

Awake!

Are

BETTER TIMES

Ahead?

APRIL 8, 1974

THE REASON FOR THIS MAGAZINE

News sources that are able to keep you awake to the vital issues of our times must be unfettered by censorship and selfish interests. "Awake!" has no fetters. It recognizes facts, faces facts, is free to publish facts. It is not bound by political ties; it is unhampered by traditional creeds. This magazine keeps itself free, that it may speak freely to you. But it does not abuse its freedom. It maintains integrity to truth.

The viewpoint of "Awake!" is not narrow, but is international. "Awake!" has its own correspondents in scores of nations. Its articles are read in many lands, in many languages, by millions of persons.

In every issue "Awake!" presents vital topics on which you should be informed. It features penetrating articles on social conditions and offers sound counsel for meeting the problems of everyday life. Current news from every continent passes in quick review. Attention is focused on activities in the fields of government and commerce about which you should know. Straightforward discussions of religious issues alert you to matters of vital concern. Customs and people in many lands, the marvels of creation, practical sciences and points of human interest are all embraced in its coverage. "Awake!" provides wholesome, instructive reading for every member of the family.

"Awake!" pledges itself to righteous principles, to exposing hidden foes and subtle dangers, to championing freedom for all, to comforting mourners and strengthening those disheartened by the failures of a delinquent world, reflecting sure hope for the establishment of God's righteous new order in this generation.

Get acquainted with "Awake!" Keep awake by reading "Awake!"

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CONTENTS

Do You Want Better Times?	3	Do You Really Want Better Times?	18
World Efforts Toward Better Times	4	Eating Honey Out of a Long-Dead Animal	21
'Problems at Peril Point'	5	Benefiting from History	22
What God Has Promised	9	God's Word Can Enrich People's Lives	26
Is God's Promise Slow of Fulfillment?	16	Watching the World	29

Awake!

"It is already the hour for you to awake."

—Romans 13:11

Volume LV

April 8, 1974

Number 7

DO YOU WANT BETTER TIMES?

AS WE head into the second quarter of 1974, how does the future look to you? Do today's problems and uncertainties stir your desire for better times—times that would allow for a fuller, more refreshing enjoyment of life?

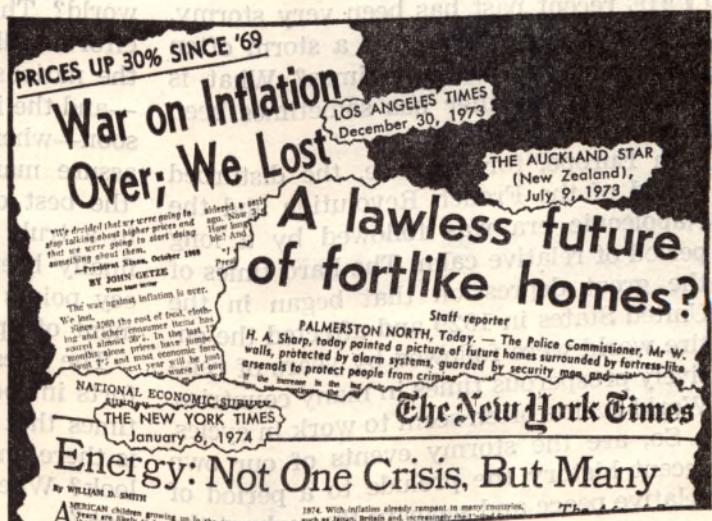
Millions of persons feel that way today. And with good reason too. Never have people lived in a time when men have had greater power to accomplish things, yet they seem to do so poorly.

For example: A year ago there was a feeling that the world was on the verge of something really big—a major change for the better. The Vietnam war seemed to be winding down, there was a growing spirit of détente between the United States and Russia. Red China had come into the United Nations, and

its massive doors were slowly and steadily opening up to the outside world. Many nations were in the midst of an economic "boom." But the months that followed sent the world into a virtual tailspin, leaving people somewhat bewildered by the suddenness of the changes.

Thus, when 1974 came on the scene it found Britishers suddenly thrust into a three-

day workweek, Frenchmen paying \$1.30 a gallon for gasoline (and still better off than Italians, who were paying \$1.45 a gallon), while people in Japan were asking themselves how their booming economy—that had zoomed them up to the position of the third-greatest commercial



power on earth—could have proved so vulnerable to the Arab states' oil embargo, not even quick efforts at appeasement doing much to remove the bleakness of future economic prospects. And reviewing the political scene in the United States, a writer in the Seattle *Times* said:

"The things which happened in American politics [in 1973] were so bizarre it almost seemed that some diabolical scriptwriter was sitting up nights cackling, creating a new shock for the next day."

The Disturbing Factor

What is it that has shaken people up so much? It is the effect these things have had on their *hopes for the future*. One Britisher said of the situation in England: "This is not a recession yet—it is just the rehearsal." Rather than planning several

years ahead, the confused attitude of so many was expressed by the Los Angeles woman who said: "One year at a time is all we can handle."

After natural disasters—floods, earthquakes, droughts—or temporary upheavals such as wars, people generally feel they still can 'pick up the pieces and start over again,' working for a better future. What is now so disturbing and frustrating to many is that they have seen repeated examples of how unstable and uncertain the world's basic systems are. The giant systems that men have proudly built up now prove surprisingly fragile and subject to becoming disjointed when least expected.

The big question in so many persons' minds therefore is: 'In what can we trust? On what can we build for the future that will prove to be more than shifting sand?'

WORLD EFFORTS

Toward Better Times

THE recent past has been very stormy. But is it not true that a storm often precedes calm, pleasant times? What is true of the weather has sometimes been true in human affairs.

In Europe, for instance, the disturbed period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era was followed by a long period of relative calm. The hard times of the great depression that began in the United States in 1929 and affected the entire world were followed by years of relatively prosperous times in many countries. World events often seem to work in cycles.

So, are the stormy events of our own recent history the prelude to a period of relative peace and security throughout the

world? There is evidence that dramatic efforts will be made in this direction by the nations of earth. The time will come—and the indications are that it will come soon—when world leaders will confidently assure mankind that it is entering into 'the best of times,' that major obstacles to a truly better life for all people have finally been removed. Even Bible prophecy points to such a worldly pronouncement of "peace and security."

The question is, however, will such efforts introduce a whole new era of better times that are *genuine and enduring*? Or is there another, finer source to which to look? Where does the Bible direct us to look?

Will the System Change?

For there to be genuinely better times, world leaders will have to bring about a drastic reversal in all fields of human endeavor. They will have to change the way that the entire system of things is going. More than that, they will have to bring about fundamental changes in the very disposition of people. Do you think all this is likely?

Among major efforts under way to bring in a new era is that of greater cooperation between the world's "superpowers." While visiting West Germany, Soviet Communist party leader Leonid Brezhnev said of improved Soviet-American relations:

"On the whole, one can perhaps say that our planet today is closer to durable, lasting peace than ever before. And the Soviet Union is shifting all its weight to buttress this beneficial tendency."

There can be no doubt that diplomatic maneuverings of major importance are going on today at a pace and with an intensity seldom before seen—particularly in peacetime. Many observers would agree with Spartak Beglov of the Soviet press agency Novosti that "a new political climate is in creation" world wide. They foresee tremendous benefits if true cooperation can be achieved among the world's great powers, China included.

Hopes, too, are expressed that the world's economic system will stabilize, that the recent crises will jolt the nations into bringing about long-needed changes or adjustments, that new energy sources—solar energy converters, for instance—will be developed or old sources will be used more efficiently, and that, as a result, a new wave of prosperity and abundance will again appear.

Yes, you can be sure that 1974 will see mighty efforts made to try to inject new life into the world's systems. And things may indeed appear to be 'on the upswing' again. But can you confidently put your

'Problems at Peril Point'

"Problems are approaching the peril point. . . . You name the problem. If it once seemed manageable, or at least bearable, it seems today to be soaring to proportions that threaten to take it beyond our mastery."—Indiana "Pharos-Tribune & Press."

trust in these developments to bring lasting results?

Optimism is certainly better than pessimism. Even more vital, however, is realism, because without it optimism becomes just wishful thinking that leads to disillusionment. How realistic, then, are the world's efforts to create a new era of lasting peace and security?

Facing the Facts as They Are

Many, many peace treaties and agreements have been signed by nations in the past, being hailed at the time as giving promise of 'lasting peace.' But each brief period of calm was later shattered by wars that became successively more costly and hideous. No matter how solemn and sincere, peace pacts among nations have never produced genuine, lasting peace and security. Selfish interests have always acted like a corroding acid that eventually dissolves the bonds of union and cooperation. Would you say that the nations are less selfish today than in the past?

Ask yourself also: If the nations and leaders in various fields are really capable of bringing about the vast changes needed for genuinely better times, why has this not been done already? Or why, at least, have we not seen some steady, gradual improvement? Surely it is not because insufficient time, effort and money have been

spent in an attempt to do so. Yet what do we see?

As time passes, the problems, world problems, are multiplying instead of lessening. More and more authorities express the belief that these problems—growing shortages of basic commodities, an “exploding” world population, the moral breakdown, pollution—are actually getting out of hand. Thus, an article published by the Indiana *Pharos-Tribune & Press* said:

“One fundamental meaning of the incredible year 1973 is that, across nearly every front of human endeavor, this nation and the world are having it driven home that their problems are approaching the peril point.

“A key word that lies at the root of this phenomenon is a jaw-crusher: magnification. You name the problem. If it once seemed manageable, or at least bearable, it seems today to be soaring to proportions that threaten to take it beyond our mastery. . . .

“The world’s growth in numbers and complexity has magnified the trouble until the danger is sinking into everybody’s bones.”

The problem goes far deeper than what most persons imagine. It really reaches down to the foundations of human society. For the principal source of worsening world conditions must, after all, be found in *people*, in their way of life, the standards—or lack of them—by which they live and which guide them in their dealings with one another. Pointing in this direction, in his book *Future Shock*, author Alvin Toffler stated:

“What is occurring now is not a crisis of capitalism but of industrial society itself, regardless of its political form.

“We are simultaneously experiencing a youth revolution, a sexual revolution, a racial revolution, a colonial revolution, an economic revolution, and the most rapid and deep-going technological revolution in history.

“We are living through the general crisis of industrialism. In a word, we are in the midst of the super-industrial revolution.”

Problems Global Now

What is happening in our generation is very different from what has happened in any other time. In the past, the problems in one land or area were contained there. It took years, generations, even centuries for the effects of most things to reach other areas.

But that is not the case now. Today the world is closely knit, tightly interwoven through rapid communications, air travel, economic and political interchange. Thus, a drastic change in one area is quickly felt in another. That is why the entire world suffered from the effects of World War I, the great depression, World War II, the Vietnam war, and now the energy crisis.

Authorities admit that the global problems of this system seem certain to grow bigger. One reason why is the relentless population growth, especially in lands that can least afford it. According to the Population Reference Bureau in Washington, D.C., the world population at the end of 1973 stood at 3,900,000,000. And it is increasing at a 2-percent rate each year. That means that during 1974 the world will experience a *net increase* of some 78 million people!

Thus, the problems multiply in speed and scope. It is no wonder that more and more people are becoming “emotionally disturbed.” Mounting pressures in all directions render growing numbers of people incapable of handling them. That is why mental institutions are crowded, why so many are behaving in an unbalanced way, even going berserk and committing mass murder. What is now happening on a large scale can be compared to what happens in battle when, because of too much pressure, soldiers become ‘shell-shocked.’

We must therefore conclude that all the grave social, moral and economic problems of this world will not go away by the mere signing of agreements for

peace and international cooperation. Signatures on pieces of paper, however well intentioned, will not eliminate greed, violence, immorality or family breakdown. They will have no effect on drug abuse, venereal disease, sickness and death. They will not make people in your neighborhood kinder, more loving toward others, will they?

If we are looking to the present systems to bring genuinely better times, we are looking to the wrong source. Why so? Because it is evident that any 'new era of peace and security' that world leaders succeed in introducing will be founded, not on true devotion to righteousness or on genuine love of people world wide, but on *fear* of global suicide from nuclear warfare or the danger of economic collapse. That is not the foundation for enduring better times. Efforts by the world leaders at correcting the problems of mankind give no more promise of lasting improvement than would someone's rearranging the furniture and redecorating a house that has a crumbling, termite-ridden foundation.

The Bible foretells that the cry of "peace and security" can be expected in our generation on a worldwide scale, causing many, the majority, to renew

their faith in the present world systems. But it shows that that cry will actually be fraudulent, and that such "new era" will be only a veneer, a whitewash covering over a system that is shot through with corruption and greed and that can never work to the lasting good of all mankind.

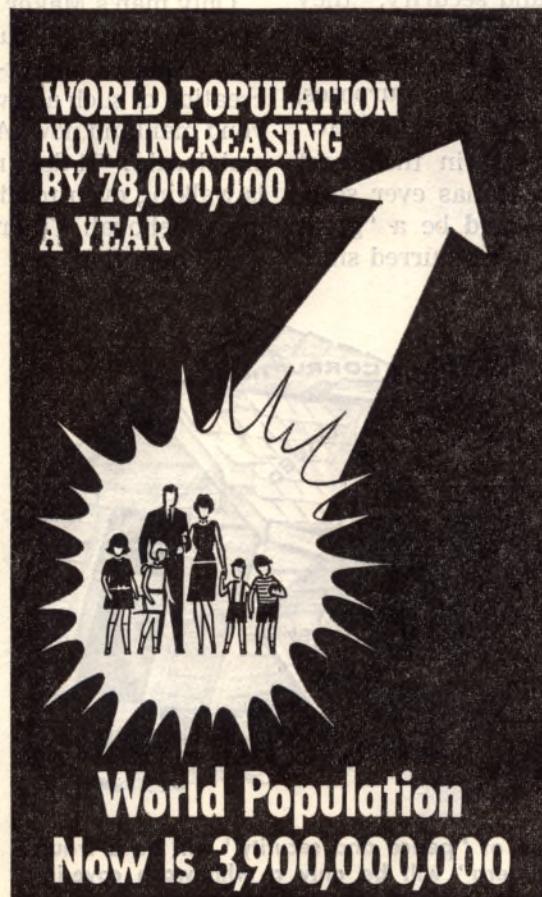
What It Really Means

Bible prophecy shows that such coming pronouncement of a new era of peaceful security will mean for the nations something very different from what they anticipate. Instead of setting in motion a new era of better times, it will prove to be the immediate forerunner of the end of the entire corrupt system of things now dominating the earth. Any sense of security and tranquillity world leaders succeed in generating will be shattered with shocking suddenness.

Is that really what God's Word, the Bible, says? Yes, and in so many words God's prophetic Word declares:

"Jehovah's day [of destruction for this present corrupt system] is coming exactly as a thief in the night. Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape."

—1 Thess. 5:2, 3.



God's purpose is to bring this system to an end, not to try to reform it. Why not? Because it is beyond reforming. It was built on a wrong foundation to begin with and now its defects are becoming clearly evident. That is the real meaning of world conditions since this present turbulent age began in 1914. That crucial date in world history ushered in what the Bible calls "the last days." (2 Tim. 3:1) It marked the generation that would see the end of this distressing system of things.

Thus, you can see why the nations and their supporters will be so disappointed by the sudden turn of events coming soon. After seemingly patching up this divided system of things and proclaiming that they have achieved "peace and security," they will find that this is actually the signal for its death stroke. Coming so unexpectedly to those who ignore God's purposes, it will indeed be "as a thief in the night."

That collapse will result in the worst time of trouble the world has ever seen. Jesus foretold that it would be a "great tribulation such as has not occurred since

the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again."—Matt. 24:21.

Source of Truly Better Times

Why, then, can we say that genuinely better times are just ahead? How can we retain this optimistic hope with the knowledge that "sudden destruction is to be instantly upon" the nations after they make their "peace and security" proclamation?

With this system nearing its end, it obviously cannot be the source of truly better times. Then how will they come? Since God is the One who executes his judgments against this present system of things, is he to be the source of an entirely new order? The Bible answers, Yes.

Only man's Maker can usher in a totally new era that will fulfill the proper needs and wants of honest-hearted persons. The creation of such a new system is utterly beyond mankind now. As the Bible writer Jeremiah said: "It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step. Correct me, O Jehovah." (Jer. 10:23, 24) Jeremiah well knew that, not man, but God is the

One who will bring about better times.

That is what God has promised, indeed, guaranteed. His Word tells us about that righteous new order in which he promises to 'satisfy the desire of every living thing.' (Ps. 145:16) But just how will he do this? What has he really promised? Why has he waited so long to bring it about? What do we have to do to benefit?



The coming worldwide cry of "peace and security" will be a fraud, for the proclaimed "new era" will be only a whitewash covering over this system's basic decay and corruption

WHAT

God Has Promised

WHEN you read newspapers outlining the new problems and crises to be faced each day, do you have the feeling, 'Oh, if I could only get some rest?' Surely better times for us would have to include relief from the tensions, irritations and frustrations we now face.

And this is exactly what God has promised in his Word, the Bible. He knows the human frame and knows that humans need rest—they are literally wearing themselves out over the situation they are in. The psalmist said: "He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." (Ps. 103:14) He has promised relief for mankind by means of a righteous government, one that will replace all the failing systems of today and produce a healthful, peaceful human society on earth. That government is the Kingdom rule for which Christ Jesus taught his followers to pray.—Matt. 6:9, 10.

The head of that government is the one who said to people of his day who yearned for better times: "Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and become my disciples, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls."—Matt. 11:28, 29.

But how can we be sure of such hope of relief by this Kingdom government? How can we know that these are not like the mere promises of today's world leaders?

Well, if a person promises something and we know that he has actually accomplished similar things in the past, we have faith that he will fulfill his promises for the present. And God, on his part, has given us a record of just such a thing. Centuries ago, he dealt with the nation of Israel in such a way as to give us a good idea of his ability to bring better times and what he means when he says he will give people peace and rest.—Isa. 32:17, 18.

Moreover, God specifically tells us that he had an account of these things written to provide examples, illustrations, of what he will do on a worldwide scale and in a permanent way for all the earth. Let us look at some of those illustrations.—1 Cor. 10:11; Rom. 15:4.

When a Nation Had Rest

Appreciating man's need of rest from pressures and worries, God provided for the nation of ancient Israel a sabbath year every seventh year. No other nation has enjoyed such a restful provision. What benefits came from such an arrangement, and how does this compare with what we see now?

When Israel obeyed God by observing the appointed sabbath years, their enemies did not disturb them. The land benefited because it was allowed to restore itself, not being cultivated that year. Any poor people, who might not be employed that year, did not suffer, because they had full, free access to all the grains, vege-



God's provision of a sabbath year for the nation of ancient Israel promoted spiritual welfare and education

tables and fruits that grew of themselves.

The owner of the land, who normally worked steadily during six years, now had extra time for his family, because in that agricultural society he was freed, to a large extent, from his work. Spiritual matters, teaching and training children and development of family life could receive greater attention, thereby strengthening the bonds of love and preventing division and delinquency such as now infect so many family units. Also, no pressures of economic worry plagued him, for no creditor could press for payment of a debt that year.—Lev. 25:2-7; Deut. 15:1-3.

Additionally, every fiftieth year was a "Jubilee" year. This was an even more complete rest, a 'year of liberty.' The Jubilee had the same provisions as did the seventh-year sabbath but went farther. Nations today could learn much from the Jubilee laws.

At the beginning of the Jubilee year, all debts were canceled. Every man who had sold his hereditary land possession re-

turned to it. It was restored to him without charge. If he had sold himself to another person as a hired laborer to work out a debt, he was permanently freed from this servitude on the opening day of this 'year of liberty.'—Lev. 25:8-22.

What rest, what security this arrangement brought to the people! It kept the land's economy in perfect balance. It prevented the growth of extremely rich and extremely poor classes, as is the case in some nations today. Inflation was prevented. Land values remained stable, as did wages.—Lev. 27:16-19; 25:50.

What a contrast to today's world situation! Spiraling costs bring spiraling prices to the consumer, in turn necessitating wage increases. This may seem good for a while, but there is a day of reckoning. Debts mount to high levels, along with inflation. The result? Individual, then national, bankruptcies. The country's resources are overused and depleted. Besides this, the monotony of assembly-line jobs makes even high-wage earners unhappy.

But under God's arrangement human dignity was recognized. A man was not a perpetual slave to some distasteful routine. Each was free to use his mind to contribute his talents and abilities toward the national welfare. The family was kept together. All received education, many in specific trades. Literacy was universal, and education in spiritual matters kept the moral level of the nation high. Adherence to God's law brought his blessing and produced this happy state.

Rest for All the Earth

Someone may ask, 'What connection does that have with our hope for better times today?' Well, Jesus Christ, God's appointed King for the earth, said that it

does have a connection. Now, Jesus did not indicate that, in order to gain relief, people must return to ancient Israel's style of living, or necessarily go back to a "horse-and-buggy" society, with no modern inventions or developments. Rather, the sabbaths back there were pictorial of greater, more permanent things.

Jesus pointed out to the people that the sabbath laws were not some mere ritual services laid upon man as a burden. He said: "The sabbath came into existence *for the sake of man*, and not man for the sake of the sabbath." Then he made a very important statement. He said: "Hence the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath."

—Mark 2:27, 28.

Certainly improved health would be needed for any true enjoyment of better times. Note, then, that Jesus proved his being 'Lord of the sabbath' by performing many of his most amazing works of healing on the Jewish sabbath day. The leaders among the Jews, not seeing the real purpose of the sabbath, bitterly opposed these works of mercy on this day of rest. Nevertheless, Jesus performed cures on the sabbath to foreshadow what would take place in the greater rest or sabbath "day" of the thousand years of his Kingdom rule over earth.

Now, Jesus knew that his sacrifice of

himself on behalf of mankind would abolish the literal weekly and year sabbaths —the prophetic "shadows" of future good things. (Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:13, 14) Accordingly, his cures and resurrections were only temporary and for our encouragement today, as we look for the complete, permanent fulfillments during the Kingdom sabbath. The apostle Paul said about this to Christians: "Let no man judge you . . . in respect of a festival or of an observance of . . . a sabbath; for those things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ."—Col. 2:16, 17.

Permanent Health and Life

Are we to understand from this that "killer" diseases such as heart failure and cancer will be eliminated in the better times God's

Kingdom government will bring? Yes, there is no need to fear that the people will be afflicted during that Kingdom rule with the diseases that baffle doctors today.

Nor should we think that humans cannot have perfect health everlasting-ly. For Jesus cured the most impossible maladies, all without charge. He healed the blind and speechless. (Matt. 9:27-34) He cured cripples and paralytics. (Luke 5:18-26; 13:11-17) He restored the worst kind of demoniacs to their full senses. (Matt. 8:28-34;



Jesus instantly healed a woman who had been bent double for eighteen years, illustrating the marvelous healing he will accomplish during his Kingdom rule

Luke 8:26-39) He cured the most dreaded disease of that day—leprosy. (Mark 1:40-45) Using this power during his Kingdom rule over earth, he can bring all obedient persons to perfection of mind and body.

But what about those who are already dead? Jesus did not overlook this, but kindly gave a foretaste of the resurrection by bringing persons back from the dead, one from the grave itself.—Matt. 9:18-26; Luke 7:11-17; John 11:38-44.

Abundance of Life's

Necessities

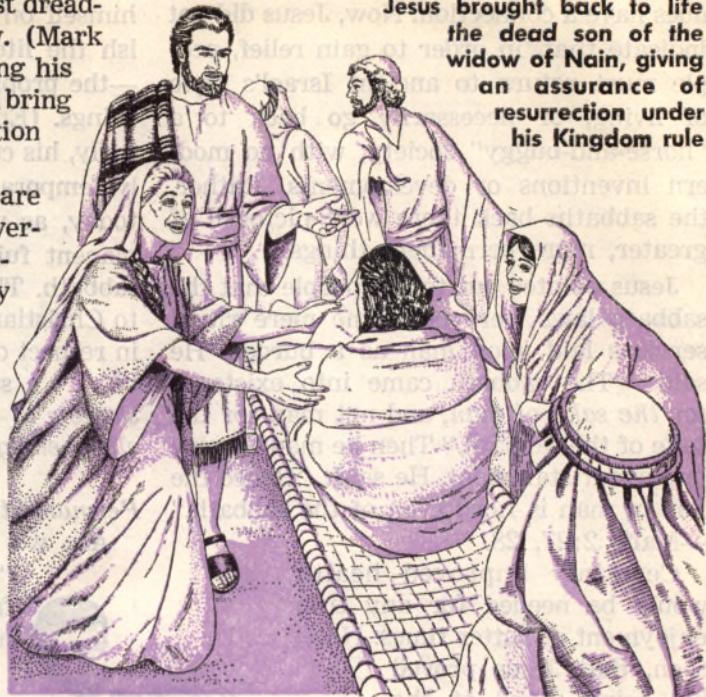
Neither is there any reason to be afraid that there may be a food shortage during the time Christ rules as Lord of God's great Kingdom sabbath. The King will know what his subjects need. (John 2:25; compare Matthew 6:7, 8.) Jesus demonstrated his ability and his compassion when, near the Sea of Galilee, "he felt pity" for a crowd of 5,000 (and on another occasion, 4,000) men, plus women and children, and fed them all. In both instances he did this by miraculously increasing only a few loaves of bread and a few fishes. —Matt. 14:14-21; Mark 8:19, 20.

Centuries before this, God himself gave a glimpse of the abundant food supply that he will provide during the Kingdom sabbath rest. How? By giving bumper crops, enough for two or even three years, during the year just prior to the sabbath and Jubilee years!—Lev. 25:20-22.

Peace and Security

Of course, material things, including good health, will not of themselves bring happiness. There has to be peace also—not a mere political peace between nations, but peace among all the earth's population,

Jesus brought back to life the dead son of the widow of Nain, giving an assurance of resurrection under his Kingdom rule



without regard to race or background.

How restful it will be when you are able to walk out of your home in perfect security, leaving the doors unlocked! How enjoyable it will be to have neighbors who are really interested in your peace and welfare! How good to know that you or your children are not going to be taken away by war, crime or disease!

This condition of genuine peace and security was also foretold and foreshadowed by God long ago. It was in a prophecy concerning "new heavens and a new earth" (that is, the heavenly government of Jesus Christ, and the new earthly arrangement of things during the thousand-year Kingdom rule).

This prophecy was spoken by God's prophet Isaiah to the Israelites before they went into exile to Babylon in 607 B.C.E. because of not observing God's laws. God comforted them by showing that he would restore them to their land. He said:

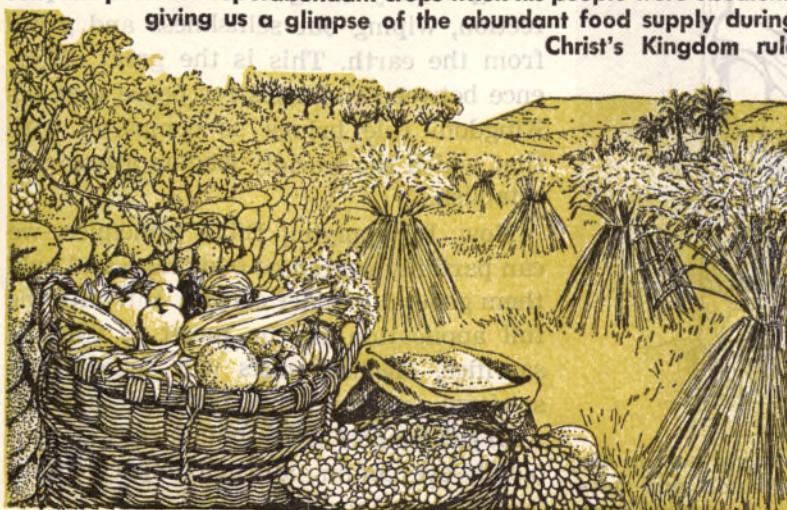
"No more will there come to be a suckingling a few days old from that place, neither an old man that does not fulfill his days; for one will die as a mere boy, although a hundred years of age; and as for the sinner, although a hundred years of age he will have evil called down upon him."—Isa. 65:17, 20.

During the seventy years of exile the Israelites had turned from their idolatrous ways and again served God in truth. (Jer. 29:10) On their return, instead of being in constant fear of their enemies, they could feel secure. Gone was the feeling they had experienced seventy years previously when Nebuchadnezzar had come in and destroyed both young and old. (Lam. 2:21) In their restored state a child would live to maturity, and a man would live out his normal life-span, not being cut off by the sword, by famine or the scourge of pestilence.

Isaiah's prophecy continues:

"And they will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. . . . They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring

Jehovah provided superabundant crops when his people were obedient, giving us a glimpse of the abundant food supply during Christ's Kingdom rule



made up of the chosen ones of Jehovah, and their descendants with them. And it will actually occur that before they call out I myself shall answer; while they are yet speaking, I myself shall hear."—Isa. 65:21-24.

The Israelites restored from Babylonian exile, after being exhorted by Jehovah's prophets to put spiritual interests first, were prospered in their building and planting, their property not being taken away by an invader, nor by economic distresses. They did not bring up their children to fall prey to war, delinquency and an early death. For many years they were thus blessed by Jehovah. But later they became disobedient again, and deteriorated as a nation. Why did God allow this?

It was not yet the time for God's Messianic kingdom to rule; it was not the time for the installation of 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness is to dwell,' of which the apostle Peter wrote. It was in only a miniature or typical fulfillment back there.—2 Pet. 3:13.

Past Acts of God Assure Paradise

Conditions for Earth

But what about the reality under God's Messianic government? God did those good things for his people back there when they listened to him. He will do them on a much larger, permanent scale for those who hear and believe his promises today, for he purposes to have a paradise earth, a real new set of conditions that will last forever.

Jesus spoke to an evildoer dying next to him about this paradise into which the evildoer would be res-

urected. This man, though being justly executed for some crime, expressed faith in Christ's coming kingdom, and this prompted Jesus Christ to promise that he would have opportunity for life there.

—Luke 23:39-43.

Note also some of the other promises of God, many of which he already fulfilled in a typical or miniature way in the sixth century B.C.E., for our faith, hope and comfort:

"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 and with glad crying out. . . . For in the wilderness waters will have burst out, and torrents in the desert plain."

—Isa. 35:1, 2, 6.

These promises proved true in a small-scale way when Israel returned from Babylon. Their land had been utterly desolate, no humans or domestic animals, only wild beasts, having inhabited it for seventy years. Most of the land was like a desert wilderness. Yet God, pleased with their return to true worship, caused waters to break out, and in a short while the land began to blossom and to produce abundantly.

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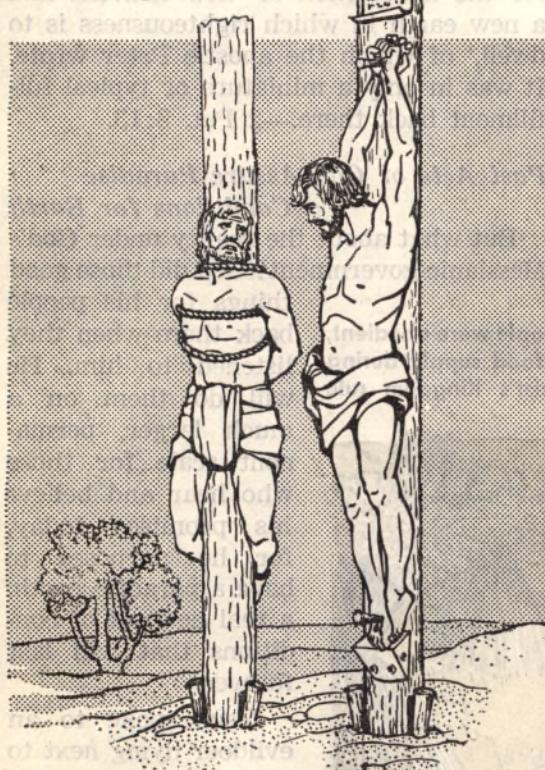
Jehovah promises permanent blessings for those who obey him under Kingdom rule, blessings like those he provided repatriated Israelites:

"For them I shall certainly conclude a covenant in that day in connection with the wild beast of the field and with the flying creature of the heavens and the creeping thing of the ground, and the bow and the sword and war I shall break out of the land, and I will make them lie down in security."—Hos. 2:18.

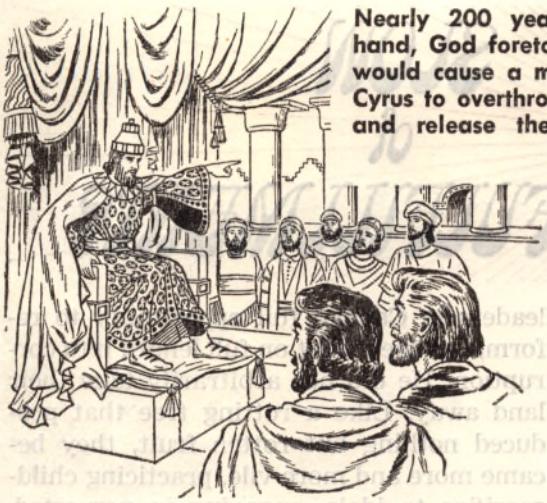
If Israel had remained faithful, their peace would have endured. But they were rebellious toward God. Under Christ's heavenly rule, such rebellion will not take place. Why not? Because, on the basis of his atonement sacrifice for mankind, he will gradually bring obedient ones to perfection, wiping out selfishness and greed from the earth. This is the great difference between the basis for peace that his Kingdom rule brings as compared with that which the worldly leaders attempt to establish.

Now, by applying Bible principles, we can partially overcome bad traits and hold them generally under control. But with the full application of the merit of Christ's sacrifice, obedient ones will achieve full spiritual, mental and physical healing, with *full control* of all their faculties, completely overcoming all their imperfections.

—Compare Romans 7:18-25.



Jesus' promise to an evildoer dying next to him was that he would be resurrected and have an opportunity for life on a paradise earth



Nearly 200 years beforehand, God foretold that he would cause a man named Cyrus to overthrow Babylon and release the Israelites

See how God assures us of permanent peace, health and security in the last book of the Bible:

"Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things [of this present old system] have passed away.' And the One seated on the throne said: 'Look! I am making all things new.' Also, he says: 'Write, because these words are faithful and true.'" —Rev. 21:3-5.

The Promiser a God of Truth

Yes, these words are faithful and true. They are not mere political promises of men seeking to hold on to positions of power and prominence. God went to all the pains to prepare these things long beforehand and to record them centuries ago for our instruction. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) In the foregoing we have seen that he has already brought to pass fulfillments of his promises in a small-scale and temporary way. Many other promises he made he has already fulfilled, and these should give us strong confidence in the reliability of his word. Note a few:

When God promised centuries ago to clean up the earth by a flood, the flood came. (Gen. 6:17; 7:11-24) When he promised more than 400 years ahead to bring Israel out of Egypt, that occurred on time. (Gen. 15:13, 14; 50:25; Ex. 12:37-42) When he promised nearly two hundred years beforehand to cause a man named Cyrus the Persian to overthrow Babylon so that Israel could be released, it came to pass.—Isa. 45:1, 2; 2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1-4.

Moreover, hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah were accurately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the promised Deliverer and King—the place and manner of his birth, the time of his appearance as the Messiah, his betrayal, his death, his resurrection, and other things too numerous to mention here.—Mic. 5:2; Isa. 7:14; Dan. 9:25, 26; Ps. 41:9; Isa. 53:12; Ps. 16:10.

The reasonable conclusion for us to reach, then, is that what God has promised will take place *just as he said*. We cannot ignore the testimony of faithful men who had no selfish gain to make when, toward the end of their lives, they exalted God as the Fulfiller of his promises, rather than taking the glory to themselves. As Joshua, who had led Israel in conquering the Promised Land, told them: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed."—Josh. 23:14.

There is no source other than the Bible that promises what people really want and need. Where else do we find a promise of genuine peace, freedom from crime, health, security and abundance, along with everlasting life? Are not these the things you really desire? Are not these unique promises worthy of your full investigation?

IS GOD'S PROMISE



SLOW of FULFILLMENT?

WHEN mention is made of God's promise of genuinely better times, do you feel like some who say, 'If God is going to bring good conditions to the earth, why didn't he do it long ago?'

Yet, do we not all value the privilege of having free will, freedom of choice?

The fact is that man set out virtually at the beginning of history, *by his own choice*, to rule according to his own will and way. He was originally made in God's image and likeness, which included his having intelligence and freedom of choice. God respects this fact and deals with man as an intelligent person, not as an unreasoning animal, nor even as an irresponsible child.

Now, if God arbitrarily forced his rule on unwilling men, where would their own free will and choice find a place? Following the first man Adam's rejection of divine rule, God has allowed mankind full and fair opportunity to try ruling themselves. They have thus had ample time to see demonstrated the failure of human rule independent of God, and to realize what rule was really best for them.

An example of God's principle of thoroughness and patience in such matters is shown in his dealing with Abraham (Abram). He promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham's posterity. But Abraham and his descendants had to wait *four hundred years* to get the land. Why? "Because," God explained, "the error of the Amorites [inhabiting the land] has not yet come to completion."—Gen. 15:13-16.

Yes, God allowed the natives and their

leaders in Canaan full opportunity to reform, but they went on full length into corruption. He did not arbitrarily take their land away. Like a rotting tree that produced nothing but rotten fruit, they became more and more vile, practicing child-sacrifice to idols, engaging in perverted, degraded sex worship, and were full of filth and disease. By every standard of right, they deserved to be ousted from the land. Not until then, after centuries of time, did God order their removal.—Lev. 18:21-28.

God's Seeming Delay

a Good Thing for Men

Indeed, God in his tolerance with man has allowed conditions to develop to the point that all can see His full moral and legal right to remove government out of the hands of selfish men and to bring in his own heavenly rule of righteousness and justice. And right-thinking persons will be glad to see it. God has let the evidence pile up, just as in a court case, so that no one can charge him with arbitrary, dictatorial or unreasonable methods—all this is really not for his own benefit, but *for that of mankind*, so that they can know that when he acts he is fully justified.

Accordingly, in God's timetable for allowing men to try ruling themselves is a definite time to bring this misrule to an end. Being the Creator, knowing his own purpose and seeing all circumstances, he can select the optimum time, the very best time, to bring man's unsuccessful efforts

to a halt. Also, unlike men, he can and will completely erase the effects of any injustices mankind has suffered during the time that God has restrained himself from acting to bring in a righteous rule over earth. The former bad things "will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart," to tarnish the happiness brought by the Kingdom's rule.—Isa. 65: 17.

So, having the power to bring about his purpose and promises instantly, GOD is the one who has shown endurance, long-suffering and patience. He has endured all the insults and has seen terrible injustices practiced, but has exercised self-control in order to carry out his own purpose and for the ultimate welfare of all.

The apostle Peter wrote: "Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Pet. 3:9) He knows exactly what is needed to give men the best possible opportunity. He knows just what foundation to lay so that men can see and appreciate the fulfillment of his promises.



The ride of the symbolic 'horsemen of the Apocalypse' began right on schedule in 1914, with resulting distress for mankind

Why Certain

Now we have reached the time when God will take action to bring about the full realization of all his grand promises. How do we know that this is so? What reason do we have to believe that we can personally enjoy the better times that God's promised government will bring?

Because the removal of the present corrupt system was foretold to occur toward the end of a certain "generation," or lifetime, of people. The Bible shows that this generation consists of those who were living in 1914,* the year when World War I began. The entire period of time since that date is described in Bible prophecy, particularly with regard to the things that were foretold to take place during that era.

Check for yourself some of the details of such prophecies, for example, those found at Matthew chapter 24, Luke chapter 21, Mark chapter 13 and 2 Timothy chapter 3. In those prophecies were foretold global war, food shortages, disease epidemics and juvenile delinquency. Also mentioned was the trend toward pleasure-seeking at the expense of morality, as well

as the breakdown of authority, the lack of neighbor love and the abandoning of any real faith in God by many people.

Those things came right on schedule, as foretold, beginning in 1914. At that time the Bible prophecy regarding the devastating ride of the 'horsemen of the Apocalypse' began its fulfillment. Their symbolic ride, with its resulting distress for humankind, continues to our day.—See Revelation chapter 6.

* For details concerning this date, see *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pp. 94-96.

Coming Soon

The fact that those foretold events have taken place, right on schedule, all within one generation, gives us confidence that the fulfillment of God's promise of genuinely better times will also take place. When will it come? Before the lifetime of the '1914 generation' runs out.

How do we know that? Because this point was specifically mentioned by Jesus Christ as part of his prophecy for our times. He pointedly said: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur."

—Matt. 24:34.

The '1914 generation' has nearly run out, with most of the people who were alive then having already died. The remainder are of advanced age. Thus there is full reason for confidence that God's time is indeed at hand to bring true relief from earth's present pressures and afflictions.

God tells us that his timetable now calls for a cleaning out of wickedness and the bringing in of a government that will really do what men desire. Our own desire for that Kingdom rule must be much more than superficial. What is involved?

Do You REALLY Want Better Times?

YOU would doubtless like to see better times—with security, good health and good food in abundance. For this to come about it is fairly obvious that changes are called for, both on a world scale and in personal living.

However, each one of us has to decide whether he is willing to accept these changes, and to make the necessary changes in his own life.

Therefore, these questions are appropriate: Do you *really* want better times at all costs? Or do you want them only on your own terms?

Large-Scale Changes to Come

The world's distress cannot be relieved unless the things standing in the way of

better times are removed. Let us examine them and see whether we would be happy to see this done. Each change will profoundly touch the life of everyone on earth.

One of the greatest causes of hatred and strife has been false religion. Some of the worst wars of history have been religious wars. During World Wars I and II world religions played a major part in propagandizing the people. Clergymen on both sides blessed the troops, tanks, planes and guns sent to slaughter the other side. The clergy, particularly those of the so-called Christian churches, have meddled in politics, letting the spirituality of their religious flocks be totally neglected. Would you be willing to see these divisive religions go?

Nationalism has also divided the world. The governments of the world are bent on world domination. They have fought two world wars over this issue and now fear a devastating third one. They refuse to acknowledge the sovereignty of Jehovah God and the kingdom of his Son. The Bible says: "The kings of earth take their stand and high officials themselves have massed together as one against Jehovah and against his anointed one [Christ]." (Ps. 2:1-3) They do not advocate that kingdom, but press for continuation of man-rule, which has brought corruption and distress. God says that he will destroy them. How do you feel about this divine judgment?—Dan. 2:44.

Commercial greed has been another great oppressor of the people. Big business interests have been a major factor in influencing the religious organizations of the world, as well as the political systems. The commercial system is to come in for its share of mourning over the devastation of its field of activity.—Jas. 5:1-6; Rev. 18: 11-19, 22, 23.

How will God accomplish the destruction of all parts of this system, and when? The Bible reveals that the political rulers will become 'fed up' with the meddling and interference of the religious leaders and will act against false religion, pictured in the book of Revelation as a "harlot." We read there of the apostle John's vision in which he saw a "wild beast" having "ten horns." He is told that the "ten horns" represent earth's "kings" or rulers. The angel presenting the vision told John:

"The ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast [symbolizing the world political organization (compare Daniel 8:20, 21)], these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy

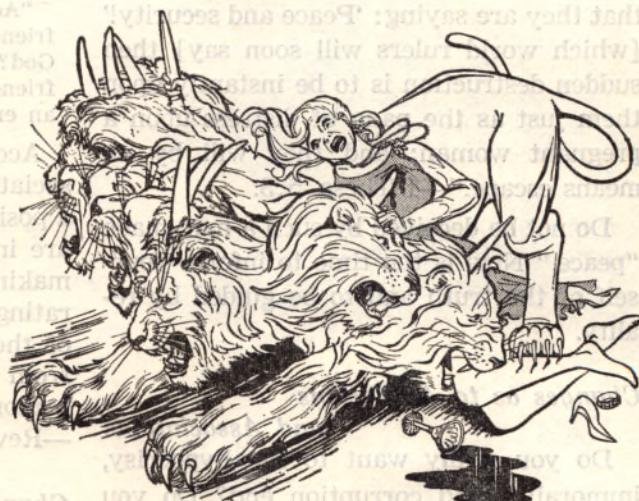
parts and will completely burn her with fire."—Rev. 17:16.

Actually, God is responsible for this action. Says the next Bible verse: "For God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought."—Rev. 17:17.

The Bible also points out that, following this destructive act, these political rulers, because of their being unwilling to give up their efforts for world domination, "will battle with the Lamb [Jesus Christ], but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them."—Rev. 17:14.

Those living on earth who truly worship God will have no part in such a battle, either to destroy false religion or to fight the political powers. They will look to the "King of kings" to clean up the earth and bring in better things. The war that destroys everything on earth that opposes God's Messianic kingdom is described at Revelation 19:11-21. How much time is available for persons involved in false religion or political activities to get out?

Evidence indicates that the destruction



The Bible represents false religion as a harlot that will soon be destroyed by the "ten horns" of the beastlike political system

If you really want better times, you need to learn God's requirements. Jehovah's witnesses will gladly help you to learn these from your Bible free of charge



of false religion is practically 'upon us,' to be closely followed by the fall of the political-commercial-military system of things. As noted earlier, the apostle Paul wrote under inspiration: "Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security' [which world rulers will soon say] then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape."—1 Thess. 5:3.

Do not be deceived by such a man-made "peace." Now is the time to inform yourself of the truth and to be guided by reality.

Changes as to Affiliations

and Associations

Do you really want to see hypocrisy, immorality and corruption end? Do you realize that 'better times' can never last unless people are taught genuinely right

principles and to hold to them and show loving respect for the interests of others? If so, it is wise to examine your religion NOW to see if it really upholds God's standards. See whether its clergymen condone the immorality of the world. What do they say about marriage? about premarital sex? about homosexuality? Do they mix in with the world's politics? Do they advocate taking sides in political issues? Do they encourage association with this decadent world in its hopes, plans and schemes?

One of the Bible writers, James, a half brother of Jesus Christ, gives a strong warning about this. He says:

"Adulteresses, do you not know that the friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever, therefore, wants to be a friend of the world is constituting himself an enemy of God."—Jas. 4:4.

Accordingly, if any attachment or association we may have is drawing us into a position of friendship with the world, we are in a most dangerous position. If it is making us party to condoning or collaborating with the immoral or corrupt things of the world, we must quickly get away from it—break off the affiliation—if we personally really want to see better times.—Rev. 18:4.

Changes in One's Personal Way of Life

What, then, about other, personal changes—changes in one's individual way of life?

If the "new earth" is to be a righteous world, with peace and security, those living in it will have to live according to right principles. Are you willing to make any needed changes? Now, before that righteous "new earth" arrives, those who really desire it must obey the apostle Paul's counsel:

"Deaden, therefore, your body members that are upon the earth as respects fornication, uncleanness, sexual appetite, hurtful desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of those things the wrath of God is coming. In those very things you, too, once walked when you used to live in them. But now really put them all away from you, wrath, anger, badness, abusive speech, and obscene talk out of your mouth. Do not be lying to one another. Strip off the old personality with its practices, and clothe yourselves with the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it."—Col. 3:5-10.

Yes, to deserve to live in perfect peace and health, a person cannot hang onto those things that promote divisions, trouble, distress, hate and disease. One who really wants better times with all his heart will immediately take steps to get rid of those bad practices, even though it may be difficult and may even bring opposition from others.

So, while the better times of Christ's thousand-year rule are sure, the qualifications for being worthy to enjoy that rule are such that they weed out all who do not really want better times. Therefore, this question is a vital one for each one to answer: 'Do you *really* want better times?' If you do, then act now while God holds open the opportunity. Jehovah's witnesses will be happy to help you, free of charge, to get more information from the Bible about God's requirements for you to meet today.

Eating Honey Out of a Long-Dead Animal

■ Some persons have wondered about the Bible passage at Judges 14:8, 9, wherein Samson is described as scraping honey out of the corpse of a dead lion. How could a dead lion turn into a beehive? This was a question asked by a reader of the Melbourne (Australia) *Age*, and an answer appeared in that newspaper under the heading "Naturalist's Diary." The writer, H. A. Lindsay, said:

"The only explanation which I can give is that it has every appearance of being plain fact. In Palestine there was—and still is—a dearth of hollow trees in which wild bees can establish colonies. As a result, they use rock crannies, recesses in caves, and even holes in the ground.

"In the dry climate of this region, especially in the summer, the carcase of any animal with a tough skin, if left unburied, soon becomes a skeleton with a dry hide stretched over it. Lacking a better site, wild bees would use the chest cavity as a site for a hive.

"This is not a theory, because I can quote a parallel case. Booroborie, South Australia, is a wide, treeless plain covered with paddocks of lucerne. This fodder plant provides good flows of honey during summer months.

"In 1927 I was walking over a hill on the south side of the lucerne fields and I came to the carcase of a horse which had died months previously. It was now a sun-dried hide stretched over a skeleton. What I had taken for a cloud of blowflies proved to be a flight of bees. . . . I was able to do what Samson had done over 3000 years ago; I ate some honey from a hive which had been established in the carcase of a long-dead animal."—November 21, 1960, page 17.

Benefiting FROM **HISTORY**

BY ONE definition, history is a record of the events of man's past. There is more than one way of looking at such history, of course. On the one hand, it is said that those who refuse to learn from the past are condemned to repeat it. On the other hand, many now assert that 'history is bunk.'

A degree of truth is found in both views. If a person can learn from the past to avoid errors and direct his life in a wise way, history has served to his benefit. However, history can be used to lead one astray. A generation ago the Nazis used a perverted version of "history" to try to fortify their myth about a Germanic "super race." This contributed to disaster and death for millions.

To benefit from history one must have the proper outlook about the past. How is this gained?

Sources of History

Very importantly, by considering the real *source* of the information one is reading. Why do we say that? Because what is written in a modern history book is ordinarily about things that happened long before the author of that book was born. He must rely on information handed down in one way or another from the past. He

may learn a few things from archaeology or geology. But the ideal source of information is usually a written record, and, preferably, one compiled by an eyewitness to the events he tells about.

For instance, if a modern historian alludes to the life of a certain Roman Caesar, you might ask yourself, Where did he get his information? Perhaps it came from the second-century Roman biographer Suetonius. Suetonius

himself lived under the Caesars and also appears to have had ready access to the Imperial and Senatorial archives, as well as other contemporary documents. By reading the works of Suetonius oneself, of course, one learns what that ancient writer himself really said. One would thereby probably get to the closest available source of history about many Caesars.

But most records regarding people and events of the distant past are scanty. Therefore, to make a connected account from the available information the gaps must be filled in and the whole body of material tied together in some form. Where does the modern writer get what is needed to 'fill in the gaps'?

If an expert in his subject, he may be able to make educated guesses as to how seemingly isolated bits of information should be brought together into a connect-



Suetonius

ed whole. Is this wrong? Not necessarily. It makes history books easier for the average person to read, providing smooth flow and coherence of thought. As long as the historian clearly informs his readers that such and such an event "may have" or "possibly" or "probably" took place in such and such a manner, he is being fair and, in a sense, helpful.

Some writers, however, merely accept someone else's interpretation of what happened in the past and adopt that into their own material as actual fact. They fail to check older, firsthand sources. Misunderstandings about the past, yes, untruths, get passed down for decades in this manner and come to be accepted as fact, simply because so few have taken time or cared enough to examine the authenticity of the statements.

Consider an example. The ancient Babylonians of ten centuries and more before the Common Era are sometimes glamorized as possessing great astronomical abilities. They are often made to appear as having detailed knowledge of planetary movements due to their observation of the heavens. The entire Babylonian culture, as a result, is made to appear highly advanced and sophisticated. Surrounding peoples, conversely, are pictured as slower and are asserted to have made progress only when they came in contact with the Babylonians. But do the original sources substantiate this view?

Well, there is no doubt that the ancient Babylonians had some knowledge of the subject of astronomy. The astrological aspect of Babylonian religion clearly reflects this. However, the available factual material as respects Babylonian astronomy is found on clay tablets. What do these tablets reveal? One scholar, O. Neugebauer, who, in his profession, deals not with what other men assert about the ancient

clay documents but with the actual documents themselves, says in *The Exact Sciences in Antiquity*:

"There is scarcely another chapter in the history of science where an equally deep gap exists between the generally accepted description of a period and the results which have slowly emerged from a detailed investigation of the source material. . . Early Mesopotamian astronomy appeared to be crude . . . quite similar to contemporary Egyptian astronomy."

The evidence shows that Babylonian astronomy was not carefully developed as a science until a few hundred years before the start of the Common Era.

When the Babylonians are stripped of the glamorized tinsel wrapping with which many modern writers popularize them, the real facts assert themselves. The ancient Babylonians, while still shown to be civilized, lose some of their assumed cultural luster in the eyes of modern readers of history.

The same process of embellishing the past also distorts ancient *events* and *biographical accounts*. Only by going to the earliest sources of ancient history can one be sure of finding the best available facts about the past. But more is necessary to benefit from the past than simply finding ancient records.

Is the Source Correct?

Even if a writer today is able to get to ancient sources and properly translate them, the view of history that the modern man presents may still be somewhat stilted. Why? Because the ancient sources on which he is depending may themselves be in error.

Remember, those ancient writers possibly lived at a much later period than when events that they describe took place. Or, they may have dwelt in an entirely different part of the world. So, like writers today, they, too, were compelled to accept

information from other people, not one of whom was perfect.

Further, it should be noted that the ancient writers had the nationalistic prejudices, loyalties and religious feelings common to all men. These, too, surely influenced what was written.

As a case in point, look back at Tacitus, thought to be among the more accurate of the ancient men of letters. His cultivated Roman view shows decidedly strong prejudices. As a result, some of the information Tacitus presents is misleading.

Thus, he writes about the Jews in *The Histories* (Book V):

"Some say that the Jews were fugitives from the island of Crete, who settled on the nearest coast of Africa about the time when Saturn was driven from his throne by the power of Jupiter. Evidence of this is sought in the name. There is a famous mountain in Crete called Ida; the neighbouring tribe, the Idaei, came to be called Judaei by a barbarous lengthening of the national name."

Documentation clearly revealing otherwise, from the Jews themselves, was available when Tacitus wrote in the first century C.E. Yet in this discussion he did not so much as acknowledge it.

How the prejudices of the ancient writers entered into their writings may be illustrated, too, by the controversy over an account by Josephus. This first-century C.E. Jewish writer says that Alexander the Great came to Jerusalem after his conquest of the cities of Tyre and Gaza. He was met with great pomp and shown the prophecies of Daniel about 'one of the Greeks who would destroy the empire of

the Persians.' Alexander is said to have applied this prediction to himself. For these reasons the city of Jerusalem, Josephus shows, was spared ravaging by the Greek armies. On the other hand, Arrian, Alexander's most noted biographer, does not mention such an event. Why such a discrepancy between the two writers?

Possibly, it has been argued by some, because of a strong anti-Jewish sentiment on the part of Arrian. Of course, his failure to mention Alexander's visit to Jerusalem (if it did indeed occur) does not make Arrian inaccurate; an omission is not necessarily a mistake.

But, then, too, it must be recalled that Josephus was not unknown to exaggerate the truth in order to glorify his own Jewish nation. Since each man, Josephus and Arrian, is considered somewhat prejudiced, today we cannot say for sure that Alexander did or did not visit Jerusalem.

Because of the uncertainties regarding some of the material presented by the ancient writers, persons today may pronounce them all bigoted and entirely useless, of no benefit to modern students. But that would not be an entirely proper analysis.

There is no reason to believe that their motive in writing was necessarily bad. They no doubt often wrote factually what they learned, with no attempt purposely to falsify their reports. But even when the ancient writings are obviously pocked with bias and personal loyalties, certain descriptive material



Tacitus



Josephus

and circumstantial evidence may be correct and quite valuable. Rather than giving up on history and pitching it all aside as useless, one needs to develop that important quality—discernment.

Discerning Beneficial History

Of necessity, most modern readers must rely on what others have learned from reading ancient historical sources. The average person does not have time to dig out all the sources and compare them, one against another, to determine the truth of a matter. Still, he does want to benefit from history. Therefore, the discerning individual will keep in view questions such as these when reading historical works:

How are the facts (which may be correct) being used by the writer? Does he have an 'ax to grind'? Are you asked to believe something that you know from your own sense of justice is wrong? Or, are you told to accept as truthful matters that you know from your own experience run counter to human nature? Is the writer using the past in some way to glorify a system of religion or politics or a way of life that has already shown itself unable to cope fully with the problems facing mankind? Is there an attempt to glorify one nation or race unduly or to downgrade another? If so, a person with discernment knows that caution is definitely needed when reading such histories.

There is a source of ancient history, however, to which one can turn with full trust.

The Bible as History

That honest history is found in the Bible. The more intently a God-fearing person studies history the more he appreciates the value of the Bible's historical narratives. It is the oldest connected history to which man has access. Historian H. E. Barnes admits: "The honor of having first produced a true historical narrative of considerable scope . . . must be accorded to the Hebrews of ancient Palestine," who were used to put together the Bible.

But, some ask, how can the Bible's history be said to be so outstanding?

Does it not glorify one nation, Israel? Does it not ask us to believe the incredible, even the miraculous?

It is true that much of the Bible concerns the history of Israel. But who can deny that the presentation of Israel in the Bible is an honest one? Israel's bad characteristics, not just its good ones, are frankly acknowledged. The nation and her people are used to illustrate the penalties coming on anyone who refuses to live by God's high standards. Bible history shows how God severely chastised Israel, eventually casting the nation off entirely as his special covenant people.

No, the Bible's history does not glorify any one earthly nation or race. Rather, it plainly declares: "In every nation the man that fears [God] and works righteousness is acceptable to him."—Acts 10:35.

It is true, too, that there are miraculous elements in its history. But before one casts it off for that reason, it should be remembered that the framework in which

these miracles are found is definitely historical and believable. In what way? In that time and place are stated.

This can be illustrated with the Bible's historical account about the opening of the Red Sea to allow the nation of Israel to leave Egypt. Some persons find this account, written by an eyewitness, Moses, hard to accept. Often the persons who reject it have never actually read the account closely for themselves.

But one who thoughtfully considers this material (found in Exodus chapters 12 through 15) for himself will observe that the *names of persons and places* are recorded.—Compare Numbers 33:1-8.

The time when Israel's stay in Egypt was drawing to a close is also stated: "The dwelling of the sons of Israel, who had dwelt in Egypt, was four hundred and thirty years. And it came about at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, it

even came about *on this very day* that all the armies of Jehovah went out of the land of Egypt."—Ex. 12:40, 41; compare 1 Kings 6:1.

Thus, an entirely credible framework of time and place for the Red Sea incident is included in the Bible's history. What else could *any* historian, living at any time, in any place, possibly have provided in his account to prove that he wrote down what he actually saw? Nothing. On what basis, then, can this Biblical account be set aside as nonhistorical? None!

The Bible's historical accounts are reliable. They, like no other history, accurately emphasize the certainty of God's Word of prophecy, the superiority of his moral laws and his continuing interest in creation. The greatest benefits come to men who acquaint themselves with the dealings of the God of history, found in the Bible.—Rom. 15:4.

God's Word Can Enrich People's Lives

WETHER they recognize it or not, humans have spiritual needs. "Man must live, not on bread alone," said Jesus Christ in turning back the Devil's temptation, "but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth." (Matt. 4:4) That is why even people who have considerably more than the necessities of life may keenly sense a certain emptiness when their spiritual needs are not satisfied. Though realizing that something is definitely lacking, they often do not know just what it is, and the turmoil existing in the world adds to their feeling of dissatisfaction.

This was the experience of a man in California. He tells of his circumstances and feelings:

"My wife and I had a good marriage, two nice boys, a home, cars, a sailboat, all the amenities of life and two well-paying jobs to take care of it all. But we were both dissatisfied with the way the world was—the unrelenting grind in gaining and holding on to mate-

rial things. We had a foreboding feeling about the future of the world.

"We felt we needed to escape. We both enjoyed the ocean, and so we thought about building a boat and sailing off to an island, where our children would be safe in virtual isolation. Of course, we were also thinking of ourselves. We were always reading books about others who had sailed off, and we were constantly dreaming of faraway places, where we could be free of the smog and the workaday world. We began building a large sailboat in 1969, trying to be oblivious to the trouble around us.

"Many times Jehovah's witnesses called at our home. My wife usually answered the door, because I was working at two jobs trying to pay for everything. One Saturday, however, a Witness came to the door and I answered. We began discussing the Bible, and he asked some questions that I could not answer."

This conversation sparked the man's interest.

Shortly thereafter both he and his wife began to study the Bible with Jehovah's witnesses. Did that study of God's Word enrich their family life? Did it supply what had been missing? The man continues: "We were just overjoyed with what we learned and the tremendous hope that was unfolding before our eyes. We could see that the only true escape or release from this system of ours would come about through God's kingdom by Christ."

No longer did they seek to escape by going to another location. When the boat was completed it was not used for what had been intended, but was sold. The man and his wife now rejoice in being able to use their assets in helping others to appreciate that God's Word can indeed enrich people's lives.

Gaining Fame Is Not Enough

Men and women who pursued fame are among others who have come to see that life is empty if spiritual needs are not cared for. A man in northwestern Africa who was in this situation relates:

"From my very early youth I set as my goal being world renowned as an athlete, bringing honor, not only to myself, but also to Africa. After years of vigorous training, calling for many sacrifices, I saw myself climbing the ladder of glory and fame as an international boxer. What pride I had in representing my country and black Africa in Russia, Germany and other European countries! Yet the suffering and crime that I saw and heard about throughout my travels saddened me very much.

"Trained carefully in my religion by my father, who is a powerful religious leader in my country's capital city, I had learned that all this suffering was the will of Allah our God. But I wondered, If God is really the Creator of man, why does he want man to suffer so?

"Then one day, at the swimming pool in my home city, where I was working as a swimming instructor, I was approached by a young, sincere-looking fellow African who started to direct the conversation from sports to world conditions and to the hope there is for a real remedy. The man was one of Jehovah's witnesses.

"Thus for the first time I heard of the true God and real Creator of man, Jehovah, and of his loving purposes to rid the earth of all crime and suffering, to the lasting benefit of men of all races.

"Little did I realize that I was about to start another course of training, no, not 'bodily train-

ing that is beneficial for a little, but godly devotion, which is beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come.' (1 Tim. 4:8) Shortly thereafter we were having regular studies in God's Word of truth, the Bible, a book that I had heard of only vaguely. I began to see that participating with one's whole soul in boxing matches left no time or energy for running the race that leads to everlasting life; a life filled with spending all one's efforts in trying to get personal glory and fame left no time to bring glory to the only one who deserves it, Jehovah, the Maker of the human body. But abandoning a sports career is not easy, especially when it also involves one's religion and even members of one's immediate family. There was fierce and prolonged opposition from my wife, father and friends, but my earnest desire was to serve my heavenly Father."

Because of his acting in harmony with that desire he no longer feels the emptiness that fame could not fill. The Bible has given him real hope that soon distressing world conditions will be no more. He is eagerly sharing this good news with others so that they, too, might enjoy a more purposeful life now.

Living Only for the Present Is Unsatisfying

While not pursuing fame, others have felt that the best thing for them would be to get as much out of life materially as they could or to live only for pleasure. As a result, many have taken up an injurious way of life. But they, too, can be helped through a study of God's Word to start in a course that can enrich their lives. From Central America comes this experience:

"My ambition was to obtain money without working too hard. This, and also the association that I had, resulted in my becoming involved in the illicit business of drug traffic. Soon I became a habitual user of marijuana. I also started living freely with a woman and became the father of a daughter. Then, in August 1970, I was arrested with a shipment of marijuana in a small plane. In time I was sentenced to five years in prison.

"I was frustrated about what had happened to me until, one day, I received a visit. The visitor was a postal employee, one of Jehovah's witnesses, who brought me a letter and a package with some books, including the 'New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures' and

'The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life.' The letter was from the woman with whom I had been living. She had begun to study with Jehovah's witnesses and was deeply affected by what she was learning.

"Never before had I read God's Word. The Witness who had brought me the literature continued to visit me. This moved me to devote myself to reading the Bible daily. A month after reading it, I said to myself, 'Well, Charles, you cannot have God's Word in one hand and marijuana in the other.' So I stayed with God's Word and gave up marijuana. The same thing happened with the use of tobacco in the following month.

"Later I received another visitor, the presiding overseer of the congregation with which the postal employee was associated. From then on, Bible studies were conducted with me. As time passed, more persons visited me so that I, though alone and without relatives, was the one that received the most visits in the prison.

"What I learned from the Bible caused me to change my personality completely. I ceased being slovenly in appearance, and I was moved to speak to others about the good things that I was learning.

"In time I had the desire to symbolize my dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. But it was a little difficult because there was no pool in the prison. However, I obtained a little lumber and with some rudimentary tools I made a box and covered the inside with waterproof polyethylene. A circuit assembly of Jehovah's witnesses was soon to be held in the city where the prison was located, and arrangements were made for the circuit overseer and the presiding overseer to come to the prison so that I could be baptized.

"I continued telling others in the prison about the good news of hope for all people. Some listened, and a study was started in the 'Watchtower' magazine and held in my cell every Sunday.

"Then a letter arrived from the secretary of the interior. It commended me for my conduct and change of personality. But what made me most grateful to Jehovah is that in the same letter I was told that for every two days of

cultural activity that I carried on as a publisher of the good news, my prison sentence would be reduced by one day.

"So, then, far from becoming free at the end of 1975, today, in August 1973, thanks to the undeserved kindness of Jehovah, I am completely free. I was deported to my country of origin, the United States. I legalized my marriage with the woman who had been my concubine and who is now serving as a faithful witness of Jehovah. We are determined to serve our Creator all the time that he permits in this present system of things."

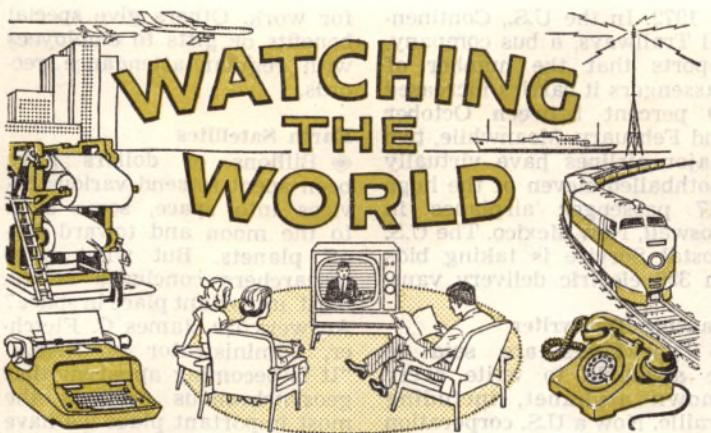
Similarly, a young man from Ohio observed how, in his own case, living just for the present, indulging in so-called "pleasures," soon left him feeling that his life was meaningless. He says:

"Two years ago I left home and started out on my own. I rented an apartment with several friends and, before I realized it, was on the road to ruin. Every day of my life was spent getting drugs, using drugs, selling drugs at a profit and using women for unclean purposes. What fun I thought I was having! But wild parties that included excessive use of alcohol, drugs and loose conduct soon began to be unpleasant. The parties became chaotic, with physical fighting to the point of almost killing one another. I knew I had to get out of this way of life and instill some purpose into my own life, for I no longer had a reason to live.

"I had always believed in a Creator and had often wondered, 'Did he mean for us to live this type of life?' Memories of one of Jehovah's witnesses' coming to the house and studying the Bible when I was in elementary school now came back to me. A friend lent me his Bible and I started to study it, began going to the Kingdom Hall on my own and, after two years of studying, I decided to get baptized."

Truly the Bible can enrich people's lives by supplying the needed spiritual things. If you are among the many who are becoming aware of their need for more than material things and pleasures, why not visit a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's witnesses near your home and see for yourself what help God's Word can be to you?





More Food Shortages Ahead?

◆ More and more experts are joining the chorus that is saying, as recently expressed in the Boston *Sunday Globe*: "The world . . . is teetering dangerously on the edge of a chronic food shortage." What is the reason for their concern? E. M. Martin, special adviser to U.S. Secretary of State Kissinger, claims: "The world has been skating on very thin ice with respect to food supply. It needs only one or two of the larger countries to have bad harvests, whether because of weather, shortages of fertilizer or various other accidents, so as to face a critical situation because there are so few stocks to draw on."

UNICEF'S Children

◆ UNICEF, a U.N. agency, is concerned with the health and education of the world's children. What future does it foresee for babies now being born in the world's one hundred "developing nations"? Using twelve children as an example, UNICEF says that two will die from one of the multiple infant diseases or from protein malnutrition. Of the ten survivors, only five will attend school; the other five will remain illiterates. Of the five who go to school, three will quit and eventually experience days of hunger and, in some cases, irreversible mental and physical

damage due to malnutrition. Of the original twelve, therefore, only two will graduate from elementary school, as UNICEF sees it.

Evolutionists' Dilemma

◆ Last October, *Awake!* reported that R. Leakey's discoveries near Africa's Lake Rudolph were causing evolutionary confusion. Now the uncertainty is being compounded. Less than 200 miles north of Leakey's location is the Omo Valley, where another evolutionist, C. Howell, has also made findings. Both sites have pig fossils. Layers of sediment in which the fossils are found at both sites have also been dated by the evolutionists. Layers at each site that are dated by them to the same time period should have the same kind of pig fossils in them. But Leakey says: "Our pigs tell us one thing, Omo's pigs tell us another." He is said to attribute the difference to 'prehistorically different environments'—another unprovable conjecture.

Alcoholics Abundant

◆ Alcoholism scours much of the world. It is possibly the major health problem in Canada's Yukon Territory, according to a recent study. The equivalent of \$250 worth of alcohol is sold there yearly for every man, woman and

child. That is three times the national average. The Soviet Union's *Literaturnaya Rossiya* says that alcoholism is rapidly increasing among their youth and women. In the U.S. a recently issued pamphlet *The New Alcoholics: Teen-Agers* reports that alcohol outstrips marijuana as youth's preferred drug. Why the increase in alcoholics? Russians accuse boredom. In the Yukon a disruption of traditional Indian and Eskimo society is blamed. American youth are said to drink simply to "get high."

Church Bingo

◆ One thing seems to get people into Christendom's churches: Bingo! So popular is the gambling game that a Catholic in Champion, Michigan, says that half the youngsters in her church's religion classes listed "bingo workers" as among those who, along with priests and nuns, assist people to get to God. She heard an elderly woman kneel and pray: "Lord, I'll light five candles tomorrow if you just keep your eye on my bingo card tonight." Why the stress on bingo in churches? An answer comes from New York's Staten Island. A commercial bingo parlor was recently about to open. Nearby Catholic churches sought to stop it, says the *Daily News*, because they were afraid it "would take away players from their own games and thus cut into needed revenue."

Rector Bans Bible

◆ Recently the rector of St. Mary's Church, Stoke D'Abernon, Surrey, England, "banned" the use of the "Old Testament" in his church. Secular Christian literature is scheduled to replace the unwanted portions of Scripture. Why the ban? He says: "It is that horrible stuff about the invading Israelites being ordered by their repulsive war God to massacre innocent people." He is also upset by

"the revolting and unhistorical Passover saga of Jewish tradition." Does the rector find Jesus Christ equally "revolting and unhistorical"? Jesus not only commemorated the Passover, but is referred to in the "New Testament" as "Christ our passover."—1 Cor. 5:7.

Mass Transit

◆ Mass transit has come in for much discussion recently. Seattle, Washington, has successfully encouraged free bus rides to clear congested streets. But Rome, Italy, found that free bus rides drew mainly former pedestrians, not auto drivers; so traffic remained heavy. Many will agree with *Business Week*, which notes: "One of the ironies of the present situation is that the specter of shortages and gasoline rationing is encouraging people to use mass transit at a time when its amenities and capacity to absorb them are limited."

Why They Quit

◆ It took Chicago's Bill O'Shea twelve years to become a Catholic priest. A total of 367 boys started at the minor seminary with him in 1955. Only 109 of that number entered the major seminary in 1960. A mere 49 were eventually ordained in 1967. Since then almost half that number, or 24, including O'Shea, have quit the priesthood. This, he says, is "an incredible percentage compared to a decade ago." Why the high dropout rate? Essentially, he argues, because seminaries belong to the past. They do not prepare youth to face life's real problems successfully.

Travel Changes

◆ The fuel shortage is changing patterns of travel. In West Germany the sale of bicycles in November 1973 was up 61 percent over the same month in 1972. Holland's largest bicycle builder says sales in the last three months of 1973 rose 70 percent over that period

in 1972. In the U.S., Continental Trailways, a bus company, reports that the number of passengers it carries increased 20 percent between October and February. Meanwhile, two major airlines have virtually mothballed eleven of the huge 747 passenger airplanes in Roswell, New Mexico. The U.S. Postal Service is taking bids on 350 electric delivery vans.

Dancing Typewriter

◆ Typewriters are said to be available to write every known alphabet, including braille. Now a U.S. corporation has developed an accessory to type the dance vocabulary. The ball-shaped element has the physical movements in Labanotation, developed almost a half century ago by Rudolph von Laban. Labanotation uses a central vertical staff to represent the dancer. Its length indicates how long action continues, while other symbols are attached to the staff to describe the position and movement of body parts.

An End to War?

◆ Some visionaries have concluded that if men ran out of natural resources they could no longer make weapons and so war would end. But Dr. Polykarp Kusch, a 1955 Nobel laureate and professor of nuclear physics at the University of Dallas, does not agree. He told an audience recently: "Ultimately, as major resources disappear, we will go at each other with bows and arrows and poleaxes."

Not at Work

◆ The problem of work absenteeism is rising. In the U.S. semiskilled factory workers and laborers are said to have most absenteeism, although the rate of increase is growing faster among management personnel. How do companies cope with this problem? Some now purposely overstaff their work force to compensate for those that will not show up

for work. Others give special benefits or gifts to employees with regular attendance records.

Earth Satellites

◆ Billions of dollars have been spent to send various devices into space, some even to the moon and toward far-off planets. But what have researchers concluded is the most important place in space? Answers Dr. James C. Fletcher, administrator of NASA: "It is becoming apparent that geosynchronous orbit is the most important place we have discovered yet in our advance into space." Geosynchronous satellites orbit 22,300 miles above the equator. This enables them to orbit at precisely the same speed as the earth. So they are valuable as communication satellites, relaying messages from one part of the earth to another part of the earth.

A Divided Church

◆ The Catholic Church appears strongly divided over even certain movies. A recent film that presents a twisted "rock" version of the life of Jesus Christ has caused violent demonstrations among some Catholics in Rome. One priest actually sprayed holy water at the Rome Opera House where the film was shown, to "cleanse it from the works of Satan." But, in direct contrast, a report by Leslie Childe from Rome says that the pope viewed a twenty-five-minute excerpt of the film and was "enthused." And one cardinal, who also saw the clipped version, noted: "It taught us a lesson. If only the Church could do such marvelous publicity for Jesus Christ."

Paper Shortage

◆ The paper shortage continues. Stores are posting signs asking customers to carry smaller items without using a paper bag. Two major New

York supermarket chains pay customers to return bags. Detroit reports that refills for staplers are hard to get, not because of a wire shortage, but because of a lack of cardboard boxes in which to ship them. Magazines, newspapers, sales brochures and catalogs are smaller. The printing of the St. Louis telephone directory was delayed when paper ran short. Who is among the latest to voice its suffering cry? The U.S. Mint complains that it needs paper to print money! Depending on whom one asks, the paper problem is blamed on consumer hoarding, ecology controls, tree and mill shortages and politics.

Dentists and Doctors

◆ In 1969, there were about a half million dentists in 130 countries and territories of the world, according to the World Health Organization's

latest records. However, the dentists are not evenly distributed. About half of these countries and territories have only one dentist for over 20,000 persons. Eight countries and territories have only one dentist for every million or more population. A survey in the U.S. reveals that there was a ratio of 5.6 cardiologists (heart specialists) for every 100,000 Americans in late 1971. But they, too, are not evenly distributed. Miami, Florida, for instance, has 17, while Milwaukee has 3.3 cardiologists for every 100,000 population.

Selfish Nationalism

◆ Men of affairs know that nationalism has aggravated, not lessened, man's current critical situations. Thus, an editorial in *The Western Producer* of Saskatoon, Canada, recently noted: "The economic

fate of the developed nations seems to depend utterly on their own quick recognition of this inescapable fact: The selfish, narrow nationalistic game cannot, will not, work. . . . The only thing that can save the world from complete chaos is the willingness of all nations to see that narrow self-interest at this crucial time in the history of the civilized world is the most destructive force ever to have threatened the world order as we have known it. Discussions leading to changes in that world order must take place soon if chaos is to be averted."

Fire Toll

◆ An estimated 11,900 persons died in U.S. fires last year. Fires set purposely increased a drastic 16.8 percent, to a total of 84,200.

