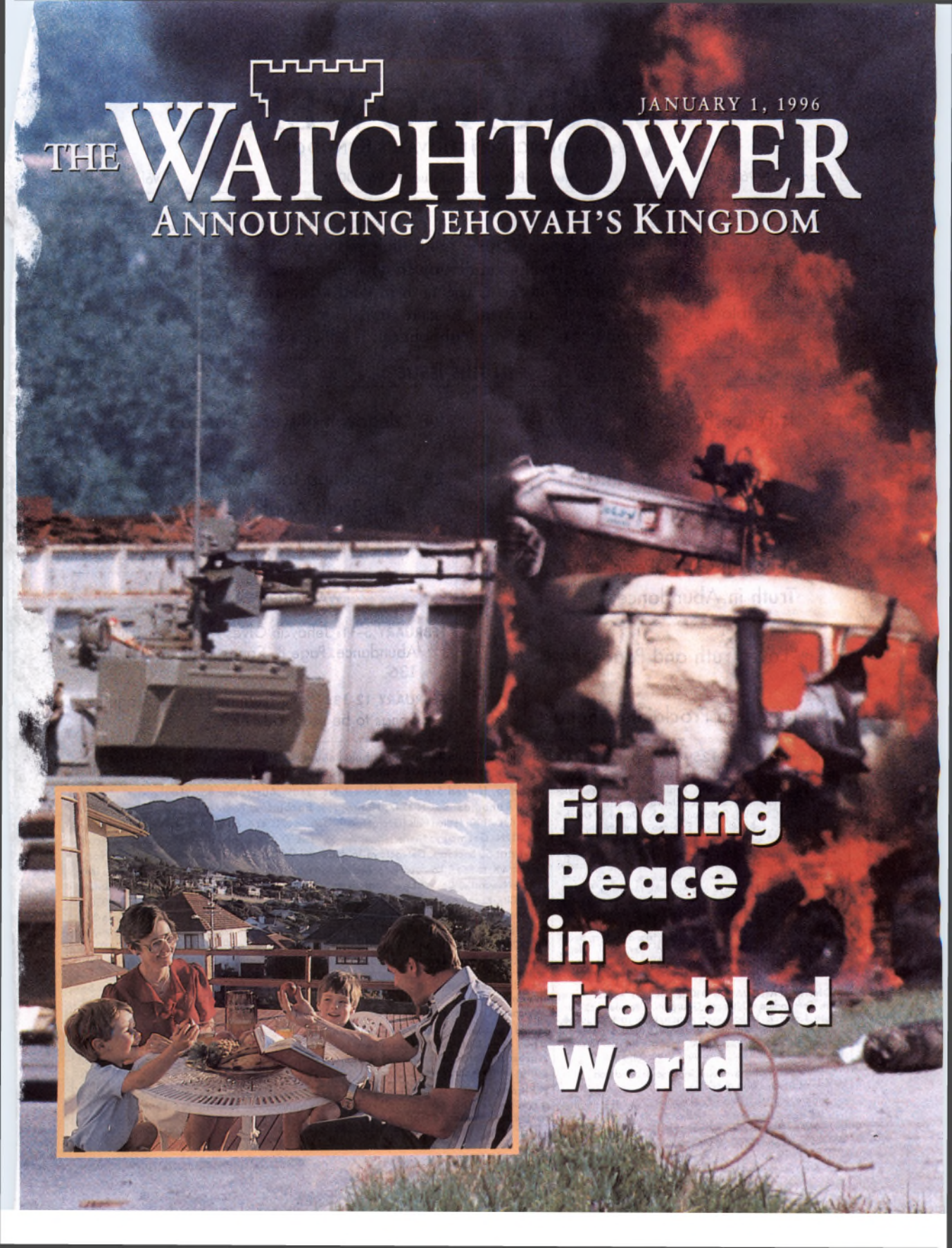


THE WATCHTOWER

JANUARY 1, 1996

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Finding
Peace
in a
Troubled
World**



THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these 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 God's 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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IS PEACE POSSIBLE?

"THERE will always be a war somewhere. That's the sad truth about mankind." This pessimistic view recently appeared in a letter from a reader in the magazine *Newsweek*. Do you agree with it? Is war inevitable and peace impossible? If history is any measure of the matter, it is difficult not to answer yes to both of these questions. As long as records have been kept, mankind has been embroiled in one war after another, and conflicts became more and more destructive as men developed more efficient ways of killing one another.

The 20th century has been no exception. Indeed, it has witnessed the bloodiest wars ever, but it has also witnessed something new. Fifty years ago the United States ush-

ered in the nuclear age by dropping two atom bombs on Japan. In the five decades since then, the nations have built up massive stockpiles of nuclear weapons that could destroy humanity many times over. Will the existence of nuclear weaponry finally scare men off from waging war? The facts speak for themselves. Since 1945 many millions have died in wars—although as yet no more nuclear bombs have been dropped.

Why is the human race so warlike? The *Encyclopedia Americana* mentions some aspects of human society that historically have led to war. They include religious intolerance, racism, cultural differences, differing ideologies (such as Communism and capitalism), nationalism and the doctrine of national sovereignty, economic conditions,

and a popular acceptance of militarism. When you read that list, do you see anything that is likely to change in the near future? Will the nations be less determined to preserve their sovereignty? Will men become less racist? Will religious fundamentalists be less fanatical? This is very unlikely.

Is there no hope at all, then, that some day things will be better and there will be lasting peace? Yes, there is hope. Despite the turmoil of this world, it is possible even today to find peace. Millions have done so. Let us tell you about a few of these people and see what their experiences can mean for you.

THEY FOUND PEACE IN A WORLD IN TURMOIL

THE cover of this magazine depicts a fiery battle scene from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Can peace exist in such a place? Surprisingly, the answer is yes. While Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Muslim communities in that tragic land fight for territory, many individuals long for peace, and some have found it.

The Djorems were residents of Sarajevo, and they were Jehovah's Witnesses. In the midst of all the turmoil in that city, they habitually visited their neighbors to share with them the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Why? Because the Djorem family knew that this Kingdom is real, that it is already established in the heavens, and that it is mankind's best and only hope for peace. Jehovah's Witnesses have complete confidence in what the apostle Paul called "the good news of peace." (Ephesians 2:17) Thanks to people like Bozo and Hena Djorem, many are finding peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A Real Peace to Come

There is more to say about the Djorems. First, though, let us talk of another couple

who gained confidence in God's Kingdom. Their names are Artur and Arina. They and their young sons used to live in a republic in the territory of the former Soviet Union. When civil war broke out, Artur fought for one of the sides. Soon, though, he asked himself, 'Why am I fighting against these people who used to be my neighbors?' He left the country and, after many difficulties, arrived with his young family in Estonia.

On a visit to St. Petersburg, Artur met Jehovah's Witnesses and was impressed by what he learned about God's Kingdom. Jehovah's will is that very soon God's Kingdom will be the only rulership over mankind. (Daniel 2:44) Then the earth will be a peaceful place, with no more civil wars or international conflicts. Isaiah prophesied about that time: "They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9.

Noting the artist's impression of that future peaceful earth in a Bible study aid that a Witness showed him, Artur remarked

that he used to live in a place that looked like that. Now, though, it was being ruined by civil war. Back in Estonia, Artur and his family are learning more about God's Kingdom through a Bible study with Jehovah's Witnesses.

Peace Amid Turmoil

Psalm 37:37 says: "Watch the blameless one and keep the upright one in sight, for the future of that man will be peaceful." In fact, the peace of one who is blameless and upright in God's eyes is not limited to his future. He enjoys it right now. How is that possible? Consider the experience of a man named Paul.

Paul lives in a remote refugee camp in southwest Ethiopia, although he actually comes from a neighboring country. In his homeland, he met one of Jehovah's Witnesses who worked for an oil company, and this man gave him a Bible study aid, *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*.^{*} Paul never met the Witness again, but he studied the book carefully. Civil war drove him to a refugee camp in Ethiopia, and there he spoke to others about what he had learned. A small group came to accept this as the truth. Based on what they had learned, they were soon preaching to others in the camp.

Paul wrote to the Watch Tower Society's headquarters asking for help. A minister sent from Addis Ababa was astonished to find 35 people waiting for him, ready to learn more about God's Kingdom. Arrangements were made for help to be given on a regular basis.

How can it be said that people like Paul enjoy peace? Their lives are not easy, but they have faith in God. When affected by the turmoil of this world, they apply the Bi-

ble's counsel: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." As a result, they have a contentment that is rare today. The apostle Paul's words to the Philippian congregation apply to them: "The peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." Indeed, they feel a close relationship with Jehovah, "the God of peace."—Philippians 4:6, 7, 9.

A Present Peace

The enthroned King of God's Kingdom is Jesus Christ, called in the Bible the "Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) Of him the ancient prophet said: "He will actually speak peace to the nations; and his rulership will be from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth." (Zechariah 9:10) Inspired words such as these had a profound effect on the life of a man named José.

At one time José was in prison. He was a terrorist and had been arrested while making preparations to blow up a police barracks. He thought that only violence would force the government to improve conditions in his country. While he was in prison, Jehovah's Witnesses began to study the Bible with his wife.

In Our Next Issue

Joyful in a Joyless World

Mankind Needs
the Knowledge of God

Comfort and Encouragement
—Gems of Many Facets

^{*} Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

After José was released, he too studied the Bible, and soon the words of Psalm 85:8 began to apply to him: "I will hear what the true God Jehovah will speak, for he will speak peace to his people and to his loyal ones." However, that verse concludes with a warning: "Let them not return to self-confidence." Hence, one who seeks Jehovah's peace will not presume to act independently or in opposition to His will.

Today, José and his wife are Christian ministers. They direct others to Jehovah's Kingdom as the solution to problems that José formerly tried to solve with homemade bombs. They are willing to trust the Bible, which says: "Jehovah, for his part, will give what is good." (Psalm 85:12) Indeed, José recently visited the barracks he had been planning to destroy. Why? In order to speak to the families there about God's Kingdom.

Peaceful People

At Psalm 37:10, 11, the Bible says: "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." What a glorious prospect!

Notice, though, that Jehovah's peace is only for "the meek ones." Those who seek peace may have to learn to be peaceful. This was the case with Keith, who lives in New Zealand. Keith was described as "powerful in build and personality, aggressive, and argumentative." He was a member of a gang and lived in a house that was a veritable fortress, with gardens patrolled by three guard dogs to keep out intruders. His wife, the mother of his six children, had divorced him.

When Keith met Jehovah's Witnesses, the good news had a profound effect on

him. Soon he and his children were attending meetings with the Witnesses. He cut his waist-long hair and began speaking about God's Kingdom to his former associates. Some of these also began studying the Bible.

Like millions of righthearted ones around the world, Keith had begun to apply the words of the apostle Peter: "He that would love life and see good days, . . . let him turn away from what is bad and do what is good; let him seek peace and pursue it." (1 Peter 3:10, 11) Keith's former wife consented to remarry him, and he is now learning to "seek peace and pursue it."

Jehovah's peace has been a lifesaver for many, including a one-time athlete born in the former U.S.S.R. This man won medals in Olympic competition, but he became disillusioned and turned to drugs and alcohol. After an eventful 19 years that included a three-year sentence to a labor camp in Siberia, a journey by ship as a stowaway to Canada, and two near-deaths because of his drug habit, he prayed to God for help to find a genuine purpose in life. A Bible study with Russian-speaking Witnesses of Jehovah helped him to find the answer to his questions. Today this man, like millions of others, has found peace with God and with himself.

The Resurrection Hope

Finally, let us return to Bozo and Hena Djorem in Sarajevo. This couple had a five-year-old daughter, Magdalena. Last July, the three of them were leaving home to engage once again in their preaching activity when all of them were killed by an exploding shell. What about the peace that they preached about to others? Did the shell that took their lives show that this was not a real peace?

By no means! In this system of things, tragedies happen. People are killed by



They have found peace despite living in a world in turmoil

bombs or shells. Others die of sickness or in accidents. Many die of old age. Those who enjoy God's peace are not immune, but the possibility of such events does not leave them without hope.

Jesus promised his friend Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life." (John 11:25) The Djorems believed this, as do all of Jehovah's Witnesses. And the Djorems had faith that if they were to die, they would be resurrected to

an earth that then would be a truly peaceful place. Jehovah God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:4.

Just before he died, Jesus said to his followers: "I give you my peace. . . . Do not let your hearts be troubled." (John 14:27) We rejoice with the Djorems who had that peace and who will surely enjoy it more fully in the resurrection. We are happy for all those who worship Jehovah, the God of peace. Such ones have peace of mind. They enjoy peace with God. They cultivate peace with others. And they have confidence in a peaceful future. Yes, they have found peace, although they live in a world in turmoil. Indeed, all who worship God with spirit and truth enjoy peace. May you too find such peace.

JEHOVAH GIVES PEACE AND TRUTH IN ABUNDANCE

"I will heal them and reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth."—JEREMIAH 33:6.

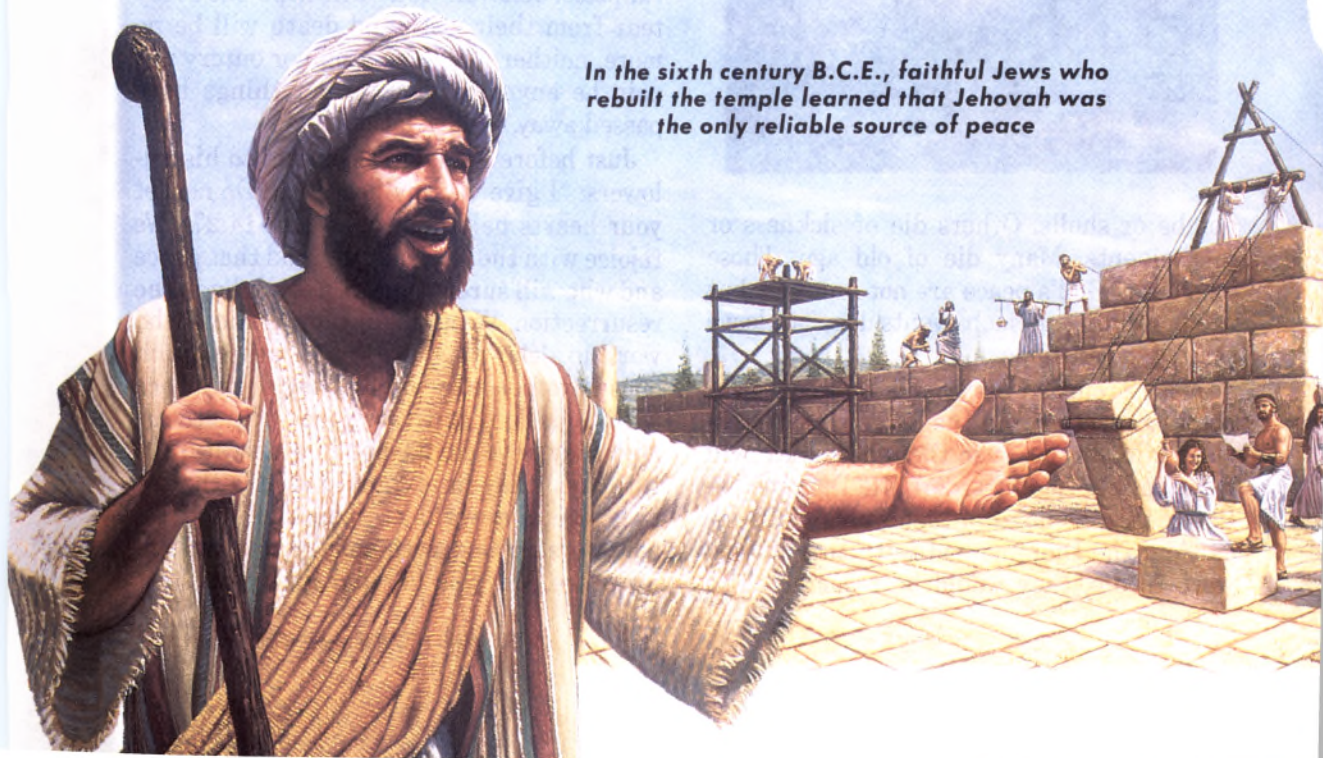
PEACE! How desirable that is, yet how rare it has been in human history! The 20th century, especially, has not been a century of peace. Rather, it has seen the two most destructive wars in human history. After the first world war, the League of Nations was set up to maintain world peace. That organization failed. After the second world war, the United Nations orga-

1, 2. (a) As to peace, what is the record of the nations? (b) In 607 B.C.E., what lesson did Jehovah teach Israel about peace?

nization was established with the same goal. We need only read the daily newspapers to see how utterly it too is failing.

² Should we be surprised that human organizations cannot bring peace? Not at all. More than 2,500 years ago, God's chosen people, Israel, were taught a lesson in this regard. In the seventh century B.C.E., Israel's peace was threatened by the ascendant world power, Babylon. Israel looked to Egypt for peace. Egypt failed. (Jeremiah 37:5-8; Ezekiel 17:11-15) In 607 B.C.E., Babylo-

In the sixth century B.C.E., faithful Jews who rebuilt the temple learned that Jehovah was the only reliable source of peace



nian armies tore down the walls of Jerusalem and burned Jehovah's temple. Thus Israel learned the hard way the futility of relying on human organizations. Instead of enjoying peace, the nation was dragged off into exile in Babylon.—2 Chronicles 36:17-21.

³ Before the fall of Jerusalem, however, Jehovah had revealed that he, not Egypt, would bring real peace to Israel. Through Jeremiah he promised: "I will heal them and reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth. And I will bring back the captives of Judah and the captives of Israel, and I will build them just as at the start." (Jeremiah 33:6, 7) Jehovah's promise began to be fulfilled in 539 B.C.E. when Babylon was conquered and freedom was offered to the Israelite exiles. (2 Chronicles 36:22, 23) By the

3. In fulfillment of Jehovah's words through Jeremiah, what historical events taught Israel a second vital lesson about peace?

latter part of 537 B.C.E., a group of Israelites celebrated the Festival of Booths on the soil of Israel for the first time in 70 years! After the festival, they set out to rebuild Jehovah's temple. How did they feel about this? The record says: "They shouted with a loud shout in praising Jehovah over the laying of the foundation of the house of Jehovah."—Ezra 3:11.

⁴ After that happy beginning, though, the Israelites were discouraged by opposers and stopped the work of temple building. Some years later, Jehovah raised up the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to rouse the Israelites to complete the rebuilding work. How thrilling it must have been for them to hear Haggai say regarding the temple that would be built: "Greater will the glory of this later house become than that of the former," Jehovah of armies has said. 'And in this place I shall give peace'!"—Haggai 2:9.

Jehovah Fulfills His Promises

⁵ In the Bible book of Zechariah, we read of numerous inspired visions and prophecies that strengthened God's people back in the sixth century B.C.E. These same prophecies continue to assure us of Jehovah's support. They give us every reason to believe that Jehovah will give his people peace in our day too. For example, in the eighth chapter of the book that bears his name, the prophet Zechariah ten times utters the words: 'This is what Jehovah has said.' Each time, the expression introduces a divine pronouncement having to do with the peace of God's people. Some of these promises were fulfilled back in Zechariah's day. All have been fulfilled or are in the process of being fulfilled today.

4. How did Jehovah rouse the Israelites to do the work of temple building, and what promise did he make about peace?

5. What is noteworthy about the eighth chapter of Zechariah?



"I Will Be Jealous for Zion"

⁶ The expression occurs first at Zechariah 8:2, where we read: "This is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'I will be jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and with great rage I will be jealous for her.'" Jehovah's promise to be jealous, to have great zeal, for his people meant that he would be vigilant in restoring their peace. The restoration of Israel to her land and the rebuilding of the temple were evidence of that zeal.

⁷ What, though, of those who had opposed Jehovah's people? His zeal for his people would be equaled by his "great rage" upon these enemies. When faithful Jews worshiped at the rebuilt temple, they would be able to reflect on the fate of mighty Babylon, now fallen. They could also think of the utter failure of the enemies who had tried to prevent the rebuilding of the temple. (Ezra 4:1-6; 6:3) And they could thank Jehovah that he had fulfilled his promise. His zeal brought them a triumph!

"The City of Trueness"

⁸ A second time Zechariah writes: "This is what Jehovah has said." What are Jehovah's words on this occasion? "I will return to Zion and reside in the midst of Jerusalem; and Jerusalem will certainly be called the city of trueness, and the mountain of Jehovah of armies, the holy mountain." (Zechariah 8:3) Before 607 B.C.E., Jerusalem was in no way a city of trueness. Her priests and prophets were corrupt, and her people were unfaithful. (Jeremiah 6:13; 7:29-34; 13:23-27) Now God's people were rebuilding the temple, showing their commitment to

pure worship. In spirit Jehovah dwelt once again in Jerusalem. The truths of pure worship were again spoken in her, so Jerusalem could be called "the city of trueness." Her lofty location could be called "the mountain of Jehovah."

⁹ While these two pronouncements were meaningful to ancient Israel, they also have much meaning for us as the 20th century draws to a close. Almost 80 years ago, during the first world war, the few thousand anointed ones who then represented "the Israel of God" went into spiritual captivity, just as ancient Israel had gone into captivity in Babylon. (Galatians 6:16) Prophetically, they were described as corpses lying in the street. Still, they had a sincere desire to worship Jehovah "with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) Hence, in 1919, Jehovah turned back their captivity, raising them from their spiritually dead condition. (Revelation 11:7-13) Jehovah thus answered with a resounding Yes Isaiah's prophetic question: "Will a land be brought forth with labor pains in one day? Or will a nation be born at one time?" (Isaiah 66:8) In 1919, Jehovah's people once again existed as a spiritual nation in their own "land," or spiritual estate on earth.

¹⁰ Safe in that land, anointed Christians served in Jehovah's great spiritual temple. They were designated as "the faithful and discreet slave," accepting the responsibility of caring for Jesus' earthly belongings, a privilege that they still enjoy as the 20th century nears its conclusion. (Matthew 24:45-47) They learned well the lesson that Jehovah is "the very God of peace." —1 Thessalonians 5:23.

9. What remarkable change in condition was experienced by "the Israel of God" in 1919?

10. Starting in 1919, what blessings have anointed Christians been enjoying in their "land"?

6, 7. In what ways was Jehovah 'jealous for Zion with great rage'?

8. In the days of Zechariah, how would Jerusalem become a city of trueness in contrast with earlier times?

¹¹ What, though, of the enemies of the Israel of God? Jehovah's zeal for his people is matched by his rage against the opposers. During the first world war, the religious leaders of Christendom brought enormous pressure to bear as they tried—and failed—to stamp out this small group of truth-speaking Christians. During the second world war, Christendom's ministers were united in only one thing: On both sides of the conflict, they urged governments to suppress Jehovah's Witnesses. Even today, in many lands religious leaders are inciting governments to restrict or ban the Christian preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses.

¹² This has not gone unnoticed by Jehovah. After the first world war, Christendom, along with the rest of Babylon the Great, experienced a fall. (Revelation 14:8) The reality of Christendom's fall became public knowledge when, starting in 1922, a series of symbolic plagues were poured out, publicly exposing her spiritually dead condition and warning of her coming destruction. (Revelation 8:7-9:21) As evidence that the pouring out of these plagues continues, the talk "False Religion's End Is Near" was delivered worldwide on April 23, 1995, followed by the distribution of hundreds of millions of copies of a special issue of *Kingdom News*.

¹³ Today, Christendom is in a pitiable state. Throughout the 20th century, her members have killed one another in vicious wars blessed by her priests and ministers. In some lands her influence is virtually nil. She is destined for destruction along with the rest of Babylon the Great.—Revelation 18:21.

11. How have religious leaders of Christendom shown themselves to be enemies of God's people?

12, 13. How is Jehovah's rage expressed against Christendom?

Peace for Jehovah's People

¹⁴ On the other hand, in this year 1996, Jehovah's people enjoy abundant peace in their restored land, as described in Jehovah's third pronouncement: "This is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'There will yet sit old men and old women in the public squares of Jerusalem, each one also with his staff in his hand because of the abundance of his days. And the public squares of the city themselves will be filled with boys and girls playing in her public squares.'" —Zechariah 8:4, 5.

¹⁵ This delightful word picture portrays something remarkable in this war-torn world—a people at peace. Since 1919, Isaiah's prophetic words have been fulfilled: "Continuous peace there will be to the one that is far away and to the one that is near," Jehovah has said, 'and I will heal him. But . . . there is no peace,' my God has said, 'for the wicked ones.'" (Isaiah 57:19-21) Of course, Jehovah's people, while no part of the world, cannot avoid being affected by the tumult of the nations. (John 17:15, 16) In some lands, they endure severe difficulties, and a few have even been killed. Yet, real Christians have peace in two principal ways. First, they have "peace with God through [their] Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1) Second, they have peace among themselves. They cultivate "the wisdom from above," which is "first of all chaste, then peaceable." (James 3:17; Galatians 5:22-24) Moreover, they look forward to enjoying peace in the most complete sense when "the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:11.

14. What prophetic word picture is given of a people at peace?

15. Despite the wars of the nations, what peace has been enjoyed by Jehovah's servants?

1995 SERVICE YEAR REPORT OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WORLDWIDE

Country or Territory	Population	1995 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1995 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1994	1994 Av. Pubs.	1995 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
Alaska	643,697	2,358	273	2,146	1	2,122	84	198	28	369,557	1,026	4,619
Albania	3,262,000	600	5,437	500	75	285	141	185	12	287,112	1,537	3,491
American Samoa	54,800	190	288	182	-1*	184	17	29	3	50,811	210	607
Andorra	64,311	149	432	137	-5*	144	1	17	2	31,912	74	326
Angola	11,233,000	26,129	430	24,619	12	22,069	3,587	2,515	357	7,208,702	62,928	106,042
Anguilla	7,000	28	250	27	17	23		4	1	6,273	33	134
Antigua	65,952	328	201	304	4	293	15	47	5	76,006	374	1,056
Argentina	33,180,171	111,186	298	107,154	5	102,200	7,208	12,083	1,604	23,064,504	89,929	244,591
Aruba	80,257	513	156	503	2	491	29	25	8	75,424	439	1,901
Australia	17,938,500	61,106	294	59,474	3	57,780	2,866	5,786	747	12,005,347	29,276	110,870
Austria	8,039,865	20,944	384	20,598	1	20,302	712	1,716	288	3,985,992	10,847	34,770
Azores	239,659	587	408	554	9	506	42	50	18	111,698	465	1,323
Bahamas	254,685	1,389	183	1,306	1	1,287	59	169	23	306,807	1,634	3,677
Bangladesh	124,638,680	48	2,596,639	40	8	37	4	6	1	10,971	71	182
Barbados	258,000	2,135	121	2,072	4	1,997	109	229	24	415,735	2,021	6,078
Belau	17,113	60	285	55	4	53	1	15	1	22,001	136	257
Belgium	10,065,574	27,751	363	26,853	2	26,328	1,185	2,030	361	4,930,681	11,706	50,601
Belize	200,000	1,140	175	1,067	4	1,022	72	147	23	251,700	1,313	5,078
Benin	4,915,555	4,241	1,159	4,067	17	3,490	358	568	90	1,092,759	6,925	18,115
Bermuda	59,807	418	143	390	6	369	13	51	5	91,947	297	893
Bolivia	7,300,000	11,543	632	10,791	11	9,759	1,151	2,162	169	3,499,397	18,145	50,555
Bonaire	13,438	71	189	65	2	64	3	3	1	9,562	51	192
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4,516,000	501	9,014	451	36	331	82	99	5	175,232	810	1,559
Botswana	1,522,528	916	1,662	837	9	770	67	94	22	195,761	1,149	2,445
Brazil	158,492,791	416,638	380	387,099	6	364,272	32,536	39,579	6,235	76,814,704	470,721	1,144,271
Britain	57,155,124	132,440	432	125,138	2	123,194	4,546	11,573	1,408	22,992,785	57,386	224,507
Brunei	285,000	29	9,828	23	44	16	5	3	1	4,221	26	64
Bulgaria	8,500,000	655	12,977	608	23	495	113	108	13	207,037	1,047	1,825
Burkina Faso	9,634,000	689	13,983	634	9	583	64	125	19	206,677	1,218	2,070
Burundi	6,400,000	1,575	4,063	1,571	12	1,403	120	217	38	497,191	3,278	4,741
Cambodia	10,400,000	13	800,000	12	20	10	1	9	1	10,456	47	65
Cameroon	13,500,531	24,242	557	22,291	10	20,301	2,005	1,654	486	4,400,890	25,926	76,807
Canada	29,380,000	112,960	260	109,168	2	106,664	4,249	11,043	1,366	21,841,381	47,460	190,697
Cape Verde	429,770	1,087	395	996	15	863	183	194	18	319,305	2,244	4,541
Cayman Islands	31,900	102	313	96	3	93	3	11	1	22,061	109	315
Central Afr. Rep.	3,480,076	1,924	1,809	1,875	7	1,758	192	293	46	514,629	3,048	11,361
Chad	6,288,261	439	14,324	404	13	358	47	85	15	142,297	750	2,367
Chile	14,210,428	50,283	283	47,175	6	44,472	3,340	6,476	489	11,885,188	59,943	148,947
Chuuk	66,169	44	1,504	41	-2*	42	1	15	3	22,376	175	462
Colombia	32,871,993	75,033	438	67,577	10	61,494	7,877	9,269	841	16,978,918	115,073	296,214
Comoros	450,000	7	64,286	6	50	4		1		2,107	10	21
Congo	2,600,000	3,130	831	3,018	18	2,568	439	542	73	1,075,701	11,138	14,351
Cook Islands	20,000	149	134	142	4	137	5	17	3	29,197	152	356
Costa Rica	3,301,210	17,082	193	15,053	8	13,977	1,163	1,683	229	3,267,822	18,035	43,738
Côte d'Ivoire	12,423,724	5,007	2,481	4,817	10	4,393	448	867	129	1,542,964	9,641	18,826
Croatia	4,784,265	4,585	1,043	4,400	8	4,072	384	585	70	1,101,500	2,894	8,829

Curaçao	149,376	1,537	97	1,502	2	1,476	51	111	19	258,998	1,625	4,385
Cyprus	638,300	1,667	383	1,627	6	1,540	83	221	17	373,672	860	3,109
Czech Republic	10,330,000	16,777	616	16,192	1	15,972	1,028	915	276	2,640,154	11,047	32,453
Denmark	5,215,718	16,082	324	15,604	0	15,587	383	1,113	222	2,447,947	5,016	24,284
Dominica	71,794	332	216	314	5	300	21	39	6	81,886	425	1,153
Dominican Rep.	7,594,000	18,440	412	17,422	7	16,354	1,469	3,797	276	5,481,385	36,158	58,174
Ecuador	11,460,000	29,767	385	28,263	10	25,704	4,150	4,671	444	7,706,062	47,063	123,149
El Salvador	5,438,691	23,710	229	22,205	7	20,658	1,539	2,253	388	4,950,165	27,246	70,261
Equatorial Guinea	372,540	312	1,194	274	19	230	23	50	4	100,004	1,111	1,937
Estonia	1,491,583	2,705	551	2,496	25	1,998	487	437	36	764,007	4,454	8,041
Ethiopia	55,000,000	4,895	11,236	4,626	12	4,144	619	1,113	72	1,688,752	4,866	13,742
Faeroe Islands	44,509	91	489	82	-5*	86	5	21	4	24,825	54	137
Falkland Islands	2,150	13	165	12	71	7	2		1	1,199	4	18
Fiji	715,375	1,591	450	1,534	3	1,496	60	222	35	382,275	1,751	6,639
Finland	5,098,754	19,419	263	18,906	3	18,432	728	2,154	301	3,541,632	9,767	29,452
France	58,027,305	126,508	459	123,408	1	121,783	5,119	8,747	1,678	22,180,124	57,287	228,783
French Guiana	147,283	1,351	109	1,297	16	1,119	118	185	18	365,625	2,304	5,493
Gabon	1,014,000	1,511	671	1,389	-1*	1,399	117	148	26	370,288	3,832	7,363
Gambia, The	1,110,000	57	19,474	53	20	44	11	13	1	21,121	114	216
Germany	81,538,231	170,346	479	165,746	1	163,327	6,018	10,771	2,013	28,702,089	87,854	287,321
Ghana	16,188,990	48,417	334	44,755	7	41,795	3,381	4,872	755	10,098,772	90,867	174,175
Gibraltar	27,107	116	234	108	-1*	109	2	7	2	17,252	40	192
Greece	10,256,465	26,266	390	25,764	3	25,053	876	3,129	354	5,191,504	10,259	44,842
Greenland	55,732	152	367	145	13	128	14	33	8	46,203	154	339
Grenada	92,000	545	169	516	6	486	33	76	7	130,704	629	1,729
Guadeloupe	387,000	7,664	50	7,370	3	7,137	429	384	93	1,218,486	8,077	18,109
Guam	150,000	551	272	522	6	494	44	104	7	149,835	767	1,836
Guatemala	9,500,000	16,176	587	14,769	6	13,957	1,041	1,541	232	3,216,234	16,059	49,329
Guinea	6,560,000	684	9,591	665	30	513	69	139	16	244,347	1,286	3,540
Guinea-Bissau	1,102,400	40	27,560	36	64	22	6	16	1	25,782	178	190
Guyana	757,863	2,005	378	1,956	5	1,859	135	241	35	413,773	2,235	8,386
Haiti	6,000,000	10,018	599	9,435	7	8,820	1,136	1,384	198	2,525,853	15,820	54,531
Hawaii	1,178,600	7,539	156	7,267	2	7,107	324	1,273	88	1,928,222	5,767	17,440
Honduras	5,534,453	8,416	658	7,782	11	7,000	557	981	126	1,985,408	12,174	36,075
Hong Kong	6,200,000	3,643	1,702	3,490	10	3,180	286	767	34	1,146,874	4,426	6,859
Hungary	10,226,600	16,907	605	15,929	9	14,556	1,769	1,274	219	3,256,066	13,733	37,536
Iceland	266,783	309	863	302	3	293	10	24	8	51,852	183	572
India	959,350,140	15,414	62,239	14,948	9	13,686	1,330	1,815	436	3,265,359	13,105	39,338
Ireland	5,104,000	4,463	1,144	4,372	3	4,252	196	679	111	1,156,796	2,412	8,017
Israel	7,495,000	599	12,513	559	15	488	43	62	8	131,567	646	1,234
Italy	58,138,000	214,446	271	210,012	3	203,307	10,015	30,775	2,838	53,681,550	109,419	388,347
Jamaica	2,509,600	10,489	239	9,570	2	9,370	553	1,010	179	1,790,258	10,239	31,622
Japan	124,655,498	206,617	603	201,266	6	189,586	11,546	87,289	3,552	97,721,628	241,221	378,586
Kenya	26,500,000	10,037	2,640	9,163	13	8,136	1,068	1,691	182	3,086,480	14,855	29,924
Kiribati	78,084	77	1,014	55	4	53	2	9	1	17,542	147	252
Korea, Republic of	44,851,000	80,523	557	78,782	4	76,026	4,571	31,065	1,491	34,981,832	69,164	136,225
Kosrae	8,446	22	384	20	5	19	2	5	1	6,037	44	133
Latvia	2,529,600	981	2,579	878	49	589	262	163	11	305,577	2,107	3,164
Lebanon	3,620,000	3,458	1,047	3,311	6	3,138	130	317	65	671,934	2,370	7,158
Lesotho	2,056,786	2,099	980	2,000	8	1,854	189	311	49	571,362	2,432	7,056
Liberia	2,500,000	1,422	1,758	1,308	-1*	1,324	128	278	25	468,120	3,493	7,013
Libya	4,485,000	8	560,625	4	33	3				689	11	21
Liechtenstein	30,629	63	486	60	2	59		8	1	15,857	40	112
Lithuania	3,717,700	1,648	2,256	1,371	40	978	350	117	12	322,718	1,676	4,738

Country or Territory	Population	1995 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1995 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1994	1994 Av. Pubs.	1995 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Attend- ance
Luxembourg	475,600	1,839		1,796	3	1,738	69	142	33	348,663	1,143	3,622
Macao	440,000	86	5,116	76	17	65	5	14	2	22,379	80	202
Macedonia	1,936,877	544	3,560	509	24	412	70	56	8	130,229	486	2,262
Madagascar	12,092,157	6,788	1,781	6,343	16	5,462	837	994	106	1,778,315	18,055	30,262
Madeira	255,722	923	277	870	7	812	73	84	14	172,648	745	1,965
Malawi	9,069,634	36,171	251	33,510	9	30,607	4,158	3,841	551	7,562,346	27,723	102,244
Malaysia	19,600,000	1,653	11,857	1,587	6	1,493	67	226	31	412,207	2,244	4,226
Mali	11,066,400	154	71,860	142	8	131	18	56	6	87,060	433	584
Malta	368,400	535	689	502	-1*	509	22	62	6	105,205	240	877
Marquesas Islands	8,700	48	181	45	25	36	6	6	3	10,835	77	148
Marshall Islands	48,872	196	249	154	1	152	9	30	3	50,881	450	1,079
Martinique	359,570	3,828	94	3,730	5	3,536	219	387	40	829,092	3,899	9,314
Mauritius	1,082,998	1,226	883	1,165	7	1,091	105	99	16	229,430	1,149	2,803
Mayotte	94,484	44	2,147	39	5	37	3	8	1	15,570	80	124
Mexico	91,600,000	443,640	206	422,283	9	388,623	33,077	53,541	10,320	95,827,479	569,842	1,492,500
Moldavia	4,587,000	10,031	457	9,320	21	7,720	1,399	403	82	1,307,033	6,059	30,417
Montserrat	11,888	39	305	36	0	36	1	5	1	9,887	47	159
Mozambique	17,336,000	19,377	895	17,468	31	13,383	2,596	2,856	438	4,846,564	24,484	70,216
Myanmar	45,000,000	2,285	19,694	2,185	2	2,134	104	292	94	523,509	1,736	5,270
Namibia	1,409,920	819	1,722	748	9	688	63	65	18	156,119	754	2,438
Nauru	6,431	7	919	5	-17*	6			1	368	2	35
Nepal	22,014,400	204	107,914	185	33	139	19	33	3	52,850	350	844
Netherlands	15,422,842	32,792	470	31,142	1	30,892	977	1,970	411	4,864,474	11,612	55,080
Nevis	10,080	41	246	35	-10*	39	1	5	1	9,503	40	122
New Caledonia	182,017	1,570	116	1,511	8	1,403	92	157	19	324,344	1,507	4,051
New Zealand	3,541,800	13,340	266	12,573	2	12,332	615	1,364	162	2,533,844	7,300	25,626
Nicaragua	4,500,000	11,920	378	11,259	8	10,395	1,144	1,568	213	3,162,550	22,729	58,750
Niger	7,490,000	226	33,142	203	3	198	21	31	7	62,431	333	600
Nigeria	98,000,000	191,439	512	184,940	6	174,441	11,302	22,918	3,583	40,083,157	272,954	507,769
Niue	2,300	35	66	31	7	29		1	1	3,843	23	91
Norfolk Island	1,912	16	120	14	100	7		1	1	1,590	5	24
Norway	4,359,922	10,181	428	9,687	2	9,521	345	521	179	1,316,101	3,407	16,409
Pakistan	129,000,000	368	350,543	345	0	344	17	38	8	74,499	438	1,602
Panama	2,631,013	8,214	320	7,808	5	7,436	554	1,120	175	1,968,025	10,908	28,558
Papua New Guinea	4,214,000	3,345	1,260	2,994	2	2,937	273	387	67	809,929	4,574	15,682
Paraguay	4,828,477	5,121	943	4,600	10	4,168	341	688	74	1,162,342	6,239	12,267
Peru	23,531,701	53,534	440	48,088	6	45,470	4,890	8,956	708	14,743,388	70,680	178,326
Philippines	67,000,000	121,017	554	118,560	3	115,311	7,457	22,740	3,489	28,737,757	95,800	378,563
Pohnpei	37,394	74	505	72	7	67	2	20	1	25,920	156	533
Poland	38,587,000	123,930	311	120,822	4	115,778	8,177	9,044	1,576	19,936,597	77,296	240,445
Portugal	9,426,160	44,650	211	43,633	3	42,257	2,186	3,224	649	7,680,991	27,337	91,597
Puerto Rico	3,522,000	26,040	135	25,225	1	24,970	1,166	2,336	317	4,779,062	18,154	64,272
Réunion	653,400	2,544	257	2,452	9	2,258	202	259	30	558,208	2,258	5,693
Rodrigues	34,652	36	963	33	6	31	1	6	1	12,489	59	110
Romania	22,755,260	33,541	678	32,472	9	29,789	2,846	1,789	423	4,937,034	17,528	89,220
Rota	2,436	8	305	5	-29*	7		2	1	2,151	4	33
Rwanda	7,828,000	3,041	2,574	2,192	6	2,072	568	626	51	1,134,827	8,221	12,307
Saba	1,000	1	1,000	1	0	1		1		1,575	13	11
St. Eustatius	1,500	16	94	14	0	14		2	1	3,509	19	77
St. Helena	5,139	147	35	143	6	135	13	3	2	16,120	86	338

St. Kitts	31,880	143	223	136	-5*	143	3	15	2	32,026	164	460
St. Lucia	142,000	666	213	627	10	572	53	120	9	183,296	981	2,089
St. Maarten	24,000	232	103	221	5	210	19	29	3	52,262	340	888
St. Pierre & Miquelon	6,300	9	700	8	-20*	10		1	1	958	6	16
St. Vincent	107,600	287	375	274	3	265	26	56	6	91,512	419	1,015
Saipan	51,597	189	273	181	7	169	22	30	3	51,468	267	528
San Marino	23,000	158	146	155	7	145	13	16	2	37,163	57	251
São Tomé & Príncipe	124,206	172	722	148	28	116	9	22	2	49,056	455	703
Senegal	8,500,000	755	11,258	712	6	674	54	156	18	263,658	1,416	2,036
Seychelles	74,240	123	604	110	9	101	11	10	2	23,084	136	420
Sierra Leone	4,387,000	748	5,865	704	4	677	80	136	20	244,105	1,418	3,313
Slovakia	5,363,638	12,272	437	11,912	4	11,423	893	602	195	1,896,035	6,569	25,600
Slovenia	1,989,477	1,732	1,149	1,693	6	1,604	93	153	36	349,002	873	3,036
Solomon Islands	372,775	1,113	335	1,016	18	862	35	104	38	213,654	1,201	5,008
South Africa	41,244,000	62,828	656	58,208	4	55,983	3,973	6,407	1,223	12,791,494	58,566	155,993
Spain	39,188,000	100,928	388	97,674	2	95,411	4,615	12,413	1,235	23,278,451	45,015	167,880
Sri Lanka	18,000,000	2,139	8,415	1,977	12	1,760	247	296	47	549,560	2,769	6,388
Suriname	400,000	1,772	226	1,702	-1*	1,712	137	249	27	415,549	2,132	5,722
Swaziland	908,119	1,772	512	1,646	3	1,605	149	230	58	442,472	2,183	5,819
Sweden	8,831,068	24,654	358	23,792	2	23,433	894	2,349	362	4,145,744	10,710	39,660
Switzerland	7,019,000	18,430	381	18,196	2	17,894	729	1,265	320	3,266,426	10,483	30,664
Tahiti	214,021	1,821	118	1,783	5	1,691	139	138	34	325,324	1,846	4,898
Taiwan	21,000,000	2,810	7,473	2,655	9	2,439	245	819	42	1,128,280	4,349	7,704
Tanzania	29,000,000	5,429	5,342	4,943	10	4,494	554	857	125	1,515,527	6,717	16,839
Thailand	59,450,000	1,574	37,770	1,522	7	1,426	99	234	43	387,719	1,597	3,334
Togo	4,052,000	8,887	456	8,294	16	7,133	604	1,337	132	2,405,554	23,292	36,386
Tokelau	1,700	5	340	4	33	3			1	602	2	11
Tonga	99,847	77	1,297	65	14	57		12	3	18,652	93	208
Trinidad & Tobago	1,257,348	7,078	178	6,861	6	6,491	413	1,163	70	1,705,304	9,635	21,670
Turkey	60,000,000	1,229	48,820	1,202	8	1,118	139	159	19	332,095	1,116	2,409
Turks & Caicos Isls.	15,000	110	136	91	30	70	7	14	2	30,179	220	499
Tuvalu	9,043	55	164	41	-9*	45	1	7	2	10,776	68	189
Uganda	19,600,000	1,678	11,681	1,447	19	1,212	212	248	32	476,720	3,056	5,737
Ukraine	52,114,400	60,011	868	55,660	20	46,575	10,639	4,388	527	11,771,627	48,828	165,832
U.S. of America	261,579,000	956,346	274	912,002	3	889,570	43,909	105,357	10,425	186,637,836	568,480	2,110,638
Uruguay	3,030,000	10,346	293	9,589	6	9,071	666	878	127	1,707,958	9,249	23,069
Vanuatu	142,630	222	642	188	3	182	19	20	3	48,765	354	1,284
Venezuela	22,600,000	71,709	315	66,490	7	61,942	5,748	11,853	937	19,129,224	106,304	238,027
Virgin Isls. (Brit.)	17,000	145	117	132	5	126		19	2	31,539	164	604
Virgin Isls. (U.S.)	101,800	648	157	622	0	621	12	74	9	137,019	707	1,979
Wallis & Futuna Isls.	15,000	20	750	14	8	13		3	1	4,062	16	84
Western Samoa	161,298	352	458	319	10	290	43	48	7	90,799	365	1,107
Yap	10,444	33	316	30	0	30	2	8	1	13,299	83	158
Yugoslavia, F.R.	10,394,026	3,130	3,321	2,923	16	2,529	422	470	39	863,612	3,199	7,994
Zaire	45,000,000	89,115	505	85,160	11	76,964	9,363	13,480	1,695	25,528,817	180,614	366,972
Zambia	9,072,060	84,592	107	79,639	-1*	80,847	3,832	9,863	2,034	17,095,771	108,017	370,622
Zimbabwe	11,035,234	24,461	451	23,108	9	21,290	1,698	2,983	770	5,434,924	34,638	65,765
197 Countries		5,041,998		4,807,211	5	4,582,218	314,986	643,465	76,882	1,112,713,869	4,609,517	12,710,722
10 Countries of Former U.S.S.R.	231,466,000	77,985	2,968	68,039	50	45,233	14,843	6,189	513	17,198,535	108,412	237,340
*25 Other Countries		79,912		75,094	11	67,660	8,662	13,867	1,225	20,441,040	147,131	199,139
GRAND TOTAL (232 countries)		5,199,895		4,950,344	5	4,695,111	338,491	663,521	78,620	1,150,353,444	4,865,060	13,147,201

During the 1995 service year, the Watch Tower Society spent \$57,955,025.64 in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments.

MEMORIAL PARTAKERS WORLDWIDE: 8,645

* Percentage of decrease

Work banned and reports are incomplete

¹⁶ There are still “old men and old women” among Jehovah’s people, anointed ones who remember the early triumphs of Jehovah’s organization. Their faithfulness and endurance are greatly appreciated. Younger anointed ones took the lead during the fiery days of the 1930’s and World War II, as well as in the exciting years of growth that followed. Further, especially since 1935, the “great crowd” of “other sheep” has manifested itself. (Revelation 7:9; John 10:16) As anointed Christians have grown older and become fewer, the other sheep have taken up the preaching work and have extended it throughout the earth. In recent years other sheep have been flooding into the land of God’s people. Why, last year alone, 338,491 of them were baptized in symbol of their dedication to Jehovah! Such new ones are very young indeed, spiritually speaking. Their freshness and enthusiasm are treasured as they swell the ranks of those who sing grateful praises “to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.”—Revelation 7:10.

¹⁷ Today, ‘the public squares are filled 16, 17. (a) How have “old men and old women” as well as “boys and girls” strengthened Jehovah’s organization? (b) What demonstrates the peace of Jehovah’s people?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ In modern times, how has Jehovah been ‘jealous with a great rage’ for his people?
- ☐ How do Jehovah’s people enjoy peace, even in war-torn lands?
- ☐ In what way are ‘the public squares filled with boys and girls’?
- ☐ What provisions have been made so that Jehovah’s people can be taught by him?

with boys and girls,’ Witnesses with youth-like vigor. In the 1995 service year, reports were received from 232 lands and islands of the sea. But there is no international rivalry, no intertribal hatred, no inappropriate jealousy, between anointed and other sheep. All grow together spiritually, united in love. The worldwide brotherhood of Jehovah’s Witnesses is truly unique on the world scene.—Colossians 3:14; 1 Peter 2:17.

Too Difficult for Jehovah?

¹⁸ Back in 1918 when the anointed remnant consisted of just a few thousand discouraged souls in spiritual captivity, no one could have foreseen the course that events would take. Nevertheless, Jehovah knew—as borne out by his fourth prophetic pronouncement: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Although it should seem too difficult in the eyes of the remaining ones of this people in those days, should it seem too difficult also in my eyes?’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies.”—Zechariah 8:6.

¹⁹ In 1919, Jehovah’s spirit revived his people for the work ahead. Still, it took faith to hold fast to the small organization of Jehovah’s worshipers. They were so few, and many things were not clear. However, little by little Jehovah strengthened them organizationally and equipped them to do the Christian work of preaching the good news and making disciples. (Isaiah 60:17, 19; Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Gradually, he helped them to discern such vital issues as neutrality and universal sovereignty. Was it too difficult for Jehovah to accomplish his will by means of that small group of Witnesses? The answer is certainly no! This is borne out on pages 12 to 15 of this magazine, which set forth the chart of activity of Jehovah’s Witnesses for the 1995 service year.

18, 19. In the years since 1919, how has Jehovah accomplished what may have seemed too difficult from a human standpoint?

“I Myself Shall Become Their God”

²⁰ The fifth pronouncement shows further the happy condition of Jehovah’s Witnesses today: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Here I am saving my people from the land of the sunrise and from the land of the setting of the sun. And I shall certainly bring them in, and they must reside in the midst of Jerusalem; and they must become my people, and I myself shall become their God in trueness and in righteousness.’”—Zechariah 8:7, 8.

²¹ In 1996 we can say without hesitation that the good news has been preached around the world, from “the land of the sunrise” to “the land of the setting of the sun.”

20. How extensive was the gathering of God’s people prophesied to be?

21. In what way has the abundant peace of Jehovah’s people been maintained and extended?

Disciples have been made of people of all nations, and they have seen the fulfillment of Jehovah’s promise: “All your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant.” (Isaiah 54:13) We have peace because we are educated by Jehovah. To this end, literature has been published in over 300 languages. Last year alone, 21 additional languages were added. The *Watchtower* magazine is now published simultaneously in 111 languages, and *Awake!* in 54. National and international conventions provide a public demonstration of the peace of God’s people. Weekly meetings unite us and give us the encouragement we need to stay firm. (Hebrews 10:23-25) Yes, Jehovah is educating his people “in trueness and in righteousness.” He is giving his people peace. How blessed we are to share in that abundant peace!

“LOVE TRUTH AND PEACE”!

“The word of Jehovah of armies continued to occur to me, saying: ‘... Love truth and peace.’”—ZECHARIAH 8:18, 19.

“THE world has never had peace. Somewhere—and often in many places at once—there has always been war.” So said Professor Milton Mayer of the University of Massachusetts, U.S.A. What a sad commentary on humanity! True, men have wanted peace. Politicians have tried all kinds of ways to maintain it, from the *Pax Romana* of Roman times to the policy of “Mutually As-

sured Destruction” during the Cold War. Ultimately, though, all their efforts failed. As Isaiah expressed it many centuries ago, ‘the very messengers of peace have wept bitterly.’ (Isaiah 33:7) Why is this?

² It is because a lasting peace has to spring from an absence of hatred and greed; it must be grounded in truth. Peace cannot be based on lies. That is why Jehovah when promising restoration and peace for ancient Israel said: “Here I am extending to her peace just like a river and the glory of nations just like a flooding

1, 2. (a) What is mankind’s record as far as peace is concerned? (b) Why will this present world never see real peace?



**Last year,
Jehovah's Witnesses
spent 1,150,353,444
hours talking to people
about God's Kingdom**

torrent.” (Isaiah 66:12) The god of this system of things, Satan the Devil, is “a man-slayer,” a murderer, and “a liar and the father of the lie.” (John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 4:4) How can a world with such a god ever have peace?

³ Remarkably, though, Jehovah gives peace to his people even while they live in Satan’s war-torn world. (John 17:16) In the sixth century B.C.E., he fulfilled his promise through Jeremiah and gave “peace and truth” to his special nation when he restored them to their homeland. (Jeremiah 33:6) And in these last days, he has given “peace and truth” to his people in their

3. What remarkable gift has Jehovah given his people, despite their living in a troubled world?

“land,” or earthly spiritual estate, even though they have lived through the worst time of trouble this world has seen up to now. (Isaiah 66:8; Matthew 24:7-13; Revelation 6:1-8) As we continue our discussion of Zechariah chapter 8, we will gain a deeper appreciation of this God-given peace and truth and see what we have to do to preserve our share in it.

‘Let Your Hands Be Strong’

⁴ For the sixth time in Zechariah chapter 8, we hear a thrilling pronouncement from Jehovah: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Let the hands of you people be strong, you who are hearing in these

4. How did Zechariah encourage Israel to act if they were to experience peace?

days these words from the mouth of the prophets, on the day on which the foundation of the house of Jehovah of armies was laid, for the temple to be built. For before those days there were no wages for mankind made to exist; and as for the wages of domestic animals, there was no such thing; and to the one going out and to the one coming in there was no peace because of the adversary, as I kept thrusting all mankind against one another.’”—Zechariah 8:9, 10.

⁵ Zechariah spoke these words while the temple was being rebuilt in Jerusalem. Previously, the Israelites who had returned from Babylon became discouraged and ceased the work of temple building. Because they turned their attention to their own comfort, they had no blessing and no peace from Jehovah. Even though they cultivated their lands and cared for their vineyards, they did not prosper. (Haggai 1:3-6) It was as if they were working for “no wages.”

⁶ Now that the temple was being rebuilt, Zechariah encouraged the Jews to “be strong,” courageously to put Jehovah’s worship first. What would happen if they did so? “‘Now I shall not be as in the former days to the remaining ones of this people,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies. ‘For there will be the seed of peace; the vine itself will give its fruitage, and the earth itself will give its yield, and the heavens themselves will give their dew; and I shall certainly cause the remaining ones of this people to inherit all these things. And it must occur that just as you became a malediction among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I shall save

you, and you must become a blessing. Do not be afraid. May your hands be strong.’” (Zechariah 8:11-13) If Israel would act with determination, she would prosper. Earlier, when the nations wished to cite an example of malediction, they could point to Israel. Now Israel would be an example of a blessing. What an excellent reason to ‘let their hands be strong’!

⁷ What of today? Well, in the years before 1919, Jehovah’s people were somewhat lacking in zeal. They did not take a fully neutral stand in the first world war, and they had the tendency to follow a man rather than their King, Jesus Christ. As a result, some were discouraged by opposition from inside and outside the organization. Then, in 1919, with Jehovah’s help they let their hands be strong. (Zechariah 4:6) Jehovah gave them peace, and they prospered mightily. This is seen in their record of the last 75 years, culminating in the 1995 service year. As a people, Jehovah’s Witnesses shun nationalism, tribalism, prejudice, and all other sources of hatred. (1 John 3:14-18) They serve Jehovah with genuine zeal in his spiritual temple. (Hebrews 13:15; Revelation 7:15) Last year alone, they spent over a billion hours talking to others about their heavenly Father! Each month, they conducted 4,865,060 Bible studies. An average of 663,521 shared in pioneer service each month. When ministers in Christendom want to give an example of a people who are truly enthusiastic in their worship, they sometimes point to Jehovah’s Witnesses.

7. (a) What thrilling changes have Jehovah’s people experienced, culminating in the 1995 service year? (b) Looking at the annual report, what countries do you see that have a remarkable record of publishers, pioneers, average hours?

5, 6. (a) Because of the Israelites’ discouragement, what was the situation in Israel? (b) What change did Jehovah promise Israel if she put his worship first?

⁸ Because of their zeal, Jehovah gives his people "the seed of peace." Each individual who cultivates that seed will see peace grow in his heart and in his life. Every believing Christian who pursues peace with Jehovah and with fellow Christians shares in the truth and peace of Jehovah's name people. (1 Peter 3:11; compare James 3:18.) Is that not wonderful?

"Do Not Be Afraid"

⁹ Now we read a seventh pronouncement from Jehovah. What is it? "This is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'Just as I had in mind to do what was calamitous to you people because of your forefathers' making me indignant,' Jehovah of armies has said, 'and I felt no regret, so I will again have in mind in these days to deal well with Jerusalem and with the house of Judah. Do not be afraid.'"—Zechariah 8:14, 15.

¹⁰ Even though Jehovah's people were scattered in a spiritual sense during the first world war, in their hearts they wanted to do what was right. Hence, Jehovah, after administering some discipline, changed his way of dealing with them. (Malachi 3:2-4) Today, we look back and thank him fervently for what he has done. True, we have been "objects of hatred by all the nations." (Matthew 24:9) Many have been imprisoned, and some have even died for their faith. We often face apathy or hostility. But we are not afraid. We know that Jehovah is stronger than any opposition, visible or invisible. (Isaiah 40:15; Ephesians 6:10-13) We will not cease to heed the words: "Hope in Jehovah; be courageous and let your heart be strong."—Psalm 27:14.

8. How can each individual Christian benefit from "the seed of peace"?

9. What change in his dealings with his people did Jehovah promise?

10. What record of Jehovah's Witnesses shows that they have not been afraid?

"Speak Truthfully With One Another"

¹¹ To share fully in the blessings from Jehovah, there are things we should remember. Zechariah says: "These are the things that you people should do: Speak truthfully with one another. With truth and the judgment of peace do your judging in your gates. And calamity to one another do not you scheme up in your hearts, and do not love any false oath; for these are all things that I have hated," is the utterance of Jehovah."—Zechariah 8:16, 17.

¹² Jehovah urges us to speak the truth. (Ephesians 4:15, 25) He does not hear the prayers of those who scheme harmful things, hide the truth for personal gain, or utter false oaths. (Proverbs 28:9) Since he hates apostasy, he wants us to cling to Bible truth. (Psalm 25:5; 2 John 9-11) Further, like the older men at the city gates in Israel, elders handling judicial cases should base their counsel and decisions on Bible truth, not on personal opinion. (John 17:17) Jehovah wants them to seek a "judgment of peace," trying, as Christian shepherds, to restore peace between contending parties and helping repentant sinners regain peace with God. (James 5:14, 15; Jude 23) At the same time, they preserve the peace of the congregation, courageously expelling those who disturb that peace by willfully persisting in wrongdoing.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

"An Exultation and a Rejoicing"

¹³ Now, we hear an eighth solemn pronouncement: "This is what Jehovah of armies has said, 'The fast of the fourth

11, 12. What should we individually bear in mind if we want to share fully in the blessings Jehovah gives to his people?

13. (a) What change regarding fasting did Zechariah prophesy? (b) What fasting was observed in Israel?

month, and the fast of the fifth month, and the fast of the seventh month, and the fast of the tenth month will become for the house of Judah an exultation and a rejoicing and good festal seasons. So love truth and peace.’” (Zechariah 8:19) Under the Mosaic Law, the Israelites fasted on the Day of Atonement to express sorrow for their sins. (Leviticus 16:29-31) The four fasts mentioned by Zechariah were apparently observed to mourn events in connection with the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:1-4, 8, 9, 22-26) Now, however, the temple was being rebuilt and Jerusalem repopulated. Mourning was being changed into rejoicing, and the fasts could become festal seasons.

¹⁴ Today, we do not observe the fasts mentioned by Zechariah or the fasting prescribed in the Law. Since Jesus offered his life for our sins, we are enjoying the blessings of a greater Day of Atonement. Our sins are covered, not just in a token way, but completely. (Hebrews 9:6-14) Following the command of the heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, we observe the Memorial of his death as the only solemn celebration on the Christian calendar. (Luke 22:19, 20) Do we not experience “an exultation and a rejoicing” as we gather together each year for that celebration?

¹⁵ Last year, 13,147,201 came together to celebrate the Memorial, 858,284 more than in 1994. What a multitude! Picture the rejoicing in the 78,620 congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses as unusually large numbers flocked into their Kingdom Halls for the celebration. Surely, all present were

14, 15. (a) How was the Memorial celebration a great cause for rejoicing, and what should this remind us of? (b) As seen in the annual report, what lands had outstanding attendances at the Memorial?

moved to “love truth and peace” as they remembered the death of the One who is “the way and the truth and the life” and who now reigns as Jehovah’s great “Prince of Peace”! (John 14:6; Isaiah 9:6) That celebration had special meaning for those who observed it in lands racked by turmoil and war. Some of our brothers witnessed indescribable horrors during 1995. Still, ‘the peace of God that excels all thought guarded their hearts and their mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.’—Philippians 4:7.

‘Let Us Soften the Face of Jehovah’

¹⁶ Where, though, did all those millions who attended the Memorial come from? The ninth utterance of Jehovah explains: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘It will yet be that peoples and the inhabitants of many cities will come; and the inhabitants of one city will certainly go to those of another, saying: “Let us earnestly go to soften the face of Jehovah and to seek Jehovah of armies. I myself will go also.” And many peoples and mighty nations will actually come to seek Jehovah of armies in Jerusalem and to soften the face of Jehovah.’”—Zechariah 8:20-22.

¹⁷ People who attended the Memorial wanted to “seek Jehovah of armies.” Many of these were his dedicated, baptized servants. Millions of others in attendance had not yet reached that stage. In some lands the Memorial attendance was four or five times the number of Kingdom publishers. These many interested ones need help to continue to make progress. Let us teach them to exult in the knowledge that Jesus died for our sins and is now ruling in God’s Kingdom. (1 Corinthians 5:7, 8; Revelation 11:15) And let us encourage

16, 17. How can people of the nations “soften the face of Jehovah”?

them to dedicate themselves to Jehovah God and submit to his appointed King. In this way they will “soften the face of Jehovah.”—Psalm 116:18, 19; Philippians 2:12, 13.

“Ten Men Out Of All the Languages of the Nations”

¹⁸ For the last time in the eighth chapter of Zechariah, we read: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said.” What is Jehovah’s final proclamation? “It will be in those days that ten men out of all the languages of the nations will take hold, yes, they will actually take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew, saying: ‘We will go with you people, for we have heard that God is with you people.’” (Zechariah 8:23) In Zechariah’s day, natural Israel was God’s chosen nation. In the first century, however, Israel rejected Jehovah’s Messiah. Hence, our God chose

18, 19. (a) In the fulfillment of Zechariah 8:23, who today is “a Jew”? (b) Who today are the “ten men” who “take hold of the skirt of a man who is a Jew”?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ How did God’s people ‘let their hands be strong’ in Zechariah’s day? Today?
- ☐ How do we respond to persecution, hostility, and apathy?
- ☐ What is involved in our ‘speaking truth with one another’?
- ☐ How can a person “soften the face of Jehovah”?
- ☐ What great cause for rejoicing is seen in the fulfillment of Zechariah 8:23?

“a Jew”—a new Israel—as his special people, “the Israel of God” made up of spiritual Jews. (Galatians 6:16; John 1:11; Romans 2:28, 29) The final number of these was to be 144,000, chosen from among mankind to reign with Jesus in his heavenly Kingdom.—Revelation 14:1, 4.

¹⁹ Most of these 144,000 have already died faithful and have gone to their heavenly reward. (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; Revelation 6:9-11) A few remain on earth and these rejoice to see that the “ten men” who choose to go along with the “Jew” are indeed “a great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues.”—Revelation 7:9; Isaiah 2:2, 3; 60:4-10, 22.

²⁰ As the end of this world gets inexorably closer, Christendom is like Jerusalem in Jeremiah’s day: “There was a hoping for peace, but no good came; and for a time of healing, and, look! terror!” (Jeremiah 14:19) That terror will reach a climax when the nations turn on false religion and bring it to a violent end. Shortly afterward, the nations themselves will experience destruction in God’s final war, Armageddon. (Matthew 24:29, 30; Revelation 16:14, 16; 17:16-18; 19:11-21) What a time of tumult that will be!

²¹ Through it all, Jehovah will protect those who love truth and cultivate “the seed of peace.” (Zechariah 8:12; Zephaniah 2:3) Let us, then, stay safe within the land of his people, zealously praising him publicly and helping as many as possible to “soften the face of Jehovah.” If we do so, we will always enjoy Jehovah’s peace. Yes, “Jehovah himself will give strength indeed to his people. Jehovah himself will bless his people with peace.”—Psalm 29:11.

20, 21. As the end of this world draws closer, how may we stay at peace with Jehovah?

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

"The Word of God Went On Growing"



THE Christian congregation grew from about 120 members to over 3,000 in a matter of hours after it was formed. (Acts 1:15; 2:41) The Bible explains that "the word of God went on growing, and the number of the disciples kept multiplying in Jerusalem very much." (Acts 6:7) After just a few years, the newly formed congregation became an intercontinental organization with Christians in Africa, Asia, and Europe.

The Christian congregation today is likewise experiencing rapid growth. For instance, in Mexico, the number of Kingdom proclaimers has grown in just five years by more than 130,000 to 443,640! In 1995, 1 out of 59 people in Mexico attended the Memorial of Christ's death as celebrated by Jehovah's Witnesses. Yet, the spiritual harvest in that country is not completed, as is illustrated by the following experience.—Matthew 9:37, 38.

In one town in the state of Chiapas, no one had accepted a home Bible study with Jehovah's

Witnesses, even after they had preached the good news some 20 years in that area. Evidently many of the townspeople were intimidated by a man who had a reputation for being violent. They feared his reaction if he was to find out that they were studying the Bible with the Witnesses.

Two courageous Witnesses who moved into the area decided to tackle the problem by going straight to the man in question. When they arrived at his home, his wife answered the door and listened attentively to their message. She was especially interested in what the Bible says about living in a paradise on earth. But she acknowledged that her husband would make things very difficult for her if she was to study the Bible. The Witnesses explained that unless she carefully examined what the Bible says, she would never learn how to serve God and enjoy life on earth forever. She accepted a Bible study.

As expected, her husband was not pleased with her decision. He prohibited her from using her automobile to attend Christian meetings, although she was allowed to use it for other purposes. Despite his opposition, she regularly walked to the closest Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, which was six miles away. Soon others in town noticed her courage and determination. People began to listen when the Witnesses visited their homes. Some even started to accompany the woman to the meetings. After a short time, the Witnesses were conducting about 20 Bible studies in that town!

A friend of this woman also decided to study the Bible despite her husband's opposition. Surprisingly, she was encouraged to do so by the husband of the first woman. After he spoke with her husband, the opposition ceased. So it was that after 20 years the seed of Bible truth finally sprouted, with more than 15 persons studying the Bible and attending Christian meetings, including these two women, who are now publishing the good news.

JEHOVAH NEVER ABANDONED US

AS TOLD BY NASHO DORI

Mbreshtan is a small mountain village in southern Albania, not far from Greece. I was born there in 1907. When I was five, I began attending a Greek school, but my schooling was interrupted when Italian forces invaded Albania during World War I. After the war, I resumed my schooling but in the Albanian language.

ALTHOUGH my parents were not very religious, they observed the traditions of the Albanian Orthodox Church. My great-uncle was a priest in Mbreshtan, so I worked in the church and got an inside view of what went on there. The rituals seemed so empty, and the hypocrisy bothered me.

Following local custom, my parents selected a young woman for me to marry. Argjiro was from the nearby village of Grabova, and we were married in 1928, when she was 18.

Learning Bible Truth

About that time I complained about the Orthodox Church to a cousin who was visiting from the United States. "In America, near my home," he replied, "there is a group of people who don't have a church, but they study the Bible." The idea of studying the Bible without having a church appealed to me. So I asked if he would send me some Bible literature.

I completely forgot about our conversation until about a year later when I received a package from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Inside was the book *The Harp of God* in Albanian

and *The Watchtower* in Greek. I skimmed through the book and noticed a reference to the true church. That upset me. 'I don't want anything to do with a church,' I said to myself. So I didn't read the book thoroughly.

In 1929, I entered the military and was sent to the city of Tiranë, the capital of Albania. There I met Stathi Muçi, who was reading a Greek Bible. "Do you go to church?" I asked. "No," he answered. "I left the church. I am one of the International Bible Students." Another soldier and I went to a meeting with Stathi on Sunday. There I learned that the true church is not a building or a religion, but it is made up of anointed servants of Christ. Now I understood what *The Harp of God* was saying.

Nasho Idrizi and Spiro Vruho had returned to Albania from the United States in the mid-1920's and were spreading Bible truths that they had learned there. I began attending the meetings in Tiranë, along with the handful of Bible Students. It soon became obvious to me that I had found Jehovah's organization. So on August 4, 1930, I was baptized in a nearby river.

Afterward I returned to Mbreshtan to pursue my shoe-making profession. But

more important, I also began sharing with others the Bible truths that I had learned. I would tell them: "Jesus Christ is not like the icons in the church. He is alive!"

Preaching Despite Opposition

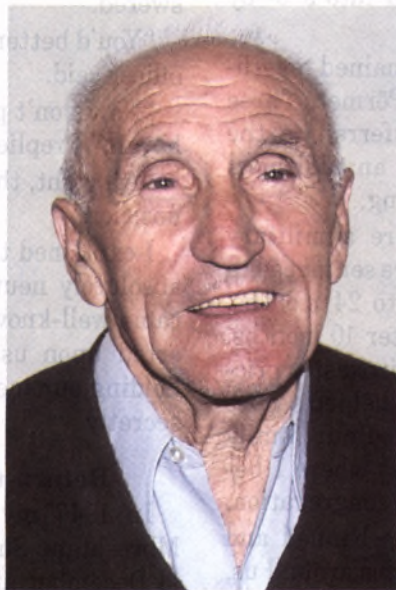
Ahmed Bey Zogu seized power in 1925, made himself King Zog I in 1928, and ruled until 1939. His minister of human rights gave approval for our Christian work. Nevertheless, we had problems. This was because Musa Juka, the minister of the interior, was closely allied with the pope in Rome. Juka ordered that only three religions be recognized—Muslim, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic. The police tried to take our books and stop our preaching, but they were unsuccessful.

During the 1930's, I often visited Berat, a larger city in Albania from where Mihal Sveci directed our preaching work. We arranged preaching tours throughout the country. Once I was sent to the town of Shkodër for two weeks, and I was able to leave much literature. In 1935 a group of us rented a bus to preach in the town of Këlcyrë. Then a larger tour of Albania was scheduled for the towns of Përmet, Leskovik, Ersekë, Korçë, Pogradec, and Elbasan. We finished the tour in Tiranë just in time to observe the Memorial of Christ's death.

A supply of spiritual food helped us keep spiritually strong, so we never felt abandoned. From 1930 to 1939, I received the Greek *Watchtower* regularly. My goal was also to read the Bible for at least an hour

each day, which I did for some 60 years before my eyesight failed. Only recently did the entire Bible become available in the Albanian language, so I am glad that I learned Greek as a child. Other Albanian Witnesses in those early days also learned to read Greek so that they too could read the entire Bible.

In 1938, Argjiro was baptized. By 1939 seven of our ten children had been born. Sadly, three of our first seven children died when they were young.



Hardships During World War II

In April 1939, just prior to the beginning of World War II, Italian Fascist troops attacked Albania. Soon afterward the work of Jehovah's Witnesses was banned, but our small group of about 50 Kingdom proclaimers continued to preach. Some 15,000 of our books and booklets were confiscated and destroyed during World War II.

Jani Komino had a large storage room for literature connected to his home. When the Italian forces

learned that the books had been printed in the United States, they became upset. "You are propagandists! The United States is against Italy!" they said. The zealous young brothers Thomai and Vasili Cama were arrested, and when it was learned that the books they were distributing had come from Komino, he too was arrested. Soon I was summoned by the police for interrogation.

"Do you know these men?" they asked.

"Yes," I replied.

"Do you work with them?"

"Yes," I answered. "We are Jehovah's Witnesses. We are not against the governments. We are neutral."

"Have you been distributing this literature?"

When I responded affirmatively, they handcuffed me, and I was put in prison on July 6, 1940. There I joined five others from my village—Josef Kaci, Llukan Barko, Jani Komino, and the Cama brothers. While in prison we met three other Witnesses—Gori Naçi, Nikodhim Shyti, and Leonidas Pope. All nine of us were crammed into a 6- by 12-foot cell!

After a few days, we were chained together and taken to the city of Përmet. Three months later we were transferred to the prison in Tiranë and held for an additional eight months without a hearing.

Finally, we appeared before a military court. Brother Shyti and I were sentenced to 27 months, Brother Komino to 24 months, and the others were freed after 10 months. We were transferred to the Gjirokastër prison, where Brother Gole Flloko helped secure our release in 1943. Afterward our family settled in the city of Përmet, where I became the overseer of the small congregation.

Even though our work was banned and World War II raged in countries around us, we continued to do what we could to fulfill our commission to preach the Kingdom message. (Matthew 24:14) In 1944 a total of 15 Witnesses were in prison. Yet, during these difficult times, we never felt abandoned by Jehovah.

Tested on the Issue of Neutrality

Although the war ended in 1945, our difficulties continued and even grew worse. Compulsory voting was enforced during the election of December 2, 1946. Anyone who dared to abstain was considered an enemy of

the State. Those in our congregation in Përmet began to ask, "What should we do?"

"If you trust in Jehovah," I answered, "you don't have to ask me what to do. You already know that Jehovah's people are neutral. They are no part of the world."—John 17:16.

Election day arrived, and government delegates came to our house. They began calmly, "Oh, let's have a cup of coffee and talk. Do you know what today is?"

"Yes, today elections are being held," I answered.

"You'd better hurry, or you'll be late," one officer said.

"No, I don't plan to go. Our vote is for Jehovah," I replied.

"All right, then come and vote for the opposition."

I explained that Jehovah's Witnesses are absolutely neutral. When our position became well-known, greater pressure was exerted upon us. We were ordered to stop holding our meetings, so we began to meet secretly.

Return to Our Home Village

In 1947 my family and I returned to Mbreshtan. Shortly afterward, on a frigid December afternoon, I was called to the office of the *Sigurimi* (secret police). "Do you know why I've called you?" the officer asked.

"I imagine it is because you have heard accusations against me," I replied. "But the Bible says that the world would hate us, so accusations do not surprise me."—John 15:18, 19.

"Don't talk about the Bible to me," he snapped back. "I'll knock your head off."

The officer and his men left but told me to stand out in the cold. After a while he

called me back into his office and ordered me to stop holding meetings in our home. "How many live in your village?" he asked.

"One hundred and twenty," I said.

"What religion are they?"

"Albanian Orthodox."

"And you?"

"I'm one of Jehovah's Witnesses."

"One hundred and twenty people go one way and you go another?" Then he ordered me to burn candles in the church. When I said that I would not do it, he began beating me with a rod. It was about one o'clock in the morning when I was finally released.

Literature Supply Cut Off

After World War II ended, we again began receiving *The Watchtower* through the mail, but eventually the magazines were no longer delivered. Then, one night at ten o'clock, I was summoned by the secret police. "A magazine in Greek has arrived," I was told, "and we would like you to explain what it is all about."

"I don't know Greek very well," I said. "My neighbor knows it better. Perhaps he can help you."

"No, we want you to explain this," an officer said as he pulled out some Greek copies of *The Watchtower*.

"Oh, these are mine!" I exclaimed. "Of course, I can explain this. You see, these magazines come from Brooklyn, New York. That is where the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses is located. I'm one of Jehovah's Witnesses. But it looks as if they made a mistake with the address. These magazines should have been sent to me, not to you."

They would not give me the magazines, and from that time until 1991, well over 40 years later, we didn't receive any Bible literature in Albania. During all those years, we continued to preach, using our Bibles

only. About 20 Witnesses were in prison in 1949; some had five-year sentences.

Difficulties Increase

In the 1950's, people were ordered to carry documents showing that they supported the military. But Jehovah's Witnesses refused to carry such documents. Because of this, Brother Komino and I spent another two months in jail.

During the time the State permitted the existence of certain religions, we had a degree of freedom. However, in 1967 all religion was banned, making Albania officially a totally atheistic country. The Witnesses continued to try to hold meetings, but it became very difficult. Some of us sewed a special pocket into our jacket lining so that we could hide a small Bible. Then we would go out into a field to read it.

Witnesses in Tiranë were caught, and three were sentenced to five years in remote labor camps. As a result, their families suffered. Those of us from small, isolated villages were not sent away because we were not considered a serious threat. But our neutrality led to the removal of our names from food lists. Hence, life was very hard. Also, two more of our children died. Yet we never felt abandoned by Jehovah.

Fear was prevalent in Albania. Everyone was watched, and the secret police wrote up reports on anyone who dared to express an opinion different from that of the ruling party. So we were very cautious about making written reports about our activity. We could not meet for spiritual encouragement in groups larger than two or three. Still, we never stopped preaching.

In an effort to cause confusion among the brothers, the secret police spread the rumor that a prominent Witness in Tiranë was a spy. This caused some to lose confidence and

disturbed our unity somewhat. Because of being without any current Bible literature and having no contact with Jehovah's visible organization, a few succumbed to fear.

In addition, the authorities spread the rumor that Spiro Vruho, a highly respected Christian elder in Albania, had committed suicide. "You see," they said, "even Vruho has given up." It later became evident that Brother Vruho had actually been murdered.

In 1975, Argjiro and I stayed with our son in Tiranë for a few months. During election time, the authorities in the city pressured us by threatening: "If you don't vote, we will take your son's job away."

"My son has been at his job for 25 years," I replied. "You have detailed personal records about him and his family. I have not voted for over 40 years. This information is normally in personnel records. If it is not, then your records are not in order. If it is in your records, then you have been disloyal to the party by allowing him to work for so many years." Upon hearing this, the authorities said that if we returned to Mbreshtan, they would not press the issue.

Dramatic Changes

In 1983 we moved from Mbreshtan to the city of Laç. Shortly thereafter, in 1985, the dictator died. He had ruled since those first obligatory elections in 1946. In time, his statue, which dominated the main square in Tiranë, and that of Stalin were taken down.

During the decades of the ban upon our activity, many Witnesses were brutally treated, and some were killed. One man told some Witnesses on the street: "During the time of the Communists, all of us had forsaken God. Only Jehovah's Witnesses remained faithful to him despite the trials and hardships."

As more freedom was granted, nine reported activity in the Christian ministry in

June 1991. In June 1992, a month after the ban was lifted, 56 shared in the preaching work. Earlier that year we were overjoyed to have 325 attend the Memorial of Christ's death. Since then the number preaching has grown to over 600, and a total of 3,491 attended the Memorial on April 14, 1995! In recent years it has been an indescribable joy for me to see so many young ones being added to our congregations.

Argjiro has remained faithful to Jehovah and has been loyal to me all these many years. While I was in prison or traveling in the preaching work, she patiently cared for our family's needs without complaint. One of our sons and his wife were baptized in 1993. That made us so happy.

For God's Kingdom Only

I am delighted to see Jehovah's organization in Albania so unified and enjoying spiritual prosperity. I feel like the aged Simeon in Jerusalem who before he died was granted the precious privilege of seeing the long-promised Messiah. (Luke 2:30, 31) Now when I am asked which form of government I prefer, I say: "I prefer neither Communism nor capitalism. Whether the people or the State own the land is not important. Governments build roads, bring electricity to distant villages, and provide a measure of order. However, Jehovah's government, his heavenly Kingdom, is the only solution to the difficult problems that face Albania as well as the rest of the world."

What God's servants are doing earth wide in preaching about God's Kingdom is not the work of any human. This is God's work. We are his servants. Although we have had many difficulties in Albania and were long cut off from Jehovah's visible organization, we were never abandoned by him. His spirit was always here. He guided us every step of the way. I have seen this throughout my life.

"Handling the Word of the Truth Aright"



THE Word of God is a storehouse of principles that are vital for a successful life.

It can help a minister to teach, to reprove, and to correct. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) However, to benefit fully from this divinely provided guide, we must follow the apostle Paul's counsel to Timothy: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright."—2 Timothy 2:15.

God's Word is likened, among other things, to nourishing milk, solid food, refreshing and cleansing water, a mirror, and a sharp sword. Understanding what these terms imply helps a minister to use the Bible skillfully.

Dispensing the Milk of God's Word

Milk is the food that newborn babies need. As the babe grows, solid food is gradually introduced into its diet, but to begin with, it can digest only milk. In many respects, those who know little about God's Word are like babes. Whether a person is newly interested in God's Word or has been acquainted with it for some time, if he has no more than a rudimentary understanding of what the Bible says, he is a spiritual babe and needs easy-to-digest nourishment—spiritual "milk." He is not yet able to digest "solid food," the deep things of God's Word.—Hebrews 5:12.

This was the situation in the newly formed congregation in Corinth when Paul wrote to them: "I fed you milk, not some-

thing to eat, for you were not yet strong enough." (1 Corinthians 3:2) The Corinthians needed first to learn the "elementary things of the sacred pronouncements of God." (Hebrews 5:12) At their stage of development, they could not have digested "the deep things of God."—1 Corinthians 2:10.

Like Paul, Christian ministers today demonstrate their concern for spiritual babes by giving them "milk," that is, by helping them to become firmly founded in basic Christian doctrine. They encourage such new or immature ones to "form a longing for the unadulterated milk belonging to the word." (1 Peter 2:2) The apostle Paul showed that he discerned the specialized attention new ones need when he wrote: "Everyone that partakes of milk is unacquainted with the word of righteousness, for he is a babe." (Hebrews 5:13) Patience, consideration, understanding, and gentleness are required of ministers of God as they share the pure milk of the Word with new and inexperienced ones by home Bible studies and in the congregation.

Handling the Solid Food of God's Word

In order to grow to salvation, a Christian needs more than "milk." Once the primary truths of the Bible are clearly understood and accepted, he is ready to move on to the 'solid food that belongs to mature people.' (Hebrews 5:14) How can he do this? Basically, through a regular routine of personal study and association at Christian

meetings. Such good habits will help make a Christian spiritually strong, mature, and effective in the ministry. (2 Peter 1:8) We should not forget that in addition to knowledge, the doing of Jehovah's will also constitutes spiritual food.—John 4:34.

Today, a "faithful and discreet slave" has been appointed to supply God's servants with food at the proper time and to help them understand "the greatly diversified wisdom of God." Jehovah, by his spirit, reveals deep Scriptural truths by means of this loyal slave, which faithfully publishes spiritual "food at the proper time." (Matthew 24:45-47; Ephesians 3:10, 11; compare Revelation 1:1, 2.) Each individual Christian is responsible to make the fullest use of such published provisions.—Revelation 1:3.

Of course, some things in the Bible are "hard to understand," even for mature Christians. (2 Peter 3:16) There are puzzling sayings, prophecies, and illustrations that require much study and meditation. Hence, personal study includes digging into God's Word. (Proverbs 1:5, 6; 2:1-5) Elders especially have a responsibility in this regard when they teach the congregation. Whether conducting the Congregation Book Study or the *Watchtower* Study, giving public talks, or serving in any other teaching capacity, elders should be thoroughly familiar with their material and be ready to give attention to their "art of teaching" as they convey solid spiritual food to the congregation.—2 Timothy 4:2.

Water That Refreshes and Cleanses

Jesus told the Samaritan woman at the well that he would give her something to drink that would become in her "a fountain of water bubbling up to impart everlasting life." (John 4:13, 14; 17:3) This life-giving water includes all of God's provisions for gaining life through the Lamb of God, and

these provisions are explained in the Bible. As individuals who thirst for that "water," we accept the invitation given by the spirit and the bride of Christ to "take life's water free." (Revelation 22:17) Drinking this water can mean everlasting life.

Further, the Bible sets the moral and spiritual standards for true Christians. As we apply these divinely set standards, we are cleansed by Jehovah's Word, "washed clean" of all practices that Jehovah God hates. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) For this reason, the truth contained in the inspired Word is called a "bath of water." (Ephesians 5:26) If we do not allow God's truth to cleanse us in this way, our worship will not be acceptable to him.

Interestingly, elders who 'handle the word of truth aright' are also likened to water. Isaiah says that they are "like streams of water in a waterless country." (Isaiah 32:1, 2) Loving elders fulfill this description when they visit their brothers as spiritual shepherds, using God's refreshing Word to impart upbuilding, comforting, spiritual information that strengthens and fortifies.—Compare Matthew 11:28, 29.*

Congregation members look forward to visits by the elders. "I know how soothing the elders can be, and I'm so happy Jehovah has made this provision," says Bonnie. Lynda, a single mother, writes: "With Scriptural encouragement, elders helped me cope. They listened and showed compassion." Michael says: "They made me feel part of an organization that cared." "Elders' visits helped me overcome periods of severe depression," says another. A spiritually uplifting visit from an elder is like a cool, refreshing drink. Sheeplike ones are comforted as loving elders help them to see how Scrip-

* See the *Watchtower* article entitled "They Compassionately Shepherd the Little Sheep," September 15, 1993, pages 20-3.

tural principles apply to their situation.—Romans 1:11, 12; James 5:14.

Use God's Word as a Mirror

When an individual takes in solid food, the purpose is not just to enjoy the taste. Rather, he expects to get nourishment that will enable him to function. If he is a child, he expects that the food will help him to grow up to become an adult. It is similar with spiritual food. Personal Bible study can be enjoyable, but that is not the only reason for it. Spiritual food should change us. It helps us identify and produce the fruitage of the spirit and assists us to put on "the new personality, which through accurate knowledge is being made new according to the image of the One who created it." (Colossians 3:10; Galatians 5:22-24) Spiritual food also helps us to grow to maturity, making us better able to apply Scriptural principles in dealing with our problems and in helping others to deal with theirs.

How can we tell whether the Bible is having that effect on us? We use the Bible like a mirror. James said: "Become doers of the word, and not hearers only. . . . If anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, this one is like a man looking at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself, and off he goes and immediately forgets what sort of man he is. But he who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it."—James 1:22-25.

We 'peer' into God's Word when we examine it closely and compare what we are with what we should be according to God's stan-



Elders encourage others, "handling the word of the truth aright"

dards. Doing this, we will become "doers of the word, and not hearers only." The Bible will be having a fine effect on us.

God's Word as a Sword

Finally, the apostle Paul helps us to see how we can use God's Word as a sword. When warning us against "the governments, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places," he urges us to "accept . . . the sword of the spirit, that is, God's word." (Ephesians 6:12, 17) God's Word is an indispensable weapon that we can use to cut away at any ideas that are "raised up against the knowledge of God."—2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

Unquestionably, "the word of God is alive and exerts power." (Hebrews 4:12) Jehovah speaks to mankind through the pages of his inspired Word. Use it well in teaching others and in exposing false doctrines. Avail yourself of it to encourage, upbuild, refresh, comfort, motivate, and spiritually strengthen others. And may Jehovah "equip you with every good thing to do his will," so that you will always do what is "well-pleasing in his sight."—Hebrews 13:21.

A photograph showing a tank in the foreground, its long barrel pointing towards the left. In the background, a village with several white houses and red roofs is situated on a hillside. The scene is somewhat desaturated, with a blueish tint. The tank is a main battle tank, possibly a Soviet T-72, with a large turret and a long barrel. The village in the background has several houses with white walls and red roofs, some with balconies. The overall atmosphere is one of a conflict zone or a war-torn area.

Even in this troubled world,
you can gain happiness from accurate Bible knowledge of God, his Kingdom, and his wonderful purpose for mankind.