

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MAY 1, 1998

WHO IS BEHIND
IT ALL?

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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Who Is Behind It All?

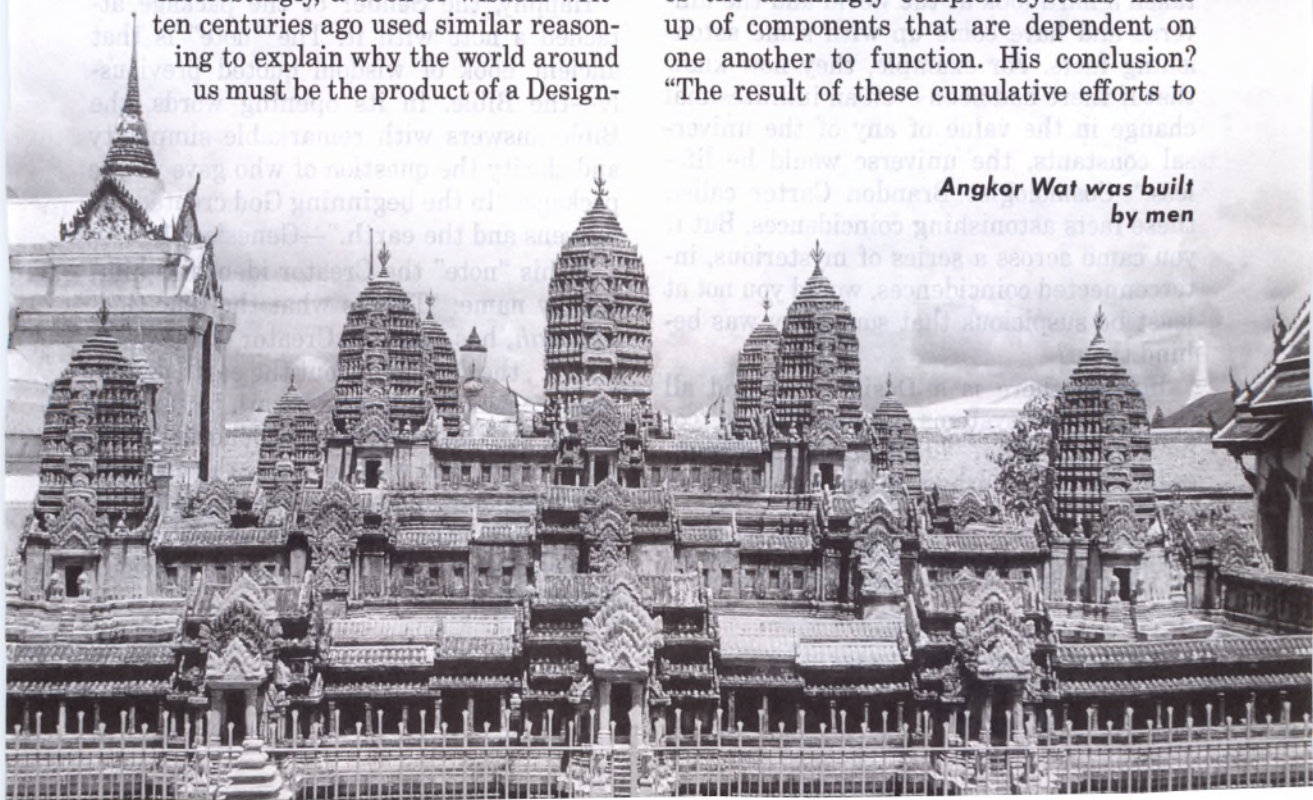
HACKING his way through the jungle in Cambodia, Henri Mouhot, a 19th-century French explorer, reached a broad moat surrounding a temple. Half a mile from where he stood, the five towers of the temple soared more than 200 feet into the air. It was Angkor Wat, the largest religious monument on earth. It had already withstood the elements for seven centuries when Mouhot discovered it.

Mouhot could tell at a glance that the moss-covered structures were the work of human hands. "Erected by some ancient Michelangelo, it is grander than anything left to us by Greece or Rome," he wrote. Despite their having been abandoned for centuries, he had no doubt that behind the magnificent structures, there was a designer.

Interestingly, a book of wisdom written centuries ago used similar reasoning to explain why the world around us must be the product of a Design-

er. It must have been created. The apostle Paul wrote: "Of course, every house is constructed by someone, but he that constructed all things is God." (Hebrews 3:4) Some may disagree with this analogy, saying: "The workings of nature are different from what is man-made." However, not all scientists agree with that objection. After conceding that "biochemical systems aren't inanimate objects," Michael Behe, associate professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University, asks: "Can living biochemical systems be intelligently designed?" He goes on to show that scientists are now *designing* basic changes in living organisms through such methods as genetic engineering. Clearly, both inanimate and animate things can be designed and engineered! Delving into the microscopic world of living cells, Behe discusses the amazingly complex systems made up of components that are dependent on one another to function. His conclusion? "The result of these cumulative efforts to

**Angkor Wat was built
by men**





When you receive a gift, do you not want to know who sent it?

difficult,” admits Professor Behe, and he leaves the question to “philosophy and theology” to try to answer. You personally may feel that the question is irrelevant to you. However, if you received a nicely wrapped package filled with exactly what you needed, would you not want to find out who sent it to you?

We have, so to speak, received such a package—a package filled with wonderful gifts that make it possible

for us to live and enjoy life. That package is the earth, with all its remarkable systems for sustaining life. Should we not want to find out who gave us these gifts?

Happily, the Sender of the package attached a note with it. The “note” is that ancient book of wisdom quoted previously—the Bible. In its opening words, the Bible answers with remarkable simplicity and clarity the question of who gave us the package: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”—Genesis 1:1.

In his “note” the Creator identifies himself by name: “This is what the true God, *Jehovah*, has said, the Creator of the heavens . . . , the One laying out the earth and its produce, the One giving breath to the people on it.” (Isaiah 42:5) Yes, *Jehovah* is the name of the God who designed the universe and made men and women on the earth. But who is *Jehovah*? What kind of God is he? And why should all the peoples of the earth listen to him?

Indeed, there is a Designer behind all these complex systems and finely tuned “coincidences.” Who? “Identifying the designer by scientific methods might be extremely

* “Constants” are values that do not appear to change throughout the universe. Two examples are the speed of light and the relationship of gravity to mass.

Who Is Jehovah?

JEHOVAH told one of his faithful worshipers:

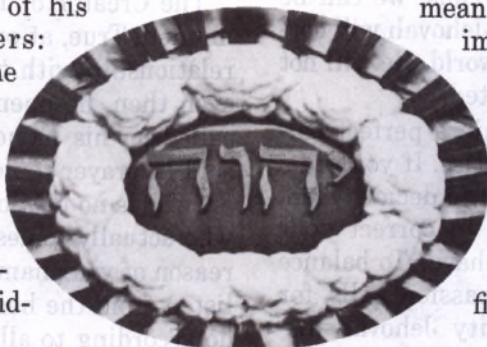
“No man may see me and yet live.” (Exodus 33:20) “God is a Spirit,” and humans cannot see him with their physical eyes. (John 4:24) Just as looking directly at the sun at mid-day would be disastrous to our eyes, so it would be devastating for us to see the tremendous Source of

energy that created not only our brilliant sun but also the countless other suns in the universe.

Happily, we do not need to see God to find out about him. The Bible both identifies the One who prepared that wonderful package, the earth, for us and reveals his personality. So it is worthwhile to look into the Bible to find out about the Father who gave us life and supplied a delightful home in which to enjoy that life.

Significance of His Name

All names have meanings, even though many may not be aware of them today. For example, the common English name David comes from a Hebrew word that means “Beloved.” The Creator’s name, Jehovah, also has a meaning. What is it? In the original Bible language Hebrew, the divine name is written in four letters, YHWH, and occurs nearly 7,000 times in the Hebrew part of the Bible. The divine name is understood to



The divine name written in the four Hebrew letters can be seen on the walls of many old churches

mean “He Causes to Become.” It implies that Jehovah wisely causes himself to become whatever he needs to be in order to accomplish his purposes. He is Creator, Judge, Savior, Sustainer of Life, and therefore he can fulfill his promises. What is more, in Hebrew the name Jehovah is in a form that denotes an action in the process of being accom-

plished. Yes, Jehovah is still causing himself to become the fulfiller of his purposes. He is a living God!

Jehovah’s Predominant Qualities

The Bible describes the Creator as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error and transgression and sin.” (Exodus 34:6, 7) The expression “loving-kindness” translates a very meaningful Hebrew word. It denotes a kindness that lovingly attaches itself to an object until its purpose for that object is realized. It can also be translated “loyal love.” Jehovah’s kindness lovingly attaches itself to his creatures and accomplishes his wonderful purpose. Would you not cherish such love from the One who has given life to you?

Jehovah is slow to anger and quick to forgive our errors. It is heartwarming to be close to such a person. Yet, that does not

mean that he condones wrongdoing. He declared: "I, Jehovah, am loving justice, hating robbery along with unrighteousness." (Isaiah 61:8) As the God of justice, he will not forever tolerate brazen sinners who persist in their wickedness. Thus, we can be sure that in his due time, Jehovah will correct the injustices in the world. He will not turn his back on the afflicted.

It is not easy to maintain a perfect balance between love and justice. If you are a parent, do you find it hard to decide when, how, and to what extent to correct your children when they misbehave? To balance justice with loving compassion calls for great wisdom. That quality Jehovah displays in abundance when he deals with humans. (Romans 11:33-36) Indeed, the Creator's wisdom can be seen everywhere, for example in the wonders of creation that surround us.—Psalm 104:24; Proverbs 3:19.

Having wisdom, however, is not enough. To accomplish his will, the Creator must also have power, and the Bible reveals that he is very powerful: "Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One who is bringing forth the army of them even by number, all of whom he calls even by name. Due to the abundance of dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power, not one of them is missing." (Isaiah 40:26) With an "abundance of dynamic energy," Jehovah gets things done. Would not such a quality attract you to him?

God of All Nations

"But isn't Jehovah the God of the "Old Testament," the God of ancient Israel?" you may wonder. It is true that Jehovah revealed himself to the Israelites. Still, by virtue of having created the first human couple, Jehovah is the God "to whom every family . . . on earth owes its name." (Ephesians 3:15) If you believe that it is proper

to respect your ancestors, would it not be appropriate to do obeisance to the One who gave life to the first man, our common ancestor, who is at the root of all the genealogies that exist on earth today?

The Creator of mankind is not narrow-minded. True, at one time he had a special relationship with the nation of Israel. But even then, he opened his arms to all who called on his name. A wise king of Israel said in prayer to Jehovah: "To the foreigner, who is no part of your people Israel and who actually comes from a distant land by reason of your name . . . , may you yourself listen from the heavens, . . . and you must do according to all that for which the foreigner calls to you; in order that all the peoples of the earth may get to know your name." (1 Kings 8:41-43) To this day, people of all nations can come to know Jehovah and have a meaningful relationship with him. But how does that affect you?

Benefits of Knowing Jehovah

To return to the illustration in the preceding article, if you received a nicely wrapped package, you would naturally want to find out what the gift was for. How should it be used and looked after? Similarly, we want to know what God had in mind when he prepared the earth for us. The Bible says that he "did not create it simply for nothing," but he "formed it even to be inhabited," that is, by humans.—Isaiah 45:18.

Most humans, though, have not cared for the Creator's gift. They are in the process of ruining the earth, much to Jehovah's displeasure. Yet, true to what his name stands for, Jehovah is determined to fulfill his original purpose for man and the earth. (Psalm 115:16; Revelation 11:18) He will repair the earth and give it as an inheritance



to those who are willing to live as his obedient children.—Matthew 5:5.

The last book of the Bible describes how things will be when that happens: “Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. . . . And he 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 21:3, 4) No one will then shed tears of sorrow or mourn because of the loss of a loved one. No one will cry out for help in desperation or suffer the pain of deadly diseases. Even “death is to be brought to nothing.” (1 Corinthians 15:26; Isaiah 25:8; 33:24) This describes the kind of life that Jehovah originally wanted us to enjoy when he created our first ancestors.

Indeed, you can have a preview of such paradisaic conditions now among the worshipers of Jehovah. He tells them: “I, Jeho-

vah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk.” (Isaiah 48:17) Jehovah is a kind Father who teaches us, his children, the best way to live. His guidelines for humans provide, not undue restriction, but loving protection. Following them will result in true freedom and happiness, just as it is written: “Now Jehovah is the Spirit; and where the spirit of Jehovah is, there is freedom.” (2 Corinthians 3:17) By following the guidelines set out in the Bible, those who accept his rulership are now experiencing a peace of mind that one day will permeate the entire world of mankind.—Philippians 4:7.

What a benevolent Father Jehovah is! Are you willing to learn more about the One who is behind all the wonders of creation? For those who are, the benefits are priceless even now. And in the future the blessings will be eternal.

JEHOVAH'S DAY IS NEAR

"Hear this, you older men, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land."—JOEL 1:2.

"ALAS for the day; because the day of Jehovah is near, and like a despoiling from the Almighty One it will come!" What a dramatic announcement! It was God's message to his people delivered by his prophet Joel.

² Those words of Joel 1:15 were recorded in Judah, likely about the year 820 B.C.E. Verdant hills then adorned the land. Fruit and grain were abundant. Pastures were broad and green. Yet, something was very wrong. Baal worship flourished in Jerusalem and in the land of Judah. The people engaged in drunken orgies before this false god. (Compare 2 Chronicles 21:4-6, 11.) Would Jehovah allow all of this to continue?

³ The Bible book of Joel leaves no doubt about the answer. Jehovah God would vindicate his sovereignty and sanctify his holy name. Jehovah's great day was near. God would then execute judgment upon all the nations in "the low plain of Jehoshaphat." (Joel 3:12) Let them prepare for war with the Almighty One, Jehovah. We too face the great day of Jehovah. So let us take a closer look at Joel's prophetic words for our day and the past.

1, 2. Because of what situation in Judah did Jehovah inspire Joel to utter his powerful prophecy?

3. Of what did Jehovah warn, and for what should the nations prepare?

Invasion of Insects

⁴ Through his prophet, Jehovah says: "Hear this, you older men, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land. Has this occurred in your days, or even in the days of your forefathers? Concerning it give an account to your own sons, and your sons to their sons, and their sons to the following generation."

(Joel 1:2, 3) The elders and all the people could expect something the like of which had not happened in their lifetime or in the days of their forefathers. So striking would it be that it would be recounted to the third generation! What was this remarkable event? To find out, let us imagine that we are back in Joel's day.

⁵ Listen! Joel hears a distant roar. The sky darkens, and that eerie sound increases as the darkness extends overhead. Then a smokelike cloud descends. It is an army of millions of insects. And what devastation they cause! Now consider Joel 1:4. The insect invaders are not limited to the winged migratory locusts. Oh, no! Coming, too, are hungry hordes of creeping, wingless locusts. Brought on the wind, the locusts arrive sud-



Locust: FAO photo/G. Tortoli; locust swarm: FAO photo/Desert Locust Survey

4. How great would be the event warned of by Joel?

5, 6. (a) Describe the plague that Joel prophesies. (b) Who was the Source of that plague?

denly, and their sound is like that of chariots. (Joel 2:5) Because of their voracious appetite, millions of them can quickly turn a virtual paradise into a wilderness.

⁶ Also on the move are caterpillars—the larval stage of moths and butterflies. Vast armies of hungry caterpillars can shear away the leaves of vegetation piece by piece, leaf by leaf, until plants are nearly denuded of their greenery. And much of what they leave, the locusts eat. And what the locusts leave, fast-moving cockroaches are sure to finish off. But notice this: At Joel chapter 2, verse 11, God identifies the locust army as “his military force.” Yes, he was the Source of the locust plague that would devastate the land and cause severe famine. When? Just before “the day of Jehovah.”

“Wake Up, You Drunkards”!

⁷ A disreputable crowd, Judah’s religious leaders are singled out when the command is uttered: “Wake up, you drunkards, and weep; and howl, all you wine drinkers, on account of sweet wine, for it has been cut off from your mouths.” (Joel 1:5) Yes, the spiritual drunkards of Judah were told to “wake up,” to sober up. But do not think that this is merely ancient history. Right now, before the great day of Jehovah, Christendom’s clergy are figuratively so full of sweet wine that they are barely conscious of this summons from the Most High. How surprised they will be when they are aroused from their spiritual drunken stupor by the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah!

7. (a) What was the condition of Judah’s religious leaders? (b) How are Christendom’s leaders today in a state similar to that of Judah’s religious leaders?



Barren tree: FAO photo/G. Singh

⁸ Look at that great locust army! “There is a nation that has come up into my land, mighty and without number. Its teeth are the teeth of a lion, and it has the jawbones of a lion. It has set my vine as an object of astonishment, and my fig tree as a stump. It has positively stripped it bare and thrown it away. The twigs of it have become white. Wail, as a virgin girded with sackcloth does over the owner of her youth.”—Joel 1:6-8.

⁹ Is this just a prophecy about “a nation” of locusts, a locust swarm, invading Judah? No, there is more to it than that. At both Joel 1:6 and Revelation 9:7, *God’s people* are represented by locusts. The modern-day locust army is none other than the military force of Jehovah’s anointed locusts, now

8, 9. (a) How does Joel describe the locusts and the effect of their plague? (b) Today, whom do the locusts represent?



joined by some 5,600,000 of Jesus' "other sheep." (John 10:16) Are you not glad to be part of this great throng of Jehovah's worshippers?

¹⁰ At Joel 1:9-12, we read of the effects of the locust plague. One swarm after another bring about complete desolation of the land. Lacking grain, wine, and oil, the unfaithful priests cannot continue their functions. Even the ground mourns, for the locusts despoiled it of grain, and fruit trees were left without fruitage. With the grapevines ruined, there is no more wine for those Baalistic wine bibbers who were also spiritual drunkards.

"Beat Your Breasts, You Priests"

¹¹ Listen to God's message for those wayward priests: "Gird yourselves, and beat

10. What is the effect of the locust plague on Judah?

11, 12. (a) Who claim to be God's priests today?
(b) How are Christendom's religious leaders affected by the modern-day locust plague?

your breasts, you priests. Howl, you ministers of the altar." (Joel 1:13) In the first fulfillment of Joel's prophecy, Levitical priests served at the altar. But what about in the final fulfillment? Today, Christendom's clergy have assumed authority to serve at God's altar, claiming to be his ministers, his "priests." However, what is happening now that God's modern-day locusts are on the move?

¹² When the "priests" of Christendom see Jehovah's people in action and hear their warning of divine judgment, they become frantic. They beat their breasts in vexation and rage at the devastating effect of the Kingdom message. And they howl as their flocks slip away from them. With their pastures being denuded, let them spend the night in sackcloth, mourning over their loss of income. Before long, they will lose their jobs too! In fact, God tells them to mourn all night because their end is near.

¹³ According to Joel 1:14, their only hope lies in repenting and crying "to Jehovah for aid." Can we expect Christendom's entire clergy class to turn to Jehovah? Of course not! Individuals among them might respond to Jehovah's warning. But the spiritually famished state of these religious leaders and their parishioners as a class will continue. The prophet Amos foretold: "'Look! There are days coming,' is the utterance of the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, 'and I will send a famine into the land, a famine, not for bread, and a thirst, not for water, but for hearing the words of Jehovah.'" (Amos 8:11) On the other hand, how grateful we are for the rich spiritual feast that God lovingly

13. Will Christendom as a whole respond favorably to Jehovah's warning?

provides through “the faithful and discreet slave”—Matthew 24:45-47.

¹⁴ The locust plague was and is a harbinger of something. Of what? Joel plainly tells us, saying: “Alas for the day; because the day of Jehovah is near, and like a despoiling from the Almighty One it will come!” (Joel 1:15) The worldwide forays of God’s locust army today clearly indicate that the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah is near. Surely, all rightharted ones long for that special day of reckoning when divine judgment is executed against the wicked and Jehovah comes off victorious as Universal Sovereign.

¹⁵ As Joel 1:16-20 shows, food was cut off in ancient Judah. So was joyfulness. Storehouses were laid desolate, and barns had to be torn down. Lacking pasturage because the locusts had stripped the land of vegetation, cattle wandered about in confusion and droves of sheep perished. What a calamity! Amid such conditions, what happened to Joel? According to verse 19, he said: “To you, O Jehovah, I shall call.” Today, too, many heed the divine warnings and cry out to Jehovah God in faith.

“The Day of Jehovah Is Coming”

¹⁶ Listen to this command from God: “Blow a horn in Zion, O men, and shout a war cry in my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land get agitated.” (Joel 2:1) Why react in that way? The prophecy answers: “For the day of Jehovah is coming, for it is near! It is a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick gloom, like light of dawn spread out upon the mountains.” (Joel 2:1, 2) There is a real sense of urgency attached to the great day of Jehovah.

14. Of what is the locust plague a harbinger?

15. In view of the sad condition of the land, how do those who heed divine warnings react?

16. Why should “the inhabitants of the land” be agitated?

¹⁷ Imagine the impact of the prophet’s vision as the relentless locusts turned a veritable garden of Eden into a desolate waste. Listen to the description of the locust army: “Its appearance is like the appearance of horses, and like steeds is the way they keep running. As with the sound of chariots on the tops of the mountains they keep skipping about, as with the sound of a flaming fire that is devouring stubble. It is like a mighty people, drawn up in battle order. Because of it, peoples will be in severe pains. As for all faces, they will certainly collect a glow of excitement.” (Joel 2:4-6) During the locust plague in Joel’s day, the anguish of the Baal worshipers mounted, and the flush of anxiety could be seen on their faces.

¹⁸ Nothing stopped the orderly, tireless locusts. They ran “like powerful men” and even scaled walls. If ‘some of them fell among the missiles, the others did not break off course.’ (Joel 2:7, 8) What a vivid prophetic portrayal of God’s present-day army of figurative locusts! Today, too, Jehovah’s locust army keeps on going straight ahead. No “wall” of opposition deters them. They do not compromise their integrity to God but are willing to face death, as did thousands of Witnesses who ‘fell among the missiles’ for refusing to hail Hitler during Germany’s Nazi regime.

¹⁹ God’s modern-day locust army has given a thorough witness in “the city” of Christendom. (Joel 2:9) They have done so throughout the world. They are still climbing over all obstacles, entering millions of homes, approaching people on the street, speaking to them over the phone, and contacting them in any way possible as they declare Jehovah’s message. Indeed, they have distributed billions of Bible publications and

17. How were the land and the people in Judah affected by the locust plague?

18, 19. How has the activity of God’s people today been like a locust plague?

will distribute many, many more in their ceaseless ministry—both publicly and from house to house.—Acts 20:20, 21.

²⁰ Joel 2:10 shows that a very large swarm of locusts is like a cloud that can blot out the sun, moon, and stars. (Compare Isaiah 60:8.) Is there any doubt who is behind this military force? Above the roar of the insects, we hear these words of Joel 2:11: “Jehovah himself will certainly give forth his voice before his military force, for his camp is very numerous. For he who is carrying out his word is mighty; for the day of Jehovah is great and very fear-inspiring, and who can hold up under it?” Yes, Jehovah God is sending forth his military force of locusts now—before his great day.

“Jehovah Is Not Slow”

²¹ Like Joel, the apostle Peter spoke of Jehovah’s great day. He wrote: “Jehovah’s day will come as a thief, in which the heav-

20. Who is supporting the modern-day locusts, and with what results?

21. What will result when ‘Jehovah’s day comes as a thief’?

Can You Explain?

- ☐ Why did Jehovah warn of a plague of insects on Judah?
- ☐ In the modern-day fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, who are Jehovah’s locusts?
- ☐ How do the leaders of Christendom react to the locust plague, and how can some of them escape its consequences?
- ☐ How extensive has the locust plague been during the 20th century, and until when will it keep on?

ens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be discovered.” (2 Peter 3:10) Under the influence of Satan the Devil, the wicked governmental “heavens” rule over the “earth,” that is, mankind alienated from God. (Ephesians 6:12; 1 John 5:19) These symbolic heavens and earth will not survive the heat of divine anger during Jehovah’s great day. Rather, they will be replaced by “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.

²² With all the present-day distractions and tests of faith, we could lose sight of the urgency of our times. But as the symbolic locusts press ever onward, many people are responding to the Kingdom message. Though God has allowed time for this, we must not confuse his patience with slowness. “Jehovah is not slow respecting his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.”—2 Peter 3:9.

²³ While we await the great day of Jehovah, let us take to heart Peter’s words recorded at 2 Peter 3:11, 12: “Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah, through which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt!” These acts and deeds certainly include that we keep up with Jehovah’s locust army by having a consistent and meaningful share in preaching the good news of the Kingdom before the end comes.—Mark 13:10.

22, 23. (a) How should we react to Jehovah’s merciful showing of patience? (b) How should we react to the nearness of the day of Jehovah?

²⁴ God's locust army will not stop its work until the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah breaks out. The very existence of this unstoppable locust force is remarkable proof that Jehovah's day is near. Are you

24, 25. (a) How do you respond to the privilege of sharing in the work of Jehovah's locust army? (b) What meaningful question does Joel raise?

not delighted to serve among God's anointed locusts and their companions in the final onslaught before Jehovah's great and fear-inspiring day?

²⁵ How great the day of Jehovah will be! No wonder the question is raised: "Who can hold up under it?" (Joel 2:11) This question and many others will be considered in the next two articles.

WHO WILL "GET AWAY SAFE"?

"Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved."—ACTS 2:21.

PENTECOST 33 C.E. was a pivotal day in world history. Why? Because on that day a new nation was born. At first, it was not a very big nation—a mere 120 disciples of Jesus who had gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem. But today, when most nations that existed back then have been forgotten, the nation born in that upper room is still with us. This fact is of utmost importance to us all, since this is the nation appointed by God to be his witness before mankind.

² When that new nation began to exist, important events took place that fulfilled Joel's prophetic words. We read of these events at Acts 2:2-4: "Suddenly there occurred from heaven a noise just like that of a rushing stiff breeze, and it filled the whole house in which they were sitting. And tongues as if of fire became visible to them and were distributed about, and one sat

upon each one of them, and they all became filled with holy spirit and started to speak with different tongues, just as the spirit was granting them to make utterance." In this way those 120 faithful men and women became a spiritual nation, the first members of what the apostle Paul later called "the Israel of God."—Galatians 6:16.

³ Crowds gathered to investigate the "rushing stiff breeze," and the apostle Peter explained to them that one of Joel's prophecies was being fulfilled. Which prophecy? Well, listen to what he said: "'In the last days,' God says, 'I shall pour out some of my spirit upon every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy and your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams; and even upon my men slaves and upon my women slaves I will pour out some of my spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. And I will give portents in heaven above and signs on earth below, blood and fire and smoke

1. Why was Pentecost of 33 C.E. a pivotal day in world history?

2. What miraculous events marked the birth of the new nation?

3. What prophecy of Joel was fulfilled at Pentecost 33 C.E.?

mist; the sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and illustrious day of Jehovah arrives. And everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.'” (Acts 2:17-21) The words Peter quoted are found at Joel 2:28-32, and their fulfillment meant that time was running out for the Jewish nation. “The great and illustrious day of Jehovah,” a time of reckoning for unfaithful Israel, was near. But who would be saved, or get away safe? And what did this foreshadow?

Two Fulfillments of Prophecy

⁴ In the years following 33 C.E., the spiritual Israel of God flourished, but the fleshly nation of Israel did not. In 66 C.E., fleshly Israel was at war with Rome. In 70 C.E., Israel almost ceased to exist, and Jerusalem along with its temple was burned to the ground. At Pentecost 33 C.E., Peter gave fine counsel in view of that approaching tragedy. Again quoting Joel, he said: “Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” Each individual Jew had to make a personal decision to call upon Jehovah’s name. This included heeding Peter’s further instructions: “Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for forgiveness of your sins.” (Acts 2:38) Peter’s listeners had to accept Jesus as the Messiah, whom Israel as a nation had rejected.

⁵ Those prophetic words of Joel had a great impact on meek ones in the first century. However, they have an even greater impact today because, as events in the 20th century show, there has been a second fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Let us see how.

⁶ After the death of the apostles, the Isra-

4, 5. In view of coming events, what counsel did Peter give, and why was that counsel applicable beyond his day?

6. How did the identity of the Israel of God begin to be made clear as 1914 approached?

el of God came to be hidden by the weeds of false Christianity. However, during the time of the end, which started in 1914, the identity of this spiritual nation once again became clear. All of this was in fulfillment of Jesus’ parable of the wheat and the weeds. (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) As 1914 drew near, anointed Christians began to separate themselves from unfaithful Christendom, boldly rejecting her false doctrines and preaching the coming end of “the appointed times of the nations.” (Luke 21:24) But the first world war, which broke out in 1914, raised issues for which they were unprepared. Under intense pressure, many slowed down, and some compromised. By 1918 their preaching activity had virtually ceased.

⁷ Still, that did not last long. Starting in 1919, Jehovah began to pour out his spirit on his people in a way that called to mind Pentecost 33 C.E. Of course, in 1919 there was no speaking in tongues and no rushing stiff breeze. We understand from Paul’s words recorded at 1 Corinthians 13:8 that the time for miracles was long since past. Nevertheless, God’s spirit was clearly evident in 1919 when, at a convention in Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A., faithful Christians were reinvigorated and again began the work of preaching the good news of the Kingdom. In 1922 they returned to Cedar Point and were galvanized by the appeal “Advertise, advertise, advertise, the King and his kingdom.” As had happened in the first century, the world was forced to take note of the effects of the outpouring of God’s spirit. Every dedicated Christian—male and female, old and young—began to “prophesy,” that is, to declare “the magnificent things of God.” (Acts 2:11) Like Peter, they exhorted meek ones: “Get saved from this crooked genera-

7. (a) What event similar to Pentecost 33 C.E. occurred in 1919? (b) Starting in 1919, what effect did the outpouring of God’s spirit have upon Jehovah’s servants?

A new nation was born at Pentecost 33 C.E.

tion." (Acts 2:40) How could responsive ones do that? By heeding Joel's words found at Joel 2:32: "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe."

⁸ Since those early years, the affairs of the Israel of God have moved ahead. The sealing of the anointed appears to be well advanced, and since the 1930's a great crowd of meek ones with an earthly hope have appeared on the scene. (Revelation 7:3, 9) All feel a sense of urgency, for the second fulfillment of Joel 2:28, 29 shows that we are close to an even greater fear-inspiring day of Jehovah, when a worldwide religious, political, and commercial system of things will be destroyed. We have every reason to 'call on the name of Jehovah' in full faith that he will deliver us!

How Do We Call on Jehovah's Name?

⁹ What is involved in calling on Jehovah's name? The context of Joel 2:28, 29 helps us to answer that question. For example, Jehovah does not listen to everyone who calls on him. Through another prophet, Isaiah, Jehovah said to Israel: "When you spread out your palms, I hide my eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I am not listening." Why did Jehovah refuse to listen to his own nation? He himself explains: "With bloodshed your very hands have become filled." (Isaiah 1:15) Jehovah will not listen to any who are bloodguilty or are practicing sin. That is why Peter told the Jews at Pentecost to repent. In the context of Joel 2:28,

8. How have things progressed for the Israel of God since 1919?

9. What are some of the things involved in calling on Jehovah's name?



29, we find that Joel too stresses repentance. For example, at Joel 2:12, 13, we read: "'And now also,' the utterance of Jehovah is, 'come back to me with all your hearts, and with fasting and with weeping and with wailing. And rip apart your hearts, and not your garments; and come back to Jehovah your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness.'" Starting in 1919, anointed Christians acted in harmony with these words. They repented over their failures and determined never again to compromise or slow down. This opened the way for God's spirit to be poured out. Every individual who wants to call on Jehovah's name and be heard must follow the same course.

¹⁰ Remember, true repentance is more than merely saying, "I am sorry." Israelites used to rip their outer garments to show the intensity of their feelings. But Jehovah says: "Rip apart your hearts, and not your garments." True repentance comes from the heart, from the depths of our being. It includes turning our backs on wrongdoing, even as we read at Isaiah 55:7: "Let the wicked man leave his way, and the harmful

10. (a) What is true repentance? (b) How does Jehovah respond to true repentance?

man his thoughts; and let him return to Jehovah.” It involves hating sin, just as Jesus did. (Hebrews 1:9) Then, we trust Jehovah to forgive us on the basis of the ransom sacrifice because Jehovah is “gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness.” He will accept our worship, our spiritual grain offering and drink offering. He will listen when we call upon his name.—Joel 2:14.

¹¹ In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave us something else to bear in mind, when he said: “Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness.” (Matthew 6:33) Our worship is not to be viewed casually, as something we do in a token way to soothe our conscience. Serving God deserves the first place in our life. Thus, through Joel, Jehovah goes on to say: “Blow a horn in Zion . . . Gather the people together. Sanctify a congregation. Collect the old men together. Gather children and those sucking the breasts together. Let the bridegroom go forth from his interior room, and the

bride from her nuptial chamber.” (Joel 2:15, 16) It is natural for newlyweds to be distracted, having eyes only for each other. But even for them, serving Jehovah must come first. Nothing should come ahead of our being gathered to our God, calling on his name.

¹² With this in mind, let us consider a statistic revealed by the 1997 Service Year Report of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Last year saw a peak of 5,599,931 Kingdom publishers—truly a great crowd of praisers! Attendance at the Memorial was 14,322,226—about eight and a half million more than the number of publishers. That figure shows a wonderful potential for growth. Many of those eight and a half million were already studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses as interested persons or as children of baptized parents. A large number were attending a meeting for the very first time. Their being present gave Jehovah’s Witnesses a fine opportunity to get to know them better and to offer to help them make further prog-

11. What place should true worship have in our lives?

12. What potential for growth is seen in the Memorial report for last year?



ress. Then, there were those who attend the Memorial each year and perhaps attend a few other meetings, but they make no further progress. Of course, such ones are very welcome to attend meetings. But we urge them to meditate carefully on Joel's prophetic words and consider what further steps they must take to be sure that Jehovah will hear when they call on his name.

¹³ The apostle Paul stressed another aspect of calling on God's name. In his letter to the Romans, he quoted Joel's prophetic words: "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." Then he reasoned: "How will they call on him in whom they have not put faith? How, in turn, will they put faith in him of whom they have not heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach?" (Romans 10:13, 14) Yes, many others who up to now have not come to know Jehovah need to call on his name. Those who already know Jehovah have the responsibility not only to preach but also to reach out and give them that help.

13. If we are already calling on Jehovah's name, what responsibility do we have toward others?

A Spiritual Paradise

¹⁴ That is the way both the anointed and the other sheep view things, and as a result, Jehovah blesses them. "Jehovah will be zealous for his land and will show compassion upon his people." (Joel 2:18) In 1919, Jehovah showed zeal and compassion for his people when he restored them and brought them into his realm of spiritual activity. This is truly a spiritual paradise, well described by Joel in these words: "Do not be fearful, O ground. Be joyful and rejoice; for Jehovah will actually do a great thing in what He does. Do not be fearful, you beasts of the open field, for the pasture grounds of the wilderness will certainly grow green. For the tree will actually give its fruitage. The fig tree and the vine must give their vital energy. And, you sons of Zion, be joyful and rejoice in Jehovah your God; for he will be bound to give you the autumn rain in right measure, and he will bring down upon you people a downpour, autumn rain and

14, 15. What paradisaic blessings do Jehovah's people enjoy because they call on his name in a way that pleases him?

Earlier in this century, Jehovah again poured his spirit on his people in fulfillment of Joel 2:28, 29





People must be helped to call upon Jehovah's name

spring rain, as at the first. And the threshing floors must be full of cleansed grain, and the press vats must overflow with new wine and oil.”—Joel 2:21-24.

¹⁵ What a delightful picture! Abundant provisions of three staples of life in Israel—grain, olive oil, and wine—together with plentiful flocks. In our day those prophetic words are indeed fulfilled in a spiritual way. Jehovah provides us all the spiritual food we need. Do we not all delight in such God-given abundance? Truly, as Malachi foretold, our God has ‘opened the floodgates of the heavens and emptied out upon us a bless-

ing until there is no more want.’
—Malachi 3:10.

The End of a System of Things

¹⁶ It is after foretelling the paradisaic condition of God’s people that Joel prophesies about the pouring out of Jehovah’s spirit. When Peter quoted this prophecy at Pentecost, he said that it was fulfilled “in the last days.” (Acts 2: 17) The outpouring of God’s spirit back then meant that the last days had begun for the Jewish system of things. The outpouring of God’s spirit on the Israel of God in the 20th century means that we are living in the last days of the worldwide system of things. In view of this, what does the future hold? Joel’s prophecy goes on to tell us: “I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun itself will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before

the coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah.”—Joel 2:30, 31.

¹⁷ In 66 C.E., these prophetic words started to come true in Judea as events moved inexorably toward the climax of the fear-inspiring day of Jehovah in 70 C.E. How terrifying at that time to be among those not exalting the name of Jehovah! Today, events just as terrifying lie ahead, when this whole world system of things will be destroyed at Jehovah’s hand. Still, escape is possible. The prophecy

16. (a) What does the outpouring of Jehovah’s spirit signify for our time? (b) What does the future hold?

17, 18. (a) What fear-inspiring day of Jehovah came upon Jerusalem? (b) The certainty of the future fear-inspiring day of Jehovah moves us to do what?

goes on to say: "It must occur that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will prove to be the escaped ones, just as Jehovah has said, and in among the survivors, whom Jehovah is calling." (Joel 2: 32) Jehovah's Witnesses are truly grateful to know Jehovah's name, and they have complete trust that he will save them when they call on him.

¹⁸ What, though, will happen when the great and illustrious day of Jehovah strikes this world in all its fury? That will be discussed in the final study article.

Do You Remember?

- ☐ When did Jehovah first pour his spirit out upon his people?
- ☐ What are some of the things involved in calling upon Jehovah's name?
- ☐ When did Jehovah's great and illustrious day come upon fleshly Israel?
- ☐ How does Jehovah bless those who call upon his name today?

JUDGMENT EXECUTED IN THE LOW PLAIN OF DECISION

"Let the nations . . . come up to the low plain of Jehoshaphat; for there I shall sit in order to judge all the nations."—JOEL 3:12.

CROWDS, crowds are in the low plain of the decision"! We read those stirring words at Joel 3: 14. Why are these crowds assembled? Joel answers: "The day of Jehovah is near." It is the great day of Jehovah's vindication—the day for executing judgment on the multitudes who have rejected God's established Kingdom under Christ Jesus. At long last, the "four angels" of Revelation chapter 7 are to release their tight hold on "the four winds of the earth," resulting in "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until

1. Why does Joel see crowds assembled in "the low plain of the decision"?

now, no, nor will occur again."—Revelation 7:1; Matthew 24:21.

² At Joel 3:12, the location for this execution of judgment is called "the low plain of Jehoshaphat." Appropriately, during a tempestuous period of Judah's history, Jehovah executed judgment there in behalf of good King Jehoshaphat, whose name means "Jehovah Is Judge." A consideration of what happened at that time will help us better to appreciate what is about to take place in our time. The record is found in 2 Chronicles

2. (a) Why is the place for executing Jehovah's judgment appropriately called "the low plain of Jehoshaphat"? (b) How did Jehoshaphat properly react when under attack?

chapter 20. In verse 1 of that chapter, we read that "the sons of Moab and the sons of Ammon and with them some of the Ammonim came against Jehoshaphat in war." How did Jehoshaphat react? He did what faithful servants of Jehovah always do in a crisis. He turned to Jehovah for guidance, praying fervently: "O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For in us there is no power before this large crowd that is coming against us; and we ourselves do not know what we ought to do, but our eyes are toward you."—2 Chronicles 20:12.

Jehovah Answers a Prayer

³ While "all those of Judah were standing before Jehovah, even their little ones, their wives and their sons," Jehovah gave his response. (2 Chronicles 20:13) Just as he uses his "faithful and discreet slave" today, so the great Hearer of prayer empowered the Levite prophet Jahaziel to provide His answer to those assembled. (Matthew 24:45) We read: "Here is what Jehovah has said to you, 'Do not you be afraid or be terrified because of this large crowd; for the battle is not yours, but God's. . . . You will not need to fight in this instance. Take your position, stand still and see the salvation of Jehovah in your behalf. . . . Do not be afraid or be terrified. Tomorrow go out against them, and Jehovah will be with you.'"—2 Chronicles 20:15-17.

⁴ Jehovah required more of King Jehoshaphat and his people than that they merely sit idly by, awaiting a miraculous deliverance. They were to take the initiative in coping with the enemy's challenge. The

3. What instructions did Jehovah give to Judah when they faced the onslaught of neighboring nations?

4. In what way did Jehovah require that his people be active, not passive, when they faced the enemy's challenge?

king and 'all those of Judah, even their little ones, their wives and their sons,' expressed strong faith as they obediently rose early in the morning and marched out to meet the invading hordes. On the way, the king continued to provide theocratic instruction and encouragement, urging them: "Put faith in Jehovah your God that you may prove yourselves of long duration. Put faith in his prophets and so prove successful." (2 Chronicles 20:20) Faith in Jehovah! Faith in his prophets! Therein lay the key to success. Likewise today, as we continue active in Jehovah's service, may we never doubt that he will make our faith victorious!

⁵ Like the Judeans of Jehoshaphat's day, we must "give praise to Jehovah, for to time indefinite is his loving-kindness." How do we render this praise? By our zealous Kingdom preaching! As those Judeans "started off with the joyful cry and praise," so we add to our faith works. (2 Chronicles 20:21, 22) Yes, let us exhibit similar sterling faith as Jehovah prepares to move into action against his enemies! Though the road may appear to be long, let us be determined to endure, active in faith, even as his victorious people are doing in trouble spots of the earth today. In some lands hit hard by persecution, violence, famine, and dire economic conditions, faithful servants of God are experiencing remarkable results, as the *1998 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* reports.

Jehovah Saves His People

⁶ The ungodly nations surrounding Judah tried to engulf God's people, but

5. How are Jehovah's Witnesses today active as they praise Jehovah?

6. How does strong faith help to keep us loyal today?

Judah was told: 'Do not be afraid for the battle is not yours but God's'

with exemplary faith Jehovah's servants responded by singing his praises. We can express the same faith today. By filling our lives with works of praise to Jehovah, we strengthen our spiritual armor, leaving no room for Satan's crafty devices to penetrate. (Ephesians 6:11) Strong faith will stifle the temptation to become distracted by the degraded entertainment, materialism, and apathy that characterize the dying world around us. This invincible faith will keep us serving loyally with "the faithful and discreet slave" as we are continually nourished by the diet of spiritual food provided "at the proper time."
—Matthew 24:45.

⁷ Our Bible-based faith will strengthen us to stand firm against hate campaigns stirred up by those who manifest the spirit of the "evil slave" of Matthew 24:48-51. Fulfilling this prophecy in a remarkable way, apostates are actively sowing lies and propaganda in many lands today, even conspiring with some in positions of authority among the nations. Where appropriate, Jehovah's Witnesses have responded, as described at Philippians 1:7, by 'defending and legally establishing the good news.'

7. How have Jehovah's Witnesses responded to various attacks against them?



For example, on September 26, 1996, in a case from Greece, the nine judges of the European Court of Human Rights, at Strasbourg, unanimously reaffirmed that "Jehovah's Witnesses come within the definition of 'known religion,'" entitled to enjoy freedom of thought, conscience, and belief, and the right to make known their faith. As for apostates, God's judgment states: "The saying of the true proverb has happened to them: 'The dog has returned to its own

vomit, and the sow that was bathed to rolling in the mire.’”—2 Peter 2:22.

⁸ Back in Jehoshaphat’s day, Jehovah executed judgment against those who wanted to harm His people. We read: “Jehovah set men in ambush against the sons of Ammon, Moab and the mountainous region of Seir who were coming into Judah, and they went smiting one another. And the sons of Ammon and Moab proceeded to stand up against the inhabitants of the mountainous region of Seir to devote them to destruction and annihilate them; and as soon as they finished with the inhabitants of Seir, they helped each one to bring his own fellow to ruin.” (2 Chronicles 20:22, 23) The Judeans named that place the Low Plain of Beracah, Beracah meaning “Blessing.” In modern times too, Jehovah’s execution of judgment on his enemies will result in great blessings for his own people.

⁹ We may ask, Who in modern times are to receive an adverse judgment from Jehovah? To get the answer to that question, we have to return to Joel’s prophecy. Joel 3:3 speaks of enemies of his people who “would

8. In Jehoshaphat’s day, how did Jehovah execute judgment against the enemies of His people?

9, 10. Who have shown themselves worthy of Jehovah’s adverse judgment?

In Our Next Issue

Can Riches Make You Happy?

Christian Faith Will Be Tested

You Can Make Spiritual Progress

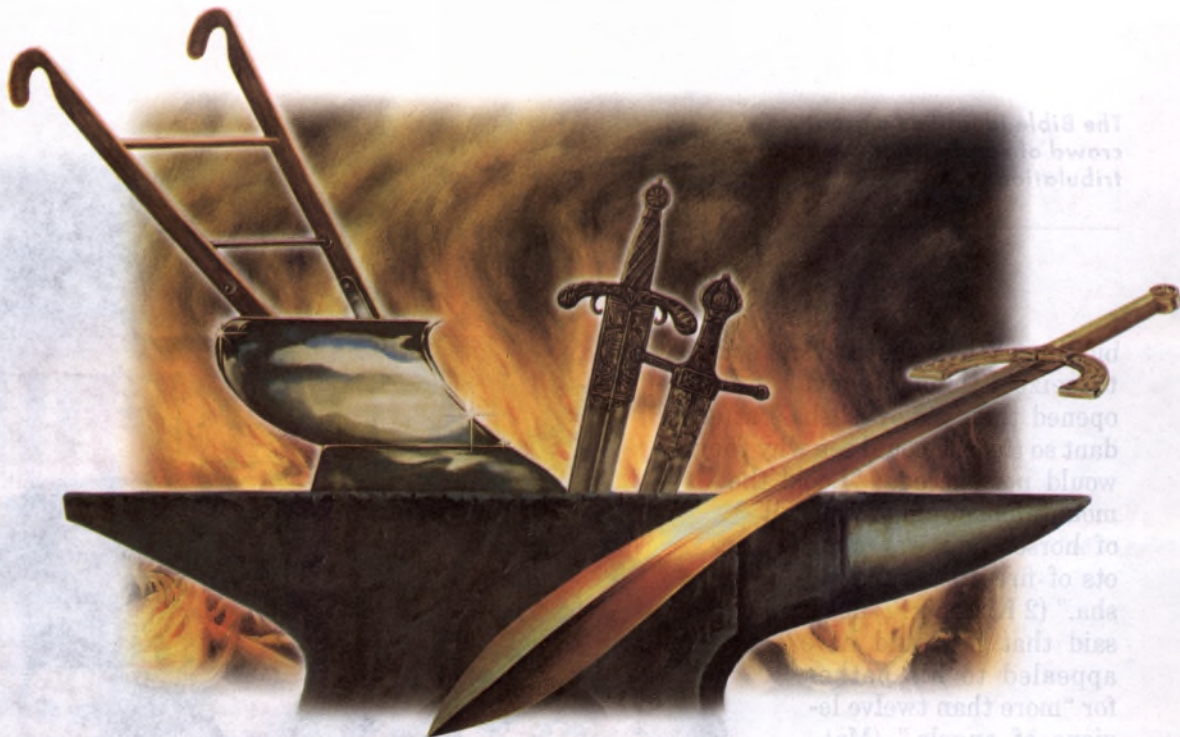
give the male child for a prostitute, and the female child they sold for wine.” Yes, they view God’s servants as far beneath them, their children worth no more than the hire of a prostitute or the cost of a jug of wine. They will have to answer for that.

¹⁰ Equally worthy of judgment are those who commit spiritual harlotry. (Revelation 17:3-6) And especially reprehensible are those who nudge the political powers into persecuting Jehovah’s Witnesses and obstructing their activity, as some rabble-rousing religious leaders have been doing in Eastern Europe in recent times. Jehovah expresses his determination to act against such workers of iniquity.—Joel 3:4-8.

“Sanctify War!”

¹¹ Next, Jehovah calls on his people to proclaim a challenge among the nations: “Sanctify war! Arouse the powerful men! Let them draw near! Let them come up, all the men of war!” (Joel 3:9) This is a declaration of an unusual kind of warfare—righteous warfare. Jehovah’s loyal Witnesses rely on spiritual weapons as they respond to lying propaganda, counteracting falsehood with truth. (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:17) Soon, God will sanctify “the war of the great day of God the Almighty.” (Revelation 16:14) It will rid the earth of all opposers of God’s sovereignty. His people on earth will have no physical part therein. Literally and figuratively, they have ‘beaten swords into plowshares and spears into pruning shears.’ (Isaiah 2:4) In contrast, Jehovah challenges the opposing nations to do the reverse: “Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning shears into lances.” (Joel 3:10) He invites them to throw their entire arsenal of war machines

11. How does Jehovah challenge his enemies to war?



Jehovah challenges his enemies to 'beat their plowshares into swords'

and modern armaments into the battle. But they cannot succeed, for the struggle and the victory belong to Jehovah!

¹² In the early 1990's, the nations declared that the Cold War was over. In view of that, has the United Nations' primary goal of peace and security been achieved? Hardly! What do events in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia tell us? In the words of Jeremiah 6: 14, they are saying: "There is peace! There is peace!" when there is no peace."

¹³ Even though outright war has ceased in some places, member nations of the UN still compete with one another in manufacturing sophisticated weapons of war. Some

12, 13. (a) Despite the end of the Cold War, how have many nations shown that they are still warlike? (b) For what are the nations not prepared?

continue to maintain stockpiles of nuclear weapons. Others develop chemical or bacteriological weapons of mass destruction. As those nations gather to the symbolic location called Armageddon, he challenges them: "As for the weak one, let him say: 'I am a powerful man.' Lend your aid and come, all you nations round about, and collect yourselves together." Joel then breaks in with his own appeal: "To that place, O Jehovah, bring *your* powerful ones down." —Joel 3:10, 11.

Jehovah Protects His Own

¹⁴ Who are Jehovah's powerful ones? Some 280 times in the Bible, the true God is called "Jehovah of armies." (2 Kings 3: 14) These armies are the angelic hosts of heaven that stand ready to do Jehovah's

14. Who are Jehovah's powerful ones?

The Bible identifies a great crowd of survivors of the great tribulation

bidding. When the Syrians sought to seize Elisha, Jehovah finally opened the eyes of Elisha's attendant so that he could see why they would not succeed: "Look! the mountainous region was full of horses and war chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17) Jesus said that he could have appealed to his Father for "more than twelve legions of angels." (Matthew 26:53) Describing Jesus' riding forth to execute judgment at Armageddon, Revelation states: "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, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. He treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty." (Revelation 19:14, 15) That symbolic winepress is described in vivid terms as "the great winepress of the anger of God."—Revelation 14:17-20.

¹⁵ How, then, does Jehovah answer Joel's petition to bring *God's own* powerful ones down? It is in these graphic words: "Let the nations be aroused and come up to the
15. How does Joel describe Jehovah's warfare against the nations?



low plain of Jehoshaphat; for there I shall sit in order to judge all the nations round about. Thrust in a sickle, for harvest has grown ripe. Come, descend, for the winepress has become full. The press vats actually overflow; for their badness has become abundant. Crowds, crowds are in the low plain of the decision, for the day of Jehovah is near in the low plain of the decision. Sun and moon themselves will certainly become dark, and the very stars will actually withdraw their brightness. And out of Zion Jehovah himself will roar, and out of Jerusalem he will give forth his voice. And heaven and earth certainly will rock."
—Joel 3:12-16.

¹⁶ As surely as the name Jehoshaphat means “Jehovah Is Judge,” just as surely God, Jehovah, will fully vindicate his sovereignty when he executes judgment. The prophecy describes those who receive an adverse judgment as ‘crowds, crowds in the low plain of the decision.’ Any remaining advocates of false religion will be among those crowds. Included also will be those described in the second Psalm—the nations, national groups, kings of earth, and high officials—who have preferred the corrupt system of this world to ‘serving Jehovah with fear.’ These decline to “kiss the son.” (Psalm 2:1, 2, 11, 12) They do not acknowledge Jesus as Jehovah’s associate King. Further, the crowds marked for destruction will include all the people whom that glorious King will judge to be “goats.” (Matthew 25:33, 41) When it is Jehovah’s due time to roar out of the heavenly Jerusalem, his appointed King of kings will ride forth to execute that judgment. Heaven and earth certainly will rock! However, we are assured: “Jehovah will be a refuge for his people, and a fortress for the sons of Israel.”—Joel 3:16.

¹⁷ Revelation 7:9-17 identifies those who survive the great tribulation as “a great crowd” made up of those who exercise faith in the ransoming power of Jesus’ blood. These find protection on Jehovah’s day, while the thronging crowds of Joel’s prophecy meet up with adverse judgment. Joel says to the survivors: “You people will have to know that I am Jehovah your God, residing in Zion my holy mountain,” Jehovah’s heavenly habitation.—Joel 3:17a.

¹⁸ The prophecy then informs us that the

16. Who will be included among those against whom Jehovah executes judgment?

17, 18. Who are identified as survivors of the great tribulation, and what conditions will they enjoy?

domain of God’s heavenly Kingdom “must become a holy place; and as regards strangers, they will no more pass through her.” (Joel 3:17b) In heaven and in the earthly realm of that heavenly Kingdom, there will be no strangers, for all will be united in pure worship.

¹⁹ Even today, an abundance of peace prevails among Jehovah’s people here on earth. Unitedly, they are proclaiming his judgments in over 230 lands and in more than 300 different languages. Their prosperity is beautifully prophesied by Joel: “It must occur in that day that the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the very hills will flow with milk, and the very streambeds of Judah will all flow with water.” (Joel 3:18) Yes, Jehovah will continue to pour out on his praisers on earth an overflow of joyful blessings and prosperity and an increasing stream of precious truth. Jehovah’s sovereignty will have been fully vindicated in the low plain of decision, and joy will abound as he resides forever among his redeemed people.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

19. How is the paradisaic happiness of God’s people today described by Joel?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ How did Jehovah rescue his people in the days of Jehoshaphat?
- ☐ Whom does Jehovah judge worthy of destruction in “the low plain of the decision”?
- ☐ Who are God’s powerful ones and what part will they play in the final conflict?
- ☐ What happinesses do faithful worshipers enjoy?



A CHANGE OF ASSIGNMENT AT 80

AS TOLD BY GWENDOLINE MATTHEWS

When I reached 80, my husband and I decided to pack all our possessions into a rented van and move from England to Spain. We did not speak Spanish, and we were going to southwest Spain, far from the haunts of English-speaking tourists. Most of our friends thought we were crazy, but I cheerfully reminded myself that Abraham was 75 when he left Ur.

AS IT turned out, our years in Spain since we arrived here in April 1992 have been some of the most rewarding in our lives. But before I explain why we moved, let me tell you how our lifetime in Jehovah's service led us to make such a big decision.

Bible Truth Changes Our Lives

I was brought up in a religious home in southwest London, England. Mother used to take my sister and me to different places of worship as she kept searching for spiritual satisfaction. My father, who was chronically sick with tuberculosis, did not accompany us. But he was an avid reader of the Bible, and he underlined it every time he found a passage that enlightened him. One of my most treasured possessions is that well-worn Bible that meant so much to him.

In 1925, when I was 14, a tract was put

under our door that invited us to a public lecture in West Ham town hall. My mother and a neighbor decided to attend the talk, and my sister and I accompanied them. That talk, "Millions Now Living Will Never Die," sowed the seeds of Bible truth in Mother's heart.

A few months later, Father passed away at the age of 38. His death was a terrible blow, since it left us heartbroken as well as destitute. At the memorial service, held at the local Church of England, Mother was shocked to hear the priest claim that Father's soul was in heaven. She knew from the Bible that the dead are sleeping in the grave, and she firmly believed that some day Father would be resurrected to everlasting life on the earth. (Psalm 37:9-11, 29; 146:3, 4; Ecclesiastes 9:5; Acts 24:15; Revelation 21:3, 4) Convinced that she had to associate with people who taught God's Word, she resolved to cultivate her acquaintance

with the International Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called.

Since we had no money for transportation, every week we walked for two hours from our home to the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. Afterward, we spent another two hours trudging home. But we valued those meetings immensely, and we never missed one, even when the notorious London fog enshrouded the city. Mother soon decided to dedicate her life to Jehovah and get baptized, and in 1927, I also got baptized.

Despite our economic difficulties, Mother always taught me the importance of spiritual priorities. Matthew 6:33 was one of her favorite texts, and she really did 'seek first the kingdom.' When she died prematurely of cancer in 1935, she was making plans to answer the call for full-time ministers who could move to France to serve.

Examples That Strengthened Us

In those early years, some in attendance at the meetings in London wanted to proclaim their own ideas, and these people sparked quarrels and harsh outbursts. Yet, Mother always said that it would be disloyal to abandon Jehovah's organization after all that we had learned from it. Visits by Joseph F. Rutherford, then president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, stimulated us to continue serving loyally.

I remember Brother Rutherford as a kind, approachable man. When I was still a teenager, the London Congregation had an outing at which he was present. He spotted me—a somewhat bashful teenager—with a camera and asked if I would like to take a photo of him. That photo became a cherished memento.

Later on, an experience impressed on me the contrast between those taking the lead in the Christian congregation and promi-

nent men of the world. I was serving as parlormaid in a large London house to which Franz von Papen, one of Hitler's emissaries, had been invited for a luncheon. He refused to take off his dress sword while eating, and I tripped over it and spilled the soup I was carrying. He angrily remarked that in Germany such carelessness would lead to my being shot. For the rest of the meal, I gave him a wide berth!

A momentous convention, where I heard Brother Rutherford speak, was held in Alexandra Palace in 1931. There we enthusiastically adopted our new name, Jehovah's Witnesses. (Isaiah 43:10, 12) Two years later, in 1933, I entered the pioneer service, as the full-time ministry is called. Another blessing I remember from those years was that of being able to associate with fine young men who later became missionaries in far-flung parts of the earth. These included Claude Goodman, Harold King, John Cooke, and Edwin Skinner. Such faithful examples made me want to serve in a foreign field.

Pioneering in East Anglia

My pioneer assignment was in East Anglia (eastern England), and preaching there required enthusiasm and zeal. To cover our large territory, we traveled on bicycle from town to town and village to village and stayed in rented rooms. There were hardly any congregations in the area, so my partner and I by ourselves discussed together all the parts for the regular weekly meetings. In our ministry, we placed hundreds of books and booklets that explained God's purposes.

One memorable visit was to a parsonage where we spoke with the local vicar of the Church of England. In most areas, we put off our visit to the Anglican vicar until the last because he often made difficulties for us when he learned that we were preaching



Pioneering in
the 1930's

the good news in the area. But in this village everyone spoke well of the vicar. He visited the sick, he lent books to those who enjoyed reading, and he even made home visits to his parishioners to explain the Bible to them.

Sure enough, when we visited him, he was extremely friendly, and he accepted a number of books. He also assured us that if anyone in the village wanted to have some of our books but could not afford them, he would cover the cost. We learned that his dreadful experiences in World War I had made him determined to promote peace and goodwill in his parish. Before we left he gave us his blessing and encouraged us to continue our good work. His parting words to us were those of Numbers 6:24: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee."—*King James Version*.

Mother died two years after I began pioneering, and I returned to London with no money and no family. A dear Scottish Witness took me under her wing, helped me cope with the death of Mother, and encouraged me to continue in the full-time ministry. So I returned to East Anglia with Julia

Fairfax, a new pioneer partner. We fixed up an old caravan (trailer) to serve as a semi-mobile home; we used a tractor or a truck to move it from one place to another. Together with an older couple, Albert and Ethel Abbott, who also had a small caravan, we continued preaching. Albert and Ethel became like parents to me.

While pioneering in Cambridgeshire, I met John Matthews, a fine Christian brother who had already proved his integrity to Jehovah under difficult circumstances. We got married in 1940, not long after the start of the second world war.

Wartime and a Family

When we were a newly married couple, our home was a tiny caravan about the size of a small kitchen, and we got around in our ministry on a trusty motorbike. A year after we were married, John was sentenced to work as a farm laborer when because of his Bible-based convictions, he refused to do military service. (Isaiah 2:4) Although this meant an end to our pioneering, John's sentence proved to be providential since I was expecting a baby and he would be able to support us.

During the war years, we enjoyed the special meetings that were held despite the hardships. In 1941 our motorbike carried John and me, pregnant with our first child, to Manchester, 200 miles away. On the way, we passed many bombed-out towns, and we wondered if the meeting could be held under such circumstances. It was. The Free Trade Hall in the center of Manchester was packed with Witnesses from many parts of England, and the whole program was presented.

At the conclusion of his talk, the convention's final speaker told the audience that they should vacate the premises immediately, as an air raid was expected. The warning was a timely one. We were not far from the hall when we heard sirens and anti-aircraft guns. Looking back, we spotted dozens of planes dropping bombs on the city center. In the distance, amid fires and smoke, we could see the hall in which we had recently been sitting; it was completely destroyed! Thankfully, none of our Christian brothers or sisters were killed.

While we reared our children, we were not able to pioneer, but we opened our home to traveling overseers and to pioneers who had no accommodations. At one time, six pioneers stayed in our home for a few months. No doubt the association with such ones was one reason that our daughter Eunice chose to begin pioneering in 1961 when she was just 15. Sad to say, our son, David, did not continue serving Jehovah when he grew up, and our other daughter, Linda, died under tragic circumstances during the war.

Our Decision to Move to Spain

Mother's example and encouragement had stirred in me the desire to be a missionary, and I never completely lost sight of that goal. Thus, we were delighted when,

in 1973, Eunice left England for Spain where the need for Kingdom proclaimers was greater. Of course, we were sad to see her leave, but we were also proud that she wanted to serve in a foreign land.

We visited Eunice over the years, and we got to know Spain well. In fact, John and I visited her in four of her different assignments. Then, as the years went by, our strength began to fail. John had a fall that seriously affected his health, and I had heart and thyroid problems. Besides, we both suffered from arthritis. Although we really needed Eunice's help, we did not want her to leave her assignment for our sake.

We discussed our options with Eunice, and we prayed for guidance. She was willing to come home to assist us, but we decided that the best solution would be for John and me to live with her in Spain. If I could not be a missionary myself, at least I could support my daughter and her two pioneer companions in the full-time service. By then, John and I considered Nuria and Ana, Eunice's two pioneer partners of some 15 years, to be our own daughters. And they were happy to have us come to live with them wherever they might be assigned.

Over six years have gone by since we made that decision. Our health has not deteriorated further, and our lives have certainly become more interesting. I still cannot speak much Spanish, but that does not stop me from preaching. John and I feel at home in our small congregation in Extremadura, southwest Spain.

Living in Spain has taught me a lot about the international nature of our Kingdom preaching work, and I now understand much more clearly how, as Jesus Christ said, "the field is the world."—Matthew 13:38.

Job's Integrity Is Rewarded

JOB was a compassionate man, a champion of widows, orphans, and the afflicted. (Job 29:12-17; 31:16-21) Then, quite suddenly, he fell into dire straits, losing his wealth, his children, and his health. Sadly, this noble man who had been a pillar of support to the oppressed received little help in his hour of need. Even his own wife told him to "curse God and die!" And his "friends" Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar provided no comfort. Instead, they insinuated that Job had sinned and hence deserved his pain.—Job 2:9; 4:7, 8; 8:5, 6; 11:13-15.

Despite much suffering, Job stayed faithful. Because of this, Jehovah eventually extended mercy to Job and blessed him. The account of how he did so provides assurance to all integrity-keeping servants of God that in time they too will be rewarded.

Exoneration and Restoration

First, Jehovah reproved Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Addressing Eliphaz, evidently the eldest, he said: "My anger has grown hot against you and your two companions, for you men have not spoken concerning me what is truthful as has my servant Job. And now take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job, and you men must offer up a burnt sacrifice in your own behalf; and Job my servant will himself pray for you." (Job 42:7, 8) Think of what this implied!

Jehovah required a considerable sacrifice from Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, perhaps to impress upon them the gravity of their sin. Indeed, either wittingly or unwittingly, they had blasphemed God by saying that he 'has no faith in his servants' and that it did not really matter to him

whether Job was faithful or not. Eliphaz even said that in God's eyes Job was of no more value than a moth! (Job 4:18, 19; 22:2, 3) No wonder Jehovah said: "You men have not spoken concerning me what is truthful!"

But that is not all. Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar also sinned against Job personally by telling him that his problems were of his own making. Their baseless accusations and utter lack of empathy left Job embittered and depressed, causing him to cry out: "How long will you men keep irritating my soul and keep crushing me with words?" (Job 10:1; 19:2) Imagine the expressions of shame on the faces of these three men as they now had to present Job with an offering for their sins!

But Job was not to gloat over their humiliation. Indeed, Jehovah required that he pray in behalf of his accusers. Job did just as he was instructed, and for this he was blessed. First, Jehovah cured his dreaded disease. Then, Job's brothers, sisters, and former associates came to comfort him, "and they proceeded each one to give him a piece of money and each one a gold ring."* Moreover, Job "came to have fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels and a thousand spans of cattle and a thousand she-asses."† And Job's wife was evidently reconciled with him. In time, Job was blessed with seven sons and three daughters, and he lived to see four generations of his offspring.—Job 42:10-17.

* The value of "a piece of money" (Hebrew, *qesi-tah'*) cannot be determined. But "a hundred pieces of money" bought a sizable tract of land in Jacob's day. (Joshua 24:32) Therefore, "a piece of money" from each visitor was likely more than a token gift.

† Likely, the gender of the asses is mentioned because of their value as breeders.



Lessons for Us

Job set an outstanding example for modern-day servants of God. He was "blameless and upright," a man that Jehovah was proud to call "my servant." (Job 1:8; 42:7, 8) This does not mean, however, that Job was perfect. At one point during his trials, he wrongly assumed that God was the cause of his calamity. He even criticized God's way of dealing with man. (Job 27:2; 30:20, 21) And he declared his own righteousness rather than God's. (Job 32:2) But Job refused to turn his back on the Creator, and he humbly accepted correction from God. "I talked, but I was not understanding," he admitted. "I make a retraction, and I do repent in dust and ashes."—Job 42:3, 6.

When under trial we too may think, speak, or act in a way that is not fitting. (Compare Ecclesiastes 7:7.) Nevertheless, if our love for God is deep, we will not rebel against him or grow bitter because he permits us to experience hardships. Instead, we will maintain our integrity and

thus eventually reap a great blessing. The psalmist said of Jehovah: "With someone loyal you will act in loyalty."—Psalm 18:25.

Before Job was restored to a healthy state, Jehovah required that he pray in behalf of those who transgressed against him. What a fine example for us! Jehovah requires that we forgive those who sin against us before our own sins can be forgiven. (Matthew 6:12; Ephesians 4:32) If we are not willing to forgive others when there is sound basis for doing so, can we rightly expect Jehovah to be merciful to us?—Matthew 18:21-35.

All of us face trials at one time or another. (2 Timothy 3:12) Yet, like Job we can keep integrity. By doing so, we will reap a large reward. James wrote: "Look! We pronounce happy those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful."—James 5:11.

Why Not Be With Them?

NDJAIKUA ULIMBA is 73 years old, and last year he went on a journey of some 280 miles. He walked the entire distance, and it took him 16 days.

This elderly gentleman made his long journey in order to attend one of the annual conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses. After the convention, overjoyed and spiritually strengthened, he walked home again—another 16 days. Was it worth the effort? Yes, indeed! Ndjaukua Ulimba has made this journey annually for some years.

This African man was one of more than 15 million from over 230 lands who attended the conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses last year. Most, of course, did not have to walk for days to the convention location. The majority arrived by car, bus, train, or airplane. Were you one of them?

In 1998, conventions will again be held around the world, mostly during summer months (or during the dry season). If health permits, Ndjaukua Ulimba will likely make the same long walk in order to attend. He and millions of others will hear a practical, faith-strengthening, and invigorating program. For all who attend, the convention will be a highlight of the year. You too are warmly invited to attend. Jehovah's Witnesses in your locality will be happy to tell you the location of the convention nearest you.

