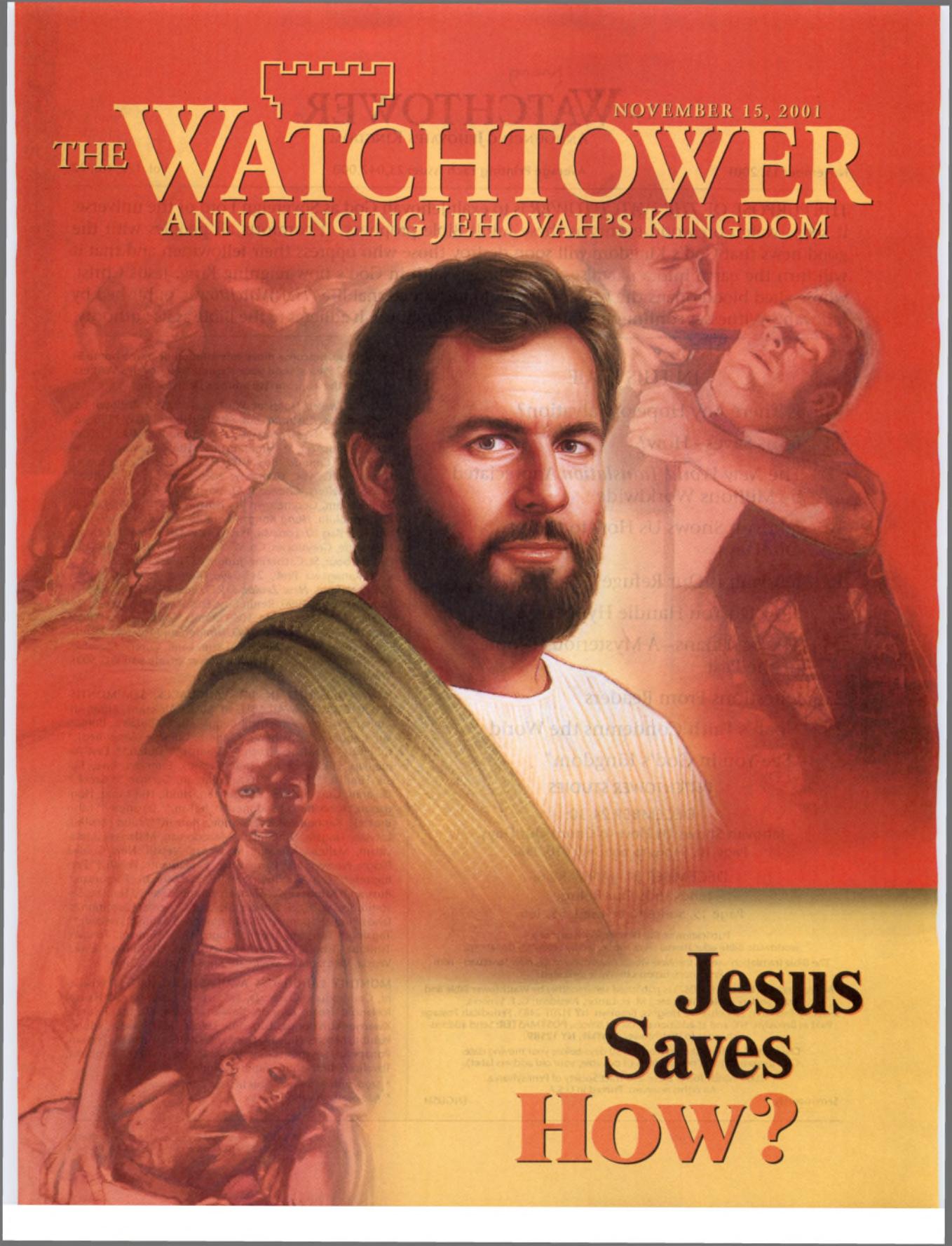


NOVEMBER 15, 2001

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Jesus
Saves
How?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

November 15, 2001

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

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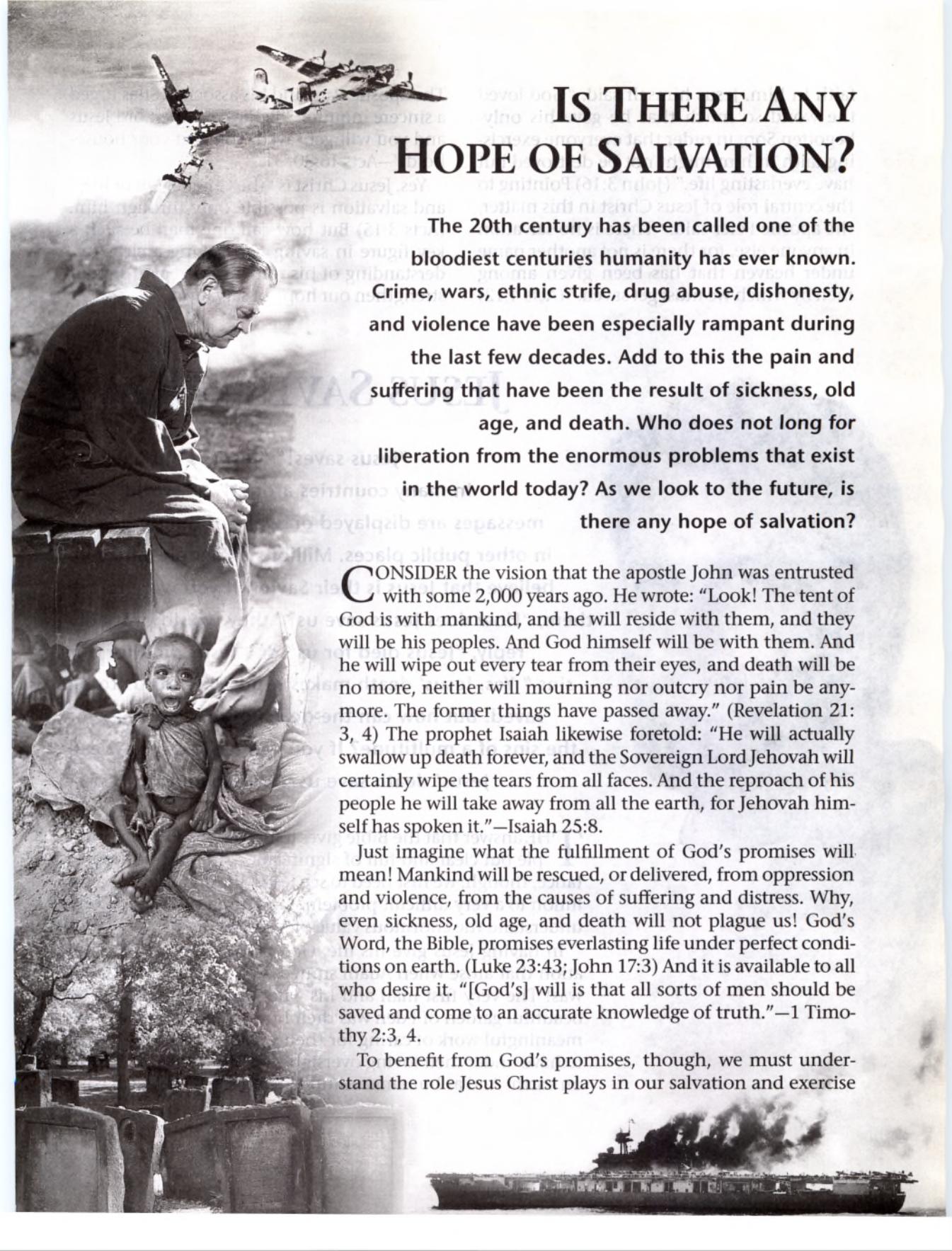
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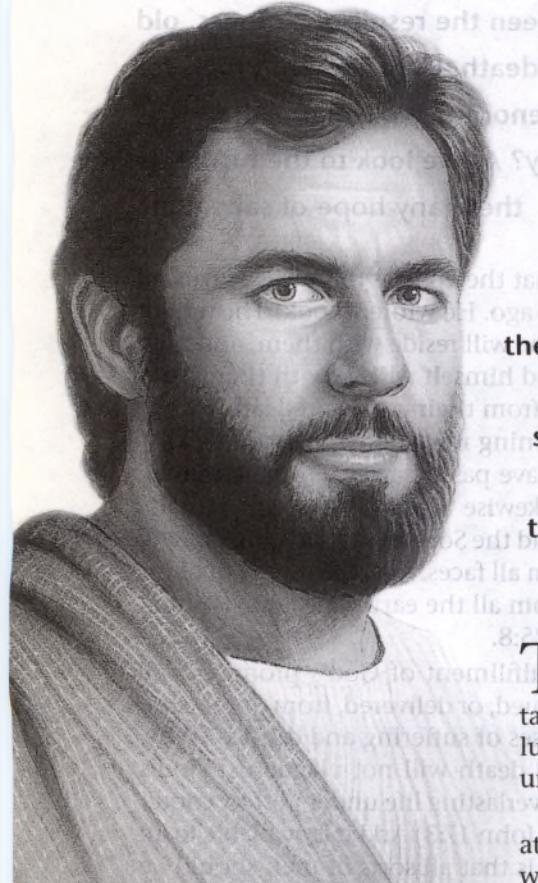
IS THERE ANY HOPE OF SALVATION?

The 20th century has been called one of the bloodiest centuries humanity has ever known. Crime, wars, ethnic strife, drug abuse, dishonesty, and violence have been especially rampant during the last few decades. Add to this the pain and suffering that have been the result of sickness, old age, and death. Who does not long for liberation from the enormous problems that exist in the world today? As we look to the future, is there any hope of salvation?

CONSIDER the vision that the apostle John was entrusted with some 2,000 years ago. He wrote: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." (Revelation 21: 3, 4) The prophet Isaiah likewise foretold: "He will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces. And the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for Jehovah himself has spoken it."—Isaiah 25:8.

Just imagine what the fulfillment of God's promises will mean! Mankind will be rescued, or delivered, from oppression and violence, from the causes of suffering and distress. Why, even sickness, old age, and death will not plague us! God's Word, the Bible, promises everlasting life under perfect conditions on earth. (Luke 23:43; John 17:3) And it is available to all who desire it. "[God's] will is that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth."—1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

To benefit from God's promises, though, we must understand the role Jesus Christ plays in our salvation and exercise



faith in him. Jesus himself said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Pointing to the central role of Jesus Christ in this matter, the apostle Peter said: "There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved." (Acts 4:12)

The apostle Paul and his associate Silas urged a sincere inquirer: "Believe on the Lord Jesus and you will get saved, you and your household."—Acts 16:30, 31.

Yes, Jesus Christ is "the Chief Agent of life," and salvation is possible only through him. (Acts 3:15) But how can one man be such a key figure in saving us? Having a clear understanding of his role in this regard should strengthen our hope of salvation.

JESUS SAVES—HOW?

"Jesus saves!" "Jesus is our Savior!"

In many countries around the world, such messages are displayed on walls of buildings and in other public places. Millions of people sincerely believe that Jesus is their Savior. If you were to ask them, "How does Jesus save us?" they would probably reply, "Jesus died for us" or, "Jesus died for our sins." Yes, Jesus' death makes it possible for us to be saved. But how can the death of one man pay for the sins of a multitude? If you were asked, "How can Jesus' death save us?" what would you say?

THE answer that the Bible gives to this question is very simple but clear and full of significance. To grasp its importance, though, we first need to see Jesus' life and death as a solution to a very difficult problem. Only then can we properly understand the enormous value of Jesus' death.

In having Jesus give his life, God was dealing with a situation that arose when Adam sinned. What a tragedy that sin was! The very first man and his wife, Eve, were perfect. The beautiful garden of Eden was their home. God gave them the meaningful work of caring for their garden home. They were to have under their loving oversight the other living creatures on earth. And as humans multiplied and filled the earth with

millions of their kind, they were to expand the paradise to earth's limits. (Genesis 1:28) What a delightful and exciting work they were given! Moreover, they had the warm companionship of each other. (Genesis 2:18) They lacked nothing. Happy eternal life was before them.

It is hard to imagine how Adam or Eve could sin. But the first human pair rebelled against the very one who created them—Jehovah God. Using a serpent, the spirit creature Satan the Devil deceived Eve into disobeying Jehovah, and Adam followed her.—Genesis 3:1-6.

There was no question about what the Creator would do about Adam and Eve. He had already spelled out the consequence of disobedience, stating: "From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Genesis 2:16, 17) A question of far greater magnitude now required an answer.

Mankind Faces a Difficult Problem

The original sin created a very critical problem for mankind. Adam began life as a perfect human. Therefore, his children could have enjoyed perfect everlasting life. However, Adam sinned before he fathered any children. The entire human race was still in his loins when he received the sentence: "In the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) So when Adam sinned and began to die as God said he would, all mankind was sentenced to death along with him.

Appropriately, the apostle Paul later wrote: "Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all

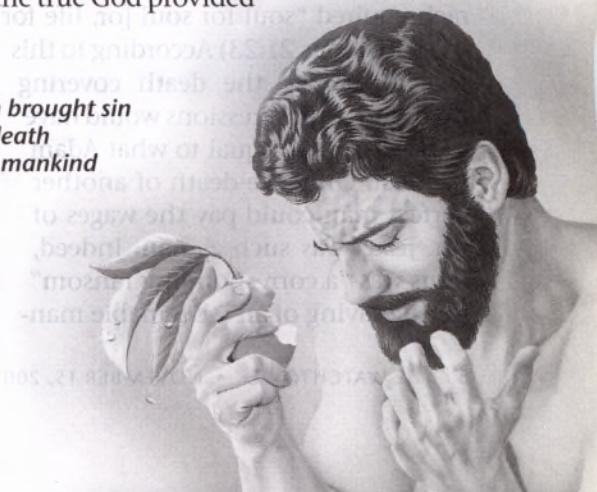
sinned." (Romans 5:12) Yes, because of the original sin, children that were supposed to be born perfect with endless life ahead of them were brought forth with sickness, old age, and death as their prospect.

"That is not fair," someone might say. "We did not choose to disobey God—Adam did. Why should we lose our prospect for everlasting life and happiness?" We know that if a court of law were to put a son in prison because his father had stolen a car, the son could rightly complain: "That is not just! I did not do anything wrong."—Deuteronomy 24:16.

By inducing the first man and woman to sin, Satan may have concluded that he would place God in an impossible situation. The Devil struck very early in the history of the human race—before any children had been born. The moment Adam sinned, an important question was, What will Jehovah do about the children that Adam and Eve will have?

Jehovah God did what was just and fair. "Far be it from the true God to act wickedly, and the Almighty to act unjustly!" declared the righteous man Elihu. (Job 34:10) And concerning Jehovah, the prophet Moses wrote: "The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) The solution that the true God provided

Adam brought sin and death upon mankind



to the problem created by Adam's sin does not take away our opportunity for everlasting life on a paradise earth.

God Provides a Perfect Solution

Consider the solution God laid out in the sentence he pronounced on Satan the Devil. Jehovah said to Satan: "I shall put enmity between you and the woman [God's heavenly organization] and between your seed [the world under Satan's control] and her seed [Jesus Christ]. He will bruise you [Satan] in the head and you will bruise him in the heel [Jesus' death]." (Genesis 3:15) In this first prophecy of the Bible, Jehovah alluded to his purpose to have his heavenly spirit Son come to earth to live as the perfect man Jesus and then die—be bruised in the heel—in that sinless state.

Why did God require the death of a perfect man? Well, what was Jehovah God's penalty for Adam if he sinned? Was it not death? (Genesis 2:16, 17) "The wages sin pays is death," wrote the apostle Paul. (Romans 6:23) Adam paid for his sin with his own death. He was given life, he chose to sin, and he died as a penalty for his sin. (Genesis 3:19) What about the condemnation that the entire human race came under because of that sin? A death was needed to atone for their sins. But whose death could justly cover the transgressions of all mankind?

God's Law to the ancient nation of Israel required "soul for soul [or, life for life]." (Exodus 21:23) According to this legal principle, the death covering mankind's transgressions would have to be of a value equal to what Adam had lost. Only the death of another perfect man could pay the wages of sin. Jesus was such a man. Indeed, Jesus was "a corresponding ransom" for the saving of all redeemable man-

kind descended from Adam.—1 Timothy 2:6; Romans 5:16, 17.

Jesus' Death Has Great Value

Adam's death had no value; he deserved to die for his sin. Jesus' death, however, had great value because he died in a sinless state. Jehovah God could accept the value of Jesus' perfect life as a ransom for obedient descendants of sinful Adam. And the value of Jesus' sacrifice does not stop at paying for our past sins. If it did, we would have no future. Being conceived in sin, we are bound to err again. (Psalm 51:5) How grateful we can be that Jesus' death makes provision for us to gain the perfection that Jehovah originally intended for the offspring of Adam and Eve!

Adam can be likened to a father who died and left us in such deep financial debt (sin) that there is no possible way for us to get out of debt. On the other hand, Jesus is like a good father who died and left us a rich inheritance that not only frees us from the enormous debt that Adam burdened us with but also provides enough for us to live on eternally. Jesus' death is not simply a cancellation of past sins; it is also a wonderful provision for our future.

Jesus saves because he died for us. And what a valuable provision his death is! When we see it as a part of God's solution to the complex problem of Adam's sin, our faith in Jehovah and his way of doing things is strengthened. Yes, Jesus' death is a means of rescuing "everyone exercising faith" in him from sin, disease, old age, and death itself. (John 3:16) Are you thankful to God for making this loving arrangement for our salvation?

Jehovah provided a perfect solution

The New World Translation Appreciated by Millions Worldwide

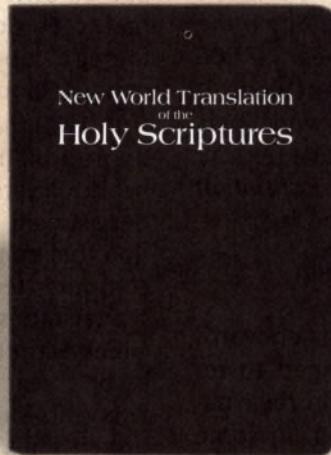
IT TOOK 12 years, 3 months, and 11 days of painstaking work. On March 13, 1960, however, the final segment of text for a new Bible translation was completed. It was called the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

One year later, Jehovah's Witnesses published this translation in a single volume. That edition in 1961 had a printing of one million copies. Today, the number of printed copies has passed the one hundred million mark, making the *New World Translation* one of the most widely distributed Bibles. What, though, prompted the Witnesses to prepare this translation?

Why a New Bible Translation?

In order to understand and proclaim the message of the Holy Scriptures, Jehovah's Witnesses have over the years used many different English Bible translations. While these versions have their points of merit, they are often colored by religious traditions and the creeds of Christendom. (Matthew 15:6) Jehovah's Witnesses therefore recognized the need for a Bible translation that faithfully presented what is in the original inspired writings.

The first step toward filling this need was taken in October 1946 when Nathan H. Knorr, a member of the Governing Body of



Jehovah's Witnesses, proposed the production of a new Bible translation. On December 2, 1947, the New World Bible Translation Committee set out to prepare a translation that would be faithful to the original text, would embody the latest scholarly findings gleaned from newly discovered Bible manuscripts, and would use language readily understood by today's readers.

With the publication of the first installment—the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*—in 1950, it became evident that the translators had met their objectives. Bible texts that had previously been only dimly understood became dramatically clear. For instance, consider the perplexing text at Matthew 5:3: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (*King James Version*) It was rendered: "Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need." The apostle Paul's admonition rendered "be careful for nothing" (*King James Version*) was translated: "Do not be anxious over anything." (*Philippians 4:6*) And the apostle John's reference to "the concupiscence of the flesh" (*Douay Version*) reads, "the desire of the flesh." (1 John 2:16) Clearly, the *New World Translation* opened up a new world of understanding.

Various scholars were impressed. For example, British Bible scholar Alexander

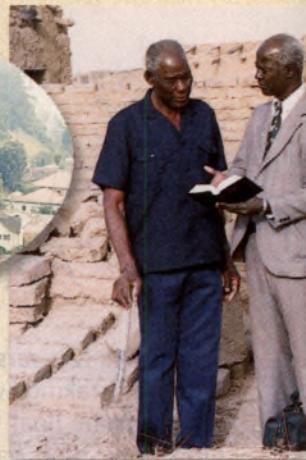
Thomson noted that the *New World Translation* is outstanding in accurately rendering the Greek present tense. To illustrate: Ephesians 5:25 reads "Husbands, continue loving your wives" instead of saying merely "Husbands, love your wife." (*King James Version*) "No other version appears to have exhibited this fine feature with such fulness and frequency," said Thomson regarding the *New World Translation*.

Another outstanding feature of the *New World Translation* is its use of God's personal name, Jehovah, in both the Hebrew and the Greek portions of the Scriptures. Since the Hebrew name for God appears nearly 7,000 times in the so-called Old Testament alone, it is clear that our Creator wants his worshipers to use his name and to know him as a person. (*Exodus 34:6, 7*) The *New World Translation* has helped millions of people to do so.

The *New World Translation* Goes Multilingual

Ever since it appeared in English, Jehovah's Witnesses around the world longed to receive the *New World Translation* in their native tongue—and for good reason. In some countries, it was difficult to obtain translations in local languages because representatives of the Bible Societies distributing them were not pleased to see their stock of Bibles end up in the hands of Jehovah's Witnesses. Moreover, such vernacular Bibles often conceal vital teachings. A typical example is a version in a southern European tongue that hides an important reference to God's name by replacing Jesus' words "Let your name be sanctified" with "May you be honored by people."—Matthew 6:9.

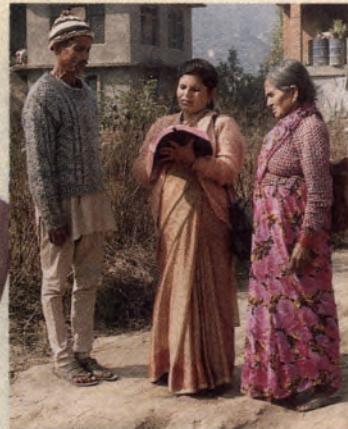
Already in 1961, translators began rendering the English text of the *New World Translation* into other languages. Just two years later, the *New World Translation of the Chris-*



tian Greek Scriptures was completed in six additional languages. By then, 3 out of every 4 Witnesses worldwide could read this Bible in their own language. Yet, much more work had to be done if Jehovah's Witnesses were to get a copy of this Bible into the hands of many millions of people.

In 1989 that goal came closer with the setting up of Translation Services at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. That department developed a method of translation that combined Biblical word study with computer technology. Using this system has made it possible to translate the Christian Greek Scriptures into some other languages in one year and the Hebrew Scriptures in two years—a fraction of the time normally required for a Bible translation project. Since this method was developed, 29 editions of the *New World Translation* have been translated from English and released in languages spoken by over two billion people. Work is now under way in 12 other languages. To date, the English *New World Translation* has been translated, in whole or in part, into 41 other languages.

Over 50 years have now passed since the first part of the *New World Translation* was released on August 3, 1950, at the Theocracy's Increase Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York City. On that occasion, Nathan H. Knorr urged the conventioners: "Take this translation. Read it through, a thing that will be done with enjoyment.



Study it, for it will help you to better your understanding of God's Word. Put it in the hands of others." We encourage you to read the Bible daily, for its message can help you to "stand complete and with firm conviction in all the will of God."—Colossians 4:12.

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"New World Translation Releases"

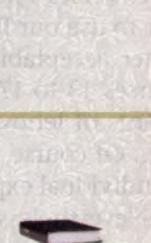
First released in English, the *New World Translation* is now available in whole or in part in 41 additional languages



Christian Greek Scriptures



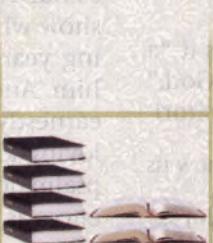
Complete Bible



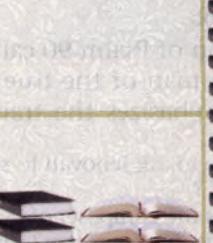
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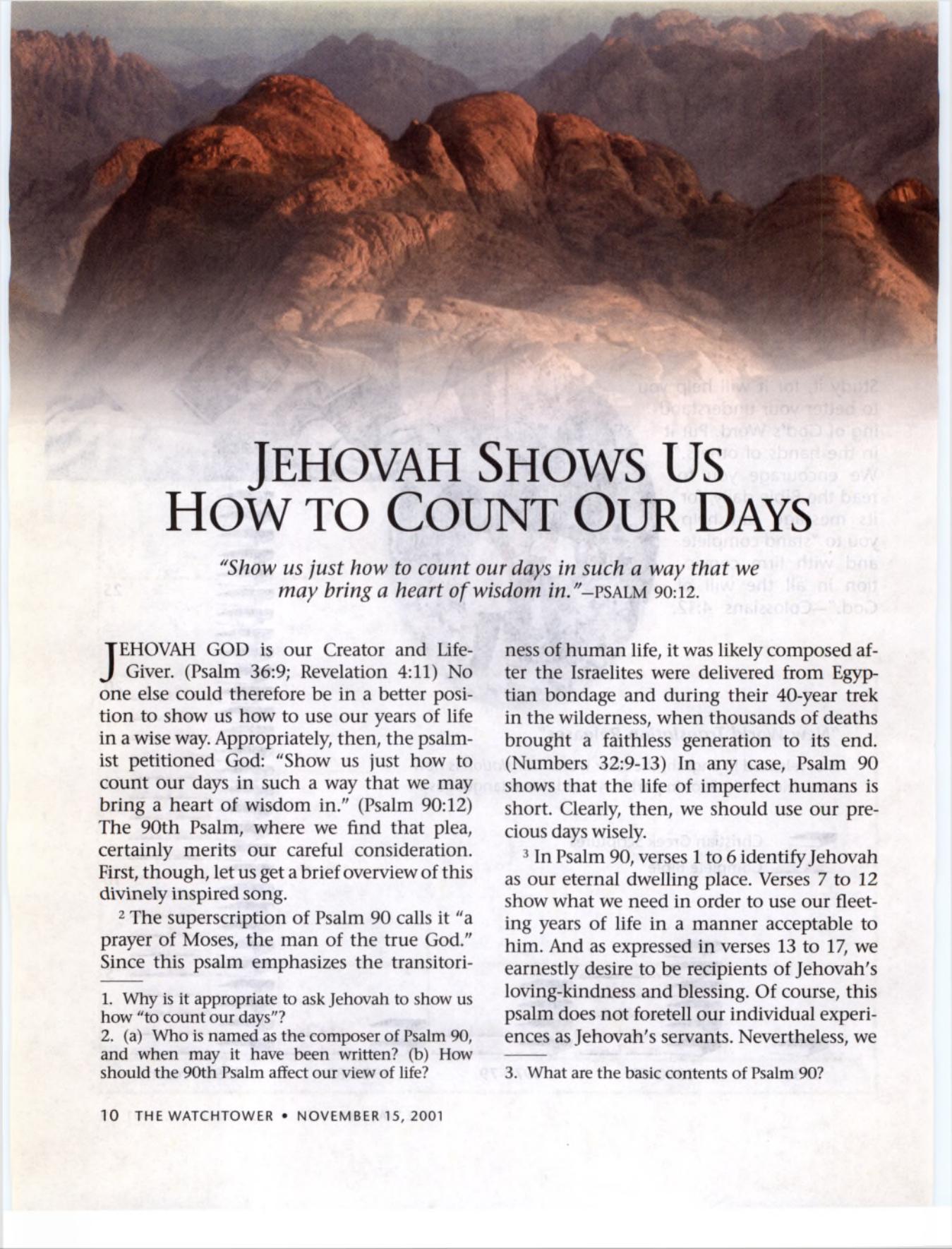
1970-79



1980-89



1990-Present



JEHOVAH SHOWS US HOW TO COUNT OUR DAYS

"Show us just how to count our days in such a way that we may bring a heart of wisdom in."—PSALM 90:12.

JEHOVAH GOD is our Creator and Life-Giver. (Psalm 36:9; Revelation 4:11) No one else could therefore be in a better position to show us how to use our years of life in a wise way. Appropriately, then, the psalmist petitioned God: "Show us just how to count our days in such a way that we may bring a heart of wisdom in." (Psalm 90:12) The 90th Psalm, where we find that plea, certainly merits our careful consideration. First, though, let us get a brief overview of this divinely inspired song.

² The superscription of Psalm 90 calls it "a prayer of Moses, the man of the true God." Since this psalm emphasizes the transitori-

ness of human life, it was likely composed after the Israelites were delivered from Egyptian bondage and during their 40-year trek in the wilderness, when thousands of deaths brought a faithless generation to its end. (Numbers 32:9-13) In any case, Psalm 90 shows that the life of imperfect humans is short. Clearly, then, we should use our precious days wisely.

³ In Psalm 90, verses 1 to 6 identify Jehovah as our eternal dwelling place. Verses 7 to 12 show what we need in order to use our fleeting years of life in a manner acceptable to him. And as expressed in verses 13 to 17, we earnestly desire to be recipients of Jehovah's loving-kindness and blessing. Of course, this psalm does not foretell our individual experiences as Jehovah's servants. Nevertheless, we

3. What are the basic contents of Psalm 90?

Jehovah was God "before the mountains themselves were born"

should personally take its prayerful sentiments to heart. Let us therefore look closely at Psalm 90 through the eyes of those dedicated to God.

Jehovah—Our "Real Dwelling"

⁴ The psalmist opens with the words: "O Jehovah, you yourself have proved to be a real dwelling for us during generation after generation. Before the mountains themselves were born, or you proceeded to bring forth as with labor pains the earth and the productive land, even from time indefinite to time indefinite you are God [or, the Divine One]."—Psalm 90:1, 2, footnote.

⁵ For us "the everlasting God," Jehovah, is "a real dwelling"—a spiritual refuge. (Romans 16:26) We feel secure, for he is always there to help us as the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) Because we cast our anxieties upon our heavenly Father through his beloved Son, 'the peace of God that excels all thought guards our hearts and mental powers.'—Philippians 4:6, 7; Matthew 6:9; John 14:6, 14.

⁶ We enjoy spiritual security because, figuratively speaking, Jehovah is "a real dwelling" for us. He also provides "interior rooms"—likely linked closely with the congregations of his people—as spiritual havens, where loving shepherds contribute greatly to our sense of security. (Isaiah 26:20; 32:1, 2; Acts 20:28, 29) Moreover, some of us belong to families that have a long history of service to God and have personally found him to be 'a real dwelling during generation after generation.'

⁷ Jehovah existed before the mountains were "born" or the earth was brought forth as with "labor pains." Viewed from a human standpoint, producing this earth with all its

4-6. How is Jehovah "a real dwelling" for us?

7. In what sense were the mountains "born" and the earth brought forth as with "labor pains"?

features, chemistry, and complicated mechanisms required a great deal of effort. And by saying that the mountains were "born" and the earth was brought forth as with "labor pains," the psalmist is showing great respect for the amount of work involved when Jehovah created these things. Should we not have similar respect and appreciation for the Creator's handiwork?

Jehovah Is Always There for Us

⁸ "Even from time indefinite to time indefinite you are God," sang the psalmist. "Time indefinite" can refer to things that have an end but the duration of which has not been specified. (Exodus 31:16, 17; Hebrews 9:15) At Psalm 90:2 and elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures, though, "time indefinite" means "eternal." (Ecclesiastes 1:4) Our minds cannot understand how it is possible that God has always existed. Yet, Jehovah had no beginning and will have no end. (Habakkuk 1:12) He will always be alive and ready to help us.

⁹ The psalmist was inspired to equate a thousand years of human existence with a very short time in the experience of the eternal Creator. Addressing God, he wrote: "You make mortal man go back to crushed matter, and you say: 'Go back, you sons of men.' For a thousand years are in your eyes but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch during the night."—Psalm 90:3, 4.

¹⁰ Man is mortal, and God makes him "go back to crushed matter." That is, man returns "to dust," as crushed, or pulverized, earth. In effect, Jehovah says: 'Go back to the dust of the ground from which you were made.' (Genesis 2:7; 3:19) This applies to all—strong or weak, rich or poor—for

8. What is meant by the statement that Jehovah is God "from time indefinite to time indefinite"?

9. With what does the psalmist equate a thousand years of human existence?

10. How does God make man "go back to crushed matter"?

no imperfect human ‘can by any means redeem even a brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, that he should live forever.’ (Psalm 49:6-9) But how thankful we are that ‘God gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might have everlasting life’!—John 3:16; Romans 6:23.

¹¹ From Jehovah’s standpoint, even 969-year-old Methuselah lived less than a day. (Genesis 5:27) To God a thousand years is but as yesterday—a period of just 24 hours—when it is past. The psalmist also notes that to God a thousand years is like a sentry’s four-hour watch at an encampment during the night. (Judges 7:19) Clearly, then, a long time for us is very short to the eternal God, Jehovah.

¹² In contrast with God’s eternal existence, present human life is short indeed. Says the psalmist: “*You have swept them away; they become a mere sleep; in the morning they are just like green grass that changes. In the morning it puts forth blossoms and must change; at evening it withers and certainly dries up.*” (Psalm 90:5, 6) Moses saw thousands of Israelites die in the wilderness, ‘swept away’ by God as in a flood. This portion of the psalm has been rendered: “*You sweep men away in the sleep of death.*” (*New International Version*) On the other hand, the life span of imperfect humans is “a mere sleep” of short duration—comparable to just one night’s slumber.

¹³ We are ‘just like green grass that puts

11. Why can we say that a long time for us is very short to God?
12. How are humans ‘swept away’ by God?
13. How are we “just like green grass,” and how should this affect our thinking?

From Jehovah’s standpoint, 969-year-old Methuselah lived less than a day

forth blossoms in the morning’ but by evening has withered under the sun’s intense heat. Yes, our life is as transitory as grass that withers in a single day. Therefore, let us not waste this precious commodity. Instead, we should seek God’s guidance on how we ought to use our remaining years in this system of things.

Jehovah Helps Us “to Count Our Days”

¹⁴ As to God, the psalmist adds: “*We have come to an end in your anger, and by your rage we have been disturbed. You have set our errors right in front of you, our hidden things before your bright face. For all our days have come to their decline in your fury; we have finished our years just like a whisper.*”—Psalm 90:7-9.

¹⁵ Faithless Israelites ‘came to an end in God’s anger.’ They were ‘disturbed by his rage,’ or ‘terrified by his indignation.’ (*New International Version*) Some were “laid low in the wilderness” as a result of divine judgments. (1 Corinthians 10:5) Jehovah ‘set their errors right in front of him.’ He called them to account for their public wrongdoing, but even their “hidden things,” or concealed sins, were ‘before his bright face.’ (Proverbs 15:3) As objects of God’s fury, the unrepentant Israelites ‘finished their years just like a whisper.’ For that matter, our own brief life span is like a breath passing our lips as a mere whisper.

^{14, 15. Psalm 90:7-9 had what fulfillment upon the Israelites?}

¹⁶ If any of us were to practice sin secretly, we might be able to hide such conduct from fellow humans for a time. But our hidden wrongdoing would be 'before Jehovah's bright face,' and our actions would damage our relationship with him. To regain intimacy with Jehovah, we would need to pray for his forgiveness, leave our transgressions, and gratefully accept the spiritual help of Christian elders. (Proverbs 28:13; James 5:14, 15) How much better that would be than possibly 'finishing our years just like a whisper,' with our hope of everlasting life in jeopardy!

¹⁷ Regarding the life span of imperfect humans, the psalmist says: "*In themselves the days of our years are seventy years; and if because of special mightiness they are eighty years, yet their insistence is on trouble and hurtful things; for it must quickly pass by, and away we fly.*" (Psalm 90:10) A life span of 70 years is typical of people in general, and at age 85, Caleb cited his unusual strength. There have been exceptions, such as Aaron (123), Moses (120), and Joshua (110). (Numbers 33:39; Deuteronomy 34:7; Joshua 14:6, 10, 11; 24:29) But of the faithless generation that came out of Egypt, registered ones from 20 years old and upward died within 40 years. (Numbers 14:29-34) Today, in many countries the general human life span remains within the range given by the psalmist. Our years are filled with "trouble and hurtful things." They pass by quickly, "and away we fly."—Job 14:1, 2.

¹⁸ The psalmist next sings: "*Who is there knowing the strength of your anger and your fury according to the fear of you? Show us just how to count our days in such a way that we may bring a heart of wisdom in.*" (Psalm 90:11,

16. If some are practicing sin secretly, what should they do?

17. What life span is typical of people in general, and our years are filled with what?

18, 19. (a) What does it mean to "count our days in such a way that we may bring a heart of wisdom in"? (b) Our exercising wisdom will move us to do what?

12) Not one of us fully knows the strength of God's anger or the extent of his fury, and this should heighten our reverential fear of Jehovah. It should, in fact, motivate us to ask him "just how [we can] count our days in such a way that we may bring a heart of wisdom in."

¹⁹ The psalmist's words are a prayer that Jehovah teach his people how to exercise wisdom in valuing and using their remaining days in a God-approved way. A life expectancy of 70 years holds out hope of some 25,500 days. Regardless of our age, though, 'we do not know what our life will be tomorrow, for we are a mist appearing for a little while and then disappearing.' (James 4:13-15) Since 'time and unforeseen occurrence befall us all,' we cannot say how much longer we will live. Let us therefore pray for wisdom to deal with trials, to treat others properly, and to do our best in Jehovah's service right now—today! (Ecclesiastes 9:11; James 1:5-8) Jehovah guides us by means of his Word, his spirit, and his organization. (Matthew 24:45-47; 1 Corinthians 2:10; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17) The exercise of wisdom moves us to 'seek first God's Kingdom' and to use our days in a way that brings glory to Jehovah and makes his heart rejoice. (Matthew 6:25-33; Proverbs 27:11) Worshiping him wholeheartedly will not remove all our problems, of course, but it certainly results in great joy.

Jehovah's Blessing Brings Us Joy

²⁰ How splendid it would be if we could rejoice throughout the rest of our life! In this regard, Moses pleads: "*Do return, O Jehovah! How long will it be? And feel regret over your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your loving-kindness [or, "loyal love"], that we may cry out joyfully and may rejoice during all our days.*" (Psalm 90:13, 14; footnote) God does not make mistakes. Nevertheless, he does

20. (a) In what way does God "feel regret"? (b) How will Jehovah deal with us if we err seriously but demonstrate true repentance?



Jehovah has 'firmly established the work of our hands'

"feel regret" and 'turn back' from his anger and from meting out punishment when his warning about taking such action produces a change in attitude and conduct on the part of repentant wrongdoers. (Deuteronomy 13:17) So even if we were to err seriously but demonstrate true repentance, Jehovah would 'satisfy us with his loving-kindness,' and we would have reason to "cry out joyfully." (Psalm 32: 1-5) And by pursuing a righteous course, we will sense God's loyal love for us and will be able to "rejoice during all our days"—yes, for the rest of our lives.

²¹ The psalmist earnestly prays: "Make us rejoice correspondingly to the days that you have afflicted us, the years that we have seen calamity. May your activity appear to your own servants and your splendor upon their sons." (Psalm 90:15, 16) Moses may have been asking God to bless Israel with rejoicing that corresponded to, or lasted as long as, their days of affliction and the years during which they

²² In the words recorded at Psalm 90:15, 16, what may Moses have been requesting?

suffered calamity. He asked that God's "activity" of blessing the Israelites become apparent to His servants and that His splendor be made manifest upon their sons, or offspring. We can appropriately pray that blessings be showered upon obedient mankind in God's promised new world.—2 Peter 3:13.

²² Psalm 90 concludes with this plea: "*Let the pleasantness of Jehovah our God prove to be upon us, and the work of our hands do you firmly*

—
²² According to Psalm 90:17, for what can we rightly pray?

How Would You Answer?

- How is Jehovah "a real dwelling" for us?
- Why can we say that Jehovah is always ready to help us?
- How does Jehovah help us "to count our days"?
- What enables us to "rejoice during all our days"?

Ly establish upon us. Yes, the work of our hands, do you firmly establish it." (Psalm 90:17) These words show that we can rightly pray for God to bless our efforts in his service. As anointed Christians or their companions, the "other sheep," we rejoice that "the pleasantness of Jehovah" rests upon us. (John 10:16) How happy we are that God has 'firmly established the work of our hands' as Kingdom proclaimers and in other ways!

Let Us Keep On Counting Our Days

²³ Meditating on the 90th Psalm ought to increase our dependence on Jehovah, our

23, 24. How can we benefit from meditating on the 90th Psalm?

"real dwelling." By reflecting on its words about the brevity of life, we should become more keenly aware of the need for divine guidance in counting our days. And if we persevere in seeking and exercising godly wisdom, we are sure to be recipients of Jehovah's loving-kindness and blessing.

²⁴ Jehovah will continue to show us how to count our days. And if we yield to his instruction, we will be able to keep on counting our days for all eternity. (John 17:3) If we are to keep everlasting life in view, however, Jehovah must be our refuge. (Jude 20, 21) As we shall see in the next article, this point is made abundantly clear in the heartening words of the 91st Psalm.

JEHOVAH IS OUR REFUGE

"Because you said: 'Jehovah is my refuge,' . . . no calamity will befall you."—PSALM 91:9, 10.

JEHOVAH is a true refuge for his people. If we are wholly devoted to him, we may be 'pressed in every way, but not cramped beyond movement; perplexed, but not with no way out; persecuted, but not left in the lurch; thrown down, but not destroyed.' Why? Because Jehovah grants us "power beyond what is normal." (2 Corinthians 4:7-9) Yes, our heavenly Father helps us to pursue a godly life, and we can take to heart the psalmist's words: "Because you said: 'Jehovah is my refuge,' you have made the Most High himself your dwelling; no calamity will befall you."—Psalm 91:9, 10.

² Those words of Psalm 91 may have been written by Moses. A superscription names him as the composer of the 90th Psalm, and Psalm 91 follows it without any intervening statement naming another writer. Perhaps Psalm 91 was

1. Why can we say that Jehovah is our refuge?
2. What can be said about Psalm 91 and what it promises?

sung antiphonically; that is, one person may have sung first (91:1, 2), with a choir responding (91:3-8). Possibly a single voice was heard next (91:9a) and was answered by a group (91:9b-13). Then one singer may have sung the final words (91:14-16). In any case, the 91st Psalm promises spiritual security to anointed Christians as a class and provides similar assurance for their dedicated companions as a group.* Let us consider this psalm from the standpoint of all such servants of Jehovah.

Secure in 'God's Secret Place'

³ The psalmist sings: "*Anyone dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will procure himself lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One. I will say to Jehovah: 'You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I will trust.'*" (Psalm 91:1, 2) "The secret place of the Most High" is a figurative place of protection for us, and particularly for anointed ones, who are special targets of the Devil. (Revelation 12:15-17) He would destroy all of us were it not for the protection we enjoy as those who lodge with God as spiritual guests. By "lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One," we experience God's protective shade, or shadow. (Psalm 15:1, 2; 121:5) There is no safer refuge or more formidable stronghold than our Sovereign Lord, Jehovah.—Proverbs 18:10.

⁴ The psalmist adds: "*He himself [Jehovah] will deliver you from the trap of the birdcatcher, from the pestilence causing adversities.*" (Psalm

* Writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures did not discuss Psalm 91 from the standpoint of Messianic prophecy. Of course, Jehovah was a refuge and a stronghold for the man Jesus Christ, even as He is for Jesus' anointed followers and their dedicated companions as a group in this "time of the end."—Daniel 12:4.

3. (a) What is "the secret place of the Most High"? (b) What do we experience by "lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One"?
4. What devices does "the birdcatcher," Satan, use, and how do we escape?

91:3) A birdcatcher in ancient Israel often captured birds by using snares or traps. Among the snares of "the birdcatcher," Satan, are his evil organization and "crafty acts." (Ephesians 6:11, footnote) Hidden traps are placed in our path to draw us into wickedness and cause our spiritual ruin. (Psalm 142:3) Because we have renounced unrighteousness, however, 'our soul is like a bird that escapes from the trap.' (Psalm 124:7, 8) How grateful we are that Jehovah delivers us from the wicked "birdcatcher"!—Matthew 6:13.

⁵ The psalmist cites "the pestilence causing adversities." Like a contagious epidemic disease, there is something that causes "adversities" for the human family and for upholders of Jehovah's sovereignty. In this regard, historian Arnold Toynbee wrote: "Since the end of World War II nationalism has doubled the number of local sovereign independent states . . . Mankind's present mood is increasingly divisive."

⁶ Through the centuries, certain rulers have fanned the flames of divisive international strife. They have also demanded that reverence be directed to them or to various images or symbols. But Jehovah has never let his faithful people succumb to such a "pestilence." (Daniel 3:1, 2, 20-27; 6:7-10, 16-22) As a loving international brotherhood, we give Jehovah exclusive devotion, maintain Scriptural neutrality, and impartially acknowledge that "in every nation the man that fears [God] and works righteousness is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35; Exodus 20:4-6; John 13:34, 35; 17:16; 1 Peter 5:8, 9) Although we suffer "adversities" in the form of persecution as Christians, we are joyful and spiritually secure "in the secret place of the Most High."

⁷ Having Jehovah as our refuge, we draw comfort from the words: "*With his pinions he*

- 5, 6. What "pestilence" has caused "adversities," but why do Jehovah's people not succumb to it?
7. How does Jehovah protect us "with his pinions"?

will block approach to you, and under his wings you will take refuge. His trueness will be a large shield and bulwark." (Psalm 91:4) God protects us, even as a parent bird hovers protectively over its young. (Isaiah 31:5) 'With his pinions he blocks approach to us.' Broadly, a bird's "pinions" are its wings. With them a bird covers its young, protecting them from predators. Like mere fledglings, we are secure under Jehovah's figurative pinions because we have taken refuge in his true Christian organization.—Ruth 2:12; Psalm 5:1, 11.

⁸ We trust in "trueness," or faithfulness. It

8. How is Jehovah's "trueness" a large shield and bulwark?



*Do you know
how Jehovah's
trueness is a large
shield for us?*

is like a large shield of ancient times, often doorlike in shape and big enough to cover a person's entire body. (Psalm 5:12) Confidence in such protection frees us from fear. (Genesis 15:1; Psalm 84:11) Like our faith, God's trueness is a large protective shield that stops Satan's burning missiles and wards off enemy blows. (Ephesians 6:16) It is also a bulwark, a strong defensive mound behind which we stand firm.

'We Will Not Be Afraid'

⁹ In view of God's protection, the psalmist says: "You will not be afraid of anything dreadful by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in the gloom, nor of the destruction that despoils at midday." (Psalm 91:5, 6) Since many evil deeds are committed under the cloak of darkness, the night can be a fear-inspiring time. Amid the spiritual darkness now covering the earth, our enemies often resort to covert acts in an effort to destroy our spirituality and stop our preaching work. But 'we are not afraid of anything dreadful by night' because Jehovah guards us.—Psalm 64:1, 2; 121:4; Isaiah 60:2.

¹⁰ "The arrow that flies by day" seems to denote verbal attack. (Psalm 64:3-5; 94:20) As we persist in presenting truthful information, such open opposition to our sacred service proves futile. Moreover, we do not fear "the pestilence that walks in the gloom." This is a figurative pestilence bred amid the gloom of this morally and religiously diseased world lying in Satan's power. (1 John 5:19) It produces a deadly state of mind and heart, leaving people in the dark regarding Jehovah, his purposes, and his loving provisions.

9. Why can the night be a fear-inspiring time, but why are we not fearful?

10. (a) What does "the arrow that flies by day" seem to denote, and how do we react to it? (b) What is the nature of "the pestilence that walks in the gloom," and why do we not fear it?



***Jehovah helps his servants
to perform their ministry
despite unexpected attacks
and open opposition***

(1 Timothy 6:4) Amid this darkness, we are not fearful, since we enjoy spiritual light in abundance.—Psalm 43:3.

¹¹ “The destruction that despoils at midday” does not frighten us either. “Midday” may denote the so-called enlightenment of the world. Those who succumb to its materialistic views suffer spiritual destruction. (1 Timothy 6:20, 21) As we boldly declare the Kingdom message, we do not fear any of our enemies, for Jehovah is our Protector.—Psalm 64:1; Proverbs 3:25, 26.

11. What happens to those who experience ‘despoiling at midday’?

¹² The psalmist continues: “A thousand will fall at your very side and ten thousand at your right hand; to you it will not come near. Only with your eyes will you look on and see the retribution itself of the wicked ones.” (Psalm 91:7, 8) Because of failing to make Jehovah their refuge, many “fall” in spiritual death at our “very side.” In effect, “ten thousand” have fallen at the “right hand” of today’s spiritual Israelites. (Galatians 6:16) But whether we are anointed Christians or their dedicated companions, we are secure in God’s “secret place.”

12. At whose side do thousands “fall,” and in what way?

We merely 'look on and see the retribution of the wicked,' who are reaping trouble in commercial, religious, and other ways.—Galatians 6:7.

'No Calamity Will Befall Us'

¹³ Although this world's security is breaking down, we put God first and take courage from the psalmist's words: "*Because you said: Jehovah is my refuge, you have made the Most High himself your dwelling; no calamity will befall you, and not even a plague will draw near to your tent.*" (Psalm 91:9, 10) Yes, Jehovah is our refuge. However, we also make the Most High God 'our dwelling,' where we find safety. We laud Jehovah as the Universal Sovereign, 'dwell' in him as our Source of security, and declare the good news of his Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Therefore, 'no calamity will befall us'—none of the calamities described earlier in this psalm. Even when we share with others in such calamities as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, famines, and ravages of warfare, these do not destroy our faith or our spiritual security.

¹⁴ Anointed Christians are like alien residents living in tents apart from this system of things. (1 Peter 2:11) 'Not even a plague draws near their tent.' Whether our hope is heavenly or earthly, we are no part of the world, and we are not infected by such spiritually deadly plagues as its immorality, materialism, false religion, and worship of "the wild beast" and its "image," the United Nations.—Revelation 9:20, 21; 13:1-18; John 17:16.

¹⁵ Regarding the protection we enjoy, the psalmist adds: "*He [Jehovah] will give his own angels a command concerning you, to guard you in all your ways. Upon their hands they will carry you, that you may not strike your foot against any stone.*" (Psalm 91:11, 12) Angels

13. What calamities do not befall us, and why?
14. As Jehovah's servants, why are we not infected by deadly plagues?
15. In what respects do we enjoy angelic help?

have been given power to protect us. (2 Kings 6:17; Psalm 34:7-9; 104:4; Matthew 26:53; Luke 1:19) They guard us 'in all our ways.' (Matthew 18:10) We enjoy angelic guidance and guardianship as Kingdom proclaimers and do not stumble spiritually. (Revelation 14:6, 7) Even 'stones' such as bans against our work have not caused us to stumble and fall out of divine favor.

¹⁶ The psalmist continues: "*Upon the young lion and the cobra you will tread; you will trample down the maned young lion and the big snake.*" (Psalm 91:13) Just as a young lion makes an open, frontal attack, some of our enemies show their opposition openly by passing laws designed to stop our preaching work. But unexpected attacks like those of a cobra striking from a place of concealment are also made upon us. Hiding behind the scenes, the clergy sometimes attack us through lawmakers, judges, and others. But with Jehovah's support, we peacefully seek redress in the courts, thus 'defending and legally establishing the good news.'—Philippians 1:7; Psalm 94:14, 20-22.

¹⁷ The psalmist speaks of trampling down "the maned young lion and the big snake." A maned young lion can be quite fierce, and a big snake can be a reptile of great size. (Isaiah 31:4) Regardless of how fierce the maned young lion may be when making a frontal attack, though, we figuratively trample on it by obeying God rather than lionlike men or organizations. (Acts 5:29) So the menacing "lion" does not cause us spiritual injury.

¹⁸ In the Greek Septuagint, "the big snake" is called "a dragon." This may well remind us of "the great dragon . . . , the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan." (Revelation

16. How do attacks carried out by a "young lion" and a "cobra" differ, and how do we react to them?
17. How do we trample down "the maned young lion"?
18. "The big snake" may remind us of whom, and what do we need to do if we are under attack?

12:7-9; Genesis 3:15) He is like a monstrous reptile capable of crushing and swallowing its prey. (Jeremiah 51:34) When Satan is trying to wrap his coils around us, crush us with this world's pressures, and swallow us, let us shake ourselves loose and trample down this "big snake." (1 Peter 5:8) The anointed remnant must do this if they are to share in the fulfillment of Romans 16:20.

Jehovah—Our Source of Salvation

¹⁹ Concerning the true worshiper, the psalmist represents God as saying: "*Because on me he has set his affection, I shall also provide him with escape. I shall protect him because he has come to know my name.*" (Psalm 91:14) The phrase "I shall protect him" is literally, "I shall place him on high," that is, out of reach. We take refuge in Jehovah as his worshipers especially because 'we have set our affection on him.' (Mark 12:29, 30; 1 John 4:19) In turn, God 'provides us with escape' from our enemies. Never will we be wiped off the earth. Rather, we will be saved because we know the divine name and call upon it in faith. (Romans 10:11-13) And we are determined to 'walk in Jehovah's name forever.' —Micah 4:5; Isaiah 43:10-12.

²⁰ As Psalm 91 concludes, Jehovah says of his faithful servant: "*He will call upon me, and I shall answer him. I shall be with him in distress. I shall rescue him and glorify him. With length of days I shall satisfy him, and I shall cause him to see salvation by me.*" (Psalm 91:15, 16) When we call upon God in prayer according to his will, he answers us. (1 John 5:13-15) We have already passed through much distress because of the hostility fomented by Satan. But the words "I shall be with him in distress" prepare us for future trials and assure us that God will sustain us when this wicked system is destroyed.

19. Why do we take refuge in Jehovah?
20. As Psalm 91 concludes, what does Jehovah promise his faithful servant?

²¹ Despite Satan's rabid opposition, the full complement of anointed ones among us will be glorified in heaven in Jehovah's due time—after a "length of days" on earth. Yet, God's remarkable rescues have already brought spiritual glory to the anointed. And how honored they are to take the lead as Witnesses of Jehovah on earth in these last days! (Isaiah 43:10-12) Jehovah's greatest rescue of his people will occur during his great war of Armageddon when he vindicates his sovereignty and sanctifies his holy name.—Psalm 83:18; Ezekiel 38:23; Revelation 16:14, 16.

²² Whether we are anointed Christians or their dedicated companions, we look to God for salvation. During "the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah," those loyally serving God will be saved. (Joel 2:30-32) Those of us who will make up the "great crowd" of survivors into God's new world and who remain faithful during a final test will be 'satisfied by him with length of days'—life without end. He will also resurrect multitudes. (Revelation 7:9; 20:7-15) Jehovah will indeed take great delight in 'causing us to see salvation' through Jesus Christ. (Psalm 3:8) With such grand prospects before us, let us keep on looking to God for help in counting our days to his glory. By our words and deeds, may we continue to prove that Jehovah is our refuge.

21. How have the anointed already been glorified?
22. Who will 'see salvation by Jehovah'?

How Would You Answer?

- What is "the secret place of the Most High"?
- Why are we not afraid?
- How is it that 'no calamity will befall us'?
- Why can we say that Jehovah is our source of salvation?

How Do You Handle HYPOCRISY?

IN THE garden of Gethsemane, Judas Iscariot went up to Jesus and "kissed him very tenderly." This was a customary expression of warm affection. But Judas' gesture was only a pretense to identify Jesus to those who had come in the night to arrest him. (Matthew 26:48, 49) Judas was a hypocrite—a person who pretends to be what he is not, someone who hides his bad motives behind a mask of sincerity. The Greek word rendered "hypocrite" means "one who answers" and also denotes a stage actor. In time, the word came to refer to anyone who was simply putting on an act in order to deceive others.

How do you react to hypocrisy? Do you get angry, for example, when you see cigarette manufacturers promote smoking despite medical evidence that their product is harmful? Are you incensed at the hypocrisy of caretakers who abuse those entrusted to their care? Do you feel hurt when a friend who you thought was genuine turns out to be false? How does religious hypocrisy affect you?

"Woe to You . . . Hypocrites!"

Consider the religious climate that existed when Jesus was on earth. The scribes and Pharisees pretended to be loyal teachers of God's Law, but in reality they filled people's minds with human teachings that drew attention away from God. The scribes and Pharisees scrupulously insisted on the letter of the law, but they ignored fundamental principles that reflected love and compassion. In public they pretended to be devoted

to God, but in private they were full of badness. Their deeds never measured up to their words. Their objective in doing things was "to be viewed by men." They resembled "whitewashed graves, which outwardly indeed appear beautiful but inside are full of dead men's bones and of every sort of uncleanliness." Boldly exposing their hypocrisy, Jesus repeatedly said to them: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"—Matthew 23:5, 13-31.

If you had lived in those days, like other honesthearted people you might have been truly sickened by such religious hypocrisy. (Romans 2:21-24; 2 Peter 2:1-3) But would you have allowed the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees to embitter you to the extent that you would reject all religion, including that which was taught and practiced by Jesus Christ and his disciples? Would that not have been to your disadvantage?

Hypocritical conduct on the part of religious people may turn us away from religion in disgust. However, this response would also blind us to the sincerity of true worshipers. The very barriers that we build for protection against hypocrisy can, in effect, turn us away from genuine friends. Our response to hypocrisy, then, should be reasonable and balanced.

"Keep Your Eyes Open"

First, we must learn to identify hypocrites. This is not always easy. One family learned this at great cost to themselves. The mother

had fallen into a coma. In filing a lawsuit for malpractice against the hospital where this had occurred, the family hired a lawyer who was also a preacher in a local church. Even though the hospital paid \$3.4 million in settlement, the family's tragedy was compounded. The mother died a pauper, and there was no money to pay for her funeral. Why? Because the lawyer pocketed most of the money. Regarding this lawyer, a law journal stated: "If he preached the kind of conduct he practised . . . , his message would have to be this: let us prey." How can we protect ourselves from people like that?

"Keep your eyes open," was the advice Jesus gave to those in his day who were confronted with religious hypocrisy. (Matthew 16:6; Luke 12:1) Yes, we must be cautious. People may profess the most noble aims and ooze sincerity, but we need to exercise reasonable caution and not immediately accept everyone at face value. Would we not carefully check our bank notes if we knew that counterfeit currency was in circulation?

Hypocrites have appeared even within the true Christian congregation. The disciple Jude warned about them, saying: "These are the rocks hidden below water in your love feasts while they feast with you, shepherds that feed themselves without fear; waterless clouds carried this way and that by winds; trees in late autumn, but fruitless."—Jude 12.

To 'keep our eyes open' means to avoid being deceived by someone who pretends to be loving but who is actually self-centered and promotes opinions not based on God's Word. Like a jagged rock lying just below the surface of placid waters, such a person can cause spiritual shipwreck to the unwary. (1 Timothy 1:19) The hypocrite may promise much in the way of spiritual refreshment but turns out to be a 'waterless cloud'—delivering nothing. Like a fruitless tree, a deceiv-

Would you have allowed the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees to turn you away from Jesus Christ and his disciples?

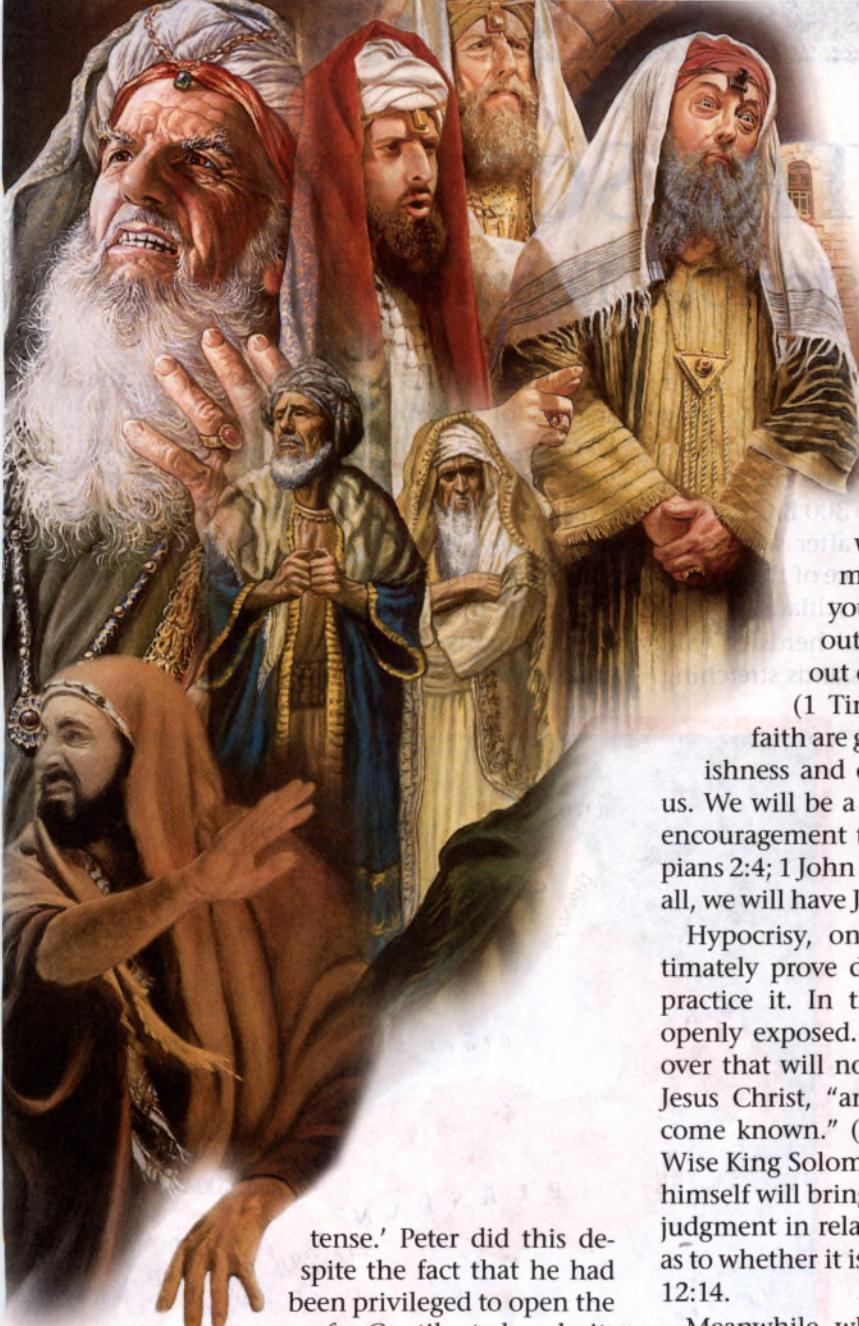
er bears no genuine Christian fruitage. (Matthew 7: 15-20; Galatians 5:19-21) Yes, we need to be on guard against such deceivers. Yet, we must do so without being suspicious of everyone's motives.

"Stop Judging"

How easy it is for imperfect humans to point out other people's failings while ignoring their own! This inclination, though, makes us vulnerable to hypocrisy. "Hypocrite!" Jesus said. "First extract the rafter from your own eye, and then you will see clearly how to extract the straw from your brother's eye." We do well to heed his counsel: "Stop judging that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged . . . Why, then, do you look at the straw in your brother's eye, but do not consider the rafter in your own eye?"—Matthew 7:1-5.

When others at times do things that seem hypocritical, we must be careful not to label them hastily as hypocrites. The apostle Peter, for example, "went withdrawing and separating himself" from Gentile fellow believers in Antioch so as to please visitors of Jewish background from Jerusalem. Barnabas 'was also led along with Peter and others in this pre-





tense.' Peter did this despite the fact that he had been privileged to open the way for Gentiles to be admitted to the Christian congregation. (Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 10:24-28, 34, 35) But this slip on the part of Barnabas and Peter surely did not put them in the same category as the scribes and Pharisees or Judas Iscariot.

"Let Your Love Be Without Hypocrisy"

"When you do good to other people," admonished Jesus, "don't hire a trumpeter to go in front of you—like those play-actors in the synagogues and streets who make sure that men admire them." (Matthew 6:2, Phillips) "Let your love be without hypocrisy," wrote the apostle Paul. (Romans 12:9) He encouraged young Timothy to have "love out of a clean heart . . . and out of faith without hypocrisy."

(1 Timothy 1:5) If our love and faith are genuine—not tainted by selfishness and deception—others will trust us. We will be a source of real strength and encouragement to those around us. (Philippians 2:4; 1 John 3:17, 18; 4:20, 21) And above all, we will have Jehovah's approval.

Hypocrisy, on the other hand, will ultimately prove death-dealing to those who practice it. In the end, hypocrisy will be openly exposed. "There is nothing covered over that will not become uncovered," said Jesus Christ, "and secret that will not become known." (Matthew 10:26; Luke 12:2) Wise King Solomon declared: "The true God himself will bring every sort of work into the judgment in relation to every hidden thing, as to whether it is good or bad."—Ecclesiastes 12:14.

Meanwhile, why should we allow the hypocrisy of others to affect us to the point that we are deprived of the genuine love of true friends? We can be cautious without becoming overly suspicious. And by all means, let us keep our own love and faith free of hypocrisy.—James 3:17; 1 Peter 1:22.

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THE SCYTHIANS

A Mysterious People of the Past

GALLOPING through the dust, their saddlebags bulging with booty, came the cavalry of a nomadic nation. This mysterious people held sway over the steppes of Eurasia from about 700 to 300 B.C.E. Then they disappeared—but only after securing a place in history. There is a trace of them even in the Bible. They were the Scythians.

For centuries, nomads and herds of wild horses had roamed the grasslands stretching from the Carpathian Mountains of eastern Europe to what is now southeastern Russia. By the eighth century B.C.E., military action taken by the Chinese Emperor Hsüan triggered migrations to the west. Moving westward, the Scythians fought and drove out the Cimmerians, who controlled the Caucasus and the area north of the Black Sea.

Seeking wealth, the Scythians sacked the Assyrian capital, Nineveh. Later, they allied themselves with Assyria against Media, Babylonia, and other nations. Their attacks touched even northern Egypt. The fact that the city of Beth-shan in northeastern Israel was later called Scythopolis may indicate a period of Scythian occupation.—1 Samuel 31:11, 12.

Eventually, the Scythians settled in the steppes of present-day Romania, Moldova, Ukraine, and southern Russia. There they grew wealthy, serving as middlemen between the Greeks and the grain producers of present-day Ukraine and southern Russia. The Scythians traded grain, honey, fur, and cattle in exchange for Greek wine, textiles, weapons, and works of art. They thus amassed fabulous riches.



Formidable Horsemen

For these warriors of the steppe, the horse was what the camel has been for people of the desert. The Scythians were excellent horsemen and were among the first to use the saddle and stirrup. They ate the flesh of horses and drank mare's milk. In fact, they used horses for burnt offerings. When a Scythian warrior died, his horse was killed and given an honorable burial—complete with harness and trappings.

As portrayed by the historian Herodotus, the Scythians were given to sadistic customs, which included using the skulls of their victims as drinking cups. Storming their enemies, they decimated them with iron swords, battle-axes, spears, and barbed arrows that tore flesh.

Tombs Outfitted for Eternity

The Scythians practiced witchcraft and shamanism and worshiped fire and a mother goddess. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12) They regarded the tomb as a dwelling for the dead. Slaves and animals were sacrificed for the dead master's use. Treasure and household retainers supposedly accompanied chieftains into the "next world." In one royal tomb, five menservants were found lying with their feet toward the master, ready to rise and resume their duties.

Rulers were buried with lavish offerings, and during periods of mourning, the Scythians spilled their blood and cut off their hair. Herodotus wrote: "They cut off a part of their ears, shave their heads, make cuts round their arms, tear their foreheads and noses, and pierce their left hands with arrows." In contrast, God's Law to the Israelites of the same era commanded: "You must not make cuts in your flesh for a deceased soul."—Leviticus 19:28.



*The Scythians were
a warring people*

The State Hermitage
Museum, St. Petersburg

The Scythians left behind thousands of kurgans (burial mounds). Many ornaments found in the kurgans depict everyday Scythian life. Russian Czar Peter the Great began to collect such items in 1715, and these glittering objects can now be seen in museums in Russia and Ukraine. This "animal art" includes horses, eagles, falcons, cats, panthers, elk, deer, bird-griffins, and lion-griffins (mythological creatures having the winged or wingless body of one animal and the head of another).

Scythians and the Bible

The Bible makes only one direct reference to Scythians. At Colossians 3:11, we read: "There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, foreigner, Scythian, slave, freeman, but Christ is all things and in all." When the Christian apostle Paul wrote those words, the Greek term rendered "Scythian" implied, not a specific nation, but the worst of uncivilized people. Paul was stressing that under the influence of Jehovah's holy spirit, or active force, even such individuals could put on a godly personality.—Colossians 3:9, 10.

Some archaeologists believe that the name Ashkenaz found at Jeremiah 51:27 is the

equivalent of the Assyrian *Ashguzai*, a term that was applied to the Scythians. Cuneiform tablets cite an alliance between this people and the Mannai in a revolt against Assyria in the seventh century B.C.E. Just before Jeremiah began to prophesy, the Scythians harmlessly

The Scythians traded their goods for Greek works of art and became very wealthy



Courtesy of the Ukraine Historic Treasures Museum, Kiev

passed by the land of Judah on their way to and from Egypt. Hence, many who had heard him foretell an assault on Judah from the north may have questioned the accuracy of his prophecy.—Jeremiah 1:13-15.

Certain scholars think that there is an allusion to the Scythians at Jeremiah 50:42,

which reads: “Bow and javelin they handle. They are cruel and will show no mercy. The sound of them is like the sea that is boisterous, and upon horses they will ride; set in array as one man for war against you, O daughter of Babylon.” But this verse applies primarily to the Medes and the Persians, who conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.E.

It has been suggested that “the land of Magog” referred to in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 pertains to the Scythian tribes. However, “the land of Magog” has a symbolic significance. It evidently refers to the vicinity of the earth, to which Satan and his angels were consigned after the war in heaven.—Revelation 12:7-17.

The Scythians were involved in the fulfillment of Nahum’s prophecy foretelling the overthrow of Nineveh. (Nahum 1:1, 14) The Chaldeans, the Scythians, and the Medes sacked Nineveh in 632 B.C.E., causing the downfall of the Assyrian Empire.

A Mysterious Decline

The Scythians have disappeared but why? “The truth is, we simply don’t know what happened,” says a leading Ukrainian archaeologist. Some believe that softened by their taste for opulence they succumbed in the first and second centuries B.C.E. to a new group of nomads from Asia—the Sarmatians.

Others think that strife among Scythian clans led to their decline. Still others say that a remnant of the Scythians may be found among the Ossetians of the Caucasus. In any case, this mysterious people of the past left a mark on human history—one that made the name Scythian a synonym for cruelty.

Questions From Readers

How did the serpent in the garden of Eden convey to Eve the idea to break God's law regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and bad?

Genesis 3:1 states: "Now the serpent proved to be the most cautious of all the wild beasts of the field that Jehovah God had made. So it began to say to the woman: 'Is it really so that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?'" There have been various suggestions as to how the serpent might have communicated with Eve. One idea is that it did so through body language or gestures. For example, English cleric Joseph Benson commented: "It seems most likely that it was by signs of some kind. Some, indeed, have supposed that *reason and speech* were then the known properties of serpents, . . . but of this there is no proof."

By using mere body language, however, how could the serpent communicate to Eve the idea that by partaking of the forbidden fruit she would become like God, able to decide what was good and what was bad? Furthermore, Eve participated in the conversation, answering the question raised by the serpent. (Genesis 3:2-5) The view that the serpent communicated only with signs or movements would lead to the conclusion that Eve replied by using gestures, whereas the Bible says that she spoke.

Referring to this incident, the apostle Paul warned fellow Christians: "I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted." The danger Paul spoke of came from "false apostles, deceitful workers." The threat that such "superfine apostles" presented was not confined to body language and gestures. It included their speech—their cunning words, spoken to mislead others.—2 Corinthians 11:3-5, 13.

Although speech was used to misguide Eve in the garden of Eden, there is nothing to suggest that the literal serpent had vocal cords. It actual-

ly did not need them. When God's angel spoke to Balaam through a she-ass, the animal did not need a complex voice box similar to that of a human. (Numbers 22:26-31) Obviously, when this 'voiceless beast of burden made utterance with the voice of a man,' the power for the action came from the spirit realm.—2 Peter 2:16.

The spirit creature behind the serpent that spoke to Eve is identified in the Bible as "the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan." (Revelation 12:9) The audible words that Eve heard and responded to came at the instigation of Satan, who "keeps transforming himself into an angel of light."—2 Corinthians 11:14.

**"You are bound to be like God,
knowing good and bad"**



Noah's Faith Condemns the World

HAVE you heard of Noah, a God-fearing man who built an ark for the preservation of life during a global flood? Despite its antiquity, this story is familiar to millions. What many do not realize, however, is that Noah's life has meaning for all of us.

Why should we be interested in an account that is thousands of years old? Is there a similarity between Noah's situation and our own? If there is, how can we benefit from his example?

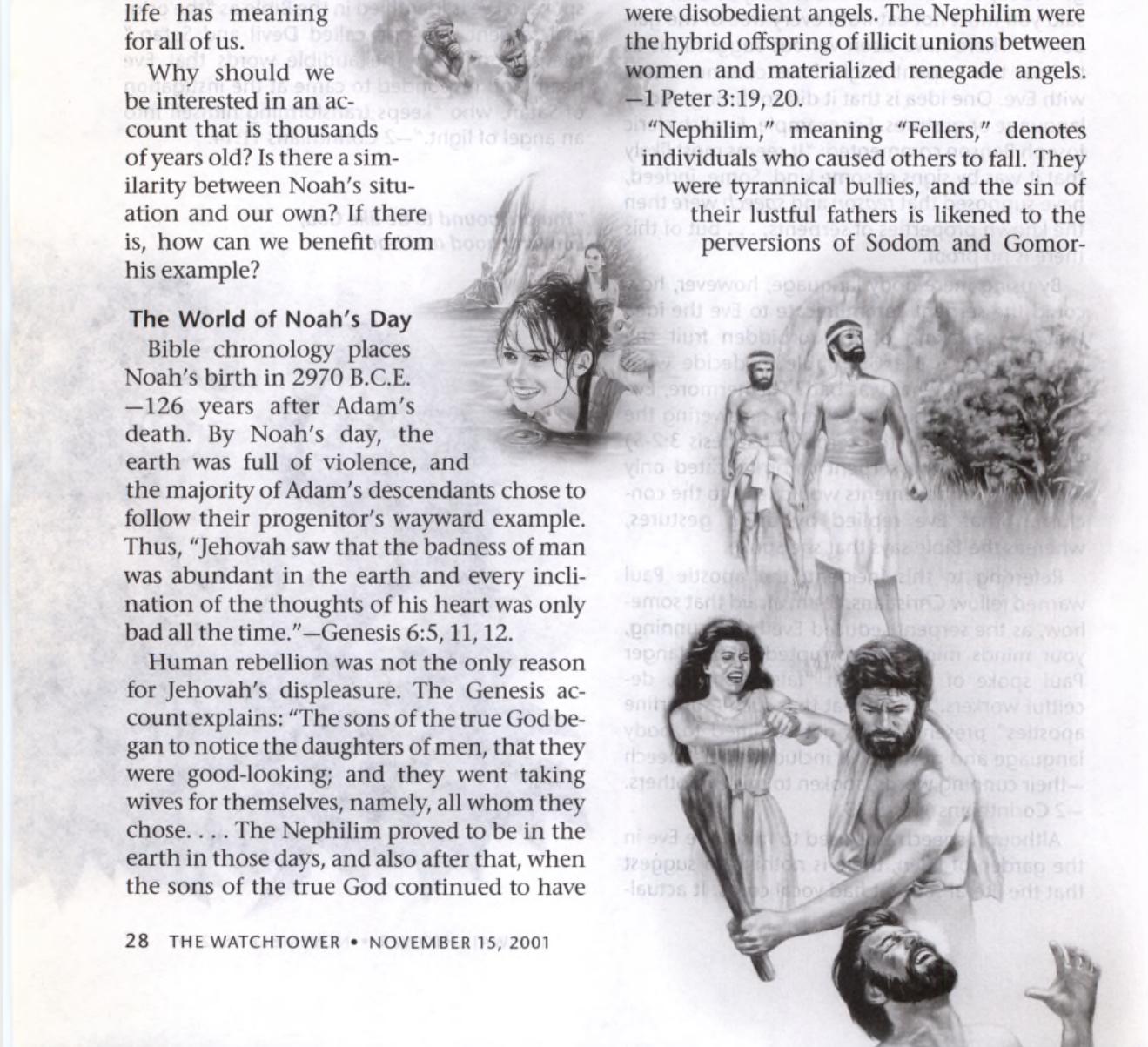
The World of Noah's Day

Bible chronology places Noah's birth in 2970 B.C.E.—126 years after Adam's death. By Noah's day, the earth was full of violence, and the majority of Adam's descendants chose to follow their progenitor's wayward example. Thus, "Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant in the earth and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time."—Genesis 6:5, 11, 12.

Human rebellion was not the only reason for Jehovah's displeasure. The Genesis account explains: "The sons of the true God began to notice the daughters of men, that they were good-looking; and they went taking wives for themselves, namely, all whom they chose. . . . The Nephilim proved to be in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of the true God continued to have

relations with the daughters of men and they bore sons to them, they were the mighty ones who were of old, the men of fame." (Genesis 6:2-4) Comparison of these verses with a statement recorded by the apostle Peter indicates that "the sons of the true God" were disobedient angels. The Nephilim were the hybrid offspring of illicit unions between women and materialized renegade angels.
—1 Peter 3:19, 20.

"Nephilim," meaning "Fellers," denotes individuals who caused others to fall. They were tyrannical bullies, and the sin of their lustful fathers is likened to the perversions of Sodom and Gomor-



rah. (Jude 6, 7) Together, they whipped up intolerable wickedness on earth.

"Faultless Among His Contemporaries"

Evil was so rife that God was determined to destroy mankind. But the inspired account states: "Noah found favor in the eyes of Jehovah. . . . Noah was a righteous man. He proved himself faultless among his contemporaries. Noah walked with the true God." (Genesis 6:8, 9) How was it possible to 'walk with God' in a godless world fit only for destruction?

Doubtless, Noah learned much from his father, Lamech, a man of faith and a contemporary of Adam. When giving his son the name Noah (thought to mean "Rest," or "Consolation"), Lamech prophesied: "This one will bring us comfort from our work and from the pain of our hands resulting from the ground which Jehovah has cursed." That prophecy was fulfilled when God lifted his curse that was on the ground.—Genesis 5:29; 8:21.

Having godly parents is no guarantee of spirituality, for each individual must establish his own relationship with Jehovah. Noah 'walked with God' by pursuing a course that had divine approval. What Noah learned about God moved him to serve Him. Noah's faith did not waver when he was informed of God's purpose 'to bring all flesh to ruin in the deluge.'—Genesis 6:13, 17.

Confident that this unprecedented disaster would occur, Noah obeyed Jehovah's command: "Make for yourself an ark out of wood of a resinous tree. You will make compartments in the ark, and you must cover it inside and outside with tar." (Genesis 6:14) Meeting God's specifications for the ark was no small task. Nevertheless, "Noah proceeded to do according to all that God had commanded him." In fact, "he did just so." (Genesis 6:22) Noah did this with the help of his

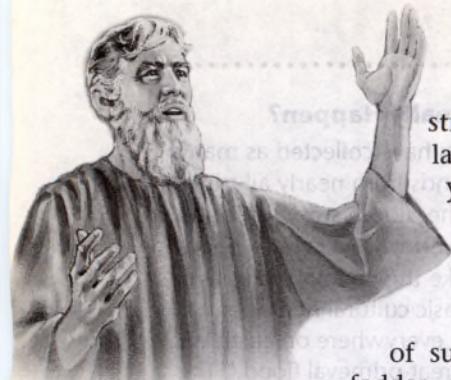
Did It Really Happen?

Anthropologists have collected as many as 270 flood legends from nearly all tribes and nations. "The flood story is found throughout the world," says scholar Claus Westermann. "Like the creation narrative, it is part of our basic cultural heritage. It is truly astonishing: everywhere on earth we find stories of a great primeval flood." The explanation? Says expositor Enrico Galbiati: "The insistent presence of a flood tradition in different and widely separated peoples is a sign of the historical reality of the fact that lies at the base of such traditions." More important to Christians than scholarly observations, however, is the knowledge that Jesus himself spoke of the Flood as an actual event in the history of mankind.—Luke 17:26, 27.

wife and their sons Shem, Ham, and Japheth and their wives. Jehovah blessed such faith. What excellent examples for families today!

What would building the ark involve? Jehovah directed Noah to construct a huge watertight, three-story, wooden chest, 437 feet long by 73 feet wide by 44 feet high. (Genesis 6:15, 16) Such a vessel would have had a capacity similar to that of various present-day cargo vessels.

What a colossal undertaking! Very likely, it meant felling thousands of trees, hauling them to the construction site, and cutting them into planks or beams. It meant building scaffolding, making pins or pegs, obtaining tar for waterproofing, procuring containers and tools, and so on. The work may have required negotiations with merchants and payment for goods and services. It apparently called for skill in carpentry so as to fit the timbers accurately and build an adequately strong structure. And



just think—construction probably lasted some 50 or 60 years!

Noah's attention would next have to turn to the preparation of sufficient food and fodder. (Genesis 6:21) He would have to assemble and

marshal a host of animals into the ark. Noah carried out all that God had commanded, and the work was finished. (Genesis 6:22) Jehovah's blessing ensured its complete success.

"A Preacher of Righteousness"

Besides building an ark, Noah sounded a warning and served God faithfully as "a preacher of righteousness." But the people "took no note until the flood came and swept them all away."—2 Peter 2:5; Matthew 24:38, 39.

Given the spiritual and moral bankruptcy of those days, it is easy to see how Noah's family could have become the laughing-stock of incredulous neighbors and the object of abuse and ridicule. People must have considered them to be crazy. However, Noah was successful in giving his household spiritual encouragement and support, for they

The Nephilim in Mythology?

Tales about liaisons between gods and humans—and the "heroes" or "demigods" born from these unions—were common to Greek, Egyptian, Ugaritic, Hurrian, and Mesopotamian theology. Gods of Greek mythology had human form and great beauty. They ate, drank, slept, had sexual intercourse, quarreled, fought, seduced, and raped. Though supposedly holy, they were capable of deceit and crime. Heroes like Achilles were said to be of both divine and human descent and were endowed with superhuman ability but not with immortality. So, what Genesis says of the Nephilim sheds light on the possible or even probable origin of such myths.

never adopted the violent, immoral, defiant ways of their godless contemporaries. By his speech and actions, which demonstrated his faith, Noah condemned the world of that time.—Hebrews 11:7.

Preserved Through the Flood

Shortly before the downpour began, God told Noah to enter the completed ark. When Noah's family and the animals were aboard, "Jehovah shut the door," closing out any derisive jeers. When the Flood came, the disobedient angels apparently dematerialized and escaped destruction. But what about others? Why, every living creature on the dry ground outside the ark, including the Nephilim, perished! Only Noah and his family survived.—Genesis 7:1-23.

Noah and those of his household spent a lunar year and ten days in the ark. They were busy feeding and watering the animals, removing waste, and keeping track of time. Genesis dates all the phases of the Flood precisely, like a ship's log, reflecting the veraci-

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

The Golden Rule—Is It Still Practical?

You Can Avoid a Spiritual Heart Attack

Fear Jehovah and Keep His Commandments

ty of the account.—Genesis 7:11, 17, 24; 8:3-14.

While in the ark, Noah doubtless led his family in spiritual discussions and thanksgiving to God. Evidently by means of Noah and his family, pre-Flood history was preserved. Reliable oral traditions or written historical documents in their possession would provide fine material for profitable consideration during the Deluge.

How glad Noah and his family must have been to step onto dry land once again! The first thing he did was erect an altar and act in a priestly capacity for his family, offering sacrifices to the One who had saved them.
—Genesis 8:18-20.

"Just as the Days of Noah Were"

Jesus Christ said: "Just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be." (Matthew 24:37) Today, Christians are likewise preachers of righteousness, urging people to repent. (2 Peter 3:5-9) Given that analogy, we might wonder what went through Noah's mind before the Deluge. Did he ever feel that his preaching was useless? Was he tired at times? The Bible does not say. We are simply told that Noah obeyed God.

Do you see the relevance of Noah's situation to ours? He obeyed Jehovah despite opposition and hardship. That is why Jehovah judged him righteous. Noah's family did not know exactly when God would bring the Deluge, but they knew that it would come. Faith in God's word sustained Noah through years of labor and what may have seemed to be fruitless preaching. Indeed, we are told: "By faith Noah, after being given divine warning of things not yet beheld, showed godly fear and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; and through this faith he condemned the world, and he became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith."—Hebrews 11:7.

How did Noah acquire such faith? He evidently took time to ponder over everything he knew about Jehovah and let himself be guided by that knowledge. Undoubtedly, Noah talked to God in prayer. In fact, he became so intimately acquainted with Jehovah that he 'walked with God.' As the family head, Noah gladly devoted time and loving attention to his household. This included caring for the spiritual interests of his wife, his three sons, and his daughters-in-law.

Like Noah, true Christians today know that Jehovah will soon bring an end to this godless system of things. We do not know that day or hour, but we realize that imitating the faith and obedience of this "preacher of righteousness" will result in "the preserving alive of the soul."—Hebrews 10:36-39.



"See You in God's Kingdom"

"Dear Friend! Rupert, today I was sentenced to death. Do not mourn for me. I send my love to you and to everyone in the house. See you in God's Kingdom."

ON JUNE 8, 1942, Franc Drozg penned these words minutes before being shot by Nazi soldiers. Why was he executed?

According to the records in the Museum of National Liberation in Maribor, Slovenia, this 38-year-old blacksmith refused to join the *Wehrmannschaft*, a German paramilitary detachment in German-occupied Slovenia. He was a *Bibelforscher*, or Bible Student,

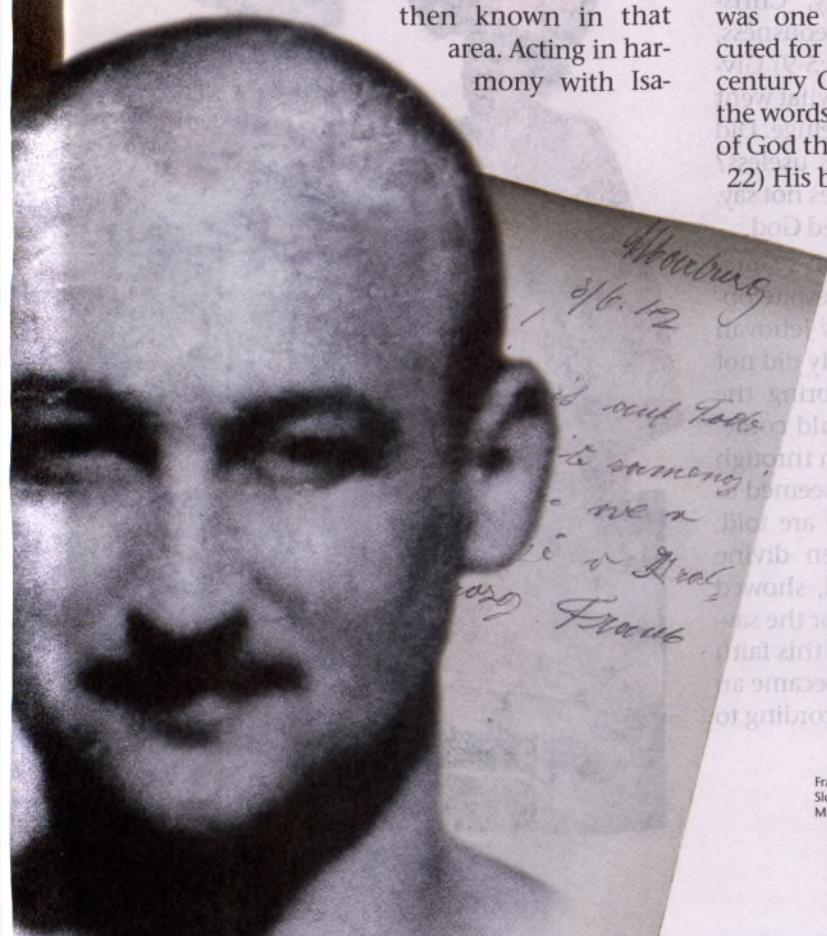
as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known in that area. Acting in harmony with Isa-

iah 2:4, he would not support the Nazi war effort, declaring himself to be a subject of God's Kingdom.—Matthew 6:33.

In his hometown of Ptuj, Franc was known as a zealous proclaimers of the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Despite many hardships, he preached the good news without letup until his arrest in May 1942.

Many Slovenian Witnesses of Jehovah were intensely persecuted by the Nazis. Franc was one of the first of them to be executed for his religious convictions. Like first-century Christians, he was strengthened by the words: "We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations." (Acts 14:

22) His belief in the reality of that heavenly government was evident in his final words, "See you in God's Kingdom."



Franc Drozg: Photo Archive-Museum of National Liberation Maribor, Slovenia; letter: Original kept in Museum of National Liberation Maribor, Slovenia