (b) What further function will be served by those making up the "bride" of the Eternal Father?

18. How did Jesus keep the Kingdom hope before his disciples in his Sermon on the Mount and at his last Passover?

19. How is it that the royal Son does not remain such without a kingdom, and how does the Bridal congregation share with him?

**ATTITUDE OF
"THOSE INVITED TO THE MARRIAGE FEAST"**

²⁰ Through being taken into the Mosaic Law covenant the nation of Israel had a wonderful privilege and "invitation" offered to them. With respect to the "marriage feast" arranged for by their God, Jehovah the King, they were a nation of "invited" ones. But there were conditions attached to their becoming a "kingdom of priests." The question therefore arises, What would be the attitude of the nation when notified that it was the generation favored with the opportunity of now acting on their King's invitation and entering into the marriage festivities? Would as many individuals of the nation respond favorably as the number of the places or seats within the marriage feast chamber? There was an opportunity for *many*, because the illustration indicates that the king invited many and that there were many lounges provided for the invitees to recline at the festal table.

²¹ When, in fulfillment of the parable, was it that God the King sent out his "slaves" to notify the "invited" ones that the time for the "marriage feast" had arrived and so they should come at once? This was after the water baptism of Jesus and the anointing of him with God's holy spirit so as to become the Christ, the one anointed to be the Messianic King. When Jesus Christ returned from forty days spent in the Judean wilderness, John the Baptist pointed to him and said to listeners, "See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!" John not only identified Jesus as the figurative Lamb that was to be sacrificed for rescuing the world of mankind from the penalty of sin but also testified that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.

20. (a) What about the generation came under question when informed that it was the one able to attend the marriage feast? (b) What question arises as to how many would respond favorably?

21. When was it that the heavenly King began to send out his "slaves" to notify the "invited" ones that the feast was ready?

Shortly after this, the anointed Jesus began his teaching work with some who began to follow him as the Messiah. One of these, named Andrew, found his brother Simon and said to him: "We have found the Messiah" (which means, when translated, Christ)." (John 1:26 through 2:2) Thus Jesus began forming a body of disciples.

²² Not only Jesus Christ taught and preached God's Messianic kingdom but he also sent out his Jewish disciples to preach with him: "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." (Matt. 10:1-7; Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-9) In this way the heavenly King, Jehovah God, sent out his "slaves" under the Law covenant to give the first notification. This went on from the fall of the year 29 C.E. to the spring of 33 C.E., or about three and a half years. These "slaves" were sent only to "those invited." That is to say, the Jewish nation under the Mosaic Law covenant that afforded an opportunity to become a "kingdom of priests." In recognition of "those invited," Jesus said to the disciples whom he sent out to announce that the time had come: "Do not go off into the road of the nations, and do not enter into a Samaritan city; but, instead, go continually to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." And with reference to himself, Jesus said: "I was not sent forth to any but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."—Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24.

²³ It was the right time for this initial notification work. Jesus reminded the "house of Israel" of this divine timing of things, when he said to the Jews: "The appointed time has been fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has drawn near. Be repentant, you people, and have faith in the good news." (Mark 1:15) But did the na-

22. How long did the first period of notification last, and who were then the ones notified?

23. How did Jesus show that it was the right time for the first call, but how did his illustration indicate the attitude of the ones invited?

tionwide preaching by the "slaves" of the heavenly King result in a national repentance and conversion and an acceptance of the King's Son as the royal Messiah? It was almost at the end of the first call of notification that Jesus described how this initial call had been received. In his illustration he went on to say: "But they were unwilling."

²⁴ Ah, yes, there had been no national conversion, no nationwide acceptance of the King's Son Jesus Christ as the Messiah for whom a royal "marriage feast" was in store. Their unwillingness was so stubborn that they prevailed upon the Roman governor Pontius Pilate to put him to death on Passover day of 33 C.E. Thus Jesus died as "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." (John 1:29, 36) His death as a perfect human sacrifice was to result in lasting benefit for those "invited" to the King's real "marriage feast." However, this sacrificial death ended direct, personal participation of Jesus Christ in the notification work. In this way, the first call to "those invited" ended.

²⁵ What, then? Was the preparation of the King's "marriage feast for his son" all in vain? Was it now doomed to failure? No, not according to the purpose of God the King. Almighty God raised his faithful Son Jesus Christ from the dead and exalted him to a royal seat at God's right hand in the heavens. (Acts 2:32-36; Ps. 110:1, 2; Matt. 22:41-45) In God's presence the resurrected Jesus presented the value of his human sacrifice as the Lamb of God, and this brought the Mosaic Law covenant with its subhuman animal sacrifices to an end. In spite of this canceling out of the Law covenant and the establish-

ing of a new covenant with Jesus Christ as Mediator, Jehovah God the King still mercifully gave recognition to "those invited to the marriage feast" according to the Law covenant. He did this because they were the natural born "house of Israel" and the natural, fleshly offspring of the faithful patriarch Abraham, God's friend.—Dan. 9:24, 27.

SECOND NOTIFICATION OF THE "INVITED ONES"

²⁶ Jehovah God the King had cause for great indignation against the nation of "invited" ones, but he gave the nation a further opportunity of exclusively occupying all seats at the purposed "marriage feast for his son." He sent them a second notification, but a final one. Jesus Christ indicated that extended mercy of God to the invitees, when he said to his disciples just before his ascension to heaven: "You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and [first after that] Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

²⁷ What the reaction to this second notification on the part of the nation in general would be, Jesus foretold in his illustration, saying: "Again he [the king] sent forth other slaves, saying, 'Tell those invited: 'Look! I have prepared my dinner, my bulls and fattened animals are slaughtered, and all things are ready. Come to the marriage feast.''" But unconcerned they went off, one to his own field, another to his commercial business; but the rest, laying hold of his slaves, treated them insolently and killed them."—Matt. 22:4-6.

²⁸ This part of Jesus' illustration began

24. Just how stubborn was the unwillingness on the part of "those invited," and with what event did the first call end?

25. (a) Why did God's purpose for the marriage feast not then fail? (b) Why did God still give recognition to those originally "invited" according to the Law covenant?

26. How did the resurrected Jesus indicate a second notification was to be given to the invitees to fill all places exclusively?

27. How did Jesus illustrate what the reaction of the invitees would be to the second notification?

28. When did the second notification begin, and what charge of the Jewish Supreme Court shows that the nation of invitees was being notified?

on the day of Pentecost of the year 33 C.E., when holy spirit was poured out upon Jesus' waiting disciples and they began preaching the good news of God's Messianic kingdom in Jerusalem to the Jews and circumcised proselytes to Judaism. How many hundreds of thousands of celebrators from many parts of the earth were there at Jerusalem, the inspired record does not say. Thousands of celebrators began to hear the good news about the resurrected Jesus the Messiah. Before long, the Jewish Supreme Court said to the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ: "Look! you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you are determined to bring the blood of this man upon us." (Acts 5:27, 28) Unquestionably, the nation of "invited" ones was being notified, now for the second time.

²⁹ How did the mass of the nation respond to the heavenly King's second reminder of their invitation to the now ready "marriage feast"? With insult to the King and with disdain for his marriageable Son, by showing more personal concern for their materialistic interests than for dignifying the King by presenting themselves at the marriage feast for His Son! They even resorted to outright murder of his obedient "slaves," the Christian preachers of the good news of God's Messianic kingdom. A person just has to read the book of Acts of the Apostles, chapters three through nine, to have a historic record of how true was Jesus' prophetic illustration in this regard.

³⁰ Not otherwise, then, that second notification of the ones invited came to an end, *had* to come to an end according to prophecy. It did so in the year 36 C.E., three

29. How did those invited respond to the king's second call, and what record shows how true Jesus' illustration was on this?

30, 31. (a) When did the second notification end? (b) In the illustration, after rejection of his second notification, what did the king do?

and a half years after the martyrdom of Jesus Christ at Jerusalem. How was this? Jesus' illustration pictured how. Pointing to the punishment that was to come upon the nation of "those invited" for disloyally rejecting the invitation of their heavenly King, Jesus said:

³¹ "But the king grew wrathful, and sent his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The marriage feast indeed is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Therefore go to the roads leading out of the city, and anyone you find invite to the marriage feast.' Accordingly those slaves went out to the roads and gathered together all they found, both wicked and good; and the room for the wedding ceremonies was filled with those reclining at the table."—Matt. 22: 7-10.

³² From the above word order of Jesus in setting out the details of the illustration, we are not to understand that, before the king paid any further attention to the marriage feast, he ordered out his armies for active service and sent them against the city where unappreciative "invited" ones lived and "destroyed those murderers and burned their city." Otherwise, it would mean that the heavenly King, Jehovah God, did not send out his slaves to gather in people indiscriminately to the wedding feast until late in the year 70 of our Common Era, for it was in the summer of that year that Jerusalem was razed to the ground by the Romans under General Titus the son of Emperor Vespasian. Then, indeed, those "murderers" were killed. As reported by Flavius Josephus, 1,100,000 Jews perished in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem and 97,000 were carried away captive to be disposed of as slaves.—Luke 21:20-24; 19:41-44.

32. Does the word order in Jesus' illustration mean that the king delayed further marriage feast arrangements until after he had the city of those "invited" destroyed?

The Gathering In

OF

REPLACEMENTS FOR THE FEAST

WHY did the killing of the antichristian "murderers" at the destruction of their holy city, Jerusalem, and the breaking up of their Jewish nationhood in the year 70 C.E. occur? It was because, as the king in Jesus' illustration said, those invited to the marriage feast "were not worthy." (Matt. 22:8) The Jews had proved this by their insulting, disrespectful, disloyal, often violent refusal to act on the heavenly King's invitation after the second notification from Him. What would it have meant for them to leave their selfish materialistic concerns and come to the spiritual "marriage feast"? It would have meant to repent, not only of their falling short in keeping the Mosaic Law covenant, but also of their violent rejection of the Messiah from God and then to get baptized in water as disciples of Jesus as their Messiah. But they were too proud, too self-righteous, too occupied with their own plans, and so balked against meeting such requirements. This was the case with the nation of Israel in general.

² Does this signify that all the places at the "marriage feast" were then left unoc-

1. (a) How did "those invited" to the marriage feast show that they were "unworthy"? (b) What would it have meant for them to leave their selfish materialistic interests?

2. (a) Why were not all the marriage feast places left unoccupied at the end of the second notification? (b) How many places did the King have in mind to fill with "worthy" ones?

cupied? No, not all of them! The Bible record shows that there were some of the "invited" Jews that responded after the first notification and still more Jews and circumcised Jewish converts after the second notification began on the day of Pentecost of the year 33 C.E.

But these were really few in comparison with the many seats that were available in the marriage feast room. How many places did the King have in mind to fill? Since those who *worthily* occupied reclining places at the "table" pictured those who become joint heirs with the King's Son in the "kingdom of the heavens," the heavenly King Jehovah counted on filling 144,000 places in order to have the "room for the wedding ceremonies" filled with "worthy" ones. What Jesus Christ shows us in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, proves that. (Rev. 7:4-8; 14:1-3; 20:4-6) That number means *many* places at the marriage supper.

³ According to Jesus' illustration, Jehovah the King threw open the opportunity for the whole nation of Israel in the Law covenant to provide sufficient worthy ones to fill all those 144,000 places. They were the natural fleshly "seed" of Abraham with whom God had made his covenant for the blessing of all the families of the ground by means of such "seed." (Gen. 12:3; 22:17, 18) The Law covenant into which God had brought them through Moses put them in line for becoming the "kingdom of priests" that God purposed to establish under the Messiah, the Mediator greater than Moses. They were exclusively "those invited" to the spiritual marriage feast.

⁴ Their nation as a whole could have furnished 144,000 natural Jews to occupy the

3, 4. (a) According to Jesus' illustration, to whom had the opportunity been offered to fill 144,000 places exclusively? (b) Were they numerically able to fill so many places?

many places available. The Jewish reservoir for providing the needed candidates was big enough with, doubtless, millions from which to draw. Why, according to Josephus, there were 1,197,000 Jews at the Passover celebration in Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E. And not all the Jews scattered all around the then inhabited earth were there at the Passover.

⁵ Thus there were many, all 144,000, that were invited from among the natural fleshly "seed" of Abraham. But the Bible tabulation shows that merely a few of Abraham's natural seed acted on their invitation that was built into the Law covenant. About the year 56 C.E., the Christianized Jew, the apostle Paul, estimated the number of the chosen Jews as a mere "remnant" of the nation of Israel. (Rom. 9:27-29; 11:5) Nevertheless, the presence of this Jewish "remnant" in the "room for the wedding ceremonies" left fewer places available than the many, the full 144,000, that were available at the time that the first notification began in 29 C.E.

⁶ According to Jesus' illustration, time was running out for the king with regard to his now ready marriage feast. In view of being turned down by so many of the invitees, how was the king going to have the banqueting room filled with guests in due honor to the occasion? A poor showing in this room would be a disgrace for him, a defeat of his gracious purpose. But the king was not to be defeated. If original invitees did not honor him with their attendance, then he would fill their reserved places with replacements! Promptly before the destruction of the "city" of those "murderers," the king sent his slaves to locations outside that city, outside that community, "to the roads leading out of the city." From there the king's "slaves"

would bring in the replacements, yes, "anyone" that they found.

⁷ These unknown persons, not at their home address, the slaves could persuade to take a place at the marriage feast. This was called an invitation, because those now gathered in did not take the initiative and "crash" the wedding festivities. Those now gathered as replacements were not invited in the sense that the original invitees had been. In the corresponding illustration given by Jesus, in Luke 14:15-24, when the third and final call for guests is made, the householder who spreads the "grand evening meal" says to his slave: "Go out [that is, beyond the city] into the roads and the fenced-in places, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you people, None of those men that were invited shall have a taste of my evening meal."—Luke 14:23, 24.

⁸ This work of gathering in enough guests from the "roads" outside the "city" of the invited ones began, not in 70 C.E., but in the autumn of 36 C.E., seven years, or a "week of years," after the baptism and anointing of Jesus, the Son of the heavenly King. (Dan. 9:24-27) The first slave to be sent out was the Christianized Jew, the apostle Peter. He was sent to Caesarea, the provincial capital of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, and there he preached to uncircumcised Gentiles, non-Jews. God poured out holy spirit upon the listening Italian centurion, Cornelius, and his believing friends, after which the apostle Peter baptized them. (Acts 10:1 through 11:18) From then on this gathering in of uncircumcised non-Jews has continued on down into this twentieth century. All of these are replacements.

⁹ According to the illustration given by

7. What shows whether the king's slaves gathered in the replacements with the same kind of invitation as the original invitation?

8. Who were these that were now gathered in, and when and how did the gathering of these begin?

9. (a) To what does Paul liken Abraham and his natural fleshly descendants? (b) Why were "branches" broken off, and how were they replaced?

5. (a) Those of the natural, fleshly "seed" of Abraham who responded to the invitation were counted by Paul as being what? (b) Nevertheless, were there as many places available as before?

6. In Jesus' illustration, how did the king not let his generous purpose be defeated to his disgrace?

the apostle Paul in Romans, chapter eleven, the natural Jews under the Law covenant were like natural branches in an olive tree. This tree has a limited number of branches. They were the natural descendants of God's friend Abraham and, as such, they were natural heirs of God's covenant promise to Abraham. The patriarch Abraham was the trunk of this symbolic olive tree, with its roots firmly fixed in that covenant promise of God. But what God wanted was a *spiritual* "seed" of Abraham, a spiritual Israel. Hence, when the natural Jews who were invited to become a "kingdom of priests" refused to meet the requirements for this, they were broken off the symbolic olive tree; they were not made heirs of the "kingdom of the heavens." They needed to be replaced, that the symbolic olive tree might be a full-branched one. To meet this emergency, God mercifully grafted on in their places the believing Gentiles, like branches from a wild olive tree. Thus God gets his full spiritual Israel, the spiritual "seed" of Abraham.

THE MAN WITHOUT A "MARRIAGE GARMENT"

¹⁰ Well, now, after all the gathering work of the previous eighteen centuries, there should be comparatively few, or far fewer, replacements needed to be made by the time of this twentieth century. So not many would be gathered. Now since the end of the Gentile Times in 1914 and the start then of the "time of the end," the time should be upon us when the heavenly King's "room for the wedding ceremonies" should be filled. In Jesus' illustration that point is reached, and he goes on to say: "When the king came in to inspect the guests [the reclining ones] he caught sight there of a man not clothed with a marriage garment. So he said to him, 'Fellow, how

did you get in here not having on a marriage garment?' He was rendered speechless."—Matt. 22:11, 12.

¹¹ The king had provided a marriage garment for every guest to wear at the wedding festivities, and so there was no excuse for the garmentless man to be without one. Rightly he was rendered speechless, muzzled. Jesus in his illustration does not say that the man put it on to get in and then took it off. Rather, the man declined the garment when the king's attendant offered it to him or showed him the king's wardrobe for guests. The king did not ask him, 'Why did you take off the marriage garment?' but, "How did you get in here not having on a marriage garment?" He refused to wear it. He declined to wear it at the feast table. He did not meet the requirements for being there at the table, and he did not belong there. Whom does he picture today?

¹² He pictures those who profess to be godly Christians but who have not put on what was pictured by the "marriage garment." According to reports, such garments freely provided by the host were long white linen garments, so that all guests were outwardly clothed alike, whether one was originally a Jewish invitee or a Gentile pickup. Hence, many Bible commentators refer to Revelation 19:7, 8, where it is said concerning the Lamb's wife: "It has been granted to her to be arrayed in bright, clean, fine linen, for the fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the holy ones." So it is claimed that the "marriage garment" pictures the imputed righteousness of the baptized Christian, his justification.

¹³ However, the marriage garment must signify more than one's being declared

11. Why was the garmentless man rendered speechless at the king's question?

12. Whom, briefly, does the garmentless man picture, and what do Bible commentators say that the marriage garment pictured?

13. Why does the "marriage garment" picture more than "justification"?

10. The time should be close upon us for what feature of the illustration to be fulfilled, and why?

righteous by God through one's faith in Christ as the ransom sacrifice. (Rom. 5: 1, 9) Such justification or being declared righteous now is not an end in itself; it does not now stand alone. Its purpose now is that the justified one should be adopted by God the Justifier as his spiritual son and become a member of the spiritual "seed" of Abraham and thus a member of spiritual Israel. As such, this adopted son of God is taken into the new covenant mediated by God's Son, Jesus Christ. (Gal. 4:4-7; Rom. 8:16, 17; Luke 22:19, 20) Hence, the "marriage garment" symbolizes all *that* for the repentant, baptized guest at the feast. So it is one's identification as a spiritual Israelite, one of Abraham's spiritual "seed."

¹⁴ Since the lone one whom the king discovered was not wearing the available marriage garment, he pictured the class who did not exercise faith and take due action in harmony with faith to be declared righteous by God and adopted as his spiritual son and taken into the new covenant that is made with spiritual Israel through Christ. He does not picture Christians who have been anointed with God's spirit and made joint heirs with Christ but who prove unfaithful

14. Whom, then, did the garmentless man picture?



to God and lose out on the heavenly kingdom. Rather, he pictures imitation Christians, of whom Christendom today is composed and who claim and pretend to be at the marriage feast "table." God the King never recognized them as being there with the proper identification, and so he did not anoint them with holy spirit as Kingdom heirs.

¹⁵ The time must come when God exposes the wrongness of the claim and pretense of being at the marriage feast "table" as made by Christendom and to execute adverse judgment upon her before the eyes of all onlookers. God the King does this when he as the Arranger of the marriage feast for his Son 'comes in to inspect the guests.' According to Jesus' illustration, this must occur when the "room for the wedding ceremonies" is "filled." (Matt. 22: 10, 11) With the filling of this room with enough guests the gathering work by the king's slaves would stop. As the gathering of the ones to be "chosen" is done under the invisible guidance of God's angels, the heavenly King would come in and inspect when the work foretold by Jesus is fulfilled at the conclusion of the system of things:

¹⁶ "Then the sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And

15, 16. (a) The time must come for the King to do what with respect to the garmentless class? (b) When is it that the King would come in to inspect the guests?

In Jesus' parable the king commanded his servants to throw out the man who refused to wear a marriage garment. This man pictured imitation Christians, of whom Christendom is composed

he will send forth his angels with a great trumpet sound, and they will gather his chosen ones together from the four winds, from one extremity of the heavens to their other extremity.”—Matt. 24:30, 31.

¹⁷ The completion of this gathering of the “chosen ones” would take place shortly before the “great tribulation” that Jesus compared with the deluge of Noah’s day begins. (Matt. 24:21, 22, 37-41) So, at that time of inspection made by the heavenly King, would the class pictured by the man without the marriage garment be taken along as one of the “chosen” ones? Or would this class be left to share with “all the tribes of the earth” who beat themselves in lamentation because of the coming destruction? The class that makes up Christendom has no excuse to offer to the King for trying to be at the “marriage feast” without the symbolic garment. That class can offer no reason for being allowed to enjoy the “wedding ceremonies” and “feast.” At the time of the final inspection, that class is found “speechless.” How will the King treat that class? Jesus’ illustration shows:

¹⁸ “Then the king said to his servants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and throw him out into the darkness outside. There is where his weeping and the gnashing of his teeth will be.’”—Matt. 22:13.

¹⁹ So this class is bound beyond all ability to offer resistance. It is cast thus into the “darkness outside,” outside where the darkness is not alleviated by such things as street lamps. There, with no enlightenment of any kind from God, that class will weep and gnash its teeth, in the “great tribulation” in which religious Babylon the Great and all the rest of this system of things will be destroyed. (Rev. 17:14-18) That class will be cut off

17, 18. (a) The completion of that gathering work would be the time for determining what with regard to the garmentless class? (b) How does Jesus’ illustration show what will be done then to that class?
19. Into what will that class be thrown out, and what will it fall to enjoy?

from the “kingdom of the heavens” and will have no part in the “evening meal of the Lamb’s marriage” in the heavens above.—Rev. 19:9.

MANY INVITED, FEW CHOSEN

²⁰ In order to round off the illustration and to show the point of it, Jesus said: “For there are many invited, but few chosen.” (Matt. 22:14) Jesus was not saying those words with reference to the ejected man without the required marriage garment.* This man was not the main feature of the illustration. Certainly the man did not picture what was left of the “many” invited ones after the “few” chosen ones had been taken out. Correspondingly, the “guests” who wear the marriage garment and who are not thrown out of the “room for the wedding ceremonies” do not picture the “few” that had been chosen from the Jewish nation after the vast majority of all the “invited” Jews had excused themselves. Whom, then, did Jesus mean by the “many” that had been invited, and whom by the “few” chosen?

²¹ The “many” invited were the Jewish nation that was in the Law covenant, which offered help to the Jews to become a “kingdom of priests” to God. The “few” chosen as worthy of the “kingdom of the heavens” were the “remnant” of natural Jews who acted on the notification from the heavenly King. Such Jews left worldly concerns behind, came to the “room for the wedding ceremonies” and accepted the

* “This remark in the 14th verse is the inference of the whole parable and not of the part about the man without the wedding garment.”—Page 104 of Barnes Notes on the New Testament, printing of 1963. *The Jerusalem Bible* (1966) says, in a footnote on Matthew 22:14: “This sentence appears to refer to the first part of the parable rather than to the second. It is a question not of the elect as a whole but of the Jews, the first to be invited. The parable . . . neither asserts nor denies that some (a ‘few’) of the Jewish people have accepted the invitation and are ‘chosen’.”

20. With what statement did Jesus round off his illustration, and did this refer to the garmentless man?
21. Who, then, were the few that were chosen, and did they make up all the “guests” that recline at the “marriage feast”?

"marriage garment" from the King, put it on and then reclined at the "table." Because, by the year 36 C.E., merely a "few" (Jews) acted on notification from God the King, he found it necessary to send his "slaves" out beyond the Jewish "city" or community with orders to bring in replacements from the uncircumcised Gentiles. Eventually a roomful of guests results. So the "few" that made up the Jewish remnant were only part of the "guests" at the feast.

²² Hence, all the "guests" clothed with the marriage garment picture more than just the "remnant" of Jews who became spiritual Israelites. The "guests" include also all the faithful Gentile replacements. God duly indicated his choosing of all these garmented "guests" by anointing them with his holy spirit through his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus' illustration nowhere pictures, and was not meant to picture, that an unknown number of anointed Christians would turn unfaithful and prove unworthy of the "kingdom of the heavens." Jesus' illustration was meant to show that the heavenly King would succeed in having a fully attended "marriage feast" in spite of difficulties. He would have a successful "marriage feast" in fulfillment of his gracious purpose.

²³ All along the King Jehovah knew how many reclining places he would have at the feasting "table." So he would not have his "slaves" bring in an overload of prospective "guests." He would have his slaves bring in only as many as were needed to fill all the places available. In his due time he had his "slaves" bring in a remnant from the originally invited Jews. After that he called for all the needed replacements from all uncircumcised Gentile na-

22. (a) How did God the King show his choosing of the garmented "guests"? (b) What was Jesus' illustration meant to show regarding the King's having a marriage feast?

23. Did the King Jehovah have his "slaves" bring in an overload of prospective "guests," or in what way did he proceed?

IN COMING ISSUES

■ **Racial Injustice—Will We Ever Be Relieved of It?**

■ **Is There Danger in Occult "Charms"?**

■ **Benefits and Rewards from Being Spiritually Secure.**

tions. Gradually all places would be "filled."

²⁴ One thing Jesus' illustration does not show. What? That, after the man without the marriage garment was thrown out, the king would send out a slave to bring in a replacement for that man. Certainly the king would not send out a slave into the night, "into the darkness outside," to hunt up a replacement for the man thrown out. What person would be on "the roads" outside the city at that hour of the night? The king approves of the garmented wedding guests (reclining ones), and the feast now goes forward with all these and without the garmentless man who was thrown outside. In the fulfillment of the final part of Jesus' illustration today, there is no need to bring in a replacement for Christendom and her religious crowd. They merely *tried* to get in to the feasting table without meeting the divine requirements. Their pretense at being there does not work.

²⁵ Jehovah the King does the calling or inviting. As in the case of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert to Christianity, God first reads the heart of the person to whom he gives attention. Then, because of the

24. (a) What does Jesus' illustration not show as respects the man thrown out? (b) In the fulfillment, why is there no need to bring in replacements for that garmentless class?

25. (a) So, who does the calling or inviting, and how? (b) How is the choosing indicated, and what is required of those chosen?

promising attitude of the heart, God sends the needed aid to the responsive one. This one thus gets the Bible instruction concerning the hope of the heavenly kingdom. Consequently, not all the hundreds of millions who are having "this good news of the kingdom" preached to them are thereby having God's invitation extended to them to attend the spiritual "marriage feast." (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) The majority are merely receiving a "witness" concerning the Kingdom. The ones really "invited," who meet God's requirements, are then "chosen" by his anointing of them with holy spirit to be joint heirs of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27) Now that they have been thus chosen, they must prove faithful to the end.—Rev. 17:14; 2:10.

²⁶ Today the whole world of mankind is in trouble, in this "time of the end" of the system of things. But the faithful chosen "guests" in the brilliantly lighted "room for the wedding ceremonies" are experiencing the joys and blessings of the King's approval. After they hold fast to their Christian integrity clear through the approaching "great tribulation" that brings the end of the worldly system of things, they will be admitted to the "evening meal of the Lamb's marriage" in the heavens above. (Rev. 19:7, 9) Since they will make up the "bride" of Christ, this is doubtless why the bride of the king's son is not mentioned and is not introduced into Jesus'

26. What are the chosen "guests" yet on earth enjoying now, and what will the faithful ones enjoy after the "great tribulation"?

illustration.* All the 144,000 chosen and faithful members of the Bridal congregation will there enjoy the meal with their Bridegroom.

FIGURATIVE BRIDESMAIDS

²⁷ A marriage and wedding festivities suggest bridesmaids. Well, Psalm 45:13-15 indicated prophetically that there would be some in attendance. Today, when the Bridal congregation of Christ is nearing completion, they are associating with the "remnant" of that congregation. Of course, these figurative bridesmaids do not expect to go to heaven with the "remnant," but they honor the heavenly King and his Bridegroom Son, and show due respect for the remnant of the Bridal congregation. Revelation 7:9-17 portrays that there would be a numberless "great crowd" of these companions.

²⁸ They rejoice in the outworking of this beautiful feature of God's purpose, and render loving help to the remnant of the Bride class. They reverently join in the worship and service of the heavenly King at his spiritual temple palace. From Him they will receive lasting life benefits through his Bridegroom Son as their Eternal Father. (Isa. 9:6, 7) Endless blessings will be theirs on a paradisaic earth under the kingdom of God's wedded Son.

* Compare the parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-12) in this same regard.

27. With whom is the remnant of the Bridal congregation now associating on earth, and how do these honor the King and his Bridegroom Son?

28. Whom are those of this "great crowd" now helping, and what will be their reward through the Eternal Father?

More Bibles and Study Aids

● The Bible is now available, the whole or in part, in 1,526 languages, according to the United Bible Societies. It appeared in twenty-six more languages for the first time last year. The Bible textbook *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and released in 1968, has now been printed to the total of 74 million copies in 91 languages. Another such Bible study aid, *True Peace and Security—From What Source?* (1973), is now in 14 languages; over 16 million copies have been printed.

IN OUR generation tremendous pressures are brought on everyone. From every direction problems confront people. It is like a heavy atmosphere pushing in from all sides. It certainly takes courage to keep going.

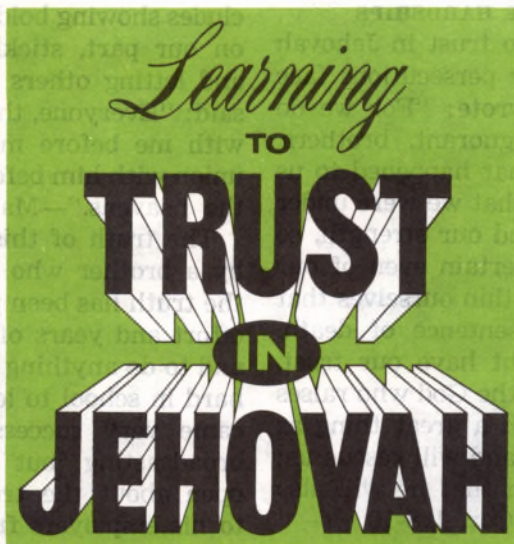
The only way anyone can face the world's pressures successfully is by trusting in Jehovah, the Creator. For that reason Jehovah's witnesses endeavor to help people to see that man's solutions will fail, that only God can and will bring help to mankind.

God's Word says: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. Happy is the one . . . whose hope is in Jehovah his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, . . . the One keeping truthness to time indefinite."—Ps. 146:3, 5, 6.

CHRISTIANS CAN LEARN

But even true Christians, whose hope and trust are in God's Kingdom rule for this earth, have much to learn about trusting in Jehovah. It is relatively easy to look at this decaying system of things and to say that the only hope is in God's government for earth. However, questions each can ask himself are: 'Am I really living a life of trust in Jehovah?' 'Do I trust, not only in what God will do in the future, but also in his day-to-day guidance?'

For example, you may be a young, vigorous person. Or you may be situated in a comfortable home, with financial security. This is fine. But you have to make decisions as to secular work, getting things you need or want, or doing things you



enjoy. In doing so, do you place trust in your own vigor or possessions? The Bible writer James warns against misplacing our trust when he says:

"Come, now, you who say: 'Today or tomorrow we will journey to this city and will spend a year there, and we will engage in business and make profits,' whereas you do not know what your life will

be tomorrow. For you are a mist appearing for a little while and then disappearing. Instead, you ought to say: 'If Jehovah wills, we shall live and also do this or that.'"—Jas. 4:13-15.

So, in making any decision, do you first search for God's guidance on the matter? How will it affect your service to Him, to your brothers and to others? Will it *simplify* your life, reducing things that distract from attention to Christian duties? Will it enable you to care better for responsibilities in the congregation, or to 'reach out' to serve in a wider capacity? Will it help you to improve your spirituality? How will it give you more opportunity to be with your family and build them up?

One of the main considerations is, What will it do for me NOW in a spiritual way? Anything that will hinder *now* is dangerous, because *now* is when you are alive, as James says. Moreover, the future of this entire system of things is short.

On the other hand, you may not be materially well-to-do. Do you, nevertheless, trust in Jehovah by favoring spiritual things when making a decision, sacrificing, if necessary, better material prospects? This demonstrates real trust in Jehovah.

TRUST IN TIME OF HARDSHIPS

Then, too, we need to trust in Jehovah when real hardships or persecutions face us. The apostle Paul wrote: "For we do not wish you to be ignorant, brothers, about the tribulation that happened to us in the district of Asia, that we were under extreme pressure beyond our strength, so that we were very uncertain even of our lives. In fact, we felt within ourselves that we had received the sentence of death. This was that we might have our trust, not in ourselves, but in the God who raises up the dead. From such a great thing as death he did rescue us and will rescue us; and our hope is in him that he will also rescue us further."—2 Cor. 1:8-10.

We should view adversities as opportunities to strengthen our trust in Jehovah, for when there is nothing more we can do for ourselves, in whom else can we trust? For some of Jehovah's witnesses it was when they were engaging in the full-time preaching work that they first fully learned what trust in Jehovah means. At times they did not know where their next meal was coming from. Yet when they exercised faith and trust, going ahead in this "pioneer" work that they had chosen as a life's vocation, they were amply provided for, and they had happiness.—1 Tim. 6:6-8.

In times of distress or persecution, appeal to God in prayer. (Heb. 4:16) Also, do not overlook the help that the prayers of your Christian brothers can bring. The apostle appealed to his fellow Christians: "You also can help along by your supplication for us." (2 Cor. 1:11) If you are demonstrating trust in Jehovah by your course of action, and if your faithful brothers are interceding with God in prayers for you, you can have perfect confidence that you will be given all the help you need.—1 Tim. 2:1.

Trust in Jehovah involves more than the faith that he will take care of us. It in-

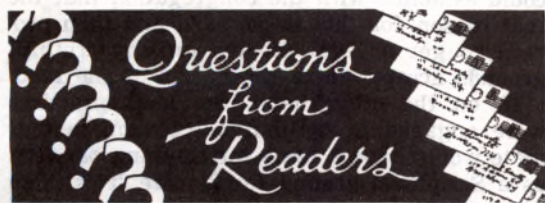
cludes showing boldness, freeness of speech on our part, sticking to Bible principles and letting others know our stand. Jesus said: "Everyone, then, that confesses union with me before men, I will also confess union with him before my Father who is in the heavens."—Matt. 10:32.

The truth of this has been experienced by a brother who nearly all his years in the truth has been paralyzed. It took great effort and years of training even to walk and to do anything for himself. He worked hard in school to learn journalism. He became very successful in radio and TV broadcasting, but was always firm and open about the truth—he made it clear to his employers from the beginning that he was one of Jehovah's witnesses and could not violate Christian principles in advertising. He lost jobs because of his openness and turned down executive jobs because they involved activities that would have required him to violate his conscience.

Nevertheless, this brother and his wife have been well provided for, without dependence on others. Work has always been available for him. In addition, Jehovah has opened to him fine opportunities to witness to persons normally hard to reach, and he has enjoyed many congregation assignments, serving as an elder, and participating in news-service activity at large assemblies of Jehovah's witnesses.

So, no one should despair, regardless of his physical condition, his financial status, his background or present circumstances. In fact, God is more greatly glorified when it is evident that a thing was accomplished, not by the individual's own strength or ability, but by God's power. As the apostle says: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the power beyond what is normal may be God's and not that out of ourselves."—2 Cor. 4:7.

Your loyal trust glorifies Jehovah. In turn, his appreciative heart goes out to you.—Heb. 6:10; 11:6.



● What did the apostle Paul mean when, in discussing marriage, he spoke of being "past the bloom of youth"?

Basically he was referring to being past the time when one's sexual desire has first bloomed or become strong.

At 1 Corinthians 7:36 we read: "But if anyone thinks he is behaving improperly toward his virginity, if that is past the bloom of youth,* and this is the way it should take place, let him do what he wants; he does not sin. Let them marry." This counsel can be best appreciated in the light of the context.

Paul had just pointed out that an unmarried Christian is free of the anxieties that go with being married. Thus he or she can give attention to "the Lord without distraction." (1 Cor. 7:32-35) However, with some single persons their passionate desire might put them under dangerous strains and temptations. For those it would be "better to marry than to be inflamed with passion." (1 Cor. 7:9) But Paul pointed out that there was a factor to consider before deciding that this was one's situation and that one should marry.

Perhaps one's desire is merely the first surge or blooming of sexual passion, which one might be able to control and remain single without 'burning' or 'being inflamed' with passion. Paul understood that as a boy or a girl passes puberty a natural sexual desire begins to grow. As one becomes an adult this desire can seem quite compelling. Self-control is needed. Yet, instead of one's *quickly* concluding that having a sexual urge means that one definitely would be better off married, time might show that the Christian could make a success of singleness without being tormented by desire.

So Paul was advising one to consider his or her situation and circumstances. If one was past the initial surge of desire and yet passion

continued to be a problem, "let him do what he wants; he does not sin. Let them marry." But if one's sexual desire was "past the bloom of youth" and one was not constantly troubled by passion, then one might be able to remain single; one in that situation who resolved in his heart to continue single would do better.—1 Cor. 7:37, 38.

This inspired counsel certainly contains food for thought for young persons. For if a person marries just as soon as his or her sexual desire 'blooms' or becomes strong, it might well be that a surge of passion is the dominant influence in determining when to marry and whom to marry. But when one is past the period of the primary surge of desire, one is in position to evaluate more objectively one's feelings and situation in life.

Further, in most societies today teen-age marriages are marked by an unusually high incidence of unhappiness, failure and divorce. Often those who marry young have been unduly influenced by romanticism and their still-developing physical desire. In many cases they have not yet developed the qualities that contribute to a successful marriage, such as self-control. (2 Pet. 1:5-8; Gal. 5:22, 23) So is it not more likely that a young man or woman who has, over a period of time, shown self-control of physical desire will be able to display this and other fine qualities in marriage?

● Do lewd practices on the part of a married person toward that one's own mate constitute a Scriptural basis for the offended mate to get a divorce?

There are times when lewd practices within the marriage arrangement would provide a basis for a Scriptural divorce. Of course, the Holy Scriptures do not encourage divorce nor do they command the innocent party to divorce a mate who engages in adultery or gross sexual perversion.

Regarding divorce, Jesus Christ stated: "Whoever divorces his wife, except on the ground of fornication, and marries another commits adultery." (Matt. 19:9) "Everyone divorcing his wife, except on account of fornication, makes her a subject for adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."—Matt. 5:32.

Thus "fornication" is set forth as the only ground for divorce. In the common Greek in

* The Greek word here translated "past the bloom of youth" is *hyperakmos*, from *hyper* (beyond) and *akme* (highest point or full bloom of a flower).

which Jesus' words are recorded, the term "fornication" is *por-nei'a*, which designates all forms of immoral sexual relations, perversions and lewd practices such as might be carried on in a house of prostitution, including oral and anal copulation.

As to Jesus' statements about divorce, they do not specify with whom the "fornication" or *por-nei'a* is practiced. They leave the matter open. That *por-nei'a* can rightly be considered as including perversions within the marriage arrangement is seen in that the man who forces his wife to have unnatural sex relations with him in effect "prostitutes" or "debauches" her. This makes him guilty of *por-nei'a*, for the related Greek verb *por-neu'o* means "to prostitute, debauch."

Hence, circumstances could arise that would make lewd practices of a married person toward that one's marriage mate a Scriptural basis for divorce. For example, a wife may do what she reasonably can to prevent her husband from forcing upon her perversions such as are carried on in a brothel. Yet, due to his greater strength, he might overpower her and use her for perverted sex. So as not to be prostituted in this way at another time, a

Christian wife may decide to get a divorce. She could establish with the congregation that the real reason for this is *por-nei'a* and then proceed to get a legal divorce on any truthful grounds acceptable to the courts of the land.

If, on the other hand, the lewd practices were engaged in by mutual consent, neither mate would have a basis for claiming *por-nei'a* as a Scriptural ground for divorce. This is so because neither party is innocent and seeking freedom from a mate guilty of *por-nei'a*. Both marriage partners are guilty. Such a case, if brought to the attention of elders in the congregation, would be handled like any other serious wrongdoing.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

December 15: The King's Marriage Feast in the Purpose of God, ¶1-19. Page 685. Songs to Be Used: 2, 13.

December 22: The King's Marriage Feast in the Purpose of God, ¶20-32, and The Gathering In of Replacements for the Feast, ¶1-6. Page 691. Songs to Be Used: 27, 30.

December 29: The Gathering In of Replacements for the Feast, ¶7-28. Page 695. Songs to Be Used: 32, 86.

There are those who believe that the marriage arrangement would provide a basis for a Scriptural divorce. Of course, the Holy Scriptures do not encourage divorce nor do they command the innocent party to divorce a mate who engages in adultery or gross sexual perversion.

Regarding divorce, Jesus Christ stated: "Whoever divorces his wife except on the ground of fornication and marries another commits adultery." (Matt. 19:9) "Everyone divorcing his wife except on account of fornication makes her a subject for adultery and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."—Matt. 5:32.

Thus "fornication" is set forth as the only ground for divorce in the common Greek in

the Greek word here translated "but the reason of fornication" (from *por-nei'a* (fornication) and *dein* (against) or *de* (from) or *dein* (against)).

So Paul was advising one to consider his or her situation and circumstances. If one was past the initial surge of desire and yet passion

was still strong, one might be better off married than single. If one was past the initial surge of desire and yet passion