

Awake!

JUNE 8, 1983



**Is Pollution
Making You Sick?
There Is a Solution!**

*Have you tried
this about you?*

WHY AWAKE! IS PUBLISHED

AWAKE! is for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another.

Most importantly, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure New Order before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.

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Feature Articles

Pollution through pesticides and other chemical agents has become a worldwide threat during recent decades. Many persons have fallen ill or have become victims of allergies without immediately knowing the reason why. Is there anything you can do to avoid the harmful effects of pollution? Is a permanent solution possible?

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I Was Allergic to *Toxic Chemicals*

"I was always sensitive to pesticides, cosmetics and paint fumes, which resulted in rashes and headaches. Nothing to worry about—so I thought. Little did I realize what these could lead to." With this Millie began her story.

She continued:

"OH, THOSE flies!" So I put up some insecticide strips. Soon—not a fly in sight. I thought, 'How wonderful modern technology is!' But this was a turning point for my health.

I began having heart palpitations, extreme muscle weakness, vomiting and outbursts of crying. What was wrong? I was happily married and had been enjoying life. Then we moved. Our new apartment was infested with roaches, so we sprayed it.

Suddenly I couldn't get my breath. My husband, Jerry, rushed me to the hospital. After returning home I plunged into a depression, became confused and could hardly talk. Soon I was back in the hospital, where the doctor told Jerry: "Your wife has a mental disorder—schizophrenia." But when we moved to an older mobile home the symptoms cleared up.

Then the ants came. Exterminators sprayed an insecticide. The depression, nausea and crying spells all returned. I vomited every 30 minutes for 18 hours. I had diarrhea. My every bone ached. In despair we went to a mental hospital.

Hospital blood tests revealed a shortage of white cells, perhaps indicating an immune-system defect. Yet I never connected it with my problems. Then, af-

ter an examination, the psychiatrist stated: "You're certainly not schizophrenic. You're in better mental health than most people on the street." In the hospital I improved. Then I went home. But once there my vision blurred. All the other symptoms returned!

"Every time I take her to the hospital she gets better, but she gets worse when she comes home," Jerry tearfully told the doctor. "She hasn't been the same since we sprayed the house for ants."

"That's it, that's it!" fired back the doctor. "Get her out of that home for a while and we'll know."

For three days I slept in a trailer and my symptoms cleared. Still doubting that the problem was in the house, I returned. Immediately my throat tightened and my tongue swelled. Now I knew! I was allergic to toxic chemicals in the home. In time I began to react to perfume, household chemicals, hair dye, cosmetics, gasoline fumes, car exhausts—even to synthetic clothing!

Millie was suffering from what has been called the 20th-century syndrome. True, hers was an extreme case. The reaction of most people to pollution is sneezing, itching or burning eyes. But are growing numbers of cases like hers worldwide a warning signal of increasing environmental pollution? Is man truly "ruining the earth" as foretold centuries ago in the Bible?—Revelation 11:18.



Is Pollution Making You Sick?

DOES Millie's case, previously mentioned, mean that every time *you* feel irritable, depressed or have health problems environmental pollution is to blame? Not at all.

Our body's marvelously designed immune system can fight off pollutants. (Psalm 139:14) Yet, because of genetic inheritance and our living habits, each of us will react differently. Increasing medical evidence has shown that even small amounts of chemical pollutants can affect the health of some people.

Chemical Sensitivities

"After treating over 20,000 patients over a period of 30 years for various allergic reactions, I think that the chemical problem is rapidly becoming—if it is not already—the number one offender," Dr. Theron Randolph of Chicago, Illinois, told *Awake!* "The load exposure from the environment and our industrialized diet is greatly increasing. These chemical sensitivities don't hit everybody immediately, but it hurts most those who are subjected to the chemicals with any degree of persistence."

But should not the body's immune system counteract these pollutants? Dr. Alan S. Levin, an immunologist of San Francisco, explained: "Chemical pollutants weaken the immune system by poisoning and thereby reducing certain 'T cells' [a type of white cell] in the blood which act as 'brakes' for the im-

mune system. As a result, a person's immune system becomes uncontrollable and overreacts. He can become *overly* sensitive and react to virtually all synthetic materials and petrochemicals."

Medical journals tell of persons reacting to soft plastic food containers, fumes from oil or gas stoves, denture materials, synthetic fabrics and a host of other modern-day products. So the emotional and physical problems encountered by Millie can be caused by a reaction to substances in one's environment.

"But really, *individual susceptibility* is the crux of the problem," states Dr. Randolph. After nationwide research, Dr. Irving Selikoff, director of Environmental Sciences Laboratory at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York, reached the same conclusion. In an interview with *Awake!*, he said: "Individual susceptibility is tremendously important. One out of five persons who work with asbestos will die of lung cancer. Why not the other four? I don't know. But this is true in many, many things."

So what you react to may be no problem for another. The state of your health, heredity, mental outlook and stresses are all factors. Such knowledge should help us develop fellow feeling when others struggle with health problems that we may not have. (1 Peter 3:8) But the effects of environmental pollutants go further than just an allergic reaction.

The Workplace

Asbestos, a mineral widely used in industry, became a 1982 front-page horror story. Evidence revealed that an estimated 10,000 persons exposed to asbestos dust on their jobs may die each year from now until the end of the century from asbestos-caused cancer and other related illnesses.

"It was shown more than 20 years ago what asbestos exposure would do to health," said Dr. Irving Selikoff. "Industry perhaps felt that a little bit wouldn't hurt. Well, we patiently gathered much information. Now we see the results. *But it's too late.* For the 20 million among us who were exposed to the dust from 1940 to 1980, with inadequate precautions, the future is worrisome!" Many responsible industries have imposed stricter safety measures since one out of every 10 workers in the United States is now exposed (full time or part time) to cancer-causing substances.

Dr. Kent Anger of the Neurobehavioral Research Section of NIOSH (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) told *Awake!* that over 30 workplace chemicals—other than medical drugs—can affect the nervous system. He stated: "Nearly 20 million workers are exposed to one or several of these. They can cause slight changes in the attention span, tremors or tingling in hands, short-term memory loss, general weakness, emotional instability, nervousness, irritability—even paralysis and blindness. Of course, we have also seen these symptoms caused by other problems."

Chemical pesticides are widely used. The World Health Organization considers pesticide poisoning of farm workers a major health problem in developing countries. It estimates that in these coun-



**Your workplace can be
a source of pollution**

tries pesticides cause some 500,000 human poisonings each year—one every minute! Of these, 5,000 are fatal. Both sterility and miscarriages have been linked with either the production or the use of these compounds. Of course, not all pesticides are equally harmful, but the effects of some may be known only after years of use.

Our Food, Water and Air

Much of the world's food is lost each year to pests. One estimate says over 40 percent! Thus, in 1979 alone 6.4 billion pounds of pesticides were produced—well over a pound for every person on earth!* Many of these chemicals—some of which do not easily break down—cling to our vegetables and fruits or enter the food chain where they are stored in the meat we eat. Pesticides banned in the United States because they cause birth

* 1 pound equals .45 kg.

defects and cancer in laboratory animals are still produced and sold to other countries, and the United States gets these back in many of its imported foods.

So virtually everyone on earth has in his body a small amount of these pollutants. Just how hazardous this is—especially in the long term—no one can say with certainty. However, some react with asthma attacks, skin rashes and headaches when eating pesticide-contaminated food.

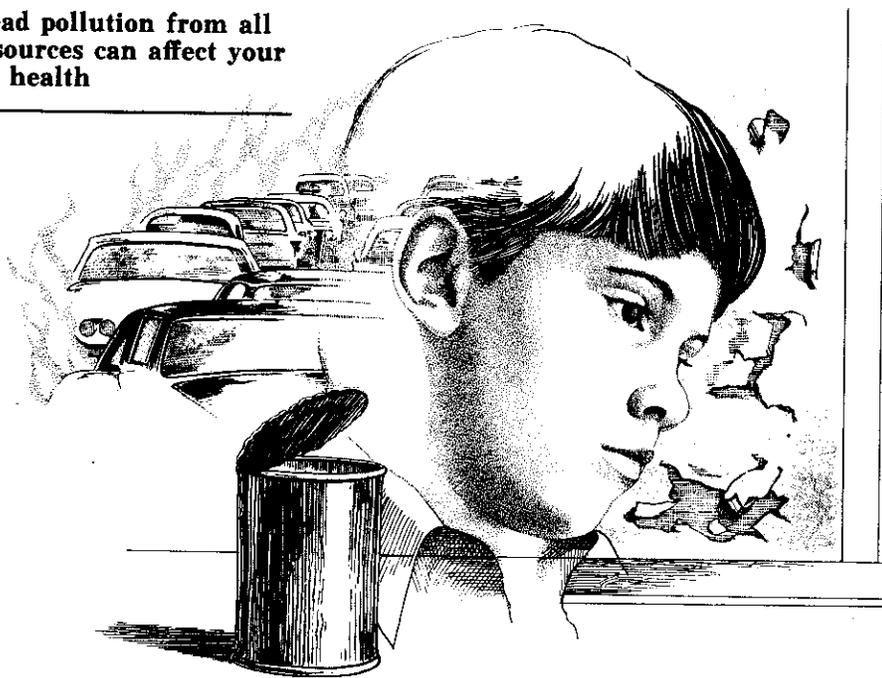
While most drinking water is safe, experiences like that of Egg Harbor, New Jersey (U.S.), are increasing. In 1981 a leaking chemical waste dump had contaminated the nearby *groundwater*. The New Jersey groundwater is one of the numerous water systems held in suspension below the ground, and these systems provide drinking water for over

half the country. Once such a water system is polluted there is usually no way to cleanse it.

"DON'T DRINK THE WATER. POISON. CHEMICALS." This sign that hung in the kitchen of one Egg Harbor home was a painful reminder that throughout New Jersey and neighboring states hundreds of wells have been closed. Many residents blamed bronchial coughs, kidney ailments, nervous disorders and skin rashes on the toxic chemicals. Some of these symptoms cleared up when the sufferers temporarily left the area or switched to bottled water. With perhaps *thousands* of similar chemical dumps nationwide, Environmental Protection Agency ex-official Eckhardt Beck stated: "This will become the environmental horror story of the 80's."*

* See "Just the Tip of the Iceberg" in the November 22, 1980, issue of *Awake!*

The lead pollution from all these sources can affect your child's health



City air pollution is widely believed *capable* of causing or aggravating chronic heart and lung disease, especially among the elderly, infirm and newborn. However, to what extent is still debatable; better controls have helped in some cities. Yet air pollution adds stress. One study revealed that among the middle-class population of a large city in the United States, in high pollution areas there were 80 percent more deaths from heart disease due to high blood pressure than there were in low pollution areas.

Lead—The Subtle Poison

Dr. Herbert Needleman analyzed the lead levels of baby teeth of 2,146 normal schoolchildren aged five to six. He then had each child's behavior rated by the teacher. The results: more lead—worse behavior! Similar findings were made in Canada, Germany and England. There is growing alarm.

Lead can be eaten in the form of old paint chips or dust, breathed from the exhaust fumes of leaded gasoline and can make its way into our food. "Half the lead in the American diet probably originates from lead-soldered cans, since these containers contaminate their contents about tenfold and canned foods comprise about 20 percent of the diet," concluded two California research scientists.

Adults will absorb 10 percent of the lead they eat; children absorb up to 50 percent. They also more readily absorb what they breathe. Their developing nervous system is especially vulnerable. Though the symptoms of low-level lead poisoning in children include clumsiness, stomach aches, refusal to play, irritability, fatigue and loss of appetite, these are often ignored by parents and the condition can worsen.



**Your life-style can
make pollution worse**

Your Life-Style

The effects of pollution are often greatly intensified by an unwise life-style. "Persons who work with asbestos have a seven or eight times greater risk of dying from lung cancer than the normal population. However, *if they smoke,*" revealed Dr. Selikoff, "they have a risk that is 92 times greater." Smoking is one of the reasons that indoor pollution in many places is *worse* than pollution outside and often is a greater health hazard.

Your eating habits are also a factor. Drs. Lonsdale and Shamberger of the United States reported treating a number of unusually irritable young people who showed disturbing personality changes. A steady diet of "junk foods" had created a vitamin B₁ (thiamine) deficiency. Supplements of thiamine and a *change in diet* cleared up their symptoms.

Thus, many factors are involved in answering the questions: Is pollution making you sick? What can *you* do about it?



What Can You Do?

DO NOT drink the water in the ditch reservoirs. It is polluted with chemicals that may cause liver cancer.' Thus the people of Qidong county (China) were urged. Among the 67,000 surveyed who drank ditchwater, 107 had developed liver cancer compared to *none* of 6,000 well-water drinkers. Many heeded the warning. Five years later among 23,000 surveyed who were now drinking water from wells there was only one case of liver cancer. Among 47,000 still using ditchwater there were 216!

Not all environmentally caused illnesses are avoided that easily. But you can take steps that may protect your health. As the Bible says: "Sensible people will see trouble coming and avoid it, but an unthinking person will walk right into it and regret it later."—Proverbs 22:3, *Today's English Version*.

'How do I know if it is the environment?' you may wonder. This may not be easy to determine because the symptoms often appear gradually. But if you take a vacation to a relatively pollution-free area and feel great, and on returning home you get sick again, your sickness could be something in the environment. For clues, try to recall when you feel the worst. Is it on the way to work, at the job, in the kitchen, in the garden or while using such items as cleaning fluids?

If you have a serious unresolved health problem, however, seeing a qualified doctor may be helpful, for it may be a physical illness unrelated to the environment. Of course, you must use discern-

ment in deciding which doctor to consult, for some, though well meaning, may not recognize the impact of pollutants. Peter Breyesse stated in *JAMA (The Journal of the American Medical Association)*, January 16, 1981: "Physician recognition of such environmental problems is important. Many of the adults who were interviewed said they had been under treatment by their physician, some for over four years and more, without improvement in their condition."

Environmental Medicine

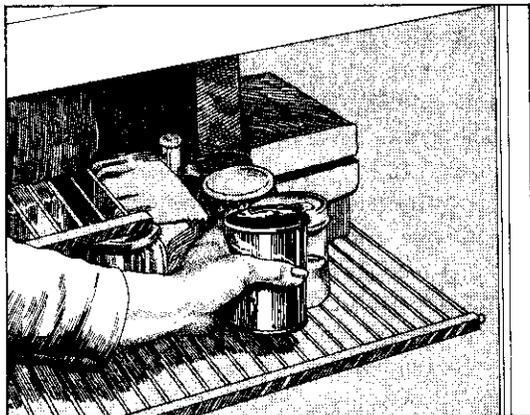
Millie (see page 3) was sensitive to almost everything. With the cooperation of her family doctor she entered the Brookhaven Medical Center in Dallas, Texas, which specializes in such problems. She stayed for several weeks in the Environmental Control Unit—rooms that are specially designed to be free of all environmental pollutants and synthetic materials. Tests determined what she was sensitive to. After a short fasting period she began a difficult program of strengthening her immune system through injections, by exercise and use of vitamin supplements. She strictly had to avoid certain pollutants and foods until her body could build itself up. In time she built up her resistance and now lives a more normal life.

The help Millie received was from a growing—yet controversial—medical speciality called clinical ecology. Millie's was an extreme case, and her hospitalization cost several thousand dollars. Of-

ten less severe cases are treated in the doctor's office. Dr. Randolph, in his interview with *Awake!*, defined its approach: "It's essentially environmental medicine. We take the holistic view, that is, the body as a whole and the way it responds to the environment. We attempt to treat the causes rather than the effects of the illness." Yet in his book *An Alternative Approach to Allergies* (1980), his coauthor, Dr. Moss, admits, "It will not cure every case of headache, depression, arthritis, or chronic fatigue." Other approaches include traditional allergists and clinical toxicologists. *Awake!* is not endorsing any of these treatments; it is simply reporting on them. But what can you do to *improve* your environment?

Improving Home Environment

Since you may spend 70 percent of your life at home, polluted *indoor* air is often a greater hazard than outdoor pollution. Does this mean that household cleaners, aerosol sprays, room deodorants and pesticides should not be used? Not necessarily—unless you or a family member reacts to moderate use. Usually



Avoid storing food in open cans!

a *daily airing of your house*, especially in winter when pollutants build up, is sufficient.

Since a gas oven without an exhaust fan can produce, within an hour, air-pollution levels three times as high as a city smog, be sure your gas stove is well vented to the outside. Some people have had to use electrical cooking and heating devices instead.

When you use paints, solvents and chemical paint removers make sure the area is well ventilated. *Read and follow the directions carefully!* If you are sanding old paint, plaster or joint compound, or mixing asbestos cement, use the proper mask to avoid inhaling potentially toxic particles. Since many plastering compounds, and even cement for insulating pipes and furnaces, are made without asbestos, you may prefer these.

Warn your children against putting old paint chips, or even their house-dust laden hands, in their mouth. Do not let them play near heavy automobile traffic. If you use food or beverages from lead-soldered cans, then, *once opened*, do not store the contents in the can.

Your drinking water can be checked by local officials if you suspect it is contaminated. Uncontaminated bottled water or the use of a filter designed to remove chemicals (if regularly changed) may be the solution.

The Job Environment

"I think that people should look at what they're working with and question what's happening to them as a result of exposure," stated Dr. Anger. "There is no need to panic, however. If they have health problems, notice personality changes or feel much better on weekends, then check with other workers to

see if they're similarly affected. They can request that the company or government determine if there are any overly high exposures of potentially dangerous substances." Sometimes dangerous substances are found in the most unlikely jobs. For instance, brake linings contain asbestos, so auto mechanics beware!

Make use of the protective equipment that responsible companies provide, and use common sense. One worker was seen eating a sandwich in the lunchroom with a pesticide on his mustache. So clean up before you eat. A change of clothes before you go home may sometimes be needed to protect your family.

Did you know that some pesticides in more concentrated forms have been used as nerve gas during war? Therefore it is dangerous to drink from or wash in the open water near sprayed fields. You can absorb the pesticide through your skin. *Never* reuse the metal tins or plastic sacks the pesticides are packaged in. Wait the required time before going back into the fields after spraying. Children are especially prone to pesticide poison, so watch carefully what they work or play with.

Nutrition and Life-Style

For years the drinking water in one province of Chile contained high levels of arsenic. After considering who became sick by the poison, and the five children who died, researchers concluded: "It is highly probable that the *low nutritional status* of these infants and children has significantly favored the chronic toxic effects of arsenic." (Italics ours.) Nutritional deficiencies can make the effects worse. Thus strive to have nutritious, well-balanced meals. One's economic situation may make this difficult. However, simple foods, such as beans, leafy

vegetables and fruits, are often high in vitamins and minerals.

According to the book *Nutrition and Environmental Health*, laboratory research has shown that vitamin C may protect against chromium poison as well as numerous toxic and cancer-causing compounds; vitamin A has reduced the danger from the body's storing some insecticides; the B vitamins can reduce the intensity of lead and of over 30 toxic chemical compounds. Such research is still not viewed by everyone as conclusive, so simply to gorge oneself with vitamins—without competent medical direction—may be harmful.

Cigarette smoke may cause chronic bronchitis; it aggravates emphysema and may cause lung cancer. This should be additional reason to "cleanse ourselves of every defilement [pollution, *Kingdom Interlinear*] of flesh and spirit," as the Bible counsels. Yes, stop smoking!—2 Corinthians 7:1.

What you put into your inner feelings or thoughts, your "spirit," also has an effect. "The spirit of a man can put up with his malady; but as for a stricken spirit, who can bear it?" (Proverbs 18:14) One group of workers who were exposed to a 'mystery gas of unknown origin' reacted with dizziness and nausea, and some even fainted. However, a survey revealed that the ones with the severest symptoms were those who in the first place were most dissatisfied with the job! This is not to say that all adverse reactions are because of a "stricken spirit," but it shows that factors other than exposure can play a role.

So we can do much to improve the quality of our environment. But what hope is there for a permanent answer?

What Hope for a Complete Solution?

JOYCE and her husband reared three children four miles (6 km) from a metal smelting company. One child has a learning disability. Another has had rheumatic fever. Joyce has asthma and on many days cannot go outside because of fumes from the plant.

"Did we make a mistake, staying here?" she asked. Her husband, Lou, added, "We've got a farm in north-central Idaho. . . . There are [chemical pesticide] spray planes going around that place all the time. So where else is there? Los Angeles? Love Canal? Three Mile Island? You sort of wonder: where do you go?"

Yes, where do you go to escape the effects of pollution? To do so, in the words of the apostle Paul in connection with moral pollution, "you would actually have to get out of the world." (1 Corinthians 5:10) So though we can do some things to ease the problem, pollution may have to be endured as are other stresses of life.

Need Inner Strength

"The outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength," wrote the apostle Paul. (2 Corinthians 4:16, *Philips*) The "wear and tear" on our bodies cannot be avoided—even without pollution we are all growing older and dying. Yet Paul renewed with "fresh strength" the inner driving force that involved his

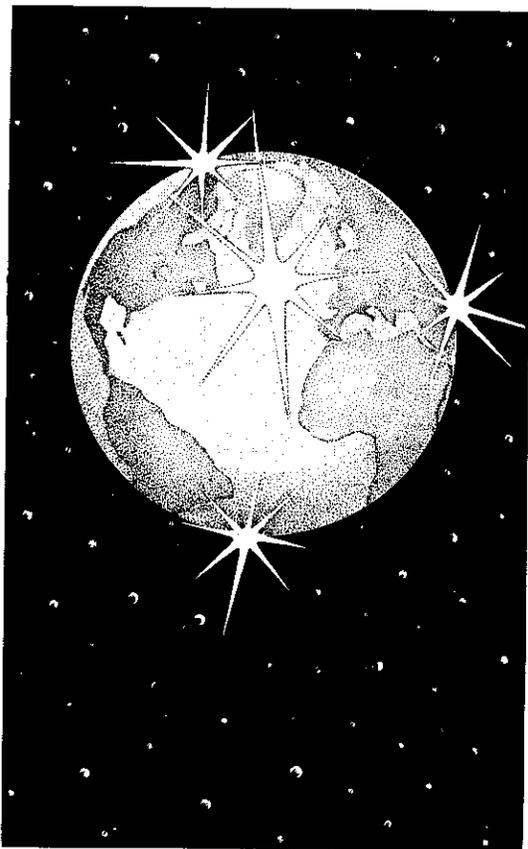
mind and heart by daily cultivating a close friendship with God. By focusing his attention on God's promises for the future, he could cope.

Though Millie's pressures were different, they were just as intense to her. (See page 3.) She said: "I had such pain and confusion that at times it was a minute-by-minute struggle to endure." What helped her cope?

"I never failed to read my Bible and Bible study aids," explained Millie. "I had to put these in my protective glass-covered reading box because of the ink fumes, and sometimes I could hardly concentrate. But I would plead: 'Please, Jehovah, just show me something out of your Word that will help me get through this day and not give up.' He always answered my prayers and he brought me through all of this." You, too, can develop similar inner strength by a study and application of the Bible along with the loving help of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Another source of strength was the encouraging support of her family and others in the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. They recorded Bible lectures for her when she could not attend and some made clothing for her of material she was not sensitive to. When her pollution-free "metal home" had to be moved to another area, many from several congregations helped.

'But living by the Bible isn't going to



**Soon God will remove those ruining
the earth and make it a Paradise**

change this world! It's not going to cause others to stop pollution,' is the way many feel. Stopping man-made pollution *completely* now is unbelievably complex. For instance, it has been said that "Britain's smokiest, grimmest" factory was allowed by the government to continue polluting because, reportedly, it provides work for nearly 4,000 persons, so closing it would hurt local employment.

Today's economic system characterized by greed and the need for profits, along with consumers who will often buy the cheapest product and only a

perfect-looking fruit or vegetable, makes it difficult to implement nonpolluting alternatives. After reviewing the way dangerous pesticides were allowed by the government to saturate the environment, Lewis Regenstein, in his book *America the Poisoned*, blamed "a combination of industry pressure and governmental inaction." He highlighted 'the hopeless ineffectiveness of the present system.' Really, the entire system needs replacing.

God's Kingdom

—A Righteous Government

God promises to remove this entire greedy present system in favor of a righteous government under the King, Jesus Christ, who will show a genuine concern for *all* his subjects. "Their blood will be precious in his [Jesus'] eyes. There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow." (Psalm 72:14, 16) Yes, with *complete* knowledge of everything involved in ecology, God's government by Christ will provide an abundance for all without poisoning earth's inhabitants!

'But,' you may wonder, 'what about those places already saturated with toxic chemicals?' In the past God showed his ability to purify water and remove poisons from contaminated food. (See 2 Kings 2:19-22; 4:38-41.) In the future he will use such powers, along with earth's own recuperative processes, to create an unpolluted Paradise of beauty. —Luke 23:43.

Since there is overwhelming evidence that man is now "ruining" our earth in a way unknown to any other period in history, the time for God's Kingdom to "bring to ruin those ruining the earth" is *near at hand!*—Revelation 11:18.