

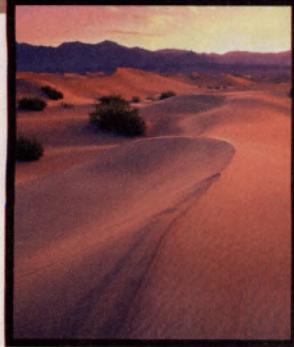
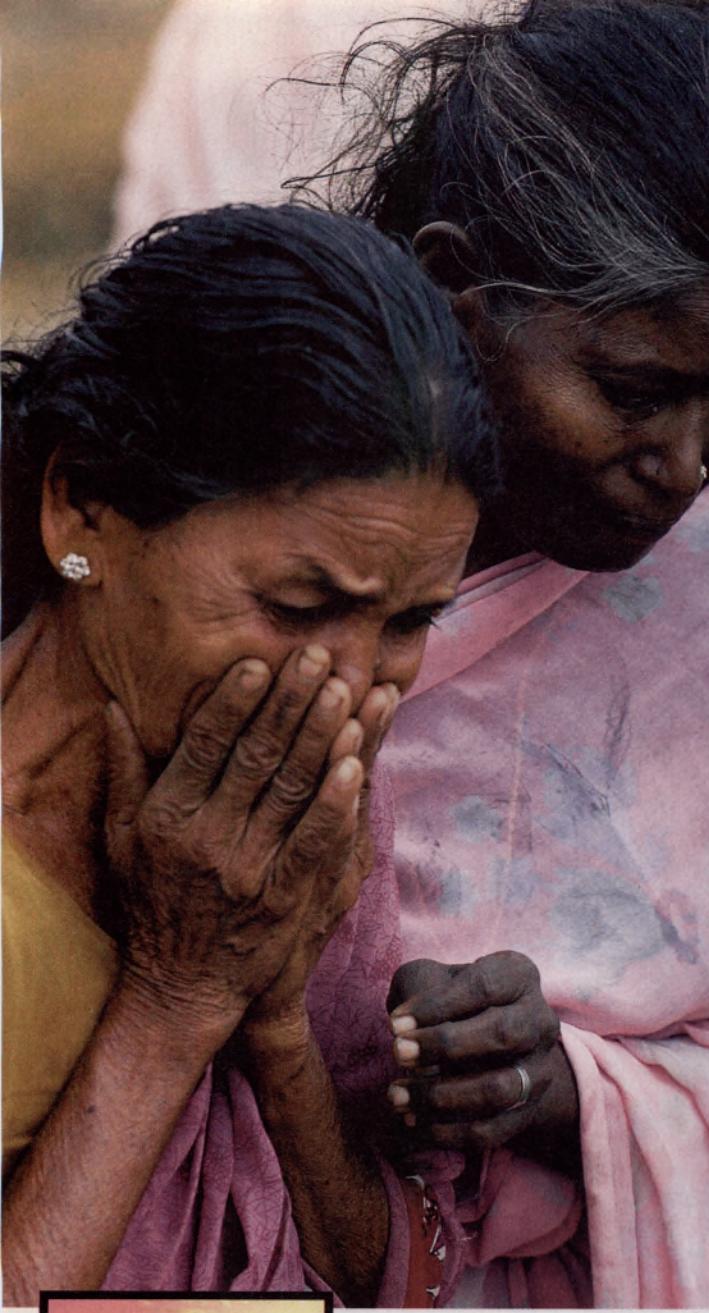
Awake!

NOVEMBER 2006



"WHY?"

**Answering the
Hardest of Questions**



Life in Death Valley 14

Read about one of the hottest places in the world, and see how hundreds of amazing species thrive there.

Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 32,412,000
PUBLISHED IN 81 LANGUAGES

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A countless number of people are victims of natural disasters, of terrorist attacks, or simply of tragic accidents. Have you wondered why God allows such things to occur? See how the Bible furnishes an answer, as well as comfort and hope.

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COVER: Flood: © Tim A. Hetherington/
Panos Pictures



The Hardest Question

“WHY?” It is tragic to see how much anguish and pain can be packed into that simple word. People often ask that question after disaster or tragedy strikes: A hurricane sweeps through a region, leaving death and destruction in its wake. An earthquake reduces a city to rubble. A terrorist attack changes a quiet, routine day into a nightmare of fear and violence. Or an accident injures or takes the life of a loved one.

All too often, the victims include the most innocent and defenseless among us. Recent times have brought more than their share of such disasters, causing many to cry out to God, “Why?” Consider some examples:

■ “Why did you do this to us, God? What did we do to upset you?” Reuters news agency reported that an elderly woman in India asked those questions after a tsunami devastated her village.

■ “Where was God? And if God has ultimate control, why did God let this happen?” These questions were raised by a newspaper in Texas, U.S.A., after a gunman opened fire in a church, wounding and killing a number of worshippers.

■ “Why did God allow her to die?” A woman asked this question after cancer took her friend’s life, leaving the deceased’s husband to care for their five children.

These people are not alone in thinking that God is somehow behind their troubles. Regarding natural disasters, for example, nearly half the respondents in a recent Internet poll

felt that disasters such as hurricanes come from God. Why do so many feel that way?

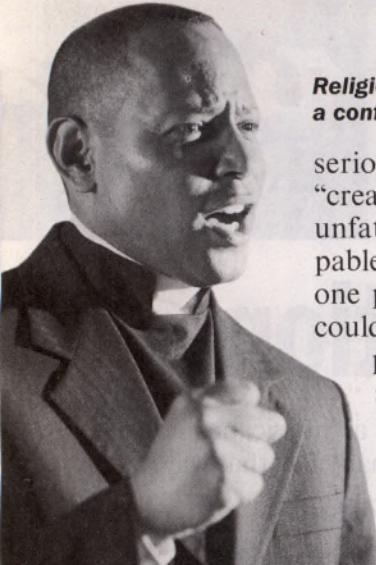
Religious Confusion

Instead of offering satisfying answers, religious leaders often contribute to the confusion. Let us focus on just three of their common responses.

First, many religious leaders preach that God sends disasters in order to punish wayward humans. For instance, in the United States, after New Orleans, Louisiana, was devastated by Hurricane Katrina, some ministers claimed that God had punished the city. They pointed to the prevalence of corruption, gambling, and immorality. Some even cited the Bible as evidence, noting occasions when God destroyed the wicked by flood or by fire. Such claims, however, misrepresent the Bible.—See the box “Acts of God”?

Second, some clergymen assert that God has his reasons for bringing about the calamities that befall mankind but that these reasons are beyond our comprehension. Many people find such a notion unsatisfying. They wonder, ‘Could a loving God really carry out such evil and then refuse to enlighten those who hunger for comfort and who pleadingly ask, “Why?”’ Indeed, the Bible says: “God is love.”—I John 4:8.

Third, other religious leaders feel that perhaps God is not all powerful and is not loving. Once again, such an explanation raises



Religious leaders have offered a confusing variety of answers

serious questions. Is the One who “created all things”—including the unfathomably vast universe—incapable of preventing suffering on this one planet? (Revelation 4:11) How could the One who gave us the capacity to love, whose Word describes him as the very embodiment of love, be unmoved by human suffering?—Genesis 1: 27; 1 John 4:8.

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Acts of God?

Does the Bible teach that God is behind the natural disasters we see today? Not at all! God's judgments as described in the Bible are quite different from natural disasters. For one thing, God is selective; he reads the hearts of individuals and destroys only those he deems wicked. (Genesis 18:23-32) Furthermore, God sends warnings first, thereby giving the righteous opportunity to escape.

Natural disasters, on the other hand, strike with little or no warning, and they kill and maim indiscriminately. To some extent, mankind has made such disasters worse by damaging the natural environment and by building in areas prone to earthquakes, floods, and extreme weather.



Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED 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 always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

Of course, the three points just mentioned are only some of the ways in which humans try to explain why God allows suffering—a question that has puzzled thinking people for centuries. In the next article, we will consider what the Bible teaches on this important and timely subject. As you will see, the Bible's sound, logical explanation clears away the confusion. Moreover, the Bible offers much comfort to all who have suffered tragedies in life.

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Why Does God Permit Suffering?



SOMETIMES a person asking the question "Why?" seeks comfort as well as answers, for when the question springs from severe loss, there is a great need for solace. Does the Bible offer such comfort? Consider three important Biblical truths related to this matter.

First, it is not wrong to ask why God allows suffering. Some people worry that posing such a question implies a lack of faith in God or disrespect for him. On the contrary, if you ask this question out of a sincere heart, you are in good company. The faithful prophet Habakkuk asked God: "Why do you make me watch such terrible injustice? Why do you allow violence, lawlessness, crime, and cruelty to spread everywhere?" (Habakkuk 1:3, *Contemporary English Version*) Jehovah God did not rebuke Habakkuk. Instead, he had that faithful man's questions recorded for all of us to read.—Romans 15:4.

Second, it is important to understand that God feels for you in your plight. He is not aloof and mysterious; he is "a lover of justice," and he *detests* wickedness and the suffering it causes. (Psalm 37:28; Proverbs 6:16)

Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Croatian, Czech,[#] Danish,⁺ Dutch,⁺ English,[#]⁺^o Estonian, Finnish,[#]⁺ French,[#]⁺ Georgian, German,[#]⁺ Greek, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hungarian, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,[#]⁺ Japanese,[#] Korean,[#]⁺ Latvian, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Myanmar, Norwegian,⁺ Polish, Portuguese,[#]⁺ Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Sesotho, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,[#]⁺ Swahili, Swedish,⁺ Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Xhosa, Zulu

[#] Audiocassettes also available.

⁺ CD also available.

^o MP3 CD-ROM also available.

19) Back in the days of Noah, God felt "hurt at his heart" because of the violence spreading in the earth. (Genesis 6:5, 6) God has not changed; he does not feel differently about what is occurring today.—Malachi 3:6.

Third, God is never the source of wickedness. The Bible makes this quite clear. Those who attribute such things as murder and terrorism to God are maligning him. Note what Job 34:10 says: "Far be it from the true God to act wickedly, and the Almighty to act unjustly!" Similarly, James 1:13 states: "When under trial, let no one say: 'I am being tried by God.' For with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." So if you have suffered evil, rest assured that God is not the cause.

Who Rules the World?

The foregoing still leaves us with the question, If God is loving, just, and powerful, why are we surrounded by evil? One common misconception needs to be cleared up first. Many people think of Almighty God as the ruler of this world, the one who is in direct control of everything. "Not one atom or molecule of the

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Would you welcome more information? Write Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address: **America, United States of Wallkill, NY 12589.** **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Ghana:** P. O. Box GP 760, Accra. **Jamaica:** P. O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 75-142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City 300001, Edo State. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** Private Bag WG-5001, Westgate.

universe is outside his active rule," said the president of one theological seminary. Does the Bible really teach that?

Not at all. Many are surprised to learn what the Bible actually says about who rules the world. For example, 1 John 5:19 states: "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." Who is this wicked one? Jesus Christ identified him as Satan the Devil, whom he called "the ruler of the world." (John 14:30) Now, does that not make sense? Satan is cruel, deceptive, and hateful—traits that underlie much of the suffering that people experience. Why, though, does God allow Satan to rule?

An Issue Raised in Eden

How would a loving and capable parent feel if he was publicly accused of lying to his children, abusing his authority over them, and withholding good things from them? Would he disprove those slanderous accusations by physically assaulting his accuser? Of course not! In fact, by reacting in such a manner, he might give credibility to the accusations.

This illustration helps to explain Jehovah God's way of handling a challenge raised against him at the dawn of human history in a place called Eden. There God announced to the first two humans, Adam and Eve, a wonderful project for his earthly children. They were to fill the earth, subdue it, and turn it into a global paradise. (Genesis 1:28) Moreover, hundreds of millions of spirit sons of God were keenly interested in this exciting project.—Job 38:4, 7; Daniel 7:10.

Being a generous God, Jehovah gave Adam and Eve a beautiful garden home with all its delicious fruits. Only one tree was out of bounds for them—"the tree of the knowledge of good and bad." By not eating from this tree, Adam and Eve would demonstrate their full trust in their Father, recognizing that he had the right to decide what was good and bad for his children.—Genesis 2:16, 17.

Sadly, though, one of God's spirit sons, motivated by the desire to be worshipped, told Eve that if she ate the forbidden fruit, she would not die. (Genesis 2:17; 3:1-5) Thus, this wicked angel, Satan, blatantly contradicted God, essentially calling him a liar! Satan also went on to accuse God of withholding vital knowledge from Adam and Eve. Humans, Satan implied, should be able to decide for themselves what is good and what is bad. Simply put, Satan accused God of being an unfit Ruler and Father and implied that he, Satan, could do a better job.

By means of those cunning and malicious lies, the angel made himself Satan the Devil. These names mean "Resister" and "Slanderer." What did Adam and Eve do? They sided with Satan, turning their backs on God. —Genesis 3:6.

Jehovah could have destroyed the rebels on the spot. But, as mentioned in our illustration, such issues cannot be settled by violent retaliation. Keep in mind too that when Satan challenged God, millions of angels were listening. In fact, a significant, but undisclosed, number later joined Satan in his rebellion, making themselves demons.—Mark 1:34; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6.

Why Has God Not Intervened?

By seducing Adam and Eve into choosing independence from their Creator, in effect, Satan founded a family that was not truly independent but under his authority. Influenced, knowingly or unknowingly, by their "father," the Devil, this family would choose its own

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- **Jesus—Who Was He?**
- **I Was a Prodigal Son**
- **Is It Wrong to Drink Alcoholic Beverages?**



Are you satisfied with the results of human rule?

Baby: © J. B. Russell/Panos Pictures;
crying woman: © Paul Lowe/Panos Pictures

goals and standards of conduct. (John 8:44) But would that way of life bring them true freedom and lasting happiness? Jehovah knew full well that it would not. Still, he allowed the rebels to pursue their independent course, for only in this way would the issues raised in Eden be fully settled for all time.

For over 6,000 years now, mankind has built a world system of things, trying all kinds of rulership and codes of conduct. Are you delighted with the result? Is the human family truly happy, peaceful, and united? Clearly, the answer is no! Instead, wars, famines, natural disasters, sickness, and death have plagued mankind, causing "futility," "pain," and "groaning," just as the Bible states.—Romans 8:19-22; Ecclesiastes 8:9.

Still, some may ask, 'Why has God not prevented tragedies?' Really, that would be an

injustice, and it would cloud the issue by making it seem that rebelling against God is without consequence. Hence, Jehovah has not been behind the scenes preventing all the crimes and tragedies that result, directly or indirectly, from disobedience to him.* Jehovah would never be party to the harmful lie that Satan's system can succeed, that it has found the key to happiness! Nevertheless, Jehovah has not been indifferent to events. In fact, he has been very active, as we shall now see.

"My Father Has Kept Working"

Those words of Jesus show that God has not been sitting idly by, watching events

* Although God has intervened in human affairs on occasion, his acts have not been in support of the present system. Rather, they have related to the outworking of his purpose.—Luke 17:26-30; Romans 9:17-24.

unfold. (John 5:17) Rather, since the rebellion in Eden, he has been very busy. For instance, he inspired Bible writers to record his promise that a future “seed” would crush Satan and all who stuck with him. (Genesis 3:15) Additionally, by means of that Seed, God would form a government, a heavenly Kingdom, that would bless obedient humans and end all causes of suffering, even death itself.—Genesis 22:18; Psalm 46:9; 72:16; Isaiah 25:8; 33:24; Daniel 7:13, 14.

As a step in the fulfillment of those wonderful promises, Jehovah sent to the earth the One who would become the primary Ruler of that Kingdom. This one was none other than Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (Galatians 3:16) In accord with God’s purpose for him, Jesus focused his teaching on God’s Kingdom. (Luke 4:43) In fact, Christ provided a living preview of what he will accomplish as King of that Kingdom. He fed hungry thousands, healed the sick, resurrected the dead, and even showed his power over the natural elements by calming a violent storm. (Matthew 14:14-21; Mark 4:37-39; John 11:43, 44) Concerning Jesus, the Bible states: “No matter how many the promises of God are, they have become Yes by means of him.”—2 Corinthians 1:20.

Those who listen to Jesus and come “out of the world”—the system of things that is estranged from God and ruled by Satan—are welcomed into Jehovah’s family. (John 15:19) This global family of true Christians is governed by love, committed to peace, and marked by determination to eradicate any trace of bigotry and racism in its midst. —Malachi 3:17, 18; John 13:34, 35.

Instead of upholding the present world, true Christians support and proclaim God’s Kingdom in obedience to Jesus’ command recorded at Matthew 24:14. Think: Who preach the “good news of the kingdom” worldwide? Who have refused, as a worldwide spiritual family, to engage in warfare and divisive national and tribal disputes? And who

let God’s Word guide their conduct, whether its lofty standards are popular or not? (1 John 5:3) Many have observed these traits in Jehovah’s Witnesses. Please examine the evidence for yourself.

Decide for God’s Rule!

Mankind, alienated from God and misled by Satan, has built a world system that breeds more and more misery and hopelessness. Even the earth itself is being ruined! Jehovah, on the other hand, has set up a heavenly

*Jesus will restore
Paradise—and even
raise the dead
back to life*



government that has changed the lives of millions for the better and that has given each one a sure hope. (1 Timothy 4:10) Which will you choose?

Now is the time to decide, for God will not allow Satan and his wicked world to go on indefinitely. God's original purpose to make this earth a paradise has never altered. To that end, his Kingdom and its supporters will go from strength to strength, while the world under Satan's control will experience increasing "pangs of distress" until God brings it to an end. (Matthew 24:3, 7, 8) So if you have sincerely cried out, "Why?" to God, listen to him by taking to heart the Bible's message of comfort and hope. Even now, your tears of sorrow can become tears of joy.—Matthew 5:4; Revelation 21:3, 4.



God Does Care!

GOD'S way of handling the rebellion that started in Eden shows his profound love for each one of us and his concern for our future. Please consider the following evidence that God truly does care about us, and read the cited scriptures in your copy of the Bible.

- ❖ He has provided the earth, which is full of natural beauty, fascinating animal life, and productive land.—Acts 14:17; Romans 1:20.
- ❖ He has given us a marvelous body that enables us to find delight in day-to-day experiences, such as tasting good food, seeing a sunset, hearing a child laugh, and feeling the tender touch of a loved one.—Psalm 139:14.
- ❖ He provides us with wise guidance that helps us to cope with problems and pressures.—Psalm 19:7, 8; 119:105; Isaiah 48:17, 18.
- ❖ He gives us a wonderful hope, including the prospect of living in a paradise on earth and seeing the resurrection of our dead loved ones.—Luke 23:43; John 5:28, 29.
- ❖ He sent his only-begotten Son to die in our behalf so that we might have the hope of living forever.—John 3:16.
- ❖ He has established the Messianic Kingdom in heaven and given us abundant evidence that the Kingdom will soon take full control over the earth.—Isaiah 9:6, 7; Matthew 24:3, 4, 7; Revelation 11:15; 12:10.
- ❖ He invites us to approach him in prayer, to pour out our heart to him, and when we do so he really listens.—Psalm 62:8; 1 John 5:14, 15.
- ❖ He repeatedly assures humans of his deep love and concern.—1 John 4:9, 10, 19.

The Quakers'

"HOLY EXPERIMENT"



IN July 1656, the ship *Swallow*, from Barbados in the West Indies, anchored at Boston, Massachusetts, in what is now the United States of America. Richard Bellingham, deputy governor of the Massachusetts colony, ordered that passengers Mary Fisher and Ann Austin be held on board. Among their belongings were found 100 books that were said to contain "corrupt, heretical, and blasphemous doctrines."

The books were burned in the marketplace. Then the women were imprisoned, stripped naked, and examined for signs of witchcraft. Their cell window was sealed, and for five weeks the women were kept in darkness. Any one who dared speak to them risked a five-pound fine. Finally, Mary Fisher and Ann Austin were sent back to Barbados.

A contemporary chronicler inquired of the magistrates: "Why was it that the coming of two women so shook ye, as if a formidable

army had invaded your borders"? These two "dangerous" women were, in fact, the first Quaker missionaries to arrive in North America. Who were the Quakers, and why were they considered a threat?

The Society of Friends

The Quakers, or the Religious Society of Friends, arose in 17th-century England. The Friends' founder was George Fox (1624-91), a weaver's son born in Leicestershire. After allegedly hearing a miraculous voice, Fox concluded that he could commune directly with God and receive enlightenment apart from human mediation. "The traditional date for the origin of the Society of Friends is 1652," says the book *A Religious History of the American People*.

How did the Friends come to be called Quakers? One reference states that they experienced "agitated movements before moments of divine revelation." Another says that they "trembled under an awful sense of the infinite purity and majesty of God." The Quakers' aim was to find religious truth and to revive primitive Christianity.

For guidance, they claimed to look to the holy spirit, the Biblical prophets, the apostles of Christ, and an



Quaker meeting in Philadelphia, 1800's



◀ **Quaker Mary Dyer being led to execution in Massachusetts Bay Colony**



◀ **Quakers leaving England, 1600's**

▲ **William Penn making a treaty with Native Americans, 1682**

inner "light," or "voice," of alleged spiritual truth. Meetings, therefore, were essentially periods of group silence during which each person sought God's guidance. Any who received a divine message could speak up.*

Quakers believed in justice, uncompromising honesty, a simple lifestyle, and nonviolence. They also held that all Christians, including women, should share in the ministry. Because they challenged the religious establishment, eschewed pomp and ceremony, and claimed to be guided by an inner voice and not by a clergy class, Quakers aroused fear and suspicion. Most worrisome of all was their missionary zeal, which provoked anger, mobbings, and official interference.

In England, Quakers were persecuted and imprisoned, and in New England they were also banished and even killed. For example, between 1659 and 1661, missionaries Mary Dyer, William Leddra, William Robinson, and Marmaduke Stephenson were hanged in Boston. Others were clapped in irons, branded, or whipped. Some had their ears cropped. A man named William Brend received 117 lashes on his bare back with a tarred rope. Despite such brutality, however, Quakers increased in number.

Boats: © North Wind Picture Archives; Treaty: Brown Brothers

* Nowadays, many Quaker churches have a paid minister who conducts services in a more organized manner.

William Penn and the "Holy Experiment"

Beginning in 1681, the Quaker experience in North America took an amazing turn. In what has been termed a "holy experiment" in statecraft, William Penn (1644-1718), a young English convert to the Society of Friends, established a colony based on Quaker ideals and administered by Quakers. The pacifist son of a British admiral, Penn himself had been imprisoned for preaching and writing about his views.

In payment for a debt owed Penn's father, the English Crown granted Penn a large tract of land in North America. A royal charter gave young Penn almost unlimited power over the new colony, which was named Pennsylvania, meaning "Penn's Woods," in memory of Admiral Penn. There, people of all faiths were to enjoy religious freedom.

Penn first sent his cousin William Markham to America to act as his agent in securing the loyalty of the few Europeans within the precincts of the new colony and to purchase land from the Native Americans. In 1682, Penn sailed up the Delaware River and saw his colony for the first time. He made a fair treaty with the native peoples at Shackamaxon (now called Kensington, a part of Philadelphia). Then, less than a mile from Shackamaxon, he planned and named a new

“MY KINGDOM IS NO PART OF THIS WORLD”

Why did Jesus say those words recorded at John 18:36? The answer becomes clear when we understand what God's Kingdom is. God's Kingdom, which was the main theme of Jesus' teaching, is nothing less than a world government in the hands of Jesus Christ. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Luke 4:43) Instead of

working through human rulerships, the Kingdom will do away with them and become earth's sole government. (Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14) This eventuality is what Jesus mentioned in the model prayer when he said: “Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.” (Matthew 6:9, 10) Obedient subjects of that Kingdom will experience a quality of life that sincere men, such as William Penn, could never bring about—they will enjoy perfect health and endless life in peaceful, paradisaic surroundings.—Luke 23:43; Revelation 21:3, 4.

settlement, which he called Philadelphia, meaning “Brotherly Love.” It grew rapidly.

Penn returned to England and advertised the new colony to encourage people to move there. He wrote of fine lands and forests, a noble river, wild animals, and furs. The new government, he promised, would promote religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence. All were welcome—tradesmen, men without means, and idealists eager to contribute to good government.

Hope of relief from the social and political ills of Europe drew Quakers from England and Northern Ireland. Mennonites and kindred groups came from the Rhine country in Europe. The first settlers were overwhelmingly Quaker, and Penn testified to the colony's auspicious start. In 1683 he wrote: “Two general assemblies have been held, . . . and at least seventy laws were passed without one dissent.” The general feeling of optimism, however, was not to last.

The Experiment Unravels

The charter of Penn's colony granted liberty of conscience to all. Thus, when violence was deemed necessary in the interests of maintaining law and order, the Quakers' pacifism presented a problem—one that grew with time. Initially, Penn sidestepped the issue by appointing non-Quaker deputies to be, as he put it, “stiff with our neighbours upon

occasion.” In 1689 the possibility of war with France further challenged Quaker scruples.

Adding to the problems, droves of new settlers, most of whom were not Quakers, arrived and wrested land from the Native Americans. Thus, as Quakers became a minority, relations with the native peoples grew progressively more hostile.

The final blow to Quaker political authority came when the governor and his council declared war on the Delaware and Shawnee tribes in 1756. In response, Quakers withdrew from government, ending their regime. Thus, some 75 years after it began, Penn's “holy experiment” in statecraft came to its end.

In time, the Quakers' religious zeal also began to wane as their material affluence increased. Said Quaker Samuel Fothergill: “With the bent of their spirits to this world, [Quaker settlers] could not instruct their offspring in those statutes they had themselves forgotten.” In time, sects also arose.

Penn and his supporters may have had noble aspirations and temporary success; yet, they either misunderstood or disregarded Jesus' teaching that he and his disciples are “no part of the world.” (John 17:16) In principle, therefore, any enterprise, no matter how well intentioned, that tries to fuse religion with the politics of the world does so without the blessing of God or of his Son. (James 4:4; 1 John 5:19) Hence, it cannot succeed.—Psalm 127:1.



“Mealtimes Draw Us Closer Together”

DOES your family enjoy at least one meal a day together? Sadly, in today's hectic world, eating has become a haphazard, do-your-own-thing affair in many households. Yet, besides filling a physical need, enjoying a meal together as a family can satisfy even more important needs—warm communication and family bonding.

Algirdas lives with his wife, Rima, and their three daughters in the northern European country of Lithuania. “Although I work and the girls go to school,” says Algirdas, “we organize our schedule so that we can eat supper together. During mealtimes all of us feel free to talk about the day's events and to share our problems, thoughts, plans, likes,

and dislikes. We also use this time for spiritual discussions. Without a doubt, mealtimes draw us closer together.”

Rima adds: “Preparing meals with the girls also gives us opportunities for intimate communication. The girls enjoy doing things together in the kitchen, and at the same time, they are learning valuable skills. Thus, we are able to combine work with pleasure.”

Algirdas, Rima, and their children are reaping many benefits because they take the time to have a meal together. If you are not already doing so, why not arrange to enjoy at least one meal together as a family each day, even if you are a single parent. The rewards will far outweigh any sacrifice you make.





Life in Death Valley

TN 1848 gold was discovered near Sacramento, California, U.S.A. By the next year, some 80,000 fortune-seekers had poured into the state in hopes of striking it rich. On December 25, 1849, one group, part of a train of some 100 wagons

traveling west from Salt Lake City, entered what is now known as Death Valley. They hoped that this parched depression near the California-Nevada border would be a shortcut.

The valley was cool that time of year, but the terrain was forbidding. The group separated into several bands, each taking a different route. One band, which included women and children, attempted unsuccessfully to find a way out of the valley over the mountains to the west. Exhausted and low on provisions, they camped at a spring near what is now Furnace Creek and then moved on to a water hole later named Bennett's Well. From there, two 20-year-olds, William Manly and John Rogers, went for help. The rest stayed put.

Manly and Rogers expected to reach the city of Los Angeles in a few days. Little did they know that it lay some 200 miles to the southwest. After nearly two weeks on foot, they reached the San Fernando Valley, north of the city. There they obtained supplies and immediately headed back.

When they arrived at the campsite after 25 days away, they saw no signs of life. Manly fired a gun, and a man emerged from under a wagon. Manly later wrote: "He threw up his arms high over his head and shouted—'The

boys have come. The boys have come!'" Others also appeared, too overcome with emotion to speak. Thanks to Manly and Rogers, all but one man survived—he had left the camp to walk out of the valley alone. As the band of settlers departed, one woman reportedly looked back and said, "Good-bye, Death Valley!" And that became its name.

Land of Extremes

Death Valley—about 140 miles long and between 5 and 15 miles wide—is the driest, lowest, and hottest spot in North America. The air temperature at Furnace Creek has been recorded at 134 degrees Fahrenheit, while the ground temperature has reached a searing 201 degrees—11 degrees below the boiling point of water at sea level!*

Rainfall averages less than two inches annually, and some years see no rain at all. The lowest elevation in the entire Western Hemisphere—282 feet below sea level—is found in the valley near a salty pond at Badwater. Only 85 miles away stands 14,495-foot Mount Whitney—the highest point in the United States outside Alaska.

By 1850, small amounts of gold had been discovered in the valley at Salt Spring. Prospectors also found silver, copper, and lead in the area. Mining towns with such colorful names as Bullfrog, Greenwater, Rhyolite, and Skidoo popped up all over the valley.

* The current world record of 136.4 degrees was recorded in 1922 in Libya. In overall summer temperatures, however, Death Valley appears to be the hottest place on earth.

3. 659 B.C. 4. 936 B.C. 5. Manasseh. 6. Peter
Jehovah's command. ♦ No. 2. 1037 B.C.
1. Mt. Moriah. ♦ Solomon's temple. ♦ He obeyed
Jeovah's command. ♦ No. 2. 1037 B.C.



The driest, lowest, and hottest spot in North America

Mules: Courtesy of The Bancroft Library/University of California, Berkeley

But when the ores ran out, these boomtowns became ghost towns. In 1880, however, borax—a white crystalline compound used in the manufacture of soap and other products—was discovered in Death Valley, leading to the most successful mining period in the valley's history. Until 1888, teams made up of 18 mules and 2 horses hauled dual, 16-foot wagons loaded with borax a grueling 165 miles to the town of Mojave. But no shipments moved from June to September; the heat was too intense for both man and beast.

Death Valley was designated a national monument in 1933. Its boundaries were grad-

ually expanded to encompass 3.3 million acres. In 1994, this area became Death Valley National Park—the largest national park in the continental United States.

Death Valley Pulses With Life

One could be excused for thinking that Death Valley is lifeless. Yet, hundreds of animal species either visit or live there, many being nocturnal in view of the heat. The largest mammals are the majestic desert bighorn sheep, which occasionally venture into the valley from nearby mountains. Other creatures include badgers, bats, bobcats, coyotes, kit foxes, kangaroo rats, mountain lions, porcupines,



rabbit, skunks, wild burros, lizards, snakes, and desert tortoises. Birds include coots, hawks, herons, quail, ravens, sandpipers, vultures, and hundreds of other species.

Among the hardiest of all these creatures are the kangaroo rats. They can live out their entire life without imbibing a drop of water! "All of the water they need to survive can be metabolized within their bodies from starch and fats in the dry seeds they eat," says a reference work. And their kidneys can concentrate urine up to five times that of human kidneys.

These small, burrowing rodents escape the intense heat of day by foraging at night.

More than a thousand plant varieties flourish in the valley. The Shoshones, Indians who have lived there for over a thousand years, sought local plants for food and for raw materials to make utensils. If you know what to look for, they say, you will find lots of food in Death Valley.

When the Desert Blossoms

Every so often, Death Valley puts on a spectacular show of

Burros: ©Joseph C. Dovala/age fotostock; top panorama: © Neil Mishalov/www.mishalov.com; flowers: Photo by David McNew/Getty Images





Fish in the Desert!

Four species of an amazing little fish called the desert pupfish live in Death Valley. In winter these two-and-a-half-inch, silvery colored creatures lie dormant in the muddy bottom of the creeks and isolated pools there. Then, when the spring sun warms the waters, they become active and breed. Males change color to iridescent blue and vigorously defend their territory against other males. But summer's blazing heat soon dries up most of the water, and pupfish die en masse. Those that survive cope with water that becomes highly saline and may reach a temperature of 112 degrees Fahrenheit.



Top fish: © Neil Mishalov—www.mishalov.com;
bottom fish: Donald W. Sada, Desert Research Institute

wildflowers. These spring from the countless seeds that lie dormant in the soil—sometimes for decades—waiting for just the right combination of rainfall and temperature to germinate. “We have many years [when] we don’t see any blooms at all,” says National Park Service botanist Tim Croissant.

But during the winter of 2004/2005, Death Valley experienced its greatest rainfall on record—over three times the normal. The result was an explosion of more than 50 kinds of wildflowers, including larkspurs,

lilacs, orchids, poppies, primroses, sunflowers, and verbenas. The valley had the fragrance of a flower shop, said one visitor. Of course, blossoms beckon bees and other insects. So when Death Valley blooms, it also hums with countless tiny wings.

If you ever decide to visit this valley of extremes, be sure to have a reliable vehicle and plenty of water. And if you come when the bees do, you will want to pack your camera as well. Family and friends back home will be amazed at the amount of life that thrives in Death Valley.

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK...

How can I conquer this habit?

*"I began masturbating when I was eight years old. Later I learned God's view of the matter. I felt terrible every time I gave in. 'How could God love someone like me?' I asked myself. I felt sure that I would not make it into God's new world."—Luiz.**

PERHAPS you, like Luiz, have been enslaved to the habit of masturbation. You know that Jehovah would be pleased with you if you resisted the urge and exercised self-control, a fruit of God's holy spirit. (Galatians 5:22, 23; 2 Peter 1:5, 6) But at times you give in. After each relapse, you conclude that you are a lost cause, that you are incapable of living up to God's righteous standards.

That is precisely how young Pedro viewed himself. "When I relapsed, I felt terrible," he says. "I thought that I could never atone for what I had done. I found it hard to pray. I would start by saying: 'Jehovah, I don't know whether you are going to hear this prayer, but . . .' " A young man named André had similar thoughts. "I felt like such a hypocrite," he says. "It was a struggle to get out of bed in the



morning and face the day. I found it difficult to sit through Christian meetings or to participate in the ministry."

If your feelings are similar to those of Luiz, Pedro, or André, take courage. You're not alone, and your case is not hopeless! Many young people—and older ones—have struggled with masturbation and have been able to overcome it. You can too.*

Dealing With Guilt

As already noted, those who have fallen into the habit of masturbation are often plagued with guilt. Without a doubt, being "saddened in a godly way" can give you the

* Although the people quoted in this article are males, many females also struggle with masturbation. Hence, the advice given pertains to both genders. Note, too, that this article discusses masturbating *oneself*. Doing it outside of marriage to another person is included in what the Bible calls fornication, a very serious sin in God's eyes.—See the article "Young People Ask . . . What's Wrong With Premarital Sex?" in our issue of July 22, 2004, pages 12-14.

* Names in this article have been changed.

incentive to overcome the habit. (2 Corinthians 7:11) But excessive guilt can be counterproductive. It can make you feel so discouraged that you just want to give up the fight.—Proverbs 24:10.

Strive, then, to put the matter in perspective. Masturbation is a form of uncleanness. It can make you a ‘slave to various desires and pleasures,’ and it fosters attitudes that can be mentally corrupting. (Titus 3:3) At the same time, self-masturbation is not a form of gross sexual immorality, such as fornication. (Ephesians 4:19) Hence, if you have a problem with masturbation, you need not conclude that you have committed the unforgivable sin. The key is to resist the urge and *never to give up your fight!*

Sometimes it is easy to become downhearted after a relapse. When that occurs, take to heart the words of Proverbs 24:16: “The righteous one may fall even seven times, and he will certainly get up; but the wicked ones will be made to stumble by calamity.” A temporary setback does not make you a wicked person. So do not give up. Instead, analyze what led to the relapse, and try to avoid repeating the same pattern.

Instead of continually berating yourself for your problem, take time to meditate on God’s love and mercy. The psalmist David, who was no stranger to weakness, stated: “As a father shows mercy to his sons, Jehovah has shown mercy to those fearing him. For he himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:13, 14) Yes, Jehovah takes into consideration our imperfection and is “ready to forgive” when we err. (Psalm 86:5) On the other hand, he wants us to put forth effort to improve.

What practical steps can you take to conquer your habit and to avoid a relapse?

The Value of Confiding

Despite the publicity given to sex in a number of lands, many people still find it difficult to talk about sex in a serious, dignified way. In your case shame might make it difficult for you to bring up the subject even to a confidant. One Christian who struggled with masturbation for several years

A Relapse Does Not Spell Defeat!

How easy it is to think: ‘I failed, so I may as well give up.’ Fight that mood. Refuse to let a temporary setback, or even several setbacks, spell defeat for you.

Consider an illustration: If you were walking up a flight of stairs and slipped back one or two steps because of stumbling, would you reason, ‘I’ll just have to walk back to the foot of the stairs and start over?’ Of course not! Why, then, should you apply this false reasoning to the fight against bad habits?

Feelings of guilt often follow a setback. You might carry these feelings to an extreme by concluding that you are no good, that you are of weak character and do not deserve anything good. Do not allow yourself to indulge in such exaggerated guilt. It saps you of the strength that you need to resume the battle. And remember this: The greatest man ever to walk this earth, Jesus Christ, came to redeem sinners, not perfect people. So none of us will do things perfectly at this time.—From *Awake!* April 8, 1991, page 15.



Take the Offensive!

■ Force your mind onto other matters.—*Philippians 4:8*.

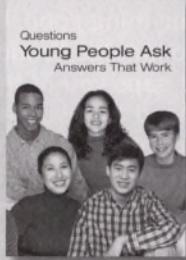
■ Avoid looking at things that will stimulate improper desires.
—*Psalm 119:37*.

■ Pray for "power beyond what is normal."—*2 Corinthians 4:7*.

■ Keep busy in Christian activities.—*1 Corinthians 15:58*.

Further Help

For more information on overcoming the habit of masturbation, see chapters 25 and 26 of the book *Questions Young People Ask . . . Answers That Work*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



More articles from the "Young People Ask . . ." series can be found at the Web site www.watchtower.org/ype



commented: "How I wish I could have summoned the courage to talk to someone about it when I was a youth! Feelings of guilt plagued me for many years, and it seriously affected my relationships with others and, above all, with Jehovah."

Whom should you talk to? The best person would be someone who is spiritually mature, preferably a parent. You could start by saying: "May I talk to you about a problem that is bothering me a lot?"

Mário decided to talk to his father, who proved to be very sympathetic and understanding. He even admitted to Mário that he himself had battled with the habit when he was younger. "My father's honesty and sincerity encouraged me greatly," Mário says. "I reasoned that if he had been victorious, I could be too. I was so moved by my father's attitude that I broke down and cried."

André gathered the courage to talk to a Christian elder, and he is glad that he did.* "As the elder listened to me, his eyes filled with tears," says André. "When I finished, he assured me of Jehovah's love for me. He told me that my problem is a common one. He promised to check on my progress and to bring me more information from Bible-study aids. Talking with him, I resolved to keep up the fight—even if further relapses occurred."

Like Mário and André, you can find help in your efforts to conquer the habit of masturbation. Follow the advice in the accompanying box, "Take the Offensive!" Yes, be assured that you *can* win the battle!

* A young woman may want to talk to her mother or a mature spiritual sister in the congregation.

TO THINK ABOUT

- Why is it important to remember that Jehovah is "ready to forgive"?—*Psalm 86:5*.
- What steps will you take to overcome the habit of masturbation?
- Why need you not feel ashamed to ask for help?
- How can you best keep your mind on things that are chaste?

Saved out of All My Distresses

AS TOLD BY
JEAN-CLAUDE
FRANÇOIS

BECAUSE OF MY BIBLE-TRAINED CONSCIENCE, I LANGUISHED FOR SEVEN YEARS IN OVER A DOZEN PRISONS. DESPITE THE SUFFERING I ENDURED, I CONSIDER MYSELF BLESSED. LET ME EXPLAIN.



I WAS born in Algiers, Algeria, on January 9, 1937. France then ruled Algeria, and my father was an officer in the French army. His work took him to Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria for months at a time, leaving him little time for his five children.

I loved school and received good grades. But I puzzled over such questions as, Why do we die, and how can there be evil if God is all-powerful and good? I received no satisfactory answers. I also yearned to know how life came about. Darwin's theory of evolution seemed to be the only valid explanation, so in time I became an atheist.

Answers at Last!

In 1954 a friend named Georges, who had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, gave me the booklet *Evolution Versus the New World*.^{*} I devoured it. Besides exposing the failings of evolution theory, the booklet revealed that the fossil record confirms the Genesis account, which says that God created every living thing "according to its kind." (Genesis 1:12, 25) But the question of evil lingered in my mind.



Georges was a pioneer, or full-time minister, and devoted much of his time to teaching people the Bible, a book I had never read. Could he answer my questions? I went to his small apartment, where he lived with other pioneers, and received Scrip-

tural answers to many of my questions. Thereafter, I began a systematic and very pleasurable study of the Bible. Since then, I have never tired of digging into God's Word in pursuit of its faith-strengthening treasures.—Proverbs 2:1-5.

I also began to attend Christian meetings, which were held in the basement of a restaurant in the heart of Algiers. The Witnesses warmly welcomed me, and in time I started attending regularly. When an announcement was made about a meeting to be held on a certain street, I decided to go. When I arrived, I learned that the Witnesses were gathered for the house-to-house preaching work. (Acts 20:20) Nevertheless, I stayed, and that is how I was introduced to the public ministry.

The third time I went out witnessing, I spoke to householders by myself. At one door I was unable to find a Bible text that I had quoted. "Young man," said the householder, "teach others when you are capable of doing so." Then he closed the door. Frustrated, I sat down on a bench and searched for that elusive text. When I found it a few minutes later, I returned and showed it to the man.

I was baptized in symbol of my dedication to God on March 4, 1956. Six months later I had a big decision to make. Should I serve as a regular pioneer, or should I accept a post as a schoolteacher in the Algerian interior

In prison at the Château de Turquant, near Saumur

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses but now out of print.

and spend less time in the ministry? I chose to pioneer.

My father became enraged because of my decision and put a knife to my throat, ordering me to return home every evening. He also said that I could no longer expect to be fed, even though I had fully intended to pay all my expenses. Hence, I would leave home in the morning hungry, eat a meal with the pioneers at lunchtime, and have a sandwich in the evening before returning home.

Avoiding Bombs and Dodging Bullets

At the time, Algeria was in the throes of a war for independence from France, and Algiers was racked by bombings and fierce reprisals. One particular month saw over 100 explosions. Bombs were placed in buses, bars, and stadiums. The ministry was a challenge. People were afraid to open their doors, and there were frequent curfews, identity checks, and searches.

On Sunday, September 30, 1956, while several other pioneers and I were tidying up our meeting place, a bomb exploded in the restaurant above, killing and maiming dozens. Thankfully, none of us below were hurt. In December a sister and I were preaching on a busy street when a car sped by, spraying bullets into the crowd from its open windows. We dashed into a doorway, where I pushed the sister to the ground and then dropped down myself. Bullets ricocheted overhead. After that, all of us were much more careful when witnessing.

I Refused to Bear Arms

On March 1, 1957, I was called up for military service. Since my Chris-

tian conscience would not allow me to take up arms, I prayed for the strength to deal with the authorities. I also asked that I avoid a confrontation with my father. Much to my relief, I was told to report to the city of Lille, France, far from home.

Six days later I arrived at the Citadel of Lille, a fortress dating from the time of 17th-century King Louis XIV. Using the Bible, I explained my neutral position to the army officials, who then threw me into prison. One morning, guards dragged me from my cell, searched me, and found a small Bible. Then they made me lie face down in the snow, threw my Bible onto the snow beside me, pressed a rifle butt against the back of my head, and held me there for some 30 minutes. Afterward, to my delight, the guards let me keep the Bible, and it sits on my bookshelf to this day. However, the abuse I suffered on that day gave me stomach cramps for years.

A few days later, the commander read to me from a letter he received from my father. "He must be made to give in. Break him if you must," it said. Because I would not compromise, the officer threw me into a dark cell, where I slept on a board and covered myself with a small blanket. With no toilet, I relieved myself in a corner of the cell. I could not wash, brush my teeth, or clean my food dish. Two weeks later, I was sent to the Fresnes prison in Paris.

Over the next six years, I received four sentences and spent time in 14 prisons. During one winter, I was held at Fontevrault, a 12th-century abbey in the Loire Valley, which was used as a prison. My possessions were confiscated when I arrived. Because I persisted in asking for my Bible, the guards threw me into solitary confinement for a month. There, my other enemy, the cold, returned with a vengeance, and I began to cough up blood.

I was then transferred to a more humane prison—the Château de Turquant, near Saumur, where prisoners performed domestic duties for retired magistrates. Among the inmates was Ahmed Ben Bella, the future president of the Algerian republic. For several months I witnessed to him. "You are a native of Algiers," he once told me, "and you are here because you refused to take up arms against the Algerians." He respected me for my stand.

Strengthened Through Further Trials

My health deteriorated, and I was diagnosed with tuberculosis and sent to a sanatorium in the south of France, where I was bedridden for months. My doctor advised surgery to remove the affected lung, and I agreed to the operation, provided that I 'abstain from blood.' (Acts 15:29) Angry, the doctor refused to operate. I was now in my sixth year of incarceration.

I had to leave the sanatorium in midwinter, my only clothes being those I had on. But just as Jehovah sent Onesiphorus to help the apostle Paul, He now sent a helper to me—Brother Adolphe Garatoni, who took me in and proved to be "a strengthening aid" to me. (Colossians 4:11; 2 Timothy 1:16-18) With his help and that of a doctor in the south of France, my health steadily improved.

During this time, I had some large expenses and needed funds to cover them. I was not sure how I would cope. Then one day a stranger called. "I am a lawyer," she said. "The president of Algeria, Mr. Ben Bella, sent me to give you this." She handed me an envelope with more than enough money to cover my expenses. I thanked Jehovah, the "Hearer of prayer," with all my heart.—Psalm 65:2.

Wonderful Privileges and a Beautiful Partner

Now freed from prison, I again took up the full-time ministry. In the congregation of Melun, near Paris, I met a 35-year-old widow, Andrée Morel. Her first husband, also a Witness, had died in an auto accident. We were married on September 26, 1964. On August 1, 1965, we received an assignment as special pioneer ministers. Although Andrée did not have good health, she enjoyed full-time service for 28 years!

In 1967, I was appointed as a circuit overseer, a traveling minister who visits and encourages congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses. We served in southern France from Bordeaux to Monaco, and for one year, in Paris. Because

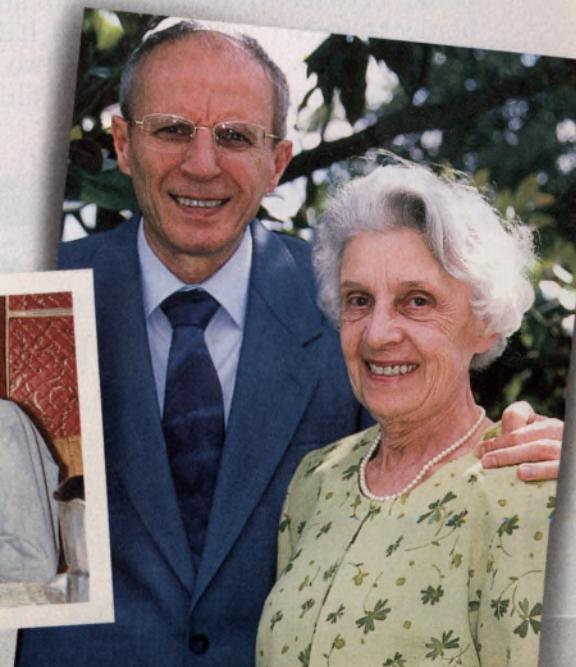
of our health, the traveling work was not easy, but with Jehovah's help, we served the brothers for 20 years, until 1986, when we again became special pioneers.

My Life Today

I am now nearly 70 years of age and have learned time and again that Jehovah always gives his servants the strength to endure trials. Of course, some of that strength comes from studying his inspired Word, which I try to read from cover to cover every year.—Isaiah 40:28-31; Romans 15:4; 2 Timothy 3:16.

Andrée and I are encouraged when we see people respond to the good news and dedicate their life to Jehovah. Indeed, over the years, we have seen 70 of our Bible students do just that, bringing us immeasurable and lasting joy. In reflecting on our lives, I feel that the psalmist spoke for each of us when he wrote: "This afflicted one called, and Jehovah himself heard. And out of all his distresses He saved him."—Psalm 34:6.

**With my wife in 1967,
and today**





Meet the Mighty

Mekong

THE Mekong River weaves through six Asian countries, supporting some 100 million people from nearly 100 indigenous and ethnic groups. Annually, the river yields up to 1.3 million tons of fish—four times the catch in the North Sea! Stretching for 2,700 miles, it is the longest waterway in Southeast Asia. And because it courses through a number of countries, the river has many names, the best known—Mekong—being a contraction of the Thai name Mae Nam Khong.

Born high in the Himalayas, the Mekong bursts forth with youthful vigor as it cascades down mountain slopes and surges through deep gorges. By the time its waters leave China, where it is called the Lancang, they have already traversed almost half the total length of the river and have plunged a dramatic 15,000 feet. The lower half of the Mekong drops only 1,600 feet. As a result, that stretch of the river is much more sedate. Upon leaving China, the river forms the border between Myanmar and Laos and much of the border between Laos and Thailand. It divides in Cambodia and flows into Vietnam as two branches that fan out and empty into the South China Sea.

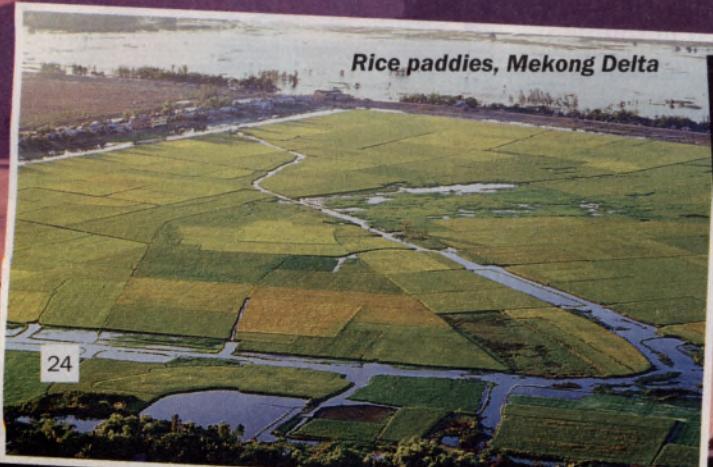
In the late 1860's, the French tried to find a navigable route up the Mekong into China. Their hopes were dashed, however, when they encountered rapids near the town of Kratie, in Cambodia, and a formidable series of cataracts called the Khone Falls, in southern Laos. More water tumbles over the Khone Falls than over any other waterfall in the world, even double that of Niagara Falls, which straddles the border between Canada and the United States.

A River of Life

The Mekong is vital to Southeast Asia's economy. Both Vientiane, the capital of Laos, and Phnom Penh, the capital of Cambodia, are port cities on the river. Downstream, the Mekong is the very lifeblood of Vietnam. There it splits into seven branches,

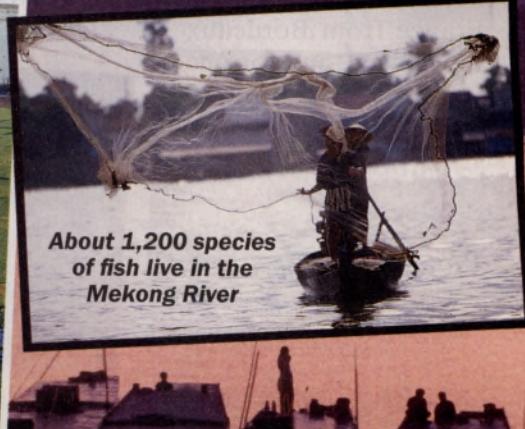
Rice paddies: © Jordi Camí/age fotostock; fishing: ©Stuart Pearce/World Pictures/age fotostock; background: © Chris Sartori/erge/Panos Pictures

Rice paddies, Mekong Delta



24

About 1,200 species
of fish live in the
Mekong River



forming a delta of 15,500 square miles, with an estimated 2,000 miles of waterways. This abundance of water irrigates fields and rice paddies and enriches them with precious silt, enabling farmers to grow three crops of rice annually. Indeed, Vietnam is the world's second-largest exporter of this popular staple, surpassed only by Thailand.

An estimated 1,200 species of fish live in the Mekong, and some of these, as well as shrimps, are farmed. One popular local fish, the trey riel, has a unique claim to fame—the Cambodian currency, the riel, is named after it. The Mekong is also home to an endangered species of catfish that can grow to nine feet.

In 2005, fishermen netted a 646-pound catfish, perhaps the largest freshwater fish ever found anywhere in the world! Another endangered species, at least as far as the Mekong is concerned, is the Irrawaddy dolphin. Researchers say that there may be fewer than 100 left in the river.

Besides feeding millions of people, the Mekong serves as a highway for craft of all sizes—small

boats ferrying passengers, larger vessels carrying goods, and freighters steaming to and from the open sea. The river is also popular with tourists, many of whom like to travel beyond the Khone Falls to visit Vientiane. Famous for its canals, pagodas, and houses on stilts, the city has been a hub of commerce, politics, and religion for over 1,000 years. From Vientiane, one can venture upriver to Louangphrabang. This port city once served as the capital of a large Thai-Lao state and for a time, including the period of French rule, as the royal capital of Laos. A French colonial atmosphere still pervades this historic city.

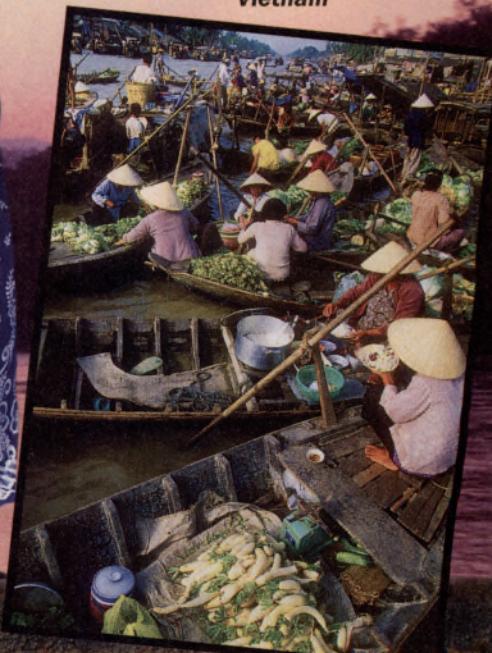
Recent times have seen unsettling changes along the Mekong. These include destructive fishing practices, deforestation, and the construction of massive hydroelectric dams. To many observers, the situation appears to be out of control. But there is hope.

The Bible promises that our loving Creator will soon intervene in human affairs by means of his Kingdom. (Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14; Matthew 6:10)

Under the guidance of that perfect world government, the whole earth will be healed, and the rivers will, figuratively speaking, "clap their hands" out of sheer joy. (Psalm 98:7-9)

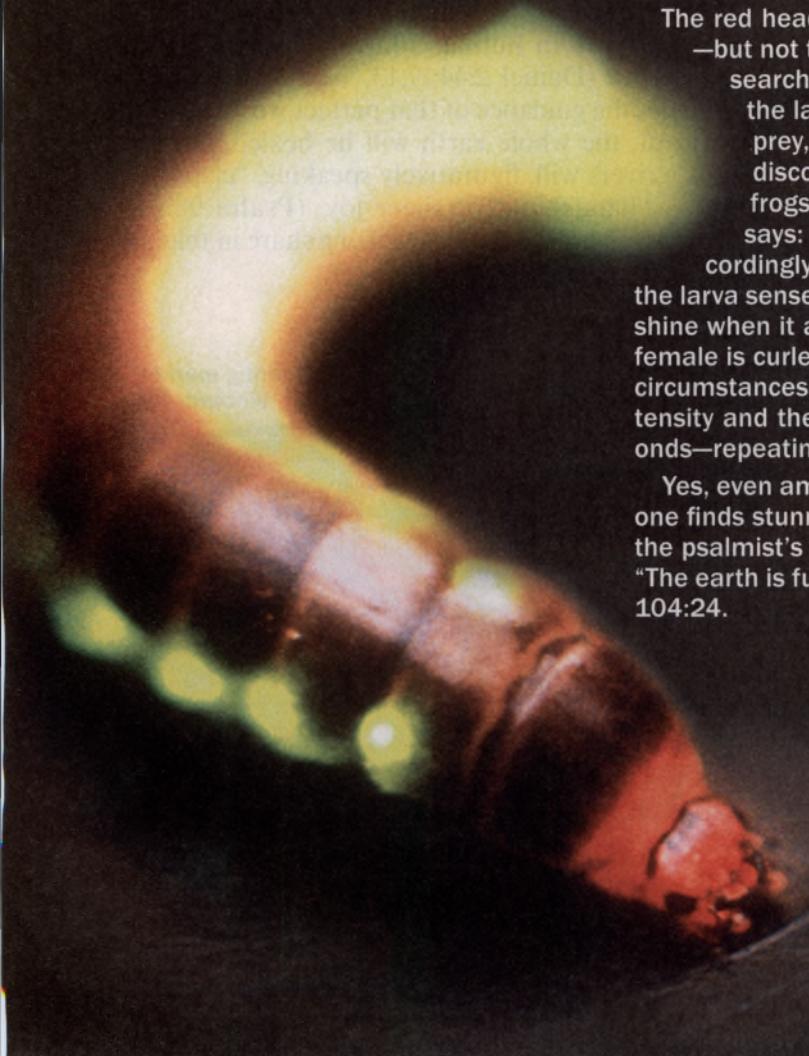
May the mighty Mekong share in that applause.

**Floating market,
Vietnam**



“LITTLE TRAINS”

That Glow in the Dark



■ On a quiet evening in rural Brazil, a tiny “train” emerges from beneath the forest litter. Two red “headlights” light its path, and 11 pairs of yellow-green lanterns illuminate its sides. To be sure, this is no ordinary train. Rather, it is a two-inch-long larva of the Phengodidae family of beetles, found in North and South America. Because females, which retain their larval form, resemble internally illuminated railway cars, they are often called railroad worms. Brazilian country folk call them little trains.

During the day the dull-brown larva is hard to spot. But at night it advertises its presence with its amazing array of lights. These are energized by the organic substance luciferin, which, aided by the enzyme luciferase, oxidizes to produce cold light. Colors of the light include red, orange, yellow, and green.

The red headlights glow almost constantly—but not the yellow-green lateral lights. Research suggests that the headlights help the larva to find millipedes, its favorite prey, whereas the sidelights seem to discourage predators, such as ants, frogs, and spiders. In effect, the glow says: “I’m unpalatable. Go away!” Accordingly, the sidelamps luminesce when the larva senses a potential predator. They also shine when it attacks millipedes and when the female is curled around her eggs. Under normal circumstances, the sidelights build up to peak intensity and then darken—all within a few seconds—repeating the cycle as often as necessary.

Yes, even among the litter on the forest floor, one finds stunning beauty, which calls to mind the psalmist’s words of praise to the Creator: “The earth is full of your productions.”—Psalm 104:24.

Glaciers Flowing Faster

"The flow of several large glaciers draining the Greenland Ice Sheet is accelerating," reports *Science* magazine. Satellite monitoring indicates that over the last five years, the velocity of several Greenlandic glaciers has approximately doubled, reaching more than seven miles per year. Over the last ten years, net ice-mass loss increased from more than 20 cubic miles per year to 50 cubic miles per year. Scientists thus suggest that "existing estimates of future sea-level rise are too low."

Churches Fete Darwin

Nearly 450 "Christian" churches in the United States celebrated Charles Darwin's 197th birthday in February 2006. The event included "programs and sermons intended to emphasize that his theory of biological evolution is compatible with faith and that Christians have no need to choose between religion and science." According to the *Chicago Tribune*, Michael Zimmerman, a biologist and dean of the College of Letters and Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, who organized the celebrations, said: "You don't have to make that choice. You can have both."

Workplace Rudeness

"Rudeness in the workplace can cost an organization time, effort and talent," says *The Wall Street Journal*. A survey of nearly 3,000 people found that more than 90 percent "experienced incivility at work." Half of these said they "lost work time worrying about the incident," "25 per cent cut back their efforts on the job," and 1 in 8 quit. According to Christine Porath, a management professor at the University of Southern California, "holding back on work efforts, absenteeism, and even stealing can all be signs of an organization that is struggling with rudeness," says the *Journal*.



■ Worldwide, 5.7 million attempts to defraud Internet users are made every day.—*MAGAZINE, SPAIN.*

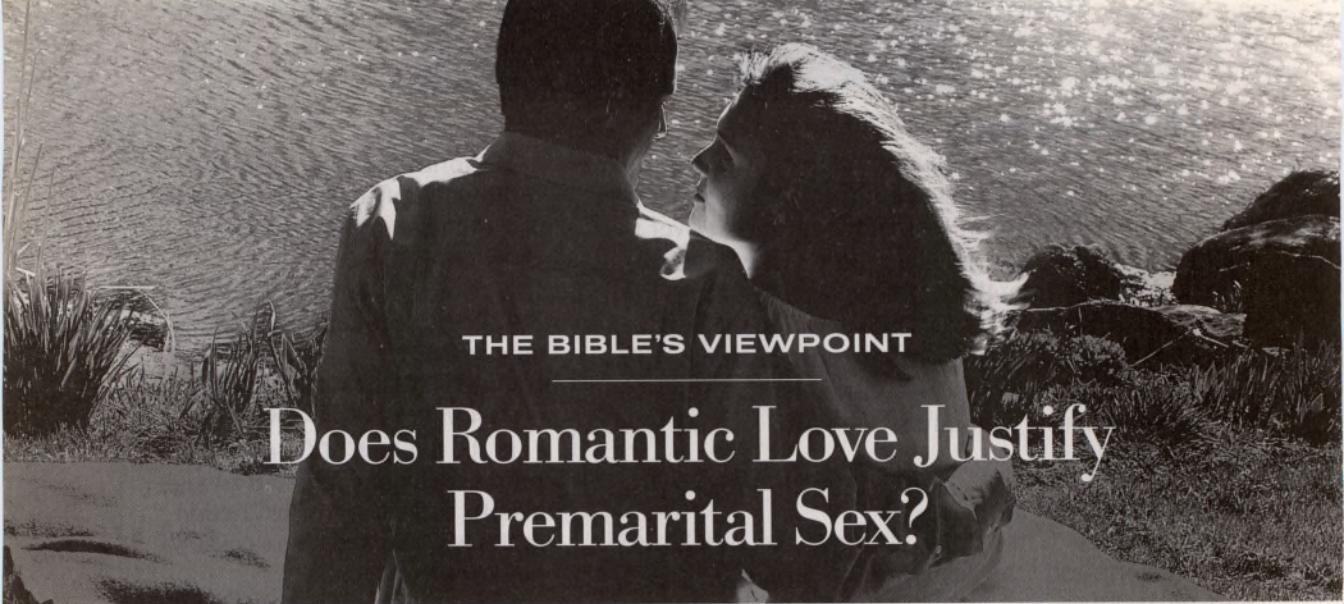
■ "Suicides in Japan topped 30,000 for the eighth straight year in 2005." Japan has one of the highest rates in the world.
—*MAINICHI DAILY NEWS, JAPAN.*

■ "In the last 500 years, human activity has forced 844 species to extinction (or extinction in the wild)."—*IUCN, WORLD CONSERVATION UNION, SWITZERLAND.*

■ According to government figures, 6 percent of Britons —male and female—are homosexual. Legislation passed in 2005 "allows same-sex partners to 'marry,'" and it gives them rights similar to those of heterosexual married couples.—*THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, ENGLAND.*

Giant Patch of Oceanic Debris

Early in 2006, a massive field of oceanic debris "drifted south into Hawaiian waters, driving loads of derelict fishing gear and plastic trash onto Island beaches," reports *The Honolulu Advertiser*. Currents push much of the floating debris in the North Pacific into a quiet part of the ocean, but under certain atmospheric conditions, the debris is swept toward Hawaii. In 2005 "more than 2,000 pieces of debris were found," as well as more than 100 fishing nets. The garbage is a hazard to marine life. Says Charles Moore, founder of the Algalita Marine Research Foundation: "There is no such thing as organic fish in the ocean anymore. They're all eating bits of plastic."



THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT

Does Romantic Love Justify Premarital Sex?

IN ONE survey almost 90 percent of teenagers polled felt that premarital sex is not wrong when the two parties love each other. This thinking is reflected in and often condoned by the media. Television and films routinely portray sexual activity as a normal result of a romantic attachment.

Of course, those who want to please God do not look to the world for guidance, recognizing that it reflects the thinking of its ruler, the Devil. (1 John 5:19) They also take care not to be governed purely by their feelings, knowing that “the heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate.” (Jeremiah 17:9) Rather, those who are truly wise look to the Creator and to his inspired Word for direction.—Proverbs 3:5, 6; 2 Timothy 3:16.

Sex Is a Divine Gift

“Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, for it comes down from the Father of the celestial lights,” says James 1:17. Sexual intimacy within the marriage arrangement is one of those precious gifts. (Ruth 1:9; 1 Corinthians 7:2, 7) It enables humans to procreate, and it also helps a husband and wife to bond physically and emotionally in a very tender and pleasurable way. “Rejoice with the wife of your youth,” penned ancient

King Solomon. “Let her own breasts intoxicate you at all times.”—Proverbs 5:18, 19.

Naturally, Jehovah wants us to benefit from and rejoice in his gifts. To that end, he has also given us the very best laws and principles to live by. (Psalm 19:7, 8) Jehovah is “the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk.” (Isaiah 48:17) Would our heavenly Father—the very personification of love—deprive us of something that is truly good?—Psalm 34:10; 37:4; 84:11; 1 John 4:8.

Sex Before Marriage Is Unloving

When a man and a woman unite in wedlock, they become “one flesh,” as it were. When two unmarried people have sexual relations, also called fornication, they too form “one body”—but one that is unclean in God’s eyes.* What is more, such unions are unloving. How so?—Mark 10:7-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, 16.

For one thing, fornication is sex without genuine commitment. And besides under-

* The Greek word translated “fornication” applies to all sexual activity with another person outside marriage that involves the use of the sex organs, including oral sex.—See *Awake!* of July 22, 2004, page 12, and *The Watchtower* of February 15, 2004, page 13, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

mining self-respect, it can result in disease, unwanted pregnancy, and emotional pain. Above all, it violates God's righteous standards. Hence, fornication reflects little or no regard for the present and future welfare and happiness of the other person.

For a Christian, fornication is also an encroachment upon the rights of his or her spiritual brother or sister. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6) For example, professed servants of God who indulge in sex outside marriage bring uncleanness into the Christian congregation. (Hebrews 12:15, 16) Also, they deprive the one with whom they commit fornication of a clean moral standing and, if the other person is single, of entering into a possible future marriage morally chaste. They also stain the good record of their own family, as well as wrong the family of their sexual partner. Finally, they show a disregard for God, whom they have hurt by violating his righteous laws and principles. (Psalm 78:40, 41) Jehovah, in turn, will 'exact punishment' for all such bad deeds committed by unrepentant individuals. (1 Thessalonians 4:6) Is it any wonder, then, that the Bible tells us to "flee from fornication"?—1 Corinthians 6:18.

Are you in love and planning to marry? Then why not use your courtship to build a solid foundation of mutual trust and respect? Think: How can a woman fully trust a man who has shown himself lacking in self-control? And how easy is it for a man to cherish and honor a woman who disregards God's law in order to satisfy her romantic feelings or to please the man?

Remember, too, that those who reject God's loving standards reap what they sow. (Galatians 6:7) "He that practices fornication

is sinning against his own body," says the Bible. (1 Corinthians 6:18; Proverbs 7:5-27) True, if a couple who engaged in pre-marital sex truly repent, work hard to restore their relationship with God, and strengthen their trust in each another, negative feelings may eventually abate. Still, their past conduct usually leaves a scar. One young couple, who are now married, bitterly regret having committed fornication. 'Are our marital disagreements somehow a result of this unclean foundation?' the husband sometimes asks himself.

True Love Is Unselfish

While it may be accompanied by romantic feelings, true love "does not behave indecently" or "look for its own interests." (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) Instead, it works toward the other person's welfare and everlasting happiness. Such love impels a man and a woman to honor each other and to accord sexual intimacies their proper, God-given place—the marriage bed.—Hebrews 13:4.

The feelings of trust and security that make for a truly happy marriage are especially important when babies arrive, for God purposed that children grow up in a loving, stable, and secure environment. (Ephesians 6:1-4) Only in marriage do two people *truly* commit to each other. In their heart, and often orally as well, they vow to care for and support each other through good times and bad for the rest of their lives.—Romans 7:2, 3.

Sexual intimacies between a husband and wife can strengthen their bond. In a happy marriage, partners also find sexual intimacy more pleasurable and meaningful—and without cheapening the union, troubling the conscience, or disobeying the Creator.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- What is God's view of sex before marriage?—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.
- Why is fornication harmful?—1 Corinthians 6:18.
- How can two people who are romantically attracted to each other show true love?—1 Corinthians 13:4, 5.





Top and bottom left: Museo Nacional de Arte Romano, Mérida

REPORTS of riots like this one do not sound out of place in today's newspapers. But this particular incident occurred almost 2,000 years ago during the reign of Emperor Nero. Roman historian Tacitus described this riot, which took place in the amphitheater of Pompeii during a gladiatorial contest when Pompeians clashed with sports fans from the neighboring city of Nuceria.

In the first century, entertainment had a great hold on the masses. Important cities of the Roman Empire had theaters, amphitheaters, and circuses, and some had all three. "The games," says *Atlas of the Roman World*, "involved frantic danger and excitement . . . [and] systematic bloodletting." Charioteers wore distinct colors, and each team represented a certain group in society, either political or social. Supporters erupted in a frenzy when their favorite team appeared. Charioteers became so popular that people adorned their houses with their portraits, and the charioteers were paid enormous sums.

Mass Entertainment IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Countless injuries and many deaths, including those of some children, were caused by a riot between rival sports fans from two neighboring cities in southern Italy. As a result of this tragedy, authorities ordered the closure of the amphitheater for ten years.

Cities also staged bloody gladiatorial fights and fights between men and beasts, the men sometimes being unarmed. According to historian Will Durant, "condemned criminals, sometimes dressed in skins to resemble animals, were thrown to beasts made ravenous for the occasion; death in such cases came with all possible agony."

Those who enjoyed such ungodly entertainment truly were "in darkness mentally" and "past all moral sense." (Ephesians 4:17-19) In the second century, Tertullian wrote: "Among [Christians] nothing is ever said, or seen, or heard, which has anything in common with the madness of the circus, the immodesty of the theatre, [and] the atrocities of the arena." Today, true Christians too are careful to avoid exposure to violent entertainment, whatever the medium—literature, television, or computer games—remembering that Jehovah hates "anyone loving violence." —Psalm 11:5.

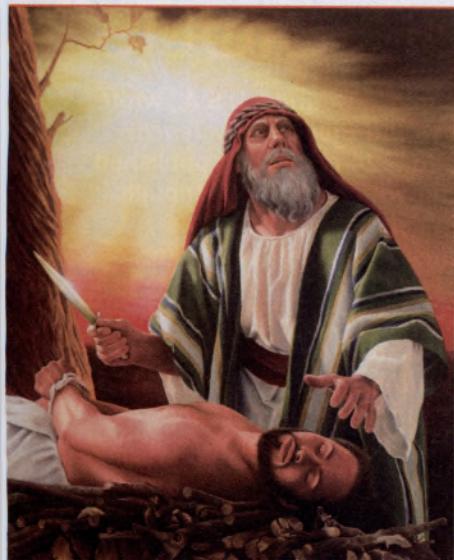
► Mosaic of a victorious charioteer

◀ Fresco of a man fighting a lioness

First-century Roman theater ▼



Ciudad de Mérida



WHERE DID IT HAPPEN?

1. On what mountain did this event take place? Circle your answer on the map.

◆ What structure was later built on this mountain?

◆ Why did Abraham attempt to sacrifice Isaac?

◆ Was Isaac a small child at the time?

■ For Discussion:

Why do you think Isaac cooperated with his father? How was Jesus like Isaac?



WHEN IN HISTORY?

Draw a line connecting the king to the date he started ruling.



2
1 Kings 1:38, 39



3
2 Kings 21:24



4
1 Kings 22:42

977
1037 B.C.E.

936

716

659

607

(Answers on page 14)

FROM THIS ISSUE

Answer these questions, and provide the missing Bible verse(s).

Page 4 What is one difference between God's judgments as described in the Bible and natural disasters? (Genesis 18:____)

Page 5 Is it wrong to ask why God allows suffering? (Habakkuk 1:____)

Page 19 If you are fighting the habit of masturbation, why should you not berate yourself if you have a relapse? (Psalm 103:____)

Pages 28-9 What is one reason to flee from fornication? (1 Corinthians 6:____)

WHO AM I?

5. I was taken captive to Babylon but returned to Jerusalem, where I completed my reign as king.

WHO AM I?

6. I wrote a portion of the Bible in Babylon when the Romans ruled Jerusalem.



Children's Picture Search

Can you find these pictures in this issue? In your own words, describe what is happening in each picture.

"It Is Marvelous"

That is what a couple in Georgia, U.S.A., wrote regarding *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* a colorfully illustrated, 224-page book published in 2005. They explained: "It is simple enough that almost anyone can use it. Yet, it has enough depth to satisfy the spiritual need of the most learned."

The title itself has attracted interest, as illustrated by what happened to a couple from New Jersey, U.S.A. After attending a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Florida, where they obtained a copy of the book, the couple flew to the Bahamas for a vacation. While examining their luggage, a customs official noticed the book, read the title, and said, "I have always wanted to know the answer to that question." Much to the official's delight, the Witness couple gave her a spare copy.

The following day the same couple were reading the book at the beach when a local woman selling goods to tourists noticed it. She explained that earlier that day she had prayed to God for an answer to basically that same question—What does the Bible really teach? She asked how she could get a copy of the book and was overjoyed when the vacationers gave her their remaining extra copy.

