

Awake!

April 8, 1992



EASTER
What Does It Mean to You?

Also in This Issue:
“I Wept for Joy”



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Easter has been acclaimed as the principal religious celebration of Christendom. Many people consider it pivotal to Christian faith. What is your view of Easter? And most important, what does it mean to God?



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Young people want to know why they should apply themselves in school when so many others do not



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What Does Easter Mean to You?

IT IS 8:30 in the evening. In the gloom of a 300-year-old church in northern Africa, some 20 deacons in white robes are chanting and beating their drums. The fragrance of frankincense diffuses from the censers. Now a group of priests joins the ceremony, reading the Bible in Geez, an ancient liturgical language. Worshipers listen. Only a few of those present understand the words. The ritual continues until three in the morning.

In Vatican City the pope holds a special Mass. His audience for this extraordinary meeting consists of the full Vatican diplomatic body, together with hundreds of cardinals, prelates, priests, and nuns and thousands of pilgrims.

Across the Atlantic, in New York City, the police have set up barriers to prevent vehicles from entering glamorous Fifth Avenue. A procession of elegantly dressed New Yorkers—men in top hats and tails and women wearing flamboyant bonnets—promenade down the avenue in colorful exuberance.

What is the occasion? The celebration of Easter. All over the world, there are people who hold this religious observance in high esteem. Some have called it the queen of festivals and *festum festorum*—Latin for “feast of feasts.”

How Important Is It to You?

What do you think about Easter? Do you know why it is celebrated? Many do not. A

survey conducted in Britain revealed that 1 out of every 3 Britons does not know the reason for Easter. Yet, in Britain, as well as in most other countries in the world, Easter remains the most important religious celebration of Christendom.

According to *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Easter is the “principal festival of the Christian Church Year, celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his Crucifixion.” The book *Easter—Its Story and Meaning* explains that Easter is the “greatest feast of the Christian Year, celebrated with the utmost joy, because it promises a like resurrection to all who have accepted the Faith of Christ.” Do you take the celebration of Easter that seriously? Do you really believe that Easter has something to do with your prospects for life in the future?

Many do not view Easter with such reverence. Commenting on the commercialization of Easter, one newspaper called it “The Greatest Story Ever Sold.” It added: “Easter, the most important Christian holiday, has become the second-biggest holiday for gift giving, toymakers say.” The biggest, of course, is Christmas, and some church officials feel that the secularization of Easter has followed the pattern of the secularization of Christmas.

For the 1989 Easter season, for example, candymakers in the United States geared up for projected sales of \$815 million. It is the

second largest candy season in the United States after Christmas. One company produces more than a hundred types of Easter rabbits.

According to *The Detroit News*, Jack Santino, professor of folklore and popular culture at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, admitted that the secularization of Easter is "typical" of today's consumer-oriented society. The newspaper added that the Easter "bunny—not the resurrection—has become the focus of Easter."

Just Another Holiday

In the Northern Hemisphere, Easter heralds the beginning of spring and is generally

Emblems of Easter have become symbols of fun and games

accompanied by a week's vacation from schools and colleges. So where possible, many young people flock to warm-weather resorts for wild beach-parties. Others view the Easter season simply as the end of the ski season—their last chance to enjoy the slopes.

In Norway, where almost 88 percent of the population belongs to the Lutheran Evangelical state church, only about 14 percent of those surveyed in a recent study said that they

would consider going to church on Easter. About 75 percent admitted that they no longer view Easter as a religious holiday. They said they would rather go skiing.

For many, some of the important emblems of Easter have become symbols of fun and games. The egg, for example, is probably the most popular symbol of Easter in many countries. The symbolism of the egg is very religious. Supposedly, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is represented by the new life that emerges from a seemingly lifeless egg. Hence, the custom of decorating eggs with attractive colors and designs is an important feature of the Easter celebration.

But for some, the main value of the Easter egg is to entertain children. In one town the traditional Easter egg hunt at the local church ends up in an egg fight! "For children," notes Robert J. Myers in his book *Celebrations*, "Easter means fun, surprises, and probably enough candy and sweets to last until Halloween!"

In theory, Easter continues to hold the highest position among Christendom's religious holidays. In practice, however, it seems that more and more people regard it as of little significance, as just another holiday. What about you? What does Easter mean to you? Before you answer this question, however, should you not first ask: "What does Easter mean to God? Is the celebration pleasing to him? Are Christians really required to celebrate Easter?"

Awake!

Why Awake! Is Published *Awake!* is for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it 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 before the generation that saw the events of 1914 passes away.

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What Does Easter Mean to God?

EASTER—the “queen of festivals!” *festum festorum!*—is said to celebrate the resurrection of Christ. But what did Jesus have to say about commemorating his resurrection? Did the apostles command us to celebrate it? Is the celebration of Easter a God-given command or a man-made tradition? You can easily find answers to these questions by examining two sources of information—history and the Bible.

History Speaks

First, what does history have to say? Writing in the fifth century C.E., historian Socrates Scholasticus stated in his *Ecclesiastical History*: “It seems to me that the feast of Easter has been introduced into the church from some old usage, just as many other customs have been established.”

The book *Curiosities of Popular Customs* explains that it was the policy of the “Church to give a Christian significance to such of the extant pagan ceremonies as could not be rooted out. In the case of Easter the conversion was peculiarly easy. Joy at the rising of the

natural sun, and at the awakening of nature from the death of winter, became joy at the rising of the Sun of righteousness, at the resurrection of Christ from the grave. Some of the pagan observances which took place about the 1st of May were also shifted to correspond with the celebration of Easter. Many new features were added.”

In his book *Celebrations*, Robert J. Myers agrees, stating that “many of the pagan rebirth rites, celebrated at the vernal equinox, became part of the feast.” These statements are supported by *The New Encyclopædia Britannica*, which says: “As at Christmas, so also at Easter, popular customs reflect many ancient pagan survivals—in this instance, connected with spring fertility rites, such as the symbols of the Easter egg and the Easter hare or rabbit.”

Of Pagan Origin?

Evidently, then, Easter as it is celebrated today is saturated with pagan rites and customs. This is not to say, however, that the celebration of Easter has no relationship to some Biblical events.

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What Is the Origin of the Word “Easter”?

■ “The name, which is in use only among the English- and German-speaking peoples, is derived, in all probability, from that of a goddess of the heathen Saxons, Ostara, Oster, or Eastr. She was the personification of the East, of the morning, of the spring.”

—*Curiosities of Popular Customs*, by William S. Walsh.

■ “We are told by an ancient English chronicler, the Venerable Bede, that the word ‘Easter’ was originally the name of an Anglo-Saxon goddess of the dawn, known as Eostre or Ostara, whose principal festival was kept at the vernal equinox. We only have Bede’s word for it, for no record of such a goddess is to be found elsewhere, but it is unlikely that Bede, as a devout Christian, would have gone out of his way to invent a pagan origin for Easter. But whether or not there was ever such a goddess, it seems most likely that some historical connection must exist between the words ‘Easter’ and ‘East’, where the sun rises.”—*Easter—Its Story and Meaning*, by Alan W. Watts.

■ “The origin of the term for the feast of Christ’s Resurrection has been popularly considered to be from the Anglo-Saxon Eastr, a goddess of spring. However, recent studies by Knobloch . . . present another explanation.”—*New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

■ “The English name *Easter*, like the German *Ostern*, probably derives from *Eostur*, the Norse word for the spring season, and not from *Eostre*, the name of an Anglo-Saxon goddess.”—*The Encyclopedia of Religion*.

For instance, Easter has been referred to as the successor to the Jewish Passover, a Biblical event. The book *Curiosities of Popular Customs* tells us that “in the early Church Easter was identical in date with the Passover, as in fact the two festivals are identical in their root.” It is not surprising then, that in a number of languages, such as French, Greek, Italian, Spanish, and others, the word for Easter and the word for Passover are identical or similar.

However, early Christians did not hold an annual feast to celebrate a Christianized version of the Jewish Passover. The *Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions* states regarding Easter: “The primitive observance was actually the anniversary (14 Nisan, according to the Jewish lunar calendar) of Jesus’ crucifixion.”

The Bible tells us that on the evening before his death, Jesus met with his disciples in a large room to observe the Jewish Passover. (Mark 14:12-16) It was after this, his last Passover, that Jesus instituted what is known as the Lord’s Evening Meal. Then he commanded his disciples: “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.”—Luke 22:19.

Pagan observances were shifted to correspond with the celebration of Easter

This Lord’s Evening Meal, which was to be celebrated once a year, was in commemoration of Jesus’ death. The apostle Paul said regarding this anniversary: “As often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord.”—1 Corinthians 11:25, 26.

Adulterating Bible Teaching

In obedience to this Scriptural mandate, true Christians held this observance every year on the 14th of Nisan. However, in time, people also began to celebrate Jesus' resurrection. *The New Encyclopædia Britannica* explains that the "earliest Christians celebrated the Lord's Passover at the same time as the Jews, during the night of the first (paschal) full Moon of the first month of spring (Nisan 14-15). By the middle of the 2nd century, most churches had transferred this celebration to the Sunday after the Jewish feast."

The book *Seasonal Feasts and Festivals* says: "It was apparently not until towards the end of the fourth century in Jerusalem that Good Friday and Easter Day were kept as separate commemorations."

Some scholars believe that because of the growing enmity between professed Christians

and the Jews, some leaders of Christendom did not want their most important holiday to correspond exactly in date with the most important Jewish holiday. This attitude led to a change. In time most of Christendom began to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus on the first Sunday after the full moon that follows the spring equinox and made this its most important religious celebration. In effect they downgraded to a lower position the celebration of Jesus' death.

According to these sources, then, Christendom's Easter actually usurps the original anniversary of Jesus' death.

The Bible Speaks

What does the Bible have to say about Easter? Of course, the Scriptures give ample testimony to the fact that Jesus was resurrected. The resurrection of Christ is a basic doctrine



Ancient rites of pagan origin were given a Christian significance and were added to the Easter festivities

of true Christianity. The apostle Paul clearly believed this. He said: "If Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain. Further, if Christ has not been raised up, your faith is useless; you are yet in your sins."—1 Corinthians 15: 14, 17.

Nonetheless, nowhere does the Bible even hint at an annual celebration of Jesus' resurrection. The historian Socrates Scholasticus admitted: "The Saviour and his apostles have enjoined us by no law to keep this feast: nor in the New Testament are we threatened with any penalty, punishment, or curse for the neglect of it." More recently *The Christian Century* magazine stated in an article on Easter: 'Early Christians began celebrating the resurrection in the second century.' Hence, Easter was introduced well after the death of all the apostles and after the Bible was completed. It is no secret that the tradition of Easter is man-made rather than God-given.

However, some may ask: 'What is wrong with remembering Jesus' resurrection?' True, the Bible does not require that Christians celebrate Easter. But is there anything in the Bible that prohibits it?

| | EASTER | PASSOVER |
|---------|----------------|------------------------------|
| Danish | påske | påske |
| Dutch | Pasen | joods paasfeest |
| Finnish | pääsiäinen | pääsiäinen (juutalaisten) |
| French | Pâques | La Pâque |
| German | Ostern | Passah |
| Greek | Paskha | Paskha |
| Italian | Pasqua | Pasqua ebraica |
| Spanish | Pascua florida | Pascua |
| Swahili | Pasaka | Pasaka |

Clean and Undefined Worship

Admittedly, there is no specific prohibition in the Bible regarding the celebration of Jesus' resurrection. However, the Bible does warn Christians against adulterating pure worship with man-made traditions. This

Nowhere does the Bible even hint at an annual observance or celebration of Jesus' resurrection

would apply especially to a tradition, such as Easter, that is laced with pagan customs and the ancient rites of false religions.

In the preface to his 123-page book on Easter, Alan W. Watts stated: "The full story of Easter is a most complex mixture of history and mythology—so much so that the difficult task of distinguishing between the two is far beyond the scope of a short book." This being the case with Easter, would God accept our worship if it included such a mixture of pagan customs? No. God accepts only "the form of worship that is clean and undefiled." And this means to "keep oneself without spot from the world," which would include the worldly customs associated with Easter.—James 1:27.

The apostle Paul warned Christians against the introduction of man-made traditions into the congregation when he said: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ."—Colossians 2:8.

Jesus himself spoke against the Jewish traditions that twisted Scriptural truths and



Jesus instituted the Lord's Evening Meal with his disciples

adulterated true worship. At Mark 7:6-8, Jesus' words to the religious leaders of his day are recorded: "Isaiah aptly prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from me. It is in vain that they keep worshiping me, because they teach as doctrines commands of men.' Letting go the commandment of God, you hold fast the tradition of men."

At 2 Corinthians 6:14-17, the Bible warns us: "Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness? Further, what harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what portion does a faithful person have with an unbeliever? . . . Therefore get out from among them, and separate yourselves," says Jehovah, "and quit touching the unclean thing."

The Anniversary of His Death

Additionally, according to Bible teaching, the arrangement for our salvation includes Jesus' sacrifice of his perfect life, his resurrection, and his presenting the value of his sacrifice to God in heaven. All these elements are important. (Hebrews 7:25; 9:11-14) Jesus commanded his followers to celebrate the anniversary of his death. It is the only event Scripturally commanded to be memorialized by Christians.

This year millions of Jehovah's Witnesses will meet after sunset, April 17 (Nisan 14), 1992, to commemorate Jesus' death. The celebration will include a discourse explaining the meaning of Christ's sacrificial death. It will help you appreciate the extent of Jehovah God's love for humankind in offering his only-begotten Son so that you can enjoy the prospect of everlasting life. Meet with us on the most important day of 1992!

Motorcycles —How Dangerous Are They?

By *Awake!* correspondent in Japan

SUSUMU'S trail bike was running smoothly when suddenly he saw a car crossing his lane. The next thing he saw was the roof of a house as he was catapulted into the air. He landed on his head and shoulder. A crack in the middle of his helmet revealed the severity of the crash. He survived the accident, but his leg was broken and bent into a U shape.

Susumu's accident is not unique. *The Globe and Mail* of Canada reports that during one year 166,000 Americans were hospitalized after motorcycle accidents. "Of those, 4,700 died. Many others were crippled for life." In Canada, says the same source, motorcycle accidents doubled in a ten-year period. And in Japan 2,575 motorcyclists lost their lives in 1989. Of these, excluding moped riders, more than 70 percent were youths between the ages of 16 and 24.

How do these figures compare with automobile-accident statistics? Insurance companies claim that in some countries, for the same distance traveled, the death rate for motorcyclists is about nine times higher than that for persons riding in a car. What causes this greater death toll? *Consumer Reports* gives three reasons: (1) A motorcycle is harder to see than a car. (2) A motorcycle offers little or no protection for its rider. (3) A motorcycle's handling is tricky—if it skids, it often spills. No wonder that many people feel that motorcycles are dangerous. Others dis-



agree. Riding a motorcycle has advantages, they say. What do you think?

True, as a means of economical transportation, the motorcycle is hard to surpass. Fuel economy is its hallmark. With a medium-sized motorcycle, says *Consumer Reports*, you can ride 60 to 70 miles on one gallon of fuel. Additionally, it has only two tires. Other advantages are: easy to maneuver, no parking problems, and a price tag far lower than that of an automobile. But even some who could afford to drive an expensive automobile still prefer the motorcycle. Why?

The Main Appeal

Most motorcycle lovers admit that the main appeal of motorcycles is the thrill that comes with riding one. "It may be their sound," says one motorcycle enthusiast. The rumble of an English twin, the howl of a Japanese multi-two-stroke, or the purr of a multi-cylinder four-stroke—all are like music to the ears of motorcycle lovers.

For other motorcyclists, it is the sense of freedom and feeling of control. Says one: 'It's exciting to feel that machine beneath you, to know that it will answer to your every whim or direction, to lean into curves and know that it will carry you to your destination reliably.' This mixture of sound, speed, and freedom may appeal to you too. But there is a danger. This thrill may become an addiction.

Especially are young people in danger. "You feel scared when you see a sharp bend," says a former member of a motorcycle gang, "but the thrill of clearing the bend at high speed without skidding leaves you excited. I used to search for ever sharper bends and take them at higher speeds." Yoshio, who used to be crazy about motorcycling, says: "I used to ride, rain or shine, because it made me high. To me it was like a drug." And Sumu, mentioned earlier, says: "I didn't care whether it would kill me or not—I had to ride." So even before the cast was removed from his broken leg, he was riding again. He admits: "I was hooked."

'Should I Ride a Motorcycle?'

So weigh these aspects of appeal and safety against each other when you consider riding a motorcycle. And if you are a Christian who values a clean conscience and respects the Bible, there are also some scriptures you will want to consider.

Proverbs 6:16, 17, for example, lists seven things that are detestable to Jehovah. One of them is "hands that are shedding innocent

blood." A law given to the ancient nation of Israel tells us more about Jehovah's viewpoint on shedding innocent blood. The law states: "If a bull was formerly in the habit of goring and warning was served on its owner but he would not keep it under guard, and it did put a man or a woman to death, the bull is to be stoned and also *its owner* is to be put to death." (Exodus 21:29) In other words, we are accountable for our possessions.

So if you have in mind getting a motorcycle, how will you handle it and what type will you choose? One of the powerful, potentially dangerous bikes that are designed for high-speed performance and that are often involved in fatal accidents? If so, will you be free of bloodguilt if you are involved in an accident? Even if you do not harm others, what about your own life? Will you show respect for the gift of life if you speed around dangerous corners just for the thrill of it?

This principle also applies to the maintenance of your motorcycle if you have one or obtain one. Your motorcycle can turn into a 'goring bull,' so to speak, if you do not keep the brakes in order. Additionally, each time before riding the motorcycle, you should make chain and engine checks. And how about being a nuisance to neighbors by reckless driving and loud noise?

True, if you are a motorcycle enthusiast, you may love the sound of the bike's engine, but not everyone shares those sentiments. In fact, to some people the sound is so upsetting that they have been known to react violently. One irate man in Japan, reports the newspaper *Nara Shimbun*, threw a piece of lumber at a passing motorcycle. The rider, a 16-year-old motorcycle-gang member, died. Another person, stated the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, stretched a rope across a route frequented by bike gangs. The rope caught the neck of a young cyclist, who was strangled to death.

SAFETY TIPS FOR THOSE WHO DO RIDE A MOTORCYCLE

- **Ride With Extreme Care:** Steering, accelerating, and braking require skill and a high degree of coordination.
- **Avoid the Center of Any Lane:** That is where debris and oil droppings from cars accumulate.
- **Wear a Proper Outfit:** Be sure to wear a helmet. Gloves, a jacket, and boots will also protect you.
- **Ride With Your Headlight On:** If permitted by traffic laws in your country, do this even in daytime. It will make you more visible to other motorists.
- **Apply Reflective Tape to Your Helmet:** This makes you more visible at night.
- **Drive Defensively:** Do not expect that car drivers will give you the right-of-way.
- **Do Not Ride a Motorcycle When Under the Influence of Alcohol or Drugs**
- **Select a Motorcycle That You Can Manage**

And when the newspaper invited its readers to say how they felt about motorcycle-noise pollution, some readers sympathized with the ones who took those actions against the motorcyclists.

Of course, the Bible condemns such violent actions. But on the other hand, motorcyclists should not provoke others by cruising through residential areas on motorcycles that do not have mufflers, as motorcycle gangs sometimes do. After all, we should want to live up to the law that Jesus Christ gave his

followers: "You must love your neighbor as yourself."—Matthew 22:39.

A Sound Mind

Does this mean that you should not ride a motorcycle? No, but a sound mind is needed. For many people a motorcycle is an affordable, convenient, and pleasant way to get around. In some countries, however, people use motorcycles mostly for recreation. That can be enjoyable, but be cautious. Do not let passion for speed and power overcome your better judgment.

Some who lived solely for their motorcycle have made changes. Now they center their lives around pleasing God. Yoshio, for example, used to ride powerful motorcycles. Today he says: "When I rode for thrills, I was pleasing only myself. Now, I have the joy of giving by working as a Christian minister." Knowing that he cannot control himself once he gets on a motorcycle, Yoshio did not renew his license.

A former member of a motorcycle gang in Hokkaido, Japan, recalls: "I used to ride the motorcycle to show off. I was deep into drugs as the result of bad association with motorcycle-gang members." But he started to think about the future. He looked into various religious groups and finally found the truth by studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses.

And what about Susumu? For him, riding a motorcycle is no longer the center of his life. Susumu, as well as the two motorcycle enthusiasts mentioned above, now serve as full-time Christian ministers. One of them exchanged his heavy motorcycle for a moped and uses it in spreading Bible truth to others.

Yes, the motorcycle can be an efficient means of transportation, but it must at all times be used carefully and with respect for the feelings of others.

The Womb Our Marvelous First Home

WHAT a marvelous place, your first home! Warm and cozy. Well stocked with rich nourishment. Safe and secure.

You spent months there, thriving and growing. Soon, though, your quarters seemed to be getting tighter and tighter, till one day you could barely move. Likely, by that time you were even standing on your head! Then, all at once, you felt yourself being squeezed by powerful forces, and you burst through the door of your home into the cold, noisy, brightness of the outside world.

You don't recall any such experience? No doubt you do not. But you owe your life to that wonderful place in which you were housed—your mother's womb. It was perfectly designed with you in mind, providing all the nurturing and protection a developing baby needs. So why not journey back and take a tour of that marvelous first home of yours—the womb?

A Warm Welcome Awaits You

Your life probably began while en route to this fine home. A ripe ovum from your mother traveled down a tunnel called the Fallopian tube. Meanwhile, millions of sperm cells from your father were on their way up the same road to meet this egg head-on. One sperm succeeded in fertilizing the egg, and thus you came to be you.

By this time preparations for your arrival were already under way. The walls of the

womb, or uterus (Latin *uter*, for "bag"), had been preparing themselves, and the place was fairly brimming with nutrients. The lining of the uterus had swelled to twice its normal thickness, with a soft spongy coating.

After three or four days, you passed over the threshold of your new home. To you—a pinhead-sized cluster of a few dozen cells called a blastocyst—it might have seemed like a sprawling cavern. Inside, however, the space is quite small. Actually, the uterus is a hollow organ, smooth and pinkish, about the size and shape of an upside-down pear.

This would be your home for the next 270 days or so, and your mother, even at the expense of her own body, would provide you with the nutrients you need to grow and develop till it was time for birth. Several weeks would pass before your mother even realized you existed, and it would be another three to four months before her belly would protrude enough for others to notice.

After a free fall into the uterine cavity, you floated around for three more days. Finally, you attached yourself to the uterine wall. Enzymes from the blastocyst digested the surface cells of this plush lining, called the endometrium, and you sank down and nestled securely in the velvety depths. Had an egg not been fertilized and implanted in this lining, the uterus would eventually have shed it and expelled it from your mother as the menstrual flow.

Coping With Rejection

Marvelous processes were now at work to ensure that your stay was a pleasant one. For one thing, you needed protection from your mother's own immune system. Scientists are still puzzled about why your mother's body didn't consider you a foreign intruder and attack you. Normally, the complex rejection system springs into action at the first sign of any invader. Yet, you would eventually grow to be a foreign body of gigantic proportions, weighing several pounds. Why did you not come under siege?

Researcher David Billington of the University of Bristol explained: 'Essentially you've got a wall between the mother and the fetus. The wall fairly effectively stops any traffic between the mother and the fetus.' He was referring to a layer of tissue called the trophoblast, which surrounds the fetus. This barrier prevented any direct contact between you and your mother. Just why her immune defenses didn't challenge the trophoblast as foreign tissue is a mystery. The answer to this question might also tell us why some pregnancies end in miscarriage.—See box on page 16.

Nourishing and Nurturing Continue

Consider your insatiable appetite for nourishment, especially during these early stages. In your first eight weeks of life, you increased in length about 240 times, and your weight grew to a million times more than at conception. Ultimately, your birthweight would be some 2.4 billion times that, with your amazing home expanding like a balloon to accommodate you. The womb then weighs about 16 times the nonpregnant womb, but within a few weeks after delivery, it shrinks back to nearly original size. The first trimester of life saw the basic structure of your body form, with organs and nervous system ready for the stages of development to follow.

Early on, the watery amniotic sac formed. It provided you with a cushioned, temperature-controlled playroom in which to tumble and frolic in your second trimester. You were strengthening muscles you would need outside the weightlessness of the bag of waters. You swallowed amniotic fluids by the mouthful, presumably for nourishment. Every two to three hours, the fluid was replaced for you.

From the outer wall of the blastocyst grew an intricate pad of tissue called the placenta (Latin for "flat cake"). Consider some of the services it performed for you.

It acted as a lung, exchanging oxygen and carbon dioxide between you and your mother. Acting as a liver, it processed some of your mother's blood cells to extract necessary components, such as iron, for your use. Its function as a kidney filtered out urea from your blood and passed it to your mother's bloodstream for excretion through her kidneys. Like the intestines, the placenta digested food molecules. All these processes took place through the 22-inch-long umbilical cord.

It was once thought that the placenta was an impregnable security system, that it would allow nothing harmful to pass from mother to child. Sadly, we now know that many infections can breach the security system, as can substances like the infamous drug thalidomide. Diseases such as German measles also pose a threat in certain stages of pregnancy.

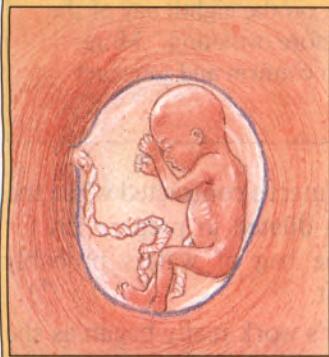
The blood-brain barrier present in adults is not yet well established in the developing fetal brain, leaving it especially vulnerable to such invaders as cigarette smoke, alcohol, drugs, and other chemical toxins. Research shows that alcohol does create adverse effects in an unborn baby. Does caffeine, which crosses the placenta, influence the infant's development? Do vitamin supplements benefit the developing child in any way? More needs to be learned about such questions.

The protective system for any baby, therefore, must begin with its mother's own care to avoid taking in any substances known to be harmful to infants. On the positive side, a bal-

anced diet and exercise, upon doctor's approval, may go a long way toward promoting the general health and well-being of mother and child.



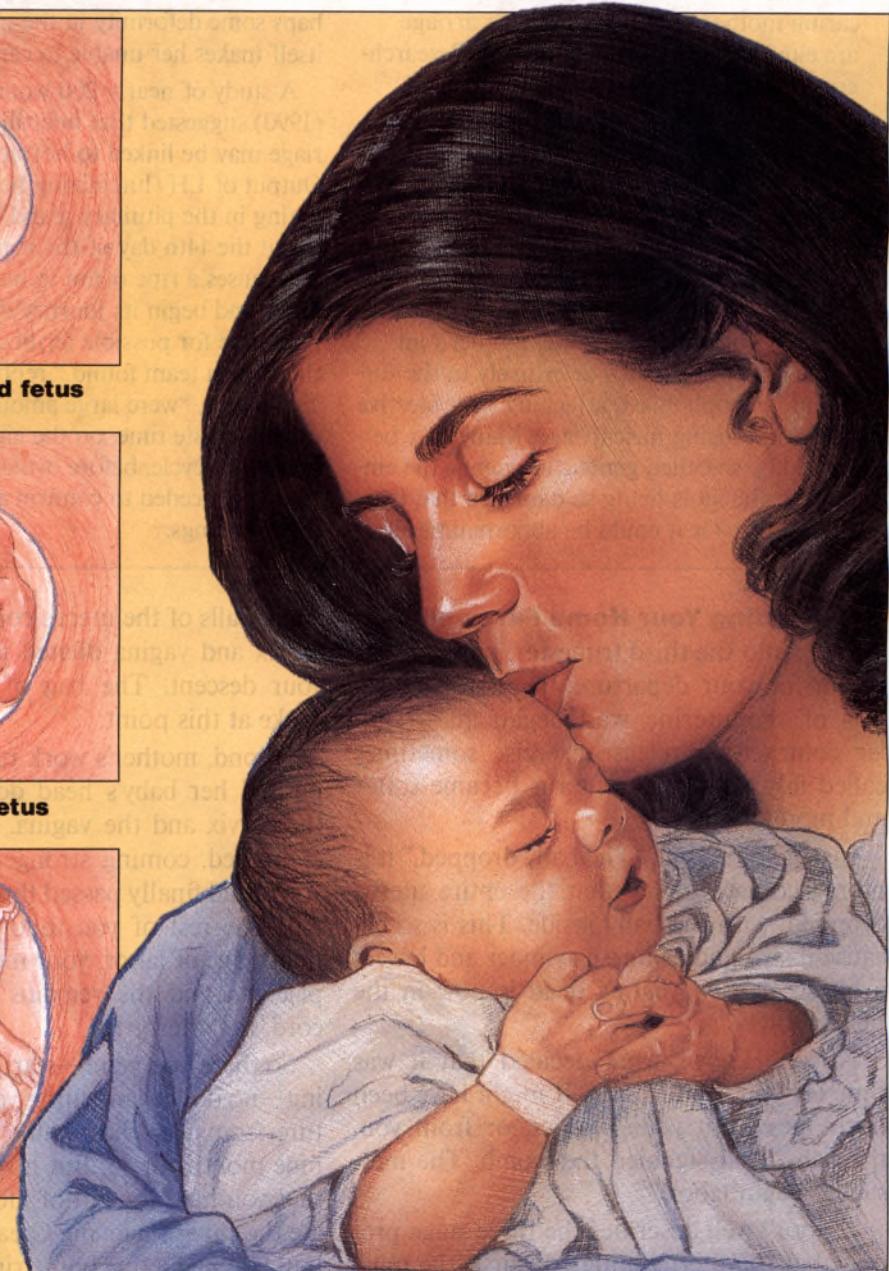
Three-month-old fetus



Six-month-old fetus



Nine-month-old fetus



Miscarriage —The Tragic Eviction

TRAGEDY may strike even the most caring mother. The causes of miscarriage are elusive and the debates heated. Researchers don't even agree on the percentage of successfully fertilized eggs that end in spontaneous abortion. Estimates range from 10 percent to 20 percent or even more of pregnancies in the general population of women in the United States.

Why does the womb sometimes forcibly evict its new life instead of cradling it protectively within? Possibly the mother's immune system responds defensively to the surrounding trophoblast, attacking its protective wall and causing miscarriage. Many may be caused by so-called genetic accidents, the embryo or the fetus being so damaged that it cannot live. Or it could be abnormalities in

the reproductive process—an egg's prematurely entering the uterus before the lining is ready to receive it or so late that the endometrium is already beginning to shed. Perhaps some deformity in the mother's uterus itself makes her unable to carry a child.

A study of nearly 200 women in Britain (1990) suggested that infertility and miscarriage may be linked to hormonal imbalances. Output of LH (luteinizing hormone), originating in the pituitary gland, usually rises on about the 14th day of the menstrual cycle and causes a ripe ovum to burst through the ovary and begin its journey down the Fallopian tube for possible fertilization. "What the British team found," reported *The New York Times*, "were large amounts of LH at an inappropriate time, on the eighth day of the menstrual cycle, before ovulation." More testing is needed to confirm and interpret these findings.

Bidding Your Home Farewell

Deep into the third trimester, preparations began for your departure. The strong muscles of the uterine wall began an irregular contract-and-release exercise sometimes called false labor. The uterus became softer and more elastic.

Instead of saying, "The baby dropped," it is more accurate to say that the entire uterus dropped, with the baby inside. This is so because it straightens into a cylinder and lowers a bit so that the baby's head is now in the pelvic bowl.

No one knows what decided that it was time for you to move out. It might have been hormones from your mother, or from you, the baby, that signaled the womb. The message: "Begin labor!"

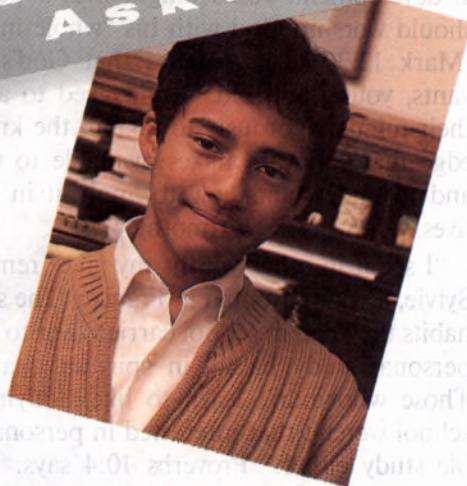
"Labor" well describes the three-stage process that the uterus initiated. First, the mus-

cular walls of the uterus contracted while the cervix and vagina dilated in preparation for your descent. The bag of waters probably broke at this point.

Second, mother's work really began as she pushed her baby's head downward through the cervix and the vagina. The contractions continued, coming stronger and faster until your head finally passed through the birth canal. The rest of you followed easily. In the final stage of labor, your mother expelled the placenta and the remains of the umbilical cord, the afterbirth.

So there you were—startled, cold, and crying—no doubt lamenting your sudden departure from your hospitable home of the last nine months or so. But how glad you can be that you have the gift of life and can appreciate the care of a loving Creator, who saw to it that you had a fine home right from the start!

**Young
People
Ask . . .**



Why Should I Study Hard in School?

'Most of what we learn in school is just theory anyway. None of it really has any practical value.'

'Homework doesn't interest me. I'm more interested in other things, like sports and going out with my friends.'

'I know I'm going to enter the full-time ministry, so what's the point of working hard in school?'

COMMENTS like these are often made by youths when they speak of school and homework. Perhaps you share their sentiments.

Admittedly, given the choice between study and recreation, most youths would probably opt for the latter. Some may even wish they never had to study at all. They do not take learning seriously; they cannot imagine what difference it will make in their lives. On the other hand, perhaps you are one who wants to succeed in school but has little enthusiasm for your schoolwork. 'I'm just not the studious type,' you reason.

Whatever your feelings, interests, or abilities, you *can* make a success of school. But you must be motivated to do so. And examining the benefits that may come your way if you study hard may just give your motivation a real boost.

Brain Exercise

Much of what you study in school may not now seem relevant to your life. Unless you are planning a career as a scientist, you will likely have little use in the future for the physics formulas your teacher may have made you learn. Further, it is not likely that as an adult you will have a day-to-day need to conjugate verbs or compute the angles of an isosceles triangle. 'So, what is the point of studying all that?' you ask.

For one thing, school provides you the opportunity to gain a good general knowledge of many different subjects, such as history, literature, science, geography, and mathematics. This broad base of knowledge will enrich your understanding of the world around you and will form a foundation on which more specific information can be added. "To the understanding one knowledge is an easy thing," says Proverbs 14:6.

In his book *Savoir étudier* (Knowing How to Study), Robert Bosquet further explains

that the mind's potential for learning "must be discovered progressively and put into working order." He adds: "It is common knowledge that a sports champion will only achieve his best results after a long period of training during which he discovers how to use his abilities to the full. . . . Knowing how to study is just that: using your full potential, getting the best results, with the minimum of time and effort."

Homework may therefore be called a brain exercise. "The brain is . . . a vast interconnecting network," says the book *How to Study*, "and the more complex and interconnected it becomes the more efficiently it works." School assignments can help you sharpen your abilities to concentrate, to reason, to memorize, to analyze a problem, and to draw logical conclusions.

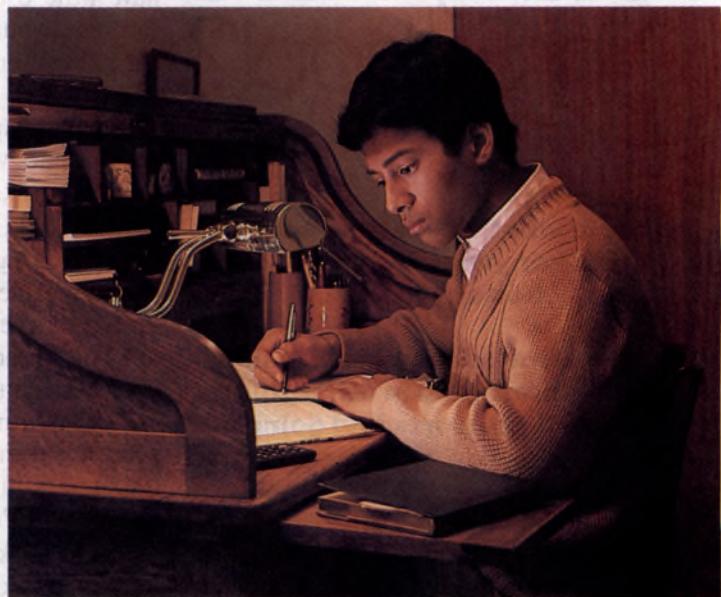
Emotional and Spiritual Growth

Your school years are also a time of emotional and spiritual growth. You are developing habits and attitudes that will to a large extent determine the kind of adult you will be. Will you be industrious, diligent, self-disciplined, and competent—someone an employer would want to hire? Training yourself now to have good work and study habits will have life-long benefits. (Compare Proverbs 22:6.) Among other things, it may have a profound impact on your economic future and employment prospects. Many businesses use a person's record of academic

achievement as an indicator of an applicant's future work potential.

Your study habits also affect your spiritual development. Jesus taught that a person should worship God with his "whole mind." (Mark 12:30) This implies that God's servants, young and old, would need to apply their minds vigorously to take in the knowledge that Jehovah makes available to them and to understand how to apply it in their lives.—John 17:3; 1 Timothy 4:7.

"I see it in other youths my age," remarks Sylvie, a young woman in France. "The study habits they had in school carried over to their personal study habits in spiritual matters. Those who didn't learn to like studying in school weren't that interested in personal Bible study either." Proverbs 10:4 says: "The one working with a slack hand will be of little means, but the hand of the diligent one is what will make one rich." This proved true for Sylvie in a spiritual sense. Her good study habits made it easier for her to deepen her understanding of the Bible. This prepared her



***The learning skills
you develop while in
school will benefit you
throughout life***

for her career as a full-time evangelizer.
—Compare Psalm 1:2, 3.

Learn How to Study

But what if you are not studiously inclined? Realize that the primary difference between a good student and a poor student is usually diligence—not intelligence. “I didn’t have a lot of natural ability like some other students,” admits Sylvie. “To do well in school, I really had to work and work just to get decent grades.” Although school wasn’t easy for her, Sylvie put forth diligent efforts; she learned not only how to study but also how to enjoy it. “Because it became a habit,” she says, “it was not such a big chore to study or research a subject. I learned to do it naturally.”

In his book *How to Study*, Harry Maddox says: “Ability alone is not enough. Many highly intelligent students fail . . . because they do insufficient work, or because they have never learned how to study effectively.” He adds: “Efficient methods of study are worth learning not only for your immediate purposes of study, but because your habits of work will stay with you all your life.”

People usually enjoy doing things that they do well—and they tend to avoid things they do poorly. Perhaps you dislike schoolwork, then, because you haven’t developed your study skills sufficiently to make your work enjoyable. If so, why not focus on learning *how* to study? Helpful information is given in chapter 18 of the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work.**

Look Beyond Your School Years

Many students neglect their studies simply because they would rather be doing something else—such as having a good time. But Proverbs 21:17 warns: “He that is loving mer-

itment will be an individual in want.” Recreation and relaxation do have their place. (*Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4*) However, while you are in school, studying should be one of your priorities. The results you achieve will largely be determined by how much effort you are willing to put forth. “By every kind of toil there comes to be an advantage,” says Proverbs 14:23.

This does not mean that you will necessarily like every class or school assignment you receive. But you can try to see your education as a positive means to an end—gaining knowledge and skills that will help you lead a useful and productive life. True, educational requirements and economic conditions vary widely from country to country. Even so, many young people leave school without having acquired even the most basic learning skills; they find themselves unprepared or unqualified for most types of employment. And why? Because they didn’t apply themselves while in school.

Do not fall into this trap! Look beyond your school years and plan on being able to support yourself after you leave school. Some day you may well have the responsibility of providing for a family. (1 Timothy 5:8; compare Proverbs 24:27.) Like many youths among Jehovah’s Witnesses, you too may be planning a career as a full-time evangelizer. You will still have to support yourself and perhaps even a family. So think ahead. Long before graduating, try to find out what types of part-time work are available where you live. Applying yourself to your schoolwork can help you to develop the skills necessary to obtain such jobs.

Whatever your future plans are, it makes sense to study hard in school. No, you may not necessarily make it to the top of your class. But you can learn to love learning. Better yet, you can develop knowledge, skills, and habits that will benefit you throughout life.

* Published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

I Am Grateful to Have Survived

If YOU have seen the motion picture *The Bridge on the River Kwai*, you may easily relate to my story. I was a prisoner of the Japanese during the second world war and was among those forced to build the railroad track along the river Kwai (now Khwae Noi).

Our Dutch and native forces had surrendered at Bandung, Java, in March 1942, after days of retreating before a superior Japanese army. We spent a few weeks in a local civilian prison; then early one morning we were told to get ready for a long march.

First, however, we were taken by train from Bandung to Batavia (now Djakarta), Java's capital city. There we were put on a ship for our voyage to Singapore. In Singapore we were herded onto a train and transported nearly a thousand miles into Siam (now Thailand). Before reaching the capital, Bangkok, our train turned west onto a branch line and arrived at Kanchanaburi, near the Burma (now Myanmar) border.

The proposed railroad track had been mapped out to follow the river Kwai, since the river afforded a source of water for drinking and bathing. We half-starved prisoners were to build the railroad into Burma. Trucks took us to the end of the bitumen road and then along a dirt road to the first prisoner-of-war camp. The next morning we were driven to a second camp.

From this second camp, our long march began. But before describing what happened, let me say something about my background

and how I came to be a Japanese prisoner of war.

War Comes to Netherlands Indies

My mother was of German descent, and Father was Dutch. We lived on a beautiful, lush farm on the slope of the volcano Bukit Daun on Java, the fourth largest of the more than 13,600 islands that made up the Netherlands Indies (now Indonesia). Father managed a rubber plantation, and I went to school in the large city of Bandung. When World War II broke out in 1939, we moved about 350 miles away to the town of Lahat, on Sumatra.

Mother was Roman Catholic, so my two brothers and I were sent to a Catholic boarding school. One day during class, I asked the priest: "Why is Hitler persecuting the Jews when Jesus was also a Jew?" He replied angrily that Jesus was not a Jew, stating adamantly that he was God, part of the Trinity.

"Well, was Mary, Jesus' mother, a Jewess?" I asked.

The priest became even angrier, replying: "I will tell you when you grow older. It is too difficult for you to understand now!"

In Europe the German army invaded the Netherlands in May 1940. The Netherlands Indies were then a Dutch colony. Earlier my father had joined the NSU (National Socialist Union), thinking that this political party would provide the Indies with a better defense in time of war. But after the Netherlands was invaded by Germany, the NSU began to favor

Hitler. Father immediately resigned from the party, but it was too late. All members of the NSU were rounded up by the Dutch Army in the Indies and put into a concentration camp. Father too was imprisoned.

When the German battleship *Bismarck* was sunk in May 1941, many students at our boarding school rejoiced. Knowing that my mother was of German descent, they shouted, "The only good Germans are dead ones!" During class, I asked the priest: "Does that mean that all Catholic bishops and priests in Germany ought to be dead?" He immediately left the room. Returning about an hour later, he forbade us to mention politics and the war again.

With Father a political prisoner, Mother found it difficult to run the farm. So I returned home to help her while my two brothers remained in school. In one of Father's letters, he mentioned a prison mate, a conscientious objector, who was teaching him interesting things from the Bible.

About this time my older brother was drafted into the army, and three months later I volunteered. I was given a desk job in a civilian office, but when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941, I was immediately drafted into the Netherlands Indies army and given training in jungle warfare. We learned to bury ammunition in the jungle and mark it on army maps. This was to ensure that we, with the help of these maps, would always have access to ammunition for use in jungle fighting.

Japanese armed forces soon landed on the islands of Billiton (now Belitung) and Sumatra. Here our outnumbered forces faced them. The Japanese soon took Palembang, one of Sumatra's major cities. We were ordered to retreat across the Sunda Strait to Merak on the west coast of Java, and from there we retreated to Batavia. Finally, as men-

tioned earlier, we surrendered to the Japanese at Bandung and became prisoners of war.

I See My Father

By a strange twist of events, the occupying Japanese forces released my father from prison there in Bandung, along with all other political prisoners. He then went to stay at my aunt's home in Bandung. There he learned that I was a prisoner nearby, and he visited me. I was able to tell him where our family now lived and that my older brother had been reported missing in action.

Excitedly, Father began to tell me what he had learned about the Bible from his fellow prisoner. He told me that God's name was not Jesus but a name that sounded strange to me



Tankred E. van Heutsz and his wife

at the time—Jehovah. Unfortunately, the Japanese refused Father any further visits, so I did not talk to him again. Father's freedom was short-lived. I found out after the war that he had died in a Japanese concentration camp near Bandung in October 1944.

Building the Railroad

As described at the outset, we prisoners of war were transported to the Burmese border. We were divided into groups, and the plan was that each group build about 12 miles of track. The first section was to join up with another group's work that had started 12 miles ahead of the first one. Groups of prisoners completing sections of track were eventually to meet up with other prisoner groups laying track from inside Burma.

In the tropical heat and humidity, building a railroad by hand, virtually without any mechanized equipment, was exhausting enough, even for men in good physical condition. But in our semistarved state, it was almost beyond human endurance. Adding to our misery, we soon had to work barefoot and almost naked because within just a few weeks, continuous monsoon rains rotted our clothes and boots.

To make matters worse, we had practically no medicine or bandages. In desperation we used our mosquito nets for bandages. But then, without nets, we were attacked by swarms of flies during the day and by hosts of mosquitoes at night. Disease soon became rampant. Malaria, dysentery, and hepatitis laid low many of the wretched prisoners.

Then, dreadful tropical ulcers broke out, even among those who seemed stronger. Lack of medicine forced what few doctors there were among us to treat the ulcers with tea leaves, coffee dregs, and mud. The only medicine the Japanese supplied was quinine tablets to help ward off malaria. Under these circumstances it was not surprising that ca-

sualties mounted rapidly, until as many as six dead per day—mainly from malaria and tropical ulcers—became commonplace. The amazing thing was that despite all this deprivation and human suffering, the railroad track into Burma was eventually completed!

But then bombing raids of the track were begun by Allied forces. These raids were mostly at night. Often, time bombs were used, but by early the following morning, all of them had usually exploded. We prisoners then had the work of repairing whatever damage had been caused the previous night. After the railroad was finished, we also built machine-gun tunnels into the foot of Three Pagodas Pass on the border between Burma and Siam. Two bridges crossed the river Kwai at this point. This is where I was when the war ended.

By the spring of 1945, after I had slaved more than three years as a prisoner of war, the Japanese in that area surrendered. I was very ill, suffering from malaria, amoebic dysentery, and hepatitis. I had been reduced to less than 90 pounds. Yet I was grateful to have survived those terrible years.

After the War

In the summer of 1945, I was taken back to Siam, where I received food and medicine; however, it took about three months to recover a measure of health. Afterward I continued to serve in the army, first in Bangkok, then on the Netherlands Indies islands of Sumbawa, Bali, and Celebes (now Sulawesi).

I tried to make contact with my mother and my younger brother. When I succeeded, I applied for a special leave, since Mother was about to be sent to the Netherlands because of a severe illness. I was granted three weeks and was overjoyed to see her again in Batavia. In February 1947, Mother left the Indies for the Netherlands, where she remained until her death in 1966. I too decided to immigrate to the Netherlands, and it was there that I was dis-

charged from the army in December 1947, after serving as a soldier for six years.

Obtaining good employment was not easy. Eventually, however, after three years of night school, I passed my final exam and qualified as a marine engineer. The family I was living with asked me what I would like as a gift on that occasion. I asked for a Bible, and they gave me a "New Testament," which I frequently read at night while away at sea, wherever my job took me.

In 1958, I moved to Amsterdam, planning to study for a higher degree. But I found the concentrated study too demanding on my health, which was already beginning to show the effects of my wartime suffering. Remembering the Australian prisoners of war that I had befriended while building the railroad, I decided to apply to immigrate to Australia.

I Begin to Find Answers

Before I left Amsterdam for Australia, I visited a number of churches, seeking answers to questions. After one service, I asked the vicar if he knew God's personal name. He replied that it was Jesus. I knew that was not right, but I couldn't remember what my father many years before had told me was the name of God.

Soon after this a couple called at my home, explaining that they would like to share good news from the Bible with me. During the conversation, they asked whether I knew God's name. I answered, "Jesus." They explained that that was the name of God's Son and then showed me in the Bible that God's name is Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18) Immediately I recalled that this was what my father had said. When I asked what religion they belonged to, they answered: "Jehovah's Witnesses."

The Witnesses called again, but I was not easily convinced. A few days later, I met a vicar of the Dutch Reformed Church and asked him his view of Jehovah's Witnesses. He replied that

he was not pleased with them, but he did commend them on one point—they did not participate in war. After the horrors that I had witnessed during World War II, that impressed me.

A few days later, in 1959, I immigrated to Australia, and there Jehovah's Witnesses again contacted me. I cut my ties with the Catholic Church, having come to appreciate, among other things, that the hellfire and Trinity doctrines taught by the church were incorrect. Bible knowledge helped me to overcome the nightmares and guilt feelings that I had for years as a result of my wartime experiences. The truth found in the Bible set me free.
—John 8:32.

I made my dedication to Jehovah God and was baptized in 1963. Soon thereafter I moved to Townsville, on the coast of north Queensland, where I shared in full-time preaching activity. There I met Muriel, a faithful fellow Witness, and we were married in 1966. Since then we have served Jehovah together, often in the full-time ministry.

When we heard of a greater need for evangelizers in the Australian outback, we volunteered to serve in Alice Springs, right in the heart of this vast land. We have happily served here together for many years. During these years, my wife and I have had the privilege of helping a number of others onto the road of spiritual freedom and everlasting life.—*As told by Tankred E. van Heutsz.*

In Our Next Issue

Life—What Is Its Purpose?

Dowsing—Scientific or Occult?

Why Stay a Virgin?

"I WEPT FOR JOY"

Readers Express Deep Appreciation for
"Healing the Wounds of Child Abuse"

A RECENT series of articles in the *Awake!* magazine moved many readers from all over the world to express their heartfelt appreciation for the cover series "Healing the Wounds of Child Abuse" in the October 8th, 1991, *Awake!* Their responses have shown that this carefully prepared material accomplished its purpose, which was threefold: (1) to provide understanding and hope for the victims; (2) to warn parents so they can be vigilant about the safety of their children; (3) to help elders who assist abuse victims to be better informed so that they can give more effective assistance. —Proverbs 21:13; compare 27:23.

A theme that was repeated by many readers was typified by this comment: "I have always appreciated being one of Jehovah's Witnesses. However, my appreciation and love for Jehovah and his 'faithful and discreet slave' (Matthew 24:45-47) have been increased a hundredfold after reading the October 8, 1991, issue of *Awake!*"

"Jehovah Really Understands and Cares Deeply"

A large number expressed gratitude for a most important aspect of the articles: that God listens, cares, knows that the victim was not at fault, and can provide healing. A reader states: "Thanks from the bottom of my heart for the October 8th *Awake!* Your articles helped me by showing me that Jehovah really understands and cares deeply." —Britain.



A woman writes: "Some months ago I wanted to ask you to write about the matter of healing the wounds of child abuse. I did not write but instead prayed to Jehovah about it. You can imagine, then, why I was so delighted when I saw the cover of the October 8th issue. I broke into tears, and thanked our loving God, Jehovah, from the bottom of my heart." —Greece.

Another says: "When I think about what I had to go through, I cry bitterly. That is why I have read with particular attention the series about 'Healing the Wounds of Child Abuse,' which I have found to be extremely useful. They show clearly that you have loving interest in ones who have had to suffer such things in their lives." —Italy.

Many expressed this thought: "I thank Jehovah for providing this information, the best articles I have ever read on the topic. I pray this will help not only the victims (survivors) but also those who have had this morbid fear of addressing the issue and found it difficult to talk about the subject." —United States.

"I Feel Life Is Worthwhile Now"

A woman whose daughter was abused had not yet come to terms with the problem of that abuse. "But your articles put me on the right track," she explained. "I've been having therapy weekly for 11 months for anxiety, panic attacks, and depression. Those articles did more for me than all the therapy in the world! I feel life is worthwhile now, whereas before reading the issue, I still felt

guilty for something I could not prevent.”—Britain.

Many said that the information was a turning point in their lives: “I can’t begin to thank you enough for the articles. They came when I was at about the lowest point I can ever remember. Some days I would curl up in a ball and sob. Thanks to these articles, which I have read and reread, I can see that my pain, and everyone’s pain, is important to Jehovah and his organization. This information has given me the will to begin healing. I already feel closer to Jehovah again.”—United States.

But child abuse is not only a Western problem, as this sample shows: “When I received the October 8th issue on child abuse, I immediately read it. It took considerable time for me to read the articles because of having difficulty seeing the words through my tears! My feelings and thoughts were right there in the articles. Now I feel happy that somebody understands. I was encouraged to see how Jehovah kindly helps people whose suffering is unseen by others. I am truly grateful that you published these articles. To heal my wounds, I will go on applying what is written in the articles. With love and feelings of gratitude beyond words.”—Japan.

Another writes: “I have been contending with the wounds of child abuse all my life. When I got the October 8th magazine, I reasoned that Jehovah knows what we need even before we do and that he really loves us. I could hardly see for the flood of tears, and my heart felt as though it were about to burst for love and appreciation for our loving heavenly Father. This October 8th issue is a magazine that I will treasure ‘till the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart.’” (Isaiah 65:17)—United States.

“I Have Been Let Out of Prison!”

A woman deeply troubled much of her life writes: “Thank you for the articles on child

abuse. At last, at 53 years of age, I have been let out of prison! The unlocking key for me was the sentence that shows that these young victims ‘are powerless to defend themselves when threatened, so God does not hold them responsible.’” Reading the October 8th *Awake!* and understanding that as the magazine stated, “*IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT!*” helped her to apply Jesus’ ransom sacrifice in beginning her healing process.—Britain.

Another woman says: “From the time I was small until my early years in elementary school, I was sexually molested repeatedly. As mentioned in the articles, I escaped mentally. However, the memories kept coming back. I have always thought: ‘I am a dirty person. Jehovah would never accept me.’ So my prayer to God has always been: ‘You may not give me a place in Paradise, but at least please let me stay within your organization until I die.’ This is because of thinking, like those victims mentioned in the articles, that ‘I’m not really clean enough to be in God’s Kingdom’ and that my death would be at Armageddon. It was as if feelings of shame and wretchedness were crushing me to death. Thus, the contents of the articles, which were very warm and gentle, helped me a great deal. As I read them, my tears flowed.”—Japan.

Another says: “I want to thank you for your sensitive and well-researched articles. For years, the trauma of abuse had fragmented my inner self. It is easy for many to understand the abuse and torture of war and political turmoil. We understand Holocaust survivors. Evil perpetrated by strangers is easier to digest. Yet why do some not comprehend it when the perpetrators are our own fathers, mothers, uncles, sisters, brothers—those who were to comfort, nurture, and protect us? I have seen my own scars and have known the shattering reality of hopelessness. In my healing it has been my spiritual Father, Jehovah, who has time and time again picked

up my shattered self, keeping me from annihilation.”—United States.

“I’ve Suddenly Come to Life!”

A woman who says that for 28 long years she felt as if she had been discarded wrote: “I read straight through the articles the evening I received the issue and shed tears because I was so moved and grateful. I am so happy to think that Jehovah so clearly understands my feelings. I feel as if I’ve suddenly come to life! Because the articles stress that children in that position bear no responsibility for what happens, I realize that I have no reason at all to reproach myself. My mind has truly been put to rest.” Her heart was moved to respond to healing from God’s Word.—Japan.

Child rape is also a problem in developing countries, as is evident by this similar response from Africa: “The articles came at a time when I needed them most. What a relief to read statements such as, ‘be assured that there is hope, that you can recover’ and, *‘IT WAS NOT YOUR FAULT!’* As I read the articles, I felt really safe and comforted for the first time in my life. They brought real consolation to my mind, soul, and body. Now I will have the strength to travel the road toward full recovery.”—Nigeria.

Another writes: “Words cannot express my appreciation and how I felt after reading the October 8th *Awake!* on child abuse. Tears filled my eyes as I read every paragraph, every page, every scripture. It was written with much thought, tenderness, and love. As a victim, I have been struggling with my feelings and emotions. Now I feel that a measure of the burden of grief has been lifted. Thanks to your articles and to a trusted, patient friend who listens and gives me support, I can let the healing begin.” The God of all undeserved kindness, through the priestly service of his Son, is making many such victims “firm” and “strong.” (1 Peter 5:6-11)—United States.

One incest victim was so distraught that she tried to kill herself by setting a garage on fire while she was in there. She was rescued and hospitalized. As soon as the October 8th issue came out, it was brought to her. She cried hard when she read it, and then went over the articles again and again for support, helping her to overcome suicidal tendencies. A friend of hers who helped her a great deal wrote: “Sometimes I think *Awake!* should be renamed *Cope* because that’s sure what it’s helping us to do.”—United States.

“Some Can Forget, Others Cannot”

Another appreciative reader has this to say: “The articles on child abuse are so balanced. I appreciate the scriptures used. These articles are so well written that I could commend you on it paragraph by paragraph. I am grateful that you showed that though some can forget, others cannot. I have been having flashbacks for three years and the physical pains that go with each memory. But it does get better by learning to deal with the flashbacks. Thank you again for such a wonderfully balanced series.” (United States) These Scriptural articles have helped this victim, and many others, once again to *rejoice* in Jehovah’s spiritual provisions.—Philippians 4:4-9.

“I have been a reader of *Awake!* magazine for years,” writes one woman. “However, I have never been more touched by an article than by the magazine series entitled ‘Healing the Wounds of Child Abuse.’ The subject is a difficult one, but you handled it with tact and loving-kindness. Having been an abused child myself, it helped and comforted me immensely. I will save this magazine so that I can read it over often. I really cannot thank you enough for the time, effort, insight, and most of all the love you’ve shown for those who suffer in a quiet way.”—United States.

Facing Reality

It has proved very helpful to victims who cannot forget the crimes committed against

them to be allowed to talk with a sympathetic elder, face the problem realistically, see how Jehovah views the matter, and deal with it Scripturally so that healing in the power of Jesus' ransom can take place. In this regard, a woman states:

"I cannot express just how timely the articles were. I really couldn't believe how accurate the information was. I have suffered depression and bulimia for 20 years, looking for help and answers everywhere: psychiatrists, psychologists, medical doctors, group therapy, weight-loss clinics—all a dead end for me.

"But now I am finding help through information such as that found in the October 8th issue. It is desperately needed. I can't tell you the feelings of hopelessness that I have at times, so overwhelming that death would seem a relief. But now I can see that what happened to me as a child wasn't my fault, that God *doesn't* think I'm dirty. I was a victim. Because of information such as this, I see that Jehovah does care, that I can trust him. After 33 years of life, I feel Jehovah's spirit beginning to unlock the chains of bondage. Thanks for loving us enough to put the effort into such a wonderful gem as this *Awake!* Please continue to publish this type of articles and others, as they are vital for our spirituality."

The following letter from one man sums up the feeling of many. He had suffered more than 50 years of anguish because of being abused as a child. He says: "Jehovah's loving care through his earthly organization never ceases to amaze us and inspire ever deeper devotion and trust in him. After carefully studying the information in the October 8th, 1991, *Awake!* on child abuse, I wept for joy and sang song after song to Jehovah, rock and fortress, our refuge. Keep those articles coming, brothers. Jehovah is using you in ways you can never imagine."

From Overseers

Of interest is this letter from a traveling overseer who supervises the activity of a

number of congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses:

"Thank you for the October 8th *Awake!* on 'Healing the Wounds of Child Abuse.' Excellent information was presented that we really need. The articles were very accurate. I have observed time and again that victims have a very difficult time relating to Jehovah as a loving Father. When I see this difficulty, I ask them discreetly, 'Were you mistreated as a child?' The great majority of the time, the answer is yes! In every instance where the person was able to see the connection between the abuse and the way their current depression or turmoil affects them, they began to improve."

Summing up how many elders feel is this brief comment by another: "The October 8th issue on child abuse was excellent and needed. As elders in the congregations, we need to know as much as we can about these problems so as to show the concern and patience the victims need. As this system gets worse, these types of problems are getting more common. Thank you again for the help."

It has warmed our hearts to receive such letters. Coming fully to appreciate that 'it was not their fault,' and as a result of the transforming power of God's Word, such victims of child abuse cope with unhappy memories. They rejoice in the hope ahead, confident that in God's new world, "the former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart." (Isaiah 65:17; Romans 12:12) Even now, through the healing power of Jesus' blood, they have a clean standing with God. (Hebrews 9:14) And they need to turn to the elders for help. These elders can act as "a hiding place from the wind" to those in need, speaking consolingly and praying with them. (Isaiah 32:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; James 5:14, 15) Thus, abuse victims can be helped to move forward and find joy in all the activities of the Christian congregation.

Wickedness Who Is to Blame?

AS SHE entered her home, she quickly sensed that something was not right. A quick glance around the home confirmed her darkest suspicions—the television, the stereo, some clothes, and other items were missing. Then, an alarming thought rushed into her mind, ‘What if the intruders are still in the house?’ She retreated to the safety of a neighbor’s home to call the police. Yes, she was one more victim of crime.

If you have not personally experienced crime, you probably know someone who has. It is a scene played all too often around the world by unwilling actors. According to a survey by the UN Committee on Crime Prevention and Control, the rate of reported crime is climbing faster than national economies and populations.

Sincere, honesthearted people everywhere fret over the crime, horrific assassinations, injustice, and corruption infecting the world and are transfixed by fear of random violence. Many ask, ‘Why doesn’t God put a stop to it?’

That is a good question, and the Bible does give the answer. However, in order to appre-

ciate the answer, it is important to recognize the source, the root cause, of wickedness.

God Is Not to Blame

“Is there injustice with God?” asks the Bible writer Paul. “Never may that become so!” he answers. (Romans 9:14) But some may feel that since God is almighty, he is responsible for everything that happens. This is not so. Consider: An architect designs a beautiful yet functional building. The workmanship is of the highest quality, and the materials used are the best. The tenants, however, wreck and misuse the building. Soon it needs extensive repairs. Surely you would agree that the tenants, not the designer or the builder, are responsible for the sad condition of the building! So it is with mankind and the earth

today. As Deuteronomy 32:4, 5 explains, Jehovah’s activity is perfect. “All his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice.” Who, then, is to blame for much of the trouble on the earth today?

The scripture continues: “They have acted ruinously on their own part . . . The defect is their own.” Indeed,



Dore's illustration of Lucifer for Dante's *Divine Comedy*

much of the trouble in the world today is the direct result of mankind's own weakness or, perhaps, willfulness. However, there is another, much greater source and cause of wickedness.

The Real Cause Exposed

At Revelation 12:9, we read that Satan the Devil, "who is misleading the entire inhabited earth," is cast down to the vicinity of the earth. The result? Verse 12 of the same chapter continues: "*Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time.*" So it is he, the great Adversary, who instigates the injustices that fill the earth. True, there are individuals who cooperate with his efforts; yet he is the one described as "a manslayer when he began." (John 8:44) The Scriptures show us that Satan the Devil is the root cause of man's problems. Not only is he the cause but he has been a continuous perpetrator of wickedness, intensifying his efforts in these "last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5, 13) So Jehovah God is not the cause of wickedness. But does he care enough to stop mankind's suffering?

Will God Stop Wickedness?

Yes, he does care, and he will put an end to wickedness and suffering. He is a God of love, and as a loving Father, he knows and wants to satisfy the needs and desires of his children. (Psalm 145:16; 1 John 4:8-10) That God has not already done so is not an indication of indifference. Rather, his restraint and patience is evidence of his almighty and omniscience. He knows the best time to end this wicked system of things, and at exactly the right time, he will do so.

The situation might be compared to that of an expectant mother. While she is anxious for the arrival of her baby, she knows there is no need to be unduly apprehensive. She understands that it takes a certain amount of time for

the baby in her womb to develop fully. Undoubtedly, there will be some anxiety and discomfort along the way, but the arrival of a healthy, fully developed, full-term baby makes all the worrying and waiting worth while.

So, too, it is with the glorious new world of peace described in the Bible. It will arrive immediately after God's Kingdom intervenes in human affairs, removing the present unrighteous world. Then, all wickedness will be a thing of the past. Suffering, pain, sickness, and death—all these things will be gone. (Revelation 21:3, 4) The ones responsible for all the suffering will be done away with too. Satan and his demons, as well as individuals who have become a part of his system of things, will be dealt with.—Malachi 4:1; Revelation 20:1-4.

No more will those like the woman mentioned at the beginning of this article need to be nervous about coming home alone. As she and her husband put it: "After our home was broken into, we installed an alarm system. It's been some years now since the theft, so we don't feel too much anxiety over it anymore. But we know that it is only in the future, under God's Kingdom arrangement, that we will enjoy real peace and security."

Until that soon-to-be-seen day dawns, we need to be using the time we now have wisely. Peter tells us to consider "the patience of our Lord as salvation." (2 Peter 3:15) And salvation for others too, for as we tell people about this wonderful hope, we 'will save both ourselves and those who listen to us.' (1 Timothy 4:16) Now is the time for us to be working on the qualities that will make us the kind of people who will live in that new world, where wickedness will be a thing of the past. (Psalm 37:9-11) We need to search the Bible not only for the answers to our questions but also for the guidance we need to harmonize our lives with God's will.

Watching the World

Religion in Canada

"Canadians are leaving the religious fold in record numbers," reports *The Vancouver Sun*. Half the adults in Canada do not attend church services at all or merely attend about once a year. Recent statistics show that during the past ten years, the number of Canadians who say they have no religion has almost doubled. Jim Hodgson, associate secretary of ecumenical education and communication for the Canadian Council of Churches, said: "Many people are finding materialism and consumerism to be their motivation in life." He added that "the shopping mall is probably more important than the church in most people's lives."

Nigeria's New Capital

For the past 77 years, Lagos was the capital of Nigeria. But on December 12, 1991, Nigerian president Ibrahim Babangida and his wife waved farewell to cheering crowds in Lagos, boarded a jet, and flew 300 miles inland to Abuja, which was officially proclaimed the new national capital. The decision to move the seat of government to Abuja was made in 1976 during Nigeria's oil boom. According to Nigeria's *Newswatch* magazine, the decision was prompted by a desire to place the capital at the center of the country and to escape the congestion of Lagos.

Australia's Drought Crisis

"Rural Australia has plunged into its worst crisis for nearly 50 years," claims *The Weekend Australian Review* of Sydney. At the end of October 1991, the state of New South Wales declared

65 percent of its area drought-stricken. To the north, neighboring Queensland has declared more than two thirds of the state drought-affected. By the time the continent entered its most recent summer season, 60 percent of eastern Australia had already registered below-average rainfall for many months, with some areas reporting their lowest rainfall on record. The *Review* noted that "the question is whether this is The Big One: the one-in-100-years-drought."

An Unhealthy Ideal

"The ideal of feminine beauty women are currently instructed to strive for is in most cases unnatural, unobtainable, and unhealthy," according to a recent report in the *Tufts University Diet and Nutrition Letter*. In the eyes of many women today, the notion of beauty is



inseparable from thinness. The media promotes this standard through the persistent use of ultrathin models. "But," as the report notes, "not only are women not meant to look like well-exercised boys, most are unable to no matter how hard they might try." Women, it seems, naturally store more fat than men; most girls will not begin the menstruation cycle until their bodies are about 17 percent fat. Pregnancy

also adds fat to the body. Thus, many middle-aged women, regardless of culture or country, carry nearly 40 percent of their body weight in fat.

Slowing the Population Explosion

By mid-1991, the earth's population had reached 5.4 billion. If it continues to grow at the present rate, says the report *State of World Population 1991*, the world's population will reach ten billion by the year 2050. UNFPA (UN Fund for Population Activities) plans to slow this increase—especially in Africa where there are, on an average, 6.2 births per woman. UNFPA's target for the year 2000 is to increase the use of modern birth-control methods by 50 percent worldwide. Meeting this goal will cost \$9 billion annually, according to UNFPA. Some consider this expense worthwhile. For example, official calculations in India indicate that since 1979 some 106 million births have been prevented by the use of birth control. This has saved \$742 billion in education and health costs.

Clergy's Reputation

According to the EPS (*Ecumenical Press Service*), a news agency of the World Council of Churches, a recent survey revealed that the public image of Germany's clergy "has suffered a severe setback." EPS says that the information service of the German Evangelical Alliance noted that "for the first time ministers of the church do not appear in the top ten professions with the highest reputation." Since 1987, clerics in former East Germany slid all the way down to

position number 19 on the list of 25 professions surveyed, while their colleagues in former West Germany fell from position number 5 to position number 12.

Male Breast Cancer

A man from Provo, Utah, U.S.A., wrote to *American Health* magazine and asked: "Is it possible for a man to get breast cancer?" The answer was: "Yes, but it's extremely rare." Of the more than 170,000 new breast-cancer patients expected in the United States during 1991, only some 900 are likely to be men. The risk factors for men listed by the magazine were: "a family history of male breast cancer; Klinefelter's syndrome, a genetic disease associated with gynecomastia (enlargement of the breast); and hyperestrogenism, the production of excess estrogen." *American Health* went on to say that "since male breast cancer is usually advanced before it's detected, doctors generally recommend mastectomy."

Blood and Disease

The Indonesian minister of health claims that as many as 2,500 people in the country may be infected with AIDS, reports *The Jakarta Post*. There is an increased public awareness of the danger of AIDS among Indonesians. Acknowledging that the dreadful disease can spread through blood transfusions, a special effort is being made to test Indonesia's blood supply. *The Jakarta Post* reports that no HIV has yet been found in any of the donated-blood samples. However, the Indonesian Red Cross has found the syphilis spirochete and the Hepatitis B virus in 2.56 percent of the donated blood that has been tested so far.

Vegetable Ivory

The demand for animal ivory has brought the elephant close to the edge of extinction. "Now from the rain forests of South America comes a natural product that might help diminish that demand," says *International Wildlife* magazine. "It's called tagua, and, unlike elephant tusks, it grows on trees." The vegetable ivory is made from the dried and polished nuts of South American palms. Carved, it is remarkably similar to animal ivory in both look and feel, and even mimics its porosity. No



doubt that is why it is called *Phytelephas*—"elephant plant." Its only drawback is its size, slightly over an inch, which limits the items that can be made from it. The use of vegetable ivory is not new but goes back over 100 years. Buttons and other things were made from it. But after World War II, the competition from newly developed and inexpensive plastics wiped out the tagua trade, and it was virtually forgotten. Use of tagua is already growing in Japan, France, Italy, Germany, and the United States.

Adultery in Argentina

The Argentinean newspaper *Clarín* reports that 90 percent of the people who hire the services of private detectives in Argentina are seeking evidence of their mate's adultery. *Clarín* states that "the majority of the clients are women

(approximately 75 percent). Generally they are about 40 years of age." Private detectives are able to gather enough circumstantial evidence to confirm suspicions of adultery in 80 percent of these cases.

Changing Attitudes

Since World War II, Japan has risen from poverty and is now widely recognized as one of the world's economic giants. Yet, ordinary Japanese are unimpressed. A recent study found that only 27 percent of the Japanese said they are proud of the country's major companies," notes the *Mainichi Daily News*. Of the ten countries surveyed, the Japanese are the least patriotic in all respects. Only 10 percent of the Japanese say they would die for their country. This is a marked change from attitudes at the height of World War II when, according to *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*, 92 percent of the male civilians joining in the war effort did so voluntarily.

Losing Ground Against Malaria

"These are grim days in the battle against malaria," states *Science* magazine. A new report from the Institute of Medicine shows that after making progress in the 1940's and 1950's, humans are now losing ground to the parasite. Over a million people in 102 countries, most of them children, are being killed each year. Adding to the problem is that the antimalaria drugs in use have lost some of their effectiveness, and efforts to create new vaccines have come up short. Warfare in the African countries, where most of the deaths occur, has also made it difficult to battle the disease, and the richer nations have been cutting their budgets for malaria research.



A Day to Remember

The evening before he died, Jesus shared a loaf of unleavened bread and a cup of wine with his apostles and said: "Keep doing this in remembrance of me."—Luke 22:19. This year the anniversary of his request falls on April 17, after sunset.