

A photograph of a man with grey hair and a serious expression, standing in a field of tall, yellow and purple wildflowers. He is wearing a light-colored, long-sleeved button-down shirt over a plaid shirt, and dark trousers. His hands are clasped in front of him. The background is a dense field of similar flowers, slightly out of focus.

THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

FEBRUARY 15, 1995

**Has God
Fixed Our
Destiny?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Has God already fixed our destiny?

“SO MANY imaginary problems would be avoided if the often-misunderstood term predestination were not used at all.” You may wonder why, if you have used the word “predestination” or heard it used.

According to the recent French Catholic encyclopedia *Théo*, we do well not to use the word “predestination.” Another book states: “Today, predestination is no longer at the heart of theological debates, even for most Protestants, it seems.”

Nevertheless, the question of predestination has disturbed many people throughout history. It was at the heart of the controversy that brought about the Reformation, and even within the Catholic Church, it was a subject of heated discussion for centuries. Although less debated today, it still remains a problem. Who would not want to know whether his destiny was fixed in advance?

Predestination—Meaning of the Word

What does the word “predestination” mean in the churches? The *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* considers it to be “the divine intention to bring certain ones, who are designated by name, to everlasting life.” It is generally thought that the chosen ones, “designated by name,” are the ones referred to by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Romans, in the following terms: “God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he

also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.”—Romans 8: 28-30, *Revised Standard Version*.

Even before their birth, some people were supposedly chosen by God with a view to sharing Christ’s glory in the heavens. This leads to the long-debated question: Does God arbitrarily choose whom he wants to save, or do men have free will and a part to play in obtaining and retaining God’s favor?

Augustine, the Father of Predestination

Although other Church Fathers had previously written about predestination, Augustine (354-430 C.E.) is generally considered to have laid the foundations of the doctrine for both Catholic and Protestant churches. According to Augustine, the righteous have from eternity been predestined by God to receive eternal blessings. On the other hand, the unrighteous, although not predestined by God in the strict sense of the word, are to receive the merited punishment for their sins, condemnation. Augustine’s explanation left little place for free will, thus opening the way for many a controversy.

Augustine’s Heirs

The debate regarding predestination and free will surfaced regularly during the Middle Ages, and it came to a head during

the Reformation. Luther saw individual predestination as a free choice on God's part, without His foreseeing the future merits or good works of the chosen ones. Calvin came to a more radical conclusion with his concept of twofold predestination: Some are predestined to eternal salvation, and others to eternal condemnation. However, Calvin too considered God's choice to be arbitrary, even incomprehensible.

The issue of predestination and the closely related question of "grace"—a word used by the churches to designate the act by which God saves and declares men righteous—took on such proportions that in 1611 the Catholic Holy See forbade anything to be published on the subject without its consent. Within the Catholic Church, Augustine's teachings received strong support from the French Jansenists of the 17th and 18th centuries. They advocated a very austere and elite form of Christianity and even had followers among the aristocracy. Yet, the controversy over the matter did not calm down. King Louis XIV ordered the destruction of the abbey of Port-Royal, the cradle of Jansenist thought.

Within the Protestant Reformed churches, the discussion was far from closed. Along with others, the Remonstrants, who followed Jacobus Arminius, believed that man has a role to play in his own salvation. The Protestant Synod of Dordrecht (1618-19) temporarily settled the question when it adopted a strict form of Calvinist orthodoxy. According to the book *L'Aventure de la Réforme—Le monde de Jean Calvin*, in Germany this quarrel on predestination and free will gave birth to a long period of "unsuccessful attempts at reconciliation, as well as abuses, imprisonments, and banishments of theologians."

Predestination or Free Will?

From the beginning, these two diametrically opposed ideas, predestination and free will, aroused many heated conflicts. Augustine for his part had been unable to explain this incompatibility. Calvin too saw it as an expression of God's sovereign will and hence inexplicable.

But does the Bible's revelation of God's qualities and personality help us to understand these questions more clearly? The following article will examine these points in detail.

Calvin



Luther



Jansen



Pictures: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris

Can predestination be reconciled with God's love?

“WE DEFINE *predestination as the eternal design of God, whereby he determined what he wanted to do with each man.* For he did not create them all in the same condition, but foreordains some to everlasting life and others to eternal damnation.”

That is how Protestant Reformer John Calvin defined his concept of predestination in the book *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. This concept is based on the idea that God is omniscient and that his creatures' actions cannot call his purposes into question or oblige him to make changes.

But is this really what the Bible implies concerning God? More important, is such an explanation compatible with God's qualities, especially his foremost quality—love?

A God Capable of Foretelling the Future

God is able to foretell the future. He describes himself as “the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done; the One saying, ‘My own counsel will stand, and everything that is my delight I shall do.’” (Isaiah 46:10) Down through human history, God has had his prophecies recorded to show that he can exercise his foreknowledge and foretell events before they take place.

Thus, in the days of Belshazzar, king of Babylon, when the prophet Daniel had a dream about two wild beasts, one sup-

planting the other, Jehovah gave him its interpretation: “The ram that you saw possessing the two horns stands for the kings of Media and Persia. And the hairy he-goat stands for the king of Greece.” (Daniel 8:20, 21) Obviously, God exercised his foreknowledge to reveal the succession of world powers. The then prevailing Babylonian Empire would be succeeded by Medo-Persia and then by Greece.

Prophecies can also concern one individual. For instance, the prophet Micah declared that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2) Again, in this case God exercised his foreknowledge. However, this event was announced with a particular purpose—the identification of the Messiah. This instance does not justify generalizing a doctrine of predestination that includes each individual.

On the contrary, the Scriptures reveal that there are situations in which God chooses not to foreknow the outcome. Just before the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, he declared: “I am quite determined to go down that I may see whether they act altogether according to the outcry over it that has come to me, and, if not, I can get to know it.” (Genesis 18:21) This text clearly shows us that God did not foreknow the extent of the depravity in those cities before he investigated matters.

True, God can foresee certain events, but in many cases, he has chosen not to use his foreknowledge. Because God is almighty, he is free to exercise his abilities as *he* wishes,

not according to the wishes of imperfect humans.

A God Who Can Set Matters Straight

As did Calvin, some say that God predetermined man's fall before his creation and that he had predestinated the 'chosen ones' *before* that fall. But if this were true, would it not have been hypocritical for God to offer the prospect of everlasting life to Adam and Eve, fully aware that they would be unable to realize it? Moreover, the Scriptures nowhere deny that the first human couple were given a choice: either to follow divine directions and live forever or to reject them and die.—Genesis, chapter 2.

But did Adam and Eve's sin really thwart God's purpose? No, for immediately after their sinning, God announced that he would raise up a "seed" to destroy Satan and his agents and that he would again set matters straight on earth. Just as a few insects cannot stop a gardener from producing good yields, so Adam and Eve's disobedience will not prevent God from making the earth into a paradise.—Genesis, chapter 3.

God later revealed that there would be a Kingdom government entrusted to a descendant of King David and that others would be associated in this Kingdom. These others are called "the holy ones of the Supreme One."—Daniel 7:18; 2 Samuel 7:12; 1 Chronicles 17:11.*

To Foretell Is Not to Predestine

The fact that God did not choose to know which course mankind would take did not prevent him from prophesying the consequences of man's good or bad actions. A

* When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom prepared "from the founding of the world" (Matthew 25:34), he must be referring to sometime *after* the first sin. Luke 11:50, 51 relates "the founding of the world," or the founding of mankind redeemable by means of a ransom, to the time of Abel.

mechanic who warns a driver of the poor condition of his vehicle cannot be held responsible if an accident occurs or be accused of predestining it. Likewise, God cannot be accused of predestining the sad consequences of individuals' actions.

The same was true with the descendants of the first human couple. Before Cain killed his brother, Jehovah put a choice before Cain. Would he master sin, or would sin get mastery over him? Nothing in the account indicates that Jehovah predetermined that Cain would make the bad choice and murder his brother.—Genesis 4:3-7.

Later, the Mosaic Law warned the Israelites about what would happen if they turned away from Jehovah, for instance, by taking wives from among the pagan nations. What was foretold did happen. This can be seen from the example of King Solomon, who in his later years was influenced by his foreign wives to practice idolatry. (1 Kings 11:7, 8) Yes, God warned his people, but he did not predestine what their individual actions would be.

The Christian elect, or chosen ones, are encouraged to persevere if they do not wish to be deprived of the promised reward of reigning in the heavens with Christ. (2 Peter 1:10; Revelation 2:5, 10, 16; 3:11) As some theologians of the past have asked, Why were such reminders given if the calling of the chosen ones was final?

Predestination and God's Love

Man was given free will, being created "in God's image." (Genesis 1:27) Free will was indispensable if humans were to honor and serve God out of love, not as robots with every movement determined beforehand. Love displayed by intelligent, free creatures would enable God to refute unjust accusations. He says: "Be wise, my son, and

make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me.”—Proverbs 27:11.

If God’s servants were predestined—or programmed, so to speak—could not the genuineness of their love for their Creator be called into question? Also, would it not be contrary to God’s impartiality for him to make a predetermined choice of persons destined to glory and happiness without taking their individual merits into account? Moreover, if some receive such preferential treatment, while others are destined to eternal punishment, this would hardly arouse sincere feelings of gratitude in the “elect,” or “chosen ones.”—Genesis 1:27; Job 1:8; Acts 10:34, 35.

Finally, Christ told his disciples to preach the good news to all mankind. If God has

already chosen the ones to be saved, would this not dampen the zeal Christians show in evangelizing? Would it not make the preaching work essentially pointless?

Impartial love from God is the strongest force that can move men to love him in return. The greatest expression of God’s love was to sacrifice his Son in behalf of imperfect, sinful mankind. God’s foreknowledge respecting his Son is a special case, but it assures us that the restoration promises resting on Jesus will indeed be fulfilled. So may we put faith in that Son and draw close to God. Let us show our appreciation by accepting God’s invitation to come into a fine relationship with our Creator. Today, God addresses this invitation to all who want to exercise their free will and show their love for him.

PREDESTINED AS A CLASS

“Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.” (Romans 8:29, 30, *New International Version*) How should we understand the term “predestined” used by Paul in these verses?

Paul’s reasoning here is not a peremptory argument in favor of individual predestination. Earlier in our century, the *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* explained Paul’s arguments (Romans, chapters 9-11) this way: “Increasingly, the prevailing opinion among Catholic scholars is that the actual concept of a predestination to eternal life has not been set out.” The same reference work then quotes M. Lagrange as saying: “The question primarily developed by Paul is not at all one of predestination and reprobation but merely that of the call of the Gentiles to the grace of Chris-

tianity, its antithesis being the incredulity of the Jews. . . . *It concerns groups, Gentiles, Jews, and not specific individuals directly.*”—Italics ours.

More recently, *The Jerusalem Bible* offered the same conclusion concerning these chapters (9-11), stating: “The subject of these chapters, therefore, is not the problem of individual predestination to glory, or even to faith, but of Israel’s part in the development of salvation history, the only problem raised by the statements in the O[ld] T[estament].”

The last verses of Romans chapter 8 belong to the same context. Thus, these verses can justly remind us that God foresaw the existence of a *class*, or group, from among mankind that would be called to reign with Christ, as well as the requirements they would have to meet—and this without designating ahead of time the specific individuals who would be chosen, for that would be contrary to his love and justice.

THERE WILL BE A RESURRECTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS

"I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."—ACTS 24:15.

"ALL that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol, the place to which you are going." (Ecclesiastes 9:10) With these few, well-chosen words, wise King Solomon describes a situation that has faced every generation of mankind since the fall of our first parents, Adam and Eve. Without exception, death has eventually swallowed up everyone—rich and poor, king and commoner, faithful and faithless. Truly, death has "ruled as king."—Romans 5:17.

² Despite the latest advances of medical science, death still rules as king even today. While this is no surprise, some may have been somewhat disappointed when they finally came face-to-face with this longtime enemy. Why? Well, back in the 1920's, the Watch Tower Society proclaimed the message "Millions now living will never die." Who would these millions be? The "sheep" spoken of in Jesus' remarks about the sheep and the goats. (Matthew 25:31-46) These sheeplike ones were

prophesied to appear during the time of the end, and their hope would be everlasting life on a paradise earth. As time went by, God's people gained a better understanding of the position of these "sheep" in Jehovah's purposes. It was realized that these obedient ones were to be distinguished from the stubborn "goats," and after the destruction of the latter ones, the sheep would inherit the earthly realm of the Kingdom that had been prepared for them.

Gathering of Sheeplike Ones

³ Beginning in 1935, 'the faithful slave' has concentrated on locating such sheeplike ones and bringing them into Jehovah's organization. (Matthew 24:45; John 10:16) These teachable Christians have come to realize that Jesus is now reigning in Jehovah's heavenly Kingdom and that the time is fast approaching for the end of this wicked system of things and the ushering in of a new world in which righteousness is to dwell. (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 12:10) In that new world, the heartening words of Isaiah will be fulfilled: "He will actually swallow up death forever."—Isaiah 25:8.

1. What situation has faced all humans since the fall of Adam and Eve?

2. Why may some faithful ones have been disappointed during this time of the end?

3. On what work have God's people concentrated since 1935?

⁴ Since the end of Satan's world is so close, sheeplike Christians would dearly enjoy living until Jehovah's sovereignty is vindicated during the coming tribulation on Babylon the Great and the rest of Satan's world. (Revelation 19:1-3, 19-21) For a great number, it has not worked out that way. Many who had hoped to be among the "millions" who would never die have indeed died. Some were martyred for the truth in prisons and concentration camps or at the hands of religious fanatics. Others have died in accidents or from so-called natural causes—sickness and old age. (Psalm 90:9, 10; Ecclesiastes 9:11) Clearly, more will die before the end comes. How will such ones see the fulfillment of the promise of a new world in which righteousness is to dwell?

The Resurrection Hope

⁵ The apostle Paul gave the answer when he was speaking before the Roman governor Felix. As recorded at Acts 24:15, Paul boldly declared: "I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." The hope of the resurrection gives us courage in the face of the worst adversities. Be-

4. Though earnestly hoping to see Jehovah's sovereignty vindicated at Armageddon, what has happened to many of the other sheep?

5, 6. What future exists for those with an earthly hope who die before Armageddon?



Like Paul, anointed Christians hope in the heavenly resurrection

cause of that hope, our dear friends who fall sick and sense that they are going to die do not lose heart. Whatever happens, they know that they will reap the reward of faithfulness. Because of the resurrection hope, our courageous brothers and sisters who face death at the hands of persecutors know that there is no way their persecutors can gain the victory. (Matthew 10:28) When someone in the congregation dies, we are sad to lose that person. At the same time, if he or she is one of the other sheep, we rejoice that our fellow believer has proved faithful to the end and is now resting, assured of a future in God's new world.—1 Thessalonians 4:13.

⁶ Yes, the resurrection hope is a vital feature of our faith. Why, though, is our belief in the resurrection so strong, and who share that hope?

⁷ The Greek word for “resurrection” is *a-na’sta-sis*, which literally means “standing up.” It refers basically to a rising from the dead. Interestingly, the actual word “resurrection” does not appear in the Hebrew Scriptures, but the resurrection hope is clearly expressed there. We see it, for example, in the words uttered by Job in the midst of his suffering: “O that in Sheol you would conceal me, . . . that you would set a time limit for me and remember me!” (Job 14:13) Similarly, at Hosea 13:14, we read: “From the hand of Sheol I shall redeem them; from death I shall recover them. Where are your stings, O Death? Where is your destructiveness, O Sheol?” At 1 Corinthians 15:55, the apostle Paul quoted these words and showed that the prophesied victory over death is accomplished through the resurrection. (Of course, in that scripture Paul was speaking of the heavenly resurrection.)

Believers “Declared Righteous”

⁸ In his statement to Felix, quoted in paragraph 5, Paul said that there would be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous. Who are the righteous ones that will be raised? Well, no human is righteous by nature. All of us are sinners from birth, and we commit sins throughout our lifetime—which makes us deserving of death on two counts. (Romans 5:12; 6:23) However, in the Bible we find the term “declared righteous.” (Romans 3:28) This refers to humans who, although imperfect, have their sins forgiven by Jehovah.

⁹ The expression is most prominently used with regard to anointed Christians, who

7. What is the resurrection, and what are some scriptures expressing its certainty?

8, 9. (a) How can imperfect humans have a part in the resurrection of the righteous? (b) What is the basis of our hope in a life that will not be terminated by death?

have a heavenly hope. At Romans 5:1, the apostle Paul says: “Now that we have been *declared righteous* as a result of faith, let us enjoy peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” All anointed Christians are declared righteous because of faith. Faith in what? As Paul explains at some length in the book of Romans, it is faith in Jesus Christ. (Romans 10:4, 9, 10) Jesus died a perfect man and thereafter was resurrected from the dead and ascended to heaven to offer the value of his human life in our behalf. (Hebrews 7:26, 27; 9:11, 12) When Jehovah accepted that sacrifice, Jesus, in effect, purchased the human race out of slavery to sin and death. Those who exercise faith in this arrangement benefit greatly from it. (1 Corinthians 15:45) On its basis faithful men and women have the hope of inheriting a life that will not be terminated by the grim enemy, death.—John 3:16.

¹⁰ Thanks to Jesus’ ransom sacrifice, faithful anointed ones, being declared righteous, have the sure hope of being resurrected as immortal spirit creatures, like Jesus. (Revelation 2:10) Their resurrection is mentioned at Revelation 20:6, which says: “Happy and holy is anyone having part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years.” This is the heavenly resurrection. Notice, though, that the Bible calls it “the first resurrection,” which implies that there is more to come.

¹¹ In Hebrews chapter 11, Paul referred to a long line of pre-Christian servants of God who had manifested strong faith in Jehovah God. These too had faith in a resurrection. In verse 35 of that chapter, Paul speaks

10, 11. (a) What resurrection awaits faithful anointed Christians? (b) What kind of resurrection was hoped for by pre-Christian worshippers?

of miraculous resurrections that occurred during the history of Israel, saying: "Women received their dead by resurrection; but other men were tortured because they would not accept release by some ransom, in order that they might attain a better resurrection." Those faithful witnesses of old could look forward to a resurrection better than the ones involving, for example, Elijah and Elisha. (1 Kings 17:17-22; 2 Kings 4:32-37; 13:20, 21) Their hope was resurrection into a world where servants of God would not be tortured for their faith, a world where women would not lose their loved ones in death. Yes, they looked forward to rising from the dead into the same new world that we hope for. (Isaiah 65:17-25) Jehovah had not revealed to them as much as he has to us about this new world. Nevertheless, they knew that it was coming, and they wanted to be in it.

The Earthly Resurrection

¹² Should we think of the awakening of these faithful pre-Christian men and women in that new world as part of the resurrection of the righteous? Evidently yes, because the Bible refers to them as righteous. For example, the disciple James mentions a man and a woman of ancient times who were declared righteous. The man was Abraham, the progenitor of the Hebrew race. Regarding him we read: "'Abraham put faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness,' and he came to be called 'Jehovah's friend.'" The woman was Rahab, a non-Israelite who exercised faith in Jehovah. She was "declared righteous" and came to be part of the Hebrew nation. (James 2:23-25) Thus, men and women of old who exercised strong faith in Jehovah and his promises and remained faithful to the death were declared righteous by Jehovah on the

basis of their faith, and they will without doubt share in the 'resurrection of the righteous.'

¹³ However, what of sheeplike individuals today, those with an earthly hope who dedicate themselves to Jehovah and who die faithful during this time of the end? Will they share in the resurrection of the righteous? Apparently so. A great crowd of such faithful ones was seen in vision by the apostle John. Notice how he describes them: "I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. And they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.'"—Revelation 7:9, 10.

¹⁴ Notice that these meek ones are firmly convinced of their salvation, and they attribute this to Jehovah and Jesus, "the Lamb." Moreover, they are standing before Jehovah and the Lamb, all dressed in white. Why in white? A heavenly creature tells John: "They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14) In the Bible, white is a symbol of purity, righteousness. (Psalm 51:7; Daniel 12:10; Revelation 19:8) The fact that the great crowd are seen wearing white garments means that Jehovah views them as righteous. How is that possible? Because they have, as it were, washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. They exercise faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ and are therefore declared righteous as God's friends with a view to surviving the great tribulation. Hence, any faithful dedicated

12. Were pre-Christian faithful ones declared righteous? Explain.

13, 14. (a) How do we know that Christians with an earthly hope can be declared righteous? (b) What does this mean for them?

Christian now a part of the “great crowd” who dies before the great tribulation can be sure of having a part in the earthly resurrection of the righteous.

¹⁵ That resurrection is described at Revelation chapter 20, verse 13, in these words: “The sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Hades gave up those dead in them, and they were judged individually according to their deeds.” Thus, during Jehovah’s great thousand-year Judgment Day, all those in God’s memory will be resurrected—both the righteous and the unrighteous. (Acts 17:31) How much better, though, it will be for the righteous! They have already lived lives of faith. They already have a close relationship with Jehovah and confidence in the outworking of his purposes. Righteous witnesses from before the Christian Era will awaken from death eager to learn how the promises of Jehovah regarding the Seed were fulfilled. (1 Peter 1:10-12) Those of the other sheep whom Jehovah views as righteous in our day will come forth from the grave eager to behold the Paradise earth that they spoke about when they declared the good news in this system of things. What a joyful time that will be!

¹⁶ During that thousand-year Judgment Day, when exactly will those who died faithful in these final years of Satan’s system of things be resurrected? The Bible does not say. However, would it not be reasonable to think that those counted righteous who die in our time would have an early resurrection and thus could share with the great crowd of Armageddon survivors in the work of welcoming earlier generations back from the dead? Yes, indeed!

15. Since both righteous and unrighteous will be resurrected, what is the advantage of the resurrection of the righteous?

16. What can we say about the Judgment Day resurrection of those who die in our time?

A Hope That Gives Comfort

¹⁷ The resurrection hope gives strength and comfort to all Christians today. If we remain faithful, no unforeseen occurrence and no enemy can rob us of our reward! For example, in the *1992 Yearbook of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, on page 177, there appear pictures of courageous Christians in Ethiopia who died rather than compromise their faith. The caption reads: “Faces we expect to see in the resurrection.” What a privilege it will be to get to know these ones and countless others who have shown a similar faithfulness in the face of death!

¹⁸ What about our own loved ones and friends who because of age or infirmity do not make it through the great tribulation? In line with the resurrection hope, they have a wonderful future if they remain faithful. And if we also courageously exercise faith in Jesus’ ransom sacrifice, we have a wonderful future. Why? Because, like Paul, we hope in the “resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” With all our hearts, we thank Jehovah for this hope. Surely, it moves us to echo the psalmist’s words: “Declare among the nations [God’s] glory, among all the peoples his wonderful works. For Jehovah is great and very much to be praised.”—Psalm 96:3, 4.

17, 18. (a) What comfort does the resurrection hope provide? (b) What are we moved to declare about Jehovah?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ What scriptures help confirm our hope in an earthly resurrection?
- ☐ On what basis are Christians now declared righteous?
- ☐ How does the resurrection hope give us courage and determination?

SAVED ALIVE THROUGH THE GREAT TRIBULATION

"These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

—REVELATION 7:14.

WHEN untold millions are raised in the 'resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous,' they will not be brought back to life on an empty earth. (Acts 24:15) They will awaken in beautifully improved surroundings and find that living quarters, clothing, and an abundance of food have been prepared for them. Who will make all these preparations? Clearly, there will be people living in the new world before the earthly resurrection begins. Who? The Bible indicates that they will be survivors of the coming great tribulation. Of all Bible teachings, undoubtedly this is one of the most intriguing—that some faithful ones will be saved alive through the great tribulation and will never have to die. This hope is well attested to in the Holy Scriptures.

As the Days of Noah

² At Matthew 24:37-39, Jesus Christ made a comparison between the days of Noah and the last days, where we now find ourselves. He said: "Just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be. For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, men marrying

and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and they took no note until the flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be."

³ The global Flood swept away all who paid no attention to God's warning message. It did not, though, sweep away Noah and his family. They "entered into the ark," as Jesus said. Because of their godly devotion, Jehovah provided them with a way of escape. Second Peter 2:5, 9 refers to the survival of Noah and his family when it says: "He [God] . . . kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people. Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial." Jesus drew a comparison between Noah's day and the last days to show that people in general would not heed God's warning message. Nevertheless, in doing so he also confirmed that Noah and his family obeyed Jehovah God, entered the ark, and survived the great Flood. Survival by Noah and his family points to the survival of God's faithful servants at this world's end.

A First-Century Pattern

⁴ Jesus also spoke of events to take place at the end of this world. At Matthew 24:

1. Who will greet the resurrected ones in the earthly resurrection?
- 2, 3. (a) What similarities are drawn between the days of Noah and our time? (b) What is pointed to by the survival of Noah and his family through the Flood?

4. In fulfillment of Jesus' words, what events led up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E.?

21, 22, we read: "Then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again. In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved; but on account of the chosen ones those days will be cut short." These words had a preliminary fulfillment in the first century of our Common Era. In 66 C.E., the city of Jerusalem was besieged by Roman armies under Cestius Gallus. The Roman troops got to the point of undermining the temple wall, and many Jews were ready to surrender. Unexpectedly, however, and for no apparent reason, Cestius Gallus withdrew his troops. Upon seeing the Romans withdraw, the Christians acted on the words of Jesus, spoken many years before: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her." (Luke 21:20, 21) The Christianized Jews, the chosen ones, immediately abandoned the doomed city of Jerusalem and were thus saved from the terrible destruction that came upon it soon after. In 70 C.E., the Roman legions under General Titus returned. They encamped around Jerusalem, besieged the city, and devastated it.

⁵ The Jewish historian Josephus relates that 1,100,000 Jews died, whereas 97,000 survived and were taken into captivity. Those non-Christian Jewish survivors were certainly not "the chosen ones" of Jesus' prophecy. Speaking to the rebellious Jewish nation, Jesus had said: "Look! Your house is abandoned to you. For I say to you, You will by no means see me from henceforth until

5. In what sense was the tribulation on Jerusalem cut short in 70 C.E.?

you say, 'Blessed is he that comes in Jehovah's name!'" (Matthew 23:38, 39) There is no record that those Jews, bottled up in Jerusalem, at the last minute accepted Jesus as the Messiah, became Christians, and received Jehovah's favor. Nevertheless, the tribulation that came upon Jerusalem in 70 C.E. was cut short. The final siege by the Roman army was not of long duration. This allowed for some Jews to survive, if only to be sent off to various parts of the Roman Empire as slaves.

A Great Crowd of Survivors

⁶ While Jerusalem's destruction in 70 C.E. did indeed bring "great tribulation" on that religious city, the major fulfillment of Jesus' words is yet to be realized. A greater religious city, Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, is to experience a death-dealing great tribulation followed immediately by an unparalleled tribulation on the rest of Satan's system of things. (Matthew 24:29, 30; Revelation 18:21) Some 26 years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the apostle John, at Revelation 7:9-14, wrote about this world-embracing great tribulation. He showed that a great crowd of people would survive it.

⁷ These survivors, called the "great crowd," are identified by certain decisive actions that they take. According to Revelation 7:14, one of the 24 elders in heaven told John: "These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Yes, the great crowd hail Jehovah as the source of their salvation. They exercise faith in Jesus' shed blood and have a righteous standing before their Creator and his appointed King, Jesus Christ.

6, 7. (a) What great religious city is yet to be destroyed, as part of what unparalleled tribulation? (b) What did John prophesy about the coming great tribulation on this world?



⁸ Today, almost five million members of the great crowd are living under the active leadership of the heavenly King Jesus Christ. They are in subjection to Christ and in close association with his anointed brothers yet on earth. Concerning the treatment that the great crowd accord these anointed ones, Jesus says: "Truly I say to you, To the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40) Because they unselfishly render aid to Christ's anointed brothers, those of the great crowd are judged to have done good to Jesus himself. This helps them to have a secure relationship with Jesus Christ and Jehovah God. They have been privileged to join the anointed remnant in becoming God's Witnesses and bearers of his name.—Isaiah 43:10, 11; Joel 2:31, 32.

Staying Awake

⁹ The great crowd must maintain their

8. What fine relationship exists between the "great crowd" and the remaining ones of Jesus' anointed brothers?

9, 10. (a) What must we do to maintain our righteous standing before the Son of man?
(b) How must we act in order to "keep awake"?

Christians escaped Jerusalem's tribulation

righteous standing before the Son of man without letup, which requires staying watchful right up to the end. Jesus stated this clearly when he said: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day 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, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:34-36.

¹⁰ To succeed in standing before the Son of man, we must have his approval, which we will not have if we allow ourselves to be influenced by the thinking of this world. Worldly thinking is seductive and can induce a person to overindulge in fleshly pleasures or to become so weighed down with life's problems that he no longer keeps Kingdom interests first. (Matthew 6:33) Such a course weakens a person spiritually and could leave him indifferent about

his responsibilities toward God and others. He could become inactive or jeopardize his place in the congregation by committing serious sin, perhaps even displaying an unrepentant attitude. Each individual in the great crowd must pay attention to himself. He must keep separate from this ungodly world and its practices.—John 17:16.

¹¹ To that end, Jehovah has provided what we need by means of his Word, his holy spirit, and his visible organization. We must take full advantage of these. Further, we must be prayerful and obedient to God if we expect to have his favor. For one thing, we must develop a strong hatred for what is bad. The psalmist said: "I have not sat with men of untruth; and with those who hide what they are I do not come in. I have hated the congregation of evildoers, and with the wicked ones I do not sit. Do not take away my soul along with sinners, nor my life along with bloodguilty men." (Psalm 26:4, 5, 9) In the Christian congregation, young and old alike need to limit association with those not dedicated to Jehovah. To receive God's favor, we strive to be blameless and without spot from the world. (Psalm 26:1-5; James 1:27; 4:4) Thus, we will be assured that at Armageddon, Jehovah will not sweep us away in death along with the ungodly.

Some "Will Never Die at All"

¹² It is exciting to contemplate survival of the end of this system of things and the possibility of never having to die. This is the prospect held out to us by Jesus. Just before resurrecting his dead friend Lazarus, Jesus told Lazarus' sister Martha: "I am the resur-

rection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life; and everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all. Do you believe this?" Martha believed in the resurrection, but she did not understand all that Jesus was saying.—John 11:25, 26.

¹³ Jesus did not mean that his faithful apostles would continue living in the flesh and would never die. On the contrary, he later indicated that his disciples would die. (John 21:16-23) Indeed, their anointing with holy spirit at Pentecost 33 C.E. meant that they would have to die in order to receive their heavenly inheritance as kings and priests. (Revelation 20:4, 6) Thus, with the passage of time, all first-century Christians passed away. However, Jesus said what he did for a purpose. His words about living without ever dying will be fulfilled.

¹⁴ For one thing, faithful anointed Christians will never experience everlasting death. (Revelation 20:6) Also, Jesus' words point to a specific time when God will intervene in human affairs and will wipe out wickedness on the earth, just as he did in Noah's day. Faithful ones found doing God's will at that time will not have to die by God's judgment acts. Rather, like Noah and his family, they will have the opportunity of surviving the destruction of a world. Such a hope is solid, being based on Bible teachings and illustrated by examples. (Compare Hebrews 6:19; 2 Peter 2:4-9.) The fulfillment of Bible prophecy shows that very soon the present world consisting of unrighteous human society is going to end in destruction. The present situation is irreversible, for the world is incorrigibly wicked. What God said about the world of Noah's day is also true of

11. The application of what Scriptural principles will help us to survive Armageddon?

12, 13. (a) Before resurrecting Lazarus, Jesus uttered what words that Martha did not fully understand? (b) What was not meant by Jesus' words about some 'never dying at all'?

14, 15. (a) How will Jesus' words about some 'never dying at all' be fulfilled? (b) What is the situation of this world, but what hope do righteous ones have?

the world today. Wickedness fills the hearts of the vast majority of humans, and their thoughts are only bad all the time.—Genesis 6:5.

¹⁵ Jehovah has allowed men to govern the earth for centuries without divine interference, but their time is almost up. Soon Jehovah will annihilate all the wicked on earth, just as the Bible says. (Psalm 145:20; Proverbs 2:21, 22) However, he will not destroy the righteous along with the wicked. God has never done such a thing! (Compare Genesis 18:22, 23, 26.) Why would he destroy those who are endeavoring to serve him faithfully, with godly fear? It is only reasonable that Jehovah's faithful worshippers who are living when the great tribulation begins will find favor in his eyes and will not be destroyed, just as Noah and his family were not destroyed when the wicked world of his day came to a cataclysmic end. (Genesis 7:23) They will have divine protection and will survive the end of this world.

¹⁶ What then? In the new world, healing blessings will flow to mankind as the benefits of Jesus' ransom sacrifice are fully applied. The Bible speaks of a symbolic "river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of its broad way. And on this side of the river and on that side there were trees of life producing twelve crops of fruit, yielding their fruits each month. And the leaves of the trees were for the curing of the nations." (Revelation 22:1, 2) Marvelous to say, that "curing" includes the conquest of Adamic death itself! "He will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces." (Isaiah 25:8) Thus, those who survive the great tribulation into the new world need never face death!

16. What wondrous things will happen in the new world, meaning what for survivors?

A Sure Hope

¹⁷ Can we have full confidence in this astounding hope? Absolutely! Jesus indicated to Martha that there would be a time when people would live without ever dying. (John 11:26) Moreover, in chapter 7 of the Revelation that Jesus gave to John, it was revealed that a great crowd comes out of the great tribulation, surviving it. Can we believe Jesus Christ and the historical account of the Flood of Noah's day? Unquestionably! Furthermore, the Bible has other accounts of occasions when God preserved his servants alive through judgment periods and the downfall of nations. Should any less be expected of him in this time of the end? Is anything impossible for the Creator?—Compare Matthew 19:26.

¹⁸ By serving Jehovah faithfully now, we have the assurance of life everlasting in his new world. For untold millions, life in that new world will come by means of the resurrection. Yet, in our day, millions of Jehovah's people—yes, a great crowd that no man can number or limit—will have the unique privilege of being saved alive through the great tribulation. And they will never have to die.

17. How certain is the hope that some will survive Armageddon and "never die at all"?

18. How can we be assured of life in Jehovah's righteous new world?

Please Explain

- ☐ How was surviving Armageddon foreshadowed in Noah's day?
- ☐ What must we do in order to keep standing when Jesus comes to execute Jehovah's judgments?
- ☐ Why can we say that Armageddon survivors need "never die at all"?



“HAVE NO FEAR, LITTLE FLOCK”

“Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom.”—LUKE 12:32.

“**S**EEK continually [God’s] kingdom.” (Luke 12:31) When Jesus said these words to his disciples, he expressed a principle that has guided the thinking of Christians from his day down to our own. The Kingdom of God must take the very first place in our lives. (Matthew 6:33) In Luke’s account, however, Jesus went on to speak endearing and reassuring words to a special group of Christians. He said: “Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has

approved of giving you the kingdom.” (Luke 12:32) As the Fine Shepherd, Jesus knew that there were stormy times ahead for his intimate disciples. But there was no reason for them to be fearful if they kept seeking God’s Kingdom. Hence, Jesus’ exhortation was not a harsh command. Rather, it was a loving promise that served to inspire confidence and courage.

² Jesus was speaking to his disciples, and he called them a “little flock.” He was also

1. What was the basis for Jesus’ words: “Have no fear, little flock”?

2. Who make up the little flock, and why are they especially privileged?

speaking to those to whom Jehovah would 'give the kingdom.' Compared with the vast crowds that would accept Jesus in later times, this group were indeed few in number. They were also considered precious because they were chosen for a remarkable future, to be used in royal service. Their Father, the Great Shepherd, Jehovah, calls the little flock with a view to their receiving a heavenly inheritance in connection with Christ's Messianic Kingdom.

The Little Flock

³ Who, then, make up this little flock having such a wonderful prospect? The followers of Jesus Christ who receive an anointing with holy spirit. (Acts 2:1-4) Seeing them as heavenly singers with harps in their hands, the apostle John wrote: "I saw, and, look! the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. These are the ones that did not defile themselves with women; in fact, they are virgins. These are the ones that keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes. These were bought from among mankind as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, and no falsehood was found in their mouths; they are without blemish."—Revelation 14:1, 4, 5.

⁴ Since Pentecost 33 C.E., these anointed, spirit-begotten ones have served as ambassadors of Christ on earth. (2 Corinthians 5:20) Today, only a remnant of them remain, serving together as the faithful and discrete slave class. (Matthew 24:45; Revelation 12:17) Since the year 1935 in particular, they have been joined by "other sheep," Christians with an earthly hope, who now number into the millions. These assist in

3. What glorious vision of the little flock did John see?

4. What position does the little flock have on earth today?

preaching the good news in all the earth.—John 10:16.

⁵ What is the attitude of the remaining ones of this little flock who are yet on earth? Knowing that they are to receive 'an unshakable Kingdom,' they render their sacred service with godly fear and awe. (Hebrews 12:28) They humbly realize that theirs is an inestimable privilege that results in unbounded joy. They have found the "one pearl of high value" referred to by Jesus when he spoke about the Kingdom. (Matthew 13:46) As the great tribulation approaches, God's anointed ones stand fearless. In spite of what is about to come upon the world of mankind during "the great and illustrious day of Jehovah," they have no morbid fear of the future. (Acts 2:19-21) Why should they?

Numbers Decrease

⁶ In recent years the number of the little flock still on earth has become quite small. This was evident from the 1994 Memorial report. In some 75,000 congregations of Jehovah's people worldwide, only 8,617 demonstrated by partaking of the emblems their profession to be members of the remnant. (Matthew 26:26-30) In contrast, the total attendance was 12,288,917. Anointed Christians know that this is to be expected. Jehovah has established a limited number, 144,000, to make up the little flock, and he has been gathering it since Pentecost 33 C.E. Logically, the calling of the little flock would draw to a close when the number was nearing completion, and the evidence is that the general gathering of these specially blessed ones ended in 1935. However, the other sheep in the time of the

5. What is the attitude of the remaining ones of the little flock, and why need they have no fear?
6, 7. (a) Why is the number of the little flock still on earth quite small? (b) How should each individual view the hope he entertains?

end were prophesied to grow to be “a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues.” Since 1935 the general gathering by Jehovah has been of this great crowd, whose hope is everlasting life on a paradise earth.—Revelation 7:9; 14:15, 16; Psalm 37:29.

⁷ Most of those of the little flock yet on earth are now in their 70's, 80's, and 90's. A few have passed their 100th year of life. All of these, whatever their age, know that through a heavenly resurrection, they will eventually be united with Jesus Christ and will rule with him in his glorious Kingdom. Those of the great crowd will be earthly subjects of Christ the King. Let each one rejoice over what Jehovah has in store for those who love him. It is not for us to choose what hope to entertain. That is for Jehovah to determine. Both groups can thrill in their hope for a happy future, whether it be in the heavenly Kingdom or on a paradise earth under that Kingdom.—John 6:44, 65; Ephesians 1:17, 18.

⁸ The 144,000-strong little flock is “the Israel of God,” which has replaced natural Israel in God's purposes. (Galatians 6:16) Therefore, the remnant make up the remainder of that spiritual nation still on earth. Such remaining ones are being sealed for Jehovah's final approval. In a vision, the apostle John saw this happening, and he reported: “I saw another angel ascending from the sunrising, having a seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying: ‘Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.’ And I heard the number of those who were sealed, a hundred and forty-four

8. How far along is the sealing of the 144,000, and what will happen when it is complete?

thousand, sealed out of every tribe of the sons of [spiritual] Israel.” (Revelation 7:2-4) Since this work of sealing spiritual Israel is evidently far along, exciting events soon to happen are portended. For one thing, “the great tribulation,” when the four winds of destruction are let loose upon the earth, must be very near.—Revelation 7:14.

⁹ Those of the great crowd who have already been gathered number in the millions. How this warms the hearts of the remnant! Although those of the little flock still on earth continue to decrease in number, they have trained and prepared qualified men of the great crowd to take on responsibilities in connection with God's expanding earthly organization. (Isaiah 61:5) As Jesus indicated, there will be survivors of the great tribulation.—Matthew 24:22.

“Have No Fear”

¹⁰ Satan and his demons have been debased to the vicinity of the earth. He and his hordes are being maneuvered to make their all-out attack on Jehovah's people. This attack, foretold in the Bible, is described as the attack of Gog of Magog. Upon whom does the Devil specifically focus his assault? Is it not upon the last members of the little flock, the spiritual Israel of God, who are dwelling peacefully “in the center of the earth”? (Ezekiel 38:1-12) Yes, but the remnant of the faithful anointed class, together with their loyal companions, the other sheep, will witness how Satan's attack precipitates a dramatic response on the part of Jehovah God. He will intervene in defense of his people, and this will trigger the outbreak of “the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah.” (Joel 2:31) Today, the faithful

9. How does the little flock view the increasing number of the great crowd?

10. (a) What attack is due to be launched on God's people, and to what will it lead? (b) What questions are asked of each of us?

and discreet slave is accomplishing a vital, lifesaving service, warning of this coming intervention by Jehovah. (Malachi 4:5; 1 Timothy 4:16) Are you actively supporting that service, sharing in the preaching of the good news of Jehovah's Kingdom? Will you continue to do so as a fearless Kingdom proclaimer?

¹¹ In view of the present world situation, how timely it is for the little flock to heed the words Jesus addressed to them: "Have no fear, little flock"! Such a courageous attitude is essential in view of all that is now being worked out in harmony with Jehovah's purpose. Individually, each one of the little flock realizes the need to endure right down to the end. (Luke 21:19) As Jesus Christ, the Lord and Master of the little flock, endured and proved faithful until the completion of his earthly life, so each one of the remnant must endure and prove faithful.—Hebrews 12:1, 2.

¹² All anointed ones must have the same outlook as had the apostle Paul. Note how his words as an anointed public proclaimer of the resurrection are in harmony with Jesus' exhortation to have no fear. Paul wrote: "Remember that Jesus Christ was raised up from the dead and was of David's seed, according to the good news I preach; in connection with which I am suffering evil to the point of prison bonds as an evildoer. Nevertheless, the word of God is not bound. On this account I go on enduring all things for the sake of the chosen ones, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in union with Christ Jesus along with everlasting glory. Faithful is the saying: Certainly if we died together, we shall also live together; if we go on enduring, we shall also rule together as kings; if we deny, he also will deny us; if we

are unfaithful, he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself."—2 Timothy 2:8-13.

¹³ Like the apostle Paul, the remaining members of the anointed little flock are willing to endure suffering as they declare the powerful message set forth in God's Word. Their convictions are deeply rooted as they hold to the divine promises of salvation and of their being given "the crown of life" if they prove faithful until death. (Revelation 2:10) By experiencing an instantaneous resurrection and change, they will be brought into union with Christ, to rule together with him as kings. What a triumph for their integrity-keeping course as world conquerors!—1 John 5:3, 4.

A Unique Hope

¹⁴ The resurrection hope entertained by the little flock is unique. In what ways? For one thing, it precedes the general resurrection of "the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Actually, the resurrection of the anointed falls into a certain order of importance, as is clearly established by these words found at 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23: "Christ has been raised up from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death. But each one in his own rank: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who belong to the Christ during his presence." By having the kind of endurance and faith that Jesus displayed, the little flock know what is in store for them as they finish their earthly course, particularly since the true Lord came to his temple for judgment in 1918.—Malachi 3:1.

¹⁵ Paul gives us an added reason to view this resurrection as unique. As recorded at

13. What deep convictions do the members of the little flock hold, and what does this move them to do?

14, 15. How is the resurrection hope of the little flock unique?

11. Why is a courageous attitude vital today?

12. How did Paul, like Jesus, exhort anointed Christians to have no fear?

1 Corinthians 15:51-53, he wrote: "Look! I tell you a sacred secret: We shall not all fall asleep in death, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, during the last trumpet. . . . For this which is corruptible must put on incorruption, and this which is mortal must put on immortality." These words apply to those of the little flock who die during Christ's presence. Without having to sleep a lengthy period of time in death, they are clothed with immortality, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

¹⁶ In the light of this understanding, we can grasp the sense of the apostle John's words found at Revelation 14:12, 13. He wrote: "'Here is where it means endurance for the holy ones, those who observe the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.' And I heard a voice out of heaven say: 'Write: Happy are the dead who die in union with the Lord from this time onward. Yes, says the spirit, let them rest from their labors, for the things they did go right with them.'"

16, 17. Regarding their hope of the resurrection, how are anointed Christians today especially blessed?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ Why should we expect the remaining number of the little flock to decrease?
- ☐ What is the situation of the anointed remnant today?
- ☐ Why should Christians have no fear, despite the approaching attack of Gog of Magog?
- ☐ Why is the resurrection hope of the 144,000 unique, especially today?

¹⁷ What a unique reward is in store for the remnant of the little flock! Their resurrection will come quickly, right after they fall asleep in death. What a remarkable change they will experience as they take up their assignment in the spirit realm! With such a glorification of the little flock in progress and with the fulfillment of major Bible prophecies so far along, the last remaining members of the little flock truly need "have no fear." And their fearlessness serves to encourage those of the great crowd, who should cultivate a similar attitude of fearlessness as they anticipate deliverance during the greatest time of trouble the earth has ever known.

¹⁸ Recounting the activities of the little flock enables them and the great crowd to keep on fearing the true God. The hour for judgment by him has arrived, and the favorable time left is precious. Limited, indeed, is the time for others to act. We, though, do not fear that God's purpose will fail. It will certainly succeed!

¹⁹ Already, the loud heavenly voices have been heard to say: "The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever." (Revelation 11:15) Surely, the Great Shepherd, Jehovah, is guiding all of his sheep in "the tracks of righteousness for his name's sake." (Psalm 23:3) The little flock are unerringly being led to their heavenly reward. And the other sheep will be delivered safely through the great tribulation to enjoy eternal life in the earthly realm of God's glorious Kingdom under the rule of Christ Jesus. Hence, while Jesus' words were addressed to the little flock, surely all of God's servants on earth have reason to listen to his words: "Have no fear."

18, 19. (a) Why is the time we live in urgent? (b) Why should both the anointed and the other sheep have no fear?

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Still Open to Discovery

AS A mere youth, Christopher Columbus embarked on a life at sea that eventually led him to the discovery of the islands known today as the West Indies. In December 1492, his principal vessel, *Santa María*, struck ground off the north coast of the island of Española, known today as the island of Hispaniola, shared by Haiti and Dominican Republic. There Columbus established the first European settlement, a hastily built fort, and named it La Navidad. This island became the center of his further explorations.

Columbus discovered that the island was occupied by a notably handsome, trusting, and hospitable people, the Taino Indians. There were an estimated 100,000 of them at the time. However, under the harsh treatment of the invaders, whose primary interest was finding gold, the native population dwindled rapidly. By 1570 there reportedly were only about 500 Taino Indians left.

Today, Dominican Republic is populated by people of many races and colors, whose ancestors immigrated here. Even so, they seem to have many of the fine traits of the Taino, being basically a friendly and easy-going people. This, coupled with a sincere belief in God and respect for the Bible, has made the preaching and teaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses remarkably successful in this land.

Discovery of Another Kind

The first Watch Tower missionaries, Lenart and Virginia Johnson, arrived in Do-

minican Republic during the era of the dictator Trujillo. They discovered, to their delight, that many responded quickly and positively to their Bible message. This, however, was not to the liking of the authorities and their religious advisers. A wave of persecution soon broke out, and the faith of those early Dominican Witnesses was put to severe tests. To this day, their loyalty and faith—even to the death—are still much talked about.

Jehovah's Witnesses, now numbering about 16,000 in the land, are well-known. A while ago, five television stations nationwide broadcast the video *Jehovah's Witnesses—The Organization Behind the Name*.*

This gave much publicity to the work of the Witnesses not only in larger cities but also in smaller towns and some rural areas. As a follow-up, they mounted a special campaign to reach out and take the Kingdom good news to these outlying areas.

Blessings for Reaching Out

Many young, energetic, and zealous Witnesses volunteered to spend periods of two months preaching in these faraway territories. Their efforts were well rewarded. In one area two Witnesses discovered exceptional interest. As it was the time to hold the annual Memorial of Jesus' death, they made the arrangements and invited the people to come. The hall filled up, and they conducted

* Produced by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.



the meeting. When it was over, they found, to their great surprise, that there was another large group of people outside the hall waiting to get in. So they invited them in and repeated the program. There is now a congregation in that area.

The generous and outgoing nature of the people often moves them to share the Bible truth they are learning with members of their family and others. One Bible student was bubbling over with joy when he finally qualified to participate in the house-to-house ministry. He was already conducting five Bible studies in his neighborhood, but he was happy to have a greater share in the ministry.

With much territory not regularly visited by Kingdom publishers, effort is made to preach to people on buses and those who come to the cities to do business or to shop. This has led to happy results, as illustrated by an experience in connection with a letter received by the branch office. It was from two men in a rural area, who request-

ed a Bible study. When a Witness called on them, the "men" turned out to be 10 and 11 years of age. But how did they learn about the Bible study arrangement? Well, a man from that village came into the capital for some business. He met a Witness on the street, who gave him a tract and offered him a free home Bible study. Returning to his village, the man gave the tract to a 12-year-old neighborhood girl and told her about the Bible study arrangement. In turn, the girl passed the information on to the two boys, who promptly wrote the letter. A Bible study was started with the boys, the girl, the man, and his two children.

Fine Response by the Young

Indeed, young people, both those brought up in the truth and others, seem to take their worship of God seriously. For example, Tamar and her sister Keila were both baptized at the age of 10 and entered the full-time pioneer ministry by 11. Wendy Carolina was 12 when she symbolized her



Young ones discover the value of spiritual things by pursuing full-time service

dedication by water baptism, and two years later, in 1985, she started regular pioneering. Today she is an effective teacher, still enjoying the full-time ministry. Young Giovanni, baptized at 10 and a regular pioneer at 11, is conducting four home Bible studies. When ten-year-old Rey discovered that a secondhand-book vendor had a booklet published by Jehovah's Witnesses, Rey begged his mother to buy it for him. He read it from cover to cover. His search for more Bible literature eventually led him to the branch office. Today he is enjoying the full-time service, and his mother is also serving God.

What has helped these and other young ones to appreciate the value of spiritual things? In many cases proper parental guidance played an important role. This was so with Josué, whose Christian parents are schoolteachers. When a traveling overseer suggested that the parents try to help at least one of their children to take up the full-time ministry, they gave attention to

Josué. Being an outstanding student, Josué was granted a government scholarship to study engineering. After a year and a half at the university, he accepted an invitation to join the construction project at the headquarters complex for Jehovah's Witnesses in Dominican Republic. His parents expressed deep satisfaction in having given their son to Jehovah's service.

"Explorers" From Other Lands

Jesus' words that "the harvest is great, but the workers are few" can truly be applied to the field here. (Matthew 9:37) The great need and the fine response have prompted Witnesses from other lands to come to share in exploring the territory for the real modern-day treasures—sincere truth seekers.

From the neighboring island of Puerto Rico have come Witness families who found true satisfaction serving in different areas of Dominican Republic. Said one family head: "Being able to express your faith

and hope to hearing ears really makes the truth live!" Learning of the need here, Cecilia from Sweden and Nia from the United States joined forces with several other young full-time ministers. They are serving in the interior where they find a higher altitude and a milder climate. Similarly, high up in the cool pine-covered mountains, two Canadian families joined a Dominican family who had returned from the United States. They are part of a small congregation and are able to reach out to people who have not been visited by Jehovah's Witnesses for up to ten years.

Alfredo and Lourdes and their five children returned from New York City and are associated with a small congregation in one of the beautiful tourist beach towns. They rejoice in being able to share in finding honesthearted ones and helping the congregation grow. Roland, a computer operator from Austria, and his wife, Yuta, have settled in the warm, dry, southern part of the country. They have had the joy of seeing a new congregation formed since their arrival. In a neighboring town, a group of three pioneer sisters and a couple from California reported that they had so many requests for Bible studies that they could not conduct them all. So they encouraged the interested ones to attend the meetings at the lo-

cal Kingdom Hall and get on a waiting list for Bible studies. Yuta's brother Stefan is faithfully serving with a small congregation in the lovely town of Samaná, to the northeast. In just two years, the number of Kingdom publishers there has doubled.

The love and zeal demonstrated by these and others who have come to help are truly commendable. They have accepted the challenge not only of relocating to a new land with different culture and customs but also, in most cases, of learning a new language in order to care for the spiritual needs of sheeplike people. Their efforts have resulted in a positive response from the local people.

Some Dominican families have left the comforts of the large cities and have reached out to the rurals. All are being richly rewarded by the joy of discovering the real treasures of sincere seekers of truth.

The 15th-century treasure seekers brought, not blessings, but bondage and untold suffering to the native Taino people. Even Columbus himself did not benefit from the treasures of the New World. He was eventually arrested and removed from the island he discovered and returned to Spain in chains.

Today a different kind of exploration is under way, and a more valuable treasure is being found. Jehovah's people are busy searching for the honesthearted people who respond to the Kingdom good news. The result is that an ever-increasing crowd is enjoying the freedom that only God's Word can bring. (John 8:32) They look forward to the time when this land of mountains, lovely waterfalls, beautiful beaches, and enchanting caves will become, not just an island paradise, but part of a new world that encompasses the whole earth.—2 Peter 3:13.

In Our Next Issue

Lessons From the Miracles of Jesus

Living Up to Our Dedication
"Day After Day"

A Theological Dilemma

A lesson in how to handle problems

FEW people have ever had to cope with all the problems Job had. Within a short space of time, he was devastated by the loss of his wealth and livelihood, the tragic death of all his children, and finally a very painful disease. Ostracized by friends and relatives, he was urged by his wife to “curse God and die!”—Job 2:9; 19:13, 14.

Job, however, is a unique source of encouragement to anyone who is experiencing similar trials. The positive outcome of his ordeal shows that endurance in the face of adversity makes Jehovah’s heart glad, when we are motivated by genuine godly devotion rather than personal advantage.—Job, chapters 1, 2; 42:10-17; Proverbs 27:11.

This Bible account also contains valuable lessons in how to handle problems. It provides striking examples of how someone who is facing trials should—and should not—be counseled. Furthermore, Job’s own experience can help us react in a balanced way when we find ourselves buffeted by adverse circumstances.

A Lesson in Negative Counseling

The expression “Job’s comforter” has become synonymous with a person who, instead of sympathizing at a time of misfortune, rubs salt into the wound. But despite the reputation Job’s three companions have deservedly earned for themselves, we should not assume that their motives were all bad. To some degree they may have wanted to help Job, in line with their mis-

taken views. Why did they fail? How did they become instruments of Satan, who was determined to break Job’s integrity?

Well, they based practically all their counsel on an incorrect supposition: that suffering comes only to those who sin. In his first speech, Eliphaz said: “Who that is innocent has ever perished? And where have the upright ever been effaced? According to what I have seen, those devising what is hurtful and those sowing trouble will themselves reap it.” (Job 4:7, 8) Eliphaz mistakenly believed that the innocent are immune to calamity. He reasoned that since Job was in severe straits, he must have sinned against God.* Both Bildad and Zophar likewise insisted that Job repent of his sins.—Job 8:5, 6; 11:13-15.

His three companions further disheartened Job by voicing personal ideas rather than godly wisdom. Eliphaz went so far as to say that ‘God has no faith in his servants’ and that it did not really matter to Jehovah whether Job was righteous or not. (Job 4:18; 22:2, 3) It is hard to imagine a more discouraging—or more untruthful—remark than that! Not surprisingly, Jehovah later rebuked Eliphaz and his companions for this blasphemy. “You men have not

* While the Bible states that “whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap,” this does not mean that a person’s suffering must be divine retribution. (Galatians 6:7) In this world dominated by Satan, the righteous often face more problems than the wicked do. (1 John 5:19) “You will be objects of hatred by all people on account of my name,” Jesus told his disciples. (Matthew 10:22) Sickness and other types of misfortune can befall any of God’s faithful servants.—Psalm 41:3; 73:3-5; Philippians 2:25-27.



"Behold the clouds, that they are indeed higher than you." Elihu thus helped Job understand that God's ways are higher than man's ways

spoken concerning me what is truthful," he said. (Job 42:7) But the most damaging assertion was yet to come.

Eliphaz finally went to the extreme of making outright accusations. Since he was unable to extract from Job an admission of guilt, he resorted to fabricating sins that he assumed Job must have committed. "Is not your own badness too much already, and will there be no end to your errors?" Eliphaz asked. "For you seize a pledge from your brothers without cause, and you strip off even the garments of naked people. You do not give the tired one a drink of water, and from the hungry one you hold back bread." (Job 22:5-7) These accusations were totally unfounded. Jehovah himself had described Job as a man who was "blameless and upright."—Job 1:8.

How did Job react to these attacks on his personal integrity? Understandably,

they made him somewhat bitter and depressed but more determined than ever to prove that these charges were untrue. In fact, he became so engrossed in vindicating himself that, in a way, he began to blame Jehovah for his predicament. (Job 6:4; 9:16-18; 16:11, 12) The real issues involved were overlooked, and the dialogue became a futile debate about whether Job was, or was not, a righteous man. What lessons can Christians learn from this disastrous counseling session?

1. *A loving Christian does not assume at the outset that a brother's problems are of his own making.* Harsh criticism of past mistakes—whether real or imagined—can totally discourage a person who is struggling to keep going. The depressed soul needs to be 'consoled' rather than berated. (1 Thessalonians 5:14) Jehovah wants overseers to be "a hiding place from the wind," not "troublesome comforters" like Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar.—Isaiah 32:2; Job 16:2.

2. *We should never make an accusation without clear evidence.* Hearsay or suppositions—like those of Eliphaz—are not a sound basis for giving reproof. If an elder, for example, makes a faulty accusation, he could well lose credibility and cause emotional stress. How did Job feel about having to listen to such misguided counsel? He gave vent to his anguish with the ironic exclamation: "O how much help you have been to one without power!" (Job 26:2) A concerned overseer will "straighten up the hands that hang down," not make the problem worse.—Hebrews 12:12.

3. *Counsel should be based on God's Word, not on personal ideas.* The arguments of Job's companions were both incorrect and destructive. Instead of drawing Job closer to Jehovah, they led him to think there was a barrier separating him from his heavenly Father. (Job 19:2, 6, 8) Skillful use of the Bible, on the other hand, can set things straight, invigorate others, and offer real comfort.—Luke 24:32; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16; 4:2.

While the book of Job helps Christians to identify certain pitfalls, it also provides a useful lesson in how to give effective counsel.

How to Give Counsel

Elihu's counsel was completely different from that of Job's three companions, both in content and in the way Elihu dealt with Job. He used Job's name and spoke to him as a friend, not as Job's judge. "Now, however, O Job, please hear my words, and to all my speaking do give ear. Look! I am to the true God just what you are; from the clay I was shaped, I too." (Job 33:1, 6) Elihu was also quick to commend Job for his upright course. "I have taken delight in your righteousness," he reassured Job. (Job 33:32) Apart from this kindly manner of counseling, Elihu was successful for other reasons.

Having waited patiently until the others had finished speaking, Elihu was better able to grasp the issues before offering counsel. Granted that Job was a righteous man, would Jehovah punish him? "Far be it from the true God to act wickedly, and the Almighty to act unjustly!" Elihu exclaimed. "He will not take away his eyes from anyone righteous."—Job 34:10; 36:7.

Was the righteousness of Job really the main issue? Elihu drew Job's attention to

an unbalanced viewpoint. "You have said, 'My righteousness is more than God's,'" he explained. "Look up to heaven and see, and behold the clouds, that they are indeed higher than you." (Job 35:2, 5) Just as the clouds are much higher than we are, so Jehovah's ways are higher than our ways. We are not in a position to judge the way he does things. "Therefore let men fear him. He does not regard any who are wise in their own heart," Elihu concluded.—Job 37:24; Isaiah 55:9.

Elihu's sound counsel prepared the way for Job to receive additional instruction from Jehovah himself. In fact, there is a striking parallel between Elihu's review of "the wonderful works of God," in chapter 37, and Jehovah's own words to Job, recorded in chapters 38 to 41. Evidently, Elihu saw matters from Jehovah's viewpoint. (Job 37:14) How can Christians imitate Elihu's fine example?

Like Elihu, overseers in particular want to be empathetic and kindly, remembering that they too are imperfect. They do well to listen carefully in order to get the facts and understand the issues before giving counsel. (Proverbs 18:13) Moreover, by using the Bible and Scriptural publications, they can make sure that Jehovah's viewpoint prevails.—Romans 3:4.

Apart from providing these practical lessons for elders, the book of Job teaches us how to face problems in a balanced way.

How Not to React to Adverse Circumstances

Devastated by his suffering and frustrated by his false comforters, Job became embittered and depressed. "Let the day perish on which I came to be born . . . My soul certainly feels a loathing toward my life," he groaned. (Job 3:3; 10:1) Unaware that Satan was the culprit, he assumed that God

was causing his calamities. It seemed so unjust that he—a righteous man—should suffer. (Job 23:10, 11; 27:2; 30:20, 21) This attitude blinded Job to other considerations and led him to criticize God's dealings with mankind. Jehovah asked: "Will you invalidate my justice? Will you pronounce me wicked in order that you may be in the right?"—Job 40:8.

Perhaps our immediate reaction when confronted with adversity is to feel victimized, as Job apparently did. The common response is to ask, 'Why me? Why should others—who are much worse than I am—enjoy a life relatively free from problems?' These are negative thoughts that we can counteract by meditating on God's Word.

Unlike Job, we are in a position to comprehend the greater issues involved. We know that Satan "walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone." (1 Peter 5:8) As the book of Job reveals, the Devil would delight to break our integrity by causing us problems. He is bent on proving his claim that we are only fair-weather Witnesses of Jehovah. (Job 1:9-11; 2:3-5) Will we have the courage to uphold Jehovah's sovereignty and thus prove the Devil a liar?

The example of Jesus, and countless other faithful servants of Jehovah, shows that some form of suffering is almost inevitable in this system of things. Jesus said that his disciples must be willing to 'pick up their torture stake' if they wish to follow him. (Luke 9:23) Our personal "torture stake" might be one or more of the adversities that Job endured—ill health, the death of loved ones, depression, economic hardship, or opposition from unbelievers. Whatever type of problem we may be facing, there is a positive side. We can view our circumstance as an opportunity to demonstrate

our endurance and unwavering allegiance to Jehovah.—James 1:2, 3.

That was the way Jesus' apostles reacted. Soon after Pentecost they were flogged for preaching about Jesus. Rather than being discouraged, they went on their way "rejoicing." They were joyful, not because of the suffering itself, but because "they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his [Christ's] name."—Acts 5:40, 41.

Of course, not all our difficulties befall us as a result of serving Jehovah. Our problems may be self-inflicted—at least to a certain extent. Or perhaps, through no fault of our own, the problem has affected our spiritual balance. Whatever the case, a humble attitude like that of Job will enable us to discern where mistakes have been made. Job admitted to Jehovah: "I talked, but I was not understanding." (Job 42:3) The one who recognizes his errors in this way is much more likely to avoid similar difficulties in the future. As the proverb says, "shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself."—Proverbs 22:3.

Most important, the book of Job reminds us that our problems will not last forever. The Bible says: "We pronounce happy those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful." (James 5:11) We can be sure that Jehovah will likewise reward the faithfulness of his servants today.

We also look forward to the time when problems of every kind—"the former things"—have passed away. (Revelation 21:4) Until that day dawns, the book of Job serves as an invaluable guide that can help us to handle problems with wisdom and fortitude.



