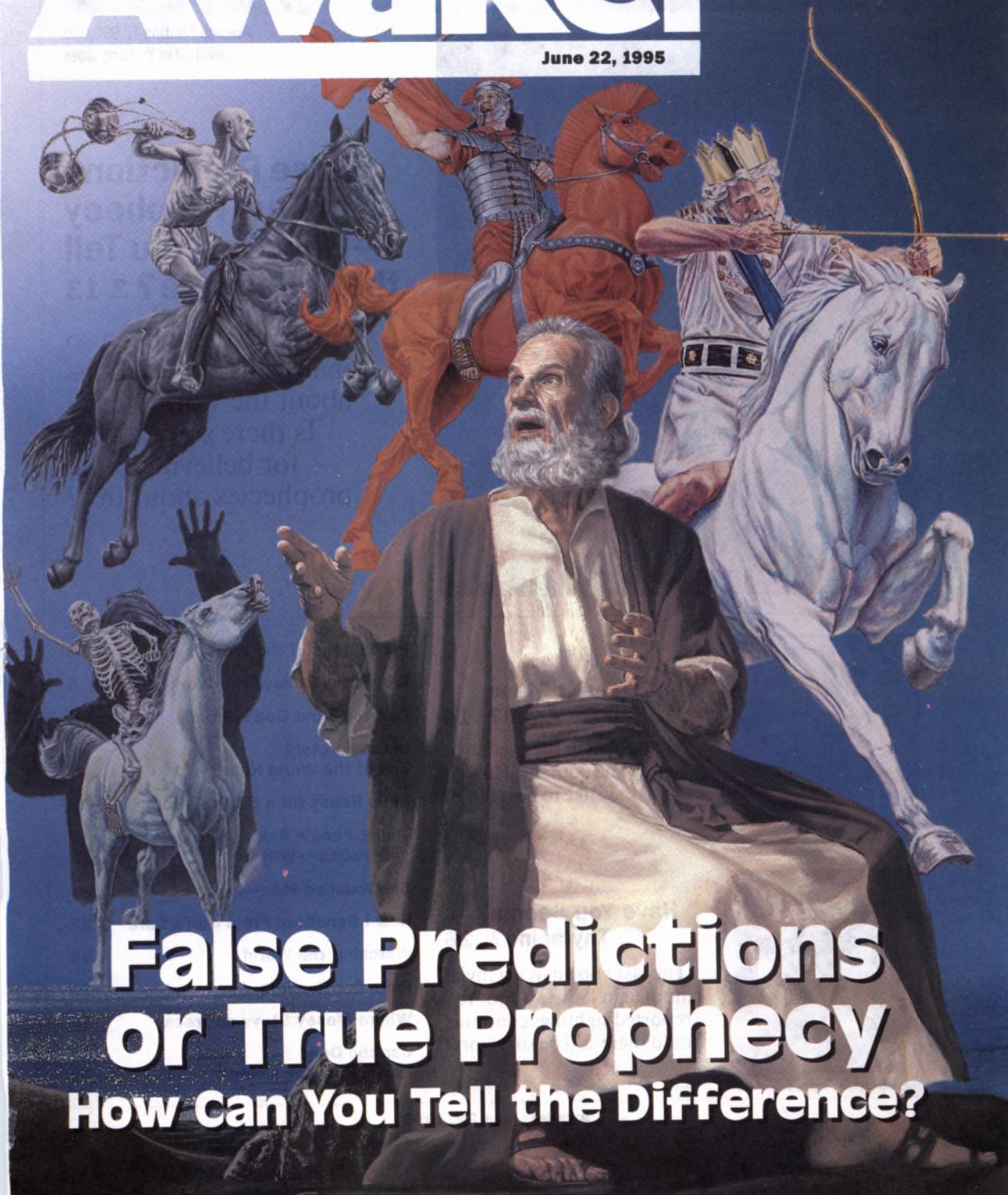


# Awake!

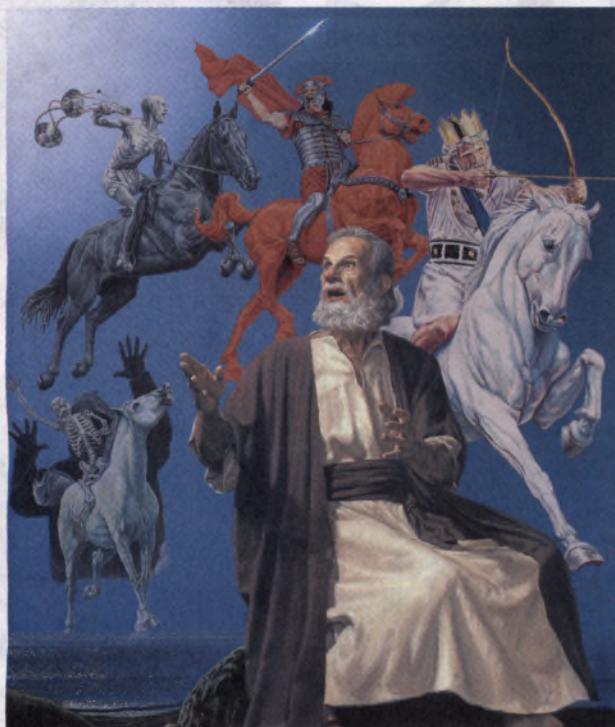
2300, 1995, 1996 All the True Books

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## False Predictions or True Prophecy

How Can You Tell the Difference?

**What Does It Mean  
to Be Aged? 14**

What can help the aged to be happy and content? How do they like to be treated?

**Have You Seen a  
Thylacine? 26**

The last known living thylacine died in 1936 in a zoo. Yet, reported sightings continue. Could there still be survivors?

Tom McHugh/Photo Researchers

**False Predictions  
or True Prophecy  
—How Can You Tell  
the Difference? 3-13**

Why have there been so many false predictions about the world's end? Is there sound basis for believing Bible prophecies about this?

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Predictions of the World's End</b>               | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Why Many Believe the World Will End</b>          | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Can You Trust God's Promises?</b>                | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Is the Foretold<br/>End of the World Near?</b>   | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Keep Ready for a Bright Future</b>               | <b>13</b> |
| <b>Young People Ask . . .<br/>Stealing—Why Not?</b> | <b>17</b> |
| <b>She Touched Many Lives</b>                       | <b>20</b> |
| <b>How I Benefited From God's Care</b>              | <b>22</b> |
| <b>Watching the World</b>                           | <b>28</b> |
| <b>From Our Readers</b>                             | <b>30</b> |
| <b>Where Money Stays on Trees</b>                   | <b>31</b> |
| <b>Can the Dead<br/>Really Help the Living?</b>     | <b>32</b> |

# PREDICTIONS OF THE WORLD'S END

IN 1033, just 1,000 years after the death of Christ, the inhabitants of Burgundy, France, were in great fear because it was predicted that the world would end that year. Expectations of doom were heightened when an unusual number of destructive thunderstorms and a severe famine occurred. Large crowds engaged in public displays of repentance.

A few decades earlier, as the thousandth year from Christ's birth approached (according to the chronology then accepted), many believed the world's end was at hand. Artistic and cultural activity in Europe's monasteries is said to have nearly ground to a halt. Eric Russell observed in his book *Astrology and Prediction*: "Seeing that the end of the world is now approaching" was a fairly common formula in wills executed during the second half of the tenth century."

Martin Luther, who started the Protestant Reformation in the 16th century, predicted that the world's end was near in his day. According to one authority, he stated: "For my part, I am sure that the day of judgment is just around the corner." Another writer explained: "By correlating historical events with Biblical prophecies Luther could

"For thousands of years prophets of gloom have been predicting that the world was about to end."

*—Premonitions: A Leap Into the Future.*

announce the nearness of the final cataclysm."

In the 19th century, William Miller, who is generally credited with the founding of the Adventist Church, predicted that Christ would return sometime between March 1843 and March 1844. As a result, some then expected to be taken away to heaven.

In more recent times, a Ukraine-based religion called the Great White Brotherhood predicted that the world would end on November 14, 1993. In the U.S.A., a radio evangelist, Harold Camping, said the end of the world would come in September 1994. Obviously, these predictions of dates for the world's end have been wrong.

Has this caused people no longer to believe that the world will end? On the contrary. "The approach of a new millennium in the year 2000," noted *U.S. News and World Report* of December 19, 1994, "is unleashing a flood of doomsday prophecies." The magazine reported that "nearly 60 percent of Americans think the world will end sometime in the future; almost a third of those think it will end within a few decades."

Why have there been so many predictions regarding the end of the world? Is there good reason to believe it will end?

# WHY MANY BELIEVE THE WORLD WILL END

THE world truly is in a desperate situation, as many today quickly acknowledge. "I have asked people from various parts of the world what they think of our chances for the future," the evangelist Billy Graham wrote. "Most of them have a pessimistic view. . . . Constantly the words 'Armageddon' and 'Apocalypse' are used to describe events on the world scene."

Why are the words "Armageddon" and "Apocalypse" often used to describe today's situation? What is their significance?

## Biblical Origins

The Bible speaks of "the war of the great day of God the Almighty" and relates this war to the place "called in Hebrew Har-Magedon," or Armageddon. (Revelation 16: 14-16) *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines Armageddon as "a final and conclusive battle between the forces of good and evil."

Although "apocalypse" is from a Greek word that means "revelation," or "unveiling," it has taken on another meaning. The Bible book of Revelation, or Apocalypse, highlights God's destruction of the wicked and the Thousand Year Reign of his Son, Jesus Christ. (Revelation 19:11-16; 20:6) Thus, *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines

"apocalypse" as "an imminent cosmic cataclysm in which God destroys the ruling powers of evil and raises the righteous to life in a messianic kingdom."

When people today speak of the world and its situation, they are obviously influenced by what is said in the Bible. What does the Bible actually say about the end of the world?

## The Bible and the World's End

The Bible clearly foretells the end of the world. Jesus Christ and his disciples spoke about the time of the end. (Matthew 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 3:3; *King James Version*) However, they did not mean that the earth itself would be destroyed. Of the literal earth, the Bible says: "It will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever." (Psalm 104:5) The expression "end of the world" means simply "conclusion of the system of things."—*New World Translation*.

The apostle Peter spoke of the world before the Flood in Noah's day and said: "The world of that time [consisting of ungodly people] suffered destruction when it was deluged with water." Peter then went on to say that our present world is "reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of



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**Would you welcome more information? Write Watch Tower at the appropriate address on page 5. Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.**

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the ungodly men." (2 Peter 3:5-7) The apostle John also wrote: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever."—1 John 2:17.

During the end of this world, its invisible ungodly ruler will also be put out of the way. (Revelation 20:1-3) The apostle Paul wrote about this evil ruler: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not." Jesus said of him: "Now shall the prince of this world [Satan the Devil] be cast out."—2 Corinthians 4:4; John 12:31; KJ.

Will it not be a blessing to be rid of this world and its wicked ruler? Christians have long prayed for this to happen, asking for God's Kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth. They are praying for Jesus Christ to act in obedience to his Father's command to rid the earth of all wickedness! —Psalm 110:1, 2; Proverbs 2:21, 22; Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10.

However, this raises a question: Could false, or erroneous, predictions of the world's end have resulted because people predicted a date for this event based on a misunderstanding or misapplication of true Bible prophecies? Let us see.

### First-Century Misunderstandings

Consider what occurred in the first century. When Jesus was about to ascend to heaven, his apostles eagerly asked: "Lord,

are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" They wanted to enjoy all the blessings of the Kingdom right away, but Jesus said: "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction."—Acts 1:6, 7.

Just three days before his death, Jesus had spoken similarly: "Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming." He added: "Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father. Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is." (Matthew 24:42, 44; Mark 13:32, 33) A few months earlier, Jesus had also encouraged: "Keep ready, because at an hour that you do not think likely the Son of man is coming."—Luke 12:40.

Despite such cautions provided by Jesus, early Christians, eager for Christ's presence and the blessings it would bring, began speculating about when Kingdom promises would be fulfilled. Thus, the apostle Paul wrote the Thessalonians: "Respecting the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we request of you not to be quickly shaken from your reason nor to be excited either through an inspired expression or through a verbal message or through a letter as though from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here."—2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2.

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Paul's words indicate that some early Christians had developed erroneous expectations. Although the Christians in Thessalonica may not have predicted a particular date for their 'being gathered to Christ in heaven,' they clearly thought that event was at hand. They needed to have their views corrected, and Paul's letter did this.

#### **Others Also Need Correction**

As we noted in the first article, after the first century, others also expected the ful-

fillment of God's promises at a particular time. Some made predictions that the end of a thousand years, counting either from Jesus' birth or from his death, would see the end of the world. But their predictions likewise proved false, or erroneous.

This raises the questions: Have mistakes regarding the fulfillment of Bible promises meant that the promises themselves were wrong? Are God's promises reliable? And how have modern Christians accepted correction on this matter?

## **CAN YOU TRUST GOD'S PROMISES?**

**J**EHOVAH GOD, our Creator, has always been true to his word. "I have even spoken it," he said. "I shall also do it." (Isaiah 46:11) After leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, God's servant Joshua wrote: "Not a promise failed out of all the good promise that Jehovah had made to the house of Israel; it all came true."—Joshua 21:45; 23:14.

From Joshua's day until the coming of the Messiah, hundreds of prophecies inspired by God were fulfilled. An example is when the rebuilder of Jericho suffered a penalty foretold centuries in advance. (Joshua 6:26; 1 Kings 16:34) Yet another is the promise, seemingly impossible to fulfill, that the starving inhabitants of Samaria would receive plenty of food to eat on the day following the prediction. In 2 Kings chapter 7, you can read how God fulfilled that promise.

#### **Rise and Fall of World Powers**

God inspired Bible writers to record details about the rise and fall of world powers.

For example, God used his prophet Isaiah to foretell the overthrow of mighty Babylon nearly 200 years before it happened. In fact, the Medes, who became aligned with the Persians, were named as the conquerors. (Isaiah 13:17-19) Yet more remarkable, God's prophet named the Persian king Cyrus as the one who would take the lead in the conquest, even though Cyrus had not even been born when the prophecy was recorded! (Isaiah 45:1) But there is more.

The prophet Isaiah also foretold *how* the conquest of Babylon would be accomplished. He wrote that the city's protecting waters, the river Euphrates, 'must be dried up' and that "the gates [of Babylon] will not be shut." (Isaiah 44:27-45:1) These specific details were fulfilled, as the historian Herodotus reported.

While Babylon was still supreme, God also used his prophet Daniel to tell about the world powers that would follow her. Daniel had a vision of a symbolic two-horned ram that succeeded in

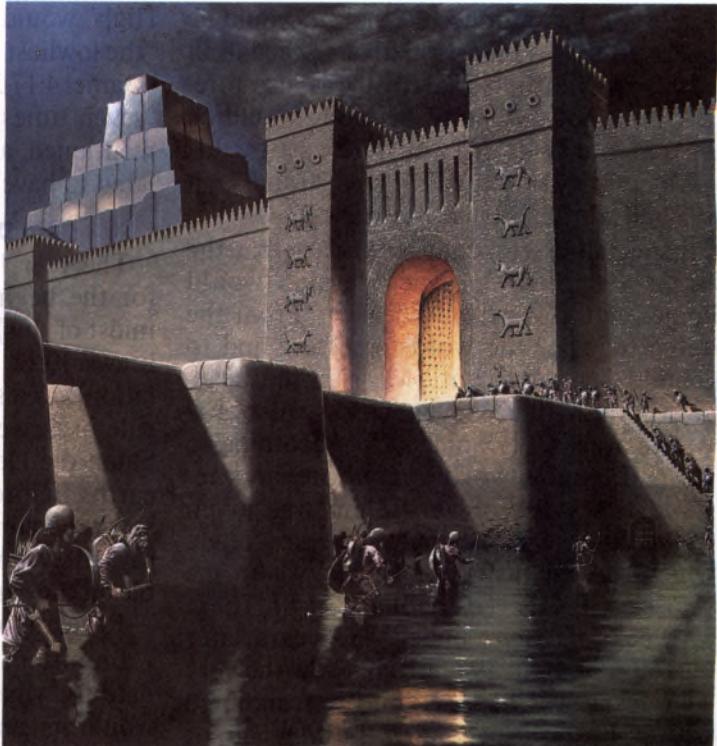
**Specific details were foretold about the fall of Babylon**

conquering all other “wild beasts.” Leaving no question as to whom the two-horned ram represented, Daniel wrote that it “stands for the kings of Media and Persia.” (Daniel 8:1-4, 20) Indeed, just as foretold, Medo-Persia became the next world power when it conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.E.

In this vision from God, Daniel next saw “a male of the goats [with] a conspicuous horn between its eyes.” Daniel continued his description: ‘I saw it coming into close touch with the ram, and it struck down the ram and broke its two horns, and the ram proved to have no deliverer. And the male of the goats put on great airs; but as soon as it became mighty, the great horn was broken, and there came up four instead of it.’—Daniel 8:5-8.

God’s Word does not leave any question as to what all of this means. Note the explanation: “The hairy he-goat stands for the king of Greece; and as for the great horn that was between its eyes, it stands for the first king. And that one having been broken, so that there were four that finally stood up instead of it, there are four kingdoms from his nation that will stand up, but not with his power.”—Daniel 8:21, 22.

History shows that this “king of Greece” was Alexander the Great. After his death in 323 B.C.E., his empire was eventually split up among four of his generals—Seleucus I



Nicator, Cassander, Ptolemy I, and Lysimachus. Just as the Bible had foretold, “there were four that finally stood up instead.” As also foretold, none of these ever had the power that Alexander had. Indeed, so remarkable have been the fulfillments that such Bible prophecies have been called “history written in advance.”

**The Messiah Promised**

God not only promised a Messiah to deliver humans from the effects of sin and death but also provided scores of prophecies to identify that Promised One. Consider only a few of these, prophecies that Jesus could not have arranged to fulfill.

It was foretold hundreds of years in advance that the Promised One would be born in Bethlehem and that he would be born of a virgin. (Compare Micah 5:2 and Matthew 2:3-9; Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:

22, 23.) It was prophesied that he would be betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. (Zechariah 11:12, 13; Matthew 27:3-5) It was also foretold that not a bone of his body would be broken and that lots would be cast for his garments.—Compare Psalm 34:20 and John 19:36, Psalm 22:18 and Matthew 27:35.

Especially significant is the fact that the Bible foretold *when* the Messiah would come. God's Word prophesied: "From the going forth of the word to restore and to rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Leader, there will be seven weeks, also sixty two weeks." (Daniel 9:25) According to the Bible, the word to restore and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem was given in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes' reign, which secular history indicates was in the year 455 B.C.E. (Nehemiah 2:1-8) These 69 weeks of years ended 483 years later ( $7 \times 69 = 483$ ), in 29 C.E. That was the very year Jesus was baptized and was anointed with holy spirit, becoming the Messiah, or Christ!

Significantly, the people in Jesus' day were *expecting* the Messiah to appear at that time, as the Christian historian Luke noted. (Luke 3:15) Roman historians Tacitus and Suetonius, Jewish historian Josephus, and Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus also testified to this state of expectation. Even Abba Hillel Silver, in his book *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel*, acknowledges that "the Messiah was expected around the second quarter of the first century C.E." This, he said, was because of "*the popular chronology of that day*," derived in part from the book of Daniel.

In view of such information, it should not be surprising that the Bible would also indicate when the Messiah would return to begin his kingly rule. Chronological evidence contained in the prophecy of Daniel pinpointed the very time that "the Most

High" would hand earth's rulership over to "the lowliest one of mankind," Jesus Christ. (Daniel 4:17-25; Matthew 11:29) A period of "seven times," or seven prophetic years, is mentioned, and this period has been calculated to have run out in the year 1914.\*

#### No Date Given for the End

The year 1914, however, is the date only for the beginning of Christ's rule "in the midst of [his] enemies." (Psalm 110:1, 2; Hebrews 10:12, 13) The Bible book of Revelation reveals that at the time that Christ's rule in heaven would begin, he would hurl Satan the Devil and his angels down to the earth. Before he would put these wicked spirit persons out of existence, the Bible says, they would cause a great deal of trouble on the earth for "a short period of time." —Revelation 12:7-12.

Importantly, the Bible does not provide a date for when this "short period of time" would end and when Christ would act as Executioner of God's enemies at Armageddon. (Revelation 16:16; 19:11-21) In fact, as noted in the preceding article, Jesus said to keep ready because no human knows the date for that event. (Mark 13:32, 33) When someone goes beyond what Jesus said, as did early Christians in Thessalonica and others after them, there will be false, or inaccurate, predictions.—2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2.

#### Correction of Viewpoint Needed

Prior to the latter part of the year 1914, many Christians expected Christ to return at that time and to take them away to heaven. Thus, in a discourse given on September 30, 1914, A. H. Macmillan, a Bible Student, stated: "This is probably the last public address I shall ever deliver because we shall be going home [to heaven] soon."

\* See the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, pages 138-41, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.



***Jesus could not have arranged to fulfill many of the prophecies about himself***

Clearly, Macmillan was mistaken, but that was not the only unfulfilled expectation he or his fellow Bible Students had.

Bible Students, known since 1931 as Jehovah's Witnesses, also expected that the year 1925 would see the fulfillment of marvelous Bible prophecies. They surmised that at that time the earthly resurrection would begin, bringing back faithful men of old, such as Abraham, David, and Daniel. More recently, many Witnesses conjectured that events associated with the beginning of Christ's Millennial Reign might start to take place in 1975. Their anticipation was based on the understanding that the seventh millennium of human history would begin then.

These erroneous views did not mean that God's promises were wrong, that he had made a mistake. By no means! The mistakes or misconceptions, as in the case of first-century Christians, were due to a failure to heed Jesus' caution, 'You do not know the time.' The wrong conclusions were due, not to malice or to unfaithfulness to Christ, but to a fervent desire to realize the fulfillment of God's promises in their own time.

Consequently, A. H. Macmillan explained later: "I learned that we should

admit our mistakes and continue searching God's Word for more enlightenment. No matter what adjustments we would have to make from time to time in our views, that would not change the gracious provision of the ransom and God's promise of eternal life."

Indeed, God's promises can be trusted! It is humans who are prone to error. Therefore, true Christians will maintain a waiting attitude in obedience to Jesus' command. They will keep awake and ready for Christ's inevitable coming as God's Executioner. They will not allow false predictions to dull their senses and cause them to ignore the true warning of the world's end.

What, then, about the belief that this world will end? Is there really evidence that it will occur shortly, within your lifetime?



# IS THE FORETOLD END OF THE WORLD NEAR?

THE *Detroit Free Press Magazine* of February 6, 1994, noted: "Apocalyptic dreams became an obsession with the dawn of the nuclear age. After the incineration of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, it was obvious to everyone: Now the world *really could end!*"

Last December, Charles B. Strozier, a New York psychoanalyst and professor of history, said: "We no longer need poets to tell us it could all end with a bang, or a whimper, or in the agony of AIDS." In fact, he added: "It now takes an active imagination *not* to think about human endings."

Since Jesus Christ taught that the world would end, can we determine from his teachings whether the end is really near?

## The End—When?

Jesus' disciples asked him for a "sign" to identify when this world, or system of things, would end. "When will these things be," they inquired, "and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?" (Matthew 24:3) You can check "the sign" Jesus gave in answer to this question. It is recorded in the Bible in Matthew chapter 24, Mark chapter 13, and Luke



U.S. National Archives photo

chapter 21. Some of the major events making up that sign are as follows:

**GREAT WARS:** "*Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.*" (Matthew 24:7) We have certainly seen this part of the sign fulfilled. "The First World War [beginning in 1914] was the

first 'total' war," noted one historian. Yet, World War II was many times worse, claiming some 50 million victims. And war continues to ravage the earth.

**FOOD SHORTAGES:** "*There will be food shortages.*" (Matthew 24:7) World War I was followed by terrible famine, and since then famine has continued to run rampant in many parts of the earth. Even in wealthier nations, hunger and malnutrition are widespread.

**GREAT EARTHQUAKES:** "*There will be great earthquakes.*" (Luke 21:11) Consider only a few major ones: 1920, China, 200,000 killed; 1923, Japan, 143,000 lives lost; 1970, Peru, 66,800 killed; and 1976, China, 240,000 (some say 800,000) casualties. A specialist in earthquake-proof engineering called the 1976 China quake "the greatest earthquake disaster in the history of mankind."



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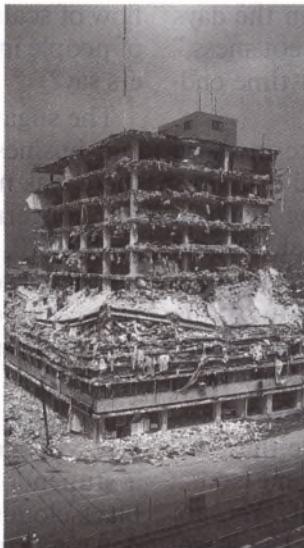
**DISEASE:** “*In one place after another pestilences.*” (Luke 21:11) Right after World War I, some 21 million people died of the Spanish flu. *Science Digest* reported: “In all history there had been no sterner, swifter visitation of death.” Since then, heart disease, cancer, AIDS, and many other maladies have killed hundreds of millions.

**CRIME:** “*Increasing of lawlessness.*” (Matthew 24:12) In many lands crime is out of control. Murder, robbery, rape, terrorism, corruption—daily we hear about such crimes or we experience them ourselves.

Other Bible prophecies also foretold conditions that would exist in the last days. For example, in the book of Revelation, there is the vision of the ride of four horsemen. (Revelation 6:1-8) The first horseman pictures Jesus himself as conquering King. The other riders with their steeds picture happenings on earth that mark the beginning of Jesus’ reign: war, famine, and untimely death through various means.

Still other Bible prophecies describe attitudes and situations that would be prevalent during “the final age of this world.” Consider what an apostle of Jesus wrote. When you read this prophecy, ask yourself: Does this not describe exactly the troubled times of today?

“The final age of this world,” the apostle wrote, “is



WHO photo by W. Cutting



to be a time of troubles. Men will love nothing but money and self; they will be arrogant, boastful, and abusive; with no respect for parents, no gratitude, no piety, no natural affection; they will be implacable in their hatreds, scandal-mongers, intemperate and fierce, strangers to all goodness, traitors, adventurers, swollen with self-importance. They will be men who put pleasure in the place of God, men who preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality.”—2 Timothy 3:1-5, *The New English Bible*.

Another important prophecy regarding the world’s end is the one that promises that God will “bring to ruin those ruining the earth.” (Revelation 11:18) Humans in previous generations never had the technological capacity to ruin the earth, but they do now. And today new technologies are playing a major part in polluting the environment. In November 1992, newspapers carried headlines like this: “Top Scientists Warn of Earth’s Destruction.”

#### Recognize True Prophecy

There can be no question about it. All the things that the Bible foretold would happen during “the final age,” or “the conclusion of the system of things,” are occurring right now. We are seeing true prophecy in the course of fulfillment, and it is vital that we give heed to it. Jesus showed

this in describing the situation in the days of Noah, "a preacher of righteousness," shortly before the world of that time ended.—2 Peter 2:5.

Jesus explained: "As they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and *they took no note* until the flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be." (Matthew 24:38, 39) When true prophecy is ignored, the consequences are disastrous.

Perhaps you say, 'Yes, I believe these Bible prophecies; the end will come some day, but it's quite some time off.' Yet, are you sure? Should you not heed the warning now?

#### **Warnings That Should Be Heeded**

Obviously, some warnings are without basis, and it would be foolish to heed them. But others are not. Just because many, including prominent members of a community, belittle a warning, that is no reason to ignore it. Consider an example.

It was March 1902, and on the beautiful Caribbean island of Martinique, volcanic Mount Pelée became active. By April, smoke, ash, and bits of rock belched forth along with acrid fumes. The citizens of St. Pierre, located about five miles away, became apprehensive. "The city is covered with ashes," one resident wrote. "Many of the people are obliged to wear wet handkerchiefs to protect themselves from the strong fumes."

Early in May the volcanic activity increased. The local newspaper said: "The rain of ashes never ceases . . . The passing of carriages is no longer heard in the streets. The wheels are muffled." The heat was suffocating.

Then, on May 5, the volcano sent forth a

flow of scalding material that killed dozens of people in its path. But what did city leaders say?

The sugarcane harvest was approaching, and businessmen assured the people that there was no great danger. The politicians too, concerned with the upcoming election on May 10, did not want the people to flee. So they also tried to squelch the people's fears. Moreover, the clergy cooperated with the business and political groups and persuaded their parishioners not to leave.

Then it happened. On May 8, shortly before 8:00 a.m., Mount Pelée exploded with a stupendous roar. Gigantic, superheated black clouds raced with unbelievable speed down toward St. Pierre. The hot gas quickly extinguished thousands of lives. Practically everyone in St. Pierre died—some 30,000 or more persons. The lone person to survive was a young prisoner in a dungeon at the bottom of the prison.

#### **The Situation Today**

Similarly today, there are many who belittle the evidence that Bible prophecies are in the course of fulfillment. They refuse to heed evidence that should be convincing to any reasonable person that the end of this system is near. Yet, the Bible even foretold their attitude, saying: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'" —2 Peter 3:3, 4.

But today's ridiculers are mistaken. The fact is, *things have changed*. Bible prophecies are being fulfilled. The evidence that the end is near is overwhelming.

Wisely, you should not put off lifesaving action. But what do you need to do?

# KEEP READY FOR A BRIGHT FUTURE

“KEEP ready,” Jesus urged. (Luke 12:40) If we do, when Christ comes “with power and great glory,” we can respond with joy to his command: “Raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near.”—Luke 21:27, 28.

What kind of deliverance? Why, the kind of deliverance Noah and his family enjoyed—yes, through the end of this world! “The world is passing away,” the apostle John wrote, “but he that does the will of God remains forever.”—1 John 2:17.

In Jehovah’s new world, earthly subjects of the King, Jesus Christ, will enjoy everlasting life. “The righteous themselves will possess the earth,” the Bible says, “and they will reside forever upon it.” (Psalm 37:29) What a marvelous future God promises for his people! “God himself will be with them,” his Word says. “He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.” This is true prophecy! —Revelation 21:3, 4.

Yet, to enjoy this future, you must act. Obtaining knowledge is the first essential. The Bible explains: “This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.” —John 17:3.

You also need to meet together regularly with the others who are seeking this knowledge, as the apostle urged: “Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together . . . and all the more so as you behold the day drawing near.” (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Indeed, Jehovah’s people behold the day of deliverance into God’s new world drawing ever closer, and so they have become known for their meeting together.

Commenting on one gathering at a large stadium, the London *Sunday Telegraph* reported: “There is none of the gloom traditionally associated with those who declare that ‘The End Is Nigh.’ Nigh it may be. In the meantime everyone seems to be enjoying himself in a sober, upright, Godly but cheerful manner.” The paper then added: “If the present world order really is about to break down, the Witnesses at Twickenham seem well prepared to organise the new one.”

Keeping ready means keeping busy, doing a work like that done by Noah, who served in the days before the Flood as “a preacher of righteousness.” (2 Peter 2:5) Keeping ready also means engaging “in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion.” You are invited, yes, urged, to join with Jehovah’s people in “awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah.”—2 Peter 3:11, 12.

# What Does It Mean to Be Aged?

"OLD AGE ISN'T SO BAD WHEN YOU CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVE."

—Maurice Chevalier.

THE aging process eventually affects everyone. It is inescapable. It begins almost imperceptibly—a little ache here, a little wrinkle there, and a few gray hairs—but eventually it engulfs a person in its unrelenting grip. Never in history have so many felt the effects of old age.

A major reason for the increase in the number of older ones is the success of medical science in controlling death-dealing diseases. In the United States, for example, those over 65 represent about 12 percent of the population, and in Japan roughly 11 percent. Americans over the age of 85 increased from 700,000 in 1953 to 2.1 million in 1978. Indeed, about 50,000 Americans and some 3,700 Canadians are a hundred years old or older!

Although the aged are leading more productive lives than they did in the past, a person's later years are invariably marred by a decrease in certain abilities. Hearing, vision, muscle tone, and mobility are all affected as one ages. Some older ones suffer loneliness and even senility. Others feel they are losing their attractiveness and become depressed.

Often it is how one adjusts to the process of aging that determines one's happiness or lack of it. When someone says: "I'm too old to do that," it is at times the attitude, more than anything physical, that closes the door to possible activities.

A youth showed considerable insight when he said: "Old, to me, seems anybody

that has stopped living life to the fullest, anybody who doesn't love and have fun with life anymore. It isn't really possible to put an age on 'old' as there are teenagers who seem old, yet there are senior citizens who seem young."

## Aged Yet Happy and Content

For some the later years of life prove to be, in certain ways, golden years. These happy aged ones enjoy freedom from the pressures and restrictions of regular employment. For them old age means more time to enjoy their grandchildren. They realize that their happiness does not depend on what others think of them. They may feel freer to speak their minds, and they may be more relaxed and contented.

Furthermore, such ones may look beyond their personal needs and find joy in volunteering to help those in need. They assist the blind by reading to them, take orphans on trips, or help the disabled to feel better about themselves. Others learn new skills and do things they were not able to do while raising a family or making a living. The famed American painter Grandma Moses started her painting career in her late 70's and completed 25 pictures after the age of 100!

Of course, one does not have to do unusual things to achieve joy. At the age of 86, a world-famous stage actress commented: "I'm having the best time, now! So late? you wonder. The advantage of being at this



### **Do you visit the elderly?**

source of wisdom and experience that younger persons can tap to their advantage. Of course, this does not give a license for older ones to interfere in the lives of others.

Happily, in some cultures the aged are still given due respect. In Japan and most African countries, for example, they often remain the core of the family and tribal unit. In the Abkhaz

point in my life is that I look neither back nor forward—more than a few days at a time. I just enjoy *now*." She added: "To feel really good about yourself, your life, you don't have to make the front page or make a million dollars."

Another advantage of being aged is the wisdom and experience that are usually acquired along the way. Do you appreciate these assets? One woman who does said: "I appreciate the wisdom I've attained over the years. Learning what's really important has helped me cope with life's problems. In fact, many younger women seek me out for advice. They usually say afterward: 'I'm so glad I talked to you. I never thought of it that way before.' I wouldn't trade that for anything. I'm so thankful I can be of help, especially to younger ones."

#### **View of the Aged**

At one time the aged were highly respected, and their advice was followed. In many lands this has changed. Now the aged are often ignored and even ill-treated. This is sad, since the aged represent a rich re-

source of wisdom, Georgia, in the former Soviet Union, where people commonly live more than a hundred years, centenarians are respected by the younger generations. The word of the aged ones is often considered to be law within the family.

When youngsters tap this resource of wisdom, the family unit benefits. There can be a special relationship between grandparents and grandchildren. It is through this affinity of the two age groups that children often learn patience, compassion, empathy, and respect for their elders. When they lose this contact, young ones can be adversely affected.

#### **How Do They Want to Be Treated?**

The aged want to be respected. They need to make decisions and feel that they are in charge of their lives. Although their physical abilities diminish with age, those who keep their minds active often remain sharp mentally. True, they may not think as rapidly as when they were younger or learn new things as fast. But they should not be pushed aside and their role in the family

usurped, nor should others take over chores the aged would prefer to do for themselves. Doing this would frustrate and discourage them and make them feel inadequate and even useless.

Productive activity for the aged is vital; it helps give them a sense of worth. Significantly, centenarians in the Abkhaz Republic often have many daily chores to handle, such as working in the fields, feeding the poultry, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, and caring for small children—all of which no doubt contribute to their longevity. Indeed, when the aged have meaningful work to do, they thrive. Why? Because they have a purpose in life.

Even when the aged are incapacitated by a stroke or other illness, they still want to be treated with dignity. They do not appreciate being talked down to or scolded like a child. If they cannot speak, they can usually hear, and their feelings are understandably sensitive. Sometimes, because of excessive medication, they may appear to be senile when in reality they are not. So empathy more than any other emotion can be the key to caring for them properly.

Since the aged may be confined to their homes, they need to feel they are not forgotten. They appreciate visitors. How sad it is when members of a Christian congregation fail to visit or call on incapacitated elderly members who in the past may have contributed significantly to the expansion of the Kingdom work! Really, such visits or phone calls take relatively little time and ef-

fort compared with the great benefit they can be to the elderly!

However, no matter how others treat them, much depends on how the aged view themselves. As a 75-year-old woman declared: "The thing that really keeps me going is always having something to do. I couldn't function if I didn't have plans and goals. Of course I have physical problems. But so do most people my age."

The aged should avoid becoming chronic complainers and being uncooperative. This may not be easy to do when one is suffering. "Even though I have physical problems," one elderly man said, "my ailments have not diminished my joy in living. I think attitude is all-important. The experience of living all these years has been enriching to me. And I feel the key to staying young is to associate with young people. They benefit from my wisdom,

and I tap their energy. You see, I'm really young at heart."

#### **What Can Be Done?**

If you are young, do you need to improve your view of old age and your treatment of the elderly? If you are aged, why not ask yourself the questions outlined in the accompanying box? Are there things you can do to improve your situation?

If you answer all the questions in the affirmative, you will rarely lack friends, old or young. Others will naturally want to be around you. Best of all, you will enjoy your own company and find that life, at any age, can be interesting and full.

#### **Self-Examination for the Aged**

- Do I look to the future with hope?
- Am I still curious and eager to learn new things?
- Do I try to stay as active as possible?
- Do I take each day as it comes and make the necessary adjustments?
- Am I cheerful and encouraging around others?
- Do I try to maintain my sense of humor?
- In simple terms—am I growing old gracefully?

## Young People Ask...



# Stealing —Why Not?

**"I'm 16 years old and have a very big problem. Lately, I've been stealing a lot. I just went to the shopping mall and stole seven pairs of earrings. I'm afraid to tell anyone about my problem. Please help me!"**

**S**O WROTE one distraught teenage girl to a magazine advice column. One writer reported: "An estimated ten billion dollars' worth of consumer goods are . . . thieved, raided, ripped off, or otherwise stolen from retail stores each year [in the United States]. Teenagers account for nearly half of all shoplifting arrests."

According to one recent poll, over one third of high school (secondary school) students admit to shoplifting. And according to another poll, conducted by researchers Jane Norman and Myron Harris, "almost all [youths] admit having taken something without paying for it at one time or another."

### Why They Steal

A thief is someone who deliberately takes something belonging to someone else without permission. At times thievery may seem justified by personal need. "I was in a tough situation," recalls one impoverished youth. "I would go to the back of a [fast food restaurant] and kick open the door and take some chicken. But that's all. I only did it because I was hungry."

Says a Bible proverb: "People do not despise a thief just because he commits thievery to fill his soul when he is hungry." Even so, stealing is morally wrong. The next Bible verse thus showed that even a hungry thief had to "make it good" by payment of a severe penalty.—Proverbs 6:30, 31.

Incredibly, though, only a minority of teenage thieves steal because of any legitimate need. Typical is young Mary Jane who admitted: "Yes, I have shoplifted and it was really weird, because I don't know why I did it. My parents give me money for everything. I didn't need anything."\* *Seventeen* magazine similarly reported: "In a survey conducted by the National Crime Prevention Council, the most common reason given by offenders was that they wanted something for free." Some youths even justified their sticky fingers by arguing that the stores 'charged too much'!

For many youths, stealing is simply a means of alleviating boredom. "It was just something to do after school," explained a former thief named Jeremy. Stealing also

\* Some of the names have been changed.

seems to serve as a kind of high-risk sport; some seem to love the rush of adrenaline that comes as they stuff a purloined blouse into a purse or slip a compact disc into a knapsack.

### **Masking Pain?**

Of course, there are far safer ways of fighting boredom than risking a jail sentence. Could it be, then, that more is behind such thrill seeking than a desire for a little fun? Many experts believe that there is. The *Ladies' Home Journal* observed that some youths "find it difficult to cope with the pressures of growing up. A fight with their parents, the breakup of a friendship, a low mark on a test, can make them feel out of control; breaking the rules gives them back a sense of power."

Yes, behind the bravado of a thief may be a lot of hurt and pain. As the Bible puts it, "even in laughter the heart may be in pain." (Proverbs 14:13) Evidence indicates that repeated shoplifting may be a sign of depression. Some young thieves have even been found to have a history of child abuse. Whatever the cause of the pain, the thrill of stealing may seem to block it out—for a while, at least.\* Take, for example, one American youth who gets his fun out of stealing cars and taking them for a wild joyride. "It feels good," he says. "You get this feeling like you are scared, like you feel high."

### **Peers and Their Pressure**

The Bible says: "Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) This truth is widely recognized. Writer Denise V. Lang observed: "Rarely does a young person get into trouble all by himself or herself."

\* We are not discussing kleptomania—a mental disorder characterized by a compulsive urge to steal. Doctors say that kleptomania is rare, afflicting less than 5 percent of known shoplifters. The disorder is often treated with medication.



**Shoplifters often suffer the humiliation of being caught**

self." Oftentimes, peers will dare one another to steal something. Sad to say, many a youth gives in to the pressure.

"I got involved with a bunch of girls in junior high," says young Kathy. The price of membership in their exclusive club? Stealing an expensive sweater. "I wanted to be in that club, so I went into a store and got my sweater," she confesses.

### **Getting God's Viewpoint**

The prospect of owning things you can't afford, of enjoying high-risk thrills, or of being accepted by peers may make stealing seem attractive. Nevertheless, one of the Ten Commandments in the Bible is: "You must not steal." (Exodus 20:15) The apostle Paul wrote that 'thieves will not inherit God's kingdom.' (1 Corinthians 6:10) God's viewpoint should be of particular concern to youths who have been raised as Christians. How hypocritical it would be to put on the appearance of righteousness and secretly carry on as a thief! The apostle Paul put it this way: "Do you, however, the one teaching someone else, not teach yourself?"

You, the one preaching ‘Do not steal,’ do you steal?”—Romans 2:21.

The humiliating prospect of being arrested is reason enough to avoid the vice of stealing. After being apprehended, one young thief said: “I wanted to die.” Knowing that Jehovah ‘hates robbery’ is the strongest reason to avoid giving in to the impulse—or pressure—to steal. (Isaiah 61:8) Even if one is able to conceal thievery from store officials, police, and parents, one cannot hide it from Jehovah. Exposure is inevitable.—Isaiah 29:15.

Remember, too, that sin hardens a person. (Hebrews 3:13) Petty thefts tend to escalate to more brazen and reckless acts. Young Roger, for example, started his life of crime by stealing money from his mother’s purse. In time he was knocking elderly women to the ground and stealing their purses!

### Fighting the Temptation

Admittedly, if one has begun stealing in secret, quitting may not be easy. “It was kind of an addiction,” admitted one youth. What can help a youth to change his or her ways?

*Confess your sin to God.* He will “forgive in a large way” those who repent of their wrongs and openly confess to him.—Isaiah 55:7.

*Get help.* Many readers of this magazine are acquainted with the Christian congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in their area. Such ones can seek out the local Christian overseers and request spiritual help and correction. (James 5:14, 15) Parents who have good moral principles can also prove to be a source of help and support. If hurt, pain, or simple boredom is behind the misconduct, talking about things with a compassionate listener may prove very helpful.—Proverbs 12:25.

*Make restitution.* Under the Mosaic Law, thieves were required to pay back stolen goods with interest. (Leviticus 6:4, 5) Do-

ing similarly not only helps clear one’s conscience but also impresses upon one the hardship stealing causes others. The Bible promises that when a person “pays back the very things taken by robbery, and actually walks in the very statutes of life . . . , he will positively keep living. He will not die.”—Ezekiel 33:15.

*Stifle feelings of envy and greed.* The last of the Ten Commandments is, “You must not desire . . . anything that belongs to your fellowman.” (Exodus 20:17) If there is something that you really need—or want—but cannot afford, perhaps you can find a way to earn the money to purchase it. The apostle Paul advised: “Let the stealer steal no more, but rather let him do hard work, doing with his hands what is good work.”—Ephesians 4:28.

*Watch your associates.* “If you are with a friend or a group of friends who do something wrong or commit a crime,” reminds writer Denise Lang, “you will also be considered guilty simply for being at the scene with them.” Have the strength to say no if peers suggest doing something illegal.—Proverbs 1:10-19.

*Consider the harm stealing does to others.* A thief thinks only of himself. But Jesus counsels us: “All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must likewise do to them.” (Matthew 7:12) When one learns to care about other people, one is less inclined to do something that could cause others harm.

*Think of the consequences to you.* (Galatians 6:7) Instead of thinking about how nice it would be to own that shiny trinket or gadget that you cannot afford, think about how embarrassing it would be to be caught and prosecuted; think of the reproach you would bring on your parents and on God himself! You will surely conclude that stealing is not such a good idea after all.

# She Touched Many Lives

ON NOVEMBER 19, 1994, Kathy Roberson died at the age of 26. She faithfully attended Christian meetings right up to the week of her death. Her struggle against cancer since the age of nine had been recorded in *Awake!* of August 22, 1994, under the title "When Life Is Not Easy." After reading the article, many from around the world responded by mail and described how Kathy's courageous example deeply touched them.

## Youths Encouraged to Serve God

Loida, from Spain, wrote: "I am 16 years old, and I wept when I read the experience about the endurance of Kathy. I used to be afraid of dying, but thanks to this article, I understand that, as she said, 'what is truly important is, not whether we live or die now, but whether we gain the blessing of Jehovah God, the One who can give us everlasting life.'"

Mari, from Japan, wrote: "Because I am close in age to Kathy and was baptized on the same day, reading her experience seemed like reading an encouraging letter from a close friend. Her hope that her story would move many to use their health, not in vain pursuits, but wisely in Jehovah's service caused my heart to burn, as I am just about to start regular pioneering [full-time ministry]."



Kathy Roberson

Noemi, from Italy, wrote similarly, saying that Kathy's wish for youths to use their health, not in vain pursuits, but wisely in Jehovah's service "will be an encouragement for thousands of youngsters, including me." Noemi added: "I cannot wait to see her in the new world when all of this will have passed. As soon as I have finished high school, I

am going to start pioneering."

"I am 18 years old," Rachelle from Florida, U.S.A., wrote, "and I have been considering the pioneer work for quite some time now. As I read the article 'When Life Is Not Easy,' I found it a great encouragement to see someone young like me endure such hardship. Kathy has moved me to use my health, as she said, 'not in vain pursuits, but wisely in Jehovah's service.'"

Some missionaries from the island of Chuuk, in Micronesia, wrote: "Our pioneers here are poor materially. However, Sister Roberson's experience helped them appreciate what they have. They realized that although poor materially they are blessed with strong bodies that enable them to serve Jehovah full-time. It was a good reminder for them to be thankful for what they have and use their strength in Jehovah's service."

A group of 16 students attending pioneer school in France were moved to send a photograph of lilies to Kathy with the encou-

# You are another Job. L'article int. 1. "mercier" P

13 agement: "We won't forget your exhortation to use our time for our great Creator."

Another youth from France wrote: "Being young and prime targets of Satan, we sometimes feel it difficult to remain loyal to Jehovah. Yet, when we read such beautiful and moving stories, we receive renewed strength and zeal, knowing that other youths, like Kathy, keep their integrity despite suffering. What a beautiful example!"

"I am about your age and have very good health," wrote Nadine from Ohio, U.S.A. "Many times I let minor things get in the way of my service to Jehovah. Reading your story made me take a good long look at my life, realizing how much precious time I have wasted. You have been an inspiration to me."

A young woman from Brazil said: "She talked directly to my heart and increased my desire to serve our God more fully."

A Canadian youngster wrote: "I am 15 years old. Two years ago, I learned that I was suffering from autoimmune hepatitis. Thanks to the experience of Kathy Roberson, I realized that in spite of my health condition, I can also serve Jehovah faithfully while there is yet time and that I must patiently await God's promised new system for a complete recovery."

Jennette from New Jersey, U.S.A., wrote: "All the obstacles she went through and the faith that she showed help all of us to be resolved to continue to reach out to do more in Jehovah's service despite any difficulties we may have. I am planning to use her experience with some of my Bible students to motivate them to set goals of pioneer service as they graduate from school."

## Older Ones Encouraged Too

A woman from California, U.S.A., wrote: "You certainly have cut through all the minor issues in our lives and brought life

down to its basic, essential element—our relationship with Jehovah." She added: "Though I am far beyond my youth, I was deeply moved and motivated by your experiences and your outlook. It has helped me to review my priorities."

Another letter from California said: "What you have gone through is as big a test as any put on the brothers and sisters in Germany or Malawi or any other place I've read of. I'm 68 now, so I've seen, heard, and read a lot of experiences. Your story will be a blessing to young and old alike."

A woman from South Carolina, U.S.A., acknowledged: "I am not a kid. I am almost 70 years old." She wrote in appreciation: "You are another Job. I hope all the young and the old will take note of your endurance."

Another letter said: "Kathy's faith and determination touched my heart. I'm almost 57 years old, and one of my goals was to put more time in Jehovah's service when I retire, but recently I was diagnosed with cancer. How I regret that when I was younger and had my health, I didn't do more for Jehovah! None of us can predict when a serious illness will take that privilege away."

A Christian elder wrote: "I am going to keep this article in a special file for my reading when life takes the unexpected turns that could test my faith. I'm also going to keep this article in my shepherding file for use to encourage the dear friends who are bombarded by hardships as this system draws to a close."

Indeed, we are strengthened by the faith and courage of all members of our worldwide brotherhood. (1 Peter 5:9) All of us look forward, as Kathy did, to the fulfillment of the Bible's promise of a time when "death will be no more." (Revelation 21:3, 4) What a grand time it will then be when "no resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.

zelle s'achant que d'autres journées comme nous ent malgré leurs suffrances. Quel bel exemple !

To your remercie de tout mon coeur pour

# How I Benefited From God's Care



ON THE morning of May 18, 1963, I awoke much happier than usual. It was the start of a beautiful, warm sunny day. But before I explain why that day was so special to me, let me tell you a little about myself.

I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., on May 20, 1932, the youngest girl in a family of four daughters. My mother died when I was two, and Father remarried when I was five. In time, six younger brothers and sisters were added to our family. We were Baptist, and at one point I even thought about becoming a Sunday-school teacher.

I was born with rheumatoid arthritis, which contributed to a very difficult childhood. When I was nine, a doctor told me I would get worse as the years went by. Sadly, his prediction proved true. By the time I was 14, I was no longer able to walk. Eventually my hands, feet, and legs were completely crippled, and my hips fused. My fingers became so deformed that I had a hard time writing or just picking things up. Because of my condition, I was not able to return to public school.

When I was admitted to a hospital at age 14, I was happy because the nurses allowed me to do little things to help them. I enjoyed this work very much. Later, I reached the point where I could not sit up alone. The doctors told my parents that there was nothing they could do for me, so after spending three months in the hospital, I was sent home.

For the next two years, until I was 16, I did not do much of anything except lay in bed. Some home tutoring was provided, but then my condition deteriorated. I developed an ulcer on my right ankle, as well as rheumatic fever, which required a return to the hospital. I turned 17 there. Once again I remained in the hospital for three months. When I returned home, I was no longer eligible for home tutoring.

As I approached 20, I was very miserable and spent much of my time crying. I knew there was a God, and many times I prayed for him to help me.

## A Hope for the Future

While in Philadelphia General Hospital to receive further treatment for my ankle, I shared a room with a young girl named Miriam Kellum. We became friends. When Miriam's sister Catherine Miles visited, Catherine would share information from the Bible with me. After I was discharged from the hospital, I somehow always managed to keep in touch with Catherine, who was one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Unfortunately, my stepmother did not like me very much. When I was 25, I moved in with one of my older sisters, and Catherine happened to move into a house around the corner. I called her, and she began to study the Bible with me using the book *Let God Be True* as a study aid. What a joy it was to learn that I would not always be crippled and that one day all wickedness would be done away with! (Proverbs 2:21, 22; Isa-

iah 35:5, 6) These truths appealed to me, along with the resurrection hope and the prospect of seeing my mother again.—Acts 24:15.

I started attending meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses right away. Catherine's husband would carry me to their car and take me to the Kingdom Hall. When I went to the meetings, I felt encouraged by the love I was shown.

### **Overcoming Obstacles**

Sadly, my sister and her husband separated, which required that I once again live with my father and stepmother. Since my stepmother was very opposed to Jehovah's Witnesses, I had to study the Bible secretly from 1958 to 1963. She would not permit any of Jehovah's Witnesses to come into the house. I would study with different ones on the telephone or when I was in the hospital.

Another obstacle was that my stepmother would at times refuse to feed and bathe me. Once she did not wash my hair for eight months. She also did not allow me to read any mail that she did not first approve. However, Jehovah's care was evident, since my brother allowed me to have my mail sent to his house. This arrangement enabled Pat Smith, a Christian sister with whom I corresponded, to keep in touch with me and supply me with Scriptural encouragement. My brother would smuggle her letters in to me; I would answer them, and he would smuggle my letters out.

In 1963, I had to return to the hospital, and Pat Smith continued to study with me there. One day she asked me: "Would you like to get baptized at our circuit assembly?"

"Yes!" I replied.

I was in the rehabilitation ward and could obtain a day's pass. On the day of the circuit assembly, Pat, along with other Witnesses, came to get me. The brothers had to lift me

over a partition and let me down into the water in order for me to be baptized. Now I was one of Jehovah's servants! That was May 18, 1963, a day I will never forget.

### **In and Out Of Nursing Homes**

In November, I was to leave the hospital. I did not want to go back home because I knew my service to Jehovah would be limited there. So I made arrangements to enter a nursing home. There I began to share in the ministry by writing letters to people whom the Witnesses had difficulty contacting in the house-to-house ministry. I also read the obituary columns and wrote to relatives of those who had recently died, enclosing comforting scriptures from the Bible.

Then, in May 1964, I moved to New York City to live with my oldest sister and her husband. He bought me my first wheelchair, and I began attending the meetings. What a joy it was to give my first talk in the Theocratic Ministry School while in New York City!

Early in 1965, some friends from Philadelphia asked me to spend two weeks with them. While I was staying in Philadelphia, my sister wrote and told me that she did not want me anymore and that I should stay where I was. I arranged to reenter a nursing home. While living there, I continued to attend meetings and to witness to people by writing letters. It was at this time that I was able to expand my ministry by sharing in what is known as the auxiliary pioneer work.

### **Recipient of Loving Care**

A further indication of Jehovah's care was the assistance given me by the West Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in Philadelphia. In addition to taking me to Christian meetings, they provided me with the stationery and the other supplies I needed for my ministry.



**I called this area where I engaged in the ministry paradise corner**

made arrangements to feed me, bathe me, and care for my personal needs. Others helped by doing shopping and by caring for other necessary business.

Every morning the sisters arrived early to feed and dress me for the day. After assisting me to get into my wheelchair, they would roll me up to my desk in a little corner of the apartment, near a window. There I would sit, engaging in the ministry by using the telephone and by writing letters. I called this area of my apartment paradise corner, as I had it decorated with many theocratic scenes.

I would spend the entire day in my ministry until someone came at night to put me to bed.

In 1974 my health required that I enter the hospital. While I was there, the doctors tried to pressure me into taking blood. About a week later, after my condition had improved, two of the doctors came to visit me. "Oh, I remember you two," I said to them. "You tried to talk me into taking blood."

"Yes," they replied, "but we knew it wouldn't work." I had opportunity to give the doctors a witness about the Bible's promise of the resurrection and about the Paradise earth.—Psalm 37:29; John 5:28, 29.

During the first ten years that I lived alone, I was able to attend Christian meetings. I never missed them unless I was ill. If the weather was bad, the friends would wrap my legs with a blanket and cover them

In 1970 a further evidence of Jehovah's care occurred when arrangements were made for me to move in with Maude Washington, a Christian sister and retired nurse. Though she was approaching 70 at the time, she willingly cared for me over the next two years until she could no longer do so.

While I was with Maude, the brothers of the Ridge Congregation in Philadelphia worked diligently to make sure I was able to attend all the meetings. This required that they carry me up and down three flights of stairs three times a week. How grateful I am to those who worked so faithfully to help me get to the meetings!

In 1972, when Sister Washington could no longer care for me, I decided to obtain an apartment of my own. This adjustment would not have been possible without the self-sacrificing help and love of Christian sisters in the Ridge Congregation. They

to keep them dry. Occasionally a traveling overseer would come to see me. During his visits, he would "accompany" me on a Bible study that I conducted by using the telephone. These were times of great joy for me.

### Coping With a Worsening Situation

In 1982, I reached the point where I could no longer get out of bed. I couldn't attend meetings, nor could I pioneer, which I had done continuously for 17 years. These circumstances made me very sad, and I would often cry. However, Jehovah's care was evident—Christian elders arranged to have a Congregation Book Study in my small apartment. How grateful I still am for this provision!

Since I was confined to my bed all day and could not get to my desk, I began to practice writing on a piece of paper that I would lay upon my chest. At first, my writing wasn't legible, but with lots of practice, it became readable. For a time I was again able to give a witness by writing letters, and this brought me a measure of joy. Unfortunately, my condition has deteriorated further, and I am no longer able to share in this aspect of the ministry.

Although I have not been physically able to attend a district convention since 1982, I try to get into the spirit of the occasion at convention time. A Christian sister brings me a lapel card and attaches it to my gown. Also, I turn the television on to a baseball game at Veteran's Stadium in Philadelphia and think about where I used to sit during our conventions there. Usually, someone records the convention program so that I can listen to all of it.

### Not Giving Up

Though I am not able to do as much as I formerly did in the ministry, I am still conscious of talking to people about Bible

truths. Having been able to pioneer and to help a number of interested ones study the Bible has been a source of joy. While it has not been easy living alone for the past 22 years, I have enjoyed the freedom to serve Jehovah without hindrance, which I would not have been able to do if I had remained at home.

I have also seen the need to work diligently to adjust my own personality. At times my utterances have not always been offered with graciousness when providing direction to those who have volunteered to help me. (Colossians 4:6) I continue to pray to Jehovah to help me to improve in this area. I am truly grateful for the patient and forgiving spirit displayed by those who have put up with me in love over the years. Their loving assistance is a blessing for which I thank them and Jehovah.

Although physically unable to attend the meetings for years—I haven't been out of my apartment in all that time except once to go to the hospital—I am still joyful and happy. Admittedly, I get depressed at times, but Jehovah helps me to come right out of it. I now enjoy listening to the meetings over a telephone hookup to the Kingdom Hall. By relying on Jehovah through prayer and trusting in him, I have never felt alone. Yes, I can truly say that I have benefited from Jehovah's care.—*As told by Celeste Jones.*

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

#### Do You Appreciate Grandparents?

'Thank You for  
Bringing Me Home, Mom'

What Can You Do  
About Bad Breath?

# Have You Seen a THYLACINE?

BY AWAKE! CORRESPONDENT IN AUSTRALIA

**H**AVE I seen a "what?" you may ask. "I don't even know what a thylacine is."

Actually, "thylacine" is the shortened form of the full zoological name *Thylacinus cynocephalus* and is the name of a fascinating animal from down under, the Tasmanian tiger, or Tasmanian wolf.

*Thylacinus cynocephalus* literally means "pouched dog with a wolf's head," but the animal was given a variety of much simpler names by early European settlers of Tasmania, Australia's small island state. Names such as zebra opossum, hyena, zebra wolf, and dog-headed opossum were common. The Aborigines, who were in Tasmania long before the white man arrived only about 200 years ago, called the thylacine by the name corinna.

The Tasmanian tiger is now considered extinct, but stuffed specimens can be found in museums. The last known living thylacine died in 1936 in a zoo in Hobart, Tasmania's capital. There are, however, those who claim there are still some living thylacines hiding out in the Tasmanian wilderness, and reports of sightings continue.



Tom McHugh/Photo Researchers

Although not really of the tiger family, the name Tasmanian tiger doubtless arose both because the animal is striped and because it is a meat eater. Distinctive, dark-brown, almost black, stripes run across its back and down its long, rigid tail. A further fascinating fact is that the thylacine is a marsupial—that is, the female has a pouch. The young are born tiny, immature, and sightless but then find their way to their mother's pouch, where they are suckled until fully grown and strong enough to leave. The tiny newborn stays in mother thylacine's pouch for about three months before venturing out. Once out of the pouch, though, it is not long before junior thylacine begins following mother in her quest for food.

It is claimed that the thylacine is the largest meat-eating marsupial known in recent times. Unlike marsupials such as the kangaroo, the female thylacine has a rearward-facing pouch. She can carry and suckle four young at a time.

### **How Widespread?**

Though Aboriginal rock-paintings, fossils, and dried, mummified specimens of the thylacine have been found in many parts of Australia, the main habitat of the thylacine seems to have been Tasmania. Even there it may never have been plentiful. Humans have mainly been responsible for its extinction. The Tasmanian tiger was itself a predator, yet it was no match for the cunning and greedy hunters that some white settlers proved to be. Being curious and largely unafraid of man, the thylacine was easy prey to the gun and the snare.

Many farmers claimed that the Tasmanian tiger was a sheep killer, so attractive bounties were offered by large pastoral interests as well as by the Tasmanian government. Live specimens that were trapped were readily acquired by overseas zoos. Although the thylacine population was no doubt affected by a serious unknown disease that ravaged much of Tasmania's wildlife many years ago, by far the greatest decimation of its numbers was by man.

### **Unique Hunting Methods**

The thylacine usually hunted alone but sometimes in pairs. Its method was to target an animal, such as a small kangaroo, then just trot after it, running it down. Once the prey slowed, exhausted, the thylacine would leap in and kill it with its powerful jaws. Another unique feature of this unusual animal was the opening gape of its jaws, an astonishing 120 degrees!

Their habit of eating only certain parts of the carcass—usually just the internal organs—led some to regard them as wanton killers. But to offset this seeming waste, another smaller, meat-eating marsupial, the scavenging Tasmanian devil (which is still

in existence) would follow up the tiger and soon clean up all the leftovers—bones, fur, and all.

Apparently the thylacine was no threat to man. There is no evidence that they ever hunted humans. One old-timer recalls that late one evening, many years ago, he was sitting in front of his campfire, reading, when through the flames he suddenly saw a Tasmanian tiger crouched low, stalking and edging menacingly toward him. Fearing an attack, he quietly reached for his rifle, took careful aim through the flames, and fired. The thylacine did an ungraceful backward somersault but was apparently not badly injured, for it jumped up and disappeared into the darkness. The man then went to inspect for any blood, in order to see how badly he had wounded the tiger. Just in front of the fire, he found a large opossum with the bullet in it. That was what the thylacine had been stalking!

### **What About Reported Sightings?**

There have been scores of reported sightings of the thylacine since the last one in captivity died in 1936, but so far little has been produced to convince zoologists that any are still alive. It seems that nothing short of an actual photograph or a live capture will convince officials that thylacines still exist.

Many older people living in Tasmania's country areas say they would not report a Tasmanian tiger if they saw one. They are troubled over the fact that early in their lifetime, other humans were responsible for the apparent extinction of this unique animal. If any thylacines do still exist, such people want them left in peace.

So if they were asked, "Have you seen a thylacine lately?" their answer—truthful or not—would be, "No!"

## WATCHING THE WORLD

### Gambling More Than Money

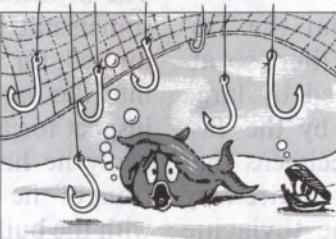
According to the Australian newspaper *The Sydney Morning Herald*, with the opening of new casinos, the authorities are facing an unexpected problem: "parents who abandon their children to gamble." Several children have been found locked in cars while their parents spent hours at the gambling tables. One notorious case was that of a five-year-old boy and his 18-month-old sister who were locked in a car for five hours until they were freed by police at seven o'clock in the morning. Prominent signs in several languages have now been placed outside one casino warning parents that they face a \$5,000 fine and possible jailing for abandoning their children in this way. According to *The Herald*, a social worker noted that gambling addictions have also led to "marriage break-ups, crime, job losses and suicides."

### Tampering With the Bible

Oxford University Press has prepared a new version of the Bible with unprecedented changes. In an attempt to be "politically correct," the version avoids statements that could allegedly be interpreted as sexist, racist, or tainted with anti-Semitism. For example, the new version refers to God as "Father-Mother." Jesus will be not the "Son of man" but, rather, the "Human One." The version has no reference to the Jews' having killed Jesus Christ. Even alleged bias against left-handed persons will be eliminated when God's "right hand" becomes his "mighty hand," says *The Sunday Times*.

### Fishing Imperiled

As the fishing fleets of different nations wrangle over territory and fishing rights, a report by the Worldwatch Institute warns that the world's fish harvest has reached its upper limits and is now actually in decline in most parts of the earth. While acknowledging that environmental pollution has been a factor in global depletion of marine life, the report says that overfishing



by the commercial fishing industry is the primary cause for the diminishing number of fish taken in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans and the Black and Mediterranean seas. The Agence France-Presse news service says that according to the Worldwatch report, the catch has fallen off by as much as 30 percent in some regions and that if the present mismanagement of the oceans' resources continues, literally millions of fishermen will soon be unemployed.

### The Rising Cost of Bird's-Nest Soup

In the restaurants of Hong Kong and other Asian cities, a favorite dish is an edible bird's nest, which is often made into a soup. According to the *International Herald Tribune*, many Chinese view the cooked nests not only as

a delicacy but also as a health tonic. Conservation groups estimate that Hong Kong alone absorbed about 17 million swiftlet nests in 1992. Overharvesting, however, has pushed the wholesale cost of nests to a record \$230 per pound, and premium-grade nests can fetch over eight times that much. The cost to the swiftlets that produce the nests is far higher. The destruction of eggs and chicks when the nests are harvested has resulted in the decline of some populations of swiftlets and the extinction of others.

### Police Crack Down on Heavy Schoolbags

"The weight of schoolbags cannot exceed 15 percent of [the pupil's] body weight," says the mayor of Cantù, a town in the province of Como, northern Italy. The mayor is worried about the risk of scoliosis. The parents of children who break the rule can face a 400,000 lire [\$250, U.S.] fine and up to six months' imprisonment. To demonstrate that he was serious, the mayor sent the city police, armed with a weighing scale, to mount checkpoints outside of schools, reports *Corriere della Sera*. Only two students stopped during the first checks were within the limit. In fact, one boy weighing 75 pounds was carrying a bag weighing 26 pounds. His schoolmates rallied to his defense, complaining that the anthology and math books alone weighed 11 pounds, and they needed to carry books for a minimum of four subjects each day. The mayor placed the blame on the publishing houses, whose interest is "in selling heavier and

more expensive books." He suggested that they publish the textbooks in parts.

### Commendation Counters Stress

Each year heart attacks take the lives of 200,000 persons in Germany. What is the main cause? "Stress," reports the newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, since working in Germany demands "total commitment, constant stress." Stress at work results in a high rate of absenteeism through illness and can lead to burnout. Every second nurse suffers from symptoms of stress, and 1 teacher in 3 takes early retirement, many because of "nervous strain." Health insurance companies are studying how to diminish stress at work. One study, carried out among several hundred medium-sized firms, pinpoints what appears to be a contributing factor: Of the workers surveyed, 44 percent never received any commendation at work.

### Runaway Children

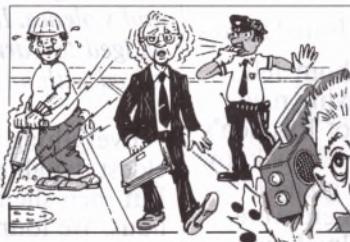
Each year 98,000 children in Britain run away from home, notes the newspaper *The Independent*. Many leave to escape violence in the family. More than 10,000 flee at least ten times before they are 16 years old. Too young to receive welfare benefits, many of these runaways turn to crime and prostitution. Ignore the problem, warns Ian Sparks, chief executive of the Children's Society, and these youngsters will grow up to become "homeless adults detached from society." If "society as a whole" placed more emphasis on supporting and helping the parents, he noted, then "a lot of problems would not happen in the first place."

### Staggering Water Shortage

"South Africa is facing a water crisis of staggering proportions," reports the newspaper *The Star*. Unless alternative sources are exploited, current water sources will be depleted "within the next 15 years." One factor is the rapidly increasing population. Low rainfall, about half the world average, is another cause. An unusually high rate of evaporation exacerbates the problem. The largest water-storage dam in the country loses on average 130,000,000 gallons annually through evaporation. The quality of the existing water is also declining as a result of pollution. *The Star* states: "There are now 12 million people without access to clean drinking water and over 20 million without adequate (water-borne) sanitation."

### Noise Pollution

At least 10 percent of the world's population suffers some degree of hearing deficiency. Brazilian magazine *Globo Ciência* explains that "the human ear was not made to tolerate the noises



made by civilization." Daily exposure to unhealthy noise levels may also contribute to poor concentration, low productivity, aggression, and accidents on the job.

### Prison Rates Increasing

As crime increases worldwide, so does the rate of imprison-

ment. Russia now has an imprisonment rate of 558 for every 100,000 people, followed by the United States with 519 per 100,000. Next comes South Africa with 368, Singapore with 229, and Canada with 116. Since the breakup of the former Soviet Union, murders and other crimes have greatly increased in Russia, and the incarceration rate there soared past the United States, the former leader. Why do many European nations imprison people at rates that are one sixth that of the United States? "One explanation is that while overall crime rates differ little across borders, violence is more prevalent in the United States, Russia and South Africa," says *U.S. News & World Report*. "Whatever the reasons, the imprisonment gap is likely to grow."

### Children Who Read and Write Better

"Reading to youngsters enhances writing skills," reports the Canadian newspaper *Globe and Mail*. According to results of recent tests conducted by the Ministry of Education of Ontario, Canada, students who said they often had stories read to them when they were growing up performed at a higher level than those who rarely or never had books read to them. The *Globe* added that "students who performed well in reading also fared well in writing" and that "students who read out of school performed better both in reading and writing." According to the president of the Ontario Teachers Federation, the test results revealed that "students who don't read or aren't in the practice of being read to by age 14 won't after that."

## FROM OUR READERS

**Religion and War** I want to express my appreciation for the October 22, 1994, series "When Religion Takes Sides in War." Although I lived through the time of the slaughter of Serbs in Croatia, I was too small to remember it. This complex and tragic situation is thus very close to my heart. I appreciated the way you illuminated the role of religion and its relentless efforts in exacerbating division and hatred among these national groups.

M. K., United States

I was touched by the article "We Did Not Support Hitler's War." It was so well told I almost cried. I am 15 years old, and I feel encouraged to know that whatever small persecution I may face at school or in the preaching work, I can deal with it.

A. M., United States

I couldn't help but shed a few tears over the trials faced by the Wohlfahrt family. Their trials make my little discouragements seem so unimportant. The article encouraged me to continue pressing on, knowing that as Christians, we may face similar opposition as this system comes to its end.

M. S., United States

**Relief Efforts** I was worried about Jehovah's Witnesses in Rwanda. Having read the article "Caring for Victims of Rwanda's Tragedy" (December 22, 1994), I now know something about what they are going through. The article said that there were many there who died. What helped me to feel a little better about this was having the hope of meeting them in Paradise. In the meantime, I'll pray for my fellow believers in Rwanda.

J. D., Japan

**The Elusive Wolf** Thanks for the many informative and often amusing articles you publish about Jehovah's creation. The article "An Elusive Creature—Hated and

Loved" about *Canis lupus* (September 8, 1994) was most interesting. But in the picture on the first page of the article, the animal appears to be too small to be a wolf.

S. W., Germany

*We appreciate the observation of this sharp-eyed reader. It turns out that the silhouetted figure was actually based on a photo of a coyote, not a wolf. We apologize for the mistake.*  
—ED.

**Satanism** I find the stereotypes and generalizations made about heavy-metal music throughout your series "The Lure of Satanism" (September 22, 1994) to be appalling. While it is true that there are bands that fit this stereotype, your article fails to mention other positive messages in heavy-metal music.

C. C., United States

*It may be true that not all heavy-metal music directly promotes Satanism. Nevertheless, the outrageous appearance and behavior of even mainstream heavy-metal bands is well-known. So is the long-standing association this genre of music has had with drugs and violence. In view of these facts, we felt obliged to warn readers about getting involved with any form of this music.*—ED.

Everything you wrote was accurate. Our eldest daughter was raised as a Christian. But then she became increasingly rebellious. We found out she was associating with kids who listened to heavy-metal music. She would hide heavy-metal tapes and listen to the songs at night with headphones. Some of the lyrics were satanic chants! We later discovered satanic symbols hidden about her room. Eventually she moved out of our home and continues to be dead spiritually. And it all began with heavy-metal music.

D. B., United States

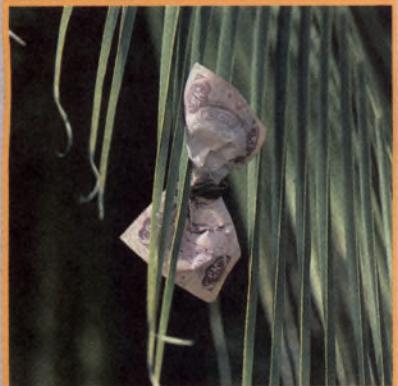
# Where Money Stays on Trees

SUPPOSE that money grew on trees and that you owned such a tree. Now imagine that your tree was planted alongside a path traveled by dozens of your neighbors each day. How long do you think the money would remain on your tree?

If all your neighbors were Jehovah's Witnesses, your money tree would be secure. Why do we say so? Because Jehovah's Witnesses follow the Biblical injunction to conduct themselves honestly in all things. (Hebrews 13:18) A recent incident illustrates this.

In Nigeria, West Africa, a five-naira note was found on the road a hundred yards from the nearest building of the Watch Tower Society's branch office complex. The finder tied it to the frond of a nearby coconut palm, thinking that the person who had lost the money might return to look for it.

Though the money could be clearly seen by dozens of Jehovah's Witnesses who passed daily, no one claimed it. After many days it was removed and put in the Society's contribution box.





# Can the Dead Really Help the Living?

*People who drove by the Mother of Good Counsel Catholic Church in Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.A., in the spring of 1994 might have drawn that conclusion. For there they could have read the sign seen here: "PRAY TO YOUR BELOVED DECEASED. THEY CAN HELP."*

Does the Bible teach that the dead can help the living? Do the dead only appear to die but live on in another form? Are they really living somewhere, and are they able to help us?



What Hope  
for Dead Loved Ones?