

NOVEMBER 1, 1995

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



WHAT CAN ANGELS
DO FOR YOU?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

November 1, 1995

Average Printing Each Issue: 16,100,000

Vol. 116, No. 21

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.

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>3 Are There Angels Among Us?</p> <p>4 The Truth About Angels</p> <p>9 Kingdom Proclaimers Report</p> <p>10 Saved From a "Wicked Generation"</p> <p>16 A Time to Keep Awake</p> <p>22 "Thrown Down, but Not Destroyed"</p> <p>25 Comfort for Those With a "Stricken Spirit"</p> | <p>29 Box Meal Gives Witness</p> <p>30 Questions From Readers</p> <p>32 'Just as Iron Sharpens Iron'</p> |
|---|--|

Pages 3 and 4: *The New Testament: A Pictorial Archive from Nineteenth-Century Sources*, by Don Rice/Dover Publications, Inc.

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

DECEMBER 11-17: Saved From a "Wicked Generation." Page 10. Songs to be used: 24, 27.

DECEMBER 18-24: A Time to Keep Awake. Page 16. Songs to be used: 174, 123.

Now published in 121 languages.

SEMIMONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL:

Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bicol, Bis-
lama, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese
(Simplified), Cibemba, Croatian, Czech, "Danish," Dutch,
Efik, English,* also Braille, Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finn-
ish,* French,* Ga, German,* Greek,* Gujarati, Hiligay-
non, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,* Igbo, Iloko, Indone-
sian, Italian,* Japanese* (also Braille), Kannada, Korean,*
Lingala, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Marathi,
Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinean Pidgin, Norwegian, Panga-
sinan, Papiamento, Polish, Portuguese,* Rarotongan, Roma-
nian,* Russian, Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian,
Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,*
Swahili, Swedish,* Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai,
Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Venda,
Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Armenian, Cambodian, Georgian, Greenlandic, Gun, Hausa, Hebrew, Icelandic, Kinyawanda, Kwanyama/Ndonga, Latvian, Lithuanian, Luganda, Maltese, Marshallese, Moore, Niuean, Palauan, Persian, Ponapean, Punjabi, Sango, Silozi, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Sranantongo, Tongan, Tuvaluan, Urdu, Yapese

* Study articles also available in large-print edition.

* Audiocassettes also available.

© 1995 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Milton G. Henschel, President

If you would like to learn about Jehovah's Witnesses or their publications, please write to Watch Tower at the appropriate address below.

America, United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565. **Bahamas:** Box N-1247, Nassau, N.P. **Barbados:** Fontabelle Rd., Bridgetown. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **England:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Germany:** Niederselters, Am Steinfels, D-65618 Selters. **Ghana:** Box 760, Accra. **Guyana:** 50 Brickdam, Georgetown 16. **Hawaii 96819:** 2055 Kam IV Rd., Honolulu. **Hong Kong:** 4 Kent Road, Kowloon Tong. **India:** Post Bag 10, Lonavala, Puna Dis., Moh. 410 401. **Ireland:** 29A Jamestown Road, Finglas, Dublin 11. **Jamaica:** Box 180, Kingston 10. **Japan:** 1271 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa Pref., 243-04. **Kenya:** Box 47788, Nairobi. **Liberia:** P.O. Box 10-0380, 1000 Monrovia 10. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City, Edo State. **Philippines, Republic of:** P.O. Box 2044, 1099 Manila. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago, Republic of:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** 35 Fife Avenue, Harare.

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

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Watch Tower, using the appropriate address above.

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

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Second-class postage paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.
Printed in U.S.A.



Are there angels among us?

I happened so quickly. Deep in thought and oblivious to her surroundings, Marilynn strolled onto the railroad tracks. Suddenly, she heard a loud rumbling. She looked up, only to discover that she stood directly in the path of an oncoming train! Marilynn froze, paralyzed with fear. The train was so close that she could see the blue eyes and terror-struck face of the conductor. Marilynn never forgot what happened next. "It was as if a giant pushed me from behind," she said. "I went flying off the tracks and fell down on the cinders just beyond." Slightly bruised, Marilynn got up to thank her rescuer—but no one was in sight! Her conclusion? "My guardian angel saved my life," Marilynn says. "Who else could it have been?"

ASKEPTICAL world seems suddenly obsessed with angels. In recent years, heavenly beings have been the subject of television shows, movies, and even a Broadway play. Books about angels are high on the list of religious best-sellers. There are angel clubs, seminars, and newsletters. Workshops have been formed to help you—as one article puts it—to unleash “your ‘inner angel.’”

Conveniently grabbing the coattails of the angel movement are opportunist merchants touting an endless stream of consumer products. “Anything with angels on it is hot stuff,” says a shop co-owner in the United States. In addition to a flood of books, she lists “angel statues, pins, dolls, T-shirts, posters and greeting cards”—all racking up what one journalist calls “heavenly profits.”

But this is not just a fad, insist the angel advocates. To back up their claim, they present one testimonial after

another—"true-life" encounters with angels. Some say that they saw an angel in human form. Others saw a light, heard a voice, sensed a presence, or felt an urge that was, they believe, angelic. Many, like Marilynn, say that an angel saved their life.

What is happening? "I think there's a resurgence of spirituality," says Joan Wester Anderson, who has written two books on "supernatural" encounters. Alma Daniel, who helped to author another book, takes

it a step further. She says that angels are "under instruction now to make themselves known so that more and more people can be touched. The reason we're seeing so much about them is because they want it that way. They're doing it."

Is this really so? Or is something else behind the current fascination with angels? To find out, we must examine God's Word. The Bible contains the truth about angels, as we will see.



The truth about angels

Becoming acquainted with someone usually includes learning something about that one's family. It is the same with coming to know Jehovah God. More is involved than simply learning his name. We must also come to know something about his "family" in heaven. (Compare Ephesians 3: 14, 15.) The Bible calls the angels God's "sons." (Job 1:6) Considering their significant role in the Bible, we should want to know more about them to understand their place in God's purpose.

A NEW subculture is developing. Not only are more people saying that they believe in angels; an increasing number are claiming to have been touched by them in some way. When 500 Americans were asked, "Have you ever personally felt an angelic presence in your life?"

almost a third answered yes. Surprising too is the number of youths who profess belief in angels—according to one poll in the United States, a full 76 percent! Evidently, people are interested in angels. But how does the current thinking about angels measure up to Bible truth?

Soft-Pedaling Satan's Role

When speaking of angels, we should not ignore the wicked angels, heavenly creatures who the Bible says rebelled against God. Foremost of these is Satan. A popular book called *Ask Your Angels* suggests that Satan is merely "an aspect of God" who helps humans strengthen their "spiritual muscles" through constant temptation. Despite Satan's "loving intentions," the authors state, he has over the centuries become mistakenly identified with evil. They add that Satan and Jesus, "while not exactly complementary to each other, are at least on the same side, integral parts of the same whole." These are astonishing assertions, but what does the Bible say?

The Bible makes it clear that Satan is not "an aspect of God" but an *enemy* of God. (Luke 10:18, 19; Romans 16:20) He defies Jehovah's sovereignty, and his intentions toward humans are hardly "loving." He heartlessly vents his wrath on God's earthly servants. He accuses them before God day and night!* (Revelation 12:10, 12, 15-17) Satan is intent on corrupting them at any cost. His merciless persecution of the righteous man Job exposed his callous attitude toward human suffering.—Job 1:13-19; 2:7, 8.

Far from being "on the same side," Satan and Jesus are diametrically opposed to each other. Why, it was undoubtedly Satan who induced Herod to decree a mass infanticide—all in an effort to do away with the young child Jesus! (Matthew 2:16-18) And Satan's relentless attacks continued right up until Jesus' death. (Luke 4:1-13; John 13:27) Thus, rather than being "integral parts of the same whole," Jesus and Satan are complete opposites. Bible prophecy shows that

* The words "Satan" and "Devil" mean "resister" and "slanderer."

their enmity is inevitable. (Genesis 3:15) Fittingly, it is the resurrected Jesus who will destroy Satan in God's due time.—Revelation 1:18; 20:1, 10.

Prayers to Whom?

Some advocates of the angel movement recommend meditation and other techniques in order to communicate with angels. "A sincere request for contact with any member of the celestial family will not go unheeded," says one book. "Ask and you shall be answered." Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael are among the angels the book recommends for consultation.*

However, Jesus taught his followers to pray to God, not to angels. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Similarly, Paul wrote: "In everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." (Philippians 4:6) In their prayers, therefore, Christians do not approach anyone except Jehovah, and they do so in the name of Jesus Christ.[#]—John 14:6, 13, 14.

Nondenominational Angels?

According to Eileen Elias Freeman, who presides over the AngelWatch Network, "angels transcend every religion, every philosophy, every creed. In fact, angels have no religion as we know it."

The Bible, however, makes it clear that faithful angels do have a religion; they worship the true God, Jehovah, who tolerates no rivalry from other gods. (Deuteronomy 5:6, 7; Revelation 7:11) Thus, such an angel described himself to the apostle John as

* While Michael and Gabriel are mentioned in the Bible, the names of Raphael and Uriel appear in the Apocryphal books, which are not part of the Bible canon.

[#] Note that prayer is directed *through* Jesus, not *to* him. Prayer is offered in Jesus' name because his shed blood opened the way of approach to God.—Ephesians 2:13-19; 3:12.

"a fellow slave" of those who obey God's commands. (Revelation 19:10) Nowhere in the Bible do we read of faithful angels upholding any other form of worship. They give Jehovah exclusive devotion.—Exodus 20:4, 5.

"The Father of the Lie"

Many so-called angelic encounters involve communication with the dead. "I had the feeling that my uncle had found a way to reach me and let me know that he was happy at last," says a woman named Elise after receiving what she felt was a sign. Terri similarly remembers a dear friend who died. "A week after the funeral," she says, "he came to me in what I thought was a dream. He told me I should not mourn his departure, because he was happy and at peace."

But the Bible states that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) It also says that when a person dies, "*in that day his thoughts do perish.*" (Psalm 146:4) Satan, however, is "the father of the lie." (John 8:44) He is the one who originated the falsehood that the human soul survives death. (Compare Ezekiel 18:4.) Many people today believe this, which suits Satan's purpose, for it negates the need for faith in the resurrection—a fundamental doctrine of Christianity. (John 5:28, 29) So, inquiring of the dead or seemingly receiving messages from them is yet another facet of the angel movement that is not approved by God.

Approach to Angels or to Demons?

Much of the current angel movement dabbles in the occult. Consider Marcia's experience. "From September to December 1986," she says, "I began to receive messages from 'beyond the third dimension.' I saw apparitions and had incredible 'past life' dreams. I contacted friends who had died and had many other psychic experiences in which I

knew things about people I had just met. I also became blessed with the gift of automatic writing and transmitted messages from discarnates. Some, whom I have never met in their earthly lives, would deliver messages to others through me."

The use of divination as a means to "communicate" with angels is not uncommon. One source outrightly encourages its readers to employ rune stones, tarot cards, *I Ching* coins, palmistry, and astrology. "Allow your inner knowing self to lead you to the right oracle," the authors write, "and trust that an angel will meet you there."

According to the Bible, however, whatever 'meets you there' certainly is not one of God's angels. Why? Because divination stands in open defiance of God, and true worshipers—in heaven and on earth—have nothing to do with it. Why, in Israel divination was a capital offense! "Everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah," the Law stated.—Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:10-12.

"An Angel of Light"

It should not surprise us that the Devil can make divination appear beneficial, even angelic. The Bible says that Satan "keeps transforming himself into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14) He can even fabricate portents and then make them come true, deceiving onlookers into thinking that the omen is from God. (Compare Matthew 7:21-23; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12.) But all of Satan's works—no matter how virtuous or how sinister they may appear—serve one of two purposes: to turn people against Jehovah or simply to blind their minds so that 'the illumination of the glorious good news about the Christ might not shine through.' (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4) This latter method of deception is often the most effective.

**Are you listening to the
angel flying in
midheaven?**

Consider the Bible account of a servant girl in the first century. Her predictions brought much gain to her masters. For many days she followed the disciples, saying: "These men are slaves of the Most High God, who are publishing to you the way of salvation." Her words were true. Yet, the account tells us that she was possessed, not by an angel, but by "a demon of divination." Eventually, Paul "turned and said to the spirit: 'I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.' And it came out that very hour."

—Acts 16:16-18.

Why did Paul expel this spirit? After all, it provided much income to the masters of the demon-possessed girl. With supernatural powers, the servant girl may have told farmers when to plant, maidens when to marry, and miners where to look for gold. Why, this spirit even moved the girl to speak some words of truth, publicly praising the disciples!

Nevertheless, it was "a demon of divination." As such, it had no right to make proclamations about Jehovah and his provision for salvation. Its complimentary speech, perhaps uttered to lend credence to the servant girl's predictions, distracted onlookers from Christ's true followers. With good reason, Paul warned the Corinthians: "You cannot be partaking of 'the table of Jehovah' and the table of demons." (1 Co-



rinthians 10:21) Not surprisingly, first-century Christians destroyed all their books that were associated with divination.—Acts 19:19.

An "Angel Flying in Midheaven"

As we have seen, the Bible exposes much of the current angel movement as being closely aligned with God's Adversary, Satan the Devil. Does this mean that holy angels are not involved in human affairs? On the contrary, they are now performing a powerful work on earth.

What is it? To answer, we must look to the Bible book of Revelation. The angels are mentioned more times in this book than in any other book of the Bible.

At Revelation 14:6, 7, we read the apostle John's record of a prophetic vision he received: "I saw another angel flying in mid-heaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people, saying in a loud voice: 'Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has ar-

rived, and so worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and sea and fountains of waters.'"

This scripture highlights the foremost work of the angels today. They are involved in a high-priority assignment—that of declaring the good news of God's Kingdom. It was with regard to this work that Jesus promised his followers: "I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:18-20) How is Jesus with his followers? One way is by providing them with angelic help so that this monumental work might be accomplished.

Jehovah's Witnesses spend more than a billion hours annually preaching the good news of God's Kingdom. While performing this work, they see evidence of angelic direction. In their door-to-door ministry, it has often occurred that they contact individuals who had just been praying for someone to help them understand God's purposes. Angelic guidance, along with the Witnesses' own initiative, has resulted in hundreds of thousands coming to a knowledge of Jehovah each year!

Are you listening to the angel flying in mid-heaven? When Jehovah's Witnesses call, why not discuss more fully with them this angelic message?

WHO ARE THE ANGELS?

CONTRARY to what many believe, angels are not the departed souls of humans who have died. The Bible plainly states that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5) Where, then, did the angels come from? The Bible indicates that they were individually created by God before the founding of the earth. (Job 38:4-7) The size of God's heavenly family may be hundreds of millions, perhaps billions or more! Some angels joined Satan in his rebellion.—Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11; 12:7-9.

Since Jehovah is a God of order, it is not surprising that his vast angelic family is organized.—1 Corinthians 14:33.

- The foremost angel, both in power and authority, is the archangel, Jesus Christ, also called Michael. (1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9) Under his authority are seraphs, cherubs, and angels.

- Seraphs are in attendance at God's throne. Their assignment evidently involves declaring God's holiness and keeping his people clean.—Isaiah 6:1-3, 6, 7.

- Cherubs are also seen in Jehovah's presence. As bearers or escorts of God's throne, they uphold Jehovah's majesty.—Psalm 80:1; 99:1; Ezekiel 10:1, 2.

- Angels (meaning "messengers") are agents and deputies of Jehovah. They carry out the divine will, whether it involves deliverance of God's people or the annihilation of the wicked.—Genesis 19:1-26.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Witnessing Bears Fruit at Home and in School

THE life of a Christian involves doing good to others, especially by sharing with them the good news of God's Kingdom. Proverbs 3:27 says: "Do not hold back good from those to whom it is owing, when it happens to be in the power of your hand to do it." In Argentina a young Witness in his third year of high school wanted to share the good news of the Kingdom with a school friend. His doing so had far-reaching results.

One day the young Witness mentioned to his friend that not all religions are good. When the young man replied that he did not do anything bad, the Witness said: "Neither do you do anything for God." This caused the youth to think. Later the Witness explained that these are the last days and that in order to have God's approval, one must get accurate Bible knowledge and apply it. His school friend agreed. But would his family permit him to have a Bible study? To give his friend something to think about, the Witness asked him to read the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*.

Time passed, and the friend quit school. Nothing was heard of him for more than a year. Then one day the young Witness was surprised to receive a telephone call from his friend who said that he could see that Bible prophecies were really being fulfilled. Immediately the Witness arranged to study the Bible with him.

When he went to his former school friend's home, he noticed that his friend's parents were quite concerned as to what their son was getting involved in. Even the friend's younger brother thought that he was going crazy. So

the parents had the younger brother sit in on the next study. Afterward, with tears in his eyes, this young man reported to the parents that his older brother was not crazy, to which the mother exclaimed, "Instead of one problem, I now have two!"

Hence, at the next study she herself was present and had to agree that the boys were



not crazy. Later a Bible study was arranged with her and her husband. Soon the whole family began to attend the congregation meetings at the Kingdom Hall. In time, the grandparents too began to study the Bible and started going to the meetings. Since then, the first young man has been baptized. He got married, and he and his wife are zealous publishers.

Furthermore, through informal witnessing at school, the young Witness has helped two other schoolmates as well as the mother and the sister of one of them to begin studying the Bible. In all, 11 people learned the Bible's truth because the young Witness did not hold back from doing good to his schoolmates. What a happy outcome! Truly, "Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah!"—Psalm 144:15.

SAVED FROM A “WICKED GENERATION”

“O faithless and twisted generation, how long must I continue with you and put up with you?”—LUKE 9:41.

WE LIVE in calamitous times. Earthquakes, floods, famines, disease, lawlessness, bombings, horrendous warfare—these and more have engulfed mankind during our 20th century. However, the greatest calamity of all threatens in the near future. What is that? It is “great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again.” (Matthew 24:21) Yet, many of us may look forward to a joyful future! Why? Because God’s own Word describes “a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues . . . These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation . . . They will hunger no more nor thirst anymore . . . And God will wipe out every tear from their eyes.”—Revelation 7:1, 9, 14-17.

² The inspired record at Matthew 24:3-22, Mark 13:3-20, and Luke 21:7-24 introduces Jesus’ prophetic description of “the conclusion of the system of things.”* This prophecy had an initial fulfillment on the

* For a detailed outline of this prophecy, please see the chart on pages 14, 15 of *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1994.

1. (a) What do our calamitous times portend?
(b) What do the Scriptures say about survivors?
2. The opening verses of Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21 had what initial prophetic fulfillment?

corrupt Jewish system of things of the first century of our Common Era, culminating in an unprecedented “great tribulation” on the Jews. The entire religious and political structure of the Jewish system, centered at Jerusalem’s temple, was thrown down, never to be restored.

³ Let us now consider the circumstances that surrounded the first fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy. This will help us better to understand the parallel fulfillment today. It will show us how urgent it is to take positive action *now* in order to survive the greatest of tribulations that threatens all mankind.—Romans 10:9-13; 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 15:58.

“The End”—When?

⁴ About the year 539 B.C.E., God’s prophet Daniel was given a vision of events that would occur during the final “week” of a period of “seventy weeks” of years. (Daniel 9:24-27) These “weeks” began in 455 B.C.E. when King Artaxerxes of Persia ordered the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. The final “week” started with the appearance of Messiah, Jesus Christ, at his baptism

3. Why is it urgent that we heed Jesus’ prophecy today?
- 4, 5. (a) Why were God-fearing Jews of the first century C.E. interested in the prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27? (b) How was this prophecy fulfilled?

and anointing in 29 C.E.* God-fearing Jews of the first century C.E. were well aware of this time feature of Daniel's prophecy. For example, concerning the crowds that flocked to hear the preaching of John the Baptizer in 29 C.E., Luke 3:15 states: "The people were in expectation and all were reasoning in their hearts about John: 'May he perhaps be the Christ?'"

⁵ The 70th "week" was to be seven years of special favor extended to the Jews. Starting in 29 C.E., it included Jesus' baptism and ministry, his sacrificial death "at the half of the week" in 33 C.E., and another 'half week' until 36 C.E. During this "week," the opportunity to become Jesus' anointed disciples was extended exclusively to God-fearing Jews and Jewish proselytes. Then in 70 C.E., a date not known in advance, the Roman legions under Titus exterminated the apostate Jewish system.

—Daniel 9:26, 27.

⁶ Thus the Jewish priesthood, which had defiled Jerusalem's temple and conspired in the murder of God's own Son, was wiped out. Gone, too, were the national and tribal records. Thereafter, no Jew could legally claim a priestly or a kingly inheritance. Happily, though, anointed spiritual Jews had been separated as a royal priesthood to "declare abroad the excellencies" of Jehovah God. (1 Peter 2:9) When Rome's army first besieged Jerusalem and even undermined the temple area in 66 C.E., Christians recognized that military force as "the disgusting thing that causes desolation, as spoken of through Daniel the prophet,

* For further information on the "weeks" of years, see pages 130-2 of the book *The Bible—God's Word or Man's?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

6. How did "the disgusting thing" move into action in 66 C.E., and how did the Christians respond?

standing in a holy place." In obedience to Jesus' prophetic command, the Christians in Jerusalem and Judea fled to the mountainous regions for protection.—Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20, 21.

⁷ Those faithful Jewish Christians observed the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy and were eyewitnesses of the tragic wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and lawlessness that Jesus had foretold as part of the "sign . . . of the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 24:3) But had Jesus told them *when* Jehovah would actually execute judgment on that corrupt system? No. What he prophesied about the climax of his future royal presence surely applied also to the first-century "great tribulation": "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father." —Matthew 24:36.

⁸ From Daniel's prophecy, the Jews could have calculated the timing of Jesus' appearing as the Messiah. (Daniel 9:25) Yet they were given no date for the "great tribulation" that finally desolated the apostate Jewish system of things. It was only *after* the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple that they realized that the date was 70 C.E. However, they had been aware of Jesus' prophetic words: "This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matthew 24:34) Apparently, the application of "generation" here is different from that at Ecclesiastes 1:4, which speaks of successive generations coming and going over a period of time.

"This Generation"—What Is It?

⁹ When four apostles seated with Jesus

7, 8. What "sign" did the Christians observe, but what did they not know?

9. How do lexicons define the Greek word *ge-ne-a'*?

on the Mount of Olives heard his prophecy about “the conclusion of the system of things,” how would they understand the expression “this generation”? In the Gospels the word “generation” is translated from the Greek word *ge-ne-a'*, which current lexicons define in these terms: “Lit[erally] those descended fr[om] a common ancestor.” (Walter Bauer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*) “That which has been begotten, a family; . . . successive members of a genealogy . . . or of a race of people . . . or of the whole multitude of men living at the same time, Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 1:48; 21:32; Phil. 2:15, and especially of those of the Jewish race living at the same period.” (W. E. Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*) “That which has been begotten, men of the same stock, a family; . . . the whole multitude of men living at the same time: Mt. xxiv. 34; Mk. xiii. 30; Lk. i. 48 . . . used esp[ecially] of the Jewish race living at one and the same period.”—J. H. Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*.

¹⁰ Thus Vine and Thayer both cite Matthew 24:34 in defining “this generation” (*he ge-ne-a' hau'te*) as “the whole multitude of men living at the same time.” The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (1964) gives support to this defi-

10. (a) What identical definition do two authorities give in citing Matthew 24:34? (b) How do a theological dictionary and some Bible translations support this definition?



Jesus compared “this generation” to crowds of unruly children

nition, stating: “The use of ‘generation’ by Jesus expresses his comprehensive purpose: he aims at the whole people and is conscious of their solidarity in sin.” Truly a “solidarity in sin” was apparent in the Jewish nation when Jesus was on earth, just as it marks the world system today.*

¹¹ Of course, Christians studying this matter guide their thinking primarily by how the inspired Gospel writers used the Greek expression *he ge-ne-a' hau'te*, or “this generation,” in reporting Jesus' words. The expression was consistently used in a nega-

* Certain Bibles render *he ge-ne-a' hau'te* at Matthew 24:34 as follows: “these people” (*The Holy Bible in the Language of Today* [1976], by W. F. Beck); “this nation” (*The New Testament—An Expanded Translation* [1961], by K. S. Wuest); “this people” (*Jewish New Testament* [1979], by D. H. Stern).

11. (a) What authority should primarily guide us in determining how to apply *he ge-ne-a' hau'te*? (b) How did this authority use the term?

tive way. Thus, Jesus called the Jewish religious leaders “serpents, offspring of vipers” and went on to say that the judgment of Gehenna would be executed on “this generation.” (Matthew 23:33, 36) However, was this judgment limited to the hypocritical clergy? Not at all. On a number of occasions, Jesus’ disciples heard him speak of “this generation,” applying the term uniformly in a far wider sense. What was that?

“This Wicked Generation”

¹² In 31 C.E., during Jesus’ great Galilean ministry and shortly after the Passover, his disciples heard him say to “the crowds”: “With whom shall I compare this generation? It is like young children sitting in the marketplaces who cry out to their playmates, saying, ‘We played the flute for you, but you did not dance; we wailed, but you did not beat yourselves in grief.’ Correspondingly, John [the Baptizer] came neither eating nor drinking, yet people say, ‘He has a demon’; the Son of man [Jesus] did come eating and drinking, still people say, ‘Look! A man gluttonous and given to drinking wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’” There was no pleasing those unprincipled “crowds”!

—Matthew 11:7, 16-19.

¹³ Later in 31 C.E., as Jesus and his disciples set out on their second preaching tour of Galilee, “some of the scribes and Pharisees” asked Jesus for a sign. He told them and “the crowds” who were present: “A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. For just as Jonah was in the belly of the huge fish three days and three nights,

12. As his disciples listened, how did Jesus link “the crowds” with “this generation”?

13. In the presence of his disciples, whom did Jesus identify and condemn as “this wicked generation”?

so the Son of man will be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. . . . That is how it will be also with this wicked generation.” (Matthew 12:38-46) Obviously, “this wicked generation” included both the religious leaders and “the crowds” who never came to appreciate the sign that was fulfilled in Jesus’ death and resurrection.*

¹⁴ After the Passover of 32 C.E., as Jesus and his disciples came into the Galilean region of Magadan, the Sadducees and the Pharisees again asked Jesus for a sign. He repeated to them: “A wicked and adulterous generation keeps on seeking for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” (Matthew 16:1-4) Those religious hypocrites were indeed most reprehensible as leaders among the unfaithful “crowds” whom Jesus condemned as “this wicked generation.”

¹⁵ Toward the end of his Galilean ministry, Jesus called the crowd and his disciples to him and said: “Whoever becomes ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man will also be ashamed of him.” (Mark 8: 34, 38) So the masses of unrepentant Jews of that time obviously made up “this adulterous and sinful generation.” Some days later, after Jesus’ transfiguration, Jesus and his disciples “came toward the crowd,” and a man asked him to heal his son. Jesus commented: “O faithless and twisted generation, how long must I continue with you?

* These unfaithful “crowds” are not to be equated with the ‘*am-ha·a’rets*, or “people of the land,” with whom the proud religious leaders refused to associate, but for whom Jesus “felt pity.”—Matthew 9:36; John 7:49.

14. Jesus’ disciples heard him make what condemnation of the Sadducees and the Pharisees?

15. Just before and again right after the transfiguration, Jesus and his disciples had what encounter with ‘this generation’?

How long must I put up with you?"—Matthew 17:14-17; Luke 9:37-41.

¹⁶ It was likely in Judea, after the Festival of Booths in 32 C.E., "when the crowds were massing together" around Jesus, that he repeated his condemnation of them, saying: "This generation is a wicked generation; it looks for a sign. But no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah." (Luke 11:29) Finally, when the religious leaders brought Jesus to trial, Pilate offered to release him. The record says: "The chief priests and the older men persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas, but to have Jesus destroyed. . . . Pilate said to them: 'What, then, shall I do with Jesus the so-called Christ?' They all said: 'Let him be impaled!' He said: 'Why, what bad thing did he do?' Still they kept crying out all the more: 'Let him be impaled!'" That "wicked generation" was demanding Jesus' blood!

—Matthew 27:20-25.

¹⁷ A "faithless and twisted generation," egged on by its religious leaders, thus played a key part in bringing about the

16. (a) What condemnation of "the crowds" did Jesus repeat in Judea? (b) How did "this generation" come to commit the most wicked of all crimes?

17. How did some of "this crooked generation" respond to Peter's preaching at Pentecost?

How Would You Answer?

- What do we learn from the fulfillment of Daniel 9:24-27?
- How do current lexicons define "this generation" as used Biblically?
- How did Jesus consistently use the term "generation"?
- How was Matthew 24:34, 35 fulfilled in the first century?

death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Fifty days later, at Pentecost in 33 C.E., the disciples received holy spirit and started to speak in different tongues. Upon hearing the sound, "the multitude came together," and the apostle Peter addressed them as "men of Judea and all you inhabitants of Jerusalem," saying: "This man [Jesus] . . . you fastened to a stake by the hand of lawless men and did away with." How did some of those listeners react? "They were stabbed to the heart." Peter then called on them to repent. He "bore thorough witness and kept exhorting them, saying: 'Get saved from this crooked generation.'" In response, about three thousand "embraced his word heartily [and] were baptized."

—Acts 2:6, 14, 23, 37, 40, 41.

"This Generation" Identified

¹⁸ What, then, is the "generation" so frequently referred to by Jesus in the presence of his disciples? What did they understand by his words: "This generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur"? Surely, Jesus was not departing from his established use of the term "this generation," which he consistently applied to the contemporary masses with their "blind guides" who together made up the Jewish nation. (Matthew 15:14) "This generation" experienced all the distress foretold by Jesus and then passed away in an unequaled "great tribulation" on Jerusalem.

—Matthew 24:21, 34.

¹⁹ In the first century, Jehovah was judging the Jewish people. Repentant ones, who came to exercise faith in Jehovah's merciful provision through Christ, were saved out of that "great tribulation." True to Je-

18. Jesus' use of the term "this generation" consistently refers to what?

19. When and how did the "heaven and earth" of the Jewish system pass away?



sus' words, all things prophesied occurred, and then the "heaven and earth" of the Jewish system of things—the entire nation, with its religious leaders and wicked society of people—passed away. Jehovah had executed judgment!—Matthew 24:35; compare 2 Peter 3:7.

²⁰ Those Jews who had paid attention to Jesus' prophetic words realized that their salvation depended, not on trying to calculate the length of a "generation" or of some dated "times or seasons," but on keeping separate from the evil contemporary generation and zealously doing God's will. Though the final words of Jesus' prophecy apply to the major fulfillment in our day, first-century Jewish Christians also had to heed the admonition: "Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are

**Only Jehovah knew in advance the hour
for executing judgment on the
wicked Jewish system**

destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:32-36; Acts 1:6-8.

²¹ Today, "the great day of Jehovah . . . is near, and there is a hurrying of it very much." (Zephaniah 1:14-18; Isaiah 13:9, 13) Suddenly, at Jehovah's own predetermined "day and hour," his fury will be unleashed upon the world's religious, political, and commercial elements, together with the wayward people who make up this contemporary "wicked and adulterous generation." (Matthew 12:39; 24:36; Revelation 7:1-3, 9, 14) How may you get saved out of "the great tribulation"? Our next article will answer and tell of the grand hope for the future.

20. What timely admonition applies with urgency to all Christians?

21. What sudden development may we expect in the near future?

A TIME TO KEEP AWAKE

"In all the nations the good news has to be preached first. . . . But he that has endured to the end is the one that will be saved."—MARK 13:10, 13.

ENDURE we must—amid a faithless and twisted generation! Since 1914 a generation of people has become corrupt, just as in Jesus' day. And today the corruption is on a worldwide scale. In these “last days,” the “critical times hard to deal with” described by the apostle Paul are afflicting mankind. ‘Wicked men and impostors continue to advance from bad to worse.’ Clearly, “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one,” Satan the Devil, who is now making his final effort to ruin the earth. But take courage! There is an oncoming “great tribulation” that will bring permanent relief to all who love righteousness.—2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13; 1 John 5:19; Revelation 7:14.

² Happily, Jehovah has now enthroned the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavens, preparatory to removing mankind's oppressive enemies. (Revelation 11:15) As at Messiah's first advent, so in this century a remarkable prophecy penned by Daniel has been fulfilled. At Daniel 4:16, 17, 32, we are told of the suspending of rightful kingship over the earth for a period of “seven times.” In their major fulfillment, these seven times amount to seven Biblical years of 360 ‘days’ each, or 2,520 years in all.*

* For detailed information on the “seven times,” see pages 127-39, 186-9 of the book *“Let Your Kingdom Come,”* published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

1. Why should we endure and take courage?
2. How was prophecy fulfilled in 1914?

They ran from 607 B.C.E., when Babylon began trampling underfoot the kingdom of Israel, to 1914 C.E., the year of Jesus' enthronement in heaven as mankind's rightful King. Then “the appointed times of the nations” ended. (Luke 21:24) But the nations have declined to yield to the incoming Messianic Kingdom.—Psalm 2:1-6, 10-12; 110:1, 2.

³ As the 70th week of years (29-36 C.E.) approached, and again as the year 1914 drew near, God-fearing people were expecting Messiah's arrival. And arrive he did! In each case, though, the manner of his appearing differed from the expectation. In each case too, after a comparatively brief time period, an evil “generation” finally suffers execution by divine decree.—Matthew 24:34.

⁴ In our preceding article, we noted how the wicked Jewish generation that called for the blood of Jesus met its end. What, then, of the ruinous generation of mankind that even now opposes or ignores him? When will judgment on this faithless generation be executed?

“Keep on the Watch”!

- 5 After prophesying events leading up to

3, 4. (a) What comparison may be made of first-century events to those in our time? (b) What pertinent questions may be asked?

5. (a) For what good reason do we not need to know the time of Jehovah's “day and hour”? (b) According to Mark, with what sound counsel did Jesus conclude his prophecy?

a time of “great tribulation,” Jesus added: “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Matthew 24:3-36; Mark 13:3-32) We do not need to know the exact timing of events. Rather, our focus must be on being watchful, cultivating strong faith, and keeping busy in Jehovah’s service—not on calculating a date. Jesus concluded his great prophecy by saying: “Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is. . . . Keep on the watch . . . What I say to you I say to all, Keep on the watch.” (Mark 13:33-37) Danger lurks in the shadows of today’s world. We must keep awake!

—Romans 13:11-13.

⁶ Not only must we pay attention to the inspired prophecies concerning these final days of a wicked system but we must anchor our faith primarily on the precious sacrifice of Christ Jesus and God’s marvelous promises based thereon. (Hebrews 6:17-19; 9:14;

1 Peter 1:18, 19; 2 Peter 1:16-19) Eager to see the end of this evil system, Jehovah’s people have at times speculated about the time when the “great tribulation” would break out, even tying this to calculations of what is the lifetime of a generation since 1914. However, we “bring a heart of wisdom in,” not by speculating about how many years or days make

6. (a) On what should our faith be anchored? (b) How may we “count our days”? (c) What does Jesus basically mean by “generation”?

up a generation, but by thinking about how we “count our days” in bringing joyful praise to Jehovah. (Psalm 90:12) Rather than provide a rule for measuring time, the term “generation” as used by Jesus refers principally to contemporary people of a certain historical period, with their identifying characteristics.*

* See Volume 1, page 918, of *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

Alexandra Boulat/Sipa Press



**Suffering humanity
will find relief when
this violent, wicked
generation passes away**

Left and below: Luc Delahaye/Sipa Press





**Glorious "new heavens and a new earth"
lie just ahead for all races of mankind**

⁷ In line with the above, professor of history Robert Wohl wrote in his book *The Generation of 1914*: "A historical generation is not defined by its chronological limits . . . It is not a zone of dates." But he pointed out that World War I created "an overwhelming sense of rupture with the past," and he added: "Those who lived through the war could never rid themselves

7. What does a history professor write about "the generation of 1914," and how does this tie in with Jesus' prophecy?

of the belief that one world had ended and another begun in August 1914." How true that is! It focuses on the crux of the matter. "This generation" of mankind since 1914 has experienced appalling changes. It has seen the earth drenched with the blood of millions. Warfare, genocide, terrorism, crime, and lawlessness have erupted worldwide. Famine, disease, and immorality have stalked our globe. Jesus prophesied: "You also, when you [his disciples] see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, This generation will by no means pass away until all things occur."—Luke 21:31, 32.

⁸ Yes, the complete triumph of the Messianic Kingdom is at hand! Is anything to be gained, then, by looking for dates or by speculating about the literal lifetime of a "generation"? Far from it! Habakkuk 2:3 clearly states: "The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it keeps panting on to the end, and it will not tell a lie. Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late." Jehovah's day of accounting hastens ever closer.—Jeremiah 25:31-33; Malachi 4:1.

⁹ When Christ's Kingdom rule began in 1914, Satan was hurled down to earth. This has meant "woe for the earth . . . because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a *short* period of time." (Revelation 12:12) That time is short, indeed, compared with the thousands of years of Satan's rulership. The Kingdom is at hand, and so is Jehovah's day and hour for executing judgment on this wicked generation!—Proverbs 3:25; 10:24, 25.

The "Generation" That Passes Away

¹⁰ Let us examine more closely Jesus' statement at Matthew 24:34, 35: "Truly I say to you that *this generation* will by no means pass away until all these things occur. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away." Jesus' words that follow show that 'nobody knows that day and hour.' Far more important, he shows that we must avoid the snares surrounding us in *this generation*. Thus Jesus adds: "For just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of

8. How do Jehovah's prophets stress the need to keep awake?
9. What developments since 1914 show that the time is short?
10. How is "this generation" like that of Noah's day?

man will be. For 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 24:36-39) Jesus here compared the generation of his day to that of Noah's day.—Genesis 6:5, 9; footnote.

¹¹ This was not the first time that the apostles heard Jesus make this comparison of '*generations*', for some days earlier he had stated concerning himself: "The Son of man . . . must undergo many sufferings and be *rejected by this generation*. Moreover, *just as it occurred in the days of Noah*, so it will be also in the days of the Son of man." (Luke 17:24-26) Thus, Matthew chapter 24 and Luke chapter 17 make the same comparison. In Noah's day "all flesh [that] had ruined its way on the earth" and that was destroyed at the Flood was "*this generation*." In Jesus' day the apostate Jewish people that were rejecting Jesus was "*this generation*."—Genesis 6:11, 12; 7:1.

¹² Therefore, in the final fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy today, "*this generation*" apparently refers to the peoples of earth who see the sign of Christ's presence but fail to mend their ways. In contrast, we as Jesus' disciples refuse to be molded by the life-style of "*this generation*." Though in the world, we must be no part of it, "for the appointed time is near." (Revelation 1:3; John 17:16) The apostle Paul admonishes

11. What comparison of '*generations*' did Jesus make, as reported by Matthew and Luke?
- 12, 13. (a) What today is "*this generation*" that must pass away? (b) How are Jehovah's people now coping with this "crooked and twisted generation"?

us: "Keep doing all things free from murmurings and arguments, that you may come to be blameless and innocent, children of God without a blemish in among a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you are shining as illuminators in the world."—Philippians 2:14, 15; Colossians 3:5-10; 1 John 2:15-17.

¹³ Our "shining as illuminators" includes not only displaying a clean Christian personality but, above all, fulfilling Jesus' prophetic commission: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) No human can say when that end will be, but we know that the end of "this generation" of wicked people will come once the witness has been given to God's satisfaction "to the most distant part of the earth."—Acts 1:8.

"That Day and Hour"

¹⁴ When the global witness has been accomplished to the extent Jehovah purposes, it will be his "day and hour" to dispose of this world's system. We do not need to know the date in advance. Thus, following Jesus' example, the apostle Paul admonished: "Now as for the times and the seasons, brothers, you need nothing to be written to you. For you yourselves know quite well that Jehovah's day is coming exactly as a thief in the night. Whenever it is that they are saying: 'Peace and security!' then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape." Note Paul's focus: '*It is when they are saying.*' Yes, when

14. What admonition did both Jesus and Paul give as to "the times and the seasons," and how should we react?

there is talk of "peace and security," when it is least expected, God's judgment will suddenly be executed. How appropriate is Paul's advice: "So, then, let us not sleep on as the rest do, but let us stay awake and keep our senses!"—1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, 6; see also verses 7-11; Acts 1:7.

¹⁵ Does our more precise viewpoint on "this generation" mean that Armageddon is further away than we had thought? Not at all! Though we at no time have known the "day and hour," Jehovah God has always known it, and he does not change. (Malachi 3:6) Obviously, the world is sinking further and further toward terminal ruination. The need to keep awake is more critical than it has ever been. Jehovah has revealed to us "the things that must shortly take place," and we should respond with an absorbing sense of urgency.—Revelation 1:1; 11:18; 16:14, 16.

¹⁶ As the time approaches, keep awake, for Jehovah is about to bring calamity on all of Satan's system! (Jeremiah 25:29-31) Jehovah says: "I shall certainly magnify myself and sanctify myself and make myself known before the eyes of many nations; and they will have to know that I am Jehovah." (Ezekiel 38:23) That decisive "day of Jehovah" draws near!—Joel 1:15; 2:1, 2; Amos 5:18-20; Zephaniah 2:2, 3.

Righteous "New Heavens and a New Earth"

¹⁷ Concerning 'all these things that must occur' Jesus said: "Heaven and earth will

15, 16. (a) Why should we not think that Armageddon is further away than we may have believed? (b) How must Jehovah's sovereignty be magnified in the near future?

17, 18. (a) According to Jesus and Peter, how does "this generation" pass away? (b) Why should we keep on the watch as to conduct and deeds of godly devotion?

pass away, but my words will by no means pass away." (Matthew 24:34, 35) Jesus likely had in mind the "heaven and earth"—the rulers and the ruled—of "this generation." The apostle Peter used similar words in referring to "the heavens and the earth that are now," which are "stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." He next describes how "Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the [governmental] heavens will pass away" together with a corrupt human society, or "earth," and its sinful works. The apostle then exhorts us to "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, [as we are] awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah, through which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved and the elements being intensely hot will melt!" What follows? Peter turns our attention to 'new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness is to dwell.'—2 Peter 3:7, 10-13.*

¹⁸ Those "new heavens," the Kingdom rule by Christ Jesus and his associate kings, will shower blessings on the righteous "new earth" society of mankind. Are you a prospective member of that society? If so, you have reason to exult over the grand future in store!—Isaiah 65:17-19; Revelation 21:1-5.

¹⁹ Yes, a righteous "generation" of mankind is even now being gathered. Today the anointed "faithful and discreet slave" is providing divine education in line with the words of Psalm 78:1, 4: "Do give ear,

* See also pages 152-6 and 180-1 of *Our Incoming World Government—God's Kingdom*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

19. What great privilege may we now enjoy?

O my people, to my law; incline your ear to the sayings of my mouth . . . , relating them even to the generation to come, the praises of Jehovah and his strength and his wonderful things that he has done." (Matthew 24:45-47) On April 14 of this year, in more than 75,500 congregations and in some 230 lands, over 12,000,000 persons around the earth attended the Memorial of Christ's death. Were you among them? May you rest your faith on Christ Jesus and 'call on the name of Jehovah for salvation.'—Romans 10:10-13.

²⁰ "The time left is reduced," said the apostle Paul. It is time, therefore, to keep ever awake and busy in Jehovah's work, as we endure trials and hatreds imposed by a wicked generation of mankind. (1 Corinthians 7:29; Matthew 10:22; 24:13, 14) Let us keep on the watch, observing all the things foretold in the Bible to come upon "this generation." (Luke 21:31-33) By escaping these things and by standing with divine approval before the Son of man, we may at last attain to the prize of everlasting life.

20. Since "the time left is reduced," how must we keep awake, and with what prospect in view?

Questions in Review:

- Having noted the fulfillment of Daniel 4:32, how should we now "keep on the watch"?
- How do the Gospels of Matthew and Luke identify "this generation"?
- As we await "that day and hour," what do we observe, and how should we respond?
- What should the prospect of righteous "new heavens and a new earth" encourage us to do?

"THROWN DOWN, BUT NOT DESTROYED"

AS TOLD BY ULF HELGESSON

In July 1983, doctors leaning over me exclaimed: "He is awake!" A four-and-three-quarter-inch-long tumor had been removed from my spinal cord in a complicated 15-hour operation.

I was left totally paralyzed.

A FEW days later, I was moved to a hospital nearly 40 miles from my hometown of Helsingborg, in the south of Sweden. There I entered a rehabilitation program. The physiotherapist said it would be extremely demanding, yet I was anxious to get started. I really wanted to walk again. By diligently pursuing a five-hour-a-day program of exercise, I made rapid progress.

A month later when the traveling overseer served our congregation, he and the other Christian elders made the long trip to hold the congregation elders' meeting in my hospital room. How my heart rejoiced at this evidence of brotherly love! The nurses in the ward served the whole group tea and sandwiches after the meeting.

At first the doctors were amazed at my progress. After three months I could sit up in my wheelchair and even stand for a few moments. I was happy and fully determined to walk again. My family and fellow Christians gave me a lot of encouragement during their visits. I was even able to go home for short periods.

A Real Setback

After that, however, I did not make any further progress. Soon the physiotherapist gave me the painful message: "You will not

get any better than this!" The goal now was to strengthen me to move about by myself in a wheelchair. I wondered what would happen to me. How would my wife manage? She had had major surgery herself and had needed my help. Would I require permanent institutional care?

I became deeply depressed. My strength, courage, and power drained away. Days passed, and I remained immobile. Not only was I physically paralyzed but I was also emotionally and spiritually numb. I was "thrown down." I had always viewed myself as spiritually strong. I had a firmly rooted faith in God's Kingdom. (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:10) I was convinced of the Bible's promise that all diseases and infirmities would be cured in God's righteous new world and that all humankind would be restored to perfect life there. (Isaiah 25:8; 33:24; 2 Peter 3:13) Now I felt paralyzed not just physically but spiritually as well. I felt "destroyed."—2 Corinthians 4:9.

Before I go any further, let me tell you a little about my background.

A Happy Family

I was born in 1934, and my health had always been good. In the early 1950's, I met Ingrid, and we married in 1958 and settled down in the town of Östersund, in central

Sweden. A turning point in our life came in 1963 when we began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. By then we had three small children—Ewa, Björn, and Lena. Soon our entire family was studying and progressing well in the knowledge of Bible truths.

Shortly after we began studying, we moved to Hälsingborg. There, my wife and I dedicated ourselves to Jehovah and were baptized in 1964. Our happiness increased when our oldest daughter, Ewa, was baptized in 1968. Seven years later, in 1975, Björn and Lena were also baptized, and the following year I was appointed an elder in the Christian congregation.

My secular work enabled me to provide well for the material needs of my family. And our happiness grew when Björn and Lena took up the full-time ministry. Björn was soon invited to serve at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Arboga. Life, as it were, smiled on us. Then, early in 1980, I started to feel the physical effects of the tumor that was eventually removed in that major surgery in 1983.

Overcoming Spiritual Paralysis

When I was told that I would not walk again, life seemed to collapse around me. How did I regain spiritual strength? It was easier than I thought. I simply picked up my Bible and started to read. The more I read, the more spiritual strength I received. Most of all I came to appreciate Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. I read it over and over again and meditated on it.

My happy outlook on life was restored. Through reading and meditation, I started to see opportunities instead of obstacles. I regained my desire to share Bible truths with others, and I satisfied this desire by witnessing to the hospital staff and others I

met. My family fully supported me and received training in how to take care of me. Finally I was able to leave the hospital.

At last I was home. What a happy day that was for all of us! My family arranged a schedule that included my care. My son, Björn, decided to leave the work at the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses, and he came home to help take care of me. It was most comforting to be the object of so much love and concern from my family.

Coping With Another Setback

However, as time went on, my health deteriorated, and it was difficult for me to move. Finally, despite my family's devoted efforts, they were no longer able to care for me at home. So I thought it would be best for me to enter a nursing home. Again, it meant changes and a new routine. But I did not permit this to be a spiritual setback.

I never let up on Bible reading and research. I kept considering what I could do, not what I could not do. I meditated on the spiritual blessings all of Jehovah's Witnesses have. I stayed close to Jehovah in prayer and used every opportunity to preach to others.

Now I spend my nights and part of my days in the nursing home. The afternoons and evenings I spend either at home or at

In Our Next Issue

A Better Life—Soon!

Cities of Refuge
—God's Merciful Provision

William Tyndale—A Man of Vision



our Christian meetings. A municipal service arranges for regular transportation to and from the meetings and to and from my home. My devoted family, the brothers in the congregation, and the personnel at the nursing home look after me in a marvelous way.

Doing What I Can

I do not consider myself an invalid, and I am not treated as such by my family, nor by my Christian brothers. I am lovingly cared for, enabling me to continue serving effectively as an elder. I conduct a Congregation Book Study each week, as well as the weekly congregation study of *The Watchtower* at the Kingdom Hall. It is difficult for me to turn the pages in the Bible, so someone is assigned to help me do that at the meetings. I conduct meetings and give discourses from my wheelchair.

Thus I can still do many of the things I ap-

preciated doing before, including making shepherding calls. (1 Peter 5:2) I do this when brothers and sisters come to me for help or advice. I also use the telephone, taking the initiative by phoning others. The resulting encouragement is mutual. (Romans 1:11, 12) A friend recently said: "Just when I'm feeling downhearted, you call to cheer me up." But I too am encouraged, knowing that Jehovah is blessing my efforts.

Before and after the meetings, I have fine association with the children in the congregation. Since I am sitting in my wheelchair, we speak to one another at the same eye level. I appreciate their sincerity and straightforwardness. A young boy once said to me: "You are an exceptionally handsome invalid!"

By focusing on what I can do instead of fretting over what I cannot do, I have been enjoying serving Jehovah. I have learned much from what has happened to me. I have realized that we are trained and strengthened by the trials we go through.—1 Peter 5:10.

Many healthy people, I have observed, fail to appreciate that we must always take seriously the worship of our heavenly Father. If we don't, our schedule of study, meetings, and field ministry can become mere routine. I consider these provisions to be vital to survival through the end of this world into God's promised earthly Paradise.—Psalm 37:9-11, 29; 1 John 2:17.

We must always keep the hope of life in God's coming new world alive in our hearts. (1 Thessalonians 5:8) I have also learned not

to give up in the fight against any tendency to become discouraged. I have learned to view Jehovah as my Father and his organization as my Mother. I have come to realize that if we make the effort, Jehovah can use any one of us to be an effective servant of his.

Even though I at times have felt that I was, as it were, "thrown down," I have 'not been destroyed.' I have never been abandoned by Jehovah and his organization, nor by my family and my Christian brothers.

Thanks to my reaching out for the Bible and starting to read it, I regained spiritual strength. I am grateful to Jehovah God, who gives "power beyond what is normal" when we trust in him.—2 Corinthians 4:7.

With full confidence and complete trust in Jehovah, I am eagerly looking forward to the future. I am confident that very soon Jehovah God will fulfill his promise about a restored paradise here on earth along with all the wonderful blessings it will bring.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Comfort for those with a "stricken spirit"

TO DAY, Satan's world has come to be "past all moral sense." (Ephesians 4:19; 1 John 5:19) Adultery and fornication are pandemic. In many lands 50 percent or more of marriages end in divorce. Homosexuality is widely accepted. Sexual violence—rape—is often in the news. Pornography is a billion-dollar industry.—Romans 1:26, 27.

Among the vilest perversions is the sexual abuse of innocent children. Like the wisdom of Satan's world, child sexual abuse is "animal, demonic." (James 3:15) In the United States alone, *Time* magazine says, "more than 400,000 reports of verifiable sexual assaults are filed with authorities each year by teachers and doctors." When victims of this abuse become adults, many still carry painful wounds, and those wounds are real! The Bible says: "The spirit [mental inclination, inner feelings and thoughts] of a man can put up with his malady; but as for a stricken [wounded, afflicted] spirit, who can bear it?"—Proverbs 18:14.

The good news of God's Kingdom appeals to people of all kinds, including "the brokenhearted" and those with a "downheart-

ed spirit." (Isaiah 61:1-4) Not surprisingly, many who are in emotional pain respond to the invitation: "Let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life's water free." (Revelation 22:17) The Christian congregation can be a place of comfort for these. They rejoice to learn that suffering will soon be a thing of the past. (Isaiah 65:17) Until that time, though, they may need to be 'comforted' and have their wounds 'bound up.' Well did Paul counsel Christians: "Speak consolingly to the depressed souls, support the weak, be long-suffering toward all."—1 Thessalonians 5:14.

"Repressed Memories"

In recent years some have been "broken-hearted" for reasons that others find difficult to understand. They are adults who, on the basis of what have been described as "repressed memories," say that they were sexually abused when they were children.* Some have no thought of having been molested until, unexpectedly, they experience flashbacks and "memories" of an adult (or adults)

* "Repressed memories" and similar expressions are enclosed in quotation marks to distinguish them from the more typical memories that all of us have.

abusing them when they were young. Do any in the Christian congregation have such disturbing thoughts? In a few lands, yes, and these dedicated ones may experience deep distress, anger, guilt, shame, or loneliness. Like David they may feel isolated from God and cry out: "Why, O Jehovah, do you keep standing afar off? Why do you keep yourself hid in times of distress?"—Psalm 10:1.

Many aspects of these "memories" are not well understood by mental-health professionals. Still, such "memories" can affect the spirituality of dedicated Christians. So we look with confidence to God's Word for guidance in handling them. The Bible provides "discernment in all things." (2 Timothy 2:7; 3:16) It also helps all concerned to put faith in Jehovah, "the Father of tender mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation."—2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

Did It Really Happen?

In the world, there is much controversy as to what these "memories" are and to what extent they represent things that actually happened. Jehovah's Witnesses are "no part of the world" and take no part in this controversy. (John 17:16) According to published reports, "memories" have sometimes proved to be accurate. For example, after insurance adjuster Frank Fitzpatrick "remembered" being molested by a certain priest, almost one hundred others came forward to claim that they too had been abused by the same priest. The priest reportedly admitted to the abuse.

It is noteworthy, however, that a number of individuals have been unable to corroborate their "memories." Some afflicted in this way have had vivid recollections of a certain individual committing abuse or of the abuse being committed in a specific place. Later, though, legitimate evidence to the contrary made it clear that these "remembered" details could not be true.

Providing a Refuge

Nevertheless, how can comfort be given to those who experience a "stricken spirit" because of such "memories"? Remember Jesus' parable of the neighborly Samaritan. A man was set upon by robbers, beaten, and stripped of his possessions. When the Samaritan came along, his heart went out to the wounded man. What did he do? Did he insist on hearing every last detail about the beating? Or did the Samaritan get a description of the robbers and immediately chase after them? No. The man was hurt! So the Samaritan gently dressed his wounds and lovingly carried him to the safety of a nearby inn where he could recover.—Luke 10: 30-37.

True, there is a difference between physical wounds and a "stricken spirit" caused by actual childhood sexual abuse. But both cause great suffering. Hence, what the Samaritan did for the wounded Jew shows what can be done to help an afflicted fellow Christian. The first priority is to give loving comfort and to help him recover.

The Devil afflicted faithful Job, apparently confident that either emotional or physical pain would break his integrity. (Job 1:11; 2:5) Since then, Satan has often tried to use suffering—whether he directly causes it or not—to weaken the faith of God's servants. (Compare 2 Corinthians 12:7-9.) Can we doubt that the Devil now plays upon child abuse and the "downhearted spirit" of many adults who suffered this (or are troubled by "memories" of having suffered it) to try to weaken the faith of Christians? Like Jesus when under attack by Satan, a Christian who suffers pain but who stalwartly refuses to abandon his integrity is saying: "Go away, Satan!"—Matthew 4:10.

Stay Spiritually Strong

"The faithful and discreet slave" has published information to help handle the spir-

itual and emotional hurt caused by child abuse. (Matthew 24:45-47) Experience shows that the sufferer is helped if he can rely on the ‘power of the Lord and the mightiness of his strength,’ putting on “the complete suit of armor from God.” (Ephesians 6:10-17) This armor includes Bible “truth,” which exposes Satan as the ultimate enemy and dissipates the darkness in which he and his henchmen work. (John 3:19) Then, there is “the breastplate of righteousness.” The afflicted one should strive to hold to righteous standards. For example, some have strong impulses to harm themselves or to commit immorality. Every time they resist these impulses, they win a victory!

Spiritual armor also includes “the good news of peace.” Talking to others about Jehovah’s purposes strengthens the one talking as well as anyone who listens. (1 Timothy 4:16) If you should be one with a “stricken spirit,” making it difficult for you to talk about the good news, try to accompany another Christian as he or she does this vital work. And do not forget “the large shield of faith.” Have faith that Jehovah loves you and that he will restore all that you have lost. Believe without reservation that Jesus also loves you, and he proved this by dying for you. (John 3:16) Satan has always falsely claimed that Jehovah does not care for his servants. That is just another of his gross, vicious lies.—John 8:44; compare Job 4:1, 15-18; 42:10-15.

If pain of heart makes it difficult to believe that Jehovah is concerned about you, it will help to associate with others who firmly believe that he does have concern. (Psalm 119: 107, 111; Proverbs 18:1; Hebrews 10:23-25) Refuse to allow Satan to rob you of the prize of life. Remember, “the helmet of salvation” is part of the armor; so is “the sword of the spirit.” The Bible is inspired by holy spirit, which Satan cannot defeat. (2 Timo-

thy 3:16; Hebrews 4:12) Its healing words can soothe emotional pain.—Compare Psalm 107:20; 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.

Finally, pray constantly for the strength to endure. (Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18) Heartfelt prayer sustained Jesus through intense emotional agony, and it can help you too. (Luke 22:41-43) Is it difficult for you to pray? Ask others to pray with you and for you. (Colossians 1:3; James 5:14) Holy spirit will support your prayers. (Compare Romans 8:26, 27.) As with a painful physical illness, some with deep emotional wounds may not be completely healed in this system of things. But with Jehovah’s help we can endure, and endurance is victory, as it was in Jesus’ case. (John 16:33) “Trust in [Jehovah] at all times, O people. Before him pour out your heart. God is a refuge for us.” —Psalm 62:8.

What of the Alleged Abuser?

A person who actually abuses a child sexually is a rapist and should be viewed as such. Anyone victimized in this way has the right to accuse his abuser. Still, an accusation should not be made hastily if it is based solely on “repressed memories” of abuse. In this case the most important thing is for the sufferer to regain a degree of emotional stability. After the passage of some time, he may be in a better position to assess the “memories” and decide what, if anything, he wants to do about them.

Consider the case of Donna. She reportedly had eating disorders and went to a counselor—apparently one of dubious competence. Soon she was accusing her father of incest and he was taken to court. The jury was deadlocked, so the father did not go to prison, but he was left with \$100,000 in legal bills. Then, after all that, Donna told her parents that she no longer believed that the abuse happened!

Wisely, Solomon said: "Do not go forth to conduct a legal case hastily." (Proverbs 25:8) If there is some valid reason to suspect that the alleged perpetrator is still abusing children, a warning may have to be given. The congregation elders can help in such a case. Otherwise, take your time. Eventually, you may be content to let the matter drop. If, though, you want to confront the alleged perpetrator (after first assessing how you would feel about the possible responses), you have a right to do so.

During the time that the one experiencing "memories" is healing, awkward situations may arise. For example, an individual may have vivid mental images of being molested by someone he or she sees every day. No rules can be laid down for handling this. "Each one will carry his own load." (Galatians 6:5) Sometimes one may feel that a relative or a member of one's immediate family is involved. Remember the dubious nature of some "repressed memories" when it comes to identifying the one suspected of being a perpetrator. In such a situation, as long as the matter has not been firmly established, keeping contact with the family—at least by occasional visits, by letter, or by telephone—would show that one is trying to follow a Scriptural course.—Compare Ephesians 6:1-3.

What Can Elders Do?

If the elders are approached by a member of the congregation who is experiencing flashbacks or "repressed memories" of child abuse, two of them are usually assigned to help. These elders should kindly encourage the afflicted one to focus for the time being on coping with the emotional distress. The names of any "remembered" abusers should be kept in strict confidence.

The elders' primary task is to act as shepherds. (Isaiah 32:1, 2; 1 Peter 5:2, 3) They should be especially careful to "clothe

[themselves] with the tender affections of compassion, kindness, lowliness of mind, mildness, and long-suffering." (Colossians 3:12) Let them listen in a kindly way and then apply healing words from the Scriptures. (Proverbs 12:18) Some who are afflicted with painful "memories" have expressed appreciation for elders who make regular visits or even telephone calls to check to see how they are doing. Such contacts need not take a lot of time, but they show that Jehovah's organization cares. When the afflicted one realizes that his Christian brothers truly love him, he may be helped to recover a considerable degree of emotional balance.

What if the sufferer decides that he wants to make an accusation?* Then the two elders can advise him that, in line with the principle at Matthew 18:15, he should personally approach the accused about the matter. If the accuser is not emotionally able to do this face-to-face, it can be done by telephone or perhaps by writing a letter. In this way the one accused is given the opportunity to go on record before Jehovah with his answer to the accusation. He may even be able to present evidence that he could not have committed the abuse. Or perhaps the one accused will confess, and a reconciliation may be achieved. What a blessing that would be! If there is a confession, the two elders can handle matters further in accordance with Scriptural principles.

If the accusation is denied, the elders should explain to the accuser that nothing more can be done in a judicial way. And the congregation will continue to view the one accused as an innocent person. The Bible says that there must be two or three witnesses before judicial action can be taken. (2 Corinthians 13:1; 1 Timothy 5:19) Even if more than one person "remembers" abuse

* It may also be necessary for the step outlined in this paragraph to be taken if the matter has become common knowledge in the congregation.

by the same individual, the nature of these recalls is just too uncertain to base judicial decisions on them without other supporting evidence. This does not mean that such "memories" are viewed as false (or that they are viewed as true). But Bible principles must be followed in establishing a matter judicially.

What if the one accused—though denying the wrongdoing—is really guilty? Does he "get away with it," as it were? Certainly not! The question of his guilt or innocence can be safely left in Jehovah's hands. "The sins of some men are publicly manifest, leading directly to judgment, but as for other men their sins also become manifest later." (1 Timothy 5:24; Romans 12:19; 14:12) The book of Proverbs says: "The expectation of the righteous ones is a rejoicing, but the very hope of the wicked ones will perish." "When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes." (Proverbs 10:28; 11:7) Ultimately, Jeho-

vah God and Christ Jesus render everlasting judgment in justice.—1 Corinthians 4:5.

Resisting the Devil

When dedicated souls endure in the face of great physical or emotional pain, what an evidence it is of their inner strength and love for God! And what a testimony to the power of Jehovah's spirit to sustain them! —Compare 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Peter's words apply to such ones: "Take your stand against [Satan] solid in the faith." (1 Peter 5:9) Doing so may not be easy. Sometimes, it may even be difficult to think clearly and logically. But take heart! Soon, the Devil and his crafty acts will no longer exist. Truly, we long for that time when "God himself . . . 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.

Box Meal Gives Witness

IN THE days following the earthquake in Kobe, Japan, last January, people in the affected area had a hard time finding food. Still, Jehovah's Witnesses did not lack sustenance, thanks to the kind assistance of their friends. For the first two or three days after the quake, nearby congregations provided rice balls. Soon, caring friends were providing box meals. To the box meals, many attached notes expressing concern for the affected ones. Those who received the meals said that every meal was "salted" as they could not hold back their tears when reading the notes.

Jehovah's Witnesses shared their food with others who were in need. One Witness found himself eating his lunch while traveling

by car with a non-Witness colleague working in the same company. So he shared one of the box meals he had received.

"Where did you buy this box lunch?" his colleague asked. The brother explained the relief work of the Witnesses. "I haven't eaten vegetables for days. I'm going to save some and take it home for my family," the man said appreciatively.

The third time this happened, the colleague handed 3,000 yen (about \$35, U.S.) to the Witness and said: "I'm familiar with your activities, so please let me make a donation to your work. I appreciate your sharing your lunch with me. Really, your friends are all such nice people."

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

At 1 Peter 2:9, the "King James Version" calls anointed Christians "a chosen generation." Should this affect our view of Jesus' use of "generation" recorded at Matthew 24:34?

The word "generation" does appear in the rendering of both passages in certain translations. According to the King James Version, the apostle Peter wrote: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." And Jesus foretold: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."—1 Peter 2:9; Matthew 24:34.

In the former passage, the apostle Peter used the Greek word *ge'nos*, whereas in the text of Jesus' statement, we find *ge-ne-a'*. These two Greek words may appear to be similar, and they are linked to a common root; yet, they are different words, and they have different meanings. The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References says in a footnote to 1 Peter 2:9: "'Race.' Gr., *ge'nos*; different from *ge-ne-a'*, 'generation,' as in Mt 24:34." A corresponding footnote is found to Matthew 24:34.

As those footnotes indicate, *ge'nos* is appropriately translated by the English word "race," as commonly found in English versions. At 1 Peter 2:9, Peter applied the prophecy found at Isaiah 61:6 to anointed Christians with the heavenly hope. These are drawn from many nations and tribes, but natural backgrounds are put behind them as they become part of the nation of spiritual Israel. (Romans 10:12; Galatians 3:28, 29; 6:16; Revelation 5:9, 10) Peter identified them as becoming, in a spiritual sense, a distinct group—"a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession."

But in the Greek text of Jesus' words found at Matthew 24:34, we find the word *ge-ne-a'*. It is

widely recognized that Jesus was referring, not to any "race" of people, but to the people living at a certain period of time.

Almost a hundred years ago, Charles T. Russell, first president of the Watch Tower Society, made this clear, writing: "Although the words 'generation' and 'race' may be said to come from a common root or starting point, yet they are not the same; and in Scriptural usage the two words are quite distinct. . . . In the three different records of this prophecy our Lord is credited with using a wholly different Greek word (*genea*) which does not mean race, but has the same significance as our English word generation. Other uses of this Greek word (*genea*) prove that it is not used with the significance of race, but in reference to people living contemporaneously."—The Day of Vengeance, pages 602-3.

More recently, A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew (1988), designed for Bible translators, said: "[The New International Version] translates **this generation** literally but follows with a footnote, 'Or race.' And one New Testament scholar believes that 'Matthew means not just the first generation after Jesus but all the generations of Judaism that reject him.' However, there is no linguistic evidence to substantiate either of these conclusions, and they must be brushed aside as attempts to avoid the obvious meaning. In its original setting the reference was solely to Jesus' own contemporaries."

As discussed on pages 10 to 15, Jesus condemned the generation of Jews of his time, his contemporaries who rejected him. (Luke 9:41; 11:32; 17:25) He often used qualifiers such as "wicked and adulterous," "faithless and twisted," and "adulterous and sinful" in describing that generation. (Matthew 12:39; 17:17; Mark 8:38) When Jesus used "generation" for the last time, he was on the Mount of Olives with four apostles. (Mark 13:3) Those men, who were not yet anointed with spirit nor part of a Christian congregation, certainly did not constitute either a "generation"

or a race of people. They were, though, very familiar with Jesus' use of the term "generation" in referring to his contemporaries. So they logically would understand what he had in mind when he mentioned "this generation" for the last time.* The apostle Peter, who was present, thereafter urged Jews: "Get saved from this crooked generation."—Acts 2:40.

We have often published evidence that many things Jesus foretold in this same discourse (such as wars, earthquakes, and famines) were fulfilled between his uttering the prophecy and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Many, but not all. There is no evidence, for example, that after the Romans attacked Jerusalem (66-70 C.E.) "the sign of the Son of man" appeared, causing "all the tribes of the earth" to beat themselves. (Matthew 24:30) Hence, that fulfillment between 33 C.E. and 70 C.E. must have been merely an initial one, not the full or large-scale fulfillment to which Jesus was also pointing.

In the introduction to his translation of Josephus' work *The Jewish War*, G. A. Williamson writes: "The disciples, Matthew tells us, had asked [Jesus] a double question—about the destruction of the Temple and about His own final coming—and He gave them a double answer, the first part of which most vividly foretold the occurrences destined to be so fully described by Josephus."

Yes, in the initial fulfillment, "*this generation*" evidently meant the same as it did at other times—the contemporaneous generation of unbelieving Jews. That "*generation*" would not pass away

* In the expression "*this generation*," a form of the demonstrative pronoun *hou'tos* well corresponds to the English word "this." It can refer to something present or before the speaker. But it can also have other meanings. The *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (1991) notes: "The word [*hou'tos*] designates an immediate fact. Thus the [*aiōn hou'tos*] is the 'presently existing world' . . . and the [*genea' haute*] is the 'generation now living' (e.g., Matt 12:41f, 45; 24:34)." Dr. George B. Winer writes: "The pronoun [*hou'tos*] sometimes refers, not to the noun locally nearest, but to one more remote, which, as the principal subject, was mentally the nearest, the most present to the writer's thoughts."—A *Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament*, 7th edition, 1897.



without experiencing what Jesus foretold. As Williamson commented, this proved true in the decades leading up to Jerusalem's destruction, as an eyewitness historian, Josephus, described.

In the second or larger fulfillment, "*this generation*" would logically also be the contemporaneous people. As the article beginning on page 16 establishes, we need not conclude that Jesus was referring to a set number of years making up a "generation."

On the contrary, two key things can be said about any time implied by "*generation*." (1) A generation of people cannot be viewed as a period having a fixed number of years, as is the case with time designations meaning a set number of years (decade or century). (2) The people of a generation live for a relatively brief period, not one of great length.

Consequently, when the apostles heard Jesus refer to "*this generation*," what would they think? While we, with the benefit of hindsight, know that Jerusalem's destruction in the "great tribulation" came 37 years later, the apostles hearing Jesus could not know that. Rather, his mention of "*generation*" would have conveyed to them, not the idea of a period of great length, but the people living over a relatively limited period of time. The same is true in our case. How fitting, then, are Jesus' follow-up words: "Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father. . . . On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming."—Matthew 24:36, 44.

'Just as iron sharpens iron'

TOWARD the end of the third century C.E., an earnest young man named Anthony, described as a "Coptic Christian," retired from the world and spent 20 years isolated in the desert. Why? He felt that this was the best way for him to serve God. He was Christendom's first influential hermit, or eremite.

Today, Christendom has few hermits. But more and more individuals seek isolation in another way. They refuse to talk to others about religion, feeling that such talk leads to disagreements and fights. Their worship consists mainly of doing no harm to their neighbor.

True, doing no harm to one's neighbor is a part of true religion, but more is needed. An ancient proverb states: "By iron, iron itself is sharpened. So one man sharpens the face of another." (Proverbs 27:17) The fact is, the Bible encourages Christians to meet together, not to isolate themselves completely from the world or from other Christians. (John 17:14, 15) It says: "Let us consider one another to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking the gathering of ourselves together." (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Jehovah's Witnesses follow that counsel. Several times a week, they gather together to 'sharpen one another's face,' building up the faith of fellow believers. They find that honestly discussing the Bible does not lead to fights. Rather, it leads to harmony and peace. It is a vital part of true worship.

