

The **Watchtower** December 15, 1987
Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

**ANGELS—Do They
Affect Your Life?**

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Angels

Past and Present

"They are exemplified at Christmas in the decorations we hang on the tree, or view on Christmas cards—golden dolls with pretty faces, playing the harp or the church organ or carrying candles. They have stubby wings like those of small birds. In a word, they are cute."—*The Sunday Denver Post*.

"ANGELS are generally ignored in schools of theology, slighted in Sunday school, and aren't even mentioned in the index of the National Catechetical Directory, the guidebook for Catholic religious education in America."

So declared Charles W. Bell, religion editor. He noted that some theologians, especially from mainline Protestant churches, feel "uneasy and uncertain about angels." The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* observes that some modern thinkers say that "all belief in the existence of angels should be repudiated."

This has not always been the case. For example, in the 13th century, scholars who studied angelology, a branch of theology dealing with angels, were said to be intrigued with thoughts regarding the "nature, intelligence, and will" of angels. For several centuries, prayers were even made to "guardian angels." But, as noted above, attitudes have changed since then.

According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, "in the modern mind angels . . . are more and more being relegated to the sphere of legend, fairy tale, and child's fancy." Indeed, by the middle of the 19th century, in the minds of many people angels had become less linked to religion and more associated with secular romantic notions. Today, even more people consider them to be products of the imagination;

hence, such people deny the existence of angels.

Angels in Some Religions

However, angels still hold a place in some religions. For example, the Roman Catholic Church "encourages the faithful to love, respect, and invoke the angels." In fact, Catholicism has exalted three whom it considers to be angels—Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael—to sainthood. Raphael appears only in the Apocryphal books and not in the Bible canon.

In Eastern Orthodox churches, angels are important in the litany, a form of prayer in which invocations or petitions are made, with responses by the congregation. Angels also have a place in Islam, belief in angels being one of the articles of faith in Muslim theology.

Still, there is no doubt that in our day belief in the existence of angels is diminishing.

Do You Believe in Angels?

Regarding belief in angels, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* says: "Gradually . . . in the course of a long development and refinement . . . through *speculative elaboration* of the concepts contained in Holy Scripture, there evolved an angelology that, with varying degrees of certitude, has become the doctrine of the Church." [*Italics ours.*] How firm a belief in angels

would you have if you knew that your faith was based on “speculative elaboration”?

Interestingly, divisions of thought on this matter exist even within the Catholic Church. As to when angels were created, the *Enciclopedia de la Religión Católica* states: “In the opinion of the Greek fathers, angels were created before the visible world, but the general opinion of the Latin fathers is that they were created afterwards. Nevertheless, the opinion that has the majority of supporters is that they were created at the same time as the world.” Such uncertainty creates confusion in the minds of people and helps to influence the trend toward disbelief today.

Angels

Do They Affect Your Life?

DO ANGELS really exist? Or are they just a product of the imagination? If they do exist, can they affect *your* life?

There is only one reliable source for the answers to such questions. That is the inspired Record that God has given to mankind—his Word, the Holy Bible. Of it the apostle Paul wrote: “All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial . . . for setting things straight.”—2 Timothy 3:16.

Thus, we can have confidence that the Bible will give us straight answers as to the existence of angels and whether they affect us. Surely the Creator of the universe can tell us if angels were among his creations.

Are Angels Real?

The Bible clearly states: “He [God] makes his angels spirits.” (Hebrews 1:7)

A Jewish philosopher, Philo, contended that angels were simply “manifestations and powers of the universe.” Over the years, theologians have debated pointless issues regarding the nature and characteristics of angels, such as the frivolous question, How many angels could stand on the point of a needle? Is it any wonder that many people in our modern age have preferred not to believe in angels?

In view of all these contrasting concepts, why not examine what the Bible itself has to say about angels? This will help us get firm answers about questions such as: Are angels real? If so, have they ever intervened in man’s affairs? And, more importantly, can angels affect your life?

So the Creator has spirit creatures in the heavenly realm. These are invisible to us, and they are powerful.—Psalm 104:4; 2 Peter 2:11.

Did God intend for the angels to be just impersonal, vague entities? If that were the case, why does the Bible portray angels as having feelings? For example, it tells us that when the foundation of the earth was laid, the angels “joyfully cried out together, and all the sons of God [the angels] began shouting in applause.”—Job 38:4-7.

It appears that, like God’s intelligent earthly creatures, the intelligent spirit creatures, the angels, have their own personality. Although the Bible states the names of only two angels (Michael and Gabriel), the fact that angels do have names adds to their individuality. (Luke 1:

11, 19, 26; Jude 9) The Bible strongly condemns the worshiping of angels, and that includes praying to them. Rather than our praying to angels, the apostle Paul advises us: "In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God."—Philippians 4:6; Revelation 19:10; 22:8, 9.

But were angels programmed to be without the power of personal choice between right and wrong like mindless robots? No, angels are free moral agents, just as humans are. For example, when certain angels broke God's laws in the days of Noah, God rejected them, and they have been expelled from God's heavenly courts. Their disobedient behavior was an obvious display of angelic individuality.—Genesis 6:1, 2; 2 Peter 2:4; Matthew 25:41.

Thus, the Bible provides us with helpful information about the origin, existence, and nature of angels. To go beyond what God's Word says about them could cause an individual to ponder needlessly over questions that the Bible does not answer. It could even lead to giving undue attention or worship to angels. (Colossians 2:18) The Bible reminds us to "make sure of the more important things" and not to go 'beyond what has already been declared as good news.'—Philippians 1:10; Galatians 1:8.

Angels in God's Purpose

Although many may agree on the origin and characteristics of angels, few are really aware of the reason for their existence and how angels affect our lives today.

In the Bible, the two words used for "angel" are *mal'akh* (Hebrew) and *ag'gelos* (Greek). These both mean "messenger." They tell us something about one of the functions of angels. The angels serve as messengers, or couriers, between God and man.

For example, an angel was sent to deliver a message to Abraham regarding his son Isaac and the blessing that would come through him, a blessing that we can receive. (Genesis 22:11-17) An angel was sent to communicate with Moses. (Acts 7:37, 38) God also sent an angel with instructions to the prophet Elijah. (2 Kings 1:3) And an angel appeared to Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, with special instructions regarding the infant.—Matthew 2:13.

Angels have also been sent to protect God's people: "The angel of Jehovah is camping all around those fearing him, and he rescues them." (Psalm 34:7) For instance, an angel released the apostle Peter from prison. (Acts 12:6-11) Two angels helped Lot and his daughters to survive the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by escorting them out of that area. Lot's wife, however, did not act in full accord with the angels, so she went down in destruction with those cities.—Genesis 19:1-26.

The Bible mentions many other instances of angelic help, reinforcing what Hebrews 1:7 and 14 states: "With reference to the angels he says: 'And he makes his angels spirits, and his public servants a flame of fire.' Are they not all spirits for public service, sent forth to minister for those who are going to inherit salvation?"

An angel brought great comfort to Jesus. The night before his death, Jesus knew what lay before him—that he would be betrayed, beaten, and cruelly executed. He needed strength to endure this test of his integrity. At that crucial time, an angel appeared to him 'to strengthen him.' What a blessing that angelic comfort must have been for Jesus! As a result, although he experienced such anguish that "his sweat became as drops of blood falling to the ground," he was able to endure faithfully to death.—Luke 22:43, 44.

God has also used angels to annihilate the enemies of his people. When the Assyrian World Power threatened God's ancient worshipers, the following took place: "It came about on that night that the angel of Jehovah proceeded to go out and strike down a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians. When people rose up early in the morning, why, there all of them were dead carcasses." (2 Kings 19:35) You can see the awesome power of angels—it took only *one* angel to execute 185,000 opposers of God and his people!

Blasphemous Herod too was confronted with the power of an angel. When Herod began to think of himself as being godlike, "instantly the angel of Jehovah struck him, because he did not give the glory to God; and he became eaten up with worms and expired."—Acts 12:21-23.

We are informed that soon, when God brings this entire wicked system of things to its end, angels will again be used as executioners. "The Son of man will send forth his angels, and they will collect out from his kingdom all things that cause stumbling and persons who are doing lawlessness, and they will pitch them into the fiery furnace."—Matthew 13:41, 42.

Thus, angels are far from what many people may imagine. The German religion author Dr. Manfred Barthel stated: "If we want to imagine the angels of the Lord as the authors of the Old Testament saw them, first we will have to forget the dimpled cherubs . . . that decorate our greeting cards."—*What the Bible Really Says*.

How Do Angels Affect You?

However, the question remains: What are the angels doing today? Are they affecting us right now? Yes, they certainly are!

Recall that in his prophecy concerning "the conclusion of the system of things" Jesus foretold: "When the Son of man arrives in his glory [assuming Kingdom power], and *all the angels with him*, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another."—Matthew 24:3; 25:31, 32.

How will this separation of people be accomplished? Jesus foretold: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) Yes, God uses his people on earth to do this global preaching work.

God's Kingdom is the government that will bring the only solution to mankind's problems. Today, the message about it is being proclaimed throughout the world by more than three million of Jehovah's Witnesses, who have angels backing them up. "That is how it will be in the conclusion of the system of things: the angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous."—Matthew 13:49.

This angel-directed preaching work today receives a mixed reaction from the people. Some say they are too busy to listen or simply refuse to do so. Others are hesitant or indecisive. Yet, many honest-hearted ones, concerned about their future, have willingly responded. How?

In 208 lands, Jehovah's Witnesses are conducting home Bible studies with millions of people who are "conscious of their spiritual need" and who are 'hungering for righteousness.' (Matthew 5:3, 6) Many experiences show that angels often direct God's servants to contact such honest-hearted persons with the message of salvation. Revelation 14:6 symbolically describes an "angel flying in midheaven" having "everlasting good news to declare

as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth.” That is certainly happening right now! How will this affect your future?

Angels in Your Future

The Bible clearly identifies our times as “the last days” of this present system. (2 Timothy 3:1-5) The Bible also informs us that angels are now “standing upon the four corners of the earth, holding tight the four winds.” (Revelation 7:1) What does this symbolism mean?

Being at the “corners” of the earth, the angels are in position to loose destructive “winds” from all directions. No area of the earth will be spared, which will mean “harm,” or destruction, for this wicked system and all its supporters. God’s angels are thus described as ready to go into action when the signal is given!—Revelation 7:3; 19:11-21.

The destructive “harm,” though, is to be on only those who do not respond to the angelically backed message now being preached earth wide. It will not harm those who are searching for God and who listen to the Kingdom message. They will be preserved, as God’s Word says: “Seek Jehovah, all you meek ones of the earth . . . Seek righteousness, seek meekness. Probably you may be concealed in the day of Jehovah’s anger.”—Zephaniah 2:3.

What will then be the lot of such “meek



ones”? Psalm 37:11 says: “The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.” For how long? “The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside *forever* upon it.” (Psalm 37:29) That means that everlasting life will be possible on an earth that is to be transformed into a paradise, as Jesus indicated.—Luke 23:43.

So, then, the question you need to ask is: ‘What will be my future?’ The answer depends on how you react to angelic direction. Will you listen and respond when you are presented with the message that they are backing? If you do, you will be among those who can look forward with confidence to the future, having God’s sure promise: “The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.”—1 John 2:17.

Who Really Is Jesus?

WHEN the boat carrying Jesus and his disciples puts in at Bethsaida, the people bring a blind man to him and beg that he touch the man and heal him. Jesus leads the man by the hand outside the village and, after spitting on his eyes, asks: "Do you see anything?"

"I see men," the man answers, "because I observe what seem to be trees, but they are walking about." Laying his hands on the man's eyes, Jesus restores his sight so that he sees clearly. Jesus then sends the man home with the instruction not to enter into the city.

Jesus now leaves with his disciples for the village of Caesarea Philippi, in the extreme north of Palestine. It is a long ascent covering about 30 miles to the beautiful location of Caesarea Philippi, some 1,150 feet above sea level. The trip probably takes a couple of days.

On the way, Jesus goes off by himself to pray. Only about nine or ten months remain before his death, and he is concerned about his disciples. Many have already left off following him. Others are apparently confused and disappointed because he rejected the people's efforts to make him king and because he did not, when challenged by his enemies, provide a sign from heaven to prove his kingship. What do his apostles believe about his identity? When they come over to where he is praying, Jesus inquires: "Who are the crowds saying that I am?"

"Some say John the Baptist," they answer, "others Elijah, still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Yes, they think Jesus is one of these men raised from the dead!

"You, though, who do you say I am?" Jesus asks.

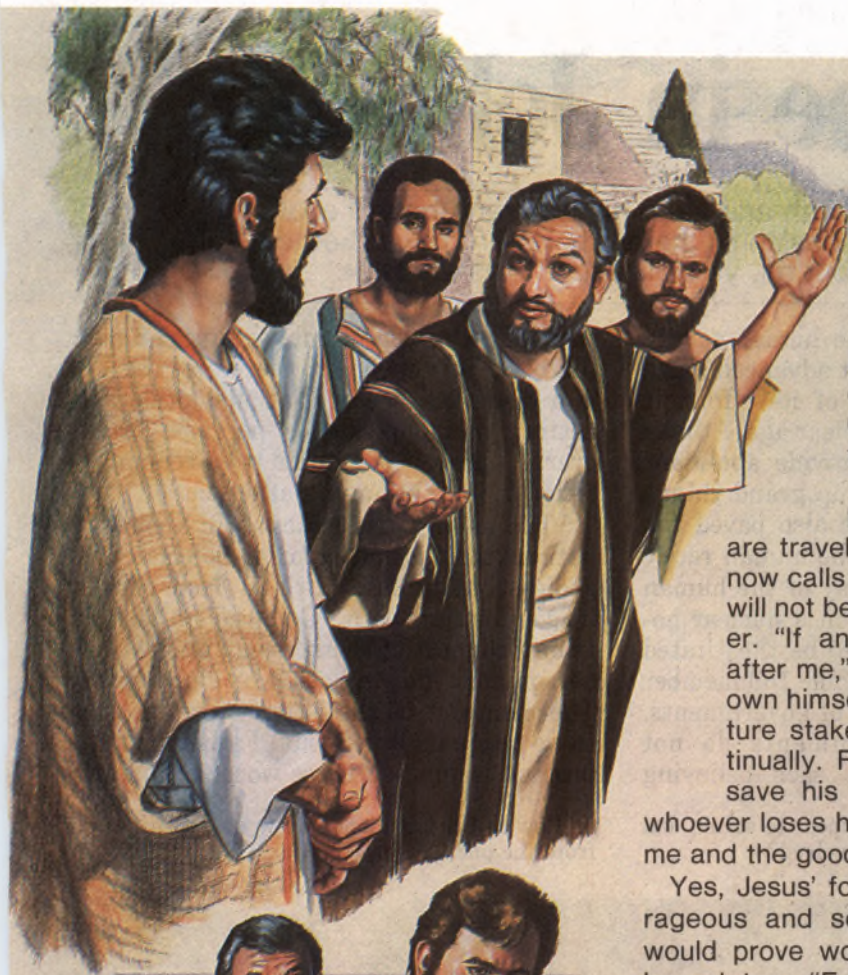
Peter quickly responds: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

After expressing approval of Peter's response, Jesus says: "I say to you, You are Peter, and on this rock-mass I will build my congregation, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it." Here Jesus first announces that he will build a congregation and that even death will not hold its members captive after their faithful course on earth. Then he tells Peter: "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens."

Jesus thus reveals that Peter is to receive special privileges. No, Peter is not given first place among the apostles, nor is he made the foundation of the congregation. Jesus himself is the Rock-mass upon which his congregation will be built. But Peter is to be given three keys with which to open, as it were, the opportunity for groups of people to enter the Kingdom of the heavens.

Peter used the first key at Pentecost 33 C.E. when he showed repentant Jews what they must do to be saved. He used the second shortly afterward when he opened to believing Samaritans the opportunity to enter God's Kingdom. Then, in 36 C.E. he used the third key by opening to uncircumcised Gentiles, Cornelius and his friends, the same opportunity.

Jesus continues his discussion with his apostles. He disappoints them by telling of the sufferings and death that he will soon face in Jerusalem. Failing to understand that Jesus will be resurrected to heavenly life, Peter takes Jesus aside. "Be kind to yourself, Lord," he says. "You will not have this destiny at all." Turning his back, Jesus answers: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stum-



bling block to me, because you think, not God's thoughts, but those of men."

Evidently, others besides the apostles are traveling with Jesus, so he now calls them to explain that it will not be easy to be his follower. "If anyone wants to come after me," he says, "let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and follow me continually. For whoever wants to save his soul will lose it; but whoever loses his soul for the sake of me and the good news will save it."

Yes, Jesus' followers must be courageous and self-sacrificing if they would prove worthy of his favor, as he relates: "For whoever becomes ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him when he arrives in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." **Mark 8: 22-38; Matthew 16:13-28; Luke 9: 18-27.**

- ♦ Why is Jesus concerned about his disciples?
- ♦ What views as to Jesus' identity do people have?
- ♦ What keys were given to Peter, and how were they used?
- ♦ What correction did Peter receive, and why?



Hope in Jehovah

"Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."—PSALM 37:34.

INTELLECTUALLY, the human family has attained to its most advanced stage of development. Because of its effort, it has finally reached the nuclear age. Atomic power appears able to provide abundant energy and thus to open up grand things globally. Ironically, it has also paved the way for extreme hurt to the human race.

² What stands in the way of the human family's destroying itself in a nuclear holocaust? It could appear to be the United Nations, which boasts of some 159 member nations with many forms of governments. Politically, these governments do not agree with one another, each believing

1, 2. Where does mankind appear to stand, and how is the United Nations involved?

that its own form of rule is superior, yes, the best. Within itself, therefore, the UN is a discordant body. National pride and desire for independence pervade. Moreover, a number of nations have renounced belief in God, becoming atheistic.

³ The name Christendom still applies to nations that do not want to be classed as godless but profess faith in Jesus Christ in conjunction with "God the Father" in triune connection with Jesus and with a personified "holy ghost," or holy spirit. The members of the Trinity are asserted to be coequal. But Jesus' Father had the prophet Isaiah pen these words of identifi-

3. How is Christendom's view of God different from the one God himself has?

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.



As sheep follow their shepherd, so David looked to and hoped in Jehovah

cation: "I am Jehovah. That is my name; and to no one else shall I give my own glory, neither my praise to graven images." (Isaiah 42:8) This Jehovah, or Yahweh (*The Jerusalem Bible*), has made an incomparable historical record for himself.

⁴ In no way to its credit, the United Nations has abstained from rendering to God's name due honor and recognition. It does not encourage mankind, now facing its most desperate plight, to hope in the bearer of that name. Yet, that One is rightly styled "the God of hope," seeing that he has laid the basis for the only valid hope that humankind may now entertain. (Romans 15:13, *King James Version*) The hope that he gives has strengthened and sustained many men and women.

Early On—Hope!

⁵ The basis for entertaining that hope was laid early in the history of the human family. Yes, it was laid immediately prior to the ejection of our first parents from their Edenic garden home in the Middle East. The record written in the Hebrew language about that garden, or Paradise, is no fable, no myth of peoples who veered away from worshiping their Creator.—Genesis 2:7-3:24.

⁶ More than 4,000 years later, the Christian apostle Paul was inspired to write: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned." (Romans 5:12) In another of his writings, he identified the one guilty man: "As in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22) A physician named Luke, in the 3rd chapter of his Gospel, traced Jesus' lineage all the way back to Adam, who,

before being expelled from Eden, heard Jehovah's message of hope.—Luke 3:23-38.

⁷ Naturally, you should want to know the content of that message. But before reading it, take note of the fact that for a long time Jehovah has been a hope giver. In the beginning Adam was God's earthly son, and God permitted him to produce offspring. If you foresaw a grim situation, you might want to encourage or give hope to your offspring. God did something similar. After Adam heard God's words of condemnation pronounced upon him personally, he heard words of hope for his descendants.

⁸ What were those words from this hope-instilling God? To a "serpent" involved in Adam's sin, God said: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed [offspring]. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Genesis 3:14, 15) You might wonder how those words could be said to raise up hope. First, we learn that "the serpent" was to have his head bruised.

⁹ In Revelation 12:9 it is written: "So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him." Yes, "the serpent" involved in Eden was none other than the wicked spirit creature known as Satan the Devil. Not only did that symbolic serpent come to have angels in heaven but he has had a "seed" down here on earth, a "seed" that in due time will be crushed out of existence with him.

7. What encouraging thing did God do while Adam was yet alive?

8. How did Genesis 3:15 provide a basis for hope?

9. Who was "the serpent" referred to at Genesis 3:14, 15?

4. The United Nations is diverting mankind from what?

5. When was the basis for hope laid?

6. How did mankind come to need hope?

¹⁰ Confirming this identification of the Devil as being “the serpent” behind the downfall of our original parents, Jesus Christ said to Jewish religious leaders in the first century: “You are from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father. That one was a manslayer when he began, and he did not stand fast in the truth . . . When he speaks the lie, he speaks according to his own disposition, because he is a liar and the father of the lie.” (John 8:44) Jesus also called those religious opposers “offspring of vipers.”—Matthew 12:34; 23:33.

Hope Kept Alive

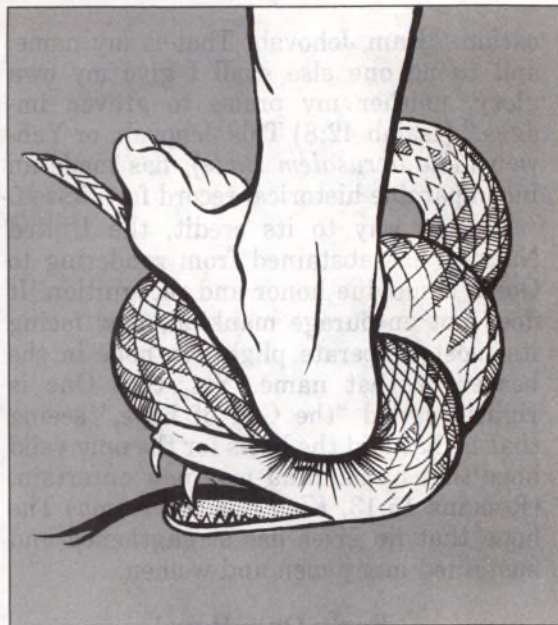
¹¹ The divine promise of the bruising of the head of the symbolic serpent actually set a heartwarming hope before all the human family that was yet to come into existence. We can see why by examining other aspects of Genesis 3:15. The “seed” of the woman is mentioned. The identity of that “seed” was long left shrouded in mystery. But it was clear that Jehovah God would put that yet unidentified “seed” at enmity with the symbolic serpent and its anti-God “seed.” Victory was promised, yes, guaranteed, for the “seed” of “the woman”! Its victory was set as a hope before mankind. So the members of the human family could hope for the coming of that “seed” of “the woman.”

¹² Over the centuries, God revealed that this “seed” was his only-begotten Son, who was sent to earth to become the Messiah and to offer his life as a ransom sacrifice. (Genesis 22:17, 18; Galatians 3:16; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 5:9, 10) For this reason the hope of Jehovah’s Witnesses does not rest

10. How did Jesus confirm the identification of “the serpent”?

11. What additional reason for hope did Genesis 3:15 provide?

12. In time, what more was revealed about the “seed” of “the woman”?



upon the United Nations. It rests on a living Jesus Christ, Chief Spokesman of Jehovah God. We can be confident that Christ is living, since he rose from the dead to be seated at the right hand of Jehovah in heaven. As Paul says: “If in this life only [which life includes our 20th century] we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. However, now Christ has been raised up from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death.” (1 Corinthians 15:19, 20) As has often been Biblically established in the pages of this magazine, Jesus Christ is today installed as heavenly King.—Revelation 11:15.

¹³ Of course, Jesus has not replaced Jehovah as the hope of mankind. Psalm 37:34 still remains applicable: “Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it.” It is still necessary to keep hoping

13, 14. Where do Jehovah’s Witnesses place their hope, and what do they do about it?

in Jehovah and to encourage all peoples to leave off from hoping in man-made institutions.

¹⁴ In harmony with this fact, Jehovah's Witnesses are active in 208 lands, preaching the Kingdom good news. They cannot be stopped from doing so. Political institutions, aided and abetted by religious organizations, are without divine right in trying to stop them. We can continue to be witnesses of Jehovah and to hope in him, as did David of Bethlehem, who wrote:

¹⁵ "Jehovah is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: He guideth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou hast anointed my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah for ever."—Psalm 23, *American Standard Version*.

¹⁶ King David was Jehovah's spiritual shepherd for the tribes of ancient Israel, and he paved the way for Jerusalem to be the nation's capital, where his son Solomon reigned for 40 years. With good reason, Jesus Christ was spoken of as the "son of David." (Luke 1:31; 18:39; 20:41) If David hoped in Jehovah God, his earthly descendant Jesus Christ would do similarly. And he did.

¹⁷ As evidence that David's most famous earthly descendant, Jesus Christ, followed

15. What sort of hope did King David have in Jehovah?

16. Why can it be said that Jesus had the same outlook as David had?

17. What evidence is there that Jesus hoped in Jehovah?

the counsel of Psalm 37:34 when breathing his last on the torture stake, Jesus said: "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit." (Luke 23:46) He was quoting and fulfilling David's words at Psalm 31:5, addressed to God: "Into your hand I entrust my spirit." Jesus' hope was not disappointed, any more than was that of King David. Christ was resurrected from the dead on the third day. Forty days later he returned to his heavenly Father. At the end of the Gentile Times in 1914, Jehovah exalted his Son to become Ruler of the earth.

A Time for Hope Now

¹⁸ Today, as the new year 6014 A.M. (in the Year of the World) carries the human family forward into the future, what hope can be entertained for the human family? That question is now most appropriate because we are nearly 1,900 years into the post-Bible era. It has been a long time since David wrote Psalm 37:34.

¹⁹ Jehovah God, the Almighty God who resurrected Jesus from the dead, has a far grander role for him than that conjured up by shortsighted men. By resurrecting and exalting his only-begotten Son to his right hand in the heavens, Jehovah God has added reason for us to look to Him with

18. Why is today an appropriate time for hope?

19. Jehovah did what for Jesus, giving us hope?

In Our Next Issue

■ Who Are the True Evangelizers?

■ The Last Days
—A Time of Harvest

■ Ancient Coins Testify to
Prophetic Truth

unfailing hope, our ultimate hope. It can mean our everlasting life in happiness, just as the inspired writer Paul says: "We [are] saved in this hope."—Romans 8:24.

²⁰ The apostle goes on to say: "But hope that is seen is not hope, for when a man sees a thing, does he hope for it? But if we hope for what we do not see, we keep on waiting for it with endurance." (Romans 8:24, 25) And so that original hope still lives on, yes, nears a glorious fulfillment upon the human race. (2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:4, 5) For the very reason that it is a hope for all mankind, it deserves to be made known to all. This is the idea of our "God of hope."

²¹ Now of all times is his time for this idea to be carried out. Even in our era when some nations of the UN have achieved scientific mastery of the very nucleus of all matter, the leaders of these governments do not feel the need to leave the solving of problems to some higher intelligence.—Compare Genesis 11:6.

²² As never before, popular religion is on the defensive, with its back against the wall. Its divisive influence must be done away with. The Bible shows that the ruling

20. Why can we say that Jehovah is still "the God of hope"?

21, 22. What can we expect the nations to do in the near future?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ Why is the hope of the nations deceptive?
- ☐ How did God provide a basis for hope in Genesis 3:15?
- ☐ What was Jesus' position regarding Psalm 37:34?
- ☐ Why do we now have reason for hope?

elements will assert their superiority and divorce themselves from the parasitical religions that have been trying for so long a time to suck the worldly system of things for all that they can get. It is no surprise, then, that the political element will take this course. Their getting away safely with this attack on religion will indicate, from their point of view, that there is no God who deserves to be worshiped and served. The prophetic indication is that they will then turn against the witnesses of God, who remain. They will look for the easiest of victories over Jehovah's Witnesses as the finale of their anti-God campaign.—Revelation 17:12-17; Ezekiel 38:10-23.

²³ However, they will finally get to know the shameful defeat that must come to one who dares to enter into conflict with Jehovah of armies, who has never lost a battle. That will make it unmistakably clear that they have been serving the ends of the chief opponent of the one true God, namely, "the serpent," Satan, "the god of this system of things."—2 Corinthians 4:4.

²⁴ What a humiliation this will mean for them! What they had hoped to demonstrate will prove to be the height of effrontery, provoking the very God of heaven and earth to righteous indignation. To puny mankind he could say: "For the thoughts of you people are not my thoughts, nor are my ways your ways," is the utterance of Jehovah. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For just as the pouring rain descends, and the snow, from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout, and seed is actually given to the sower and

23, 24. How will Jehovah react to the nations' attack on his people?

bread to the eater, so my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it.'”—Isaiah 55:8-11.

²⁵ This Creator of man has put into the human heart keen sensitiveness, such as he himself has. “For this is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Following after the

25. Why, then, do we now have good reason to look to Jehovah as our “God of hope”?

glory he has sent me to the nations that were despoiling you people; for he that is touching you is touching my eyeball.’” (Zechariah 2:8) So, then, Jehovah’s Witnesses will have to hope in Jehovah. He will measure up to that hope to the most beautiful embellishment of his universal sovereignty. He will prove beyond all further dispute that he is the most high, almighty, eternal God, who has lived up to the highest hopes of his creatures in all heaven and earth. Hallelujah!—Psalm 150:6.

Honoring the God of Hope

“The utterance of Jehovah is: . . . ‘Those honoring me I shall honor, and those despising me will be of little account.’”—1 SAMUEL 2:30.

IN VIEW of the prospects that we can have, based on the Bible, it is altogether fitting and reasonable for us to honor “the God of hope,” “the God who gives hope.” (Romans 15:13, *King James Version*; *New World Translation*) Why is that? How can we, who are but tiny, imperfect humans, honor the Grand Creator of the entire universe? And will he honor us in return?

² We can learn from what occurred with Jesus. None of us would deny that Jesus always wanted his Father to be honored,

1. What reason do we have for wanting to honor Jehovah? (1 Timothy 1:17; Revelation 4:11)
2. How did Jesus feel about honor being given to God?

glorified. (John 5:23; 12:28; 15:8) In fact, Jesus criticized Pharisees and scribes who ‘honored God with their lips but whose hearts were far removed from him.’ Please note, their not honoring God involved inappropriate motives and actions. (Matthew 15:7-9) Can we, though, say that in Christ’s honoring God, his hope was involved? And how did Jehovah respond to being thus honored?

³ Jesus took to heart David’s words at Psalm 16:10: “You will not leave my soul in Sheol. You will not allow your loyal one to

3. How do we know that Jesus hoped in Jehovah?

see the pit." Because he had this hope of being resurrected, Jesus Christ could say electrifying words to an evildoer impaled beside him: "Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:39-43) That evildoer soon died, so he was not able three days later to witness the confirmation of Jesus' hope of being raised. But an eyewitness reported: "This Jesus God resurrected, of which fact we are all witnesses." (Acts 2:31, 32) It was a fact.

⁴ Many of the common people to whom Jesus ministered knew that he merited esteem, or honor. (Luke 4:15; 19:36-38; 2 Peter 1:17, 18) Then he died like a criminal. Did that change things? No, for Jesus had the approval of the God in whom he hoped. Thus, Jehovah brought him back to life. The fact that "the God of hope" raised his Son to life and clothed him with immortality in the spirit realm proves that the Father was continuing to honor his Son. Paul says: "We behold Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honor for having suffered death, that he by God's undeserved kindness might taste death for every man." —Hebrews 2:7, 9; Philippians 2:9-11.

⁵ Jesus, who had honored Jehovah, mentioned one special way in which the Father honored him. In an appearance to his faithful apostles, he said: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth. Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit . . . Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:18-20) So the Father additionally honored the Son by giving him unique authority. This was to be used in behalf of humans who would do a work that brings honor to the One whom

4. What honor did Jesus merit and receive? (Revelation 5:12)

5. In what special way was Jesus honored, resulting in what added honor to God?

Jesus strives to honor. Does this mean, then, that we imperfect humans can in some way honor the Father and be honored by him in return?

Humans Honor God

⁶ Most humans hardly think of honoring God first, for they are more interested in gaining honor for themselves. Some might even say that it is normal for us to want to be honored. There is a measure of truth in this, as it is normal to desire a good reputation, with a measure of honor from this. (1 Timothy 3:2, 13; 5:17; Acts 28:10) Yet, the desire for honor from men can easily be exaggerated. This is evident by the many who will chase fame at any cost or who will do anything to save face.

⁷ When you think about it, even the greatest honor from men is fleeting, for all soon die. Oh, the memory of a few heroes may be honored for a while, but most of the dead are forgotten. How many people know their great-grandparents' names or know who were the leaders of their nation a hundred years ago? Actually, whether someone lived or did not live does not change matters. He is but a minute speck of dust on the scales of time, a tiny drop in the stream of life. And even if he is honored briefly after death, he is unaware of it. (Job 14:21; 2 Chronicles 32:33; Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 49:12, 20) The only thing that can make a difference is having the hope that God provides, honoring him, and being honored in return. We can see this in the lives of two contemporaries in ancient Israel.

⁸ Eli was one. He served God in the unique position of high priest for 40 years

6. Is it appropriate to desire to be honored, but what danger exists in this? (Luke 14:10)

7. Why is being honored by men of such limited value?

8. Eli fell into what trap involving the giving of honor?

and was also privileged to judge Israel. (1 Samuel 1:3, 9; 4:18) Nonetheless, in time he showed weakness concerning his sons Hophni and Phinehas. Though being priests, they abused their office by stealing parts of the sacrifices and by engaging in immoral sex. When their father did little more than mildly criticize them, God declared that Eli 'kept honoring his sons more than me.' Jehovah had promised to continue the Aaronic priesthood, but he would cut off the house of Eli from the high-priestly office. Why? God explained: "Those honoring me I shall honor, and those despising me will be of little account."—1 Samuel 2:12-17, 29-36; 3:12-14.

⁹ In contrast there was Samuel. You likely know that his parents brought him at a young age to serve at the tabernacle in Shiloh. One night Jehovah spoke to the lad. You may enjoy reading this account at 1 Samuel 3:1-14, imagining this boy's being awakened, not by a thunderous roar, but by a low voice that he mistook for elderly Eli's. Then think how intimidating it must have been for young Samuel to have to tell the aged high priest of God's determination to punish the house of Eli. Yet Samuel did it; he honored God by obedience.—1 Samuel 3:18, 19.

9. How was Samuel given the opportunity to honor Jehovah?



¹⁰ Samuel honored Jehovah for years as a prophet, and God honored him. Note this at 1 Samuel 7:7-13. Jehovah quickly responded to Samuel's prayer for help to defeat the Philistines. Would you not feel honored to have such divine recognition? When Samuel's sons did not follow his lead, God did not reject him as he had rejected Eli. This evidently was because Samuel did all he could to honor God. Further showing this, Samuel disapproved of the people's request for a human king. (1 Samuel 8:6, 7) God used Samuel to anoint both Saul and David. At Samuel's death, Israel honored him by mourning. More importantly, however, God honored him by mentioning him in the Bible among men of faith who will be blessed with a resurrection and the good

10. In response to being honored, how did God honor Samuel?

things God has in store for them. (Psalm 99:6; Jeremiah 15:1; Hebrews 11:6, 16, 32, 39, 40) Does this not show that honoring "the God of hope" is of great value?

Will You Honor "the God of Hope"?

¹¹ The cases of Jesus and Samuel, to give just two Bible examples, establish that humans can put honoring their "God of hope" as the highest priority in life. And those two cases show that by our doing so we can fittingly seek and receive honor from God. But how can you do this with reasonable assurance that you will please God, will be honored by him, and will attain your Bible-based hope?

¹² Having a genuine, respectful fear of displeasing God is one way. (Malachi 1:6) Likely we readily agree with that statement. Yet, remember Eli's sons. If you had asked them whether they wanted to honor God by respectfully fearing him, most likely they would have said yes. The problem comes in translating into the reality of actions in everyday life our desire to honor God by fearing him.

¹³ If we are faced with a tempting situation in which we could steal or engage in some sexual impropriety without its becoming general knowledge, would our desire to honor God affect our actions? We ought to cultivate the feeling, 'Even if the wrongdoing could remain hidden, my very giving in to such sin is a dishonor to "the God of hope" whose name I bear.' And the fact is that the wrong will not permanently remain hidden, any more than did the things that Eli's sons committed. This is borne out by Paul's words concerning "God's righteous judgment": "He will render to each one according to his works:

11, 12. What do we need to consider about honoring Jehovah, and what is one way for us to do that?

13. Illustrate how a desire to honor God by fearing him can help us.

everlasting life to those who are seeking glory and honor and incorruptibleness by endurance in work that is good; however, for those who are contentious and who disobey the truth but obey unrighteousness there will be wrath and anger."—Romans 2:5-8.

¹⁴ On the other hand, Paul mentions participation "in work that is good," which honors God and results in "glory and honor" from him. A primary work of this kind today is what Jesus mentioned at Matthew 28:19, 20: 'Make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all the things that I have commanded you.' Earth wide, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses are active in this God-honoring preaching and teaching work. Many are even exerting themselves to be full-time ministers as pioneers, either on a permanent basis or during vacation from secular work or school. With this in mind, each one of us can beneficially consider how he stands as to this work. You might ask, for example, 'Am I honoring "the God of hope" by having a full share in the preaching work?'

¹⁵ Some Christians who for years were active preachers have gradually slowed down. They have settled into a pattern of having only a small or infrequent share in the important disciple-making work. We do not mean individuals who have physical limitations and slow down because of the effects of old age. Quite aside from such, a slowing down is seen among certain Witnesses of various ages. Interestingly, Paul was not referring to a certain age group when he warned Christians against 'tiring out.' Rather, no matter what a person's age, the crux of the matter is that regular

14. What is another way in which we can honor God, and what might we ask ourselves?

15. What has happened to some Christians in regard to honoring Jehovah through the public ministry?

participation in the ministry requires effort. As evidently occurred in Paul's day, some today are reasoning, 'I've done my share over the years, so now newer Christians can exert themselves.'—Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 12:3.

¹⁶ Those who have been affected in this way are certainly in the minority, but you might ask, 'Do I frankly recognize any such tendency in my case? How does my share in the ministry compare with that in the past?' Whether any slowing down has occurred or not, we all should bear in mind that our "God of hope" promises to provide "glory and honor and peace for everyone who works what is good." (Romans 2:10) Paul used a Greek word that means "to work something, produce, perform." How vital it is that we avoid what befell the Pharisees and scribes, who simply honored God by a form of lip service! (Mark 7:6; Revelation 2:10) Conversely, when from the heart we actively share in the public ministry, we confirm to ourselves and to others that we do have a real hope. We honor our Creator and Life-giver. And we come in line to be honored by him, now and endlessly.—Luke 10:1, 2, 17-20.

With Our Valuable Things

¹⁷ As to one other way in which we can honor our "God of hope," Proverbs 3:9 says: "Honor Jehovah with your valuable things and with the firstfruits of all your produce." Spurrell renders this verse: "Glorify Jehovah with thy wealth, and with the best of all thine increase."—*A Translation of the Old Testament Scriptures from the Original Hebrew*.

¹⁸ Since various clergymen have become notorious for their boundless greed and

opulent life-style, many individuals hesitate to give to churches and religious organizations whose aim clearly seems to be just the gaining of wealth. (Revelation 18:4-8) Such abuses, however, do not alter the validity of Proverbs 3:9. In accord with that inspired counsel, how can we use our "valuable things" to "honor Jehovah," our "God of hope"?

¹⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses find that the growing number of people responding to the Kingdom message requires the expanding of Kingdom Halls or the building of new ones. Here, then, is one way to "glorify Jehovah with thy wealth." Young and old have shared in doing this, such as by personally resolving to contribute toward the building funds. To hold to such secret resolves may take personal discipline or even some sacrifice, particularly if the planning and completing of a building project extends over a long period of time. (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7) Still, using funds in this way truly honors Jehovah, for the Kingdom Halls are places where Christians worship him and where they and their associates gain knowledge of God. Jesus' words at Matthew 6:3, 4 give us good reason to trust that God will honor those who have thus honored him.

²⁰ A word of caution, though: The Pharisees and scribes, who Jesus said were not putting foremost the honoring of God, made sure that they were the first ones to benefit from their wealth. So the counsel at Matthew 15:4-8 recommends that we submit to self-scrutiny as to 'honoring Jehovah with our valuable things.' (Jeremiah 17:9, 10) For example, a Christian who has become somewhat wealthy through his

16. Why might we benefit from self-examination in this regard?

17, 18. What is another way in which we can honor God, and why is reluctance to do so not valid?

19. Illustrate how some have applied Proverbs 3:9.

20. (a) Why is self-scrutiny in order in applying Proverbs 3:9? (b) What questions might we ask ourselves?

business might rationalize his continuing to work full-time so as to earn still more. He might reason, 'Others enter the pioneer ministry or move to serve where preachers are especially needed, but my special way to serve God is by earning more and then having plenty to donate.' His contributions may do much good. But he could well ask, 'Does my personal life-style reflect that using money in honoring God is my *primary* motive for earning more and more?' (Luke 12:16-19; compare Mark 12:41-44.) And, 'Could I arrange my affairs to have a greater personal share in the most important work for our day—declaring the good news?' In fact, no matter what our circumstances in life are, we can examine our motives and actions and ask, 'How can I more fully honor my Life-giver and "God of hope"?'

²¹ Jehovah will not disappoint us. What a delightful prospect it is that he might, now and on into the future, say about us

21. What prospect do we have if we honor Jehovah now?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ As to humans honoring Jehovah, what can we learn from Jesus' example?
- ☐ How did Eli and Samuel differ regarding honoring God?
- ☐ What are some ways in which you can increase the honor you bring to God, and what response may you receive?
- ☐ What future awaits those who put first the honoring of our "God of hope"?

what he said of faithful Israel: "Owing to the fact that you have been precious in my eyes, you have been considered honorable, and I myself have loved you"! (Isaiah 43:4) That same One promises "everlasting life to those who are seeking glory and honor." This promise he directs to those who endure "in work that is good." What a "God of hope"!

LETTERS ABOUT CONTRIBUTIONS

Here are some excerpts from letters received by the Brooklyn, New York, office of the Watch Tower Society:

"My name is Abijah. I am nine years old. I want to give you \$4 for the brothers working on the Kingdom Halls. They can use it for lumber or for a candy bar, I don't mind."—Oregon.

"You will find enclosed my personal check. I am past 96 years old and very hard of hearing, but I really enjoy saving my money for this. Yes, I know, I am driving a secondhand car, and I do not spend my winters in Florida or California. I can do such a little toward getting the good news of the Kingdom preached by knocking on doors. But by saving my money and sending some to you, I feel that I am still having a part in it."—Ohio.

"Thank you for everything you did for the Kingdom Hall. This money [\$5] is to help you with books and *The Watchtowers* for us to read. The money is from my piggybank. Thanks for the *School* brochure to tell us about drugs."

"Enclosed please find a check. Two hundred dollars of it is for the Kingdom Hall Building Fund. The rest is to be used any way you see fit to promote the preaching work."—Missouri.

Ignoring Warnings and Testing God

"Not even with the water up to their ankles did they want to escape."—*El País*, Colombia.

THAT headline from a Colombian daily newspaper highlighted one of the reasons for the terrible loss of life in the Armero avalanche disaster of November 1985. Dora Elisa Rada Esguerra, a telephone operator in Armero, alerted by the falling ash and overflowing river, decided to flee. Then she warned her fellow workers at the telephone exchange of the oncoming tragedy. She later explained: "They saw the water, that was . . . flowing strongly, very strongly, but even then they did not move." Dora escaped from the doomed city.

The other telephone operators died along with some 21,000 other victims in a torrent of volcanic mud, ice, and boulders that roared down from the volcano Nevado del Ruiz. Among those swept away were the mayor of the town and most of the local police force, which indicates that hardly anybody took the threat seriously—until it was too late.

Why Did They Not Flee?

There were signs and warnings of the impending disaster. Why did so many people in Armero ignore them? In the first place, official warnings

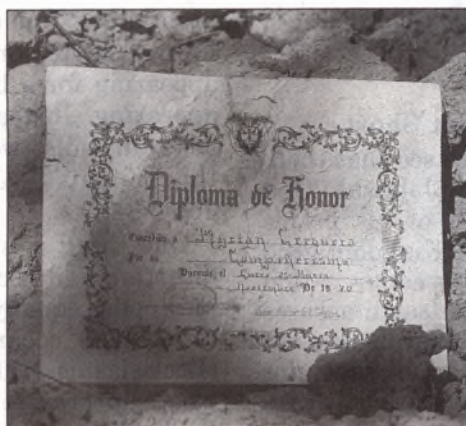
came late, when disaster was already striking the city. Prior to this, the people had been told to be calm, that there might be flooding but that it would be nothing serious. Instead, the city was wiped off the map by a vast wall of death that poured down the river Lagunilla.

Likely, some did not want to abandon their homes and their possessions, knowing that pillagers would soon sneak in and steal. This turned out to be a real threat. A few looters were shot by the army. Some who survived the disaster came back to their flooded homes to find that locks had been shot off the doors and valuables had been stolen. But the majority of the townspeople never lived long enough to come back to their homes. And in most cases, there were no homes to come back to.

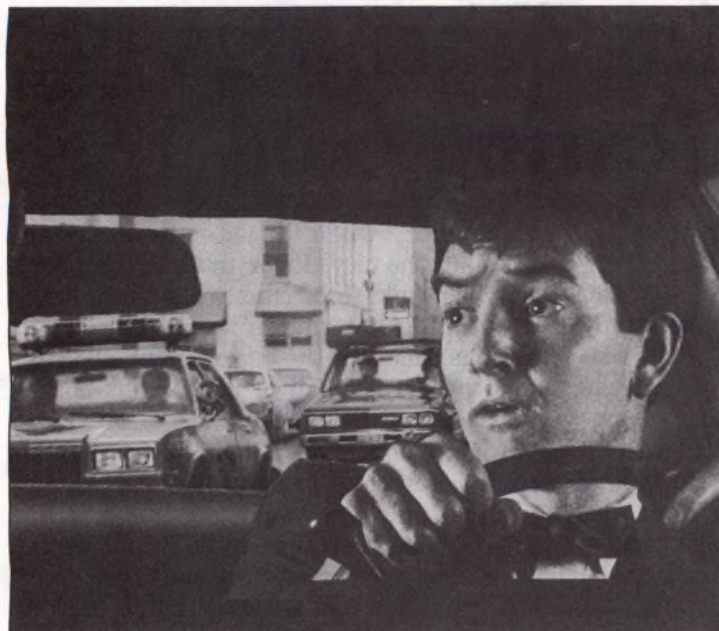
Perhaps others felt that God or the Virgin Mary would intervene in their behalf.

Yet, is it reasonable to expect God to intervene today in behalf of certain persons when natural disasters occur? Why should some be saved by divine intervention and others, in similar conditions, be allowed to perish?

Is there a solid basis for a person to believe that he can lead a charmed life with special protection from God? For example, can a car driver trust in



A diploma found in the ruins of Armero is a grim reminder that thousands did not heed warnings



Do your driving habits reflect Christian soundness of mind?

his “guardian angel” or favorite “saint”? Too many sincere Catholics with “Saint” Christopher medallions have died in car accidents for that to be credible. Or should a Christian believe that he has God’s special protection when traveling in an airplane? What about special protection when sharing in some dangerous sport? Is it reasonable to test God in those circumstances?

Jehovah’s Hand Not Short

The Scriptures help us to see that there are situations in which Jehovah God might intervene in behalf of his people when the preaching of the Kingdom good news is affected or when his congregation is threatened. The prophet Isaiah assures us: “Look! The hand of Jehovah has not become too short that it cannot save, nor has his ear become too heavy that it cannot hear.”—Isaiah 59:1.

The Bible gives clear examples of Jehovah’s protecting hand in relation to the

apostles. King Herod, out to gain favor with the Jews, had Peter imprisoned under heavy guard. The congregation in Jerusalem prayed intensely in his behalf. What happened? Jehovah’s angel came and released Peter from jail. Even Peter was astonished by what was happening. Eventually he realized what was going on and said: “Now I actually know that Jehovah sent his angel forth and delivered me out of Herod’s hand.”

—Acts 12:1-11.

The same account tells us that Herod had already done away with the apostle James, the brother of John.

Jehovah allowed that martyrdom to take place. Therefore, it is evident that while Jehovah can give protection and deliverance, he may permit events to take their course, and so allow some of his devoted servants to prove their integrity even to death. The words of James, the half brother of Jesus, are appropriate: “You do not know what your life will be tomorrow. For you are a mist appearing for a little while and then disappearing. Instead, you ought to say: ‘If Jehovah wills, we shall live and also do this or that.’”—James 4:14, 15; compare Job 2:3-5.

One thing is sure, in times of natural disasters and accidents, the Bible principle applies equally to all people: “Time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:11) And while it is appropriate to pray for help and protection in times of persecution, we have to recognize that “persecution is inevitable for those who are determined to live really Chris-

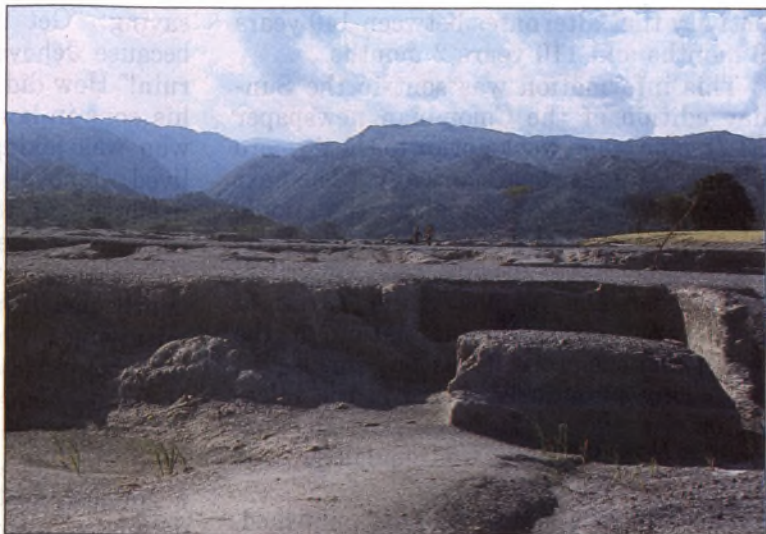
tian lives.”—2 Timothy 3:12, *Phillips*.

A Spirit of a Sound Mind

While it is true that in times past Jehovah has acted to protect his people, as when he saved Israel from Egypt and from Pharaoh's armies, it would be presumptuous to think that God must protect each Christian from the results of 'time and unforeseen circumstance' or from the consequences of his own imprudence. Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome, some of whom perhaps died later in the arena as martyrs, has a bearing on this: "I tell everyone there among you not to think more of himself than it is necessary to think; but to think so as to have a sound mind, each one as God has distributed to him a measure of faith." (Romans 12:3) J. B. Phillips' translation states: "Try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities."

The counsel expressed here has equal application today, although in a different context. If a Christian imagines that he can drive carelessly or under the influence of alcohol and get away with it because he has God's protection, does that display "a sound mind"? Does the Christian have 'a sane estimate of his capabilities'? Also, if he puts his fellowman in jeopardy, does he really 'love his neighbor as himself'?—Matthew 22:39.

Now let us apply the spirit of a sound mind to the situation where man has established communities in earthquake-prone areas or where active volcanoes represent a latent but real threat. A good



*The now-desolated site where Armero stood.
Over 20,000 persons perished here*

example is the already cited area around the Nevado del Ruiz volcano in Colombia. According to the Colombian daily *El Pais*, architect César Zárate prepared a study in 1982 that indicated that the Lagunilla River had flooded Armero in the past and that the city was still without adequate defenses. It was also known that the Nevado del Ruiz volcano had erupted six times since 1570. According to historical sources, the volcano has a regular cycle of



*This demolished automobile epitomizes the
disaster that struck Armero*

activity that alternates between 140 years 9 months and 110 years 2 months.

This information was sent to the Sunday edition of the Colombian newspaper *El Tiempo* some weeks prior to the Armero disaster. It stated categorically: "The next flood . . . will take place about the middle of November of this year. The characteristic signs have already been observed: smoke from the 'Arenas' crater. A rain of ashes and gases. Contamination of the water and the crops. Nauseous smells. . . . A roaring sound originating in the volcano on September 11. Progressive thawing of the snowcap . . . Consequently, it is time to act."

However, the article was not published. Perhaps it was viewed as unnecessary calamity howling. *El Tiempo's* editors later put it down to "a lack of foresight, a lack of intuition, or the naive belief that nothing would happen."

Right on schedule, though, Nevado del Ruiz blew its top on the night of November 13, 1985. More than 20,000 people lost their lives in Armero, and there were thousands of victims from Chinchiná and other nearby towns. Among those who died in Armero were 41 of Jehovah's Witnesses and their associates. Some inadvisably had fled to the Kingdom Hall, which was on lower ground. They were swept away and entombed with it. Happily, other Witnesses were able to flee to higher ground and were saved.

Obviously, wisdom after the fact is easy. But at least lessons can be learned from those terrible events.

Ancient Warnings Ignored

The Bible offers examples of some who ignored timely warnings or thought 'it couldn't happen in their time' or in their area of the earth. One clear case is when Lot was warned to flee from Sodom and Gomorrah. He alerted his sons-in-law,

saying: "Get up! Get out of this place, because Jehovah is bringing the city to ruin!" How did they react? "In the eyes of his sons-in-law [Lot] seemed like a man who was joking." The "joke" was short-lived. Jehovah made it rain sulfur and fire upon the doomed, perverse cities. The sons-in-law died along with the immoral inhabitants of that region. Lot's wife evidently fled from Sodom with doubts and misgivings. She "began to look around from behind [Lot], and she became a pillar of salt."—Genesis 19:12-26.

Over 1,900 years ago, Jesus prophesied that ancient Jerusalem would undergo a terrible destruction. He gave specific details of events that would take place before the city's desolation, saying: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near." He added the warning: "Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her."—Luke 21:20-24.

When the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem in the year 66 C.E., the Christians in that city recognized the sign that Jesus had given. Then, with total conquest within his grasp, General Cestius Gallus inexplicably withdrew his troops. That was the opportunity the Christians were waiting for, and they fled to the other side of the Jordan. In 70 C.E. the Romans returned under General Titus and destroyed Jerusalem. Hundreds of thousands of Jews who stayed on in the doomed city died during the siege and the fighting.

True, in these cases divine warning was given. But the point is that only a few heeded the message and escaped. The majority took no note. They refused to take God's warning seriously.

In What Way Can We Rightly Test God?

Even with natural disasters, there are often warnings—the previous history of the area, recent signs, or scientific data—that indicate a strong possibility of danger within a certain time period. Perhaps an area is prone to flooding. Then a reasonable person must weigh all the factors to decide if a move to another district is necessary and viable. Of course, it is impossible to predict the time and place of every natural disaster. Still, the law of averages can be taken into account and also the margin for safety if the worst happens. But it is not reasonable to expect special protection from God. To do so would be to put God to the test in a way that is not licit or balanced.

However, in a different sense, Jehovah does invite us to test him. Back in the time of the prophet Malachi, Israel was wrongly testing God by presenting shoddy sacrifices on the altar. By their polluted bread and lame animal offerings, they showed that they despised Jehovah's table. Through Malachi, Jehovah invited them to turn around and rectify their course of action. "Bring all the tenth parts into the storehouse, that there may come to be food in my house; and test me out, please, in this respect," Jehovah of armies has said, 'whether I shall not open to you people the floodgates of the heavens

and actually empty out upon you a blessing until there is no more want.'"—Malachi 3:10.

Yes, in regard to spiritual blessings, we can "test," or prove, Jehovah's faithfulness. If we seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, then, as Jesus said, all 'other necessary things will be added to us.' Jesus also said: "Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you." If imperfect men give kind gifts to their children, "how much more so will your Father who is in the heavens give good things to those asking him [in accordance with his will]?"—Matthew 6:33; 7:7-11; 1 John 5:14.

At this very time, a warning is being given to the nations to the effect that soon Jehovah will initiate his act of retribution against all parts of Satan's system of things. (Revelation 16:14, 16; 18:20) Millions of prudent people are heeding this message preached by Jehovah's Witnesses and are separating themselves to the side of God's Kingdom rule. They are getting out of the corrupt political and religious alliance before it is too late. (Revelation 18:4) By so doing, they are preparing for everlasting life under Christ's rulership of our earth, which will be transformed into a paradise of justice and equity. Are you heeding this warning? —2 Peter 3:13; Titus 1:2.

Search for the Truth Rewarded

FINDING little satisfaction as a lay preacher in the Presbyterian Church, a gentleman started looking for God's true church. He drew up ten requirements that he felt the true church should have. He already had an accurate understanding of the unscripturalness of hellfire, immortality of the soul, and so forth. For 30 years he conducted this search. When contacted by one of Jehovah's Witnesses, he began firing his questions, such as: "Who is the little flock? Who are the 144,000 and the other sheep?" Getting satisfying answers, he agreed to a Bible study. After three months he said to the Witness: "Well, Brother, the true church of God is Jehovah's Witnesses." He is now 71 years of age and happy that he has found the true church after a 30-year search!

a House





Jehovah Builds



SATURDAY, March 21, 1987, was a day that the staff of the Watch Tower Society's South Africa branch will never forget. It was a historic occasion. The new complex at Roodekrans was dedicated—the culmination of six years of hard work. But the honor goes to Jehovah. As Solomon expressed it: "Unless Jehovah himself builds the house, it is to no avail that its builders have worked hard on it." —Psalm 127:1.

Let us briefly trace the growth of Jehovah's Witnesses in South Africa. In 1902 the first two local individuals started studying the Society's publications and preaching to others. In 1910 Will Johnston was directed by Brother Russell to open a one-man branch office in Durban. The next year one of the first African congregations was organized in nearby Ndwedwe. During the crucial year of 1914, the first convention was held in Durban and had an attendance of 50. The branch was moved to Cape Town in 1923, and the following year a simple press was put in use. The branch was moved to larger premises in 1933, but there was no Bethel Home.

Still another important move took place in 1952, to Elandsfontein—some 1,500 kilometers north of Cape Town and about 20 kilometers east of Johannesburg. It was the first of the buildings in South Africa that was actually designed by the Society, so it included ample space for printing as well as a Bethel Home, or residence. Meanwhile, the Kingdom work was opening up in several countries cared for by the South Africa branch. So the branch needed to be expanded in 1959, again in 1971, and yet again in 1978. Then there was no room for further expansion at that site.

The original two publishers in South Africa had increased to about 28,000. It was time to look for a new place, which

involved a long search. At last a fine farm of 87 hectares was found at Roodekrans, which is some 60 kilometers from Elandsfontein. Jehovah's guidance and help were very evident in the finding and purchasing of this lovely place.

Overcoming Problems

However, serious problems had to be overcome. The initial cost seemed huge, and special permits were needed to build a factory, offices, and a residence in a municipal area. An added complication was the desirability of having black Witnesses who were translators live there. It seemed miraculous how these obstacles were overcome, giving evidence that Jehovah was building the house. Another problem was a serious lack of artisans. But volunteer workers were quick to learn the various trades. This included sisters. One overseer remarked: "Refined young girls who don't fit on a building site became expert tilers. I've never seen better."

Construction work went slowly at first. Then volunteers flocked to Roodekrans—blacks, whites, Colored, and Indians. Brothers even came from other countries, such as New Zealand and the United States. This was very unusual in South Africa. "It's beautiful to see brothers and sisters working together, different nationalities and races from different backgrounds," said one volunteer. Many gave up good jobs or took long leaves to help with the construction at Roodekrans. They included experienced mechanics, an architect, an engineer, qualified draftsmen, and construction overseers. Much expensive machinery was donated or loaned.

How about the enormous cost involved? The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses made provision for a very substantial loan, and local Witnesses of all races and all ages contributed generously. A girl



near an attractive suburb, there is still wildlife present, such as guinea fowl and hares. Black eagles and jackals often pay a visit too. The residence building, strung along the lower slopes of the hills for some 360 meters, is of red brick. It has three stories, with beautiful views. In the center is a service area with a dining room, a kitchen, a laundry, and an infirmary. Nearby are the office block and a huge printery, which is roughly the size of Noah's ark. It houses the large four-color TKS offset press.

of six wrote: "I was saving this money to buy a doll, but I am sending it to you. I hope you can finish Roodekrans with this money. When I am big, I also want to go to Roodekrans and work there." A five-year-old Indian boy contributed his pocket money from the previous six months!

On weekends hundreds of additional Witnesses came to share in this vital project. Other volunteers came on a daily basis, often making real sacrifices and putting forth great effort to do so. Non-Witness visitors shook their heads in disbelief at seeing the massive, enthusiastic support. Many people living in the vicinity were deeply impressed. Local commercial firms vied for business at Roodekrans, and their representatives often commented on the atmosphere of peace and unity.

A Majestic Building in a Beautiful Setting

Rocky hills on the southern side of the construction site overlook a pleasant valley and stream. Although the property is

To the west of the residence building is a farming area and a large barn, which was used as the dining room and kitchen during the construction. Fields of grass and alfalfa provide fodder for a herd of milk cows. There are hundreds of protea shrubs on the hills behind the residence. In addition to existing tall eucalyptus trees, many new trees, colorful flower beds, and spacious lawns have been planted.

The Dedication Program

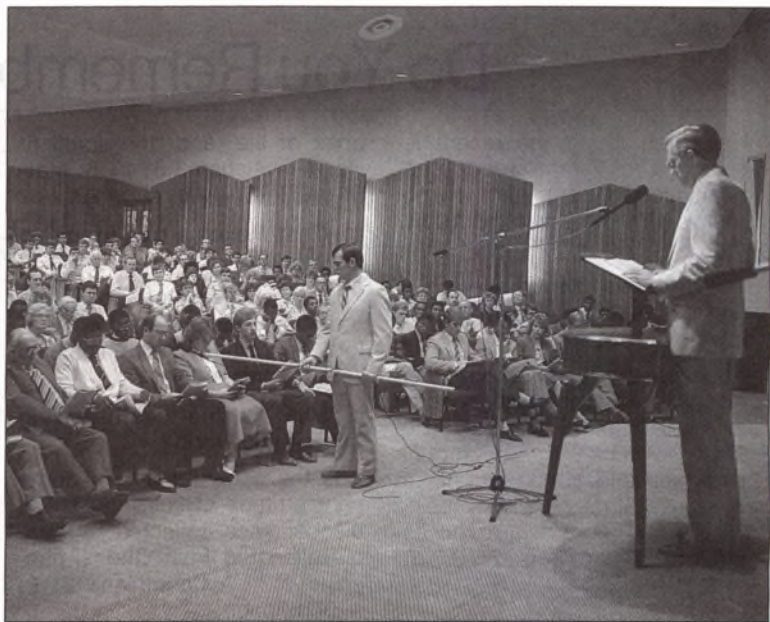
A crowd of about 4,000 gathered in an open space near the residence building for the dedication on Saturday afternoon, March 21, 1987. A temporary platform faced the hills, giving the effect of an amphitheater. The chairman, Brother R. F. Stow, read supportive messages from 17 countries. The most moving of these was from Maud Johnston, the wife of the first branch overseer in Durban. At 92 years of age, she is still serving in the Australia Bethel.

P. J. Wentzel, overseer of the Service

Department, was the first speaker, and he gave a brief summary of the history of Kingdom work in South Africa. He compared the attendance of 50 at the first assembly in 1914 with the attendance of 99,000 at the 1986 conventions. Next, J. R. Kikot, factory overseer, described the printing of literature in many languages and the work of over 50 translators. He mentioned also that in 1979 a large TKS press, a gift from the Japan branch, was installed, but it printed in only two colors. Recently, two more units, also a gift from Japan, were added to the press. As a result, *The Watchtower* of April 1, 1987, was printed in full color, to the delight of all.

C. F. Muller, the coordinator of the Branch Committee, described how Jehovah helped to provide the site, the funds, the experts, and the skilled workers. God's spirit also produced fine harmony among the various races. Though at one stage it seemed impossible to build a factory in a prime residential area and for blacks to live there, Jehovah opened the way, so he was the real Master Builder!

The next speaker was Carey Barber, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. His fine talk was based on Isaiah 65:17-19, which foretells how Jehovah's people will "exult . . . and be joyful forever." The speaker explained that "exult" means "to leap for joy" and that it is the supreme form of happiness. It certainly was a very happy day for those present. The dedication talk was given by Milton Henschel, also of the Governing Body. He offered a special prayer to Jeho-



vah, giving thanks for providing the building, which was now dedicated to Him.

The next day 28,250 Witnesses and interested persons gathered in the Rand Stadium, Johannesburg, where they heard a brief summary of the program at Roodekrans. In a talk translated into Zulu, Henschel showed how Jehovah's Witnesses, led by Jehovah and Jesus, are triumphant everywhere and spreading "a sweet odor of Christ" and other Bible knowledge. (2 Corinthians 2:14-17) He concluded with many encouraging experiences that delighted the vast audience.

During the next few days, similar gatherings were held in Durban and Cape Town. These were occasions that will never be forgotten by Jehovah's Witnesses in South Africa. The Bethel family at Roodekrans will certainly long remember the dedication of their new home. With over 40,000 Witnesses currently active in South Africa instead of the 28,000 when work began at Roodekrans, the 'house that Jehovah built' fills an urgent and vital need.

Do You Remember?

Have you found the recent issues of *The Watchtower* of practical value to you? Then why not test your memory with the following:

□ **Why was Timothy such a fine example for youths to follow?**

Timothy sacrificed a so-called normal life at home to become a reliable, faithful companion of Paul. He stuck with Paul through thick and thin, supporting him in the preaching work and being willing to serve wherever assigned. (Philippians 2:19, 20) —8/15, page 14.

□ **What are the qualifications for baptism?**

The baptismal candidate must comprehend what is involved. He must truly want to serve Jehovah because he loves Him. He shows this by adhering to God's moral requirements and sharing his faith with others. He also needs to make a personal dedication to Jehovah in prayer. —8/15, page 16.

□ **Why is it wrong to explore spiritism?**

Exploring spiritism amounts to loving what Jehovah hates. (Proverbs 6:16-19) Actually, it is like rejecting Jehovah and siding with God's archenemy and his supporters. —9/1, page 5.

□ **What is the "book of remembrance" spoken of in Malachi 3:16?**

From the time of Abel forward, God has been noting, as if writing down in a book, those of redeemable mankind who are worthy of being remembered as to everlasting life. This "book of remembrance" is the same as "the

book of life" and "the scroll of life." (Revelation 3:5; 17:8; Matthew 23:35) —9/1, page 29.

□ **What makes a true friend so precious?**

You can always turn to a true friend for help, advice, comfort, and warm companionship. —9/15, pages 3, 4.

□ **What is the death-dealing "air" of this world?**

It is the general spirit, or dominant attitude of selfishness and disobedience, reflected by people alienated from God. (Ephesians 2:2; 1 Corinthians 2:12) —9/15, page 11.

□ **For a religion to be of practical value, what must it do?**

It must bear good fruit. It must produce better people. It must be able to explain why things are as they are on earth today. And it should instill in people's minds and hearts a sure hope for the future. (Matthew 7:17-20) —10/1, page 7.

□ **What did the Reformation fail to accomplish?**

Some early reformers dreamed of returning to Bible standards, to pure Christianity. This dream was never realized. With the passage of time, basic doctrines of Protestant churches, whether national or otherwise, fell largely into line with those of the Roman Catholic Church. —10/1, page 25.

□ **What led to God's adverse judgment of Moses and Aaron following the incident at Kadesh-barnea?**

Psalms 106:32, 33 gives an insight into this incident, showing that Moses acted out of a bitter

spirit and 'spoke rashly with his lips.' With angry words, he called attention to himself and Aaron rather than to Jehovah, who really could miraculously provide water. In this way Moses failed to 'sanctify God before the eyes of the people.' (Numbers 27:12-14) —10/15, page 31.

□ **What lofty purpose was served by God's Law given to Israel?**

The Law was given to Israel in order to keep the nation clean physically, spiritually, mentally, and morally. —11/1, page 12.

□ **What are some aids to maintaining chaste singleness?**

Pray regularly for God's spirit and his help to display its fruitage. Ponder over and apply the counsel in God's Word. Avoid pornography and immoral entertainment. Guard your associations. Shun all unclean speech and obscene jesting. —11/15, page 20.

□ **What crucial differences are there between the cures reported in the Bible and those reported by faith healers today?**

Jesus and his disciples never charged fees for their cures. Healings performed in Bible times either were instantaneous or were accomplished within a short period of time. —12/1, pages 4, 5.

□ **What are some of the benefits of singing aloud in true worship?**

Our personal involvement in public worship becomes stronger. Singing gives a good witness to newcomers. Most importantly, greater praise is brought to Jehovah. —12/1, page 27.

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