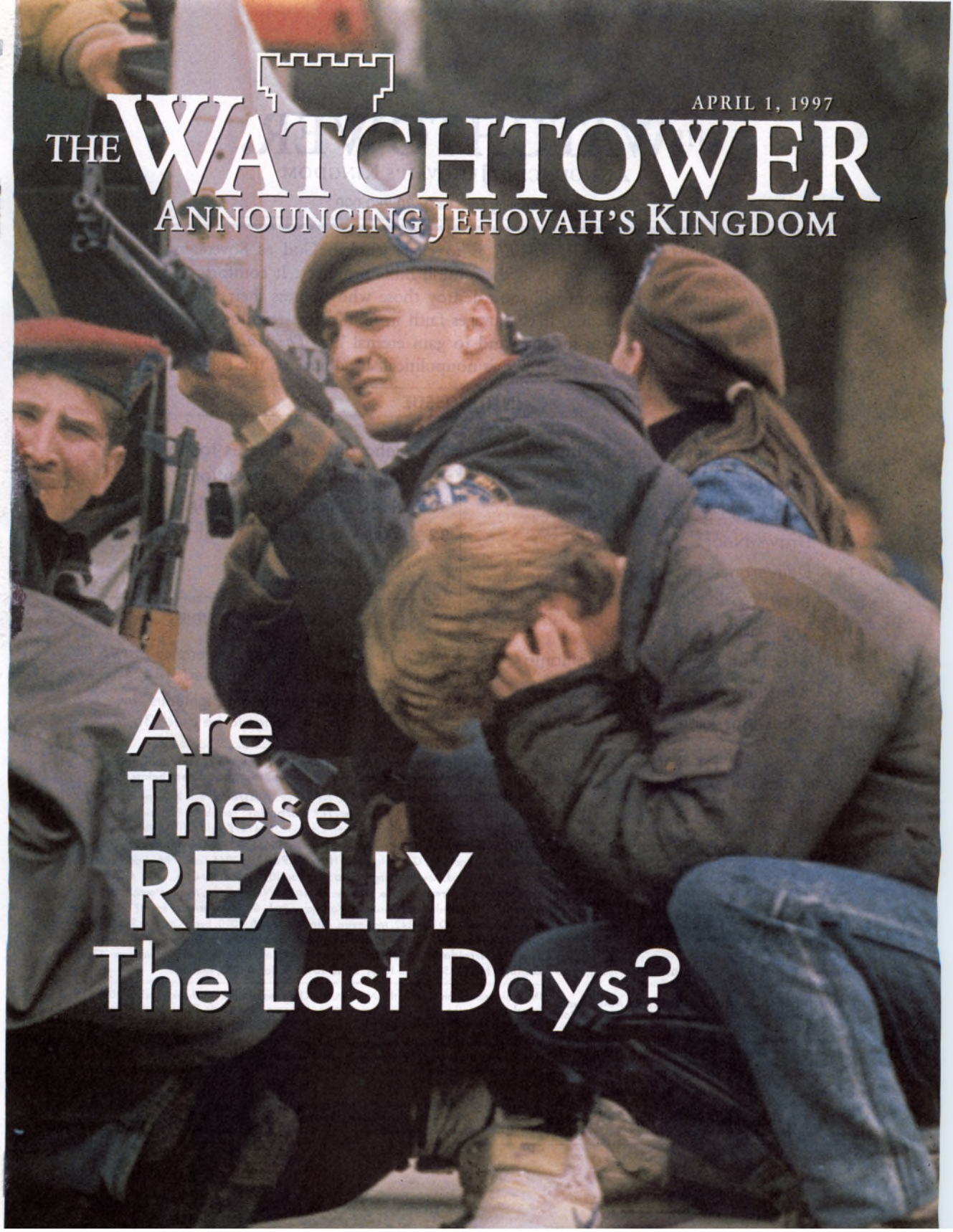
APRIL 1, 1997

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



Are These REALLY The Last Days?

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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WHY ARE THESE TIMES SO BAD?

WHEN you sit down to read a newspaper or watch the TV news or listen to a radio news broadcast, you expect some *bad* news, do you not? You are probably not surprised to learn that an ongoing war is still raging, that violent crime is still rampant, or that a famine is still sapping the strength of a developing land.

If you live some distance from these happenings, you probably do not constantly feel overly distressed by such reports. After all, who can afford to *feel* for all those suffering masses? Even so, it is very difficult to remain unmoved when we are brought face-to-face with the way suffering affects individuals. In other words, while it is one thing to read about a war and ponder statistics on fatalities, it is quite another to read about little Adnan, a nine-year-old Bosnian boy whose mother was killed when a bomb destroyed their home. Adnan's father was fatally shot by a sniper just months later as they walked down a street together. His sister bled to death before his eyes just a few weeks later, victim of an artillery shell in the school yard. Doctors who treated Adnan for trauma found that the boy was numb, devoid of all feelings—even curiosity. Fears and flashbacks blighted his waking hours; nightmares robbed his sleep of any restfulness. Adnan is no statistic. He is a suffering child; we cannot help but feel for him.

So it is also with other world maladies. It is one thing to read about famine; it is quite another to see a picture of a five-year-old girl with a bloated belly and matchstick limbs, a barely living victim of starvation. It is one thing to read of crime statistics; it is quite another to hear of an elderly widow being brutally beaten, robbed, and raped. It is one thing to read of the decline of the family; it is quite another to learn that a mother deliberately starved and viciously abused her own child.

It is painful to read about such things. But how much worse when one of these global plagues afflicts us directly! When you personally suffer evil, the bigger picture presented by the world news can become overwhelming. It is terrifying to face the fact that suffering from crime, war, famine, and disease is increasing on a scale unprecedented in human history. The effects of dealing with the realities of this 20th century can be profound indeed—bewilderment, fear, and depression are common.

People of many religions are seeking answers to such troubling questions as, Why are things so bad? Where is mankind heading?

Sadly, religions today rarely offer satisfying answers. When you first saw the question on the cover of this magazine, you may have reacted with skepticism—an understandable reaction. Fundamentalist religions often try to force from the Bible what it simply does not contain—the very day and hour of this world's demise. (See Matthew 24:36.) The publishers of this journal prefer to let the Bible explain itself. You may be surprised to learn that the Bible's discussion of the last days is factual and reasonable. And the Bible does more than explain why things are so bad. It also provides a hope for the future, one that is truly comforting. We invite you to consider the following articles to see how this is so.

ARE THESE REALLY THE LAST DAYS?

YOU are in the bow of a canoe as it enters a rough stretch of river. Huge boulders loom up through cascades of foam and spray. You try to fend them off. The person behind you is supposed to help steer the craft, but he has little experience. Worse yet, you have no map, so you have no idea whether these rapids will end in a calm pool or in a waterfall.

Not a pleasant scenario, is it? So let us change it. Imagine that you have an experienced guide with you, one who knows this river's every rock, every bend. He knew far ahead that this white water was approaching, he knows how it will end, and he knows how to negotiate his way through it. Would you not feel far more secure?

Really, all of us are in a similar predicament. We find ourselves, through no fault of our own, in a rough stretch of human history. Most people have no idea how long things will be this way, whether conditions will improve, or how best to survive in the meanwhile. But we do not have to feel lost or helpless. Our Creator has provided us with a guide—one that foretold this dark period of history, predicts how it will end, and

offers us the guidance we need in order to survive. That guide is a book, the Bible. Its Author, Jehovah God, calls himself the Grand Instructor, and through Isaiah he says reassuringly: "Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left." (Isaiah 30: 20, 21) Would you welcome such guidance? Then let us consider if the Bible really foretold what our days would be like.

People are seeking answers to such troubling questions as, Why are things so bad? Where is mankind heading?

Jesus' Followers Ask a Meaningful Question

Jesus' followers must have been amazed. Jesus had just told them, in no uncertain terms, that Jerusalem's impressive temple buildings would be completely destroyed! Such a prediction was astonishing. Shortly afterward, as they sat upon the Mount of Olives, four of the disciples asked Jesus: "Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3; Mark 13:1-4) Whether they realized it or not, Jesus' answer would have a multiple application.

The destruction of Jerusalem's temple and the end of the Jewish system of things were not the same as the time of Christ's presence and of the conclusion of the whole world system of things. Nonetheless, in his lengthy answer, Jesus artfully addressed all these aspects of the question. He told them what things would be like before Jerusalem's destruction; he also told them what to expect the world to be like during his presence, when he would be ruling as King in heaven and would be on the verge of bringing the entire world system of things to its end.

The End of Jerusalem

Consider first what Jesus said about Jerusalem and its temple. Over three decades in advance, he foretold a time of terrible hardships for one of the greatest cities in the world. Notice in particular his words recorded at Luke 21:20, 21: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, and let those in the midst of her withdraw, and let those in the country places not enter into her." If Jerusalem was to be surrounded, encircled by encamped armies, how could "those in the midst of her" simply "withdraw," as Jesus had commanded? Clearly, Jesus was implying that a window of opportunity would open up. Did it?

In 66 C.E., the Roman armies under the command of Cestius Gallus had beaten the Jewish rebel forces back to Jerusalem and had them pinned within the city. The Romans even made a thrust into the city itself and reached as far as the temple wall. But then Gallus directed his armies to do something truly baffling. He ordered them to retreat! Elated Jewish soldiers set out in pursuit and inflicted damage on their fleeing Roman enemies. Thus, Jesus' foretold window of opportunity opened. True Christians heeded his warning and got out of Jerusalem. Wisely so, for just four years later, the Roman armies were back, with General Titus leading them. This time no escape was possible.

The Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem again; they built a fortification of pointed stakes around it. Jesus had prophesied regarding Jerusalem: "The days

will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification with pointed stakes and will encircle you and distress you from every side."* (Luke 19:43) Before long, Jerusalem fell; its glorious temple was reduced to smoldering ruins. Jesus' words were fulfilled in every detail!

Jesus had far more in mind, though, than that destruction of Jerusalem. His disciples had also asked him about the sign of his presence. They did not then know it, but this referred to a time when he would be installed to reign as King in heaven. What did he foretell?

Today, over 90 percent of war casualties are civilians

War in the Last Days

If you read Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21, you will see unmistakable evidence that Jesus was talking about our own age. He foretold a time of wars—not just the "wars and reports of wars" that have always marred human history but wars involving 'nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom'—yes, great international wars.—Matthew 24:6-8.

Think for a moment about how warfare has changed in our century. When war meant merely the clash of armies representing two opposing nations, slashing with sabers or even firing guns at one another on a battlefield, it was terrible enough. But in 1914 the Great War broke out. Nation followed nation into the conflagration in a domino effect—the first global war. Automatic weapons were designed to kill more and more people and from greater distances. Machine guns spat bullets with grim efficiency; mustard gas burned, tormented, maimed, and killed soldiers by the thousands; tanks rumbled mercilessly through enemy lines, their great guns blazing. The airplane and the submarine also came into play—mere harbingers of what they were to become.

World War II did the unimaginable—it actually dwarfed its predecessor, killing scores of millions of people. Huge aircraft carriers, virtual floating cities, plied the seas and unleashed warplanes to rain death from the skies upon enemy targets. Submarines torpedoed and sank enemy vessels. And atom bombs were dropped, claiming thousands of lives in each crushing blow! Just as Jesus prophesied, there have indeed been "fearful sights" to mark this warring age.—Luke 21:11.

Has war eased off since World War II? Hardly. Sometimes literally dozens of wars rage during a single year—even in this decade of the 1990's—taking a death toll in the millions. And there has been a change in war's primary victims. No longer are the dead mainly soldiers. Today, most casualties of war—in fact, over 90 percent of them—are civilians.

Other Features of the Sign

War is only one aspect of the sign Jesus mentioned. He also warned that there would be "food shortages." (Matthew 24:7) And so it has been, though paradoxically the earth is producing more food than is needed to feed all mankind, though agricultural science is more

* Titus held a decidedly winning hand here. Nonetheless, in two important respects, he did not get his way. He made offers for peaceful surrender, but the city leaders stubbornly, inexplicably, refused. And when the city walls were finally breached, he ordered that the temple be spared. Yet it was burned completely! Jesus' prophecy had made it clear that Jerusalem would be devastated and that the temple would be completely demolished. —Mark 13:1, 2.

advanced than ever in human history, though speedy and efficient transportation is available to transport food anywhere in the world. Despite all of that, about one fifth of this world's population goes hungry every day.

Jesus also foretold that "in one place after another" there would be "pestilences." (Luke 21:11) Again, our age has seen a strange paradox—better medical care than ever, technological breakthroughs, vaccines to prevent many common diseases; yet pestilential diseases have made unprecedented strides as well. The Spanish Influenza followed swiftly on the heels of World War I and claimed more lives than the war did. So contagious was this disease that in cities such as New York, people could be fined or jailed just for sneezing! Today, cancer and heart disease claim millions of lives each year—veritable pestilences. And AIDS continues to strike down lives, basically unchecked by medical science.

Whereas Jesus discussed the last days largely in terms of sweeping historical and political conditions, the apostle Paul put the focus more on social problems and prevalent attitudes. He wrote, in part: "Know this, that in the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, . . . disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to

Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem was fulfilled in every detail

any agreement, . . . without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."—2 Timothy 3:1-5.

Do those words strike a familiar chord with you? Consider just one aspect of social decay in today's world—the disintegration of the family. The flood tide of broken homes, battered spouses, abused children, and maltreated elderly parents—how these show that people have "no natural affection," are "fierce," and even "betrayers," "without love of goodness"! Yes, we see these traits on an epidemic level today.

Is Our Generation the One Foretold?

You may wonder, though, 'Have not these conditions always plagued mankind? How do we know that our modern generation is the one foretold in these ancient

prophecies?' Let us consider three lines of evidence that prove that Jesus was talking about our time.

First, while there was a partial, early fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, Jesus' words definitely pointed to the future beyond that day. About 30 years after the cataclysm that destroyed Jerusalem, Jesus gave the aged apostle John a vision showing that the prophesied conditions—war, famine, pestilence, and resultant death—were to arrive worldwide in the future. Yes, these distresses would embrace, not any one locality, but "the earth" as a whole. —Revelation 6:2-8.

Second, in this century some features of Jesus' sign are being fulfilled in what we might call the ultimate degree. For example, is there any room for wars to become much worse than they have been since 1914? If there was a World War III, with all of today's nuclear powers deploying their weapons, the aftermath would likely find this earth a charred waste —and mankind as extinct as the dodo. Similarly, Revelation 11:18 foretold that in these days when the nations are "wrathful," mankind would be "ruining the earth." For the first time in history, pollution and degradation of the environment now threaten the very habitability of this planet! So this feature too is seeing fulfillment in or near its ultimate degree. Could wars and pollution simply continue to worsen until man has destroyed himself and this planet? No; for the Bible itself decrees that the earth will last forever, with righthearted humans living upon it.—Psalm 37: 29; Matthew 5:5.

Third, the sign of the last days is especially convincing *when taken as a whole*. All told, when we take into account the features Jesus mentioned in the three Gospels, those in Paul's writings, and those in Revelation, this sign has dozens of features. A person might quibble about them one at a time, arguing that other ages have seen similar problems, but when we consider all of them together, they point an unmistakable finger at only one age—our own.

What, though, does all of this mean? That the Bible simply paints our age as a desperate, hopeless time? Far from it!

Good News

One of the most noteworthy features of the sign of the last days is recorded at Matthew 24:14: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." In this century, Jehovah's Witnesses have carried out a work unique in human history. They have taken the Bible's message about Jehovah God's Kingdom—what it is, how it rules, and what it will accomplish—and have spread that message all over the earth. They have published literature on this subject in well over 300 languages and have brought it to people in their homes or on the streets or at their places of business in virtually every land on earth.

In so doing, they have been fulfilling this prophecy. But they have also been spreading hope. Notice that Jesus called this "good news," not bad news. How could that be in these dark times? Because the Bible's central message is not about how bad things will be at the end of this old world. Its central message involves God's Kingdom, and that Kingdom promises something dear to the hearts of every peace-loving human—deliverance.

Just what is that deliverance, and how can it be yours? Please consider the following articles on this subject.

TAKE COURAGE AS DELIVERANCE DRAWS NEAR

"'I am with you,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'to deliver you.'"
—JEREMIAH 1:19.

DELIVERANCE! What a comforting word! To be delivered means to be rescued, set free from a bad, unhappy situation. This includes the thought of being brought into a much better, happier condition.

[2] How desperately the human family needs such deliverance at this time! People everywhere are burdened down and discouraged by difficult problems—economic, social, physical, mental, and emotional. The vast majority are discontented and disappointed with the way the world is going and would like a change for the better.—Isaiah 60:2; Matthew 9:36.

"Critical Times Hard to Deal With"

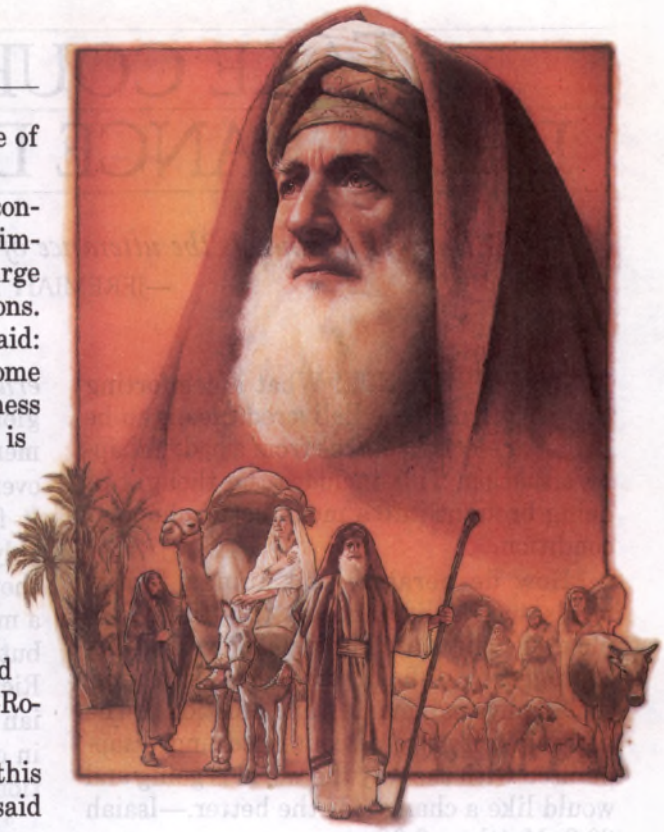
[3] Since this 20th century has experienced greater suffering than any other, there is a greater need for deliverance now than ever before. Today, well over a billion people live in dire poverty, and that number increases by some 25 million annually. Each year about 13 million children die from malnutrition or other poverty-related causes—more than 35,000 a day! And millions of older people die prematurely from various diseases.—Luke 21:11; Revelation 6:8.

[4] Wars and civil disorders have caused untold suffering. The book *Death by Government* says that wars, ethnic and religious strife, and mass murder by governments of their own citizens have "killed over 203 million people in this century." It further says: "The dead could conceivably be nearly 360 million people. It is as though our species has been devastated by a modern Black Plague. And indeed it has, but a plague of Power, not germs." Writer Richard Harwood observed: "The barbarian wars of centuries past were alley fights in comparison."—Matthew 24:6, 7; Revelation 6:4.

[5] Adding to the distressing conditions of recent years is the huge increase in violent crime, immorality, and family breakdown. Former United States Secretary of Education William Bennett noted that in 30 years the U.S. population grew 41 percent, but violent crime grew 560 percent, illegitimate births 400 percent, divorces 300 percent, and the teenage suicide rate 200 percent. Princeton University Professor John DiIulio, Jr., warned of the growing ranks of young "super-predators," who "murder, assault, rape, rob, burglarize and create serious communal disorders. They do not fear the stigma of arrest, the pains of imprisonment, or the pangs of conscience." In that land, homicide is now the second-leading cause of death among those 15 to 19 years

1, 2. Why does the human family need deliverance?
3, 4. Why is there a greater need for deliverance now?
5, 6. What makes our time so distressing?

Abraham was among those who had full confidence in Jehovah



of age. And more children under the age of four die from abuse than from disease.

[6] Such crime and violence are not confined to one nation. Most lands report similar trends. Contributing to this is the surge of illegal drug use that corrupts millions. Australia's *Sydney Morning Herald* said: "International drug trafficking has become the world's second most lucrative business after the arms trade." Another factor is the violence and immorality that now saturate television. In many countries, by the time a child reaches the age of 18, he has seen tens of thousands of violent acts on TV and countless immoral ones. That is a significant corrupting influence, since our personality is shaped by what we regularly feed our minds.—Romans 12:2; Ephesians 5:3, 4.

[7] Bible prophecy accurately foretold this awful trend of events in our century. It said that there would be global wars, disease epidemics, food shortages, and increasing lawlessness. (Matthew 24:7-12; Luke 21:10, 11) And when we consider the prophecy recorded at 2 Timothy 3:1-5, it is like listening to nightly news reports. It identifies our era as "the last days" and describes people as 'lovers of themselves, lovers of money, disobedient to parents, disloyal, having no natural affection, without self-control, fierce, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God.' That is exactly what the world is like today. As William Bennett acknowledged: "There are just too many signs of . . . civilization gone rotten." It has even been said that civilization ended with the first world war.

7. How did Bible prophecy foretell the present bad conditions?

[8] The situation now is even worse than before the Flood of Noah's day, when "the earth became filled with violence." Back then, people in general refused to repent of their bad ways. Thus, God said: "The earth is full of violence as a result of them; and here I am bringing them to ruin." The Deluge ended that violent world.—Genesis 6: 11, 13; 7:17-24.

No Deliverance by Humans

[9] Can human endeavors deliver us from these bad conditions? God's Word answers: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation

8. Why did God bring the Flood in Noah's day, and how does this relate to our day?
9, 10. Why should we not look to humans to provide deliverance?

belongs." "It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." (Psalm 146:3; Jeremiah 10:23) Thousands of years of history have verified those truths. Humans have tried every political, economic, and social system imaginable, but conditions worsen. Had there been a human solution, it would have become evident by now. Instead, the reality is that "man has dominated man to his injury."—Ecclesiastes 8:9; Proverbs 29:2; Jeremiah 17:5, 6.

10 A few years ago, former U.S. national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski said: "The unavoidable conclusion of any detached analysis of global trends is that social turmoil, political unrest, economic crisis, and international friction are likely to become more widespread." He added: "The menace confronting humanity [is] global anarchy." That assessment of world conditions is even more valid today. Commenting on this era of increased violence, an editorial in the New Haven, Connecticut, *Register* declared: "We seem to be too far gone to be able to halt it." No, there will not be a halt to this world's deterioration, for the prophecy about these "last days" also said: "Wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse, misleading and being misled."—2 Timothy 3:13.

11 Humans cannot reverse these trends because Satan is "the god of this system of things." (2 Corinthians 4:4) Yes, "the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19; see also John 14: 30.) Rightly the Bible says of our day: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." (Revelation 12:12) Satan knows that his rule and his world are about to end, so he is like "a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone."—1 Peter 5:8.

11. Why will worsening conditions not be reversed by human efforts?

Deliverance Near—For Whom?

12 The increasingly difficult conditions on earth are striking evidence that a vast change—indeed, a grand deliverance—is near at hand! For whom? Deliverance is nearing for those who pay attention to the warning signals and who take appropriate action. First John 2:17 shows what must be done: "The world [Satan's system of things] is passing away and so is its desire, but *he that does the will of God* remains forever." —See also 2 Peter 3:10-13.

13 Jesus foretold that the corrupt society of today is soon to be swept away in a time of trouble "such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." (Matthew 24:21) That is why he cautioned: "Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth. Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur."—Luke 21:34-36.

14 Those who "pay attention" and "keep awake" will search out the will of God and do it. (Proverbs 2:1-5; Romans 12:2) These are the ones who will "succeed in escaping" the destruction soon to be brought on Satan's system. And they can have complete confidence that they will be delivered. —Psalm 34:15; Proverbs 10:28-30.

The Principal Deliverer

15 For God's servants to be delivered,

12. For whom is deliverance nearing?
13, 14. How did Jesus emphasize the need to keep awake?
15, 16. Who is the principal Deliverer, and why are we certain his judgments will be righteous?

Satan and his entire worldwide system of things need to be removed. This requires a source of deliverance far more powerful than humans. That source is Jehovah God, the Supreme Sovereign, the almighty Creator of the awesome universe. He is the principal Deliverer: "I—I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior."—Isaiah 43:11; Proverbs 18:10.

16 In Jehovah there is the ultimate degree of power, wisdom, justice, and love. (Psalm 147:5; Proverbs 2:6; Isaiah 61:8; 1 John 4:8) So when he executes his judgments, we can be certain that his actions will be righteous. Abraham asked: "Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?" (Genesis 18:24-33) Paul exclaimed: "Is there injustice with God? Never may that become so!" (Romans 9:14) John wrote: "Yes, Jehovah God, the Almighty, true and righteous are your judicial decisions." —Revelation 16:7.

17 When Jehovah promises deliverance, he will without fail accomplish it. Joshua said: "Not a promise failed out of all the good promise that Jehovah had made." (Joshua 21:45) Solomon stated: "There has not failed one word of all his good promise that he has promised." (1 Kings 8:56) The apostle Paul noted that Abraham "did not waver in a lack of faith, . . . being fully convinced that what [God] had promised he was also able to do." Sarah likewise "esteemed [God] faithful who had promised." —Romans 4:20, 21; Hebrews 11:11.

18 Unlike humans, Jehovah is completely trustworthy, true to his word. "Jehovah of armies has sworn, saying: 'Surely just as I have figured, so it must occur; and just as I have counseled, that is what will come true.'" (Isaiah 14:24) So when the Bible says that "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off," we can have full confidence that this will happen. (2 Peter 2:9) Even when threatened with destruction by powerful enemies, Jehovah's servants take courage because of his attitude, reflected in his promise to one of his prophets: "They will be certain to fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for 'I am with you,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'to deliver you.'"—Jeremiah 1:19; Psalm 33:18, 19; Titus 1:2.

17. How have Jehovah's servants in the past expressed confidence in his promises?

18. Why can Jehovah's servants today be confident that they will be delivered?

Deliverances in the Past

19 We can be greatly encouraged by recounting some of Jehovah's previous saving acts. For instance, Lot was "greatly distressed" by the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah. But Jehovah took note of "the cry of complaint" against those cities. At the right time, he sent messengers to urge Lot and his family to get out of that area right away. The result? Jehovah "delivered righteous Lot," "reducing the cities Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes." (2 Peter 2:6-8; Genesis 18:20, 21) Today, too, Jehovah notices the cry of complaint regarding this world's gross wickedness. When his modern-day messengers have completed their urgent witnessing work to the extent he wants, he will act against this world and deliver his servants as he did Lot.—Matthew 24:14.

20 In ancient Egypt millions of God's people were enslaved. Jehovah said about

19. How did Jehovah deliver Lot, with what parallel for our time?

20. Describe Jehovah's deliverance of ancient Israel from Egypt.

them: "I have heard their outcry . . . I well know the pains they suffer. And I am proceeding to go down to deliver them." (Exodus 3:7, 8) However, after letting God's people go, Pharaoh changed his mind and pursued them with his mighty army. The Israelites seemed trapped at the Red Sea. Yet Moses said: "Do not be afraid. Stand firm and see the salvation of Jehovah, which he will perform for you today." (Exodus 14:8-14) Jehovah parted the Red Sea, and the Israelites escaped. Pharaoh's armies charged after them, but Jehovah projected his power so that "the sea covered them; they sank like lead in majestic waters." Afterward, Moses exulted in song to Jehovah: "Who is like you, proving yourself mighty in holiness? The One to be feared with songs of praise, the One doing marvels."—Exodus 15:4-12, 19.

[21] On another occasion, the enemy nations of Ammon, Moab, and Seir (Edom) threatened Jehovah's people with destruction. Jehovah said: "Do not you be afraid or be terrified because of this large [enemy] crowd; for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . You will not need to fight . . . Stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah in your behalf." Jehovah delivered his people by proceeding to strike confusion into the ranks of the enemy so that they slaughtered one another.—2 Chronicles 20:15-23.

[22] When the Assyrian World Power came against Jerusalem, King Sennacherib taunted Jehovah by saying to the people on the wall: "Who are there among all the gods of these lands [that I have conquered] that have delivered their land out of my hand so that Jehovah should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" To God's servants he said: "Do not let Hezekiah cause you to trust in Jehovah, saying: 'Without fail Jehovah will deliver us.'" Then Hezekiah prayed fervently for deliverance, "that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O Jehovah, are God alone." Jehovah struck down 185,000 Assyrian soldiers, and God's servants were delivered. Later, as Sennacherib worshiped his false god, his sons assassinated him.—Isaiah, chapters 36 and 37.

[23] We can surely take courage when we see how Jehovah in the past has wonderfully delivered his people. What about today? Into what dangerous situation will his faithful servants soon come that will require his miraculous deliverance? Why has he waited until now to bring their deliverance? What fulfillment will there be of Jesus' words: "As these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near"? (Luke 21:28) And how will deliverance come for God's servants who have already died? The following article will examine these questions.

21. How were Jehovah's people saved from Ammon, Moab, and Seir?

22. What miraculous deliverance from Assyria did Jehovah provide for Israel?

23. What questions need answering about deliverance today?

Review Questions

- ☐ Why is there a great need for deliverance?
- ☐ Why should we not look to humans for deliverance?
- ☐ For whom is deliverance near?
- ☐ Why can we be confident in Jehovah's deliverance?
- ☐ What examples of past deliverances are encouraging?

DELIVERANCE INTO A RIGHTEOUS NEW WORLD

"They will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."
—PSALM 37:11.

JEHOVAH is a God of deliverance. In ancient times, he delivered his people on many occasions. Those deliverances were temporary, for Jehovah did not in any of those instances permanently execute his judgments against Satan's entire world. But in our day, Jehovah will soon perform the grandest deliverance of all for his servants. This time he will destroy every trace of Satan's system earth wide, and he will bring his servants into a permanent, righteous new world.—2 Peter 2:9; 3:10-13.

[2] Jehovah promises: "Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more . . . But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." (Psalm 37:10, 11) For how long? "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." (Psalm 37:29; Matthew 5:5) However, before that happens, this world will undergo the greatest time of trouble it has ever known.

The "Great Tribulation"

[3] In 1914 this world entered its "last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13) We are now 83 years into that period and are nearing its end when, as Jesus foretold, the following will take place: "There will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." (Matthew 24:21) Yes, worse than even World War II, when some 50 million lives were taken. What a world-shaking time is fast approaching!

[4] The "great tribulation" will come with astounding suddenness, "in one hour." (Revelation 18:10) Its outbreak will be marked by God's execution of judgment on all false religion, which God's Word calls "Babylon the Great." (Revelation 17:1-6, 15) Ancient Babylon's dominant feature was false religion. Modern Babylon is like her ancient counterpart and represents the world empire of false religion. She has played the harlot by compromising with the political elements. She has supported their wars and has blessed armies on opposing sides, resulting in people of the same religion slaughtering one another. (Matthew 26:51, 52; 1 John 4:20, 21) She has winked at the corrupt practices of her adherents and has persecuted true Christians.—Revelation 18: 5, 24.

[5] The "great tribulation" begins when the political elements suddenly turn on "Babylon the Great." They "will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked,

1, 2. (a) How will Jehovah's deliverance in our time differ from deliverances of ancient times? (b) Into what kind of world will Jehovah bring his people?
3. How did Jesus describe the "great tribulation"?
4. Why does God's judgment come upon "Babylon the Great"?
5. How does the "great tribulation" begin?

and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire." (Revelation 17:16) Thereafter, her former supporters "will weep and beat themselves in grief over her." (Revelation 18:9-19) But Jehovah's servants have long expected this, and they will exclaim: "Praise Jah, . . . for he has executed judgment upon the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged the blood of his slaves at her hand."—Revelation 19:1, 2.

God's Servants Attacked

6 Having destroyed false religion, the political elements turn on Jehovah's servants. Satan, "Gog of the land of Magog" in prophecy, says: "I shall come in upon those having no disturbance, dwelling in security." Thinking that they are easy prey, he attacks them with "a numerous military force . . . , like clouds to cover the land." (Ezekiel 38:2, 10-16) Jehovah's people know that this attack will fail because they trust in Jehovah.

7 When Pharaoh and his armies felt that they had God's servants trapped at the Red Sea, Jehovah miraculously delivered his people and destroyed Egypt's armies. (Exodus 14:26-28) During the "great tribulation," when the nations feel that they have Jehovah's people trapped, he again miraculously comes to the rescue: "In that day . . . my rage will come up into my nose. And in my ardor, in the fire of my fury, I shall have to speak." (Ezekiel 38:18, 19) The climax of the "great tribulation" will then be imminent!

8 At some point after the "great tribulation" begins, but before Jehovah executes his judgment upon the rest of this world, supernatural events will occur. Note the effect they will have. "Then the sign of the Son of man [Christ] will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will beat themselves in lamentation, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory." (Matthew 24:29, 30) "There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, . . . while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth." —Luke 21:25, 26.

6, 7. Why can Jehovah's servants be confident when attacked during the "great tribulation"?
8. What supernatural events take place before Jehovah executes the wicked, and with what effect?

"Your Deliverance Is Getting Near"

9 At that particular time, the prophecy of Luke 21:28 applies. Jesus said: "As these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near." God's enemies will be trembling with fear because they will know that the supernatural events taking place come from Jehovah. But Jehovah's servants will rejoice because they will know that their deliverance is getting near.

10 Jehovah then delivers the death blow to Satan's system: "I will bring myself into judgment with [Gog], with pestilence and with blood; and a flooding downpour and hailstones, fire and sulphur I shall rain down upon him and upon his bands . . . And they will have to know that I am Jehovah." (Ezekiel 38:22, 23) All vestiges of Satan's system are destroyed. The entire human society of God-ignoring people is annihilated. That is the Armageddon climax of the "great tribulation."—Jeremiah 25:31-33; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Revelation 16:14, 16; 19:11-21.

11 Delivered through the "great tribulation" will be the millions of worshipers of

9. Why can Jehovah's servants 'lift their heads up' when supernatural events occur?
10. How does God's Word describe the climax of the "great tribulation"?
11. Why are Jehovah's servants delivered through the "great tribulation"?

The whole earth will be transformed into a paradise

Jehovah earth wide. These make up the "great crowd" who have come "out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." Why are they delivered in such an awe-inspiring way? Because they render Jehovah "sacred service day and night." So they survive this world's end and are ushered into a righteous new world. (Revelation 7:9-15) Thus, they witness the fulfillment of Jehovah's promise: "Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."—Psalm 37:34.

The New World

12 What a thrilling time that will be—the elimination of wickedness and the dawn of the most glorious era in all human history! (Revelation 20:1-4) How grateful to Jehovah the Armageddon survivors will be to have entered a bright, clean civilization of God's making, a new world, on an earth that will be transformed into a paradise! (Luke 23:43) And they will never need to die at all! (John 11:26) Indeed, from that point onward, they will have the amazing, marvelous prospect of living as long as Jehovah lives!

13 Jesus, whom Jehovah has appointed as heavenly King, will oversee the miraculous blessings that the delivered ones will enjoy. When on earth, he opened blind eyes and deaf ears and cured "every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity." (Matthew 9:35; 15:30, 31) In the new world, he will resume that great healing work but on a global scale. As God's Agent, he will fulfill the promise: "[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) Never again will there be a need for medical practitioners or undertakers!—Isaiah 25:8; 33:24.

14 Also delivered will be all those faithful servants of God who died in the past. In the new world, they will be rescued from the clutches of the grave. Jehovah guarantees: "There is going to be a resurrection of both

12. To what can Armageddon survivors look forward?

13. How does Jesus resume the healing work he began on earth?

14. What deliverance will come to Jehovah's servants who have already died?

the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) Likely, "righteous" ones will be resurrected earlier and contribute to the expanding Paradise. How fascinating it will be for Armageddon survivors to hear the experiences of those faithful dead ones of long ago, now returned to life!—John 5:28, 29.

15 All those living will then experience what the psalmist said of Jehovah: "You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16) No more hunger: The earth will be restored to an ecological balance and produce abundantly. (Psalm 72:16) No more homeless people: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy," and each one will sit "under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble." (Isaiah 65:21, 22; Micah 4:4) No more fear: There will be no war, violence, or crime. (Psalm 46:8, 9; Proverbs 2:22) "The whole earth has come to rest, has become free of disturbance. People have become cheerful with joyful cries."—Isaiah 14:7.

16 In the new world, Satan's propaganda media will have been removed. Instead, "righteousness is what the inhabitants of the productive land will certainly learn." (Isaiah 26:9; 54:13) With wholesome spiritual instruction year after year, "the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea." (Isaiah 11:9) Upbuilding thoughts and actions will permeate mankind. (Philippians 4:8) Imagine, a worldwide society of people free from crime, egotism, jealousy —an international brotherhood where the fruitage of God's spirit is produced by all. Indeed, even now such qualities are being cultivated by the great crowd.—Galatians 5:22, 23.

15. Describe some of the conditions to be experienced in the new world.

16. Why will righteousness permeate the new world?

Why So Long?

17 However, why has Jehovah waited so long to remove wickedness and deliver his people into the new world? Consider what had to be accomplished. Most important is the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty, his right to rule. By permitting enough time to go by, he has demonstrated beyond any doubt that human rule outside of his sovereignty has turned out to be a colossal failure. (Jeremiah 10:23) So now Jehovah is fully justified in replacing human rule with the rule of his heavenly Kingdom under Christ. —Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10.

18 What has taken place during all these centuries is similar to what happened in Abraham's time. Jehovah told Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan—but not for four hundred years "because the error of the Amorites [had] not yet come to completion." (Genesis 12:1-5; 15:13-16) Here the term "Amorites" (a dominant tribe) likely represents the peoples of Canaan as a whole. So some four centuries would pass before Jehovah would enable his people to take over Canaan. In the meantime Jehovah let the nations in Canaan develop their societies. With what result?

19 The *Bible Handbook,* by Henry H. Halley, notes that at Megiddo, archaeologists found the ruins of a temple of Ashtoreth, goddess-wife of Baal. He writes: "Just a few steps from this temple was a cemetery, where many jars were found, containing remains of infants who had been sacrificed in this temple . . . Prophets of Baal

17. Why has Jehovah waited so long before ending wickedness?

18. When would the descendants of Abraham inherit the land of Canaan?

19, 20. What kind of societies did the Canaanites develop?

and Ashtoreth were official murderers of little children." "Another horrible practice was [what] they called 'foundation sacrifices.' When a house was to be built, a child would be sacrificed, and its body built into the wall."

[20] Halley comments: "The worship of Baal, Ashtoreth, and other Canaanite gods consisted in the most extravagant orgies; their temples were centers of vice. . . . Canaanites worshiped, by immoral indulgence, . . . and then, by murdering their first-born children, as a sacrifice to these same gods. It seems that, in large measure, the land of Canaan had become a sort of Sodom and Gomorrah on a national scale. . . . Did a civilization of such abominable filth and brutality have any right longer to exist? . . . Archaeologists who dig in the ruins of Canaanite cities wonder that God did not destroy them sooner than He did."—Compare 1 Kings 21:25, 26.

[21] The wickedness of the Amorites had "come to completion." So Jehovah was now fully justified in exterminating them. The same is true today. This world is filled with violence, immorality, and contempt for God's laws. And since we are rightly appalled at the hideous child sacrifices in ancient Canaan, what of the sacrifice of tens of millions of young people in the wars of this world, far worse than anything in Canaan? Certainly, Jehovah is now fully justified in bringing this wicked system to an end.

21. What similarity is there between the situation of the Canaanites and that of our day?

Review Questions

- ☐ What is the "great tribulation," and how does it begin?
- ☐ Why will Gog's attack on Jehovah's servants fail?
- ☐ How does the "great tribulation" end?
- ☐ What marvelous benefits will the new world provide?
- ☐ Why has Jehovah waited so long before bringing this system's end?

Accomplishing Something Else

[22] Jehovah's patience in these last days is accomplishing something else. He is allowing time to gather and educate the great crowd, already numbering more than five million. Under Jehovah's direction, they have been formed into a forward-moving organization. Men, women, and youths are trained to teach others Bible truths. Through their meetings and Bible publications, they learn God's loving ways. (John 13:34, 35; Colossians 3:14; Hebrews 10:24, 25) In addition, they are developing skills in construction, electronics, printing, and other fields in order to support the preaching of the "good news." (Matthew 24:14) Likely such teaching and building skills will be widely used in the new world.

[23] Yes, today Jehovah is preparing his servants to pass through the "great tribulation" into a righteous new world. Then there will be no Satan and his wicked world to contend with, no sickness, sorrow, and death. With great enthusiasm and joy, God's people will proceed with the happy task of building a paradise, where every day will be an "exquisite delight." How privileged we are to live at this climax of the ages, to know and serve Jehovah, and to realize that very soon we will 'lift our heads up because our deliverance is getting near'!—Luke 21:28; Psalm 146:5.

22. What is accomplished by Jehovah's patience in our time?
23. Why is it a privilege to be alive at this time?

THE "HOLY COAT OF TRIER"

TRIER, with a history stretching back 2,000 years, is the oldest city in Germany.* For centuries Trier has had strong connections with the Catholic Church. In 1996 the cathedral in Trier put a relic on display that supposedly is almost as old as the city itself. It is called the Holy Coat of Trier.

The coat is 62 inches long and 43 inches wide and has sleeves of half-length. It is made of cotton and, according to Hans-Joachim Kann in his book *Wallfahrtsführer Trier und Umgebung* (Pilgrimage Guide to Trier and Surroundings), was probably worn as an *outer* garment. Some estimates date the original garment—much of which has been repaired and reinforced with other textiles over the centuries—back to the second or even the first century C.E. If correct, that would make it a rare item of clothing, an interesting museum piece.

However, some maintain that the garment is not only rare but also holy—hence the name Holy Coat. This is because it is seamless, as was the inner garment worn by Jesus Christ. (John 19:23, 24) Some claim that the "Holy Coat" actually belonged to the Messiah.

How the coat came to Trier is uncertain. One reference work states that it was "presented to the city by the empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great." Kann points out that the first reliable report of the tunic's presence in Trier is from 1196.

The coat, which is stored in the cathedral, has been put on display at irregular intervals since the 16th century. For instance, this was done in 1655, shortly after the Thirty Years' War, which had been very costly for Trier. The sale of pilgrimage mementos has on occasion generated much income.

There have been three "Holy Coat" pilgrimages this century— in 1933, 1959, and 1996. In 1933 the pilgrimage was announced the same day that Hitler was appointed chancellor of the German Reich. Kann points out that this coincidence of the two occurrences on the same date highlights the circumstances surrounding the pilgrimage. Uniformed Nazi troopers formed a guard of honor for pilgrims outside the cathedral. Two and a half million people viewed the robe that year.

Herbert, a resident of Trier for many years, compared the pilgrimages of 1959 and 1996. "In 1959 the streets were crowded, with stalls selling souvenirs on almost every street corner. This year the whole thing is much quieter." Indeed, only 700,000 viewed the robe in 1996, a million short of the 1959 figure.

Why Do They Go to View the Robe?

The church emphasizes that the robe should not be seen as an object of veneration. The seamless robe is seen as symbolic of church unity. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reports that when announcing the pilgrimage, Bishop Spital said: "The unusual situation in our world challenges us Christians to have unusual answers. We have to stand against the swelling wave of hatred, brutality, and violence." The bishop explained that viewing the robe would remind one of unity.

But why does anyone need the "Holy Coat" to be reminded of church unity? What if the robe should be damaged or disintegrate or be exposed as a fake? Would church unity then be in danger? What about people unable to make a pilgrimage to Trier? Are they less conscious of any unity within the church?

The Holy Scriptures make no mention of early Christians' needing objects to remind them of the need for Christian unity. Indeed, the apostle Paul encouraged Christians with the words: "We are walking by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7) The unity that true Christians enjoy is thus described as a "oneness in the faith."—Ephesians 4: 11-13.

* See *Awake!* of April 22, 1980, pages 21-3.

I LEARNED BIBLE TRUTH IN ROMANIA

AS TOLD BY GOLDIE ROMOCEAN

In 1970, I visited family members in Romania for the first time in nearly 50 years. People lived under an oppressive Communist regime, and I was continually cautioned to be careful of what I said. Then, as I stood in the government office in our home village, the official urged me to leave the country immediately. Before I explain why, let me tell how I learned Bible truth in Romania.

I WAS born on March 3, 1903, in the village of Ortelec in northwestern Romania near the town of Zalău. We lived in beautiful surroundings. The water and air were clean. We raised our own food and lacked nothing materially. In my early years, the country was at peace.

People were very religious. In fact, our family belonged to three different religions. One of my grandmothers was Orthodox Catholic, the other Adventist, and my parents were Baptist. Because I did not agree with any of their religions, my family said I would become an atheist. 'If there is one God,' I thought, 'there should be just one religion—not three in one family.'

Things I saw in religion disturbed me. For example, the priest visited homes to collect church dues. When people did not have money to give, he took their best wool blankets instead. In the Catholic church, I watched grandmother kneel to pray before a picture of Mary. 'Why pray to a picture?' I thought.

Troublous Times

Father went to the United States in 1912 to earn money to pay off a debt. Not long afterward war broke out, and the men of our village left to fight—only women, children, and old men remained. Our village came under Hungarian rule for a while, but then Romanian soldiers returned and took the village back. They ordered us to leave im-

mediately. However, in the haste and confusion of packing belongings and little ones into an oxcart, I was left behind. You see, I was the oldest of five children.

I ran to a neighbor, an old man who had stayed behind, and he said: "Go home. Lock your doors, and don't let anyone in." I quickly obeyed. After I had eaten some chicken soup and stuffed cabbage that had been left in the haste of the departure, I knelt by my bed and prayed. Soon I fell fast asleep.

When I opened my eyes, it was daylight, and I said: "Oh, thank you, God! I'm alive!" The walls were full of bullet holes, as there had been shooting all night. When Mother realized that I was not with them in the next village, she sent young George Romocean, who found me and took me back. It was not long before we could return to our home village and resume living there.

My Desire for Bible Truth

My mother wanted me to be baptized as a Baptist, but I did not want to do that because I could not believe that a loving God would burn people forever in hell. Trying to explain, Mother said: "Well, if they're bad." But I replied: "If they're bad, kill them off, but don't torture them. I wouldn't even torture a dog or a cat."

I remember that on a beautiful spring day, when I was 14 years old, Mother had me take the cows out to pasture. As I lay on the grass beside a river, with a forest in the background, I looked into the sky and said: "God, I know you're there; but I don't like any of these religions. You must have one good one."

I really believe that God heard my prayer because that very summer of 1917, two Bible Students (as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called) came to our village. They were colporteurs, or full-time ministers, and they came to the Baptist church while a service was being held.

Bible Truth Spreads in Romania

A few years before, in 1911, Carol Szabo and Josif Kiss, who had become Bible Students in the United States, returned to Romania to introduce Bible truth there. They settled in Tîrgu-Mureş, less than a hundred miles southeast of our village. Within a few years, literally hundreds of people responded to the Kingdom message and took up the Christian ministry.—Matthew 24:14.

Well, when the two young Bible Students came to the Baptist church in our village of Ortelec, George Romocean, though only 18 years old, was conducting the service and was attempting to explain the meaning of Romans 12:1. Finally, one of the young colporteurs stood up and said: "Brothers, friends, what is the apostle Paul trying to tell us here?"

When I heard that, I was so excited! I thought, 'These men must know how to explain the Bible.' But most of those present shouted: "False prophets! We know who you are!" An uproar followed. But then George's father stood up and said: "Shut up all of you! What kind of spirit is this—the kind that comes from a bottle? If these men have something to tell us and you don't want to listen, I'm inviting them to my home. Anyone who wants to come is welcome."

Excitedly, I ran home and told Mother what had happened. I was one of those who accepted the invitation to the Romocean home. How thrilled I was that evening to learn from the Bible that there is no burning hell and to see in my own Romanian Bible God's name, Jehovah! The colporteurs

arranged for a Bible Student to visit Romocean's home every Sunday to teach us. The following summer, at the age of 15, I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to Jehovah.

In time, practically the entire Prodan family and the Romocean family accepted Bible truth and dedicated their lives to Jehovah. Many others from our village also did so, including the young couple whose home had formerly served as the Baptist church. Afterward they converted it into a place for the Bible Students to meet for study. Scriptural truth spread rapidly in nearby villages, and by 1920 there were about 1,800 Kingdom publishers in Romania!

To the United States

We were eager to share what we had learned with my father, Peter Prodan. But, amazingly, before we could write, we received a letter from him telling us that he had become a baptized servant of Jehovah. He had studied with the Bible Students in Akron, Ohio, and he wanted all of us to join him in the United States. Mother, however, refused to leave Romania. So, in 1921, using the money Father had sent me, I joined him in Akron. George Romocean and his brother had already migrated to the States the year before.

When I arrived by ship at Ellis Island, New York, the immigration official didn't know how to translate my name, Aurelia, into English, so he said: "You're Goldie." That has been my name ever since. Shortly thereafter, on May 1, 1921, George Romocean and I were married. A year or so later, Father returned to Romania and in 1925 brought back to Akron my younger sister, Mary. Then Father returned to Romania to be with Mother and the rest of the family.

Our Early Ministry in the States

George was a very loyal, devoted servant of Jehovah. Between 1922 and 1932, we were blessed with four lovely daughters—Esther, Anne, Goldie Elizabeth, and Irene. A Romanian congregation was started in Akron, and in the beginning the meetings were held in our home. Eventually, every six months a representative from the world headquarters of the Bible Students in Brooklyn, New York, visited our congregation and stayed with us.

Many Sundays we devoted the whole day to the preaching work. We packed our book bags and a lunch, put the girls in our Model T Ford, and spent the day preaching in rural territory. Then in the evening, we attended the *Watchtower* Study. Our girls came to love the preaching work. In 1931, I was present in Columbus, Ohio, when the Bible Students adopted their distinctive name Jehovah's Witnesses.

Correction That I Needed

A few years later, I became angry with Joseph F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. A new Witness felt that Brother Rutherford had dealt unjustly with him, not hearing him out. I felt that Brother Rutherford was wrong. Well, one Sunday my sister Mary and her husband, Dan Pestrui, came to visit us. After dinner Dan said: "Let's get ready to go to the meeting."

"We don't go to the meetings anymore," I said. "We're mad at Brother Rutherford."

Dan clasped his hands behind his back and paced back and forth, and then he said: "Did you know Brother Rutherford when you got baptized?"

"Of course not," I replied. "You know I was baptized in Romania."

"Why did you get baptized?" he asked.

"Because I learned that Jehovah is the

My sister Mary and Father standing, and me, George, and our daughters Esther and Anne

true God, and I wanted to dedicate my life to serve him," I answered.

"Never forget that!" he replied. "What if Brother Rutherford left the truth, would you leave it?"

"Never, never!" I said. That brought me to my senses, and I said: "Everybody get ready for the meeting." And we haven't stopped since. How grateful I was to Jehovah for my brother-in-law's loving correction!

Managing During the Depression

During the Depression in the 1930's, times were hard. One day George arrived home from work very dejected, informing me that he had been laid off his job at the rubber factory. "Don't worry," I said, "we have a rich Father in heaven, and he won't leave us."

That same day George met a friend who had a large basket of mushrooms. When George learned where his friend had picked them, he came home with a bushel of mushrooms. Then he spent our last three dollars on small baskets. "How could you do that," I asked, "when we have little girls who need milk?"

"Never mind," he replied, "just do as I say." For the next few weeks, we had a little factory in our house, cleaning and packaging mushrooms. We sold them to the nicer restaurants and brought home 30 to 40 dollars a day, a fortune to us then. The farmer who gave us permission to pick the mushrooms from his pasture said that he had lived there for 25 years and had never seen so many mushrooms. Before long the rubber factory called George back to work.

Maintaining Our Faith

In 1943 we moved to Los Angeles, California, and four years later we settled in Elsinore. We opened a grocery store there, and our whole family took turns working in it. At the time, Elsinore was just a small town of about 2,000, and we had to travel 20 miles to another town for our Christian meetings. How happy I was to see a small congregation formed in Elsinore in 1950! Now there are 13 congregations in the same area.

In 1950 our daughter Goldie Elizabeth (whom most now know as Beth) graduated from the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead in South Lansing, New York, and was assigned to Venezuela as a missionary. In 1955 our youngest daughter, Irene, was happy

that her husband was invited to serve as a traveling minister in the circuit work. Then in 1961, after attending the Kingdom Ministry School in South Lansing, New York, they were sent to Thailand. Sometimes I missed my daughters so much that I cried, but then I thought, 'That's what I wanted them to do.' So I grabbed my book bag and went out in the preaching work. I always returned home happy.

In 1966 my dear husband, George, had a stroke. Beth, who had returned from Venezuela because of health problems, helped care for him. George died the following year, and I was comforted by the fact that he had remained faithful to Jehovah and had received his heavenly reward. Afterward Beth went to Spain to serve where the need for Kingdom preachers was greater. My oldest daughter, Esther, became sick with cancer and died in 1977, and in 1984, Anne died of leukemia. Each had been a faithful servant of Jehovah all her life.

By the time of Anne's death, Beth and Irene had returned from their foreign preaching assignments. They had helped care for their sisters, and we all grieved deeply. After a time I told my girls: "OK, that's enough! We have comforted others with precious Bible promises. Now we must allow ourselves to be comforted. Satan wants to rob us of our joy in serving Jehovah, but we can't let him."

With my daughters Beth and Irene and Irene's husband and their two boys, who are all faithfully serving Jehovah

Our Faithful Family in Romania

My sister Mary and I made that memorable trip to visit our family in Romania in 1970. One of our sisters had died, but we were able to visit our brother John and our sister Lodovica, who still lived in the village of Ortelec. By the time of our visit, Father and Mother had died, having remained faithful to Jehovah. Many told us that Father had been a pillar in the congregation. Even some of his great-grandchildren in Romania are now Witnesses. We also visited many relatives on my husband's side of the family who had remained steadfast in Bible truth.

In 1970, Romania was under the cruel Communist regime of Nicolae Ceauşescu, and Jehovah's Witnesses were being viciously persecuted. My brother John's son, Flore, as well as other relatives of mine, spent many years in concentration camps because of their Christian faith, and so did my husband's first cousin, Gábor Romocean. No wonder that when we were entrusted with delivering correspondence to the headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in

New York, our Romanian brothers said that they would not rest until they heard that we were safely out of the country!

When we realized that our visas had expired, we went to the government office in Ortelec. It was a Friday afternoon, and there was only one official on duty. Learning who we had been visiting and that our nephew had been in a concentration camp, he said: "Ladies, get out of here!"

"But there's no train leaving today," my sister replied.

"It doesn't matter," he said urgently. "Take a bus. Take a train. Take a taxi. Walk. Just get out of here as quickly as you can!"

As we started to leave, we were called back and informed that an unscheduled military train was coming through at 6:00 p.m. How providential that proved to be! On a regular train, our papers would be checked repeatedly, but since this train carried military personnel and we were the only two civilians aboard, no one asked to see our passports. They may have assumed that we were the grandmothers of some of the officers.

We arrived at Timisoara the following morning, and with the help of a friend of a relative, we were able to get our visas. The next day we were out of the country. We brought back home with us many fond and unforgettable memories of our loyal Christian brothers and sisters in Romania.

In the years following our visit to Romania, we heard few details about the preaching activity from behind the Iron Curtain. Yet, we were confident that our Christian brothers and sisters would remain loyal to our God—come what may. And surely they have! What a joy it was to learn that Jehovah's Witnesses were legally recognized as a religious organization in Romania in April 1990! The following summer we were delighted with the reports about the conventions held in Romania. Why, over 34,000 attended in eight cities, and 2,260 were baptized! Now there are more than 35,000 sharing in the preaching work in Romania, and last year 86,034 attended the Memorial of Christ's death.

The Truth Still Precious to Me

For a few years, I stopped partaking of the emblems at the Memorial. I observed very qualified brothers who did not partake, and I reasoned: 'Why would Jehovah grant me the privilege of being a joint heir with his Son in heaven when others are such fluent speakers?' But when I did not partake, I felt very disturbed. It was as if I were rejecting something. After much study and prayerful supplication, I began partaking again. My peace and joy returned, and they have never left me.

Although I can no longer see to read, I listen every day to tapes of the Bible and of the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. I also still share in the preaching work. Usually I place between 60 and 100 magazines each month, but when we had the special campaign with the *Awake!* magazine last April, I placed 323. With help from my daughters, I am also able to deliver parts in the Theocratic Ministry School. I am happy that I can continue to encourage others. Almost everyone in the Kingdom Hall calls me Grandma.

Looking back over nearly 79 years of dedicated service to Jehovah, I thank him every day that he has permitted me to know his precious truth and to use my life in his service. I am so grateful that I have lived to see the fulfillment of the marvelous Bible prophecies that foretold the ingathering of God's sheeplike ones in these last days. —Isaiah 60:22; Zechariah 8:23.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Spreading Kingdom Seed on Every Occasion

GOD'S Word, the Bible, encourages industriousness. King Solomon said: "In the morning sow your seed and until the evening do not let your hand rest; for you are not knowing where this will have success, either here or there, or whether both of them will alike be good."—Ecclesiastes 11:6.

On every appropriate occasion, Jehovah's Witnesses sow "seed" by preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. In over 230 lands and island groups, they continue "without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus." (Acts 5:42) The following experiences illustrate how Jehovah's Witnesses are 'not letting their hands rest' in the preaching work.

☐ In the Republic of Cape Verde, one of Jehovah's Witnesses was walking by a prison while engaged in the field ministry. In the prison's courtyard, some prisoners were perched in a tree. Observing the Witness down below, the prisoners cried out for some magazines. The Witness tied a number of *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines to a stone and threw them over the prison wall. As a result of this initial interest, 12 Bible studies were started. Three of the prisoners have dedicated their lives to God and have presented themselves for water baptism. One of the prisoners has been serving as a full-time evangelizer, or pioneer, for over a year now. How, though, do they conduct field service activities in prison? First the prison is divided into territories. Then the territory is distributed among the three Witnesses and worked from cell to cell. These Kingdom proclaimers follow up on interest in much the same way as Jehovah's Witnesses around the world do—by making return visits. One difference, however, is the frequency with which Bible studies are conducted. Rather than study the Bible just once or twice a week for an hour or so, some prisoners study every day! Additionally, the Witnesses have been given permission by the general director of the prison to conduct all congregation meetings inside the prison.

☐ A woman in Portugal inherited a number of Watch Tower publications following her grandmother's death. Since she was not one of Jehovah's Witnesses, she had no interest in keeping the books. However, she did not want to destroy them. One day she told one of Jehovah's Witnesses who called on her in the door-to-door ministry about the library. The Witness asked her if she had any idea of the library's real value. The woman replied: "As a matter of fact, I don't know their real value, but how can I find out?" The woman accepted a Bible study, and soon she came to treasure her grandmother's library. Now she too is a baptized Witness of Jehovah. Moreover, her daughter and a close friend of the family are also studying the Bible. What a valuable inheritance this collection of books proved to be!

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

What should a Christian do when called for jury duty?

In some lands, the judicial system uses juries selected from the citizenry. Where this prevails, a Christian must decide how to respond when directed to report for jury duty. Many Christians have in good conscience concluded that Bible principles do not rule out appearing, even as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego complied with the directive of the Babylonian government to appear on the plain of Dura and as Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem at the direction of the Roman authorities. (Daniel 3:1-12; Luke 2:1-4) There are, though, factors that sincere Christians can consider.

The use of juries is not universal. In some lands, civil and criminal cases are decided by a professional judge or a panel of judges. Elsewhere, what is known as common law prevails, and juries are part of the judicial process. Still, most people have only a vague idea of how juries are selected and what they do. So getting an overview will be helpful whether you face jury duty or not.

God's people recognize Jehovah as the Supreme Judge. (Isaiah 33:22) In ancient Israel, experienced men who were upright and impartial served as judges to resolve disputes and decide questions of law. (Exodus 18:13-22; Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 21:18-21) By the time Jesus was on earth, the judicial function was handled by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish high court. (Mark 15:1; Acts 5:27-34) There was no provision for the average Jew to be on a civil jury.

Other lands used juries made up of citizens. Socrates was tried by 501 jurors. Trial by jury existed also in the Roman Republic, though this was abolished under the emperors. Later, King Henry III of England provided for the accused to be judged by his neighbors. It was felt that since they knew the accused, their judgment would be fairer than procedures in which he tried to prove his innocence by combat or by surviving some ordeal. As time went by, the jury system changed into an arrangement whereby a group of citizens were to hear a case and reach a verdict based on evidence. A professional judge guided them on points of evidence.

There is variety in the types of juries, the number of jurors, and what is involved in reaching a verdict. For example, in the United States, a grand jury of from 12 to 23 members decides whether there is enough evidence for a person to be indicted for a criminal offense; it does not determine guilt or innocence. Similarly, in a coroner's jury (jury of inquest), the jurors weigh evidence to decide whether a crime was committed.

When most people think of a jury, they have in mind a panel of 12 citizens at a trial—either a civil dispute or a criminal case—who hear testimony to decide guilt or innocence. This is a petit (small) jury, in contrast with a grand jury. Generally, the court sends notices to appear for jury duty to individuals selected from lists of voters, licensed drivers, or the like. Some may automatically be disqualified, such as convicted felons and the mentally incompetent. Depending on local law, others—such as doctors, clergymen, lawyers, or owners of small businesses—may claim exemption. (Some may be exempted because they have strong personal, conscientious objections to jury service.) Yet, authorities are increasingly

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Do You Remember?

eliminating exemptions so that all are obliged to report for jury duty, perhaps repeatedly over the years.

Not all reporting for jury duty necessarily sit as jurors in a trial. From a pool of persons called for jury duty, some are selected at random as potential jurors for a particular case. Then the judge identifies the parties and their attorneys and describes the nature of the case. He and the attorneys examine each potential juror. This is the time to speak up if one has a conscientious reason for not serving because of the nature of that case.

The group needs to be reduced to the number who will actually sit through the trial of that case. The judge will dismiss any whose impartiality may be questioned because of possible interest in the case. Also, the attorneys for each side have the prerogative to dismiss a few jurors. Any who are dismissed from that jury panel return to the jury pool to await random selection for other cases. Some Christians in this situation have used the time to do informal witnessing. After a number of days, a person's jury duty is fulfilled, whether he has actually sat as a juror or not.

Christians strive 'to mind their own business,' not getting involved in "other people's matters." (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:15) When a Jew asked Jesus to judge a matter about inheritance, he responded: "Man, who appointed me judge or apportioner over you persons?" (Luke 12:13, 14) Jesus came to declare the Kingdom good news, not to arbitrate legal matters. (Luke 4:18, 43) Jesus' response may have moved the man to use the method for settling disputes that was set out in God's Law. (Deuteronomy 1:16, 17) Valid as such points are, responding to a direction to report for jury duty is different from involving oneself in the business of others. It is closer to the situation of Daniel's three companions. The Babylonian government commanded them to report to the plain of Dura, and their doing so did not violate God's Law. What they did thereafter was another matter, as the Bible shows.—Daniel 3:16-18.

After God's servants ceased to be under the Mosaic Law, they had to deal with secular courts in various lands. The apostle Paul urged "holy ones" in Corinth to settle differences within the congregation. While referring to the judiciary of secular courts as "unrighteous men," Paul did not deny that such had a place in handling *secular* affairs. (1 Corinthians 6:1) He defended himself in the Roman judicial setting, even appealing his case to Caesar. It is not as if secular courts are fundamentally wrong.—Acts 24:10; 25:10, 11.

Secular courts are a function of "the superior authorities." Such "stand placed in their relative positions by God," and they make and enforce laws. Paul wrote: "It is God's minister to you for your good. But if you are doing what is bad, be in fear: for it is not without purpose that it bears the sword; for it is God's minister, an avenger to express wrath upon the one practicing what is bad." Christians do not 'oppose the authority' as it carries out such legal functions, for they do not want to 'take a stand against it' and receive judgment.—Romans 13:1-4; Titus 3:1.

In balancing factors, Christians should consider whether they can submit to certain demands made by Caesar. Paul counseled: "Render to all [the superior authorities] their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax; to him who calls for the tribute, the tribute; to him who calls for fear, such fear." (Romans 13:7) That is straightforward as to a monetary tax. (Matthew 22:17-21) If Caesar says that citizens must give of their time and efforts to clean roads or perform other work that is among Caesar's functions, each Christian must decide whether to submit.—Matthew 5:41.

Some Christians have viewed jury service as rendering to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. (Luke 20:25) In jury duty the task is to hear evidence and offer an honest opinion on points of fact or law. For example, on a grand jury, the jurors decide whether the evidence warrants someone's being brought to trial; they do not determine guilt. What of a common trial? In a civil case, the jury might award damages or compensation. In a criminal case, they are to determine whether the evidence supports a guilty verdict. Sometimes they recommend which sentence stipulated by law should be applied. Then the government uses its authority "to express wrath upon

the one practicing what is bad," or "to inflict punishment on evildoers."—1 Peter 2:14.

What if a Christian does not feel that his conscience permits him to serve on a particular jury? The Bible does not mention jury duty, so he cannot say, 'It is against my religion to serve on any jury.' Depending on the case, he might state that serving on the jury for a particular case is against his personal conscience. That might be so if a case involves sexual immorality, abortion, manslaughter, or another issue on which his thinking is shaped by Bible knowledge, not by mere secular law. In reality, though, it is quite possible that the trial he is selected for does not involve such issues.

A mature Christian would also reflect on whether he would share any responsibility for the sentence rendered by judges. (Compare Genesis 39:17-20; 1 Timothy 5:22.) If a guilty verdict is in error and the death penalty is imposed, would a Christian on the jury share bloodguilt? (Exodus 22:2; Deuteronomy 21:8; 22:8; Jeremiah 2:34; Matthew 23:35; Acts 18:6) At Jesus' trial Pilate wanted to be "innocent of the blood of this man." The Jews readily said: "His blood come upon us and upon our children."—Matthew 27:24, 25.

If a Christian reported for jury duty, as directed by the government, but because of his personal conscience declined to serve on a particular case despite the insistence of the judge, the Christian should be prepared to face the consequences—be that a fine or imprisonment.—1 Peter 2:19.

In the final analysis, each Christian faced with jury duty must determine what course to follow, based on his understanding of the Bible and his own conscience. Some Christians have reported for jury duty and have served on certain juries. Others have felt compelled to decline even in the face of punishment. Each Christian has to decide for himself what he will do, and others should not criticize his decision.—Galatians 6:5.

Jehovah's Witnesses to Hold International Conventions

The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses is planning to hold international conventions during 1998. This announcement met with an enthusiastic response at the annual meeting of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, held at the Jersey City Assembly Hall on Saturday, October 5, 1996.

Along with the usual district conventions, a number of international conventions will be held in North America during the middle of 1998. It is expected that these gatherings will bring together hundreds of thousands of Witnesses from many parts of the earth. To allow as many lands as possible to be represented, each of the more than 100 branch offices of the Watch Tower Society will have an allotment of delegates for a designated international convention city in North America.

Obviously, not all who would like to travel to North America will be able to do so. However, it may be possible for thousands to attend an international convention closer to their home. Arrangements are being made for international conventions to be held in two or three countries in Europe and others in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the South Pacific, and the Caribbean.

At an appropriate time, the Society's branch offices will advise congregations in their respective territories about the convention city or cities to which they are invited. Information will be given concerning convention dates and the arrangements for selecting delegates. Those who have in mind filling out applications for delegate selection may wish to start saving some of their funds in anticipation of these special events.

All of Jehovah's Witnesses worldwide can look forward to what is in store at these international gatherings for 1998. District conventions in all countries will carry a similar program.

A 403-YEAR MARRIAGE IS IN TROUBLE

IN Sweden, Church and State have enjoyed a close relationship for more than 400 years. Now the marriage between religion and government is weakening.

Lutheranism was established as the State religion in 1593, and all Swedes had to be baptized members. Years later, during the 1850's, an adjustment was made. It was no longer necessary for Swedes to be baptized; nevertheless, they were still considered members of the Lutheran Church. As such, they were required to pay 1 percent of their taxed income to support the church and to pay for certain civil services rendered by the church. More recently another change occurred. Beginning in 1952, Swedes could withdraw legally from the church and thereby be exempt from paying a major part of the church tax.

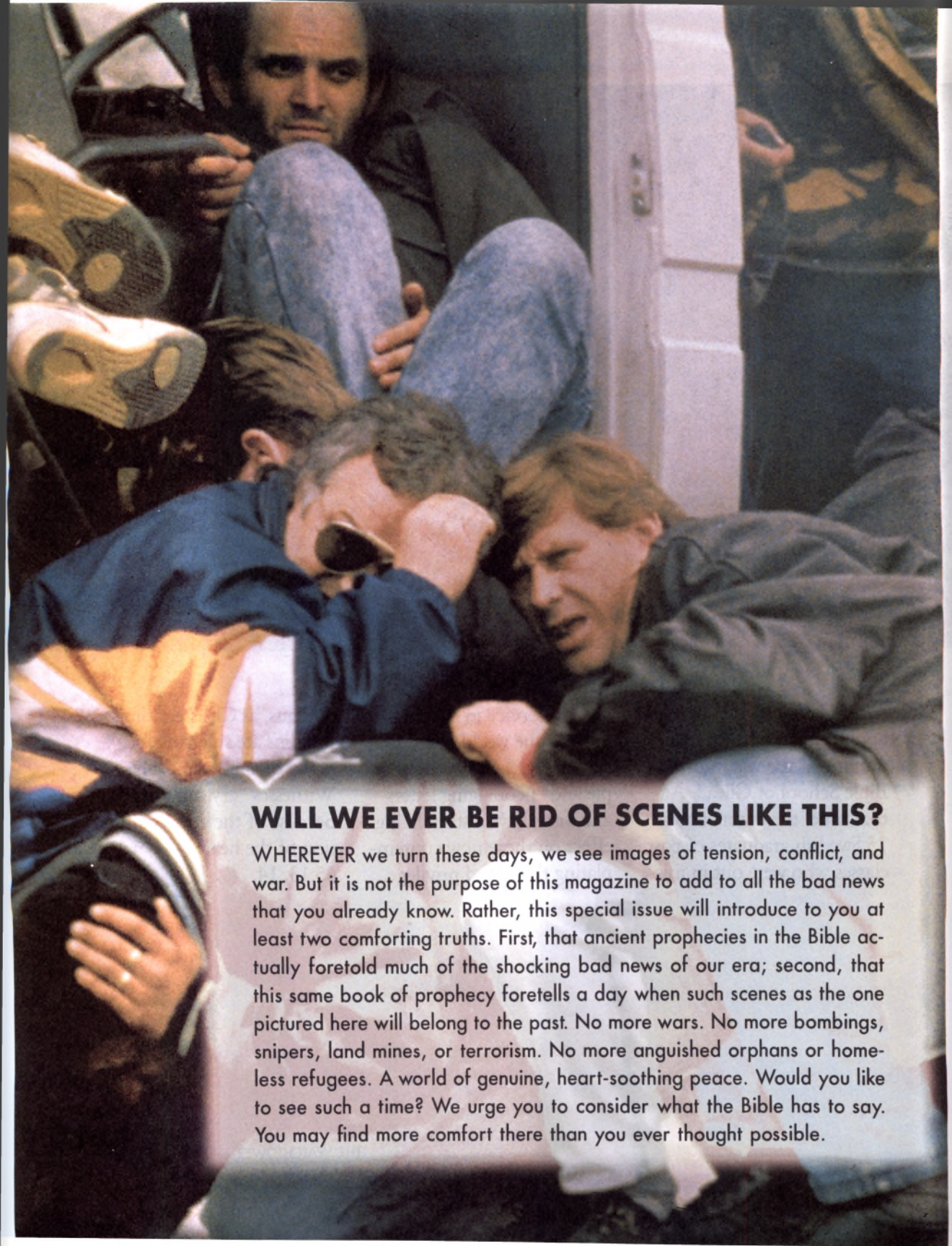
In recent years the Lutheran Church has continued to lose its grip in Sweden. This was inevitable, since 10 percent of Sweden's inhabitants are non-Lutheran immigrants, including Jews, Catholics, and Muslims. Thus, at the beginning of 1996, only 86 percent of Swedes belonged to the Lutheran Church, and the number continues to decline.

The growing apathy is forcing a rift between Church and State. Already, it has been declared that the king need not be a Lutheran, and children born to a Lutheran parent are not automatically considered members of the Lutheran State Church. Furthermore, according to *The Dallas Morning News,* by the year 2000, "local parishes and the state must appraise and divide up vast amounts of property. The church must cut its $1.68 billion annual budget, most of which is collected through taxes." After the turn of the century, the church will appoint its own bishops.

While apathy and falling membership plague Christendom, Jehovah's Witnesses in Sweden continue to flourish. The *1997 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* reports that there are 24,487 publishers of God's Kingdom in that land, and close to 10 percent are preaching as full-time pioneer ministers. Many of these are reaching out for greater privileges of service. For example, during the 1995 district conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses, 20

married couples submitted applications for missionary training at the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. At that time, there were about 75 Swedish graduates of past classes who were out in missionary service in different parts of the world. Undoubtedly, their fine example and encouraging letters and visits have a stimulating effect on those now contemplating this grand privilege.

Thus, as Christendom's millions are suffering breakdown of spirit, Jehovah's Witnesses "cry out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart."—Isaiah 65:13, 14.



WILL WE EVER BE RID OF SCENES LIKE THIS?

WHEREVER we turn these days, we see images of tension, conflict, and war. But it is not the purpose of this magazine to add to all the bad news that you already know. Rather, this special issue will introduce to you at least two comforting truths. First, that ancient prophecies in the Bible actually foretold much of the shocking bad news of our era; second, that this same book of prophecy foretells a day when such scenes as the one pictured here will belong to the past. No more wars. No more bombings, snipers, land mines, or terrorism. No more anguished orphans or homeless refugees. A world of genuine, heart-soothing peace. Would you like to see such a time? We urge you to consider what the Bible has to say. You may find more comfort there than you ever thought possible.