

## **Home Page**

### **Heaven**

#### **The Watchtower, December 15, 1968, p. 765-766**

“The ‘Lamb’ referred to here is, of course, Jesus Christ; and this ‘Mount Zion’ is not on earth, but in heaven where Jesus is. (John 1:29; Heb. 12:22) So the 144,000 are persons who die on earth as humans and are resurrected to heavenly life as spirit creatures, as Jesus was. (Rom. 6:5) When compared with the thousands of millions of persons who live on earth, they are, indeed, a ‘little flock.’ Even single cities that have more than 144,000 residents are common on earth today. However, the ‘little flock’ who go to heaven are not the only ones who receive salvation. As we have seen, they will have a vast number of happy earthly subjects. Jesus referred to these as his ‘other sheep,’ of whom ‘a great crowd’ are even now serving God faithfully.—John 10:16; Rev. 7:9, 15.”

#### **The Truth, That Leads to Eternal Life, 1968 ed. p. 77**

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**The Watchtower, April 15, 1981, p. 18**

“ But do all those who accept Christ and hope to live forever receive this ‘holy calling’ to incorruptible life in the heavens? Indicating that this special calling is meant for a limited number of ‘elect’ (*Authorized Version*) or ‘chosen ones,’ Paul adds: ‘On this account I go on enduring all things for the sake of the *chosen ones*, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in union with Christ Jesus along with *everlasting glory*. Faithful is the saying: Certainly if we died together, we shall also live together; if we go on enduring, we shall also *rule together as kings*.’—2 Tim. 2:10-12.”

**The Watchtower, February 1, 1982, p. 28**

“Under its direction the heavenly hope was held out, highlighted and stressed until about the year 1935. Then as ‘light flashed up’ to reveal clearly the identity of the “great crowd” of Revelation 7:9, the emphasis began to be placed on the earthly hope.”

**The Watchtower, December 15, 1982, p. 19**

“Down to the spring of 1935 the dedicated, baptized witnesses of Jehovah had entertained in true faith the ‘one hope’ that was set before them in Ephesians 4:4-6, as follows: ‘One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons.’ But in that memorable year of 1935, at the convention held in Washington, D.C., the ‘great multitude,’ as visualized at Revelation 7:9-17 (*Authorized Version*), was identified as being composed of the Fine Shepherd’s ‘other sheep’ of John 10:16.”

(continued)

**You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth,  
1982 ed. p. 122**

“David, Job and John the Baptizer will receive a resurrection to life on earth. In fact, all faithful men and women who died before Jesus died had the hope of living again on earth, not in heaven. They will be resurrected to become some of the earthly subjects of God’s kingdom”

**United in Worship of the Only True God, 1983  
ed. p. 110**

“However, Jesus did not mean that *only* those apostles would rule with him in his heavenly Kingdom. Later it was made known that 144,000 redeemed from the earth would have that grand privilege.”

**United in Worship of the Only True God, 1983  
ed. p. 111-112**

“In time the prescribed but limited number of 144,000 would be filled. The final sealing of these spiritual Israelites as approved would be near. (Rev. 7:1-8) Then Jehovah, by means of his spirit and the understanding of his Word that he made possible for his visible organization, would direct matters so as to fulfill another part of his purpose, as described in Revelation 7:9-17. A ‘great crowd’ out of all nations would be gathered, with the thrilling prospect of surviving the great tribulation and living forever in perfection amid an earthly Paradise.”

(continued)

**The Watchtower, February 15, 1984, p. 4**

“But does not the Bible show that some people will go to heaven? Yes, the Bible does teach that a limited number go to heaven for a special reason. God does not need humans in heaven; nor does he have to take them to heaven in order to give them eternal happiness. Otherwise, why did he not create them in heaven to begin with, dispensing with all the suffering and turmoil they have gone through while on earth?”

(done)

ers: "Have no fear, little flock, because your Father has approved of giving you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) Yes, God would give this "little flock" a share in the heavenly government over all mankind.

At Revelation 20:6 we read concerning those who would be resurrected to heavenly life: "They will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years." Jesus Christ is the principal king and the high priest, and these faithful ones taken from the earth serve with him. As the Bible says: "They will rule as kings over the earth."—Rev. 5:9, 10.

Why are they chosen from the earth for such a work? Because it was here at this earth that Jehovah God's rulership was challenged. It was here that the faithfulness of men to God could be put to the test under opposition from the Devil. It was here that Jesus proved his full loyalty to God under test and gave his life as a ransom for mankind. So it was from this earth that Jehovah arranged to take a "little flock" of persons to be associated with his Son in the heavenly kingdom.

Those taken from earth to serve as heavenly kings and priests are persons who show full faith in God's provision for salvation through Christ. They are ones whose lives prove the Devil a liar when he charged that men serve God only for selfish advantage. Jehovah has marvelously purposed to use them for his glory. (Eph. 1:9-12) Under the direction of God's own loyal Son they will have a further part, from heaven, in clearing God's name of reproach as he brings this present wicked system of things to its end.—Rom. 16:20; Rev. 2:26, 27.

As kings and priests under the direction of Jesus Christ, they will serve from their heavenly positions in carrying out Jehovah's will toward mankind. How wonderful it will be to have as rulers those who have proved faithful to God! (Rev. 20:4) And how loving of God to put in office those who have experienced the problems common to humankind! Surely, they, like Christ, will deal in an understanding way with their subjects.—Heb. 2:17, 18.

What a blessing it will be to the inhabitants of earth as these heavenly

priests apply to them the benefits of Christ's ransom sacrifice, healing them spiritually, mentally and physically until they reach perfection! In this way, Almighty God will fulfill toward his earthly subjects his grand promise to "wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be any more. The former things have passed away."—Rev. 21:2-4.

#### HOW MANY GO TO HEAVEN?

Those who are called by God to share in heavenly service are few in number. As Jesus said, they are a "little flock." Years after his return to heaven, Jesus made known the exact number in a vision to the apostle John, who wrote: "I saw, and, look! the Lamb standing upon the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand . . . who have been bought from the earth."—Rev. 14:1, 3.

The "Lamb" referred to here is, of course, Jesus Christ; and this "Mount Zion" is not on earth, but in heaven where Jesus is. (John 1:29; Heb. 12:22) So the 144,000 are persons who die on earth as humans and are resurrected to heavenly

#### COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

"You Must Not Forget."

"Do Not Forget All His Doings."

Lovers of God's Name.

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However, the "little flock" who go to heaven are not the only ones who receive salvation. As we have seen, they will have a vast number of happy earthly subjects. Jesus referred to these as his "other sheep," of whom "a great crowd" are even now serving God faithfully.—John 10:16; Rev. 7:9, 15.

What is your hope? Is it to receive eternal life with Christ in the heavens? Or is it to enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom rule as one of its earthly subjects?

#### AN EARTHLY DESTINY OR A HEAVENLY ONE?

Members of the "little flock" know that God has called them to heavenly life. How? By means of the operation of God's spirit, which implants and cultivates in them the hope of heavenly life. The apostle Paul, as one of the "little flock," wrote: "The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together."—Rom. 8:16, 17.

The operation of God's spirit changes the entire outlook of such a person, so that his thoughts and prayers are centered upon serving God with the heavenly hope in view. Being with Christ in heaven is more important to him than any earthly ties. The witness of the spirit is unmistakable.

No doubt you have thought about this matter, and perhaps you have wondered whether you are one who will receive heavenly life. Before one can properly

analyze his situation, he needs an understanding of what the Bible teaches on this matter. Why? Because God's holy spirit that bears witness that one has been called to heavenly glory is the same spirit that directed the writing of the Bible. (2 Pet. 1:21) With this in mind, let us examine the situation.

In the past did you believe that all good persons go to heaven? If so, and if you endeavored to live a good life, you may well have expected to be included among them. You may also have hoped in this way to be reunited with your loved ones whom you had lost in death. But when you had that expectation, did you know that the Bible says that such faithful servants of God as King David and John the Baptist did not go to heaven? Yes, the Bible clearly says: "David did not ascend to the heavens."—Acts 2:29, 34; Matt. 11:11.

Also, at that time did you know that only 144,000 chosen from among mankind over the past nineteen centuries would gain heavenly life? And did you know then that the Bible holds out hope of eternal life under righteous conditions here on earth for all others who would become faithful servants of God? "The righteous themselves will possess the earth," the Bible promises, "and they will reside forever upon it."—Ps. 37:10, 11, 29.

When you were then thinking about heavenly life for yourself, did you believe in the immortality of the human soul? Then, understandably, you may have hoped that your soul would go to heaven. But if you had such a hope it was not because God's spirit was bearing witness to you. To the contrary, as God's inspired Word clearly says: "The soul that is sinning—it itself will die." So those who die must depend on God to resurrect them to whatever place he wills for them.—Ezek. 18:4; 1 Cor. 15:35-38.

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6 As kings and priests under the direction of Jesus Christ, they will serve from their heavenly positions in carrying out Jehovah's will toward mankind. How wonderful it will be to have as rulers those who have proved faithful to God!

3. What does Revelation 20:6 say that those resurrected to heavenly life will do there?

4. Why is it fitting that those whom God arranges to be in the heavenly kingdom are taken from this earth?

5. (a) Why is it a loving arrangement of God to put in office those who have experienced the problems common to mankind? (b) What blessings will earth's inhabitants enjoy when these heavenly priests apply the benefits of Christ's ransom sacrifice?

(Revelation 20:4) And how loving of God to put in office those who have experienced the problems common to humankind! Surely, they, like Christ, will deal in an understanding way with their subjects. (Hebrews 2:17, 18) What a blessing it will be to the inhabitants of earth as these heavenly priests apply to them the benefits of Christ's ransom sacrifice, healing them spiritually, mentally and physically until they reach perfection!—Revelation 21:2-4.

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7 However, the "little flock" who go to heaven are not the only ones who receive salvation. As we have seen, they will have happy earthly subjects. Jesus referred to these as his "other sheep," of whom "a great crowd" are even now serving God faithfully.—John 10:16; Revelation 7:9, 15.

8. How many make up the "little flock"?  
 7. (a) Are the 144,000 the only ones to receive salvation? (b) By what term did Jesus refer to those who will live on earth?

Savior, Christ Jesus, who has abolished death but has *shed light upon life and incorruption.*" (2 Tim. 1:9, 10) If life in heaven had been the hope of the faithful remnant among the Jews, why did Christ have to "shed light" on this "holy calling" to incorruption? No, this call to heavenly life was clearly something quite new for these early Christians chosen from among the Jews and the Gentiles.

**THE HEAVENLY HOPE FOR A LIMITED NUMBER OF "CHOSEN ONES"**

<sup>18</sup> But do all those who accept Christ and hope to live forever receive this "holy calling" to incorruptible life in the heavens? Indicating that this special calling is meant for a limited number of 'elect' (Authorized Version) or "chosen ones," Paul adds: "On this account I go on enduring all things for the sake of the chosen ones, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in union with Christ Jesus along with everlasting glory. Faithful is the saying: Certainly if we died together, we shall also live together; if we go on enduring, we shall also rule together as kings."—2 Tim. 2:10-12.

<sup>19</sup> If all who are saved are called to "everlasting glory" in order to "rule together as kings" with Christ Jesus, over whom are they due to rule? And if all are to become "a royal priesthood," on behalf of whom are they to act as royal priests?

<sup>20</sup> Consider the following: In his letter to the Galatians, Paul says of Christians chosen from among Jews and non-Jews who have been "baptized into Christ" that they "are really Abraham's seed, heirs with reference to a promise," and he calls them "the Israel of God." (Gal. 3:26-29; 6:16) And in his letter to the Romans, the same

apostle speaks of the "sacred secret" of non-Jews being called by God because of the "lack of faith" of many Jews, adding—and this is a key passage—"until the full number ["complete number," *TEV*] of people of the nations has come in." He explains that "in this manner," that is, by Gentiles being called to fill out the required number, "all Israel will be saved." Obviously this refers to spiritual Israel, the "ones chosen" from among Jews and non-Jews who are "really 'Israel'" or "truly Israel."—Rom. 11:7, 17-26; 9:6 (*The New English Bible*); 2:28, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Since non-Jews would receive this "holy calling" only until the "full number" was reached of those making up "the Israel of God," logically the number of such spiritual Israelites is limited. Well, what is that number? Look up Revelation 7:1-8. There a definite limit is set on the number of Christians who are "sealed" to become a part of spiritual Israel. That this limited number is not chosen from among the angels is proved by Revelation 14:1-4, where this same number is said to be "bought from the earth," "bought from among mankind as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb."

<sup>22</sup> For these 144,000 spirit-begotten, anointed Christians their Bible-based hope is a heavenly hope. After having part in "the first resurrection," they "will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years."—Rev. 20:6.

<sup>23</sup> But if these "ones chosen" are "firstfruits," logically other fruits are to follow. And if they are to "rule as kings," who will be their subjects and what is the hope of such? We shall see as we proceed with this examination.

18, 19. Explain how Paul's second letter to Timothy and Peter's first letter indicate that not all those who hope to live forever will be kings and priests with Christ in heaven. (Rev. 5:9, 10)

20. How do Paul's letters to the Galatians and the Romans show that the number of spiritual Israelites is limited?

21. (a) How many spiritual Israelites are there? (b) What scripture proves that they are not chosen from among the angels?

22. For the 144,000, of what kind is their Bible-based hope?

23. What questions are raised by the words "firstfruits" and "kings"?

ording to [God's] great mercy he gave us a new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an incorruptible and undefiled and unfading inheritance. It is reserved in the heavens for you." (1 Peter 1:3, 4) As these keep a good relationship with their heavenly Father, he strengthens them in the conviction that they are indeed "born again" Christians.

#### How Can a Person Be Certain?

<sup>16</sup> Those sharing in preaching this good news of the Kingdom in modern times are confident that Jehovah God is leading his dedicated servants by means of his visible spirit-begotten organization, the "faithful and discreet slave." (Matthew 24:45-47) Under its direction the heavenly hope was held out, highlighted and stressed until about the year 1935. Then as 'light flashed up' to reveal clearly the

16. Since when has the "faithful and discreet slave" placed the emphasis on the earthly hope, and to what conclusion does this lead?



Even as physical birth requires an active role on the part of human parents, so being "born again" requires an active role by the Father and his heavenly "wife"

identity of the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9, the emphasis began to be placed on the earthly hope. (Psalm 97:11) It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that by that time the full number of 144,000 would have been nearly completed. Of course, any individuals proving unfaithful would need to be replaced. But, understandably, these would be comparatively few. And by whom would these be replaced? It seems reasonable also to conclude that most likely this heavenly hope would be extended to some who had endured in integrity, who had stuck to their dedication over the years, rather than its being held out to unproved newly dedicated ones. (Compare Luke 22:28-30.) However, from reports at hand it appears that even some newly dedicated Christians have considered themselves to be "born again."

<sup>17</sup> Any who in comparatively recent times dedicated themselves and were baptized and who consider themselves to be "born again" would do well to reflect seriously on the following questions: What reasons have you for feeling that Jehovah God has planted this hope in you? Could it be that your emotional feeling is a holdover from the mistaken belief you previously held while in Babylon the Great that heaven is the destiny of all good people? Or could it be that you feel this way because you had great inward disturbances, that you at first fought against the idea but it gradually won out? But did it win out because *you* wanted it that way, perhaps even unconsciously? Such struggles do not of themselves prove that you were "born again."

<sup>18</sup> Or do you feel that you have been chosen by God to be one of the 144,000

17. What kind of feelings cause some to think mistakenly that God has implanted in them the heavenly hope?

18. Why would not appreciation of deep spiritual matters of itself prove that a person had been "born again"?

These noticeable things could have acted as a disunifying factor among Jehovah's Witnesses. But not so! They recognize that, regardless of race, color, language, nationality and social level, they all have one common source of their existence and of the light of truth. Among Jehovah's Witnesses of this late date there are a remnant of spirit-begotten Christians who have heavenly prospects and a "great crowd" of those whom the Fine Shepherd, Jesus Christ, called his "other sheep." (John 10:16; Revelation 7:9-17; Matthew 25:31-46) Nevertheless, the long-range forecast of Jesus Christ has not failed, even though it said: "And they will become one flock, one shepherd." The Fine Shepherd has shown his skill in keeping all his peace-loving sheeplike followers "one flock," notwithstanding the difference in hopes for the future. They all unitedly love their "one shepherd," who lovingly sacrificed his human life for all of them, and they are loyal to him.

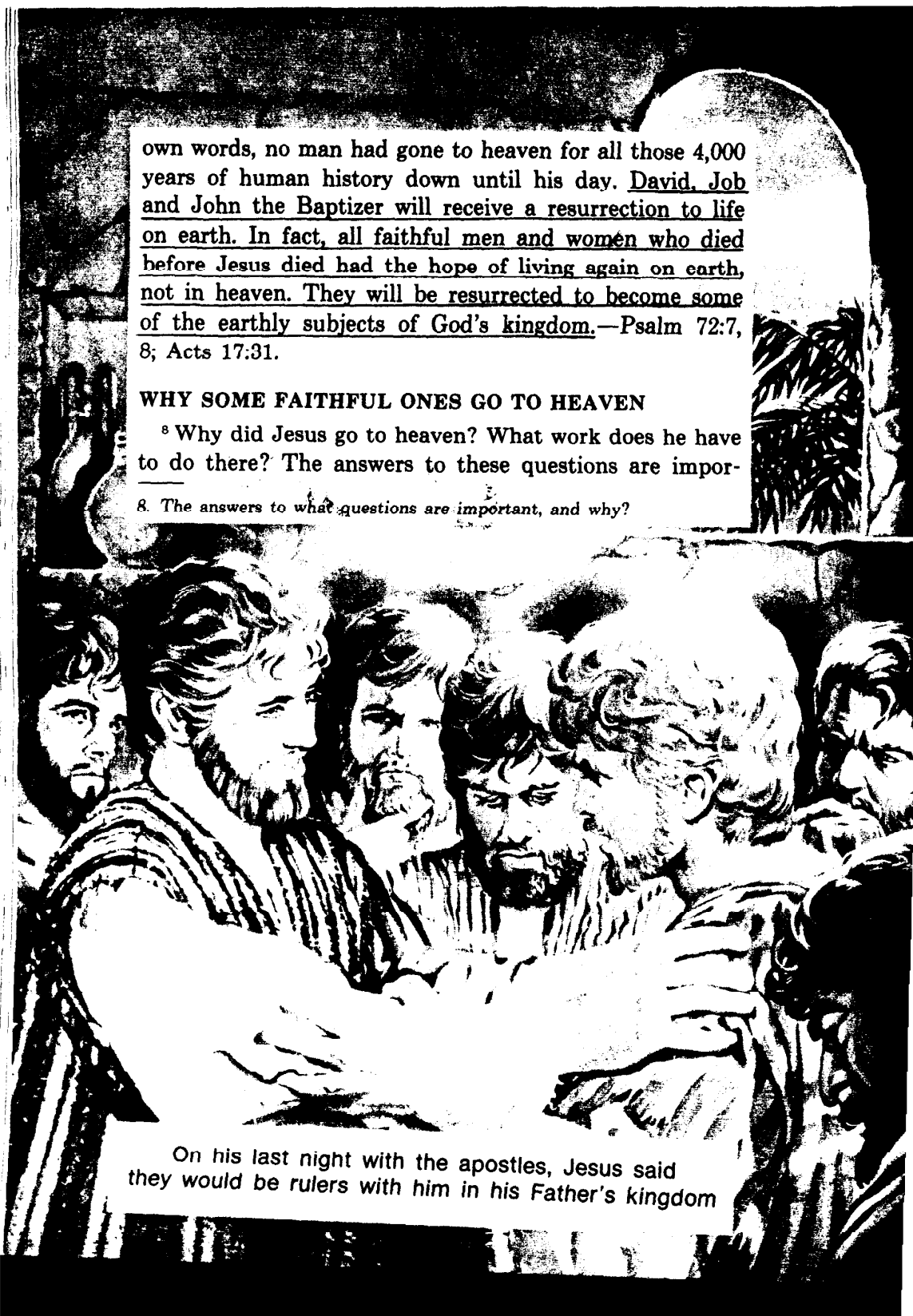
<sup>6</sup> The Biblical "truth" that all the sheep of today love so strongly has much to say about the Paradise hope for the constantly growing "great crowd" of the Shepherd's "other sheep." So, as lovers of the whole "truth" of God's Word, the spiritual remnant are not envious so as to hold back anything profitable from those "other sheep" but have lovingly published worldwide that grand earthly hope, particularly since the year 1935. The remnant know that they are now living in "the times of restoration of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time." (Acts 3:21) For the remnant the revelation of this truth has been part of their "inheritance of the holy ones in the light." From the start of the publi-

6. Why have the remnant with heavenly hope not held back from publishing the Bible truths that pertain to the "other sheep"?

cation of this magazine, *The Watchtower*, in July of 1879, it has been God's instrument for reviving this grand Paradise hope for redeemed humankind. The other publications of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society have all combined to strengthen and confirm that hope in which the "great crowd" of "other sheep" delight so greatly today, with loving appreciation for the remnant.

<sup>7</sup> Down to the spring of 1935 the dedicated, baptized witnesses of Jehovah had entertained in true faith the "one hope" that was set before them in Ephesians 4:4-6, as follows: "One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons." But in that memorable year of 1935, at the convention held in Washington, D.C., the "great multitude," as visualized at Revelation 7:9-17 (Authorized Version), was identified as being composed of the Fine Shepherd's "other sheep" of John 10:16. The anointed remnant who still held on to their valid "one hope" rejoiced greatly over this advancing light upon the Holy Scriptures and set themselves to act wholeheartedly in the gathering of those "other sheep." They did not feel that the "other sheep" were infringing on the "one baptism" by themselves getting immersed in water, for the baptism of such "other sheep" was as much a symbol of their dedication to Jehovah God through Christ as that of the anointed remnant had been. The love with which they had clothed themselves now widened out to embrace those lovable "other sheep" of their own Shepherd.

7. In 1935, what hope besides their own did the anointed remnant lovingly set forth, and why did they allow for the baptism of those with this other hope?



own words, no man had gone to heaven for all those 4,000 years of human history down until his day. David, Job and John the Baptizer will receive a resurrection to life on earth. In fact, all faithful men and women who died before Jesus died had the hope of living again on earth, not in heaven. They will be resurrected to become some of the earthly subjects of God's kingdom.—Psalm 72:7, 8; Acts 17:31.

#### WHY SOME FAITHFUL ONES GO TO HEAVEN

<sup>8</sup> Why did Jesus go to heaven? What work does he have to do there? The answers to these questions are impor-

8. *The answers to what questions are important, and why?*

On his last night with the apostles, Jesus said they would be rulers with him in his Father's kingdom

## 'I Make a Covenant With You for a Kingdom'

**I**T WAS on the night before Jesus was put to death that he told his faithful apostles: 'In the house of my Father there are many abodes. I am going my way to prepare a place for you, that where I am you also may be. He further said to them: "I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom." (John 14:2, 3; Luke 22:29) What a marvelous prospect he set before them!

<sup>2</sup> However, Jesus did not mean that only those apostles would with him in his heavenly Kingdom. Later it was made known that 144,000 redeemed from the earth would have that grand privilege. (Rev. 5:9, 10; 14:1, 4) Are some today reaching out to lay hold of it?

### GATHERING THE KINGDOM HEIRS

<sup>3</sup> After John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod Antipas, Jesus undertook an intense campaign of public preaching in which he focused attention on "the kingdom of the heavens." (Matt. 4:12, 17) He made people aware that there would be opportunity for them to enter that Kingdom, and his disciples earnestly reached out for that prize.—Matt. 5:3, 10, 20; 7:21; 11:12.

1. On the night before Jesus' death what prospect did he set before his apostles?
2. How many will share with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom?
3. In his public ministry, to what opportunity did Jesus draw attention?

<sup>4</sup> At Pentecost of 33 C.E. the first of them were anointed with holy spirit. (Acts 2:1-4; 2 Cor. 1:21, 22) God's provision for salvation leading to immortal heavenly life was made known. Peter used "the keys of the kingdom of the heavens" to open up this knowledge—first to the Jews, next to the Samaritans, and then to people of the Gentile nations. (Matt. 16:19) Special attention was being given to making up the government that would rule mankind for 1,000 years, and nearly all the inspired letters in the Christian Greek Scriptures are primarily directed to this group of Kingdom heirs—"the holy ones," "partakers of the heavenly calling."

<sup>5</sup> Their being called to heavenly life was not because they were somehow better than all the servants of God who had died before Pentecost of 33 C.E. (Matt. 11:11) Rather, Jehovah now had begun to select those who would be associate rulers with Jesus Christ. For some 19 centuries after this there was only one calling, the heavenly one. It was an undeserved kindness that God bestowed on a limited number in furtherance of his own wise and loving purposes.—Eph. 2:8-10.

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\* See the opening verses of Romans 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, 1 and 2 Peter; also Galatians 3:26-29, 1 Thessalonians 2:12, 2 Thessalonians 2:14, 2 Timothy 4:8, Hebrews 3:1, James 1:18, 1 John 3:1, 2 and Jude 1.

4. (a) When were the first of Jesus' disciples anointed with holy spirit? (b) What shows that attention was being directed from them on to the gathering of the Kingdom heirs?
5. Was their being called to heavenly life because they were better servants of God than those who had lived before?
6. (a) Why must the time come when the heavenly calling would close? (b) Who would direct matters so that the prophecy regarding the "great crowd" would also be fulfilled, and what has actually happened?

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<sup>6</sup> In time the Prescribed but limited number of

\* See the opening verses of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Titus, 1 and 2 Peter; also Galatians 3:26-29; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 3:1; James 1:18; 1 John 3:1, 2 and Jude 1.

4. (a) When were the first of Jesus' disciples anointed with holy spirit? (b) What shows that attention was being directed from then on to the gathering of the Kingdom heirs?
5. Was their being called to heavenly life because they were better servants of God than those who had lived before?
6. (a) Why must the time come when the heavenly calling would close? (b) Who would direct matters so that the prophecy regarding the "great crowd" would also be fulfilled, and what has actually happened?

144,000 would be filled. The final sealing of these spiritual Israelites as approved would be near. (Rev. 7:1-8) Then Jehovah, by means of his spirit and the understanding of his Word that he made possible for his visible organization, would direct matters so as to fulfill another part of his purpose, as described in Revelation 7:9-17. A "great crowd" out of all nations would be gathered, with the thrilling prospect of surviving the great tribulation and living forever in perfection amid an earthly Paradise. When we consider what has actually occurred, it seems evident that the heavenly calling in general was completed by about the year 1935 C.E., when the earthly hope of the "great crowd" was clearly discerned. Since then there have been brought into association with the comparatively few thousand remaining ones of the heavenly class millions of worshippers of Jehovah who are earnestly hoping to live forever right here on earth.

<sup>7</sup> Does this mean that none are now being called by God for heavenly life? Until the final sealing is done, it is possible that some few who have that hope may prove unfaithful, and others will have to be chosen to take their place. But it seems reasonable that this would be a rare occurrence.

#### **SPIRITUAL SONS—HOW DO THEY KNOW?**

<sup>8</sup> God's spirit gives positive assurance of adoption as spiritual sons to baptized Christians who have received the heavenly calling. The apostle Paul showed this when he wrote to the "holiness" in Rome, describing what was at that time heavenly calling, and why do you so answer?  
<sup>8</sup> What explanation does Paul give showing how those begotten by holy spirit are aware of that fact?

the situation of all true Christians. He said: "All who are led by God's spirit, these are God's sons. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery causing fear again, but you received a spirit of adoption as sons, by which spirit we cry out: 'Abba, Father!' The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God's children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs: heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together."—Rom. 1:7; 8:14-17.

<sup>9</sup> Two uses of the word "spirit" are here brought to our attention: "the spirit itself" and "our spirit." The first is God's invisible active force. It inspires in his spiritual children a conviction of having been adopted as God's free children. That spirit also bears witness through God's inspired Word, the Bible, which is like a personal letter to his spiritual children. (1 Pet. 1:10-12) When those who have been begotten by holy spirit read what the Scriptures say to those who are spiritual sons of God, they properly respond: "That applies to me." Thus God's own active force in various ways bears witness with their spirit, the motivating force of their own mind and heart, that they are God's children. In accord with what God's spirit thus indicates, their minds and hearts become set on the prospect of being joint heirs with Christ, and they accept the responsibilities of God's spiritual children.—Phil. 3:13, 14.

<sup>10</sup> Is that true of you? If so, you have a wonder—  
<sup>9</sup> How does 'the spirit itself bear witness' with the spirit of those who truly are sons of God?

10. (a) What factors do not by themselves identify one as an anointed Christian? (b) What view do the "other sheep" take regarding their place in God's purpose?

and received God's just penalty, death. But ask yourself, 'What if they had not disobeyed?' The clear implication is that they would have kept on living—never dying. Yes, Adam and Eve would still be living today, in perfect health and happiness.

#### What About Earth's Future?

Albert Barnes, in his *Notes on the New Testament*, sums up the general belief of Christendom as to earth's future. With reference to 2 Peter 3:10, this commentator wrote:

*"The earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. That is, whether they are the works of God or man—the whole vegetable and animal creation, and all the towers, the towns, the palaces, the productions of genius, the paintings, the statuary, the books, which man has made."*

As here stated, the consensus in Christendom has long been that the time will come when the earth will no longer be the habitation of man or of any living thing. Our planet, in the view of many churchgoers, will have served its purpose, for to them the earth is just a proving ground leading either to heaven or to hell.

However, at this point you would do well to consider, Did God's purpose for the earth and man change when Adam and Eve sinned? You will find that no one can point to a single Bible passage that says so. To the contrary, many years after the first human pair sinned, Isaiah the prophet was inspired to write:

"This is what Jehovah has said, the Creator of the heavens, He the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even

to be inhabited." Isaiah quoted Jehovah as saying: "My own counsel will stand, and everything that is my delight I shall do." (Isaiah 45:18; 46:10) The psalmist also wrote about Him: "Your faithfulness is for generation after generation. You have solidly fixed the earth, that it may keep standing." —Psalm 119:90.

You can see that the Bible thus clearly states that God, in creating the earth, made it a permanent fixture in the universe and that his definite purpose in creating it was that it be inhabited by humans. That purpose has not changed. God will see to it that his purpose will be completely fulfilled.

But does not the Bible show that some people will go to heaven? Yes, the Bible does teach that a limited number go to heaven for a special reason. God does not need humans in heaven; nor does he have to take them to heaven in order to give them eternal happiness. Otherwise, why did he not create them in heaven to begin with, dispensing with all the suffering and turmoil they have gone through while on earth?

Nevertheless, when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, by exercising their own free will that he had given to them as intelligent creatures, God acted immediately to ensure that his purpose for the earth and man upon it would be carried out. All the details were not revealed to humans until centuries later. Yet it is evident from the disclosing of what the Bible calls a "sacred secret" that God right then conceived his grand purpose for the redemption of man. This was "before the founding of the world," that is, before Adam and Eve could produce children that might be redeemed, such as their faithful son Abel.—Romans 16:25; Ephesians 1:4.