

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

JUNE 15, 1998

IS OUR
EARTH
HERE TO
STAY?

THE WATCHTOWER®

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June 15, 1998

Average Printing Each Issue: 22,103,000

Vol. 119, No. 12

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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New published in 128 languages.

SEMI-MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano,* Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,* Danish,* Dutch,* Efik, English,* (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,* French,* Ga, Georgian, German,* Greek,* Gujarati, Gun, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,* Igbo, Iloko,* Indonesian, Italian,* Japanese,* (also Braille), Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Korean* (also Braille), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Norwegian, Pongasinan, Papiamentu, Polish,* Portuguese* (also Braille), Rarotongan, Romanian,* Russian,* Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Slovak,* Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,* Sranantongo, Swahili, Swedish,* Tagalog,* Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian,* Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

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The Bible translation used is the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References, unless otherwise indicated.

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Publication of "The Watchtower" is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Printed in U.S.A.

Is Planet Earth Doomed?

THE end of the 20th century is approaching, and the 21st century is about to dawn. In this setting, an increasing number of people who would normally pay scant or no attention to prophecies of doom are wondering whether some event of world-shattering importance may be in the offing.

You may have noticed newspaper and magazine articles about this—even whole books on the subject. With what developments the 21st century will begin, we must wait to see. Some people point out that reaching the end of the year 2000 makes a difference of only one year (or of one minute, from 2000 to 2001) and will likely be of no great consequence. Of greater concern to many is the long-range future of our planet.

One prophecy that surfaces with more frequency nowadays is that at some point—whether in the immediate or in the distant future—planet Earth itself is doomed to complete destruction. Consider just a couple of such gloomy forecasts.

In his book *The End of the World—The Science and Ethics of Human Extinction*, first published in 1996, author and philosopher John Leslie offers three possibilities as to how man's life on earth might end. First he asks: "Could all-out nuclear war mean the end of the human race?" Then he adds: "A more likely scenario . . . would be extinction through the effects of radiation: cancers, weakenings of the immune system so that infectious diseases ran riot, or numerous birth defects. There could also be deaths of microorganisms important to the health of the environment." A third possibility that Mr. Leslie puts forth is that the earth might be struck by a comet or an asteroid: "Of comets and asteroids whose orbits are such that they might some day hit the Earth, there appear to be around two thousand measuring between half a mile and six miles in diameter. There is also a much smaller number (to estimate it would be sheer guesswork) of still

larger ones, and a much greater number of smaller ones."

A Graphic "Doomsday" Description

Or consider another scientist, Paul Davies, professor at the University of Adelaide, Australia. He was described by the *Washington Times* as "the best science writer on either side of the Atlantic." In 1994 he supplied *The Last Three Minutes*, which has been termed "the mother of all doomsday books." The first chapter of this book is called "Doomsday," and it describes an imaginary scenario of what could happen if a comet were to strike planet Earth. Read part of his blood-chilling description:

"The planet shudders with the force of ten thousand earthquakes. A shock wave of displaced air sweeps over the surface of the globe, flattening all structures, pulverizing everything in its path. The flat terrain around the impact site rises in a ring of liquid mountains several miles high, exposing the bowels of the Earth in a crater a hundred miles across. . . . A vast column of dusty debris fans out into the atmosphere, blotting out the sun across the whole planet. Now the sunlight is replaced by the sinister, flickering glare of a billion meteors, roasting the ground below with their searing heat, as displaced material plunges back from space into the atmosphere."

Professor Davies goes on to link this imaginary scenario to the prediction that comet Swift-Tuttle would hit the earth. He adds the warning that although such an event may not be likely in the near future, in his opinion "sooner or later Swift-Tuttle, or an object like it, *will* hit the Earth." His conclusion is based on estimates that suggest that 10,000 objects a quarter mile or more in diameter move on Earth-intersecting orbits.

Do you believe that such a frightening prospect is real? A surprising number of

people do. But they brush aside any concern by reassuring themselves that it will not happen in their time. Why, though, should planet Earth ever be destroyed—either soon or millenniums from now? Certainly, it is not the earth itself that is the main source of trouble for its inhabitants, human or animal. Rather, is not man himself responsible for most of the problems of this 20th century, including the possibility of completely "ruining the earth"?—Revelation 11:18.

Man's Mismanagement Reversed

What of the more likely possibility that man himself may totally ruin or spoil the earth by his mismanagement and greed? There is no question that great destruction of parts of the earth has already taken place through excessive deforestation, uncontrolled pollution of the atmosphere, and spoiling of the waterways. This was summed up well some 25 years ago by authors Barbara Ward and René Dubos in their book *Only One Earth*: "The three broad areas of pollution which we must examine—air, water, and soil—make up, of course, the three main constituent elements of our planetary life." And the situation has basically not changed for the better since then, has it?

When considering the possibility of man's ruining or destroying the earth by his own folly, we can take heart by considering planet Earth's marvelous recuperative and regenerative powers. Describing this ability of amazing recovery, René Dubos makes these encouraging observations in another book, *The Resilience of Ecosystems*:

"Many persons fear that awareness of environmental degradation has come too late because much of the damage already done to ecosystems is irreversible. In my opinion, this pessimism is unjustified because ecosystems have enormous powers of recovery from traumatic experiences.

"Ecosystems possess several mechanisms for self-healing. . . . They enable ecosystems to overcome the effect of disturbances simply by reestablishing progressively the original state of ecological equilibrium."

It Can Be Done

An outstanding example of this in recent years is the gradual cleanup of London's famed river Thames. The book *The Thames Transformed*, by Jeffery Harrison and Peter Grant, documents this remarkable achievement that demonstrates what can be done when men work together for the common good. Britain's Duke of Edinburgh wrote in his foreword to the book: "Here at last is a success story on such a major scale that it is worth publishing even at the risk that it may encourage some people to assume that the problems of conservation are not really as bad as they were led to believe. . . . They can all take heart from what has been achieved in the Thames. The good news is that it can be done and their schemes too can succeed."

In the chapter "The Great Clean-Up," Harrison and Grant write enthusiastically about what has been achieved over the last 50 years: "For the first time in the world, a heavily polluted and industrialised river has been restored to such a degree that waterfowl and fish have returned in abundance. That such a transformation has taken place so rapidly, in a situation which at first seemed quite hopeless, gives encouragement to even the most pessimistic wildlife conservationist."

They then describe the transformation: "The state of the river deteriorated steadily over the years with what was, perhaps, the final blow coming during the Second World War when major sewage works and sewers were damaged or destroyed. During the 1940's and 1950's the health of the Thames was at its lowest ebb. The river was little

better than an open sewer; the water was black in colour, contained no oxygen, and during the summer months the foul smell from the Thames was detectable over a wide area. . . . The once teeming fish had finally been driven out, apart from a few eels which were able to survive because of their ability to breathe air direct from the surface. The birdlife of the inner, built-up reaches between London and Woolwich was reduced to a handful of mallard and mute swans, and they owed their existence to spillages from the grain wharves rather than a natural food supply. . . . Who would have believed then the dramatic reversal which was

Education and united effort can help the earth reverse even extensive damage to itself

about to take place? Within ten years those same reaches of the river were to be transformed from a virtual avian void to a refuge for many species of water birds, including a wintering population of up to 10,000 wild-fowl and 12,000 waders."

Of course, that describes but one transformation in one small corner of the globe. Nonetheless, we can draw lessons from this example. It shows that planet Earth need not be considered doomed because of the mismanagement, greed, and thoughtlessness of man. Proper education and united effort for the common good of mankind can help the earth reverse even extensive damage to its ecology, environment, and land surface. But what about possible doom from outside forces, such as a wandering comet or asteroid?

The following article contains the key to a satisfying answer to such a perplexing question.

There is a question that you ought to consider: Was our beautiful planet produced by an intelligent Creator who has a purpose for the earth and for humans on it? Resolving that issue to your satisfaction can help you to see what the future holds for our planet.

Earth

Why Is It Here?

MANY scientists who have in depth studied the universe and our earth have seen evidences that point to the existence of a Creator, that God is behind it. Consider the comments from just one:

Professor Paul Davies writes in *The Mind of God*: “The existence of an orderly, coherent universe containing stable, organized, complex structures requires laws and conditions of a very special kind.”

After discussing a number of “coincidences” that astrophysicists and others have noted, Professor Davies adds: “Taken together, they provide impressive evidence that life as we know it depends very sensitively on the form of the laws of physics, and on some seemingly fortuitous accidents in the actual values that nature has chosen for various particle masses, force strengths, and so on. . . . Suffice it to say that, if we could play God, and select values for these quantities at whim by twiddling a set of knobs, we would find that almost all knob settings would render the universe uninhabitable. In some cases it seems as if the different knobs have to be fine-tuned to enormous precision if the universe is to be such that life will flourish. . . . The fact that even slight changes to the way things are might render the universe unobservable is surely a fact of deep significance.”

What it signifies to many is that our earth, along with the rest of the universe,

was produced by a purposeful Creator. If that is so, we need to find out why he formed the earth in the first place. We also need to ascertain, if we can, what his purpose is for the earth. In this connection a strange anomaly appears. Despite the widespread popularity of atheism, a surprising number of people still hold belief in an intelligent Creator. Most churches of Christendom nominally speak of an almighty God and Creator of our universe. Yet, rarely do any of these religions speak with confidence and conviction about earth’s future in God’s purpose.

What Does the Bible Say?

It is logical to look to a source of information that is widely accepted as coming from the Creator. That source is the Bible. One of the simplest and clearest statements in it regarding the future of our earth is found at Ecclesiastes 1:4. We read: “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever.” (*King James Version*) The Bible is straightforward in explaining why Jehovah God created the earth. It also shows that he placed it in just the right position in the universe and in relation to our sun to sustain life on it. Almighty God inspired the ancient prophet Isaiah to write: “This is what Jehovah has said, the Creator of the heavens, He the true God, the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who



firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even to be inhabited: 'I am Jehovah, and there is no one else.'—Isaiah 45:18.

But what of man's developing the means to destroy all life on the earth? In his incomparable wisdom, God declares that he will step in before mankind can destroy all life on our planet. Note this reassuring promise in the Bible's last book, Revelation: "The nations became wrathful, and your own wrath came, and the appointed time for the dead to be judged, and to give their reward to your slaves the prophets and to the holy ones and to those fearing your name, the small

and the great, and to bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18.

Jehovah reveals to us what was his original purpose in creating the earth, this jewel in space, as an astronaut circling the earth described it. God purposed it to be a global paradise, comfortably populated by humans—men and women—all living in peace and harmony. He arranged to populate the planet gradually by allowing the first human pair to produce offspring. For the first human couple's pleasure and enjoyment, Jehovah had brought a small section of the earth into a paradise condition. As the procreation of human families would proceed over

the years and centuries, the garden of Eden would gradually be extended until Genesis 1:28 would be fulfilled: "God said to them: 'Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it.'"

As we now see the sorry plight of the earth and its inhabitants, does it mean that God's original purpose for the earth has failed? Or has he changed his purpose and decided that because of mankind's waywardness, he will let the planet be ruined altogether and start again, as it were? No, we can be sure that neither of these situations is true. The Bible tells us that whatever Jehovah purposes must eventually take place, that whatever he decides cannot be thwarted by any individual or even by an unexpected development. He assures us: "So my word that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."—Isaiah 55:11.

God's Purpose Interrupted, Not Changed

With the defection of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the garden of Eden, it was obvious that God's purpose for a paradise earth would be accomplished without them. However, Jehovah indicated there and then that some of their offspring would carry out his original mandate. True, this would take time, even many centuries, but there is no indication how much time would have been involved in carrying out the original mandate even if both Adam and Eve had continued living in perfection. The fact is that by the end of Christ Jesus' Millennial Reign—a little over a thousand years from now—the Paradise conditions of Eden will extend earth wide and planet Earth will be peopled with peaceful and happy descendants of the first human pair. Indeed, Jeho-

vah's ability as an infallible Purposer will be forever vindicated!

Then will be fulfilled the exciting prophecies that God inspired so long ago. Such scriptures as Isaiah 11:6-9 will be gloriously fulfilled: "The wolf will actually reside for a while with the male lamb, and with the kid the leopard itself will lie down, and the calf and the maned young lion and the well-fed animal all together; and a mere little boy will be leader over them. And the cow and the bear themselves will feed; together their young ones will lie down. And even the lion will eat straw just like the bull. And the sucking child will certainly play upon the hole of the cobra; and upon the light aperture of a poisonous snake will a weaned child actually put his own hand. 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."

Poor health and terminal illnesses will be things of the past, as will death itself. Could anything be plainer than these simple words found in the last book of the Bible? "The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. 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.

Yes, we can take heart—our beautiful planet Earth is here to stay. May it be your privilege to survive the end of this wicked system of things, with all its earth-ruining practices. The clean new world of God's making is now near at hand. And many loved ones will awaken from death by the miracle of the resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) Truly, our earth is here to stay, and we can stay with it and enjoy it.

A Very Special **WEDDING**

IN THE north of Mozambique lies a lush valley surrounded by beautiful mountains—some rocky, others covered in luxuriant vegetation. This is where the village of Fingoè is located. On clear winter nights, the heavens sparkle with stars, and the moon is so bright that it illuminates the straw-roofed homes of the villagers. It was in this splendid setting that a unique wedding took place.

Hundreds of people walked for hours, even days, to attend this special occasion. Some crossed inhospitable and dangerous regions inhabited by hyenas, lions, and elephants. Besides personal baggage, many visitors brought along chickens, goats, and vegetables. After reaching the village, they found their way to an open area normally used for Christian conventions. Though tired from the journey, they were happy, and their smiling faces reflected eager expectation of what was to follow.

Who were the ones getting married? They were many! Yes, scores of couples. These were no part of some headline-grabbing mass wedding. On the contrary, they were sincere and well-motivated couples who previously were not able to register their marriages because they lived in remote regions far from registry offices. All these couples became aware of divine standards regarding marriage when they studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. They learned that they needed to marry according to the laws of the land to please their Creator, the Originator of marriage, even as Joseph and Mary complied with registration requirements around the time of Jesus' birth.—Luke 2:1-5.

Preparing for the Event

The branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Mozambique decided to help. First, the Ministries of Justice and Interior in the



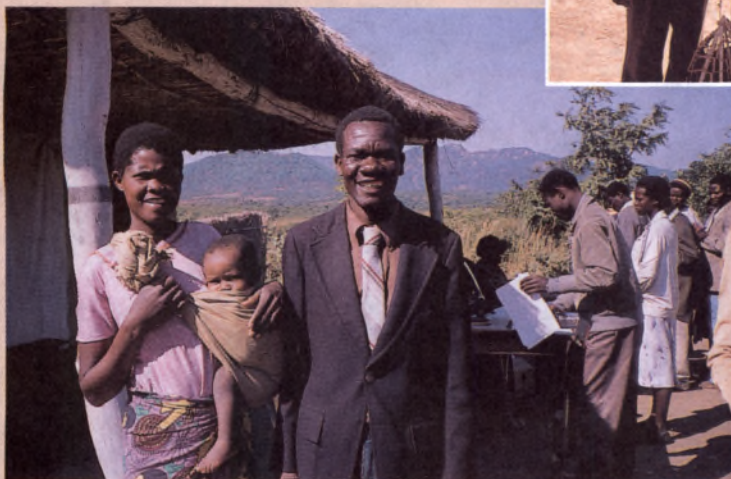
country's capital, Maputo, were contacted to determine what procedures were required by law. Next, the missionaries in the capital city of the province of Tete got in touch with local authorities to coordinate arrangements further. A date was set for the missionaries and officials from the Notary and the Civil Identification Department to travel to the village of Fingoè. Meanwhile, the branch office sent a letter of explanation providing direction to all the congregations involved. Both Witnesses and local officials eagerly looked forward to the unique event.

On Sunday, May 18, 1997, three missionaries along with government officials arrived in Fingoè. The local authorities had prepared comfortable accommodations for the officials adjacent to the administration building. However, the visiting officials were so impressed with the hospitality of Jehovah's Witnesses that they preferred to lodge with the missionaries in improvised huts. They were surprised to learn that one of the cooks was an elder in the local congregation and that a traveling overseer was among the volunteers doing the more menial chores in preparation for the wedding. They likewise noticed the good humor of the missionaries, who, without complaint, lodged in a simple

hut and bathed using a small can. Never before had they seen such a strong bond between people of such varied backgrounds. However, what most impressed them was the faith displayed in making great sacrifices to come into harmony with the law of the land and with the arrangement of God.

A Joyous Occasion

As the couples arrived, they immediately prepared for the first stage of the marriage: obtaining a birth certificate. All waited patiently in line in front of the Civil Registry team to provide their personal data. Then they proceeded to another line to be photographed, after which they went to the team from the Civil Identification Department to obtain their identity cards. Next, they returned to the Civil Registry team for preparation of the much desired marriage



certificate. Following this, they stood patiently waiting for their names to be called over the megaphone. The handing over of the marriage certificates was an emotional scene. There was great joy as each couple held up their marriage certificate like a precious trophy.

All of this took place beneath the torrid sun. Yet, the joy of the occasion was undisturbed by heat and dust.

The men were smartly dressed, many in jackets and ties. The women were dressed in the traditional manner, which included a long, richly colored cloth called a *capulana* around their waists. Some carried babies wrapped in similar cloth.

Things proceeded well, but there were too many to process in a single day. When darkness fell, the government officials kindly decided to continue attending to the couples. They commented that they could not leave "our brothers" waiting after these had made so great a sacrifice to be there. This spirit of cooperation and self-sacrifice will always be remembered.

With the night came intense cold. While a few had lodging in huts, most of the couples were outside, huddled around fires. This did nothing to diminish the happiness of the occasion. Above the crackle of the fires rose the sound of laughter and song, sung in four-part harmony. Many shared stories of their journey, clutching their newly obtained documents.

At daybreak some ventured into the center of the village to sell their chickens, goats, and vegetables to contribute toward the cost of registering their marriages. Many truly made "sacrifices" of those animals, selling them far below their real value. To poor people, a goat is a precious and expensive item; yet they were willing to make this sacrifice to get married and please their Creator.

Rigors of the Journey

Some of the couples had walked long distances to be there. This was the case of Chamboko and his wife, Nhakulira. They told their story on the second night of the event while warming their feet at a fire. Though 77 years old, blind in one eye and with poor eyesight in the other, Chamboko walked barefoot for three days accompanied by the rest of his congregation, for he was determined to legalize his 52-year union.

Anselmo Kembo, 72 years of age, had already lived with Neri for about 50 years. A few days before the journey, he seriously punctured his leg on a large thorn while cultivating his plantation. He was rushed to the nearest hospital for treatment. Nevertheless, he decided to make the trip on foot, hobbling all the way to Fíngôe in pain. It took three days. Anselmo could not contain his joy as he held his certificate of marriage in his hand.

Another noteworthy newlywed was Evans Sinóia, a former polygamist. When he learned the truth of God's Word, he decided to legalize his union with his first wife, but she refused, abandoning him for another man. His second wife, who had also been studying the Bible, agreed to marry him. Both of them walked through a perilous region inhabited by lions and other wild animals. After a three-day journey, they too succeeded in becoming legally married.

On Friday, five days after the missionaries and officials had first arrived, the work was accomplished. The result was that 468 identity cards and 374 birth certificates were issued. The number of marriage certificates issued was 233! The atmosphere was one of euphoria. Despite fatigue, all agreed that it was well worth their while. Without a doubt, that occasion will remain indelibly marked on the minds and hearts of all involved. It was truly a very special wedding!

DO YOU APPRECIATE JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION?

"This is what Jehovah has said: 'The heavens are my throne, and the earth is my footstool.'"—ISAIAH 66:1.

DO YOU believe that Jehovah has an organization? If so, why do you believe it? You might answer: 'Well, we have a Kingdom Hall. We have a well-arranged congregation with a body of elders. We have a duly appointed circuit overseer who visits us regularly. We attend organized assemblies and conventions. We have a branch office of the Watch Tower Society in our country. Surely, all of this and much more proves that Jehovah has a functioning organization.'

² Such features amount to evidence of an organization. But if all we see and appreciate is here on earth, we do not have a total grasp of Jehovah's organization. Jehovah told Isaiah that the earth is only His footstool, but the heavens are His throne. (Isaiah 66:1) To which "heavens" was Jehovah referring? To our atmosphere? To outer space? Or to some other level of life? Isaiah speaks of Jehovah's "lofty abode of holiness and beauty," and the psalmist describes these heavens as "the established place where he dwells." Thus, the "heavens" at Isaiah 66:1 refers to the invisible spirit realm in which Jehovah occupies the supreme, or ultimate, position.—Isaiah 63:15; Psalm 33:13, 14.

³ Therefore, if we truly want to perceive and appreciate Jehovah's organization, we

1, 2. (a) To what visible evidence of Jehovah's organization can you point? (b) Where does Jehovah dwell?

3. How can we overcome doubts?

must look to the heavens. And therein lies a problem for some. Since Jehovah's heavenly organization is invisible, how do we know that it really exists? Some may even pass through a tunnel of doubt, wondering, 'How can we be sure?' Well, how can faith overcome doubt? Two key ways are intense personal study of God's Word and regular attendance at and involvement in Christian meetings. Then we see the light of truth at the end of the tunnel. There have been other servants of God who have had doubts. Let us consider the case of Elisha's servant when Israel was under attack by the king of Syria.—Compare John 20:24-29; James 1:5-8.

One Who Saw the Heavenly Hosts

⁴ The king of Syria sent a heavy military force by night to Dothan to capture Elisha. When Elisha's servant got up early in the morning and went out, perhaps to get some fresh air on the flat roof of their Middle Eastern dwelling, why, what a shock he got! A whole army of Syrians with horses and war chariots was surrounding the town, waiting to capture God's prophet. The servant cried out to Elisha: "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" Evidently, calmly and with conviction, Elisha responded: "Do not be afraid, for there are more who are with us than those who are with them." The ser-

4, 5. (a) What problem did Elisha's servant have? (b) How did Jehovah respond to Elisha's prayer?

vant must have wondered, 'Where are they? I can't see them!' Sometimes that might also be our problem—failure to see with the eyes of understanding, or to perceive, the heavenly hosts.—2 Kings 6:8-16; Ephesians 1:18.

⁵ Elisha prayed for his servant's eyes to be opened. What happened next? "Immediately Jehovah opened the attendant's eyes, so that he saw; and, look! the mountainous region was full of horses and war chariots of fire all around Elisha." (2 Kings 6:17) Yes, he saw the heavenly hosts, angelic armies waiting to protect God's servant. Now he could understand Elisha's confidence.

⁶ Do we sometimes have a problem of perception similar to what Elisha's servant had? Are we prone to see only the physical side of situations threatening us or the Christian work in certain lands? If so, can we expect a special vision to enlighten us? No, because we have something that Elisha's servant did not have—a whole book containing many visions, the Bible, which can give us insight into the heavenly organization. That inspired Word also gives guiding principles to set straight our thinking and our way of life. However, we must make an effort to search for discernment and cultivate appreciation of Jehovah's arrangement. And that we can do by personal study, along with prayer and meditation.—Romans 12:12; Philippians 4:6; 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

Studying to Perceive

⁷ Personal study is not necessarily a pleasant prospect for many people, such as those who never enjoyed study at school or never had the opportunity to engage in it. However, if we want to perceive and appreciate Jehovah's organization with our eyes of understanding, we must cultivate a desire to

6. How can we get insight into Jehovah's heavenly organization?

7. (a) What problem might some have with personal Bible study? (b) Why is personal study worth the effort?



The benefits of personal study far outlast those of a well-prepared meal

study. Can you enjoy a good meal without preparation? As any chef or cook will tell you, a lot of work goes into preparing a delicious meal. Yet, it may be consumed in half an hour or less. On the other hand, the benefits of personal study can last a lifetime. Personal study can become an acquired taste when we see the progress we can make. The apostle Paul rightly said that we should pay constant attention to ourselves and to our teaching and continue applying ourselves to public reading. Consistent effort is required, but the benefits can be everlasting.—1 Timothy 4:13-16.

⁸ A wise man of old said: "My son [or, daughter], if you will receive my sayings and treasure up my own commandments with yourself, so as to pay attention to wisdom with your ear, that you may incline your heart to discernment; if, moreover, you call out for understanding itself and you give forth your voice for discernment itself, if you keep seeking for it as for silver, and as for hid treasures you keep searching for it, in that case you will understand the fear of Jehovah, and you will find the very knowledge of God."—Proverbs 2:1-5.

8. What attitude does Proverbs recommend?

⁹ Do you recognize where the responsibility lies? 'If you' is the repeated phrase. And notice the expression, 'If you keep searching as for hid treasures.' Think of the miners who for centuries dug for silver and gold in Bolivia, Mexico, South Africa, and other countries. They worked hard, using picks and shovels, to excavate the rock from which they would get the precious metals. They valued gold so much that in one mine in California, U.S.A., they excavated 367 miles of tunnels, reaching a vertical depth of about one mile—just to find gold. Yet, can you eat gold? Drink gold? Will it sustain you in a desert if you are dying of hunger and thirst? No, its value is artificial and arbitrary, changing from day to day as reflected in the international markets. Nonetheless, men have died for it. Now how much effort is it worth to get spiritual gold, "the very knowledge of God"? Think of it, the very knowledge of the Sovereign Lord of the universe, his organization, and his purposes! In this regard, we can use spiritual picks and shovels. Those are Bible-based publications that help us to dig into Jehovah's Word and discern its meaning.—Job 28:12-19.

Digging for Insight

¹⁰ Let us do some spiritual digging in order to begin getting the very knowledge of Jehovah's heavenly organization. For a key insight, let us turn to Daniel's vision of the Ancient of Days on his throne. Daniel writes: "I kept on beholding until there were thrones placed and the Ancient of Days sat down. His clothing was white just like snow, and the hair of his head was like clean wool. His throne was flames of fire; its wheels were a burning fire. There was a stream of fire flowing and going out from before him. There

9. (a) How does the value of gold compare to "the very knowledge of God"? (b) What implements do we need to get accurate knowledge?

10. What did Daniel see in a vision?

were a thousand thousands that kept ministering to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand that kept standing right before him. The Court took its seat, and there were books that were opened." (Daniel 7:9, 10) Who were these thousands who were ministering to Jehovah? The marginal references in the *New World Translation*, used as "picks" and "shovels," lead us to such references as Psalm 68:17 and Hebrews 1:14. Yes, the ones ministering were heavenly angels!

¹¹ Daniel's account does not say that he saw all the faithful angels that God has at his command. There may be millions more. But surely we can now appreciate why Elisha could say: "There are more who are with us than those who are with them." The army of the king of Syria, even though backed up by unfaithful angels, the demons, was outnumbered by Jehovah's heavenly armies!—Psalm 34:7; 91:11.

¹² Perhaps you would like to know more about these angels, such as the role they play in serving Jehovah. From the Greek word for angel, we can see that they are messengers because it also means "messenger." However, there is much more to their duties. To find out what it is, though, you must dig. If you have available *Insight on the Scriptures*, you can study the article "Angels," or you can consult past articles in *The Watchtower* about angels. You will be amazed how much you can learn about these celestial servants of God and come to appreciate their support. (Revelation 14:6, 7) However, in God's heavenly organization, some spirit creatures serve specialized purposes.

What Isaiah Saw

¹³ Now let us do some digging in the vi-

11. How can Daniel's vision help us to understand Elisha's words?

12. How can you get to know more about angels?

13, 14. What did Isaiah see in vision, and how did this affect him?



A vision of heavenly hosts was Jehovah's answer to Elisha's prayer

sion of Isaiah. When you read chapter 6, verses 1 to 7, you should be impressed. Isaiah says that he “got to see Jehovah, sitting on a throne,” and “seraphs were standing above him.” They were calling out about the glory of Jehovah, extolling his holiness. You should be affected even by reading this account. What was Isaiah’s reaction? “I proceeded to say: ‘Woe to me! For I am as good as brought to silence [in Sheol], because a man unclean in lips I am, and in among a people unclean in lips I am dwelling; for my eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of armies, himself!’” How impressed he was with that vision! Are you?

¹⁴ So how was Isaiah able to withstand this glorious sight? He explains that a seraph came to his rescue and said: “Your error has departed and your sin itself is atoned for.” (Isaiah 6:7) Isaiah could trust in God’s mercy and pay attention to Jehovah’s words. Now, would you not like to know more about these high-ranking spirit creatures? Then what must you do? Dig for more information. One implement to use would be the *Watch Tower*

Publications Index, following its references to many sources of clarifying information.

What Did Ezekiel See?

¹⁵ Let us next turn to another type of spirit creation. Ezekiel was privileged to have an inspiring vision while he was yet a captive in Babylon. Open your Bible to Ezekiel chapter 1, the first three verses. How does the account start? Does it say, ‘Once upon a time, in a distant land . . .’? No, this is no fairy tale in a mythological time setting. Verse 1 states: “Now it came about in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month, while I was in the midst of the exiled people by the river Chebar, that the heavens were opened and I began to see visions of God.” What do you notice about this verse? It gives an exact date and a precise place. These details point to the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin, the year 613 B.C.E.

¹⁶ The hand of Jehovah came to be upon

15. What indicates that Ezekiel’s vision is reliable?

16. What did Ezekiel see?

Ezekiel, and he began to see an awe-inspiring vision of Jehovah on a throne in a vast heavenly chariot that had huge wheels with eyes all around the rims. The detail that interests us here is that there were four creatures, one standing at each wheel. "This was how they looked: they had the likeness of earthling man. And each one had four faces, and each one of them four wings. . . . And as for the likeness of their faces, the four of them had a man's face with a lion's face to the right, and the four of them had a bull's face on the left; the four of them also had an eagle's face."—Ezekiel 1:5, 6, 10.

¹⁷ What were these four living creatures? Ezekiel himself tells us that they were cherubs. (Ezekiel 10:1-3, 14) Why did they have four faces? To represent the Sovereign Lord Jehovah's four outstanding attributes. The eagle's face was a symbol of farsighted wisdom. (Job 39:27-29) What did the face of the bull represent? With the tremendous strength of its neck and shoulders, a fighting bull has been known to lift a horse and rider into the air. Surely, the bull is a symbol of Jehovah's limitless power. The lion is used as a symbol of courageous justice. Finally, the face of a man appropriately represents God's

17. What do the four faces of the cherubs represent?

Questions for Review

- ☐ To appreciate Jehovah's organization, what must we perceive?
- ☐ What experience did Elisha's servant have, and how did the prophet encourage him?
- ☐ How should we view personal study?
- ☐ How do Daniel, Isaiah, and Ezekiel give details of the heavenly organization?

love, since man is the only earthly creature that can manifest this quality intelligently. —Matthew 22:37, 39; 1 John 4:8.

¹⁸ There are other visions that can help us to complete the picture. These include John's visions related in the Bible book of Revelation. He, like Ezekiel, sees Jehovah on a glorious throne accompanied by cherubs. What are the cherubs doing? They echo the seraphs' proclamation of Isaiah chapter 6, saying: "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is coming." (Revelation 4:6-8) John also sees a lamb by the throne. Who might that represent? The very Lamb of God, Jesus Christ. —Revelation 5:13, 14.

¹⁹ So by means of these visions, what have we perceived? That the heavenly organization has at its zenith Jehovah God on his throne accompanied by the Lamb, Jesus Christ, who is the Word, or Logos. Then we have seen a heavenly host of angels, including seraphs and cherubs. They are part of one vast, united organization serving Jehovah's purposes. And one of those purposes is the preaching of the good news worldwide in this time of the end.—Mark 13:10; John 1:1-3; Revelation 14:6, 7.

²⁰ Finally, we have Jehovah's Witnesses on earth meeting in their Kingdom Halls in order to learn how to do the Sovereign Lord's will. Surely, now we can appreciate that there are more who are with us than those who are with Satan and the enemies of the truth. There remains the question, What does the heavenly organization have to do with the preaching of the Kingdom good news? The following article will examine that and other matters.

18. How does the apostle John add to our perception of the heavenly organization?

19. Through this study, what have you perceived about Jehovah's organization?

20. What question will be answered in the following article?

JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION SUPPORTS YOUR MINISTRY

"I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings."—REVELATION 14:6.

WHY is it so important to recognize the role of Jehovah's heavenly organization in supporting the Christian ministry? Well, could Jehovah's Witnesses have accomplished the preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom throughout a hostile world without the support of Jehovah's heavenly hosts? Witnesses have done such preaching during a century of extreme nationalism, totalitarian political systems, world wars, and sundry adversities. Without Jehovah's help could the Witnesses have survived the international barrage of prejudice, bias, and often violent persecution that has been leveled against them?—Psalm 34:7.

Survival in Spite of Worldwide Opposition

² In this 20th century, enemies, both religious and political, have raised every possible obstacle, legal and otherwise, to try to prevent or stifle Jehovah's work. Christian brothers and sisters have been persecuted, misrepresented, libeled, and slandered—many have even been killed—often

1. How have Jehovah's Witnesses been tested, and why have they survived?

2. What parallel is there between true Christians of the first century and those today?



Henryka Żur

at the instigation of the clergy of Babylon the Great. It can be said, as it was of the early Christians, that "truly as regards this sect it is known to us that everywhere it is spoken against." Just as the Jewish clergy of Christ's time fought tooth and nail to stop his ministry, so the clergy and apostates, in league with their political paramours, have tried to suffocate the great educational witness work of Jehovah's people.—Acts 28:22; Matthew 26:59, 65-67.

³ Take as an example what happened in Poland on March 1, 1946. Henryka Żur, a 15-year-old Witness girl from near Chelm, accompanied another Witness, a brother, to visit interested people in a nearby village. They were picked up by members of a Catholic military squad

called *Narodowe Siły Zbrojne* (National Armed Forces). The brother was severely beaten but escaped with his life. Not so with Henryka. She was horribly tortured for many hours as they tried to force her to make the Catholic sign of the cross. One of her tormentors said: "Think inside whatever you want to, just make the Catholic sign of the cross. Otherwise a bullet awaits you!"

3. What can we learn from the integrity of Henryka Żur?



United States



Kenya



United States

Jehovah's Witnesses preach wherever and whenever people are to be found



Japan



Martinique

Did she weaken in her integrity? No. The religious cowards dragged her into a nearby forest and shot her. Still, she was victorious! They had failed to break her integrity.*
—Romans 8:35-39.

⁴For over one hundred years, God's modern-day servants have been treated harshly and disrespectfully. Because Jehovah's Witnesses are not, and do not wish to be, a part of Satan's mainstream religions, they are viewed as fitting prey for any biased critic or fanatical opponent. They have

* For further examples, see the 1994 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses, pages 217-20.

4. How have political and religious elements tried to suppress the Kingdom preaching work?

been ferociously attacked by the political elements. Many Witnesses have been martyred for their faith. Even so-called democracies have tried to impede the preaching of the good news. As far back as 1917 in Canada and the United States, the clergy instigated accusations of subversion against the Bible Students, as the Witnesses were then known. Officials of the Watch Tower Society were wrongly imprisoned, only later being exonerated.—Revelation 11:7-9; 12:17.

⁵Satan has used every means at his disposal to try to stop the witnessing work of Christ's brothers and their loyal companions. Yet, as so many experiences show, neither threats, intimidation, physical violence, prisons, concentration camps, nor even death has silenced Jehovah's Witnesses. And this has been the case down through history. Time and again, Elisha's words have served as an encouragement: "Do not be afraid, for there are more who are with us than those who are with them." One reason is that faithful angels outnumber the Devil's hordes!—2 Kings 6:16; Acts 5:27-32, 41, 42.

Jehovah Blesses Zealous Preaching

⁶In the course of the 20th century, Jeho-

5. What words have served to encourage Jehovah's servants?

6, 7. (a) What early efforts were made to preach the good news? (b) What beneficial change took place starting in 1943?

vah's Witnesses have used many advances in technology in order to amplify and speed up the great work of witnessing before the end comes. Back in 1914, Pastor Russell, first president of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, promoted the early use of slides and motion pictures, synchronized with a Bible-based commentary on phonograph records, in an eight-hour Bible production called "The Photo-Drama of Creation." It amazed audiences in many countries at that time. Later on, in the 1930's and 1940's, the Witnesses became known for their house-to-house preaching with portable phonographs, using recordings of Bible talks presented by J. F. Ruth-erford, the second president of the Society.

⁷ In 1943 a bold step was taken under the direction of Nathan H. Knorr, the third president of the Society, when it was decided to set up a school for ministers in every congregation. The Witnesses would be trained to preach and teach from house to house without the use of phonograph recordings. Since then, other schools have been organized to train missionaries, full-time pioneer ministers, congregation elders, and responsible overseers in the branches of the Watch Tower Society. What has been the result?

⁸ Back in 1943, in the midst of World War II, there were only 129,000 Witnesses active in 54 lands. Yet, they had faith and determination that Matthew 24:14 would be fulfilled before the end came. They were convinced that Jehovah would have the important warning message proclaimed first before the sequence of events that would bring an end to this corrupt system of things. (Matthew 24:21; Revelation 16:16; 19:11-16, 19-21; 20:1-3) Have their efforts been rewarded?

8. How did Witnesses show great faith in 1943?

⁹ There are now at least 13 countries that have more than 100,000 active Witnesses each. Several of these are lands dominated by the Catholic Church. Yet, look at the situation. Brazil has some 450,000 publishers of the good news, and over 1,200,000 attended the Memorial of Christ's death in 1997. Mexico is another example, with nearly 500,000 Witnesses and over 1,600,000 at the Memorial celebration. Other Catholic countries are Italy (some 225,000 Witnesses), France (about 125,000), Spain (over 105,000), and Argentina (more than 115,000). In the United States, where the Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish religions predominate, there are some 975,000 Witnesses and over 2,000,000 attended the Memorial. Surely, great crowds are streaming out of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion, with its mystical teachings and are turning to God's simple and sure promises of "new heavens and a new earth." —2 Peter 3:13; Isaiah 2:3, 4; 65:17; Revelation 18:4, 5; 21:1-4.

Adapting to the Needs of People

¹⁰ Many of those who have turned to Jehovah through Christ Jesus were found from house to house. (John 3:16; Acts 20:20) But other methods have been used. Times have changed, and economic conditions are such that many women now work outside the home. Often, during the week, few people can be found at home. Thus, Jehovah's Witnesses have adapted to the situation. Like Jesus and the early disciples, they go where and when the people are to be found.—Matthew 5:1, 2; 9:35; Mark 6:34; 10:1; Acts 2:14; 17:16, 17.

¹¹ Witnesses are taking the initiative and

9. What facts show that the witness work has prospered?

10. How have circumstances changed in some areas?

11. Where are Jehovah's Witnesses preaching today, and with what result?

are discreetly preaching to people in large parking areas, shopping malls, factories, offices and businesses, schools, police stations, gas stations, hotels and restaurants, and on the streets. In fact, they preach wherever people can be found. And when people are at home, then the Witnesses continue calling on them there. This adaptable and pragmatic approach is resulting in increased distribution of Bible literature. Sheeplike ones are being found. New Bible studies are being started. The greatest educational work in human history is being carried out zealously by over five and a half million volunteer ministers! Do you have the privilege of being one of them?—2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 3:5, 6.



Earlier in this century, phonographs were used to spread the Kingdom message

What Motivates Jehovah's Witnesses?

¹² How does the heavenly organization fit into all of this? Isaiah prophesied: "All your sons will be persons taught by Jehovah, and the peace of your sons will be abundant." (Isaiah 54:13) Jehovah is teaching this worldwide united brotherhood through his visible organization on earth—at Kingdom Halls, at conventions, and at assemblies. Unity and peace result. Jehovah's teaching has produced a unique people, educated to love one another and their neighbor as themselves, not to hate their neighbors, wherever they may live in this divisive and divided world.—Matthew 22:36-40.

¹³ Love is what motivates Jehovah's Wit-

12. (a) How is Jehovah teaching his people?
- (b) What effect does this teaching have?
13. How can we be sure that angelic direction is involved in the preaching work?

nesses to continue preaching in spite of apathy or persecution. (1 Corinthians 13:1-8)

They know that their life-saving work is being directed from heaven, as Revelation 14:6 states. What is the message that is being proclaimed under angelic direction? "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived, and so worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters." The preaching of the Kingdom good news exalts Jehovah's name. People are being invited to give glory to the Creator, God, not to creatures and blind evolu-

tion. And why is the preaching work so urgent? Because the hour of judgment has arrived—judgment against Babylon the Great and all other aspects of Satan's visible system of things.—Revelation 14:7; 18:8-10.

¹⁴ No dedicated Christian is exempt from this preaching work. Spiritual elders take the lead in preaching with the congregation. Trained pioneers are fully occupied in the work. Zealous publishers of the Kingdom message, whether able to preach only a few hours a month or many, are spreading the message into every corner of the earth.—Matthew 28:19, 20; Hebrews 13:7, 17.

¹⁵ Has all this effort made an impact on the world? One simple proof that it has is the number of times Jehovah's Witnesses are featured on TV programs and in news columns. These often highlight our per-

14. Who are involved in this great teaching campaign?

15. What is an indicator of the impact of the preaching of Jehovah's Witnesses?

sistence and determination to reach everybody. Yes, our zeal and constant presence make a deep impression, even if the majority of people reject the message and the messengers!

Our Zeal to Complete the Witness

¹⁶ We do not know how much more time is left for this system of things, nor do we need to know as long as our motive in serving Jehovah is pure. (Matthew 24:36; 1 Corinthians 13:1-3) But we do know that in order for Jehovah's love, power, and justice to be manifest, the good news must be preached "first." (Mark 13:10) Therefore, regardless of how many years we may eagerly have awaited the end of this wicked, unjust, and violent world, we must zealously live up to our dedication in accord with our circumstances. We may be elderly or sick, but we can still serve Jehovah with the zeal that we had in our younger or healthier days. Maybe we can no longer manage to spend as much time in the ministry as we formerly did, but we can certainly maintain the quality of our sacrifice of praise to Jehovah.—Hebrews 13:15.

¹⁷ Therefore, whether young or old, let us show zeal and share our positive new world message with all we meet. Let us be like the shy seven-year-old girl in Australia who went with her mother to the store. She had heard at the Kingdom Hall how important it is for all to preach, so she put two Bible brochures in her bag. While her mother was busy at the counter, the little girl disappeared. When her mother looked for her, there she was offering a brochure to a lady! The mother went over to apologize for any annoyance her daughter might have

caused the lady. But the lady had graciously accepted the brochure. When the mother again was alone with her daughter, she asked her how she got the courage to approach a stranger. "I just said, Ready, Set, Go! And I went!"

¹⁸ We all need a spirit like that of the Australian girl, especially in order to approach strangers or even officials with the good news. We may fear rejection. Let us not forget what Jesus said: "Do not become anxious about how or what you will speak in defense or what you will say; for the holy spirit will teach you in that very hour the things you ought to say."—Luke 12:11, 12.

¹⁹ So trust in the help of God's spirit as you approach people in a kindly way with the good news. Millions put their trust in often unworthy men and women who are here today and gone tomorrow. We trust in Jehovah and his heavenly organization—Christ Jesus, the holy angels, and resurrected anointed Christians—who are alive forever! Therefore, remember: "There are more who are with us than those who are with them!"—2 Kings 6:16.

18. How can we show an admirable spirit?

19. How do you feel about your ministry?

How Do You Answer?

- ☐ What role has God's heavenly organization played in the survival of Jehovah's people?
- ☐ What political and religious elements have attacked Jehovah's Witnesses in the 20th century?
- ☐ How have Jehovah's Witnesses adapted their ministry to the needs of the times?
- ☐ What motivates you to preach?

16. What attitude should now be manifested in the limited time that remains?

17. Relate an encouraging experience that might help us all.

JESUS

THE RULER "WHOSE ORIGIN IS FROM EARLY TIMES"

EXCITEMENT mounts as you await the arrival of a long-lost relative. Finally, you meet him and greet him warmly. You listen attentively as he tells you why his father sent him to visit you. Then the time quickly arrives for his return home. Sadly, you bid him good-bye. The loss you feel at his departure diminishes when news arrives that he has reached home safely.

Later, when searching through some old papers, you become aware of letters that briefly mention your relative's exploits long before he started out on his journey to meet you. What those letters tell you offers interesting insights into his background and enhances your appreciation for both his visit and his present work.

"From Early Times"

Among the old papers available to first-century Jews were the writings of God's prophet Micah, recorded some seven hundred years previously. These pinpoint the Messiah's birthplace. "You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, the one too little to get to be among the thousands of Judah, from you there will come out to me the one who is to become ruler in Israel, whose origin is from early times, from the days of time indefinite." (Micah 5:2) True to these words, Jesus was born in the Judean village of Bethlehem in what is now called the year 2 B.C.E. But how could his origin be "from early times"?

Jesus had a prehuman existence. In his letter to the Christians in Colossae, the apostle Paul described Jesus as "the image of the

invisible God, the *firstborn of all creation*." —Colossians 1:15.

Jehovah, the Source of wisdom, created his first Son as his 'earliest achievement,' to use the inspired expression recorded by King Solomon in the book of Proverbs. After Jesus' sojourn on earth and his return to heaven, he testified that he was indeed "the beginning of the creation by God." As wisdom personified, the prehuman Jesus declared: "When [Jehovah] prepared the heavens I was there."—Proverbs 8:22, 23, 27; Revelation 3:14.

From the start, God's Son received a unique assignment, that of being "master worker" alongside his Father. What joy this brought to Jehovah! "I came to be the one he [Jehovah] was specially fond of day by day," notes Proverbs 8:30, adding, "I being glad before him all the time."

Jehovah later invited his firstborn Son to share in the creation of humankind. "Let us make man in our image," he declared, "according to our likeness." (Genesis 1:26) As a result, another fondness developed. "The things I was fond of," explained the prehuman Jesus, "were with the sons of men." (Proverbs 8:31) At the beginning of his Gospel, the apostle John acknowledged Jesus' prehuman role in creation: "All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence." —John 1:3.

Jehovah's Spokesman

John's words draw attention to another privilege that God's Son enjoyed, namely, be-

Joshua meets the prince of Jehovah's army



ing a spokesman. From the beginning, he served as the Word. Thus, when Jehovah spoke to Adam, and later when he addressed Adam together with Eve, he likely did so through the Word. And who better to convey God's instructions for mankind's welfare than one who had a fondness for them? —John 1:1, 2.

How it must have pained the Word to see Eve and then Adam disobey their Creator! And how he must have yearned to remedy the ills their disobedience brought on their offspring! (Genesis 2:15-17; 3:6, 8; Romans 5:12) Addressing Satan, who had encouraged Eve to rebel, Jehovah declared: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed." (Genesis 3:15) Having witnessed what happened

in Eden, the Word realized that as the primary part of the woman's "seed," he would become the target of vicious hatred. He knew that Satan was a manslayer.—John 8:44.

When Satan later questioned faithful Job's integrity, the Word must have felt outrage at the slanderous accusations leveled against his Father. (Job 1:6-10; 2:1-4) Indeed, in his role as archangel, the Word is known as Michael, whose name means "Who Is Like God?" and indicates how he champions Jehovah against all who aspire to usurp God's sovereignty.—Daniel 12:1; Revelation 12:7-10.

As the history of Israel unfurled, the Word observed Satan's attempts to turn humans away from pure worship. Following the Exodus from Egypt, God told Israel through Moses: "Here I am sending an angel ahead of you to keep you on the road and to bring you into the place that I have prepared. Watch yourself because of him and obey his voice. Do not behave rebelliously against him, for he will not pardon your transgression; because my name is within him." (Exodus 23:20, 21) Who was this angel? Likely, the prehuman Jesus.

Faithful Subjection

Moses died in 1473 B.C.E., and his body was buried "in the valley in the land of Moab in front of Beth-peor." (Deuteronomy 34:5, 6) Apparently, Satan wanted to use the corpse, possibly to promote idolatry. Michael opposed this but submissively deferred to the authority of his Father, Jehovah. 'Not

TESTIMONY TO A PREHUMAN EXISTENCE

Jesus' own words, as noted below, abundantly testify to his prehuman existence:

□ "No man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man." —John 3:13.

□ "Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father does give you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. . . . I have come down from heaven to do, not my will, but the will of him that sent me." —John 6:32, 33, 38.

□ "This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever." —John 6:50, 51.

□ "What, therefore, if you should behold the Son of man ascending to where he was before?" —John 6:62.

□ "My witness is true, because I know where I came from and where I am going. . . . You are from the realms below; I am from the realms above. You are from this world; I am not from this world." —John 8:14, 23.

□ "If God were your Father, you would love me, for from God I came forth and am here. Neither have I come of my own initiative at all, but that One sent me forth." —John 8:42.

□ "Most truly I say to you, Before Abraham came into existence, I have been." —John 8:58.

□ "Father, glorify me alongside yourself with the glory that I had alongside you before the world was. Father, as to what you have given me, I wish that, where I am, they also may be with me, in order to behold my glory that you have given me, because you loved me before the founding of the world." —John 17:5, 24.

daring to bring a judgment against Satan in abusive terms, Michael warned Satan: "May Jehovah rebuke you." —Jude 9.

Israel next began its conquest of the Promised Land of Canaan. Near the city of Jericho, Joshua received reassurance of the Word's continuing oversight of the nation. There he met up with a man carrying a drawn sword. Joshua walked up to the stranger and asked: "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" Imagine Joshua's surprise when the stranger revealed his identity, saying: "No, but I—as prince of the army of Jehovah I have now come." Little wonder that Joshua fell on his face before this exalted representative of Jehovah, no doubt the prehuman Jesus who would later become "Messiah the Leader." —Joshua 5:13-15; Daniel 9:25.

A further confrontation with Satan took place in the days of God's prophet Daniel. On this occasion Michael supported his fel-

low angel when the demon prince of Persia 'stood in opposition' for three weeks. The angel explained: "Look! Michael, one of the foremost princes, came to help me; and I, for my part, remained there beside the kings of Persia." —Daniel 10:13, 21.

Prehuman and Human Glory

In 778 B.C.E., the year Judean King Uzziah died, God's prophet Isaiah beheld a vision of Jehovah on his lofty throne. "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" asked Jehovah. Isaiah volunteered, but Jehovah warned him that his fellow Israelites would be unresponsive to his declarations. The apostle John compared the unbelieving Jews of the first century to the people of Isaiah's day, and noted: "Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory." Whose glory? That of Jehovah and of the prehuman Jesus alongside him in the heavenly courts. —Isaiah 6:1, 8-10; John 12:37-41.

Some centuries later came Jesus' greatest assignment up to that time. Jehovah transferred the life force of his beloved Son from heaven into the womb of Mary. Nine months later she gave birth to a baby boy, Jesus. (Luke 2:1-7, 21) In the words of the apostle Paul: "When the full limit of the time arrived, God sent forth his Son, who came to be out of a woman." (Galatians 4:4) Likewise, the apostle John acknowledged: "The Word became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father; and he was full of undeserved kindness and truth."—John 1:14.

Messiah Appears

At least by the age of 12, the young Jesus had come to appreciate that he must be busy doing his heavenly Father's business. (Luke 2:48, 49) Some 18 years later, Jesus came to John the Baptist at the Jordan River and was baptized. As Jesus prayed, the heavens opened, and the holy spirit descended on him. Imagine the flood of memories that came to mind as he recalled the countless millenniums he had served alongside his Father as master worker, spokesman, prince of God's army, and as the archangel, Michael. Then came the thrill of hearing his Father's voice telling John the Baptist: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved."—Matthew 3:16, 17; Luke 3:21, 22.

John the Baptist certainly did not doubt Jesus' prehuman existence. As Jesus approached him, John declared: "See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!" And he added: "This is the one about whom I said, Behind me there comes a man who has advanced in front of me, because *he existed before me.*" (John 1:15, 29, 30) The apostle John too knew of Jesus' preexistence. "He that comes from above is over all others," he wrote, and: "He that comes

from heaven is over all others. What he has seen and heard, of this he bears witness."—John 3:31, 32.

About the year 61 C.E., the apostle Paul urged Hebrew Christians to appreciate the full importance of Messiah's arrival on earth and his work as High Priest. Drawing attention to Jesus' role as Spokesman, Paul wrote: "God . . . has at the end of these days spoken to us by means of a Son . . . through whom he made the systems of things." Whether this refers to Jesus' role as "master worker" at creation or to his involvement in God's progressive arrangements for man's reconciliation, Paul here adds his testimony to Jesus' prehuman existence.—Hebrews 1:1-6; 2:9.

Loyalty From "Early Times"

To first-century Christians in Philippi, Paul addressed this exhortation: "Keep this mental attitude in you that was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he was existing in God's form, gave no consideration to a seizure, namely, that he should be equal to God. No, but he emptied himself and took a slave's form and came to be in the likeness of men. More than that, when he found himself in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient as far as death, yes, death on a torture stake." (Philippians 2:5-8) Jehovah lovingly responded to Jesus' loyal course by resurrecting him and then welcoming him back home to heaven. What a sterling example of integrity through aeons of time Jesus has left for us!—1 Peter 2:21.

How grateful we are for the glimpses the Bible provides of Jesus' prehuman existence! They surely strengthen our resolve to imitate his example of loyal service, especially now that he reigns as King of God's Messianic Kingdom. Let us hail the "Prince of Peace," Christ Jesus, our Governor and Ruler "whose origin is from early times"!—Isaiah 9:6; Micah 5:2.



TRUE JUSTICE

WHEN AND HOW?

THE innocent should have nothing to fear from true justice. Indeed, citizens almost everywhere have reason to be grateful if their country has a legal system that tries to ensure justice. Such a system involves a framework of laws, a police force to enforce them, and courts to administer justice. True Christians respect the judicial system in which they live, in keeping with the Biblical admonition to “be in subjection to the superior authorities.”—Romans 13:1-7.

However, judicial systems in various countries have made harmful and embarrassing errors.* Instead of punishing the guilty and protecting the innocent, at times innocent people have been punished for crimes they did not commit. Other individuals have spent years in prison, only to be released before completion of their sentence amid serious doubt as to whether they were guilty

and their conviction was warranted. Hence, many are asking, Will there ever be true justice for everyone? If so, when and how? Whom can we trust to protect the innocent? And what hope is there for victims of injustice?

Justice Gone Wrong

In the 1980's, Germany witnessed “one of the most sensational processes of the post-war period,” during which a mother was sent to prison for life for murdering her two daughters. Years later, however, the evidence against her was reevaluated, and she was released pending a new trial. *Die Zeit* reported in 1995 that the original judgment “could prove to be a judicial error.” Up to the time of writing, this woman had spent nine years in prison surrounded by uncertainty as to her guilt or innocence.

One November evening in 1974, the city center of Birmingham, England, was rocked by the explosion of two bombs that killed 21 persons. It was an event that “no one in Birmingham will ever forget,” wrote Chris Mulren, a member of Parliament. Later, “six innocent men were convicted of the biggest

* In the cases mentioned here, *The Watchtower* is not suggesting the guilt or innocence of any individual, nor is the magazine upholding one country's judicial system as being better than that of another. Moreover, this magazine does not advocate one form of punishment over another. This article simply states the facts as they were known at the time of writing.

murder in British history." Later their convictions were quashed—but only after the men had spent 16 years behind bars!

Legal counsel Ken Crispin reported on a case that "captured the public imagination in a manner unique in the annals of Australian legal history." A family was camping near Ayers Rock when their baby disappeared, never to be found again. The mother was charged with murder, convicted, and sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1987, after she had been incarcerated for over three years, an official inquiry found that the evidence against her could not justify a conviction. She was released and pardoned.

An 18-year-old woman living in the southern United States was murdered in 1986. A middle-aged man was charged, convicted, and sentenced to death. He spent six years on death row before it was established that he had nothing to do with the crime.

Are these rare examples of judicial mistakes? David Rudovsky of the University of Pennsylvania Law School notes: "I've been in the system for about 25 years and seen a lot of cases. I would say those convicted who are in fact innocent . . . I'd guess between five and 10%." Crispin asks the disturbing question: "Are there other innocent people sitting dejectedly in prison cells?" How are such tragic mistakes possible?

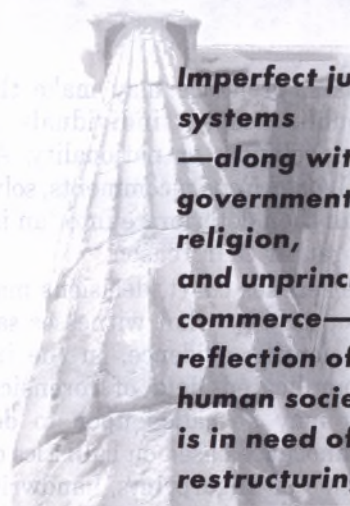
Human Judicial Systems —With Human Weaknesses

"No human system can expect to be perfect," stressed the British Court of Appeal in 1991. A judicial system can be only as just and dependable as the people who design and administer it. People are prone to error, dishonesty, and prejudice. Hence, it should come as no surprise that man's judicial systems manifest exactly these same flaws. Consider the following.

According to Judge Rolf Bender of Germany, in 95 percent of all criminal cases,

statements from witnesses are decisive as evidence. But are such witnesses in court always reliable? Judge Bender thinks not. He estimates that half the witnesses who appear in court tell untruths. Bernd Schünemann, professor ordinarius of criminal law at the University of Munich, Germany, made a similar observation. In an interview with *Die Zeit*, Schünemann confirmed that statements of witnesses are the principal—albeit unreliable—form of evidence. "I would say the typical reason for errors of justice is that the judge relies on unreliable statements of witnesses."

Witnesses are fallible; so are the police. Particularly following a crime that causes



**Imperfect judicial
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public outrage, the police come under pressure to make an arrest. Under such circumstances, individual policemen have succumbed to the temptation to manufacture evidence or to force a suspect to confess. When the six men who were convicted of the Birmingham bombings were released, the British newspaper *The Independent* carried the headline: "Conviction of Six Blamed on Corrupt Police." According to *The Times*: "Police lied, colluded and deceived."

COMFORT FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

In November 1952, Derek Bentley and Christopher Craig broke into a warehouse in Croydon, near London, England. Bentley was 19 years of age and Craig was 16. The police were called, and Craig shot and killed one of the policemen. Craig served nine years in prison, whereas Bentley was hanged for murder in January 1953.

Bentley's sister, Iris, campaigned for 40 years to clear his name of a murder he did not commit. In 1993, the Crown issued a pardon in respect of the sentence, admitting that Derek Bentley should never have been hanged. Iris Bentley wrote about the case in the book *Let Him Have Justice*:

"About a year before the shooting he met a Jehovah's Witness in the street . . . Sister Lane lived not far from us at Fairview Road and she in-

vited Derek round to listen to Bible stories. . . . What was good was that Sister Lane had the Bible stories on records, which she lent him [since Derek was a poor reader]. . . . He used to come back and tell me what she'd told him, things like we'll all come back again after we're dead."

Iris Bentley visited her brother on death row prior to his execution. How did he feel? "Those things that Sister Lane told him helped him over those last few days."—Italics ours.

Should you suffer hardship from an error of justice, it would be good for you to read and meditate on Bible truths. This can provide great comfort, for Jehovah God is "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

In some cases, prejudice may make the police and public suspect individuals of a certain race, religion, or nationality. As *U.S. News & World Report* comments, solving a crime can then deteriorate into "an issue of racism rather than reason."

Once a case reaches court, decisions may be affected not only by what witnesses say but also by scientific evidence. In the increasingly complicated field of forensics, judge or jury may be called upon to decide guilt or innocence based on ballistics or the identification of fingerprints, handwriting, blood groups, hair color, textile threads, or DNA samples. One lawyer noted that courts are faced with "batteries of scientists describing procedures of bewildering complexity."

Moreover, the magazine *Nature* notes that not all scientists agree on the interpretation of forensic evidence. "There can be genuine disagreement between forensic scientists." Sad to say, "faulty forensic evidence has already been responsible for more than its fair share of faulty convictions."

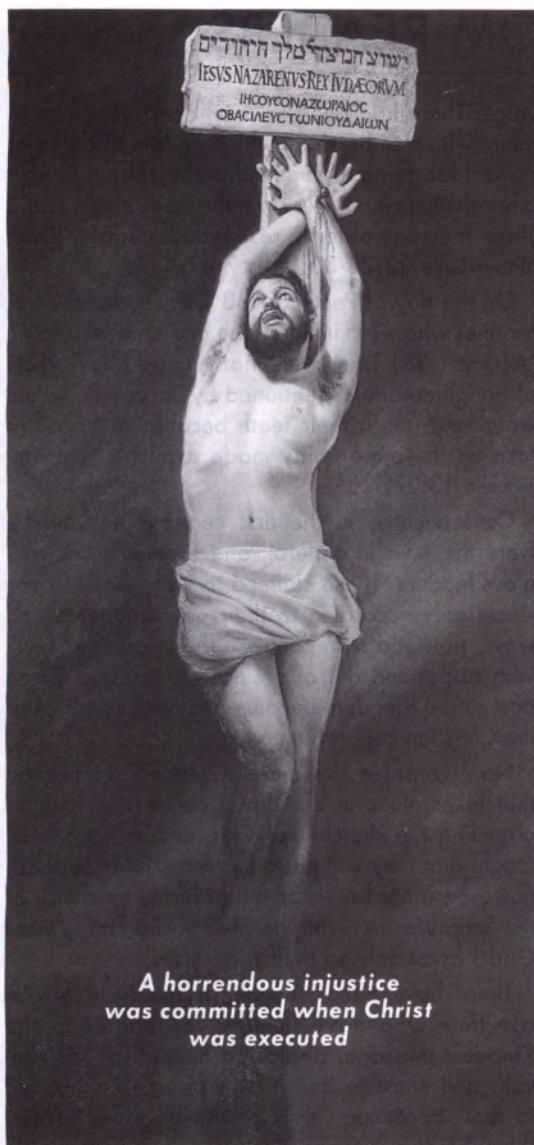
No matter where we live, all judicial systems currently in operation reflect human shortcomings. So whom can we trust to protect the innocent? Can we hope ever to have true justice? And what hope is there for victims of judicial error?

"I, Jehovah, Am Loving Justice"

Should you or a member of your family be the victim of an error of justice, Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus, recognize what you are going through. The most horrendous injustice of all time was committed when Christ was executed on a torture stake. The apostle Peter tells us that Jesus "committed no sin." Yet, he was accused by false witnesses, found guilty, and executed.—1 Peter 2:22; Matthew 26:3, 4, 59-62.

Imagine how Jehovah must have felt about such mistreatment of his Son! Justice is one of Jehovah's cardinal qualities. The Bible tells us: "All his ways are justice."—Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 33:5.

Jehovah gave Israel an outstanding judicial system. In the case of an unsolved mur-



der, the death was atoned for by sacrifice. There was no pressure to solve every crime at the risk of convicting an innocent person. No one could be convicted of murder purely on circumstantial or scientific evidence; at least two eyewitnesses were needed. (Deuteronomy 17:6; 21:1-9) These examples show that Jehovah has high standards and is con-

cerned that justice be administered properly. Indeed, he says: "I, Jehovah, am loving justice."—Isaiah 61:8.

Of course, Israel's judicial system was in the hands of humans who had shortcomings similar to ours. There were cases when the law was applied wrongly. King Solomon wrote: "If you see any oppression of the one of little means and the violent taking away of judgment and of righteousness in a jurisdictional district, do not be amazed over the affair."—Ecclesiastes 5:8.

Jehovah was able to correct the injustice done to his Son. The certainty of this strengthened Jesus, who "for the joy that was set before him . . . endured a torture stake." Similarly, the joyful prospect of living on a paradise earth under the rulership of the Messiah, with true justice prevailing, can strengthen us to endure hearing about or even experiencing injustice in this old system. There is no harm or injury that Jehovah cannot put right in his due time. Even ones who lose their lives through a judicial mistake may experience a resurrection.—Hebrews 12:2; Acts 24:15.

If we suffer as victims of injustice, we can be grateful that many judicial systems have legal channels that may enable us to correct the situation. Christians may use such channels. However, they bear in mind this fact: Imperfect judicial systems are a reflection of a human society that is in need of a major restructuring. That is shortly to take place—at God's hand.

Jehovah will soon do away with this unjust system of things and replace it with a new system in which "righteousness is to dwell." We can have absolute confidence that our Creator will then administer justice through his Messianic King, Jesus Christ. True justice for everyone is near at hand! How grateful we can be for this prospect.—2 Peter 3:13.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Jesus urged: "Exert yourselves vigorously to get in through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will seek to get in but will not be able." (Luke 13:24) What did he mean, and how does it apply today?

We can best understand this interesting passage by considering its setting. Some six months before his death, Jesus was in Jerusalem during the anniversary of the rededication of the temple. He spoke of being the shepherd of God's sheep but pointed out that the Jews in general were not among such sheep because they refused to listen. When he said that he was "one" with his Father, the Jews lifted up stones to stone him. He escaped to Perea beyond the Jordan.—John 10:1-40.

There a man asked: "Lord, are those who are being saved few?" (Luke 13:23) That was a fitting question for him to ask, since Jews of that time held that only a limited number would merit salvation. Given their attitude, it is not hard to imagine who they thought would constitute the few. How mistaken they were, as later developments would show!

For some two years, Jesus had been among them, teaching, performing miracles, and holding out the possibility of their becoming heirs of the heavenly Kingdom. With what result? They, and their leaders in particular, were proud of being descendants of Abraham and being entrusted with God's Law. (Matthew 23:2; John 8:31-44) But they would not recognize and respond to the Fine Shepherd's

voice. There had been as if an open door before them, with membership in the Kingdom as the chief reward for going through it, but they refused. Only a relatively few, mainly from the lowly class, heard Jesus' message of truth, responded, and stuck with him.—Luke 22:28-30; John 7:47-49.

On the day of Pentecost 33 C.E., it was the latter ones who were in line to be anointed with spirit. (Acts 2:1-38) They were not among the workers of unrighteousness mentioned by Jesus who would weep and gnash their teeth because of failing to take up the opportunity made available to them.—Luke 13:27, 28.

Consequently, in the first century the "many" were the Jews in general, and especially the religious leaders. These claimed to want God's favor—but only according to their own standards and ways, not God's. In contrast, the relatively "few" who responded out of a sincere interest in being part of the Kingdom became anointed members of the Christian congregation.

Now consider the more extended application that takes place in our day. Countless individuals attending the churches of Christendom have been taught that they will go to heaven. This aspiration, however, is not based on the accurate teachings of the Scriptures. As with the Jews earlier, these want God's favor only on their own terms.

There have been, though, a relatively few in our time who have humbly responded to the Kingdom message, dedicated themselves to Jehovah, and come in line for his favor. This has led to their becoming "sons of the kingdom." (Matthew 13:38) Such anointed "sons" began to be invited at Pentecost 33 C.E. Jehovah's Witnesses have long held that the evidence of God's dealing with his people suggests that fundamentally the members of the heavenly class have been called. Hence, those who have learned Bible truth in recent years have understood that the hope of everlasting life on a paradise earth is now being extended. These have come to outnumber the declining remnant of anointed Christians, who have the prospect

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of actually going to heaven. Luke 13:24 does not apply principally to those who do not expect to go to heaven, but it certainly contains wise advice for them.

By urging us to exert ourselves vigorously, Jesus was not saying that either he or his Father puts obstacles in our way to hinder us. But we understand from Luke 13:24 that God's requirements are such as to exclude unworthy ones. "Exert yourselves vigorously" implies struggling, extending ourselves. We thus might ask ourselves, 'Am I extending myself?' Luke 13:24 might be paraphrased, 'I need to exert myself vigorously to get

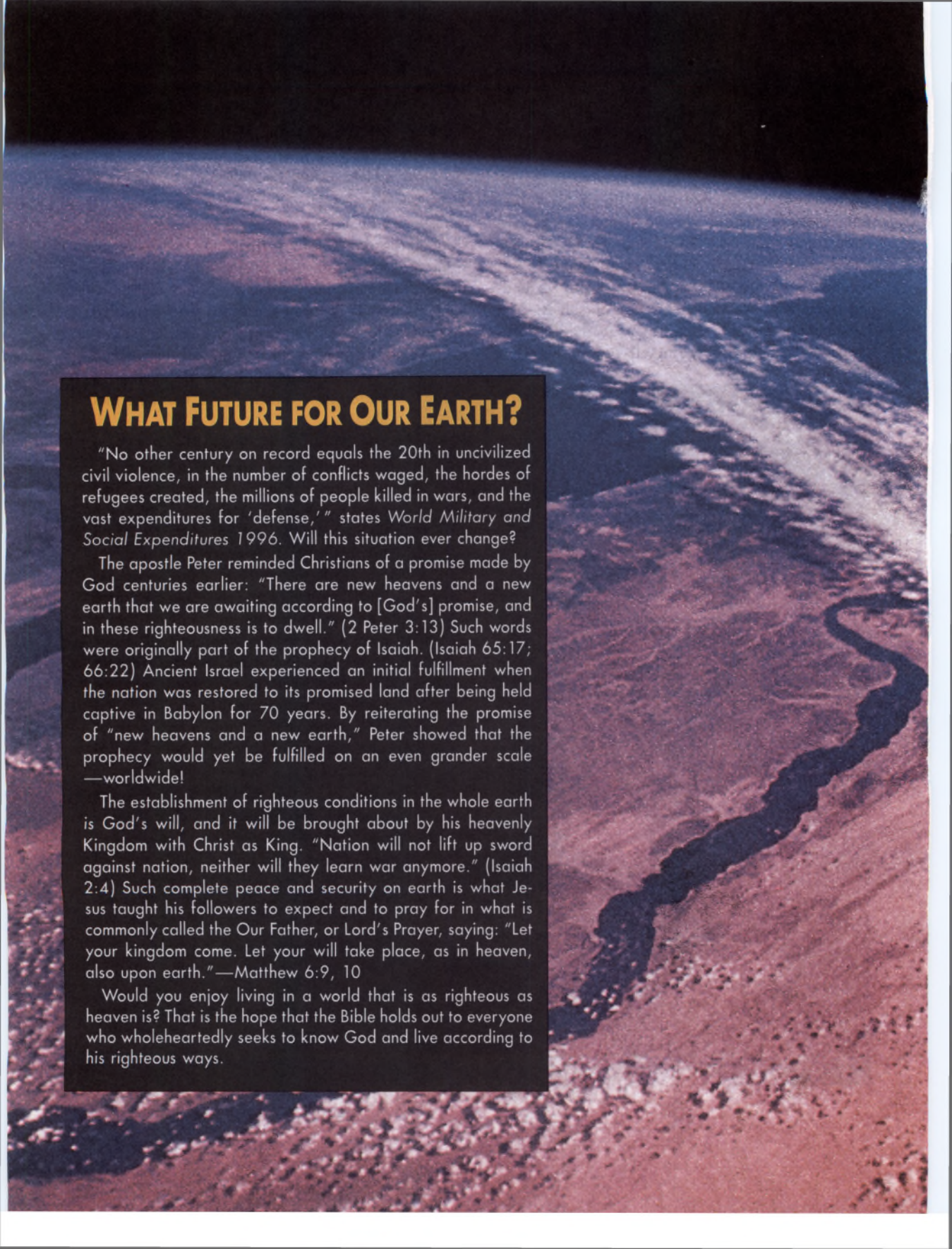
in through the narrow door because many will seek to get in but will not be able. So am I truly exerting myself vigorously? Am I like an athlete in an ancient stadium who gives his all to win the prize? No such athlete would be halfhearted, taking it easy. Am I?'

Jesus' words suggest that some might seek to 'get through the door' only at their own convenience, at an easy pace that they prefer. Such an attitude could affect individual Witnesses. Some might reason, 'I know of devoted Christians who extended themselves for years, making many sacrifices; yet, by the time of their death, the end of this wicked system still had not come. So maybe I'd better slow down, live a more normal life.'

It is easy to think that way, but is it really wise? For example, did the apostles think that way? Definitely not. They gave true worship their all—right down till their death. Paul, for instance, could say: "[Christ] is the one we are publicizing . . . To this end I am indeed working hard, exerting myself in accordance with the operation of him and which is at work in me with power." Later he wrote: "To this end we are working hard and exerting ourselves, because we have rested our hope on a living God, who is a Savior of all sorts of men, especially of faithful ones."—Colossians 1:28, 29; 1 Timothy 4:10.

We know that Paul did the absolutely right thing in exerting himself. How content each of us would be to be able to say as Paul did: "I have fought the fine fight, I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith." (2 Timothy 4:7) So in line with Jesus' words recorded at Luke 13:24, each of us can ask, 'Am I applying myself with diligence and industriousness? Yes, do I give ample, regular evidence that I take to heart Jesus' admonition: "Exert yourselves vigorously to get in through the narrow door"?'



An aerial photograph of a dry, cracked landscape with a winding river. The river is a dark, narrow line that meanders through the parched, reddish-brown earth. The cracks in the ground form a complex, web-like pattern, suggesting extreme drought. The sky above is a pale, hazy blue, and the overall scene conveys a sense of environmental hardship and the fragility of life on Earth.

WHAT FUTURE FOR OUR EARTH?

"No other century on record equals the 20th in uncivilized civil violence, in the number of conflicts waged, the hordes of refugees created, the millions of people killed in wars, and the vast expenditures for 'defense,'" states *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996*. Will this situation ever change?

The apostle Peter reminded Christians of a promise made by God centuries earlier: "There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to [God's] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell." (2 Peter 3:13) Such words were originally part of the prophecy of Isaiah. (Isaiah 65:17; 66:22) Ancient Israel experienced an initial fulfillment when the nation was restored to its promised land after being held captive in Babylon for 70 years. By reiterating the promise of "new heavens and a new earth," Peter showed that the prophecy would yet be fulfilled on an even grander scale—worldwide!

The establishment of righteous conditions in the whole earth is God's will, and it will be brought about by his heavenly Kingdom with Christ as King. "Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore." (Isaiah 2:4) Such complete peace and security on earth is what Jesus taught his followers to expect and to pray for in what is commonly called the Our Father, or Lord's Prayer, saying: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:9, 10

Would you enjoy living in a world that is as righteous as heaven is? That is the hope that the Bible holds out to everyone who wholeheartedly seeks to know God and live according to his righteous ways.