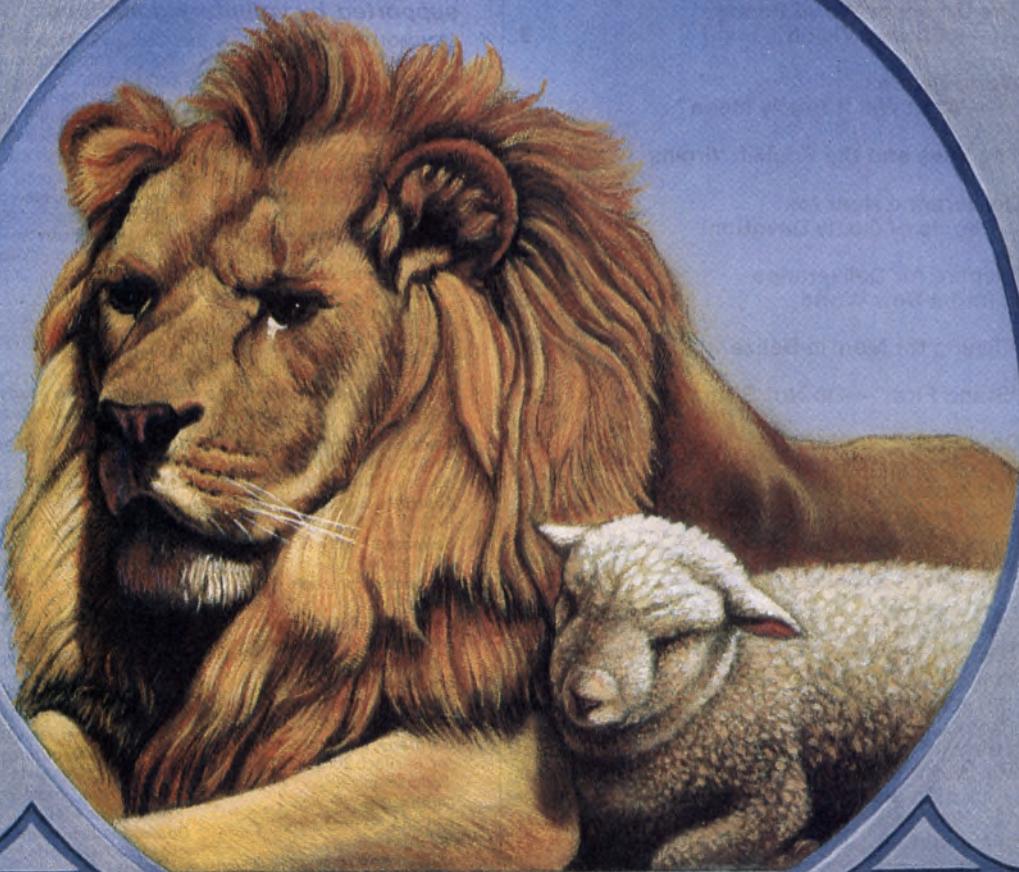


The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

April 15, 1990



WORLD PEACE
WHAT WILL IT REALLY MEAN?

In This Issue

The Dream of World Peace —A Flawed Vision	3
World Peace —What Will It Really Mean?	4
The Wise and the Foolish Virgins	8
Deliverance Near for People of Godly Devotion!	10
Prepare for Deliverance Into a New World	16
'Fishing for Men' in Belize	22
"Stand Firm"—Do Not Stumble	26
Do You Remember?	29
The Moabite Stone —Destroyed but Not Lost	30
Are You Your Own Idol?	31

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

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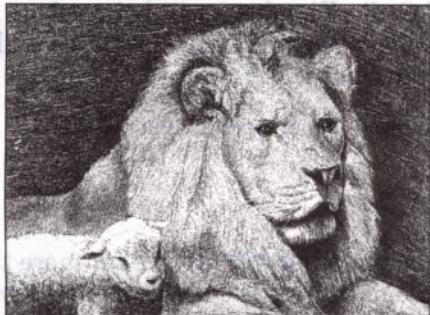
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OPTIMISM over the prospects for world peace is running high. In her column for *The Toronto Star*, Carol Goar wrote: "Peace agreements are proliferating from Afghanistan to Angola. Regional conflicts that seemed intractable a few months ago are showing signs of abating. And the United Nations is undergoing a heartening rebirth." This, says Goar, has triggered a "global epidemic of hope." An editorial in *USA Today* similarly proclaimed: "Peace is breaking out all over the world."

Particularly noteworthy of late has been what the *UN Chronicle* described as "the ongoing *rapprochement* between the Soviet Union and the United States." Troop withdrawals, startling events in Eastern Europe, talk of troop and arms reductions—these developments have aroused hopes that the superpowers may finally be putting the brakes on the arms race. In a world where military spending reportedly drains the economy of over 850 thousand million dollars a year, this is a most welcome prospect.



THE DREAM OF WORLD PEACE A FLAWED VISION

still murder quite efficiently. World Wars I and II bear grim testimony to this fact. Furthermore, the technology needed to re-create nuclear weapons would still exist—ready and waiting for the first sign of political tensions. Some, like political scientist Richard Ned Lebow, even argue: "Probably keeping a few nuclear weapons around does keep people cautious."

But as long as nuclear weapons exist, the specter of nuclear annihilation will make a mockery of any claimed attainment of peace; so will the continuation of the nonmilitary problems that rob millions of peace in their

daily lives. UN secretary-general Javier Pérez de Cuéllar spoke of "the plight of millions of our fellow citizens who are homeless or live in totally inadequate shelter conditions. The problem is steadily growing worse." The *UN Chronicle* further reports that economic underdevelopment afflicts "two thirds of mankind, in some cases with levels of poverty and destitution indistinguishable from the suffering inflicted by war." And what about the situation of the world's estimated 12 million refugees? Will arms reduction or even complete disarmament bring peace to their lives?

Clearly, man's dream of world peace is a flawed vision—myopic, narrow, limited. Is there a better prospect for peace? Indeed there is. In the previous issue of this magazine, we saw that the Bible gives a sure hope for peace.* Soon Jesus Christ, as King of God's Kingdom, will bring about a peace far surpassing any human expectations. But what will this peace really mean for mankind? The next article will discuss this.

* See "Who Will Lead Mankind to Peace?" in our April 1, 1990, issue.

THE world peace that God has in mind will involve far more than a global cease-fire or a nuclear stalemate. This is evident from the way the Bible uses the word "peace."

For example, in the Hebrew Scriptures (the "Old Testament") the word for peace is *sha-lohm'*. A form of this word is used at Genesis 37:14, where the

patriarch Jacob tells his son Joseph: "See whether your brothers are *safe and sound* and whether the flock is *safe and sound*, and bring me back word."* *Sha-lohm'* is used again at Genesis 41:16, where it is rendered "welfare."

In a Biblical sense, therefore, real peace involves not simply a cessation of hostilities but also health, safety, and well-being. Our previous issue showed that humans are unable to solve the puzzle of how to bring peace. Only Jesus Christ, the "Prince of Peace," will fit the pieces together and bring real peace to the earth. (Isaiah 9:6, 7) Consider, for example, what the Bible prophesies at

Psalm 72:7, 8 about the rule of that one: "In his days the righteous one will sprout, and the abundance of peace until the moon is no more. And he will have subjects from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth."

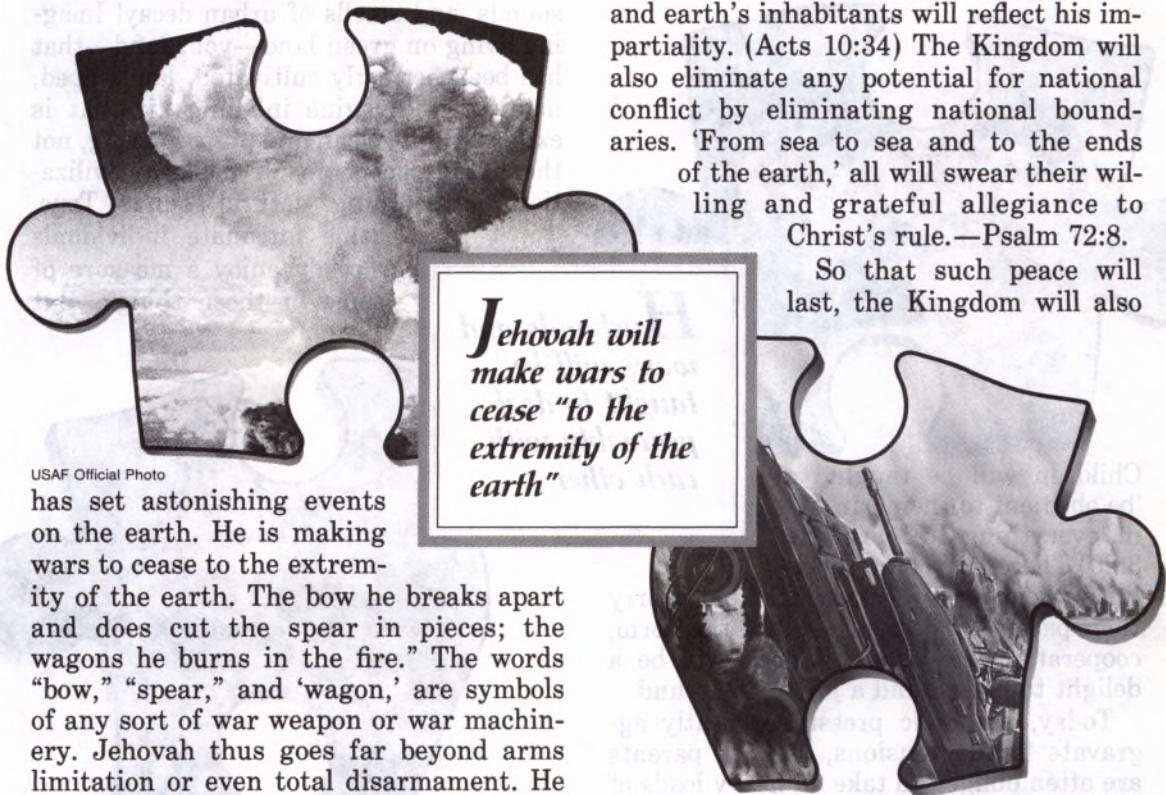
Imagine—health, safety, and well-being on a worldwide scale! No political

* Literally, "See the peace of your brothers and the peace of the flock."

treaty could ever accomplish that. Only God's Kingdom can, and it will achieve yet more. The Bible gives us a number of thrilling prophetic glimpses into this future world peace. Let us consider some of them.

Global Disarmament—God's Way!

Psalm 46:8, 9 says: "Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he



USAF Official Photo

has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth. The bow he breaks apart and does cut the spear in pieces; the wagons he burns in the fire." The words "bow," "spear," and 'wagon,' are symbols of any sort of war weapon or war machinery. Jehovah thus goes far beyond arms limitation or even total disarmament. He thoroughly eliminates nuclear weapons, cannons, tanks, missile launchers, grenades, plastic explosives, rifles, handguns—*anything* that could threaten global peace!

However, weapons alone do not cause war. Usually, war has its roots in the hateful, greedy, or violent nature of imperfect humans. (Compare James 4:1-3.) God's Kingdom will therefore attack this root

cause of war by eliminating such vile personality traits in people. How? By means of a global educational program. "The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9.

Having been thus "taught by Jehovah," mankind will no longer see racial differences as a basis for conflict, animosity, or disdain. (John 6:45) "God is not partial," and earth's inhabitants will reflect his impartiality. (Acts 10:34) The Kingdom will also eliminate any potential for national conflict by eliminating national boundaries. 'From sea to sea and to the ends of the earth,' all will swear their willing and grateful allegiance to Christ's rule.—Psalm 72:8.

So that such peace will last, the Kingdom will also



eliminate the most divisive force in man's history: false religion. (Zephaniah 2:11) Mankind will be united in its worship of the only true God. (Isaiah 2:2, 3) A worldwide brotherhood will prevail!

Peace on the Home Front

Of what value, however, would world peace be if private homes were a

battleground where insults, hurtful words, and threats were constantly being hurled about. Such is the case with many families today. Other families conceal deep-seated animosities behind a veil of cold silence.

True peace must therefore include domestic tranquillity. Under the Kingdom's educational program, husbands and wives will be taught to deal with each other in love and respect. (Colossians 3:18, 19)



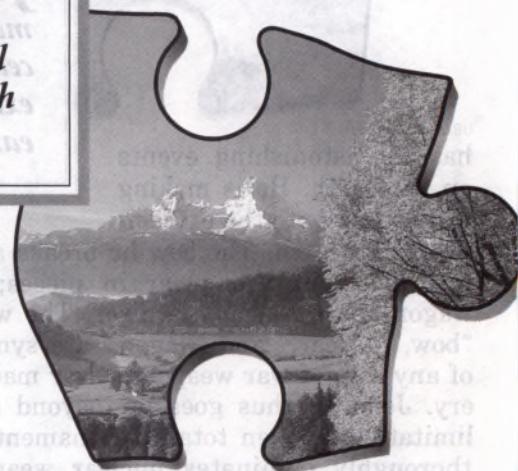
Children will be taught to 'be obedient to their parents in everything.' (Colossians 3:20) There will be no rebellious teenagers to frustrate and worry their parents. Obedience will be the norm, cooperation the rule. Children will be a delight to behold and a joy to be around.

Today, economic pressures greatly aggravate family tensions, as both parents are often obliged to take on heavy loads of secular employment. But under Christ's rulership, families will be relieved of crushing financial burdens—inflate rents, towering mortgage payments, escalating taxes, unemployment. Fulfilling, challenging work will be plentiful. And no one will need to be homeless. Note how the prophecy at Isaiah 65:21-23 highlights these facts: "And they will certainly build houses and have occupancy . . . They will not build and

someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. . . . The work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full. They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bring to birth for disturbance; because they are the offspring made up of the blessed ones of Jehovah, and their descendants with them."

Imagine living in an environment that does not assault you with the sights, sounds, and smells of urban decay! Imagine living on green land—your land—that has been perfectly cultivated, landscaped, manicured. Imagine inhaling air that is exhilaratingly clean and pure; hearing, not the harsh cacophony of modern civilization, but soothing, natural sounds. True, some fortunate individuals already enjoy a measure of some of these things. But

*Husbands and
wives will be
taught to deal
peaceably with
each other*



under God's Kingdom, peaceful living conditions will be enjoyed by all. There will be no poor, no hungry, no disadvantaged. —Psalm 72:13, 14, 16.

The Bible further promises that "as regards the wicked, they will be cut off." (Proverbs 2:22) That means the abolition of crime. If your smallest child goes out to play, you will not need to worry about child

molesters or kidnappers lurking in the shadows, cars with drunken drivers at the wheel careening out of control, or roving gangs of drug-crazed youths. Your children will play in absolute safety and security.

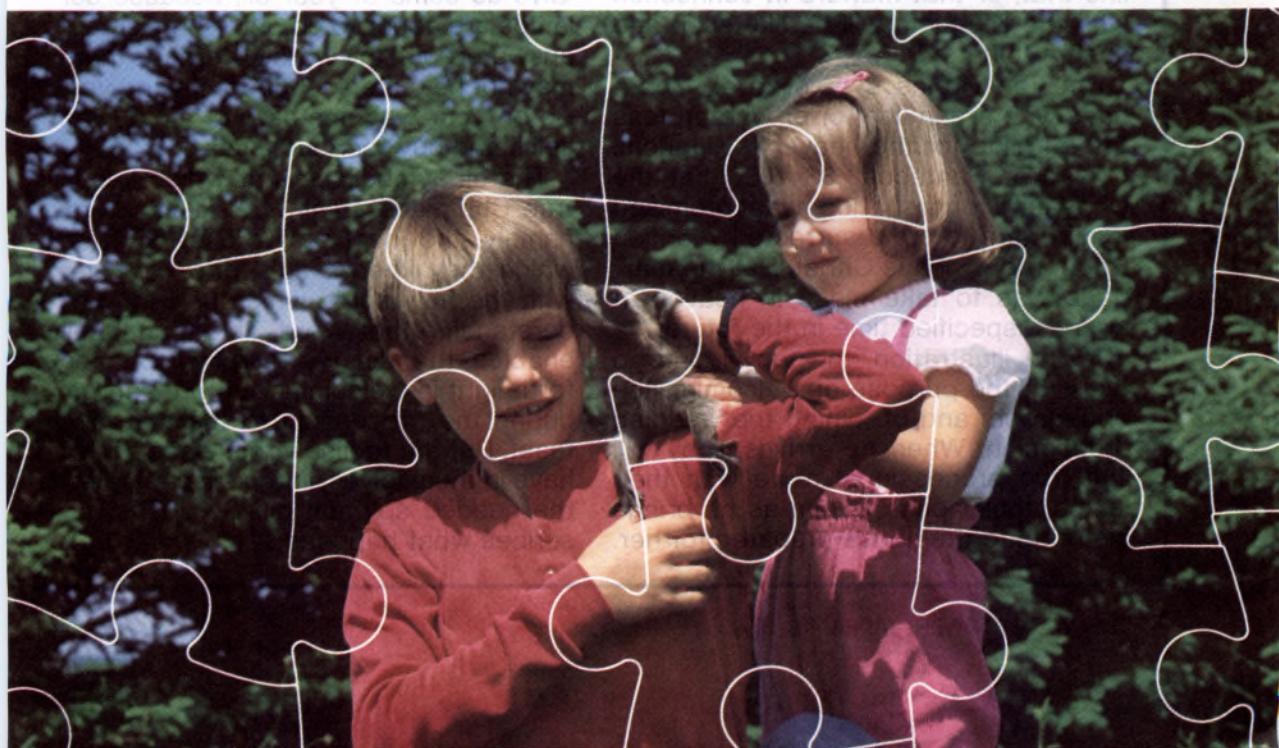
Peace and Your Personal Well-Being

Finally, there is the aspect of personal well-being. Even Paradise conditions do not dull the pain of cancer or the aches of arthritis. True peace must therefore include the eradication of disease, illness, and death. Is such a thing possible? While on earth, Jesus Christ repeatedly demonstrated his mastery over human ailments. (Matthew 8:14-17) From his heavenly vantage point, Christ will be able to perform miracles earth wide! "At that time," promises the Bible, "the eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness."—Isaiah 33:24; 35:5, 6.

Christ's campaign against human misery will not stop there, however. The apostle Paul explains regarding Christ's kingship: "For he must rule as king until God has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing." (1 Corinthians 15:25, 26) This means undoing all the havoc death has wreaked upon mankind from the very beginning. As Jesus Christ himself explained: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear [Christ's] voice and come out." (John 5:28, 29) Countless millions who have lived and died in misery will thus have the opportunity to share in the coming world peace.

Will you share in it? Jehovah's Witnesses urge you to learn more about what the Bible teaches in this regard.* The prospect of world peace is too thrilling, too real, to be ignored. Be assured that if you exert yourself to learn and apply God's Word, "the God of peace will be with you"—eternally!—Philippians 4:9.

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



The Wise and the Foolish Virgins

JESUS has been answering his apostles' request for a sign of his presence in Kingdom power. Now he provides further features of the sign in three parables, or illustrations.

The fulfillment of each illustration would be observable by those living during his presence. He introduces the first one with the words: "Then the kingdom of the heavens will become like ten virgins that took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish, and five were discreet."

By the expression "the kingdom of the heavens will become like ten virgins," Jesus does not mean that half of those who inherit the heavenly Kingdom are foolish persons and half are discreet ones! No, but he means that in connection with the Kingdom of the heavens, there is a feature like this or like that, or that matters in connection with the Kingdom will be like such and such a thing.

The ten virgins symbolize all Christians who are in line for or who profess to be in line for the heavenly Kingdom. It was at Pentecost 33 C.E. that the Christian congregation was promised in marriage to the resurrected, glorified Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. But the marriage was to take place in heaven at some unspecified time in the future.

In the illustration, the ten virgins go out with the purpose of welcoming the bridegroom and of joining the wedding procession. When he arrives, they will light the processional route with their lamps, thus honoring him as he brings his bride to the house prepared for her.

However, Jesus explains: "The foolish took their lamps but took no oil with them, whereas the discreet took oil in their receptacles with their lamps. While the bridegroom was delaying, they all nodded and went to sleep."

The extended delay of the bridegroom indicates that Christ's presence as ruling King is to be in the distant future. He finally comes to his throne in the year 1914. During the long night prior thereto, all the virgins fall asleep. But they are not condemned for this. The condemnation of the foolish virgins is for their not having oil for their receptacles. Jesus explains how the virgins awaken before the bridegroom arrives:

"Right in the middle of the night there arose a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Be on your way out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and put their lamps in order. The foolish said to the discreet, 'Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are about to go out.' The discreet answered with the words, 'Perhaps there may not be quite enough for us and you. Be on your way, instead, to those who sell it and buy for yourselves.'"

The oil symbolizes that which keeps true Christians shining as illuminators, namely, the inspired Word of God, on which they keep a tight grip, together with the holy spirit, which helps in understanding that Word. The spiritual oil enables the discreet virgins to shed forth light in welcoming the bridegroom during the procession to the marriage feast. But the foolish virgin class do not have in themselves, in their receptacles, the needed spiritual oil. So Jesus describes what happens:



"While [the foolish virgins] were going off to buy [oil], the bridegroom arrived, and the virgins that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterwards the rest of the virgins also came, saying, 'Sir, sir, open to us!' In answer he said, 'I tell you the truth, I do not know you.'"

After Christ arrived in his heavenly Kingdom, the discreet virgin class of

true anointed Christians awoke to their privilege of shedding light in this be-darkened world in praise of the returned Bridegroom. But those pictured by the foolish virgins were unprepared to provide this welcoming praise. So when the time comes, Christ does not open the door to the marriage feast in heaven to them. He leaves them outside in the blackness of the world's deepest night, to perish with all other workers of lawlessness. "Keep on the watch, therefore," Jesus concludes, "because you know neither the day nor the hour."

Matthew 25:1-13.

- ♦ Who are symbolized by the ten virgins?
- ♦ When is the promise in marriage to the bridegroom made, but when does he arrive to take his bride to the marriage feast?
- ♦ What does the oil represent, and what does possession of it enable the discreet virgins to do?
- ♦ Where does the marriage feast take place?
- ♦ What grand reward do the foolish virgins lose out on, and what is their fate?

DELIVERANCE NEAR FOR PEOPLE OF GODLY DEVOTION!

"Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off."—2 PETER 2:9.

PROBLEMS of life are increasing for all mankind. This is true whether one lives where material things are plentiful or where they are in short supply. Insecurity exists everywhere. As if unstable economic conditions were not enough to worry about, serious environmental problems are assaulting planet Earth, threatening all life upon it. Sickness is rampant. Infectious diseases, heart ailments, and the scourge of cancer take a

1. (a) What distressing conditions confront humankind in our day? (b) In view of this, what questions are we going to consider?

heavy toll. Immorality has wreaked havoc with human emotions and with family life. Besides all of this, the world is saturated with violence. In view of what human society is facing, we realistically ask: Is there a sound basis for expecting early deliverance? If so, how will it come, and for whom?—Compare Habakkuk 1:2; 2:1-3.

² What is taking place in our day re-

2, 3. (a) Why do we today find what is said at 2 Peter 2:9 to be reassuring? (b) To what specific acts of deliverance does the Bible point as a basis for encouragement?



minds us of certain other highly significant times in human history. The apostle Peter draws attention to the acts of deliverance that God performed on those occasions and then comes to this reassuring conclusion: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial." (2 Peter 2:9) Take note of the context of that statement, at 2 Peter 2:4-10:

³ "Certainly if God did not hold back from punishing the angels that sinned, but, by throwing them into Tartarus, delivered them to pits of dense darkness to be reserved for judgment; and he did not hold back from punishing an ancient world, but kept Noah, a preacher of righteousness, safe with seven others when he brought a deluge upon a world of ungodly people; and by reducing the cities Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them, setting a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come; and he delivered righteous Lot, who was greatly distressed by the indulgence of the law-defying people in loose conduct—for that righteous man by what he saw and heard while dwelling among them from day to day was tormenting his righteous soul by reason of their lawless deeds—*Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial*, but to reserve unrighteous people for the day of judgment to be cut off, especially, however, those who go on after flesh with the desire to defile it and who look down on lordship." As those scriptures show, what took place in Noah's day and in the time of Lot is filled with meaning for us.

The Spirit Prevalent in Noah's Day

⁴ The historical account in Genesis chapter 6 informs us that in Noah's day the earth had become ruined in the sight of the true God. Why? Because of violence. This

⁴. In Noah's day, why did God view the earth as ruined? (Psalm 11:5)

was not a matter of isolated cases of criminal violence. Genesis 6:11 reports that "the earth became *filled* with violence."

⁵ What was behind it? The scripture quoted from 2 Peter refers to ungodly people. Yes, a spirit of ungodliness pervaded human affairs. This involved not merely a general disregard for divine law but a defiant attitude toward God himself.* And when men are defiant toward God, how can it be expected that they will deal kindly with their fellowman? Already before Noah was born, this ungodliness was so rampant that Jehovah had caused Enoch to prophecy regarding the outcome. (Jude 14, 15) Their defiance of God was certain to bring an execution of divine judgment.

⁶ There was also another influence that contributed to the violence of those days. Genesis 6:1, 2 directs attention to it when it says: "Now it came about that when men started to grow in numbers on the surface of the ground and daughters were born to them, then the sons of the true God began to notice the daughters of men, that they were good-looking; and they went taking wives for themselves, namely, all whom they chose." Who were those sons of the true God? Not mere humans. Men had for centuries been taking note of good-looking women and had been marrying them. These sons of God were angels who materialized. At Jude 6, they are described as "angels that did not keep their original

* "Anomia is disregard for, or defiance of, God's laws; *asebeia* [noun form of the word rendered 'ungodly people'] is the same attitude toward God's Person."—Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, Volume 4, page 170.

5. (a) What attitude on the part of humans contributed to the violence of Noah's day? (b) What had Enoch warned regarding ungodliness?

6, 7. What situation involving angels was a major factor in the bad conditions that developed before the Flood?



position but forsook their own proper dwelling place."—Compare 1 Peter 3:19, 20.

⁷ When these superhuman creatures who materialized as men had relations with the daughters of men, what was the result? "The Nephilim proved to be in the earth in those days, and also after that, when the sons of the true God continued to have relations with the daughters of men and they bore sons to them, they were the mighty ones who were of old, the men of fame." Yes, the offspring of that unnatural union were Nephilim, mighty ones who used their superior power to bully others.—Genesis 6:4.

⁸ Just how bad did the situation become? It came to the point that "Jehovah saw that the badness of man was abundant in the earth and every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only bad all the time." How did God react to this? "Jehovah

8. How did Jehovah react to the bad conditions on earth?

Building the ark involved years of hard work

felt regrets that he had made men in the earth, and he felt hurt at his heart." This does not mean that God felt that he had made a mistake when he created humankind. Rather, he felt regret that after he had made humans, their conduct became so evil that he was obliged to destroy them.

—Genesis 6:5-7.

The Course That Led to Deliverance

⁹ As for Noah, he "found favor in the eyes of Jehovah. . . . Noah was a righteous man. He proved himself faultless among his contemporaries. Noah walked with the true God." (Genesis 6:8, 9) So Jehovah gave Noah advance notice that He was going to bring a global deluge and instructed him to build an ark. All humankind, apart from Noah and his family, would be wiped off the surface of the earth. Even the animal creation would be destroyed, with the exception of those few representatives of each basic kind that Noah was to take into the ark.—Genesis 6:13, 14, 17.

¹⁰ This advance knowledge put a heavy responsibility on Noah. The ark must be built. It was to be shaped like a huge chest, some 1,400,000 cubic feet in total volume. Noah was to stock it with food and then gather animals and birds, "every sort of flesh," for preservation. It was a project that would involve years of work. How did Noah respond? He "proceeded to do according to all that God had commanded him.

9. (a) Why did God deal favorably with Noah? (b) What advance information did God give to Noah?

10. (a) What preparation had to be made with a view to preservation, and how big a job was it? (b) What is noteworthy about the manner in which Noah cared for his assignment?

Noah devoted time to developing the spirituality of his family

He did just so."—Genesis 6:14-16, 19-22; Hebrews 11:7.

¹¹ While doing that work, Noah also had to devote time to building up the spirituality of his household. They needed to be safeguarded against adopting the violent ways and the defiant attitude of people around them. It was important that they not become overly engrossed in the everyday affairs of life. God had a work for them to do, and it was vital that they build their lives around it. We know that Noah's family accepted his instruction and shared his faith because Noah, his wife, their three sons, and the sons' wives—eight persons in all—are spoken of with approval in the Scriptures.—Genesis 6:18; 1 Peter 3:20.

¹² Noah also had another responsibility—to warn of the coming Deluge and to make known why it was coming. It is evident that he faithfully discharged that responsibility, for he is referred to in God's Word as "a preacher of righteousness."—2 Peter 2:5.

¹³ Now just think of the circumstances under which Noah carried out that assignment. Put yourself in his position. If you had been Noah or a member of his family, you would have been surrounded by the violence that was perpetrated by the Nephilim and ungodly men. You would have been directly confronted by the influence of rebellious angels. As you worked on the ark, you would have been the object of ridicule. And year after year as you warned of the coming Deluge, you would have found that the people were so

11. As to his own household, what vital responsibility rested upon Noah?

12. As shown at 2 Peter 2:5, what responsibility did Noah faithfully fulfill?

13. What conditions confronted Noah as he cared for his God-given assignment?



wrapped up in the daily affairs of life that "they took no note"—that is, "until the flood came and swept them all away."—Matthew 24:39; Luke 17:26, 27.

What Does Noah's Experience Mean for You?

¹⁴ Such a situation is not at all hard for most of our readers to imagine. Why not? Because conditions in our day are very much like those that prevailed in the days

14. Why do we today not find it difficult to understand the situation that confronted Noah and his family?

of Noah. Jesus Christ said that this was to be expected. In his great prophecy about the time of his presence during the conclusion of the system of things, Jesus foretold: "Just as the days of Noah were, so the presence of the Son of man will be."—Matthew 24:37.

¹⁵ Has it turned out that way? Is the world today filled with violence? Yes! Over a hundred million people have died in wars in this century. Some of our readers have directly felt the effect of this. Even more have been threatened by criminals intent on getting their money or other valuables. And young ones have been exposed to violence at school.

¹⁶ However, Jehovah's servants experience more than the ravages of war and criminal violence in general. They are also subjected to violence because they are no part of the world but endeavor to be people of godly devotion. (2 Timothy 3:10-12) Sometimes that violence simply takes the form of pushing or slapping; at other times it involves destruction of property, vicious beatings, and even killings.—Matthew 24:9.

¹⁷ While engaging in such violence, ungodly men have, at times, brazenly declared their contempt for God. In one area in Africa, the police declared: "The government is ours. You go to God, if there is one, and ask him to come and help you." In prisons and concentration camps, Jehovah's Witnesses have been confronted by men like Baranowsky, in Sachsenhausen, Germany, who taunted: "I have taken up a fight with Jehovah. We will see who is the stronger, I or Jehovah." Shortly afterward, Baranowsky took ill and died; but others continue to manifest a similar attitude.

15, 16. (a) How is it true that, as in Noah's day, the earth today is filled with violence? (b) To what violence in particular have Jehovah's servants been subjected?

17. Is ungodliness rampant today? Explain.

Officials indulging in a crusade of persecution are not the only ones who display defiance of God. Around the world, servants of God hear and see things that give evidence that those who indulge in them have no fear of God in their hearts.

¹⁸ In these days that are so much like the time of Noah, we also witness interference by wicked spirits. (Revelation 12:7-9) These demons are the same angels that materialized as humans and married women in the days of Noah. When the Deluge came, their wives and children were destroyed, but those disobedient angels were forced back into the spirit realm. They no longer had a place in Jehovah's holy organization but were consigned to Tartarus, a condition of dense darkness, cut off from divine illumination. (2 Peter 2:4, 5) Operating under Satan's direction, they have continued to maintain close contact with humans and, although unable any longer to materialize, have endeavored to control men, women, and even children. Some of this is done through occult practices. They also stir up mankind to destroy one another in ways that defy human reason. But that is not all.

¹⁹ The Bible reveals that the demons are waging war against those "who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness to Jesus." (Revelation 12:12, 17) Those wicked spirits are the prime instigators of persecution of Jehovah's servants. (Ephesians 6:10-13) They use every conceivable means to coerce or entice faithful humans to break integrity to Jehovah and to stop proclaiming Jehovah's Kingdom with Jesus as the Messianic King.

18. In what ways are wicked spirits contributing to the agitated state of humankind?

19. (a) Against whom in particular do the demons direct their hatred? (b) What are demons trying to force us to do?

²⁰ The demons strive to hinder people who long for relief from their oppressive influence. A former spiritist in Brazil reports that when the Witnesses called at her home, demon voices ordered her not to open the door; but she did, and she learned the truth. In many areas the demons directly employ practitioners of witchcraft to try to stop the work of Jehovah's Witnesses. For example, in a village in Suriname, opposers of Jehovah's Witnesses contacted a spiritist who was well-known for being able to cause the sudden death of people simply by pointing his magic stick at them. With his entourage of dancers and drummers, the spiritist, possessed by a demon, confronted Jehovah's Witnesses. He uttered his magic formulas and pointed his stick at them. The villagers expected the Witnesses to drop dead, but it was the spiritist who fainted and had to be whisked away by his embarrassed supporters.

²¹ Even in areas where witchcraft and sorcery are not as openly practiced, every Witness of Jehovah has experienced what

20. How do the demons try to hinder people from breaking free from their control? (James 4:7)

21. As in Noah's day, how do the majority of people react to our preaching, and why?

Do You Remember?

- How did Peter show that Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial?
- What factors contributed to the violence in Noah's day?
- In view of the coming global Deluge, what responsibility did Noah have?
- What parallels with Noah's day do we see in our time?

it is like to try to preach to people who are so wrapped up in the everyday affairs of life that they do not want to be bothered. As it was in Noah's day, the vast majority 'take no note.' (Matthew 24:37-39) Some may admire our unity and achievements. But our spiritual building work—involving hours of personal study, regular meeting attendance, and field service—is all foolishness to them. They ridicule our confidence in the promises of God's Word because their lives are centered on the material possessions and sensual pleasures that they can have now.

²² Will Jehovah's loyal servants be forever subjected to abuse from those who have no love for God? By no means! What happened in Noah's day? At God's direction, Noah and his family moved into the completed ark. Then, at the divinely specified time, "all the springs of the vast watery deep were broken open and the floodgates of the heavens were opened." The Deluge continued until even the mountains were covered. (Genesis 7:11, 17-20) The angels that had forsaken their proper dwelling place were forced to abandon their materialized human bodies and return to the spirit realm. The Nephilim and all the rest of that world of ungodly people, including those who were too indifferent to act on Noah's warning, were destroyed. On the other hand, Noah and his wife and their three sons and the sons' wives were saved. Thus, Jehovah delivered Noah and his household out of the trial that they had loyally endured for so many years.

²³ Will Jehovah do the same for people of godly devotion today? There is absolutely no question about it. He has promised it, and he cannot lie.—Titus 1:2; 2 Peter 3:5-7.

22, 23. How do the events of Noah's day give sound assurance that Jehovah will deliver people of godly devotion out of trial?



PREPARE FOR DELIVERANCE INTO A NEW WORLD

"Remember the wife of Lot."—LUKE 17:32.

FTER telling about the marvelous deliverance that Jehovah performed in behalf of Noah and his family, the apostle Peter cited another historic example. He drew attention to the preservation of righteous Lot when Sodom and Gomorrah were reduced to ashes, as we read at 2 Peter 2:6-8. The details were preserved for our benefit. (Romans 15:4) Our taking to heart what occurred in connection with that deliverance can help to put us in line for preservation into God's new world.

1. What historic example of divine deliverance does our lesson today highlight, and how can it benefit us?

How We React to the World's Way of Life

2 Why were those cities and their inhabitants destroyed? The apostle Peter mentions indulgence in "loose conduct." (2 Peter 2:7) As indicated by the use of the Greek term from which that expression is translated, the people of Sodom and Gomorrah indulged in wrongdoing in a manner that displayed brazen disrespect, even contempt, for law and authority. Jude 7 says that they 'committed fornication excessively and went out after flesh for unnatural use.' The grossness of their con-

2. What conduct in Sodom and Gomorrah led to their destruction by God?

duct was manifest when the men of Sodom, "from boy to old man, all the people in one mob," surrounded the house of Lot and demanded that he turn over his guests for the men of Sodom to gratify their perverted appetites. And they shouted denunciations at Lot because he resisted their depraved demands.—Genesis 13:13; 19:4, 5, 9.

³ Lot had originally moved into the area near Sodom because of its potential for material prosperity. In time, he took up dwelling in the city itself. (Genesis 13:8-12; 14:12; 19:1) But he did not agree with the lewd practices of the men of the city, and those men did not view him as one of them, evidently because Lot and his family did not share in their social life. As 2 Peter 2:7, 8 says: "Lot . . . was greatly distressed by the indulgence of the law-defying people in loose conduct—for that righteous man by what he saw and heard while dwelling among them from day to day was tormenting his righteous soul by reason of their lawless deeds." Those conditions constituted a severe trial for Lot because, as a righteous man, he abhorred such conduct.

⁴ In our day too, the moral level of human society has become degraded. In many lands, more and more engage in premarital or extramarital sex. Even many young people in school are deeply involved in this way of life, and they ridicule those who do not join them. Homosexuals outspokenly identify themselves and parade through the streets of large cities to demand recognition. The clergy have joined in the reveling.

3. (a) How did Lot and his family come to be living in such a corrupt environment as Sodom? (b) What was Lot's reaction to the loose conduct of people in Sodom?

4. (a) In what ways are conditions today like those in ancient Sodom? (b) If we are like righteous Lot, how do we react to present corrupt conditions?

Officially, not many churches ordain known homosexuals and fornicators. Yet, in actuality, as news reports have repeatedly shown, it is not at all difficult to find homosexuals, fornicators, and adulterers in the ranks of the clergy. In fact, some religious leaders have been moved to other cities or have even been forced to resign over sex scandals. Lovers of righteousness are not in sympathy with such wickedness; they "abhor what is wicked." (Romans 12:9) Especially are they grieved when the conduct of people who claim to serve God brings reproach on his name and causes uninformed people to turn away from all religion in disgust.—Romans 2:24.

⁵ Year after year the situation grows worse. Will there be an end to it? Yes, there will! What Jehovah did to ancient Sodom and Gomorrah shows clearly that, at his appointed time, he will execute judgment. He will utterly destroy the wicked, but he will deliver his loyal servants.

Who or What Comes First in Life?

⁶ Only those who manifest true godly devotion will be spared. In this regard, consider what Jehovah's angels said to Lot before Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed. "Do you have anyone else here? Son-in-law and your sons and your daughters and all who are yours in the city, bring out of the place! For we are bringing this place to ruin." So Lot spoke to the young men who were to marry his daughters. He urged them repeatedly: "Get up! Get out of this place, because Jehovah is bringing the city to ruin!" Their relationship to the household of Lot

5. What question does Jehovah's destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah answer for us?

6. (a) What timely lesson is there in the account about the young men who were about to marry Lot's daughters? (b) How did the attitude of their prospective mates test Lot's daughters?

God's people are safeguarded by him like young birds under their parent's powerful wings

afforded them a special opportunity for deliverance, but they personally had to take action. They had to give tangible evidence of obedience to Jehovah. Instead, in their eyes Lot "seemed like a man who was joking." (Genesis 19:12-14) You can imagine how Lot's daughters felt when they learned what had happened. It put their loyalty to God to the test.

⁷ The next morning at dawn, the angels became urgent with Lot. They said: "Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are found here, for fear you may be swept away in the error of the city!" But "he kept lingering." (Genesis 19:15, 16) Why? What detained him? Was it material interests that he had there in Sodom—the very thing that had lured him into the area in the first place? If he clung to these, he would be destroyed with Sodom.

⁸ Out of compassion, the angels seized those in his family by the hand and hurried them out of the city. On the outskirts, Jehovah's angel commanded: "Escape for your soul! Do not look behind you and do not stand still in all the District! Escape to the mountainous region for fear you may be swept away!" Lot still hesitated.

7, 8. (a) When the angels urged Lot to take his family and flee, how did he react, and why was this unwise? (b) To be delivered, what was vital for Lot and his family?



Finally, after it was agreed that he could go to a location that was not so far, he and his family fled. (Genesis 19:17-22) There could be no further delay; obedience was vital.

⁹ However, the deliverance was not yet complete when they got away from Sodom. Genesis 19:23-25 tells us: "The sun had gone forth over the land when Lot arrived at Zoar. Then Jehovah made it rain sulphur and fire from Jehovah, from the heavens, upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah. So he went ahead overthrowing these cities, even the entire District and all the inhabitants of the cities and the plants of the ground." But where was Lot's wife?

¹⁰ She had fled with her husband. However, was she in full agreement with what he was doing? There is nothing to indicate that she in any way approved of the immorality of Sodom. But was her love for God stronger than her attachment to her

9, 10. (a) Why was being with her husband not sufficient to ensure preservation for Lot's wife? (b) When Lot's wife was killed, what further test was brought upon Lot and his daughters?

home and the material things she had there? (Compare Luke 17:31, 32.) Under pressure, what was in her heart became manifest. Evidently they were already near Zoar, perhaps at the point of entering the city, when she disobediently turned and looked back. And as the Bible record says, "she became a pillar of salt." (Genesis 19:26) Now a further test of loyalty faced Lot and his daughters. Was Lot's attachment to his deceased wife or the girls' feelings for their dead mother stronger than their love for Jehovah, who had brought about this calamity? Would they continue to obey God even though someone very close to them proved disloyal to him? With full trust in Jehovah, they did not look back.

¹¹ Yes, Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial. He knows how to deliver entire families that are united in pure worship; he also knows how to deliver individuals. When they truly love him, he shows great consideration in dealing with them. "He himself well knows the formation of us, remembering that we are dust." (Psalm 103:13, 14) But his deliverance is only for those who are people of godly devotion, those whose devotion is genuine, those whose obedience is an expression of loyalty.

Loving Preparations for a Greater Deliverance

¹² By what he caused in the days of Noah and of Lot, Jehovah did not remove all the wicked forever. As the scripture says, it simply set a pattern of things to come. Before those things were to arrive, Jehovah had in mind much more that he purposed to do to benefit people who love

11. What have we learned here about the deliverance that Jehovah provides?
12. What loving preparations was Jehovah going to make before bringing the deliverance that we so eagerly anticipate?

him. He was going to send his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to earth. Here, Jesus would clear God's name of reproach by demonstrating the kind of devotion that Adam as a perfect human should and could have rendered to God; but Jesus would do it under far more difficult circumstances. Jesus would lay down his perfect human life as a sacrifice so that offspring of Adam who exercised faith could have what Adam lost. Then, a "little flock" of loyal humans would be chosen by God to share with Christ in his heavenly Kingdom, and "a great crowd" would be gathered out of all nations to make up the foundation for a new human society. (Luke 12:32; Revelation 7:9) With that accomplished, God would perform the grand deliverance foreshadowed by events associated with the Deluge and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Why Decisive Action Is Urgent Now

¹³ Students of God's Word know that Jehovah has on many occasions performed acts of deliverance for his servants. However, in most cases the Bible does not say, 'As it was at that time, so the presence of the Son of man will be.' Why did the

^{13, 14. What can we learn from the fact that Peter used the destruction of ungodly people in the days of Lot and of Noah as examples?}

In Our Next Issue

■ Millions Now Dead
Will Live Again

■ Coping With
My Weaknesses

■ Your View of the Soul
Affects Your Life

apostle Peter, inspired by holy spirit, isolate just two examples? What was different about what occurred in the days of Lot and of Noah?

¹⁴ A definite indication is found at Jude 7, where we read that "Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them . . . are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of *everlasting fire*." Yes, the destruction of the gross sinners in those cities was eternal, as will be the destruction of the wicked at the end of the present system of things. (Matthew 25:46) The Flood of Noah's day is likewise referred to in contexts that discuss eternal judgments. (2 Peter 2:4, 5, 9-12; 3:5-7) So by the destruction of ungodly people in the days of Lot and of Noah, Jehovah demonstrated that he will deliver his servants by destroying *forever* those who practice unrighteousness.—2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

¹⁵ The destruction of the wicked brings no pleasure to Jehovah, nor does it bring pleasure to his servants. By means of his Witnesses, Jehovah urges people: "Turn back, turn back from your bad ways, for why is it that you should die?" (Ezekiel 33:11) Nevertheless, when people show no desire to heed this loving appeal but persist in their own selfish way of life, Jehovah's respect for his own holy name and his love for his loyal servants who suffer abuse at the hands of ungodly men require that he execute justice.

¹⁶ God's time to bring deliverance is very near! The attitudes and events that Jesus foretold as the sign of his presence and of the conclusion of the system of things are clearly in evidence. The fea-

15. (a) What urgent warning is given to those who engage in wicked practices? (b) Why will justice be executed on all who persist in unrighteousness?

16. (a) Why can we be confident that the foretold deliverance is very near? (b) From what and into what will deliverance be?

tures of that sign first began to appear over 75 years ago, and Jesus said that "this generation" would by no means pass away before God's execution of judgment on this ungodly world occurred. When Jehovah determines that the Kingdom message has been proclaimed to a sufficient extent in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, then the end of this wicked world will come, and with that will come deliverance for people of godly devotion. (Matthew 24:3-34; Luke 21:28-33) Deliverance from what? From the trials that they have had to undergo at the hands of the wicked, and from circumstances that have daily been a source of distress to them as lovers of righteousness. It will also be deliverance into a new world where sickness and death will be things of the past.

Divine Help With Deliverance in View

¹⁷ The question that we individually need to consider is, 'Am I ready for that act of God?' If we are trusting in ourselves or our own concept of righteousness, we are not ready. But if, like Noah, we are moved by "godly fear," then we are responding in faith to the direction that Jehovah gives us, and this will lead to our deliverance.—Hebrews 11:7.

¹⁸ Beautifully describing those who enjoy the protection that Jehovah gives even now, Psalm 91:1, 2 says: "Anyone dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will procure himself lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One. I will say to Jehovah: 'You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I will

17. (a) What sobering question should we ask ourselves? (b) How can we give evidence that, like Noah, we are moved by "godly fear"?

18. Why is learning genuine respect for theocratic authority an important part of our preparation for deliverance into the new world?

trust.’’ Here is a group of people who are safeguarded by God like young ones under the powerful wings of a parent bird. Their full trust is in Jehovah. They acknowledge that he is the Most High, the Almighty One. As a result, they respect theocratic authority and submit themselves to it, whether it is exercised by parents or by ‘‘the faithful and discreet slave.’’ (Matthew 24:45-47) Is that true of us individually? Like Noah, are we learning to do ‘‘all that Jehovah commands’’ us and to do things his way? (Genesis 6:22) If so, we are responding to the preparation that Jehovah is giving us for deliverance into his righteous new world.

¹⁹ That preparation also involves giving attention to our figurative heart. ‘‘Jehovah is the examiner of hearts.’’ (Proverbs 17:3) He helps us to realize that it is not what we appear to be on the outside that counts but, rather, the inner person, the heart. While we do not indulge in violence or immorality like the world around us, we need to be on guard against being enticed or entertained by these things. Like Lot, we should feel distressed by the very existence of such lawless deeds. Those who hate what is bad will not be seeking ways to indulge in it; yet, people who do not hate it may physically refrain from it while mentally wishing that they could share. ‘‘O you lovers of Jehovah, hate what is bad.’’—Psalm 97:10.

²⁰ Jehovah is lovingly educating us to shun not only immoral conduct but also a materialistic way of life. ‘‘Be content with sustenance and covering,’’ his Word coun-

19. (a) What is our figurative heart, and why is it vital that we give it attention? (Proverbs 4:23) (b) How can we benefit from Lot’s example regarding our reaction to worldly enticements?

20. (a) In what ways does the Bible warn us against a materialistic way of life? (b) How can we tell whether the Bible’s vital lessons on materialism have taken hold in our heart?

sels. (1 Timothy 6:8) Noah and his sons had to leave their homes behind when they went into the ark. Lot and his family, too, had to abandon home and possessions in order to save their lives. Where have we fixed our affections? ‘‘Remember the wife of Lot.’’ (Luke 17:32) Jesus urged: ‘‘Keep on, then, seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness.’’ (Matthew 6:33) Are we doing that? If Jehovah’s righteous standards guide us and if the proclaiming of the good news of his Kingdom is the first concern in our lives, then we are, indeed, responding to his preparation of a people for deliverance into his new world.

²¹ To people of godly devotion who would see fulfilled the sign of his presence in Kingdom power, Jesus said: ‘‘Raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near.’’ (Luke 21:28) Have you seen that sign as it has developed in every detail? Then have confidence that fulfillment of Jehovah’s promise of deliverance is very near at hand! Be fully convinced that ‘‘Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial.’’—2 Peter 2:9.

21. Why can we rightly anticipate that Jehovah’s promise of deliverance will soon be fulfilled?

What Have You Learned?

- Like Lot, how should we react to the world’s way of life?
- What tests did Lot and his family face even while fleeing Sodom?
- How do the examples used by Peter emphasize the urgency of taking a firm stand on Jehovah’s side now?
- In preparing his people for deliverance, what vital lessons is Jehovah teaching?

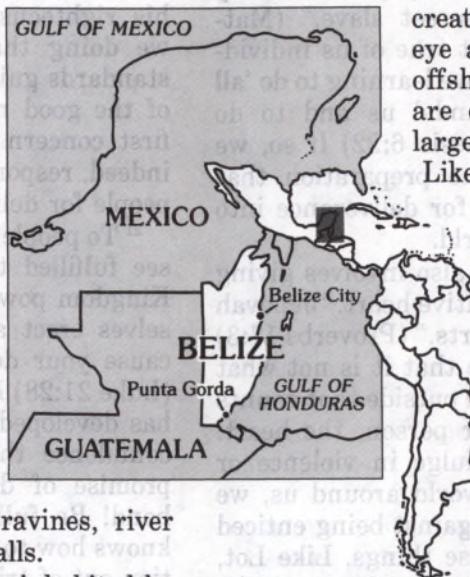
Fishing for Men' in BELIZE

BEIZE is a small subtropical country nestled between Mexico and Guatemala. Off its coastline, the turquoise-blue Caribbean is dotted with atolls and coral reefs that form the longest barrier reef in the Western Hemisphere. Most of the land along the coast is dry and flat. But inland toward the south, the Maya Mountains reach an altitude of 3,680 feet. This once thickly wooded mountainous region is characterized by ravines, river gorges, and beautiful waterfalls.

The country was originally inhabited by the Maya, as many ruins and artifacts testify. In the 1600's, it began to be settled by ex-buccaneers who had turned to logwood and mahogany cutting. Later, it became the colony of British Honduras. Independence and nationhood came in 1981.

Today, Belize has a population of about 175,000. It is truly a mixed company, made up of Afro-Belizeans (Creoles), Mestizos, Maya, Garinagus (Caribs), Asians, Europeans, and others. Because of the British background of Belize, English is the official language, with Spanish a strong second language. Creole is also widely spoken, as are Maya, Garifuna, and other languages.

The 175-mile-long barrier reef, with its brightly colored corals, castlelike turrets, and caves, harbors a wide variety of sea



creatures that delight the eye and the palate. These offshore fishing grounds are one of the country's largest natural resources.

Likewise, with its wide variety of people and culture, Belize has proved to be a productive 'fishing' ground for those who respond to Jesus' invitation: "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men."

—Matthew 4:19.

'Fishing' Getting Started

It was in 1923 that James Gordon, a Witness baptized in 1918 in Jamaica, moved to Belize. He began casting his net, as it were, among his neighbors in and around the village of Bomba in the Belize District. His 'fishing equipment' came to include a very large mahogany case containing books, carried in one hand, and his phonograph carried in the other.

About 1931 Freida Johnson, a full-time minister from Texas, came to Belize in the course of a tour to spread the good news in Central American countries. During her six-month stay, she contacted a baker named Thaddius Hodgeson, who in turn introduced the truth to a fellow baker, Arthur Randall. Brother Hodgeson carried



on the work until the arrival in 1945 of the first Gilead-trained missionaries, Charles Heyen and Elmer Ihrig.

The next year, during a visit of N. H. Knorr and F. W. Franz, then president and vice-president respectively of the Watch Tower Society, a branch office was established there. Since then the "net" has been cast in all parts of Belize, and the work has grown steadily. The number of those sharing in 'fishing for men' reached a peak of 844 in 1989.

'Casting the Net' Afield

Today, Belize City and other towns are worked regularly by those preaching the good news of the Kingdom, but many of the outlying villages and cays (islands) are not. Such was the case with San Pedro, on Ambergris Cay, until a few years ago.

For many years, the only contact the inhabitants of San Pedro had with the truth was when Witnesses from the mainland went over for brief visits. The Witnesses left Bible literature with interested people, but they could not follow up the interest because they had to return to the mainland. Later, a family of four came to Belize to serve where the need was greater. They volunteered to move to the island even though they had to live in a recre-

ational vehicle until they could build a house. But the "fishing" was good. They started many Bible studies, and today there are over 20 "fishers of men" on the island. In September 1986, with the help of Witnesses from all over the country, they built their own Kingdom Hall in just one weekend.

The branch territory also includes several isolated Maya villages in the southern Toledo District, where the Ketchi and Maya Mopan languages are spoken. Once a year, during the dry season when the rivers and mountains can be crossed, a group of Witnesses used to visit these villages. Carrying everything they needed on their backs, they walked to the villages, gave the inhabitants a witness, and returned to call on those who showed interest.

On one such annual 'bush trip' in 1968, the brothers visited the village of Crique Sarco. A young girl found a copy of the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life*, which a brother had inadvertently dropped. She recounts what followed.

"That book was precious to me, but I would only look at the few pictures, and I never read it. The annual visits the brothers paid my father impressed the name Jehovah on my mind, and I came to know that He has an organization. When I started high school in the town of Punta Gorda, the question came up in class one day: What is God's name? When I answered, 'Jehovah,' I was given an 'automatic jug' (five demerits plus a disciplinary work assignment, such as toilet cleaning). Then the priest called me in and told me that I must not use that name again or I could be expelled from school. At that I left the school voluntarily and never returned."

"My next contact with the truth was many years later when I was married and living in Corozal Town in the north. I saw a piece of paper blowing in the breeze,



*Construction of a Kingdom Hall
in San Pedro, Ambergris Cay*



picked it up, and found that it was the cover of the booklet *Jehovah's Witnesses and the Question of Blood*. I commented to a friend that this was one belief of the Witnesses I could not agree with. She said that perhaps some day I would agree with them. The next day, a brother called and said he had heard that I was interested in studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. Even though I told him I really wasn't, he explained that it would not take much time, so I accepted. At last, that *Truth* book that I had cherished for eight years was put to use!

"Soon, my in-laws were urging my husband to stop my study. Then we moved to an isolated village, and I lost touch with the Witnesses. Finally, a sister called on me in the house-to-house ministry, and I renewed my study. My husband did all he could to disrupt the study. He would get drunk, make a lot of noise, chase me out of the house, or threaten to have another woman. But I stood firm and relied heavily on Jehovah in prayer. Two years ago Jehovah answered my prayers far beyond my expectations.

"One day my husband came home with his face all bruised, and he went straight to bed. Later that day he said, 'I want to study the Bible too!' That change brought

me great joy but also the wrath of his family. 'Changing religion is like changing parents,' they told him, 'so you are no longer our son!' Now that my husband and I were united, we made rapid progress. On December 5, 1987, we were baptized at our first Special Assembly Day."

So it is that "fish" are being caught even in the remote areas of Belize. The brochure *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!* has been translated into Ketchi in the hope that many more in these villages may be helped to accept the good news. Those who have been saved from the polluted waters of Satan's system are enjoying the crystal-clear waters of truth in Jehovah's spiritual paradise.

For instance, a young man in Belize City learned of Jehovah's clean standards from the Bible. He gave up his addiction to marijuana and other drugs and was baptized. Soon after, he became a full-time "fisher of men." He also has the privilege of being a ministerial servant in his congregation. Hundreds of others have been helped to clean up their lives by legalizing their marriages and registering them with the authorities. Many others have been taught to read and write so as to be able to study God's Word for themselves. So the educational work of Jehovah's Wit-



nesses in Belize is not only satisfying the spiritual needs of the people but also bringing other beneficial results to the community.

Bringing in the Net

Once Jesus' disciples followed his directions and cast their net on the other side of their boat. As a result, "they were no longer able to draw it in because of the multitude of the fishes." (John 21:6) Similarly, the response to the good news is so great that the Witnesses in Belize are finding it a challenge to take care of the multitude coming into the organization.

There is a great need for mature brothers to take the lead in the congregations. On the average, there are only one or two elders in each congregation. Then, there is the challenge of reaching all parts of the country with the good news on a regular basis. Many areas can be reached by roads, but because of the lack of public transportation, it is hard for Witnesses to cultivate the interest found or for interested people to get to the meetings regularly. Walking or using a dugout canoe is still the only practical way to reach some isolated areas.

The Witnesses in Belize also experience difficulty in finding adequate facilities for their weekly congregation meetings and

annual conventions and assemblies. The total attendance at the 1987 "Trust in Jehovah" District Conventions was over 2,200, about three times the number of publishers in the country. For those conventions, the brothers erected a temporary structure on a property near Ladyville. Now, they are looking into the possibility of building a permanent Assembly Hall on the site.

While the challenge is great, the Witnesses are enthusiastically responding to it. They have demonstrated this by increasing their share in the field ministry. In 1979 the publishers spent, on the average, 8.3 hours each month in the preaching work. Now they spend an average of 11.3 hours each month. There has also been a fine increase in the pioneer ranks. In 1979 there was an average of 10 auxiliary pioneers and 12 regular pioneers a month. Now there are 51 auxiliary pioneers and 42 regular pioneers each month, ranging from 14 to 74 years of age.

The prospects for expansion are great, judging by the outstanding attendance at the Memorial of Christ's death held on March 22, 1989. The brothers worked hard to invite interested people. The result? A total attendance of 3,834—more than four times the peak number of publishers! It was thrilling to see the many ethnic groups—Creole, Mestizo, Maya, European, Chinese, Lebanese, and others—mixing together in this way.

In addition, the 844 publishers in the country are conducting more than a thousand home Bible studies. By continuing to look to the Head of the congregation, Jesus Christ, for direction, many more in Belize will no doubt respond to the invitation to become "fishers of men."

"STAND FIRM"

Do Not Stumble

THE greatest issue facing mankind today is that of universal sovereignty. Jehovah invites us to take a stand and be counted in this matter by submitting to his appointed King, Christ Jesus. There is an urgent need to respond to his invitation, and in just the past five years, more than a million individuals have done so. But these have found that more is involved in taking a stand than merely a onetime decision to serve Jehovah. There must be a lifelong dedication. Will we maintain our stand when the going gets difficult? Or will we gradually weaken, after initially 'standing firm'?—1 Corinthians 16:13; Hebrews 2:1.

If you have not found the Christian course easy, take comfort from the knowledge that the same was true of Jesus Christ. Yes, even God's only-begotten Son had to pray for strength in order to maintain his stand, especially when his supreme test was approaching. Picture him in the garden of Gethsemane, praying earnestly: "Abba, Father, all things are



possible to you; remove this cup from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want." (Mark 14:36) He knew that the course ahead was difficult. He was especially aware that his Father's name would be affected. Hence, the only perfect man on earth was not ashamed to ask for help.

When the going gets difficult for us, we have the same source of strength that Jesus had. We can pray to Jehovah for help so that we do not stumble or fall. But what kind of hazards may present themselves to make us stumble? Knowing this and preparing *in advance* may perhaps help us to avoid stumbling.

Persecution Can Stumble Us

The Bible warns: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12) Persecution can cause us to stumble, and it comes in many forms. (Mark 4:17) It may be legal bans—bringing the danger of imprisonment and even death—mob violence, faith-sapping day-to-day opposition of a determined, opposed mate, or constant mockery of schoolmates.

Persecution is difficult to endure, but we are warned that it will occur in one form or another. Hence, we can build up our faith now and learn to rely on Jehovah's strength so that when the time comes, we will endure in that strength. (1 Peter 4:13, 14; 5:6-11) However, stumbling blocks are often more subtle than the vicious assault of persecution.

Disappointments Can Weaken Faith

Who does not remember the crushed feeling that came when we were children and felt let down? Do you recall the time when Dad promised a special treat for the family and then for some reason changed his mind? Or the time he was going to take you to the zoo and at the last minute had to cancel out? How disappointed you were!

Adult Christians too can be disappointed, and this has in some cases led to spiritual disaster. Some set their hope on a date when they were sure Armageddon would come. When nothing happened on that day, they felt let down. Others were disappointed when a hoped-for privilege did not materialize. Moreover, people can be disappointing. One 18-year-old girl told her parents that she was so disappointed in the conduct of some of the young men in the congregation—and the failure of their parents to discipline them—that she wanted nothing more to do with the truth.

While disappointment is understandable under all these circumstances, should the disappointed ones be stumbled out of their relationship with Jehovah? Imagine Jesus' disappointment when his apostles persisted in arguing over who was the greatest among them, thus betraying an ambitious attitude. (Luke 9:46; 22:24) Imagine, too, Job's disappointment when the three companions who were supposed to be there to help him turned on him and started questioning his faithfulness! (Job 22:5-10) Yet, Jesus and Job did not stumble.

All humans are weak, so it would be unreasonable to let others' failings affect our relationship with Jehovah. (Psalm 51:5) The imperfection of some should not blind us to the wonderful work Jehovah is doing as he gathers "all things together again in the Christ." (Ephesians 1:9, 10) Keep in mind that it is imperfect, fallen humans like us that Jehovah is gathering, humans who need discipline and refining in order to grow strong. (Psalm 130:3) Our

enemy is not our imperfect Christian brother but Satan, who wants to devour us if he can. He will not succeed if we 'take our stand against him, solid in the faith.' (1 Peter 5:8, 9) If we have such faith, we will by no means "come to disappointment."—Romans 9:33.

Self-Condemnation Can Destroy

Some have lost their relationship with Jehovah God because of a sense of unworthiness. Conscious of their own weaknesses and shortcomings, they come to the conclusion that Jehovah would never accept their service. They feel that for someone like them to claim to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses is just hypocrisy. Have you ever been hard on yourself like that? If so, you should fight against such feelings.

Do you feel unworthy to serve Jehovah? Then ask yourself, 'Who is worthy of this great privilege?' All Christians have a constant fight against their own imperfections. Even the apostle Paul complained: "When I wish to do what is right, what is bad is present with me." (Romans 7:21) Was Paul a hypocrite because he sometimes did things that were wrong? No. A hypocrite is one who pretends to be what he is not. If we strive to do what is right but slip occasionally in spite of ourselves, is that making a pretense about something? Of course not.

The Bible exhorts us to "put on the new personality." (Ephesians 4:24) Does that mean, though, that we lose all the traits of the old personality? No. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said that the new personality is "being made new" through accurate knowledge. (Colossians 3:9, 10) The expression "being made new" implies a continuing action. So changing our personality is an ongoing process. It is not surprising, then, that on occasion we discover flaws in ourselves.

This is not, of course, to minimize the seriousness of sin, nor does it mean that we

can give in to temptation without a fight, assuming that Jehovah will automatically forgive us. But it does help us not to be unreasonably critical of ourselves. And it makes us love Jehovah all the more because he provided Christ's ransom sacrifice so that we can serve Him in spite of our inherently sinful nature.

The apostle John presented a balanced view of the matter when he said: "I am writing you these things that you may not commit a sin." But then he realistically added: "Yet, if anyone does commit a sin [due to human imperfection], we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ." (1 John 2:1) Rather than being excessively self-condemning, this insight into our condition and the help Jehovah has provided leads us to echo Paul's words: "Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!"—Romans 7:25.

Do Not Stay Stumbled

Jesus gave a stern warning to any who might be a cause for stumbling: "Whoever stumbles one of these little ones who put faith in me, it is more beneficial for him to have hung around his neck a millstone such as is turned by an ass and to be sunk in the wide, open sea." (Matthew 18:6) But what about the one stumbled? If we are stumbled by somebody or some circumstance, should we excuse ourselves and say, "Well, it isn't my fault, so I won't serve Jehovah anymore"?

Consider an illustration. Have you ever slipped on a patch of ice or tripped over a step? Perhaps the hazard took you by surprise. It is understandable that you found yourself sprawled on the ground. But what did you do next? Did you say: "It's not my fault that I am lying here. It's the ice [or the step] that is to blame. So I will not get up again"? More likely, you stood up and walked away from the embarrassing scene as quickly as possible.

Would not the same be true in spiritual matters? If we are offended by some circumstance or by some fellow Christian, that is a serious problem that should be handled. However, if we stay stumbled, insisting on blaming someone else for our problem, is it not true that our situation becomes more and more our own fault?

Happily, if we are stumbled, the elders and other mature ones in the congregation are more than willing to help. (Galatians 6:1) And Jehovah himself gives strength to those who desire to serve him despite difficulties. (Philippians 4:13) So we should always be ready to ask for help if it seems that something is going to interfere with our firm stand for Jehovah and his Kingdom. Then we will not give Satan a victory by being stumbled and staying down.

Where Do You Stand?

Each day, dedicated servants of God face issues that test their devotion to Jehovah. No matter what they have to contend with, they must stand up and be counted on the side of Jehovah's Messianic King. The powerful rulers of this earth have taken their stand "against Jehovah and against his anointed one." What a privilege we have to stand for him!—Psalm 2:2.

However, we cannot stand against the influence of this whole world system on our own, so we are comforted by Jesus' promise to be with his congregation "until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:20) He will support us. In addition, great help comes when we stick close to Jehovah and seek support from him. Turning to his Word can give us strength. When we may feel unable to bear up, Psalm 55:22 invites us to 'throw our burden upon Jehovah himself, and he himself will sustain us. Never will he allow the righteous one to totter.' Yes, the Bible urges all of God's people to "stand firm in the faith"—and not to stumble.—1 Corinthians 16:13.

Do You Remember?

Have you found the recent issues of *The Watchtower* of practical value to you? Then why not test your memory with the following?

□ What must we do if we are to realize the harmony and peace for people of all races envisioned at Isaiah 2:4?

First, we must acknowledge that our Creator, Jehovah, has the right to instruct us "about his ways." And second, we must have an earnest desire to conform to God's laws by saying: "We will walk in his paths." (Isaiah 2:2, 3) —12/15, pages 5, 6.

□ Why are Jehovah's Witnesses not discouraged and disheartened by worldwide hatred and opposition?

Jesus foretold that such opposition and hatred would be an identifying mark of genuine worshippers. (John 15:20, 21; 2 Timothy 3:12) So proclaimers of the good news are reassured that they have divine approval. In addition, Jehovah's Witnesses know that they have the backing of the Most High God, Jehovah.—1/1, page 12.

□ What are some basic requirements that we must meet if our prayers are to be answered?

We must sincerely believe that God exists. We must be "earnestly seeking him," confident that he will reward those who do so. (Hebrews 11:6) Also, we must approach Jehovah through Jesus Christ and him alone. (John 14:6, 14)—1/15, pages 4, 6.

□ What is "godly devotion"? (1 Timothy 3:16)

Godly devotion is reverence, worship, and service to God, with

loyalty to his universal sovereignty.—1/15, page 11.

□ Who is "the man of lawlessness" that Paul speaks of at 2 Thessalonians 2:3?

Paul is not speaking of a single individual, for he states that this "man" was evident in Paul's day and would continue in existence until Jehovah destroyed him at this system's end. Hence, "the man of lawlessness" is a symbolic expression. Evidence shows that he is the body of proud, ambitious clergymen of Christendom, who over the centuries have set themselves up as a law unto themselves.—2/1, page 11.

□ How can greed be eliminated?

Greed among humans can only be eliminated through proper education and training, with strict guidelines, or rules of conduct, being followed. Such education must emanate from a source that is itself free from greed. Only the God of heaven can supply this kind of education, and it is found in his written textbook, the Holy Bible.—2/15, page 5.

□ If personal Bible study is to result in the developing of godly devotion, what should the study include?

The objective of personal study cannot simply be to cover pages of material and thus fill the mind with information. Instead, when a portion of God's Word is read, time must be taken to reflect on the material to determine what it teaches about Jehovah's qualities and ways so that the student can become more like Je-

hovah in these respects.—3/1, page 13.

□ Why should personal Bible study include a regular reading of the Gospel accounts of Jesus?

Jesus' example helps us to cultivate godly devotion. Jesus knew his Father better than anyone else, so he could closely imitate Jehovah's ways and qualities. Hence, he set for us the perfect example of godly devotion. (John 1:18; 14:9; Romans 13:14)—3/1, page 19.

□ In Jesus' illustration of the talents, what was meant by putting the talents to work? (Matthew 25:19-23)

Putting the talents to work meant faithfully acting as ambassadors of God, making disciples, and dispensing spiritual truths to the household of God. (Matthew 24:45; 28:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 5:20) —3/15, page 13.

□ In what three aspects is the Bible unique compared to all other sources of counsel?

First, its counsel is always beneficial. (Psalm 93:5) Second, the Bible has stood the test of time. (Isaiah 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25) Third, the wide range of the Bible's counsel is unequaled. No matter what problem or decision we face, there is wisdom in the Bible that can help us.—4/1, page 13.

□ What are two lines of evidence that demonstrate that the Bible is the Word of God, not of man?

The unparalleled wisdom of the Bible and its power to change people. (Proverbs 2:1, 5, 6; Hebrews 4:12)—4/1, page 21.

THE MOABITE STONE

destroyed but not lost

THE Moabite, or Mesha, Stone was deliberately broken up within a year of its discovery in 1868. It was almost 3,000 years old. A piece of polished black basalt with a neatly rounded top, it was 44 inches high, 28 inches wide, and 14 inches thick. Some time after it was broken up, 2 large and 18 smaller fragments were recovered, but a third of the stone was irretrievably lost.

How was such an extraordinary artifact almost lost forever? And how valuable is it to students of the Bible?

Intrigue and Distrust

F. A. Klein was the first and last European to see the stone in its unbroken state. It was lying among the ruins of Dibon to the northeast of the Dead Sea. He made some brief sketches of parts of the 35-line inscription within its raised border and, upon returning to Jerusalem, reported the find to his Prussian superior. The script was immediately identified as Phoenician and its importance recognized. The Royal Museum of Berlin put up money to buy the stone, but soon other interested parties were contending for it. Alerted to the value of their prize, the local sheikhs hid it and raised its price to ridiculous heights.

A French archaeologist managed to get a paper squeeze of the writing, but because the squeeze had to be snatched away before it was dry, the impression was barely legible. In the meantime, orders came from Damascus for the Bedouin to surrender their stone to government officials. Rather than comply, the Bedouin determined to destroy it. So they lit a fire

around the precious relic and repeatedly doused it with water. When the stone fractured, the fragments were quickly distributed among local families to be placed in their granaries, ostensibly in order to ensure a blessing for their crops. It was also the best way for individuals to negotiate personally for the sale of the scattered fragments.

Biblical History Comes to Life

With the aid of plaster casts and paper pressings to augment the pieces that were purchased, the inscription on the stone was ultimately recovered. When the full text was revealed, scholars were astounded. The ancient stela was described at the time as "the most remarkable monolith that has ever been discovered."

King Mesha of Moab erected the Moabite Stone to his god Chemosh to commemorate Mesha's breaking of Israel's domination, which, he says, had lasted 40 years and was allowed by Chemosh because he was "angry with his land." This revolt of Moab is usually considered to be related to the events recorded in the third chapter of 2 Kings. On the monument, Mesha boasts of being very religious, of building cities and a highway, and of winning a victory over Israel. In this, he gives all credit to his god Chemosh. Mesha's defeat and the sacrifice of his own son—reported in the Bible—are, as one would expect, omitted in this self-glorifying inscription.

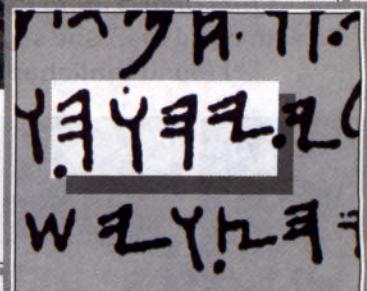
Many locations listed by Mesha as places he captured are mentioned in the Bible, among them Medeba, Ataroth,



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

(Above) The land of Moab
(Left) The reconstructed
Moabite Stone
(Right) The Tetragrammaton
as it appears on the artifact

Musée du Louvre, Paris



The Bible in the British Museum

Nebo, and Jahaz. Thus, the stone supports the accuracy of the Bible's accounts. Outstanding, however, is Mesha's use of the Tetragrammaton, YHWH, the name of Israel's God, in the 18th line of the record. There Mesha brags: "I took from there [Nebo] the [vessels] of Yahweh, dragging them before Chemosh." Outside of the Bi-

ble, this is probably the earliest record of the use of the divine name.

In 1873 the Moabite Stone was restored, with plaster casts of the missing text added, and put on exhibition in the Louvre museum, Paris, where it has remained. A facsimile can be seen in the British Museum, London.

ARE YOU Your Own Idol?

Without realizing it, some humans make idols of themselves. The Bible explains at Ephesians 5:5: "For you know this, recognizing it for yourselves, that no fornicator or unclean person or greedy person—which means being an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and of God." (Colossians 3:5; compare Galatians 5:19-21.) Fleshly desires can come between a person and God. Paul

says of such that "their god is their belly." (Philippians 3:18, 19) In other words, they have another "god" apart from Jehovah, putting first their own fleshly desires. Such conduct can exclude a person from God's Kingdom. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) There is good reason, then, to heed the words of the apostle Paul: "Therefore, my beloved ones, flee from idolatry."—1 Corinthians 10:14.

'Counsel in the Book Worked'

That is what a youth from Maryland, U.S.A., writes regarding the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*. "I read the whole book in two days," she says, "and couldn't stop telling people about it.

"I found that chapter 6, 'Why Are My Brother and Sister So Hard to Get Along With?,' helped me because at

times I feel kind of jealous of my older sister. But I was quick to realize by reading that I shouldn't feel jealous because she had certain rights that I didn't have. When an argument seemed to be coming, I applied the counsel in the book. It worked! Now a stronger relationship is building between my sister and me."

