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1999

### **The Watchtower, October 15, 1980, p. 31**

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### **Awake!, November 8, 1986, pp. 7-8**

“When will these promises be fulfilled? Let’s see how some other youngsters answer...Samuel, a 15-year-old youth from the same country, also believes in a complete change; “For the year 2000, I visualize a world transformed into a beautiful paradise! But I don’t think that either the present world or its rulers will live to see that day...We are living in the last days of the system of things...Only Jehovah, our Creator, can and will do that soon...Why are the last youngsters interviewed so sure of beneficial changes in the near future?...A close examination of Bible prophecies showed the young Witnesses that we are now living in a privileged period of history, for the time has come for God to intervene in human affairs and rid the entire earth of unrighteousness. The Scriptures call this short period preceding God’s intervention ‘the time of the end’ and specify that it will not last longer than a ‘generation’...Since the ‘generation’ of 1914 is now well advanced in years, God’s promise is really up-to-date news for young people today.”

(continued)

**The Watchtower, January 1, 1989, p. 12  
(magazine only, changed in bound volume)**

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**The Watchtower, June 1, 1990, p. 7**

“Jesus warned his disciples not to speculate. He said: ‘It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction.’ (Acts 1:7) And regarding the exact ‘day and hour’ when these events would occur, Jesus said that only his Father, Jehovah God, knew. (Matthew 24:36) Thus, the Bible is no supporter of any of the now growing number of doomsday prophets and movements that point to the stroke of midnight on New Year’s Eve, 1999, as the end of the world.”

(done)

## QUESTIONS from READERS

● In speaking of "the sign of [his] presence and of the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus said to his disciples: "Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur." (Matt. 24:3, 34) How are we to understand this?

This prophecy, uttered in the year 33 C.E., had a notable typical fulfillment up until the year 70 C.E., when the Jewish system of things was destroyed, and Jerusalem's temple was thrown down, 'not a stone being left upon a stone.' In Jerusalem alone 1,100,000 Jews perished, according to the historian Josephus. Although many of Jesus' early disciples had died in the persecutions up until that time, some of the generation that had been with Jesus and had witnessed his mighty works remained also to see the end of that "conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 24:2, 3) They were persons of Jesus' generation, his contemporaries.

However, from Jesus' prophecy we understand that his words are to have a later, major fulfillment, culminating in "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again." This "great tribulation" is to embrace not just a Jewish "system of things" but the entire world of mankind, yes, "all the nations" to whom Jehovah's Witnesses must 'preach this good news of the kingdom before the end comes.' The "pangs of distress" that began to afflict this earth, starting with World War I, show that Jesus' "sign" is having its great antitypical fulfillment from 1914 onward. —Matt. 24:3-8, 14, 21.

What, then, is the "generation" that "will by no means pass away until all these things occur"? It does not refer to a period of time, which some have tried to interpret as 30, 40, 70 or even 120 years, but, rather, it refers to people, the people living at the "beginning of pangs of distress" for this condemned world system. It is the generation of people who saw the catastrophic events that broke forth in connection with World War I from 1914 onward.

THE WATCHTOWER — OCTOBER 15, 1980

As indicated by an article on page 56 of *U.S. News & World Report* of January 14, 1980, "If you assume that 10 is the age at which an event creates a lasting impression on a person's memory," then there are today more than 13 million Americans who have a "recollection of World War I." And if the wicked system of this world survived until the turn of the century, which is highly improbable in view of world trends and the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, there would still be survivors of the World War I generation. However, the fact that their number is dwindling is one more indication that "the conclusion of the system of things" is moving fast toward its end.

In this connection, the magazine *The Economist* of March 15, 1980, gave an interesting review of a book entitled "The Generation of 1914," by Robert Wohl. It made this significant remark: "Eventually Mr. Wohl voices his own opinions about the generation of 1914. In a terse and condensed last chapter he suggests that generations are not mathematically definable in terms of numbers of years, but cluster around major historical crises, of which the first world war is the supreme example." This lines up very well with the Scriptural viewpoint that Jehovah's Witnesses take on "the generation of 1914."

Yes, there was a generation of people that was living in 1914, and that saw the major historical changes from an era of comparative tranquillity to the present era of war, lawlessness and ruination. Many who are now Jehovah's Witnesses were among them. Truly, 1914 marked "the supreme example" of change, for that year set in motion the foretold "beginning of pangs of distress" among the nations. Many persons are still alive who can tell us how catastrophically conditions on earth changed in the year 1914. And the world continues to plunge into worse and worse trouble. We can be happy, therefore, for Jesus' assurance that there will be survivors of "the generation of 1914"—that this generation will not have completely passed away—when the "great tribulation" rings down the curtain on this wicked world system.

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### "WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

November 16: Are We Nearing Armageddon?

Page 11. Songs to Be Used: 59, 44.

November 23: Execution of the "Great Harlot"

Nears. Page 17. Songs to Be Used: 90, 96.

## A United World

**John**, a young Canadian, "would bring the world together into a single community." **Mikiko**, a young girl from Japan, explains how she thinks unity could be obtained: "I would make a land where only good people live." And **Milton**, from Brazil, gives further ideas: "I would like to see a united world, with one government and one religion."

"And to him [Jesus] there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him." "Many nations will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah . . . and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.'" — Daniel 7:14; Micah 4:2.

As the preceding comparisons have shown, the future that God promises is just what many young people desire. This future will come to be a reality, for the psalmist, speaking to Jehovah, gives the assurance: "You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing." (Psalm 145:16) But when will these promises be fulfilled? Let's see how some other youngsters answer.

### The Time for a Change Is Near!

**Carole**, from France, has a "marvelous hope" and foresees, for the near future, "something marvelous—not at all like the world we live in." **Samuel**, a 15-year-old youth from the same country, also believes in a complete change: "For the year 2000, I visualize a world transformed into a beautiful paradise! But I don't think that either the present world or its rulers will live to



see that day. . . . We are living in the last days of the system of things.” Ruth, a German girl of 16, also expresses her confidence in these changes: “I know I’m not smart enough to change the world and make things run right. Only Jehovah, our Creator, can and will do that soon.”

But why are the last youngsters interviewed so sure of beneficial changes in the near future? Simply because they have come to know about God’s promises through his Word, the Bible. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, they are confident of something better—a world of justice and peace where, according to God’s promise, even illness and death will be no more.—2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21:3, 4.

A close examination of Bible prophecies showed these young Witnesses that we are now living in a privileged period of history, for the time has come for God to intervene

in human affairs and rid the entire earth of unrighteousness. The Scriptures call this short period preceding God’s intervention “the time of the end” and specify that it will not last longer than a “generation.” It would also be distinguished by wars, earthquakes, epidemics, fear, and rising insecurity—all of which have marked the world since 1914. Since the “generation” of 1914 is now well advanced in years, God’s promise is really up-to-date news for young people today.—Daniel 12:4; Matthew 24:3, 7-14, 34.

#### ***Preparing Your Future***

What, then, should be our attitude toward the future? A choice is offered to everyone. A French journalist put it this way: “There are two ways of showing an interest in the future: One is by trying to visualize it, like someone in a train watching the countryside go by; the other is by preparing for it.” Which do you prefer?

Rather than living in dread of a dark future, you may wish to investigate the beliefs of the young Witnesses to find out if there is a solid basis for their hope. Why not begin a study of God’s Word together with one of Jehovah’s Witnesses? Instead of waiting passively for the future, you will learn to prepare for it. The marvelous hope of the future can be yours.

#### ***Is Tomorrow Like Today?***

When imagining the future, people often tend to think of it as a prolonging of their present way of life. The famous American physicist Robert Oppenheimer, one of the fathers of the atom bomb, explained why he thought the future cannot be foreseen in that way: “There is a complementary danger in foreseeing the future and trying to foretell it. We are often convinced that yesterday’s surprises will determine what happens tomorrow. . . . But for good or for bad, tomorrow is novelty. It is the novelty of chance, things that come together in a way one cannot predict. . . . What makes tomorrow is that it cannot be foretold today; it is not implied by today.”

Since man cannot of his own ability peer into the future, he needs to consult a Being of superior intelligence. The Bible describes God as having the necessary capacity in these words: “I am . . . the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done.” So it is to him alone that man can turn to find out what the future holds.—Isaiah 46:9, 10.

spirit, indicated a decisive move for the expansion of the missionary work. The record at Acts 13:2-4 tells us: "The holy spirit said: 'Of all persons set Barnabas and Saul apart for me for the work to which I have called them.' . . . Accordingly these men, sent out by the holy spirit, went down to Seleucia [the seaport of Syrian Antioch], and from there they sailed away to Cyprus." How thrilling that must have been for Paul and Barnabas—sailing to their first foreign assignment! The apostle Paul was spearheading the Christian missionary activity. He was also laying a foundation for a work that would be completed in our 20th century.

<sup>9</sup> Paul went on to make three recorded missionary tours plus his journey to Rome as a prisoner. In the course of these, he opened up the work in several cities in Europe and preached the Kingdom message in countries and islands that today are known as Syria, Cyprus, Crete, Turkey, Greece, Malta, and Sicily. He may even have reached Spain. He helped establish congregations in many cities. What was the secret of his effective missionary activity?

#### Effective Teaching

<sup>10</sup> Paul imitated Christ's way of teaching. Therefore he knew how to relate to people. He knew how to teach and how to train others as teachers. He based his teaching on the Scriptures. He did not try to impress others with his own wisdom but, rather, reasoned from the Scriptures. (Acts 17: 2, 3) Paul also knew how to adapt to his audience and how to use the local setting as a springboard for his message. As he said: "I have made myself the slave to all, that I may gain the most persons. And so to the

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 10. Why was Paul so effective in his missionary activity?

Jews I became as a Jew . . . To those without law I became as without law . . . To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I have become all things to people of all sorts, that I might by all means save some." —1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Acts 17:22, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Paul and his companions were effective missionaries. By perseverance and endurance, they established and strengthened Christian congregations everywhere they went. (Acts 13:14, 43, 48, 49; 14:19-28) The early Christian ministry was so widespread that Paul could eventually write about "the truth of that good news which has presented itself to you, even as it is bearing fruit and increasing in all the world . . . , and which was preached in all creation that is under heaven." Truly, early Christian missionary activity affected people.—Colossians 1:5, 6, 23.

<sup>12</sup> However, by the beginning of the second century C.E., apostasy was creeping into the Christian congregation, even as Jesus and the apostles had warned. (Matthew 7:15, 21-23; Acts 20:29, 30; 1 John 2: 18, 19) In the centuries that followed, theology and pagan doctrine submerged the Kingdom message. Christendom sent out missionaries, not to preach the true Kingdom of God, but to impose on defenseless natives—often with the sword—the kingdom of their political masters and sponsors. Authentic Christian missionary work ceased but not forever.

<sup>13</sup> Toward the close of the 19th century, Charles T. Russell, the first president of the Watch Tower Society, saw the need for missionary activity. He thus organized an extensive witnessing campaign, and he

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valid sense of urgency that Jesus and the inspired Scriptures generated.

All of this is even more applicable to us, at the late hour in which we live. Paraphrasing Paul's words, we cannot deny that now our salvation is nearer than at the time when the early Christians became believers and even than when we ourselves became believers. The night is well along; the day certainly has drawn near.

We have been able to see in history starting with World War I

the physical evidence piling mountain high, evidence that proves that we are in the conclusion of the system of things. Rather than be preoccupied with guessing just when the end will occur, we should be occupied with the preaching of the good news, which can save our lives and the lives of many others.—1 Timothy 4:16.

We have ample reasons to expect that this preaching will be completed in our time. Does that mean before the turn of a new

month, a new year, a new decade, a new century? No human knows. For Jesus said that even the angels of the heavens did not know that. (Matthew 24:36) Furthermore, we do not need to know as we continue doing what the Lord commands us to concentrate on doing. What is most important is that God's will and work be done and that we have the fullest share in that. Thus we "may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:36.

## AIDS 'Beginning of a New Morality'?

**A**FTER pointing out that a medical doctor had said that "a completely monogamous relationship" is the only way to avoid contracting AIDS sexually, a Canadian editorial writer asks: "Could the dreaded AIDS be the beginning of a whole new morality in our world?" The writer wondered, too, as to whether it is not "strange" that what the Bible has taught for years, namely, monogamy, "could now be a matter of survival for mankind." Referring also to today's world of "drugs, tobacco, alcohol and not least, sexual overdrive," the editorial says: "We are now paying the price for the pornographic, promiscuous, polluting world we have created."

While it is good to hope for improvement in conduct and for survival, is it merely the fear of an early death or of the end of mankind that will produce "a whole new morality"? No, for despite warnings from

doctors and researchers, most smokers and heavy drinkers of alcohol foolishly continue to abuse their health, bringing their lives to a premature end. And some homosexuals have stated that they will carry on with multiple partners even at the risk of contracting AIDS.—Proverbs 10:21, 23.

What, then, will properly restrain wrongdoing? Surely, a healthy fear of and respect for Jehovah, seen in obedience to his laws on morality. "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge." And this kind of knowledge produces the wisdom that truly "preserves alive its owners."—Proverbs 1:7; Ecclesiastes 7:12.

Significantly, the editor, noting that AIDS may be contracted through a blood transfusion, also asked: "Isn't [it] ironic that we who have roundly condemned the Jehovah[']s Witnesses for refusing blood transfusions . . . may now be doing the same thing for other reasons?"



tion of what Christ's Millennium holds in store.

#### Coinciding With Third Millennium?

World events since 1914 show that we are living in "the conclusion of the system of things." Jesus further said that the generation that was associated with these foretold events would "by no means pass away until all these things occur." Does this mean, then, that Christ's Millennial Rule will coincide with the third millennium?—Matthew 24:3-21, 34.

Jesus warned his disciples not to speculate. He said: "It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times or seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction." (Acts 1:7) And regarding the exact "day and hour" when these events would occur, Jesus said that only his Father, Jehovah God, knew. (Matthew 24:36) Thus, the Bible is no supporter of any of the now growing number of dooms-

day prophets and movements that point to the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, 1999, as the end of the world.

However, present world events clearly show that the time of the end of this dark, wicked system of things is "well along" and that Christ's Millennium has "drawn near." (Romans 13:12) Instead of speculating on the exact day and hour for this to come, it is now high time to take in knowledge of God's requirements for survival. (John 17:3) In this way you can learn how to be among those to whom Jesus will say: "Come, you who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world." (Matthew 25:34) Jehovah's Witnesses are willing and able to help you be among those who will enjoy the blessings of the coming grand Millennium.\*

\* A free home Bible study can be arranged by writing the publishers of this magazine.