

The WATCHTOWER

When Preaching Is a Real Challenge

Events That Still Lie Ahead

**Our Refuge Under the
Incorruptible "Kingdom of
the Heavens"**

NOVEMBER 15, 1975

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The WATCHTOWER

November 15, 1975
Vol. 96, Number 22

A watchtower enables a person to see far into the distance and announce to others what is coming. Can a magazine serve similarly in our day? Yes, from its first issue (July 1879) onward, *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's witnesses, has done just that.

How can it benefit you? Consider: Do you long for a better world, one of true justice and free from sorrow, hatred and war? Do you want to live at a time when genuine peace and love prevail among people of all races? Then this magazine can aid you. Using God's Word, the Bible, as its authority, it points out the clear evidence that the present wicked system of things will soon end, destroyed by God. But it also announces the coming in of a righteous new order. There, under the rule of God's kingdom, his heavenly government, people will enjoy life forever in true peace, health and happiness on a paradise earth.

Faithfulness to the Word of God lifts *The Watchtower* above the contradicting religious teachings and philosophies of men. It stays strictly neutral as regards political affairs. It wholeheartedly upholds the highest moral standard—that of man's Maker, Jehovah God. From this source, it shows solutions to the problems of daily life.

We know that many sincere persons would appreciate a discussion of these things in their own home with a qualified person. A minister of Jehovah's witnesses will be glad to call on you free of charge. To arrange for this, simply write the publishers of this magazine or contact Jehovah's witnesses locally.

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"Become Kind

TO *One Another*"

WHAT a pleasure it is to associate with kind persons! Their consideration and active interest in the welfare of others stand out in sharp contrast to the selfishness of those who are harsh and rude.

Those who are desirous of pleasing God have good reason to be concerned about showing kindness. Jehovah God, the Creator of mankind, wants all of us to cultivate this quality in full measure. Kindness is a fruit of his spirit. (Gal. 5:22) The Bible urges those who love God: "Clothe yourselves with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering."—Col. 3:12.

The example that Jehovah God has set in showing kindness should move us to want to display this admirable quality in our own lives. On that very basis, the apostle Paul admonishes us, saying: "Become kind to one another, tenderly compassionate, freely forgiving one another just as God also by Christ freely forgave you."—Eph. 4:32.

Surely Jehovah God has been kind in forgiving us our transgressions. As the Scriptures state: "He kindly forgave us all our trespasses." (Col. 2:13) How wrong it would be, therefore, for us to harbor grudges or resentment against our fellows because of their minor transgressions against us! It would indeed be unkind to

shun them or to refuse to speak to them because of their having disappointed us in some way. Would we want others to react that way on account of our minor failings? And where would we stand if Jehovah God held all our many errors against us? —Ps. 130:3.

If we want God to continue benefiting us with his kindness, we must

be willing to cover over one another's minor transgressions. As Jesus Christ pointed out: "If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; whereas if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."—Matt. 6:14, 15; see also Luke 6:35, 36.

CONSIDERATE SPEECH AND ACTIONS

Kindness toward others, however, is not limited to being forgiving. It also includes considerate speech and actions. At times a person may be prone to take liberties with those to whom he is close, his relatives and friends. When dealing with strangers, he may be very courteous, saying "please" and "thank you," and show outstanding consideration for their feelings. But when it comes to family members and friends, he may be careless about his words and actions. He may reason that those who really know him will understand regardless of how he might act or express himself. While this may be true to some extent, does it really make life more pleasant and enjoyable for such close associates? Does it not, rather, put a strain on their kindness?

Consider what faithful angels have done in dealing kindly and respectfully with hu-

mans. Though superior in strength and power, angels are never depicted in the Scriptures as if suggesting that they took liberties when speaking to humans on earth. (2 Pet. 2:11) They were very respectful, granting due dignity to those whom they addressed. For instance, Jehovah's representative angel said "please" when talking with Abraham. (Gen. 13:14) Should we not be willing to do the same for fellow humans, kindly according them the dignity and respect due to them?

Granted, in this unkind world it may not be easy to show kindness. A person may find himself having to deal with rude, unprincipled people. But does this mean that kindness is out of place with these? Not at all.

Think about the man Lot and the situation he faced in Sodom. When he entertained angelic visitors in his home, a mob surrounded his house, demanding that he turn his guests over to them for immoral purposes. What did he do? Did he lose control of himself and angrily denounce the mob? No, Lot exercised great restraint, appealing to the mob with kind words: "Please, my brothers, do not act badly."—Gen. 19:7.

Since Lot spoke so kindly to very vile men, certainly we should want to do no less for those who are our companions in seeking after God, even if they are perhaps thoughtless in some way. We should exert ourselves to express great kindness to them, even as we do to those who show no interest in the Bible's message. In this way, we act in harmony with the inspired admonition: "As long as we have time favorable for it, let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith."—Gal. 6:10.

The writer of this inspired counsel, the apostle Paul, did just that. When he wrote to Philemon to receive back with kindness

his runaway slave Onesimus, who had become a newly converted brother, Paul himself demonstrated great kindness. Paul could have ordered Philemon to do what he, as an apostle, deemed proper. But the apostle Paul chose to appeal to Philemon's love of right. He wrote: "Though I have great freeness of speech in connection with Christ to order you to do what is proper, I am exhorting you rather on the basis of love, seeing that I am such as I am, Paul an aged man."—Philem. 8, 9.

Surely this kind, warm approach to the matter was far more effective in reaching Philemon's heart than would have been an authoritative command. Such kindness impels one to want to respond favorably to the one showing it. Kindness also contributes toward the development of strong bonds of love and affection.

This quality can have a powerful effect for good even on unkind persons. As the Bible says: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing this you will heap fiery coals upon his head." (Rom. 12:20) Your kind words and acts toward someone who is unkind may cause him to become ashamed about the way he has acted. He may soften his attitude toward you. His heart may be moved to respond with kindness, bringing out the best in him. Would that not be a grand and rewarding blessing for having displayed kindness?

In view of the benefits resulting from showing kindness, we should indeed strive to cultivate this quality in fuller measure. This will contribute much toward others' happiness and thereby also to our own. "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving," says God's Word. (Acts 20:35) Most importantly, we thereby gain and maintain the approval of our kind heavenly Father, Jehovah God.

When Preaching IS A REAL CHALLENGE

WHAT if you were given as a preaching assignment a territory nearly half the size of Europe, or half the size of the United States? What if this territory was mainly desert, where heat from a relentless sun commonly soared above 120 degrees Fahrenheit? Would you accept the challenge of preaching where the dirt roads, the dust, the flies, the swarms of other insects and the occasional torrential rains bring seemingly endless trials?

My wife and I were offered such an assignment in the desert outback of Australia, and we accepted it. You may be surprised that Australia is so big—it is fifty-eight times the size of England! It has more snow country than Switzerland, more lakes than Scotland, Holland, France and Belgium combined, and more sun and surf than Hawaii, Tahiti, Bali, Fiji and Pago Pago put together. And its deserts are among the world's largest.

For two years we traveled these desert areas, covering some 10,000 miles every six months in our visit to fourteen con-

gregations and seven small groups of Jehovah's witnesses. Do you know what is involved in just making it from congregation to congregation in this desert outback?

PREPARATIONS FOR TRAVEL

First, our car had to be modified to stand up to the bone-shaking corrugations, ruts, river crossings and dust. Especially hard on the car were the 3,000 miles of dirt roads we traveled each time around our preaching circuit.

To protect our windshield, we put a screen on it. Next we installed a kangaroo bar to prevent damage when kangaroos jumped into the oncoming car lights. Larger coil springs were fitted to the front of the car to lift the engine and gear mechanism higher off the road. In the rear, a sheet-metal plate was welded completely around the gas tank to prevent it from being punctured by stones. Lastly, a differential stiffener was installed to stop the differential from vibrating free and dropping onto the road.

Our car is outfitted with a roof rack that almost completely covers its top. We used



An outline of Australia over a map of Europe, with the route of travel indicated

every inch of its space for spare wheel rims, tires, extra gas, oil, filters, air pump, tow ropes, jacks, battery jumper cables, water for washing and drinking, and tools and spare auto parts to handle practically any mechanical breakdown. You are correct in concluding that before a person qualifies for a preaching assignment here he needs to be a good mechanic. Emphasizing the need for being prepared is the fact that each year a number of people die in their stranded cars from the extreme heat. Often it is more than 300 miles between gas stations and you rarely meet up with another car.

Also, an important part of preparation is the wrapping of all clothes in plastic before one puts them in the suitcase. Then the suitcase is wrapped in canvas. Why? Because otherwise the clothes would become permeated by the talcum-like dust.

EXPERIENCES ON THE ROAD

Generally, we would spend the first part of the week traveling and the latter part sharing in the preaching work along with a congregation of Witnesses. We averaged about a 500-mile drive between visits to congregations or isolated groups. This meant that we slept in our car on the road one or two nights every week, in night temperatures of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more.

In traveling the 750 miles from Wyndham, Western Australia, to Broome we ran into wet weather. At times we had to leave the road and "go bush" (off the beaten track) to avoid trouble spots. Or we would get out and shovel anthills to fill up rough sections of road. But with me pushing the car and my wife driving, we would make it through.

The first time around our circuit we did not see any grass in all those 10,000 miles, except in one town. The drought was devastating! But, as the Scriptures indicate, deserts can blossom like the saffron after

rain. (Isa. 35:1) Following the seasonal rains, we have seen thousands of miles of beautiful flowers literally covering the earth as far as the eye can see. Also, the desert areas are alive with wildlife, including kangaroos, goannas, wild donkeys, horses, emus, dingoes (wild dogs) and even a few camels.

One 455-mile section of dirt road was especially isolated and hot. To save on weight, we had decided to leave our extra water supply behind. But on the road we had a flat tire, then later a blowout. Our two spare tires were now in use; hardly any cars were traveling the road, and we still had 120 miles to go to reach the next town.

With few words and with our hearts in our mouths we plugged on at twenty miles per hour for what seemed an eternity, fearing that at any moment another tire would go. The temperature was near 115 degrees Fahrenheit and all we had was half a water bag of warm water. Suddenly, another flat tire, but we were at the outskirts of town. It was good to be back in "civilization" that night.

On another occasion we experienced unseasonal rain, and huge trucks were bogged down along the road. "You'll never make it, mate," one truck driver told us. But we said that we would go up the road at least to have a look. It appeared almost impassable, so we parked in the middle of the road that night and slept a few hours.

The next morning I cautioned my wife, "No screams." Then, after warming up the motor carefully and thinking of the wild-driving Bible character Jehu, I took our "chariot" roaring up the hill, with mud and slush flying in all directions. (2 Ki. 9:20) It is necessary at times really "to have a go," as the Australians say. We had uppermost in our minds getting to the next congregation and sharing with our Christian brothers there in the preaching work.

However, we were not always able to keep our schedule. Owing to floods, on one occasion we had to detour 2,600 miles in order to visit a congregation! So, instead of arriving early in the week, we came in on Thursday night, tired and especially dusty and disheveled. This was partly because 450 miles back down the road we had broken a windshield. But we were able to share with the congregation in the preaching work Friday through Sunday.

The distances traveled to Christian assemblies were even much longer. For example, we went over 6,000 miles round trip to attend an international assembly in Sydney, leaving from Port Hedland and returning to Mount Newman. In case of problems, for such trips we would take a box of food, usually enough to last two weeks. Biscuits and baked beans were my favorites, while my wife liked canned sardines the best.

Sometimes I had to take on a few days of secular work in order to have sufficient funds to keep our car going. I will never forget the time I had the opportunity to work with the aborigines in Wyndham, reported to be one of the hottest places on earth. One of the natives there was particularly interested in the Bible, and I had an opportunity to give him a good witness about God's promised new system.—2 Pet. 3:13.

COPING WITH THE HEAT

Many a time we would not have minded giving others some of our heat in exchange for cooler weather. When the big drought was on in 1972, the temperature was consistently 120 degrees Fahrenheit plus. My wife survived by dabbing a damp cloth on her face and neck. We would eat our lunch crouched under a shrub, as there are no trees for some 800 miles across the Nullarbor Plain. This plain is well named, since Nullarbor means "No Trees."

Everything was shimmering hot; to touch the car would burn the flesh. The prolonged heat blistered the rubber around our car windows. I made the mistake of buying a cheaper pair of shoes, and the soles melted and slid sideways after just a few weeks. Once, after we reached our destination, the temperature dropped to 117 degrees Fahrenheit, which almost felt cool.

We often experienced temperatures of over 110 degrees Fahrenheit during our preaching work, but still we were able to maintain our normal schedule of house-to-house visits. In Exmouth, I remember, it was 110 degrees Fahrenheit before 9 a.m. one morning as I knocked on my first door. But the people are very tough, and they learn to cope with this type of weather.

We saw a twenty-two-month-old Witness child go from house to house all morning without a whimper in over 105-degree heat. When we met up for lunch he had red mud all over his face, sweat beads on his head and rivulets of perspiration streaking down his cheeks, as he walked along holding his father's hand. But he had a big smile from ear to ear, and tried to tell us about some of the people that they had met that morning.

One day when it was 117 degrees, I gave a public talk in a home in Meekatharra. The next time that I took off my trousers a white square of salt was caked to the left knee where I had placed my Bible, and there were two white patches where I had sat down. But the local folks, being used to the heat, had not even bothered to turn on the fans that afternoon. My wife and I were able to cope with these conditions by consuming extra salt and trusting in Jehovah God for strength.

KEEPING STRONG SPIRITUALLY

One family of Jehovah's witnesses that we visited live hundreds of miles from the nearest congregation, yet they make sure

that they receive the same spiritual food as other Witnesses do. Each meeting night they dress up, and the various members of the family share in handling the same meeting parts considered in congregations of Jehovah's witnesses world wide.

A problem came up when the mother was in the hospital, having given birth to a baby during the day. How were they going to conduct their meeting that night, since she had a talk in the Theocratic Ministry School? Well, off they all went to the hospital, and held their meeting there! Nothing stops that family from its regular program of spiritual instruction.

Another isolated Witness followed the same pattern. But since he was alone, he handled all the meeting parts himself, even singing the Kingdom songs by himself. The townsfolk noticed his absence from social functions, so they thought they would do him a favor and placed his name on the membership rolls of two clubs in town. He tactfully explained why he chose not to be involved in club functions.

This person was a new Witness, and it took a while before he worked up courage to call on his neighbors to preach to them. Then people would often tell him: "Not today, mate. You're a good bloke, mate, but don't bring that religion around here." However, he started a Bible study with someone, and it was not long before this person was sharing with him in his meeting program. We felt that our visit with them was all too short.

There were a number of places we visited where only one Witness lived. One isolated Christian sister kept up a vigorous preaching schedule, having over 10,000 people to witness to in her territory. She carried a baby on her back in a "papoose," taking another child along by the hand. She was able to cultivate much interest in God's Word among the people. Occasionally cassette tape recordings of public Bible lectures in the congregations are sent to

isolated publishers or groups so that they can receive these spiritual benefits.

Witnessing is a delight in most of the remote mining towns. To get to these, Witnesses often will travel hundreds of miles, camping out a week or so at a time. Here we met many young families, and found the people to be very friendly. They have fewer distractions, and so have more time to read. One day a person in Karratha took all the Bible literature that I was carrying.

Even though at times we got a little fatigued, the blessings were very great indeed. Sometimes we were low on provisions. Once we were 'hundreds of miles from nowhere' and I was under the car trying to find a brake pad that was not there. To our surprise, a car pulled up. The driver turned out to be one of the Witnesses doing preaching in unassigned territory. What a pleasant sight! When he returned home he immediately wired us \$50 to our next stop. We never lacked the things we needed.

It is nothing for Witnesses in the outback to travel seventy miles to go to a weekly Bible meeting. A committee of three Christian elders may spend their entire weekend assisting a nearby congregation with a judicial matter, traveling as much as 1,200 miles. Some Witnesses travel 3,000 miles round trip to attend their semiannual circuit assembly. If the roads are too bad or flooded, they will fly if they can afford it. One family spent over \$1,000 in air fares and for accommodations to attend their circuit assembly. What a pleasure it was to be with these people who put spiritual matters first in their lives!

Now we have another preaching assignment. The territory we cover in our new circuit would fit into the area of just one congregation in the previous one. Our hearts go out to our brothers in the great outback of Australia—they will always be especially dear to us.—Contributed.

Events THAT STILL LIE AHEAD

THE ushering in of an earth free from unrest, crime, sickness and pain is at hand. Soon prisons, hospitals and medical staffs will no longer be needed.—2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:3-5.

The coming into existence of such a state of affairs in our day is no idle dream. It is based on the dependable promise of the One who is fully capable of bringing it about. That One is man's Creator, Jehovah God.

However, before he takes action to produce an earth filled with righteousness, other startling events must first take place. As they do, God-fearing persons will have added assurance that, despite increasing insecurity and troubles on earth, a righteous new order is near. Rather than give way to great anxiety and fear, they will heed the admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near."—Luke 21:28.

But what world-shaking events will precede the deliverance from the troubles that have long plagued humankind?

PREACHING OF THE "GOOD NEWS"

One of these events is now in the process of reaching its culmination. It is the preaching of the "good news" of God's kingdom by his Christ. (Matt. 24:14) You yourself have seen repeated evidence that this "good news" is being proclaimed. Has

not someone taken the time to speak to you about God's kingdom? And have you not noticed that Jehovah's witnesses are the only group of Christians that are making it a matter of personal concern to reach people privately and publicly so that they might hear this message? Jehovah's witnesses are doing this in 207 lands. Though persecuted, misrepresented and ridiculed in various parts of the earth, they have not stopped their activity. Even when faced with governmental bans, they have kept right on preaching, obeying "God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

What has been the result of this activity? First of all, the disciples chosen by God to be united with his Son in rulership have been gathered from among earth's inhabitants. (Matt. 24:31) But that is not all. Each year tens of thousands of other believers have dedicated their lives to Jehovah God and, by conforming to the Bible's commands, have begun living in a way that reflects subjection to Jesus Christ as King. Today more than two million men, women and children earth wide are doing just that. Their course of action in repentantly accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord to the glory of his Father, Jehovah, was described to the apostle John in a prophetic vision. That vision portrays them as a "great crowd" of persons out of all nations who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."—Rev. 7:9, 14.

This "great crowd" is looking forward with eager anticipation to the prospect of surviving the end of the present ungodly

system of things. They know that the destructive "day of Jehovah" will come right after men and nations reach the point where they are proclaiming "Peace and security!" (1 Thess. 5:3) Already there are indications in that direction. Not only are world leaders more frequently using the words "peace" and "security," but they are also developing a "détente," in which they view more tolerantly the nations that have completely different ideologies and social systems.

DESTRUCTION OF "BABYLON THE GREAT"

But what will be first to go down in destruction at the time that men are saying, "Peace and security!"? From the Bible book of Revelation, we learn that it will be a "woman," a harlot, called "Babylon the Great." But who is she?

The Holy Scriptures say of this harlot that she represents "the great city that has a kingdom over the kings of the earth." (Rev. 17:18) This would make her an empire. Since the Bible refers to some rulers and to commercial elements as mourning her destruction, "Babylon the Great" must be a religious empire. (Rev. 18:9-19) This agrees with the fact that religion has tried to dominate the political scene. Also, the ancient city of Babylon was primarily known for being a religious center. So, then, "Babylon the Great" fittingly represents the world empire of false religion.

Though the political governments have also used religion for their selfish purposes, they will soon tire of religious interference and influence in carrying out their functions. They will become disgusted with "Babylon the Great" and rise up against her in destructive fury.—Rev. 17:16.

GOD'S GREAT WAR

Not satisfied with stamping out false religion, the political elements will next attempt to vent their rage against those

who are upholding true worship—the "chosen ones" and the "great crowd," all loyal disciples of Jesus Christ. Satan the Devil and his demons will incite the political elements to do this and thereby they will be maneuvered into fighting against Jehovah God and his appointed King, Jesus Christ.—Rev. 16:14.

Jehovah God, however, will not permit the nations of the earth to destroy his people. By means of his Son and mighty angelic forces, he will come to the defense of his human servants. The Bible describes symbolically what will take place:

"Look! a white horse. And the one seated upon it is called Faithful and True, and he judges and carries on war in righteousness. . . . Also, the armies that were in heaven were following him on white horses, and they were clothed in white, clean, fine linen. And out of his mouth there protrudes a sharp long sword, that he may strike the nations with it, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. He treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty. And upon his outer garment, even upon his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

"I saw also an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice and said to all the birds that fly in midheaven: 'Come here, be gathered together to the great evening meal of God, that you may eat the fleshy parts of kings and the fleshy parts of military commanders and the fleshy parts of strong men.'”—Rev. 19:11-18.

INVISIBLE RULERS REMOVED FROM THE SCENE

The destruction of ungodly humans would, nevertheless, not be enough to pave the way for righteous conditions on earth. Centuries ago Jehovah God destroyed a wicked world of mankind in a global flood. But that did not prevent wickedness from springing up anew among the descendants of the Flood survivors. One of the major reasons for this was that the Flood did not rid the earth of Satanic influence.

Following the "war of the great day of

God the Almighty" at Har-Magedon, however, Satanic influence will be completely removed. Satan and his demons will be confined to an abyss, a deathlike state of inactivity. Regarding this we read at Revelation 20:1-3:

"I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not mislead the nations anymore."

BLESSINGS AHEAD

The removal of all interference from ungodly men and wicked spirit forces will create a climate conducive to the doing of God's will. Furthermore, with human perfection as an objective, the benefits of Jesus Christ's atoning sacrifice will then be applied in behalf of the "great crowd" of persons who survive the destruction of all wickedness. This "great crowd" will begin to grow to perfection as they individually respond to the help made available to them through the application of Jesus' atoning sacrifice.

Under the direction of God's kingdom, this earth will be transformed into a state of paradisaic loveliness. What Jehovah God did for ancient Israel in fulfillment of his prophetic word he can easily do on a far grander scale in fulfillment of the commission that he gave to man in Genesis 1:28:

"The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron. Without fail it will blossom, and it will really be joyful with joyousness . . . For in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain. And the heat-parched ground will have become as a ready pool, and the thirsty ground as springs of water."—Isa. 35:1-7.

Not only will the survivors of God's great war be able to enjoy these blessings,

but the hundreds of millions who have died will be raised to life with the opportunity of enjoying righteous conditions for all eternity. "The hour is coming," said Christ Jesus, "in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) What joy there will be as the Har-Magedon survivors welcome back the dead from the graves!

EVENTS AHEAD SHOULD STIR US TO ACTION

But what should the events that lie ahead stir you to do? Appreciating that this ungodly system of things is on its way out, would it not be right to join the ever-increasing crowd of persons who are helping others to put themselves in line for God's approval and life? Would it not be most appropriate to strive to maintain a clean standing before Jehovah God? Indeed! And this is exactly what the apostle Peter urged fellow believers to do in view of the coming annihilation of all ungodly elements. We read:

"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah, through which the heavens [not the literal heavens, but "the superior authorities" that have exercised rulership over mankind] being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt! But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell. Hence, beloved ones, since you are awaiting these things, do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace."—2 Pet. 3:11-14.

Is this what you desire to do? If so, Jehovah's Christian witnesses in your locality would be pleased to assist you in gaining an accurate knowledge of God's will now. Why not avail yourself of the opportunity to have a free Bible study right in your own home?

Insight on the News

- Most historians recognize 1914 as a turning point for mankind. That year saw the outbreak

1914—

"A Mortal Change"

of the first world war in human history. A new book, "The Great War and Modern Memory," by Professor Paul Fussell records some of the impact of that conflict. A New York "Times" review of the book comments that "a universe of concepts was shattered: ideas of innocence, of glory, of romanticism. . . . The language, the moral and literary conventions that men brought with them in 1914, Professor Fussell points out, were almost incapable of describing the violent change that was taking place, the massive dehumanization of the first fully industrialized war." Of this war and World War II, which followed, the review goes on to state that "the two modern wars made a mortal change in the moral and psychological ecology of the Atlantic world. We are still exploring the extent and the nature of the change."

The unparalleled slaughter that these wars brought and the fear that they instilled all fit in with the Bible's prophecy concerning our day as a time of 'nation rising against nation' and of mass destruction by the symbolic "great sword" of all-out warfare.—Luke 21:10, 26; Rev. 6:4.

- Were humans made to live just seventy or eighty years and then die? Evidence pointing

The Fantastic Brain

to a different conclusion can be found in the human brain. A recent book, "How the Brain Works," shows that the neurons (nerve cells) in the human brain are "usually estimated at 10 to 30 billion or more." Thus, "there are far more neurons in any one brain than there are people on earth. There are more possible interconnections between neurons in your brain, by many-fold, than between all the telephones that exist—they run into the trillions, to numbers beyond all ordinary meaning."

Surely the human brain was designed to receive, retain and use vastly more information than any human could possibly gain in a short life of seven or eight decades. In fact, the human brain is clearly designed to serve for an

eternity of life. That is what the Bible says that God purposed for man and what he now offers to those exercising faith in him and in his promise of everlasting life in a paradise earth.—John 17:3; Rev. 21:4.

- The newspaper "El Mercurio" of Valparaiso, Chile, reports on a "Call to Youth to Embrace the Priesthood" issued by the archbishop of that city. It quotes the archbishop

Dwindling Priesthood

as saying that in the last twelve years only six new priests have been ordained—one every two years. In that same period sixteen priests died. With a population of 740,000 persons, Valparaiso now has only one priest for every 4,000 inhabitants. According to the archbishop, the next five years should produce just five more priests. Last year 3,000 students entered their fourth year of high school in Valparaiso. But not a single one made application for the Catholic seminary. The archbishop calls this situation 'absurd, desolating, and much too serious to ignore.' Yet what is happening in Chile is but another piece in the global picture of Christendom's religious decline.

- Shedding some light on the cause of the above problem, Leo Rosten, writing in "Saturday Review" magazine, says: "Our churches are in as

"Eye of a Storm"

much turmoil as our political institutions." Reflecting, he asks: "What prophet, what theologian, what historian or scholar could have predicted the militant participation of clergymen in civil-rights marches, . . . the open campaign of homosexuals against anathematization, the mounting skepticism about the validity or effectiveness of church teachings, . . . the phenomena of 'jazz masses' and rock-and-roll music in cathedrals . . . ? We are in the eye of a storm. The velocity and power of that storm should surprise the most sophisticated observers." As the prophet Hosea said of Israel when it turned from God's Word to apostasy: "For it is wind that they keep sowing, and a stormwind is what they will reap."—Hos. 8:7.

OUR REFUGE

UNDER THE

INCORRUPTIBLE “KINGDOM OF THE HEAVENS”

HAVE you ever felt the intense need to seek refuge, to find a place of shelter and protection from danger or distress? Perhaps you are one who has vivid memories of taking refuge night after night in an air-raid shelter in wartime, this giving you a sense of protection, a measure of relief. But what about the dangers and stress of present-day conditions? As a man, do you feel secure in your job? As a woman, do you feel secure in your homelife and personal relationships? Is it safe for you or the children to go out alone at night, or maybe even in the daytime? We could mention a great many more reasons for feeling very insecure, including such things as inflation, vandalism, drugs, pollution and the like. World conditions never looked blacker. World distress is deepening. Man's helplessness becomes more and more evident. Relief from human sources is obviously impossible. The heart-

1. What are some reasons for feeling insecure, leading to what urgent cry?

felt cry goes up, Where can we find that place of secure refuge?

² Before answering that question, let us look at the root cause for these things. When and how did it all start? Looking back, we can see that 1914 C.E. was the big turning point. Until the summer of that year the outlook was promising. There was the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Europe for settling international difficulties. Life for many was genial and promising. Then came World War I like a bolt out of the blue, started by a single pistol shot that developed into

2. (a) In what way was 1914 C.E. a big turning point?
(b) Since then, in what respects has escalation become evident?



bombs raining from the sky. It was hoped to be the war that would end all war. Instead it paved the way for World War II. And now, the stockpiling of nuclear weapons for missile warfare threatens our very existence. Escalation is also seen in other respects. The world population is increasing, like compound interest on money that is invested. With this increase of mouths to feed, there is the talk of world famine in the near future. And what about the widespread growth of pestilences? Not only did the "Spanish flu" of 1918 claim 20 million victims, but, with our permissive society, loathsome sex diseases have become epidemic. Crime, violence and lawlessness are the order of the day. With the growing need for self-preservation, and with so much rivalry, greed, stealing, taking advantage of others, inborn human selfishness is bound to increase. And with the loss of love for fellowman, the love of God has cooled off. Not only has it cooled off, but it is quite popular today to say that God is dead! Of course, we readily admit that there are yet many individuals who are good-hearted and are living decent lives, but it must also be admitted that they are finding it more difficult.

³ Well, we have traced the general trend of things since 1914, but have we really fathomed the root cause? And, more importantly, what is the remedy? Is there one? How can we find a satisfactory answer to these questions? To whom can we go? Happily, yes, there is someone who can give, and already has given us, completely satisfying answers to all these questions. We remind you that as far back as 1876 the Bible Student who became the first president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society stated in print that the Biblical "times of the Gentiles" would expire in the autumn of 1914 resulting in unparalleled trouble for the whole world.

3. (a) How are we guided in finding the real meaning of present-day conditions? (b) What significant question led to Jesus Christ's great prophecy?

Where did he get his information? From God's Word, the Holy Bible, and particularly from Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32 and the great prophecy given by Jesus Christ, God's Son, who was inspired by God's holy spirit. This prophecy forms an integral part of God's Word and is recorded at Matthew 24:4-51, also at Mark 13:5-37 and Luke 21:8-36. The prophecy was given in answer to a noteworthy question raised by Jesus' disciples: "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matt. 24:3) Yes, Jesus foretold the conclusion of a system of things, not only for his day, but in parallel fashion for our day. He also identified the much-needed refuge in which we are keenly interested.

* Looking briefly at the immediate fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in his own day and that of his disciples, we know that the predicted things that reached their peak in the desolation of the temple, the "holy place," and "the holy city," Jerusalem, also the province of Judea in the year 70 C.E., marked the calamitous end of that system of things. What of our day? Do we see the many things that Jesus foretold that make up the composite "sign" marking his presence and the conclusion of the system of things? We have already mentioned quite a few of them, and, even apart from the chronological reckoning concerning the "times of the Gentiles," we can say with confidence that 1914 certainly marked the beginning of the "last days" of this system of things when, as Paul said, "critical times hard to deal with will be here."—2 Tim. 3:1.

THE REMEDY AND THE REFUGE

* We next ask, Is there a remedy? There is no remedy for the present system of

4. What was the immediate fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy, pointing to what similarity in our day?

5. At Luke 21:28-31, how did Jesus tell of the only refuge to which we should flee?

things. According to God's Word, it is deservedly doomed to destruction. But is there nothing to which individuals can turn that will counteract present-day evils? There certainly is, and this is where our attention is drawn to the all-important *refuge* to which we need to flee without delay. Note Jesus' words when he said:

"But as these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near." With that he spoke an illustration to them: "Note the fig tree and all the other trees: When they are already in the bud, by observing it you know for yourselves that now the summer is near. In this way you also, when you see these things occurring, know that the *kingdom of God* is near."

—Luke 21:28-31.

* That is it! That "kingdom of God" deserves our fullest attention. Who is the king of that kingdom? Just preceding the above-quoted words, Jesus, referring to himself, said: "Then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." And following his prophecy he gave three parables, concluding with the one respecting the sheep and the goats, introduced as follows: "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne." (Luke 21:27; Matt. 25:31) There is no doubt as to who is the anointed King of God's kingdom. And there is no doubt as to his worthiness! First, he willingly emptied himself of his previous heavenly glory and then, "when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake. For this very reason also God exalted him to a superior position and kindly gave him the name that is above every other name." (Phil. 2:5-11) He is a living person of today—yes, and highly interested in the fulfillment of his own inspired prophecy!

6. (a) How did Jesus identify the king of God's kingdom? (b) What further identification is found in the Hebrew Scriptures?

His life on earth was a marked life and had been foretold, in its vitally important aspects, in the inspired Hebrew Scriptures, in order to identify clearly who the Messiah was. One of these scriptures foretells our day when "the kings of earth take their stand and high officials themselves have massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one"; then, in reply and with a derisive, angry laugh, Jehovah tells these enemies they are too late. He says: "I, even I, have installed my king upon Zion, my holy mountain." For further identification, Jehovah says to this anointed king: "You are my son." The opposing nations are given to him to "dash them to pieces." But the psalm comes to a fine conclusion: "Happy are all those *taking refuge* in him." (Ps. 2: 1-12) Many other psalms, such as Psalm 91:1, 2, speak of Jehovah as our refuge, or "my refuge," but the means by which he has provided refuge in this day is his kingdom in the hands of his anointed and reigning Son, Christ Jesus.—See Psalm 110:1-4.

* Many times Jesus spoke of the "kingdom of God," or the "kingdom of the heavens." He also spoke of some sharing with him, actually sharing with him as associate kings. Whoever heard of such an arrangement? Has there ever been a nation or an empire that has had 144,000 and one kings ruling in it at the same time? Never has such a thing happened. Even today, with a global population of more than four thousand million, there are not that many kings or rulers, even all of them put together. With whom did this idea originate? Certainly not with man! It is God's idea. It is the purpose of the Creator of heaven and earth. Such a heavenly government with so many kings comprising a world government may seem fantastic to politically minded people. But that is because,

7. What is God's purpose as to some sharing with Christ Jesus, and why is this so astonishing?

just as the literal heavens are higher than the earth, so the heavenly Creator, God, has a way of thinking that is higher than the way in which earthly man thinks. As God once said to his ancient people, Israel: “ ‘The thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, nor are my ways your ways,’ is the utterance of Jehovah. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’ ”—Isa. 55:8, 9.

* So we should not be surprised at anything purposed by him being so much grander than what mere man could have imagined. Centuries later, in the last book of the Bible, Revelation, God disclosed more details respecting this world government. It also gives God's Son the full credit for pursuing a self-sacrificing course as a perfect man on earth. Notice how the apostle John, writing under inspiration, expressed this: “Jesus Christ, ‘the Faithful Witness,’ ‘The firstborn from the dead,’ and ‘The Ruler of the kings of the earth.’ To him that loves us and that loosed us from our sins by means of his own blood—and he made us to be a kingdom, priests to his God and Father—yes, to him be the glory and the might forever. Amen.”—Rev. 1:5, 6.

* If it were not that Jesus Christ poured out his lifeblood in self-sacrifice to God, his footstep followers could never be made kings and priests to God his Father in heaven. Jesus Christ thus plays a vital part in making it possible for these associate kings to share with him in the heavenly kingdom. As he said: “To the one that conquers I will grant to sit down with me on my throne, even as I conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.” (Rev. 3:21) In harmony with this, the twenty-four elders are reported as saying to Jesus Christ: “You were slaughtered and with

your blood you bought persons for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth.”—Rev. 5:9, 10.

¹⁰ As to the number of these associate kings and priests with Christ Jesus, we are not left in doubt. Describing those who will reign with Christ Jesus on the heavenly Mount Zion and telling of their fine qualifications, John writes: “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. . . . And they are singing as if a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders; and no one was able to master that song but the hundred and forty-four thousand, who have been bought from the earth. 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.”—Rev. 14:1-5.

¹¹ These followers of the Lamb are clearly differentiated from mankind in general when Revelation 7:4-8 speaks of them as Israelites of a spiritual kind. As such, they are sealed with the “seal of the living God” in their foreheads. The apostle John lists twelve tribes of them with Israelite patriarchal names. He states that 12,000 were sealed from each of these twelve tribes, giving a grand total of 144,000 spiritual Israelites. The Lamb, Jesus Christ, is himself spoken of as “the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah.” (Rev. 5:5) Hence,

10. Who are seen with the Lamb on Mount Zion, and how are they described?

11, 12. (a) How are these differentiated from mankind in general? (b) When do these king-priests reign with Christ Jesus, and how do they gain entrance into the heavenly kingdom?

8, 9. (a) Respecting this, what further details are given at Revelation 1:5, 6? (b) What additional information is given about this in the book of Revelation?

this finally results in 144,000 and one spiritual Israelites, all together.

¹² The twentieth chapter of Revelation discloses that these 144,000 king-priests enter in upon a reign of a thousand years with the Lamb Jesus Christ immediately after Satan the Devil and his demons are chained and hurled into an abyss, where these wicked spirit forces are unable to mislead the peoples of the earth during Christ's millennial reign together with the ones whom he bought with his sacrificial blood. They enter into the heavenly kingdom with Christ by means of a resurrection to spirit life, spoken of as "the first resurrection." Hence, Revelation 20:6 says: "Happy and holy is anyone having part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority [because they have been made immortal], but they will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years."

AN INCORRUPTIBLE REFUGE

¹³ With all this inspired written evidence before us, we have no grounds for questioning that Jehovah God has purposed a literal government of one hundred and forty-four thousand and one kings to reign over the whole globe during the prescribed thousand years, during which Satan and his demons will be imprisoned in the "abyss." Down till now, our earth has never been favored with a government of that kind, with government officials of such Godly qualities. This heavenly world-government is at hand. It is the kingdom for all people to seek for a refuge that will not fail them.

¹⁴ All man-made kingdoms or governments, as represented by their rulers, by whatever title they may be known, are

subject to corruption. They are corruptible, in the sense that, due to inherited sin and imperfection, they all sicken and die off, but they are also subject to corruption morally. There is no need to submit proof of this. We are only too familiar with the record to date. Not so, however, with the government comprising the "kingdom of the heavens," even though made up of so large a number. Each and every one of them will be incorruptible, both literally, as regards their organisms, and morally. There is no question of the top-most one, Christ Jesus, who, at Hebrews 7:26, is described as "loyal, guileless, undefiled, separated from the sinners, and become higher than the heavens." But what of his associates, chosen from amongst sinful mankind? Well, following their sincere repentance and conversion, turning to God in whole-souled dedication and exercising faith in the merit of Christ's ransom sacrifice, they are accepted by God and quickened by his spirit to a new hope, a heavenly one. As the apostle Peter expressed it: "He [God] gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is reserved in the heavens for you." Then, later, after saying, "You have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth," he adds: "For you have been given a new birth, not by corruptible, but by incorruptible reproductive seed, through the word of the living and enduring God."—1 Pet. 1:3, 4, 22, 23; see also Acts 26:20.

¹⁵ As for the realization of their heavenly hope, Peter says: "He [God] has freely given us the precious and very grand promises, that through these you may become sharers in divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world through lust." And this is confirmed

13. From all the foregoing evidence, what conclusions do we reach?

14. (a) In what two ways are present-day rulers subject to corruption? (b) What can be said in this respect of all the members of God's heavenly government?

15, 16. What do we further learn regarding this, including the scriptures at 2 Peter 1:4 and 1 Corinthians 15:53?

by Paul's word as regards their nature and organism when he wrote: "For this which is corruptible must put on incorruption, and this which is mortal must put on immortality."—2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:53.

¹⁶ As regards those who are not of the "kingdom of the heavens" class, but who seek and find refuge under the Kingdom, these too must prove to be incorruptible morally, but this matter will be discussed later.

THE FALSE GOVERNMENTAL REFUGE

¹⁷ Meanwhile, in order to heighten our appreciation by means of a sharp contrast, let us take a look at a *false* governmental refuge that has been foisted upon mankind, reaching a climax in our day. Since the outbreak of World War I in 1914 the inability of man-made governments to rule mankind successfully has become more and more evident. And yet the people turn increasingly to human government, with more national governments being established since 1919 than in any comparable previous period. The former League of Nations, which died in the throes of World War II, had fewer than sixty member nations at that time. But the United Nations of today has one hundred and thirty-eight member nations. Local rule by the local people, not colonial empires, has been the guiding principle. This multiplication of man-made governments has gone on in spite of the ever-intensified preaching by Jehovah's witnesses that God's Messianic kingdom is mankind's only and immediate hope. During the past sixty-one years hundreds of thousands have responded to this Kingdom message, but these two million advocates of God's kingdom are far outnumbered by the overwhelming majority of earth's four thousand million inhabitants. There is no gainsaying the fact that

17. Since World War I, how and why have people turned increasingly to human government, and in spite of what preaching?

the vast bulk of humankind are manifestly *not* taking refuge under God's kingdom as their only hope.

¹⁸ Should we be surprised that the greater part of mankind have shut their hearts and minds to the Kingdom gospel and prefer human political governments as their refuge in these troublous times? No, not if we are well acquainted with the prophetic scriptures of God's Holy Bible. His Son, the Lamb Jesus Christ, foretold that it would be so. In one of his illustrations, he said: "The kingdom of the heavens has become like a man that sowed fine seed in his field. While men were sleeping, his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat, and left." He went on to say that the sorting out of the weeds from the wheat would wait until the harvest. Later, when explaining the parable, he said: "As for the fine seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; but the weeds are the sons of the wicked one," and added that "the harvest is a conclusion of a system of things." (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) Keep in mind, too, the answer Jesus gave when his disciples asked him: "Why is it you speak to them by the use of illustrations?" Note, now, his reply: "To you [disciples] it is granted to understand the sacred secrets of the kingdom of the heavens, but to those people it is not granted . . . because, looking, they look in vain, and hearing, they hear in vain, neither do they get the sense of it; and toward them the prophecy of Isaiah [at chapter 6:9, 10] is having fulfillment, which says, 'By hearing, you will hear but by no means get the sense of it; and, looking, you will look but by no means see.' For the heart of this people has grown un receptive, and with their ears they have heard without response, and they have shut their eyes; that they might never see with their eyes and hear with their ears and get the sense of it with their hearts

18. (a) What illustration of Jesus foretold two contrasting classes, and how so? (b) What did Jesus further say that gives the real point to many of his parables?

and turn back, and I heal them.' " (Matt. 13:10-15) This setting gives the thrust to many of Jesus' parables. Is it not exactly the same today with the "weeds" at this "harvest," the "conclusion of a system of things"? Their hearts and minds are shut.

¹⁹ Bearing on the same subject, we recall the warning that the apostle Paul gave to the elders of the congregation at Ephesus when he said: "I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:27-30) These false teachers would be very corrupt and, as Paul also foretold, would gradually form

19. (a) What similar warning did Paul give at Acts 20:27-30? (b) How did the "man of lawlessness" develop, ultimately forming what false governmental refuge?

a composite "man of lawlessness." (2 Thess. 2:3-12) It was already at work in the days of the apostles, but it did not take definite form until the fourth century when Emperor Constantine the Great forced a compromise with the so-called "bishops," the false teachers of his day. So the adulterated Christianity that these "bishops" supervised was merged with the pagan Roman religion. This fusion religion became the State religion, and in this way Christendom was founded. It is a huge religious mass today and is thoroughly leavened with paganism, worldliness, badness, traditions of men, hypocrisy, doctrines of demons. Christendom made herself a part of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, and is the dominant part of that religious empire.—Rev. 17:3-6; Gal. 5:9, 19-21.

A POSITIVE COMMITMENT REQUIRED

FOR *Those Taking Refuge*

ON LOOKING into the last book of the Bible, we find two symbolic women who are seen in sharp contrast with each other. The one is "Babylon the Great," and the other is the "wife" of the Lamb of God. The first is branded as a "harlot." The second, "the bride, the Lamb's wife," is a virgin. (Rev. 17:3-6, 15; 21:9) Both are religious organizations, the one unclean, the other clean. The "bride, the Lamb's wife," is the congregation of the 144,000 virginlike faithful followers of the

Lamb Jesus Christ, all of them being spiritual Israelites. Babylon the Great is the world empire of false religion as derived from ancient Babylon. Hence, it is composed of all of those who practice religions in opposition to true Christianity. That is why the apostle John "saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." (Rev. 17:6) The religion of the members of Babylon the Great is, therefore, not Christian, but Babylonish, hence false.

1. What two symbolic women are mentioned in the book of Revelation, and how are they identified?

² By becoming the dominant religious organization of the Roman World Power, Christendom was, in effect, a daughter of Babylon the Great, of whom it is said: "Upon her forehead was written a name, a mystery: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of the harlots and of the disgusting things of the earth.'" (Rev. 17:5) It is no wonder, then, that Christendom imitates her religious mother, of whom it is said: "With [her] the kings of the earth committed fornication, whereas those who inhabit the earth were made drunk with the wine of her fornication." (Rev. 17:1, 2) Christendom enjoys intimate friendship with the world. This reminds us of the scripture at James 4:4: "Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God." The many unions of Church and State in Christendom do not stand to her credit. They brand her as a spiritual fornicatrix, a meddler in world politics. She is condemned as a false and an unclean refuge for mankind.

³ What befalls Babylon the Great also befalls Christendom. There are no two ways about it. Revelation, chapter 17, though written in symbolic language, makes it unmistakably plain. Coming to the climax of the drama pictured in that chapter, we read: "And the ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast [on which Babylon the Great had been riding as mistress], 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." Not a pretty picture!

—Rev. 17:16.

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2. What is the relationship between Christendom and Babylon the Great, and how is this made evident?
 3. How is the destiny of Babylon the Great, including Christendom, vividly portrayed?

FLEE FROM BABYLON THE GREAT TO GOD'S TRUE WOMAN

⁴ Not surprisingly, early in Revelation, chapter 18, we hear the urgent and compelling cry: "*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. . . . In one day her plagues will come, death and mourning and famine, and she will be completely burned with fire, because Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong." (Rev. 18:4-8) Have you heard and heeded that cry? Perhaps you say that you have seen the hypocrisy of the churches of Christendom and have left them, if indeed you ever reckoned to have membership in any one of them. There are many in our present generation who have no religious background at all, but who say in a vague sort of way that they believe there must be a God. Do you feel satisfied to be simply nonreligious? You could hardly claim to be in, or seeking to be in, a safe place of refuge if you are holding to such a negative and noncommitted attitude. In view of all the evidence of the approaching end of the present system of things, including Christendom, we must face the question: On whose side are we in this day of approaching climax?

⁵ Perhaps you say that you are not one of the "kingdom of the heavens" class comprising those who know they have the heavenly hope, as was discussed earlier. But this does not rule you out of God's favor or of finding refuge under his wings. (Ps. 91:4) Following the description of the 144,000 spiritual Israelites at Revelation 7:4-8, we read: "After these things 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

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4. (a) At Revelation 18:4-8, what compelling cry did John hear, and why was it an urgent one? (b) How might some react to this cry, but what question must we all face today?
 5. After the vision of the 144,000, what crowd of people did John see, giving what detail?

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.' " Then, for further identification, we read: "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. That is why they are before the throne of God; and they are rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple . . . [and] the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, will shepherd them, and will guide them to fountains of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes." What an inviting picture!—Rev. 7:9-17.

⁶ For further indication as to who comprise this "great crowd," and inviting you to be one of them, may we remind you of what Jesus said concerning his followers, whom he likened to sheep. As regards those who would share with him in his throne, he said: "Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) Yes, a "*little flock*." But on another occasion, when speaking more extensively about his "sheep" and himself as the "fine shepherd" who 'surrenders his soul in behalf of the sheep,' he said: "And I have *other sheep*, which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one shepherd." He also made this very personal. A little earlier he said: "He [the shepherd] calls his own sheep *by name* and leads them out." This means that if you become one of his true sheep by disowning yourself and continually following him, then he knows you personally. And notice the very personal note in his further words: "*My* sheep listen to *my* voice [and to no one else], and I know them [indi-

vidually], and they follow me. And I give them everlasting life, and they will by no means ever be destroyed, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me is something greater than all other things, and no one can snatch them out of the hand of the Father." What a grand assurance of a safe refuge!—John 10:3, 16, 27-29; see also Matthew 16:24.

⁷ Returning to the question as to whose side we are on, we do well to consider what the apostle Peter was inspired to say respecting this. Toward the close of his second letter he first warned of the rise of "false teachers among you. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects and will disown even the owner that bought them, bringing speedy destruction upon themselves." With these imitation Christians in mind, he later wrote: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" Is that not exactly the attitude that is adopted generally by Christendom's clergy and their followers? We trust that it is not *your* attitude.—2 Pet. 2:1, 2; 3:3, 4.

⁸ Rather, we trust that the sincere attitude of all of us is in line with the apostle's further exhortation. After telling that "by the word of God" a former system of things, a former heavens and earth, "suffered destruction when it was deluged with water," he then continued, saying that "by the same word [of God] the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." He then warned about becom-

6. (a) How did Jesus speak of this people? (b) In what way did he make this very personal, leading to what fine assurance?

7. What warning did Peter give respecting "false teachers"?

8. How did Peter go on to sound a warning especially for our day?

ing impatient, as many are these days, by God's seeming slowness, saying: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, [now notice the reason] but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." He again warned that "Jehovah's day will come as a thief" in which the present symbolic heavens and earth, under Satan's invisible control, will be destroyed.—2 Pet. 3:5-10.

⁹ Then comes the exhortation: "Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) The ridiculers of today do not take advantage of God's patience. However, although they do not appreciate it, God has acted very kindly toward them with a view to their repenting. As the apostle Paul wrote: "Do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and long-suffering, because you do not know that the kindly quality of God is trying to lead you to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4) Woe betide us if we despise God's kindness!

¹⁰ But, on the positive side, how should we answer the question: What sort of persons ought you to be? And how can we show that we are "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah"? For one thing, all of us, whether our hope of life is heavenly or earthly, must respond to Peter's further plea: "Do your utmost to be found finally by him spotless and unblemished and in peace." (2 Pet. 3:12, 14) Yes, we must always strive to be morally incorruptible. We must maintain our integrity, "pure in heart" in whole-souled devotion to Jehovah. (Matt. 5:8) Granted, we are all imperfect and fall short every

9. Why is it important to take the right view of God's patience?

10. On what basis and in what way can we respond to the plea at 2 Peter 3:14?

day, but, as mentioned in the very next letter in the Bible, at 1 John 1:7: "If we are walking in the light as he [God] himself is in the light, we do have a sharing with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." Yes, Jesus Christ "is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins [the Christian congregation, the "little flock"], yet not for ours only but also for the *whole world's*." Hence, however many come into the "great crowd" of "other sheep," they can, and must, 'wash their robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.'—1 John 2:2; Rev. 7:14.

¹¹ But that is not all. Do you remember our mention of those two symbolic women set in sharp contrast with each other? The one is the harlot, Babylon the Great, including Christendom, the other is a virgin, the Lamb's wife, the Christian congregation. It is not sufficient to get out of Babylon the Great, to abandon all false religion. Who were told, at Revelation 18:4, to "get out of her"? It was: "*My people*." This means that you must definitely identify yourself as one of God's people, as one of his devoted servants or slaves, as a follower of the fine shepherd, Christ Jesus, one of his "sheep." For further information about this, we must go back to the Hebrew Scriptures and prophecies forming the basis, not only of the command at Revelation 18:4, but of most of what is contained in that last book of the Bible.

¹² According to Isaiah's prophecy, Jehovah's Messianic Servant, Christ Jesus, before performing his role on earth, was a member of Jehovah's heavenly organization of faithful "sons of God." (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7) That heavenly spirit organization takes the part of a "wife" who is married to Jehovah the Creator,

11. Besides the abandonment of false religion, what definite commitment is indicated at Revelation 18:4?

12. (a) How did Isaiah's prophecy speak of Jehovah's heavenly organization? (b) What part did Christ Jesus play in connection with this organization?

just as the ancient nation of Israel, when taken into the Law covenant, was as if married to Jehovah and was pictured as an earthly wife of his. (Isa. 54:1, 5-8) Jehovah selected his principal heavenly son to serve as the Messianic Servant on earth. So Jehovah's motherly organization in heaven furnished this one to be the prime vindicator of her Husband's universal sovereignty. When this Servant had faithfully fulfilled his course on earth and was resurrected from the dead, the motherly organization in heaven received him back as the "firstborn from the dead." (Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5, 17, 18) Her joy was foretold! Listen: "'Cry out joyfully,'" says Isaiah 54:1, "'you barren woman that did not give birth! Become cheerful with a joyful outcry and cry shrilly, you that had no childbirth pains, for the sons of the desolated one are more numerous than the sons of the woman with a husbandly owner,' Jehovah has said."

¹³ This scripture is applied by the apostle Paul, not to the Jewish nation after its exile in Babylon, but to Jehovah's wifely organization in heaven. At Galatians 4:22 through 5:1, Paul contrasts the Jewish nation with its capital at Jerusalem, and which nation rejected Jesus Christ, with God's heavenly wifely organization, and says that the "Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother." According to Isaiah's prophecy, God's heavenly organization was to have more children than the Messiah Jesus, for whom she had long waited as if in barrenness. She was to become the spiritual mother of the 144,000 associates of the Messiah Jesus. This is clearly shown at Isaiah 54:13, addressed to the "Jerusalem above," the "heavenly Jerusalem" or "Mount Zion," and which reads: "And all your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant." That this is the correct under-

standing is evidenced by the fact that Jesus Christ applied that scripture to his own disciples, at John 6:45.—Heb. 12:22.

¹⁴ Thus we can say that God's wifelike heavenly organization is represented on earth by the well-taught and well-trained associates of Christ Jesus. Hence, not only must we flee from the unclean harlot, Babylon the Great, but we must flee to and find refuge in close association with God's true woman, the "heavenly Jerusalem," represented by the virginlike followers of the Lamb, Christ Jesus, on earth. This is clearly seen in the situation that obtains today with that body of Christian people known as Jehovah's witnesses. Among them, forming a nucleus, there is a remnant of those who are anointed by God's spirit to the heavenly hope. Closely gathered around that nucleus is an ever-increasing "great crowd" of "other sheep," forming "one flock [under] one shepherd." —John 10:16.

¹⁵ This is no empty claim. They show that they are indeed "keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." Despite all the increasing pressures, they hold to the 'pure religion and undefiled' by keeping themselves without spot from the unclean world. They refuse to worship the political "wild beast" and its man-made "image," the United Nations. They keep from being stained with bloodguilt, keeping strictly neutral and nonparticipating with respect to the sanguinary wars of nations and political parties of this world. They copy Jesus Christ their leader in being no part of this world.—Jas. 1:27; Rev. 13:1-15; 15:2-4; John 15:19; 17:14, 16.

¹⁶ With emphasis on the positive side, they prove that they are "seeking first the

14. How is God's organization represented on earth, calling for what positive commitment?

15. In what ways do Jehovah's witnesses show that they keep Jehovah's day "close in mind"?

16. How do they carry out the two commands at Matthew 24:14 and Matthew 28:18-20, and with what evidence of Jehovah's blessing?

13. (a) How and to whom did Paul apply Isaiah 54:1? (b) In harmony with this, how did Jesus apply Isaiah 54:13?

kingdom [of their heavenly Father] and his righteousness" by their persistence in proclaiming what they know to be man's only hope and refuge, as Jesus foretold: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." They also persist, while there is yet time, in carrying out the command of the resurrected Jesus Christ to go and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in water and teaching them to observe all the things that he commanded them. (Matt. 6:33; 24:14; 28:18-20) That all of this has had Jehovah's blessing is seen, not only in the truly remarkable increase of those crowding into Jehovah's organization, but in the peaceful, happy, secure and clean condition, obtaining earth wide among Jehovah's dedicated people. It is truly like a spiritual paradise. Listen, then, and give heed to this Scriptural invitation, to come and find refuge in this spiritual paradise.

INVITATION TO A SPIRITUAL PARADISE

¹⁷ At the close of Isaiah, chapter 54, comes the grand promise to the spiritual sons of the "Jerusalem above": "Any weapon whatever that will be formed against you will have no success, and any tongue at all that will rise up against you in the judgment you will condemn." (Isa. 54:17) Then comes the thrilling invitation: "Hey there, all you thirsty ones! Come to the water. And the ones that have no money! Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk even without money and without price. . . . Listen intently to me, and eat what is good, and let your soul find its exquisite delight in fatness itself." (Isa. 55:1, 2) The clue to the situation is seen when we recall that Isaiah foretold the desolating of Jerusalem and Judea and the exile of the Jews to Babylon for seventy years. He also foretold their

17. What promise and what invitation were given at Isaiah 54:17 and Isaiah 55:1, 2, and with what miniature fulfillment?

liberation through Cyrus the Persian, who was used as a prophetic type of God's Messianic Servant, Christ Jesus, who would overthrow and destroy modern Babylon the Great. (Isa. 44:28-45:6) But what of today?

¹⁸ During World War I, Babylon the Great really got Jehovah's witnesses in her power by means of her worldly paramours, the political, military and judicial authorities. There were widespread persecution and bans, climaxed by the imprisonment of members of the governing body of Jehovah's witnesses. The outlook was dim. Then suddenly an unexpected postwar period opened up before them. The message of deliverance came from Jehovah, the Scriptural message of deliverance from Babylon the Great by means of the established Messianic kingdom. The concrete proof of this was seen in the release from prison of the above-mentioned members and their being totally relieved of all false charges. Closely following in the same year, 1919, the leading article appeared in *The Watch Tower* entitled "Blessed Are the Fearless," and which was the theme of the General Convention at Cedar Point, Ohio, September 1-8, 1919. At that convention, as a sign of more spiritual food and a greater work ahead, there was announced the publication of a new biweekly magazine, *The Golden Age*. As you can imagine, all of this was like refreshing water, strengthening bread, joy-giving wine and fattening milk to God's true servants.

¹⁹ That was only the beginning, the first step, of the restoration of a spiritual paradise for God's people. Tremendous forward steps have been taken since then, as the modern history of Jehovah's witnesses shows, and which record is available for

18. How did the experiences of Jehovah's witnesses from 1914 to 1919 lead up to a major fulfillment of the above scriptures?

19. What subsequent steps have been taken toward the restoration of a spiritual paradise?

all to see and check for themselves. Additionally, each forward step can be seen to be under the direction of the Bible's Author, who said: "My word . . . will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it. For with rejoicing you people will go forth, and with peace you will be brought in . . . the very trees of the field will all clap their hands. Instead of the thicket of thorns the juniper tree will come up. Instead of the stinging nettle the myrtle tree will come up. And it must become for Jehovah something famous, a sign to time indefinite that will not be cut off."—Isa. 55:10-13.

²⁰ What a grand and inviting description of a spiritual paradise! And you are invited to have a personal share in that paradise if you stick closely to God's Word. As it says at Psalm 1:1-3: "Happy is the man . . . [whose] delight is in the law of Jehovah, and in his law he reads in an undertone day and night." What happens to that man? "He will certainly become like a tree planted by streams of water, that gives its own fruit in its season and the foliage of which does not wither [re-

20. How is the invitation to share in this paradise expressed at Psalm 1:1-3?

maining ever fruitful and ever green], and everything he does will succeed."

²¹ The way into the spiritual paradise is still open! The invitation to enter and enjoy it is still sounding out world wide! As expressed by the king in Jesus' parable: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." (Matt. 25:34) In fact, the Holy Scriptures, God's Word, concludes with this invitation: "And the spirit and the bride keep on saying: 'Come!' And let anyone hearing say: 'Come!' And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free." As a last word, John, in vision, hears Christ Jesus say: "He that bears witness of these things says, 'Yes; I am coming quickly.'" Then John eagerly responds: "Amen! Come, Lord Jesus."—Rev. 22:17-20.

²² Why not make a positive commitment and take refuge under the incorruptible "kingdom of the heavens"? With such an oft-repeated and pressing invitation, will you not eagerly respond? Will you not come?

21, 22. (a) How do the scriptures at Matthew 25:34 and Revelation 22:17-20 enlarge on this invitation? (b) What personal and positive commitment can we make in response to this invitation?

Separenness from the World Can Be Lifesaving

"The world has hated them," Jesus Christ said of his followers, "because they are no part of the world." (John 17:14) By keeping themselves separate from the world—its politics, ways and attitudes—true Christians often become objects of ridicule and outright hatred. But such separateness may also serve as a protection in times of political upheaval.

A man living in a South American university city found this to be true in his case. He was very active at the university in directing political activities. Then, his casual interest in the Scriptures, sparked by a conversation with one of Jehovah's witnesses, developed into a serious study of the Bible. Learning the Christian view

of noninvolvement in politics, he gradually withdrew from his circle of friends and their ideologies.

His former friends and political associates scoffed and ridiculed what they termed his "newfound ignorance." Time and again he explained his Bible-based stand to them. Then, in the early part of the 1970's, a sudden turn of events in the political scene brought a change of attitude toward the ideologies that this man had once supported. His former associates were either exiled, imprisoned or killed. How happy he is to be alive and free today because of having taken his stand as a disciple of Jesus Christ!

MAKING CHRISTIANITY YOUR WAY OF LIFE

FIRST-CENTURY followers of Jesus Christ were spoken of as belonging to "The Way." (Acts 9:2) That can still be said of true Christians. Why? Because their manner of life centers around faith in Christ. And, like Jesus, they are wholeheartedly devoted to Jehovah God. It is their way of life.

Perhaps you have been studying the Bible with Jehovah's Christian witnesses and attending meetings at their local Kingdom Hall. If so, you probably are happy with the spiritual things you are receiving. But very likely you realize that being a worshiper of Jehovah is not simply a matter of adhering to certain doctrines and meeting with those who believe in God and Christ. Rather, practicing true religion influences every aspect of the Christian's life.

Some people think that being so concerned with spiritual matters is too restrictive. They may reason that they already are accountable to "Caesar's" tax regulations, traffic laws and many other rules, and that is enough for them. Such individuals say that they want to be free. They do not yet realize that "where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom." They have yet to experience that "his commandments are not burdensome."—2 Cor. 3:17; 1 John 5:3.

Actually, great freedom and happiness result from adhering to God's requirements and making Christianity one's way of life. For example, consider the matter of employment. Since the Bible condemns laziness, one who is a real Christian works diligently. (Prov. 20:4) Being industrious,

he is likely to become quite skilled. In turn, increased proficiency can make his job more secure, or it may result in advancement. If an employer must reduce his working force, such a person is likely to be retained. There is a demand for conscientious and skillful workers. Appropriately, God's Word says: "Have you beheld a man skillful in his work? Before kings is where he will station himself; he will not station himself before commonplace men."—Prov. 22:29.

But suppose your employer wants you to be dishonest in dealing with his customers. Well, the Scriptures say, "A cheating pair of scales is something detestable to Jehovah." God hates "a false tongue," and "one of little means is better than a lying man." (Prov. 11:1; 6:16, 17; 19:22) As a person who is trying to please God, therefore, doubtless you would respectfully tell your employer that you will neither cheat nor lie at his behest. Would that result in the loss of your job? Not necessarily, for often a principled man or woman gains increased respect. Furthermore, most employers would be delighted to have workers who will not lie to them or steal things at their places of employment.

It is possible, of course, that your firm stand for what is right might result in the loss of your job. In that event, other employment would have to be sought that requires no violation of Christian conscience. But Jehovah's hand is not short. "A young man I used to be," declared the psalmist David under divine inspiration, "I have also grown old, and yet I have not seen anyone righteous left entirely, nor his

offspring looking for bread."—Ps. 37:25.

A similar desire to conduct oneself "honestly in all things" motivates schoolchildren who are making Christianity their way of life. (Heb. 13:18) Since they do not cheat during examinations, they get more benefit from instruction that is being provided than do the students who cheat when taking tests. So the Christian course is more practical. Besides that, honest Christians can "spend the night satisfied" instead of being unable to sleep well because of a guilty conscience.—Prov. 19:23.

Those making Christianity their way of life also shun sexual immorality, because they wish to please Jehovah and realize that "God will judge fornicators and adulterers" in an adverse way. (Heb. 13:4) Today many persons desire supposed sexual freedom and do not want Biblical restraints. But who has true freedom from the anxieties of marital unfaithfulness and a host of other troubles? Those making Christianity their way of life.

The Bible book of Proverbs represents a "young man in want of heart," or lacking good motive, as being misled by an immoral woman. "All of a sudden," it is said, "he is going after her, like a bull that comes even to the slaughter . . . until an arrow cleaves open his liver, just as a bird hastens into the trap, and he has not known that it involves his very soul." (Prov. 7:6-23) As it is, syphilis sometimes attacks the liver, even as it does other organs of the body. The consequences of this venereal disease can be fatal, but the person who really makes Christianity his way of life refrains from immoral conduct that is physically, mentally and spiritually detrimental.

Now, please think about your homelife. For example, consider the husband-wife relationship. The apostle Paul wrote: "Let each one of you individually so love his wife as he does himself; on the other hand,

the wife should have deep respect for her husband." (Eph. 5:33) Of course, to be loved and appreciated by her husband, a woman must conduct herself in ways that produce these feelings. Then, too, a husband will not be respected deeply unless he acts in a manner that earns such esteem.

Surely Christian attitudes would benefit any marriage. And family life in general goes well when those in the household display godly traits. Obviously, any family has reason for happiness when its members exhibit qualities such as love, compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness and long-suffering.—Col. 3:12-14.

Making Christianity one's way of life certainly results in many benefits. Yet, it does not require asceticism or extreme self-denial. For instance, proper recreation has its place among Christians. The Scriptures say: "For everything there is an appointed time . . . a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to wail and a time to skip about."—Eccl. 3:1, 4.

As you progress in knowledge of God's Word, the Bible, you will appreciate more and more that a Christian life truly is balanced, joyous and satisfying. The person adhering to Jehovah's requirements does not feel burdened with oppressive rules. Rather, he knows real freedom and happiness because he has come to 'know the truth, and the truth has set him free.' (John 8:32) That is the lot of all who really make Christianity their way of life.

IN COMING ISSUES

- Reasonableness Makes Life More Enjoyable.
- Profiting from Jonah's Experience.
- Christian Greatness Comes from Serving.

A GOD WHO MERITS OUR TRUST

HUMAN promises are often unreliable. Despite this, there are still people whom we trust. Why? Our confidence is mainly based on their past record of dependability and trustworthiness. We know that any number of things could prevent them from carrying out what they have promised. But we do not let these possibilities keep us from trusting them.

What about our Creator? Does he not merit far greater trust? Yes, he has given us basis for being sure that nothing will ever prevent a single promise of his from being fulfilled. The past record of Jehovah God as a Fulfiller of his word is without as much as even one flaw. Take the case of the Israelites in the time of Joshua. They witnessed the fulfillment of God's promise that they would be given the land of Canaan—a promise that had been made to their forefather Abraham *over four hundred years* earlier. (Gen. 15:13-21) Also, in fulfillment of God's promise given through Moses and with divine help and protection, they succeeded in taking over Canaan despite the fierce opposition of stronger nations. (Deut. 7:17-21; 11:23) Looking back on what Jehovah God had done, Joshua could say to the Israelites: "Not a promise failed out of all the good promise that Jehovah had made to the

house of Israel; it all came true."—Josh. 21:45.

NO OBSTACLE CAN STOP THE FULFILLMENT

How different it is with man! Unless he can carry out his promise in a comparatively short time, he may be prevented by unforeseen occurrences from ever doing so. His word of promise could become a dead word. But in the case of the eternal God, his word of promise is always 'alive and powerful.' (Heb. 4:12) Nothing can prevent its accomplishment.

Through his prophet Isaiah (55:10, 11), Jehovah declared: "Just as the pouring rain descends, and the snow, from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout, and seed is actually given to the sower and bread to the eater, so my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."

Once rain or snow starts falling, who can prevent the precipitation from filtering down into the soil? The water descending in the form of snow or rain is bound to accomplish its purpose. Combining with nutrients in the soil, it will provide what plants need to grow and to produce fruit. In the case of grain, part of the seed produced may be set aside for sowing in the next season and a far larger portion may be ground into flour for making bread. In this way the ultimate purpose of the precipitation is realized.

Similarly, every detail of God's promises will be fulfilled, regardless of what obstacles might stand in the way. This is well illustrated in the case of the specific word of promise under discussion in Isaiah chapter 55. Verses 12 and 13 read: "With rejoicing you people will go forth, and with peace you will be brought in. The moun-

tains and the hills themselves will become cheerful before you with a joyful outcry, and the very trees of the field will all clap their hands. Instead of the thicket of thorns the juniper tree will come up. Instead of the stinging nettle the myrtle tree will come up."

This promise pointed forward to the time when the desolated land of Judah, overgrown with thorns and nettles, would again be cultivated and inhabited. The fulfillment of this promise, however, may have seemed nearly impossible to the Israelites who were taken into Babylonian exile. The capital of the Chaldean Empire, Babylon, was strongly fortified, invincible from all appearances. As long as the Babylonian dynasty ruled, there was no hope of ever being set free. That dynasty is described in Scripture as having the reputation of 'making the productive land like the wilderness, overthrowing its very cities, and not opening the way homeward even for the prisoners' or exiles.—Isa. 14:17.

Yet this great obstacle did not prevent the promise from being fulfilled. Suddenly, *in one night*, great Babylon fell to the Medes and Persians under the command of Cyrus. Shortly thereafter, Cyrus issued a decree enabling Jewish exiles to return to the desolated land of Judah to rebuild the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem.—2 Chron. 36:22, 23.

ADDED ASSURANCE GIVEN

Another reason why we can have the utmost trust in God's promises is the fact that he has staked his very name or reputation on his word. In the case of his promise to Abraham, for instance, he even added his oath. At Hebrews 6:13 we are told: "When God made his promise to Abraham, since he could not swear by anyone greater, he swore by himself."

The amazing thing about this oath-

bound promise is that its fulfillment did not rest solely with Jehovah God. How so? In that it was to be through the "seed" of Abraham that 'all nations of the earth were to bless themselves.' (Gen. 22:18) The primary "seed" of Abraham proved to be Jesus Christ. (Gal. 3:16) As such, would he maintain perfect integrity while on earth? The fulfillment of God's promise depended upon that.

Jesus Christ did maintain his perfection down to the very death. So the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham, as well as of all other promises of God, is certain. Now there is no question about the identity of the primary one of Abraham's seed, nor about the possibility of that one's proving himself unsuitable for being the one through whom all nations would bless themselves. Second Corinthians 1:20 gives this faith-strengthening assurance: "No matter how many the promises of God are, they have become Yes by means of him. Therefore also through him is the 'Amen' said to God for glory through us."

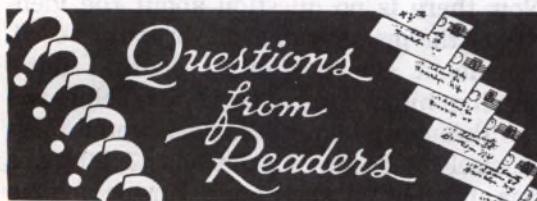
Rightly Jesus Christ is even called the "Amen," meaning, literally, "sure," "truly," "so be it," "truth." (Rev. 3:14) As such, he is more than just a speaker of truth. His life course of perfect integrity-keeping as a man, including his sacrificial death, confirmed and made possible the realization of all the promises of his Father. In Jesus Christ all of God's promises find fulfillment.—John 14:6.

It was Jehovah God who made it possible for his Son to become the primary seed of Abraham by miraculously causing him to be born of the virgin Mary, a descendant of Abraham through the royal line of David. As a loving Father, Jehovah felt keenly the terrible suffering to which his Son was subjected on earth. Yet he was willing to make the supreme sacrifice, giving his Son in behalf of the world. So we cannot imagine that Jehovah God will now in

some way fail to keep his word after having laid a solid foundation for its fulfillment at the cost of the life of his dearly beloved Son. As the apostle Paul pointed out: "He who did not even spare his own Son but delivered him up for us all, why will he not also with him kindly give us all other things?"—Rom. 8:32.

Yes, how could anyone fear that perhaps some promise of God might remain unfulfilled? Jehovah God has already made

the supreme sacrifice. His word and his oath to Abraham proved to be no lie but absolute truth. Through the course of human history, Jehovah has demonstrated his trustworthiness. Never did he fail in keeping his word of promise. Truly, Jehovah is a God who merits our absolute trust. He will not fail us. May we, therefore, strive hard not to fail him, exerting ourselves to maintain an approved standing before him.



- Does the rendering of John 1:1 in the *New World Translation* violate rules of Greek grammar or conflict with worship of only one God?

The *New World Translation* renders John 1:1 as follows: "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god." Some have objected to the translation "a god," which appears in the final clause of this verse. They claim that the translators were wrong in putting an "a" in there before "god." Is this really a mistranslation?

While the Greek language has no indefinite article corresponding to the English "a," it does have a definite article *ho*, often rendered into English as "the." For example, *ho Khristos'*, "the Christ," *ho Kyrios'*, "the Lord," *ho Theos'*, literally, "the God."

Frequently, though, nouns occur in Greek without the article. Grammarians refer to these nouns as "anarthrous," meaning "used without the article." Interestingly, in the final part of John 1:1, the Greek word for "god," *theos'*, does not have the definite article *ho* before it. How do translators render such anarthrous Greek nouns into English?

Often they add the English indefinite article "a" to give proper sense to the passage. For example, in the concluding portion of John 9:

17 the Greek text literally states, according to the interlinear literal translation by clergyman Alfred Marshall, D.Litt: "And he said[,] — A prophet he is." There is no definite article before the Greek word for "prophet" here. The translator, therefore, rendered the word as "a prophet," as do many other English translations.—*Authorized Version, New American Standard Bible*, also translations by Charles B. Williams and William F. Beck.

This does not mean, however, that every time an anarthrous noun occurs in the Greek text it should appear in English with the indefinite article. Translators render these nouns variously, at times even with a "the," understanding them as definite, though the definite article is missing. At Matthew 27:40, for instance, several English Bible versions have the phrase "the Son of God," though the Greek word for "son" is without the definite article.

What about John 1:1? Marshall's interlinear translation of it reads: "In [the] beginning was the Word, and the Word was with — God, and God was the Word." As noted above, no "the" appears before "God" in the final clause of this verse. The New World Bible Translation Committee chose to insert the indefinite article "a" there. This helps to distinguish "the Word," Jesus Christ, as a god, or divine person with vast power, from the God whom he was "with," Jehovah, the Almighty. Some persons familiar with Greek claim that in doing so the translators violated an important rule of Greek grammar. Why so?

The problem, they say, is word order. Back in 1933 Greek scholar E. C. Colwell published an article entitled "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament."

In it he wrote: "A definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb. . . . A predicate nominative which precedes the verb cannot be translated as an indefinite or a 'qualitative' noun solely because of the absence of the article; if the context suggests that the predicate is definite, it should be translated as a definite noun in spite of the absence of the article."

At John 1:1 the anarthrous predicate noun *theos* does precede the verb, the Greek word order being literally: "God [predicate] was [verb] the Word [subject]." Concerning this verse Colwell concluded: "The opening verse of John's Gospel contains one of the many passages where this rule suggests the translation of a predicate as a definite noun." Thus some scholars claim that the only really correct way to translate this clause is: "And the Word was God."

Do these statements of Colwell prove that "a god" is a mistranslation at John 1:1? Perhaps you noticed this scholar's wording that an anarthrous predicate noun that precedes the verb should be understood as definite "if the context suggests" that. Further along in his argument Colwell stressed that the predicate is indefinite in this position "only when the context demands it." Nowhere did he state that all anarthrous predicate nouns that precede the verb in Greek are definite nouns. Not any inviolable rule of grammar, but context must guide the translator in such cases.

The Greek text of the Christian Scriptures has many examples of this type of predicate noun where other translators into English have added the indefinite article "a." Consider, for example, Marshall's interlinear translation of the following verses: "Says to him the woman: Sir, I perceive that a prophet [predicate] art [verb] thou [subject]." (John 4:19) "Said therefore to him—Pilate: Not really a king [predicate] art [verb] thou [subject]? Answered — Jesus: Thou sayest that a king [predicate] I am [verb, with subject included]." —John 18:37.

Did you notice the expressions "a prophet," "a king" (twice)? These are anarthrous predicate nouns that precede the verb in Greek. But the translator rendered them with the indefinite article "a." There are numerous examples of this in English versions of the Bible. For further illustration consider the following from

the Gospel of John in *The New English Bible*: "A devil" (6:70); "a slave" (8:34); "a murderer . . . a liar" (8:44); "a thief" (10:1); "a hireling" (10:13); "a relation" (18:26).

Alfred Marshall explains why he used the indefinite article in his interlinear translation of all the verses mentioned in the two previous paragraphs, and in many more: "The use of it in translation is a matter of individual judgement. . . . We have inserted 'a' or 'an' as a matter of course where it seems called for." Of course, neither Colwell (as noted above) nor Marshall felt that an "a" before "god" at John 1:1 was called for. But this was not because of any inflexible rule of grammar. It was "individual judgement," which scholars and translators have a right to express. The New World Bible Translation Committee expressed a different judgment in this place by the translation "a god."^{*}

Certain scholars have pointed out that anarthrous predicate nouns that precede the verb in Greek may have a qualitative significance. That is, they may describe the nature or status of the subject. Thus some translators render John 1:1: "The Logos was divine," (Moffatt); "the Word was divine," (Goodspeed); "the nature of the Word was the same as the nature of God," (Barclay); "the Word was with God and shared his nature," (The Translator's New Testament).

Does being "divine" or godlike mean that Jesus Christ is himself almighty and coeternal with God the Father?

It is true that trinitarians attach special significance to the divine status of Jesus. They even employ a special non-Biblical Greek term, *homoousios* ("of one substance," or "of one essence"), in this regard. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* explains under the heading "Consubstantiality," which is an English rendering of *homoousios*: "The consubstantiality defined by [the Council] Nicaea I [325 C.E.], then, . . . affirms essentially that the Son is equal to the Father, as divine as the Father, being from His substance and of the same substance with Him; it follows necessarily that the Son cannot belong to the created . . . Because of the absolute unicity, unity, and simplicity of God, the identity of the substance is not merely specific [as in the case of humans having human nature in common] but absolute, or numerical."

* For a fuller discussion of John 1:1, please see the article "A Grand Spokesman—Who Is He?" in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 1975, pages 173-176.

Where, though, in the Scriptures does one encounter such reasoning? The answer is simple: Nowhere. The written Word of God neither contains the word *homoousios* nor the idea that trinitarians attach to it. That is mere philosophizing.

Does the idea that Jesus Christ is "a god" conflict with the Scriptural teaching that there is only one God? (1 Cor. 8:5, 6) Not at all. At times the Hebrew Scriptures employ the term for God, 'elo-him', with reference to mighty creatures. At Psalm 8:5, for example, we read: "You also proceeded to make him [man] a little less than godlike ones." (Hebrew, 'elohim'; "a god," New English Bible, Jerusalem Bible) The Greek Septuagint Version renders 'elo-him' here as "angels." The Jewish translators of this version saw no conflict with monotheism in applying the term for God to created spirit persons. (Compare Hebrews 2:7, 9.) Similarly, Jews of the first century C.E. found no conflict with their belief in one God at Psalm 82, though verses 1 and 6 of this psalm utilize the word 'elo-him' (*the-o-i*, plural of *the-o-s*, Septuagint) with reference to human judges.—Compare John 10:34-36.

Does this mean that the God of the Hebrews and the God of the Christians are different? Not at all. The God of the Hebrews is the God of the Christians. The God of the Christians is the God of the Hebrews.

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Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures, is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) Yet Christians with a heavenly calling expect to bear Christ's image in its fullness, becoming partakers of "divine nature," when they get to heaven. (2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Cor. 15:49; Phil. 3:21) They have already gotten a start toward this by the spiritual "new birth" while yet on earth. (1 Pet. 1:3, 4) This, however, does not mean that they will be coequal with God. Nor does Jesus' then having "divine nature" with them mean that for him.

The translation "a god" at John 1:1 does no injustice to Greek grammar. Nor does it conflict with the worship of the One whom the resurrected Jesus Christ called "my God" and to whom Jesus himself is subject.—John 20:17; Rev. 3:2, 12; 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:28.

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