OCTOBER 1, 1978

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

How Urgent Are Our Times?

Till When Will the Angels Hold Back the "Winds" of Destruction?

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October 1, 1978
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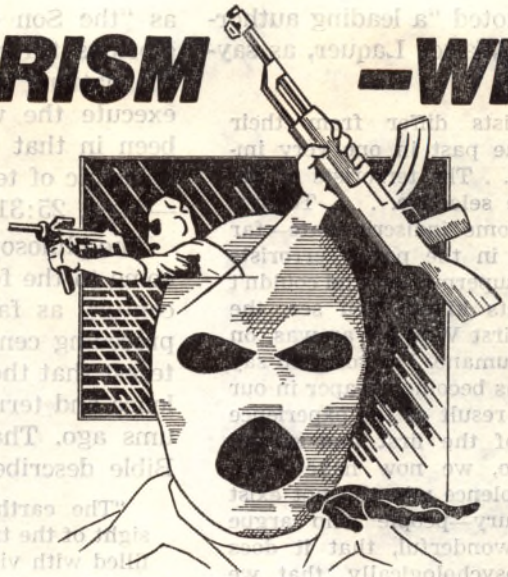
TERRORISM —WHY?



RECENTLY a missionary couple, Jehovah's Witnesses, were caught up in the frightful massacre that struck the city of Kolwezi, Zaïre. The assault on the city was apparently made by Communist-backed tribesmen, and at first they seemed content to frighten the whites by firing at the tops of the houses. Many whites barricaded themselves in their homes, but their assailants later went on a rampage of looting, drinking, raping and killing, which turned the town into a scene of utter carnage. A horrible week of terror ended with the arrival of the French Foreign Legion on May 19, and Belgian paratroopers the following day. It was estimated that some 200 whites and 700 blacks died in the slaughter.

How did the Witness couple make out? For seven days they sheltered in their home behind a barrier of cartons of Bible literature, and with cartons, mattresses and pillows shielding the windows. Shells and shrapnel flew all around. Their house became a shambles, but they survived to be flown out to Kinshasa. Though themselves only slightly wounded, the strain had been so great on the wife, about six months pregnant, that she gave birth prematurely to a baby boy. Not fully developed for life outside his mother's womb, he survived for only four days. The parents were comforted, however, by the knowledge that he will live again on a much more pleasant earth, and also by the hope that they themselves may survive this age of terrorism to welcome him back in that paradise.—Luke 23:43; John 5:28, 29.

THE MENACE OF TERRORISM

Look where you will on this earth today—terrorism is raising its ugly head. Terrorists have overthrown democracies in the Americas. Thousands have died as a result of terrorist feuding between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. In Japan, militant terrorists delayed the opening of Tokyo's new international airport for five years. Palestinian guerrillas continue their fight against Israel, even killing people by the busload. In Germany and in Italy there have been kidnap-murders, climaxed in Rome by the cruel killing of former premier Aldo Moro.

Then there is the terror that daily walks the streets in many of the large cities on earth. Muggings, thefts, rapings and murders have become everyday occurrences. Few people really feel safe anymore. Yes, terrorism is on the rampage around the globe.

One weekly periodical described the situation as an "epidemic of violence."* In

* *U.S. News & World Report*, May 22, 1978, pp. 35, 36.

an interview, it quoted "a leading authority on terrorism," Walter Laquer, as saying:

> "Today's terrorists differ from their counterparts of the past in one very important respect. . . . The terrorists of the 19th century were selective. . . . Today's terrorism has become indiscriminate—far more brutal than in the past. Terrorists leave a bomb in a supermarket and couldn't care less who gets killed. You see, the period up to the first World War was, on the whole, more humane. I'm sorry to say that human life has become cheaper in our time—partly as a result of the experience of mass killing of the first and second World Wars. Also, we now have these philosophers of violence who did not exist in the 19th century—people who argue that violence is wonderful, that it does things for you psychologically, that we really need violence."

Mr. Laquer also warned of the possibility of terrorists getting hold of weapons of "superviolence," whereby they might destroy a whole country, including families, friends and enemies—everyone!

WHY THE EPIDEMIC?

Note that the above-quoted authority states that this era of inhuman, brutal terrorism got under way as a result of the first world war. The epidemic of violence has continued ever since. This is of particular interest to students of the Bible, for Jesus himself, in speaking of 'the sign of his presence and of the conclusion of the system of things,' foretold as "a beginning of pangs of distress" that 'nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom'—total warfare engulfing the world. This, Jesus said, would be followed by an 'increase of lawlessness' and "fearful sights . . . while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."—Matt. 24:3, 7, 8, 12; Luke 21:10, 11, 26.

Jesus indicated that these frightening events would be part of the sign that he, as "the Son of man," is present on his glorious throne in the heavens, to judge the nations and peoples of earth, and to execute the wicked. Evidently, we have been in that time of judgment since the epidemic of terrorism got started in 1914. —Matt. 25:31-33, 41, 46.

The philosophy of violence has *certainly* come to the fore since 1914, marking this century as far more terrifying than the preceding centuries. However, it is of interest that there was a similar age of violence and terror more than four millenniums ago. That was in Noah's day. The Bible describes it in these words:

> "The earth came to be ruined in the sight of the true God and the earth became filled with violence. So God saw the earth and, look! it was ruined, because all flesh had ruined its way on the earth."—Gen. 6:11, 12.

The violent ones back there were principally the powerful hybrid offspring of daughters of men and disobedient spirit sons of God, who materialized on earth. These offspring were called "Nephilim," meaning "fellers"—"mighty ones" who terrorized mankind. (Gen. 6:4) They triggered an era of violence comparable to what we see in the earth today. That wicked generation refused to heed Noah's warning of coming destruction. As Jesus stated in the above-quoted prophecy: "They took no note until the flood came and swept them all away." And Jesus made clear that his 'presence as the Son of man' would be for the purpose of executing a like judgment upon the wicked *generation* at the world's end.—Matt. 24:37-39.

HOW WILL IT END?

That the age of terrorism will come to its own violent end is clearly made known in many Bible prophecies. (Jer. 25:31-33; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; 2 Pet. 3:5-7) But this will not be through terrorist men or nations getting to use weapons of "superviolence,"

in order to destroy the earth or parts of it. Rather, it will be through the action of Christ Jesus, who loves mankind and has real interest in delivering lovers of righteousness from the terrors of our age. That is why, after describing the nations' "anguish" due to the terrors of our day, Jesus speaks these encouraging words:

> "As these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near." —*Luke* 21:25, 28.

Yes, it is time for all lovers of righteousness among oppressed mankind to lift up their heads in anticipation of happy times ahead. It was strong faith in God, together with the hope of a paradise earth and the resurrection of the dead that sustained faithful missionaries during that terrible experience in Zaïre. Faith in God's promises continues to sustain devoted servants of God wherever they are serving in this violent earth. May it sustain you, too, in surviving this age of terrorism into 'a new earth where righteousness is to dwell.'—2 Pet. 3:13.

Are These Really the "Last Days"?

DOES this age of violence mean that we are now living in the "last days"? Those who ask this question in all sincerity will find a satisfying answer. But others ask with a wrong motive, and concerning these the apostle Peter writes: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of [the Lord Jesus Christ]? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" (2 Pet. 3:3, 4) In today's godless world, such ridiculers of the Word of God abound—in itself an indication that we have entered the "last days."

Peter calls the attention of the ridiculers to the destruction of the world of Noah's day by the deluge, and adds:

> "By the same word [of God] the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." (2 Pet. 3:5-7)

The governmental powers and human society of this wicked world face just such a destruction. But can we really be sure that these *are* the "last days"?

EVIDENCES OF THE "LAST DAYS"

The apostle Paul tells us that "in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here," and adds:

> "Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."

Paul then tells us to turn away from such. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) Do we not see this lack of real love, this "self first" attitude accentuated throughout the world today? It contributes greatly to the critical problems of the times.

This materialistic, worldly spirit even endangers the Christian congregation. *It*

is for this reason that Jesus' half brother James warns persons who are well off against living in luxury, or for sensual pleasure, telling them, "something like fire is what you have stored up in the last days." (Jas. 5:1-5) So, "the last days" are not the time for genuine Christians to pursue the self-indulgent ways of a world alienated from God.

We noted in the previous article that an era of total warfare and terror began on the earth in the year 1914. Few will question that 1914 marked an unprecedented turning point in human affairs, "a beginning of pangs of distress," as Jesus described it. Yes, a "beginning," and Jesus' great prophecy, recorded at Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapter 21, details distresses without parallel that have been experienced by mankind since 1914: wars, food shortages, earthquakes, pestilences, fearful sights, lawlessness, lovelessness, fear, anguish. "The disgusting thing that causes desolation," also identified in Revelation 17:3, 8 as "a scarlet-colored wild beast," has also appeared, first as the League of Nations and later as the United Nations, but it has not supplied a way out for mankind. —Matt. 24:15, 16; Dan. 11:31.

Along with the world in general, followers of Christ have had to endure these distresses. Christians have also gone through additional hardships described by Jesus in his prophecy: court trials, beatings, hatreds and persecutions. During World War I they were hounded and oppressed, even in democratic countries. Before and during World War II, they became the butt of Nazi-Fascist-Shinto hatreds. More recently, Communist Europe and a number of radical African countries have vented their spleen on the Witnesses. But, Christians, take courage! All of this *has been* "in order that the tested quality of your faith, of much greater value than gold that perishes despite its being proved by fire, may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ."—1 Pet. 1:7.

A POWERFUL EVIDENCE

Convincing proof that we are now in the "last days" is to be found in the work that the Lord Jesus Christ has directed on this earth since the fateful year 1914. It is in fulfillment of that part of his great prophecy recorded at Matthew 24:14:

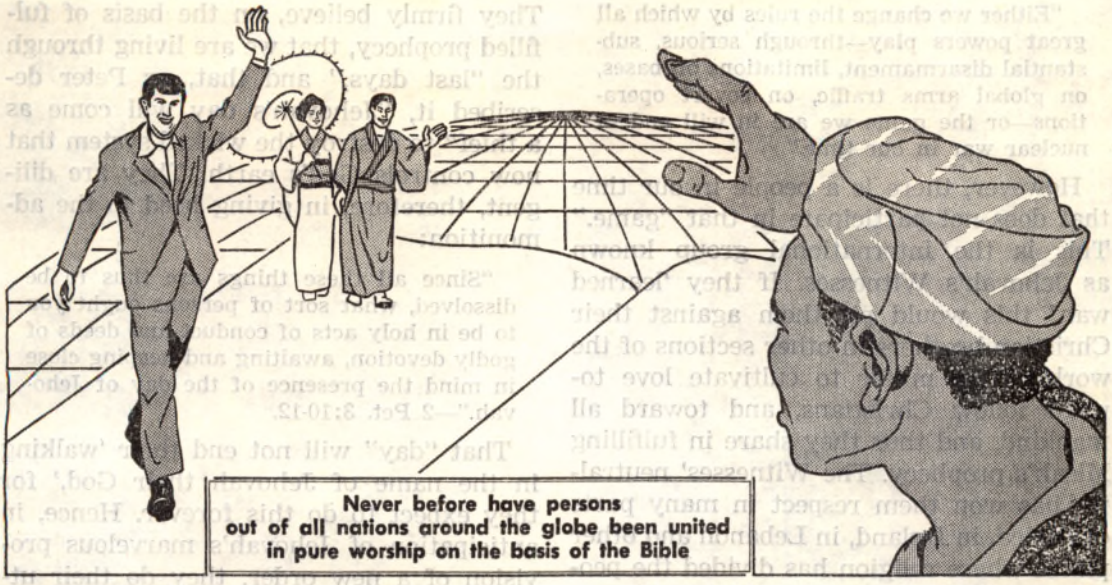
> "And this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come."

Further on in this same prophecy, Jesus described how this work would be carried through on the earth under the direction of himself and the holy angels of heaven:

> "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left."

The righteous "sheep" class go on into everlasting life, but the unappreciative "goats" into everlasting destruction. —Matt. 25:31-46.

Thus, in the "last days," a grand worldwide witness must be given concerning Christ's incoming kingdom. Has such a witness been in evidence since 1914? Indeed it has! Modern historians record that Jehovah's Witnesses have covered the earth with their preaching. And *with what* result? By 1977 they had distributed Bibles and publications explaining the Bible to the number of 4,831,823,111 in 210 different languages, made Christian disciples of more than two million persons in 216 lands and territories and comforted millions of others through free Bible studies in their homes. This work, accomplished in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, is truly



Never before have persons out of all nations around the globe been united in pure worship on the basis of the Bible

powerful evidence that these are indeed the "last days."

"THE FINAL PART OF THE DAYS"

Other Bible prophecies, notably Isaiah chapter 2 and Micah chapter 4, refer to "the final part of the days." The testimony of these two prophets is almost identical, being repeated, no doubt, for emphasis. Note what Micah 4:1, 2 says:

> "It must occur in the final part of the days that the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established above the top of the mountains, and it will certainly be lifted up above the hills; and to it peoples must stream. And many nations will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

Thus, in beautiful pictorial language, the prophet describes how, at the time of the world's end, Jehovah's spiritual temple —his house of worship—is exalted above all forms of human worship, yes, "above the hills." People of all nationalities flow in a stream to Jehovah's house of worship, where they receive his instruction and learn to walk in his ways of righteousness. There is only one time in human history when persons "out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," *all around the globe,* have become united in the one worship of the true God. (Rev. 7:9) This prophecy concerning "the final part of the days" is being fulfilled before our very eyes today, among the Christian witnesses of Jehovah.

However, the prophecy has another significant fulfillment today. And what is that? Listen to these further words:

> "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. They will not lift up sword, nation against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."—Mic. 4:3.

Are swords being beaten into plowshares today? Surely the worldly nations are not doing this! They keep on arming, and with more than swords and spears! They continue to stockpile horrendous weapons of mass annihilation, in armament programs that are racing out of control. The possibilities are terrible. As Richard J. Barnet wrote in the New York *Times* of June 6, 1978:

"Either we change the rules by which all great powers play—through serious, substantial disarmament, limitations on bases, on global arms traffic, on covert operations—or the game we are in will end in nuclear war in our time."

However, there is a people in our time that does not participate in that "game." This is the international group known as Jehovah's Witnesses. If they 'learned war,' this would pit them against their Christian brothers in other sections of the world. They prefer to cultivate love toward fellow Christians, and toward all mankind, and thus they share in fulfilling Micah's prophecy. The Witnesses' neutrality has won them respect in many parts of Africa, in Ireland, in Lebanon and other places where religion has divided the people into militant factions. By their consistently 'beating swords into plowshares,' even under the pressure of persecutions, Jehovah's people are identified as fulfilling this prophecy "in the final part of the days."

Happily, "in the final part of the days" there is one people on earth, united world wide in the bond of love, that is determined to walk, not according to the "gods" of sectarian religion, but in the precious name of 'Jehovah their God,' forever. (Mic. 4:5)

How Urgent Are Our Times?

"You will be objects of hatred by all people on account of my [Jesus'] name. But he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved."

—Mark 13:13.

AS PART of his stirring prophecy on "the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus said: "Then people will deliver you up to tribulation and will kill you, and you will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name." (Matt. 24:9) Toward what one people have these words been fulfilled in modern times? Why, toward the Christian witnesses of Jehovah! Of all religious groups, they stand alone as the ones who have been set upon by the Nazis, the Communists, the military dictatorships and even the democratic countries, so called, all around the earth.

They firmly believe, on the basis of fulfilled prophecy, that we are living through the "last days," and that, as Peter described it, "Jehovah's day will come as a thief" to destroy the wicked system that now controls God's earth. They are diligent, therefore, in giving heed to the admonition:

"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.

That "day" will not end their 'walking in the name of Jehovah their God,' for they expect to do this forever. Hence, in anticipation of Jehovah's marvelous provision of a new order, they do their utmost to prove worthy of entering into that glorious time. Their bright hope is expressed in Peter's further words:

"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)

This is a real hope, a present hope, for all the evidence adds up to show that these *really* are the "last days" of the present world system. It is urgent that we recognize them as such.

1. What tribulation did Jesus foretell for God's people, toward whom has this been fulfilled, and how?

[2] In recent years, the unwavering faith of the Malawian Witnesses in the face of killings, rapings, beatings and imprisonments has won the respect and admiration, not only of their spiritual brothers, but of freedom-conscious people everywhere. While the situation may have eased somewhat in Malawi, other African countries report growing persecutions.

One new nation has ordered all of its citizens to wear political badges. In another country, on the night of the Memorial, a false "brother" betrayed the congregation, so that police came and surrounded the meeting place, concentrating their forces, for some reason, near the rear entrance. When the alarm was sounded, the Witnesses found the front door unguarded, so that all but two were able to escape and scatter into the night. These two Christians were cruelly beaten, but their faith was unflinching and they gave a splendid witness in court.

In still another country, loyal Witnesses who refused to voice a patriotic slogan were beaten and driven from their villages. Some were told, mockingly, "You can go anywhere, even to your Jehovah." Here it has become increasingly difficult to travel, and traveling overseers have been arrested. However, there is no lack of spiritual "food" in the prison camps. These beleaguered Witnesses have been anticipating even a share in this year's "Victorious Faith" assemblies.

Another African country reports that 22 Witnesses were arrested, falsely accused of political activity, beaten terribly, stripped to their underclothes and imprisoned in this half-naked state for one month. In yet another land, three were beaten to death, and several others were sentenced to death on the neutrality issue; they have appealed this sentence. Also in an African country, a *Coptic* priest made lying accusations that Jehovah's Witnesses are involved in Mideast politics, thus causing the imprisonment of 13 male and 20 female Witnesses, one of whom was pregnant and another having a small daughter with her.

[3] Though reference here has been made particularly to recent events in Africa, many other countries on earth have been closing in on Jehovah's Witnesses, so that regular preaching activity and the arranging of Christian assemblies have become more difficult. Missionaries have been expelled from a number of countries, and it becomes harder to send missionaries into new fields. It is exactly as Jehovah foretold through his prophet Jeremiah: "They will be certain to fight against you." They are doing just that! But in the face of bitter propaganda and persecution, Jehovah's people continue to give a thorough witness. They have full faith in Jehovah's promise: "They will not prevail against you, for 'I [Jehovah] am with you . . . to deliver you.' "—Jer. 1:19.

"AS THE DAYS OF NOAH WERE"

[4] The patriarch Noah was one who lived through particularly trying times. His special work in preparing for the deluge lasted possibly through 60 years—about as long as our preaching of God's established kingdom in modern times. Though "the earth came to be ruined in the sight of the true God and . . . filled with violence," Noah could endure because he put his faith to work. Like Jehovah's Witnesses of modern times, he continued to serve zealously as "a preacher of righteousness."—Gen. 6:11; 2 Pet. 2:5.

[5] However, the majority of the people back there were just like the world of mankind today. "They took no note until the flood came and swept them all away." According to Luke's version of these words of Jesus:

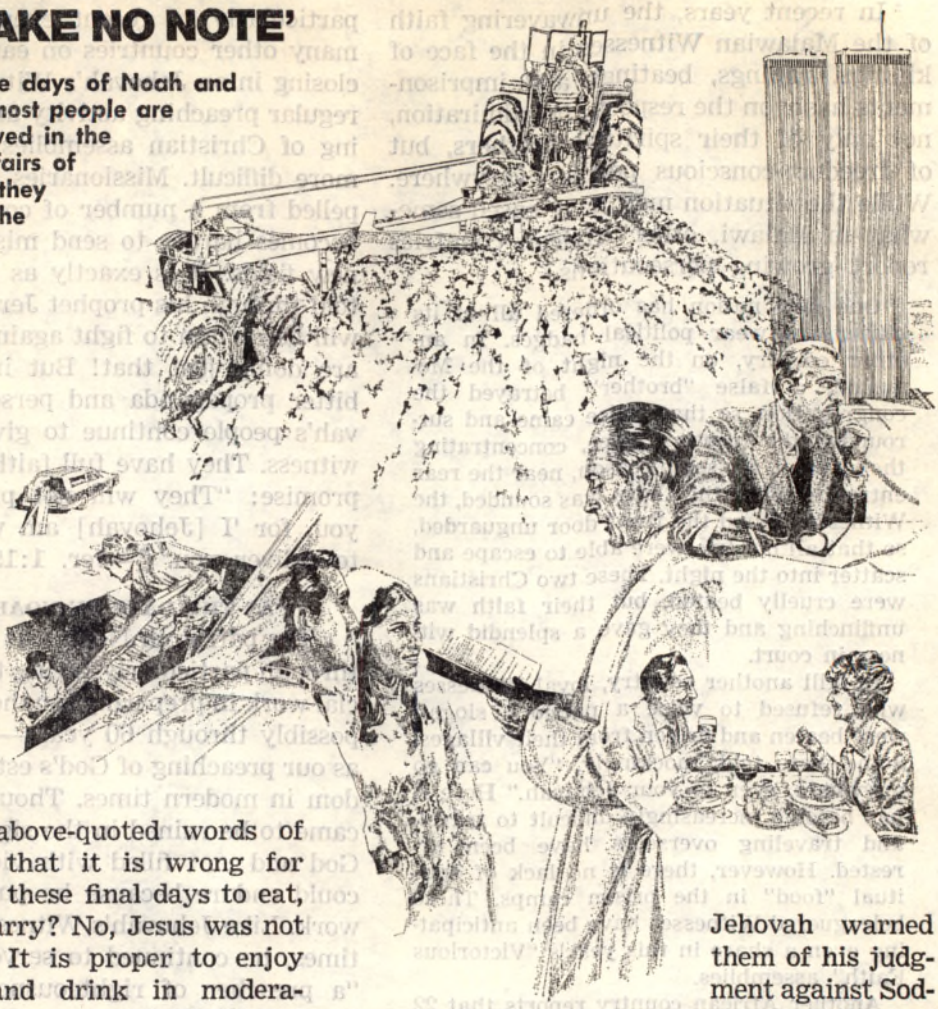
> "They were eating, they were drinking, men were marrying, women were being given in marriage, until that day when Noah entered into the ark, and the flood arrived and destroyed them all."

Today, a like-minded, wicked world faces

2. How have Jehovah's Witnesses in Africa faced up to the issue? (Ps. 37:39)
3. How do Jehovah's people demonstrate their faith?
4. Why could Noah endure? (Jas. 1:2-4)
5, 6. (a) What comparisons are to be noted between Noah's day and our day? (b) In what *should Christians* become absorbed, and why?

'THEY TAKE NO NOTE'

As in the days of Noah and of Lot, most people are so involved in the daily affairs of life that they ignore the urgency of the times



the climactic global "great tribulation"! —Matt. 24:21, 37-39; Luke 17:26, 27.

[6] Do the above-quoted words of Jesus mean that it is wrong for Christians in these final days to eat, drink and marry? No, Jesus was not saying that. It is proper to enjoy good food and drink in moderation. Likewise, marriage is God's arrangement for mankind. What Jesus was saying is that we should not regard these as the all-important activities of life, becoming absorbed in them to the point of crowding out spiritual interests. (1 Pet. 4:3; 1 Cor. 7:8, 29) Rather, we should plan our lives in such a way as to give first place to the grand work of 'preaching this good news of the established kingdom as a witness,' before the end comes.—Matt. 24:14.

"AS IT OCCURRED IN THE DAYS OF LOT"

[7] At the time when Abraham and Lot were serving as God's witnesses on earth, Jehovah warned them of his judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah. Not even 10 righteous men could be found there! As Jehovah's angels prepared to bring the foretold destruction, Lot repeatedly urged the men who were engaged to his daughters: "Get up! Get out of this place, because Jehovah is bringing the city to ruin!" However, those prospective sons-in-law, much like persons of this immoral world today, passed the divine warning off as a mere joke. But there was no time to lose. "The angels became urgent with Lot, saying: 'Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are found here, for fear

7. What urgency arose in Lot's day?

you may be swept away in the error of the city!"—Gen. 19:14, 15.

[8] What was that "error"? It included the sex perversions that are so much a part of life in many cities of this modern world, even to being glorified on stage and screen. "Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them . . . had committed fornication excessively and gone out after flesh for unnatural use." Also, with no thought of God's righteousness, "they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building." They were completely absorbed in their own selfish way of life. And what happened to them? "It rained fire and sulphur from heaven and destroyed them all." Jesus warns that he will execute a like judgment when he is revealed, soon, as "the Son of man." —Gen. 19:24-26; Luke 17:28-30; Jude 7.

[9] May we be like righteous Lot in giving urgency to Jehovah's judgment message for *our* day. And let us not be like Lot's wife, but, rather, guard against looking back with desire for the material advantages of this doomed world. (Luke 17:31, 32) Our becoming completely absorbed in doing God's will for this day will serve as our protection. Remember, it was in connection with Lot's deliverance that Peter said: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off."—2 Pet. 2:6-9.

GIVING A 'THOROUGH WITNESS'

[10] When Jesus and his apostles were on earth, it was urgent that a thorough witness be given in that day of judgment. Jesus himself set the pattern for that work, "journeying from city to city and from village to village, preaching and declaring the good news of the kingdom of God." The 12 apostles and others, including women, went along with him. For what purpose? It was in order that he might train them to build their lives around their service to God. Thus, they also would be able to share in sounding the warning about the coming destruction of the Jewish "system of things," and in comforting the oppressed people. Further, they would be aided in putting on the Christian personality, showing forth in their lives the same righteous, loyal qualities that they had observed in their Master.—Matt. 9:35–10:15; Luke 8:1, 2; 9:1-6; 10:1, 13-15; Eph. 4:24.

[11] Those early disciples learned their lesson well. They poured themselves out in zealous Kingdom service, compassionately going among the people wherever they might find them—in the markets and other public places, in the synagogues (according to the custom of those days) and at their homes. Even when they were scattered by persecution, they continued right on, "declaring the good news of the word."—Acts 5:42; 8:4; 16:13; 17:17.

[12] Toward the conclusion of many long years of zealous preaching, the apostle Paul could tell his fellow elders: "I did not hold back from telling you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and from house to house. But I *thoroughly* bore witness both to Jews and to Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:20, 21) In connection with the urgent witness given by the apostles and their fellow workers, the words "thorough" and "thoroughly" occur repeatedly in the book of Acts. (Acts 2:40; 8:25; 10:42; 20:24; 23:11; 28:23) What was the outcome of that "thorough" witness? Congregations

8. (a) What "error" resulted in destruction to Sodom and Gomorrah? (b) Why should this serve as a warning to us today?
9. What urgency is required of us now, and how may we find protection?
10. (a) What urgency was there when Jesus and his apostles were on earth? (b) How, and for what purpose, did Jesus train his disciples?
11. How did the disciples show that they had learned their lesson well?
12. What kind of witness was given in the days of the apostles, and with what result?

of believers sprang up and flourished wherever the "good news" was preached. And as traveling overseers visited these to encourage them in their service, the congregations were strengthened. They "continued to be made firm in the faith and to increase in number from day to day." —Acts 15:36–16:5.

[13] In fulfillment of the warning given by Jesus and his disciples, Jehovah in due course executed judgment on that "crooked generation" of Jews, the generation that had "killed the Chief Agent of life," the Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:40; 3:15) How did the Christian congregation fare—that small group that had been so urgent in obeying their Master's command to get "this good news of the kingdom . . . preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness"? When the end *did* come, their active faith meant salvation for them. Their endurance had its reward.—Matt. 24:13-16.

WHERE ARE WE IN THE STREAM OF EVENTS?

[14] Once again, at the climax of the age, the "good news" has been "preached in all creation that is under heaven." (Col. 1:23) But today the field for preaching embraces the entire "inhabited earth," including the realms of the "king of the north" and the "king of the south," as well as many other lands in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australasia and the islands of the sea. It could only be by Jehovah's spirit that such a globe-encircling witness could be given in the short space of some 60 years. And still new ones keep flocking to Jehovah's organization! The territory has been far more extensive than in apostolic days, when it took less than 40 years to sound the final warning to the dispersed Jewish people.

13. What judgment did Jehovah execute in the first century, but why did the Christian congregation survive?
14. By comparison, to what extent has the "good news" been preached today, and with what success?

[15] However, just where are we in the stream of events? Revelation chapter 7 tells us. Here, the apostle John "saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding tight the four winds of the earth." These are winds of destruction, for in due course they are to 'harm the earth and the sea and the trees.' First, though, the "slaves of our God" must be sealed in their foreheads. Back in 1914, at the time when 'the kingdom of the world became the kingdom of their Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ,' these slaves yearned for the end to come, that they might be gathered to their Lord in heaven. But no—Jehovah still had a work for them to do here on earth. Also, they themselves had to be refined and made ready for their future priestly service in Christ's kingdom of 1,000 years. So, the "four winds of the earth" were held back for a season.—Rev. 7:1-4; 11:15.

[16] Out of his abundant mercy and loving-kindness, Jehovah has used these "slaves" of his spiritual Israel, "the Israel of God," in a grand work on behalf of another group—"a great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." After all the 144,000 members of spiritual Israel have entered into their service in the heavens, the "kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" must continue to rule over humankind here on earth. From the mid-1930's, then, this "great crowd" has made its appearance, so that today more than two million persons look forward to serving continually as earthly subjects of the Kingdom. They are the nucleus of the "new earth," a righteous society of mankind that will live forever under the sovereignty of Jehovah God. (Rev. 7:9, 10; 21:1, 3-5; 2 Pet. 3:13) However, the angels are still "holding tight the four winds of the earth." Why?

15. Why have "the four winds" of Revelation 7 been held back?
16. What other group has been favored by the angels' 'holding tight the winds,' and what is their hope?

[17] It can only be that Jehovah has further work for his witnesses to do here on earth. There are more of the "great crowd" to be gathered. The attendance of millions of persons at the celebration of the Memorial in recent years, together with the continued steady increase in Witnesses in many Asian lands, islands of the sea and Catholic countries of Europe, shows that the gathering work is not finished. It is urgent that all of Jehovah's people apply themselves in his service clear through to the end of this wicked system. —Mark 13:10; Eph. 5:15, 16.

[18] Also, just as there was a great sifting among the anointed remnant in the decade following 1914, it seems that now there is a sifting going on among some who profess to be of the "great crowd." The words of the apostle Paul are particularly applicable to all of us in these critical times: "Keep testing whether you are in the faith, keep proving what you yourselves are." (2 Cor. 13:5) Do we truly value our dedication to Jehovah—the very intimate relationship we have with him, and which has been made possible by Jesus' sacrifice? Do we appreciate our unity with the Father and the Son in the grand work that we are privileged to share in at this hour? Are we serving out of genuine love for Jehovah and for our neighbor? Or, has our motive been just to 'save our own skin' through Har-Magedon's battle? If we are of the "great crowd," will we continue serving God "day and night" right through to the "great tribulation"? Or, will we let down our guard, permitting Satan to overwhelm us through the pleasures, the immoralities or the anxieties of life?

[19] The four angels will not always 'hold tight' the four winds of the earth. We can be happy that they have done so up until this hour, and that it will result in salvation for millions of mankind. But time is fast running out. We need to keep alive, alert, constantly moving forward with God's organization on the earth. What a joy we have in being part of the only worldwide brotherhood that is at peace, and at unity in praising Jehovah's name in these critical times! In order to keep in step, we may have to adjust our personal attitude or viewpoint at times. But let us always be ready humbly to do this, in order to serve with urgency and to continue in the joy that we share with all of God's people. As Paul counseled: "Finally, brothers, continue to rejoice, to be readjusted, to be comforted, to think in agreement, to live peaceably; and the God of love and of peace will be with you." —2 Cor. 13:11.

17. For what reason do the angels continue to 'hold back the winds'?

18. (a) What sifting appears now to be in progress? (b) Why should we pay close attention to Paul's admonition at 2 Corinthians 13:5?

19. (a) Why can we be happy that the angels have 'held tight the winds' up until this hour? (b) As indicated by 2 Corinthians 13:11, how may we keep in step with the forward movement of God's organization today?

"Keep On The Watch"

"Keep on the watch and pray continually, that you may not enter into temptation."—Matt. 26:41.

WHAT was the occasion when Jesus spoke those words? It was at the time of the greatest crisis in his life on earth—on the eve of his betrayal, arrest, trial and execution. That day would prove to be the most important in human history. The events about to take place would lead to the salvation of all mankind. On

1, 2. (a) What events surrounded Jesus' telling his apostles, "Keep on the watch"? (b) But how did the apostles respond?

that day, Jesus would give his life in sacrifice. As a Son who served in faithfulness to the end, he would be able to report back to his Father with his dying words: "It has been accomplished!"—John 19:30.

[2] However, what were Jesus' apostles doing? They had just shared with their Master in his instituting the Memorial of his death. Though not appreciating its significance, they knew that it was a very serious occasion. Yet, as he prayed, there in the garden of Gethsemane, they fell asleep! He had said to them: "My soul is deeply grieved, even to death. Stay here and keep on the watch with me." However, not just once, but three times, he returned to find them slumbering. On the third occasion, Jesus exclaimed: "At such a time as this you are sleeping and taking your rest! Look! The hour has drawn near." And at that moment his enemies were upon him!—Matt. 26:36-47.

[3] Today we stand on the threshold of another major event in the history of mankind—the "great tribulation," which will reach its climax in "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" at Har–Magedon. (Matt. 24:21; Rev. 7:14; 16:14, 16) It is the time of all times to keep awake! And yet the very prophecy that describes that oncoming war warns of persons who *may not* stay awake. This warning is sandwiched right in between mention of "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" and "Har–Magedon." It is the Lord Jesus Christ himself who gives the warning: "Look! I am coming as a thief. Happy is the one that stays awake and keeps his outer garments, that he may not walk naked and people look upon his shamefulness." Those in the priestly service of God today, and also the "great crowd," must be careful not to lose their garments of identification. And what is it that identifies them as God's servants today? Why, it is their zealous works, as they talk with people at their homes and in public places, and their practicing in their lives the same fine Christian principles that they recommend to others. For a servant of God to fall asleep spiritually would bring him great shame. He would be stripped of his identity as a witness of the true God. This would be disastrous on the eve of "the war of the great day of God the Almighty."—Rev. 16:14-16.

3. (a) Why is this the most important time to keep awake? (b) Why would failure to heed Revelation 16:15 be disastrous?

FIGHT SPIRITUAL DROWSINESS

[4] Conditions on earth have never been more dangerous. Political leaders acknowledge this fact. Anarchy and violence are mushrooming around the earth. Even from the worldly viewpoint, the present system of things is racing downhill fast, and is in danger of destruction in the foreseeable future. But from God's viewpoint, where does this system stand? Jehovah declares that he will smash it to pieces while it is still a 'going concern.' (Dan. 2:44, 45) That will need to be very soon, so fast are things deteriorating in this age of crime and terror.

[5] The Lord Jesus Christ prophesied plainly concerning our day. Repeatedly in these prophecies, he emphasized the need for our keeping awake. Here are some of his sayings, as variously reported:

"Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."—Matt. 24:42.

"Prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming."—Matt. 24:44.

"Keep on the watch, therefore, because you know neither the day nor the hour." —Matt. 25:13.

"You, then, watch out; I have told you all things beforehand."—Mark 13:23.

"Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is." —Mark 13:33.

4. What is the main threat to the world system today?
5. What did Jesus emphasize when speaking of the "conclusion of the system of things"?

"Keep on the watch,
for you do not know when
the master . . . is coming."
—Mark 13:35.

"What I say to you I say to all, Keep on the watch."—Mark 13:37.

"Happy are those slaves whom the master on arriving finds watching!"—Luke 12:37.

"Keep ready, because at an hour that you do not think likely the Son of man is coming."—Luke 12:40.

"Suddenly that day [will] be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth. Keep awake, then."—Luke 21:34-36.

[6] Also, in his final revelation concerning "the things that must shortly take place," Jesus again stresses the suddenness with which he comes:

"I am coming to you quickly . . . I am coming quickly. Keep on holding fast what you have."—Rev. 2:16; 3:11.

"Look! I am coming quickly. . . . Look! I am coming quickly, and the reward I give is with me. . . . Yes; I am coming quickly." (Rev. 22:7, 12, 20)

In response to these last expressions of our Master, surely each one of us joins with the apostle John in saying: "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus."

[7] Make no mistake! This world is fast

6. What does Jesus stress with regard to "the things that must shortly take place"?

7. Why must we remain alert?

moving toward its foretold end. It is in its death throes. It is openly stated that many of the great cities are dying. But Jehovah will put them out of their misery before they can die their natural death. We must remain alert, ready for the great day that so many of Jehovah's prophets have described.—Isa. 2:12, 17; Jer. 30:7; Joel 2:11; Amos 5:18-20.

[8] The prophet Zephaniah, who was a prince in David's line, declared:

> " 'Keep yourselves in expectation of me,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'till the day of my rising up to the booty, for my judicial decision is to gather nations, for me to collect together kingdoms, in order to pour out upon them my denunciation, all my burning anger; for by the fire of my zeal all the earth will be devoured.' " (Zeph. 3:8)

That day of Jehovah's "burning anger" is drawing perilously close. Jesus' own great prophecy concerning "the conclusion of the system of things" has now had its remarkable fulfillment in our 20th century since 1914. We clearly see militaristic elements of that "disgusting thing," the UN organization, poised to wreak havoc on the realm of Christendom. The socialistic powers make no secret about their hatred for religion—"the opium of the people" as they call it. Make no mistake! At God's due time, the "horns" of the scarlet-colored wild beast, the UN, will turn on the world empire of false religion—that longtime blasphemer of Jehovah's name—to devastate and destroy her.—Matt. 24:15; Rev. 17:3-6, 16.

[9] The "great tribulation" will no doubt be a faith-testing time for God's own people here on earth. For the "ten horns" will battle also against the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "Lord of lords and King of kings." (Rev. 17:14) These earthly powers cannot touch him up in heaven, so whom else will they attack but his faithful representatives here on the earth, and particularly the remnant of anointed witnesses of Jehovah? But they will not succeed! "The Lamb will conquer them. Also, those called and chosen and faithful with him will do so." Revelation 19:11-21 gives details of the conquest of the political powers of earth by that "King of kings and Lord of lords."

8. (a) Why should we 'keep in expectation' of Jehovah? (Zeph. 2:3) (b) What situation in the UN calls for watchfulness?

9. Why will the "great tribulation" be a faith-testing time for God's people on earth?

THE HORSEMEN ARE RIDING

[10] The mighty conqueror at Har-Magedon fights from heaven. The apostle John envisaged him riding a white horse, in symbol of righteous warfare. He said: "I saw the heaven opened, and, look! a white horse. And the one seated upon it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and carries on war in righteousness." That war will result in blessings for lovers of righteousness. (Rev. 19:11) Earlier in the Revelation, John recorded another vision of the same horseman, in these words: "I saw, and, look! a white horse; and the one seated upon it had a bow; and a crown was given him, and he went forth conquering and to complete his conquest." (Rev. 6:2) Here, then, we have the vision of Jesus' coming into Kingdom power in 1914, not as a helpless babe in a manger, or a lifeless corpse on a stake, but as the mightiest warrior ever to take the field of battle. (Rev. 11:15; Matt. 25:31) We can have absolute confidence that this "King of kings" will conquer on our behalf.

[11] However, other horsemen are seen in the vision. No mention is made of *their* conquering, but, rather, of victimizing mankind. Conquest is reserved alone for the rider of the white horse, for it is righteousness that will triumph with him. But what did John say about those oth-

10. Why can we be confident that Jesus will conquer on our behalf?

11. (a) Why are the other horsemen of Revelation 6 inferior with regard to conquest? (b) What has the rider of the "fiery-colored horse" accomplished, and since when?

er riders? "Another came forth, a fiery-colored horse; and to the one seated upon it there was granted to take peace away from the earth so that they should slaughter one another; and a great sword was given him." (Rev. 6:4) Here is depicted fiery, bloody warfare of the kind that first erupted in 1914, in what historians labeled the "Great War." But the slaughter was four times as great when the "great sword" came to be wielded in the catastrophic World War II, from 1939 to 1945. And violence continues to erupt throughout the earth. From 1914 on, there has been no real peace, as the red horse keeps up his fearsome gallop. Although Jehovah's Witnesses are neutrals to the fighting, even they have suffered directly or indirectly from the violence, persecution and hardship that accompany this taking of "peace away from the earth."

[12] The wakeful John saw still another horseman riding into the vision. "Look! a black horse; and the one seated upon it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice . . . say: 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the olive oil and the wine." (Rev. 6:5, 6) This third horseman symbolizes famine, and with famine there goes food rationing, as in a time of total warfare. Even the very essentials, the wheat and the barley, are on short supply. The wealthy get jittery, lest their luxuries, such as 'oil and wine,' be taken away. This horseman has ridden devastatingly through the earth since 1914. Inflation, spiraling prices, the shaky monetary system and the energy crisis all have to do with his headlong gallop. Nevertheless, Jehovah's own people should not be discouraged by any short rations or economic hardships that they are compelled to endure temporarily. Remember, the rider of the white horse is out in front, and will end such things.

[13] However, still another horseman appears. John gives this description: "I saw, and, look! a pale horse; and the one seated upon it had the name Death. And Hades was closely following him. And authority was given them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with a long sword and with food shortage and with deadly plague and by the wild beasts of the earth." (Rev. 6:8) Here is the last of the riders, and a gruesome one, for he brings devastating sickness to the earth. He got away to a head start following World War I when he killed some 20 million people with the Spanish flu in 1918-1919. And this horseman is still at the gallop. Despite commendable advances in the field of medicine, the human race is still suffering epidemics today. The intake of pills and other remedies is skyrocketing. But increasing heart attacks, strokes, cancer, VD and countless other afflictions keep bringing many into the clutches of Hades, the common grave of all mankind. Especially in this "time of the end," Hades (Sheol in Hebrew) is not saying "Enough!" (Prov. 30:15, 16) As illness-prone humans, Jehovah's people have suffered, too, from the deadly ride of the pale horse. But they know the reason for their physical sicknesses, and are equipped to endure cheerfully in the knowledge that Jesus' ransom will result soon in the removal of all such epidemics—even the horseman Death himself. Although they may fall victim to Hades (the grave), their resurrection into a righteous new order is assured.—John 5:28, 29.

[14] The ride of the horsemen is clearly in evidence today. Total warfare, food shortages, epidemics and wholesale death are now the ominous experience of all mankind. But it is only those who see with

12. What does the third horseman symbolize, and how does this affect God's own people?

13. What does the fourth horseman bring, and with what effect on Jehovah's people?

14. Why should we be grateful for this vision, and how should it stimulate us?

the eye of faith that perceive the white horse, with the all-conquering "King of kings," the crowned Bowman. How grateful we should be for this faith-strengthening vision! It should stimulate us to be very active in witnessing concerning these things. In this, we can be loyal to our commission from Jehovah after the example of Jesus, who came to be called "Faithful and True"—"the faithful and true witness."—Rev. 3:14; 19:11.

DO NOT BE SIDETRACKED!

15 The world does not believe that its end is at hand. It would like to dissuade us from believing that, too. But whom will you believe—their word or God's Word? It is God's Word that makes it plain that we are in "the conclusion of the system of things." Not even the nuclear armament of the "god of fortresses"—glorified by the "king of the north"—can stand against the all-conquering "King of kings." —Dan. 11:38, 45.

16 The apostle Paul extends fine counsel to any who may have become drowsy, saying:

> "It is already the hour for you to awake from sleep, for now our salvation is nearer than at the time when we became believers. The night is well along; the day has drawn near. Let us therefore put off the works belonging to darkness and let us put on the weapons of the light." (Rom. 13:11, 12)

The weapons of the light are well known to us, for it has been our grand privilege to use them in proclaiming "this good news of the kingdom" in all the earth as a witness.—Matt. 24:14; Eph. 6:11-17.

17 However, what of "the works belonging to darkness"? These are the worldly works, the things that materialistic people delight to do without thought of God and his way of light. So we should avoid them. "As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy." (Rom. 13:13) These are the worldly things that would creep into our Christian lives and into the congregation if we permitted it. They are to be guarded against. In more prosperous lands, people generally attach great importance to leisure and material things. In many places, the working week becomes progressively shorter, the love of pleasures correspondingly greater, and pressure is exerted on God's people to become like the world. Will we meet this challenge in the Christian spirit of self-sacrifice?

18 If we are active in God's service, keeping alert and awake for that service, then we will have no time to get tangled up with "revelries and drunken bouts," with "illicit intercourse and loose conduct." Our love for Jehovah and his service, and placing these first, will act as a protection. (Matt. 6:33) With our minds on spiritual matters, and on developing the fruitage of the spirit, we will be humble and understanding in our relations with our families and with our brothers. We will avoid "strife and jealousy."

19 The apostle Paul continues: "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not be planning ahead for the desires of the flesh." (Rom. 13:14) What a fine example, indeed, we have in the Lord Jesus Christ! Throughout his ministry on earth he was wide awake to the grand privilege of doing Jehovah's will. Never did he deviate one moment from his whole-souled service in making known to others his Father's name. Even on the day that he must die, how selfless and self-sacrificing he was in packing into every available moment of his

15. Why should we believe God's Word ahead of man's word?
16. What fine counsel does Paul extend at Romans 13: 11, 12, and how may we respond?
17. How may we avoid "the works belonging to darkness"?
18. How will concentration on spiritual matters protect us?
19, 20. (a) What fine example did Jesus leave for us? (b) How will our heeding Romans 13:14 benefit us?

remaining hours worthwhile, needed instruction for his disciples! (John chaps. 13 to 17) When Jesus was nearing the end on the torture stake, he refused the drug that might have eased his agony. He wanted to preserve his senses fully, as an integrity-keeper to the end.—Matt. 27:34.

[20] May all of us be counted along with those who "put on the Lord Jesus Christ," following his steps closely. (1 Pet. 2:21; Matt. 16:24, 25) By planning ahead for spiritual things, not the fleshly, we can keep wide awake in Jehovah's service as did Jesus. Let us keep on the watch, therefore, filling our lives with Kingdom service right up until the hour that the "Son of man" comes to execute judgment. Great will be our reward!

A Time for Patient Waiting

In the eighth century B.C.E. a deplorable situation existed among the Israelites. The prophet Micah declared: "Too bad for me, for I have become like the gatherings of summer fruit, like the gleaning of a grape gathering! There is no grape cluster to eat, no early fig, that my soul would desire! The *loyal one* has perished from the earth, and among mankind there is no upright one. All of them, for bloodshed they lie in wait. They hunt, everyone his own brother, with a dragnet. Their hands are upon what is bad, to do it well; the prince is asking for something, and the one who is judging does so for the reward, and the great one is speaking forth the craving of his soul, his very own; and they interweave it. Their best one is like a brier, their most upright one is worse than a thorn hedge."—Mic. 7:1-4.

Evidently Micah speaks of himself as if he were the nation personified. The nation resembled an orchard or a vineyard from which the fruit has been gathered. Not a cluster of grapes remains. There is not even one desirable early fig. This was a fitting comparison because loyal and upright people were hard to find. The majority were out for the blood of their fellowman. Fierce was the competition. There was no concern for the welfare of others. Love was totally lacking. To further their own ends, people schemed to entrap their fellows, hunting them as with a dragnet. Their hands were fully employed in doing bad. In this they proved very adept, they 'did it well.'

***The moral* decay had reached the highest levels of society. The princes or leaders of the nation 'asked for something,' greedily looking for a gratuity. Judges accepted bribes and perverted justice. Wealthy and prominent men expressed their wishes, and the judges complied with their desires. In this way, princes, judges and other influential men cooperated together in wicked scheming, 'interweaving it.' Even the best among them was like a prickly brier or a thorn hedge. Both the brier and the thorn hedge can rip clothes and painfully snag the flesh of the one passing by. So, too, lawless men in the time of Micah were treacherous, prickly and hurtful. On account of such a deplorable situation, Micah could say to the Israelites: "The day of your watchmen, of your being given attention, must come. Now will occur the confounding of them." (Mic. 7:4) The "watchmen" were the prophets. So, 'the day of the watchmen' may designate the time when Jehovah would take action against the wicked in fulfillment of what the prophets had proclaimed. The execution of Jehovah's judgment would 'confound' or bewilder the lawless people.**

The corruption was so great that not even family relationships united people in bonds of love. The prophet could, therefore, address fellow Israelites with the words: "Do not put your faith in a companion. Do not put your trust in a confidential friend. From her who is lying in your bosom guard the openings of your mouth [that is, watch what you say]. For a son is despising a father; a daughter is rising up against her mother; a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his household."—Mic. 7:5, 6.

Think of it, a man's friends—wife, father, mother and children could not be trusted. Within his own household, he would have enemies.

Such a state of affairs simply could not continue. It called for the God of justice, Jehovah, to act. Meanwhile patient waiting was in order. The prophecy states: "But as for me, it is for Jehovah that I shall keep on the lookout. I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me."—Mic. 7:7.

We today should likewise be willing to wait patiently for Jehovah God to act against all unrighteousness. His adverse judgment against the present system of things will be executed just as surely as was his judgment against lawless *Israelites*, and that right soon!

DELIVERANCE!

Proving Ourselves Grateful

As told by
Max Liebster

IT WAS to the God of Abraham that I cried from the depths of my distress when, at the age of 24, I found myself deprived of my liberty for the sole reason that I was a Jew. In my cell in Pfortzheim prison in the Black Forest, Germany, I asked myself all sorts of questions concerning the genocide of the Jews that was sweeping Nazi Germany.

Then came January 1940. My fellow prisoners and I were transferred by train to the extermination camp of Sachsenhausen-Oranienburg. We were locked in carriages that were transformed into many tiny cells for two persons. Kicked into one of them, I faced a prisoner whose eyes reflected serenity. He was there because of his respect for God's law, choosing prison and possible death rather than shed the blood of other people. He was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. His children had been taken away from him, and his wife had been executed. He was expecting to share her fate.

The 14-day journey brought an answer to my prayers, for it was during this very journey to death that I found the hope of everlasting life. But almost miraculously I didn't die! During the next five years and four months I survived the torturous life of five different death camps, including the incredibly terrible Auschwitz in Poland.

Operating on an around-the-clock basis, the gas chambers and ovens of Auschwitz murdered and disposed of over 10,000 victims *daily!* It is estimated that up to *4,000,000* persons or more, most of them Jews, were killed in the short time of the camp's operation. When I arrived in Auschwitz in 1943 it was already functioning as an extermination camp.

There were some 30 work camps operating under the direction of the main camp of Auschwitz. Some days when prisoners arrived, the SS selected young men to refill these camps. I was selected and sent to Buna where an artificial rubber

production factory was being constructed. In this work camp, every morning those who couldn't work anymore were taken to the gas chambers for extermination.

BUCHENWALD

Finally, in January 1945 I was transferred to Buchenwald, a camp located in the woods three miles (5 kilometers) northwest of Weimar, Germany. At the approach of the American soldiers the camp commander decided to exterminate all the Jews. They were to be transported by rail to a mass grave, then shot dead after they had dug it. In my convoy was another Jew named Heikorn, who, while in Buchenwald, had accepted the Bible truths taught by Jehovah's Witnesses.

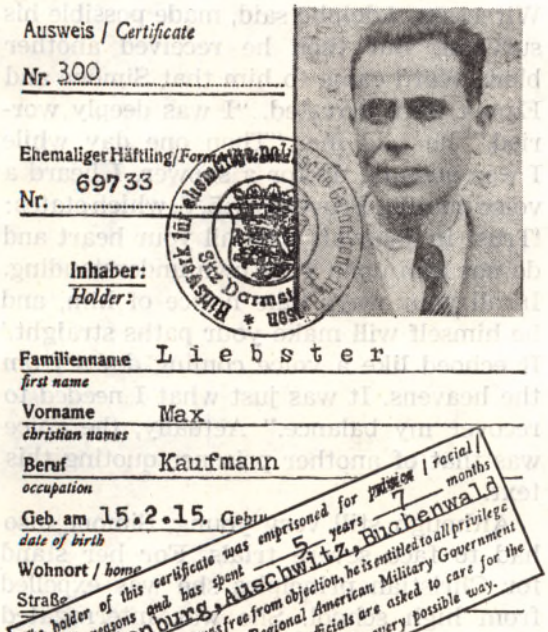
In the commotion that occurred at the railway platform, we withdrew behind a pile of wood to read and meditate on the few pages of the Bible book of Revelation that Heikorn had in his possession. And then, unbelievable as it may seem, our guards forgot us in the hustle and rush that ensued!

We stayed there until nightfall. Suddenly a call was issued through a loudspeaker: 'All Jehovah's Witnesses go to Block No. 1.' We obeyed the summons and found 180 Witnesses there. A few days later we were liberated by the American forces.

Deliverance! How grand it was to be free! Those hours during our liberation were indeed memorable. *Consolation,* the former name of *Awake!,* reports regarding this in its December 19, 1945, issue:

> "On April 12, when Buchenwald was finally taken, there were found only twenty or thirty thousand prisoners, half-dead from starvation. A sickening sight, even for hardened soldiers, upon entering this camp, were the dead bodies that were piled up like cordwood outside the barracks. Inside of these shacks were shelves, not beds, upon which the emaciated forms of those who were still able to breathe lay rotting away. Their faces and bodies were shriveled and dried up, and many were too weak to do more than roll their eyes. These had suffered some of the most brutal tortures. Harold Denny, correspondent for the New York *Times,* says he was 'told of punishments inflicted by the SS guards so depraved and so obscene that I could never tell them except to other men in whispers.' "

My health was permanently damaged, but I was grateful to be alive. The long ordeal in one death camp after another had only strengthened me in my earlier resolve. I had said then: 'If God gets me out of this lions' den, I will serve him exclusively.' So immediately after our liberation, while still there in Buchenwald, I was baptized, along with Fritz Heikorn. From that day to this I have endeavored to prove faithful to Jehovah. Since my marriage in 1956, I have shared this determination with my wife, Simone.



Simone grew up in the province of Alsace in eastern France near the German border. Her parents became Jehovah's Witnesses shortly before the preaching work of the Witnesses was banned there in 1939. Simone was baptized by her father, Adolphe, in 1941, when she was only 11. Later, on September 4, 1941, her father was picked up by the Gestapo at his place of work, and he was not seen again by the family until nearly four years later, in 1945.

Adolphe endured all sorts of trials during his detention. For instance, he was told that if he would sign a letter of renunciation of his faith he would be given an excellent job as a draftsman, and his wife and daughter would be returned to him. But if he refused, his wife would be arrested and his daughter would be taken to a reform school. Later, he was savagely beaten into unconsciousness and it took several hours to revive him.

Simone and her mother, Emma, were not immediately arrested, and they carried on the underground work of witnessing. "Together with Brother Koehl," Emma explained to me, "we used to collect *The Watchtower* at the new frontier between Alsace and the rest of France. Then it was translated into German and finally mimeographed. In this way German-speaking brothers in Alsace and Freiburg, Germany, received spiritual food."

After being kept in Mulhouse prison briefly, Adolphe was transferred, toward the end of 1941, to the Schirmeck concentration camp in Alsace. Then he was taken to the infamous Dachau concentration camp near Munich, Germany. Beginning in 1943 the situation for all prisoners in Dachau improved, and they were permitted to receive food parcels.

"One day I was eating some small cakes sent to me by Emma," Adolphe once told me. "I found that they had an unusual consistency. Suddenly I realized that I was chewing paper; messages were hidden in the cakes!"

Emma waited impatiently to receive Adolphe's quarterly letter limited to 12 lines. How relieved and happy she was to hear that he had received the "vitamins"!

The improved situation for Jehovah's Witnesses, Adolphe said, made possible his survival. But then he received another blow. Word came to him that Simone and Emma were arrested. "I was deeply worried," he told me. "Then one day while I was queuing up for a shower, I heard a voice quoting Proverbs 3:5, 6, which states: 'Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight.' It echoed like a voice coming down from the heavens. It was just what I needed to recover my balance." Actually, the voice was that of another prisoner quoting this text.

Although still very young, Simone also had to face severe trials. For her stand for Christian principles she was expelled from high school. She was interrogated under blinding lights. Two "psychiatrists" tried to obtain information regarding where *The Watchtower* came from and where the clandestine press was. She knew the answers, so she prayed intensely to

In Coming Issues

- **Bearing the Burden of Injustice**
- **"Go in Through the Narrow Gate"**
- **Why Keep Free from Murmuring?**

Jehovah for help not to become a traitor. When she was at the point of collapsing, the shrill ringing of the telephone abruptly interrupted this trying session.

Eventually, on July 9, 1943, Simone was arrested by two medical social workers and taken to the Wessenberg Nazi reform school in Constance, Germany. Her mother, Emma, managed to catch the same train to accompany her. But then, in September 1943, she, too, was arrested.

Emma was put into the Schirmeck concentration camp in Alsace. On her arrival she was commanded to mend military clothing, which she refused to do. She was thrown into solitary confinement in the prison basement for seven months. She had been released for only a short time when she was thrown back there again for giving a witness to other prisoners. She spent another three months in that terrible place. But she remained firm in faith through it all.

In the meantime, Emma's sister, Eugenie, remained free, and she did her utmost, at the risk of her life, to help the other family members. She told me: "It was a privilege to take over the sending of food parcels containing excerpts from *The Watchtower* into Dachau, and to visit Simone once a month in Germany. I had won the confidence of the directors of the reform school and thus obtained permission for Simone to accompany me for walks. This gave me the opportunity to study *The Watchtower* with her. The authorities seemed to have been blinded by Jehovah, for they were totally unaware of my association with Jehovah's Witnesses. I was able to visit Simone 13 times in the 22 months of her confinement. And I got information into prison to Emma about how her daughter was getting along."

Eventually Adolphe was transferred to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria. Then he was sent to Mauthausen-Ebensee in the winter of 1944-45. This meant a complete cutting off of communication from his family on the outside. On this, Simone comments:

"I suffered no mental damage when our family was torn apart. I kept my eyes fixed on my parents' example of integrity. Often mother's words came back to me: 'The testing of our faith is a privilege and good training.' I never saw my parents at a loss when faced with trials, nor mother cry. When I had to appear time and again before the authorities, I remembered that persecuted Christians are a spectacle to outsiders. It was as if, beyond my persecutors, I could see angels encouraging me. Before I left mother we prayed together, then sang a song to Jehovah's praise. I felt strongly the powerful hand of Jehovah upon me.

"Alone in the icy and harsh atmosphere of the reform school, I learned to walk with God as my only support. And when I prayed, I also thought about my parents' prayers ascending to the heavens, and I felt as if we were uttering a single prayer. I then felt within me the same warmth as I did during my early years, sitting on father's lap or snuggling close to mother. Years have gone by since then, but Jehovah never changes. He is a God of salvation."

REUNION AND ENDURANCE

The reuniting of Simone and her family at the end of the war was indeed a moving occasion. It took place in their flat in Mulhouse. The building had remained intact while all around were only ruins and desolation.

"The gratitude overflowing from our hearts for such an unbelievable deliverance blurred the physical difficulties," Emma told me. "With our newly found freedom to preach the 'good news' we felt as if we were walking—or rather cycling—on air, for it wasn't unusual for us to cycle 60 kilometers (over 37 miles) in order to

find Jehovah's 'sheep.' We were short on the necessities of life, but our loving brothers in the United States, by means of the Watch Tower Society's branch in Paris, provided us with clothes and other material help. That proved to us how Jehovah's organization takes care of us, as a mother would."

Shortly after their deliverance, when Simone was only 17, she refused an excellent job alongside her father as a draftswoman, so that she could pioneer. So it was only a short time after the family was reunited that Simone was off again in a preaching assignment. How happy I am for her Christian zeal, for, as a result, she was invited to Gilead in 1952 and I was able to meet and later marry her!

Our family has been richly blessed. We have been able to help more than 250 persons to take their stand for Jehovah. Some of them are now elders, others serve in Bethel homes, as circuit overseers, pioneers and missionaries. So, along with so many others in the world, we can echo the words of the Bible psalmist: "I will bless Jehovah at all times . . . out of all my frights he delivered me. . . . O magnify Jehovah with me, you people, and let us exalt his name together."—Ps. 34:1, 4, 3.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

"STOP BEING ANXIOUS"

AFTER giving counsel about shunning materialism, Jesus admonished his audience to avoid undue worry about obtaining the necessities of life: *"On this account I say to you: Stop being anxious about your souls as to what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your bodies as to what you will wear. Does not the soul mean more than food and the body than clothing?"*—Matt. 6:25.*

"On this account," that is, because one "cannot slave for God and for Riches," Jesus' disciples should avoid excessive worry even about obtaining daily needs. (Matt. 6:24) The Son of God did not mean to discourage people from having proper concern and working diligently for food and clothing. (Eccl. 2:24; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10-12) But there is no need for 'anxiety' over getting such essentials. The 'soul and body' (here representing a person as a whole) are more important than food and clothing. Since God granted physical life to humankind, certainly he can see to it that his worshipers obtain necessary sustenance.

Jesus sharpened this point by an illustration: *"Observe intently the birds of heaven, because they do not sow seed or reap or gather into storehouses; still your heavenly Father feeds them."*—Matt. 6:26a.

"The birds of heaven" that fly freely overhead do not perform agricultural la-

* The counsel of Jesus treated in this article (Matt. 6:25-34) appears with slight variations also at Luke 12:22-31. The context in Luke has its setting about a year after the Galilean Sermon on the Mount, during Jesus' later ministry in Judea. Evidently Jesus saw fit to repeat the admonition.

bors. Yet God sees to it that they obtain sufficient food. (Compare Job 38:41; Psalm 147:9.) This was something to "observe intently," to make a matter of serious meditation. The Jews who made up the audience of Jesus could speak of God as their "heavenly Father," especially since the Israelites had been "chosen" as God's covenant people. (Deut. 7:6) Contrasting them with the birds of heaven, Jesus asked: *"Are you not worth more than they are?"* (Matt. 6:26b) If God provides for the flying creatures, how much more will he do so for his worshipers!

Showing the futility of undue worry over acquiring life's necessities, Jesus continued: *"Who of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his life-span?"* (Matt. 6:27) The Scriptures frequently liken the life-span of humans to a journey, using expressions such as "the way of sinners" and "the path of uprightness." (Ps. 1:1; 27:11) Anxiety about daily needs cannot extend one's life even by a fraction, "one cubit," so to speak. Rather than benefiting people, undue worry can damage health and even shorten life.

Jesus then introduced a second illustration, saying: *"Also, on the matter of clothing, why are you anxious? Take a lesson from the lilies of the field, how they are growing; they do not toil, nor do they spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these."*—Matt. 6:28, 29.

"The lilies of the field" likely include several brightly colored flowers that appear in the countryside of Galilee. Hastings' *A Dictionary of the Bible* states:

> "All these grow among the grain, often overtopping it, and illuminating the broad fields with their various shades of pinkish purple to deep violet-purple and blue, truly royal colours. Any one who has stood among the wheat fields of Galilee, and seen the beautiful racemes [clusters] of these flowers, peering up in every direction above the standing corn, will see at once the appropriateness of our Saviour's allusion. . . . If, however, we understand by 'lilies of the field' simply *wild lilies*, these would also be included in the expression. Our Saviour's comparison would then be like a 'composite photograph,' a reference to all the splendid colours and beautiful shapes of the numerous wild plants comprehended under the name lily."

When a person observes "how" these flowers "are growing," he notices that they do so without any of the 'toiling' or 'spinning' that humans must perform to produce clothes. Yet the lilies of the field are "arrayed" with beauty that no human attire, even of one as noted for finery as King Solomon, could match.—2 Chron. 9:15-21.

As to the "lesson" in this illustration, Jesus stated: *"If, now, God thus clothes the vegetation of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much rather clothe you, you with little faith?"*—Matt. 6:30.

"The vegetation of the field" includes the flowers to which Jesus referred. During the hot summers of Palestine, that vegetation withers in as little as two days. The dried flower stalks and grass were collected as fuel for baking ovens. Since God beautifully "clothes" vegetation that dries up so quickly, Jesus' question is a good one: "Will he not much rather clothe you, you with little faith?" God's servants are far more important than flowers. Excessive worry about obtaining needed clothing would be an indication of "little faith."*

"So never be anxious and say, 'What are we to eat?' or, 'What are we to drink?' or, 'What are we to put on?' " continued Jesus, *"for all these are the things the nations are eagerly pursuing. For your heavenly*

* Jesus used the expression "of little faith" only with regard to his disciples. It appears also at Matthew 8:26; 14:31; 16:8 and Luke 12:28. The phrase is found in rabbinical writings, indicating that it was well known. For example, the *Babylonian Talmud* relates: "R[abbi] Eliezer the Great declares: Whoever has a piece of bread in his basket and says, 'What shall I eat tomorrow?' belongs only to them who are little in faith."

Father knows you need all these things." —Matt. 6:31, 32.

This is the third time in his sermon that Jesus made comparison with "the nations," or non-Jews. (See Matthew 5:47; 6:7.) They had no relationship with God, and centered their lives around material things and fleshly pleasures. So, if God's servants doubted his ability and willingness to provide the necessities of life for them, they would be like people of the nations who were "without God in the world."—Eph. 2:11, 12.

Since the Most High 'knows the needs' of his people, Jesus' hearers would do well to heed his further advice: *"Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness, and all these other things will be added to you."*—Matt. 6:33.

The disciples of Jesus had accepted him as the Messiah, which put them in line to become part of God's heavenly Messianic government, or "kingdom." (Luke 22:28-30; John 14:1-4; Dan. 7:13, 14, 18, 22, 27) But they must 'keep on seeking' this "first," continually making it the matter of chief concern in their lives. They must also seek "his [that is, *God's*] righteousness" by exercising faith in God's Messiah and practicing conduct that conforms to God's other commandments. Of course, this should never be done with the legalistic viewpoint that performing religious precepts and meritorious deeds obligates God to bless one. The righteousness that counts with God must spring from hearts full of love and appreciation for what he has done in behalf of mankind. (See Romans 10:3; 1 John 4:19.) Persons who truly put God's worship first in their lives can be confident that "all" their daily needs "will be added" to them by the benevolent God whom they worship.

"So, never be anxious about the next day," continued Jesus, *"for the next day will have its own anxieties. Sufficient for each day is its own badness."* (Matt. 6:34) Each day has its own hardships that cause a measure of frustration. Often daily difficulties arise unexpectedly and are due to causes beyond human control. (Note Ecclesiastes 9:11.) God's servants should view such predicaments as "sufficient for each day" and face them a day at a time. Rather than improving matters, anxiety over the next day shows lack of faith in God and makes it more difficult to cope with the "badness" of the present day.

Bible Education on the Wane?

AOYAMA Gakuin University, founded by Methodist missionaries in Tokyo, was ordered to pay 300,000 yen (over $1,000, U.S.) as compensation to a former undergraduate in theology for depriving him of advancing in his studies. "The Daily Yomiuri" of October 8, 1977, reported that the university decided to abolish the theology course in 1973, because of a decline in applicants and a deficit in its operation. Those observing world conditions can see a more important meaning in this. That is the current trend in which religion is losing ground. People are becoming more and more secular and less and less religious. The above university offers other courses, but its theology course is closed. However, over 44,000 Japanese Jehovah's Witnesses continue to carry on a free Bible educational service in more than 61,000 homes every week.

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

Peace and Plenty

● It is estimated that 1,000 intercontinental and strategic long-range ballistic missiles having nuclear warheads are being manufactured world wide each year. This is revealed in the latest United Nations expert report entitled "Economic and Social Consequences of the Armaments Race and Its Extremely Harmful Effects on *World Peace and Security*." Citing the report, the Philippine newspaper "Bulletin Today" states: "Such a stockpile, if collectively set off during one highly aberrant human moment, can reduce mankind into cosmic dust in a matter of a few hours."

Moreover, the UN report indicates that the nuclear stockpile is the principal obstacle to combating extreme poverty, mankind's greatest problem. The newspaper also says that, according to the report, the use of resources for the development and the manufacture of nuclear weapons "translates into yearly spendings of $350 billion, an amount sufficient to fund projects that would improve life conditions for the world's one billion poverty-stricken people."

The average person cannot alter these distressing circumstances. In fact, human leaders really cannot change them. If the arms race is to end and poverty is to vanish, God must act. Happily, his inspired Word gives the comforting assurance that he will soon 'make wars cease' and will eliminate spiritual and material poverty among all obedient mankind.—Ps. 46:8, 9; Isa. 25:6-8.

"A Status Symbol"?

● Writing in "Parade" magazine of June 25, 1978, Pamela Swift reports that in the United States about a million teenage girls had become pregnant during the preceding 12 months. She added: "Of this number, according to data from the National Center for Health Statistics, approximately 600,000 will give birth, confirming the fear that teenage pregnancies in this country are reaching epidemic proportions."

A California high school nurse was quoted as saying: "Pregnancy today is no longer a big sin. This is the permissive age, and to many teenagers pregnancy has become a status symbol."

If you are a parent, can you afford to be only passively interested in such reports and attitudes among youngsters? Would it not be wise to ask your teen-age children kindly to express themselves on matters of sexual morality? Do they view pregnancy outside wedlock as a "status symbol"? If so, godly parents will point out that God's Word, the Bible, says: "Flee from fornication."—1 Cor. 6:18.

Whether their children have begun to accept unscriptural views of sexual activity or not, Christians realize that they must persist in teaching their youngsters the high moral laws and principles of Jehovah God. This is vital, for "no fornicator . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and of God."—Eph. 5:5.

'On Eagles' Wings'

● At times the Bible's figurative statement that Jehovah God carried his ancient people out of Egypt "on wings of eagles" has been criticized as being contrary to fact. (Ex. 19:4) Eagles, some say, do not carry their offspring on their wings. But "Weltwoche Magazin" reports that a resident of Mühlheim an der Ruhr, Federal Republic of Germany, recently witnessed an incident proving the Bible to be right after all. Concerning the second flight of a baby falcon (the first attempt ended in a crash landing!), the journal says:

"While the mother remained perched, the little one attempted his next start. But after just a few meters he began to lose altitude. On the ground below, several children were playing with their dogs. . . . Danger for our flight student! Still he drifted ever lower. At this moment, the mother falcon shot from her tree, spread her wings like a glider, flew underneath her child and let him land on her back as though he were settling down on an aircraft carrier."

This account is noteworthy, although it is not unique. There have been other reports confirming the words of Exodus 19:4. (See "Aid to Bible Understanding," page 473.) And the accuracy of the Scriptures in this detail should inspire confidence in the entire Bible.

EDUCATION THAT SATISFIES

IF YOU were offered the opportunity to enjoy genuine happiness, radiant health and real security, would you grasp it? No doubt you would. However, you may say: 'This is all very fine. But does such opportunity really exist?' Yes, it does. These benefits can be obtained by means of an education that is offered free to all peoples throughout the earth.

The value of education is widely recognized today. Many people equate education with success, prestige and good income. Thus they are willing to spend much time and money in getting a good education. For example, in the Orient many parents work very hard in order to send their children to expensive private schools and universities. The children themselves study day and night to do well in examinations, with the aim of getting a good education. This, in turn, may enable them to obtain a well-paying job and to get ahead in the world. On the other hand, some seek higher education to equip themselves for greater service to their fellowman.

True, those who are able to obtain a good secular education may gain a measure of satisfaction in achieving their goals in life. However, such satisfaction is, at best, short-lived. All men, whether well educated or not, face the same eventualities of growing old and dying. Besides, how often we see men and women, who, after receiving a good education, have their lifespan cut short by sickness or accidents!

Man's Creator knows best how to satisfy human needs, both physical and spiritual

Indeed, without life everything becomes vanity, as one cannot enjoy anything in death. Jesus Christ, the greatest teacher ever to walk the earth, pointedly drew our attention to this undeniable fact, asking: "What benefit will it be to a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul?" —Matt. 16:26.

Some may say: 'Since no one can avoid dying, a person might just as well accept this reality of death and be satisfied with getting some enjoyment from life as long as it lasts.' However, you do not have to be satisfied with just a few years of enjoyment from life. In fact, the opportunity is open to you to enjoy life forever under the most pleasant and satisfactory conditions.

Only a Dream?

Is this just a dream, or an empty promise with no possibility of its ever being fulfilled? No, because Jesus Christ, the great spokesman of the Creator, gave us assurance that everlasting life is attainable, provided one receives the right education. What kind of education? This was revealed by Jesus' words in his prayer to his Father, Jehovah God: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

As we can gather from Jesus' words, it is God's will that man should enjoy the

gift of life forever. In fact, when God first created man, He put before him the prospect of living eternally on earth, if man would meet the simple requirement of loving and obeying his Creator. (Gen. 2:16, 17) The Bible also reveals that man was created in God's image, being endowed with various fine qualities of Jehovah God. This placed man in a unique position among all the creatures on earth, as no animal was created in God's image.—Gen. 1:27.

Jehovah God, being man's Creator, knows best how to satisfy human needs, both physical and spiritual. (Ps. 145:16) How abundantly He has provided for man's physical needs! Can you list all the different kinds of food and drink found on earth? The number truly is staggering! So, is it not reasonable to expect the loving and generous Creator to make adequate provision also to satisfy man's spiritual need? —Matt. 4:4.

The Greatest Study

In order for man to be truly happy and satisfied, he needs to know his Creator, to be guided by God and to have a close relationship with him. Hence, acquiring knowledge of the divine purpose is the greatest study a person can undertake. It has been observed that children from broken homes, those deprived of parental love and guidance, are often unhappy and maladjusted. Any human who does not know God and is not guided by him is in a comparable position. The lives of such persons lack real purpose and meaning. These individuals often sense the futility of life, which all too soon is cut short by death. Lacking a sure guide, often they do not know how to deal with the many problems in life.

The Bible fittingly describes the bad results of man's alienation from God, saying: "They are in darkness mentally, and alienated from the life that belongs to God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the insensibility of their hearts. Having come to be past all moral sense, they gave themselves over to loose conduct to work uncleanness of every sort with greediness."—Eph. 4:18, 19.

We can rightly conclude that the moral breakdown and lawlessness prevalent world wide today are a direct result of man's not knowing God and not being educated in His ways. True, millions of people claim that they worship the God of the Bible. But do they really know God in the sense of knowing and following his righteous standards? Judging from the way such persons conduct themselves, they are in a position similar to that of the ancient Israelites, who also claimed to worship God. However, through his prophet Hosea, God told them: "Hear the word of Jehovah, O sons of Israel, for Jehovah has a legal case with the inhabitants of the land, for there is no truth nor loving-kindness nor knowledge of God in the land. There are the pronouncing of curses and practicing of deception and murdering and stealing and committing of adultery that have broken forth, and acts of bloodshed have touched other acts of bloodshed." (Hos. 4:1, 2) Thus it can be seen that knowing God means much more than just professing belief in him. It also means obeying him and following his righteous ways.

> ***A godly course brings present benefits, for "godly devotion is beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come."***

Present Benefits

In order to follow God's ways, an individual must first be educated in them. As already noted, the accurate knowledge of God can bring eternal life. However, this

does not mean that the benefits of such a course can only be enjoyed in the future. No, indeed! A godly course also brings *present* benefits, for "godly devotion is beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come."—1 Tim. 4:8.

While increasing millions in the world today suffer from broken marriages, juvenile delinquency and loneliness, what has resulted from living according to Bible principles? Why, many happy, united families that are not plagued by marital rifts, generation gaps and child crime! The Bible's counsel assures us that applying Scriptural principles can bring about tremendous improvements in homelife.

"Husbands ought to be loving their wives as their own bodies," said the apostle Paul. "He who loves his wife loves himself, for no man ever hated his own flesh; but he feeds and cherishes it, as the Christ also does the congregation." Wives, too, are lovingly counseled: "On the other hand, the wife should have deep respect for her husband." But, what about children? They are instructed to 'be obedient to their parents in union with the Lord.' Why? Because "this is righteous," and therefore pleases Jehovah. Moreover, honoring one's parents carries with it a promise: "That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth." On the father rests the prime responsibility to impart spiritual instruction to his children, for he is told to "go on bringing them up in the discipline and mental-regulating of Jehovah."—Eph. 5:28–6:4.

Being educated in God's ways also enables a person to gain many loving friends who genuinely care for him.

Being educated in God's ways also enables a person to gain many loving friends who genuinely care for him. Such Bible-based education will bring him into association with true Christians, who sincerely strive to comply with the counsel: "But whoever has this world's means for supporting life and beholds his brother having need and yet shuts the door of his tender compassions upon him, in what way does the love of God remain in him? Little children, let us love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth. And this commandment we have from him, that the one who loves God should be loving his brother also." (1 John 3:17, 18; 4:21) Do you not agree that associating with such friends will bring much joy and satisfaction into your life?

Above all, recipients of this life-giving education can achieve a peace of mind that results only from a close personal relationship with God. While people in general are becoming increasingly distressed and anguished over the mounting problems and ominous future confronting the world today, many persons everywhere are finding great comfort in this assurance from the Bible: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus."—Phil. 4:6, 7.

Because the loving Creator cares for humans and wants to see them happy and satisfied, he is today providing free education earth wide through the Bible study program carried on by his Christian witnesses in over 200 lands. Yes, God is issuing his kind invitation to all peoples of the world. (Isa. 55:1, 2) Millions around the earth have accepted his invitation and have found that they can wholeheartedly agree with the psalmist, who urged: "Taste and see that Jehovah is good, O you people; happy is the able-bodied man that takes refuge in him." (Ps. 34:8) Will you seek the education that brings such fine benefits?

QUESTIONS from READERS

● Jesus said "this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." Which generation is this, and how long is it?

When Jesus' apostles asked for a "sign" about his presence and the conclusion of the system of things, he gave his famous prophecy about coming wars, famines, earthquakes and the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom before the end. (Matt. 24, 25; Mark 13; Luke 21) He also said: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur."—Matt. 24:34.

Based on the Bible and its fulfillment in history, Jehovah's Witnesses have often pointed out that Christ's prophecy was to have two applications: First, between 33 C.E. and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.; second, a larger fulfillment in this "time of the end" since 1914 C.E.

However, some Bible commentators have failed to appreciate the dual aspect of this prophecy. So they have held that by the term "generation" Jesus meant a race or people, such as the Jewish people or the class of wicked humans existing through the centuries. They might even refer to 1 Peter 2:9, which, in the *Authorized Version,* speaks of the anointed Christian congregation as "a chosen generation." However, Bible scholars now recognize that the Greek word in 1 Peter 2:9 should be rendered "race" and is different from the word rendered "generation" in Matthew 24:34.

Jesus was not referring to a race of people over the centuries or just to Christians. He was first of all referring to his listeners and other Jews at that time. An indication of this is the fact that earlier that day, when condemning the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus spoke of their murdering the prophets and said: "All these things will come upon *this generation.*" (Matt. 23:36) These words came true on the contemporary generation when in 70 C.E. the Jews in Jerusalem faced its fiery destruction. (Luke 3:16, 17) That also marked the 'conclusion of the Jewish system of things' in the first fulfillment of Christ's prophecy.

This helps us to understand "generation" in Matthew 24:34. In common English usage today "generation" might be used for (1) all persons who were born and who live about the same time, or (2) the average span between the birth of parents and that of their children, usually 20 to 30 years. Which did Jesus mean? Obviously not the latter, for in its first application the "generation" ran from 33 C.E. until 70 C.E., or at least 37 years.

Also, it is evident that by the word "generation" Jesus did not mean just the Jewish children born in 33 C.E. Luke relates that after being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom was coming, Jesus told his disciples: "[The Son of man] must undergo many sufferings and be rejected by this generation." (Luke 17:20-25) That rejection certainly was not by newborn babies. Likewise, the way things worked out shows that the "generation" he spoke of in Matthew 24:34 included his listeners and others who could discern the fulfillment of his words from 33 C.E. onward until Jerusalem's destruction.

Thus, when it comes to the application in our time, the "generation" logically would not apply to babies born during World War I. It applies to Christ's followers and others who were able to observe that war and the other things that have occurred in fulfillment of Jesus' composite "sign." Some of such persons "will by no means pass away until" all of what Christ prophesied occurs, including the end of the present wicked system.

Jesus did not encourage his followers to try to calculate the exact length of this "generation." (Ps. 90:10) Instead of trying to figure how many more years, at the maximum, there may be until the end, Christians should remember Jesus' warning: "Keep on the watch . . . because *at an hour that you do not think to be it,* the Son of man is coming." —Matt. 24:42-44.

We have ample evidence that Matthew chapter 24 is being fulfilled now, during "the conclusion of the system of things." One proof is the earth-wide preaching of the good news of the established Messianic kingdom, which Jesus said must be done before the end comes. (Matt. 24:14) So, rather than being drawn into speculation about a date that we cannot know, let true Christians actively share in that important preaching, as they look forward confidently to the fulfillment of Jesus' words about "this generation" at Matthew 24:34.

A Letter of Gratitude

"For five long years my wife and son were Jehovah's Witnesses, without my total consent. I realize now that I placed a great hardship and burden on them through my actions and failure to believe in Jehovah. God only knows what they went through during that time. And I can only hope that he is a *very, very* forgiving God.

"Although I was a non-practicing Catholic, sinning every day of my life, I still felt I was better than Jehovah's Witnesses, whom I regarded as fanatics. I failed to realize that Jesus Christ was also called a fanatic in his time. The very name Jehovah was repugnant to me.

"However, after a lot of hardships in moving from Missouri to California, I felt there was something missing in my life. It was as if I was lost in this mixed-up world, and I didn't know the way to get my life started again in a positive way. Consequently, I began to pray to Almighty God for guidance, direction and a way to remove the emptiness that was inside me. Immediately, there was a knock on the door of the apartment. Upon answering, I discovered that it was a lady, a Witness of Jehovah.

"Normally I would have turned away, and closed the door politely, but this time, due to the fact that I had just prayed for guidance, I felt different inside. We talked for approximately 40 minutes, after which she invited me to attend the meetings at the hall. She even took time to draw a map with directions on how to get there. I had never met a Catholic that would take this much time and show concern for the spiritual interests of his fellowman. I felt strange inside because this person had that much concern for my salvation.

"So now I am attending the Kingdom Hall with my wife Christine and son Phillip. I'm also studying the Bible regularly. I only hope I did not find Jehovah too late to gain eternal life."

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

November 12: How Urgent Are Our Times? Page 8. Songs to Be Used: 117, 74.

November 19: "Keep on the Watch." Page 13. Songs to Be Used: 55, 11.