

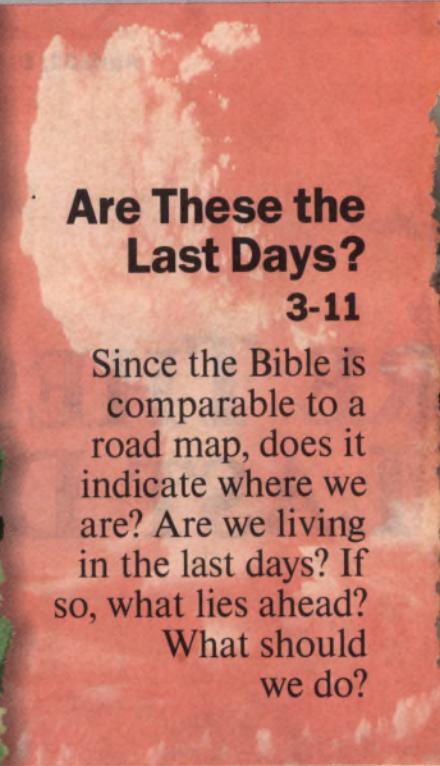
# Awake!

SEARCH • FIND • DISCOVER

April 22, 1995

## ARE THESE THE LAST DAYS?





## Are These the Last Days?

**3-11**

Since the Bible is comparable to a road map, does it indicate where we are? Are we living in the last days? If so, what lies ahead?

What should we do?



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COVER: Clockwise from upper left, Fighter jets: USAF photo; Flame of fire: Tina Gerson/Los Angeles Daily News; Bomber jet: Courtesy of the Ministry of Defense, London; Soldier: U.S. National Archives photo (see also pages 2, 7); PAGE TWO: Nuclear explosion: U.S. National Archives photo (see also page 7); Starving child: Mark Peters/Sipa Press (see also page 8)

# WHERE ARE WE HEADING?

IMAGINE that you are traveling through a region you have never seen before. By now you should have reached your destination, but the street signs, town names, and landmarks are not those you expected. ‘Where am I?’ you wonder. ‘Am I heading the right way?’

Today’s world is in a similar predicament. Man is in unfamiliar territory as he observes society deteriorating on a scale never before seen. With all the advances in science and technology, it would seem that by now we should be in a better world. In *Great Ages of Man*, editor Russell Bourne notes that only in the 20th century has “the old ideal of a global fraternity become a practical possibility.”

Yet, that destination, “a global fraternity,” has been missed. The promised landmarks of economic security, adequate food, improved health, and happy family life are nowhere to be found. “In many ways,” notes the book *Milestones of History*, “scientific advance has been directly harnessed to destruction and cruelty.”

Yes, mankind today is lost in unfamiliar territory, far off course, far from the peace and security that was envisioned at the turn of this century. Thus, many today are asking for directions: “How did we get to this condition? Where is this world heading? Are we living in the last days?”

To find out where we are, we must first determine our present whereabouts. Some say we are on the verge of a new world order; others say we are on the brink of destruction. The Bible, like a road map, helps us to see just where we are and where we are heading.

When you are traveling, it is important to watch for signs that will identify your location. Similarly, the Bible describes features—world situations and attitudes—that would characterize a period in history called “the last days.” (2 Timothy 3:1-5) This expression, “last days,” does not refer to the end of the literal heavens and earth. Rather, it signifies “the conclusion of the system of things,” or “the end of the age,” as one Bible translation puts it.—Matthew 24:3; *Today’s English Version*.

“In the last days,” wrote the Christian apostle Paul, “critical times hard to deal with will be here.” (2 Timothy 3:1) Granted, it might seem that this could apply to other periods in history. Indeed, each age has had its share of suffering.

What reason, then, is there to believe that these words pinpoint our day?

Tom Haley/Sipa Press



# ARE WE LIVING IN

THE phrase "critical times hard to deal with" is translated from the Greek *kai·roi' kha-le·poi'*. (2 Timothy 3:1) The word *kha-le·poi'* is the plural of a word that literally means "fierce" and carries the thought of menace and danger. One Bible commentator says the word refers to a "tremendous assault of evil." Therefore, while previous eras experienced turmoil, "the last days" would be extraordinarily savage. As 2 Timothy 3:13 puts it, "wicked men and impostors will advance from bad to worse."

Does this describe our day? Let us analyze some specific evidences recorded at 2 Timothy 3:2-5 to see if these indicate that we are living in the last days.

## "Men will be . . . lovers of money."

—2 Timothy 3:2.

Fraud has become, as U.S. News & World Report calls it, "an orgy of economic crime." In the United States, the toll of health-care fraud alone hovers between \$50 billion and \$80 billion annually. Sadly, such dishonesty is typical. As Gary Edwards, president of the Ethics Resource Center observes, we have "a culture that sometimes celebrates dishonesty." He explains: "We make heroes of villains, people who are politicians, business people who rip the system off and get away with it."



Michael Lewis/Sipa Press

## "Haughty."

—2 Timothy 3:2.

The haughty person looks upon others with contempt. How evident this is in racial and national prejudice today! "All minorities are targets," says *The Globe and Mail* of Toronto, Canada. "Racial violence is on the rise in Germany, the Ku Klux Klan is active in the United States and swastikas deface Toronto sidewalks and synagogues." Irving Abella, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, says: "We're seeing it everywhere: in Sweden, Italy, Holland and Belgium as well as Germany."



**Awake!**®

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# THE LAST DAYS?

## "Disobedient to parents."

—2 Timothy 3:2.

"The baby boomers are being credited by many with raising a generation of mouthy, confrontational, disrespectful brats," notes *The Toronto Star*. Rebelliousness that starts at home often spills over into school. One teacher observes that children as young as age four talk back. "Teachers spend more time dealing with behavior than they do teaching," she says. Of course, not all youths are rebellious. However, "as a trend," notes veteran high-school teacher Bruce MacGregor, "they seem to have very little respect for anything."



## "Having no natural affection."

—2 Timothy 3:3.

The last days would see a marked deterioration in the family—where, more than anywhere else, natural affection should prevail. *The New York Times* reports that "domestic violence is the leading cause of injury and death to American women, causing more harm than vehicular accidents, rapes and muggings combined." Most child molestation is perpetrated by trusted family members. The high divorce rate, the abuse of the elderly, and abortion also give evidence that many are "utterly lacking in . . . normal human affections." —Phillips.

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**"Fierce, without love of goodness."**

—2 Timothy 3:3.

"Young killers don't need much in the way of motives," writes newspaper columnist Bob Herbert. "Large numbers of kids have enthusiastically embraced the concept of blowing away another human being 'just for whatever.'" Even some parents seem to lack moral sensitivity. When a group of teenage boys were accused of competitively racking up points for having sex with as many girls as possible, one father commented: "Nothing my boy did was anything any red-blooded American boy wouldn't do at his age."

**"Lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God."**

—2 Timothy 3:4.

According to one estimate, teenagers spend 15 hours with electronic media for every hour spent with a religious group. "Today," reports the *Altoona Mirror*, "the media-driven culture that thrives in shopping malls and school hallways dominates teen life. Then comes the family. At the end of the list [is] the church." The *Mirror* also observes, "if parents are absent, and churches silent, then the media are the loudest voices in the lives of young people."



**"Having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power."**

—2 Timothy 3:5.

Bible truth has the power to change lives. (Ephesians 4:22-24) But some of the most ungodly acts take place under the veil of religion. A tragic example is the sexual abuse of children by the clergy. According to *The New York Times*, a lawyer in the United States "says he has 200 cases pending in 27 states on behalf of clients who say they were molested by priests." Truly, any form or pretense of godly devotion these clergymen display is exposed as mere hypocrisy by their wicked works.

## FURTHER EVIDENCES OF THE LAST DAYS

2 TIMOTHY 3:2-4 STATES ALSO THAT MEN WILL BE . . .

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self-assuming             | <input type="checkbox"/> Slanderers           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Blasphemers               | <input type="checkbox"/> Without self-control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unthankful                | <input type="checkbox"/> Betrayers            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disloyal                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Headstrong           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not open to any agreement | <input type="checkbox"/> Puffed up with pride |

## "THE SIGN OF YOUR PRESENCE"

Shortly before his death, Jesus was asked: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3) Jesus specified conditions and events that would characterize the last days. Let us examine some of them.

**"Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom."**

—Matthew 24:7.

"The twentieth century —although generally one of social improvement and heightened governmental concern for the lives of the poor—has been dominated by the machine gun, the tank, the B-52, the nuclear bomb and, finally, the missile. It has been marked by wars more bloody and destructive than those of any other age."—*Milestones of History*.



**"There will be fearful sights."**

—Luke 21:11.

Because of frightening developments in recent years, fear is perhaps the biggest single emotion in people's lives. People fear war, crime, pollution, disease, inflation, and many other things that threaten their security and their very lives.

**"Earthquakes in one place after another."**

—Matthew 24:7.

During this century, earthquakes measuring from 7.5 to 8.3 on the Richter scale have been experienced in Chile, China, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Peru, and Turkey.



## **"Food shortages."**

—Matthew 24:7.

"Starvation Looms While Aid Groups Bicker," announces a headline in New Scientist magazine. According to a former U.S. president, famine threatens to ravage the planet within two decades. "Despite such frightening forecasts," the article notes, "the amount of aid rich countries are giving for agricultural development in developing countries is shrinking dramatically."



## **"In one place after another pestilences."**

—Luke 21:11.

According to a panel of experts, the U.S. government's fight against AIDS—costing more than \$500 million annually—has been called a dismal failure. "We're losing a whole generation of productivity because of AIDS," warns Dr. Donna Sweet, who works with some 200 to 300 patients. In the United States, AIDS is now the leading cause of death among men ages 25 to 44.

## **WHAT LIES AHEAD?**

As we have seen, mankind is far off course, far from a peaceful world. In terms of sheer magnitude, the above conditions are unprecedented.

Indeed, the human family finds itself in unfamiliar territory.

It is passing through an era called the last days.

What will come after this period?

## **"Increasing of lawlessness."**

—Matthew 24:12.

A U.S. survey of 2,500 youths revealed that 15 percent had carried a gun at some point during the previous 30 days, 11 percent had been shot at during the past year, and 9 percent had at some time fired a gun at another person.



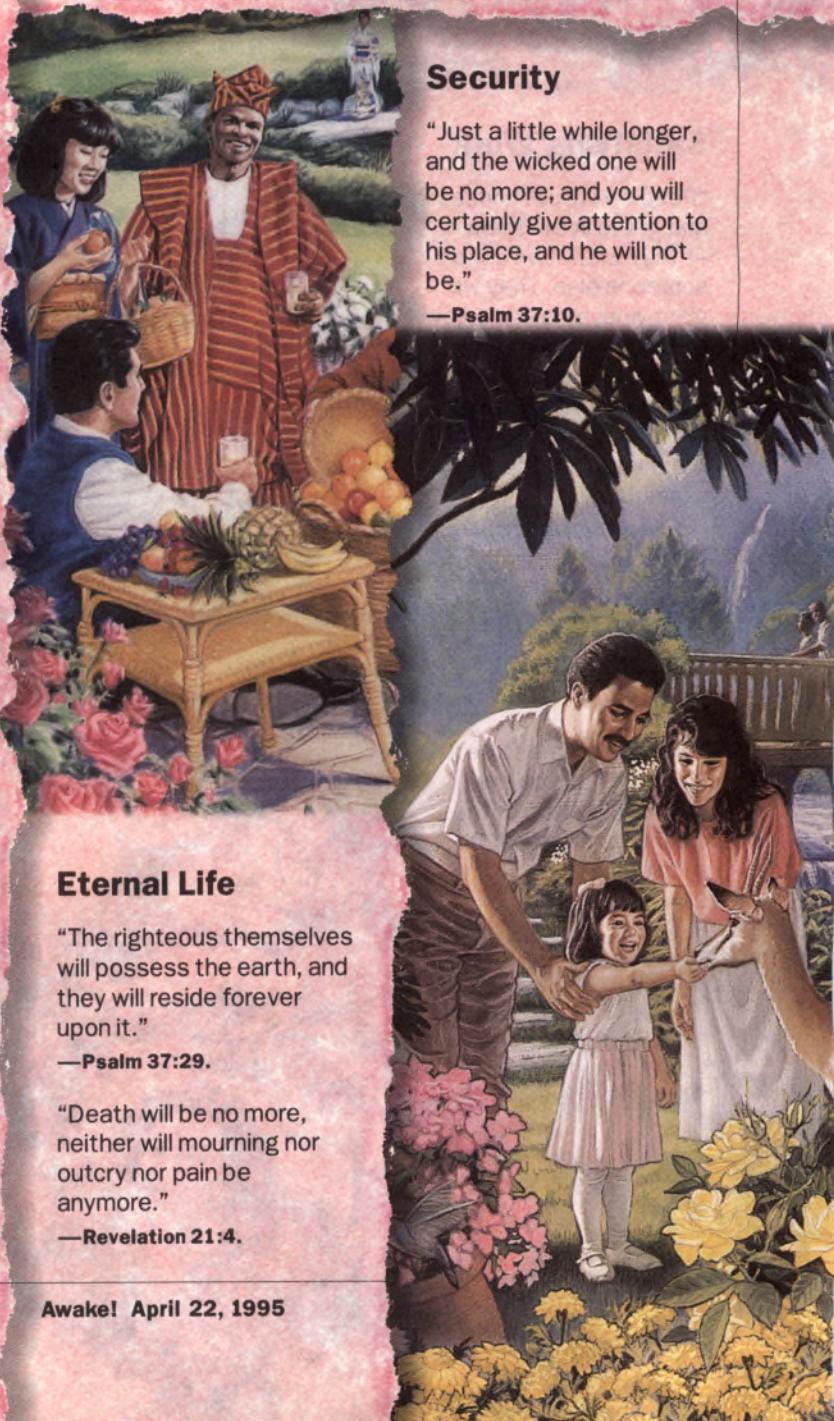
# JUST AHEAD—THE BEST OF TIMES!

ACCORDING to the Bible, God intended that the human race live forever in an earth-wide paradise. (Genesis 1:28; 2:8, 9) Obviously, we have veered far from God's original purpose. What happened?

The first human couple disobeyed God, resulting in imperfection and death for themselves and all their offspring. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:6, 7, 17-19; Romans 6:23) The Bible explains: "Sin came into the world through one man, and his sin brought death with it. As a result, death has spread to the whole human race because everyone has sinned."—Romans 5:12, *Today's English Version*.

Despite this situation, God's purpose remains unchanged. "My word is like the snow and the rain that come down from the sky to water the earth. They make the crops grow and provide seed for planting and food to eat. So also will be the word that I speak . . . It will do everything I send it to do." (Isaiah 55:10, 11, *Today's English Version*.) What does God promise to do for us?

## BLESSINGS UNDER GOD'S KINGDOM



### Security

"Just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be."

—Psalm 37:10.

### Eternal Life

"The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."

—Psalm 37:29.

"Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."

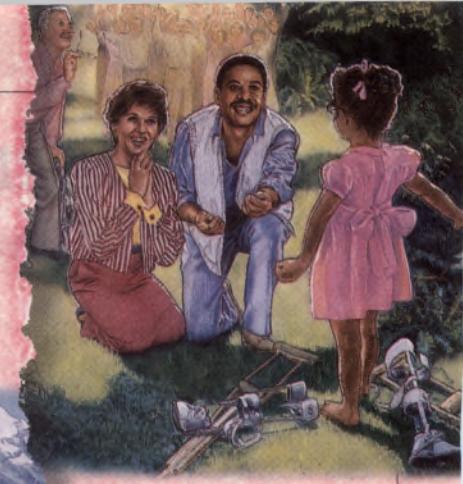
—Revelation 21:4.



## Health

"No resident will say: 'I am sick.' The people that are dwelling in the land will be those pardoned for their error."

—Isaiah 33:24.



## Satisfying Work

"People will build houses and get to live in them—they will not be used by someone else. They will plant vineyards and enjoy the wine—it will not be drunk by others. Like trees, my people will live long lives. They will fully enjoy the things that they have worked for."

—Isaiah 65:21, 22, TEV.



## No Disabilities

"The eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness."

—Isaiah 35:5, 6.



## Abundance of Food

"There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow."

—Psalm 72:16.



## Peace

"Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth."

—Psalm 46:8, 9.

## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

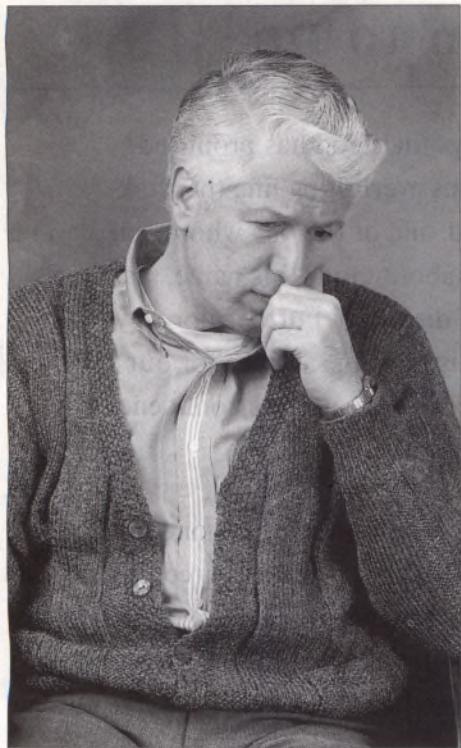
What must you do to enjoy these blessings that God has promised? The Bible answers at John 17:3: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." Yes, by learning about God—his name, his purpose, and his laws—we gain a sense of direction. Furthermore, by learning about Jesus—his life on earth, his ransom sacrifice for our sins, his position as Ruler of God's Kingdom—we can have confidence that God's purpose will be fulfilled.

God's toleration of wickedness has served to demonstrate beyond all doubt that man, like a traveler in an unfamiliar area, cannot direct his own steps. (Jeremiah 10:23) Indeed, through a multitude of governments—from dictatorships to democracies—man has tried every route imaginable. Yet, his success has been limited at best.

How thankful we can be that God's Kingdom will answer the prayer uttered by millions: "Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:10) The blessings of God's Kingdom will be enjoyed on earth when soon it replaces all human governments. The Bible promises: "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite."

—Daniel 2:44.

What a grand time that will be! A knowledge of the Bible can indeed infuse us with hope. Yes, these are troubled times—and getting worse. But that only proves that we are living in the last days of this wicked system of things. Soon these worst of times will be superseded by the best of times under God's Kingdom!



*"The intense pain behind my eye frightened me," recalls Ann. "I worried that a brain tumor was developing."*

*"When I woke up with such unusual discomfort in my side, I thought it must be appendicitis," Jean remembers.*

*"I've had rashes before," relates Dilip, "but I wondered why this one hurt so badly under the skin."*

# SHINGLES

## *Coping With the Pain*

**W**HAT exactly is shingles? This layman's term for the disease evidently comes from the old word *sengles* (meaning "a girth" or "a belt"), which derives from the Latin *cinctum*, meaning "girdle." Thus, the word has no association with the shingles that are used on roofs.

Medically it is known as herpes zoster (from the Greek terms *her'pes*, which is derived from *her'po*, meaning "to creep," and *zo·ster'*, meaning "girdle"). In character with the name, the herpes virus that causes shingles crawls stealthily along sensory nerves and frequently girdles the torso with its serpentine trail of painful eruptions. The often agonizing pain of the inflamed nerve can be excruciating, hence the term "exquisite pain" used by some doctors.

Early symptoms of shingles, such as fever, chills, and general malaise, often mimic the flu but may also be mistaken for a heart attack, brain tumor, or some other serious condition. Numbness, superficial tingling, and intense burning or itching sensations progressing to severe, agonizing pain are the most common complaints of the shingles sufferer.

In about a week's time from the onset of symptoms, a linear stretch of itchy red pimples appears along the sensory nerve network attacked by the virus, usually above the waist and on only one side of the body. Typical locations are on the rib cage, lower back, chest, neck, forehead, or eyes, depending upon the

nerve ganglia affected. The rash soon develops into clusters of vesicles, or watery blisters, that look deceptively like poison ivy. In about ten days, these become crusted and begin to fall off, in many cases leaving behind scars and lingering pain as reminders of one's encounter with shingles.

### **Causes, Prevalence, and Prognosis**

How does one get shingles? The likelihood is that the patient infects himself. Medical researchers have established with virtual certainty that the herpes virus (*varicella zoster*) that causes shingles is the same highly contagious one that causes chicken pox. This explains why someone who has shingles can cause another (generally a child) to have chicken pox. However, to get shingles, one must first have had chicken pox.

After an episode with chicken pox, usually early in childhood, the immune system does not completely rid the body of the varicella-zoster virus. It travels to a remote nerve center (researchers feel this to be a spinal or cranial area), and there it lies dormant until such time as it finds circumstances favorable for striking again, often years later when the immune system tends to be weaker.

While 10 to 20 percent of the general population get shingles some time in their lives, those most susceptible are over the age of 50. Researchers estimate that half of those reaching age 85 have had the disease. Males and females are about equally affected. The disease can recur, but it is of some comfort to know that only about 2 to 4 percent have a repeat attack.

A bout with shingles most frequently comes after a period of severe illness, unusual stress, prolonged fatigue, or other trauma in one's life. It may follow chemotherapy, radiation treatment, or other pro-

cedures that compromise or weaken the immune system. This second sting by the chicken-pox virus produces, not a recurrence of chicken pox, but shingles, which has some of the general characteristics of chicken pox. These characteristics include stages of rash, vesicles, and crusts, yet shingles is nonetheless a separate disease.

How serious is shingles, and how long does an attack last? While shingles is very distressing, the disease is seldom life-threatening. But once you get it, prepare to endure several weeks of persistent pain as the body builds up defenses to deal with this flare-up of viral infection. The duration of the disease varies from seven to ten days in most cases, although it can take up to four weeks for the eruptions to heal. It is not unusual for shingles patients to be plagued with nerve pain, called postherpetic neuralgia, for a number of weeks, sometimes months, after the vesicles have cleared up.

If the infection spreads to an eye, this can seriously affect eyesight and can cause blindness. So it is advisable to see an ophthalmologist immediately if the area affected is on the face. Early treatment can often prevent serious ocular complications.

### **Treatment**

What can be done to treat shingles effectively? While many remedies have been tried from ancient times to the present, the honest answer is that medical science has yet to come up with a treatment that does more than slightly modify the effects and control the pain until the disease has run its course.

Recent investigation into the use of anti-viral drugs in treating various herpes infections has produced some promising results in treating shingles. Acyclovir, for example, while admittedly not a cure, slows down

the replication of the virus and tends to decrease the pain and the duration of the disease in some patients. Researchers say that for best results, treatment should start early.

In a study at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, shingles patients receiving up to 800 milligrams of acyclovir orally five times a day for ten days experienced significantly less lesion formation, scabbing, and pain than recipients who received placebos. Researchers are divided as to whether acyclovir also serves to decrease the severity of postherpetic neuralgia. Vidarabine, another antiviral drug, has had some success in treating shingles. Research is being done on a vaccine, but this is still in the experimental stages.

Many who have had shingles say that the pain would be more endurable if it was not so persistent. Night and day it persists, exhausting the patient mentally as well as physically.

During those days when the patient's level of pain is very high, doctors may consider giving more potent pain inhibitors for a few days, though these tend to have undesirable side effects. If the patient can bear it, the application of wet cold compresses can be soothing. A topically applied cream with 1 percent silver sulfadiazine applied several times a day has been helpful to some. Leave the blisters alone; do not scratch them or cover them with bandages.

The sores will gradually heal, but for many sufferers there is no letup in pain as shingles strikes its second blow. Postherpetic neuralgia sets in, which is especially debilitating to the elderly and to immunosuppressed patients. Managing this throbbing, stinging pain is difficult. Corticosteroids have been tried, but medical data is inconclusive as to the effectiveness and safety

of these powerful drugs. Physicians sometimes prescribe the antidepressant amitriptyline when there is prolonged pain, but this too can compound the problem, especially in long-term use.

Strangely, quite promising results in pain control have been achieved with an ointment containing capsaicin, which comes from the red pepper used to make chili powder. But this cannot be applied until open blisters have healed over. Battling a severe case of shingles, Jean, mentioned at the outset, found relief by wearing a TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) unit night and day for several weeks. The small electrical impulses disguised the intense internal pain and allowed her freedom of movement.

The list of home remedies is long, most having to do with a wholesome diet (low in arginine) and including supplements, such as vitamins B and C and L-lysine. Some claim benefits from applying apple cider vinegar topically; others use vitamin E to assist in healing the skin eruptions.

The probability is that if you get shingles, it will not be too long before friends far and near will send you unsolicited their favorite home remedies. Some suggestions may help, many won't. Maybe they will bring you a smile amid your pain. At least your friends cared, and knowing this may do more than their remedies.

So in coping with shingles, the patient and his doctor may be able to do some things to make the attack less severe and to minimize pain. But if your physician says, "It looks like you're having a bout with shingles," he may simply say that it is best to try to exercise patience and endurance while the defenses our Creator has incorporated into the body bring the disease under control.

# MATRESHKA

## *What a Doll!*

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN RUSSIA

**A**S SOON AS visiting tourists catch a glimpse of me, most of them seem determined to take me home with them, willing to go to quite some expense to do so. I really don't know what attracts them to me. After all, they know so little about me. Maybe it's just the fashionable thing to do. But let me introduce myself. My name is Matreshka, and I come from—but then let's start at the beginning.

Actually, nobody really knows where I came from or who my real parents were. The story has two versions. Some claim that I originated on the Japanese island of Honshu as a unique toy of several interrelated parts. They say that I was brought to Russia from Honshu at the end of the 19th century by the wife of a Russian patron named Savva I. Mamontov (1841-1918). On the other hand, according to certain Japanese, it was a Russian monk who first brought to Japan the idea of making me into an exceptional

doll. But whatever the case, Russian craftsmen liked the idea, and Matreshka was born.

At the end of the 1880's, Russia was developing its economy and culture. At the same time, Russians were taking greater interest in preserving their folk

tradition. Intent on reviving Russian culture, the intelligentsia began gathering around Mamontov, including such famous Russian painters as Ilya Repin, Viktor Vasnetsov, and Mikhail Vrubel. To preserve the memory of Russian peasantry, art studios were built near Moscow. There, folklore items, toys, and dolls were collected from all parts of the country.

A professional artist named Sergei Malyutin made the first sketches of me, but I looked a bit different then. I was meant to depict a round-faced peasant girl with beaming eyes. I was dressed in a *sarafan* (a floor-length garment held up by two





straps), and I had carefully styled, slicked-down hair largely hidden under a colorful bandanna. Other figures, each smaller than the one before, were placed inside me. They were dressed in *kosovorotkas* (Russian blouses fastened at one side), shirts, *poddovkas* (men's long-waisted coats), and aprons. As revealed by Malyutin's sketches, this is how I looked when I was made in Moscow about 1891.

I often wondered about my name. I learned that at the end of the 19th century, Matrena (diminutive Matreshka) was one of the most popular female names in Russia. Derived from the Latin root *matrona*, it means "mother," "respected lady," or "mother of a family." Placing one figure inside another was also a fitting symbol of fertility and perpetuation.

#### Not Easy to Make

In attempts to make me, people have been known to spoil much material and finally to give up in defeat. No wonder, since until recently, knowing how to make me was a secret. So only a few were able to own me. But now I will let you in on the secret.

The work involved in making me requires real skill. First, it is important to choose the proper type of wood. Because of its softness, limewood is generally chosen, less often alder or birch. After the trees are cut down, usually in early spring, they are stripped of most of their bark, leaving just enough to prevent the wood from cracking while it dries. The logs

are then left stacked for several years so that they can enjoy proper circulation of air as they dry.

The cutting of the wood needs to be done at the right time, when it is neither too dry nor too damp. Only an expert can determine when it is just right. Each piece of wood goes through as many as 15 separate operations. The smallest doll in the series—the one that cannot be taken apart—is made first. At times it is so small that you must strain your eyes or even use a magnifying glass to see it clearly.

Once the smallest doll has been made, the craftsman starts on the next figure into which that first doll will fit. A piece of wood is processed to the necessary height and is cut into a top section and a bottom section. The bottom section of the doll is fashioned first. Then wood is removed from the inside of both sections of the second doll so that the smaller doll will fit snugly inside. A skilled craftsman, by the way, does not bother to take measurements but relies solely on experience. Afterward, he repeats the process, making a slightly larger doll into which the previous two will fit.

The number of dolls held one within the other varies from 2 to 60. The largest doll may be as tall as its maker! When each doll is finished, it is covered with a starchy glue that fills in any hollows in the surface. The final drying begins, and the doll is polished to a smooth surface to enable the



painter to spread the paint evenly. Then the doll is given its inimitable style.

### Time Has Brought Changes

People change as they grow older, and the same can be said of me. The craft of Matreshka-making gradually spread from Moscow to other cities and towns, including Semenov, Polkhovskii Maidan, Vyatka, and Tver.\* Each locality developed its own style and form of decoration. My loss of true identity was disturbing, but I did not complain. During the centenary celebration of the War of 1812, someone ordered a set of dolls to be made depicting Russian general Mikhail Kutuzov and French general Napoléon Bonaparte. These two generals were the largest dolls and opposing generals involved in the war were made smaller to fit inside their respective commanders.

For a long time, making and selling this type of doll was strictly controlled. But political changes at the end of the 1980's gave artisans new possibilities and freedoms. They could now make and sell their products without fear.

A painter named Sikorskii was one of the first whose dolls became popular with the public. His dolls bring the highest prices, with individual sets costing as much as 3,000 dollars. His success stimulated other artists, and during the past six years, Matreshka-making has been given an energetic push.

\* During the 1930's, Vyatka became known as Kirov and Tver as Kalinin. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the original names have been restored.



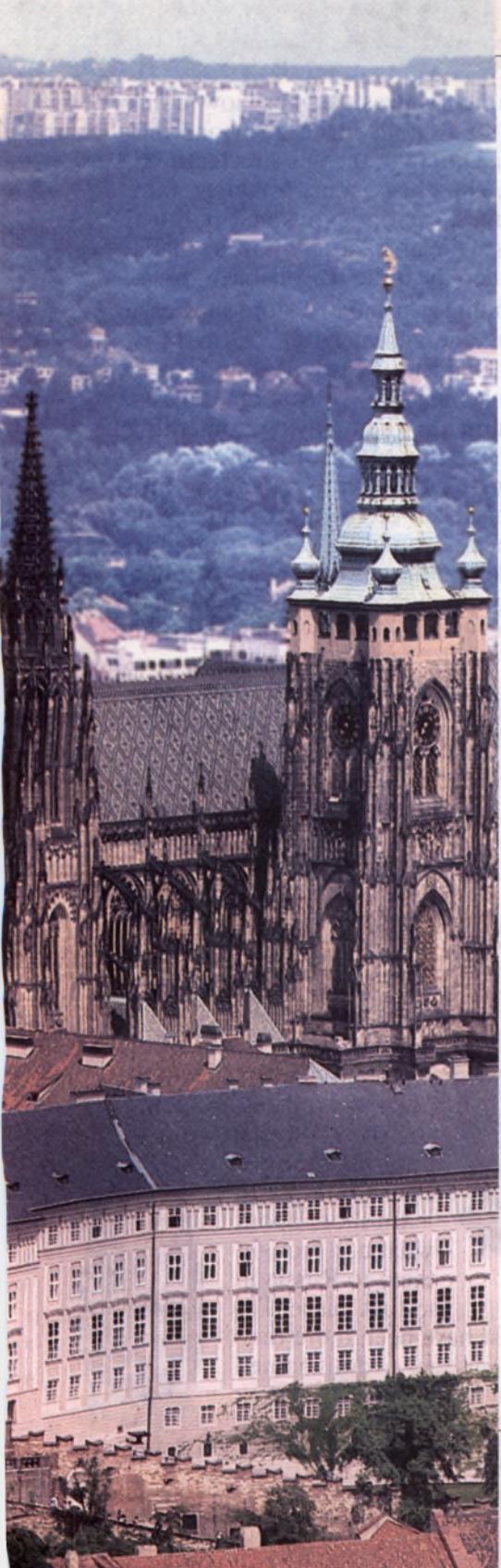
My name, Matreshka, has now come to apply to all dolls made to fit one into another. Different themes are featured: flowers, churches, icons, folktales, family themes, even religious and political leaders. The large variety now available helps keep me quite reasonable in price.

Standing as usual in a store showcase during the summer of 1993 in Moscow, I suddenly heard the sounds of an approaching group of foreign tourists. I overheard them saying something about a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses they were attending and that each of them, in memory of such a wonderful event, wanted to take me home with them. Wondering why, I gazed at them wide-eyed.

As if to answer, one of them said: "She is more than just a souvenir. I want my friends to see her eyes. I see in them the same expression I saw in the eyes of the Russian people I talked to about the Kingdom and about God's name as found in the Bible."

Jehovah's Witnesses? The Kingdom? God's name? The Bible? My eyes grew larger as I listened, and my heart pounded somewhat faster at the prospect of being taken to faraway places by some of these pleasant-looking people. Perhaps I could learn more about what had brought them to Russia in the first place. I'm sure it must have been more than just to meet me, a doll named Matreshka.





# Over 40 Years Under Communist Ban

AS TOLD BY JARMILA HÁLOVÁ

*The time: after midnight, February 4, 1952. The place: our apartment in Prague, Czechoslovakia. We were awakened by the insistent ringing of the doorbell. Then the police burst in.*

THE police put Mother, Father, my brother Pavel, and me in different rooms, stationed a guard with each of us, and started searching everything. They were still at it almost 12 hours later. After making a list of all the literature they found, they packed it in boxes.

Afterward, I was ordered to get into a car, and black glasses were put on me. That seemed odd, but I managed to move the glasses a bit to see where they were taking me. The streets were familiar. Our destination was the infamous headquarters of State Security.

They shoved me out of the car. Later when the glasses were stripped off, I found myself in a small, dirty room. A woman in a uniform ordered me to take off my clothes and to put on a pair of thick work trousers and a man's shirt. A rag was tied around my head to cover my eyes, and I was led, blindfolded, out of the room and marched along seemingly endless corridors.

Finally, the guard stopped and unlocked an iron door, and I was pushed through. The rag was torn off my head, and the door locked behind me. I was in a prison cell. A woman in her 40's was there gazing at me, dressed in an outfit like mine. I felt a sort of amusement and—strange as it might seem—could not help laughing. As a young girl of 19, with no experience in things like imprisonment, I remained in good cheer. Soon, much to my delight, I realized that no one else of our family was being held.

It was dangerous in those years to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses in what was then Czechoslovakia. The country was under Communist rule, and the Witnesses were banned. How did our family become so deeply involved with a banned organization?

### How We Became Witnesses

Father, a native of Prague, was of Protestant background and very sincere in his religious convictions. He met Mother in the 1920's when she came to Prague for medical studies. She was from the area called Bessarabia, which in her childhood was part of Russia. After they married, she joined her husband's church even though she was Jewish. Yet, she was not satisfied with it.

During World War II, Father was put in a work camp, and Mother narrowly escaped the holocaust. Those were hard years for us, but all of us survived. In mid-1947, two years after the war ended, one of Father's sisters, who had become one of Jehovah's

Witnesses, subscribed to *The Watchtower* for our family. It was Mother who started reading it, and she immediately embraced the message as the truth for which she had been searching.

At first, she said little to the rest of us, but she learned where meetings were held in Prague and started attending them. Within a few months, in the spring of 1948, she got baptized at a circuit assembly of the Witnesses. Then she invited us to join her in attending meetings. Reluctantly, Father agreed.

Meetings were held in a small hall in the center of Prague, where we began to attend as a family. Father and I had mixed emotions, both of curiosity and mistrust. We were sur-

prised that Mother already had new friends to introduce to us. I was impressed by their enthusiasm and their reasonableness, by how much they appeared to appreciate their brotherhood.

Seeing our positive response, Mother suggested that Witnesses be invited to our home for detailed discussions. What a shock it was for my father and me when they showed us from our own Bible that there are no immortal soul and no Trinity! Yes, it was eye-opening to learn what it really means to pray for God's name to be sanctified and for his Kingdom to come.

A few weeks later, Father invited several clergymen of his church to our home. He said: "Brethren, I want to discuss some Scriptural points with you." At that he



*My mother and father*

presented, step-by-step, basic doctrines of the church and noted how these contradict the Bible. The clergymen admitted that what he said was true. Father then concluded: "I have decided, and I speak on behalf of my family, to leave the church."

### The Preaching Work Banned

In February 1948, shortly before Father and I began attending meetings, the Communist party took control of the country. I watched fellow students denounce their professors and saw teachers become fearful of their pupils' parents. Everyone started to become alienated from one another. At first, however, the work of Jehovah's Witnesses remained practically undisturbed.

For us a highlight of 1948 was the convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Prague. More than 2,800 persons were present September 10 to 12. A few weeks later, on November 29, 1948, the secret police invaded the branch office, and it was sealed. The following April an official ban was placed on our work.

None of these actions intimidated our family, and in September 1949 we attended a special program in the woods outside Prague. A week later, Father and I were baptized. Despite trying to be cautious in the preaching work, I was arrested in February 1952, as noted in the beginning.

### Repeated Questioning

After being questioned a few times, I concluded that I would be in prison a long time. The interrogators seemed to think that the longer a person was confined with nothing to occupy his time, the more willing he would be to cooperate. But my parents' instruction kept coming to mind, and it helped to sustain me. They had often quoted Psalm 90:12, encouraging me 'to count my days,' that is, appraise, or evaluate, them 'so as to bring in a heart of wisdom.'

Therefore, in my mind I reviewed entire psalms and other Bible passages that I had earlier committed to memory. I also meditated on the *Watchtower* articles I had studied before being imprisoned, and I sang Kingdom songs to myself. Then, in my first months in confinement, there were fellow inmates to talk to. In addition, there were items to review that I had learned in classes at school, for I had passed my final exams only a few months before.

The interrogations made it evident to me that an informant had attended one of my Bible studies and reported my preaching activities. The authorities concluded that I was also responsible for the typewritten copies of the Bible publications seized in our home. Actually, my brother, who was only 15, had done the typing.

After a while the interrogators could see that I was not going to implicate anyone else, so efforts were made to dissuade me from my beliefs. They even confronted me with a person whom I had known as a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses. Though being a prisoner himself, he was now cooperating with the Communists in a campaign to get the other incarcerated Witnesses to renounce their faith. What a pathetic creature he was! Years later, after being released, he drank himself to death.

### Solitary Confinement

After seven months I was transferred to another prison and put in solitary confinement. Now, completely alone, it was entirely up to me how I used my time. Books were provided on request, but, of course, none of a spiritual kind. So I made up a schedule of activity that included periods of reading as well as time for meditation on spiritual matters.

I must say, never before did I feel as close to Jehovah in my prayers as then. The

**A meeting in the woods in 1949 during the ban:** 1. My brother Pavel, 2. Mother, 3. Father, 4. Me, 5. Brother Hála

thought of our worldwide brotherhood had never been so precious. Every day I tried to imagine how the good news might be spreading at that particular moment in various parts of the earth. I would imagine myself sharing in this work, giving Bible presentations to people.

Yet, in this calm atmosphere, I eventually fell into a trap. Having always loved to read and being hungry for impressions from the outside, I sometimes became absorbed in a particular book to the neglect of my schedule for meditation on spiritual matters. After this would happen, I always felt remorseful.

Thus, one morning I was taken to the prosecutor's office. Nothing in particular was spoken about—only the results of previous interrogations. I felt disappointment, since no trial date was set for my case. In a half hour or so, I was back in my cell. There I lost composure and began crying. Why? Were the long weeks in solitary finally taking their toll?

I started to analyze my problem and quickly identified the cause. The previous day, reading had engrossed me, and again I had not kept up my spiritual activities. So when I was taken unexpectedly for questioning, I was not in a proper prayerful frame of mind. Immediately I poured out my heart to Jehovah and resolved never again to neglect spiritual matters.

After that experience I decided to eliminate reading altogether. Then a better idea occurred to me, namely to force myself to read German. During the German occupa-



tion in World War II, we had to learn German at school. But because of the horrible things that the Germans did during their occupation of Prague, after the war I wanted to forget everything German, including the language. So now I determined to be hard on myself by relearning German. However, what was meant as a punishment turned into a blessing. Let me explain.

I was able to obtain both German and Czech editions of some books and began to train myself to translate German into Czech and Czech into German. This activity not only proved to be another antidote to the potentially harmful effects of solitary confinement but also served a good purpose later on.

#### **Release and Continued Preaching**

Finally, after eight months in solitary, my case came up for trial. I was indicted for subversive activity and sentenced to two years in prison. Since I had already served 15 months and an amnesty had been declared with the election of the new president, I was released.

In prison I had prayed that my family be free of worries about me, and on returning home, I found that this prayer

had been answered. Father was a medical doctor, and he encouraged many of his patients to study the Bible. As a result, Mother was conducting about 15 weekly studies! In addition, Father was conducting a group study of the *Watchtower* magazine. He also did translating of some of the Watch Tower Society literature from German into Czech, and my brother typed up the manuscripts. So I immediately plunged into spiritual activity and was soon conducting Bible studies.

#### A New Assignment

On a wet afternoon in November 1954, there was a ring at the door. Standing there, with water running down his dark gray plastic raincoat, was Konstantin Paukert, one of those taking the lead in the preaching work. Usually, he wanted to speak with Father or my brother Pavel, but this time he asked me: "Could you come out for a short walk?"

We walked silently for a while, a few pedestrians passing by. The dim light of the streetlights reflected faintly in the wet surface of the black pavement. Konstantin looked back; the street was lifeless behind us. "Would you help out with some work?" he asked suddenly. Astonished, I nodded in agreement. "We need some translating done," he continued. "You have to find some place to work but not at home and not with anyone known to the police."

A few days later, I was sitting at a desk in a small flat belonging to an elderly couple

whom I hardly knew. They were Father's patients, and a Bible study had been started with them not long before. Thus, my study of German in prison proved valuable, as we then translated our literature from German to Czech.

A few weeks later, Christian brothers taking the lead in the work were imprisoned, including Brother Paukert. Yet, our preaching was not stopped. Women, including Mother and me, helped in caring for Bible study groups and our Christian ministry. My brother Pavel, although still a teenager, served as a courier to distribute literature and organizational instructions throughout the Czech-speaking part of the country.



**With my husband, Jára**

#### A Beloved Companion

Late in 1957, Jaroslav Hála, a Witness who had been arrested in 1952 and given a 15-year sentence, was temporarily released from prison for medical treatment. Pavel immediately contacted him, and soon Jaroslav was again fully involved in helping the brothers. Knowing the languages well, he began doing most of the translating work.

One evening in mid-1958, Jaroslav invited Pavel and me for a walk. This was usual for discussing organizational affairs, since our apartment was bugged. But after speaking privately with Pavel, he asked him to wait on a park bench while the two of us walked on. After a short discussion concerning my tasks, he asked if, in spite of his impaired

health and uncertain future, I would marry him.

I was astonished by the sincere, straightforward proposal by one whom I held in great esteem, and I accepted without hesitation. Our engagement brought me into close contact with Jaroslav's mother, an anointed Christian. She and her husband were among the first Witnesses in Prague in the late 1920's. Both of them were imprisoned by the Nazis during the second world war, and her husband had died in a Communist prison in 1954.

Before we married, Jára, as we called him, was summoned by the authorities. They told him that either he had to undergo an operation for his chronic pleurisy—which at the time would have meant submitting to a blood transfusion—or he would have to serve out the rest of his sentence. Since he declined the operation, it meant that he had almost ten more years of imprisonment. I decided to wait for him.

#### A Time of Testing and Courage

Early in 1959, Jára was taken to prison, and soon afterward, we received a letter indicating that he was in good cheer. Then there was a long interval before a letter arrived that came as a blow to us. It expressed regrets, sadness, and fears, as though Jára were suffering a nervous breakdown. "This must have been written by someone else," his mother said. But it was in his handwriting!

Both his mother and I wrote and ex-

pressed our trust in God and encouraged him. After many weeks, another letter came, still more puzzling. "He couldn't have written this," his mother again said. Yet, the handwriting definitely was his style, and there were his characteristic expressions. No more letters were received, and no visits were permitted.

Similarly, Jára had received disturbing letters purportedly from us. His mother's letters blamed him for leaving her alone in her old age, and mine showed annoyance at having to wait for him for such a long time. These also perfectly matched our handwriting and manner of expression. At first he too was disturbed, but then he became convinced that we could not have written the letters.

One day someone appeared at the door, handed me a small packet, and hastened away. In it were dozens of leaves of cigarette paper on which was the tiniest possible

handwriting. Jára had copied the letters we were supposed to have written, as well as a number of his own uncensored letters. After receiving this correspondence that had been smuggled out by a non-Witness prisoner who had been set free, how relieved and thankful to Jehovah we were! To this day we have never learned how or by whom this devilish attempt to break our integrity was masterminded.

Later, Jára's mother was permitted to visit her son. On these occasions, I accompanied her to the prison gate and watched this tiny, frail woman perform acts of great courage. With guards watching, she would



*Jára's mother and the photographed literature she smuggled to him*

take her son's hand and pass to him the tiniest possible photographed literature. Although discovery would have meant severe punishment, especially for her son, she relied on Jehovah, realizing that maintaining spiritual health is always of first importance.

Later, in 1960, a general amnesty was proclaimed, and most Witnesses were released from prison. Jára came home, and in a few weeks, we were a happy newly married couple.

### Changing My Life-Style

Jára was assigned to the traveling work, serving the interests of the brotherhood throughout the country. In 1961 he was assigned to organize the first class of the Kingdom Ministry School in the Czech-speaking part of the country, as well as handling many of the school's classes thereafter.

Because of political changes in Czechoslovakia in 1968, the following year a number of us were able to attend the "Peace on Earth" International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in Nuremberg, Germany. The authorities, however, would not allow Jára to leave the country. Some of us took slide pictures of that grand convention, and throughout the country, Jára was privileged to share in delivering a faith-strengthening program that featured these pictures. Many wished to see the program over and over again.

Little did we realize that this would be Jára's last time to visit the brothers. Early in 1970, his health deteriorated dramatically. The chronic inflammation, which he

had learned to live with, affected his kidneys, and renal failure proved fatal. He died at age 48.

### Sustained With Jehovah's Help

I was bereaved of the one whom I had loved so dearly. But immediate help was provided within God's organization, for I was allowed to have a share in the translating of Bible literature. As though in a relay race, I felt that my husband had passed the baton to me to carry on part of the work he himself had been doing.

Many of us in Eastern Europe served Jehovah for over 40 years under Communist ban. Then, in 1989, with the removal of the Iron Curtain, life here began to change dramatically. While I had dreamed of Jehovah's Witnesses holding a convention in Prague's mammoth Strahov Stadium, never did I believe that this dream would come true. Yet, in August 1991, it did in a marvelous way when over 74,000 assembled in joyful worship!

Czechoslovakia ceased to exist in January 1993 when the country was divided into two countries—the Czech Republic and Slovakia. How happy we were when, on September 1, 1993, the Czech Republic granted Jehovah's Witnesses official recognition!

From my life experiences, I know that Jehovah always has a blessing in store for us, provided we allow him to teach us how to count our days. (Psalm 90:12) I constantly pray for God to teach me how to count the rest of my days in this system of things so that in the countless days ahead in his new world, I may be among his happy servants.



**Working today at the branch in Prague**

## Young People Ask...



# Married Too Soon—Can We Succeed?

**"We'd been dating since I was 16. At 18 we got married. It was going to be wonderful—forever! But after about four months, I went crazy under the pressure."**

—Tonya.\*

MARRIAGE at any age can be sobering. Says the Bible: "Those who marry will have pain and grief." (1 Corinthians 7:28, *The New English Bible*) But for many who enter wedlock in "the bloom of youth," the pain and grief often seem to come in unbearable doses.—1 Corinthians 7:36.

\* Some names have been changed.

This is mainly because teenagers are still growing up; they are seldom equipped to assume the role of husband or wife. Dr. Jane K. Burgess observes: "Young people are extremely idealistic about marriage. They don't look at it in terms of the everyday kind of work and effort that a successful marriage will take." The realities of marriage can thus hit a couple with all the warmth and charm of a slap in the face.

"You're expecting everything to be great and wonderful, like a fantasy," says young Kim. "The new wears off, though, and then it's the cooking, the dishes, the groceries, the laundry—while your husband sits on the couch. He never had to do such chores because his mom did it all for him. You never think about being tired and irritable when you're dating. And when you get pregnant, it all becomes ten times worse!"

Oftentimes, too, teenagers marry with reckless haste. "I married a man I thought was a true Christian," recalls Helen. "Because of my own lack of experience, I didn't get to know him well enough. After ten months of marriage, I could no longer tolerate his unchristian behavior." The failure of Helen's marriage is by no means unique. In the United States, most teenage marriages fail within five years.

Dire statistics notwithstanding, millions of teenagers have taken the plunge into matrimony. Perhaps you are one of them. If so, you may already feel overwhelmed by the pressures of marriage.

### No Way Out?

Although marrying young may not be wise, it is not necessarily a sin. Marriage is honorable in the eyes of God. (Hebrews 13:4) True, some extreme circumstances may justify a separation or a divorce. (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 7:12-15) Generally, though, God requires that couples stick together. (Matthew 19:6) While that may seem



### **Supporting a young man in his husbandly role can bring out the best in him**

fledgling husband. But there's really no need to become disturbed simply because your bride does not rush to obey your every command. It will take time for your wife to feel secure under your headship. In the meantime, work at *earning* her respect, not by trying to control her, but by taking the lead and trying to make balanced decisions. —Compare 1 Corinthians 16:13.

The Bible further exhorts: "In showing honor to one another take the lead." (Romans 12:10) Yes, honor your wife by putting her interests ahead of your own. (Philippians 2:4) Give her latitude, treating her as a respected partner, not as a slave. (See Malachi 2:14.) Whenever possible, consult with her when major decisions must be made. (Proverbs 13:10) This will make submitting to your headship easier for her.

What, though, if you are a young wife? It may try your patience to submit to your young husband when his lack of maturity is sometimes embarrassingly apparent or when he doesn't show the best of judgment. However, chiding him or rebelling will do little to improve your lot. "The more she scolded me, the more I would clam up," confessed one young husband. Try showing honor by making allowance for his inexperience. He just might respond by showing more respect for your point of view. If he makes a decision that irritates you—but violates no moral laws—why not simply go along with it? "The wisdom from above is . . . ready to obey." (James 3:17) By being supportive of his headship, you can help him to become more competent.

### **Money Problems**

Some say that the number-one problem for young couples is money. Couples are often shocked to learn just how much it costs

like a tough stance, it also means that God wants you to succeed.

One teenage husband says: "It's too late for, 'Was I too young? Are we really right for each other?' and all the other second-guessing. *You're married!*" So rather than bemoan your fate, why not try to find some way to make your marriage work?

### **Who's In Charge Here?**

The Bible tells couples: "Let wives be in subjection to their husbands as to the Lord . . . A husband is head of his wife." (Ephesians 5:22, 23) However, when a young man has spent his whole life under the protective shadow of mom and dad, becoming a family head can be an awesome responsibility.

One young wife recalls regarding her husband: "Tom didn't want me going anywhere by myself. I felt trapped, locked in. He thought that anytime I tried to question him, it was a challenge to his authority." On the other hand, some wives find it difficult to view their young husbands as their head. Others may chafe at the slightest hint of a husbandly decision, refusing to cooperate when they disagree.

This can be most distressing if you are a

to live. Ray and Lora, for example, "had no food or money" after their wedding. "We slept on the floor," they confess. Brad and Tonya suffered similar economic pressure when Brad lost his job—and Tonya had to pay the bills.

While it is true that young people often have trouble finding work that pays good wages, money problems are sometimes the result of poor money management. Consider the young wife who says: "I just spend the money until it's gone and then I don't have any for the last week of the month." Other couples suffer because they fail to communicate. "I went out and bought a car without talking it over with her," confesses a husband named Jake. "What we really needed was furniture," laments his wife.

Sound familiar? Then perhaps you haven't put away "the traits of a babe" when it comes to handling money. (1 Corinthians 13:11) Do you shop by impulse? Then learn to make a shopping list, and stick to it. Discuss major purchases. (Proverbs 15:22) Keep track of your expenses, and work out a reasonable budget.\* Doing so can spare you much financial stress.

### Can We Talk?

That brings us to what some call the number-two problem among young couples: communication. Some couples retreat into tense silence. Others engage in verbal violence. "The biggest arguments that [we] had were over the dumbest things," recalls Sylvia, a divorcee. "Things like his leaving his shoes all over the house, or my taking bites from his dinner plate."

Misunderstandings and disagreements are bound to occur. But "malicious bitterness and anger and wrath and screaming and abusive speech" simply tear down a mar-

\* The article "Budget Your Money—The Easy Way!" appearing in our April 22, 1985, issue has some helpful suggestions.

riage. (Ephesians 4:31) Get into the habit of talking things over while an irritation is still small. When you do, attack the problem—not the person. If things start to get out of hand, refuse to fuel an argument. "Where there is no wood the fire goes out," says Proverbs 26:20. Later, when both of you have calmed down, try talking things over again.

Good communication is also the key to solving another common problem: sexual dissatisfaction. Sometimes a young couple are simply too exhausted from their new routine to enjoy marital intimacies. The book *Building a Successful Marriage* says: "Husbands and wives come to marriage with a vast amount of misinformation concerning the role and functioning of sex." Taken in by the world's propaganda, many couples come to have grossly unrealistic expectations in this regard. Selfishness and lack of self-control also play a role. Open communication, along with time and patience, is essential. When each 'seeks the advantage of the other,' sex is rarely a serious problem.—1 Corinthians 10:24.

Clearly, then, marriage is not for children. If you have already married, you are not doomed to failure. "My first year of marriage was really rough," says one married woman. "But because of applying Bible principles, we are now leading a contented, happy married life." So can you.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

#### The Mystery of the Alpine Iceman

#### It's No Secret Anymore

#### Safely Exploring the World Beneath the Waves

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### A Unique Planet

Scientists have long speculated about the possibility that life exists on other planets. It was assumed that the conditions that make life possible on earth must likewise exist somewhere among the hundreds of billions of galaxies of the cosmos. The French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, however, says that it is now more and more apparent that "too many miraculous coincidences preceded the appearance of man on earth" and that the latest discoveries regarding the universe and the earth itself "have enormously reduced the probability, already minute, that the same process could have taken place elsewhere." Commenting on the near mathematical impossibility of identical conditions existing on another planet, the magazine notes that scientists are sure that life exists on at least one planet—ours.

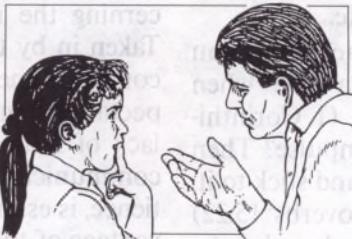
### Television or Newspapers for Accurate News?

In Australia, television news is slipping in credibility while newspapers are gaining. According to a media study published in *The Australian*, "television [has] largely sacrificed accuracy, reliability and fairness to its subject in pursuit of a 'good story.'" For example, some TV news is enhanced by old file tapes to make a more sensational story. Of the 500 news stories analyzed, 260 used file footage, the study found. If a TV news report includes file tapes, people normally expect this to be acknowledged, but this is not always done. The report states:

"Research by the Ray Morgan Research Centre . . . shows the number of people who believed television was the best medium for 'accurate and reliable news' fell by more than 12 percentage points, from a peak of 53.7 per cent in 1986 to 41.5 per cent" in 1993.

### Parent/Child Relationship?

Should parents treat their children as peers? Educator Líssandre Maria Castello Branco of São Paulo University says in the Brazilian newspaper *O Estado*



*de S. Paulo*: "Parents are never equal to their children, and this has to be made clear. . . . When the place of authority is vacant, the youth becomes abandoned, an orphan. A child always expects of his parents the responsibility of an adult who chooses to educate a person."

### Cesarean Sections Increasing

"Ten thousand gynecologists point the finger at Italy: too many cesareans," reports Rome's newspaper *Il Messaggero*. For the number of births by cesarean section, Italy places first in Europe and third in the world, behind the United States and Brazil. Since 1980, cesarean operations have doubled in Italy; now almost 1 child in 4 is delivered by cesarean

section. Why the increase? According to *Il Messaggero*, there are two reasons besides medical ones: Women want to avoid painful deliveries, and doctors, fearing court action, prefer a less-risky procedure. However, although cesarean sections have long been viewed as safe, many doctors believe that they are used too often and not always for good reasons. Carlo Signorelli, of La Sapienza University, Rome, said: "There would not appear to be any correlation between cesareans and perinatal mortality." And Luciano Movicelli, of the S. Orsola Hospital, Bologna, noted: "The conviction that a cesarean equals more safety ought to be thrown out because it is absolutely false."

### Keeping Up Appearances

What is a Japanese man to do when he does not have enough relatives or friends to keep up proper appearances at weddings and funerals? The answer: Rent them. A bride and a groom each usually try to invite the same number of guests. However, if the two groups are unequal or either is too small to make a suitable impression, the bride or groom may secretly call on the services of the *benriya*, literally "useful persons." *Benriya* do almost any odd job, including substituting for relatives and friends. In the case of funerals, they are hired not as professional mourners but as substitutes so that neighbors will not discover, for example, that the deceased's work associates would not come. The owner of a *benriya* company was reported in *Mainichi Daily News* as saying that at one company

executive's funeral he attended, about 60 of the 100 people present were *benriya*. "The family must have called up 3 or 4 *benriya* companies," he said.

### **What Makes Teachers Popular?**

"Even though many children moan about school more and more often, most of them still have a favorite teacher," reports the German newspaper *Nassauische Neue Presse*. Indeed, 91 percent of girls and 83 percent of boys have a favorite teacher. A survey of 2,080 students between 7 and 16 years of age tried to discover what qualities make teachers popular with their students. It may be surprising to many that "a teacher who gives little homework is not necessarily the favorite." Much more important is that the teacher be fair, have a sense of humor, and make lessons interesting. Furthermore, students appreciate teachers who are able to explain things well, keep calm, and show understanding.

### **Untended Children**

More and more Australian parents leave small children alone at home to fend for themselves while the parents are off at work or engaged in other activities. This worrisome trend has particularly come to light since the establishment of a national telephone hotline for children. It is now receiving about 35,000 calls a week from distressed youngsters. According to *The Sunday Telegraph* of Sydney, the help line's director says: "We have a steady procession of kids who are at the extreme end of the problem—kids left alone without food or any sort of parental care." The paper com-

mented: "[This] is an indictment on modern family life as we know it." In fact, some of these children are little more than tots; one caller to an emergency number was a scared four-year-old girl.

### **Our Garbage Talks**

What is our garbage saying? It is telling us what patterns of human behavior we follow. Garbage reveals what we consume and what we waste. "People who live routine, predictable lives waste less, because they tend to buy only what they need and consume what they buy," said *The Toronto Star*.



Surprisingly, when there is a shortage of something, "people, paradoxically, waste a lot more of it than when it's abundantly available," added the *Star*. Why is this so? People hoard. They buy more than they need and then dispose of what they do not use. Hot dogs—lots of hot dogs—are the most common food found in wet garbage. Paper, an abundance of paper, particularly newsprint, finds its way into landfills. The computer age has added more, not less, paper to our dry garbage. The overall message of our garbage is that we are living in a wasteful society.

### **AIDS Vaccine "Unprofitable"**

The World Health Organization's director of research and

development, Dr. Piot, has announced that economic considerations have caused some pharmaceutical laboratories to abandon their search for an AIDS vaccine in favor of drugs for treating AIDS patients. It is reported that the laboratories fear that if an effective AIDS vaccine were developed, government pressure would force them to surrender the product to the public, leaving little room for profit.

### **Parental Guidance Needed**

Conversing by means of computers, children often get messages full of sexual innuendo or outright proposition. They can communicate with transvestites and homosexuals. They can learn how to make bombs, how to steal credit-card numbers, and how to break into other computer systems and to commit criminal acts. Certain computer games allure children into unlimited withdrawal from reality, and a number get addicted to them. Some say "the solution lies in that most daunting task: teaching values," notes *The Washington Post National Weekly Edition*.

### **Mother at 62**

At the age of 62, an Italian woman gave birth to a child. Mother and child, a boy weighing 7 pounds 3 ounces, are doing fine. Along with the congratulations for the happy event, the case also raised an uproar in the field of ethics. Why? The mother became pregnant by means of artificial insemination. "I know this case will cause a storm," commented Professor Severino Antinori, the gynecologist who assisted the birth, "but it should be considered an extreme measure."

## FROM OUR READERS

**Education** I just graduated from a Nigerian university and missed having top grades by a margin of 2 percent. I was somewhat depressed. So when you published the article "Keeping Education in Its Place" (August 22, 1994) and showed that education should not be pursued for the sake of shining scholastically, I began to see things in their proper perspective. While my professors have encouraged me to pursue postgraduate courses, I am giving matters serious thought in the light of what I have learned.

G. J., Nigeria

I am 14 years old and under a lot of pressure to pursue higher education. With the help of your article, I have decided what I would like to do. I want to be a pioneer [full-time evangelizer], and if I need extra training to get a job, I would like to go to a vocational school and learn photography.

H. O., United States

I chose not to obtain supplementary education. I prefer to use that time to teach others about our Creator. People are usually amazed at how much I know about a variety of subjects. They ask, "Are you in college?" I tell them I have learned what I know from the Bible and the literature provided by the Watch Tower Society.

M. L., United States

Your article showed the need of considering the pros and cons of supplementary education. I felt the need to go to school again but did not want to neglect spiritual activities. I explained my schedule of Christian meetings to the school secretary, and he arranged my classes so that I could attend all my meetings.

M. F. S., Brazil

**Weaker Vessel?** Thank you for the enlightening article "The Bible's Viewpoint:

The 'Weaker Vessel'—An Insult to Women?" (October 8, 1994) Every male should read this article, as it is so beautifully laid out.

G. B., United States

I never clearly understood the Bible's expression at 1 Peter 3:7 about women being 'weaker vessels.' I always thought that women were lesser creatures, and I grew up seeing men treating women with very little respect. But that article straightened out my thinking.

T. C., United States

**Opposite Sex** Thank you so much for the "Young People Ask . . ." articles "Why Is It So Hard to Keep My Mind Off the Opposite Sex?" and "How Can I Get My Mind off the Opposite Sex?" (July 22, 1994; August 8, 1994) It was nice to know that I am not crazy, since at age 12 I have strong feelings for a boy I know. The second article helped me to stop thinking about him so much. I told an older Christian sister in my congregation, and she helped me.

P. Z., United States

The part on masturbation hit home. I thought masturbating would help me cool the flames of sexual desire, but it only makes it worse. I pray Jehovah will forgive me for being involved in this disgusting practice.

P. M., United States

The article came at the right time for me. In school the number-one topic is sex. There is a girl at school who attends the same congregation I do. I find her to be very intelligent, clever, and pretty. The article helped me to avoid constantly thinking of her and looking for her.

M. F., Germany

# "A Financial Holocaust"

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN NIGERIA

ACCORDING to a UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) report, sub-Saharan Africa is suffering "a financial holocaust." Almost half the population—some 220 million people—live in absolute poverty, unable to care for their most basic needs. The average citizen is 20 percent poorer than he or she was a decade ago.

"In education," says the report, "the 1980s can only be described as a lost decade." Spending per student dropped by one third, and enrollment in primary schools fell from 79 to 67 percent. Health-care services are also waning in many African countries, with many clinics closing because of lack of staff and medicine.

The report lists several causes of the continent's economic crisis, including military spending, declining trade, and colossal debts, which experts say can never be repaid. "Africa cannot recover," says the UNICEF report, "without an international effort on a scale that has not yet been contemplated."

Is this likely to occur? The Bible realistically states: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs." (Psalm 146:3) The solution to Africa's deep-seated problems does not rest with the governments of men. It is God's Kingdom that will bring lasting relief—not just to Africa but to the entire world.—Matthew 6:10.

WHO/OXFAM

# Awake! the Basis for a Test

## De capybara Vergissing of wonder van de schepping?

HOE zo derlike miscreet Charles Denkt u zich dat ik „een ve Hoewel ik van mij echt kwaad veren. Ik zal u van houd, en w de en mijn sied of ok een vergi ping ben.

## Sloppenwijken Het harde leven in de jungle van de stad

Door Ontwaak! correspondent in Afrika

Ministerie van Onderwijs en Volksontwikkeling  
EXAMENBUREAU

# Toetsboekje 1

Glo 6



Tekstbegrip

Hoofdrekenen

Aardrijkskunde

WOENSDAG 21 JULI 1993

EIGENDOMSRECHT

Dit boekje is het eigendom van het Mino. Er mag niets uit worden overgenomen of vermenigvuldigd zonder toestemming.

Het boekje mag pas open na toestemming.

WHEN students in the South American country of Suriname opened their high school entrance examination booklet in July 1993, they discovered that regular *Awake!* magazine readers had an advantage. This was because nearly half of the questions in the 36-page booklet, which had been prepared by the Ministry of Education's Examination Bureau, were based on two articles from *Awake!*

Pages 1 through 9 featured the article "Shantytowns—Hard Times in the Urban Jungle," which appeared in *Awake!* of October 8, 1992. There were 21 questions that tested comprehension on that material. Pages 10 to 16 of the examination booklet contained 14 questions on the article "The Capybara—Mistake or Marvel of Creation?," which appeared in *Awake!* of September 22, 1992.

"By using these articles to examine the textual comprehension of students throughout the country," remarked one headmaster in the western part of Suriname, "school authorities show that they view *Awake!* as a model of correct grammar and crisp writing."