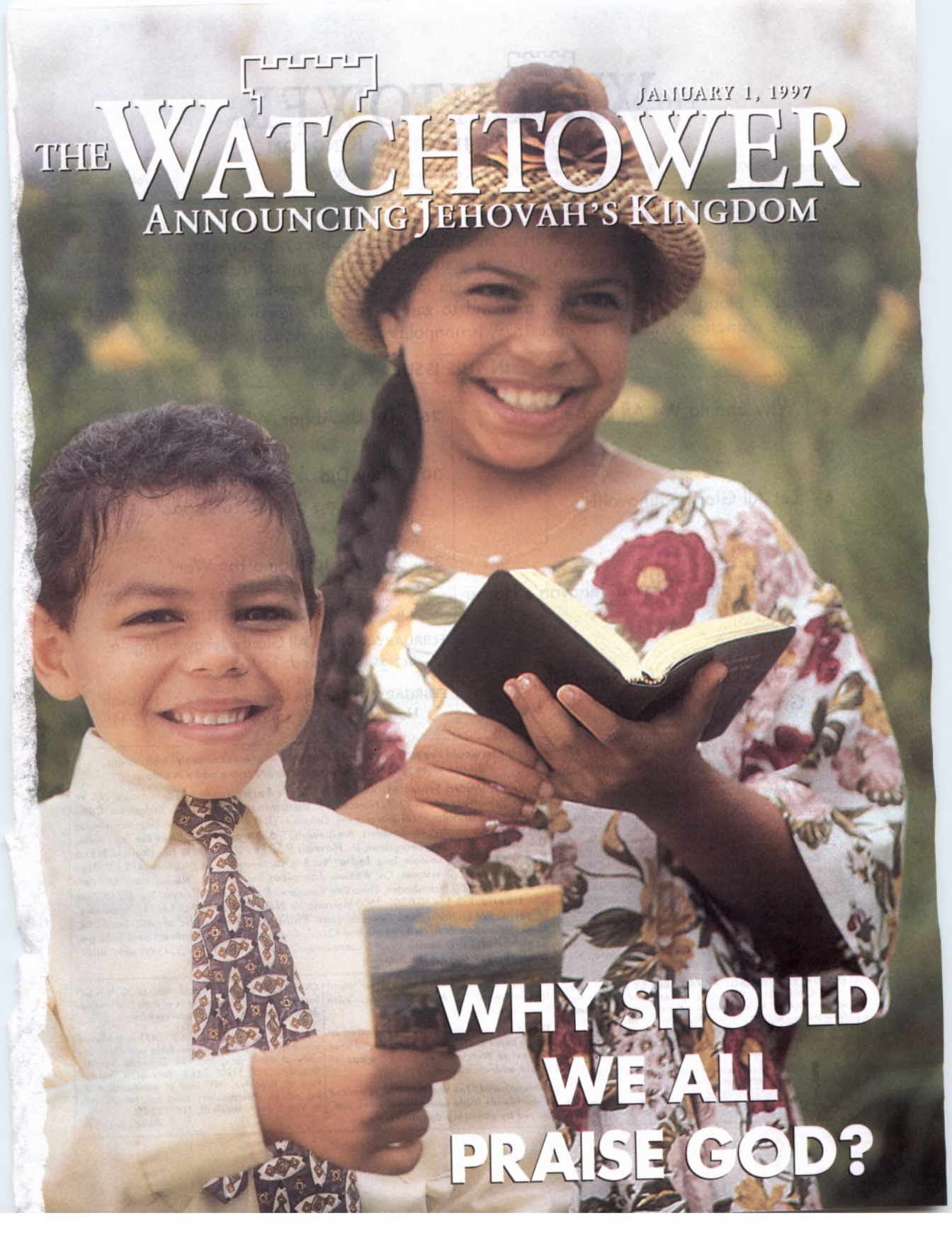


A photograph of a smiling woman and a young boy outdoors. The woman, wearing a straw hat and a floral dress, holds an open Bible. The boy, wearing a white shirt and a patterned tie, also holds a Bible. The background is a soft-focus green field.

THE WATCHTOWER

JANUARY 1, 1997

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**WHY SHOULD
WE ALL
PRAISE GOD?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

January 1, 1997

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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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Why Should We All Praise God?

HALLELUJAH! This word is well-known to most churchgoers in Christendom. Some of them shout it out loud in their Sunday services. How many, though, know what the word really means? In fact, it is Hebrew for "Praise Jah!" It is a joyful, ringing acclamation of the Creator, whose name is Jehovah.*

The word "Hallelujah" appears frequently in the Bible. Why? Because there are so many reasons to praise God. Jah (Jehovah) is the Creator and Sustainer of the vast universe. (Psalm 147:4, 5; 148:3-6) He originated the ecosystems that make life on earth possible. (Psalm 147:8, 9; 148:7-10) And he takes a special interest in mankind. If we do his will, he blesses and supports us in this life and offers us the certain hope of an even better life to come. (Psalm 148:11-14) It is Jah (Jehovah) who inspired the words: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." —Psalm 37:29.

Hence, the exhortation is directed to all: "Hallelujah!" "Praise Jah, you people!" (Psalm 104:35; footnote) Unhappily, though, not everyone feels like responding. Today, people are suffering. Many are hungry, sick, or oppressed. A number endure much grief because of misuse of drugs or alcohol or the results of their immorality or rebellion. Is there any reason why such ones should praise God?

'Only Jehovah Could Give Me Hope'

Yes, there is. Jehovah invites everyone without exception to get to know him, learn

* In the Bible, "Jehovah" is sometimes abbreviated "Jah."

to do his will, and enjoy the blessings that make people want to praise him. And many respond. Take, for example, Adriana in Guatemala. When Adriana was seven, her mother died. Shortly afterward her father left home. When she was ten, she began working for a living. Since her mother had told her to serve God and the church, Adriana associated with various Catholic groups, but by the time she was 12, she was disenchanted and joined a street gang. She began smoking, taking drugs, and stealing. Why would a young girl like that want to praise God?

Adriana's sister started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, but Adriana laughed at her. Then their aunt died. At her aunt's funeral, Adriana was vexed by troubling questions. Where did her aunt go? Was she in heaven? Did she go to a fiery hell? It was very confusing, and Adriana went to the cemetery chapel to pray for help, using God's name Jehovah, as her sister had taught her.

Soon she was studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and attending their Christian meetings. This opened up to her a whole new outlook on life, and she courageously broke her ties with the street gangs. Adriana, now in her mid-20's, says: "Only love for Jehovah made me leave such a bad way of life. Only Jehovah in his great mercy could give me the hope of everlasting life." Adriana, despite her difficult start in life, has excellent reasons to praise God.

An even more unpromising situation is reported from Ukraine. A man is sitting in prison awaiting execution. Is he self-pitying? Depressed? No, quite on the contrary. Having recently been contacted by

Jehovah's Witnesses and having gained some knowledge of Jehovah, he asked them to contact his mother. Now he is writing them because he has heard that they fulfilled his request. He says: "Thank you for visiting my mother. It was the most joyful news that I received in the last year."

Speaking of himself and the cellmates to whom he has witnessed, he writes: "Now we have faith in God and try to act according to our faith." He concludes his letter: "Thank you for helping us to learn what love is and to gain faith. If I stay alive, I will help you too. Thank God that you exist and that you are helping others to love God and believe in him." This man has appealed his death sentence. But whether he is executed or he spends many years in prison, he clearly has reason to praise God.

'Although I Am Blind, I Can See'

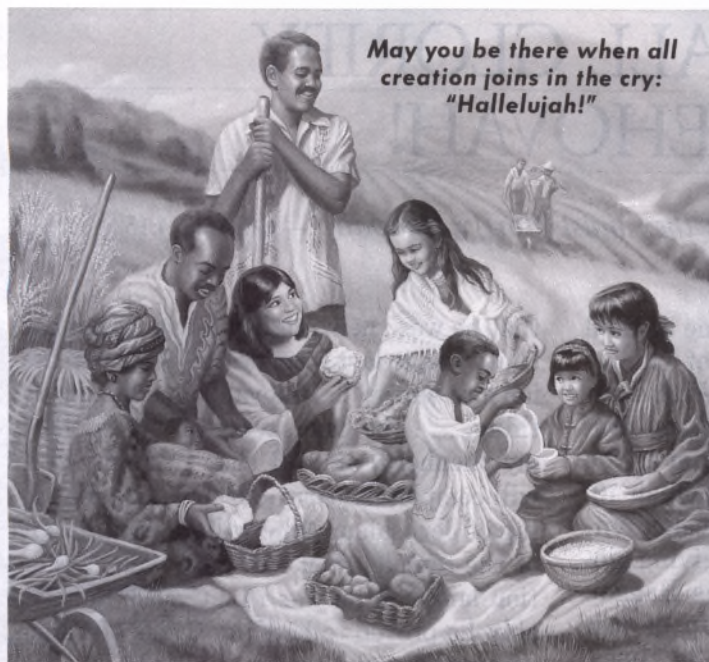
Consider, now, a vibrant teenage girl who suddenly loses her sight. That is what happened to Gloria, who lives in Argentina. Gloria suddenly went blind when she was 19 years old, and she never regained her sight. At age 29 she entered into concubinage with a man and soon became pregnant. Now she felt that her life had meaning. But when she lost her child, she began to ask questions. She wondered, 'Why is this happening to me? What have I done? Does God really exist?'

At this point, two Witnesses of Jehovah came to her door. She began to study the Bible and learned of its promise that in the new world, the blind will see again. (Isaiah 35:5) What a wonderful prospect for Gloria! She was very happy, especially when her husband consented to legalizing their marriage. Then her husband had an accident and became an invalid, confined to a wheelchair. Today this blind woman has to work hard to make ends meet. In addition, she

does all the work at home, as well as giving personal attention to her husband. Yet Gloria praises Jehovah! With the help of her Christian brothers and sisters, she studies the Braille Bible, and she is greatly encouraged by Christian meetings at the Kingdom Hall. She says: "It is difficult to explain, but although I am blind, it is as though I can see."

Sometimes people are persecuted when they praise God. A woman in Croatia was happy when she learned about God, but her husband was opposed to her newfound faith and rejected her, taking their one-year-old daughter. On the street, abandoned by husband and family, without a home, a job, or even her child, she was at first devastated. But her love of God sustained her, although she had only limited contact with her daughter until the little one grew up. This woman had found the "pearl of high value" and would not let go of it. (Matthew 13:45, 46) How did she maintain her joy through these difficult times? She says: "Joy is a fruit of God's spirit. It can be cultivated independent of external circumstances, just as plants can grow in a greenhouse whatever the weather is like outside."

In Finland, six-year-old Markus was diagnosed with an incurable muscle disease. Soon he was confined to a wheelchair. A few years later, his mother took him to a Pentecostal who was gaining wide publicity by claiming to cure sick people. But there was no miraculous healing. So Markus lost interest in God and pursued studies in science and other secular fields. Then about five years ago, a woman in a wheelchair accompanied by a young man came to the house where Markus lived. They were Jehovah's Witnesses. Markus was now an atheist, but he had no objection to discussing religion and invited them in.



Later, a married couple visited him, and a Bible study was started. Eventually, the power of Bible truth changed Markus' view of things, and he realized that despite his disability, he really did have reasons to praise God. He said: "I am very happy because I have found the truth and the organization that Jehovah is using. My life now has direction and meaning. Another lost sheep has been found and does not want to leave Jehovah's flock!"—Compare Matthew 10:6.

Let All "Praise Jah"

These are just a few of the countless experiences that can be related to show that humans today, no matter what their circumstances, can have reason to praise God. The apostle Paul explained it this way: "Godly devotion is beneficial for all things, as it holds promise of the life now and that which is to come." (1 Timothy 4:8) If we do God's will, he will fulfill the "promise of

the life now." Of course, he will not in this system of things make the poor rich or the sick healthy. But he gives his spirit to those who serve him so that they find joy and contentment whatever their external situation. Yes, even in "the life now," the sick, the oppressed, and the poor can have reason to praise God.

But what of the life "which is to come"? Why, the very thought of it should make us praise God with the greatest enthusiasm! We thrill to think of the time when poverty will be unknown; when "no resident will say: 'I am sick'"; and when 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." (Isaiah 33:24; Revelation 21:3, 4; Psalm 72:16) How do you view these promises from God?

A young man in El Salvador accepted a Bible tract that explained some of these things. He said to the Witness who gave it to him, "Lady, what this tract says is just too good to be true." Many react that way. Yet, these are promises of the One who created the universe, who set in motion the natural cycles of our earth, and who helps even the poor and the sick to find joy. We can believe what he says. The above-mentioned young man studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and found this to be true. If you are not already doing this, we encourage you to do the same. Then, may you be there when this present system of things has passed away, and all creation joins in the cry: "Hallelujah!" "Praise Jah, you people!"—Psalm 112:1; 135:1.

LET ALL GLORIFY JEHOVAH!

"In the region of light they must glorify Jehovah."—ISAIAH 24:15.

JEHOVAH—the illustrious name of God! How the faithful prophets of old rejoiced to speak in that name! With exultation they glorified their Sovereign Lord, Jehovah, whose name identifies him as the Great Purposer. (Isaiah 40:5; Jeremiah 10:6, 10; Ezekiel 36:23) Even the so-called minor prophets were most vocal in giving glory to Jehovah. One of these was Haggai. In the book of Haggai, made up of just 38 verses, God's name is used 35 times. Such prophecy sounds lifeless when the precious name Jehovah is replaced by the title "Lord," as the superfine apostles of Christendom render it in their Bible translations.—Compare 2 Corinthians 11:5.

² At Isaiah 12:2, a double form of the name is used. * The prophet declares: "Look! God is my salvation. I shall trust and be in no dread; for Jah Jehovah is my strength and my might, and he came to be the salvation of me." (See also Isaiah 26:4.) Thus, some 200 years before Israel's release from Babylonish captivity, Jah Jehovah through his prophet Isaiah was giving assurance

* The expression "Jah Jehovah" is used for special emphasis. See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, page 1248.

1. How was Jehovah's name regarded by his prophets, contrasting with what attitude in Christendom today?

2, 3. (a) How was one remarkable prophecy concerning Israel's restoration fulfilled? (b) In what joy did the Jewish remnant and their companions share?

that he was their mighty Savior. That captivity was to last from 607 to 537 B.C.E. Isaiah also wrote: "I, Jehovah, am doing everything, . . . the One saying of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and all that I delight in he will completely carry out'; even in my saying of Jerusalem, 'She will be rebuilt,' and of the temple, 'You will have your foundation laid.'" Who was this Cyrus? Remarkably, he proved to be King Cyrus of Persia, who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.E.—Isaiah 44:24, 28.

³ True to Jehovah's words recorded by Isaiah, Cyrus issued to captive Israel the decree: "Whoever there is among you of all his people, may his God prove to be with him. So let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of Jehovah the God of Israel—he is the true God—which was in Jerusalem." A supremely happy Jewish remnant along with the non-Israelite Nethinim and the sons of the servants of Solomon returned to Jerusalem. They arrived in time to celebrate the Festival of Booths in 537 B.C.E. and make sacrifices to Jehovah at his altar. The next year, in the second month, they laid the foundation of the second temple, amid loud shouts of joy and praise to Jehovah.—Ezra 1:1-4; 2:1, 2, 43, 55; 3:1-6, 8, 10-13.

⁴ Jehovah's restoration prophecy was to

4. How did Isaiah chapters 35 and 55 become a reality?



**Heavenly armies of
Jehovah direct and sustain
his Witnesses on earth**

be gloriously fulfilled in Israel: "The wilderness and the waterless region will exult, and the desert plain will be joyful and blossom as the saffron. . . . There will be those who will see the glory of Jehovah, the splendor of our God." "With rejoicing you people will go forth, and with peace you will be brought in. The mountains and the hills themselves will become cheerful before you with a joyful outcry. . . . And

it must become for Jehovah something famous, a sign to time indefinite that will not be cut off.”—Isaiah 35:1, 2; 55:12, 13.

⁵ However, that joy was short-lived. Neighboring peoples sought an interfaith alliance for building the temple. The Jews at first stood their ground, declaring: “You have nothing to do with us in building a house to our God, for we ourselves shall together build to Jehovah the God of Israel, just as King Cyrus the king of Persia has commanded us.” Those neighbors now became bitter opposers. They “were continually weakening the hands of the people of Judah and disheartening them from building.” They also misrepresented the situation to Cyrus’ successor, Artaxerxes, who issued a ban on the temple building. (Ezra 4:1-24) For 17 years the work lapsed. Unhappily, the Jews fell into a materialistic way of life during that time.

“Jehovah of Armies” Speaks

⁶ Even so, Jehovah displayed ‘his strength and his might’ in Israel’s behalf by sending prophets, notably Haggai and Zechariah, to awaken the Jews to their responsibilities. Haggai’s name has a festal connection, for it appears to mean “Born on a Festival.” Appropriately, he began to prophesy on the first day of the month of the Festival of Booths, at which time the Jews were required to “become nothing but joyful.” (Deuteronomy 16:15) Through Haggai, Jehovah delivered four messages over a period of 112 days.—Haggai 1:1; 2:1, 10, 20.

⁷ Introducing his prophecy, Haggai said: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said.”

5. Why was Israel’s joy short-lived?

6. (a) How did Jehovah respond to the situation in Israel? (b) Why is the apparent meaning of Haggai’s name appropriate?

7. How should Haggai’s opening words encourage us?

(Haggai 1:2a) Who might those “armies” be? They are Jehovah’s angelic hosts, sometimes referred to in the Bible as military forces. (Job 1:6; 2:1; Psalm 103:20, 21; Matthew 26:53) Does it not encourage us today that the Sovereign Lord Jehovah himself is using these invincible celestial forces to direct our work of restoring true worship in the earth?—Compare 2 Kings 6:15-17.

⁸ What was the content of Haggai’s first message? The people had said: “The time has not come, the time of the house of Jehovah, for it to be built.” No longer was temple construction, representing the restoration of divine worship, their first concern. They had turned to building palatial homes for themselves. A materialistic outlook had diminished their enthusiasm for Jehovah’s worship. As a result, his blessing had been removed. Their fields were no longer fruitful, and they lacked clothing for the harsh wintertime. Their income had become meager, and it was as though they were putting money in a bag full of holes.—Haggai 1:2b-6.

⁹ Twice, Jehovah gave the strong admonition: “Set your heart upon your ways.” Evidently, Zerubbabel, the governor of Jerusalem, and high priest Joshua* responded and valiantly encouraged all the people “to listen to the voice of Jehovah their God, and to the words of Haggai the prophet, as Jehovah their God had sent him; and the people began to fear because of Jehovah.” Moreover, “Haggai the messenger of Jehovah went on to say to the people according to the messenger’s commission from Jehovah, saying: “‘I am with you people,’ is the utterance of Jehovah.”—Haggai 1:5, 7-14.

* Jeshua in Ezra and other Bible books.

8. What outlook had affected Israel, and with what result?

9. What strong, upbuilding admonition did Jehovah provide?

¹⁰ Some old-timers in Jerusalem might have reckoned that the glory of the rebuilt temple would be “nothing” in comparison with that of the former temple. However, about 51 days later, Jehovah moved Haggai to declare a second message. He proclaimed: “‘Be strong, O Zerubbabel,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘and be strong, O Joshua the son of Jehozadak the high priest. And be strong, all you people of the land,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘and work. For I am with you people,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies. . . . ‘Do not be afraid.’” Jehovah, who in due course would use his almighty power to ‘rock heaven and earth,’ saw to it that all opposition, even an imperial ban, was overcome. Within five years the temple building was brought to grand success.—Haggai 2:3-6.

¹¹ A remarkable promise was then fulfilled: “‘The desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory,’ Jehovah of armies has said.” (Haggai 2:7) Those “desirable things” proved to be non-Israelites who came to worship at that temple, as it reflected the glory of his majestic presence. How did this rebuilt temple compare with that constructed in Solomon’s day? God’s prophet declared: “‘Greater will the glory of this later house become than that of the former,’ Jehovah of armies has said.” (Haggai 2:9) In the initial fulfillment of the prophecy, the rebuilt temple remained longer than the first house. It was still standing when Messiah appeared in 29 C.E. Further, before his apostate enemies had him murdered in 33 C.E., Messiah himself brought it glory when he preached truth there.

10. How did Jehovah use his power in Israel’s behalf?

11. How did God fill the second temple with ‘greater glory’?

¹² The first and second temples in Jerusalem served a vital purpose in foreshadowing important features of Messiah’s priestly service and in keeping Jehovah’s pure worship alive in the earth until Messiah’s actual appearance.—Hebrews 10:1.

The Glorious Spiritual Temple

¹³ Does Haggai’s restoration prophecy have special meaning for later times? It certainly does! The rebuilt temple in Jerusalem became the focus of all true worship on earth. But it prefigured a far more glorious spiritual temple. This began to function in 29 C.E. when, at Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan River, Jehovah anointed Jesus as High Priest, holy spirit descending upon him like a dove. (Matthew 3:16) After Jesus had completed his earthly ministry in sacrificial death, he was resurrected to heaven, pictured by the Most Holy of the temple, and there he presented to Jehovah the merit of his sacrifice. This served as a ransom, covering the sins of his disciples, and opened the way for anointing them, on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., as

12. What purpose did the first two temples serve?

13. (a) What events with regard to the spiritual temple took place from 29 to 33 C.E.? (b) What essential role did Jesus’ ransom sacrifice play in these developments?

In Our Next Issue

**Messengers of Peace
—Who Are They?**

What Does God Require of Us?

Enoch—Fearless Against All Odds

underpriests in Jehovah's spiritual temple. Their faithful ministry to the death in the temple courtyard on earth would lead to a future heavenly resurrection, for continued priestly service.

¹⁴ Thousands of repentant Jews—and later Gentiles—flocked to that Christian congregation and shared in declaring the good news of God's coming Kingdom rule over earth. After some 30 years, the apostle Paul could state that the good news had been preached "in all creation that is under heaven." (Colossians 1:23) But following the death of the apostles, a great apostasy set in, and the light of truth began to flicker. Genuine Christianity was overshadowed by Christendom's sectarianism, based on pagan teachings and philosophies.—Acts 20:29, 30.

¹⁵ Centuries passed. Then in the 1870's, a group of sincere Christians began to engage in a penetrating study of the Bible. From Scripture, they were able to pinpoint the year 1914 as marking the conclusion of "the appointed times of the nations." It was then that seven symbolic "times" (2,520 years of beastlike human rule) ended with the heavenly enthronement of Christ Jesus—the One having "the legal right" as earth's Messianic King. (Luke 21:24; Daniel 4:25; Ezekiel 21:26, 27) Particularly from 1919 onward, these Bible Students, known today as Jehovah's Witnesses, have been engaged in vigorously spreading throughout the earth the good news of the incoming Kingdom. It was in 1919 that a few thousand of these answered the call to action that was issued at the convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A. They increased in

14. (a) What joy accompanied the zealous activity of the early Christian congregation? (b) Why was this rejoicing short-lived?

15, 16. (a) How was prophecy fulfilled in 1914? (b) What ingathering marked the late 19th and early 20th centuries?

number down to the year 1935 when 56,153 reported field service. In that year, 52,465 had partaken of the emblems of bread and wine at the annual Memorial of Jesus' death, thus symbolizing their hope of becoming priests with Christ Jesus in the heavenly part of Jehovah's great spiritual temple. They are to serve with him also as associate kings in his Messianic Kingdom.—Luke 22:29, 30; Romans 8:15-17.

¹⁶ However, Revelation 7:4-8 and 14:1-4 show that the total number of these anointed Christians is limited to 144,000, many of whom were gathered in during the first century before the great apostasy set in. From the end of the 19th century and on into the 20th, Jehovah has been completing the gathering of this group who are cleansed by the water of his Word, declared righteous through faith in Jesus' atoning sacrifice, and finally sealed as anointed Christians to make up the full number of 144,000.

¹⁷ What follows when the entire number of anointed ones has been chosen? In 1935, at a landmark convention in Washington, D.C., U.S.A., it was made known that the "great crowd" of Revelation 7:9-17 was a group to be recognized "after" the 144,000 and whose destiny is everlasting life in a paradise earth. After clearly identifying the anointed Jesus, John the Baptizer, whose resurrection will be on earth as one of the "other sheep," said of Messiah: "That one must go on increasing, but I must go on decreasing." (John 1:29; 3:30; 10:16; Matthew 11:11) John the Baptizer's work of preparing disciples for Messiah was ending as Jesus then took over the selection of an increasing number who would be among the 144,000. In the 1930's the

17. (a) What ingathering has proceeded since the 1930's? (b) Why is John 3:30 of interest here? (See also Luke 7:28.)

reverse took place. A decreasing number were “called and chosen” to be among the 144,000 whereas a tremendous increase began in the number of the “great crowd” of “other sheep.” This great crowd continues to multiply as the world’s wicked system nears its end at Armageddon.—Revelation 17:14b.

¹⁸ In the early 1920’s, a featured public talk presented by Jehovah’s Witnesses was entitled “Millions Now Living Will Never Die.” This may have reflected overoptimism at that time. But today that statement can be made with full confidence. Both the increasing light on Bible prophecy and the anarchy of this dying world cry out that the end of Satan’s system is very, very near! The Memorial report for 1996 shows that 12,921,933 attended, of whom only 8,757 (.068 percent) indicated their heavenly hope by partaking of the emblems. The restoration of true worship nears completion. But let us never slack the hand in that work. Yes, Haggai 2:4 states: “Be

18. (a) Why can we confidently expect that “millions now living will never die”? (b) Why should we zealously heed Haggai 2:4?

Questions for Review

- ☐ What example of the prophets should we follow with regard to Jehovah’s name?
- ☐ What encouragement do we gather from Jehovah’s powerful message to restored Israel?
- ☐ What glorious spiritual temple operates today?
- ☐ What ingatherings have proceeded in order during the 19th and 20th centuries, with what grand prospect in view?

strong, all you people of the land,’ is the utterance of Jehovah, ‘and work. For I am with you people,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies.” May we be determined that no strains of materialism or worldliness will ever dampen our zeal for Jehovah’s work!—1 John 2:15-17.

¹⁹ Joyous is our privilege of sharing in the modern-day fulfillment of Haggai 2:6, 7: “This is what Jehovah of armies has said, ‘Yet once—it is a little while—and I am rocking the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry ground. And I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory,’ Jehovah of armies has said.” Greed, corruption, and hatred are running rampant throughout this 20th-century world. It is indeed in its last days, and Jehovah has already begun to “rock” it by having his Witnesses ‘proclaim his day of vengeance.’ (Isaiah 61:2) This preliminary rocking will climax with the world’s destruction at Armageddon, but before that time, Jehovah is drawing out for his service “the desirable things of all the nations”—the meek, sheeplike people of earth. (John 6:44) This “great crowd” now ‘renders sacred service’ in the earthly courtyard of his house of worship.—Revelation 7:9, 15.

²⁰ Service in Jehovah’s spiritual temple brings gain more precious than any material treasure. (Proverbs 2:1-6; 3:13, 14; Matthew 6:19-21) Moreover, Haggai 2:9 states: “‘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,’ is the utterance of Jehovah of armies.” What do these words mean for us today? Our next article will tell.

19. How may we share in the fulfillment of Haggai 2:6, 7?

20. Where is the most precious treasure to be found?

THE GREATER GLORY OF JEHOVAH'S HOUSE

"I will fill this house with glory," Jehovah of armies has said."

—HAGGAI 2:7.

WHILE preaching from house to house, one of Jehovah's Witnesses met a Pentecostal lady who commented, 'We have holy spirit, but you are the ones doing the work.' Tactfully, it was explained to her that one who has holy spirit will, as a matter of course, be motivated to do God's work. James 2:17 states: "Faith, if it does not have works, is dead in itself." With the help of Jehovah's spirit, his Witnesses have cultivated strong faith, and he has 'filled his house with glory' by setting them to doing righteous works—principally 'preaching this good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations.' When this work is done to Jehovah's satisfaction, "then the end will come."—Matthew 24:14.

² From these words of Jesus, we gather that our work today must focus on preaching to others "the glorious good news of the happy God," with which we are entrusted. (1 Timothy 1:11) The more we happily immerse ourselves in Jehovah's service, the faster the end will appear to come. At Habakkuk 2:2, 3, we read Jehovah's words: "Write down the vision, and set it out plainly upon tablets, in order that the one reading aloud from it may do so fluently. For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and

it keeps panting on to the end, and it will not tell a lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late." Yes, "the vision" will come true "even if it should delay." In this the 83rd year of Jesus' Kingdom rule, some may feel that we are in a period of delay right now. Should we not be happy, though, that the end has not yet come? During this decade of the 1990's, restrictions on preaching the good news have been lifted, miraculously it would seem, in Eastern Europe, parts of Africa, and other lands. The apparent "delay" is allowing time for many more "sheep" to be gathered from these territories that have recently opened up.—John 10:16.

³ "It will not be late," says the prophet. Jesus said that the present wicked generation would not pass away until "all these things occur." (Matthew 24:34) Does our updated understanding of his words mean that our preaching activity is not so pressing?* The facts show that just the opposite is the case! Our contemporary generation is plunging into a state of wickedness and corruption unparalleled in all previous histo-

* See "Saved From a 'Wicked Generation'" and "A Time to Keep Awake" in the November 1, 1995, issue of *The Watchtower*.

1. How is holy spirit related to faith and work?
2. (a) Immersing ourselves in Jehovah's work will bring what blessing? (b) Why should we be happy about any apparent "delay"?

3. Why should our updated understanding on "this generation" stimulate us to be at God's work urgently?

ry. (Compare Acts 2:40.) We should be at our work urgently. (2 Timothy 4:2) All the prophecies on the timing of the great tribulation show that it will come suddenly, instantly, stealthily—like a thief. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4; Revelation 3:3; 16:15) “On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming.” (Matthew 24:44) As this godless generation of mankind hovers on the brink of annihilation, surely we should not want to throw away our precious hope of eternal life by returning to “rolling in the mire” of worldly distractions! —2 Peter 2:22; 3:10; Luke 21:32-36.

⁴ True to Jesus’ prophecy, in 1914 there was “a beginning of pangs of distress” as mankind entered “the conclusion of the system of things.” Sorrows, catastrophic events, and lawlessness have multiplied down to this day. (Matthew 24:3-8, 12) At the same time, Jehovah has commissioned the anointed faithful and discreet slave class to provide spiritual “food at the proper time” for the household of their Master, Christ. (Matthew 24:45-47) From his throne in the heavens, this Messianic King is now directing a marvelous spiritual feeding program throughout the earth.

Plentiful “Food Supplies”

⁵ Consider the preparation of “food supplies.” (Luke 12:42) The basic item on the Christian menu is God’s Word, the Bible. To teach the Bible effectively, a readable, accurate translation is a primary need. Over the years this need has been progressively fulfilled, especially starting in 1950 when the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* was released in English.

4. What situation has called for increased supplies of “food at the proper time,” and how has this need been met?

5. The basic item of “food” is receiving what attention?

By 1961 the *New World Translation* of the entire Bible had become available, and editions soon appeared in other principal languages. The 3 volumes released during the 1996 service year bring the total up to 27, of which 14 are the complete Bible. In order to handle this work on the Bible, as well as on Bible helps, some 1,174 dedicated Christians are now working full-time on translation in 77 countries.

⁶ Backing up the work of this army of translators, the Watch Tower Society’s 24 printing branches have been producing publications in ever greater volume. To this end, additional high-speed rotary presses continue to be installed in principal branches. Production of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines has grown month by month, reaching a combined total of 943,892,500 copies, a 13.4-percent increase for the year. Total production of Bibles and hardbound books in the United States, Brazil, Finland, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, and Mexico alone has increased by 40 percent from 1995 to 76,760,098 copies in 1996. Other branches have also made a considerable contribution to the overall increase in literature production.

⁷ Much of the increase has been made necessary during the 1990’s by the removal of restrictions on Jehovah’s Witnesses in Eastern Europe and Africa. The hunger for spiritual food is great in these places. Therefore the call sounds forth with ever greater urgency: “Make the place of your tent more spacious. And let them stretch out the tent cloths of your grand tabernacle. Do not hold back. Lengthen out your tent cords, and make those tent pins of yours strong.”—Isaiah 54:2.

6. How has the Society met the demand for Bible publications?

7. How does Isaiah 54:2 take on greater urgency now?

⁸ Thus, it has been necessary to expand facilities in many of the Society's 104 branches. Because of the harsh economic conditions in most newly opened territories, a large part of the expense for this expansion is being covered by contributions to the worldwide work from more affluent lands. Happily, congregations and individuals have been responding wholeheartedly, in the spirit of Exodus 35:21: "Then they came, everyone whose heart impelled him, and they brought, everyone whose spirit incited him, Jehovah's contribution for the work." We take this opportunity to thank all who have been sharing in this generous giving.—2 Corinthians 9:11.

⁹ During 1996 the publications of the Watch Tower Society have indeed glorified Jehovah's name and purposes to the ends of the earth. It is just as the apostle Paul foretold. Quoting Joel's prophecy and the 19th Psalm, he wrote: "'Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.' Nevertheless I ask, They did not fail to hear, did they? Why, in fact, 'into all the earth their sound went out, and to the extremities of the inhabited earth their utterances.'" (Romans 10:13, 18) By thus extolling the precious name *Jehovah*, his people have played a significant part in filling his house of worship with glory. How, though, has this proclamation prospered specifically during 1996? Please examine the chart that follows on pages 18 to 21.

Harvesting Worldwide

¹⁰ Never have Jesus' words found at Luke 10:2 carried greater force: "The harvest,

8. What generous response is helping to provide financial support?

9. How is Romans 10:13, 18 being fulfilled today?

10. What outstanding features do you note in the activity of Jehovah's people, as summarized in the chart on pages 18 to 21?

indeed, is great, but the workers are few. Therefore beg the Master of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest." Are you responding to that call? Millions around the earth are. This is borne out by the new peak of 5,413,769 Kingdom publishers who reported field service during 1996. Further, 366,579 new brothers and sisters were baptized. How we treasure these "desirable things of all the nations," who now share in 'filling Jehovah's house of worship with glory'!—Haggai 2:7.

¹¹ Reports of expansion in newly opened fields are nothing short of phenomenal. Are others of us envious of those who now enjoy such growth? On the contrary, we rejoice with them. All countries had small beginnings. Haggai's contemporary prophet, Zechariah, wrote: "Who has despised the day of small things?" (Zechariah 4:10) We are overjoyed that in lands where the witness work is well established, there are now millions of Kingdom publishers, and territory is covered often, even every week in many large cities. Do we have reason to slack the hand while Jehovah now extends the opportunity for salvation to areas formerly disadvantaged? Never! "The field is the world," said Jesus. (Matthew 13:38) A thorough witness must continue to be given, just as the early disciples gave a thorough witness at the conclusion of the Jewish system of things.—Acts 2:40; 10:42; 20:24; 28:23.

Moving Ever Forward

¹² Yes, we must keep pace, moving "straight forward" with the angelic celestial chariot of Jehovah. (Ezekiel 1:12) We have in mind the words of Peter: "Jehovah is not

11. Why do all of us have reason to be overjoyed?

12. What incentive do we have to move "straight forward"? (See also box, "Harvesting 'From the Extremity of the Earth.'")

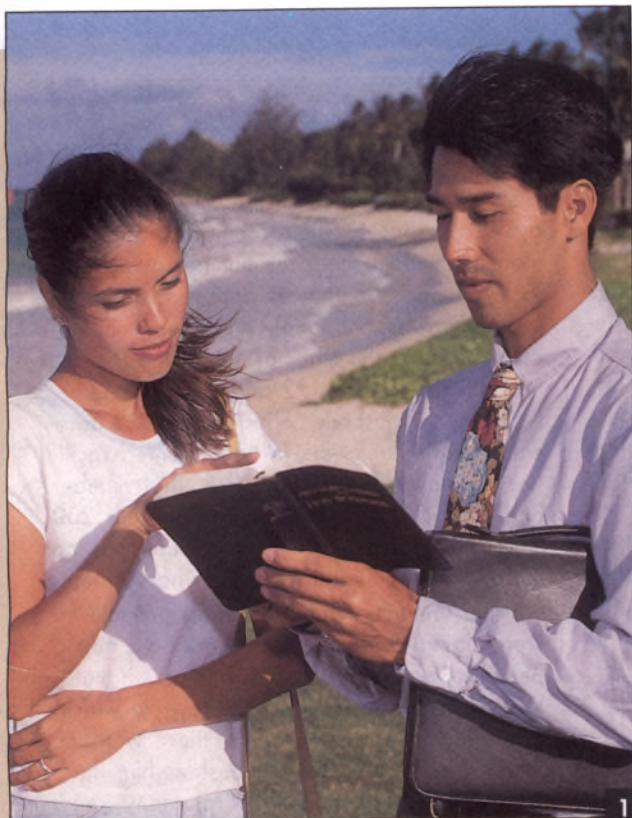
Harvesting "From the Extremity of the Earth"

AT Isaiah 43:6, we read Jehovah's command: "Do not keep back. Bring my sons from far off, and my daughters from the extremity of the earth." This scripture is having exceptional fulfillment today in Eastern Europe. Take for example, the formerly Communist country of Moldova. There are villages where up to half the population are now Witnesses. They have to travel long distances to find territory for preaching, but they are making the effort! Many publishers in these congregations are the offspring of parents who were exiled to Siberia in the early 1950's. Now their families are spearheading the harvest work. Of the 12,565 publishers, 1,917 were baptized this past year. Forty-three of the congregations have about 150 publishers each, and circuits have increased from four to eight in the new service year.

Remarkable, too, is the expansion in Albania. There a handful of loyal Witnesses endured the cruelest of dictatorships through some 50 years. A number of them were killed. This brings to mind Jesus' promise: "Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer. Look! The Devil will keep on throwing some of you into prison that you may be fully put to the test . . . Prove yourself faithful even to death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Revelation 2:10; see also John 5:28, 29; 11:24, 25.) What do we now see in Albania? Truly a striking fulfillment of Jehovah's promise found at Isaiah 60:22: "The little one himself will become a thousand"! In 1990 only one publisher reported service in Albania. However, more "workers" from Italy and other lands answered Jesus' call: "Go therefore and make disciples of people . . . , baptizing them." (Matthew 28:19; Luke 10:2) By the time of the Memorial of Jesus' death in 1996, 773 publishers were active in the field, and these gathered

6,523 persons to their Memorial meetings, more than eight times the number of publishers! Amazing attendances were reported from isolated areas. Although there were no local publishers, the cities of Kukës and Divjakë had attendances of 192 and 230 respectively. Krujë, with just one publisher, had 212 present. The 30 publishers in Korçë rented facilities for upwards of 300. After that number had packed into the auditorium, another 200 had to be turned away since there was no more space. Truly a field ripe for harvesting!

From Romania comes this report: "While we were doing house-to-house work, we met a person who said that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses and lived in a small town in which, according to our knowledge, there were no Witnesses. He told us that besides him there were 15 other persons who for many years had been holding meetings on Thursdays and Sundays and that they had started preaching from house to house. The following day we went to that town. Waiting for us in two rooms were 15 men, women, and children who accepted 20 books and 20 of the latest magazines. We showed them how to conduct Bible studies. We sang together and answered their most urgent questions. The one taking the lead in the group confessed: 'A few days ago, I prayed with tears to Jehovah to send us a shepherd, and my prayer has been answered.' We were extremely happy, and upon our departure, like an orphan who finally found a father, he said: 'Please do not forget us. Come and see us again!' We did that, and now seven Bible studies are being conducted in that town. In many virgin territories, the work starts in a wonderful way with Bible literature, which is much appreciated, and this shows that the work is of divine source."



"The desirable things of all the nations" are being gathered in the Islands of the Sea (1), South America (2), Africa (3), Asia (4), North America (5), and Europe (6)



slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Let the exemplary zeal of our brothers in economically poor lands spur us on. Any apparent delay in the outbreak of Armageddon is allowing for hundreds of thousands to be gathered in these lands as well as many in well-worked territories. Make no mistake about it: "The great day of Jehovah is near. It is near, and there is a hurrying of it very much." (Zephaniah 1:14) There should be hurrying on our part too in giving a thorough final witness!

¹³ Though the details do not appear in the service chart, there has been noteworthy increase in the distribution of Bibles, books, and magazines during the past year. For example, magazine placements worldwide showed a 19-percent increase, a total of 543,667,923 copies being placed. Our magazines lend themselves to versatile preaching—on streets, in parks, at bus stops, in business areas. Reports indicate that in some territories saturated by Kingdom preach-

13, 14. (a) What can be said of the distribution of publications during 1996? (b) What special plans may congregations make each year, and how are you planning to have a share?



ing, professional people have been impressed by the quality of our magazines and are accepting Bible studies.

¹⁴ Each year during the month of April, congregations usually organize special magazine activity, featuring a day-long campaign from house to house and in public places. Will your congregation share in this during April 1997? Outstanding April issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* have been prepared, and their simultaneous presentation worldwide should certainly make its mark! In the island of Cyprus, the congregations, taking as their slogan “reach everyone possible with the Kingdom mes-

sage,” even followed through every month with such scheduled magazine work, reaching a new peak of 275,359 placed for the year, a 54-percent increase.

Haggai's Final Messages

¹⁵ Jehovah sent Haggai, 63 days after he had conveyed his second message, with a third proclamation that we can well take to heart today. Haggai spoke as though the Jews were then laying the temple foundation, which they had actually laid 17 years

15. (a) Why did Jehovah send further messages through Haggai? (b) What lesson should Haggai's third message convey to us?

1996 SERVICE YEAR REPORT OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES WORLDWIDE

Country or Territory	Population	1996 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1996 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1995	1995 Av. Pubs.	1996 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
Alaska	635,597	2,224	286	2,122	-1*	2,146	107	174	28	333,925	866	4,583
Albania	3,262,000	908	3,593	759	52	500	273	261	16	422,804	2,012	6,523
American Samoa	58,070	195	298	180	-1*	182	4	26	3	47,419	206	589
Andorra	63,859	161	397	140	2	137	7	19	2	32,942	74	282
Angola	11,558,000	28,969	399	27,189	10	24,619	3,638	2,957	405	7,455,330	61,581	108,394
Anguilla	7,000	26	269	26	-4*	27		3	1	4,916	30	143
Antigua	65,952	328	201	309	2	304	25	41	5	67,511	326	895
Argentina	33,180,171	114,459	290	111,468	4	107,154	7,479	11,682	1,645	22,867,655	88,333	241,180
Aruba	83,651	544	154	518	3	503	29	26	8	80,614	483	1,697
Australia	18,173,600	61,580	295	60,216	1	59,474	2,373	5,153	758	11,204,410	27,505	100,246
Austria	8,039,865	20,904	385	20,664	0	20,598	740	1,534	297	3,717,655	9,996	33,121
Azores	242,505	578	420	557	1	554	38	53	18	109,355	429	1,218
Bahamas	255,055	1,415	180	1,334	2	1,306	76	171	23	301,769	1,558	3,241
Bangladesh	128,377,840	53	2,422,223	45	13	40	10	6	1	11,273	79	198
Barbados	253,000	2,188	116	2,140	3	2,072	105	217	24	403,053	1,976	5,135
Belau	17,283	64	270	56	2	55	4	18	1	23,127	131	257
Belgium	10,143,047	27,276	393	26,654	-1*	26,853	972	1,830	369	4,578,459	10,628	48,392
Belize	216,500	1,122	193	1,048	-2*	1,067	80	131	23	231,269	1,227	4,616
Benin	4,915,555	4,831	1,018	4,619	14	4,067	444	610	98	1,207,088	7,334	19,296
Bermuda	60,144	433	139	410	5	390	28	52	5	93,684	298	948
Bolivia	7,450,000	12,432	599	11,887	10	10,791	1,429	2,211	201	3,665,569	18,648	49,680
Bonaire	12,533	70	179	60	-8*	65	1	1	1	6,252	42	175
Bosnia & Herzegovina	4,516,000	663	6,811	578	28	451	161	139	5	232,893	767	1,691
Botswana	1,495,993	1,016	1,472	899	7	837	79	96	23	206,733	1,220	2,762
Brazil	161,551,700	436,140	370	410,599	6	387,099	35,760	38,457	6,655	77,304,820	472,567	1,075,039
Britain	57,171,849	132,516	431	124,623	0	125,138	4,758	10,532	1,430	21,284,251	52,462	220,128
Bulgaria	8,428,006	796	10,588	723	19	608	53	105	14	215,273	1,085	1,960
Burkina Faso	10,352,000	791	13,087	710	12	634	83	144	20	242,777	1,381	2,144
Burundi	6,500,000	1,784	3,643	1,616	3	1,571	15	202	50	361,914	3,350	881
Cambodia	10,400,000	22	472,727	19	58	12	3	10	1	12,886	63	109
Cameroon	13,850,796	24,725	560	23,667	6	22,291	2,068	1,749	506	4,446,385	25,972	78,627
Canada	29,826,262	114,272	261	110,235	1	109,168	4,025	10,048	1,379	20,541,189	43,737	185,702
Cape Verde	441,374	1,201	368	1,123	13	996	180	204	20	341,696	2,413	4,490
Cayman Islands	32,000	105	305	96	0	96	4	9	1	18,643	92	282
Central Afr. Rep.	3,584,400	2,012	1,782	1,962	5	1,875	208	297	47	539,893	3,115	11,132
Chad	6,477,000	476	13,607	454	12	404	49	87	15	155,603	803	2,410
Chile	14,418,864	54,151	266	49,587	5	47,175	3,495	6,224	542	11,854,900	58,244	119,380
Chuuk	66,830	55	1,215	45	10	41	3	14	3	21,107	154	406
Colombia	37,422,721	81,389	460	74,108	10	67,577	8,158	8,807	915	17,214,636	119,082	288,923
Comoros	450,000	8	56,250	6	0	6	1	1		1,895	10	19
Congo	2,700,000	4,141	652	3,331	10	3,018	266	565	107	1,072,644	12,973	13,972
Cook Islands	18,000	151	119	137	-4*	142	13	16	3	27,333	137	384
Costa Rica	3,367,455	18,583	181	16,943	13	15,053	1,878	1,811	232	3,409,246	19,141	43,490
Côte d'Ivoire	14,401,000	5,268	2,734	5,128	6	4,817	657	912	137	1,566,799	9,378	19,020
Croatia	4,784,265	4,976	961	4,716	7	4,400	419	574	67	1,121,071	2,712	8,989
Cuba	11,000,000	70,113	157	66,006	11	59,254	7,964	12,830	945	16,803,088	134,075	145,337
Curaçao	149,376	1,584	94	1,553	3	1,502	80	108	19	251,411	1,601	3,922
Cyprus	654,200	1,724	379	1,693	4	1,627	92	218	19	375,680	910	3,233

Czech Republic	10,308,000	16,659	619	16,209	0	16,192	950	814	257	2,373,286	9,332	33,439
Denmark	5,251,027	15,931	330	15,351	-2*	15,604	342	990	222	2,235,327	4,858	23,651
Dominica	71,794	339	212	322	3	314	26	42	6	82,895	411	905
Dominican Rep.	7,707,910	19,742	390	18,678	7	17,422	1,808	3,725	301	5,594,998	36,131	69,908
Ecuador	11,710,974	33,867	346	30,975	10	28,263	3,417	4,880	469	8,165,308	48,952	127,789
El Salvador	5,118,599	24,975	205	23,446	6	22,205	2,087	2,248	406	5,001,774	27,221	68,832
Equatorial Guinea	372,540	357	1,044	327	19	274	89	47	4	98,110	1,088	2,034
Estonia	1,476,310	3,231	457	2,947	18	2,496	567	424	36	773,728	4,169	8,130
Ethiopia	55,000,000	5,206	10,565	5,036	9	4,626	581	985	76	1,654,474	4,402	14,677
Faeroe Islands	43,382	88	493	81	-1*	82	3	20	4	21,204	48	117
Falkland Islands	2,221	12	185	10	-17*	12			1	915	2	13
Fiji	796,000	1,596	499	1,522	-1*	1,534	81	193	34	361,098	1,774	5,978
Finland	5,116,826	19,631	261	19,134	1	18,906	686	1,950	306	3,281,356	8,885	28,864
France	58,265,352	125,169	465	123,208	0	123,408	4,866	7,499	1,684	20,219,317	48,006	218,434
French Guiana	147,283	1,430	103	1,380	6	1,297	129	176	20	360,947	2,267	5,045
Gabon	1,197,000	1,651	725	1,546	11	1,389	225	147	26	362,446	3,891	6,765
Gambia, The	1,137,750	64	17,777	57	8	53	2	12	1	20,453	108	230
Germany	81,817,499	170,040	481	166,468	0	165,746	6,193	9,842	2,038	26,774,945	80,229	277,814
Ghana	18,256,301	51,309	356	47,705	7	44,755	3,619	4,922	805	10,315,695	96,685	170,211
Gibraltar	27,170	122	223	110	2	108		6	2	15,928	36	178
Greece	10,259,900	26,613	386	26,352	2	25,764	957	2,731	389	4,927,694	10,172	43,002
Greenland	48,679	158	308	151	4	145	6	34	8	46,458	155	353
Grenada	91,150	587	155	562	9	516	30	73	7	128,578	646	1,617
Guadeloupe	387,000	7,659	51	7,458	1	7,370	412	351	95	1,124,119	7,146	17,197
Guam	150,000	573	262	544	4	522	44	105	9	156,878	776	1,870
Guatemala	8,826,851	16,506	535	15,666	6	14,769	1,368	1,533	237	3,247,597	16,697	47,667
Guinea	6,560,000	824	7,601	725	9	665	75	137	18	254,256	1,435	3,218
Guinea-Bissau	1,100,000	55	20,000	48	33	36	11	20	1	31,524	225	261
Guyana	757,863	1,961	386	1,925	-2*	1,956	135	252	35	399,319	2,071	7,776
Haiti	6,000,000	10,318	582	9,851	4	9,435	1,072	1,308	201	2,440,649	14,480	49,715
Hawaii	1,186,815	7,590	156	7,392	2	7,267	290	1,183	90	1,781,828	5,438	17,361
Honduras	5,728,159	9,508	602	8,705	12	7,782	817	1,009	135	2,114,413	13,090	32,507
Hong Kong	6,307,900	3,889	1,622	3,743	7	3,490	361	756	38	1,157,608	4,355	6,562
Hungary	10,160,000	18,217	558	17,342	9	15,929	2,054	1,385	223	3,378,052	14,621	39,545
Iceland	267,806	315	850	309	2	302	18	23	8	53,684	186	593
India	988,130,640	16,615	59,472	15,970	7	14,948	1,542	1,691	461	3,211,890	12,938	41,193
Ireland	5,198,871	4,459	1,166	4,412	1	4,372	204	641	114	1,105,602	2,225	7,944
Israel	7,730,000	703	10,996	647	16	559	58	68	9	148,797	715	1,433
Italy	58,138,000	221,229	263	216,231	3	210,012	9,813	28,351	2,943	51,798,540	102,278	391,407
Jamaica	2,502,030	10,699	234	9,800	2	9,570	554	1,001	181	1,770,921	9,867	27,621
Japan	124,914,373	213,961	584	210,290	4	201,266	11,421	87,476	3,691	99,115,637	236,158	377,223
Kenya	27,295,000	11,133	2,452	10,285	12	9,163	1,412	1,727	196	3,228,641	15,163	29,000
Kiribati	78,864	80	986	60	9	55	5	11	1	20,126	160	235
Korea, Republic of	44,551,183	82,959	537	81,537	3	78,782	4,715	29,943	1,506	34,679,569	65,826	133,451
Kosrae	8,530	24	355	21	5	20	1	5	1	5,074	43	135
Latvia	2,490,200	1,320	1,887	1,157	32	878	314	168	13	332,770	2,077	3,580
Lebanon	3,695,921	3,599	1,027	3,433	4	3,311	157	273	66	629,870	2,181	6,664
Lesotho	2,112,500	2,390	884	2,038	2	2,000	200	294	51	532,571	2,303	5,998
Liberia	2,500,000	1,598	1,564	1,419	8	1,308	158	284	25	509,846	3,612	7,527
Libya	4,485,000	17	263,824	6	50	4				445	10	13
Liechtenstein	30,923	63	491	58	-3*	60		5	1	11,961	31	117
Lithuania	3,700,000	2,016	1,835	1,770	29	1,371	345	160	15	402,954	2,071	5,566
Luxembourg	418,800	1,858	259	1,840	2	1,796	92	142	34	339,142	1,041	3,558
Macao	450,000	114	3,947	104	37	76	11	26	2	37,366	115	232

Country or Territory	Population	1996 Peak Pubs.	Ratio, One Pub- lisher to:	1996 Av. Pubs.	% Inc. Over 1995	1995 Av. Pubs.	1996 No. Bptzd.	Av. Pio. Pubs.	No. of Cong.	Total Hours	Av. Bible Studies	Memorial Atten- dance
Macedonia	1,936,877	698	2,775	629	24	509	106	69	10	164,273	623	2,544
Madagascar	13,098,300	7,885	1,661	7,339	16	6,343	1,438	1,102	124	1,994,401	19,572	37,194
Madeira	258,536	959	270	934	7	870	72	77	14	170,040	741	1,954
Malawi	9,341,723	37,084	252	35,765	7	33,510	3,180	4,258	570	8,070,542	27,511	105,630
Malaysia	20,006,700	1,809	11,060	1,725	9	1,587	215	249	37	444,973	2,346	4,300
Mali	11,100,000	173	64,162	151	6	142	12	58	6	85,174	397	618
Malta	368,400	520	708	502	0	502	21	54	6	95,357	183	801
Marquesas Islands	7,358	50	147	47	4	45	1	7	1	13,753	75	149
Marshall Islands	49,360	224	220	179	16	154	29	37	3	59,774	527	1,078
Martinique	359,570	3,932	91	3,861	4	3,730	249	355	42	795,381	3,656	8,653
Mauritius	1,094,426	1,279	856	1,231	6	1,165	43	87	17	224,009	1,123	2,784
Mayotte	94,484	52	1,817	45	15	39	1	9	1	17,057	82	130
Mexico	92,656,448	470,098	197	458,059	8	422,283	37,454	52,603	10,786	100,020,106	600,751	1,518,156
Moldova	4,334,250	12,565	345	11,439	23	9,320	1,917	524	108	1,514,468	7,183	35,103
Montserrat	9,000	38	237	29	-19*	36	1	3	1	5,735	16	80
Mozambique	18,027,644	22,613	797	20,486	17	17,468	2,936	3,519	497	5,767,236	28,324	80,576
Myanmar	46,000,000	2,304	19,965	2,253	3	2,185	94	294	99	526,729	1,735	6,033
Namibia	1,634,483	972	1,682	823	10	748	63	65	19	162,220	818	2,254
Nauru	6,495	7	928	6	20	5			1	770	10	51
Nepal	22,674,830	236	96,080	218	18	185	47	35	3	60,637	393	931
Netherlands	15,493,889	32,585	475	30,887	-1*	31,142	896	1,759	420	4,467,578	10,897	53,216
Nevis	10,080	39	258	37	6	35	2	6	1	11,087	50	114
New Caledonia	200,000	1,605	125	1,533	1	1,511	85	114	21	277,667	1,308	3,942
New Zealand	3,660,364	13,277	276	12,545	0	12,573	473	1,169	163	2,319,555	6,712	25,090
Nicaragua	4,300,000	12,651	340	12,065	7	11,259	1,198	1,433	220	3,068,686	22,143	53,855
Niger	7,490,000	240	31,208	222	9	203	26	39	7	76,184	426	822
Nigeria	103,900,000	200,486	518	191,558	4	184,940	13,184	25,402	3,741	41,814,896	285,876	520,413
Niue	2,300	33	70	30	-3*	31	2	2	1	4,410	25	107
Norfolk Island	1,912	18	106	14	0	14		1	1	1,742	5	22
Norway	4,381,441	10,015	437	9,600	-1*	9,687	264	487	173	1,247,834	3,155	16,237
Pakistan	133,000,000	380	350,000	352	2	345	27	35	9	73,929	391	1,614
Panama	2,674,490	8,910	300	8,289	6	7,808	635	1,114	184	2,001,733	10,874	25,539
Papua New Guinea	4,311,886	3,318	1,300	2,950	-1*	2,994	220	330	58	684,624	3,813	13,917
Paraguay	4,955,237	5,711	868	5,012	9	4,600	405	741	80	1,251,607	6,745	12,415
Peru	23,946,800	57,175	419	51,063	6	48,088	4,506	9,642	673	15,369,526	69,943	172,706
Philippines	69,000,000	124,305	555	119,709	1	118,560	7,987	19,240	3,475	25,402,024	90,032	371,198
Pohnpei	37,767	71	532	68	-6*	72	6	15	1	19,723	148	433
Poland	38,617,000	124,316	311	122,982	2	120,822	7,502	7,835	1,668	17,902,875	66,881	243,655
Portugal	9,440,223	45,554	207	44,752	3	43,633	2,512	2,972	651	7,443,117	25,702	89,547
Puerto Rico	3,522,000	26,106	135	25,397	1	25,225	1,139	2,165	325	4,519,967	17,148	60,775
Réunion	664,200	2,670	249	2,601	6	2,452	211	246	31	545,802	2,056	5,564
Rodrigues	34,832	37	941	35	6	33	1	7	1	11,980	56	79
Romania	22,700,000	35,037	648	34,368	6	32,472	2,606	1,951	440	5,050,796	18,394	86,034
Rota	2,450	8	306	7	40	5		2	1	1,944	5	26
Russia	148,700,000	67,082	2,217	61,843	31	47,097	17,269	5,933	492	15,222,077	91,721	194,322
Rwanda	7,828,000	4,223	1,854	3,539	61	2,192	923	963	60	1,699,567	13,138	11,496
Saba	1,000	1	1,000	1	0	1		1		872	9	5
St. Eustatius	1,500	16	94	16	14	14		4	1	4,456	25	69

St. Helena	5,131	150	34	142	-1*	143	7	1	2	15,323	83	299
St. Kitts	31,880	153	208	143	5	136	14	15	2	33,323	171	419
St. Lucia	151,300	672	225	640	2	627	64	109	9	171,801	897	1,725
St. Maarten	24,000	232	103	217	-2*	221	13	28	3	47,237	310	942
St. Pierre & Miquelon	6,300	15	420	13	63	8		1	1	1,510	7	17
St. Vincent	107,600	303	355	297	8	274	22	50	6	87,339	384	889
Saipan	52,628	191	276	183	1	181	14	36	3	58,301	272	520
San Marino	23,000	162	142	159	3	155	3	13	2	30,681	50	227
São Tomé & Príncipe	124,206	207	600	183	24	148	52	31	3	64,421	511	747
Senegal	8,500,000	761	11,170	749	5	712	56	140	19	249,680	1,282	2,099
Seychelles	75,340	143	527	126	15	110	23	10	2	26,636	153	392
Sierra Leone	4,510,000	887	5,085	768	9	704	86	117	18	229,604	1,443	3,142
Slovakia	5,373,810	12,443	432	12,231	3	11,912	814	503	196	1,690,113	5,913	25,046
Slovenia	1,991,104	1,783	1,117	1,740	3	1,693	87	151	35	348,728	845	2,801
Solomon Islands	384,057	1,278	301	1,171	15	1,016	89	130	40	256,362	1,469	4,914
South Africa	41,244,000	64,484	640	59,243	2	58,208	3,985	6,091	1,260	12,259,734	57,848	143,282
Spain	39,270,000	104,496	376	99,240	2	97,674	4,151	11,141	1,257	21,876,702	39,034	166,382
Sri Lanka	18,000,000	2,458	7,323	2,203	11	1,977	263	301	52	577,481	2,807	7,186
Suriname	404,800	1,795	226	1,740	2	1,702	118	224	28	393,673	2,052	5,286
Swaziland	937,747	1,920	488	1,766	7	1,646	169	252	71	475,583	2,493	5,051
Sweden	8,842,742	24,487	361	23,896	0	23,792	826	2,193	363	3,913,919	9,882	38,729
Switzerland	7,062,400	18,448	383	18,295	1	18,196	770	1,104	315	3,029,830	9,617	31,197
Tahiti	204,742	1,840	111	1,814	2	1,783	133	113	31	304,318	1,739	4,651
Taiwan	21,000,000	3,195	6,573	2,996	13	2,655	366	870	45	1,225,299	4,574	7,711
Tanzania	29,000,000	6,368	4,554	5,806	17	4,943	721	1,043	148	1,746,863	7,140	16,978
Thailand	60,000,000	1,680	35,714	1,603	5	1,522	111	239	44	399,270	1,603	3,625
Togo	4,052,000	9,553	424	9,174	11	8,294	1,147	1,305	150	2,382,090	23,295	40,691
Tokelau	1,700	7	243	5	25	4			1	403	4	36
Tonga	100,496	77	1,305	68	5	65	7	11	3	18,426	87	233
Trinidad & Tobago	1,261,867	7,273	174	7,127	4	6,861	472	1,072	78	1,614,765	9,349	20,112
Turkey	65,000,000	1,341	48,471	1,291	7	1,202	142	163	21	343,661	1,146	2,524
Turks & Caicos Isls.	14,302	130	110	110	21	91	18	14	3	33,413	228	405
Tuvalu	9,043	46	197	43	5	41	1	6	3	11,245	76	290
Uganda	19,600,000	1,814	10,805	1,610	11	1,447	265	254	32	485,601	3,049	5,292
Ukraine	51,334,100	71,224	721	65,385	17	55,660	13,089	5,343	621	13,425,489	55,942	193,412
U.S. of America	264,206,000	975,829	271	921,123	1	912,002	43,663	99,189	10,671	178,325,740	530,200	2,024,476
Uruguay	3,030,000	10,373	292	10,061	5	9,589	741	838	130	1,677,987	9,127	21,826
Vanuatu	180,000	200	900	182	-3*	188	8	13	3	39,603	344	1,229
Venezuela	23,200,000	77,359	300	71,298	7	66,490	6,898	11,910	1,010	19,657,759	106,088	247,693
Virgin Isls. (Brit.)	17,000	148	115	139	5	132	14	21	2	32,597	153	559
Virgin Isls. (U.S.)	101,800	607	168	587	-6*	622	13	65	9	114,613	554	1,542
Wallis & Futuna Isls.	15,000	21	714	19	36	14		3	1	4,424	28	127
Western Samoa	165,195	380	435	335	5	319	37	51	7	87,674	354	1,224
Yap	10,652	33	323	28	-7*	30	1	8	1	12,296	64	198
Yugoslavia, F. R.	10,566,745	3,551	2,976	3,329	14	2,928	532	511	45	949,501	3,097	8,182
Zaire	45,000,000	94,245	477	90,063	6	85,160	10,526	13,406	1,832	26,312,847	191,408	303,875
Zambia	9,475,914	87,234	109	84,772	6	79,639	5,841	9,443	2,051	17,035,235	108,759	376,171
Zimbabwe	11,366,291	25,341	449	24,181	5	23,108	1,939	2,879	797	5,356,042	34,195	63,151
198 Countries		5,367,155		5,124,811	4.3	4,913,539	360,926	641,847	81,258	1,131,453,463	4,803,878	12,800,132
*35 Other Countries		46,614		42,447	15.3	36,805	5,653	3,662	650	9,168,251	51,152	121,801
GRAND TOTAL (233 countries)		5,413,769		5,167,258	4.4	4,950,344	366,579	645,509	81,908	1,140,621,714	4,855,030	12,921,933

During the 1996 service year, the Watch Tower Society spent \$60,932,324.26 in caring for special pioneers, missionaries, and traveling overseers in their field service assignments.

MEMORIAL PARTAKERS WORLDWIDE: 8,757

* Percentage of decrease

Work banned and reports are incomplete

earlier. Once again Jehovah saw fit to conduct a cleansing. Priests and people had slackened off and so were unclean in Jehovah's sight. Could it be that some of Jehovah's people have slackened their hands today, even involving themselves in the world's permissive and materialistic ways? It is urgent that all of us set our hearts "from this day and forward" on bringing glory to Jehovah's name, confident of his promise: "From this day I shall bestow blessing."—Haggai 2:10-19; Hebrews 6:11, 12.

¹⁶ On that same day, the word of "Jehovah of armies" came to Haggai a fourth and final time. He made known what is involved in His "rocking the heavens and the earth," saying: "I shall certainly overthrow the throne of kingdoms and annihilate the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariot and its riders, and the horses and their riders will certainly come down, each one by the sword of his brother." (Haggai 2:6, 21, 22) The "rocking" will thus reach its climax when Jehovah completely cleanses the earth at Armageddon. By then "the desirable things of all the nations" will have come in, to

16. What "rocking" is near at hand, and what will result?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ How, today, is Jehovah's house being 'filled with glory'?
- ☐ Why has it never been more urgent to preach the good news?
- ☐ What incentive to preach urgently does the 1996 Service Year Report give?
- ☐ How is Christ serving as Jehovah's "seal ring"?

form a nucleus of human society for the new world. What reasons for rejoicing and giving praise to Jehovah!—Haggai 2:7; Revelation 19:6, 7; 21:1-4.

¹⁷ Concluding his prophecy, Haggai writes: "'In that day,' is the utterance of Jehovah of armies, 'I shall take you, O Zerubbabel . . . , and I shall certainly set you as a seal ring, because you are the one whom I have chosen,' is the utterance of Jehovah of armies." (Haggai 2:23) Christ Jesus is now Jehovah's antitypical Messianic King and High Priest, combining in the heavens the offices that Governor Zerubbabel and High Priest Joshua occupied separately in the earthly Jerusalem. Like an official seal ring on Jehovah's right hand, Jesus is the one who has become "Yes" as Jehovah's instrument in bringing to reality the many "promises of God." (2 Corinthians 1:20; Ephesians 3:10, 11; Revelation 19:10) The entire prophetic message of the Bible focuses on Jehovah's provision of Christ as King and priestly Ransomer.—John 18:37; 1 Peter 1:18, 19.

¹⁸ Truly in this our day, the greatest glory is to be found in Jehovah's radiant spiritual temple! And soon, after Jehovah has swept away all of Satan's system, Haggai 2:9 will have further delightful fulfillment: "'In this place I shall give peace,' is the utterance of Jehovah of armies." Peace at last!—an enduring, universal peace, guaranteed by Jehovah's "seal ring," Christ Jesus, the "Prince of Peace," of whom it is written: "To the abundance of the princely rule and to peace there will be no end . . . The very zeal of Jehovah of armies will do this." (Isaiah 9:6, 7) For all eternity the glory of Jehovah's house of worship will be reflected throughout the peaceful realm of his universal sovereignty. May we ever remain in that house!—Psalm 27:4; 65:4; 84:10.

17. How has Jesus been set as a "seal ring"?

18. How will the concluding "utterance of Jehovah of armies" have refreshing fulfillment?

GIVING UP MUCH FOR SOMETHING GREATER

AS TOLD BY JULIUS OWO BELLO



For 32 years I was an Aladura.* I believed that faith healing and prayers would solve all my problems and cure all illnesses. I never bought any drugs, not even pain relievers. During those years, no one in my family was ever admitted to the hospital. Whenever any of my children fell sick, I prayed for them day and night until they recovered. I believed that God was answering my prayers and blessing me.

I BELONGED to *Egbe Jolly*, the most prominent social club in Akure, a town in western Nigeria. My friends were the richest and most powerful people in our community. The *Deji*, king of Akure, often visited with me in my home.

I was also a polygamist, having six wives and many concubines. My business prospered. Everything was going well for me. Yet, like the traveling merchant in Jesus' illustration of the pearl, I found something so precious that I gave up five of my wives, my concubines, church, social club, and worldly prominence in exchange for it.—Matthew 13:45, 46.

How I Became an Aladura

I first heard of the Aladuras in 1936,

* From a Yoruba word meaning "one who prays." It refers to a member of an African church that practices spiritual healing.

when I was 13 years old. A friend named Gabriel told me: "If you visit the Christ Apostolic Church, you will hear God speak."

"How does God speak?" I asked him.

He said: "Come, and you will see."

I was eager to listen to God. So that night, I went with Gabriel to the church. The small building was filled with worshipers. The congregation began to chant: "Come, you people! This is where Jesus is!"

During this chanting, someone yelled: "Come down, holy spirit!" Someone else rang a bell, and the congregation fell silent. Next, a woman began jabbering excitedly in a strange tongue. Suddenly she cried out: "Listen to God's message, O you people! This is what God has said: 'Pray for the hunters so that they do not kill humans!'" The atmosphere was charged with emotion.

I believed that God had spoken through

her, so the following year I was baptized as a member of the Christ Apostolic Church.

Early Contact With Jehovah's Witnesses

In 1951, I accepted a copy of the *Watchtower* magazine from a Witness named Adedeji Boboye. The magazine was interesting, so I subscribed to it and read it regularly. In 1952, I attended a four-day district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses at Ado Ekiti.

What I saw at the convention impressed me. I thought seriously about becoming one of Jehovah's Witnesses but dismissed the idea. My problem was that I had three wives and one concubine at the time. I thought there was no way I could live with only one wife.

When I returned to Akure, I told Adedeji to stop visiting me, and I did not renew my *Watchtower* subscription. I became more active in my church. After all, I reasoned, God had blessed me since I joined the Christ Apostolic Church. I had married three wives and produced many children. I had built my own house. I had never been admitted to a hospital. Since God seemed to be answering my prayers, why change my religion?

Growing Prominence Along With Disillusionment

I began to contribute much money to the church. Soon they made me a church elder, a position that enabled me to see the inner workings of the church. What I saw disturbed me. The pastor and "prophets" loved money; their greed appalled me.

For example, in March 1967 three children were born to me by different wives. It was the custom in the church to have a child naming ceremony. So I took gifts—fish, lemonade, and bottled soft drinks—to the pastor in preparation for the ceremony.

On the day of the church service, the pastor said in front of the whole congregation: "Rich people in this church have surprised me. They want to have a naming ceremony, and all they bring is soft drinks and fish. No meat! No goat! Imagine! Cain offered God a sacrifice of large yams, yet God did not accept that sacrifice since there was no blood in it. God wants things with blood in them. Abel brought an animal, and his sacrifice was accepted."

With that, I got up and stormed out. However, I still attended the church. Increasingly, I spent more time socializing and attending meetings of my club. Sometimes I attended meetings at the Kingdom Hall, and I renewed my subscription to *The Watchtower*. Nevertheless, I was still not ready to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The Decision to Serve Jehovah

The turning point for me came in 1968. One day I began to read an article in *The Watchtower* that described the brutal persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in Malawi. It told of a 15-year-old girl who was tied to a tree and raped six times because she refused to compromise her faith. Deeply shocked, I dropped the magazine, but I kept thinking about it. I realized that no girl in my church would show that sort of faith. Later that evening, I took up the magazine and read the page again.

I began seriously to study the Bible. As I grew in knowledge, I began to see how much the church had been misleading us. As was true in ancient times, our priests were 'carrying on nothing but loose conduct.' (Hosea 6:9) Such men were among the false prophets that Jesus warned about! (Matthew 24:24) I no longer put faith in their visions and powerful works. I decided to break free from false religion and help others do the same.

Efforts to Keep Me in the Church

When the church elders realized that I was determined to leave the church, they sent a delegation to plead with me. They did not want to lose an important source of revenue. They offered to make me *Baba Egbe*, the patron of one of the Christ Apostolic churches in Akure.

I turned them down and told them why. "The church has been lying to us," I said. "They say that all good people will go to heaven. But I have read the Bible, and I am convinced that only 144,000 persons will go to heaven. Other righteous people will live on a paradise earth."—Matthew 5:5; Revelation 14:1, 3.

The pastor of the church tried to turn my wives against me. He told them to prevent Jehovah's Witnesses from coming to our home. One of my wives poisoned my food. Two of them warned me about a vision they had seen in church. The vision showed that I would die if I left the church. In spite of that, I kept witnessing to my wives, inviting them to come to meetings with me. "You will find other husbands there," I said. However, none of them showed any interest, and they continued trying to discourage me.

Finally, on February 2, 1970, when I returned home from a trip to a neighboring town, I found that the house was empty. All my wives had run away with the children.

Sticking to One Wife

'I can now straighten out my marital situation,' I thought. I invited my senior wife, Janet, to come back home. She agreed. Her family, however, strongly opposed the idea. When my other wives learned that I had asked Janet to come back, they went to her father's home and tried to beat her up. Her family then summoned me to a meeting.

There were about 80 persons present for

the meeting. Janet's uncle, who was the family head, said: "If you want to remarry our daughter, then you must take back the other women. But if you want to practice your new religion and stay with one wife, then you must find another woman. If you take back Janet, your other wives will kill her, and we do not want our daughter to die."

After much talking, the family realized that I was determined to have only one wife. Finally they relented. The uncle said: "We will not take your wife from you. You can take her with you."

On May 21, 1970, Janet and I were legally married. Nine days later I was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. In December of the same year, Janet was also baptized.

Enjoying Jehovah's Blessing

Our former church members had prophesied that if we became Witnesses, we would die. That was almost 30 years ago. Even if I die now, would it be because I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses? If my wife dies now, can anyone say that it was because she became one of Jehovah's Witnesses?

I have struggled to show my 17 children the way of the truth. Though many of them were adults by the time I became a Witness, I encouraged them to study the Bible and took them to meetings and conventions. It is my joy to have five of them serving Jehovah with me. One serves alongside me as an elder in the congregation. Another is a ministerial servant in a nearby congregation. Two of my children serve as regular pioneers.

When I look back, I marvel at Jehovah's undeserved kindness in helping me become his servant. How true are Jesus' words: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him"!—John 6:44.

Let Us Abhor What Is Wicked

JEHOVAH is a holy God. In ancient times he was “the Holy One of Israel,” and as such he demanded that Israel be clean, unsullied. (Psalm 89:18) He told his chosen people: “You must prove yourselves holy, because I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:45) Anyone who wanted to “ascend into the mountain of Jehovah” had to be “innocent in his hands and clean in heart.” (Psalm 24:3, 4) That meant more than merely avoiding sinful acts. It meant “the hating of bad.”—Proverbs 8:13.

Lovingly, Jehovah laid down detailed laws so that the nation of Israel could identify and avoid wrongdoing. (Romans 7:7, 12) These laws included strict guidelines on morality. Adultery, homosexual acts, incestuous relationships, and bestiality were all identified as unholy spiritual pollutants. (Leviticus 18:23; 20:10-17) Those guilty of such degraded acts were cut off from the nation of Israel.

When the congregation of anointed Christians became “the Israel of God,” similar moral standards were laid down for them. (Galatians 6:16) Christians too were to “abhor what is wicked.” (Romans 12:9) Jehovah’s words to Israel also applied to them: “You must be holy, because I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:15, 16) Such unholy practices as fornication, adultery, homosexual acts, bestiality, and incest were not to corrupt the Christian congregation. Those refusing to stop engaging in such things would be excluded from God’s Kingdom. (Romans 1:26, 27; 2:22; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Hebrews 13:4) In these “last days,” the same standards apply to the “other sheep.”

(2 Timothy 3:1; John 10:16) As a result, anointed Christians and other sheep make up a clean and wholesome people, able to carry the name of their God as Jehovah’s Witnesses.—Isaiah 43:10.

Keeping the Congregation Clean

In contrast, the world condones all kinds of immorality. Although true Christians are different, they should not forget that many who now serve Jehovah were once in the world. There are many who, before they knew our holy God, saw no reason not to indulge the desires and fantasies of their fallen flesh, wallowing in a “low sink of debauchery.” (1 Peter 4:4) The apostle Paul, after describing the disgusting practices of degraded people of the nations, said: “That is what some of you were.” Still, he went on to say: “But you have been washed clean, but you have been sanctified, but you have been declared righteous in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the spirit of our God.”—1 Corinthians 6:11.

What a comforting statement that is! Whatever a person did earlier in life, he changes when the glorious good news about the Christ has an effect on his heart. He exercises faith and dedicates himself to Jehovah God. From then on he lives a morally pure life, washed clean in God’s eyes. (Hebrews 9:14) The sins that he committed previously are pardoned, and he can “stretch forward to the things ahead.”* —Philippians 3:13, 14; Romans 4:7, 8.

* See “Questions From Readers” in the May 1, 1996, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Jehovah forgave repentant David for murder and adultery, and He forgave repentant Manasseh for immoral idolatry and much bloodshed. (2 Samuel 12:9, 13; 2 Chronicles 33:2-6, 10-13) We can be truly grateful that he is prepared to forgive us too if we repent and approach him in sincerity and humility. Still, despite Jehovah's forgiving David and Manasseh, these two men—and Israel with them—had to live with the consequences of their sinful acts. (2 Samuel 12:11, 12; Jeremiah 15:3-5) In a similar way, while Jehovah forgives repentant sinners, there may be consequences of their actions that cannot be avoided.

Inevitable Consequences

For example, a man who lives a life of immoral debauchery and contracts AIDS may accept the truth and turn his life around to the point of dedication and baptism. Now he is a spiritually clean Christian having a relationship with God and a wonderful hope for the future; but he still has AIDS. He may eventually die of the disease, a sad but inescapable consequence of his former conduct. For some Christians the effects of former gross immorality may persist in other ways. For years after their baptism, perhaps for the rest of their lives in this system of things, they may have to fight urges in their flesh to return to their previous immoral life-style. With the help of Jehovah's spirit, many succeed in resisting. But they have to wage a constant battle.—Galatians 5:16, 17.

Such ones do not sin as long as they control their urges. But if they are men, they may wisely decide not to 'reach out' for responsibility in the congregation while still having to struggle with powerful fleshly impulses. (1 Timothy 3:1) Why? Because they know the trust that the congregation puts in the elders. (Isaiah 32:1, 2; Hebrews

13:17) They realize that the elders are consulted on many intimate matters and have to handle sensitive situations. It would be neither loving, wise, nor reasonable for one waging a constant fight with unclean fleshly desires to reach out for such a responsible position.—Proverbs 14:16; John 15:12, 13; Romans 12:1.

For a man who was a child molester before he was baptized, there may be another consequence. When he learns the truth, he repents and turns around, not bringing that cruel sin into the congregation. He may thereafter make fine progress, completely overcome his wrong impulses, and even be inclined to 'reach out' for a responsible position in the congregation. What, though, if he still has to live down notoriety in the community as a former child molester? Would he "be irreprehensible, . . . have a fine testimony from people on the outside, . . . [be] free from accusation"? (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 10; Titus 1:7) No, he would not. Hence, he would not qualify for congregation privileges.

When a Dedicated Christian Sins

Jehovah understands that we are weak and that even after baptism we may fall into sin. The apostle John wrote to Christians of his day: "I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's." (1 John 2:1, 2) Yes, on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, Jehovah will forgive baptized Christians who fall into sin—if they truly repent and abandon their wrong course.

An example of this was seen in the first-century congregation at Corinth. The

apostle Paul heard of a case of incestuous fornication in that young congregation, and he gave instructions that the man involved be disfellowshipped. Later, the sinner repented, and Paul exhorted the congregation to reinstate him. (1 Corinthians 5:1, 13; 2 Corinthians 2:5-9) Thus, by the healing power of Jehovah's loving kindness and the great value of Jesus' ransom sacrifice, the man was cleansed of his sin. Similar things may happen today. Again, though, even if a baptized person who commits a serious sin repents and is forgiven in Jehovah's eyes, there may still be ongoing consequences of his sin.—Proverbs 10:16, 17; Galatians 6:7.

For example, if a dedicated girl commits fornication, she may bitterly regret her act and eventually be restored to spiritual health with the help of the congregation. But what if she is pregnant because of her immorality? Then her whole life has been inescapably changed by what she did. A man who commits adultery may repent and not be disfellowshipped. But his innocent mate has Scriptural grounds to divorce him, and she may choose to do so. (Matthew 19:9) If she does, the man, although forgiven by Jehovah, will live the rest of his life with this grave consequence of his sin.—1 John 1:9.

What of a man who unlovingly divorces his wife in order to marry another woman? Perhaps he will eventually repent and be reinstated in the congregation. Over the years he may make progress and "press on to maturity." (Hebrews 6:1) But as long as his first wife lives without a mate, he will not qualify to serve in a responsible position in the congregation. He is not "a husband of one wife" because he had no Scriptural right to divorce his first wife.—1 Timothy 3:2, 12.

Are these not powerful reasons why a Christian should cultivate an abhorrence of what is wicked?

What of a Child Molester?

What if a baptized adult Christian sexually molests a child? Is the sinner so wicked that Jehovah will never forgive him? Not necessarily so. Jesus said that 'blasphemy against the holy spirit' was unforgivable. And Paul said that there is no sacrifice for

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forgives repentant
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sins left for one who *practices* sin willfully despite knowing the truth. (Luke 12:10; Hebrews 10:26, 27) But nowhere does the Bible say that an adult Christian who sexually abuses a child—whether incestuously or otherwise—cannot be forgiven. Indeed, his sins can be washed clean if he repents sincerely from the heart and turns his conduct around. However, he may still have to struggle with the wrong fleshly impulses he cultivated. (Ephesians 1:7) And there may be consequences that he cannot avoid.

Depending on the law of the land where he lives, the molester may well have to serve a prison term or face other sanctions from the State. The congregation will not protect him from this. Moreover, the man has revealed a serious weakness that henceforth will have to be taken into account. If he seems to be repentant, he will be encouraged to make spiritual progress, share in the field service, even have parts in the Theocratic Ministry School and non-teaching parts in the Service Meeting. This does not mean, though, that he will qualify to serve in a position of responsibility in the congregation. What are the Scriptural reasons for this?

For one thing, an elder must be "self-controlled." (Titus 1:8) True, none of us have perfect self-control. (Romans 7:21-25) But a dedicated adult Christian who falls into the sin of child sexual abuse reveals an unnatural fleshly weakness. Experience has shown that such an adult may well molest other children. True, not every child molester repeats the sin, but many do. And the congregation cannot read hearts to tell who is and who is not liable to molest children again. (Jeremiah 17:9) Hence, Paul's counsel to Timothy applies with special force in the case of baptized adults who have molested children: "Never lay your hands hastily upon any man; neither be a sharer in the sins of others." (1 Timothy 5:22) For the protection of our children, a man known to have been a child molester does not qualify for a responsible position in the congregation. Moreover, he cannot be a pioneer or serve in any other special, full-time service.—Compare the principle at Exodus 21:28, 29.

Some may ask, 'Have not some committed other types of sin and apparently repented, only to repeat their sin later?' Yes, that has happened, but there are other fac-

tors to consider. If, for example, an individual makes immoral advances to another adult, the adult should be able to resist his or her advances. Children are much easier to deceive, confuse, or terrorize. The Bible speaks of a child's lack of wisdom. (Proverbs 22:15; 1 Corinthians 13:11) Jesus used children as an example of humble innocence. (Matthew 18:4; Luke 18:16, 17) The innocence of a child includes a complete lack of experience. Most children are open, eager to please, and thus vulnerable to abuse by a scheming adult whom they know and trust. Therefore, the congregation has a responsibility before Jehovah to protect its children.

Well-trained children learn to obey and honor their parents, the elders, and other adults. (Ephesians 6:1, 2; 1 Timothy 5:1, 2; Hebrews 13:7) It would be a shocking perversion if one of these authority figures were to misuse that child's innocent trust so as to seduce or force him or her to submit to sexual acts. Those who have been sexually molested in this way often struggle for years to overcome the resulting emotional trauma. Hence, a child molester is subject to severe congregational discipline and restrictions. It is not his status as an authority figure that should be of concern but, rather, the unblemished purity of the congregation.—1 Corinthians 5:6; 2 Peter 3:14.

If a child molester sincerely repents, he will recognize the wisdom of applying Bible principles. If he truly learns to abhor what is wicked, he will despise what he did and struggle to avoid repeating his sin. (Proverbs 8:13; Romans 12:9) Further, he will surely thank Jehovah for the greatness of His love, as a result of which a repentant sinner, such as he is, can still worship our holy God and hope to be among "the upright" who will reside on earth forever.—Proverbs 2:21.

Finding a Wife for Isaac

THE elderly man sitting by the well was exhausted. He and his attendants along with their ten camels had trekked all the way from the vicinity of Beer-sheba to northern Mesopotamia—a distance of more than 500 miles.* Now that they had reached their destination, this weary traveler paused to reflect on his difficult mission. Who was this man, and why had he undertaken this arduous journey?

The man was Abraham's servant, "the oldest one of his household." (Genesis 24:2) Though not named in the account, apparently this was Eliezer, whom Abraham at one time referred to as 'a son of his household' and whom he spoke of as being in line to 'succeed him as heir.' (Genesis 15:2, 3) Of course, that was when Abraham and Sarah were childless. Now their son, Isaac, was 40 years old, and although Eliezer was no longer Abraham's principal heir, he was still his servant. So he complied when Abraham made a challenging request. What was it?

A Challenging Mission

In Abraham's day a marriage affected not only the family but also the entire tribe, or patriarchal community. Therefore it was customary for the parents to select a mate for their children. In searching for a wife for his son Isaac, however, Abraham was faced with a dilemma. The ungodly ways of the local Canaanites made marriage to one of them out of the question. (Deuteronomy 18:9-12) And while it was customary for a man to marry within his own tribe, Abraham's relatives lived hundreds of miles away in northern Mesopotamia. He could not simply have Isaac relocate there, for Jehovah had prom-

ised Abraham: "To your seed I am going to give *this land*," the land of Canaan. (Genesis 24:7) Hence, Abraham said to Eliezer: "Go to my country and to my relatives, and you will certainly take a wife for my son, for Isaac."—Genesis 24:4.

Upon completing the long journey, Eliezer rested by the well as he contemplated his mission. He realized that soon the women would be coming to the well to fetch the night's supply of water. So he implored Jehovah: "The young woman to whom I shall say, 'Let your water jar down, please, that I may take a drink,' and who will indeed say, 'Take a drink, and I shall also water your camels,' this is the one you must assign to your servant, to Isaac; and by this let me know that you have performed loyal love with my master."—Genesis 24:14.

While he was still praying, an attractive young woman named Rebekah approached. "Give me, please, a little sip of water from your jar," Eliezer said to her. Rebekah did so, and then she said: "For your camels too I shall draw water until they are done drinking." This was quite an offer, since a thirsty camel can drink up to 25 gallons of water in just ten minutes! Whether Eliezer's camels were that thirsty or not, Rebekah must have known that the service she offered to perform would be strenuous. Indeed, she "quickly emptied her jar into the drinking trough and ran yet again and again to the well to draw water, and kept drawing for all his camels."—Genesis 24:15-20.

Sensing Jehovah's direction, Eliezer gave Rebekah a gold nose ring and two gold bracelets, worth about \$1,400 in today's values. When Rebekah told him that she was the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother, Eliezer offered a

* Considering the average speed of camels, it may have taken more than 25 days to complete the journey.



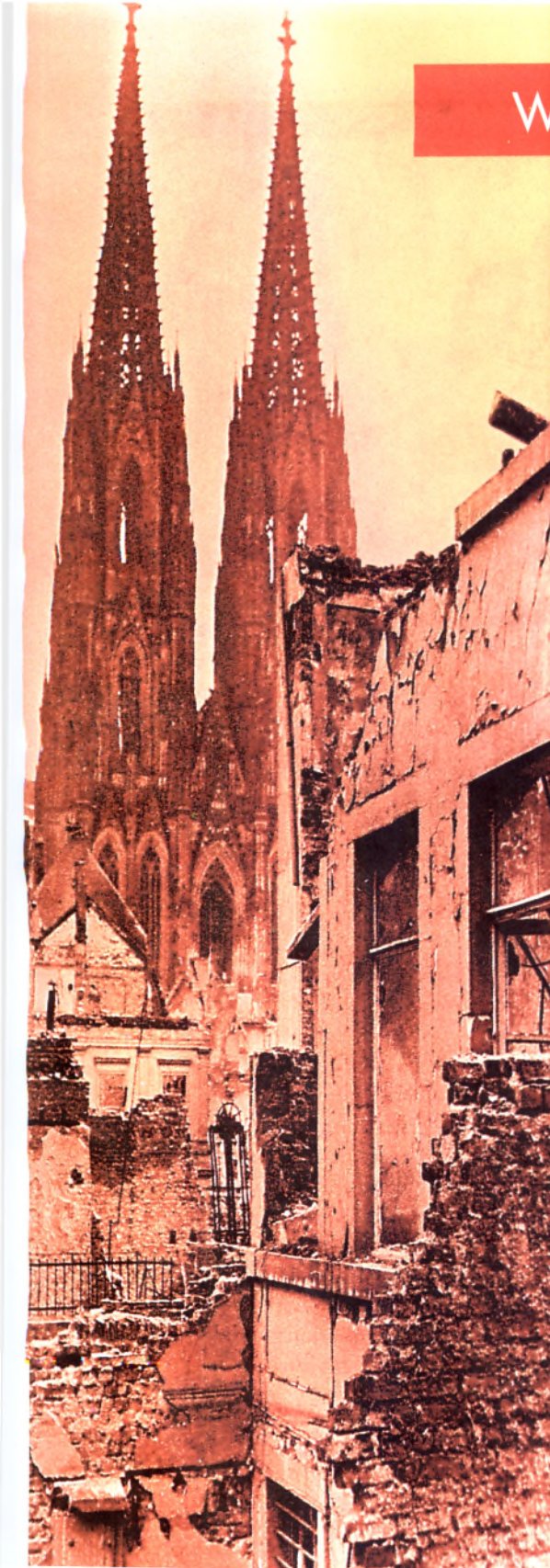
prayer of thanks to God. "Jehovah has led me to the house of the brothers of my master," he said. (Genesis 24:22-27) Eliezer was brought to Rebekah's family. In time, Rebekah became Isaac's wife, and she had the privilege of becoming an ancestress of the Messiah, Jesus.

Lessons for Us

Jehovah blessed Eliezer's prayerful effort to find a God-fearing mate for Isaac. Remember, though, that Isaac's marriage was directly tied in with God's purpose to produce a seed through Abraham. So this account should not lead us to conclude that everyone who prays for a mate will miraculously be given one. Still, if we adhere to Jehovah's principles, he will give us the strength to endure the challenges that come with either circumstance in life—marriage or single-

ness.—1 Corinthians 7:8, 9, 28; compare Philippians 4:11-13.

Eliezer had to put forth much effort to do things Jehovah's way. We too may find that conforming to Jehovah's standards is not always easy. For example, it may be hard to find employment that does not stifle theocratic activity, a mate that is God-fearing, associates that are uplifting, entertainment that is not debasing. (Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 15:33; Ephesians 4:17-19) Yet, Jehovah can sustain those who refuse to compromise Bible principles. The Bible promises: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight."—Proverbs 3:5, 6.



Who Is to Blame for War?

Is God to blame for the wars fought by humankind? "No, God does not want war." That is how Martin Niemöller, a well-known German Protestant clergyman, answered this question shortly after the end of World War II. His comments were published in 1946 in a book called *Ach Gott vom Himmel sieh darein—Sechs Predigten* (O God, Look From Heaven—Six Sermons).^{*} The book states:

"Whoever wants to blame God for [wars] does not know, or does not want to know, God's Word. Of course, it is a different question whether or not we Christians bear a good measure of guilt for the incessant wars. And we cannot escape this question so easily. . . . It can also be accurately recalled that Christian churches have, throughout the ages, repeatedly given themselves to blessing wars, troops, and weapons and that they prayed in a very unchristian way for the destruction of their enemies at war. All this is our fault and the fault of our fathers, but by no means is God to blame. And we Christians of today stand ashamed before a so-called sect like the Earnest Bible Students [Jehovah's Witnesses], who by the hundreds and thousands went into concentration camps and [even] died because they declined service in war and refused to fire on humans."

Today, some 50 years after World War II, Niemöller's words provide peace-loving people with food for thought. No, God is not to blame for the bloodshed of the nations! Indeed, through his true worshipers, who keep out of the conflicts of the world, God is declaring the imminent end of all war.—Psalm 46:9; John 17:16.

^{*} Martin Niemöller's sermons were later published in English in the book *Of Guilt and Hope*. However, the English version differs from the original German text, hence this quotation is translated directly from the German.