

OCTOBER 15, 1980

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



**Are
we
nearing
Armageddon?**

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OUR COVER: Ominous signs in the world and in the state of religion today indicate the approach of God's war—Armageddon. It will sweep all unrighteousness from earth's surface, making way for eternal peace. See pages 11-23

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A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds. Since it began publication in 1879, "The Watchtower" has held faithfully to God's Word as its authority. It stays clear of all political involvement. It points to the Bible prophecies showing that Jesus Christ is God's means for restoring peace and harmony to this globe. It shows that this Son of God, on the basis of his shed blood, will release mankind from sin and death to enjoy eternal life in happiness on a paradise earth. Because Jehovah God will accomplish all this soon through his kingdom by Jesus Christ, "The Watchtower" announces that kingdom as the real hope for mankind.

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AVOIDING THE TRAGEDY OF RAPE

PEOPLE can profit from experience. But when it comes to rape, how much better to learn from the experience of others, rather than personally being a victim. With this purpose in view, the following two real-life experiences are narrated.

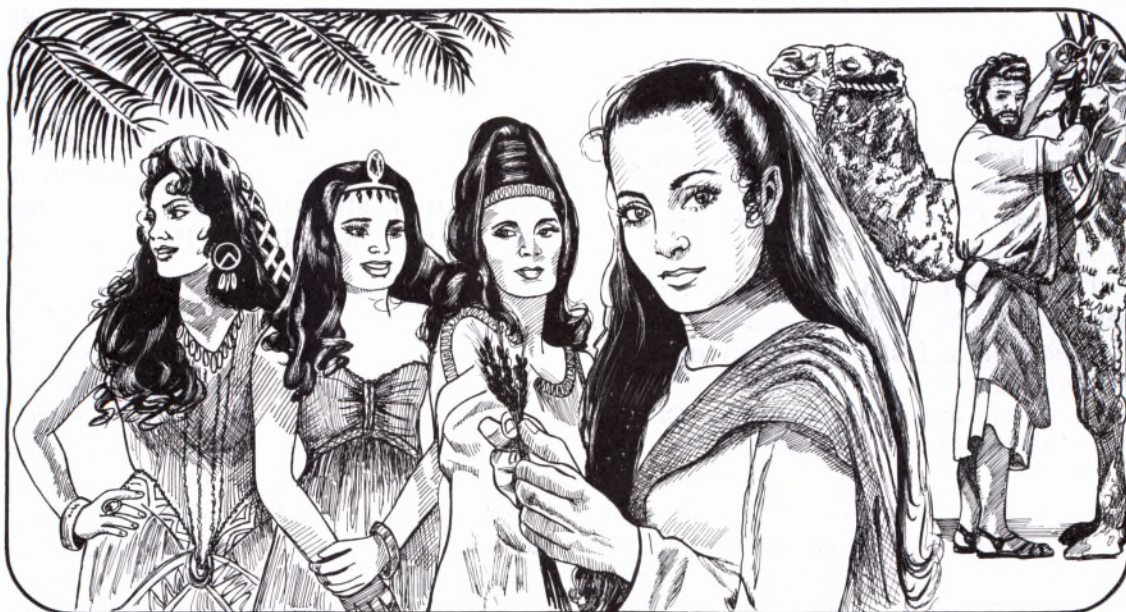
The girl was an attractive teenager, a member of a large family living in a rural community. However, she was not satisfied with the company of her household. She was in the habit of going out by herself to visit some of the girls who lived in the area.

Just exactly what her motives were for these visits is not entirely clear. Evidently she was simply interested in cultivating

new girl friends. Yet a young man there noticed her. Whether she had become acquainted with him earlier, and had done something to encourage his interest, is not known. On this occasion, however, he forced her to have sex relations with him.

That rape apparently was not premeditated, but the rape of another girl was. A young man had developed a passionate desire for his half sister. One day he pretended to be sick, asking his father to send his sister to his home to prepare some food for him. When they were alone, he grabbed her. Despite her fervent pleading, he overpowered and raped her.

Many of you previously have read about these rapes. The girls were Dinah, the



Dinah made friends with persons who did not serve God



Tamar had the humiliating experience of being raped by her half brother Amnon

daughter of Jacob, and Tamar, the daughter of David. The accounts are recorded in the Bible.—Gen. 34:1-7; 2 Sam. 13:1-14.

A RAPIDLY INCREASING CRIME

Rape has become increasingly common today. A major reason seems obvious. Sex and violence explode from TV and movie screens, from radio, newspapers, magazines and billboards. In the cities, in the rurals—almost wherever one goes—illicit sex and violence exist. And people practice what they see and hear. The Bible's description of the world prior to the global flood indeed fits our day: "*The badness of man was abundant in the earth . . . and the earth became filled with violence.*" —Gen. 6:1-5, 11; Jude 6, 7.

The violence then apparently included sexual assaults, as it does today. "Rape is increasing at a faster rate than any other violent crime in the United States," notes *The World Book Encyclopedia*. "Officials estimate that the actual number of rapes is at least four times the number reported." Since reported rapes are about 70,000 a year, the actual figure may well be over a quarter of a million. That means a rape occurs every two minutes in the United States!

Yet some forced sex offenses are not

even generally classified as rapes. Regarding this, sociologist Richard Gelles of Rhode Island University comments: "I can't imagine a marriage where a husband beats his wife that doesn't also include forced sex at times. There may be 400,000 violent marital rapes per year, but if you include rape by intimidation—the threat of violence—it would be more like a couple of million."

But sadder still is the tremendous number of sex offenses against youths—often mere children. Tens of thousands are victims every year. In the recent book *The Sex Offender*, Bart Delin writes: "It is estimated that one in six girls will be molested before the age of sixteen."

Jacob's daughter Dinah apparently was only in her early teens when she was forced into having sex relations. Why does the Bible tell about such tragic crimes as that? The apostle Paul provides an answer, saying: "For all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction."—Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11.

What can be learned from such Bible accounts?

LEARN TO ACT WITH DISCRETION

Dinah failed to act with discretion. The Bible says that she "used to go out to see the daughters of the land." (Gen. 34:1) The inhabitants of Canaan were immoral people, prostitution evidently being common. (Gen. 34:31; 38:21) Dinah apparently had no business being out by herself among them. Likely her parents had warned her about associating with the

Hitchhiking can be dangerous

girls of the land. If they had, she failed to listen, and this led to trouble.

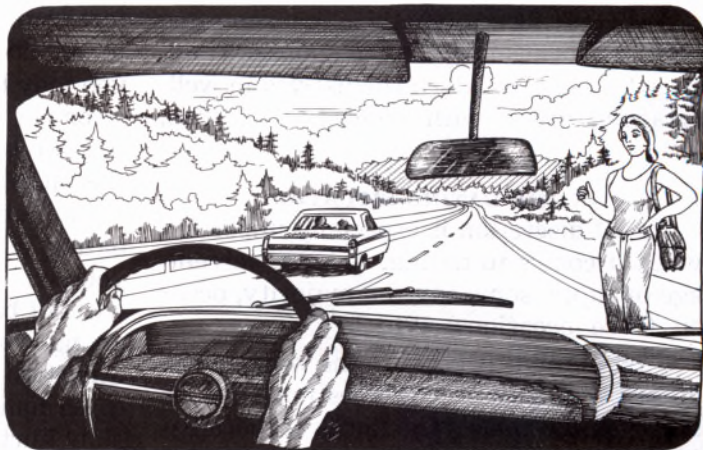
Similarly, many young women today are raped because of needlessly putting themselves in compromising situations. Hitchhikers do this. In Oregon's Multnomah county a person reportedly is raped every day. And more than half of those raped are young hitchhikers!

Many men are just looking for someone with whom to have sexual relations, and they assume that a woman who hitchhikes is, in effect, offering herself for that purpose. This has become a rather common view. For example, a California judge, explaining why a rape conviction was overturned, wrote: "It would not be unreasonable for a man in the position of the defendant here to believe that the female [hitchhiker] would engage in sexual relations." Such a view may seem callous and wrong, but it illustrates the realities of the world today.

Although a man has no right to force a woman to have sex with him, under any circumstances, women need to be discerning as to how their actions are perceived by men. The chieftain's son who raped Dinah may have assumed that to venture out by herself, Dinah must have been a girl of easy virtue. He may have concluded that her visits were not just to see some girl friends, but especially to see him. So he may have believed Dinah really wanted what she got.

SHOWING DISCRETION TODAY

There is even greater need today for



women to avoid behavior that men may misinterpret as an invitation to have sexual relations with them. Frederic Straska, who has studied and lectured extensively on rape, observed:

"Women indirectly tease men whenever they do anything in public view that might lead others to believe they've had or they're having sex with someone. I'm talking mostly about public displays of affection, but there are other things that could give this impression.

"Nowadays, a lot of young men and women set up housekeeping without the benefit of matrimony, which is surely their own business. But there may be some men around who think otherwise. These men figure that any woman who's willing to live with, and obviously sleep with, a man without marrying him is an easy mark."

Because of your respect for God's laws on morality, you doubtless would never agree to have sex relations with a man to whom you are not married. Yet other behavior could cause persons to think you are a woman of easy virtue. For example, if you went to certain bars or discos, where women of questionable morals go, men understandably might assume that you, too, are that type of woman.

Also, dressing in immodest, revealing clothes can serve as a tease or "come-on"

to men. In this regard, the Bible has some very pertinent and valuable counsel. It advises "women to adorn themselves in well-arranged dress, with modesty."—1 Tim. 2:9.

IN THE DATING SITUATION

Use of discretion is especially important when it comes to dating. A large percentage of rapes, some say the majority, occur on these occasions. Why?

First of all, it is because the woman may go out with a man who does not have respect for the Bible's standards of morality. She may assume that he is trustworthy because he attends religious meetings. But this, in itself, is no guarantee that he believes or practices what the Bible teaches. Even in the first-century Christian congregation there were persons who had wrong motives. Of such ones the apostle Peter wrote: "They have eyes full of adultery . . . and they entice unsteady souls." (2 Pet. 2:14) So it is important to determine a young man's true motivations *before* going out with him.

Furthermore, many persons view dating as a sort of game, rather than a means for becoming acquainted with a prospective marriage mate. But what often happens when a woman consents to going to an isolated place with a man, perhaps engaging in kissing and necking with him? For many men in today's immoral society such preliminary sex play is a "promise" of sexual intercourse, and they will force a woman to keep that "promise." Even if the young man intends to behave honorably, the sexual arousal of kissing and necking may override his good intentions and he may force himself on the girl.

What about the girl's feelings in such a situation? What if you, as a young woman, allow yourself to become involved in such a situation with a young man you like? It could create such difficulties as rape expert Straska described: "Given the

fact that you may not only be struggling to say no to the man but also to yourself, you may have a hard time deciding whether or not it was really rape. You may want to salve your conscience by telling yourself that it was."

Do not assume that you can play at dating as a game, or in other ways put yourself into compromising situations, without bad consequences. Time and again young women, including members of the Christian congregation who thought they could handle the situation, have been terribly hurt. Be wise. Use discretion. Benefit from Scriptural lessons, and avoid situations in which you could become involved in illicit sexual relations.

BE AWARE

Learn, too, from the sad experience of Tamar, the young woman who was maneuvered by her half brother Amnon into an isolated place where he raped her. This case illustrates the need to be *aware*, to be conscious of the attitudes and feelings of others toward you. If Tamar had earlier detected Amnon's passionate feelings for her, she might have been able to avoid getting into the situation she did.

Of course, a woman simply cannot anticipate all possibilities. For example, a young woman spent a weekend at her girl friend's home. In the morning, while she was still in bed, her girl friend and her mother went to do some grocery shopping, leaving her home alone with the father. He came into the room where she was resting and sat on her bed. When he told her he wanted to make love to her, she was so shocked and confused she put up little struggle.

Yet, what could the young woman have done? What can you, as a woman, do if someone tries to rape you? There are various things a woman can do.*

* For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see the July 8, 1980, issue of *Awake!*

From the very outset, a woman should firmly resist a rapist, screaming if necessary

THE BEST AND PROPER COURSE

Above all, she should not allow herself to be intimidated. Right at the outset she should let it be known that under no circumstances will she permit intercourse. Representatives of the *Toronto Star*, after consulting a number of rape crisis centers in the United States and Canada, came up with this common theme:

"The most crucial time in a rape encounter is the first minute. If a woman doesn't physically and mentally fight back at this point, her chances of avoiding sexual attack grow progressively smaller."

The Cleveland Rape Crisis Centre explained:

"The rapist first checks out his victim to see what her attitude is likely to be. He doesn't want trouble; he wants to intimidate the woman quietly. The more afraid the woman appears, the more vulnerable she is to assault. The longer she allows the encounter to go on, the more trouble she's in."

So the young woman mentioned above should have countered the rape threat immediately, in a firm, absolute manner, not as a passive individual groping for a response. She might have said something to this effect: "What would you think if this were happening to your own daughter? You know, some think your daughter and I look much alike."

Even if that approach did not stop the aggression, if she, right from the start, had shown herself to be a difficult, aggressive opponent, the rape no doubt could have been avoided. Susan Brownmiller, a leading spokesperson on the subject of rape, explains:

"Rapists get courage as the encounter



proceeds. They really do. In most cases, the assailant starts off with less security than the victim might believe. If he finds that he has thoroughly terrorized his victim, he gains more confidence."

Back in March 1974, *Awake!* magazine described how a man with a gun had held two of Jehovah's Witnesses prisoner in a hotel room. As he reached for the zipper on one girl's blouse, she exclaimed: "No! No! Not that!" She told him that if he touched her she would scream as he had never heard anyone scream before. She explained that if she did not she would ruin her relationship with Jehovah God and the Christian congregation. (Compare Deuteronomy 22:22-29.) Her firm demand: "Don't you touch me or come near me" kept the rapist at bay.

This woman did the Scripturally *proper* thing, which actually is the *best* thing to do. A Christian woman is under obligation to resist, for the issue of obedience to God's law to "flee from fornication" is involved. (1 Cor. 6:18) By no means would it be proper for her willingly to submit to being raped.

So about avoiding rape there is much that can be learned from the experiences of both those in ancient Bible times and persons living today. Since rape is the fastest growing crime in certain places, it is indeed wise for women to think about what they can do to resist.

THE PROMISE OF PARADISE

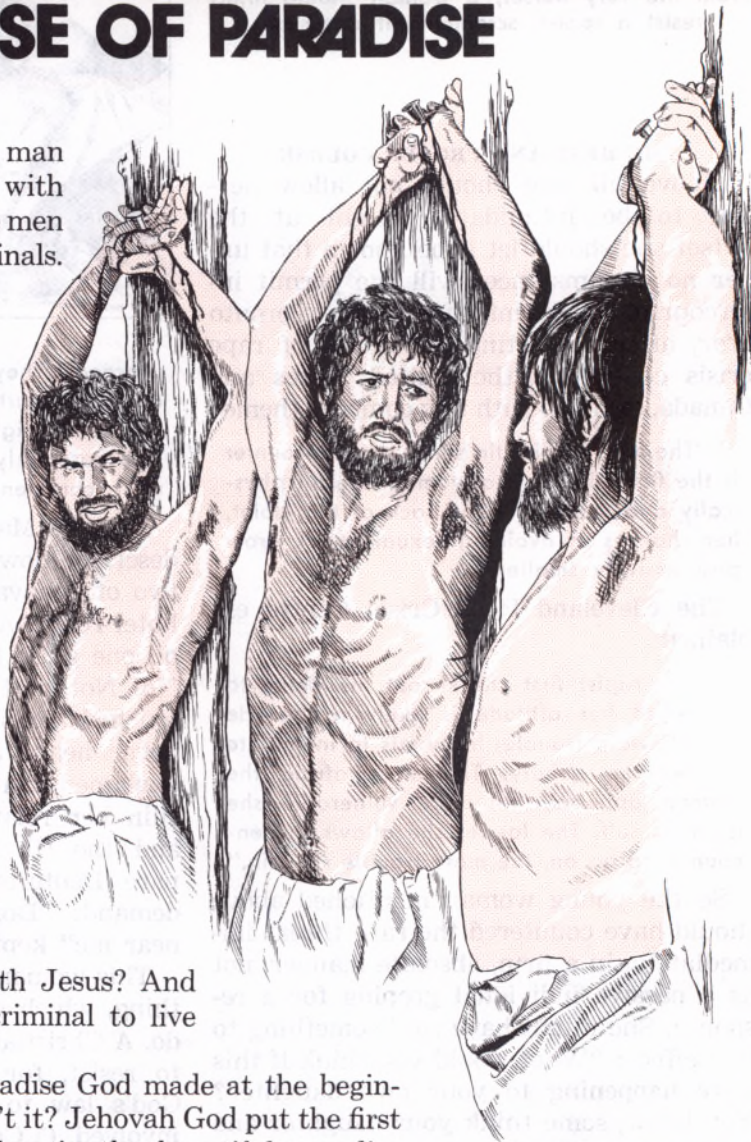
JESUS is telling the dying man next to him: "You will be with me in Paradise." Both these men next to Jesus are criminals. One of them has just finished throwing insults at him: 'You are the Christ, aren't you? Save yourself and us.'

However, the other criminal believes Jesus. He turns to him, as you can see here, and says: "Remember me when you get into your kingdom." At that Jesus promises: "Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise."—Luke 23:39-43.

But what does Jesus mean when he says: "You will be with me in Paradise"? Where is Paradise? When will it come? Will this criminal live there with Jesus? And why will Jesus permit a criminal to live in Paradise?

Well, where was the paradise God made at the beginning? It was on earth, wasn't it? Jehovah God put the first human pair, Adam and Eve, in the beautiful paradise called the garden of Eden. So when we read of this criminal in "Paradise," we should picture in our minds this earth made into a beautiful place in which to live, for the word "paradise" means "garden" or "park."—Gen. 2:8, 9.

Will Jesus Christ be right here on earth with the former criminal in Paradise? No, Christ will be in heaven ruling as king over the earthly Paradise. So he will be with that man in the sense that He will raise him from the dead



and care for his needs, both physical and spiritual. But why will Jesus permit a man who was a criminal to live in Paradise?

It is true that this criminal, along with millions of other persons whom Jesus will resurrect, did wicked things. (Acts 24:15) But they did these wicked things because they were ignorant of God's will. So in Paradise they will be taught what God's will is, and they will have the opportunity to prove that they really do love God by doing his will. Won't it be wonderful to live in Paradise where all your needs are cared for and people love one another?

The good news is that we don't have much longer to wait until that time. Jesus gave a sign that

would mark the end of this wicked system of things. When this sign is completely fulfilled, God will rid the earth of all badness. That this sign is now being fulfilled, and that the end of this system of things is very near, is proved by evidence you will read in the following articles.



INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

- The fact that men would probe the future and fear what they see was prophesied by Jesus Christ as a feature of our generation. At Luke 21:25, 26, he said that there would be "anguish of nations, not knowing the way out . . . while men become faint

"Expectation of the Things Coming"

out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."

A special 800-page document titled "Global 2000 Report to the President" from the U.S. State Department and Council on Environmental Quality illustrates the accuracy of Jesus' words. It warns that there is "potential for global problems of alarming proportions by the year 2000." The New York "Times" states that, according to the report, "time is running out for international action to prevent a starving, overcrowded, polluted, resource-poor world." And World Bank president Robert McNamara declared: "It paints an absolutely shocking picture of the world twenty years from now—unless we act."

The bleak picture of what could occur includes: half of the world's forests gone, sand dunes taking over once-fertile farmlands, the end of nearly two million species of living things, 1.3 thousand million malnourished people, and many other global problems. Are governments up to the task of solving them? The report observes: "The only solutions . . . are complex and long-term [because the difficulties] are inextricably linked to some of the most perplexing and persistent problems in the world—poverty, injustice and social conflict."

- Jesus also prophesied that "because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off." (Matt. 24:12) That this is happening world wide, especially among those who profess to be Christians, was highlighted by a recent article in "The Wall Street Journal." Under the heading "An Evangelical Revival Is Sweeping the Nation But With Little Effect," the writer quoted one Baptist pastor as saying: "I heard on one of

'Increasing Lawlessness Cools Love'

those TV evangelism shows the other night that 33% of all Americans are 'born again,' but if that's true, why is the crime rate still so high? Why is there still so much use of narcotics? Where is our impact?"

Growing lawlessness at even the highest levels of society has caused a cooling of love for God and fellowman that in the past may have acted as a restraint. Illustrating one way in which increased lawlessness develops, Gilbert Geis, a professor of social ecology at the University of California, recently declared: "The highest crime rate in the nation is in Congress. Calculate the number of congressmen arrested or sent to jail and you'll find the percentage is higher than in New York City." The result of this, said Geis, who is considered an expert on white-collar crime, is "social malaise, distrust, cynicism and greed: 'If others are doing it, I'll get my share too.'" Thus the "love of the greater number" cools as lawlessness begets lawlessness.

- "There will be food shortages . . . in one place after another," said Jesus. This affliction

Food Shortage — "Millions Will Die"

continues to be a dominant feature of our generation. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently listed 29 nations as suffering "abnormal food shortages," or widespread famine. Of these hungry nations, 23 were in Africa, and hundreds of people are reported to be dying every day on that continent. Despite international relief efforts, an FAO food expert says: "No matter what we do now, millions will die."

This situation exists even though, as "Time" magazine observes: "In the early '70s, the 36-member United Nations World Food Council vowed to create a world without hunger within a decade." What are the prospects for relieving the world's "food shortages"? Answers "Time": "Today that ambitious goal seems more distant than ever."

Yet these very conditions do give hope. They portend the "conclusion of the system of things" that presently exists, to be followed by a new and better one.—Matt. 24:3; Rev. 21:1-4.

ARE WE NEARING ARMAGEDDON?

"Then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again."—Matt. 24:21.



THE word "Armageddon" rings ominously in the ears of many people. Some understand it to be the "end of the world" when all human life will

1. (a) What do some people understand "Armageddon" to mean? (b) Is Armageddon merely another war between nations?

be destroyed and the earth made uninhabitable, perhaps by means of a nuclear war between nations. True, the English word "Armageddon" does denote a cataclysmic event, a war. But the Bible says that it is "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," which is fought at a place called "Har-Magedon." —Rev. 16:14, 16.

² Could God's war of Armageddon possibly mean the end of all mankind, or the end of this planet? No, not at all. God's own Word assures us: "This is what Jehovah has said, the Creator of the heavens, He the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even to be inhabited."—Isa. 45:18.

³ While Armageddon will not mean the end of all mankind, nor of the earth, it certainly will

mean the end of a system of things (or, "world") as we know it. Armageddon will be God's way of totally crushing out of existence today's dete-

2. Will Armageddon mean the end of mankind, or of the earth?
3. What will Armageddon accomplish?

riorating political, economic, social and religious systems that have caused so much grief. "My judicial decision," says Jehovah, "is to gather nations, for me to collect together kingdoms, in order to pour out upon them my denunciation, all my burning anger." (Zeph. 3:8) Thus, God's war of Armageddon will mean the execution of his adverse judgment against "kings," "nations" and "kingdoms." Others to receive his adverse judgment, the Bible says, are the supporters of this present wicked system of things, the "military

commanders," "strong men," "freemen," "slaves" and "small ones and great."—Rev. 16:14; 19:18.

⁴ The end of the present system will pave the way for an entirely new order of God's making, a human society in which the will of God is going to be carried out "as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matt. 6:10) In that new order after Armageddon, Bible prophecy tells us, "righteousness is to dwell." (2 Pet. 3:13) How refreshing, how

4. How does Bible prophecy describe conditions after Armageddon?



In God's new order, people will "find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace"

thrilling that will be after so many centuries of injustice, suffering, heartache and tears! With God's will being done over all the earth and with righteous conditions established, a time of unprecedented happiness will be ushered in. The Bible foretells: "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their *exquisite delight* in the abundance of peace." (Ps. 37:11) It is no wonder that Jesus called it "Paradise."—Luke 23:43.

THE COMING "GREAT TRIBULATION"

⁵ God's war of Armageddon will be the final part of a period of time called the "great tribulation." Jesus spoke of it in this way: "Then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." (Matt. 24:21) Considering the catastrophes that have taken place in the past, it is apparent that the coming "great tribulation" will be a time of upheaval unequalled in the entire history of the human family. But mercifully, it will be a very brief time, one that God will "cut short."—Matt. 24:22.

⁶ However, while the "great tribulation" will be the worst of times, we can be comforted by the fact that it immediately precedes the best of times—in God's new order. Also, there is the very happy prospect that many people now living will survive that coming time of trouble! God's Word promises that "a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" will "come out of the great tribulation" as survivors. Even now God has wiped out every tear from their eyes. (Rev. 7:9, 14, 17) For this reason, Jesus was very optimistic of the future, although knowing

that mankind yet had to face the "great tribulation." His hope-filled words are: "As these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, *because your deliverance is getting near.*"—Luke 21:28.

⁷ For many decades, Jehovah's Witnesses alone have been very active on the international scene in sounding the warning about this coming time of trouble that would climax at Armageddon. (Mark 13:10) At times, though, others sense that something cataclysmic is approaching, for they observe world conditions worsening with no hope of genuine or lasting improvement. For example, on May 4, 1980, the editor of the Miami *Herald*, Jim Hampton, wrote:

"Do you have, growing deep in your gut these days, the same kind of knot I have growing in mine? The awful, keep-you-awake-nights knot that tells you something is dreadfully wrong with your country, with the whole world? The knot that makes you shiver sometimes because it has just dawned on you that Armageddon isn't just some allegory you read about in the Bible, it's real? And that for the first time in your life the match is so close to the fuse that Armageddon is actually possible?

"I have that knot. And I'm not ashamed to admit it, because I have asked a dozen of my friends if they have it too, and not one doesn't. . . .

"Anyone with half a logical mind can put together the cataclysmic events of the past few years and see that the world is at a historic threshold. It's a threshold as important as the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, or the Electronic Age. It will change forever the way men live.

"But unlike those thresholds, which were essentially benevolent for civilization's progress, this one . . . holds the potential for malevolence such as the world has never seen."

7. Why do others sense that a climax in human affairs is approaching?

5. What is the "great tribulation," and how do we know it will last only a short time?

6. Why can we face the "great tribulation" with confidence?

While this editor was not viewing Armageddon entirely from the Biblical context, he was correct in saying that mankind is nearing a time of trouble "such as the world has never seen." What mankind actually is nearing is the "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again," as Jesus foretold.

⁸ Therefore, if we love life and want to live in a righteous new order of God's making, we very much need to learn about this coming "great tribulation" and its Armageddon climax. We need authoritative answers to such questions as: How do we know we are really nearing the "great tribulation"? What event will be a sure sign that it actually has begun?

HOW WE KNOW WE ARE GETTING NEAR

⁹ When Jesus spoke of the coming "great tribulation," he also foretold some of the evidence that would indicate its approach. On one occasion his disciples asked him what would be the "sign" of the "conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 24:3) Jesus spoke of a particular generation of people who would begin experiencing problems on a scale never before seen. He foretold for that generation international war, disease epidemics, and food shortages and earthquakes "in one place after another." He called these "a beginning of pangs of distress." So intense would the difficulties be that there would be great "anguish of nations, not knowing the way out," with many people becoming "faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."—Matt. 24:7, 8, 34; Luke 21:10, 11, 25, 26.

¹⁰ About 32 years later, the apostle Paul, under the inspiration of God's holy spirit, wrote prophetically about the "conclusion of the system of things," saying: "In the

last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride." The prophecy also says that "wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse," showing that after the beginning of the "last days" there would be a continued degeneration in human affairs, to be climaxed by the outbreak of the "great tribulation."—2 Tim. 3:1-5, 13.

In Coming Issues

- "Do Not Be Anxious over Anything"
- The Road to Recuperation Opened by God
- Warnings That Should Be Heeded

¹¹ Without a doubt, the time period that Jesus and inspired Bible writers such as Paul pointed toward is that in which we now live! In fact, it has been in progress since the "turning point" of modern history, the year 1914, which saw the outbreak of World War I. Many historians correctly point to that year as the pivotal one for mankind, because that is when the world entered a period of difficulty never before experienced on such an earth-wide scale. World War I was an evidence of this, since it was so much worse than any

8. What information do we need, and why?

9, 10. How does the Bible describe the period of time leading up to the "great tribulation"?

11, 12. Why was the year 1914 a turning point in history?

war that had ever preceded it, which is why, at the time, it was called "The Great War." It was the first global or world war. It was total warfare and affected nearly every country on earth.

¹² Regarding World War I, the book *La Grande Guerre* (The Great War), by General Richard Thoumin, published originally in France, says: "The blood and tears of the First World War changed the face of the earth." The general also wrote:

"When in November 1918 the arms were laid down at last, ten million men had lost their lives, and twice that many had been wounded or crippled. Little wonder the conflict should be called the 'Great War' . . .

"The unique 'greatness' of the First World War . . . was one of scope and numbers, of industrial output and material destruction. . . . Never before had so many countries and such large armies faced each other in such gigantic battles; never had such high proportions of combatants been killed or maimed; never had man gone to war with such powerful weapons."

¹³ In 1918, before the war was over, the Spanish influenza epidemic began sweeping the earth. It killed over 20 million people, more than the number that died in the war. During and after the war, millions of others died from starvation. Also, earthquakes took a high toll: in 1915 nearly 30,000 were killed in Italy; in 1920 about 180,000 died in China; in 1923 some 143,000 perished in Japan. For good reason did reporter Frank Peters write in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*: "Civilization entered on a cruel and perhaps terminal illness in 1914." Yes, world war, disease epidemics, food shortages and earthquakes "in one place after another." Surely, these were "a beginning of pangs of distress" that Jesus foretold. The "last days," the "time of the end," had indeed begun! —Matt. 24:8; 2 Tim. 3:1; Dan. 12:4.

¹³ What other events surrounding World War I show that the "last days" began then?

MORE EVIDENCE

¹⁴ Now, in late 1980, 66 years have passed since the crucial date of 1914. During that time, World War II also took place, killing some 55 million people, and ending with the atomic destruction of two cities, ushering in the nuclear age. Since then, conditions show that mankind is unable to solve its problems, and every part of this system of things is experiencing decay. All of this tells us that we are deep into the "last days," and that events are moving rapidly toward the "great tribulation."

¹⁵ For instance, at the end of 1979 economist Leonard Silk wrote: "This holiday season, the scarcest commodity is probably not oil but hope. For, with the turbulent decade of the 1970's in its final days, the dangers facing the world economy—and world peace—are intensifying." Columnist Max Lerner said in the spring of this year, 1980: "The world seems to have reached a stage where inflation, strikes, bankruptcy, fanaticism and terrorism come close to guaranteeing that nothing works and no one is in control. Can anyone anywhere govern?"

¹⁶ When the mayors of large cities in the United States were asked why so many of these urban centers were in such deplorable conditions, one answered: "The problems are almost insurmountable. Anyone who is not frustrated is not thinking." Another mayor was asked if the cities were "ungovernable" now, and he commented that the facts "would lead one to at least think along these lines." Similarly, Gus Tyler, author of the book *Scarcity*, said: "Mugging, burglary, assassination of police, dope peddling have brought a semi-anarchy to many cities."

¹⁷ Former chancellor of the Federal Re-

¹⁴ Why can we say we are deep into the "last days"?
^{15, 16} What do others say about conditions in our time?

¹⁷ Intensive research led a group headed by a prominent political official to what conclusion recently?

public of Germany Willy Brandt headed a group that investigated world conditions for two and a half years. This was their conclusion recently:

"At the beginning of the 1980s the world community faces much greater dangers than at any time since the Second World War. It is clear that the world economy is now functioning so badly that it damages both the immediate and longer-run interests of all nations. . . .

"The problems of poverty and hunger are becoming more serious; there are already 800 million absolute poor and their numbers are rising; shortages of grain and other foods are increasing the prospect of hunger and starvation. . . .

"Between 20 and 25 million children below the age of five die every year in developing countries. . . .

"A number of poor countries are threatened with the irreversible destruction of their ecological systems while many more face growing food deficits and possibly mass starvation. In the international economy there is the possibility of . . . a collapse of credit with defaults by major debtors, or bank failures . . . [and] an intensified struggle for influence or control over resources leading to military conflicts."

¹⁸ Add to this the well-documented disintegration of family life and marriage in recent years, the vast increase of crime and violence of all sorts, the enormous growth of drug abuse and alcoholism, and the upsurge of juvenile lawlessness. Is it not obvious that the very fiber of human society is breaking down, as Jesus said it would just prior to the "great tribulation"? (Matt. 24:12) In addition, consider this development, as noted in *World Press Review*: "The world of the Eighties is in many ways frightening, not just because of the poverty and injustice from which so many suffer . . . but because of the

machinery of global destruction with which men play." It called that machinery of destruction "horrifying," and no wonder, for Britain's *New Scientist* reports: "There are about 60,000 nuclear warheads in today's arsenals, with an explosive power equivalent to more than 16,000 million tons of TNT (equal to 1,250,000 Hiroshima bombs)." Some of those weapons are so deadly that one bomb alone can wipe out a small country, or an entire section of a large country. Yes, for the first time in history, man is capable of annihilating most life on earth.

¹⁹ Are we to think that somehow, though, world leaders, because they may be sincere, intelligent, well informed and powerful, will solve these problems? Note what former United States Secretary of the Treasury Michael Blumenthal says: "No one fully understands the present situation. That includes all government officials making policy. They are as puzzled as you are when you open the paper in the morning. The fact is that no one . . . really has been able to predict with any degree of accuracy the problems we got into." But the Bible did, and adds this wise counsel: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs." Instead, "happy is the one . . . whose hope is in Jehovah his God, . . . the One keeping trueness to time indefinite."—Ps. 146:3-6.

²⁰ For a certainty, all the conditions foretold in Bible prophecy are here. We are indeed very deep into the "last days" of this system of things and nearing the final part, the "great tribulation" with its Armageddon finish. And just what will mark the outbreak of that "great tribulation"? An event that already is well along in development. What is this event? A discussion of it follows in the next article.

18. What other recent developments in world affairs verify that the way is being prepared for the "great tribulation"?

19. Whom should we trust to solve today's problems?
20. Of what can we be certain, and so what questions do we need answered?

EXECUTION OF THE "GREAT HARLOT" NEARS

"These will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire."—Rev. 17:16.

THE Creator, Jehovah God, knows exactly what will take place in the future. He is "the One telling from the beginning the finale." (Isa. 46:10) Being "perfect in knowledge," he knows the details about the "finale" of this system of things at the coming "great tribulation." (Job 37:16; Matt. 24:21) Because he is a God of love, he reveals enough of these details to those who serve him loyally that they can be properly informed, upbuilt and protected. The Bible states: "The Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not do a thing unless he has revealed his confidential matter to his servants the prophets." —Amos 3:7.

² Thus, God gives his humble servants special knowledge that others do not have. As the apostle Paul said: "This wisdom not one of the rulers of this system of things came to know . . . For it is to us God has revealed them through his spirit." (1 Cor. 2:8-10) Having advance knowledge from Jehovah, his servants are equipped—indeed, commissioned, by God—to herald throughout the world the warning of this system's approaching end, along with the comforting message of the new order.—Matt. 24:14.

³ Since Jehovah provides his loyal servants with advance knowledge about this

system's end, does this include information that will enable them to discern when the "great tribulation" actually has begun? Yes. What is that evidence? It has to do with God's execution of judgment against what the Bible calls "Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth." (Rev. 17:5) And already, yes, *right now*, events are taking place that are preparing the way for that execution!

⁴ Who is this symbolic harlot of the Scriptures? How can it be said that events leading to her destruction already are under way? We can learn much about these things by referring to another Babylon, that powerful world empire of over two thousand years ago. What happened to ancient Babylon is much more than just history. It is a remarkable prophetic parallel to what soon will befall the "great harlot" of our day.—Rev. 17:1.

ANCIENT "BABYLON THE GREAT"

⁵ "Is not this Babylon the Great, that I myself have built for the royal house with the strength of my might and for the dignity of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30) Thus boasted Babylon's king, Nebuchadnezzar, more than six centuries before the Common Era. Nebuchadnezzar seemed to have

1, 2. What information does God give his servants, and why?

3. Will Jehovah's servants know when the "great tribulation" actually has begun?

4. Why is it helpful to know what happened to ancient Babylon?

5. Why did Nebuchadnezzar seem to have reason for boasting?

good reason for boasting, for Babylon was the mightiest city of her time, the capital of the most powerful empire the world had yet seen. The enormous city seemed impregnable, as it was surrounded by massive double walls. It also had an apparently secure water supply—the Euphrates River—running through the city. Along the river, inside the city, were huge walls with gates that could be shut to keep out any intruder.

⁶ While Babylon had great military might, she was more renowned for something else: She was the center of false religion in that ancient world. It is said that the remains of no less than 53 temples have been discovered in the city's ruins. *The World Book Encyclopedia* says: "Babylonians never really rejected earlier gods, however, so the number of gods they worshiped grew into the thousands. There were patron gods and goddesses of each city-state as well as gods representing such things as the sun, moon, and stars, the weather, crops, rivers, and the land." Babylon's religious influence was so strong that in time it even affected Christendom. To this day, false religious beliefs and practices of post-Flood Babylon can be found in almost all the religions of this world.—Gen. 11:1-9.

⁷ However, Babylon of Nebuchadnezzar's day had a fatal flaw: She was a longtime, hard-set enemy of the true God, Jehovah, and of his people. Also, she was a shedder of much innocent blood. The Bible says: "Not only was Babylon the cause for the slain ones of Israel to fall but also at Babylon the slain ones of all the earth have fallen." (Jer. 51:49) Because of this, Jehovah declared: "Babylon, the decoration of kingdoms, the beauty of the pride of the Chaldeans, must become as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. . . . the

season for her is near to come, and her days themselves will not be postponed." That prophecy was recorded by Isaiah around the year 732 B.C.E. (Isa. 13:19-22) About a century later, Jeremiah said: "Because of the indignation of Jehovah she will not be inhabited, and she must become a desolate waste in her entirety. As for anyone passing along by Babylon, he will stare in astonishment and whistle on account of all her plagues." Yes, seemingly impregnable "Babylon the Great" would "become piles of stones, the lair of jackals, . . . without an inhabitant."—Jer. 50:13; 51:37.

⁸ Just how would Babylon fall? Jehovah gave Isaiah and Jeremiah some of the details. Isaiah wrote that Jehovah is "the One saying to the watery deep, 'Be evaporated; and all your rivers I shall dry up.'" (Isa. 44:27) Further, Isaiah declared: "This is what Jehovah has said to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of, to subdue before him nations, so that I may ungird even the hips of kings; to open before him the two-leaved doors, so that even the gates will not be shut." (Isa. 45:1) Jeremiah foretold: "The mighty men of Babylon have ceased to fight. . . . Their mightiness has run dry. They have become women." (Jer. 51:30) So Babylon's protective river, the Euphrates, would "dry up"; a leader whom Jehovah named long before he was born, "Cyrus," would be the conqueror; the gates along the river would "not be shut"; and Babylon's soldiers would "cease to fight."

⁹ On October 5/6 in the year 539 B.C.E. those prophecies were precisely fulfilled. That night, the haughty Babylonian king Belshazzar held a feast for a thousand of his officials and others. Making a religious festival out of the occasion so that he could blaspheme Jehovah, he brought in

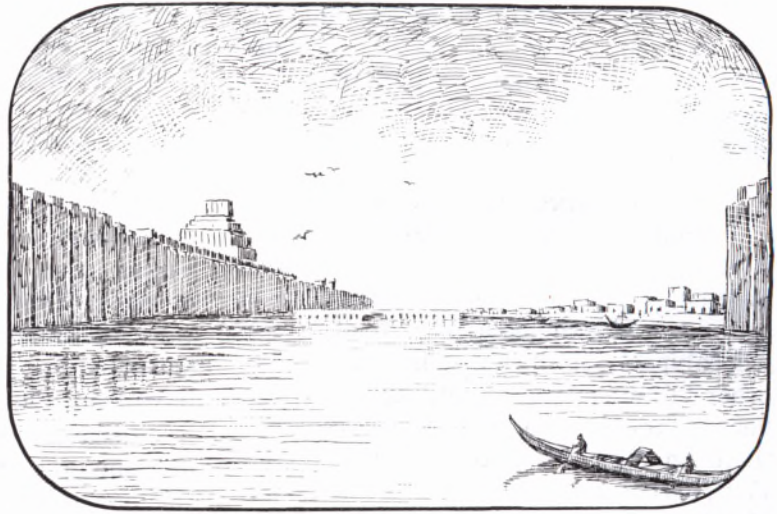
6. For what was Babylon renowned?

7. (a) What was Babylon's fatal flaw? (b) What would Jehovah do to her?

8. What details were given about how Babylon would fall?

9. Why was Belshazzar's feast especially repugnant to Jehovah?

**Ancient Babylon sat astride
the waters of the Euphrates
River**



the sacred vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had captured from Jerusalem's temple in 607 B.C.E. Out of those vessels previously used by God's people in the service of Jehovah, Belshazzar and the others, including the king's wives and concubines, arrogantly drank toasts to their false gods. —Dan. 5:1-4.

¹⁰ However, Jehovah no longer would be mocked! The time had come for him to act! "At that moment the fingers of a man's hand came forth and were writing . . . upon the plaster of the wall of the palace of the king, and the king was beholding the back of the hand that was writing." (Dan. 5:5) Belshazzar became so terrified at this sight that "his very knees were knocking each other." (Dan. 5:6) Boldly, Daniel interpreted the handwriting from God to the king, declaring: "God has numbered the days of your kingdom and has finished it. . . . you have been weighed in the balances and have been found deficient. . . . your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and the Persians." —Dan. 5:26-28.

10. What was the handwriting on the wall, and how did Belshazzar react?

¹¹ Outside Babylon's walls, Persian armies led by Cyrus the Great, in cooperation with the Medes of Darius, surrounded the city. While the Babylonians were reveling in their blasphemous religious orgy, feeling secure in their gods and armed might, Cyrus was undertaking a brilliant strategy. To the north of Babylon, his engineers cut through the bank of the Euphrates River, diverting it so that its waters no longer flowed south through the city. Soon the water level of the river in and around Babylon began to fall. In a very short time, the water was shallow enough for the troops led by Cyrus to enter the riverbed from the north and the south and move along it toward the heart of Babylon. Amazingly, the gates along the river inside the city had been left open by the unsuspecting or drunken Babylonians. In overwhelming strength, Cyrus' forces swarmed into Babylon. "In that very night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was killed." (Dan. 5:30) "Babylon the Great" had fallen—in just one night! What a shock that was, and not just to the Bab-

11. How was Bible prophecy regarding Babylon fulfilled in detail?

ylonians, but to all the nations around her! Her end had come exactly as Jehovah's servants had foretold. And in time Babylon did become "piles of stones," "a desolate waste," "without an inhabitant."

MEANING FOR OUR DAY

¹² What meaning does that have for our day? A great deal. Over six centuries after Babylon's fall, the apostle John was inspired to write the book of Revelation (the Apocalypse). In it he spoke of still another "Babylon the Great," and described her as "the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth." (Rev. 17:5) With her, John wrote, "the kings of the earth committed fornication, whereas those who inhabit the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication."—Rev. 17:2.

¹³ Since kings were said to have immoral relations with her, it is clear that this "Babylon the Great" cannot be just another "king." What it really represents is what ancient Babylon was famous for—false religion. That is why the modern harlot takes the same name as the ancient city. Indeed, many of the false doctrines and practices found in modern religious Babylon can be traced directly to ancient religious Babylon. Thus, the harlot "Babylon the Great" of our time represents the worldwide empire of false religion that has for centuries compromised herself in immoral intercourse with the world instead of chastely serving God. Too, giving another clue to her religious identity, Revelation says of her: "For by your *spiritistic practice* [false religion] all the nations were misled."—Rev. 18:23.

¹⁴ Recall that ancient Babylon had been a hard-set enemy of God and his people,

and was responsible for vast amounts of blood spilled in her many conquests. Similarly, of modern Babylon the Bible says: "In her was found the blood of prophets and of holy ones and of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth." (Rev. 18:24) This harlot has been a chief persecutor of Jehovah's modern-day people, his witnesses. Also, by her support of the wars of the nations, encouraging people on all sides to kill one another, she is held responsible for the blood "of all those who have been slaughtered on the earth."

¹⁵ Because "her sins have massed together clear up to heaven," God's execution of the harlot will come swiftly. (Rev. 18:5, 21) The Bible says that "in one day her plagues will come," indeed, "in one hour"! (Rev. 18:8, 10) That will be similar to what happened to her counterpart, ancient Babylon, which fell in one night! And at whose hands will the harlot suffer destruction? Jehovah will allow the political elements that have carried on immoral intercourse with the harlot to be her destructive agents. "These will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire."—Rev. 17:16.

¹⁶ Another similarity exists between ancient and modern Babylon, one having to do with the manner of their destruction. Ancient Babylon sat on waters, the literal waters of the Euphrates River. Modern Babylon also "sits on many waters," says Revelation 17:1. What are these waters? God's Word answers: "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is sitting, mean peoples and crowds and nations and tongues." (Rev. 17:15) Note that the overthrow of ancient Babylon was immediately

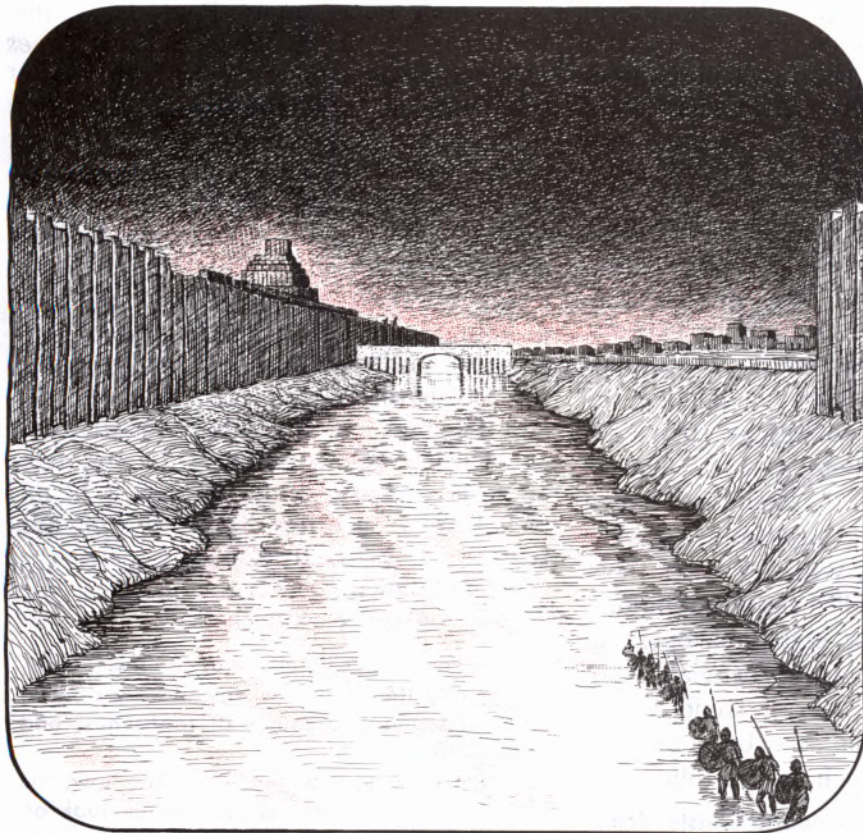
12. What does the apostle John say about "Babylon the Great" in Revelation chapter 17?

13. (a) Why could modern "Babylon the Great" not be just another political power? (b) For what reason is the harlot named "Babylon the Great"?

14. What other similarity is there between the two Babylons?

15. At whose hands will the harlot suffer destruction, and how long will it take?

16. What are the "waters" on which modern Babylon sits, and what parallel is there in this with ancient Babylon?



The dropping of the waters of the Euphrates River paved the way for enemy troops to enter Babylon and overthrow her



The dropping of the symbolic waters (people) from under Babylon the Great precedes her destruction

preceded by the dropping of the literal waters of the Euphrates River. Is there a similar dropping of the symbolic waters (humans) from underneath modern Babylon? Yes, there is, and it is taking place right before our very eyes!—Rev. 16:1, 12.

HOW THE “MANY WATERS” ARE DROPPING

¹⁷ In what way are the symbolic “many waters” under modern Babylon dropping, diminishing? In that millions of persons, including tens of thousands of religious clergy and workers, have abandoned the support that they used to give their religions, seriously weakening them. This is particularly true in Christendom, which has greater guilt since she claims to serve both God and Christ. While at times there is mention of “revival” in a few religions, particularly the less orthodox ones, in most cases this is only superficial. With few exceptions, the overall trend is unmistakable and can be seen by comments in the world press, such as the following:

“Something has happened to Christendom. Every indication is that we have entered a long, long night and we’re not going to come out of it . . .

“The effective existence of Christianity and Roman Catholicism in the public structures has already disappeared. We are witnessing the death of a socially and politically structured Christianity.”—Prominent Catholic writer Malachi Martin, in the Providence “Sunday Journal,” February 17, 1980.

“The shortage of priests and nuns in the West is near the peril point in nation after nation.”—“Time,” August 21, 1978.

“Christianity [is] retreating rapidly . . . a picture of superstitious agnosticism, confusion, and ignorance. . . . It would be no exaggeration to say that almost all children have no idea what Christianity really is.”—London “Times,” September 25, 1978, commenting on a report from the Church of England Board of Education.

17. In what way are the symbolic “waters” under the harlot dropping?

¹⁸ When Pope John Paul II visited France in May 1980, the New York *Times* (May 31) commented: “The influence of the church is rapidly declining in France. A recent poll disclosed that only 15 percent of the people are practicing Catholics, although 85 percent are baptized in the church.” In Brazil, Archbishop Luciano Cabral Duarte said: “Our Catholics are losing strength and are perishing from profound spiritual anemia.” (*Veja*, January 30, 1980) In Nigeria, a clergyman of the Presbyterian Church admitted: “Today the church seems to have lost its sense of identity like someone suffering from amnesia and is asking, ‘Who am I,’ and ‘What am I here for?’” (*Daily Star*, September 11, 1978) In Greece, a newspaper said the following about the once-respected Greek Orthodox Church:

“Today the Church, that is the clergy, especially the highest clergy, is very often a den of scandal, a source of foolishness and nonsense.

“So much so, that for some time now, the great majority of the Greek people look on most clergymen, not as a respectable, spiritual institution, but as a swarm of agitators and scandalmakers, radicals and exploiters, who rather than ‘guide their flock,’ amuse it with their prattle and deliria.”—“*To Vima*,” October 15, 1978.

¹⁹ Regarding the Eastern Orthodox Church’s most important center in Turkey, *Time* declares: “The historic see, once the center of half the Christian world, is dying.” American rabbi Alvin Reines says of the Jewish religion: ‘American Jewry is in a desperate state of crisis. The problem is that American Jews simply do not accept the teachings of traditional Judaism.’ In England, so many churches have closed in recent years due to dropping attendance that one commentator called them “an endangered species.” In Ger-

18, 19. Give additional evidence of the falling of these “waters.”

many, a poll revealed that only 17 percent of Germans under 35 believe that God exists. In Japan, when people were asked, "Do you have a religion of some sort?" 60 percent answered "No" and 7 percent more did not answer. In country after country the situation with this world's religions is as *The Age of Melbourne*, Australia, says—that all denominations "are suffering a fall in believers." Since the "fall in believers," the fall of the "many waters" upon which the harlot sits, is so obviously taking place now, can the forces of destruction be far behind? No.

²⁰ The diminishing support for the "great harlot" fits the description of Bible prophecy regarding these "last days" when it says that people would be "lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power." The same prophecy then counsels: "From these turn away." (2 Tim. 3:4, 5) Similarly, the striking declaration addressed to righteously inclined persons still in modern "Babylon the Great" is: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues."—Rev. 18:4.

²¹ Very soon now, the "great harlot" will be executed as a judgment of God against her. As with ancient Babylon, modern Babylon's speedy overthrow will prove to be a great shock to the world. (Rev. 18:9-19) Her destruction is the event that will mark the beginning of the "great tribulation." Then, also, the anti-God elements will turn on Jehovah's servants to try to crush them. (Ezek. 38:16) But Jehovah says to his loyal ones: "He that is touching you is touching my eyeball." (Zech. 2:8) This causes an immediate reaction from God. Jehovah says: "And it

must occur in that day . . . that my rage will come up into my nose. And in my ardor, in the fire of my fury, I shall have to speak." (Ezek. 38:18, 19) Coming to the rescue of his loyal servants, God swiftly and with crushing force strikes the nations at the "war of the great day of God the Almighty," Armageddon. The enemies of God and his people are thus annihilated, cleansing the earth of all wickedness.—Rev. 16:14, 16; Prov. 2:22.

²² After Armageddon, the marvelous new order begins! The loyal ones who "come out of the great tribulation" are richly rewarded. "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Rev. 21:3, 4.

²³ So take heart, all you lovers of righteousness! Know that the days of the "great harlot," and of the oppressive political rulers of this system of things, are numbered and that Jehovah will soon take them out of the way. Since God "cannot lie," have confidence that he will fulfill your hope of living forever in a paradise new order where every day you will find "exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Titus 1:2; Ps. 37:11) In the meantime, avail yourself of Jehovah's provisions to strengthen you spiritually for the difficult days immediately ahead. As you do so, lovingly consider others who may yet be "hungering and thirsting for righteousness." Urge such ones to take to heart the Bible counsel: "Search for Jehovah, you people, while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near."—Matt. 5:6; Isa. 55:6.

20. What urgent counsel does God's Word give to righteously inclined persons?

21. What final act causes Jehovah's rage to come up, and with what result?

22. How will those loyal to Jehovah be rewarded?

23. (a) Why should we take heart despite today's difficult conditions? (b) What should we urge truth seekers to do?

As told by Richard A. Boeckel



A SOLDIER WHO BECAME A PREACHER

WHILE in the army during the second world war, I began to study some Bible literature. As I read and tried to figure things out, the question went through my mind: What is God's view on the difficult situations that we face in life today?

I reasoned that in 1776, when the United States was born, there were brave men who gave their life for their country, yes, many who were even

sorry that they had only one life to give. But really, I asked myself, what eternal benefits did their noble sacrifice bring? Certainly it did not conquer man's greatest enemies, sickness and death, since all the persons living then have long since died.

The sad truth is that no human government can conquer death, or even sickness, or old age. But now I was learning about the government of Jehovah God that could, *and would*, conquer these enemies. In a prophecy about God's king, Jesus Christ, the Bible says: "For unto us a child is born, unto us

a son is given: and *the government* shall be upon his shoulder . . . Of the increase of *his government* and peace there shall be no end.”—Isa. 9:6, 7, *Authorized Version*.

Jesus taught his followers to pray for this government of God. “After this manner therefore pray,” he said. “Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. *Thy kingdom come*. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” This kingdom-government, which the Bible shows will eliminate ‘death, sorrow, crying and pain,’ surely is superior to any human government. And since Jesus urged, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,” it made sense to me that obedience to God’s laws should come first in the lives of those who support His government.—Matt. 6:9, 10, 33; Rev. 21:3, 4, *AV*.

Becoming convinced of these matters, I applied for a discharge; but this was not granted.

SHARING IN KINGDOM PREACHING

From what I was learning I recognized the Christian responsibility to share with others the “good news of the kingdom.” (Matt. 24:14) While located at Fort Francis E. Warren, Wyoming, I started attending meetings of Jehovah’s Witnesses in nearby Cheyenne, and obtained literature supplies. In the weeks that followed I distributed hundreds of books and booklets in the camp hospital and in the dormitories. Camp authorities soon learned about this preaching campaign, and they tried to find out who was responsible. But the men helped me to avoid being discovered.

I would go from bunk to bunk and speak

quietly to individuals or small groups. Meanwhile, soldiers would stand as look-outs at the front and back doors of the dormitory. When officers came looking for me, the men warned me, and I would leave by the other door. I would then go to dormitories in another section of the camp and begin witnessing there. Still I could not get my discharge.

AN IMPORTANT FURLOUGH

In August 1944 I was granted a furlough to attend the United Announcers’ Theocratic Assembly in Denver, Colorado. I really believe that it was by the Lord’s direction that this furlough was granted, especially in view of what occurred at the assembly.

During one of the sessions I sat next to Lotta Thayer, a Witness from Abilene, Kansas. In the course of our conversation, she learned about the problems I was having trying to serve God in a military environment, in view of what I had learned from Isaiah 2:4 and related scriptures.

“Do you know who my neighbor is?” she asked. “It’s General Eisenhower’s mother! She’s one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Would you like her to write you?”

“I sure would!” I exclaimed.

HELP FROM EISENHOWER’S MOTHER

Toward the end of August we were on maneuvers in Colorado. I refused guard duty and was called to the headquarters tent. Halfway up the path I was told to sit under a juniper tree until called. While I was waiting, a soldier cried, “Mail call!” and someone brought me a letter. I had just finished reading it when I was told to report.

**‘My neighbor is Eisenhower’s mother,’ the woman said.
‘She’s one of Jehovah’s Witnesses’**

As I entered the headquarters tent, where all the "top brass" had gathered, I didn't salute. One of the officers said: "Don't you salute your superiors?"

"No, Sir."

"Why not?"

Respectfully, I gave my reasons, based on my understanding of the Bible. At that the officer said: "General Eisenhower ought to line you Jehovah's Witnesses up and shoot you all!"

"Do you think he would shoot his own mother, Sir?" I asked.

"What do you mean by that?" he shot back.

Reaching in my pocket and taking out Sister Eisenhower's letter, I handed it to him. "I just received this letter from the General's mother while waiting for you to call me."

As he read the letter, which you see reproduced on the opposite page, the other officers also gathered around to look at it. Thoughtfully, and with a greatly changed attitude, he handed it back to me. "Get back to ranks," he said, "I don't want to get mixed up with the General's mother."

Ida Eisenhower, whose son later became president of the United States, was, at the time, 82 years of age. From reading her letter, you can see that for most of her life she had been one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The timing of her letter's arrival could not have been better! Her encouragement was just what I needed.

MAINTAINING A FIRM POSITION

Although I continued trying for a discharge, this was not granted. However, I refused to share in any activity that I

felt directly violated Bible principles. At one time this made for a comical situation. About 60 of us had arranged our cots in a huge circle in the dormitory to listen to instruction from a visiting major. Standing in the middle of the circle, he whirled around and pointed his finger at me. "You—demonstrate how to throw a hand grenade."

"I'd rather not, Sir," I replied.

"And why not?"

"Because somebody might get hurt."

Well, the boys, all knowing of my Bible-based beliefs, rolled back on the cots laughing so much that in the confusion that followed the major couldn't find me again. So he went on to something else.

PREACHING IN FRANCE

Later on, while still seeking to get out of the army, I was sent to France. I accepted the turn of events as Jehovah's will, and determined to serve Him whatever happened. Thus, marvelous opportunities of Kingdom service were opened to me in France. The *1980 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* briefly tells something about this under the heading "A U.S. Soldier Makes Disciples."

Arriving in France around the first of October 1944, I sent my pay to the Watchtower Society in New York and asked for some French literature. For months it never arrived.

Having studied at the University of Grenoble in the summer of 1933, I knew some French. So I was able to preach to the local people wherever we were—in Nancy, Dijon, Le Mans and Vittel. Often it would be midnight by the time I returned to our quarters after spending five

"Get back to ranks," the officer said, "I don't want to get mixed up with the General's mother"

Abilene, Kansas.
August-20-'44.

Mr. Richard Boeckel.
35 Garland Drive
Eggertsville. 21, New York.

Dear Sir:-

A friend returning from the United Announcers Convention of Jehovah's witnesses, informs me of meeting you there. I rejoice with you in your privilege of attending such convention.

It has been my good fortune many times in the years gone by to attend these meetings of those faithfully proclaiming the name of Jehovah and ~~and~~ his glorious Kingdom which shortly now will pour out its rich blessings over all the earth.

My friend informs me of your desire to have a word from General Eisenhower's mother whom you have been told is one of the witnesses of Jehovah. I am indeed such and what a glorious privilege it has been in association with those of the present time and with those on back through the annals of Biblical history even to Abel.

Generally I have refused such requests because of my desire to avoid all publicity. However, because you are a person of good will towards Jehovah God and his glorious Theocracy I am very happy to write you.

I have been blessed with seven sons of which five are living, all being very good to their mother and I am constrained to believe are very fine in the eyes of those who have learned to know them.

It was always my desire and my effort to raise my boys in the knowledge of and to reverence their Creator. My prayer is that they all may anchor their hope in the New World, the central feature of which is the Kingdom for which all good people have been praying the past two thousand years.

I feel that Dwight my third son will always strive to do his duty with integrity as he sees such duty. I mention him in particular because of your expressed interest in him.

And so as the mother of General Eisenhower and as a witness of and for the Great Jehovah of Hosts (I have been such the past 49 years) I am pleased to write you and to urge you to faithfulness as a companion of and servant with those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus".

There can be no doubt that what is now called the post-war period is the "one hour" mentioned at Revelations chapters 17 and 18. Ten here being a symbol not of just ten nations but rather of the whole number or all of the nations, then if we have a real League of Nations acting efficiently as a super guide to the nations of earth at the close of this war, should be ample proof.

Mr. Richard Boeckel. #2.

Surely this portends that very soon the glorious Theocracy, the long promised Kingdom of Jehovah the Great God and of his Son the everlasting King will rule the entire earth and pour out manifold blessings upon all peoples who are of good will towards Him. All others will be removed.

Again may I urge your ever faithfulness to these the "Higher Powers" and to the New World now so very near.

Respectfully yours in hope of and as a
fighter for the New World,

Dwight D. Eisenhower

to ten hours calling at their homes with the Kingdom message.

When in Paris I met Henri Geiger, who was then taking oversight of the activities of Jehovah's Witnesses in France. Through him I obtained some French literature. But since it was in such short supply I would lend a booklet to a householder for three or four days, and then I would return and pick it up so that I could lend it to someone else. My preaching, as well as my refusal to bear arms or salute officers, attracted much attention. But still I had no discharge!

REFUSING TO COMPROMISE

About the time the Germans mounted their last major offensive in the Battle of the Bulge, I was called to local army headquarters. Due to the shortage of fighting men, they wanted me to bear arms. Also, they ordered that I salute officers and stop preaching. "I expect you to do the work of a good soldier," the colonel said.

I explained to the colonel: "If everyone would accept my Bible-based moral advice there wouldn't be the problems with drunkenness among the soldiers, or the need to take care of their sex diseases."

The colonel's answer to that was: "America would not deny the pleasures of sexual intercourse to its soldiers, for America is built on that principle."

I corrected the colonel, telling him that it was my understanding America was built on the principle of the honorableness of marriage, and did not advocate adultery and fornication. At that I was given the ultimatum: 'Either stop preaching or be shot in the morning.' Using the apostles' words at Acts 4:19, 20 and 5:29, I told

them that I must obey God rather than them, and so I could not stop speaking about God's kingdom.

Rather than being shot, I was arrested and put to work digging a latrine. So there I was six feet down in a hole, with Sergeant Randy Tarbell guarding me above. After the war Randy studied with John Booth, now a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, and today Randy is a Christian elder.

EVIDENCE OF JEHOVAH'S DIRECTION

With the need still great for fighting men, a young soldier was transferred from Vittel and I was sent to replace him. So now I was no longer under arrest. And instead of living in a pup tent, I now had a room with a real bed in Vittel's luxury Hôtel des Grandes Sources!

The first day after arriving, I received a big box with about 60 books—the literature I had ordered from the Watchtower Society nearly five months earlier. It had been following me around, but just had not gotten to me. I hid it under my bed. It was the first place I had been where I could safely keep Bible literature. Surely, this must have been by Jehovah's direction. But besides French books, the Society also sent books in Italian, Russian and German. "Why?" I asked myself. "Don't they know I'm in France?"

Well, the next morning I went downstairs to the dining room, and what did I see? I tingled all over! There were about 50 Italian soldiers! By now, in February 1945, they had joined the Allies in the fight against the Nazis. But that is not all. There were also about 50 Russian soldiers staying in the hotel. While eating with

Rather than being shot, I was arrested and put to work digging a latrine

them in the mess hall during the next several days, I managed to communicate with them in languages we spoke in common, placing all the Italian and Russian books.

But what about the German books? Later, while in Nancy, I met 60 German prisoners. Since I spoke German I was able to witness to them. How they appreciated something to read! And how clear it became to me that Jehovah is directing the Kingdom preaching! All of this, I am convinced, could never have happened by chance.

During the weeks I was in Vittel, I visited every home in town with the Kingdom message. One call I will never forget. It was on André and Suzanne Perrin. We gathered around the table along with their children, studying until midnight. The following morning Suzanne called out to me as I passed by: "Monsieur Richard, do you know what I did after you left last night? I burned all my crosses, my images, virgins, rosaries—all in the fire!"

Recently Suzanne wrote to tell me that they have about 50 persons associated with the congregation in Vittel. Although her husband has died, she, her son, and other relatives are active Witnesses. I count it a great privilege to have been able to sow seeds of Kingdom truth in France and to have seen some of them bear fruitage, while still awaiting my discharge from the army.

BACK TO AMERICA

The war in Europe ended a few weeks later, early in May. Soon afterward we were on our way back to America.

We were sent to Camp Lee, Virginia, where we were kept before being discharged. I contacted the local group of

Jehovah's Witnesses, and spent most of my time preaching, both at the homes of the local people and in the huge army camp. Each day I took a shopping bag filled with about 25 Bible textbooks and would place them all. The brothers had to keep making special trips into Richmond to replenish their literature supplies.

Then came the last weekend before our discharge. I had three days left in the army to preach. There was no literature left. What to do? I went into a barracks where all the men were waiting for discharge. Standing at the door, I said in a loud voice: "Men, may I have your attention! I have a message for you and something you can take home with you and enjoy for the next year."

At this they gathered around and I gave a witness, stressing that God's kingdom is the only hope for mankind. I presented the *Watchtower* and *Consolation* (now *Awake!*) magazines and took their subscriptions. Sometimes I got a dozen subscriptions in one barracks. The last subscription I obtained was at 2 a.m. on the bus back to New York. I arrived home with \$203.00 for 203 subscriptions. My service in the army ended with an honorable discharge.

In the nearly 35 years since that day my convictions regarding God's Kingdom promises have not wavered in the least. After getting out of the army, I was able to pursue my goal of serving as a minister of God. I have enjoyed many privileges over the years in the Christian congregation, presently serving as an elder. Also, for 13 years now I have been in the full-time preaching activity, proclaiming the good news about God's kingdom, the only government that can bring lasting peace to earth.

Sometimes I got a dozen subscriptions in one barracks

CUBAN CHRISTIANS FAITHFULLY ENDURE

EARLIER this year over 100,000 Cuban refugees entered the United States. Among them were about 3,000 Jehovah's Witnesses, most of whom were physically forced to leave Cuba. Why?

It is part of the religious persecution they have been experiencing in Cuba. Jehovah's Witnesses advocate God's kingdom and proclaim it as the only hope for solving mankind's problems, even as Jesus Christ directed. (Matt. 24: 14; 28:19, 20) The Cuban government does not like this, and so makes life difficult for the Witnesses. But despite even brutal persecution, Cuban Christians faithfully endure.

One Witness refugee told of being stripped naked, wrapped in barbed wire and left out on top of a roof as food for mosquitoes. When the mosquitoes would bite, he would flinch, ripping the flesh. He had many scars to remind him of the ordeal. Others were put down in holes filled with human wastes, and were kept there for days without food.

An 89-year-old woman, who is still in Cuba, has been a full-time Kingdom publisher for 40 years. Gnarled and bent over, she hobbles about with her cane, fearlessly telling all whom she meets about God's kingdom. Uniformed officials have scorned her, saying: "Old woman, don't you know you can be put in prison for what you are doing?"

She replies without fear: "I'm too old now, you can't find any use for me in prison anyway." So they leave her alone, and she continues to preach openly in the streets.

Youths also are faithfully enduring tests of their faith. Refugees tell of one Cuban youth who was just starting school. He was asked by his teacher to put on the neckerchief with the triangular insignia. This is worn in Cuba to symbolize support of the State. The Witness youth, however, explained to the teacher that he could not wear such a political symbol for he is a worshiper of Jehovah God.

The teacher tried to convince the boy to put the neckerchief on, but to no avail. In exasperation, she went out to the street and called in a policeman, asking if he could persuade the youth to change his mind. The policeman

pulled out his revolver and pointed it at the boy's head, telling him to wear it—or else. After a few seconds, the boy looked up and asked: "Why do you not shoot, for I am not going to wear it?" Dumbfounded, the policeman strode out of the room.

Besides putting many Witnesses into prisons and concentration camps, the government has restricted the distribution of Bible literature, including the Bible itself. One refugee reported that there was only one New World Translation Bible for the whole town where she lived. It was buried in a certain place known only to the Witnesses. In this town, when a piece of Bible literature is obtained, children as young as nine years old copy it by hand. Thus even the youngsters learn Bible truths well because of doing so much copying.

One of the refugees told about receiving a copy of the book "Your Youth—Getting the Best out of It" late at night. She had until early the next morning before another Witness was to pick it up. By then she had finished reading it, and had made notes. In this way others in town could be helped with the information. Listening to the refugee tell this experience, a Witness from Miami said: "Sometimes we don't show the appreciation for Bible truths that these brothers have shown."

During the last several months all the Witness refugees have been sponsored, and now have places to live. Many Witnesses in the United States opened their homes to provide accommodations for these fellow Christians whom they had never seen before—surely a demonstration of the love that Christ said would identify his true disciples.

The refugee camp officials noted the contrast between the Witnesses and other Cuban refugees. When officials at the Miami camp that was set up in the Orange Bowl were asked if they were aware that there were Witness refugees in the camp, they replied: "Of course we are! They are the best behaved people here."

Truly, the faith of Cuban Christians is an inspiration to their brothers everywhere. We can look forward to reading more about their faithful endurance.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● In speaking of "the sign of [his] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus said to his disciples: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matt. 24:3, 34) How are we to understand this?

This prophecy, uttered in the year 33 C.E., had a notable typical fulfillment up until the year 70 C.E., when the Jewish system of things was destroyed, and Jerusalem's temple was thrown down, 'not a stone being left upon a stone.' In Jerusalem alone 1,100,000 Jews perished, according to the historian Josephus. Although many of Jesus' early disciples had died in the persecutions up until that time, some of the generation that had been with Jesus and had witnessed his mighty works remained also to see the end of that "conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 24:2, 3) They were persons of Jesus' generation, his contemporaries.

However, from Jesus' prophecy we understand that his words are to have a later, major fulfillment, culminating in "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." This "great tribulation" is to embrace not just a Jewish "system of things" but the entire world of mankind, yes, "all the nations" to whom Jehovah's Witnesses must 'preach this good news of the kingdom before the end comes.' The "pangs of distress" that began to afflict this earth, starting with World War I, show that Jesus' "sign" is having its great antitypical fulfillment from 1914 onward.—Matt. 24:3-8, 14, 21.

What, then, is the "generation" that "will by no means pass away until all these things occur"? It does not refer to a period of time, which some have tried to interpret as 30, 40, 70 or even 120 years, but, rather, it refers to people, the people living at the "beginning of pangs of distress" for this condemned world system. It is the generation of people who saw the catastrophic events that broke forth in connection with World War I from 1914 onward.

As indicated by an article on page 56 of *U.S. News & World Report* of January 14, 1980, "If you assume that 10 is the age at which an event creates a lasting impression on a person's memory," then there are today more than 13 million Americans who have a "recollection of World War I." And if the wicked system of this world survived until the turn of the century, which is highly improbable in view of world trends and the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, there would still be survivors of the World War I generation. However, the fact that their number is dwindling is one more indication that "the conclusion of the system of things" is moving fast toward its end.

In this connection, the magazine *The Economist* of March 15, 1980, gave an interesting review of a book entitled "The Generation of 1914," by Robert Wohl. It made this significant remark: "Eventually Mr. Wohl voices his own opinions about the generation of 1914. In a terse and condensed last chapter he suggests that generations are not mathematically definable in terms of numbers of years, but cluster around major historical crises, of which the first world war is the supreme example." This lines up very well with the Scriptural viewpoint that Jehovah's Witnesses take on "the generation of 1914."

Yes, there was a generation of people that was living in 1914, and that saw the major historical changes from an era of comparative tranquillity to the present era of war, lawlessness and ruination. Many who are now Jehovah's Witnesses were among them. Truly, 1914 marked "the supreme example" of change, for that year set in motion the foretold "beginning of pangs of distress" among the nations. Many persons are still alive who can tell us how catastrophically conditions on earth changed in the year 1914. And the world continues to plunge into worse and worse trouble. We can be happy, therefore, for Jesus' assurance that there will be survivors of "the generation of 1914"—that this generation will not have completely passed away—when the "great tribulation" rings down the curtain on this wicked world system.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

November 16: Are We Nearing Armageddon?

Page 11. Songs to Be Used: 59, 44.

November 23: Execution of the "Great Harlot"

Nears. Page 17. Songs to Be Used: 90, 96.



IT REALLY FILLS A NEED!

"The Sun," a newspaper in Grand Centre, Alberta, Canada, in its section "Library News," reported:

MY BOOK OF BIBLE STORIES

Most parents want their children to not only read but to enjoy it, because they realize that reading is the key to knowledge. Many, too, want their children to know something of the Bible, and of God.

This book is published to fulfill these aims. Written in clear, concise English, it will be easily understood by the young reader. However, Dads and Moms will not be bored reading it to the pre-reader. Each story is short, and designed to increase communication between parent and child. There are also beautiful illustrations to pictorially express the Bible Story.

For the more serious Bible student, there are references to the Bible itself, at the end of each story, so that these can be read if desired. As the stories are presented in chronological order, many have found this book helpful to relate the events of the Bible, not only to other parts of the Bible, but also to other happenings in history.

Throughout the book, a good moral standing and a good relationship with God is encouraged.