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## Christian Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses

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ECB:ECZ September 1, 2006

JAYNE WILLIAMS

Dear Sister Williams:

We are pleased to respond to your letter of July 12, 2006, wherein you ask for clarification regarding our understanding of the "seven thunders" and the "little scroll" mentioned at Revelation 10:1-4. You raise this question since page 252 of *"Then Is Finished the Mystery of God"* states: "In course of time *The Finished Mystery* proved to be unsatisfactory, because it had been written and published before many critical parts of the book of Revelation were fulfilled to make possible a correct understanding. So, although an attempt was made to write down things heard, *The Finished Mystery* did not break the secret of any 'seven thunders' that had 'uttered their own voices.' (Revelation 10:3) It was therefore a time to wait for accurate understanding to be made possible, and in the meanwhile to absorb spiritual knowledge from the hand of Jehovah God by means of his glorified Son Jesus Christ."

You are to be commended for wanting a clearer understanding of this matter. What is quoted above regarding *The Finished Mystery* book, published in 1917, is not specifically saying that the book was unsatisfactory in its explanation of Revelation 10:1-3, but rather it was inadequate in explaining various parts of the entire Bible book of Revelation, "because it had been written and published before many critical parts of the book of Revelation were fulfilled to make possible a correct understanding." In Jehovah's due time, however, a better understanding of the entire book of Revelation would be granted. Interestingly, unlike in *The Finished Mystery*, the book *"Then Is Finished the Mystery of God,"* published in 1969, provided a Scriptural explanation of what was represented by the "seven thunders" and other features of the prophecy recorded at Revelation chapter 10.—See pages 251 to 252, paragraph 10.

In more recent years, further insight has been gained into the Bible book of Revelation, including what is recorded in chapter 10. Hence, page 157 of the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* states that "the 'voices of the seven thunders' are Jehovah's own expression of his purposes," the number seven representing the completeness of this expression. (Verse 3) Too, page 158 mentions that "the opened scroll that the glorified Jesus Christ gives to John is likewise a divine message. John is to preach regarding 'peoples and nations and tongues and many kings.' To feed upon this scroll is sweet for him because it is from a divine source." (Verses 2, 8-10) Yet, as stated on page 158, paragraph 17 of the *Revelation Climax* book, it is important to "remember, John is here actually participating in the prophetic vision. What he records is, in fact, a prophecy to be fulfilled after 1914, when the strong angel takes up his position astride the earth and the sea." As further shown on pages 159 and 160, what occurred with the apostle John in vision, as recorded at Revelation 10, portrays the similar experience of the anointed "in the Lord's day" whom John represented. (Revelation 1:10) As stated on page 19, paragraph 16, of the October 15, 1988, issue of *The Watchtower*: "Back in 1919, when anointed Christians figuratively ate the little scroll, it was not time for them to have a complete understanding of Jehovah's purposes. (Compare Daniel 12:8,

9.) But they fearlessly forged ahead with what understanding they had and proved themselves worthy of further enlightenment."

Similar to the above explanation, page 19, paragraph 13, of the December 15, 1983, issue of *The Watchtower* states regarding the anointed remnant since 1914: "This remnant was prefigured by John, the writer of the last book of the Bible canon, Revelation. In the first postwar year of 1919 this remnant had an experience like that which John describes respecting himself in Revelation chapter 10. This experience was to occur near the time when 'the mystery of God,' or his 'sacred secret,' was to be brought to a finish. (Revelation 10:7, *Authorized Version, NW*) After they got spiritual refreshment, as it were, by eating the sweet-tasting 'little scroll' that was held out to them, those who made up this modern class prefigured by John were, in effect, told: 'You must prophesy again with regard to peoples and nations and tongues and many kings.'—Revelation 10:10, 11." Obediently, the anointed remnant and their companions with an earthly hope have declared God's message to mankind, which includes his purposes as foretold in the thrilling Bible book of Revelation.

We trust the above comments will be helpful to you. We send our warm love and Christian greetings.

Your brothers in Jehovah's service,

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of Jehovah's Witnesses*

whom? John was told: "You must prophesy again with regard to peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."—Revelation 10:11.

<sup>21</sup> How has all of this been fulfilled during the Lord's day? According to the historical facts, back in 1919 faithful Christians embraced the privilege of serving Jehovah so thoroughly that it became a part of them, and this was sweet indeed. But their blessing and privilege proved bitter to others—especially to the clergy of Christendom. Why? Because these faithful anointed Christians courageously proclaimed *all* of Jehovah's message for mankind. Not only did they preach the "good news of the kingdom" but they also exposed the spiritually dead condition of

21. (a) What did anointed Christians do in 1919 that corresponded to John's eating of the little scroll, and with what effect? (b) What was the result for Christendom and the world in general?

Christendom and the world in general.—Matthew 24:14; Revelation 8:1-9:21; 16:1-21.

<sup>22</sup> This faithful band of Christians was used by Jehovah to gather the final ones of the 144,000 for sealing, and they spearheaded the gathering of the great crowd, who have an earthly hope. (Revelation 7:1-4, 9, 10) This great crowd plays an important part in Jehovah's purposes toward this earth, and its appearance has caused great joy both in heaven and on earth. (Revelation 7:11-17; Ezekiel 9:1-7) Hence, this "day of all days" has already meant suffering for Satan's world but rich blessings for Jehovah's people. Let us see, now, how this will continue to be true as the Lord's day continues.

22. (a) In what grand way have the anointed been used by Jehovah during the Lord's day so far? (b) What has the Lord's day meant for Satan's world and for God's people?

## What will the Lord's day mean for you?

*"Go subduing in the midst of your enemies."*—PSALM 110:2

**B**ACK in 1914, Jesus was installed as King of God's Kingdom, and the Lord's day began. Immediately, the new King faced violent opposition from Satan the Devil and his agents here on earth. (Psalm 2:1-6) So these early years of the Lord's day have been a time of conflict in which Jesus has gone 'subduing in the midst of his enemies.'—Psalm 110:2.

<sup>2</sup> The new King's conquests have been

1-3. (a) Why has the beginning of the Lord's day been a time of conflict, and what have been some of Jesus' successes? (b) How will Jesus "complete his conquest"?

impressive. After 1914, Satan tried to "devour" the newborn Kingdom but, instead, was ignominiously cast out of heaven. (Revelation 12:1-12) He then 'waged war' with the remaining ones of the anointed, but he was unable to prevent their 'standing up' in 1919 or their accepting "the little scroll" from the hand of Jesus Christ. (Revelation 10:8-11; 11:11, 12; 12:17) He was equally powerless to prevent the gathering of the final ones of the 144,000 and the assembling of the great crowd (out of all the nations), who render "sacred service day and night in



*The fate of ancient Jerusalem shows what will soon happen to Babylon the Great*

[Jehovah's] temple."—Revelation 7:1-3, 9-15.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, since 1914 Jesus has 'gone forth conquering.' Nevertheless, much remains to be done. Jesus has yet "to complete his conquest." He has yet to take action in removing all traces of Satan's world system of things. (Revelation 6:1, 2; 19:11-21) What will this momentous act mean for us as individuals?

#### **Public Stripping of Babylon the Great**

<sup>4</sup> The destruction of Satan's world begins with the end of false religion. Revelation describes the whole world empire of false religion—including Christendom—as a prostitute, Babylon the Great, who has relations with the kings of the earth and makes mankind drunk with her fornication. She herself is also drunk—revoltingly—from drinking blood, the blood of God's servants. (Revelation 17:1-6) Revelation also describes the end of this disgusting old harlot, and we can better understand what this will mean if we consider what happened to another religious harlot that existed back in the seventh century before our Common Era.

<sup>5</sup> That harlot was the city of Jerusalem.

4. How is false religion described in Revelation?  
5, 6. Why was unfaithful Jerusalem called a prostitute, and what judgment did this bring on her from the hand of Jehovah?

She was supposed to be the center of Jehovah's worship on earth, but God said to her: "By your blood that you have shed you have become guilty." (Ezekiel 22:4) She was also supposed to be spiritually pure, but she had prostituted herself by consorting with the nations. "O how I am filled up with rage against you," Jehovah said to her, "by your doing all these things, the work of a woman, a domineering prostitute!"—Ezekiel 16:30; 23:1-21; James 4:4.

<sup>6</sup> Consider, then, Jehovah's judgment on this harlot: "Here I am collecting together all those [the nations] passionately loving you toward whom you were pleasurable and all those whom you loved . . . and they must strip you of your garments and take your beautiful articles and leave you behind naked and nude. And they must burn your houses with fire." (Ezekiel 16:37, 39, 41; 23:25-30) History records what happened. The Babylonians came in 607 B.C.E. and stripped Jerusalem bare. Her people and her wealth were carried off to Babylon. The city was destroyed, the temple was burned, and the land was left desolate.—2 Chronicles 36:17-21.

<sup>7</sup> Something similar will happen to Babylon the Great. Revelation warns: "These [modern 'kings,' or rulers with whom

7. What will be the end of Babylon the Great?

Babylon the Great has committed spiritual fornication] will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire." (Revelation 17:2, 16) From the example of ancient Jerusalem, we know what this will mean. False religion will be destroyed by national governments who formerly 'loved' her. Her wealth will be ripped away, and she will be burned, completely destroyed. A fitting end to a disgusting organization!

#### The Heavens Darkened

\* With the destruction of Babylon the Great, we will have entered the "great tribulation" prophesied by Jesus. (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 7:14) Speaking of that time, Revelation says: "A great earthquake occurred; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the entire moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell to the earth." (Revelation 6:12, 13) This great earthquake is the "great quaking" in "the soil of Israel" that Ezekiel prophesied. (Ezekiel 38:18, 19; Joel 3:14-16) It is the final destruction of this wicked system of things. Will anything happen to the literal sun, moon, and stars at that time?

<sup>9</sup> Ezekiel, warning of the coming fall of Israel's large southern neighbor, Egypt, said: "'And when you [Pharaoh] get extinguished I will cover the heavens and darken their stars. As for the sun, with clouds I shall cover it, and the moon itself will not let its light shine. All the luminaries of light in the heavens—I shall darken them on your account, and I will put darkness upon your land,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah."—Ezekiel 32:7, 8.

8. What kind of time will the great tribulation be for mankind?

9. 10. What did Ezekiel prophesy in the case of Egypt, and how was this fulfilled?

<sup>10</sup> When Pharaoh and his armies fell, the literal heavens did not darken. But Egypt's future became very dark. As Bible scholar C. F. Keil notes, "the darkness consequent [upon Pharaoh's fall] is a figurative representation of utterly hopeless circumstances." Forever finished as an independent world power, Egypt was dominated by one world power after another! Today, most of the territory of the ancient Pharaonic world power is ruled by an Arab nation.

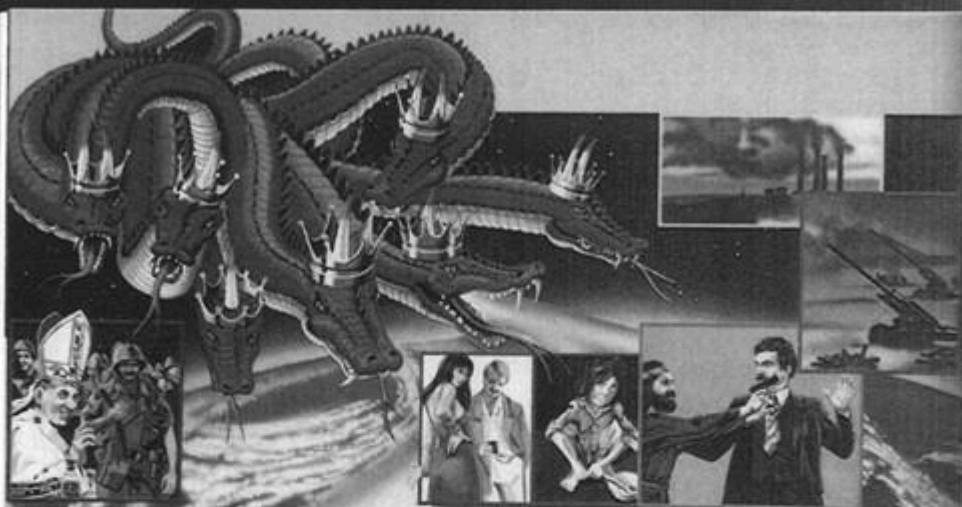
<sup>11</sup> But Keil saw a further meaning in Ezekiel's prophecy. He writes: "The overthrow of this world-power [Egypt] is an omen and prelude of the overthrow of every ungodly world-power on the day of the last judgment." This is, in substance, true. As Revelation shows, at the great tribulation ungodly mankind's prospects will be as black as were those of Egypt. It will be as if the sun gave no light by day and the night sky were devoid of any warm light from the moon and without any friendly, twinkling stars. Those who refuse to honor Jehovah's King will perish without even an honorable burial as the Rider on the white horse completes his conquest. (Revelation 19:11, 17-21; Ezekiel 39:4, 17-19) No wonder ungodly men will cry out "to the mountains and to the rock-masses: 'Fall over us and hide us from the face of the One seated on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?'"—Revelation 6:16, 17; Matthew 24:30.

#### Ongoing War!

<sup>12</sup> What, though, of Christians in these

11. (a) What is prefigured by what happened to Egypt? (b) How will the future be absolutely black for Satan's world at the great tribulation?  
12. How has Satan expressed his hatred of Jesus Christ during the Lord's day?





times? Well, they have been greatly affected by the ceaseless warfare between Satan and the Rider on the white horse. Since Satan has been unable to get at Jesus personally, he has unleashed the full force of his fury on the remaining ones of the anointed and—more recently—on the great crowd of other sheep that has gathered around them. As Jesus warned, these have been “objects of hatred by all the nations on account of [his] name.” (Matthew 24:9) Satan has used every weapon at his disposal, including mobbing, imprisonment, torture, and murder, to fight against them.—2 Timothy 3:12.

<sup>13</sup> Satan has also skillfully used guile. (Ephesians 6:11) Using “the deceptive power of riches,” he has tempted some to slow down or even to cease their sacred service. (Matthew 13:22; 1 Timothy 6:9, 10) Others he has lured into uncleanness and immorality. (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2) Many are under heavy pressure because of the “anxieties of life,” and Satan takes advantage of this to try to ‘weigh

13. How has Satan used guile in his warfare against God’s people?

them down.’ (Luke 21:34) In other cases, he has used personality conflicts or rebellious tendencies to distract from “the more important things.”—Philippians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 1:11, 12; James 4:1-3.

<sup>14</sup> Hence, Christians have needed to cultivate endurance during the Lord’s day. Some have failed, and each failure has been a small victory for Satan. (1 Peter 5:8) But most have heeded Jesus’ promise: “He that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved.” (Matthew 24:13) With help from Jehovah, they have conquered and brought joy to his heart.—Proverbs 27:11; 1 John 2:13, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Surely, none of us want to give Satan the satisfaction of seeing us quit! Hence, let us follow Paul’s counsel and arm ourselves with truth, righteousness, and faith—preaching the good news with zeal and studying to keep our faith strong. Let us also pray incessantly and stay alert. In that way, we will “be open to no accusation in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 1:8; Ephesians 6:10-18;

14, 15. How can we conquer in our struggle against Satan?

1 Thessalonians 5:17; 1 Peter 4:7) Rather, the Lord's day will be a source of rich blessings for us.

#### Marvelous Privileges of Service

<sup>16</sup> At Revelation 10:3, 4, John says that he heard "the seven thunders" utter their own voices. He wanted to write down what he had heard, but he reports: "I heard a voice out of heaven say: 'Seal up the things the seven thunders spoke, and do not write them down.'" Evidently, it was not yet time for such information to be released. Instead, John was told to take the little scroll and eat it. The seven thunders appear to represent a complete expression of Jehovah's purposes. (Psalm 29:3; John 12:28, 29; Revelation 4:5) Back in 1919, when anointed Christians figuratively ate the little scroll, it was not time for them to have a complete understanding of Jehovah's purposes. (Compare Daniel 12:8, 9.) But they fearlessly forged ahead with what understanding they had and proved themselves worthy of further enlightenment.

<sup>17</sup> Then, over the years, they were given a progressively clearer understanding of Jehovah's will. For example, they came to realize that the sheep of Jesus' parable were, even before Armageddon, being separated from the goats. (Matthew 25:31-46) They saw that the birth of the Kingdom in 1914 was in fulfillment of Revelation chapter 12. They came to a deeper appreciation of the importance of Jehovah's name, and they learned who the great crowd of Revelation chapter 7 really are. What confidence these progressive

revelations gave to God's people!—Proverbs 4:18; 2 Peter 1:19.

<sup>18</sup> At the same time, Jehovah entrusted his earthly servants with outstanding privileges of service. In a lofty vision, John saw angels proclaiming everlasting good news for mankind, proclaiming the fall of Babylon the Great, and warning against receiving the mark of the beast. (Revelation 14:6-10) While angels undoubtedly oversaw these divine service privileges, it was humans, Jehovah's Witnesses on earth, who actually spoke these messages to mankind. John also saw Jesus reaping "the harvest of the earth." (Revelation 14:14-16) But it has been through the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work of Jesus' subjects on earth that he has reaped this harvest. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) What a privilege it is to share with the angels and with Jesus Christ himself in service privileges of such vital importance! In so doing, we feel ourselves truly in harmony with Jehovah's great, invisible heavenly organization of faithful spirit creatures.

#### Divine Protection

<sup>19</sup> As the end of his world approaches, Satan will put more and more pressure upon Christians. The climax of his hostility is described in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39, where he is prophetically called Gog of Magog. According to this inspired prophecy, Satan will make an all-out attack to try to destroy God's people once and for all. Will he succeed? Revelation answers: "The ten horns [modern-day "kings," or rulers] . . . will battle with the Lamb, but, because he is Lord of lords and King of

18. What outstanding privileges of service have Jehovah's people shared in during the Lord's day, and what awareness does this build in our hearts?

19. (a) What will be the climax of Satan's hostility toward God's people? (b) Who will conquer in the final, climactic conflict?

16. Why was John told not to write down what the seven thunders said, and what did this mean for anointed Christians in 1919?

17. What are some of the new insights that Jehovah has granted to his people in the years since 1919?

kings, the Lamb will conquer them. Also, those called and chosen and faithful with him will do so." (Revelation 17:12, 14) Faithful Christians will be certain to conquer if they remain faithful to their great, conquering King. Gog's forces will be utterly destroyed.—Ezekiel 39:3, 4, 17-19; Revelation 19:17-21.

<sup>20</sup> Thus, the Lord's day means salvation for God's people. Those of the anointed still alive as humans at the great tribulation will have their heavenly position guaranteed, and they will be unwaveringly determined to finish their life's course in faithfulness. (Revelation 7:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:6-8) The great crowd will also survive, and Jesus "will guide them to fountains of waters of life. And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes." (Revelation 7:14, 17) What a fine reward for faithful endurance!

<sup>21</sup> Now the Lord's day enters into a wonderful phase: the Thousand Year Reign of Christ Jesus. (Revelation 20:6, 11-15) The river of water of life, prophesied both in Revelation and in Ezekiel, will flow down from Jehovah's throne to mankind, and those who drink of it will gradually be raised to human perfection. (Ezekiel 47:1-12; Revelation 22:1, 2) Hades will be emptied, and billions of those who have died will also have the opportunity to drink of this river.—John 5:28, 29.

<sup>22</sup> At the end of the thousand years, mankind will have been raised to perfection. What an appropriate time for Satan to make his final appearance on the earthly scene! Once again he will try to deceive mankind, and some will follow him, even then. These are significantly called "Gog

and Magog" since they will manifest the same evil spirit as that shown by 'Gog's crowd' in Ezekiel's prophecy. But their rebellious spirit will be wiped out for all eternity when they, along with Satan himself and his demons, are cast into the symbolic lake of fire. (Revelation 20:7-10; Ezekiel 39:11) A truly blessed future awaits those who remain faithful through that final test, and then the perfected human race will become one with Jehovah's righteous universal organization. Jehovah God himself will be "all things to everyone!"—1 Corinthians 15:24, 28; Revelation 20:5.

<sup>23</sup> What unimaginable blessings, then, await us if we endure! Remember, the Lord's day is now well under way. Wonderful things have already started to happen. Fitting, then, are Paul's words: "Let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out." (Galatians 6:9) Let us indeed "not give up in doing what is fine" in this the Lord's day. If we endure, this day will bring eternal benefits to each one of us.

23. In view of the time we are living in, what counsel of Paul is it most appropriate for each one of us to heed?

#### Can You Explain?

- ☐ What is the first stage of the destruction of Satan's world?
- ☐ How will Jesus "complete his conquest" of his enemies?
- ☐ How has Satan fought against Jehovah's Witnesses during the Lord's day?
- ☐ What remarkable blessings have God's people enjoyed since 1919?
- ☐ In view of where we are in the stream of time, what are you personally determined to do?

20. What blessings will the Lord's day bring to faithful Christians at the great tribulation?

21. What will happen on earth during the Lord's day after the great tribulation?

22. What momentous events await mankind at the end of the Thousand Year Reign of Christ?



# Speak the Word of God Fearlessly in the Nuclear Age

"Speak the word of God fearlessly."—PHILIPPIANS 1:14.

**T**HE nuclear age is upon us. The whole world is now menaced with nuclear warfare! The Almighty Creator of the atom with its nucleus well knows that. What is his Word for our day that needs to be preached worldwide? In our time he has had a figurative 'man clothed with linen, with a secretary's inkhorn at his side,' doing a marking work.

<sup>2</sup> This "man" has been marking the foreheads of the people who are crying and sighing over all the detestable things that are being done, particularly in the religious realm of Christendom, which professes to worship God. (Ezekiel, chapter 9) Recalling the course of conduct of Christendom's clergy during World Wars I and II, these people feel distress at what they have reason to believe those religious leaders would do during a likely nuclear war on a world scale. Expecting better things of so-called Christian leaders, they are deeply disturbed at what the clergy now make allowance for in this highly immoral, violent and religiously divided world. In a system of things that is doomed to early destruction, these righthearted ones are being

marked for preservation into a new and righteous system of things.

<sup>3</sup> No improvement of worldly things is in sight. In the case of so many righthearted people inside and outside of Christendom, what will quiet their fears of being violently exterminated en masse shortly? Well, they may be grieved at the shape of things. But, most importantly, are they grieved because the name of the God of the Holy Bible is involved and is being made a subject of reproach owing to the way those who claim to be his people are carrying on? However, who is the figurative 'man clothed in linen' who is marking more and more of these grieved persons, and how is he doing so? This marking work is not appreciated by the clergy of Christendom and has been vigorously opposed by them. It has therefore called for the exercise of great fearlessness for the marking work to be done.

<sup>4</sup> Yet it has gone forward with even greater impetus since 1935. It has been done by a class of Christians dedicated to Jehovah God through Jesus Christ.

3. Grief over what is more important than grief over prospective mass extermination, and what has the doing of the marking work called for?

4. The man doing the marking was prefigured by whom, and so what qualifications are called for in those doing the marking at present?

1. The Creator of the atom with its nucleus has had what fearlessly spoken during the past 48 years?
2. What marking work has progressed, and for what purpose?

and who were prefigured by the prophet Ezekiel, a priest of ancient Israel. He was the one that had the vision of the 'man clothed with linen who had the secretary's inkhorn at his side.' They are dedicated to the same God as Ezekiel was and so, like him, they are witnesses of Jehovah. The modern-day Ezekiel of 1983 is a priestly class, belonging to spiritual Israel, to which the apostle Peter wrote the words found at 1 Peter 2:9: "But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."

<sup>5</sup> Hence, we recognize the Ezekiel class of today to be made up of those who serve in a spiritual way as underpriests, under the High Priest, Jesus Christ, whom Jehovah God swore into the priesthood "according to the manner of Melchizedek," who was king of ancient Salem and "priest of the Most High God." (Psalm 110:4; Genesis 14:18; Hebrews 5:10; 6:20; 7:10, 11, 15-17) From the first century, in which the apostle Peter wrote his letter, Jehovah God has picked out the members of this "royal priesthood," who are to number finally 144,000 under the High Priest, Jesus Christ.—Revelation 7:1-8; 14:1-4.

<sup>6</sup> Today there is only a small remnant of the members of the "royal priesthood"

5. How many underpriests are there to be under the one whom Jehovah swears into the high priesthood?

6. How many of that "royal priesthood" are yet in the flesh on earth, and as what figurative person do they serve?



In this nuclear age a figurative man in linen is carrying on a fearless work. Are you involved in that work?

yet in the flesh on earth, according to the world report from the celebration of the Lord's Evening Meal on March 29, 1983. These serve together as the figurative linen-clad man, who does the marking of worthy ones in their foreheads.

<sup>7</sup> The prophet Ezekiel of old had to muster up great courage in order not to fear the Israelite opposers of his day. But Almighty God made the promise that he would make the face of Ezekiel just as hard as the faces of his antago-

7. What do those today who were prefigured by the linen-clad man with the inkhorn have to trust Jehovah to do for them?

nists, yes, even harder. So he should not be afraid of his merely human opposers. (Ezekiel 2:4; 3:8; Isaiah 51:12) Likewise, the remnant of spirit-anointed Christians that makes up the class prefigured by the man clothed with linen and with the inkhorn at his side need to trust in the God of Ezekiel to harden their faces to confront unflinchingly the hard-set countenances of opposers inside and outside Christendom.

<sup>8</sup> Nineteen centuries ago Jehovah's Chief Messenger, Jesus Christ, sent forth his disciples on an errand of speaking the Word of God fearlessly in their own country. Before dispatching them, he said: "Do not become fearful of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; but rather be in fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna." (Matthew 10:28) In addition, in the last book of the Bible he tells the anointed remnant of our own time: "Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Look! The Devil will keep on throwing some of you into prison that you may be fully put to the test, and that you may have tribulation ten days. Prove yourself faithful even to death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10) How encouraging those words are!

<sup>9</sup> When we call to mind that today there are witnesses of Jehovah in more than 40 lands where their work is banned or under legal restriction—doubtless more Christians now than the number imprisoned in the first and second centuries—Jehovah's Witnesses of today are not fearful of the things they must suffer, including imprisonment. The imprisonment of Christians can have an effect

8. What instructions appropriate for today did Jesus give?

9. (a) The imprisonment of so many of Jehovah's Witnesses today indicates that they are obeying what instructions given above? (b) What opposite effect is shown in Paul's case?

upon fellow Christians opposite to what the enemy contemplated. The imprisoned apostle Paul wrote from his confinement: "Most of the brothers in the Lord, feeling confidence by reason of my prison bonds, are showing all the more courage to speak the word of God fearlessly." —Philippians 1:14.

<sup>10</sup> Today, as in Paul's day, it is not a man-made message that the witnesses of Jehovah are fearlessly speaking. It is the timely message drawn from the Holy Bible, the inspired Word of the Most High God, Jehovah. In that Word he tells his dedicated, baptized people that they must be his witnesses, testifying to his Godship and his Kingship. (Isaiah 43:10, 12) Since he tells them to speak forth his infallible Word, what creature, high or low in station, has the right or authority to order or force them to stop speaking it? The position of the Christian apostles of 1,900 years ago must be taken, when they said to officials: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." —Acts 5:29.

<sup>11</sup> Men have not made gods out of themselves by inventing the nuclear bomb, and they must answer to the Most High God as to how they use it. (Note Psalm 82:6, 7.) By producing the nuclear bomb as a deterrent, the governments seek to perpetuate their domination of the earth, rather than to advance the interests of the Kingdom of God by Jesus Christ. They resent and interfere with the proclaiming of that Kingdom by the true, obedient followers of Jesus Christ today. This nuclear age has not made out of date or impractical Christ's prophetic words: "These [things] are a beginning

10. (a) Jehovah's Witnesses today are appointed to speak out a message from what source? (b) What position like that of the apostles 19 centuries ago must they take?

11. Have men deified themselves by inventing the nuclear bomb, and what about authority on their part to oppose the speaking forth of the Kingdom message?

of pangs of distress. As for you, look out for yourselves; people will deliver you up to local courts, and you will be beaten in synagogues and be put on the stand before governors and kings for my sake, for a witness to them. Also, in all the nations the good news has to be preached first. But when they are leading you along to deliver you up, do not be anxious beforehand about what to speak; but whatever is given you [to speak] in that hour, speak this, for you are not the ones speaking, but the holy spirit is."—Mark 13:8-11.

<sup>12</sup> World pangs of distress began in 1914. The foretold persecution of the faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ followed and continues down to this day. All the evidence indicates that we are living in "the conclusion of the system of things," yes, nearing its grand climax in this nuclear age. (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:3, 4) But before the complete end yet comes, "the good news" has to be "preached first." So this worldwide 'speaking the Word of God fearlessly' in behalf of the Kingdom is one of the most outstanding proofs that we are living in "the conclusion of the system of things." —Matthew 24:14.

#### **Eating God's Word and Speaking It Forth Worldwide**

<sup>13</sup> John, the last of the surviving disciples chosen by Jesus as an apostle, finished his earthly career near the end of the first century. During this "conclusion of the system of things" since 1914 there has been a remnant of dedicated, baptized Christians anointed with Jeho-

<sup>12</sup> Despite violent opposition, what was to be preached first, and of what was this to be a most outstanding sign?

<sup>13</sup> What experience like that described in Revelation chapter 10 did the anointed remnant have after World War I, and after the refreshment was taken, what command was given?



As John received a symbolic scroll and a command to "prophesy again," so Christians today fearlessly declare God's message

vah's spirit. This remnant was prefigured by John, the writer of the last book of the Bible canon, Revelation. In the first postwar year of 1919 this remnant had an experience like that which John describes respecting himself in Revelation chapter 10. This experience was to occur near the time when "the mystery of God," or his "sacred secret," was to be brought to a finish. (Revelation 10:7, *Authorized Version*, NW) After they got spiritual refreshment, as it were, by eating the sweet-tasting "little scroll" that was held out to them, those who made up this modern class prefigured by John were, in effect, told: "You must prophesy again with regard to peoples and nations and tongues and many kings."—Revelation 10:10, 11.

<sup>14</sup> Whether the apostle John on the island of Patmos was able to fulfill his assignment of service of such a wide scope and at his old age, we have no inspired record. But what about those anointed ones today whom John prefigured? This class is what fulfills his prophetic status and sees the commission to him carried out in full. The expression, "You must prophesy again," indicates that the free carrying out of his witness work was being interfered with by his exile on Patmos. It is evident that what was said to him there was really meant for his modern counterpart today. That being the case, we are obliged to ask: In how many lands and tongues are Jehovah's Witnesses speaking the Word of God fearlessly as they endeavor to preach "this good news of the kingdom . . . in all the inhabited earth for a witness"? —Matthew 24:14.

<sup>15</sup> The 1983 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses reports 205 lands, with Bible literature being published in some 190 languages. Those lands include people black, white, yellow, red and brown, also of various tribes, clans and sects along with dialects. Since World War I the number of "kings" on thrones has been greatly reduced, but there are many other types of political rulers now in office. Regardless of their official designation or their political cast, the message of Jehovah's Witnesses today involves and applies to all of them. The banning of Jehovah's Witnesses in so many lands gives proof of this fact.

<sup>16</sup> So in spite of the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations, which were set up as the means for ad-

14. By means of whom is the commission to the apostle John on Patmos fulfilled?

15. To what extent by now is the preaching being done?

16. So what proclamation has gone forward irresistibly, in spite of the religious prayers of world leaders for what?

#### Can You Recall?

☐ What was prefigured for our day by the 'man clothed with linen who had a secretary's inkhorn,' and what work is he now doing?

☐ Why is fearlessness called for on the part of Jehovah's Witnesses?

☐ When the apostle John ate a "little scroll," what was he then to do, and what parallels this in modern times?

vancing and maintaining a united world, the fearless proclamation of the Kingdom of God by Christ as the only hope for mankind has gone forward irresistibly. Such "good news of the kingdom" has not seemed "good" to world leaders, as it differs so much from what they have thought to be good, yes, the best, for afflicted humankind. They feel that they themselves can take care of earthly affairs as their own business. If they feel the need of superhuman help, it is really to "the god of this world" that their religious prayers have gone and no higher. The divine Originator of "this good news of the kingdom" is not in favor of "this world," of which Satan the Devil is the god.—2 Corinthians 4:4, A.V.

<sup>17</sup> The prophetic Bible boldly declares that the word of God is to time indefinite and that it will endure forever. (1 Peter 1:23-25) To this day those statements have not been disproved. The Bible, God's inspired written Word, has not been blotted out, despite all human efforts to destroy it by religious bans and bonfires. Correspondingly, the preaching of that written Word of God needed someone to make it vocal and hearable. The fearless

17. (a) Why has the written Word of God failed to be stamped out by opposers? (b) By means of whom has that Word been made vocal since 1919?



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speaking of that Word of God has gone doggedly onward by Jehovah's Witnesses since the postwar year of 1919 by an increasing number of mouths, despite the attempts of the infuriated opposers to stifle the fearless speakers.

<sup>18</sup> Can there be any room for doubt that the Heavenly Giver of that Word will continue to harden diamondlike the foreheads of his modern-day Ezekiel class

18. Till when will Jehovah continue to harden the foreheads of such ones?

and their courageous companions to face the hardheaded opposers till destruction suppresses their opposition? None at all! He has made the way of his witnesses successful until now. He will keep on making their way prosperous until the 'prophesying again regarding peoples and nations and tongues and kings' has been fearlessly completed. This he can be expected to do, to his own credit and to the vindication of his universal sovereignty.

## Spreading God's Word Abroad in a Fearful World

**T**HE greatest prophet in all human history, Jesus Christ, foretold concerning the world-changing era that set in with the outbreak of World War I in 1914 the international mental state as follows: "Men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken."—Luke 21:26, 27.

<sup>2</sup> However, strange as it may seem, there are those who are not becoming fearful and fainting with a sense of helplessness. They are the witnesses of Jehovah who are now found in 205 lands. They do what Jesus urged: "But as these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near."—Luke 21:28.

1. What unparalleled state of world fear did the greatest prophet in human history foretell?
2. Who are the ones not giving way to fear, and why so?

<sup>3</sup> Today the fact remains more confirmed than ever that "the appointed times of the nations," "the times of the Gentiles," ended in the latter half of 1914 and that then the promised Kingdom of Jehovah God by Jesus Christ was installed in the heavens to rule amid its enemies. (Luke 21:24, NW, *Authorized Version*) So, to this day that Messianic Kingdom has not been set up at earthly Jerusalem. Logically, also, the League of Nations failed to be "the political expression of the Kingdom of God on earth." The League's successor, the United Nations, has, after more than 35 years of operation, failed Christendom's prayers; it has not warded off the nuclear age.

<sup>4</sup> From the very time of the proposal of a league of nations toward the close of

3. Why has the Messianic Kingdom not been set up at Jerusalem in Israel, and why have the League of Nations and its successor not warded off the nuclear age?
4. Against what was the League of Nations really a conspiracy?

# Does the Bible Promise an Earthly Paradise?



**“P**ARADISE is a name for heaven,” says *The World Book Encyclopedia*. “Jesus used the word in this sense when He spoke to the dying thief upon the cross.”

But did Jesus Christ actually promise a heavenly paradise to the dying thief? Or did he promise an earthly Paradise?

## Promise of Heavenly Life

There can be no question that Jesus held out the hope of heavenly life to his faithful apostles. The night before his execution, he promised: “In the house of my Father there are many abodes. . . . I am going my way to prepare a place for you. Also, if I go my way and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be.” What a grand promise of heavenly life!—John 14:2, 3.

Jesus will rule in heaven as King of God’s Kingdom. And God has been selecting from among humankind persons to rule with him. The Bible tells what Christ does with these selected ones: “You made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth.”—Revelation 5:10; 2 Timothy 2:11, 12.

The apostle John said that those who are “bought from the earth” to rule in heaven with Christ would number 144,000. They would be a “little flock” compared with all those who receive everlasting life. (Revelation 14:1-3; Luke 12:32; John 10:16) To such ones who had

the hope of being received into heaven, Christ promised: “To him that conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7; John 16:33; 1 John 5:4) This figurative “paradise of God” is in the invisible heavens.

However, is it correct to assume that heaven is the only paradise set before all of Jesus’ followers? Since the sympathetic evildoer did not conquer the world by pursuing a course of faithfulness to God but was justly being put to death for his wicked deeds, what Paradise did Christ promise him?

## What Paradise Promised to the Evildoer?

One of the evildoers hanging next to Jesus said: “You are the Christ, are you not? Save yourself and us.” Yet the sympathetic evildoer rebuked him. Then, turning to Jesus, he said: “Remember me when you get into your kingdom.” At that Jesus made the remarkable promise: “Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise.”—Luke 23:39-43.

Where is this promised Paradise? The way this verse is rendered in numerous Bible translations has influenced the view of many people regarding this. Most Bibles read as does the *Revised Standard Version*: “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” Thus, according to such translations, on the very day that Jesus and the evildoer died they went to Paradise. Yet, how

could that be, since the Bible says that Jesus went to Hades, or Sheol, at death? The apostle Peter, in telling about His resurrection from there three days later, said: "Neither was he forsaken in Hades [Sheol, in Hebrew] . . . This Jesus God resurrected."—Acts 2:31, 32; Psalm 16:10.

Since Jesus clearly was in Sheol, or Hades (the common grave of mankind), prior to his resurrection, the *Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* by J. P. Lange says: "We have, however, by this Paradise to understand not the heavenly Paradise . . . but that part of Sheol which is opposed to Gehenna, and which was also named Paradise."

D. D. Whedon in his *Commentary on the Gospels* provides some background regarding this view of Paradise, explaining: "The name [Paradise] was transferred by the Jewish Church [from the original Paradise in Eden] to the blessed section of Hades, or the intermediate

state between death and the resurrection. Beyond all doubt it was the intention of Jesus to designate *this*, by the term *Paradise*, to the dying thief."

Paradise a "blessed section of Hades"? This was apparently a view that originated with Jewish teachers; it certainly is *not* something taught in the sacred Hebrew Scriptures. Most churchmen today do not accept the view that Paradise is a section of Hades. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* notes: "According to the prevailing interpretation of Catholic theologians and commentators, paradise in this instance is used as a synonym for the heaven of the blessed to which the thief would accompany the Saviour."

Many Protestant writers agree with this view held by Catholics. J. G. Butler, in his commentary *The Bible-Work*, exclaims: "What a day to that dying man! Its morning saw him a culprit condemned before the bar of earthly judgment; before evening shadowed the hill of Zion he stood accepted at the bar of heaven."

But wait! We have seen that, according to the Bible, Jesus went to Sheol, or Hades, when he died, not to heaven. He was dead for three days, unconscious in the common grave of humankind. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) *So he could not have gone to heaven.* The Bible says that Jesus returned to heaven 40 days after his resurrection.—Acts 1:3, 6-11.

Clearly, Jesus was promising the evildoer simply that he would be resurrected into Paradise; Jesus was not saying he would live in Paradise that very day. Therefore the correct translation of Jesus' words is: "Truly I tell you today, *You will be with me in Paradise.*" A number of Bible translations read this way, one of which (*Lamsa*) says in its footnote: "Ancient texts were not punctuated. The comma could come before or after *today*."

So where will the Paradise be that



Jesus promised the evildoer? And when will it be enjoyed?

#### **An Earthly Paradise**

Remember, we spoke earlier about God's creation of the original Paradise in Eden right here on earth. Obviously it was God's purpose to have an earthly Paradise in which humankind would enjoy everlasting life in peace and security. Do you think that God will permit this purpose of his to go unfulfilled? Never! "Everything that is my delight I shall do," he says. "I have even spoken it; I shall also bring it in." (Isaiah 46:10, 11) Yes, God will do what he purposes! And his promise is: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."—Psalm 37:29.

So when we read Jesus' promise of Paradise to the evildoer, we should picture in our minds this entire earth made into a beautiful place in which to live, like a fruitful garden, for that is what the word "paradise" means. Will Jesus be right here on earth with the former evildoer in Paradise? No, Jesus will be in heaven ruling as King over the earthly Paradise. He will be with that man in the sense that He will raise him from the dead and care for his needs, both physical and spiritual.

The evildoer obviously was not a faithful Christian conqueror who qualified for life as a coruler in heaven with Christ. He did wicked things, even as did millions of other people whom Jesus will resurrect. (Acts 24:15) But they did these wicked things because they were ignorant of God's will. So in Paradise they will be taught what God's will is, and they will have the opportunity to prove that they really do love God by doing his will.

#### **A Picture of Paradise**

Though it draws the conclusion that Paradise is "a place distinct from the earth," the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "The peace and ideal justice to be procured by the messianic king will be like those of Paradise in [Isaiah] 11:6-11." Consider the beautiful Paradise described there. After telling about the rulership of the Messianic King, Jesus Christ, this heart-stirring prophecy in Isaiah chapter 11 goes on to say in verses 6 to 9:

"The wolf will actually reside for a while with the male lamb, and with the kid the leopard itself will lie down, and the calf and the maned young lion and the well-fed animal all together; and a mere little boy will be leader over them. And the cow and the bear themselves will feed; together their young ones will lie down. And even the lion will eat straw just like the bull. And the sucking child will certainly play upon the hole of the cobra; and upon the light aperture of a poisonous snake will a weaned child actually put his own hand. They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."

Where will the Paradise conditions here so beautifully described be fulfilled? Religious teachers of Christendom do not believe they will actually be fulfilled on earth. "All the traits of the picture painted by Isaiah bear the stamp of the existing earthly corporality," acknowledges Professor J. P. Lange. But he adds: "In this sphere the prophecy cannot be realized. We must suppose a new basis of spiritual, glorified corporality made for this fulfilment."

Yet is this prophecy figuratively describing the peace and security people will enjoy in a heavenly paradise? Not at all! It is describing conditions right here



Will these conditions really prevail on earth?

on earth. Already today within the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses earth wide a condition of spiritual prosperity, peace and security exists, as depicted in such a beautiful way by God's prophet Isaiah. However, will such paradise conditions in due course be extended so as to be fulfilled in a literal way?

True, most teachers of religion in Christendom may scoff at the idea that God will cause animals to be at peace with one another and with humans. But we can have confidence that Almighty God will bring about such marvelous changes in the animal realm. As one Bible commentator noted regarding this Bible prophecy: "If all is merely figurative, what is the point of such detailed statements concerning the change in animals? It would appear also that we have here a parallelism or comparison with the condition before the fall of man into sin. Before the entrance of sin into the world the animals were the helps of man and were named by him. All that God had made

was good. Hostility between man and the animals, at least, was unknown."

Truly, what beautiful parallelisms there are between this prophetic description in Isaiah of the Messiah's rule and the conditions that existed in the garden of Eden! There, "the knowledge of Jehovah" abounded, as God no doubt communed with his perfect earthly son, Adam. The Bible specifically says that then animals were given "*all green vegetation* for food." They did not eat other animals. (Genesis 1:30) And the animals were in subjection to man, obeying the command to appear before him to be named.—Genesis 2:19, 20.

How grand it will be to see such a situation of harmony and security restored earth wide! What a privilege it will be to enjoy a glorious earthly Paradise in which all people love one another and where this grand peace among humans is even reflected in the cessation of hostilities in the animal realm! Indeed, the Bible does promise an earthly Paradise!



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## Questions From Readers

■ Do the restoration prophecies of Isaiah and other ancient prophets have their final fulfillment in the spiritual paradise of God's people today, or do they also have a literal application to the Paradise of the future "new earth"?

The book *Man's Salvation out of World Distress at Hand*, published in 1975 by the Watch Tower Society, had this to say with reference to Isaiah chapter 35: "It was after the exiled Jews returned from Babylon in 537 B.C.E. that the prophecy of the beautification of the Judean 'wilderness,' 'waterless region' and 'desert' had a miniature fulfillment. The larger and final fulfillment, the spiritual fulfillment, began to take place upon the remnant of spiritual Israelites after they returned from their exile from God's favor in Babylon the Great in the year 1919 C.E." Does this mean that none of the features of these restoration prophecies will be fulfilled in the literal Paradise on earth during Christ's Millennial Reign? Far from it!

The statement in the *Man's Salvation* book must be viewed properly in its context. Isaiah's prophecy had a miniature fulfillment when Israel was brought back from captivity in Babylon, but the major fulfillment began to take place from 1919 C.E. with the release of spiritual Israel from captivity to Babylon the Great. Restoration to their "land," their spiritual paradise, was then final and complete, for never again would they fall into bondage to any part of Satan's world empire of false religion.

However, this and other restoration prophecies include features

that will also find a physical fulfillment in the Paradise earth. There are features, for example, in Isaiah 35:1-7, such as the healing of the blind, the deaf and the lame, that did not have a literal fulfillment in the restoration from ancient Babylon; nor are they so fulfilled in the restored spiritual paradise today. But Jehovah's Witnesses look forward with keen anticipation to the realization of these promises in the Paradise earth. No doubt that is why Song 119 in our 1966 songbook is such a favorite with all of us!

Referring to other restoration prophecies, the Society's book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached* (1973) stated: "It would be inconsistent for God to inspire such a prophecy as that of Isaiah 11:6-9, and Ezekiel 34:25 and Hosea 2:18 to have only a figurative or spiritual meaning and not have a true copy of these things in actual life, as though the literal fulfillment were an impossible ideal."

It is of interest that inspired writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures have applied features of these restoration prophecies to the "new earth," even though their major fulfillment today is in the spiritual paradise. For example, the prophet Isaiah spoke of blessings to come in "new heavens and a new earth." (Isaiah 65:17-25) Later, the apos-

tle Peter described the coming of Jehovah's day, in which the present "heavens" and "earth" are to be dissolved, and added: "But there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise [by Isaiah], and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:10-13) Thus Peter indicated that features in Isaiah's prophecy will become a reality in the "new earth." True happiness, long life, secure homes, abundant food, satisfying work, peace between man and animals—all these blessings are assured "according to God's promise."

Further, in speaking of "the banquet for all peoples," Isaiah 25:6-8 includes the statement: "The Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces." Though the major fulfillment is in the spiritual paradise (with the "great crowd" sharing therein), the apostle John shows that this feature of Isaiah's prophecy has also a definite fulfillment toward mankind in the "new earth." (Revelation 7:9, 16, 17; 21:1-4) Then, a global Paradise will be recreated after the pattern of the Paradise of Eden.—Genesis 2:8; Matthew 19:28.

Jehovah's people now exult in the complete restoration of their spiritual paradise. And there will be no end to rejoicing in the physical Paradise, "because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9; 51:3.