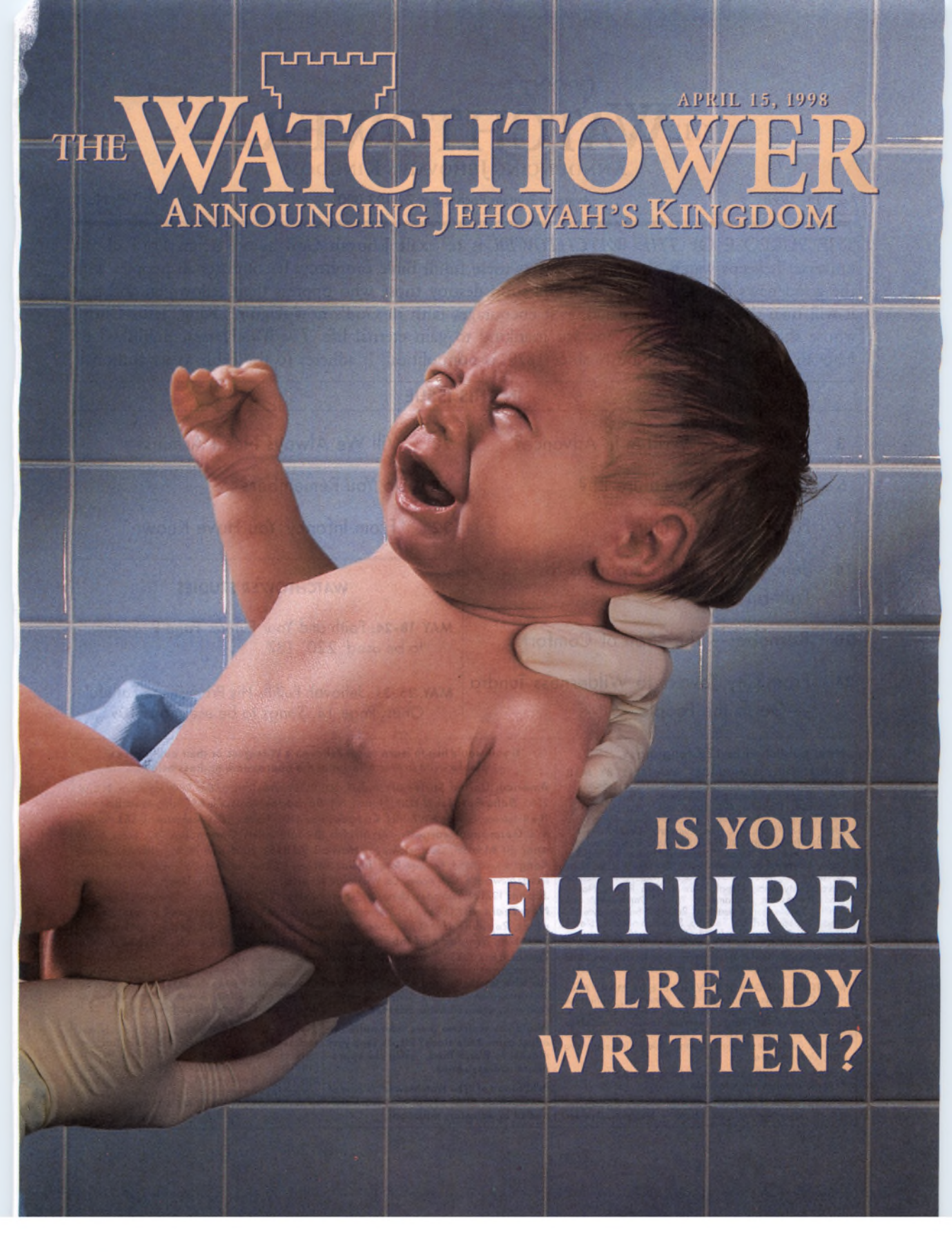


A photograph of a baby crying in a bathtub. The baby is lying on its back, with its head tilted back and mouth open in a cry. The baby's arms are raised, and its legs are also raised. The baby is wearing a white diaper. The background is a blue tiled wall. The text "THE WATCHTOWER" is written in large, gold, serif capital letters across the top. Above the "W" is a small icon of a watchtower. To the right of the "W" is the date "APRIL 15, 1998". Below "THE WATCHTOWER" is the text "ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM" in smaller, gold, serif capital letters. In the bottom right corner, the text "IS YOUR FUTURE ALREADY WRITTEN?" is written in gold, serif capital letters, with "FUTURE" in a larger font size than the other words.

APRIL 15, 1998

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

April 15, 1998

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

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Is Our Future Written in Advance?

CHRISTIAN, Muslim, Jew, Hindu, or believer of another religion—people of all faiths experience tragedy and grieve over such.

For example, on December 6, 1997, a terrible tragedy occurred in the Siberian city of Irkutsk. A huge AN-124 transport airplane had barely lifted off when two of its engines failed. The plane, fully fueled, plunged into a residential complex.

Flames engulfed a number of apartment houses, bringing death and injury to scores of helpless occupants, including innocent children.

In the area in Siberia where that accident took place, there are likely people with differing religious views. Some might express belief in Christianity, yet they could still think that the tragedy was a result of fate. They and others might feel, 'It was God's

will, and if those who were killed did not die in this way, they would have died in another manner—it was their fate.’

Such thinking, whether vocalized or not, reflects a concept that finds a place in many religions around the globe—fate. Many people believe that our future, from the day of our birth to the day of our death, is somehow written in advance.

Belief in fate takes various forms, making an all-encompassing definition difficult. Fate basically conveys the idea that everything that happens, every act, every event—whether good or bad—is inevitable; it is destined to occur because it has been determined in advance by a higher force, beyond the control of man. Such a concept can be found in astrology, in Hinduism’s and Buddhism’s karma, as well as in Christendom’s doctrine of predestination. Back in ancient Babylonia, men believed that the gods controlled fate and the future by means of a written document. Supposedly, any god who controlled these “tablets of destiny” could decide the fates of men, of kingdoms, and even of the gods themselves.

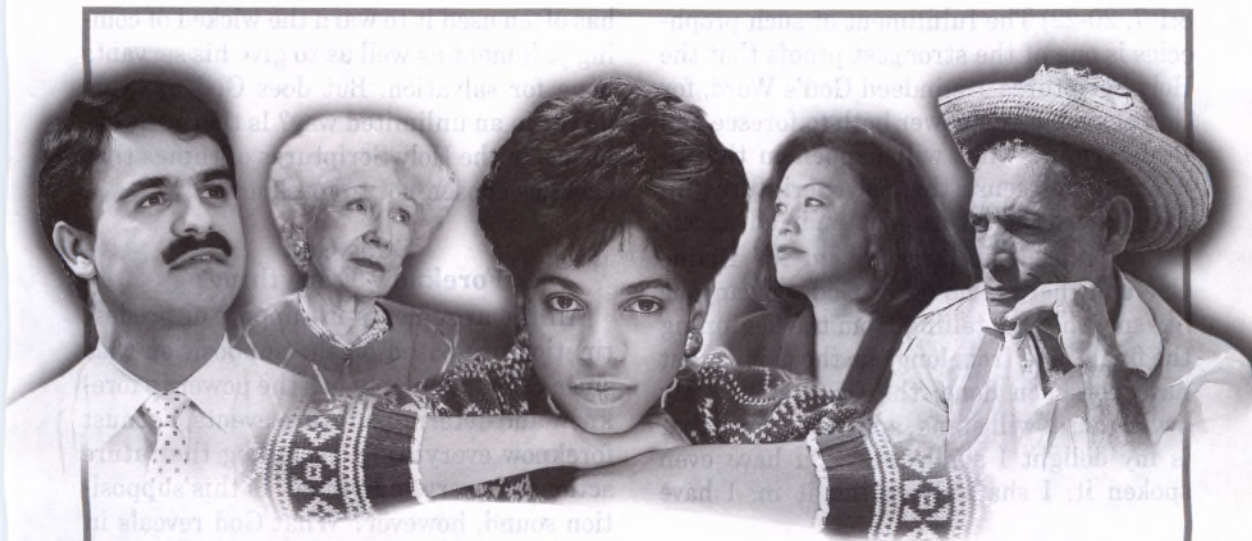
Many believers hold that by divine decree before humans are born, God determines all that will happen to people, including the length of their life, whether they will be male or female, rich or poor, miserable or happy. All of this is said to exist in God’s mind or to be written in a book before it comes to be. Thus it is not uncommon for a believer to say when calamity strikes, “*mektoub*,”—it is written! It is reasoned that since God knows everything beforehand, he must also determine who will obey him and who will disobey. Many adherents thus believe that even before a person is born, God has already determined

whether he is destined for everlasting bliss in Paradise or he will receive everlasting doom.

You may feel that this sounds very much like the doctrine of predestination taught in some churches of Christendom. The foremost Protestant proponent of predestination was the 16th-century French Reformer John Calvin. He defined predestination as “the eternal decree of God, by which he determined what he wanted to do with each man. Not all are created in the same condition, but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal damnation for others.” Calvin also asserted: “God not only foresaw the fall of the first man, and in him the ruin of his posterity; but also at his own pleasure arranged it.”

Yet, not all members of religions that teach predestination or fatalism believe it personally. Some rightly point out that the religious writings mention man’s free will. In fact, there has been great controversy over human actions, whether they are the consequence of a free human choice or they are predetermined by God. Some, for example, have argued that man must be free to choose and act, since God, who is just, holds man responsible and accountable for his acts. Others have said that God creates the acts of man but that man somehow “acquires” them and becomes responsible for them. Generally speaking, however, many hold that every event, large and small, in our daily lives has been decreed by God.

What do you believe? Has God already determined what your future will be? Do humans truly have free will, the ability to make real choices about their future? To what extent is our destiny contingent upon our own actions? The following article will seek to give answers to these questions.



What Will Your Future Be?

IF GOD Almighty is omniscient, knowing all that is past, present, and future, are not all things destined to occur exactly as God has foreseen them? If God has foreseen and decreed the course and final destiny of every human, can it truly be said that we are free to choose our life's course, our future?

These questions have been debated for centuries. The controversy still divides major religions. Can God's ability to foreknow the future be reconciled with human free will? Where should we look for answers?

Millions of people around the globe would agree that God has communicated with mankind by means of his written Word as delivered through his spokesmen, the prophets. For example, the Koran refers to revelations as coming from God: the *Taurāh* (Torah, the Law, or five books of Moses), the *Zabūr* (the Psalms), and the *Injīl* (the Gospel, Christian Greek Scriptures, or

"New Testament"), as well as what was revealed to the prophets of Israel.

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, we read: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight." (2 Timothy 3:16) Obviously, any guidance or enlightenment that we receive should ultimately come from God himself. Would it not be wise then to examine the writings of God's earlier prophets? What do they reveal about our future?

Future Written in Advance

Anyone who has read the Holy Scriptures knows that they contain literally hundreds of prophecies. Such historical events as the fall of ancient Babylon, the rebuilding of Jerusalem (sixth to fifth century B.C.E.), and the rise and fall of the ancient kings of Medo-Persia and Greece were all foretold in detail. (Isaiah 13:17-19; 44:24-45:1; Daniel

8:1-7, 20-22) The fulfillment of such prophecies is one of the strongest proofs that the Holy Scriptures are indeed God's Word, for God alone has the power both to foresee and to determine what will happen in the future. In this sense the Holy Scriptures indeed record the future written in advance.

God himself declares: "I am the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done; the One saying, 'My own counsel will stand, and everything that is my delight I shall do' . . . I have even spoken it; I shall also bring it in. I have

God uses his power of foreknowledge in the outworking of his purposes

formed it, I shall also do it." (Isaiah 46:9-11; 55:10, 11) The very name by which God identified himself to his ancient prophets is Jehovah, which literally means "He Causes to Become."* (Genesis 12:7, 8; Exodus 3:13-15; Psalm 83:18) God reveals himself as the One who becomes the Fulfiller of his word, the One who always brings his purposes to realization.

Thus, God uses his power of foreknowledge in the outworking of his purposes. He

* The name Jehovah appears more than 7,000 times in the Holy Scriptures; see the tract *The Greatest Name*, published in 1995 by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

has often used it to warn the wicked of coming judgment as well as to give his servants hope for salvation. But does God use this power in an unlimited way? Is there any evidence in the Holy Scriptures of things that God has chosen not to foreknow?

Does God Foreknow Everything?

All the arguments in support of predestination are based on the supposition that since God undeniably has the power to foreknow and determine future events, he must foreknow everything, including the future actions of every individual. Is this supposition sound, however? What God reveals in his Holy Scriptures indicates otherwise.

For example, the Scriptures say that "God put Abraham to the test" by commanding him to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering. When Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, God stopped him and said: "Now I do know that you are God-fearing in that you have not withheld your son, your only one, from me." (Genesis 22:1-12) Would God have made that statement if he knew in advance that Abraham would obey this command? Would it have been an honest test?

Furthermore, the ancient prophets report that God repeatedly spoke of himself as 'feeling regret' over something he had done or was thinking of doing. For example, God said that he "regretted [from the Hebrew *na-cham*'] that he had made Saul king over Israel." (1 Samuel 15:11, 35; compare Jeremiah 18:7-10; Jonah 3:10.) Because God is perfect, these verses cannot mean that God made a mistake in selecting Saul to be Israel's first king. Rather, they must indicate that God felt sorry that Saul turned out to be faithless and disobedient. God's



If God knew in advance that Abraham would be willing to sacrifice his son, would it have been an honest test?

using such an expression in referring to himself would be nonsensical if he had foreknown Saul's actions.

The same term appears in the most ancient of the Scriptures where, in referring to the days of Noah, it says: "Jehovah felt regrets that he had made men in the earth, and he felt hurt at his heart. So Jehovah said: 'I am going to wipe men whom I have created off the surface of the ground . . . because I do regret that I have made them.'" (Genesis 6:6, 7) Here again, this indicates that man's actions are not predestined by God. God felt regret, grief, and even hurt,

not because his own actions were mistaken, but because man's wickedness became rife. The Creator regretted that it had become necessary to destroy all mankind except Noah and his family. God assures us: 'I take no delight in the death of the wicked.' —Ezekiel 33:11; compare Deuteronomy 32:4, 5.

So did God foreknow and even decree Adam's fall into sin, as well as the calamitous consequences that this would bring upon the human family? What we have considered shows that this cannot be true. What is more, if God did foreknow all of this, he would have become the author of sin when he made man, and God would be deliberately responsible for all human

wickedness and suffering. Clearly, this cannot be reconciled with what God reveals about himself in the Scriptures. He is a God of love and justice who hates wickedness.—Psalm 33:5; Proverbs 15:9; 1 John 4:8.

Man's Two Destinies

The Holy Scriptures do not reveal that our individual future is somehow determined in advance, or predestined, by God. Instead, what they reveal is that God has foretold just two possible destinies for man. God gives to every man the free will

God "does not desire
any to be destroyed
but desires all to attain
to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9

to choose which destiny will be his. The prophet Moses long ago declared to the Israelites: "I have put life and death before you, . . . and *you must choose life* in order that you may keep alive, you and your offspring, by loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice and by sticking to him; for he is your life and the length of your days." (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20) God's prophet Jesus forewarned: "Go in through the narrow gate; because broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are the ones find-

ing it." (Matthew 7:13, 14) Two roads, two destinies. Our future is contingent upon our own actions. To obey God means life, to disobey him means death.—Romans 6:23.

God "is telling mankind that they should all everywhere repent. Because he has set a day in which he purposes to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness." (Acts 17:30, 31) Just as the majority of mankind in Noah's day chose to disobey God and were annihilated, so today the majority do not obey God's commandments. Yet, God has not already determined who will be destroyed and who will receive salvation. In fact, God's Word says that he "does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Even very wicked people can repent, become obedient, and make the changes necessary to gain God's favor.—Isaiah 1:18-20; 55:6, 7; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Romans 2:4-8.

To those who are obedient, God promises everlasting life in a peaceful paradise, an earth cleansed of all wickedness, violence, and war, a world where there will be no more hunger, suffering, sickness, and death. (Psalm 37:9-11; 46:9; Isaiah 2:4; 11:6-9; 25:6-8; 35:5, 6; Revelation 21:4) Even the dead will be resurrected and given the opportunity to serve God.—Daniel 12:2; John 5:28, 29.

"Watch the blameless one and keep the upright one in sight," says the psalmist, "for the future of that man will be peaceful. But the transgressors themselves will certainly be annihilated together; the future of wicked people will indeed be cut off." (Psalm 37:37, 38) What will your future be? It all depends on you. The publishers of this magazine will be happy to supply you with further information to enable you to ensure for yourself a happy, peaceful future.

FAITH AND YOUR FUTURE

"Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for."—HEBREWS 11:1.

ARE you interested in the future? Most people are. What they hope for is a future of peace, freedom from fear, decent living conditions, productive and enjoyable work, good health and long life. No doubt every generation in history has wanted those things. And today, in this world that is so filled with trouble, such conditions are more desirable than ever.

² As mankind moves toward the 21st century, is there any way to determine what the future will be like? One way was expressed over 200 years ago by the American statesman Patrick Henry. He said: "I know of no way of judging the future but by the past." According to this view, the future of the human family can be known to a considerable extent by what man did in the past. Many agree with that idea.

What Was the Past Like?

³ If the future is going to be a reflection of the past, do you find that encouraging? Did the future get better for previous generations down through the ages? Not really. Despite the hopes people have had for thousands of years and despite material progress in some places, history has been filled with oppression, crime, violence, war, and poverty. This world has experienced one calamity after another, mainly brought about by unsatisfactory human rule. The Bible ac-

curately states: "Man has dominated man to his injury."—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

⁴ The fact is that the bad history of mankind keeps repeating itself—but on an ever larger and more damaging scale. This 20th century is proof of that. Did mankind learn from and avoid the mistakes of the past? Well, at the beginning of this century, many put faith in a better future because there had been a relatively long period of peace and because of advances in industry, science, and education. In the early 1900's, said a university professor, it was believed that war was no longer possible because "people were too civilized." A former British prime minister said of the view people had back at that time: "Everything would get better and better. This was the world I was born in." But then he stated: "Suddenly, unexpectedly, one morning in 1914 the whole thing came to an end."

⁵ Despite the faith in a better future prevailing at that time, the new century had hardly begun when the world was engulfed in the worst man-made catastrophe ever—World War I. As an example of its nature, consider what took place in 1916 in one battle when British troops attacked German lines near the Somme River in France. In just hours the British suffered a loss of 20,000, and many were killed on the German side. Four years of slaughter took the lives of nearly ten million soldiers and many

4, 5. (a) Why were people hopeful in the early 20th century? (b) What happened to their hopes for the future?

1. Most people want what kind of future?
2. How was one view of the future expressed by a statesman?
3. What does the record of history indicate regarding prospects for the future?



civilians. France's population declined for a while because of so many men lost. Economies were ruined, leading to the Great Depression of the 1930's. No wonder that some have said that the day World War I began was the day the world went mad!

⁶ Was this the future hoped for by that generation? No, far from it. Their hopes were dashed to pieces; nor did all of that lead to anything better. Only 21 years after World War I, or in 1939, a much worse man-made catastrophe began—World War II. It took the lives of some 50 million men, women, and children. Mass bombings pul-

6. Did life get better after World War I?

The Bible accurately states: "It does not belong to man . . . to direct his step."—Jeremiah 10:23

verized cities. In World War I, some thousands of soldiers were killed in one battle in just hours, whereas in World War II, only two atom bombs killed over 100,000 people in just seconds. What many consider even worse was the systematic murder of millions in Nazi concentration camps.

⁷ Several sources state that if we include wars between nations, civil conflicts, and deaths inflicted by governments on their own citizens, those killed in this century would total about 200 million. One source even puts the figure at 360 million. Imagine

Bomb: U.S. National Archives photo; famished children: WHO/OXFAM; refugees: UN PHOTO 186763/J. Isaac; Mussolini and Hitler: U.S. National Archives photo

7. What is the reality of this entire century?

the horror of it all—the pain, the tears, the anguish, and the ruined lives! In addition, on the average, about 40,000 people, mostly children, die each day from poverty-related causes. Three times that number are killed by abortions every day. Also, about one billion people are too poor to obtain the food needed to do a normal day's work. All these conditions are evidence of what was foretold in Bible prophecy that we live in "the last days" of this wicked system of things.—2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13; Matthew 24:3-12; Luke 21:10, 11; Revelation 6:3-8.

No Human Solutions

⁸ As this 20th century nears its end, we can add its experience to that of past centuries. And what does that history tell? It tells us that human leaders have never solved the major problems of the world, that they are not solving them now, and that they will not solve them in the future. It is simply beyond their ability to provide the kind of future we want, no matter how well-meaning they may be. And some in authority are not that well-meaning; they seek position and power for their own egotistical and material ends, not for the good of others.

⁹ Does science have the answers? Not if we consider the past. Government scientists have expended huge amounts of money, time, and effort developing terribly destructive chemical, biological, and other kinds of weapons. The nations, including those that can least afford it, spend over 700 billion dollars on armaments every year! Also, 'scientific progress' is partly responsible for the chemicals that have contributed to the pollution of air, land, water, and food.

8. Why cannot human leaders solve the world's problems?

9. Why is there reason to doubt that science has the answers to man's problems?

¹⁰ Can we hope that the educational institutions of the world will help build a better future by teaching high moral standards, consideration for others, and love of neighbor? No. Instead, they focus on careers, on making money. They engender a very competitive spirit, not a cooperative one; nor do the schools teach morals. Rather, many of them condone sexual liberty, which has produced a huge increase in teenage pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

¹¹ Will the great business enterprises of the world suddenly be motivated to take good care of our planet and to show love for others by making products that will be of genuine benefit and not just for profit? That is not likely. Will they stop producing television programs filled with violence and immorality that contribute to corrupting the minds of people, especially the young? The recent past is not at all encouraging because, for the most part, TV has become a cesspool of immorality and violence.

¹² Furthermore, however sincere medical doctors are, they cannot conquer sickness and death. For instance, at the end of World War I, they were unable to contain the Spanish influenza; worldwide, it took some 20 million lives. Today, heart disease, cancer, and other death-dealing ailments are rampant. Neither has the medical world conquered the modern plague of AIDS. On the contrary, a U.N. report publicized in November 1997 concluded that the rate at which the AIDS virus is spreading is double previous estimates. Already, millions have died from it. In a recent year, another three million became infected.

10. Why does even education not ensure a better future?

11. How does the record of business enterprises cast doubt on the future?

12. What is the human condition as to sickness and death?

How Jehovah's Witnesses View the Future

¹³ However, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that mankind has a bright future, the very best! But they do not expect that better future to come by human efforts. Instead, they look to the Creator, Jehovah God. He knows what the future will be like, and it will be a marvelous one! He also knows that humans cannot bring about such a future. Since God created them, he knows their limitations far better than anyone else. In his Word, he clearly tells us that he did not create humans with the ability to govern successfully without divine guidance. God's long permission of human rule independent of him has demonstrated that inability beyond any doubt. One author acknowledged: "The mind of man has tried all possible combinations of sovereignty, and in vain."

¹⁴ At Jeremiah 10:23, we read the words of the inspired prophet: "I well know, O Jehovah, that to earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step." Also, Psalm 146:3 states: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs." In fact, because we are born imperfect, as Romans 5:12 shows, God's Word cautions us not to trust in ourselves either. Jeremiah 17:9 says: "The heart is more treacherous than anything else." Thus, Proverbs 28:26 declares: "He that is trusting in his own heart is stupid, but he that is walking in wisdom is the one that will escape."

¹⁵ Where can we find this wisdom? "The fear of Jehovah is the start of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Most Holy One is what understanding is." (Proverbs 9:10) Only Je-

13, 14. (a) How do Jehovah's Witnesses view the future? (b) Why can humans not bring about a better future?

15. Where can we find the wisdom to guide us?

hovah has the wisdom that can guide us through these fearful times. And he has given us access to his wisdom through the Holy Scriptures, which he inspired for our guidance.—Proverbs 2:1-9; 3:1-6; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

The Future of Human Rule

¹⁶ What, then, does God's Word tell us about the future? It tells us that the future will most certainly not reflect what humans have done in the past. So Patrick Henry's viewpoint was wrong. The future of this earth and the people on it is to be determined, not by humans, but by Jehovah God. His will is going to be done on earth, not the will of any men or nations of this world. "Many are the plans in the heart of a man, but the counsel of Jehovah is what will stand."—Proverbs 19:21.

¹⁷ What is God's will for our time? He has purposed to bring an end to this violent, immoral system of things. The centuries-old bad reign of humans will soon be replaced with a rulership of God's making. The prophecy found at Daniel 2:44 states: "In the days of those kings [that exist today] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom [in heaven] that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." The Kingdom will also remove the evil influence of Satan the Devil, something humans could never do. His rulership of this world will forever cease.—Romans 16:20; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19.

¹⁸ Note that the heavenly government will crush out of existence all forms of human rule. The governing of this earth will not be left to people. In heaven, those who make

16. Who has determined the future?

17, 18. What is God's will for our time?

up God's Kingdom will control all earth's affairs for the good of mankind. (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6) On earth, faithful humans will cooperate with the directives of God's Kingdom. This is the rulership Jesus taught us to pray for when he said: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:10.

¹⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses put their faith in the Kingdom of God. It is the "new heavens" that the apostle Peter wrote about: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) The "new earth" is the new human society that will be governed by the new heavens, God's Kingdom. This is the arrangement God revealed in a vision to the apostle John, who wrote: "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the former heaven and the former earth had passed away . . . And [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 21:1, 4.

²⁰ Notice that the new earth will be a righteous one. All unrighteous elements will have been removed by an act of God, the battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14, 16) The prophecy at Proverbs 2:21, 22 puts it this way: "The upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it. As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth." And Psalm 37:9 promises: "Evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth." Would you not like to live in such a new world?

19, 20. (a) How does the Bible describe the Kingdom arrangement? (b) What will its rule do for mankind?

Put Faith in Jehovah's Promises

²¹ Can we put faith in Jehovah's promises? Listen to what he states through his prophet Isaiah: "Remember the first things of a long time ago, that I am the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done; the One saying, 'My own counsel will stand, and everything that is my delight I shall do.'" The latter part of verse 11 says: "I have even spoken it; I shall also bring it in. I have formed it, I shall also do it." (Isaiah 46:9-11) Yes, we can have faith in Jehovah and his promises just as surely as if those promises had already come true. The Bible expresses it this way: "Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld."—Hebrews 11:1.

²² Humble people display such faith because they know that God will fulfill his promises. For example, at Psalm 37:29, we read: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." Can we believe this? Yes, because

21. Why can we put faith in Jehovah's promises?
22. Why can we be confident that Jehovah will fulfill his promises?

Points for Review

- ☐ What has happened to the hopes of people throughout history?
- ☐ Why should we not look to humans for a better future?
- ☐ What is God's will regarding the future?
- ☐ Why are we confident that God will fulfill his promises?

Hebrews 6:18 says: "It is impossible for God to lie." Does God own the earth, so that he can give it to humble ones? Revelation 4:11 declares: "You created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created." Thus, Psalm 24:1 says: "To Jehovah belong the earth and that which fills

it." Jehovah created the earth, owns it, and gives it to those who have faith in him. To help build our confidence in this, the next article will show how Jehovah has kept his promises to his people in times past as well as in our day and why we can have absolute confidence that he will do so in the future.

JEHOVAH FULFILLS HIS PROMISES TO FAITHFUL ONES

"He is faithful that promised."—HEBREWS 10:23.

JEHOVAH asks that his servants develop and maintain a solid faith in him and his promises. With such faith one can completely trust Jehovah to do what he has promised to do. His inspired Word declares: "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.

² The statement, "Jehovah of armies has sworn," shows that he gives his solemn oath to fulfill his promises. That is why his Word can say: "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) When we trust in Jehovah and allow ourselves to be guided by his wisdom, our paths will without fail lead to everlasting life, for God's wisdom is "a tree of life to those taking hold of it."—Proverbs 3:18; John 17:3.

1, 2. Why can we have complete confidence in Jehovah's promises?

True Faith in Ancient Times

³ The record of Jehovah's acts toward those with true faith testifies to his dependability. For example, over 4,400 years ago, God told Noah that the world of his day was to be destroyed by a global Flood. He instructed Noah to build a huge ark for preserving human and animal life. What did Noah do? Hebrews 11:7 tells us: "By faith Noah, after being given divine warning of things not yet beheld, showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his household." Why did Noah have faith in something that had never happened before, something "not yet beheld"? Because he knew enough of God's previous dealings with the human family to appreciate that whatever God says comes true. So Noah was confident that the Flood would also take place.—Genesis 6:9-22.

⁴ Another example of true faith is Abraham. Nearly 3,900 years ago, God told him

3. How did Noah show faith in Jehovah?

4, 5. Why did Abraham fully trust Jehovah?

to sacrifice Isaac, his only son by his wife, Sarah. (Genesis 22:1-10) How did Abraham respond? Hebrews 11:17 states: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, as good as offered up Isaac." However, at the last moment, Jehovah's angel stopped Abraham. (Genesis 22:11, 12) Still, why would Abraham even consider doing such a thing? Because, as Hebrews 11:19 says, "he reckoned that God was able to raise [Isaac] up even from the dead." But how could Abraham have faith in a resurrection when he had never seen one and there was no previous record of one?

⁵ Remember, Sarah was 89 when God promised them a son. Sarah's womb was beyond childbearing—dead, so to speak. (Genesis 18:9-14) God restored Sarah's womb to life, and she bore Isaac. (Genesis 21:1-3) Abraham knew that since God restored Sarah's dead womb to life, then he could also restore Isaac to life if need be. Romans 4: 20, 21 says of Abraham: "Because of the promise of God he did not waver in a lack of faith, but became powerful by his faith, giving God glory and being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to do."

⁶ More than 3,400 years ago when Joshua was over a hundred years of age and after a lifetime of experiencing how trustworthy God is, he gave this reason for his confidence: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed."—Joshua 23:14.

⁷ About 1,900 years ago, many humble people demonstrated true faith. They real-

ized from the fulfillment of Bible prophecy that Jesus was the Messiah and accepted his teachings. Having a solid basis in the facts and in the Hebrew Scriptures, they put faith in what Jesus taught. Thus, when Jesus said that God's judgment was coming against Judea and Jerusalem because of unfaithfulness, they believed him. And when he told them what course of action they had to take to save their lives, they took it.

⁸ Jesus told believers that when Jerusalem was surrounded by armies, they should flee. Roman armies did come against Jerusalem in the year 66 C.E. But then the Romans left for some unexplained reason. That was the signal for the Christians to abandon the city, for Jesus had said: "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." (Luke 21:20, 21) Those with true faith abandoned Jerusalem and the surrounding area and fled to safety.

Consequences of a Lack of Faith

⁹ What did those without true faith do? They did not flee when they had the opportunity. They thought that their leaders could save them. Yet, those leaders and their followers also had the evidence of the Messiahship of Jesus. So why did they not accept what he said? Because of their wicked heart condition. This was exposed earlier when they saw many of the common people flock to Jesus after he resurrected Lazarus. John 11:47, 48 relates: "The chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the Sanhedrin [the Jewish high court] together and began

9, 10. (a) How did the religious leaders show their lack of faith in Jesus? (b) What were the consequences of that lack of faith?

6. How did Joshua express confidence in Jehovah?

7, 8. What saving course of action did faithful Christians take in the first century, and why?



to say: 'What are we to do, because this man [Jesus] performs many signs? If we let him alone this way, they will all put faith in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.' Verse 53 says: "Therefore from that day on they took counsel to kill him."

¹⁰ What a wonderful miracle Jesus had performed—bringing Lazarus back from the dead! But the religious leaders wanted Jesus killed for doing that. Their gross wickedness was further exposed when "the chief priests . . . took counsel to kill Lazarus also, because on account of him many of the Jews were going there and putting faith in Jesus." (John 12:10, 11) Lazarus had just been raised from the dead, and those priests wanted to see him dead again! They were not concerned about God's will or the welfare of the people. They were selfish,

concerned about their positions and advantages. "They loved the glory of men more than even the glory of God." (John 12:43) But they paid for their lack of faith. In the year 70 C.E., Roman armies came back and destroyed their place and their nation, as well as many of them.

Faith Demonstrated in Our Time

¹¹ In this century, there have also been many men and women of true faith. For instance, back in the early 1900's, people in general were anticipating a peaceful, prosperous future. At that same time, those who put faith in Jehovah were announcing that mankind was about to enter its worst time of trouble yet. That is what was foretold in God's Word in Matthew chap-

11. Early in this century, how was true faith demonstrated?

ter 24, 2 Timothy chapter 3, and elsewhere. What those people of faith said actually did happen, beginning in 1914 with World War I. The world indeed entered the foretold "last days" with "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) Why did Jehovah's servants know the truth about world conditions back then when others did not? Because, like Joshua, they had faith that not one of Jehovah's words would fail.

¹² Today, Jehovah's servants, who put their trust in him, number nearly six million worldwide. They know from the evidence in fulfillment of God's prophetic word that he will soon bring this violent, immoral system of things to an end. So they are confident that the time is near when they will see the outworking of 1 John 2:17, which says: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever." His servants completely trust that Jehovah will fulfill this promise.

¹³ How far can you trust Jehovah? You can stake your life on him! Even if you lose your life now for serving him, he will give you back a much grander life in the resurrection. Jesus assures us: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs [that is, in God's memory] will hear his voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Do you know any doctor, political leader, scientist, businessman, or any other human who can do that? Their past record shows that they cannot. Jehovah can, and he will!

A Wonderful Future for Faithful Ones

¹⁴ Jesus indicated the surety of a new world under God's heavenly Kingdom, saying: "Happy are the mild-tempered ones,

12. Today, what promise of Jehovah do his servants fully trust?

13. How far can you trust Jehovah?

14. What wonderful future does God's Word promise faithful ones?

since they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5) That reinforced God's promise found at Psalm 37:29: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." And just before the death of Jesus when an evildoer expressed faith in him, Jesus said to that man: "You will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43) Yes, as King of God's Kingdom, Jesus will see to it that this man is resurrected to life on earth with the opportunity to live forever in that Paradise. Today, those who put their faith in Jehovah's Kingdom can also look forward to living in Paradise when "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:4.

¹⁵ Let us project our minds ahead to that new world. Imagine that we are living in it already. Immediately, we cannot help but observe everywhere the happy people dwelling together in total peace. They are enjoying conditions similar to those described at Isaiah 14:7: "The whole earth has come to rest, has become free of disturbance. People have become cheerful with joyful cries." Why are they that way? For one thing, notice that the doors to the houses have no locks. There is no need for them, since there is no crime or violence. It is just as God's Word said it would be: "They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble."—Micah 4:4.

¹⁶ There is no more war either, for in this new world, war is outlawed. All weapons have been turned into implements of peace. In the complete sense, Isaiah 2:4 has been fulfilled: "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears

15, 16. Why will life be so peaceful in the new world?



Right now Jehovah is forming the foundation of a new earthly society

into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore." But, then, that is what we expected! Why? Because many inhabitants of the new world learned to do that while serving God in the old world.

¹⁷ Something else you notice is that there is no poverty. No one lives in a squalid shack or wears rags or is homeless. Everyone has a comfortable home and well-kept property with lovely trees and flowers. (Isa-

17. What living conditions will prevail under God's Kingdom?

iah 35:1, 2; 65:21, 22; Ezekiel 34:27) And there is no hunger because God has fulfilled his promise that there would be abundant food for all: "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow." (Psalm 72:16) Indeed, under the guidance of God's Kingdom, a glorious paradise extends earth wide, just as God purposed back in Eden. —Genesis 2:8.

¹⁸ You also marvel at the vigorous ener-
18. In the new world, what things will no longer threaten people?

gy everyone has. This is because they now have perfect bodies and minds. There is no more sickness, pain, or death. No one is in a wheelchair or a hospital bed. All of that is gone forever. (Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6) Why, none of the animals are a threat either, for they have been made peaceful by God's power!—Isaiah 11:6-8; 65:25; Ezekiel 34:25.

¹⁹ What a wonderful civilization is formed by the faithful inhabitants of this new world! Their energies and skills and the wealth of the earth are devoted to positive pursuits, not to hurtful ones; to cooperating with others, not to competing with them. And everybody you meet is someone you can trust because, as God promised, all are "persons taught by Jehovah." (Isaiah 54:13) Since everyone is governed by God's laws, the earth is "filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea." (Isaiah 11:9) Truly, every day in this new world is what Psalm 37:11 said it would be, one of "exquisite delight."

A Happy Future Guaranteed

²⁰ What must we do to be part of that happy future? Isaiah 55:6 tells us: "Search for Jehovah, you people, while he may be found. Call to him while he proves to be near." And as we search, our attitude should be as described at Psalm 143:10: "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God." Those who do this can walk blamelessly before Jehovah through these last days and can look forward to a fine future. "Watch the blameless one and keep the upright one in sight, for the future of that man will be peaceful. But the transgressors themselves will certainly be annihilated together; the future of wicked people will indeed be cut off."—Psalm 37:37, 38.

19. Why will every day in the new world be one of "exquisite delight"?

20. What must we do to enjoy a peaceful future?

²¹ Right now Jehovah is calling out from every nation those who want to do his will. He is forming them into the foundation of his new earthly society, as Bible prophecy foretold: "In the final part of the days [the time in which we now live] . . . many peoples will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah [his elevated true worship] . . . He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.'"—Isaiah 2:2, 3.

²² Revelation 7:9 describes these as "a great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." Verse 14 states: "These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation," surviving the present system's end. This foundation for the new world is now nearly six million strong, with many new ones becoming part of it each year. All of these faithful servants of Jehovah are being trained for life in his new world. They are learning the spiritual and other skills needed to transform this earth into a paradise. And they fully trust that Paradise will become a reality because "he is faithful that promised."—Hebrews 10:23.

21, 22. What is God forming today, and how is the training accomplished?

Points for Review

- ☐ What consequences did a lack of faith bring in the first century?
- ☐ How far can God's servants trust him?
- ☐ What future is in store for faithful ones?
- ☐ What must we do to ensure a happy future for ourselves in God's new world?

BARNABAS

The “Son of Comfort”

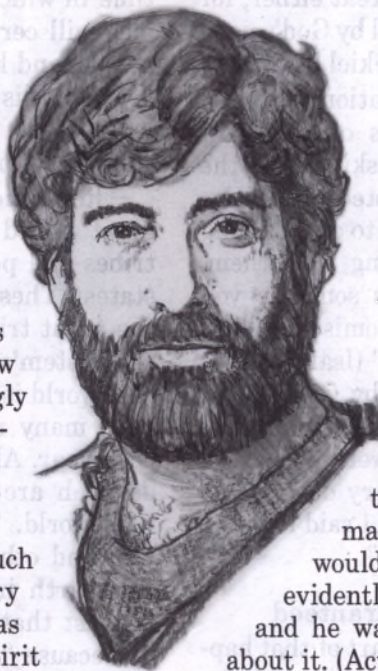
WHEN was the last time you received comfort from a friend? Do you remember when you last provided it for someone else? From time to time, all of us need encouragement, and how we appreciate those who lovingly offer it! Comforting implies taking time to listen, understand, and help. Are you ready to do that?

One person who displayed such willingness in an exemplary manner was Barnabas, who “was a good man and full of holy spirit and of faith.” (Acts 11:24) Why could that be said about Barnabas? What had he done to merit this description?

A Generous Helper

His actual name was Joseph, but the apostles gave him a descriptive surname that was very much in keeping with his character—Barnabas, meaning “Son of Comfort.”* (Acts 4:36) The Christian congregation had been formed only recently. Some suppose that Barnabas had earlier been one of Jesus’ disciples. (Luke 10:1, 2) Whether that was so

* Calling somebody “son of” a certain quality underlined an outstanding characteristic. (See Deuteronomy 3:18, footnote.) In the first century, it was common to use surnames to draw attention to a person’s qualities. (Compare Mark 3:17.) It was a kind of public recognition.



or not, this man had given a good account of himself.

Shortly after Pentecost 33 C.E., Barnabas, who was a Levite from Cyprus, voluntarily sold some land and gave the money to the apostles. Why did he do that?

The account in Acts tells us that among the Christians in Jerusalem at that time, “distribution would be made to each one, just as he would have the need.” Barnabas evidently saw that there was a need, and he warmheartedly did something about it. (Acts 4:34-37) He may have been a man of some means, but he did not hesitate to offer both his material possessions and himself for the advancement of Kingdom interests.* “Wherever Barnabas found people or situations requiring encouragement, he gave all the encouragement of which he was capable,” observes scholar F. F. Bruce. This is obvious from the second episode in which he appears.

About 36 C.E., Saul of Tarsus (the future apostle Paul), by now a Christian, was trying

* Considering what had been established by the Mosaic Law, some have asked how Barnabas, a Levite, came to own land. (Numbers 18:20) It should be noted, however, that it is not clear whether the property was in Palestine or in Cyprus. Further, it is possible that this was simply a burial plot that Barnabas had acquired in the Jerusalem area. Whatever the case, Barnabas gave up his property to help others.

to contact the Jerusalem congregation, "but they were all afraid of him, because they did not believe he was a disciple." How could he convince the congregation that his conversion was genuine and not a mere stratagem to devastate it further? "Barnabas came to his aid and led him to the apostles."—Acts 9:26, 27; Galatians 1:13, 18, 19.

Why Barnabas trusted Saul is not stated. In any case, the "Son of Comfort" lived up to his surname by listening to Saul and helping him out of a seemingly hopeless predicament. Though Saul then returned to his native Tarsus, a friendship had been formed between the two men. In years to come, that was to have important consequences.—Acts 9:30.

In Antioch

About 45 C.E., news reached Jerusalem of unusual developments in Antioch of Syria—numerous Greek-speaking residents of that city were becoming believers. The congregation dispatched Barnabas to investigate and to organize the work there. They could not have made a wiser choice. Luke states: "When he arrived and saw the undeserved kindness of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all to continue in the Lord with hearty purpose; for he was a good man and full of holy spirit and of faith. And a considerable crowd was added to the Lord."—Acts 11:22-24.

That was not all he did. According to scholar Giuseppe Ricciotti, "Barnabas was a practical man, and he immediately understood the need to get down to work in order to ensure that such a promising flowering be followed by an abundant harvest. The primary need, therefore, was for harvest workers." Coming from Cyprus, Barnabas was probably accustomed to having dealings with Gentiles. He might have felt particularly qualified to preach to pagans.

But he was ready to involve others in this exciting and encouraging activity.

Barnabas thought of Saul. Very probably, Barnabas was aware of the prophetic revelation to Ananias at the time of Saul's conversion, that the former persecutor was 'a chosen vessel, to bear Jesus' name to the nations.' (Acts 9:15) So Barnabas set off for Tarsus—a one-way journey of more than 120 miles—to seek out Saul. The two worked together as partners for a whole year, and "it was first in Antioch" in this period "that the disciples were by divine providence called Christians."—Acts 11:25, 26.

During Claudius' reign, severe famine came upon various parts of the Roman Empire. According to Jewish historian Josephus, in Jerusalem "many people died for want of what was necessary to procure food." Thus, the disciples in Antioch "determined, each of them according as anyone could afford it, to send a relief ministration to the brothers dwelling in Judea; and this they did, dispatching it to the older men by the hand of Barnabas and Saul." After fully carrying out that commission, the two returned with John Mark to Antioch, where they were counted among the prophets and teachers of the congregation.—Acts 11:29, 30; 12:25; 13:1.

A Special Missionary Assignment

Then an extraordinary event took place. "As they were publicly ministering to Jehovah and fasting, the holy spirit said: 'Of all persons set Barnabas and Saul apart for me for the work to which I have called them.'" Just think! Jehovah's spirit commanded that the two be given a special assignment. "Accordingly these men, sent out by the holy spirit, went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed away to Cyprus." Barnabas could also rightly be called an apostle, or one sent forth.—Acts 13:2, 4; 14:14.

After traveling through Cyprus and converting Sergius Paulus, the Roman provincial governor of the island, they proceeded to Perga, on the southern coast of Asia Minor, where John Mark withdrew and returned to Jerusalem. (Acts 13:13) It seems that until then Barnabas had a leading role, perhaps as the more experienced partner. From this point on, it is Saul (now referred to as Paul) who takes the lead. (Compare Acts 13:7, 13, 16; 15:2.) Was Barnabas hurt by this development? No, he was a mature Christian who humbly recognized that Jehovah was also using his partner in a powerful way. By means of them, Jehovah wanted still other territories to hear the good news.

In fact, before the two were thrown out of Antioch in Pisidia, the whole area heard God's word from Paul and Barnabas, and a number accepted the message. (Acts 13:43, 48-52) In Iconium, "a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks became believers." This moved Paul and Barnabas to spend considerable time there, 'speaking with boldness by the authority of Jehovah, who granted signs and portents to occur through their hands.' On hearing that a plot had been hatched to stone them, the two wisely fled and continued their work in Lycaonia, Lystra, and Derbe. Despite life-threatening experiences in Lystra, both Barnabas and

Paul kept on "strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to remain in the faith and saying: 'We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations.'"—Acts 14:1-7, 19-22.

These two dynamic preachers were not going to let themselves be intimidated. On the contrary, they returned to build up the new Christians in places where they had already encountered fierce opposition, likely helping qualified men to take the lead in the new congregations.

The Circumcision Issue

Some 16 years after Pentecost 33 C.E., Barnabas was involved in a history-making episode regarding the circumcision issue. "Certain men came down [to Antioch of Syria] from Judea and began to teach the brothers: 'Unless you get circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.'" Barnabas and Paul knew from experience that this was not so, and they disputed the point. Rather than asserting their authority, they recognized that this was a question that had to be settled for the good of the whole association of brothers. So they referred the question to the governing body in Jerusalem, where their reports helped to settle the issue. Thereafter, Paul and Barnabas, described as "loved ones . . . that have delivered up their souls for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ," were among those assigned to communicate the decision to the brothers in Antioch. When the letter from the governing body was read and discourses were delivered, the congregation "rejoiced over the *encouragement*" and was "strengthened."—Acts 15:1, 2, 4, 25-32.

"A Sharp Burst of Anger"

After so many positive accounts about him, we might feel we could never possibly live up to Barnabas' example. Yet, the

In Our Next Issue

Who Is Jehovah?

Judgment Executed in
the Low Plain of Decision

A Change of Assignment at 80



“Son of Comfort” was imperfect just as the rest of us are. While he and Paul were planning a second missionary journey to visit the congregations, a disagreement occurred. Barnabas was determined to take along his cousin John Mark, but Paul did not think it proper, since John Mark had departed from them on the first missionary journey. There occurred “a sharp burst of anger, so that they separated from each other; and Barnabas took Mark along and sailed away to Cyprus,” while “Paul selected Silas and went off” in another direction.—Acts 15:36-40.

How sad! Even so, the incident tells us something else about Barnabas’ personality. “It stands to Barnabas’ undying credit that he was prepared to take a risk and put trust in Mark a second time,” says one scholar. As that writer suggests, it may well have been that “the confidence Barnabas placed

Barnabas “was a good man and full of holy spirit and of faith”

in him helped to restore his own confidence and served as a spur to renewed commitment.” As things turned out, that confidence was fully justified, for the day came when even Paul acknowledged Mark’s usefulness in Christian service.—2 Timothy 4:11; compare Colossians 4:10.

Barnabas’ example can stimulate us to take time to listen to, understand, and encourage the downhearted and provide practical aid whenever we see the need. The record of his willingness to serve his brothers with mildness and courage, as well as the excellent results this produced, is an encouragement in itself. What a blessing it is to have people like Barnabas in our congregations today!

From CITY TOWERS to WILDERNESS TUNDRA *Go to the People*

NEITHER rain nor snow nor hail nor wolves nor mountain lions nor hostile territory could dampen their spirit of determination. With amazing speed, they galloped across 1,900 miles, crossing open prairie, raging rivers, and deep valleys to carry urgent mail to the West Coast. Who were they?

They were the daring young riders of the pony express.* What sparked such intensity of spirit in these young men? Probably the challenge, the adventure, and the satisfaction of getting the mail through. Interestingly, each rider carried a Bible in his saddlebag along with the priority mail.

More than a century later, a greater spirit of determination, enthusiasm, and devotion is manifested by over 113,000 devoted Kingdom proclaimers across Canada. What is their motivation? Love for God and neighbor inspires them to deliver Kingdom truth by printed page and by word of mouth. This

* The pony express was a mail service in the United States that existed for a brief 18-month period from 1860 to 1861.



life-giving truth is far more urgent than any mail delivered by the pony express. Yes, it is the precious Kingdom message of the Holy Bible, the very book found in the saddlebags of the pony-express riders.—Proverbs 2:21, 22; Isaiah 2:2-4; 61:2; Matthew 22:37-39; 24:14.

Motivated by Love for Jehovah and for People

Jehovah's Witnesses love to talk to people about the Kingdom. You will find them doing so in city high-rise apartment towers, in remote tundra communities, in airport terminals, on the streets and other public places, and on the telephone. Why in such varied locations?

Changing life-styles imposed by economic and demographic conditions pose a formidable challenge to finding people at home. In many cases, both husband and wife work to care for the basic material necessities of the family, often to the neglect of spiritual needs. Amid such pressures and stress, they desperately need a heartwarming message of hope. Jehovah's Witnesses gladly re-

spond. Using discretion and kindness, they create opportunities to bring good news to all sorts of people in an appealing, thought-provoking manner.—1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

In Other Languages: When Jesus commanded his followers to ‘go and make disciples,’ he allowed for initiative and determination in taking the message of hope to people of all languages. (Matthew 28:19) As with many lands, Canada has become a mosaic of different cultures and languages, and many Kingdom proclaimers have adapted by learning new languages.

For example, one couple, who are full-time ministers in Edmonton, Alberta, saw the need in their city to reach people who spoke Mandarin Chinese. First, however, the couple needed to learn the language, so they contacted a university student who spoke Mandarin. He agreed to teach them the language and at the same time learn Bible truths from them. What an ideal situation! Within 24 months these two devoted Kingdom proclaimers were qualified to teach in Mandarin. At the same time, their teacher/student qualified for Christian baptism.

Similar experiences are being enjoyed in other cities as Kingdom proclaimers, motivated by love, learn such languages as Polish, Russian, and Vietnamese.

On the Road: Like the pony-express riders of the last century, who rode alone, some Kingdom proclaimers in the interior of British Columbia are lone riders. A fair amount of their time is spent in their secular work of maneuvering powerful logging trucks through bush country to sawmills. This requires constant contact with other truckers by CB (citizens band) radio, communicating about traffic flow and road hazards.



Creatively, these Kingdom proclaimers use their CB radios in a unique way. They initiate discussions on the CB by citing current events. Then they skillfully refer to the Bible. In one case a fellow trucker responded to what the Bible says about a hope for the dead. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) The death of a fellow driver in a highway accident deeply disturbed him. He gratefully

accepted a Bible study and now can be heard proclaiming the good news to fellow workers and friends. Further, to his joy, a Bible study was started with the widow of his deceased friend.

What a reward for taking the initiative to present the life-giving message of truth in this unusual way!

By Air: When it comes to delivering the precious message of truth, zealous Kingdom proclaimers go where the people are, ‘entering villages’ by light aircraft. (Matthew 10:11, 12) A while ago, two plane groups, moved by zeal to declare the good news and at their own expense, flew to the scattered people of the vast expanse of the tundra wilderness. Each aircraft group logged some 2,000 miles and touched down in 14 different communities, coming within 150 miles of the Arctic Circle. These tireless proclaimers continued for seven full days to reach the people isolated by great distances.

And was it all worthwhile? Just think of the positive impact the Bible message had on these communities. The visiting ministers helped to fill a vital spiritual need when they outlined Jehovah’s purpose for a paradise earth in the near future. (Matthew 5:3) Long after the message bearers left, the honesthearted people in the communities would be able to read from the 542 Bibles

and Bible study aids and 3,000 magazines that were placed in their hands.

—Compare Acts 12:24.

By Telephone: Thousands of city dwellers live in apartment towers that have high-tech security. Even so, dedicated Kingdom proclaimers proceed with zeal and discretion. How are they able to go where these people are? While face-to-face contact is preferred, often the apartment lobby intercom is used with success. When this is not possible, they let their fingers do the work, calling people on the telephone.

One morning an older woman answered her telephone. After a brief, polite greeting, she was asked whether she felt there would be a time when people would be able safely to walk the streets at night. Scriptures were read to reassure her that peace would be abundant in the future. (Psalm 37: 10, 11; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10) She agreed to a telephone conversation the following week at the same time to discuss why we can believe God's promises. After a month of studying the Bible over the telephone, reading paragraphs from a Bible study aid and asking appropriate questions, the Kingdom proclaimer received praise from the woman for coming up with so many different sermons each week. It was time to describe the study book and to offer her a personal copy. Arrangements were then made for the two to meet personally. Indeed, Jehovah's Witnesses have demonstrated their love for people, and people are responding, recognizing that Jehovah is



with these Christian preachers.—Compare 1 Corinthians 14:25.

By Printed Page: Kingdom proclaimers in the predominantly French-speaking province of Quebec are also going where the people are. One traveling minister observed: "For years the brothers felt that they were not making headway because of the fierce opposition of the church. But through the tireless work of the brothers and their repeated calls, the Bible, which was practically an unknown book and read only by the minority, now has its place in most homes."

Exciting results are enjoyed as new evangelizers come from all levels of Quebec society, including the medical community. Such is the case of one doctor. His wife, a Kingdom proclaimer herself, would frequently discuss the Bible's hope with him. An alert congregation elder took the initiative to invite the doctor to the congregation meeting during the time when the brochure *How Can Blood Save Your Life?* was being

Successful Kingdom Proclaimers Use the Telephone

Some have said: "Hello. My name is [give name]. I have been speaking briefly with people in your building about how peace might be achieved. Do you think there will ever be peace worldwide? [Allow for response.] To put your mind at ease, I am not doing a survey or selling anything. Rather, I have been sharing the thought from the Holy Scriptures that God will actually bring peace." Then the conversation might proceed with a brief Scriptural discussion.

Others have said: "Good evening. My name is [give name]. I am a volunteer in your area. I have been getting the opinions of individuals living in your building. Many are concerned about personal safety in view of the escalating violence and crime in our area. Is this something that concerns you? [Allow for response.] Do you think there will ever be a time when the whole world will feel secure?" Allow for a reply, and proceed with a Scriptural message.

studied. He came and even participated. Impressed by the quality and spiritual depth of the discussions, he accepted his own personal Bible study. Now he too is a Kingdom proclaimer.

Effective use of magazines has played an important role in attracting people to the Bible. One never knows which article will be the catalyst to draw someone to the truth. One Kingdom proclaimer offered an issue of *Awake!* to a neighbor who did not want to listen to the message but was interested in the insect world. The photograph in the November 22, 1992, *Awake!* article "Chagas' Disease—A Kiss of Death" intrigued her. Impressed by what she read, she asked for more magazines. A Bible study was started, and within six months she was witnessing to others.

In Public Places: Canadian law allows for freeness of speech in public places, such as airports. At the Halifax International Airport, Kingdom proclaimers discreetly approach travelers between flights, engaging them in conversation. Timely leading questions are used to direct the conversation to the Bible. Since they carry a pocket Bible and literature, they can respond to spiritual needs. Surgeons, scientists, lawyers, pilots, clergymen, policemen, taxi drivers, en-

gineers, teachers, military personnel, and politicians from foreign countries are among those who have heard the Kingdom message in this way and have carried seeds of truth to germinate in faraway places.—Colossians 1:6.

Early one morning at the airport, a man accepted the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines. He then said in a calm, slow voice: "Oh, no, not Jehovah's Witnesses!" Why such a reaction? The man was a devout Muslim who had just been praying in the airport chapel. He had been pleading with God to show him wisdom, insight, and truth. The thought that Jehovah's Witnesses were an instant answer to his prayer simply amazed him.

Indeed, the courageous Kingdom proclaimers in Canada let nothing stand in the way of their presenting the precious message of the Kingdom. They allow neither foreign languages, rugged dirt roads, remote communities, nor high-security city apartment buildings to deter them. They are determined to deliver God's message of life to honesthearted truth seekers. Along with their worldwide brotherhood of fellow workers, they unselfishly obey Jesus' command to 'go and make disciples.'—Matthew 28:19.

WILL WE ALWAYS NEED ARMIES?



U.S. National Archives photo

ARMIES have consumed a large part of human resources and destroyed much of man's happiness. Some people have thus wondered, 'Can mankind ever achieve the kind of world security that allows for the disbanding of armies?' Now that weapons of mass destruction have made the extinction of all life possible, the question becomes urgent. How realistic is it to hope for a world without armies?

Numerous precedents prove that when good international relations produce confidence, it may lead to some disarmament. General friendliness between Canada and the United States, for example, has meant that their 3,000 mile border has been unprotected by armies for over one and a half centuries. Norway and Sweden have achieved a similar accord, as have many other nations. Could an agreement between all nations achieve a world without armies? With the horrors of World War I, the idea gained unprecedented popularity.

When peace was made in 1918, one of the purposes of the Versailles peace treaty was "to render possible the initiation of a general limitation of the armaments of all nations." During the following years, pacifism became popular. Some pacifists theorized that war is the worst thing that can befall a nation and is therefore worse than suffering defeat. Opponents of pacifism disagreed, pointing out that over the centuries, Jews in large areas put up little armed resistance to attackers, yet cruel attempts to exterminate them continued. Africans had little opportunity to resist those who brought them as

slaves to the Americas, and yet they were cruelly mistreated for centuries.

With the outbreak of World War II, however, many pacifists concluded that countries need protection. So when the United Nations was established after World War II, the emphasis was less on disarmament and more on international cooperation to prevent aggression. The members hoped that the security thus provided would give nations confidence to disarm.

Another problem became increasingly clear. Often the efforts of a nation to make itself secure made its neighbor feel insecure. This vicious circle led to an arms race. But more recently, improved relations between the major nations have strengthened the hope of disarmament. Since then, however, the Gulf War and the troubles in former Yugoslavia have dashed hopes of disarmament for many. About five years ago, *Time* magazine commented: "Though the cold war is over, the world has become a more, rather than less, dangerous place."

Desire for a Global "Policeman"

Many observers conclude that mankind needs a single world authority with an army powerful enough to protect everyone. Since neither the United Nations organization nor the world's leading military powers are able to do this, some feel that there is little hope for the future. But if you accept the Bible as God's Word, you may have wondered whether Almighty God will satisfy this urgent need.

Would the One whom the Bible calls "the God of love and of peace" use military might to enforce justice? If so, which army? Many of today's armies claim to have God's backing, but are they really carrying out the will of God? Or does God have some other way of intervening and providing peace and security?—2 Corinthians 13:11.

Almighty God dealt with the first rebellion by expelling Adam and Eve from Eden and posting cherubs to prevent their return. He also announced his purpose to crush all rebellion against his sovereignty. (Genesis 3:15) Might that involve God's using an army?

The Bible tells of occasions when God did use armies to carry out his judgments. For example, the kingdoms in the land of Canaan practiced sex relations with beasts, child sacrifice, and sadistic warfare. God decreed their complete destruction and used Joshua's army to carry out the sentence. (Deuteronomy 7:1, 2) Similarly, King David's army carried out God's judgment against the Philistines as an example of how God will destroy all wickedness in his final day of judgment.

Those events were instructive. Jehovah demonstrated that he can use an army to give people security. Indeed, Jehovah has a unique sort of army that will deal with the rebellion of universal proportions against his rule.

"Jehovah of Armies"

The Bible uses the expression "Jehovah of armies" over 250 times. The expression basically refers to God's position as commander of vast forces of angels. On one occasion the prophet Micaiah told Kings Ahab and Jehoshaphat: "I certainly see Jehovah sitting upon his throne and all the army of the heavens standing by him, to his right and to his left." (1 Kings 22:19) Armies of angels are referred to here. Jehovah used these ar-

mies to protect his people. When the city of Dothan was besieged, Elisha's servant abandoned hope. However, to reassure him, God gave him a miraculous vision of his army of spirit creatures. "Jehovah opened the attendant's eyes, so that he saw; and, look! the mountainous region was full of horses and war chariots of fire."—2 Kings 6:15-17.

Do such events mean that God supports armies today? Some armies of Christendom may claim to be God's armies. Many have asked clergymen to bless them. But the armies of Christendom often fight against one another, against fellow believers. The two world wars of this century began between armies that claimed to be Christian. This cannot be the work of God. (1 John 4:20) While such military forces may claim that they fight for peace, did Jesus instruct his followers to organize such armies in an attempt to prevent disturbance of peace in the world?

A serious breach of peace occurred when an armed mob laid hands on Jesus in a garden where he had been praying with his disciples. One of the disciples struck a man in the mob with a sword. Jesus used the occasion to explain an important principle. He said: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father to supply me at this moment more than twelve legions of angels?" Jesus had a vast army at his command, but Peter had not been enlisted as a soldier in it, nor has any other human. Rather, Peter and the rest of Jesus' followers had been called to be "fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19; 26:47-53) A few hours later, Jesus clarified the situation to Pilate. He said: "My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this

source.” (John 18:36) Unlike the kingdom of David that was established on the earth, the Kingdom that God has given Jesus is in heaven and will bring peace on earth.

God’s Armies Go Into Battle

The armies of God will soon take action. In describing the clash that lies ahead, Revelation calls Jesus “The Word of God.” We read: “The armies that were in heaven were following him on white horses, and they were clothed in white, clean, fine linen. And out of his mouth there protrudes a sharp long sword, that he may strike the nations with it.” The Bible says that this engagement will result in the end of “the kings of the earth and their armies.” As for others who fail to demonstrate their loyalty to God, the prophecy adds: “The rest were killed off with the long sword of the one seated on the horse.” Even Satan the Devil will be put out of action. This truly will allow for a world of peace without armies.—Revelation 19:11-21; 20:1-3.

Imagine a World Without War

Can you visualize a world so secure that armies are not needed? A Bible psalm says: “Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth.”—Psalm 46:8, 9.

What a relief this will be! Imagine the possibilities for human society released at last from the crippling burden of paying for armies and their equipment! People will be able to direct their energies toward improving living conditions for everyone, toward cleaning up the earth and replanting it. There will be new opportunities to invent things that will be genuinely useful to mankind.

This promise will have a worldwide fulfillment: “No more will violence be heard in your land, despoiling or breakdown within

your boundaries.” (Isaiah 60:18) Never again will millions of desperate refugees stream from war zones, forced to leave their homes and property to live in camps of misery. Never again will people wail over loved ones killed or maimed in conflicts between nations. Jehovah’s heavenly King will establish permanent world peace. “In his days the righteous one will sprout, and the abundance of peace until the moon is no more. From oppression and from violence he will redeem their soul.”—Psalm 72:7, 14.

More pleasant still will be life among people who have learned not to hate but to imitate God’s ways of love. God’s Word foretells: “They will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea.” What will it be like to live among people who know and love Jehovah? The same book prophesies: “The work of the true righteousness must become peace; and the service of the true righteousness, quietness and security to time indefinite. And my people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of full confidence and in undisturbed resting-places.”—Isaiah 11:9; 32:17, 18.

People whose faith is built on Bible knowledge discern that God’s armies are poised to cleanse the earth of all enemies of peace. This knowledge gives them confidence to act on what the Bible says “must occur in the final part of the days.” That is: “They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore.”—Isaiah 2:2-4.

People from many nations who have become Jehovah’s Witnesses already refrain from ‘learning war.’ They have placed their confidence in the protection of God’s heavenly armies. By studying the Bible with them, you too can develop similar confidence.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

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

□ **What is the difference between "the Lord's day" and "the day of Jehovah"?** (Revelation 1:10; Joel 2:11) "The Lord's day" includes the fulfillment of the 16 visions described in Revelation chapters 1 to 22 and the basic events that Jesus foretold in answer to his disciples' question about the sign of his presence. As the high point of the Lord's day, the fear-inspiring day of Jehovah breaks forth when he executes judgment on Satan's corrupt world. (Matthew 24:3-14; Luke 21:11)—12/15, page 11.

□ **What are some outstanding features of the Makarios Bible?** The name Jehovah occurs more than 3,500 times in the Makarios Bible. One scholar of Russian religious literature said: "[The] translation is faithful to the Hebrew text, and the language of the translation is pure and befits the subject."—12/15, page 27.

□ **What is "the truth" that Jesus said would set us free?** (John 8:32) By "the truth," Jesus meant the divinely inspired information—especially information regarding God's will—that is preserved in the Bible.—1/1, page 3.

□ **Who are the modern-day Jehu and Jehonadab?** Jehu pictures Jesus Christ, who is represented on earth by "the Israel of God," anointed Christians. (Galatians 6:16; Revelation 12:17) Just as Jehonadab came out to meet Jehu, a "great crowd" from the nations have come out to support Jesus' earthly representatives. (Revelation 7:9, 10; 2 Kings 10:15)—1/1, page 13.

□ **What is meant by 'walking with God'?** (Genesis 5:24; 6:9) This means that those doing so, such as Enoch and Noah, conducted themselves in a way that gave evidence of strong faith in God. They did what Jehovah commanded them and regulated their lives in harmony with what they knew about him from his dealings with humankind.—1/15, page 13.

□ **Why should a person plan ahead for the possibility of his death?** In a sense, making such arrangements is a gift to one's family. It shows love. It proves a desire to 'provide for those who are members of one's household' even when one is no longer with them. (1 Timothy 5:8)—1/15, page 22.

□ **What did "the old covenant" accomplish?** (2 Corinthians 3:14) It provided foregleams of the new covenant and, with its repeated sacrifices, demonstrated man's desperate need of redemption from sin and death.

It was a "tutor leading to Christ." (Galatians 3:24)—2/1, page 14.

□ **In what ways is the new covenant everlasting?** (Hebrews 13:20) First, unlike the Law covenant, it will never be replaced. Second, the results of its operation are permanent. And third, earthly subjects of God's Kingdom will continue to benefit from the new covenant arrangement through the Millennium.—2/1, page 22.

□ **What benefits result from being grateful?** The warmth that a person experiences because of being grateful at heart contributes to his happiness and peace. (Compare Proverbs 15:13, 15.) Being a positive quality, gratitude protects one from such negative feelings as anger, jealousy, and resentment.—2/15, page 4.

□ **Into what covenants have spirit-begotten ones been taken?** The new covenant, which Jehovah makes with members of spiritual Israel, and the covenant for the Kingdom, which Jesus makes with his anointed footstep followers. (Luke 22:20, 28-30)—2/15, page 16.

□ **What three great festivals were the Israelites commanded to attend?** The Festival of Unfermented Cakes, immediately following the Passover of Nisan 14; the Festival of Weeks, on the 50th day from Nisan 16; and the Festival of Ingathering, or Festival of Booths, in the seventh month. (Deuteronomy 16:1-15)—3/1, pages 8, 9.

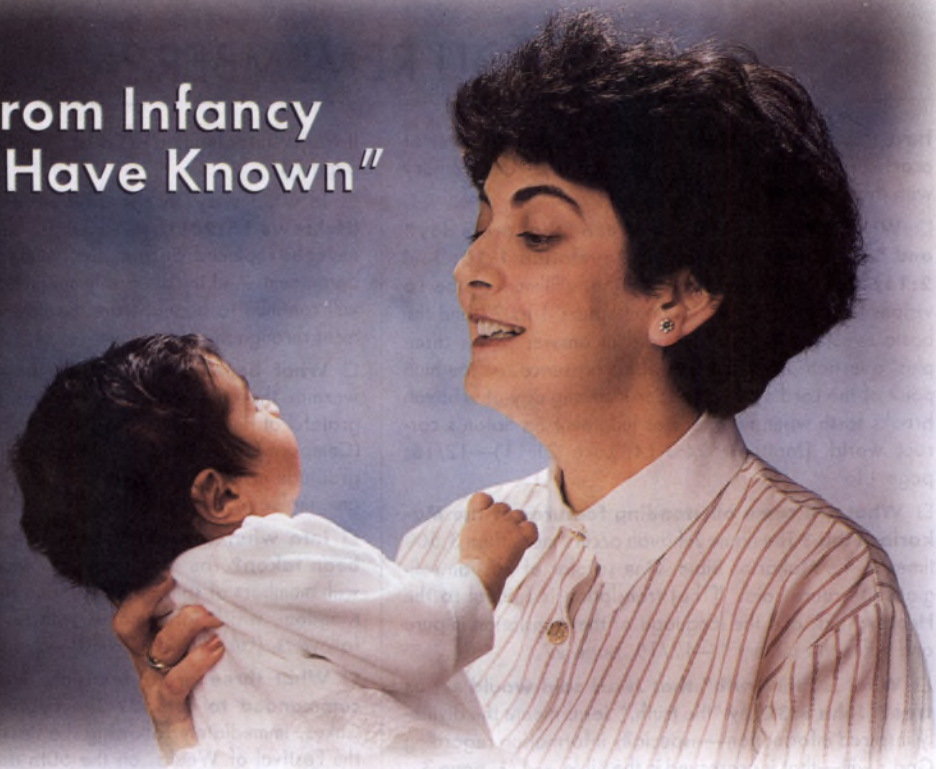
□ **Why is it a privilege to attend Christian gatherings?** Jesus said: "Where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst." (Matthew 18:20; 28:20) Also, an important way that spiritual feeding takes place is through congregation meetings and larger gatherings. (Matthew 24:45)—3/1, page 14.

□ **What is the origin of the name Nimrod?** Several scholars share the opinion that the name Nimrod was not a name given at birth. Rather, they consider it to be a name given later to suit his rebellious character after it became manifest.—3/15, page 25.

□ **How important is the family to human society?** The family is a human necessity. History shows that as the family arrangement erodes, the strength of communities and nations weakens. So the family has a direct effect on the stability of society and the well-being of children and future generations.—4/1, page 6.

□ **What are three lines of proof that the Bible is God's Word?** (1) It is scientifically accurate; (2) it contains timeless principles that are practical for modern living; (3) it contains specific prophecies that have been fulfilled, as proved by historical facts.—4/1, page 15.

"From Infancy You Have Known"



ACCORDING to recent scientific studies, talking to infants profoundly influences the development of their brains, establishing their ability to think, reason, and solve problems. This is particularly the case during the first year of a baby's life. The *International Herald Tribune* reports that some researchers now believe that "the number of words an infant hears each day is the single most important predictor of later intelligence, school success and social competence."

The spoken words, however, must come from a person. A television or a radio, it seems, is no substitute.

Stated a neuroscientist at the University of Washington in Seattle, U.S.A.: "We now know that neural connections are formed very early in life and that the infant's brain is literally waiting for experiences

to determine how connections are made. We didn't realize until very recently how early this process begins. For example, infants have learned the sounds of their native language by the age of six months."

Research challenges widespread opinion that babies will thrive intellectually if they are simply given plenty of love. It also highlights the importance of parents in a child's development.

This calls to mind the words of the inspired letter of the apostle Paul to Timothy: "From infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation." It is likely that holy writings, spoken to the infant Timothy by his believing mother and grandmother, played a key role in his development as an outstanding servant of God. —2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.