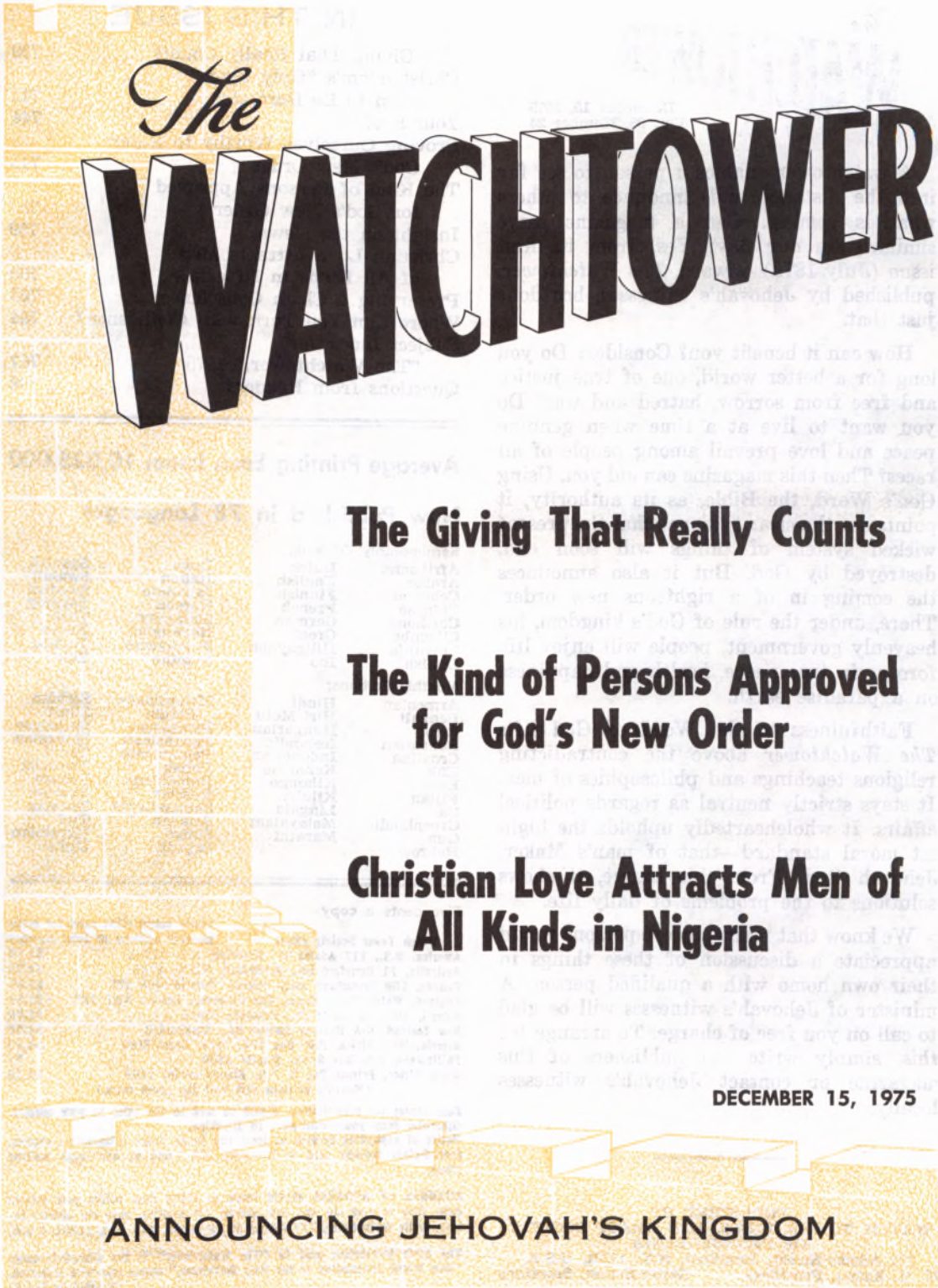




The **WATCHTOWER**

The Giving That Really Counts

**The Kind of Persons Approved
for God's New Order**

**Christian Love Attracts Men of
All Kinds in Nigeria**

DECEMBER 15, 1975

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

December 15, 1975
Vol. 96, Number 24

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.

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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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IN THIS ISSUE

The Giving That Really Counts	739
Christendom's "Holy Place"	
Soon to Be Desolated	741
Your Soul	744
Proving Ourselves Worthy to Enter	
God's New Order	745
The Kind of Persons Approved	
for God's New Order	752
Insight on the News	759
Christian Love Attracts Men	
of All Kinds in Nigeria	760
Preserving a Clean Conscience	763
Where Can You Turn with Confidence?	764
Subject Index for	
"The Watchtower," 1975	767
Questions from Readers	768

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The Giving

THAT REALLY COUNTS

WHO does not appreciate receiving a present from someone who has no ulterior motives? Unselfish giving has real heart appeal. But what about the giving that is part of the Christmas celebration? Is it free from selfish motives? More important, does it meet the noble requirements that the Bible sets for those giving presents? Does it actually count with God?

Many people take for granted that the giving of Christmas presents is in harmony with the Scriptures. This is because they believe that Christmas is a "holy day" that honors Christ and that three "wise men" brought presents for the infant Jesus. But is this the case? What really are the origins of Christmas?

An editorial in the December 1974 issue of *MD*, a medical journal, stated: "This festive occasion, which in some countries is still regarded as a holy day and not merely as a holiday, combines both religious and secular customs, most of which are drawn from pagan and mythical sources. . . .

"December 25 was originally a sun feast, motivated by the fear of man, whose life depended on the light and warmth of the sun, that the golden-orbed god would not return from his yearly

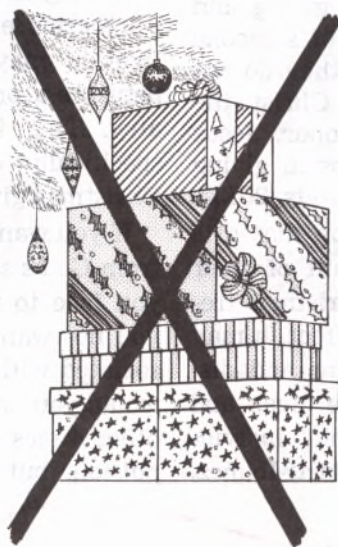
journey into the heavens. . . . In the icy northern lands, the winter solstice was the moment for lighting huge bonfires to lend strength to the winter sun and bring it back to life. The idea of the winter solstice—the return of light—was eventually crystallized in the symbol of the birth of Christ, the Light of mankind. In the fourth century the Fathers of the Church chose the winter solstice as the

best date to celebrate the birth of Christ, thus uniting it symbolically with a date of tremendous pagan importance."—P. 13.

Since the Christmas celebration has ancient non-Christian roots, reasonably we should not expect its features to be in harmony with God's Word. But might not the characteristic giving of presents be an exception?

There are persons who think that the gifts brought by the "wise men from the east" to the young child Jesus provide the basis for giving Christmas presents. (Matt.

2:1, *Authorized Version*) The Bible account reads: "When they went into the house they saw the young child with Mary its mother, and, falling down, they did obeisance to it. They also opened their treasures and presented it with gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." (Matt. 2:11) However, these "wise men," actually an unspecified number of astrologers, simply did what was then customary when visiting someone of note—in this case "one born king of the Jews." (Matt. 2:



2) Regarding the origin of giving Christmas presents, *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1959 edition, Vol. VI, p. 622) says that from the Roman feast honoring the god Saturn, celebrated toward the end of December, "were derived the elaborate feasting, the giving of gifts, and the burning of candles."

In view of the ancient idolatrous background of giving Christmas presents, would one's sharing in it result in favorable recognition from God? How could that be the case when his Word condemns mixing true worship with the darkness of idolatry? We read: "What sharing does light have with darkness? Further, what harmony is there between Christ and Belial [Satan]? Or what portion does a faithful person have with an unbeliever? . . . 'Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves,' says Jehovah, 'and quit touching the unclean thing.'"—2 Cor. 6:14-17.

Also, in other respects Christmas giving falls short of what the Scriptures recommend to those who give. Often such Christmas giving is merely an exchanging of gifts. Few persons present gifts with no intent of getting anything back. They do not give for the sheer joy of giving and contributing to the happiness of someone else. Their actions prove that they do not appreciate the words of Jesus Christ, the one whom they profess to honor. Jesus said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

Instead of being a celebration that lifts the spirits of people as a result of their sharing in unselfish giving, Christmas frequently has the very opposite effect. It may result in worry, disappointment and displeasure as a result of what is given and received. "Even for the 'normal' individual," writes Doctor Felix Marti-Ibañez,

"Christmas is a period of intensification of many conflicts: dread of solitude, financial, social, and emotional insecurity—in effect, fear of life."—*MD*, December 1974, p. 14.

Because of feeling pressured to give, many people find no joy in it. They give simply out of a sense of duty. This, too, is out of harmony with Bible principles. The Scriptures tell us: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."—2 Cor. 9:7.

Giving that counts with God should also be without any showy display. The giver should not call attention to himself. Jesus Christ urged: "When making gifts of mercy, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing, that your gifts of mercy may be in secret; then your Father who is looking on in secret will repay you." (Matt. 6:3, 4) Have you not found that this principle is often ignored at Christmas time?

Some persons, of course, may be rightly motivated in their giving. But far too many give just because they feel obligated to do so. Theirs is not the unselfish, open-hearted giving that the Bible recommends. Furthermore, regardless of what the motivation may be, Christmas giving perpetuates a practice rooted in ancient idolatry. This is something the Scriptures specifically condemn. How, then, could Christmas giving possibly count with God?

If you want your giving to be acceptable from God's standpoint, does this not bring you face to face with a decision? Should you not want to discard any practices associated with idolatry? At the same time, would you not find real delight in giving at other times of the year, not under compulsion, but cheerfully, from the heart?

CHRISTENDOM'S "holy place"

THE destruction of religious buildings during wars, earthquakes, storms or the like comes as a great shock to many religious people. And even persons who may not view the ruined structures as sacred may be saddened by the fact that impressive works of art have been destroyed. How great, then, would be the shock if all of Christendom's sacred edifices were suddenly to come to nothing! Surprising as that may seem, the Bible indicates that this will soon occur.

This future event had a historical parallel in the first century C.E. At that time Jerusalem and its glorious temple were utterly destroyed. No longer could Aaronic priests sacrifice at the altar. Gone, too, were the records on the basis of which a man might establish his descent from Aaron and claim a legitimate right to serve as priest. The Jewish system of things that had existed for centuries definitely ended. Since the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century C.E., the Jews have been unable to carry out their worship in the manner set forth in the Mosaic law.

Jesus Christ, the greatest prophet ever to walk the earth, foretold this startling development. Regarding what would befall Jerusalem, he said: "They will not leave a stone upon a stone in you." (Luke 19:44) Another time, with reference to the temple, Jesus noted: "By no means will a stone

be left here upon a stone and not be thrown down."—Matt. 24:2.

So that his disciples might escape that terrible calamity, Jesus Christ gave this admonition: "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."—Matt. 24:15, 16.

It was in 66 C.E. that Jesus' words could first be acted upon. In that year the Roman armies under Cestius Gallus stood in a "holy place," that is, Jerusalem and its environs. (Compare Matthew 4:5; 27:53.) The Roman armies got into the city itself and even began undermining the temple wall—an act that meant assailing what the Jews considered to be very "holy." Actually, Jerusalem and its temple had already lost a sacred standing with God. As Jesus Christ had said earlier: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent forth to her—how often I wanted to gather your children together in the manner that a hen gathers her brood of chicks under her wings, but you people did not want it! Look! Your house is abandoned to you."—Luke 13:34, 35.

Yet, to the Jewish people Jerusalem still was a "holy place." The presence of the Roman armies in this "holy place" was, therefore, disgusting. Furthermore, the Roman armies were not acting out of any love for the true God in coming against Jerusalem. Rightly, then, the Roman armies were prophetically designated as the "disgusting thing."



**SOON
TO BE
DESOLATED**

A FUTURE FULFILLMENT IN OUR DAY

The prophecy involving ancient Jerusalem is not limited to the time when the Roman armies came against the city and then withdrew, enabling Christianized Jews to flee to the mountains before the 'disgusting desolator' returned and destroyed the city in 70 C.E. A consideration of the rest of Jesus' words (in Matthew chapter 24) reveals that they have a future application, for he spoke about his coming

"with power and great glory." The effect of that coming would be to cause "all the tribes of the earth" to beat themselves in bitter lamentation due to the calamitous results of having failed to submit to him as King. (Matt. 24:30) Such a thing did not happen in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 C.E.

Hence, what befell ancient Jerusalem must have been prophetic of a far greater tribulation to come upon the entire human system of things, causing those who are adversely affected thereby to give way to bitter lamentation. That coming tribulation will, in the fullest sense, fit Jesus' description: "There will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again."—Matt. 24:21.

Accordingly, ancient Jerusalem must have a modern counterpart. What might that be? The city of Jerusalem had a sa-

cred status because of its being the religious center of a people who claimed to be in a covenant relationship with God. So the modern counterpart must likewise claim to enjoy a covenant relationship with the Most High. Do not the religious systems of Christendom claim to be Christian and, hence, parties with God in the "new covenant"? (Heb. 9:15) But does not their course of action reveal that they, like unfaithful Jerusalem, are false to their claim?



The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Roman armies in 70 C.E. was prophetic of a greater tribulation soon to come upon Christendom

Christendom has made herself a friend of the world. She has willingly participated in the world's wars and in its corrupt politics. God therefore views her as unclean. The Bible says: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of

the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." (Jas. 4:4) Accordingly, Christendom is a part of the worldwide religious system that is spoken of in Scripture as a "harlot," "Babylon the Great." (Rev. 17:1-5) But what is Christendom's "holy place"?

CHRISTENDOM'S "HOLY PLACE"

This is a symbolic place representing everything that the religions of Christendom control and hold sacred—their whole field of operation and claimed religious rights. Christendom's clergymen have considered themselves to be God's special rep-

representatives toward the people and, hence, entitled to the treatment of a privileged class, exempt from duties and responsibilities to which the rest of the population may be subject. Contrary to Jesus' admonition not to take to themselves such titles as "Rabbi," "Leader" and "Father," they regard it as their right to be addressed as "Father," "Reverend" and the like. (Matt. 23:8-10) The religious systems of Christendom have constructed magnificent buildings throughout the earth. They have also amassed great wealth in other forms. In many lands, these vast holdings are, by reason of their claimed sacred status, exempt from the assessments and taxes imposed upon businesses in general.

Christendom's "holy place," however, will soon be invaded and destroyed. It is no more sacred in the eyes of God than were Jerusalem and her temple prior to their destruction in 70 C.E. The religions of Christendom will be deprived of their field of operation, losing control of everything. No respect will be shown for any of their claimed religious rights. Who or what will be the 'disgusting desolator' that will soon take a stand in Christendom's "holy place" and bring it to ruin?

THE DISGUSTING DESOLATOR

The Bible points to an organization reflecting the flaws and weaknesses of the entire present-day political system. This organization is spoken of as being the "image of the wild beast" and is itself referred to as a "scarlet-colored wild beast." (Rev. 13:15; 17:3) The "wild beast" of which the "scarlet-colored wild beast" is the "image" is described in Scripture as being "like a leopard," having feet "as those of a bear" and a mouth "as a lion's mouth." (Rev. 13:2) By comparing this description with what is stated at Daniel 7:3-7, 17-23, we can see that the "wild beast" is a combination of beasts, such as those mentioned in the book of Daniel.

Those beasts are specifically identified as kings or kingdoms.

Therefore, the "wild beast" out of the "sea" must represent the global political system made up of the "kings" or ruling powers on earth. It is said to have "ten horns and seven heads, and upon its horns ten diadems, but upon its heads blasphemous names." (Rev. 13:1) So it is Satan's age-long political organization that has always blasphemed the true God.

The identification of the "wild beast" provides the key for determining the identity of its "image." What organization *today* is the "image" or reflection of the worldwide political system? Is it not the United Nations organization? Does not that organization mirror the flaws and imperfections of the world's political system?

The Bible speaks of a harlot, "Babylon the Great," as riding on the back of the "scarlet-colored wild beast," or the political "image" of the "wild beast," that is, the United Nations of today. When the United Nations organization came into existence, "Babylon the Great," of which the religions of Christendom are a dominant part, gave her support to it, viewing it as man's only hope for peace and security. She looked to that organization to prevent conflicts that could result in her annihilation. In this way the United Nations organization has proved to be like a mount under her. She has depended upon it as does a rider upon his horse.

"Babylon the Great," however, will experience bitter disappointment. She will become an object of hatred. With reference to what the "scarlet-colored wild beast" will do to her, Revelation 17:16 says: "The ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire."

According to Revelation 17:12, the "ten horns" are "ten kings." Ten being a num-

ber of completeness in the symbolic language of the Bible (comparable to ten toes and ten fingers), a complete number of earthly rulers, not a minority, will turn against the religions of Christendom and the rest of "Babylon the Great." But not just the symbolic "ten kings" will take such aggressive action. The entire organization represented by the "scarlet-colored wild beast" (the United Nations) will do so.

In acting against Christendom's religions, the 'desolator' will not be acting out of any love for God. But God will maneuver it to serve his purpose in destroying religions that are "Christian" in name only. The motivations of the desolator will be totally selfish. It has utter contempt for Christendom's church systems. But since these religious organizations claim to represent the true God, the desolator will act also in hatred against the One whom they pretend to serve. This vicious, beastly attitude against God and its 'blaspheming' his name make the desolator a "disgusting thing" from Jehovah's viewpoint.

ACT NOW

The very fact that "Babylon the Great" and the "disgusting thing" can be identified shows that there is no time to lose in getting out of Christendom's religious organizations. This is not a flight to another geographical location, as in the first cen-

tury C.E. "Babylon the Great" is not confined to one geographic location but is a worldwide religious empire. Hence, fleeing from the religious systems of Christendom means severing all connections with them and identifying oneself as being a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

No one should delay his flight until the "disgusting thing" actually starts to invade Christendom's "holy place." There being no necessity to flee to another geographical location, a person should not expect a historical development corresponding to the Roman armies' abandoning the siege of Jerusalem in 66 C.E. The appearance of the Roman armies and their withdrawal positively identified the "disgusting thing" and enabled Christianized Jews to act in harmony with Jesus' admonition to flee.

Today, once a person has identified Christendom's religious systems as part of "Babylon the Great" and recognizes that the "disgusting thing" is about to stand in her "holy place," he should act on the command found at Revelation 18:4: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues."

Is this what you have done? If not, do not delay. Christendom's holy place—her field of operation and her claimed religious rights—is soon to be desolated.

Your Soul

◆ Most churches of Christendom teach that you have a soul within you that survives the body and goes on to the spirit realm. But is this doctrine based on the inspired Scriptures?

In the recent book *Western Civilization: Its Genesis and Destiny*, Professor Norman F. Cantor, admitted that it is not:

"Christian thinkers of the second century, particularly those in Alexandria, emulated Philo's attempt to synthesize Platonism and Judaism. . . . Their God was pure spirit; man was a union of spirit and matter, of soul and body; and salvation was made possible by the separation of the soul from the body and its flight to join the angelic hosts surrounding the God-Spirit. This view was a marked departure from Hebraic thought, which viewed man as *nefesh* [soul], the whole, undifferentiated human being."

The fact is that the entire Bible teaches that man is a soul and that the prospect for future life for one who dies depends upon a future resurrection.

PROVING OURSELVES WORTHY

TO
ENTER

*God's
New Order*

"Since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace."

— 2 Pet. 3:14.

DISCONTENT with the existing old order of things is widespread throughout the earth. Many radically minded persons call it "the establishment" and protest against it. Many of such want to destroy it. However, they find themselves having nothing suitable with which to replace it. They can contrive nothing new and better as a substitute. If they destroyed the established old order, it would leave only ruin. Happily, there is someone higher than man who also is not satisfied with the old order on earth. He is able, not only to destroy the old order completely, but also to replace it with an order brilliantly new for mankind. He is the Almighty God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

² This same God has promised both the removal of the oppressive, death-dealing old order from this earth and the setting up of a righteous, life-giving new order that will satisfy the needs and rightful desires of all mankind. The divine promise of this marvelous change in human affairs we find written down in the Book of which God is the Author, the Holy Bible. One first-century Bible writer referred to that precious promise when he wrote the words: "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell."—2 Pet. 3:13.

³ The first-century readers of those confident words of the Christian apostle Peter

were indeed eagerly waiting for the promised "new heavens and a new earth" from a God who does not lie. His promise still stands true today! Hence, the question is, Do we also believe it? If we claim to do so, are we likewise awaiting such righteous "new" things? With credit to the God whose promise never fails, we ought to be doing so. (Josh. 21:45; 23:14; Titus 1:2) Really, we should be delighted, because the "new heavens and a new earth" are almost upon us! Certainly we need them as never before! Those new things symbolize God's righteous new order. It will truly be something "new." Thus far men have never seen anything like it. It will undeniably be a new experience for mankind when the words near the close of the Bible are fulfilled:

⁴ "And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither

1. What can discontents with the old order not do about it, but what can God do?

2. What has this Almighty God promised to do about it, and where do we find his promise written down?

3, 4. (a) What question arises about us as regards that divine promise? (b) What kind of experience will it be for mankind when Revelation 21:3-5 is fulfilled toward them?

will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.' And the One seated on the throne said: 'Look! I am making all things new.' Also, he says: 'Write, because these words are faithful and true.'"—Rev. 21:3-5.

⁵ Sadly mankind have found the ambitious promises of their vote-seeking politicians to be hollow, empty, exaggerated, unrealizable and not deserving of trust and confidence. In sharp contrast to that, the promises of the Creator of the "new heavens and a new earth" will prove to be "faithful and true." We can await what He has promised with no possibility of our being disappointed.

THE OLD MUST GIVE WAY TO THE NEW

⁶ For thousands of years now the old order of things has prevailed over the earth. That has been long enough for the people to get sick and tired of it. Countless millions of mankind religiously believe that the old order is man's fate, his unchangeable destiny. They resign themselves to it in hopeless despair. Such religious persons do not know the Holy Bible. They do not know the divine Author of the Bible. Surprisingly many do not even know his name. They know the personal names of the non-Biblical gods whom they have been taught to worship, but not the personal name of the Bible's God. Still, His name is there in the Book. To find it, they merely have to take the most popular English translation of the Holy Bible, the Authorized Version, as authorized by King James I of Great Britain to be read in all the churches of the land, and turn to Exodus (the second book of the Bible), chapter six, verses two and three. There they will read:

⁷ "And God spake unto Moses, and said

5. How do promises of politicians prove to be in contrast with God's promises?

6, 7. What do many people religiously believe about the old order, and of what Book and its Authorship are they ignorant?

unto him, I am the LORD: And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known to them."

⁸ If this one case of the divine name in their own copy of the Bible is not enough for them, they can turn to Psalm Eighty-three, verse eighteen, and there they will read: "That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth." They can also look up Isaiah 12:2 and 26:4, AV.

⁹ So the personal name of the One who is God and "the most high over all the earth" is Jehovah. In the original Hebrew Scriptures, generally called the Old Testament, that divine personal name occurs around seven thousand times and is spelled with four Hebrew consonants. Since God's own personal name is used so frequently in the Bible writings, we today are authorized to use that name, only in a reverential way, not taking it in vain. Thus we can designate the God whom we mean, the Bible God. His personal name is different from that of his beloved Son, Jesus, which name means "Jehovah Is Salvation."

¹⁰ The Heavenly Father, Jehovah, is the One who has promised the New Order, composed of "new heavens and a new earth." As soon as He mentioned the new heavens and new earth, it meant that the old order of things, which never came from Jehovah God, was doomed to pass away. Is that not good news? (Compare Hebrews 8:13.) Ever since the giving of the divine promise, persons of true faith in the Giver of the promise have eagerly looked forward to his bringing in such a righteous

8, 9. What is the name of "the most high over all the earth," and how and why may we use his personal name?

10. (a) God's promise of new heavens and a new earth meant what for the old order of things? (b) Though not permitted to live till the entry of the promised "new" things, what did Peter encourage his readers to do?

new order. The apostle Peter and the congregations of Christians to whom he wrote his letter were among those who looked beyond the present and confidently waited for the setting up of the righteous new governmental "heavens" and the righteous new social "earth." Because of what Peter's Master, the Lord Jesus Christ, had told him, Peter himself did not expect to live to see that blessed day on earth. (John 21:18, 19; 2 Pet. 1:13-15) But he encouraged his readers to await the entry of the righteous new order. Peter's inspired encouragement applies to us now, nineteen centuries later.

THE END OF THE OLD ORDER EXPECTED FIRST

¹¹ First, though, we must expect the end of the ungodly old order. From shortly after the worldwide deluge that engulfed the earth in the days of the prophet Noah, more than 4,300 years ago, a wicked old order has entrenched itself in the earth. So it does not propose to give up easily, without a fight. A fight against whom? Why, of course, against the Author of the New Order, the Creator of "new heavens and a new earth." But the uprooting of the old order is not too big a job for the Almighty God to undertake. In the days of Noah this God showed his ability to destroy a whole world of mankind with one stroke, one "act of God" that was not an accident. Long previous, on the second day of His creative week, he caused a division of the waters so that great masses of water were suspended in space all around the globe, with an atmospheric expanse, or "firmament," in between. (Gen. 1:6-8, AV) At his appointed time He caused those suspended waters to drop earthward. This produced a global cataclysm that drowned

11. What must be removed from the earth first, and how was it demonstrated that this is not too big a job for the Creator?

all earth's human population except the eight human souls in Noah's ark.—1 Pet. 3:20.

¹² That global deluge was a punishment from Jehovah God. He had patiently held back from inflicting that punishment for at least 120 years. (Gen. 6:1-3) The apostle Peter especially pointed up this self-restraint on God's part, when he wrote: "He did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people." That this meant a world destruction, the apostle Peter emphasizes again when he adds: "And by those means the world of that time suffered destruction when it was deluged with water."—2 Pet. 2:5; 3:6.

¹³ Thus the "ancient world," the first society of mankind, lasted for about 1,656 years after man's creation. As for this present "world," or human society, God's patience with it has lasted much longer, for about forty-two centuries or since the "act of God" in confusing the language of the builders of the tower of Babel. (Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9) The "ancient world" of Noah's day was buried in a watery grave because it was "ungodly." It had filled the earth with violence. It was ruining the earth and not subduing it to a paradisaic beauty. "The badness of man was abundant in the earth." (Gen. 6:5-9, 12, 13) It deserved to be destroyed.

¹⁴ Why, then, were Noah and his family counted worthy to be spared through the deluge and to enter the post-deluge period? It was because Noah led his family in 'walking with the true God,' not with the ungodly world. God found Noah to be right-

12. For how long at least did God show self-restraint in bringing the deluge, and what did the deluge destroy?

13. How do the "ancient world" and the present "world," or human society, compare when God's long-suffering is taken into account?

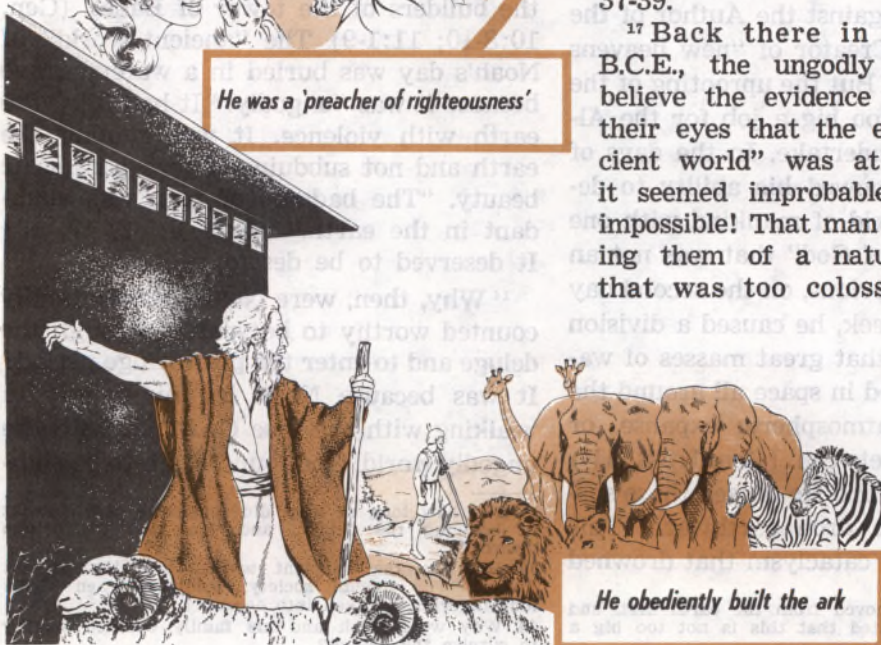
14. Why were Noah and his family counted worthy to survive the deluge?



Noah led his family in worship



He was a 'preacher of righteousness'



He obediently built the ark

teous, "faultless among his contemporaries." He was a "preacher of righteousness." He had exemplary faith in God. That was why he obediently built the ark for the preserving of his household alive.—Gen. 6:9 through 7:1; Heb. 11:7.

¹⁵ Let us not miss the lesson here set forth: It is possible for Jehovah God to bring to an end a whole world of bad human society and, more than that, to preserve approved human individuals through such an end of a world. (2 Pet. 2:9, 10) The end of a world that will likewise be global in extent is ahead of us today. God's own Son, Jesus Christ himself, foretold it, saying:

¹⁶ "Moreover, just as it occurred in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of man: they were eating, they were drinking, men were marrying, women were being given in marriage, until that day when Noah entered into the ark, and the flood arrived and destroyed them all. . . . The same way it will be on that day when the Son of man is to be revealed."—Luke 17:26-30; Matt. 24: 37-39.

¹⁷ Back there in the year 2370 B.C.E., the ungodly people did not believe the evidence that was before their eyes that the end of their "ancient world" was at hand. To them it seemed improbable, most unlikely, impossible! That man Noah was warning them of a natural phenomenon that was too colossal for them to

believe. So why worry?

15, 16. (a) What is the lesson here to be learned, with application to the present? (b) How did Jesus foretell the end of a world on a global scale? 17, 18. Why did the "ancient world" not take heed to God's warning by means of Noah, and when was divine judgment revealed?

¹⁸ Life till then had continued on just normally for them, with eating, drinking, and marrying so as to produce the next generation. They did not take into account any day of reckoning at God's hand for all their badness, the violence with which they were filling the earth, the manner in which they were ruining the earth, and their selfish way upon the earth. Noah's completing of the ark and his bringing of the basic bird and animal kinds into the ark lent no weight to Noah's warning for them. They showed a complete lack of faith. So they stood out condemned in God's sight, in contrast with Noah's course of faith backed up by works. Finally, the seventeenth day of the second lunar month (likely Bul, which means "Rain") of the year 2370 B.C.E. arrived. Then the destructive judgment of Noah's God was revealed to that "world of ungodly people." —Gen. 7:11-17; 2 Pet. 2:5.

¹⁹ Do we today desire to be like Noah and his family in surviving an end of a world and to enter into God's righteous new order, to enjoy the "new heavens and a new earth"? For us to be counted worthy of such a privilege, there is more to the matter than merely wishing to escape destruction with the "present wicked system of things." (Gal. 1:4) We have to resemble the family of Noah, the "preacher of righteousness," in their days before the global deluge. Noah had to do works of faith besides preaching righteousness and sounding the warning of world destruction. Should less be expected of us, who now find ourselves in the "conclusion of the system of things," according to Jesus' prophetic description of the eventful period of time through which we have passed since 1914 C.E.? No! Not if the modern-

19. If we desire to be like Noah in surviving the end of a world, what more is required than merely wishing to escape destruction with this system of things?

day antitype is to match the ancient type of Noah's day.—Matt. 24:3-39.

²⁰ What we need to do is the very thing of which the apostle Peter reminds the readers of his second letter to Christian believers. Building up an argument upon God's execution of judgment upon wicked angels and men, Peter writes: "If he did not spare the ancient world but kept Noah, the herald of righteousness, safe with seven others, when he let loose the deluge on the world of impious men: . . . —then be sure the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trial, and how to keep the unrighteous under punishment till the day of doom, particularly those who fall in with the polluting appetite of the flesh and despise the Powers celestial."—2 Pet. 2:5-10, *Moffatt*.

DIVINE PROGRESS TOWARD JUDGMENT DAY NOT SLOW

²¹ Toward the end of two hundred years after the Noachian deluge, Noah's descendants in general began to forget God's worldwide execution of judgment upon impious, ungodly people. They then built up a human society in rebellion against Jehovah God as the Universal Sovereign. The notorious city named Babel (or, Babylon) became a symbol of such God-defying human society. (Gen. 10:8-10) That was thousands of years ago. So this world of mankind that ignores the Supreme Judge, who let loose the deluge upon the "ancient world," has been permitted to live for a long time by now. It is a long time even when measured from the founding of Christendom in the days of Emperor Constantine the Great, in the fourth century of our Common Era. Furthermore, in our

20. In reminding us of what to do, what argument does Peter use with regard to God's ability to deal with righteous and unrighteous people?

21. Why does this generation think that destruction for them is slumbering and that God is slow about executing judgment?

own generation, it has already been sixty-one years since the start of the "time of the end" in the year 1914 C.E. (Dan. 12: 1-4) Consequently, the hypocritical religionists of Christendom may incline to think that God's judgment is slow in moving toward execution and that their destruction is slumbering. They think that, despite their religious hypocrisy with regard to the God of the Bible, he will not repeat his performance of the destruction of a whole world of rebellious humans.

²² Today, the wise thing for us to do is to take to heart the inspired words of the apostle Peter, when he wrote: "But as for them, the judgment from of old is not moving slowly, and the destruction of them is not slumbering." (2 Pet. 2:3) According to all the evidence viewed in the light of the inspired Scriptures, the hour is very late. God's tolerant long-suffering is about to reach its limit. Just so certainly as He did not spare angels who became disobedient during the years before the deluge, and just so surely as he did not spare the materialistic world of ungodly people in the days of Noah, and just so certainly as he did not spare the immoral cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the days of Abraham and his nephew Lot, just so surely this God of unchanging standards of righteousness will not spare the present-day world of faithless, self-centered people.

²³ Just because this world has not been told in the Bible the exact day and hour for the "Judge of all the earth" to execute his sentence of destruction upon this system of things, it is not a case of His having no fixed time schedule.—Gen. 18:25.

²⁴ This is not a case of legal matters moving very slowly for the carrying out of jus-

tice, as in modern-day lawcourts. It is not a case of God's slumbering upon the judicial bench or of his being fast asleep, with regard to bringing destruction on the "present wicked system of things." (Gal. 1:4) His appointed time for this has not been set at a date before now because He has been long-suffering, "slow to anger." (Ex. 34:6) Happy can all of us today be because of God's timing of events that way! Why so? For the good reason that it has allowed for our getting saved. It is as in the days of Noah, when God's allowing of 120 years until the deluge afforded the opportunity for Noah and his wife to have three sons and for these to grow up and marry three girls and then for all eight of them to join in building the ark and to bring creature life into it for salvation.—Gen. 6:3 through 7:10; Ps. 103:8.

²⁵ The ungodly world of today takes advantage of God's long-suffering to enjoy that much longer their selfish pleasures in the corrupt old order. Those who long for God's righteous new order take advantage of His 'slowness to anger' to repent of their death-dealing works and to prove worthy of salvation into His new order. They take the viewpoint that the apostle Peter sets out in these words: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance."—2 Pet. 3:9.

²⁶ Have we attained to repentance? When asking this, we do not mean ordinary repentance as over some wrong done, as when Jesus referred to a repeated offender, saying: "Even if he sins seven times a day against you and he comes back to

22. According to what patterns of dealing with peoples in the past will God not spare the present-day world of mankind?

23, 24. (a) Why should we not conclude that God has no fixed time schedule in this regard? (b) For what did God's exercise of long-suffering in the days of Noah allow?

25. How do people belonging to the old order and those desiring God's new order take advantage of his long-suffering?

26, 27. (a) The repentance here referred to has relationship to what? (b) How did Jesus show that this was the kind of repentance he had in mind?

you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him." (Luke 17:4) Rather, the repentance spoken of in 2 Peter 3:9 has to do with one's course of action regarding the kingdom of God, the government in which Jesus Christ is assigned to be King over all mankind.

²⁷ Such repentance in connection with the heavenly Messianic kingdom of God, Jesus had in mind, according to the record of Matthew 4:17, where we read: "From that time on Jesus commenced preaching and saying: 'Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (See also Mark 1:14, 15; Matthew 3:1, 2.) In harmony with such a record regarding repentance, we are told that Jesus Christ sent out his twelve apostles by twos to preach as he himself did, "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." Accordingly, "they set out and preached in order that people might repent."—Matt. 10:1-15; Mark 6:7-12.

²⁸ Back there it was urgent that the Jewish people should repent in connection with the Messianic kingdom. Hence, Jesus said to them: "Unless you repent, you will all likewise be destroyed." (Luke 13:1-4) On the day of Pentecost of the year 33 C.E., the apostle Peter said to thousands of inquiring Jews: "Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins." (Acts 2:1-38) Later, Peter gave similar counsel to the Jews at Jerusalem's temple, according to Acts 3:19-23. Repentance in the face of God's Messianic kingdom was also stressed by the apostle Paul. For example, in Athens, Greece, after "declaring the good news of Jesus and the resurrection," Paul said to the Court of the Areopagus on Mars Hill: "God has overlooked the times of such ignorance, yet now he is telling

mankind that they should all everywhere repent. [Why?] Because he has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and he has furnished a guarantee to all men in that he has resurrected him from the dead."—Acts 17:16-31. See also Acts 26:20; Romans 2:4.

²⁹ So, the matter is not open to question: Our first step towards proving ourselves worthy to enter God's righteous new order is that of repentance, and this with regard to God's Messianic kingdom. Only through God's appointed king for that government, Jesus Christ, can persons who repent gain God's forgiveness of their sins. (Acts 2:38) By means of that Messianic kingdom God will vindicate his universal sovereignty, and men must repent of having been under the sovereignty of God's great Adversary, Satan the Devil. Have all of us, in harmony with God's desire for us, attained to such repentance? If we can answer Yes, then, according to the apostle Peter, we are on the way to do what more remains to be done if we want to get God's final approval. We can take advantage of his tolerant long-suffering that he is exercising toward this wicked old order of things. Thus we can make sure of His final approval. This will mean salvation for us.

29. (a) So, what is our first step toward proving ourselves worthy to enter God's new order? (b) According to Peter, is attaining to repentance the end of the matter?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE

- **How Do You Value Your Life?**
- **"Try to Be Like Him."**
- **The Beloved John Presents "the Word."**

28. How did Peter and Paul point to the urgency of the repentance in connection with God's Messianic kingdom?

PERSONS who really believe in the early passing away of today's old order ought to be preparing themselves for God's New Order. They foresee the violent end of the present governmental "heavens" and the present social "earth" beneath. But such a prospect does not frighten them. From the Holy Bible they understand just what the "end" means, how it will come about

and what the purpose of it is. They eagerly desire and confidently expect "new heavens and a new earth" as guaranteed by God's promise. This counterbalances all thoughts of disagreeable situations on earth that are bound to come with the end of the old order. Quite appropriately they call to mind Noah and his family. During the cataclysmic end of the "ancient world" of "ungodly people," living conditions inside an ark loaded with animals and birds may not have been the most agreeable for Noah and his family for more than an entire lunar year. And yet those eight human souls survived. Thus they were able to give a righteous new start to the human family.

² God's new order, as represented by the "new heavens and a new earth" in which righteousness is to dwell, is something worth waiting for until God's appointed time to establish it. (2 Pet. 3:13) Now is it. Although foreseeing the violent end of the old order, why do we not need to be troubled at the prospect of disagreeable situations then?

2. (a) Why is now none too early for us to prepare for God's new order? (b) While doing what things do we not need to fear the arrival of Jehovah's "day"?

*The Kind
of Persons*

APPROVED FOR GOD'S NEW ORDER

none too early for us believers to begin preparing for it, that we may be counted worthy to enter it to our everlasting benefit and joy. The apostle Peter reminds us of the need for being ready, especially since "Jehovah's day" will come as a thief

in the night, with destruction for the old order of things. Says Peter: "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping

close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." (2 Pet. 3:10-12) If we were to fear the arrival of Jehovah's day with all its awesome accompaniments, we would not be awaiting it and keeping it close in mind, but would be wishing to postpone it into the indefinite future beyond our lifetime, beyond "this generation." We shall not need to fear its becoming a present reality if we are sincerely performing "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion."

³ Are we that "sort of persons"? Genuine repentance toward God, who has promised the righteous new order, should have led us to be that sort of persons, with works befitting repentance. In our repentance toward God we have dedicated ourselves to him through Christ and symbolized that dedication by water baptism. We have done so because we really love Jehovah God and we love the righteousness for

3. In our repentance toward the God of the New Order, what have we done, and what do we desire in contrast with the unrighteousness of the old order?

which He stands. We want to be deserving of His new order of things. Due to the fact that this different order of things will present a combination of "new heavens and a new earth," we love the righteousness that is to dwell in those new things. We wholeheartedly desire to be admitted into such a clean new order. We find no pleasure or satisfaction in the unrighteousness of the imperfect, corrupt, doomed order of things.

⁴ We are so devoted to the Creator of the "new heavens" and "new earth" that we disdain all popularity with the "world of ungodly people" and we seek his pleased approval of us. By ridicule or threats the world will try to frighten us away from "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion"; that failing, the world will try to allure us away from our righteous course that condemns it as out of harmony with God. But with our faces firmly fixed upon God's new order of righteous living we do not let ourselves be attracted by what the doomed system of things has to offer. We forge right ahead in the holy pathway that God has marked out for us. Not for a moment may we throw our lot in with Christendom, the popular "friend of the world." (Jas. 4:4) And when nominal Christianity, or Christendom, is turned upon by her alienated political lovers and is destroyed along with the rest of religious Babylon the Great, not for an instant will we consider a compromising treaty with those political despoilers of false religion.

⁵ We know that the "great tribulation" that is without parallel in human history is just ahead for both Babylon the Great and her political destroyers. (Matt. 24:3-22, 37-39) This global tribulation is meant

to destroy them, not us, for it comes from the hand of the God whom we worship. It will destroy the symbolic "heavens and the earth that are now," this old order. (2 Pet. 3:7) All the same, it will bring with it a climactic test of our faith in God and our devotion to him. Only Christian witnesses of Jehovah who successfully pass this test will survive and come forth like fire-refined gold for God's use in his precious new order.

⁶ It is not God's desire that those who turn to him in repentance and become baptized disciples of Jesus Christ should suffer everlasting destruction in the "great tribulation" of his "great day," the "fear-inspiring day of Jehovah." (Rev. 16:14; Joel 2:31) He has in mind repeating what he performed in the days of Noah, namely, the bringing of his faithful tested worshipers through the end of a "world of ungodly people." (2 Pet. 2:5) The coming attack of the symbolic "Gog of the land of Magog," long ago foretold, will fail to wipe out from the earth the regathered worshipers of Jehovah, but will be frustrated, crushed in disgraceful defeat. (Ezek. 38:1 through 39:26) After the frightful "great tribulation" is all past, God the Almighty will still have on the earth his preserved worshipers to display as a trophy of his glorious victory!

⁷ What a great privilege it will be for anyone to be a part of that living trophy testifying to Jehovah's triumph in the "war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon! (Rev. 16:14, 16) As far as we are concerned, God's assignment of this privilege will depend upon "what sort of persons" he finds us to be on that world-changing "day of Jehovah."

4. (a) How will the world try to get us away from our "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion"? (b) Under even what coming circumstances will we refuse to deal compromisingly with the world? 5. Who alone, then, will survive the coming "great tribulation" into God's precious new order?

6. At the close of the "great tribulation," what will God still have on earth to display as a trophy of his victory?

7. According to Peter, our being a part of God's living trophy will depend upon our being found by Him in what state finally?

To true Christians who would like to survive the end of the doomed old order, the apostle Peter makes that vital requirement clear in these words: "Hence, beloved ones, since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace. Furthermore, consider the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul according to the wisdom given him also wrote you." (2 Pet. 3:14, 15) How, then, can we be found in such an approved state?

"SPOTLESS AND UNBLEMISHED"

⁸ A spot visible on one's person may spoil one's personal appearance. If one got the spot while one was diligently engaged in a good work, it is not a disgraceful thing. Still, one would like to cleanse away the unsightly spot before presenting oneself to a clean-looking gathering of people. If, though, one gets the spot while engaged in a dishonorable work, then the spot in itself is to one's discredit. It is a shame, a disqualification, to be discovered with it. There can be spots of the latter kind upon one's religion, one's form of worship. Is our religion or form of worship spotted in such a way? If it is, then it is not pleasing and acceptable to God. In proof of this fact, we read:

⁹ "If any man seems to himself to be a formal worshiper [or, to be religious] and yet does not bridle his tongue, but goes on deceiving his own heart, this man's form of worship is futile. The form of worship [or, the religion] that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world." —Jas. 1:26, 27.

8, 9. (a) When is it a shame to be discovered with a spot on one's person? (b) According to James 1:26, 27, how can one's religion be spotted?

¹⁰ Christendom, with her professed Christianity, is covered with spots from the world. In all the realm of religion, her record is the worst. She may boast of caring for orphans and widows in her orphanages and poorhouses, but this will not hide the glaring fact that she has made orphans and widows by the millions. Is it asked how? The answer is simple: It has been by crusades and wars that she has promoted, fomented and backed up with her blessing, her prayers, and her own manpower. Her meddling in worldly politics is notorious and is resented even by many politicians themselves. She has given herself over to unchristian worldliness and has become a financial parasite upon her church members. She has not bridled her tongue, but has taught all kinds of false, Babylonish doctrines, palming these off as Christian, and has spoken gross falsehoods about the true God and has brought terrible reproach upon his sacred name, and has lyingly accused his true worshipers. How, then, can her confusion of forms of worship be "clean and undefiled" from God's standpoint? It could never be!

¹¹ Persons who desire to be found "spotless" by Jehovah God when his day for executing judgment arrives cannot ally themselves with the professedly Christian section of religious Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. For persons to become spotless in this regard, God's command for today is: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind." (Rev. 18:4, 5) Because of her hypocrisy in the name of God and his

10. Why could Christendom's religion never be considered "clean and undefiled" from God's standpoint?

11. With whom do those desirous of practicing the "clean and undefiled" religion refuse to ally themselves, and what is God's command for today on this score?

Christ, Christendom is the most reprehensible member of that international harlot, Babylon the Great. Let none of us remain spotted up from her and share in her sins before God!

¹² Let us recognize that Christendom is doomed, along with all the rest of Babylon the Great. She has refused to repent of her religiously immoral or adulterous course of action, her friendship with this world. (Jas. 4:4) She is like the rest of the ungodly world, even after Jehovah's Christian witnesses have plainly declared God's impending judgment to her. Prophetically, Revelation 9:20, 21 speaks of such sin-hardened people, saying: "The rest of the men who were not killed by these plagues did not repent of the works of their hands, so that they should not worship the demons and the idols of gold and silver and copper and stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders nor of their spiritistic practices nor of their fornication nor of their thefts."—See also Revelation 18:9, 11.

¹³ All members of the true Christian congregation are anxious to keep the organization spotless in its form of worship. We do not care to have in our membership those who are spots on the organization. The apostle Peter speaks of such kind of undesirables in the Christian congregation, saying: "They are spots and blemishes, indulging with unrestrained delight in their deceptive teachings while feasting together with you." (2 Pet. 2:13) If not sincerely repenting and turning around and away from deceptive teachings, these spot-like persons need to be dismissed from the congregation for the protection of the

practicers of the true worship of God. Otherwise, in addition to being a danger to God's flock of sheep, they are a reproach to the congregation.—2 Pet. 2:20-22.

¹⁴ Surprising events in the world today may raise doubts in the minds of some in the congregation. There may be still others, who, in a moment of weakness or carelessness, commit an act of sexual immorality. The Bible writer Jude tells the congregation how to deal with such members, saying: "Also, continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire. But continue showing mercy to others, doing so with fear, while you hate even the inner garment that has been stained [or, spotted] by the flesh."—Jude 22, 23; NW; *Interlinear*.

¹⁵ Here *The New English Bible* reads: "There are others for whom your pity must be mixed with fear; hate the very clothing that is contaminated with sensuality." *The New American Bible* reads: "Even with those you pity be on your guard; abhor so much as their flesh-stained clothing." *An American Translation* reads: "And look on others with pity mixed with fear, loathing even the clothes their animal nature has stained." This warning the congregation must heed.

¹⁶ The congregation can never sympathize with sexual immorality if it wants to be found spotless by Jehovah at his day for executing judgment. It can be merciful and have pity for members who commit an act of immorality because of fleshly weakness or other influences. But these must give evidence of true repentance. Still, it is with great caution that the congregation must show mercy and forgive

12. Of what spiritual adultery has Christendom not repented, and of what do her worldly associates not repent?

13. According to 2 Peter 2:20-22, who are like spots within the congregation, and how must such spots be disposed of?

14, 15. What does Jude 22, 23 say must be done with doubters and those guilty of an act of sexual immorality?

16. Why must the congregation feel cautious when having pity upon a repentant sinner who has committed an act of sexual immorality?

the repentant ones, always being in fear for itself, as it does not desire to weaken in its stand for righteousness in the midst of an ungodly generation that has sunk to depths of immorality such as brought Jehovah's fiery judgments upon the ancient cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.—Jude 7; 2 Pet. 2:6-8; 1 Pet. 4:3, 4.

¹⁷ The congregation has to keep filled with God's holy spirit and to cultivate its fruits, one of which fruits is moral self-control. (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:22, 23) Consistently, it must keep its distance from sexual immorality of all kinds. It does not look with amused curiosity or with corresponding sexual feelings upon an inner garment that is spotted with the evidence of sexual uncleanness on the part of its wearer. To the contrary, it hates, loathes, abhors an incriminating piece of clothing that needs to be washed from its sexual filth. Thus it fortifies its love of purity. It cannot, therefore, look with sexual gratification upon pornographic literature or movies or television.—Compare Leviticus 15:16, 17.

¹⁸ Members of the congregation must be watchful also to keep spotless in the way in which they observe God's commands for Christ's followers. Elders or overseers, who imitate the overseer of the first century named Timothy, do well to take to heart what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy as to Christian conduct, namely: "However, you, O man of God, flee from these things [the fatal consequences of materialism]. But pursue righteousness, godly devotion, faith, love, endurance, mildness of temper. Fight the fine fight of the faith, get a firm hold on the everlasting life for which you were called and you offered the fine public declaration in front of many

witnesses. In the sight of God, who preserves all things alive, and of Christ Jesus, who as a witness made the fine public declaration before Pontius Pilate, I give you orders that you observe the commandment in a spotless and irreprehensible way until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ."—1 Tim. 6:11-14.

¹⁹ Such a commandment to Christians we should want to obey in a manner that is "spotless and irreprehensible" before Jehovah God. We do not want our record of obedience to be spotty, having disfiguring black marks against us, and with much to be found fault with as to how we perform. We should do our utmost to show a sincere desire to be obedient at all times. Like the ark-builder Noah during the "time of the end" of the antediluvian system of things, we should take care to walk blamelessly with our God.—Gen. 6:3, 9.

HOW "UNBLEMISHED"?

²⁰ Not only "spotless" but also "unblemished" is how we need to be found by Jehovah God finally at the arrival of His "day." (2 Pet. 3:14) We know that a blemish is deeper than a spot. A spot is superficial and can be wiped off or cleansed away, but not so a blemish. This is a defect, a disfigurement that mars the physical perfection. It denotes that something on the inside is wrong, at fault. Jesus Christ was perfect through and through, and because of this he could offer himself as a ransom sacrifice for mankind, like an "unblemished and spotless lamb."—1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Heb. 9:14.

²¹ We descendants of the sinner Adam cannot, of course, have perfect human bodies, without a blemish of any kind. But

17. When the congregation examines the incriminating evidence of sexual immorality on the part of a member, how should it react to such evidence?

18. What exhortation, given at 1 Timothy 6:11-14, should elders or overseers take to heart?

19. How, then, should we not want our record of obedience and performance to be?

20. How does a blemish compare with a spot on a person, and what about Jesus Christ in this regard?

21. In what respect do we seek to be unblemished before God, as encouraged in Philippians 2:14-16?

what about our personality and heart motivation? Rightly, we take great pains to keep ourselves "without spot from the world," but, at the same time, we seek to cultivate a Christlike personality with purity of heart. Far be it from us to have anything defective about our sincerity in imitating the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not care to be like an animal victim presented at God's altar for sacrifice to God that is rejected by the temple priest because of its being "blemished." With equal force to us today the words of the apostle Paul of nineteen centuries ago apply: "Keep doing all things free from murmurings and arguments, that you may come to be blameless and innocent, children of God without a blemish in among a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you are shining as illuminators in the world, keeping a tight grip on the word of life."—Phil. 2:14-16.

²² Is that not a grand goal to which to aspire, namely, to be "children of God without a blemish"? Due to our being such kind of children of His, he will find nothing of which to be ashamed or over which to express disapproval. He will keep the light that is beamed out by us as illuminators continuously shining.

²³ Never will we be snuffed out as illuminators! In our case it will be as in the case of the one in whose footsteps we are following, the Logos or Word of God. Of him, it is written: "By means of him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light is shining in the darkness, but the darkness has not overpowered it." (John 1:4, 5) We expect in the near future that Christendom, which has presented God and Christ in a false light, will be destroyed, but the illumination from the "children of God without a blemish" will continue piercing the deepening darkness on earth.

22, 23. How will God keep the light as beamed out by his unblemished, innocent children on earth shining despite attack by the forces of darkness?

Then, when the irreligious hordes of the symbolic "Gog of the land of Magog" move *en masse* to the attack against these spiritual illuminators, "like clouds to cover the land," those forces of darkness will fail to quench the light. (Ezek. 38:16-19) Never will God let his "blameless and innocent" children perish from the earth!

"AND IN PEACE"

²⁴ Thus, so late in the course of human affairs, when world developments have already gone so far on a ruinous course, it is not the time for us to lose sight of what is just ahead. That is, dissolution, disintegration, of the old "heavens" and old "earth." So we should never let up on conducting ourselves in harmony with that awesome fact. At 2 Peter 3:11, *The New English Bible* presents the matter in these words: "Since the whole universe is to break up in this way, think what sort of people you ought to be, what devout and dedicated lives you should live!" If such a universal breakup is ahead, Jehovah God the Universal Sovereign is the One who will see to such a thing, and this by means of his royal Son, Jesus Christ. The symbolic old heavens and old earth will indeed be dissolved, disintegrated, broken up. But during all the time of that fiery dissolution of the old order of things, the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not dissolve, disintegrate, break up the coherence of his organized people on earth. He finds them performing "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion." His inspection shows them to be "spotless and unblemished." —2 Pet. 3:11, 14.

²⁵ Consequently, for these approved worshippers of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah the

24. During the dissolution of the old order, what will Jehovah not do with regard to his organized people on earth, and why not?

25. When the "presence of the day of Jehovah" becomes a fact, what contrast will there be between those in favor of God's new order and those supporting the old order?

spiritual paradise in which they have found themselves since the year 1919 C.E. will continue on unscathed as the catastrophic dissolution of the worldly old order takes place under the incandescent heat of God's anger. For his faithful worshipers it will be as when Noah and his family had entered into the completed, seaworthy ark and Jehovah God had shut the one door of it behind all those safely inside, to protect them from the elemental forces that he now let loose upon the "ancient world" of ungodly people. (Gen. 7:16) But as for the heedless world of mankind, with a blood-chilling shock they will realize that the unbelievable "presence of the day of Jehovah" is upon them! They will see the shape of their old order dissolve, like a snowball thrown into a roaring furnace. The unity of human society will disintegrate. The unity of human society will crumble, so that every man's hand will be against his brother. What a contrast to those then standing loyally in favor of Jehovah's righteous new order!

²⁶ Amid the worldwide breakdown of law and order among supporters of the old order, the advocates of God's new order will have to resist the pressures toward world anarchy. They will have to hold together as a divinely organized people, maintaining true Christian unity. This will require them to be at peace with one another. With inspired foresight the apostle Peter has admonished us that, when Jehovah's day for executing his judicial decision arrives with thieflike suddenness, we spotless and unblemished ones must also be found to be "in peace." We have the means with which to preserve our peace with Jehovah God and with one another. For long we have been cultivating the Christlike love, which is the "per-

26. Advocates of the New Order will have to resist pressures in what direction, and why will Christlike love be of aid in that behalf?

fect bond of union." (Col. 3:14) Still, there is more than that one binding force.

²⁷ There is that force also, of which love is the prime fruit, and that is God's holy spirit. So we must have the oneness of the spirit. Besides this, there are also the oneness of belief, the oneness of Christian activity in preaching and disciple-making, and the oneness with the one living and true God Jehovah through his Son Jesus Christ. These potent things make for harmony and peace within the organization of Jehovah's Christian witnesses. These peacemaking things will not fail them during the approaching "great tribulation" that will melt down the worldly old order to a formless mass.

²⁸ All along, during this "time of the end" since the year 1914 C.E., the devoted advocates of Jehovah's righteous new order have been applying themselves to what the apostle Paul exhorts us to do: "earnestly endeavoring to observe the oneness of the spirit in the uniting bond of peace. One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons, who is over all and through all and in all."—Eph. 4:3-6.

²⁹ Finally, we are one in awaiting shortly the dissolution of this moribund old order of things. What, then, shall we keep on doing until the thieflike arrival of the "presence of the day of Jehovah"? For us who desire to prove ourselves worthy of God's new order, the apostle Peter under inspiration prescribes what to do: "Do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace."—2 Pet. 3:10-14.

27. What other kinds of oneness will not fail them during the dissolution caused by the "great tribulation"?

28. For peace to act as a uniting bond, what unifying things do we have, as noted in Ephesians 4:3-6?

29. We are also one in awaiting what, and so what thing prescribed by Peter is there for us to keep doing?

Insight on the News

- When a twenty-four-year-old Vietnam veteran was admitted to a New Jersey hospital, he was led to believe that his wish to receive any treatment other than blood transfusion would be respected. He, his wife and his brother all made this clear to the hos-

Medical Dictators?

pital administration.

However, the hospital obtained a court order allowing the doctors to use blood. Then, in the middle of the night, the sick man was told he would be given something to make him sleep. After this, while he was unconscious, blood was administered.

Such a deceptive, dictatorial practice is an affront to persons who value their constitutionally guaranteed freedom of choice. To seize the body of an adult, trick him into thinking he is being given a sedative, and then to administer a treatment that he has expressly forbidden—is that not a form of dictatorship?

- Phoenix, Arizona, psychologist Dr. Kenneth Olson says that 'school can be devastating to the mental health of children.' Why? While he emphasized a 'negative intellectual environment,' in many other ways schools have become more threatening. In recent years schools have

Mental Health and Schools

seen growing drug abuse, immorality, violence, overcrowding, disinterested teachers and standards that conflict with parental standards.

Also, students see that many subjects have no practical use in life. Yet, as Olson says: "Before he gets to school, a child has mastered verbal and symbolic language without ever having had a course of [formal] instruction. He has been a learning machine." But much of that potential is wasted in school.

In ancient Israel, which lasted longer as a sovereign nation than almost any other, young people grew up to become skilled in the arts, crafts and agriculture, and they were taught God's laws for daily living. All of this was done without a formal public school system. God's law assigned parents the main responsibility to train the young. (Deut. 6:6, 7) They were not turned over to some school system for training.

While circumstances may be different today, much can be done to offset a poor school environment. That is why Jehovah's witnesses teach their children from infancy God's laws for daily living, often teaching them to read before they enter school. Such personal attention is continued until adulthood is reached. Also, the children are encouraged to learn practical trades. And they can look forward to God's righteous new order, where harmful environments will not exist, and where all will be taught what is really useful.—2 Pet. 3:11-13.

- The magazine "Christianity Today" said: "The Church is weak today because spiritual leaders have failed to train a body of believers to do the same kind of work they do." **"The Church Is Weak"** It observed that Jesus "does not teach simply to give his people a smattering of biblical knowledge. He teaches with a view to 'multiplying his ministry.' He trains those who in turn will train others." But, admittedly, such training among churchgoers is nonexistent.

Furthermore, in Bogotá, Colombia, the publication "El Catolicismo" reported that religious leaders in Spain held a conference where they discussed the weakness of the churches in contrast with the "successes" of Jehovah's witnesses. It was agreed that the churches were too preoccupied with secular matters and were not communicating truths to others. The conference noted: "Perhaps [the churches] are excessively neglectful about that which precisely constitutes the greatest preoccupation of the Witnesses—the home visit, that comes within the apostolic methodology of the primitive church. While the churches, on not a few occasions, limit themselves to constructing their temples, ringing their bells to attract the people and to preaching inside their places of meeting, [the Witnesses] follow the apostolic method of going from house to house and of taking advantage of every occasion to witness."

Not only do Jehovah's witnesses use the same method of calling on people in their homes as did Jesus and the apostles, but they also imitate the apostolic method of training others to be Bible teachers. Jesus told his followers: "Make disciples of people of all the nations." A disciple does the same kind of work as his teacher.—Matt. 28:19, 20.

Christian Love ATTRACTS MEN OF ALL KINDS IN NIGERIA

IN LINE with the declaration made in the Bible at Malachi 3:16, 18, Jehovah's witnesses in Nigeria are unitedly 'thinking upon the name of Jehovah and speaking, each one with his companion,' about Him and His purposes. Jehovah has taken note of their activities, as he has done in connection with his people elsewhere, and is blessing their Christian worship. People are seeing the distinction between these worshipers and those who have not followed the way of the truth. Many are led to abandon their former course of life and join with Jehovah's witnesses in pure worship, to the extent that from 1966 to 1975 the number of Jehovah's witnesses actively engaged in preaching the good news of God's kingdom in Nigeria has increased by 68,426, to make a grand total of 112,164 persons. This represents an increase of 156 percent in ten years!

With a population of over 79 million and an area of 356,669 square miles, Nigeria provides a vast field for the proclamation



of the good news of God's kingdom. The 112,164 Witnesses that are engaged in this work have learned to be versatile in order to reach people belonging to more than 235 ethnic groups, who speak more than 250 languages and dialects and practice a variety of religions.

While about 47 percent of the population claim membership in the numerous sects professing to be Christian, they are strongly influenced by the 35 percent who are Moslems and the 18 percent who practice various forms of animism and fetishism. Traditional honorary titles that require the observance of idolatrous practices are still eagerly pursued by prominent members of Christendom's churches. Polygamy is generally accepted by most of the church members, and practices based on non-Christian superstitions in connection with weddings, burials and the like are tolerated in the churches. At the same time, these religions are divided by tribal and family differences.

Viewed from this background, Jehovah's witnesses stand out as distinct, and when

honest-hearted persons are shown what the Bible says about true worship, they readily see the difference between those who are united by Christian love and those who are not. (John 13:35) Following a district assembly of Jehovah's witnesses at Abakaliki in the East Central State, in January 1973, a newspaper reporter wrote: "It is a credit to them that over 5,000 people made up of men, women and children could come to pray, sing, eat and sleep together for four days and record no incidents of stealing or fighting. And yet there was no policeman to keep order."

The determination of Jehovah's witnesses to follow the requirements of true Christianity has not been without difficulty. In a few areas they have suffered beatings because of their refusal to participate in juju or other traditional celebrations. Sometimes an entire village has been put on notice concerning a forthcoming juju celebration. All in the community participate regardless of their religious affiliation. Jehovah's witnesses, too, were expected to participate; but after years of consistent refusal to do so, in many villages they are now automatically exempted.

Thousands of people, learning the requirements of true religion, willingly destroy their objects of idol worship and cease all practices having to do with false religion. An elderly woman who destroyed her idols and charms, valued at over N80 (\$120), said: "Often my children and I would go hungry in order to make sacrifices to the demons." When she destroyed the idols, one of the observers said: "I really see evidence of truth in the worship of you Witnesses. None of the churches in this village have ever demonstrated their zeal for pure worship as you people have done by burning the objects of false worship. Church people teach us the way *we* like, not the way the *Bible* likes."

WANING INFLUENCE OF CHRISTENDOM'S CHURCHES

From 1967 to 1970 Nigeria found herself in the throes of a civil war. In contrast with other religions, Jehovah's witnesses maintained a position of strict neutrality and continued preaching the good news of God's kingdom despite severe persecution for pursuing this course. Many people observed this, and were influenced to begin studying the Bible with Jehovah's witnesses, who, they were now convinced, were practicing true Christianity. In the East Central State alone, new congregations are being formed at the rate of four each month, and at many congregational meetings there are five newly interested persons attending for every ten Witnesses. This is especially noteworthy as this section of the country has for decades been a Catholic stronghold. Apparently the quest that many former Catholics are now making for the truth is an indication of the weakening influence of the Church.

Until 1970 most of the schools throughout Nigeria were operated by the church organizations. The thinking and attitudes of the youth were thus trained and controlled by these organizations, and so the churches wielded an enormous influence at all levels of Nigerian society. But over the past four years the nation has been following a new educational policy by which the church schools have been taken over by the government. This has freed the educational system from its religious hobble and has done much to liberate the thinking of the youth. Becoming more open-minded, many who formerly hesitated to question religious doctrines for fear of the priest now openly seek out Jehovah's witnesses in order to obtain Scriptural answers to their questions.

With a view to bolstering the shaky position of the churches, many clergymen have spoken out advocating the official

adoption and practice of traditional but un-Scriptural customs. This, they say, would make the church more relevant to Nigerian society. An example of this is seen with regard to polygamy. Roman Catholic priest N.S.S. Iwe, calling for a progressive church, said: "Polygamy as a significant aspect of our culture cannot be condemned without a hearing. The concept of . . . polygamy deserves a thorough study and examination by Christianity for it is one of the honest concepts and institutions of our culture."

Not all clergymen are in agreement with such radical changes in church policies. The people notice this disagreement among church leaders, and their failure to adhere to true Christian standards. Many people have decided to look elsewhere for true Christianity and quite a number, from all social levels, are becoming Jehovah's witnesses. In fact, 17,203 of them were baptized in 1974 alone. When such persons assemble together, they provide a magnificent living testimony to the power of true Christianity and Christian love to transform their lives for the better.

CHRISTIAN UNITY AT CONVENTIONS

In January 1974, a large district assembly of Jehovah's witnesses was held at Port Harcourt in the Rivers State. It was attended by 107,442 persons who came from three neighboring states. Although the local residents opened their homes to accommodate the assembly delegates, there was still more need, and application was made for the use of the schools, which were closed for vacation. So these buildings, formerly under the control of the churches, were now occupied by Jehovah's witnesses, much to the anger of the clergymen who tried unsuccessfully to get the permission revoked.

But the local people now began to view the Witnesses with a new attitude of re-

spect. Reporting this, the convention supervisor quoted townspeople as saying: "Formerly we did not know what this religion was, but now it is undisputed that Jehovah's witnesses have become 'first among all religions.' We have not seen the government cooperate in giving schools to anyone before this. Church authorities have become helpless." It is no wonder that such a vast number of local residents attended the assembly.

Many men in responsible positions visited the assembly grounds and were favorably impressed. One of these, an English supervisor in the Nigerian Railway Corporation, said: "Your organization is just wonderful." He later attended the assembly itself. The sales manager of a local brewery also toured the assembly site and commented: "It appears you have already started your new system." Since a grand total of 256,852 persons attended the 19 district assemblies held throughout the country in 1974, and 239,343 were present at meetings of Jehovah's witnesses to celebrate the Lord's Evening Meal this year, it is evident that there were many more persons who held similar views.

NATIONWIDE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

During 1975 the Witnesses have spent over 25 million hours in their work of preaching and making disciples. They enjoy their work, whether visiting people in fine homes, or walking through squalor and going into dark rooms occupied by the poor people in the cities, or visiting the villages and remote homes in the rural areas. In all cases they enjoy progressively teaching the people what the Bible says about God's purpose and requirements relative to man and the earth.

The towns and villages of Nigeria's northern states are a stronghold of the Moslem and many other non-Christian religions. Congregations of Jehovah's wit-

nesses are scattered throughout this area and more than 2,000 Witnesses are active here in their preaching work. Though response to Bible instruction is slower than in the southern states, an increasing number of Moslems and others are learning how to transform their lives to meet true Christian requirements.

The results produced by the training given by the Witnesses to members of their own congregations impress and attract even former opposers. E. O. Avbodi, an elder in Iwhreko congregation in the Midwestern State, reports: "In the village of Otere the people boastfully said, 'We shall not give anybody to Jehovah's witnesses.' . . . But recently we started holding public meetings around the village and soon many started coming to the Kingdom Hall. In 1974 some parents brought along their children and explained: 'Our children have been behaving badly. We know your children behave very well and we want you to train our children for us.' Arrangements were made to study the Bible with the families in their own homes. Many of these have become publishers of the good news, and up to 44 persons now attend our meetings held in this village."

Literacy classes are conducted in many of the congregations of Jehovah's witnesses in Nigeria, and thousands have been taught to read and write, more than 5,000 during the past four years alone. Many of these were elderly and thought they no longer had the ability to learn. Their determination to obtain a knowledge of the Bible and to be able to instruct others reawakened their desire, and now they can read and write and help in teaching others the truth of God's Word. Illiterate ones are often taught to read and write in their own native language. However, many also learn to read and write the English language, and some of these have made such good progress that they have become qualified to serve as traveling overseers to the congregations of Jehovah's witnesses.

Truly, Jehovah God in a marked way has shown his approval of the love that his dedicated witnesses are showing for his name and the true Christian love that they manifest among themselves, as well as toward others. Jehovah has certainly richly blessed their work. People everywhere can see the distinction between those who serve God and those who are not serving him.

Preserving a Clean Conscience

● At times strong faith is needed for one to act in a way that will not defile one's conscience. This was the experience of one of Jehovah's Christian witnesses in Ghana. Her husband, not a Witness, was out of work, and the whole family depended upon her for their livelihood. However, she came to appreciate that her continuing to sell tobacco products was out of harmony with Bible principles. Determined to have a good conscience before God and men, she commended herself to Jehovah's care and closed the tobacco store.

Did her family suffer as a result? No. The very next week she was approached by a bulk-goods dealer who was looking for someone honest to sell her goods and share in the profits. Soon thereafter a second person gave her a contract to sell a local product called "shea butter," as many had proved to be untrustworthy in handling the work. These business opportunities opened up because this Witness had a fine reputation. Because of her interest in having a clean conscience, she soon had a business that was even better than the one she had given up.

Where Can You Turn WITH CONFIDENCE?

ARE you affected by the “crisis of confidence”? Earth wide there is such a crisis—of lack of confidence in leaders.

A Jesuit magazine recently commented: “A crisis of confidence in government seems to be . . . a mood spread as widely as the international political order.” And the chancellor of Atlanta University Center said: “People are undergoing a crisis of trust.”

You may realize that many persons, upon learning of widespread corruption, have lost confidence in government and business leaders. But many have no confidence in religious leaders either!

When a reporter asked him what he thought about God, a five-year-old boy in Illinois replied: “God lives in a box all week and comes out on Sunday in funny clothes to talk about money.” What the lad had in mind was a clergyman. Why do you think he got that impression? While some persons may have a good opinion of their minister or priest, what is the general impression? For instance, do you think that an additional twenty years of life will instill in this boy a deep confidence in religious leaders? Frankly, what most people see, hear and read about many of the clergy has resulted in a “crisis of confidence” as to religious leaders also.

However, this situation need not leave you in the lurch when you have spiritual or moral problems. Or when you need sound advice based on God’s Word. There is a source of help to which you can turn with confidence and receive loving, balanced assistance.

IN THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

At a time when his nation had become corrupt, the prophet Jeremiah said: “Guard yourselves each one against his own companion, and put your trust in no brother at all. For . . . every companion himself would walk around as a mere slanderer.”—Jer. 9:4, 5.

What a contrast, though, there is with Jehovah’s witnesses today. In the book *Religious Movements in Contemporary America* (1974), L. R. Cooper pointed out: “In their own congregational life Witnesses form a genuine community of trust and acceptance.” That mutual trust is found in their congregations world wide.

But there is even more than the general spirit of trust. In each congregation there is a body of elders, spiritually older men who have the confidence of the flock and who shepherd and aid all in the congregation. If you are already associated with Jehovah’s witnesses, likely you are acquainted with the mature Christians in the local

body of elders. But do you know why *you* can turn to them with confidence? How can they help you and your loved ones?

Note the prophetic description of such devoted elders that Isaiah provided: "Each one must prove to be like a hiding place from the wind and a place of concealment from the rainstorm, like streams of water in a waterless country, like the shadow of a heavy crag in an exhausted land." (Isa. 32:2) So you can gain comfort and protection if you view these mature Christian elders as men worthy of your confidence. As Isaiah went on to say: "My people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of full confidence and in undisturbed resting-places."—Isa. 32:18.

Your confidence in these men should be built up by reflecting on the Scriptural qualifications they had to meet in order to be 'appointed by holy spirit' to be elders. While there is variety as to age, personality and amount of experience, each one must be "moderate in habits, sound in mind, orderly, hospitable, qualified to teach, not a drunken brawler, not a smiter, but reasonable, not belligerent, not a lover of money, . . . not a newly converted man."—1 Tim. 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 20:28.

Since the elders are not "newly converted" men, you will be dealing with men who have progressed to spiritual maturity and had quite a bit of experience as Christians. Yet they are not "above" you. Does it not draw you to them that they do not take on high-sounding religious titles, not even "Leader"? (Matt. 23:8-12) Still, the Bible says that they "are taking the lead among you." How so? Well, they are "keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account." And they are Christians who "work hard in speaking and teaching." (Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17) You can see, then, why it should be only natural for you to develop confidence in them.

True, they are not perfect; each one may

have limitations and areas where he is improving. But was that not so with the apostles also? Did not overcritical persons find fault even with them? (2 Cor. 10:10) On the other hand, balanced Christians in the first century had real confidence in the apostles. They recognized that, though the apostles were imperfect humans, they had obvious spiritual qualifications and had been appointed by holy spirit. (Gal. 4:13, 14) Should you not likewise be confident of the elders now?

Interestingly, the Bible shows that not only the apostles enjoyed the confidence of the brothers, but other elders did too. For instance, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians about sending Titus with contributions to needy Christians in Jerusalem, he added: "We are sending along with [Titus] *the brother* whose praise in connection with the good news has spread through all the congregations." (2 Cor. 8:18) Who was that other brother? Commentator Albert Barnes says: "It is impossible to determine with certainty who it was . . . Whoever it was, it was some one well known, in whom the church at Corinth could have entire confidence."

But what would approaching an elder involve? And how might he be able to help you?

MANIFESTING YOUR CONFIDENCE

You likely realize that an elder cannot make decisions for you. On most matters the individual Christian has to make his own decision. Paul wrote: "For each one will carry his own load." (Gal. 6:5) Also, recognizing that the elders "work hard in speaking and teaching," you would not want to be constantly seeking them out on every detail of life. Still, they are happy to help if a Christian needs counsel or advice in weighing a matter in the light of God's Word.

Perhaps you face an important decision or have a problem that you are trying to

resolve. How would the elder you approach with confidence be able to help? Well, the reason you are approaching him is that you have confidence in him based on his spiritual qualifications. So, since he is one who 'holds firmly to the faithful word as respects his art of teaching,' he will try to share with you God's counsel from the Bible. Understanding and applying this will help you to act wisely.—Ps. 19:7-11; 1 Tim. 4:6.

Depending on the nature of the matter, he may ask another elder to join the two of you. That is fine. Recall that Paul did not send Titus alone. So that there would be no doubt whether the matter was handled properly, Paul sent along another brother in whom the Corinthians had confidence. (2 Cor. 8:20) Thus if two elders discuss the matter with you, you will be in position to benefit from the Scriptural knowledge and Christian experience of both. In this regard, Proverbs 15:22 tells us: "There is a frustrating of plans where there is no confidential talk, but in the multitude of counselors there is accomplishment."

Please note that this will be "confidential talk." What you discuss with these elders will not become public information. The elders take care that they do not go about "uncovering confidential talk." (Prov. 20:19) In fact, there have been instances when a person beginning to associate with Jehovah's witnesses has sought counsel from elders about past illegal conduct, such as stealing. He could do this with assurance that the elders would not disclose what he told them in confidence. Instead, they provided counsel from the Bible as to how the individual could bring his life into harmony with Jehovah's ways.—Prov. 18:24.

Maybe the help you seek has to do with a Bible question. Even if the elder is not in his sixties or seventies, he is not a rank

novice on Biblical matters. He has been studying the Bible and Christian publications for some years. He thus may recall having read some information on the very question you have. Or he may be able to spend some time showing you how questions or matters of this sort can be researched using aids such as *Watch Tower Publications Index*. That assistance will be doubly beneficial to you. First, you may right then locate a Bible-based discussion of the matter that you can study carefully. Second, in the process you may learn how you can in the future look up information. Can we not be grateful that we have available such sources of help to whom we can turn with confidence?

You can also approach a Christian elder with confidence if you have given in to temptation and sinned. Remember that the elders are human too. So you can be sure that they will strive to be understanding and considerate. They bear in mind the divine advice: "Brothers, even though a man takes some false step before he is aware of it, you who have spiritual qualifications try to readjust such a man in a spirit of mildness." (Gal. 6:1) They will want to help to restore you, so that you can continue to serve Jehovah and have his blessings. And they will try to do this with mildness.

You know that these men are not mere uninterested employees. They are not paid to serve the congregation, but are spiritual men motivated by love for Jehovah and for those who are endeavoring to do his will. By your manifesting confidence in them, and thus receiving the benefit of their prayers and Bible counsel, you can continue to be one with whom Jehovah is intimate. As Proverbs 3:32 tells us: "The perverse man is an abomination to the LORD, but the upright are in his confidence."—*Revised Standard Version*.

SUBJECT INDEX FOR "THE WATCHTOWER," 1975

indicating page on which article begins

BIBLE

Bible, complete? 414
events in order, 446
principles in business, 291
product of human wisdom? 133
Book, for mankind, 131
Knowledge, not from men, 136

CHRISTIAN LIFE AND QUALITIES

Anger, 647
Anointing to heavenly hope, 105
Christianity, genuine, 536
way of life, 698
Christians, how spiritually fed, 45
Counsel, how accepted, 267
Eating and drinking, to God's glory, 300
Faithfulness, fine reward for, 77
"Gifts in Men," 667
Goodness, endearing quality, 476
Happiness, way of life resulting in, 643
Hardship, willing to suffer? 331
Hospitality, why be? 359
Judge, is there a time to? 92
Kind, to one another, 675
Meetings, why attend Christian? 61
Observance, most important, 165
Reasonableness, makes life enjoyable, 707
Song, expressing appreciation in, 29
Stumble you, let others? 125
Tasks, willingly accept humble? 297
Uncleanliness, watch out for spiritual, 426
Work, ready for good, 317
World, separateness from, 697

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

(Partial listing only)

Abortion, attitude toward, 248
Blood, surgery without, 445
Blood transfusions, 445
Books, religious, 48
Brain, fantastic capacity, 684
Creation, learning from, 560
Era, end of [for church magazines]? 327
God, Newton's belief in, 651
Greece, burial permit refused, 71
Jehovah's witnesses, Towers Hotel, 631
1914, "mortal change," 684
Religion, influence, 200, 364
Rock music, influence, 390
Roman Catholic Church, and Nazis, 48
"Saint," Catholic, 112
Sainthood, cost of, 487
Transplant problems, 519
Universe, origin, 200

JEHOVAH GOD

Exclusive devotion, to God, 380
Faith, in God, rewarded, 302
Government, God's will take control, 632
Jehovah, appreciative God, 713
Refuge for millions, 636
"remembers we are dust," 517
Judgments, reveal God's personality, 664
Rebellion, against God, 252
Shepherds, false dismissed, 553
Sovereignty, acknowledging God's, 244
Trust, a God who merits, 700
where put? 419

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Argentina, receives "good news," 488
Assemblies, "Divine Sovereignty," 94, 349, 624, 626
Canada, moving ahead in, 41
Clergyman, recognized truth, 478
Faithfulness, not martyrdom, 475
Gilead, 59th class, 671
Governing body enlarged, 60
Greece, freedom of assembly, 547
"Land of the morning calm," 264
Mexico, gets cultural boost, 649
Missionaries, with lifesaving work, 285
Nigeria, Christian love in, 760
Philippines, Christian growth in, 391
Portugal, freedom of worship gained in, 169
Preaching, when a real challenge, 677
Spain, impact of Kingdom preaching in, 456

JESUS CHRIST

Christ's coming, will you see? 9
Family, highly favored, 220
Jesus Christ, historical personage, 249
Mary, blessed among women, 295
"Mother of God"? 539
Miracles, performed by Jesus, 669
Pilate, judged the Lord, 7
Ransom price, why so costly? 429
Spokesman, who is he? 173

LIFE STORIES

Kingdom, upholding God's truth and, 533
Man, of single purpose, 190
Minister, on move, 205
Persecution, steadfast despite, 423
Rejoicing, in fight of faith, 333

MAIN STUDY ARTICLES

Applying God's Word in Our Own Families, 433
Appreciating Our Relationship with Jehovah, 305
Appreciating the Things of God, 19
Are You Guided by a Sensitive Christian Conscience? 214
Be Steadfast in Prayer, 407
Bible—Written by Men but Still God's Message, The, 141
Christian Greatness Comes from Serving, 716
Christian Love Based on Jehovah's Love, 520
Coming to the Hearer of Prayer, 401
Cultivate Intense Love for One Another, 336
Do Not Let Your Faith Be Shipwrecked by Discouragement or Personalities, 505
Do Not Let Yourself Be Ensnared by Fads and Entertainment, 499
Do Not Let Yourself Be Sidetracked in the Race for Life, 493
Do You Show Appreciation? 13
Elders Presiding in a Fine Way, 470
Exposing of the False Kingdom Refuge, 595
Flight to the True Kingdom Refuge, 604
Getting to Know God, 113
Have Intense Love for One Another, 526
Have You 'Stopped Storing Up Treasures on Earth'? 561
"Having Nothing and Yet Possessing All Things," 568
Hope Based on the Unfolding Purpose of God, 80
How Are You Affected by Not Knowing the "Day and Hour"? 279
How You Benefit from Pursuing Godly Devotion, 119
Keep Looking, Keep Moving Forward with Jehovah, 87
Keep Your Senses in All Things, 368
Kind of Persons Approved for God's New Order, The, 752
Lasting Gain from Living by the Bible as a Family, 151
Letting God Be the Sovereign of Our Lives, 652
Looking to the Future with Confidence, 374
Love Covers a Multitude of Sins, 342
One Government for One World Under God's Sovereignty, The, 617
One World, One Government, Under God's Sovereignty, 611
Our Refuge Under the Incorruptible "Kingdom of the Heavens," 685
People Zealous for Fine Works, A, 311
Positive Commitment Required for Those Taking Refuge, A, 691
Proving Ourselves Worthy to Enter God's New Order, 745
Pursuing a Satisfying Way of Life, 54
Reason for Choosing to Worship Jehovah, The, 233
Safeguarded by Faith and Hope, 49
Serving Unitedly as an Association of Brothers, 722
Things Which the "Kingdom of the Heavens" Is Like, 589
Time for Choosing God as Sovereign, The, 658

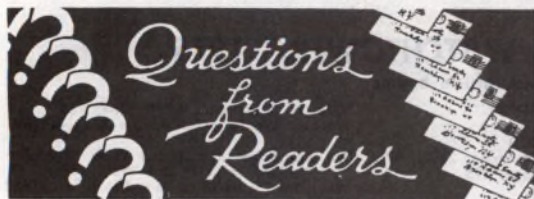
Voice of Conscience Within, The, 208
Walking Whole-souled in the Way of Life, 183
We Appreciate the Young Ones Who Are Walking in Jehovah's Way, 439
What Does It Mean to Be a "Minister"? 728
"Who Is Jehovah," so that All Should Worship Him? 227
Who Qualifies to Be an Elder? 465
Why We Have Not Been Told "That Day and Hour," 272
"Working Night and Day" to Make Disciples, 177

MISCELLANEOUS

Armageddon, meaning for mankind, 515
Blessings, do you appreciate? 556
Capital, for universe, 490
Cedars of Lebanon, 541
Churches, millions have left, 323
what not told by, 355
Confidence, where turn with? 764
Crime-free world, 35
Desire, what things? 394
Disloyalty, wages of, 109
Events, that lie ahead, 681
Fear, divine backing removes, 453
Forgiven by God, too bad to be? 38
Future, holds what for your child? 451
Giving that counts, 739
God, death of a, 269
"Holy Place," Christendom's, desolated, 741
"Holy Year," pleasing to God? 397
Injustice, life free from, 163
Jerusalem, in apostles' days, 365
Jonah, profiting from his experience, 709
Leadership, confidence in human? 241
Life, how valuable? 328
Living, why hard to make, 3
Marriage, how Bible can help, 483
to near relatives, 72
Mideastern events, fulfill prophecy? 387
Neighbors, let them starve? 195
Peoples, why they vanished? 421
Poverty, threat to all, 67
Problems, relief from global, 259
Samaritans, a look at, 103
Science, solve your problems? 99
Sects, why so many "Christian"? 166
Sheep, respond to shepherd's voice, 432
Shyness, coping with, 197
Sin, "exceeding sinfulness" of, 201
Sins, why some not forgivable, 459
6,000 years, of man-rule, 579
witnessing for Jehovah, 581
Jehovah's purpose toward mankind, 584
Stability, though nations shake, 361
Trinity, proof in 1 John 5:7, 8? 190
Youths, make life worth living, 461

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Abortion, health danger justify having? 191
Blood, "asking back" from an animal, 639
Burial place, Abraham's purchase, 735
Chronology, why Jewish differs, 63
Divorce, for wife-beating? 286
Doctors, Jehovah's witnesses believe in? 415
Dumah, pronouncement against, 31
Education, secular for children, 542
Engagement, breaking, 382
Fine, paying, 223
"Great tribulation," 768
Husbands, "as though without wives," 351
Jehovah, no gods together with, 63
Jehovah's witnesses, view of religions, 127
Jesus Christ, resurrection of, 478
Kidneys, Scriptural usage, 479
Meetings, insist children attend? 319
Moses, son's circumcision, 415
Psychiatrist, proper to consult? 255
Separation, unbeliever departs, 575
Sterilization, 158
Suicide, viewpoint toward, 447
"That which is complete," 95
Tombs, opened at time of Jesus' death, 639
Wisdom, personified, 511
Word, "a god," 702



● Does Jesus Christ know when the "great tribulation" will begin?

He may, but we cannot say definitely that he does.

Jesus foretold a "great tribulation" that will wipe out the wickedness we see around us. As to the time for this destruction, Jesus said: "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father."—Matt. 24:3, 21, 36-42.

Hence, when he was on earth as God's king-designate, Jesus Christ did not know the set date for the beginning of the "great tribulation." He died and was raised to heavenly life at the right hand of God, awaiting the granting of full authority to rule and to 'dash to pieces' the nations. (Ps. 110:1; 2:6-9) Fulfillment of Bible prophecy indicates that he received that authority in 1914 C.E.; his "presence" began then.

Ours, thus, is the generation to experience the "great tribulation." (Matt. 24:34; Rev. 11:15-18) Jesus also knows that, just as he knows how far along we are in human history since the creation of Adam and Eve.

What is Jesus now doing? Revelation 6:1-8 shows that in 1914 C.E. he "went forth conquering and to complete his conquest." Man-kind's wars, food shortages and pestilences prove that this is the time when he is moving toward the completion of his conquest.

Jesus will lead the heavenly armies in the "great tribulation." We are now deep into the period known as the time of the end, so God may already have made known to Christ the full battle strategy and schedule. But if Jesus has not yet learned the "day and hour" to "complete his conquest," he soon will learn it.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

January 25: Proving Ourselves Worthy to Enter God's New Order. Page 745. Songs to Be Used: 52, 117.

February 1: The Kind of Persons Approved for God's New Order. Page 752. Songs to Be Used: 8, 67.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS
 Question: How long will the "great tribulation" last?
 Answer: The "great tribulation" will last as long as it takes to wipe out the wickedness of the present world.
 Question: Will the "great tribulation" be a time of peace?
 Answer: No, it will be a time of great suffering and death.
 Question: Will the "great tribulation" be a time of war?
 Answer: Yes, it will be a time of great wars and battles.
 Question: Will the "great tribulation" be a time of famine?
 Answer: Yes, it will be a time of great famines and shortages of food.
 Question: Will the "great tribulation" be a time of pestilence?
 Answer: Yes, it will be a time of great pestilences and diseases.
 Question: Will the "great tribulation" be a time of darkness?
 Answer: Yes, it will be a time of great darkness and gloom.
 Question: Will the "great tribulation" be a time of fire?
 Answer: Yes, it will be a time of great fire and destruction.
 Question: Will the "great tribulation" be a time of judgment?
 Answer: Yes, it will be a time of great judgment and retribution.

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