

The WATCHTOWER

BIBLE TIMETABLES

PINPOINT
OUR
DAY

$7 \times 360 = 2,520$

607 B.C.E.



Also In This Issue:

*What Protection
for God's People?*

MARCH 15, 1974

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ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

The **WATCHTOWER**

March 15, 1974
Vol. 95, Number 6

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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Bible Timetables

PINPOINT

OUR DAY

THE Supreme One of the universe, Jehovah God, does all things at the right time, at a time that results in the greatest good possible for his loyal servants. His time for action, however, may not be specifically known beforehand to anyone but himself.

Speaking of the day for the execution of divine vengeance, Jesus Christ, when a man on earth, said: "Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father." (Mark 13:32) But do his words mean that God's servants on earth have no way to determine at what point they are living on the stream of time?

This could not be the case, as Jehovah is not a God who leaves his people in the dark. The inspired prophet Amos declared:

"The Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not do a thing unless he has revealed his confidential matter to his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7) On numerous occasions God made known in advance the precise time for certain events to occur. Abraham's descendants knew that they were to experience liberation after four hundred years of affliction. (Gen. 15:13-16) Messiah was to appear sixty-nine weeks of years "from the going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem." (Dan. 9:25) In view of such prophecies involving specific time periods, might our day be similarly marked?

A long-range prophecy of Jesus Christ indicates that this is indeed the case. After foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, Jesus Christ said: "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled. . . . And then they will see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory."—Luke 21:24-27.

Thus the close of the "appointed times of the nations" was to be followed by the unexpected revelation of Jesus Christ. He will then make manifest his power and glory in a stupendous act against all opposers of his kingly authority. This is evident from Jesus' later admonition: "Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur,

SEVEN PROPHETIC TIMES

2520 YEARS

1 YEAR

606 YEARS

1913 YEARS

607 B.C.E.

1 B.C.E. 1 C.E.

1914 C.E.

End of This System
Within One Generation

and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:36.

Is there any way to determine the start of the period that culminates in Christ Jesus' destruction of all enemy elements? Yes, other scriptures enable us to do so.

In the apostle Matthew's account (chapter 24) of Jesus' prophecy about the overthrow of Jerusalem, we find references to the Bible book of Daniel. Can we find in that book information to establish the length of the "appointed times of the nations"? The evidence is that we can.

A PROPHETIC DREAM

In the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel there is a record of a divine revelation given in a dream to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. The whole purpose of this dream and its fulfillment was that "people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one whom he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it even the lowliest one of mankind."—Dan. 4:17.

Accordingly, what befell Nebuchadnezzar in fulfillment of his dream was evidently prophetic of something that pointed to God's bestowing rulership on the "lowliest one of mankind." We know that, in God's due time, he did select Jesus Christ to receive such rulership. Jesus proved himself to be "mild-tempered and lowly in heart." Also, those who refused to exercise faith in him held Jesus in low esteem.—Matt. 11:29; Isa. 53:3.

But how did what befell Nebuchadnezzar point to the time when the "lowliest one of mankind," Jesus Christ, would receive rulership over the world of mankind?

SEVEN PROPHETIC TIMES

Like the tree that he saw in his dream, Nebuchadnezzar was cut down from his position as world ruler for "seven times," or seven years. As the years of prophetic

time were reckoned as consisting of twelve months of thirty days each, those "seven times," or seven years, amounted to 2,520 days.* During that period Nebuchadnezzar was deprived of his sanity and, like a beast, ate grass. At the end of this time he regained his sanity and his throne. It was then as if the tree seen in his dream had begun to sprout, the restraining bands having been removed.—Dan. 4:20-37.

Since Nebuchadnezzar occupied the position of world ruler by God's permission, his being deprived of that position must have been symbolic of something relating to the exercise of divine sovereignty. The same aspect of matters is involved in Jesus Christ's reference to 'Jerusalem's being trampled on.' How so? In that Jerusalem was at one time the capital of a theocratic government, the city from which kings of the royal line of David ruled. These kings were said to sit on "Jehovah's throne." (1 Chron. 29:23) Hence, with its destruction and the exile of its monarch in 607 B.C.E.,† Jerusalem as representing God's sovereignty began to be trampled on.

Does this mean that the end of the symbolic "seven times" would see the restoration of a theocratic kingdom in the city of Jerusalem, with a descendant of King David on the throne? No. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians no king of the Davidic line ever again ruled as king at Jerusalem. The permanent heir of King David, Jesus Christ, indicated that his kingdom would instead be heavenly, saying: "The kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." (Matt. 4:17) He did not

* Confirmation for this is found in other parts of the Bible. Revelation 11:2, 3 shows that a period of "forty-two months" is "a thousand two hundred and sixty days." This means that one month is thirty days long ($1,260 \div 42$). Also, Revelation 12:6, 14 reveals that 1,260 days amounts to "a time and times and half a time" (three and a half times), or "three years and a half" (*New English Bible*). Hence, "seven times," or seven years, would equal $2 \times 1,260$ days, or 2,520 days.

† Regarding the reliability of this date for Jerusalem's destruction, see *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pp. 339, 348.

expect to rule from earthly Jerusalem but revealed that this city would cease to have any special recognition from Jehovah God. —See Matthew 23:37, 38.

This being the case, the end of the “appointed times of the nations” was to witness Jesus Christ’s receiving royal authority over the world of mankind, not as a king on an earthly throne in the city of Jerusalem, but as a heavenly king.

When was this to be? At the end of the “seven times” of 2,520 prophetic days from the destruction of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. It was not until more than six centuries after that initial destruction of Jerusalem that Jesus Christ appeared on the earthly scene as King-Designate. Therefore, the prophetic 2,520 days must actually cover a period of many centuries. The Bible itself provides the key for determining their exact length, saying: “A day for a year.” (Num. 14:34; Ezek. 4:6) This means that the 2,520 *prophetic days* ended 2,520 *actual years* from the desolation of Jerusalem in 607 B.C.E. When would this be?

From October 607 B.C.E. to October of 1 B.C.E. is 606 full years; from October of 1 B.C.E. to October of 1 C.E. is one year; and from October of 1 C.E. to October 1914 C.E. is 1,913 years. Adding these figures ($606 + 1 + 1,913$), we get 2,520 years. So the “seven times” ended in October 1914 C.E., and it was then that, though invisible to human eyes, Jesus Christ received rulership over the world of mankind.

START OF THE “LAST DAYS”

Furthermore, in 1914 C.E. the world entered its “last days,” an unprecedented time of anguish of nations before the destruction of the entire ungodly system of things. Describing what conditions would be like even among professed Christians, the Bible says:

“Know this, that in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For

men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power.”—2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Have you not seen these very things? And historians are in general agreement that 1914, the year in which World War I broke out, was a great turning point in history. Observed Professor D. F. Fleming of Vanderbilt University:

“More and more historians look back upon World War I as the great turning point of modern history, the catastrophic collapse which opened the way for others, perhaps the final one.”

Truly, from 1914 onward conditions have become more critical earth wide. We are well along in the “last days,” and the destruction of all wickedness at the hands of Christ Jesus is very near.

Are you taking positive steps to prove that you are on the side of the King Jesus Christ? That is what Jehovah’s Christian witnesses are striving to do in more than 200 lands. They would be glad to conduct a free home Bible study with you regularly so that you might learn God’s requirements for surviving the “last days” and gaining life under his righteous kingdom by Christ.

IN COMING ISSUES

- Does Fear of Neighbor Control Your Life?
- Surviving on the Victorious Side at Har-Magedon.
- Why Be Honest?

Insight on the News

- A strong wave of interest in the occult is sweeping over much of the world. Books, TV shows and movies about occult practices have soared in popularity.

Interest in the Occult

To see one such film that shows priests exorcising, or casting out, a demon, people have lined up for hours in rain and sleet. Once inside, there are reports of fainting, nausea, vomiting, even heart attack. But the crowds keep coming.

Interestingly, Catholic priests say that they have had an unusual number of pleas for help from those who, after seeing the film, claim they are demon possessed. Is it possible?

The Bible gives documented cases of demon possession. The first step toward that condition is often an undue curiosity about the occult. In the actual case on which the movie is said to be based, a child became demon possessed after its relatives used a Ouija board.

Viewing such practices, not as fascinating entertainment, but as "detestable," as God does, is definitely a protection.—Deut. 18:12.

- Business is business, even when it operates behind a religious front. The U.S. Catholic

The Religion Business

Church has suffered a 50-percent drop in seminary enrollment since 1967. Obviously, that does not reflect good business. So, now they are sending "recruitment directors" to the American Management Association for business training.

But the Bible says that priests of God are 'called out of darkness' to do God's work. (1 Pet. 2:9) If these truly were His priests, would not God back them up? Would they need to turn to the darkness of the world to learn how to do God's work? As to how they feel about trusting God, the New York "Post" noted that a priest associated with the program said: "A few years ago we would trust in God and hope that the budget would somehow be properly managed. Well, that just doesn't work."

In contrast, Jesus Christ assured his followers that if they would 'seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness,' the necessary material things would be provided. (Matt. 6: 25-33) If the clergy feel that God is not looking after them, might it be because they

are too occupied with their own business, and failing to do God's work?

- Finding clergymen in politics is becoming commonplace. They are often seen in New York's City Hall, and are consulted by city councilmen.

Clergy in Politics

"Priests, rabbis and ministers mingle easily in the political clubhouses," reports the New York "Times." And a priest appointed by his bishop to

organize Catholic voters says: "I don't have a hobby of politics. It is my job."

Current reports from Brazil, Korea, Spain, Ireland and the Philippines reveal clergy involvement in politics there too. Why politics? Why not stick to religion? A politically prominent New York clergymen answers: "Politics is the only base on which people respect a clergymen today." Why is that?

Well, how can they be respected from a religious viewpoint? They have publicly discredited the Bible. And their political meddling proves that they really do not believe in God's kingdom, his government. But they have a reputation for interest in politics. They are like the Jewish clergy of the first century who said: "We have no king but Caesar." —John 19:15.

- Recently, an Oregon court tried to force a pregnant mother, one of Jehovah's witnesses,

to take a blood transfusion. Essentially the court claimed that the parents should not attempt to 'impose religious faith' on an unborn child.

On hearing about this, one bewildered woman wrote to the Seattle "Times." While not agreeing with the Witnesses as regards blood transfusions, she said: "On January 22, 1973, the highest court in this land handed down a decision that this same child could be murdered if its mother chose to have an abortion. Unbelievable!"

It is, indeed, a warped viewpoint that takes the position that snuffing out a life is ethical, but caring for that life according to Godly principles is contrary to the interests of society.

The Witness mother, incidentally, did not have the transfusion. She went to another state and delivered a healthy baby without blood.

IS IT GLUTTONY?

OUR Creator, Jehovah God, wants us to enjoy food and drink. The inspired writer of the Bible book of Ecclesiastes observed: "With a man there is nothing better than that he should eat and indeed drink and cause his soul to see good because of his hard work. This . . . is from the hand of the true God."—Eccl. 2:24.

Since food and drink are really God's gifts to man, they should be used in harmony with his will. Just as Jehovah God does not want anyone to lose his dignity through excessive drinking, he does not want anyone to overindulge in food and thereby harm himself. Were it not for the natural cycles that Jehovah God had put in operation for sustaining life, we would have no food. Hence, we show proper appreciation for this by eating in moderation. On the other hand, the person who greedily gives way to grossly excessive indulgence in food whenever he has the opportunity is an unappreciative glutton.

The Mosaic law illustrates just how serious this is. In the case of a rebellious son who overindulged in food and drink, the law prescribed the death penalty. (Deut. 21:19-21) In the Christian Greek Scriptures too, gluttony is clearly shown to be something to avoid. While a Cretan poet had mentioned the commonness of gluttony among his people, the apostle Paul advised Titus that men appointed to be Christian overseers should not be lacking in self-control.—Titus 1:7, 8, 12.

There are factors that make gluttony or overeating a serious offense. In the case of one who gluttonously overeats, his de-

sire for food has gotten out of control. He greedily consumes it without consideration for the fact that he has no right to misuse God's gifts. Hence, by disobediently overindulging in food and making a glutton of himself, he fails to show love for Jehovah God. Why so? Because, as the Bible says: "This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments."—1 John 5:3.

Then, too, overeating is conducive to mental and physical laziness. Particularly the person who becomes fat through overeating tends to lie around a lot and engages in little physical exertion. The Bible proverb well sums up what is often the result: "A glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with mere rags."—Prov. 23:21.

Overeating can also lead to physical harm. Regarding overweight or obesity, the *Illustrated Medical and Health Encyclopedia* notes:

"[It] has long been recognized as a contributory factor in many diseases, especially among the aged and aging. Fat people have been generally found to be more susceptible to heart disturbances, certain types of cancer, and diseases of the pancreas, gallbladder and kidneys. Accretion of fat around the liver, heart, or other internal organs may interfere directly with their proper function. The mortality rate in surgery is higher and in general the life span is shorter. Obese persons are prone to diabetes."

But one should not conclude that all overweight persons are gluttons. There may be glandular malfunctions and hereditary factors that are responsible for over-

weight, although self-control in eating may be displayed regularly. Even what a person eats can make a difference. Notes the publication *Overfed but Undernourished*:

"It is an unfortunate fact that the best foods for the person who must watch his weight are the most expensive ones, while the least expensive foods are usually high in calories and low in protein, vitamins and minerals. There are a great many people . . . who just cannot afford a diet of meats, vegetables and fruits on which they might maintain a high level of health and also a normal weight. So they make the inexpensive and starchy foods their chief source of the necessary calories and not only become overweight, but also eventually develop conditions brought on by the dietary deficiencies."

It may also be that certain habits cause a defect in the body mechanism that determines whether enough food has been taken into the system. At times people who stop smoking find that they start putting on excessive weight. Presenting one explanation for this, Dr. Roger J. Williams, in his book *Nutrition Against Disease*, states: "It is possible that continued smoking over the years has mildly poisoned the whole balanced mechanism. Gold thioglucose selectively poisons the braking mechanism when it is administered to animals, and when it is withdrawn, the braking mechanism is impaired."

His recommendation for those who stop smoking is for them "to watch carefully the *quality* of the food that they eat over long periods of time and to avoid empty or naked calories [such as sugar] as much as possible." Concluding on a positive note, Dr. Williams writes: "It is probable that eating good food, over a period of time, can repair the damaged mechanism."

Thus it becomes clear that whether a person is gluttonous or not cannot be determined simply by his outward appearance. A number of factors may cause weight problems. Also, there are people who seem to enjoy much better health when they weigh a little more than what might be

usual for others of similar body build. And it can be remembered that what is viewed as ideal as to one's weight or shape varies considerably from place to place. Among some peoples, being quite slender is thought attractive and sound healthwise, whereas other nationalities and peoples view being plump as a mark of beauty or good health.—Compare Psalm 92:14.

Actually, whether a person is thin or fat, his attitude toward food has much to do with whether he is being gluttonous. Is food the big thing in his life? If in the presence of others, does he selfishly ignore their needs and take far more than his share? Is he grossly overweight but exercises no restraint at all as to food, habitually gorging himself? Does he feel uncomfortable, perhaps even getting sick, because of having eaten too much? If this is the case as a matter of course, the individual has a definite problem. He needs to learn self-control.

In areas of this nature, the Christian does well to examine his inclinations. He is under divine command to do all things, including eating, for God's glory. (1 Cor. 10:31) Manifestly the person who gorges himself whenever given the opportunity is not bringing glory to God. He impairs his mental and physical powers. Owing to his lack of self-control, others come to look upon him with disdain, and he brings reproach upon Jehovah God. That is why one who persists in making a glutton of himself has no place in the congregation of God's people. Greediness, with which gluttony is definitely associated, is one of the works of the fallen flesh. Concerning those engaging in such works the inspired apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: "Those who practice such things will not inherit God's kingdom."—Gal. 5:21.

So the Christian has good reason to work hard in being a good example in moderation. His relationship to God is involved.

WHAT PROTECTION FOR God's People?

J EHOVAH God can protect his people. That goes without question, in view of the many times he has done so in the past. But it may serve his purpose at times to allow them to die in faithfulness to him. Recognizing that fact, three Hebrew exiles, faced with the threat of death in a fiery furnace, said to King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon: "If it is to be, our God whom we are serving is able to rescue us. Out of the burning fiery furnace and out of your hand, O king, he will rescue us. But if not, let it become known to you, O king, that your gods are not the ones we are serving, and the image of gold that you have set up we will not worship."—Dan. 3:17, 18.

Why is it that Jehovah God protects some of his servants while permitting others to suffer and even to die? Will it be different when the "great tribulation" begins upon this ungodly system of things? Will each person having an approved standing before Jehovah be preserved, miraculously if necessary?

GOD'S DEALINGS ARE PURPOSEFUL

Whenever Jehovah God does something, it is purposeful. So it is not without good

reason that Jehovah has permitted his servants to undergo bitter persecution and some even to suffer a violent death. That reason involves an issue of universal importance. Satan the Devil, in effect, claimed that none of God's intelligent creatures served him out of love but that all were prompted by selfish considerations. He further maintained that when such selfish considerations were removed, they would quit being

God's loyal servants. With reference to Job, Satan said to God: "Skin in behalf of skin, and everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul. For a change, thrust out your hand, please, and touch as far as his bone and his flesh and see whether he will not curse you to your very face."—Job 2:4, 5.

Time was needed to settle the issue that Satan had raised. And Jehovah God gave Satan time to try to prove his claim and also permitted him to bring pressure upon all intelligent creatures. Hence, in the course of history, there has been no kind of trial or suffering that some of God's servants have not undergone. Often Jehovah has allowed the testing to go as far as death. Appreciating the rightness of God's side of the issue, many have been willing to die for it. They have considered it a privilege to share in the vindication of God's name and thereby prove the Devil's claim to be false. The apostle Paul, who loyally served God as a disciple of Jesus Christ, said: "I am ready not only to be bound but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."—Acts 21:13.

At no time, however, has the adversary been permitted to wipe out all of God's

people. Attempts to annihilate God's ancient people, Israel, were frustrated. When Pharaoh of Egypt tried to destroy the Israelites as a nation by having all the male babies killed, he failed. (Ex. 1:15-21) Similarly, when Haman in the time of the Medo-Persian Empire succeeded in getting a royal decree passed for the annihilation of all the Jews, divine intervention brought his scheme to nothingness.—Esther 6:1-9:22.

Besides preserving his people as a whole, Jehovah God has on occasion protected his servants as individuals. One example of this is the spectacular deliverance of the aforementioned three Hebrew exiles from a fiery furnace. (Dan. 3:24-27) The test of their integrity had gone far enough in their case to prove their devotion in the face of death. And their faithfulness provided a good opportunity for Jehovah God to demonstrate his saving power. That saving power had, in fact, been called into question, for King Nebuchadnezzar had said to the three men: "Who is that god that can rescue you out of my hands?" (Dan. 3:15) So by saving them, Jehovah made a great name for himself, forcing Nebuchadnezzar to acknowledge: "There does not exist another god that is able to deliver like this one."—Dan. 3:29.

Thus Jehovah's dealings in the past reveal that he can protect his people collectively and individually. But should we expect deliverances for every last one of his servants in connection with the "great tribulation" to come upon the present wicked system?

WHAT THE "GREAT TRIBULATION" INVOLVES

In order to answer this question, we must know what the "great tribulation" includes. The apostle Paul, when writing to Christians at Thessalonica, referred to God's executional judgment upon the ungodly as a tribulation. We read:

"This takes into account that it is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus."

—2 Thess. 1:6-8.

Not just individuals and groups but also earth-wide organizations have brought tribulation upon God's devoted people. The book of Revelation mentions the "wild beast" (symbolizing Satan's visible political system of world rulership) and "Babylon the Great" (the world empire of false religion) as being among the vicious persecutors. Regarding the wicked acts of "Babylon the Great," we are told: "The woman was drunk with the blood of the holy ones and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus." (Rev. 17:6) And of the tribulation caused by the "wild beast," we read: "It opened its mouth in blasphemies against God, to blaspheme his name and his residence, even those residing in heaven. And there was granted it to wage war with the holy ones and conquer them, and authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation."—Rev. 13:6, 7.

The first of these organizations to go down in destruction is "Babylon the Great." It therefore logically follows that the "great tribulation" begins as soon as she comes under the attack that leads to her total annihilation.

HATERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE SURVIVE FOR A TIME

The instrumentalities for bringing this about are political systems and their rulers. (Rev. 17:16, 17) These have no more love for God's people than they do for the false religious systems that they will destroy. Already before the destruction of

"Babylon the Great" these political systems are building up a record of aggressive acts against Jehovah's servants. Their taking action against "Babylon the Great" does not change their antireligious attitude. This is evident from the fact that the Bible depicts them as being aligned against the King Jesus Christ.—Rev. 19: 11-16, 19.

Then, too, some who survive the destruction of "Babylon the Great" regret the material loss they suffer from her destruction, for they are shown lamenting her. (Rev. 18:9-23) These persons profited from "Babylon the Great" and approved her shedding of righteous blood. They have only hatred for God's people and, not wanting to allow any religion at all to survive, will they not seek to vent their murderous anger against God's devoted servants? Like Gog of the land of Magog they will resent the spiritual prosperity of Jehovah's worshipers.—Ezek. 38:1-18.

We can be certain that the surviving business dealers with "Babylon the Great" and also the elements that directly brought about her destruction will not want to submit to Christ's rulership. As humans they cannot directly fight against Jesus Christ and his angelic forces. But they can oppose Christ by attacking his disciples on earth. This is in harmony with the principles enunciated by Jesus: "To the extent that you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." "To the extent that you did not do it to one of these least ones, you did not do it to me." —Matt. 25:40, 45.

In view of the past record of Satan and the ungodly systems under his control, can we imagine that the enemies of the King Jesus Christ will restrain themselves in coming against his loyal subjects on earth? Surely not! We can expect an all-out attack, one that could result in the death of some of God's servants. The Bible book

of Ezekiel does, in fact, foretell such an attack under the guidance of the symbolic "Gog," Satan the Devil:

"You [Gog] will certainly come from your place, from the remotest parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great congregation, even a numerous military force. And you will be bound to come up against my people."—Ezek. 38:15, 16.

Should some of God's people die at the time of this attack, however, they would not experience lasting loss. They would die, not with any feeling of having lost divine favor, but with full confidence that God will restore them to life in his new order because of their faithfulness to him. That attack against God's people, though, is not going to run to the utmost limit. It will be stopped by force. Jehovah's word, through Ezekiel, continues:

"I will call forth against him throughout all my mountainous region a sword,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah. 'Against his own brother the sword of each one will come to be. And I will bring myself into judgment with him, with pestilence and with blood; and a flooding downpour and hailstones, fire and sulphur I shall rain down upon him and upon his bands and upon the many peoples that will be with him.'"—Ezek. 38:21, 22.

Since the natural elements will be employed against the attackers, vital public services will be disrupted. This will bring physical hardships on everyone, including God's servants. Because of disease or other physical limitations, the strain of the situation may be too much for some to bear and hence some of God's people may die. At the same time we know that Jehovah God can strengthen his people and shield them despite their limitations. But, as to the extent to which he may see fit to do so, we must wait and see. However, Jehovah does not directly smite his faithful worshipers.

Nevertheless, though the exact time period involved is unknown to us, the dis-

tressing circumstances will not be prolonged. This is illustrated by what befell ancient Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The tribulation experienced by the inhabitants of that besieged city was "cut short," coming to its termination in less than six months.

—Matt. 24:21, 22.

SURVIVAL THROUGH DIVINE PROTECTION

When the "great tribulation" destroys this ungodly system there will definitely be survivors. In fact, the Bible refers to a "great crowd" who "come out of" or survive this "great tribulation." (Rev. 7:9, 14) Jehovah God will not allow the haters of his people to vent their rage to the point of exterminating them. By means of his Son and the angelic forces, he will come to the defense of his people, rescuing them from annihilation. They being his "loyal ones," their death as a *people* would be too "precious," too costly, in his eyes. (Ps. 116:15) They will also be shielded from the execution of divine judgment. Neither Jesus Christ nor his angelic forces will make a mistake. None of God's servants will be swept away along with the wicked.

Former executions of God's judgment verify this. Noah and his family survived the deluge that destroyed the ungodly. Lot and his daughters, by availing themselves of the opportunity to escape in harmony with divine direction, did not perish with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Furthermore, the psalmist, likely Moses, acknowledged Jehovah as his refuge and stronghold. Confident in God's ability to protect his people as a *body*, he wrote:

"I will say to Jehovah: 'You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I will trust.' For he himself will deliver you from the trap of the birdcatch-

er, from the pestilence causing adversities. With his pinions he will block approach to you, and under his wings you will take refuge. His trueness will be a large shield and bulwark. You will not be afraid of anything dreadful by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in the gloom, nor of the destruction that despoils at midday. A thousand will fall at your very side and ten thousand at your right hand; to you it will not come near. Only with your eyes will you look on and see the retribution itself of the wicked ones."—Ps. 91:2-8.

Truly, then, we need not fear the coming of the "great tribulation." We can have every confidence in divine protection. Even if some do die at the hands of the enemy, their death would serve for the vindication of God's holy name. Is your love for God of such a quality that, faced with death, you would count it a privilege to prove your loyalty to him no matter what the cost? Such a firm stand would glorify Jehovah and it would prove false Satan's claim that your service to God is based on selfish considerations.

One thing we definitely know: Jehovah God will never allow his loyal servants to be effaced from the earth. And not a single one of them will perish at the hands of Jesus Christ or his executional forces. "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off." (2 Pet. 2:9) He also knows how to reward in a manner that is beyond their fondest expectations those who prove their loyalty to him. May we be found among those on his side when the "great tribulation" breaks loose upon this wicked world under the control of Satan the Devil.

THERE are thousands of temples and cathedrals throughout the world. Many of them are glorious in architecture and very ornate, often being decorated with gold and precious jewels.

Have these temples brought the people of earth closer together in true, unified worship, with love toward one another? No; rather, they have put up almost insurmountable barriers. We may find a god in such temples or an image before which devotees kneel, but can we find the true God, that all may worship him "with spirit and truth," in unity and love for one another? The psalmist said: "All the gods of the peoples are valueless gods," and the apostle Paul stated: "The things which the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God."—John 4:24; Ps. 96:5; 1 Cor. 10:20.

But at one time there did exist on earth a temple that represented the worship of the true God. It did not have an image of its God in it, for this God is the Creator, and of him it is written: "To whom can you people liken God, and what likeness can you put alongside him?" (Isa. 40:18, 25) In fact, this God prohibited his worshipers from making anything to represent him. It would be impossible to do so, for, as his representative Moses declared to Israel: "You did not see any form on the day of Jehovah's speaking to you in Horeb out of the middle of the fire." For them

When Worship Centered Around

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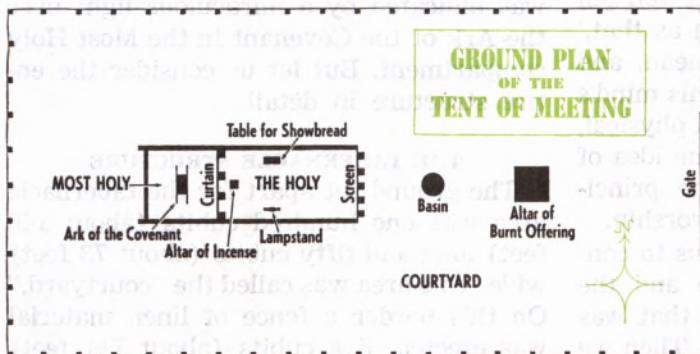
EARTHLY TEMPLE

to make for themselves a "carved image, the form of any symbol," would be to "act ruinously." (Deut. 4:15, 16) Furthermore, at the time of inaugurating the temple to this God, its builder said: "Will God truly dwell upon the earth? Look! the heavens, yes, the heaven of the heavens, themselves cannot contain you; how much less, then, this house that I have built!"—1 Ki. 8:27.

This was the temple of Jehovah, completed by King Solomon in Jerusalem in 1027 B.C.E., and destroyed by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E. After the Israelites' return to restore pure worship in 537 B.C.E., a temple was rebuilt on the same site. This structure, in turn, was rebuilt and enlarged by Herod the Great. But, in effect and for all practical purposes, over the years there was but one temple, having the same function and intent.

THE TABERNACLE A PATTERN OF HEAVENLY THINGS

Prior even to King Solomon's temple, Moses had erected a tabernacle (sometimes spoken of as a "temple") in the wilderness at God's command and according to the pattern God gave him. (1 Sam. 1:9; 3:3; Ex. 25:40; 39:43) It was the simplest of



all the temple structures that Jehovah approved, yet it provided all the essential things. The temple buildings that succeeded it were merely enlargements and elaborations and were permanent structures, whereas the tabernacle was movable.

Why would this tabernacle, built nearly 3,500 years ago in the wilderness of Sinai, be important to us? Because a large portion of a book or letter of the Christian Greek Scriptures is written about it. That tabernacle's primary purpose was a prophetic one. The writer of that letter points this out when he says that the priests serving at that tabernacle and the later temples were "rendering sacred service in a typical representation and a shadow of the heavenly things; just as Moses, when about to make the tent [tabernacle] in completion, was given the divine command: For says he [God]: 'See that you make all things after their pattern that was shown to you in the mountain.'" —Heb. 8:5.

Everyone who is a Christian wants to know as much as possible about heavenly things, at least those things that pertain directly to our living in a way that is pleasing to Jehovah. Man cannot fully understand or grasp a thing unless he has seen or experienced it, or has something to which he can compare it. For example, a man in a primitive land who has never seen a modern skyscraper, when told that some of them are forty stories high, may ask, 'Is it as tall as that tree?' If you tell him, 'Oh, it's four times as high as that,' he begins to grasp what you mean, and can see the building's height in his mind's eye. So God has kindly given us a physical, earthly pattern that gives us some idea of heavenly things, particularly the principles and requirements of true worship.

Therefore, it is profitable for us to consider the tabernacle's structure and the things carried on in it, because that was God's purpose in having it built. Then we

can more clearly see what he expects of us in worship today. As the Son of God himself told a Samaritan woman: "The hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshipers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for, indeed, the Father is looking for suchlike ones to worship him." —John 4:23.

This tabernacle or "temple" was the center of true worship for the nation of Israel. In fact, the tabernacle was the very center of the Israelite camp of between two and three million people. The Levites, caretakers of the structure, tented around it at a reasonable distance, then, farther out, the twelve tribes, three on each of the four sides. The location of the tabernacle was easily discernible because there was a cloud above the Most Holy compartment. This cloud appeared as fire by night, and hence was visible to all, wherever they tented. When the people thought of worship, they thought of the tabernacle, for here was where all sacrifices were made and where the priests rendered their services. Even questions of national importance were answered here by God through the high priest by means of the sacred lots, the Urim and the Thummim.

The tabernacle, as were the more permanent structures that replaced it, was a "sanctuary," that is, a sacred place. God did not personally dwell in this tabernacle, and he never had an image of himself there. He dwelt there only by spirit. This was indicated by a miraculous light over the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy compartment. But let us consider the entire structure in detail.

THE TABERNACLE STRUCTURE

The ground set apart for the tabernacle area was one hundred cubits (about 146 feet) long and fifty cubits (about 73 feet) wide. This area was called the "courtyard." On this border a fence of linen material was erected, five cubits (about 7½ feet)

high, supported by copper pillars or posts. In the middle of the front (east) end of the area was a gate composed of a beautifully colored woven screen twenty cubits (about 29 feet) long.—Ex. 27:9-19.

As one entered the gateway one would first see the copper altar of burnt offering, on which the sacrifices of various kinds were placed. (Ex. 27:1-8) Behind this was the copper basin containing water for the priests to wash themselves. (Ex. 30:17-21) Then, halfway back in the courtyard, was the tabernacle itself. This building or rectangular tentlike structure was thirty cubits (about 44 feet) long, ten cubits (about 14½ feet) wide and ten cubits high. It was made of forty-eight gold-overlaid panel frames, each having two side posts and three crosspieces, at the top, bottom and middle. At the entrance were five pillars overlaid with gold, and between the Holy, or larger compartment, and the Most Holy were four gold-overlaid pillars. All the panel frames and the pillars were set on solid-silver pedestals, with the exception of the five front pillars, which had copper pedestals.—Ex. 26:15-33, 37.

Covering the tabernacle were curtains of fine linen, embroidered in beautiful colors with figures of cherubs. From inside the tabernacle these would be visible through the openings in the panel frames. Over the linen covering was a fine, soft curtain of goat's hair, and over that two other protective curtains, one of ram skins dyed red and an outer covering of seal-skins, these providing a roof.—Ex. 26:1-14.

The screen in front was of linen beautifully embroidered, but not with cherubs. (Ex. 26:36) The curtain between the Holy and the Most Holy compartments was embroidered with cherubs.—Ex. 26:31-33.

The innermost room, the Most Holy, was a perfect cube ten cubits in each dimension. The front or eastern compart-

ment, the Holy (or Holy Place), was twice as long. Inside the Holy, on the north side, was the gold-overlaid table for show-bread, on which were twelve loaves of bread, one for each tribe, also some frankincense. (Lev. 24:5-7) On the south side was the solid-gold lampstand (not a candlestick). In front of the curtain to the Most Holy was the altar of incense, overlaid with gold.—Ex. 25:23-36; 26:35; 30:1-6.

In the Most Holy stood the Ark of the Covenant, gold overlaid with a solid-gold "mercy seat" or "propitiatory cover," atop which were two golden cherubs. Above the cover and between the cherubs was a miraculous cloud of light, indicating that God was with his people in the temple, not personally, but by spirit. His holy spirit was active there in providing this light.—Ex. 25:10-22; Lev. 16:2.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

To this tabernacle the people brought their sacrifices throughout the year. But the tenth day of the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar was the outstanding day of the year. It was the Day of Atonement. (Lev. 16:29-31; 23:27) On this day the gateway to the courtyard was opened so that the people could see what went on in the courtyard, but none of the people not assigned to temple service could enter. The tabernacle screen behind the five entrance posts was always in place, so that no one except the priests who ministered inside the tabernacle ever saw what was in there. However, while the atonement proceedings were carried out, only the high priest entered the tabernacle at all. (Lev. 16:17) At no time did anyone enter the Most Holy except the high priest, who entered that compartment only on this one day of the year.—Heb. 9:7.

On the Day of Atonement the primary sacrifices, besides the necessary burnt of-

ferings, were a young bull, a perfect specimen, and a goat, called the 'goat for Jehovah.' Another goat was brought in also, over which the sins of the people were confessed by the high priest, and the goat was led into the wilderness, to die there.—Lev. 16:3-10.

The bull was stood by the north side of the altar of burnt offering and then slaughtered. (Compare Leviticus 1:11.) The high priest went first into the Most Holy with a portable censer or incense burner with coals taken off the altar. (Lev. 16:12, 13) After burning the incense in the Most Holy he again entered, this time with some of the bull's blood, which he sprinkled on the ground in front of and toward the Ark of the Covenant with its propitiatory cover or mercy seat. This blood was an appeal to the mercy of God for propitiation or covering of the sins of the high priest and "his house," which included all the tribe of Levi.—Lev. 16:11, 14.

The third entry into the Most Holy was with blood of the 'goat for Jehovah,' which was sprinkled before the Ark for the sins of the people. Some of the blood of the bull and the goat was put on the altar of burnt offering and on its horns. The fat of the animals was burned on the altar, and the carcasses were taken outside the camp and burned, skin and all.—Lev. 16:25, 27.

By this means the people received the satisfaction of knowing that they were

doing what God commanded, what pleased him, and that their sins were rolled back or held off for another year. The apostle Paul remarks about the Law's sacrificial arrangement: "The blood of bulls and of bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who have been defiled sanctifies to the extent of cleanness of the flesh."

—Heb. 9:13.

But the Israelites had to observe the Day of Atonement each year, and between times had to make specific sacrifices for certain personal sins. As the apostle went on to say: "How much more will the blood of the Christ, who through an everlasting spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works that we may render sacred service to the living God?"—Heb. 9:14.

The Law, with its tabernacle and temple, only had "a shadow of the good things to come, but not the *very substance* of the things," because "*the reality* belongs to the Christ."—Heb. 10:1; Col. 2:17.

The Hebrews never had the idea enter their minds that someday they would have a High Priest who would actually give his own human life as a sacrifice and who would enter, not into the Most Holy of the earthly tabernacle or temple, but into heaven itself, in the very presence of God in his great spiritual temple. That spiritual temple and how it serves as the center of true worship today will be the subject for the next article of this series in *The Watchtower*.—Heb. 9:24.

"Jehovah is in his holy temple. Jehovah—in the heavens is his throne. His own eyes behold, his own beaming eyes examine the sons of men. Jehovah himself examines the righteous one as well as the wicked one, and anyone loving violence His soul certainly hates. He will rain down upon the wicked ones traps, fire and sulphur and a scorching wind, as the portion of their cup. For Jehovah is righteous; he does love righteous acts. The upright are the ones that will behold his face."

—Ps. 11:4-7.

A Personal Gift from Jehovah

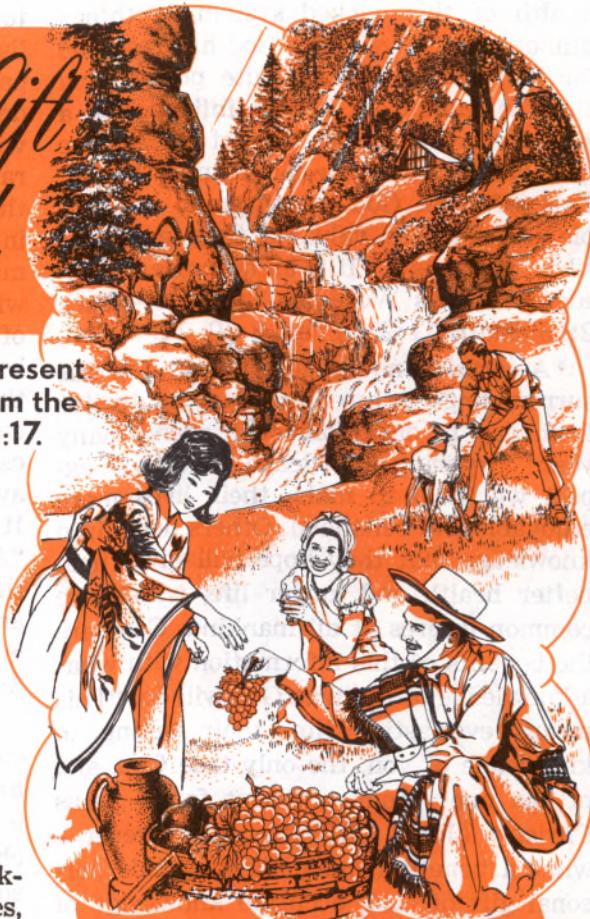
"Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, for it comes down from the Father of the celestial lights."—Jas. 1:17.

YOU have probably heard people say: "It just doesn't pay to be good or to follow Bible principles." To support this claim they may say: "Well, just look around you. Who has the most of this world's possessions? Is it those who are Christians following Bible principles or those who do what is right in their own eyes? Who, in general, can afford the largest homes and have the biggest bank accounts, the highest priced cars and other expensive material goods? Is it the honest, upright, hardworking Christian who lives by Bible principles, or is it the dishonest, deceiving, lying person, whether in the field of politics, commerce or religion?" They may even go to the extent of saying that the Bible supports this theory and turn to the words of Jesus when he said that God "makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matt. 5:45) They may say this shows that God is no respecter of persons, whether good or bad. So what is the reason for being good, upright and honest? Why strive to live by Bible principles?

² It would be wrong to conclude that God

1. How do many people view the matter of following Bible principles?

2. What personal gift has God given to his people, and how valuable is it?



Think what it would mean to know for a certainty that you could live forever on earth under paradise conditions

is blessing the wicked in the way that he is blessing those who are righteously inclined. Never let anyone mislead you into thinking that you have less or will have less just because of following the Word of God. A real Christian is more blessed and he is far richer than all others. It is true that you may not have as many acres of land, as much money, as fine a car, or as big a home, yet Christians have a gift that God has reserved for his people and "hidden" from others. All the power and

wealth of this wicked system of things cannot get this gift that God has reserved for his people. The absolute power of a dictator cannot get it. The influence of a king or president cannot get it. All the gold and silver of the rich cannot buy it. This gift that God has given to his people is far more valuable than gold and silver. What is it? It is an accurate knowledge of God's Word and purpose!—Eccl. 2:26; Matt. 11:25; Prov. 8:10, 11.

³ A certain knowledge of life and of our surroundings is essential in order to live from day to day. Some will spend many years acquiring knowledge that they expect will help to make their lives more enjoyable and beneficial. Others delve into knowledge that they hope will give them better health and longer life, which are common desires of all mankind. Compare the benefits of this information with what a knowledge of the true God will do. "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." (John 17:3) To live forever—what a benefit from possessing this personal gift of God, accurate knowledge of him and his Son. Is there any amount of secular education that can gain for its owner everlasting life? No wonder Solomon said: "If you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God." (Prov. 2:4, 5) Men will spend much time, exert much effort and endure hardship to find precious natural resources. Should one not more highly esteem knowledge of God?

⁴ Just think what it would mean for you

3. In what way is the knowledge of Jehovah superior to secular education?

4. How does a Christian benefit from the Bible's hope and promises?

to know for a certainty that you could live forever right here on earth under paradise conditions. To know that the time definitely is coming, and soon, when man will live in security, when nationalistic and racial barriers will be dissolved and when the ecological cycles of this earth will be in proper balance truly brings peace of mind. How unlike the people of our day who do not have this accurate knowledge of God and of whom the Bible says: "Men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth." (Luke 21:26) In contrast, how calm and confident are those who have availed themselves of God's personal gift. It is as written by the prophet Malachi: "And you people will again certainly see the distinction between a righteous one and a wicked one, between one serving God and one who has not served him."—Mal. 3:18.

⁵ This gift of knowledge is not automatically passed on from one generation to another, from a father to a son or from a mother to a daughter, as are physical characteristics. It is even possible that some members of a family, whether it be father or mother, son or daughter, may receive of this personal gift from Jehovah and others may not. Those without the gift of accurate knowledge may even become our enemies, though of the same family. It is with this in mind that Jesus said: "Indeed, a man's enemies will be persons of his own household." (Matt. 10: 34-37) Does a person who is perhaps disowned by his family become a loser in this case? No, for in addition to gaining the divine gift of knowledge itself, one also gains spiritual "brothers and sisters and mothers and children" a hundredfold. (Mark 10:29, 30) The joy we can have in

5. (a) Can the knowledge of the truth be inherited?
(b) How may Bible truth affect our family ties, and how should we view this?

serving Jehovah in association with these spiritual relatives far outweighs any loss.

ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE

⁶ Many people have read the Bible and have some knowledge of their Creator. However, it is of interest to note that God's will is that "all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Tim. 2:4) One must realize that more than a hazy outline of knowledge is necessary. This was one of the problems had by the Jewish people of the apostle Paul's day. He referred to them as "having the framework of the knowledge and of the truth." (Rom. 2:20) If a person building a house stopped after completing the framework, his effort would be of little value. The house must be complete to serve its intended purpose. If a person limits himself to studying only certain "favorite" portions of the Bible, his knowledge will only be a "framework" of limited value. One must appreciate that "all Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial" if one is to "come to an accurate knowledge of truth."—2 Tim. 3:16.

⁷ Actually, an incomplete picture of God's Word can be dangerous. Without the full picture we could easily be misled into thinking that we are serving God while doing something diametrically opposed to his will. Jesus warned his followers concerning such ones: "In fact, the hour is coming when everyone that kills you will imagine he has rendered a sacred service to God." (John 16:2) They may have been sincere in their killing Christ's followers, but they were wrong. Paul tells us what their problem was: "For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God; but not according to accurate knowledge." (Rom.

10:2) Those who think they are zealously serving God must 'keep testing whether they are in the faith, keep proving what they themselves are.'—2 Cor. 13:5.

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE IMPORTANT

⁸ Since a knowledge of the true God is so beneficial and readily available, why is it that so few of mankind have it? Often the reason is that they have the wrong attitude toward Jehovah and his Word. For example, one thing that is essential was stated by Solomon, one of the wisest men who ever lived: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge." (Prov. 1:7) This does not mean that one would fear God in the way one would fear an enemy who was trying to do one harm. Rather, out of respect for God and in appreciation of all he has done and will do, one would never want to disappoint him or incur his displeasure. The same wise one quoted above later said: "The fear of Jehovah means the hating of bad." (Prov. 8:13) So, for one truthfully to say that one has this Godly fear, one must back it up by demonstrating a hatred for what is bad. One may have to make some real changes in one's life to conform to the standard of righteousness that God has established. Proper fear, reverence and awe of Jehovah lay the foundation for knowledge of the true God and his universe.

⁹ Something else is necessary in gaining the gift of accurate knowledge of God, and that is the proper estimation of the Son of God, Christ Jesus. In addition to being the ransomer of all mankind, he has an executive position in the universe that is surpassed only by that of his Father, Jehovah God. In accord with the facts he was able to say: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth." (Matt. 28:18) Into his hands has been committed all judgment. The resurrection takes place

6. (a) What is Jehovah's will for mankind? (b) How does one "come to an accurate knowledge of truth"?
7. Is sincerity sufficient to please God? Explain.

8. (a) What is the foundation for true knowledge? (b) What does it mean to fear Jehovah?
9. What facts must we recognize about Christ Jesus?

at his direction and he has the power to heal all mankind from sin's death-dealing effect. Really, all the harm done by Satan's rebellion in the garden of Eden is to be remedied through Jesus Christ. No wonder the apostle Paul said concerning Jesus: "Carefully concealed in him are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge." (Col. 2:3) His position in God's purpose must be recognized if we are going to gain God's gift of knowledge.—Matt. 20:28; John 5:22-27; 6:39, 40; Heb. 7:23-25; 1 John 3:8.

¹⁰ One could not read the Bible with pre-conceived ideas and hope to gain what Jehovah wants us to understand from it. If one has allowed oneself to be influenced by the pagan teaching of the immortality of the human soul one may read right over the statement, "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die," and never even get the point. (Ezek. 18:4, 20) One may go right on believing that the soul cannot die. Yet this same person may twist words or phrases elsewhere in the Bible in an effort to support his belief. How different are those with open minds, for they let what they learn from God's Word mold their thinking and way of life! They feel as the psalmist: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths." —Ps. 25:4; 2 Cor. 4:4.

¹¹ In addition to having an open mind one must have the proper motive in studying God's Word. Certain Jews of Jesus' day were quite studious and yet Jesus said to them: "You are searching the Scriptures, because you think that by means of them you will have everlasting life." There is nothing wrong with desiring everlasting life. It is a proper hope, but if the gaining of it is our sole motive in "searching the Scriptures," then we are not going to gain the knowledge that leads to everlasting

10. Why do some not grasp the truth when reading the Scriptures, and what frame of mind should we have? 11. How can a wrong motive affect our studying of the Word of God?

life. Just after his above statement Jesus pointed to the proper motivation that those Jewish people lacked: "I well know that you do not have the love of God in you." (John 5:39, 42) We must love God in order to receive this personal gift of accurate knowledge.

¹² Something else that is essential to receiving this priceless gift from God is referred to in the psalm: "He will cause the meek ones to walk in his judicial decision, and he will teach the meek ones his way." (Ps. 25:9) So, a person who is proud and haughty cannot expect to get this knowledge until he changes his attitude. We need to "become as young children," with open, teachable minds and hearts, to understand God's Word. (Matt. 18:3) This helps us to appreciate why many men who have made an analytical study of the Bible still may not understand such basic things as God's purpose for this earth. They may know the original Bible languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, but often they have let their knowledge 'puff them up.' It is as Jesus said: "I publicly praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intellectual ones and have revealed them to babes." (Matt. 11:25) The proper viewpoint in regard to any knowledge we may have is expressed by Paul under inspiration: "If anyone thinks he has acquired knowledge of something, he does not yet know it just as he ought to know it." (1 Cor. 8:2) Humility and reliance on God's help through his spirit are essential to gaining accurate knowledge of the Bible.—1 Cor. 8:1; Jas. 1:5.

DO NOT NEGLECT THE GIFT

¹³ While it is true that knowledge is a "gift" from God, it is not acquired or main-

12. (a) What did Jesus mean when he said to "become as young children"? (b) In our gaining knowledge, what danger should be avoided?

13. Does the gift from Jehovah come without effort on our part?

tained without considerable personal effort. To illustrate, a musician may be said to have a gift for playing the piano. When he plays, it seems effortless. He may have certain natural inclinations that lend themselves to his musical ability, and yet we should not conclude that his ability to play came without effort or that he maintains this gift without practice. Our getting and keeping knowledge of God's Word is much the same. You may notice the skill that others have in their use of the Bible. No matter what question comes up, they seem to have a Scriptural answer. They make it appear so easy. But never conclude that they got their knowledge without effort. No matter who we are, it requires serious study to accumulate an accurate knowledge of the Bible, and once we have it we must keep studying to maintain it. This reminds us of the apostle Paul's words to Timothy regarding his "gift," his assignment of service in the Christian congregation: "Do not be neglecting the gift in you."—1 Tim. 4:14.

¹⁴ A Christian's watching entertainment on television, listening to soap operas on the radio, or reading novels to improve his knowledge of the Creator's purpose would be the same as a farmer using a mowing machine to cultivate his corn. It is just the wrong implement. It would do more harm than good. The Bible is the instrument provided by Jehovah God, and through his visible organization he has provided many aids for cultivating the seed of truth. That we need to cultivate and to improve our knowledge of the truth is in harmony with what Paul wrote to the Hebrews: "Now that we have left the primary doctrine about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying a foundation again, namely, repentance from dead works, and faith toward God, the teaching on baptisms and the laying on of the hands, the

resurrection of the dead and everlasting judgment. And this we will do, if God indeed permits." (Heb. 6:1-3) Since it is God's purpose under the Kingdom to have the earth populated with men and women perfect in knowledge, then it is well that Christians now advance in knowledge that befits servants of Jehovah.—Isa. 11:9.

¹⁵ It would not be wise for a Christian to make it a practice to listen to false religious propaganda on the radio or on television, nor to have such literature come regularly into his home, thinking that this would equip him to refute unscriptural teachings. Nor would it be beneficial to study higher criticism, thinking that this would help him to talk intelligently to those who disbelieve the Bible. In order to be able to speak well, one does not study bad grammar but, rather, studies the rules of good grammar. If one knows good grammar, that which is incorrect will stand out. Likewise, if one studies the truth from God's Word, that which is false will stand out. One who has an accurate knowledge of God's Word will have no problem in refuting false religious ideas. But there is danger in feeding one's mind on religious teaching contrary to God's Word. The apostle Paul cautions us in this regard when he says: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ." —Col. 2:8; 1 Cor. 10:12.

¹⁶ While the Bible encourages personal study as a method of gaining accurate knowledge, it also says: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." (Prov. 18:1) So we must seek out

14. How does one go about cultivating the seed of truth, and why?

15. What pitfall should be avoided, and why?
16. In addition to personal study, what else is essential in gaining accurate knowledge?

the association of others who, like ourselves, are anxious to know accurately the will of God. Not only will this assist you to broaden out your scope of knowledge, but it will also encourage you to keep studying and applying the things you learn. Because of this need for encouragement, God's Word counsels: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near."—Heb. 10:24, 25.

¹⁷ In regard to taking in knowledge, many persons could easily point to their limited education, their poor memory and their lack of reading ability. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Jehovah is "a God of knowledge," and humans should strive to reflect his image. (1 Sam. 2:3) If we are illiterate we can learn to read and write. If we do not know the meaning of some words we can look them up in a dictionary. It is as the book of Proverbs says: "The way of the lazy one is like a brier

hedge, but the path of the upright ones is a way cast up." (Prov. 15:19) A person who is mentally lazy sees only the obstacles, whereas to the "upright ones" the road looks smooth. A positive attitude will go a long way toward helping us to gain accurate knowledge.—Col. 3:10.

¹⁸ An accurate knowledge of the purposes of God as revealed in his Holy Word the Bible is a wondrous endowment from a loving heavenly Father. If you have not already benefited from this generous provision from our Creator, why not seek out those in your community whom you know to have this gift. You will find them at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. Or, if you are one of those who recently or perhaps many years ago received the knowledge that leads to everlasting life, use what you have and build on it. Remember, too, that what you may lack in a material way in comparison with those who ignore God's Word, he has more than compensated for by making you the beneficiary of his personal gift of life-giving knowledge.—Prov. 2:6.

17. What contribution will a positive attitude make toward our acquiring knowledge of God?

18. No matter what our circumstances, what should be our attitude toward God's personal gift?

WHATEVER ELSE YOU ARE DOING

"As you go, preach."

—Matt. 10:7.

WHEN we look around us at the troubled conditions in the world, the increase of crime, the unrest among youth, the unhappiness among families, it is painfully evident that the majority of

1. Why is it so essential to have the preaching of the good news done at this time, and what question arises as to the preaching?

-Preach!

mankind needs to know about the good things that Jehovah recorded in his Word, the Bible. However, the question asked over nineteen hundred years ago still echoes today: "How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach?" (Rom. 10:14) When you read these inspired words in the

Holy Scriptures, to whom do you look as the preacher meant? Do you think of it as applying to clergymen or others with special education or ability?

² Each one of the early Christians felt personally involved in the answer to this question, and that is why every one of them became a preacher. Regardless of the fact that some "were men unlettered and ordinary," all knew something about the "good news" and had a burning desire to share it with someone, anyone with whom they would come in contact. (Acts 4:13) *The History of the Christian Religion and Church, During the Three First Centuries* (New York; 1848, by Dr. Augustus Neander, translated from German by Henry John Rose, page 41) had this to say: "Celsus, the first writer against Christianity, makes it a matter of mockery, that labourers, shoemakers, farmers, the most uninformed and clownish of men, should be zealous preachers of the Gospel." So, preaching in early Christianity was not restricted to a special class, but all Christians felt an obligation to be preachers. It will be of interest to analyze how over one million eight hundred thousand persons of all walks of life, from all educational backgrounds, with a variety of abilities have come to be preachers of the good news today.—1 Cor. 1:26-29.

THE MAKING OF A PREACHER

³ We are here talking about those Christian preachers known all around the world today as Jehovah's witnesses. Before learning about the 'good news of God's kingdom,' many of these had been involved in drug abuse, drunkenness and other degraded ways of life. Others were caught up in commercial ventures and were full of tension and anxiety because of the instability of the economy and their quest

2. What fine example did the early Christians set, and is the preaching restricted to any certain class of people?
3. What changes have occurred in people's lives due to the preaching work?

for financial security. Still others were leading humdrum lives, getting nowhere and constantly asking themselves: "What purpose is there in living? Is this all there is to life?" All of this changed because someone had enough love for his neighbor to preach the truth of God's word to him. An aimless, troubled existence gained purpose. Frustration and anxiety gave way to hope. With this new-found sense of direction in life, they now have a zest for living.—1 Cor. 6:9-11.

⁴ Are you one of those who have thus benefited? How does this make you feel? For one thing, you no doubt feel a sense of obligation, an obligation to help someone else in the same way that you were helped. But more than there being just a feeling of hard, cold duty, has not your very heart been touched? Yes, you see so many people in the same condition that you formerly were in, and you feel toward them the same as Jesus did toward the people of his day: "On seeing the crowds he felt pity for them, because they were skinned and thrown about like sheep without a shepherd." (Matt. 9:36) Jehovah's Christian witnesses are motivated by such compassion to want to help mankind today.—1 John 3:16; 4:11.

⁵ Even more than love for neighbor, it is love for God that motivates true Christians to preach 'the good news of God's kingdom.' In fact, by his Son he has commanded them to do so. (Matt. 24:14; Acts 10:42) All who truly love God are preaching. We cannot pay a "preacher" to preach for us any more than we can pay someone to live a good, clean, upright life for us while we disobey God's moral laws. Each must carry his own load of responsibility. There is no substitute for our personally preaching. It is an essential expression of our love for God.—1 John 5:3; Gal. 6:5.

4, 5. (a) What condition of mankind motivates Christians to share the good news with others? (b) How does love of God affect our preaching obligation?

⁶ Observing God's commands in regard to preaching, or anything else, is not burdensome. Eating, drinking, sleeping and breathing are not burdensome, and yet obedience to these natural laws of God is vital, as our life depends on it. To a Christian, preaching is just as vital. It is something we want to do, and what pleasure it brings! What satisfaction, contentment and joy we have after a period of preaching! To know that one is able to do what Christ Jesus did and what God has commanded for our day brings an inner sense of peace and contentment that knows no equal. And to think that, even unknown to you, a seed may have been planted that will perhaps open the way for someone else to learn the truth—what joy this brings! Faithful preaching also contributes to a clean conscience, which is a factor of no small value in our present happiness and peace of mind.

⁷ Among those actively sharing in the preaching work today are persons with limited education, physical impediments and other problems that some might consider to be drawbacks, but they have not let these things stop them from obeying God and showing love for their neighbor. One of Jehovah's witnesses who lived in a rural community all her life used to be so timid and shy that she would not even do her own grocery shopping because of being afraid to meet people. She was in her fifties when learning the Bible truth. Now she goes from house to house telling total strangers about the good news she has learned. Now it is just the natural thing for her to do. If we love God and our neighbor, if we will forget about our qualifications from a human standpoint and simply trust in God, we can become preachers of the good news and enjoy a successful ministry.—2 Cor. 3:5; Phil. 4:13.

6. How should we view our privilege to preach, and with what benefit to ourselves?

7. What may cause one to hold back from preaching, and yet what positive viewpoint is necessary?

⁸ Of course, it takes real faith to speak out boldly about the truth from God's Word, because, though it is good news, it is unpopular to many. This message often calls for drastic changes in one's way of life, and many do not like to change their traditional way of living. They may scoff at the message or be indifferent. Without faith we might stop speaking. Yet, true Christians are motivated by the same faith that moved the apostle Paul, who wrote: "Now because we have the same spirit of faith as that of which it is written: 'I exercised faith, therefore I spoke,' we too exercise faith and therefore we speak." (2 Cor. 4:13) True Christians need to exercise care never to neglect the many avenues available for them to keep their faith strong, realizing that weakening faith will result in a letup in their preaching activities.

⁹ So then, we have seen that secular education and natural ability are not prerequisites to becoming a preacher; rather, one must have love for God, love for one's neighbor, and real faith based upon accurate knowledge of God's Word. But now the questions arise: "To whom do we preach, when, where, and how?" The key to these questions is indicated by the apostle Paul, who wrote a letter to some Christian preachers in Rome. He said to them: "You became obedient from the heart." (Rom. 6:17) Yes, the heart is the key to the matter. For this reason Paul did not have to give them a lot of specific instructions as to when, where and how they should preach. Likewise today, if we will simply do what our heart motivates us to do, we are going to start talking to someone about the things we are learning from the Bible, and so we will have become preachers of the good news.

8. What quality is needed in order to preach, and why?

9. How is the heart involved in our properly serving Jehovah?

REACHING ALL

¹⁰ As preachers of the good news, our desire should be to reach all who will hear.



In the days of the apostles all Christians, young and old, rich and poor, farmers and city dwellers, preached the good news. Whatever those footstep followers of Christ knew about Jesus, his ministry, his death and his resurrection, they told to others. In fact, they used every avenue open to them to get this message of everlasting life through to the people around them. They preached in the fields, in the cities, at marketplaces, in the homes and everywhere they found a listening ear. They did not hide themselves away in some monastery, nor did they wait for some scheduled time to preach on a certain day, as clergymen do in modern times. Early Christians were moved from the heart to make proclamation of the good news under all conditions. It is said of the apostle Paul: "Consequently he began to reason in the synagogue with the Jews and the other people who worshiped God and every day in the marketplace with those who happened to be on hand." (Acts 17:17) Similarly today, a love for people will help us to be alert to the many avenues open for reaching people.—Mark 1:39; 6:56; Luke 8:1; 13:26; John 18:20.



¹¹ The Christian witnesses of Jehovah are making good use of the house-to-house method of preaching. In groups or as individuals, on any day of the week and almost any time of the day,

10. What effective and superior method of reaching people did the early Christians use?

11. What method of preaching to people are Jehovah's witnesses famous for world wide?

Jehovah's witnesses share in this feature of their ministry. Where individuals are not at home they are careful to make note of the address so that further efforts may be made to find each householder. Where interest in the Bible is shown, return visits are made and, if possible, a home Bible study program is established.

¹² When conducting Bible studies in the homes of interested persons, advantage is taken of opportunities to invite other members of the family to take part. Perhaps there is a visitor in the home, so rather than our delaying the study until the visitor leaves, we invite him to sit in on the study. In many cases the visitors are waiting to be invited or are interested in

what is going on, so the invitation is accepted.

¹³ Jehovah's witnesses know that if they keep some Bible literature handy at all times, and if they are alert and will boldly but tactfully take the initiative, many other occasions are available in which they may share the good news. For example, we have acquaintances and relatives that we may see from time to time, and often they will more readily listen to us than to a stranger. Of course, in such situations there is the ever-present danger of being too forceful and trying to tell them too much at one time. Even though we may know them well, it is not wise to take liberties that may close their minds to the message. We need to be just

12. Alertness at Bible studies can often accomplish what additional good?

13. (a) In witnessing to acquaintances and relatives, what advantage do we have? (b) Why is tact important for our effectively presenting the good news to such ones?



as tactful and considerate of them as we are of the strangers we meet when we call from house to house. We may start with small dosages of the positive aspects of the good news. If the initial response is a cold one, there is no need to isolate ourselves from them, but, rather, we endeavor to keep the lines of communication open so that a further witness may be given at some future time. Through the loving concern of friends and relatives many have come to learn the good news.

¹⁴ At our place of employment opportunities often present themselves where the Kingdom message can be presented. For example, at lunchtime the Christian witness may take the time to do some reading of the Bible. He could take the initiative to strike up a conversation with a fellow worker and mention an interesting scripture, such as Psalm 37:10, 11, which tells that in a little while the wicked ones will be done away with and the meek ones will live on the earth in peace. Questions such as, "Do you think you will ever see that day?" or, "How would you and your family like to live at that time?" can easily direct the conversation to the Kingdom hope. Of course, we should not do this preaching when we should be working at our secular job, but should realize that our example as a good worker is very important.

¹⁵ Other occasions for sharing the good news come when traveling. Hotel and motel managers, gasoline station attendants, and restaurant workers all need what you have

14. Can we conscientiously preach at our place of employment? Explain.
15, 16. (a) How can we mix preaching with traveling?
(b) What opportunities do we have to preach in our homes?



—the good news. When traveling to a Christian convention one could easily explain the purpose of the trip and perhaps leave copies of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines, or, possibly, a book such as *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*. While traveling on public transportation one could read some Christian literature. Frequently the one sitting next to you will show some interest. Or you may offer the one sitting next to you something to read on the trip. Many persons have been introduced to the good news in this way. Of course, it takes some initiative and advance preparation to use these occasions to preach and to spread Christian literature.—John 4:6, 7, 13, 14.

¹⁶ Salesmen may call at your home from time to time. You might ask a question such as, "Does anyone ever mistake you for one of Jehovah's witnesses?" This might spark a conversation that could be utilized to preach the good news. Others who call may similarly be given an opportunity to learn the truth. We might ask, "Do you think we will ever see peace?" or, "Why do you think there is so much crime?"

¹⁷ Young folks in school have an excellent opportunity to spread the good news to an almost captive audience. They have a field that is relatively untouched, and one in which open minds are often found. Whether you are studying about the future, the past, or the present, the Bible has something to say that, from time to



17. Schoolchildren, why are your opportunities to preach in school so unusual?

time, can be tied into classroom discussions and private conversations. The literature of the Watch Tower Society covers a wide range of subjects, and if you are alert, teachers and classmates alike may be introduced to the good news through it.

¹⁸ It may be a greater challenge for those who are sick or physically handicapped to present the good news; nevertheless, they share the same privilege as preachers as do their fellow Christians.

Many of these write letters, use the telephone, and never pass up an opportunity to talk to a visitor about God's promises. While in the hospital, fellow patients, nurses, and doctors all may be tactfully introduced to the good news. Witnesses who are thus confined may not always see immediate results, and yet their 'planting and watering' is making the same contribution to the preaching work as that of their Christian brothers. Both must rely upon God to make it grow. And always realize, regardless of who listens, we are doing what God tells us to do. We are being faithful.—1 Cor. 3:6, 7.



PREACHING BY EXAMPLE

¹⁹ People may learn much about the good news from us without our ever saying a word. Psalm 19:1-3 shows how this is possible. Verses one and two read: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling. One day after another day causes speech to bubble forth, and one night after another night shows forth knowl-

18. How is it possible for the physically handicapped to share in the preaching work, and who makes our efforts successful?

19, 20. (a) Is it possible for Jehovah to be praised without a word being spoken? Why do you so answer? (b) How can we in our own neighborhood praise Jehovah by our conduct?

edge." This sounds as if the heavens literally speak about God, but as verse three says: "There is no speech, and there are no words; no voice on their part is being heard."

²⁰ The speechless testimony of the heavens says so much about our Creator's majesty, and, likewise, our good example in the community can do much to enhance the preaching work. This aspect of spreading the good news must not be overlooked. Our neighbors may not be fellow believers, but they are fellow humans and deserve due consideration. A kind word or a pleasant smile goes a long way. In time of need we might even be able to render some assistance to them, even as Jesus showed human compassion to those in need in his day. Our genuine concern in their time of need may cause them to notice that there is a people on the earth who follow Jesus' counsel: "All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them." (Matt. 7:12) In addition to our human kindness, they may notice that we are especially neat and clean around the home. They may observe that we do things as a family, and are always so happy. At our place of employment the application of Bible principles makes us stand out as honest, hard workers. As we go about our daily life we are silently preaching to those in the community. Now, when we or one of our Christian brothers calls at the homes in the area with the message of Christian hope, the response we get will to some degree be a reflection of the example that has been set. What have you done recently for a neighbor that would cause him to listen to the next witness of Jehovah at his door?—Gal. 6:10; Mark 10:13-16.

RESULTS OF YOUR PREACHING

²¹ We may read the *Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* and note that tens of thou-

21. To what positive proof can we point to show that Jehovah is blessing the preaching of his people?

sands of persons annually respond to the preaching work, and we may wonder, "Why don't we see quicker growth in our congregation?" But if you examine the facts, what do you find? Check back five, ten or twenty years. Are there not more congregations, more preachers of the good news in your area now than there were then? Are you not visiting the people in the ministry more often now? We must exercise patience like the farmer. We may not notice growth from day to day, but it is there. Organizationally we are being blessed, and it has become true with Jehovah's people as Isaiah prophesied: "The little one himself will become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation. I myself, Jehovah, shall speed it up in its own time."—Isa. 60:22; Jas. 5:7, 8.

²² But how about us as individuals? Does the fact that we cannot point to someone in the congregation and say that we personally were used to help that person into the way of the truth mean that God is not blessing our ministry? No! Really, how many of us can point to someone and say we brought him into the way of the truth? Actually it takes the efforts of all the brothers in cultivating the field by their faithful preaching and by setting good examples in the community, and, finally, it is Jehovah who brings the increase. Who knows how many people you may have aid-

ed to learn the good news? Perhaps it was your good example, your call at their door or the letter you wrote that initially aroused their interest. Someone else may have actually conducted the Bible study to further their interest and knowledge, but you share in that 'letter of recommendation.' Really, all of God's people can point to the hundreds of thousands who have become baptized Christians in recent years as proof that Jehovah's witnesses are adequately qualified to be ministers.—1 Cor. 3:7; 2 Cor. 3:1-6.

²³ We have seen that it is a command from God that all Christians preach, regardless of age, sex or educational background. It has also been noted that our success as preachers depends upon the intensity of our love for God, the quality of our faith, and the depth of our love for our fellowman. We have also observed that there are many opportunities open for preaching and that one should not become discouraged if results do not seem to be immediately forthcoming. Our perseverance and our faithful example in the community will reap fruitage. The results of the preaching done by Jehovah's witnesses over the past years have been an encouragement to them and an honor to Jehovah's name. So, whatever you are doing in preaching the good news, keep up the fine work.

22. Explain why we should not be discouraged if after our preaching we cannot point directly to a 'letter of recommendation.'

23. Why do Jehovah's witnesses give the preaching work such a high priority in their lives, and what is the secret of their success in preaching?

DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES IN THE BRITISH ISLES FOR 1974

This year Jehovah's Christian witnesses will be having four-day district assemblies in many parts of the world. In the British Isles the assembly dates and locations are as follows:

July 11-14: Waterford, Ireland. **July 18-21:** Sheffield, Yorkshire.

August 1-4: London. **August 8-11:** London; Edinburgh, Scotland.

This assembly information is in addition to what was published in the February 1, 1974, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Consider

WHAT JEHOVAH HAS DONE FOR YOU

MANY people in this materialistic world try to shut God out of their lives. They say that they have no need for belief in God. But, whether they thank God or not, they benefit from his undeserved kindness every day of their lives.

What an abundance of good things God has provided for man's enjoyment! To satisfy man's hunger there is an almost endless variety of delicious fruits and vegetables and other foods. The Creator also provided abundantly for the satisfying of our emotional needs, our craving for beauty and for pleasure. He created birds and butterflies, sea and land animals, majestic mountains, hills and valleys, rivers and lakes, trees and colorful sunsets in endless variety. Think, too, about the delightful sounds of creation—the singing of birds, the rustle of leaves in the breeze, the ocean waves washing the shore.

And consider what God has done for you by endowing you with a marvelous body and brain! You are able to reason, to remember. You have a conscience to tell you the difference between right and wrong. You are able to conceive in your mind the existence of the Creator and to worship him though never having seen him. God also created us with an artistic sense, not only so that we can enjoy the natural beauties of the earth around us, but also so that we can take pleasure in the works of our own hands. Yes, we can delight in making and hearing beautiful music, in painting and viewing beautiful pictures.

What about life itself? To whom are we indebted for it? Do you think that you

got life from your parents? You did. But where did the very first human parents get their life? From Jehovah God! Without life, we could do nothing. And for this most precious possession we owe thanks to God.—Rev. 4:11.

To aid us in learning about him, Jehovah God has given us his Word, the Holy Bible. It tells us what his glorious qualities are and what he has done for mankind. In the Bible, God also makes known his will for his earthly creatures, his laws and principles for man's guidance. Have you taken the time to read it?

A man of old who appreciated what Jehovah God had done for him, as well as for all mankind, was the psalmist David. After describing many of the things that God had provided for man's enjoyment, he exclaimed: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions." That man also appreciated the value of God's Word and how it could influence one's life for good. Concerning it, he wrote: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, bringing back the soul. The reminder of Jehovah is trustworthy, making the inexperienced one wise. The orders from Jehovah are upright, causing the heart to rejoice . . . The judicial decisions of Jehovah are true; they have proved altogether righteous . . . in the keeping of them there is a large reward." (Ps. 104:24; 19:7-11) Do you have a similar appreciation of all that Jehovah has done for you, and do you give expression to that appreciation?

THE GREAT SUSTAINER

Not only did Jehovah God create the earth and living things upon it; he also sustains it, along with all the rest of the physical universe, making possible our continued existence on this earth. Thus his Son, Jesus Christ, stated: "Your Father who is in the heavens . . . makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matt. 5:45) To the same effect the apostle Paul testified to the inhabitants of Lystra, in Asia Minor, that God "did not leave himself without witness in that he did good, giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts to the full with food and good cheer." Because Jehovah God is the Sustainer as well as the Creator, the same apostle could say on a later occasion to the pagan philosophers of Athens that "by him we have life and move and exist." This is a fundamental fact of life.—Acts 14:17; 17:28.

How very fitting, therefore, that God's Word should repeatedly instruct us to praise and thank God for all his goodness toward us. Literally hundreds of times it tells us to do this, as, for example, at 1 Chronicles 16:8: "Give thanks to Jehovah, you people; call upon his name, make his deeds known among the peoples!" Do you ever give thought to heeding this command? Have you ever made it a point to tell other people what you know about Jehovah's deeds?

PROVIDES DELIVERANCE AND SALVATION

Jehovah God has provided for the deliverance and salvation of humankind from sin, sorrow and death. This provision affects all of us. How did it come about that it was necessary for God to make such provisions for humankind? It was not God's fault or because of any error or mistake on his part. Rather, as God's Word

tells, it was because our first parents failed to appreciate Jehovah's goodness to them.—Gen. 2:16, 17; 3:17-19.

By their disobedience to the law of God, on whom their life depended, our first parents forfeited the right to life not only for themselves but also for all their offspring, since their children were born after they had transgressed. Adam and Eve could not transmit to their children what they themselves did not possess. A human father who loses the title to his home, because of not making payments on the mortgage, cannot give it in his will to his children as an inheritance. Just so, Adam could not bestow upon his offspring the right to life that he had forfeited.—Rom. 5:12.

Therefore, it was not the fault of Adam's offspring that they, including us, were all born sinners, born without the right to life. Accordingly, God sent his Son to the earth to sacrifice his perfect human life so as to ransom mankind and in this way make it possible to give the opportunity to live forever to any of Adam's family who would exercise faith in this divine provision. At the same time, by this means Jehovah God would vindicate himself as being able to carry out his purpose to have a global earthly paradise filled with perfect people.

Concerning God's love for humankind, his Word tells us: "For hardly will anyone die for a righteous man; indeed, for the good man, perhaps, someone even dares to die. But God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:7, 8) Jesus Christ, having God as his Father and not some imperfect human, had the right to life as a perfect man. By voluntarily laying down his human life he could use its value to benefit the human race, which had been deprived of the full enjoyment of life by Adam. The blessings and benefits of

this provision are available to you if you exercise faith in Jehovah God and in Jesus Christ. As the Bible appealingly states: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) What are you doing with your life that demonstrates in a meaningful way your appreciation for this priceless provision?

THINGS JEHOVAH HAS DONE FOR HIS SERVANTS

The Scriptures show that Jehovah God pours out many of his material blessings upon all mankind, upon the good and bad alike, upon the undeserving as well as upon the deserving. But does he not take note of the difference between these two kinds of people and does he not do more for the deserving ones than he does for the undeserving ones? Yes; he watches over them and blesses their efforts to obtain life's necessities. (Luke 12:29-31) But at this time he favors them primarily in a spiritual way. In this way he gives them what the rest of the world does not have—a consciousness of divine approval and a solidly based hope for the future. He

works on the principle stated at Romans 8:28: "We know that God makes all his works cooperate together for the good of those who love God."

Today there are more than one million eight hundred thousand happy persons who are enjoying a spiritual paradise. They have peace of mind and contentment, great happiness, a knowledge of Jehovah God and his purposes and a strong faith in his promise of a new order where righteousness will prevail and where, as Revelation 21:4 says, "death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." They dwell in peace and unity, and they have a high and noble purpose, that of showing others how they too can enjoy these blessings. Are you among those who enjoy this spiritual paradise? You can be.

Reflect on all that Jehovah God has done for you. As you do so, do you not feel moved to show your appreciation in a way acceptable to him? To help you to learn how to do so in a way pleasing to God, Jehovah's witnesses have weekly meetings at their Kingdom Halls. Find out the location of the one nearest to you and visit it this week. You will be so glad that you did.



- What is the "time of distress" referred to at Daniel 12:1?—U.S.A.

This particular scripture mentions this "time of distress" in connection with Michael's*

* For the evidence proving that Michael is Christ Jesus, see *Aid to Bible Understanding*, p. 1152.

'standing up.' The distress is revealed to be one that God's people will escape or survive. Daniel 12:1 reads: "During that time [that is, the period of conflict between the 'king of the north' and the 'king of the south' leading to the 'time of the end' mentioned in this chapter] Michael will stand up, the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of your people. And there will certainly occur a time of distress such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation until that time. And during that time your people will escape."

The Bible book of Revelation depicts this

Michael with his angels as waging successful warfare against Satan the Devil and his demons. (Rev. 12:7-9) With their defeat, the announcement is made: "Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ." (Rev. 12:10) So the defeat of Satan and his demons would be powerful evidence that Michael had stood up and defended the interests of the newborn kingdom of God.

Since the standing up of Michael is mentioned before the distress, he and his angelic forces are the ones involved in bringing it upon the ungodly. The only distress that is described in similar terms in the Bible is the "great tribulation" that a "great crowd" of devoted servants of Jehovah God survive. (Rev. 7:14) That tribulation is definitely one brought upon the ungodly by angelic forces. We read the apostle John's words of what was revealed to him: "I saw four angels standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding tight the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow upon the earth or upon the sea or upon any

tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the sunrising, having a seal of the living God; and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying: 'Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until after we have sealed the slaves of our God in their foreheads.'"—Rev. 7:1-3.

The time of "distress" spoken of in the prophecy of Daniel is therefore evidently the same as the "great tribulation" that will bring the entire wicked system of things to its end. But God's devoted people, the 'sealed ones,' as well as a "great crowd" of their companions, will escape or survive that destructive tribulation coming on this earthly system in the near future.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS
April 21: A Personal Gift from Jehovah. Page 177. Songs to Be Used: 31, 110.
April 28: Whatever Else You Are Doing—Preach! Page 182. Songs to Be Used: 10, 51.

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