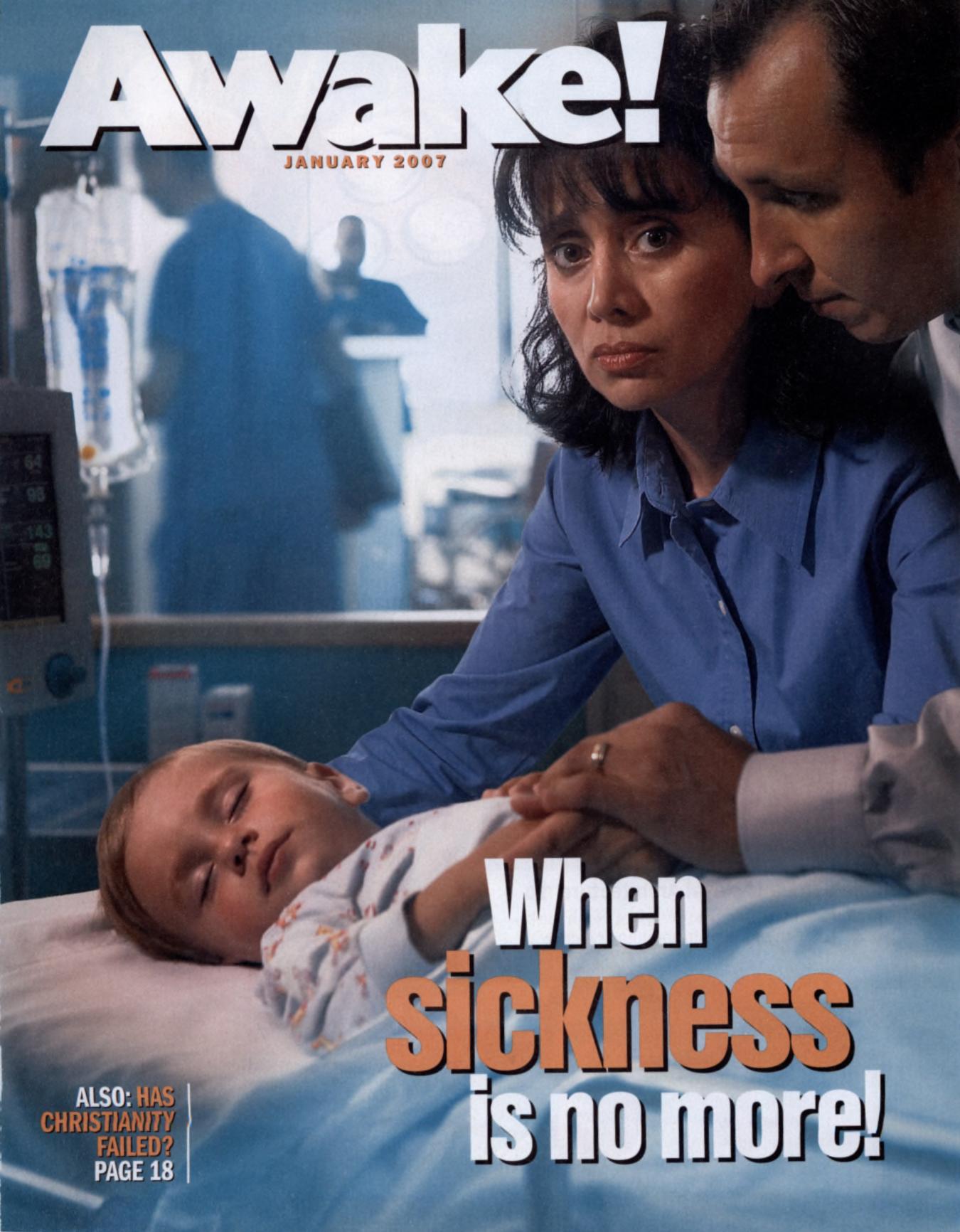


Awake!

JANUARY 2007



When
sickness
is no more!

ALSO: HAS
CHRISTIANITY
FAILED?
PAGE 18



When sickness is no more!

3-11

Science has made great strides in the fields of medicine and health care. Still, sickness continues to exact a heavy toll on humankind. Will there ever be a time when sickness is no more?

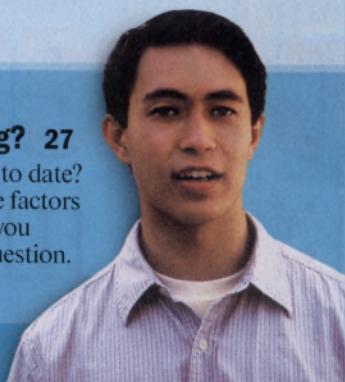


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OVER 2,700 years ago, a prophet spoke of a future time when sickness will be no more. This prophecy has been preserved down to our day and is found in the ancient writings of Isaiah. He wrote of a time when "no resident will say: 'I am sick,'" and he added: "At that time 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) Other Bible prophecies speak of such a future. For example, the last book of the Bible, Revelation, describes a time when God will eliminate pain.—Revelation 21:4.

Will these promises come true? Will there ever be a time when the human race will enjoy good health and when sickness will be no more? Granted, a large segment of mankind enjoys better health today than in past generations. But better health does not mean the best health. Sickness still exacts a heavy toll. Just the fear of getting sick brings great anxiety. And the harsh reality is that even in this modern age, no one can fully escape the onslaught of physical and mental maladies.

The Price You Pay

The burden of ill health has many faces. One that is of great concern today is the soaring financial cost of illness. For instance, during a recent year, 500 million workdays were lost in Europe because of health problems. The situation is similar elsewhere. Reduced productivity at the workplace, together with the increasing cost of health care, creates a financial burden that affects all. Business corporations and governments pay a price. In order to offset costs, businesses raise the price of their products and governments increase taxation. Who pays? Ultimately, you do!

Sad to say, the poor usually find it difficult to obtain adequate health care, if any at all. In developing countries that is the tragic

The world wants good health!

plight of millions who have either limited access or no access to professional health services. Even in wealthy countries, some have to struggle to benefit from the good medical care available. This is often the case with many of the 46 million people in the United States who do not have health insurance.

The burden of illness is not just financial. The ultimate price we pay is the anguish of suffering a terminal disease, the agony of enduring chronic pain, the sadness of seeing others who are seriously ill, and the despair of experiencing the loss of a loved one.

The hope of someday living in a world without sickness is most appealing. The world wants good health! Many believe that as fantastic as it may sound, such a hope is real. There are some who are convinced that through man-made technology, in time, virtually all disease and sickness will be eradicated. On the other hand, those who put faith in the Bible believe that God will cause its ancient prophecies about a world without sickness to be fulfilled. Will man bring about a time when sickness is no more? Will God? What will the future bring?



Will science cure the world?

WILL modern science cure the world? Do the Bible prophecies of Isaiah and Revelation point to a time when man himself will bring about a world without sickness? In view of the many accomplishments in health care, some feel that this is not a far-fetched notion.

Governments and private benefactors are now working together with the United Nations in an unprecedented campaign against disease. One concerted effort focuses on the immunization of children in developing countries. According to the United Nations Children's Fund, if countries achieve their goals, "by 2015, more than 70 million children who live in the world's poorest countries will receive each year life-saving vaccines against the following diseases: tuberculosis, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, measles, rubella, yellow fever, haemophilus influenzae type B, hepatitis B, polio, rotavirus, pneumococcus, meningococcus, and Japanese encephalitis." Measures are also being taken to provide basic health necessities, such as adequate access

to clean water, better nutrition, and hygiene education.

Scientists, however, aspire to provide much more than just the basics in health care. Cutting-edge technology is revolutionizing the medical field. It has been said that about every eight years, scientists double their medical knowledge. The following is just a sample of some of the latest technological achievements and goals in the fight against disease.

■ **X-ray imaging** For more than 30 years, doctors and hospitals have been using what is known as the CT scan. The acronym CT stands for *computed tomography*. CT scanners produce three-dimensional X-ray images of the inside of our bodies. These images are helpful in diagnosing disease and examining internal abnormalities.

While there is some controversy over the dangers associated with radiation exposure, medical experts are optimistic about the future benefits of this advancing technology. Michael Vannier, a professor of radiology at the University of Chicago Hospital, says: "In just the past few years, the progress is enough to make your head spin."

CT scanners are now faster, more accurate, and less costly. The speed of the newest scanning methods is an important advantage. This is especially true when scanning the

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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heart. Because the heart is constantly beating, many X-ray images of it used to come out blurry, making them difficult to evaluate accurately. As *New Scientist* magazine explains, new scanners take "just a third of a second to rotate around the body, faster than a single heart beat," thus creating sharper pictures.

With the help of the latest scanners, doctors can not only capture the anatomical details of the inner body but also examine the biochemical activity of specific areas. This application may make it possible to detect the presence of cancer in its early stages.

■ Robotic surgery Sophisticated robots no longer remain in the realm of science fiction—at least in the medical field. Already, thousands of surgeries are taking place with the help of robots. In some cases the surgeons operate with the use of a remote-control device that allows them to manipulate several robotic arms. These arms are equipped with scalpels, scissors, cameras, cauteries, and other surgical instruments. The technology allows surgeons to perform extremely complicated operations with incredible precision. "Surgeons who use the system have found that patients have less blood loss and pain, lower risk of complications, shorter hospital stays and quicker recovery times than those who have open surgery," reports *Newsweek* magazine.

■ Nanomedicine *Nanomedicine* is the application of *nanotechnology* to the medical field. In turn, nanotechnology is the science of manipulating and creating microscopic objects.

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

[#]Audiocassettes also available.

⁺ CD also available.

^o MP3 CD-ROM also available.

The unit of measure used in this technology is called the nanometer, which is one billionth of a meter.*

To put such a measurement in perspective, the page you are reading now is about 100,000 nanometers thick, and a human hair about 80,000. A red blood cell is about 2,500 nanometers in diameter. A bacterium is about 1,000 nanometers long, and a virus about 100 nanometers. Your DNA measures about 2.5 nanometers in diameter.

Proponents of this technology believe that in the near future, scientists will be able to build tiny devices designed to perform medical procedures inside the human body. Often referred to as nanomachines, these little robots will carry microscopic computers programmed with very specific instructions. Amazingly, these fairly complex machines will be built with components no bigger than 100 nanometers. That is 25 times smaller than the diameter of a red blood cell!

Because they are so small, it is hoped that nanodevices will someday be able to travel through tiny capillaries and deliver oxygen to anemic tissues, remove obstructions from blood vessels and plaque from brain cells, and even hunt down and destroy viruses, bacteria, and other infectious agents. Nanomachines may also be used to deliver drugs directly to specifically targeted cells.

Scientists predict that cancer detection will improve dramatically with the aid of

* The prefix "nano," from the Greek term for dwarf, means "one billionth."

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nanomedicine. Dr. Samuel Wickline, a professor of medicine, physics, and biomedical engineering, said: "The possibilities are enormous for finding very small cancers far earlier than ever before and treating them with powerful drugs at the tumor site alone, while at the same time reducing any harmful side effects."

Although this may sound like futuristic fantasy, nanomedicine is very real in the minds of some scientists. Leading researchers in this field expect that within the next decade, nanotechnology will be in use in repairing and rearranging the molecular structure of living cells. One proponent claims: "Nanomedicine will eliminate virtually all common diseases of the 20th century, virtually all medical pain and suffering, and allow the extension of human capabilities." Even now some scientists are reporting good success in the use of nanomedicine on laboratory animals.

■ Genomics The study of gene structure is known as genomics. Every cell in the human body is packed with many components that are vital to life. One of these components is the gene. Each of us has about 35,000 genes that determine hair color and texture, skin and eye color, height, and other features of our individual physical appearance. Our genes also play an important role in determining the quality of our internal organs.

When genes are damaged, they can have an impact on our health. In fact, some researchers believe that all diseases arise from genetic malfunction. Some defective genes are inherited from our parents. Others are damaged by exposure to harmful elements in our environment.

Scientists hope that they will soon be able to identify the specific genes that predispose us to disease. This can allow doctors to understand, for instance, why certain individuals are more prone to cancers than others or why a type of cancer is more aggressive in some people than in others. Genomics may

also reveal why a drug proves effective for some patients while not for others.

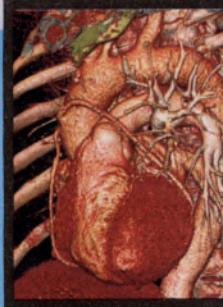
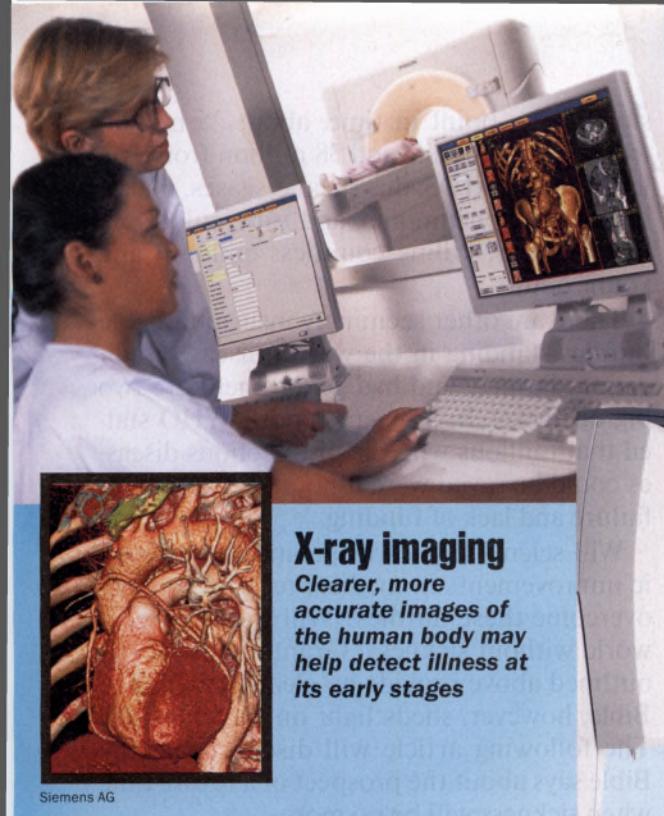
Such specific genetic information may give birth to what is being called personalized medicine. How might you benefit from this technology? The concept of personalized medicine suggests that medical care can be tailored to match your unique genetic profile. For example, if a study of your genes were to reveal that you are predisposed to develop a certain disease, doctors could detect such a disease long before any symptoms appeared. Proponents claim that in instances where the disease is not yet present, the right treatment, diet, and changes in behavior might even prevent the disease altogether.

Your genes may also alert doctors to the likelihood of your having an adverse reaction to medication. This information may give doctors the ability to prescribe the precise kind of medicine and the dosage needed in your particular case. *The Boston Globe* reports: "By 2020, the impact [of personalized medicine] is likely to be far more sweeping than any of us can envision today. New gene-based designer drugs will be developed for diabetes, heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, schizophrenia, and many other conditions that take a high toll on our society."

The above-mentioned technologies are but a sample of what science promises for the future. Medical knowledge continues to grow at an unprecedented rate. But scientists do not expect to eradicate sickness completely anytime soon. There are many hurdles that still seem insurmountable.

Seemingly Insurmountable Hurdles

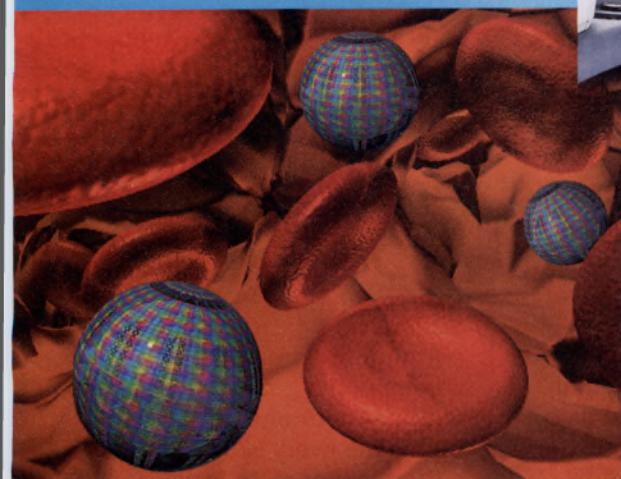
Human behavior may slow down progress in the eradication of disease. For example, scientists believe that human-inflicted damage to certain ecosystems has resulted in new, dangerous diseases. In a *Newsweek* magazine interview, Mary Pearl, president of the Wildlife Trust, explained: "Since the mid-1970s, more than 30 new diseases have emerged, including



X-ray imaging

Clearer, more accurate images of the human body may help detect illness at its early stages

Siemens AG



Nanomedicine Man-made microscopic machines may enable doctors to treat illness at the cellular level. This photo shows an artist's conception of nanomachines that would mimic the function of red blood cells

▲ Artist: Vik Olliver (vik@diamondage.co.nz)/
Designer: Robert Freitas

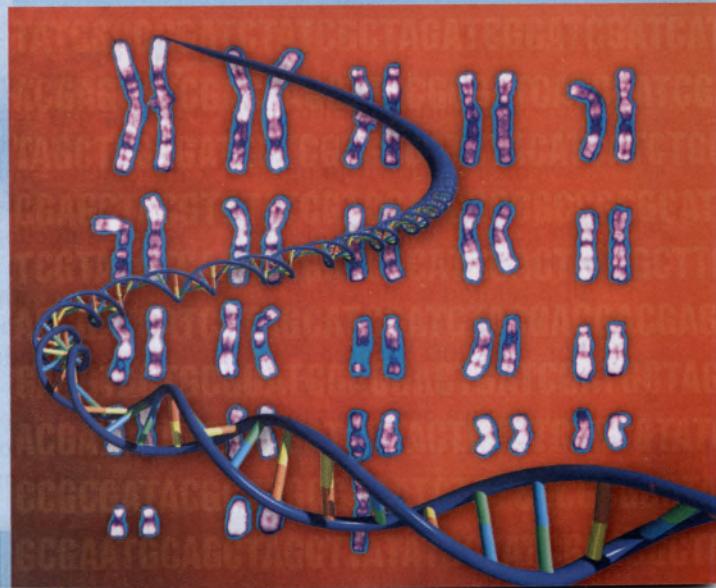
Chromosomes: © Phanie/
Photo Researchers, Inc. ►

Robotic surgery Robots equipped with surgical instruments help doctors perform extremely complicated operations with incredible precision



© 2006 Intuitive Surgical, Inc.

Genomics By studying an individual's gene structure, scientists hope to detect and treat illness even before the patient experiences any symptoms



AIDS, Ebola, Lyme disease and SARS. Most of these are believed to have moved from wildlife to human populations."

Additionally, people are eating less fresh fruits and vegetables and more sugar, salt, and saturated fat. This together with a decrease in physical activity and other unhealthy habits has resulted in more cardiovascular diseases. Tobacco smoking is on the increase, causing serious health problems and death to millions globally. Every year some 20 million people sustain serious injuries or die as a result of automobile accidents. War and other forms of violence kill and maim countless others. Millions suffer ill health as a result of alcohol or drug abuse.

The fact is that regardless of the cause, and notwithstanding all the advancements in medical technology, some diseases continue to take a heavy toll. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 'more than 150 million people suffer from depres-

sion at any point in time, about 25 million from schizophrenia, and 38 million from epilepsy.' HIV/AIDS, diarrheal diseases, malaria, measles, pneumonia, and tuberculosis infect millions, killing countless children and young adults.

There are other seemingly insurmountable hurdles standing in the way of disease eradication. Poverty and bad government are two big obstacles. In a recent report, WHO stated that millions who die of infectious diseases could be saved were it not for government failure and lack of funding.

Will scientific knowledge and the dramatic improvements in medical technology help overcome these hurdles? Will we soon see a world without sickness? Granted, the factors outlined above provide no clear answer. The Bible, however, sheds light on this question. The following article will discuss what the Bible says about the prospect of a future time when sickness will be no more.

Six Undefeated Foes

Medical knowledge and related technologies continue to advance at an unprecedented rate. In spite of this, plagues of infectious diseases are still ravaging the world. The killer diseases listed below remain undefeated.

HIV/AIDS

Some 60 million people have been infected with HIV, and about 20 million have died of AIDS. During 2005 there were five million new infections and more than three million AIDS-related deaths. The victims included more than 500,000 children. The vast majority of HIV victims have no access to adequate treatment.

Diarrhea

With about four billion cases every year, diarrhea is described as a major killer among the poor. It is caused by various infectious diseases that can be spread by contaminated water or food or a lack of good personal hygiene. These infections result in a yearly death toll of more than two million people.

Malaria

Annually, some 300 million people get ill from malaria. About one million victims die every year, many of them children. In Africa one child dies of malaria about every 30 seconds. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "science still has no magic bullet for malaria and many doubt that such a single solution will ever exist."

Alternative Forms of Medicine on the Rise

There are a wide variety of healing methods that are not generally accepted by practitioners of conventional medicine. These are generally known as traditional medicine and alternative medicine. In developing countries the majority of the population rely on traditional medicine for their health needs. In poor areas many cannot afford conventional medical treatments, while other people simply prefer traditional methods.

Alternative forms of medicine are also thriving in wealthy countries. Among the most popular types of alternative treatment are acupuncture, chiropractic, homeopathy, naturopathy, and herbal medicine. Some of these practices have been scientifically studied and proved beneficial for certain conditions. The effectiveness of certain methods, however, has not been adequately established.

The increased popularity of alternative types of medicine has raised some safety issues. In many countries such healing therapies are not regulated. This provides an environment where harmful self-medication, counterfeit products, and quackery can thrive. Although being well-intentioned, friends and relatives lacking sufficient training often become self-appointed practitioners. All of this has resulted in adverse reactions and other health hazards.

In several countries where regulations are in place, alternative forms of therapies are gaining acceptance in the conventional medical community and are offered by medical doctors. Still, there seems to be no valid claim that these methods will ever bring about a world without sickness.



Measles

During 2003, measles killed more than 500,000 people. A leading cause of death among children, measles is a highly contagious disease. Every year some 30 million people contract measles. Ironically, an effective and inexpensive vaccine against measles has been available for the past 40 years.

Pneumonia

More children die of pneumonia than of any other infectious disease, claims WHO. About two million children under the age of five die of pneumonia every year. Most of these deaths take place in Africa and Southeast Asia. In many parts of the world, limited access to health facilities prevents victims from getting lifesaving medical treatment.

Tuberculosis

During 2003, tuberculosis (TB) caused the death of over 1,700,000 people. Of great concern to health officials is the emergence of drug-resistant TB germs. Some strains have developed resistance to all major anti-TB medications. Drug-resistant TB strains develop in patients who undergo poorly supervised or incomplete medical treatment.



When sickness is no more!

MANY people hope that they will find relief from pain and sickness in a heavenly afterlife. However, contrary to popular belief, the hope that the Bible really offers for mankind in general is life in an earthly paradise. (Psalm 37:11; 115:16) This promised future includes perfect health, happiness, and everlasting life.

Why do we get sick and die? And how will a world without sickness come about? The Bible answers those questions.

■ **The real cause of sickness** Adam and Eve, our first human parents, were created with perfectly healthy

bodies. (Genesis 1:31; Deuteronomy 32:4) They were designed to live on earth forever. It was not until they willfully rebelled against God that their bodies became susceptible to disease. (Genesis 3:17-19) By rejecting God's authority, they severed their ties with the Creator, the Source of their perfect life. They became defective. As a result, they got sick and died, just as God had warned them they would.—Genesis 2:16, 17; 5:5.

After their rebellion Adam and Eve could only pass on imperfection to their children. (Romans 5:12) As mentioned in the preceding article,

A Balanced View of Health

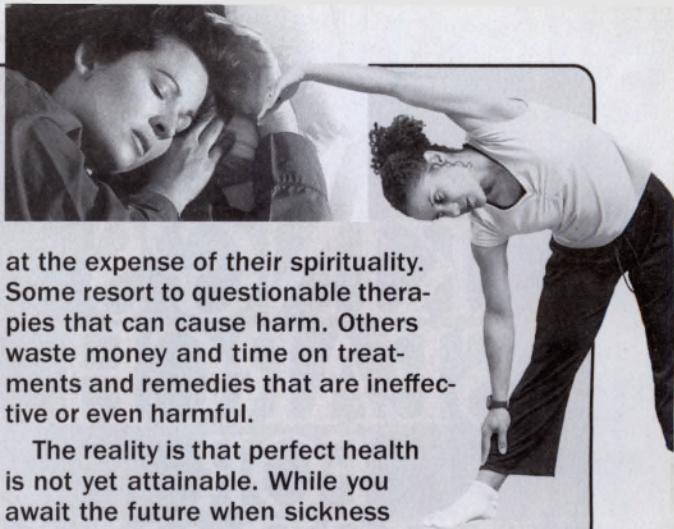
The Bible promotes respect for life. Jehovah's Witnesses display such respect by striving to take care of their health. They avoid harmful practices, such as drug abuse and the use of tobacco. God expects his worshippers to be moderate in their drinking and eating habits. (Proverbs 23:20; Titus 2:2, 3) Such practical steps along with sufficient rest and exercise can delay or prevent many physical maladies. Those suffering illness may need the help of trustworthy health specialists.

The Bible promotes reasonableness and "soundness of mind." (Titus 2:12; Philippians 4:5) Many today lack balance and become obsessed in their search for cures, even

scientists today recognize that there are inherited malfunctions that contribute to sickness and death. After extensive research, a group of scientists recently concluded: "It is an inescapable biological reality that once the engine of life switches on, the body inevitably sows the seeds of its own destruction."

■ Not by human effort Science is achieving great things in the fight against sickness. But the cause of disease has proved too complex for science to resolve fully. This is no surprise to Bible students who are acquainted with God's inspired words: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs."—Psalm 146:3.

However, as the Bible declares, "the things impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:27) Jehovah God can undo the cause of sickness. He will heal all our maladies. (Psalm 103:3) His inspired Word promises: "Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be any-



at the expense of their spirituality. Some resort to questionable therapies that can cause harm. Others waste money and time on treatments and remedies that are ineffective or even harmful.

The reality is that perfect health is not yet attainable. While you await the future when sickness will be no more, the wisdom and reasonableness found in the Bible can help you to remain balanced in your pursuit of good health.

more. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

■ What you need to do Jesus Christ pointedly explained what we must do in order to enjoy a future world without sickness. He said: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—John 17:3.

The knowledge of God and the teachings of his Son, Jesus, are found in the Bible. Such knowledge includes practical advice that can improve your life now. But even more, God promises a world without pain for his obedient worshippers. Yes, God offers you a future when "no resident will say: 'I am sick'!"—Isaiah 33:24.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

■ Is Religion Losing Its Influence?

■ Who Is Satan? Is He Real?

■ Homosexuality—How Can I Avoid It?

A KING'S SEARCH FOR WISDOM

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SPAIN



ALFONSO EL SABIO.

THE 13th century was a time of bitter intolerance and extreme violence. Europe was embroiled in the infamous Inquisition and the death-dealing Crusades. Yet, in the midst of this bloody era, a Spanish king tried to bring some sanity to the world. His name was Alfonso X, also called Alfonso the Wise.

This king is credited with a cultural awakening that is sometimes called the 13th-century renaissance. He brought new knowledge to Spain from distant lands. He was particularly interested in the fields of art, history, law, and science. This had a profound influence on the cultural development of Spain as well as the rest of Europe. More significantly, however, his quest led him to promote the Word of God, the Holy Bible.

Alfonso was instrumental in the formation of an academy where learned Jews, Muslims, and "Christians" could collaborate. To facilitate their work, the king created and financed one of the world's first State libraries.

Alfonso himself actively participated in the writing and compiling of a whole range of works dealing with jurisprudence, science,

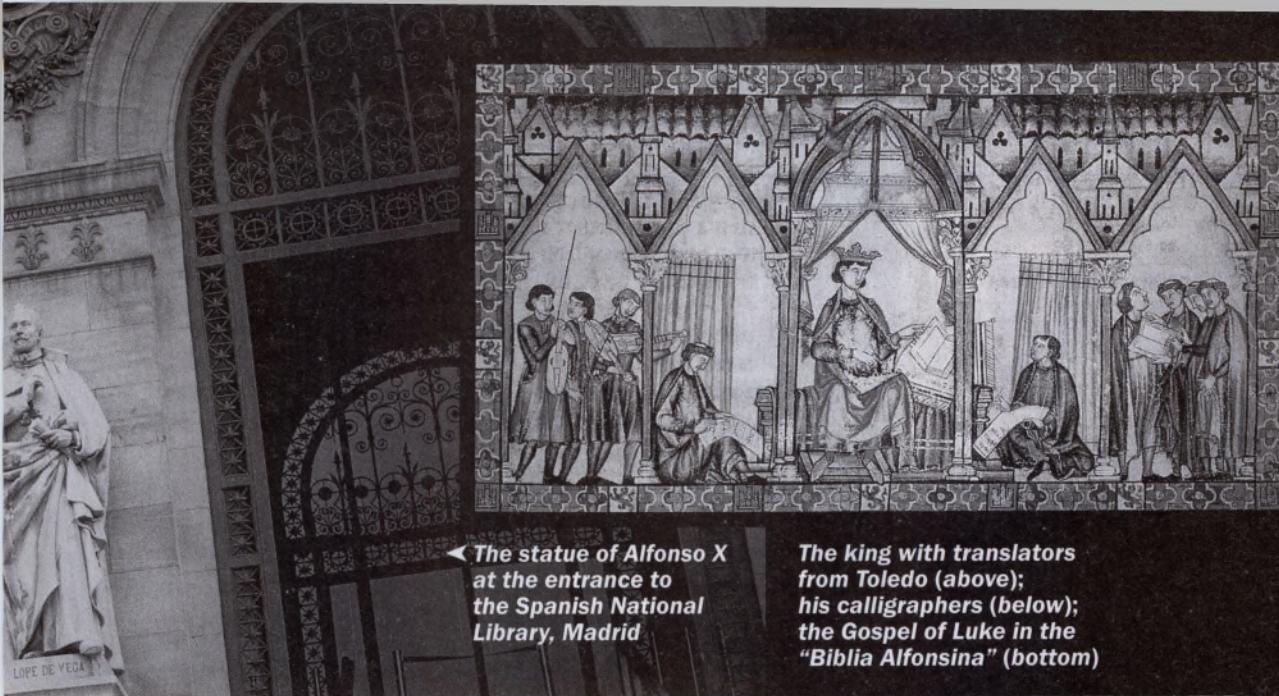
and history. He encouraged the development of literature and poetry, fields in which he himself excelled, as shown by his famous cantigas.* These were written in Gallego (Galician), the language used at that time for lyrical compositions.

A School of Translators

Alfonso sponsored the School of Translators in Toledo. "The king's work consisted of selecting both the translators and the works to be translated," explains the book *La Escuela de Traductores de Toledo* (The School of Translators in Toledo). "He revised the translations, encouraged intellectual debate, and sponsored the composition of new works."

The Toledo scholars began by translating a large quantity of Arabic works. Muslim scholars had already translated the most important works of the Greek, Indian, Persian, and Syrian civilizations into Arabic. The resulting storehouse of knowledge had been useful in the Muslim scholars' continuing development in the fields of mathematics, as

* Cantigas are medieval poetic compositions that were sung by minstrels.



The statue of Alfonso X at the entrance to the Spanish National Library, Madrid

The king with translators from Toledo (above); his calligraphers (below); the Gospel of Luke in the "Biblia Alfonsina" (bottom)

tronomy, history, and geography. In turn, the school of Toledo sought to mine this storehouse. How? By translating important Arabic works into Latin and Spanish.

News about the accomplishments of Toledo's scholars spread to other countries. Learned men from universities in northern Europe soon flocked to Toledo. All this played a vital role in the scientific and literary progress of the West. In fact, the effects of this vast translation enterprise had an impact on the development of the Renaissance.

The labors of Toledo's translators allowed doctors to read the medical works of Galen, Hippocrates, and Avicenna, whose *Canon of Medicine* became the basic medical textbook in Western universities until the 17th century. Astronomers were able to read Ptolemy's works and benefit from Arabic trigonometry and the astronomical tables of al-Khwārizmī.*

Alfonso wanted those translations to be understood by people in general. This initiative established the Spanish language as a scientific and literary vehicle. The work that Alfonso started helped change

* Al-Khwārizmī was a renowned Persian mathematician of the ninth century who developed algebra and introduced Indian mathematical concepts, such as the use of Arabic numerals including the concept of a zero and the fundamentals of arithmetic. The word "algorithm" is derived from his name.



Habíamos los dieciséis en epifanía estando, e
por muchas pueras es dicho q' descan-
só Ihsu xpo al logar o el ante a leer en
terram, e quanto oyo fechó su oració
fímosle... tan alargado de pena de mu-
er... cuemo era alargado de corrom-
pimiento de su carne... Aquí comienza
San Jóhā su evanglio.



Al com-
pagnie-
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Esto era
en dies
al compagamiento. Todas las cosas fue-
ron fechas por él; e sin él no oyo hecho
nada. Lo q' en él fue hecho: nuda era, e

EARLY SPANISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

The works of Alfonso X were not the first to include Spanish translations of portions of the Scriptures. A few years earlier, Hermannus Alemannus, one of the translators who worked in the school of Toledo, had translated the Psalms directly from Hebrew into Spanish. Also, early in the 13th century, the *Biblia medieval romanceada Prealfonsina* (Pre-Alphonsine Medieval Romance Bible) was translated. (See photo at left.) This work is considered to be the oldest complete Spanish Bible. Doubtless it influenced the Bible translation sponsored by Alfonso X a few years later.

Regarding this Pre-Alphonsine Bible, scholar Thomas Montgomery says: "The translator of this Bible produced an admirable work with regard to accuracy as well as elegant language. The version scrupulously follows the sense of the Vulgate without excessive use of Latin expressions or terms. The language is simple and clear, as was needed for a Bible prepared for people unversed in Latin."

the general view that Latin was the language of culture.

The Alfonsine Bible

The experience the Toledo scholars gained when translating such an abundance of material must have proved very useful when Alfonso ordered the translation of portions of the Bible into Spanish. According to Spanish historian Juan de Mariana, the king sponsored this Bible translation in the hope that through it the Spanish language would be polished and enriched. Doubtless, such early translation of the Bible did indeed contribute to the development of the Spanish language.

The king regarded the Bible as valuable for the instruction of mankind. He wrote in the prologue of *Crónica de España*: "If we consider the benefit that flows from the Sacred Scriptures, we see that it lies in the instruction they give us regarding the creation of the world, the coming of the patriarchs, . . . the promised coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his passion, resurrection and ascension."

He also supervised the preparation of the ambitious literary project that he called the *General Estoria*. It included a Spanish trans-

lation of portions of the Hebrew Scriptures. (A translation of portions of the Greek Scriptures was added later.) This impressive work, known as the Alfonsine Bible (*Biblia Alfonsina*), was the largest of its kind produced in the Middle Ages. It was copied many times and partly translated into Portuguese and Catalan.

The Legacy of Alfonso

The medieval manuscripts of Alfonso's time kept Scriptural knowledge alive during an age of spiritual darkness. Thanks to these translations, an interest in the vernacular Bible was aroused. During the following two centuries, other Bible translations were produced in Spanish.

The invention of the printing press and the tireless work of 16th-century Bible translators in Spain and other European countries carried forward the work that Alfonso and his contemporaries had begun. People throughout Europe could at last possess a copy of the Bible in their own language. Although the reign of Alfonso X had its share of wars and rebellions, his quest for knowledge helped make divine wisdom widely accessible.



Germs in the Office

University of Arizona microbiologists measured bacteria in offices in a number of U.S. cities. They found that "the five most germ-contaminated spots were (in order) phones, desktops, water fountain handles, microwave door handles and keyboards," says the *Globe and Mail* newspaper. According to the report, "the average desktop is home to 100 times more bacteria than a kitchen table and 400 times more than the average toilet seat."

"Christians Only in Words"

The Philippines has been referred to as the only "Christian" nation in Asia. However, Bishop Efraim Tendero of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches stated: "Most of us are Christians only in

words but not in our actions."

As stated in the *Manila Bulletin*, part of the blame rests with church leaders, who fail "to create awareness and appreciation of the Bible." Some church sermons are said to highlight politics rather than the Scriptures.

Humans and Animals Fight for Sustenance

"Reports of baboons and hyenas attacking communities in drought-stricken Somalia are becoming common," states the Nairobi newspaper *The East African*. One fight over water left several baboons dead and some livestock raisers injured. Bands of monkeys are said to position themselves at "strategic road intersections or on bridges" to raid trucks ferrying provisions to local markets. "The sight of animals making off with bunches of bananas or [large] watermelons is common," adds the newspaper.

Shipping Affects Coastal Weather

Maritime traffic on busy waterways can affect coastal weather, reports the German newspaper *Köl-*

■ Over a 15-month period, 82 newborn babies were found abandoned on the streets of Mexico City, 27 of them lifeless.

—EL UNIVERSAL, MEXICO.

■ Studies of caves in two national parks in California, U.S.A., have yielded 27 new animal species. "This just confirms how little we know about the world around us," says Joel Despain, a cave specialist for the National Park Service.—SMITHSONIAN, U.S.A.

■ Twenty percent of the world's population lack potable water. Forty percent lack basic sanitary systems.—MILENIO, MEXICO.

■ Poachers kill between 20,000 and 30,000 animals per year in the Serengeti National Park alone.—THE DAILY NEWS, TANZANIA.

■ Studies carried out in Barcelona, Spain, reveal that 1 out of every 3 students aged 16 smokes cannabis regularly.

—LA VANGUARDIA, SPAIN.

ner Stadt-Anzeiger. Researchers at the Max Planck Institute for Meteorology, Hamburg, analyzed cloud formation over the English Channel. They found that clouds over coastal lands have become thinner, while those over waterways have become denser. The phenomenon is attributed to the exhaust fumes from ships. Soot particles emitted by the ships are believed to function as nuclei for condensation, increasing the formation of water droplets. "In the last 50 years," says the newspaper, "the fuel consumption of shipping has more than quadrupled."

Meet the Gardener's Friend

the Ladybird

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN BRITAIN



IN Britain this tiny, colorful insect is called a ladybird.* In North America it is known as a ladybug or a lady beetle. Other countries have their own names for it. Although beetles are not everyone's favorite insect, ladybirds are generally viewed with affection. They fascinate children, and gardeners and farmers welcome them with open arms. What makes them so popular?

Why Popular

Most species of this friendly little beetle just love to eat aphids (shown left), the tiny soft-bodied insects that suck the life out of garden and agricultural crops. Some adult ladybirds can consume several thousand aphids in their lifetime—and the ladybirds' larvae have huge appetites too. In addition, the beetle feeds on many other insect pests, and some even relish plant-damaging mildews. No wonder gardeners and farmers welcome the ladybird!

In the late 1800's, cottony-cushion scale insects were accidentally imported from Australia into California, U.S.A. The pest multiplied so rapidly that it threatened to wipe out the citrus orchards and destroy the industry.

Knowing that in its home country this scale insect posed no threat to crops, an entomologist went to Australia in search of the insect's natural enemy. He found it to be the vedalia, a ladybird



* "Ladybird" comes from "Our Lady's Bird," named after the Virgin Mary.

beetle. About 500 of the beetles were shipped to California, and within a year the scale was virtually wiped out. The citrus orchards were saved.

A Year in the Life of a Ladybird

This attractive little beetle has a round or oval, dome-shaped body and a flat underside. Despite having voracious appetites, most species of ladybirds are under a half inch in length. Hard, shiny wing covers called elytra protect the delicate flight wings underneath and give the beetle its colorful pattern. When the insect flies, the elytra open up and lift out of the way. Although ladybirds are often portrayed as red with black spots, the approximately 5,000 species actually have a variety of color and spot combinations. Some are orange or yellow with black spots. Others are black with red spots. A few have no spots. Still others have checkerboard markings or stripes.

Many species live for a year. During winter, adults hibernate in a dry, sheltered location. Awakening when the days get warmer, they fly in search of plants infested with aphids. The female, after mating, lays a cluster of tiny yellow eggs (shown right) on the underside of a leaf near a good aphid supply. Each egg hatches into a six-legged larva that looks more like a ferocious little alligator (shown left) than a future ladybird. Since the larva spends its

Top: © Wadthäusl/Schlaububer/Naturfoto-Online; left two: Scott Bauer/Agricultural Research Service, USDA; middle: Clemson University—USDA Cooperative Extension, South Series, www.insectimages.org; eggs: Bradley Higbee, Paramount Farming, www.insectimages.org.



time eating aphids, it soon grows too big for its skin. After shedding its skin several times, it attaches itself to a plant and produces a pupal skin. Inside the pupa, the larva continues to grow until it finally pops out as an adult. At first soft and pale, it remains on the plant while its body hardens. In a day, its distinctive markings appear.

Enemies learn to avoid the colorful ladybird. When threatened, the beetle squirts a yellow, foul-smelling, horrible-tasting liquid from its joints. Predators, such as birds or spiders, never forget their first unpleasant encounter, and the insect's bright color serves as a constant reminder.

A Problem Ladybird

One species of ladybird, initially used as pest control, is proving somewhat of a pest itself. The harlequin ladybird, also called the multicolored Asian lady beetle, lives happily with other species of ladybirds in its native habitat in northeastern Asia. Because of its exceptional appetite for aphids and other plant pests, it was recently introduced into North America and Europe. Unfortunately, it has endangered native ladybirds by eating all their food. More than that, when its preferred diet runs out—and without its natural enemies to control it—the hungry beetle turns to devouring local ladybirds and other beneficial insects. Entomologists view the future with alarm as they foresee the extinction of some ladybird species. The harlequin also makes itself unpopular by gorging on ripe fruit ready for harvesting and by invading

houses in massive numbers in the autumn to escape the winter cold.

A few other species of ladybirds eat precious crops instead of insect pests. Happily, however, the vast majority are a gardener's delight.

Welcome the Ladybird

How can you attract ladybirds to your garden? Native flowering plants provide a welcome source of pollen and nectar. A patch of weeds and a shallow dish of water will encourage them too. If possible, avoid using chemical pesticides. Some dead leaves left on plants or on the ground during the winter will provide cozy hibernation sites. Try not to squash any bugs and eggs you find in your garden. You could be killing the next generation of ladybirds.

Remember, just a few of these attractive little insects will help you keep garden pests at bay without the use of harmful pesticides. If you look after ladybirds, they will reward you for your care. They are yet another example of our Creator's wisdom, as the psalmist acknowledged when he said: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions."—Psalm 104:24.





THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT

Has Christianity Failed?

ABOUT a third of the earth's population claim to be Christian. Yet, the world seems more politically divided and more violent than ever before. Does this mean that Christianity as Jesus taught it is somehow flawed? Or, rather, does the flaw exist in the way many people apply Christ's teachings?

This article will examine what Christ actually taught and the example he set for his followers. It will also consider a common view among professed Christians, one that is actually in conflict with the true meaning of Christianity.

A Distorted Form of Christianity

Hundreds of years after Christ's death, a distorted form of Christianity was made a favored religion in the Roman Empire. No longer unwelcome outsiders, members of this group of professed Christians soon found

themselves at the center of the political and social mainstream of Roman society. Church leaders, such as Augustine, reacted to this change by teaching that the awaited Kingdom of God had now arrived. Such leaders taught that their newly acquired political and religious influence was the means of bringing about the will of God on earth. Thus the value of human effort in directing earth's affairs was emphasized.

As a result, many have come to believe that a Christian has a role to play in the political fabric of society. To do that, most believe, a Christian must at times subordinate certain aspects of his beliefs to the will of the society in which he lives. For example, many people pay lip service to Christ's teachings of love and peace, while at the same time supporting vicious wars. For the same reason, churches

may encourage their followers to pray for the Kingdom of God but at the same time lend support to rulers who act oppressively.

This counterfeit form of Christianity is not the religion that Jesus established. Rather, it is a man-made version and is practiced by most professed Christians today. This version of Christianity has indeed failed, as evidenced by the widespread disregard for Bible principles in all of Christendom today.

What Did Jesus Actually Teach?

It may come as a surprise to some that Jesus actually said that his followers should be “no part of the world, just as [he was] no part of the world.” (John 17:15, 16) Why would Christ encourage his disciples to take such a stand? Jesus’ beloved disciple the apostle John provided an answer. He wrote: “The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.”—1 John 5:19.

Hence, Christ’s teachings direct people, not to human entities, but to the heavenly Kingdom of God as the agency that will create a just and righteous world here on earth. (Matthew 6:10) Jesus himself did not show the slightest inclination to interfere with the social structure of his day. He rejected political office outright. (John 6:15) He also rejected violence as a way of settling disputes. (Matthew 26:50-53; John 18:36) Jesus left behind no constitution or canon of civil laws. He took no political stand on the issues of his day. For instance, he did not become an activist for the rights of slaves, nor did he involve himself in the struggle of the Jewish people against Rome.

This does not mean, however, that Jesus was unconcerned about people and their problems. Jesus taught a great deal about an

individual’s responsibility toward his fellow man. He encouraged honesty in the payment of taxes and stressed the need to be submissive to those in legitimate positions of authority. (Matthew 22:17-21) He taught how to show an active interest in the welfare of those in need. He also taught how to show respect for the dignity of others and how to be empathetic, forgiving, and merciful. (Matthew, chapters 5-7) It is a well-known fact that the focus of Christ’s teachings is love of God and of neighbor.—Mark 12:30, 31.

True Christianity Today

How, then, would a true follower of Christ conduct himself? He would do as Jesus did. While faithfully obeying the laws of the land, he would remain strictly neutral regarding political affairs. (John 12:47, 48) He would not compromise Christian principles, even when under great pressure. (1 Peter 2:21-23) At the same time, he could not be just a disinterested observer. A true Christian would take an active interest in the welfare of those around him, as Jesus did. (Mark 6:34) He would also expend himself in helping others to lead happier lives by helping them understand and live by Christ’s teachings.—John 13:17.

Accordingly, Jehovah’s Witnesses today strive to imitate Christ in their relationship with the world around them. While being peaceful law-abiding citizens, they are no part of the world. As Jesus did, they refuse to be part of the violence and political wrangling so common today. Their hope is firmly fixed on the Kingdom of God as the solution to the problems facing the world. True Christianity results in a happier life and harmony among its members. (John 13:34, 35) It certainly has not failed.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Should Christians involve themselves in politics?—John 6:15.
- Did Christ recommend violence as a way to settle disputes?—Matthew 26:50-53.
- What is the identifying mark of true Christians?—John 13:34, 35.

Noah's Ark and NAVAL ARCHITECTURE



FOR more than 40 years, I have worked as a naval architect and marine engineer. My work has involved designing vessels of various shapes and sizes, along with the mechanical and other systems that propel them. In 1963, while I was living in British Columbia, Canada, one of Jehovah's Witnesses showed me that the Bible book of Genesis describes Noah's ark as a long box, or chest. This description intrigued me, and I decided to look into it further.

The Genesis account shows that God determined to cleanse the earth of wickedness by deluging the planet with water. He told Noah to construct an ark in order to preserve himself, his family, and representatives of the animal world through this great Flood. God told Noah to make the ark 300 cubits long, 50 cubits wide, and 30 cubits high. (Genesis 6:15) According to one conservative estimate, this would make the ark about 438 feet long, 73 feet wide, and 44 feet high.* It thus had a gross volume of some 1,400,000 cubic feet.

The Ark's Design

The ark was constructed with three decks, which gave it added strength and provided a total floor space of about 96,000 square feet. It was built of resinous—and thus water-resistant—wood, possibly cypress, and was sealed inside and outside with tar. (Genesis 6:14-16) We are not told how Noah fastened the timbers together. But even before relating the Flood account, the Bible mentions forgers of copper and iron tools. (Genesis 4:22) In any case, to this day wooden drive pins known as treenails are used to build some wooden ships.

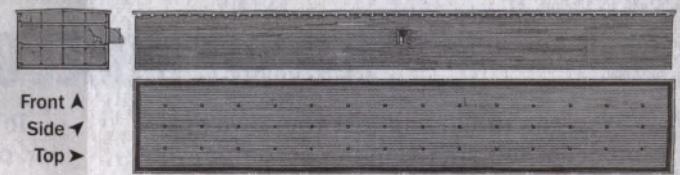
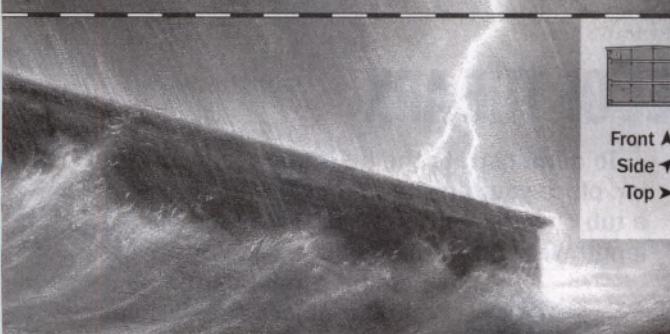
* The cubit is an ancient unit of measurement corresponding approximately to the distance from the elbow to the fingertips. During Israelite times, the cubit seems generally to have been standardized at about 17.5 inches.

The ark had internal compartments, a door in its side, and a one-cubit-high *tso'har*, which may have been a gabled roof, possibly having openings below it for ventilation and light. The Genesis account makes no mention, however, of a keel or a prow or of any sails, oars, or rudders on the ark. In fact, the same Hebrew word for "ark" is used to describe the pitch-covered basket used by the mother of the infant Moses to keep him afloat in the waters of the Nile River.—Exodus 2:3, 10.

Good Seakeeping

The ark's length was six times its width and ten times its height. Many modern ships have similar proportions, although for them the length-to-breadth ratio is chosen with regard to the power required to move them through the water. The ark, on the other hand, had only to float. How well would it have performed?

The manner in which vessels respond to wind and waves is called seakeeping behavior. This too is related to a vessel's proportions. The Bible describes the tremendous downpour that produced the Flood and also says that God later caused a wind to blow. (Genesis 7:11, 12, 17-20; 8:1) The Scriptures do not say how strong the waves and wind were, but likely both wind and waves would have been powerful and changeable,



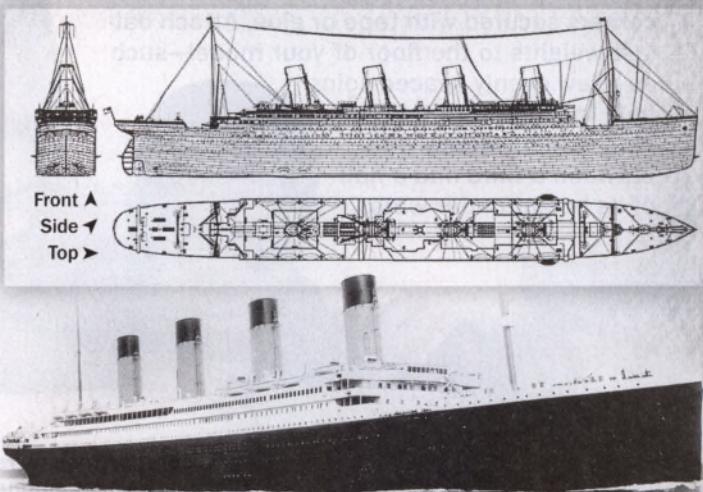
**Noah's ark was about 438 feet long,
nearly half as long as the "Titanic"**

even as they can be today. The longer and harder the wind blows, the higher and farther apart are the waves. In addition, any seismic action could have produced strong waves.

The ark's proportions contributed to its stability, preventing it from capsizing. The ark was also designed to deal with the forces that could cause it to pitch lengthwise in heavy seas. Extreme pitching—when each wave lifts one end of the vessel and then allows it to plunge downward—would have been very uncomfortable for the people and animals on board. Pitching also puts heavy stresses on a vessel. The structure must be strong enough to resist the tendency to sag in the middle when large waves lift both ends of the vessel at the same time. Yet, when a large wave lifts the vessel at its midpoint, with nothing to support its ends, the bow and stern may bend downward. God told Noah to use a length-to-depth ratio of 10 to 1. Later shipbuilders would learn only by hard experience that such a ratio can accommodate these stresses.

Safe and Comfortable

Because of the ark's chestlike shape, buoyancy—the force that makes a boat float—would have been uniform from end to end. Its weight too would have been uniform. Likely, Noah made sure that the cargo



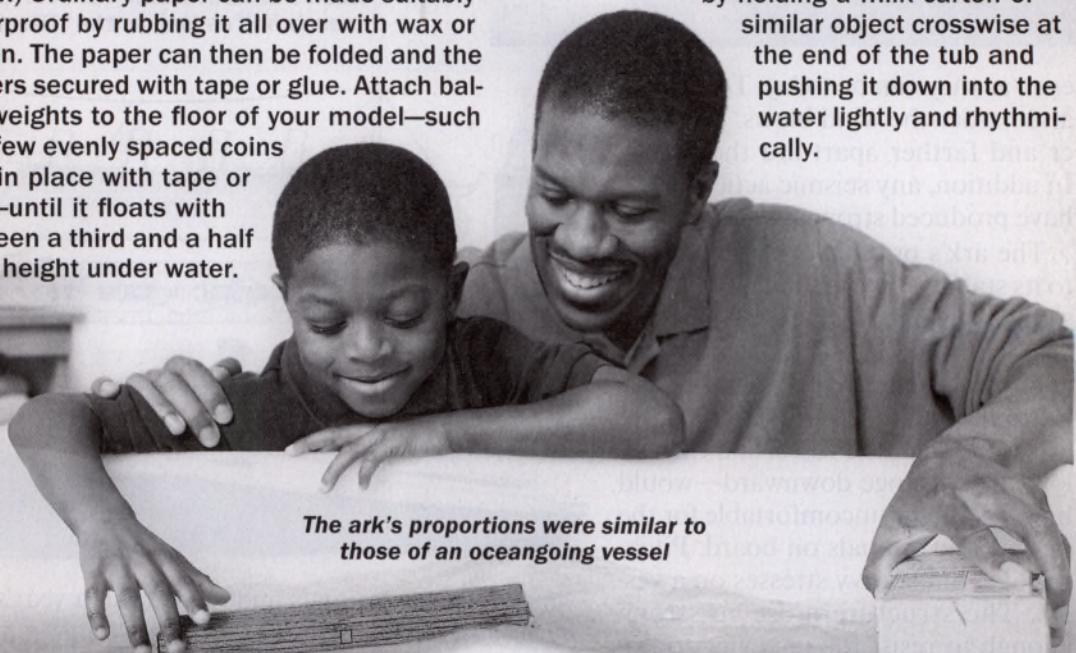
—including the animals and more than a year's supply of food—was distributed evenly. Good weight distribution minimizes the additional stress that cargo places on a vessel's structure. Thus, two main factors contributed to the ability of the ark and its passengers to ride out the global Flood safely—the ark's divinely originated design and Jehovah's protective care. God undoubtedly saw to it that the ark came to rest in a safe and suitable location.

My thorough examination of this subject led me to conclude that what the Bible says about Noah's ark is realistic and consistent with modern shipbuilding practice. Of course, there are many details about the ark and the Flood that are not mentioned in the Genesis account. I hope one day, after the resurrection, to meet Noah here on earth, right among the families of humans and animals whose existence was made possible by the ark that he worked so long and hard to construct. (Acts 24:15; Hebrews 11:7) First, I will thank him and his family. Then I will ply him with many questions.—Contributed.

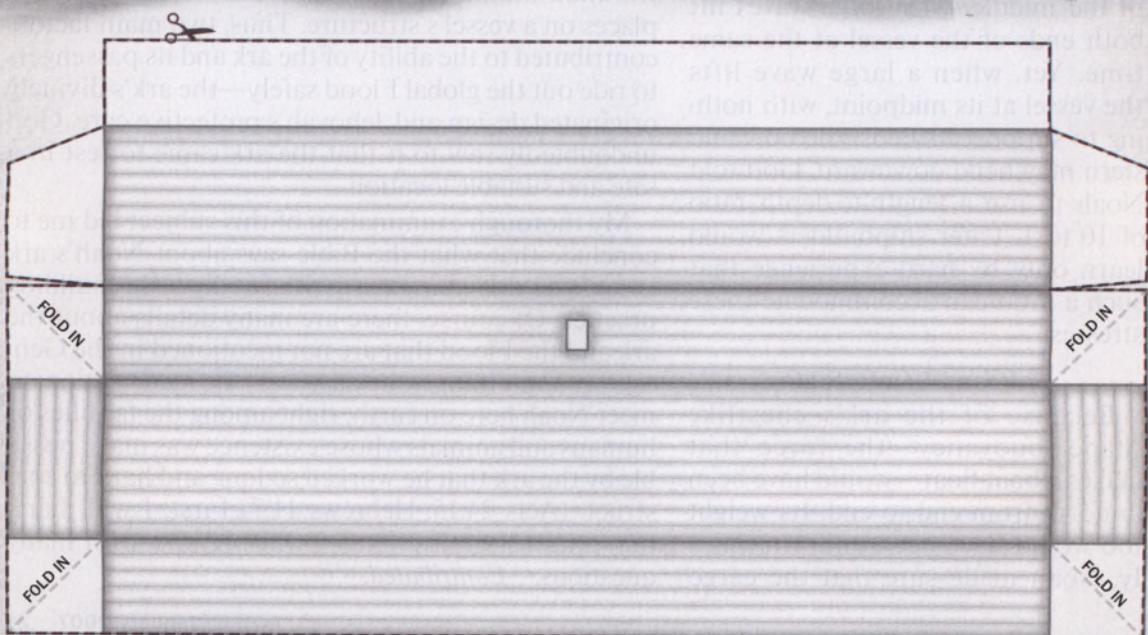
A SCALE MODEL OF THE ARK

You can make and test your own scale model of the ark using the accompanying pattern. (You may build a bigger model by proportionately enlarging the pattern shown below.) Ordinary paper can be made suitably waterproof by rubbing it all over with wax or crayon. The paper can then be folded and the corners secured with tape or glue. Attach ballast weights to the floor of your model—such as a few evenly spaced coins held in place with tape or glue—until it floats with between a third and a half of its height under water.

To demonstrate the ark's seaworthy behavior, place your finished model in the middle of a tub of water, such as a bathtub, and align it lengthwise. Try making small regular waves by holding a milk carton or similar object crosswise at the end of the tub and pushing it down into the water lightly and rhythmically.

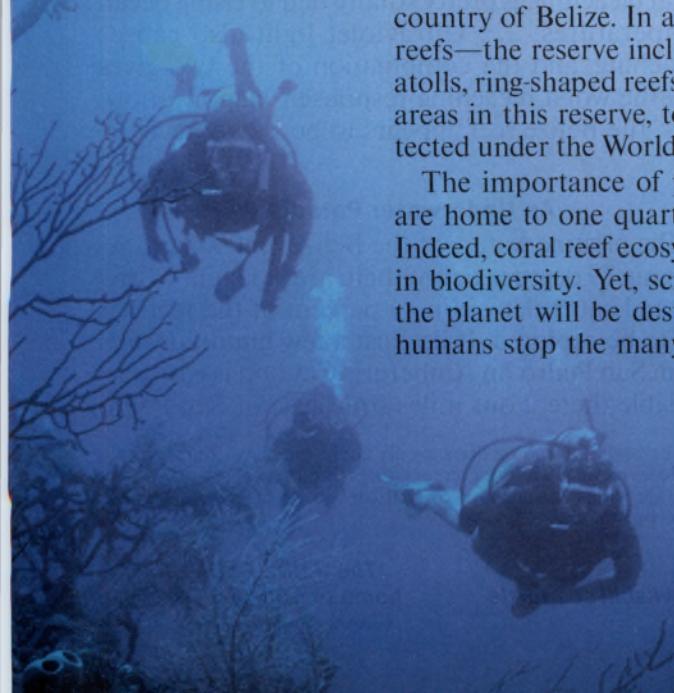


The ark's proportions were similar to those of an oceangoing vessel





* Satellite view of Belize showing the 185-mile reef



The Belize Barrier Reef

A WORLD HERITAGE SITE

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MEXICO

"Deterioration or disappearance of any item of the cultural or natural heritage constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world. . . . It is incumbent on the international community as a whole to participate in the protection of the cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value."

—From UNESCO's World Heritage Convention.

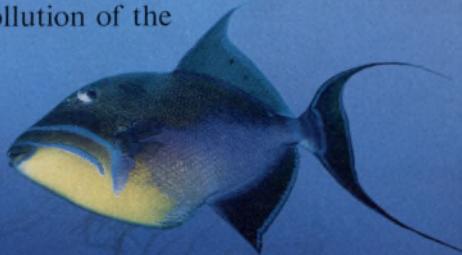
IN KEEPING with the above words, the Belize Barrier-Reef Reserve System was inscribed as a World Heritage site in 1996. It was thus accorded the same status as Machu Picchu in Peru, the Grand Canyon in the United States, and other such wonders around the world. What makes this site of "outstanding universal value"?

A Heritage Worth Preserving

The Belize Barrier Reef is the second-largest mass of living coral in the world, after the Great Barrier Reef of Australia, and it is the longest in the Western Hemisphere. It extends for 185 miles along the Yucatán Peninsula, including most of the coast of the Central American country of Belize. In addition to the reef itself—actually a series of reefs—the reserve includes some 450 cays, or islets, and three coral atolls, ring-shaped reefs enclosing picturesque lagoons. Seven aquatic areas in this reserve, totaling 370 square miles, are specifically protected under the World Heritage Convention.

The importance of preserving coral reefs is evident in that they are home to one quarter of the earth's marine plants and animals. Indeed, coral reef ecosystems are second only to tropical rain forests in biodiversity. Yet, scientists warn that 70 percent of all corals on the planet will be destroyed within the next 20 to 40 years unless humans stop the many forms of pollution of the

Satellite view: NASA/The Visible Earth (<http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/>).
diver: © Paul Duda/Photo Researchers, Inc.





Rendezvous Cay

©kevinschafer.com

The Blue Hole on Lighthouse

Reef, created by a collapsed
limestone cavern



seas, uncontrolled tourism, and destructive practices, such as cyanide fishing.

©kevinschafer.com

Seventy species of hard corals, 36 species of soft corals, and 500 species of fish have been identified in the Belize Barrier-Reef Reserve System. It is a habitat for endangered or threatened marine animals, such as the loggerhead, the green, and the hawksbill sea turtles, as well as the manatee and the American crocodile. Commenting on the amazing diversity of marine life at this site, coral reef researcher Julianne Robinson says: "The Belize Barrier Reef System offers many unique opportunities for researchers and visitors alike. . . . It is one of the few places left where you can observe nature at its best, but it is nonetheless under threat."

Perhaps the biggest threat to the Belize reef system is coral bleaching, in which the multicolored corals turn a translucent white. (See the box on page 26.) *National Geographic News* reports that coinciding with Hurricane Mitch, a mass-bleaching event occurred in 1997 and 1998 resulting in a 48 percent reduction of the live coral cover. What caused this devastation? Although research is ongoing, reef scientist Melanie McField says: "This coral bleaching is pretty solidly tied to rising ocean temperatures. . . . Ultraviolet light also causes bleaching, and the combination of the two gives you the worst bleaching response." Happily, however, the Belize reef appears to be slowly recovering.*

An Underwater Paradise
The pristine waters of the Belize reef system, averaging 79 degrees Fahrenheit, are a delight to divers and snorkelers. Ninety percent of the reef has yet to be explored. It lies just a few hundred yards from San Pedro on Ambergris Cay and is easily accessible there. Four miles southeast of San Pedro



Copyright © Brandon Cole



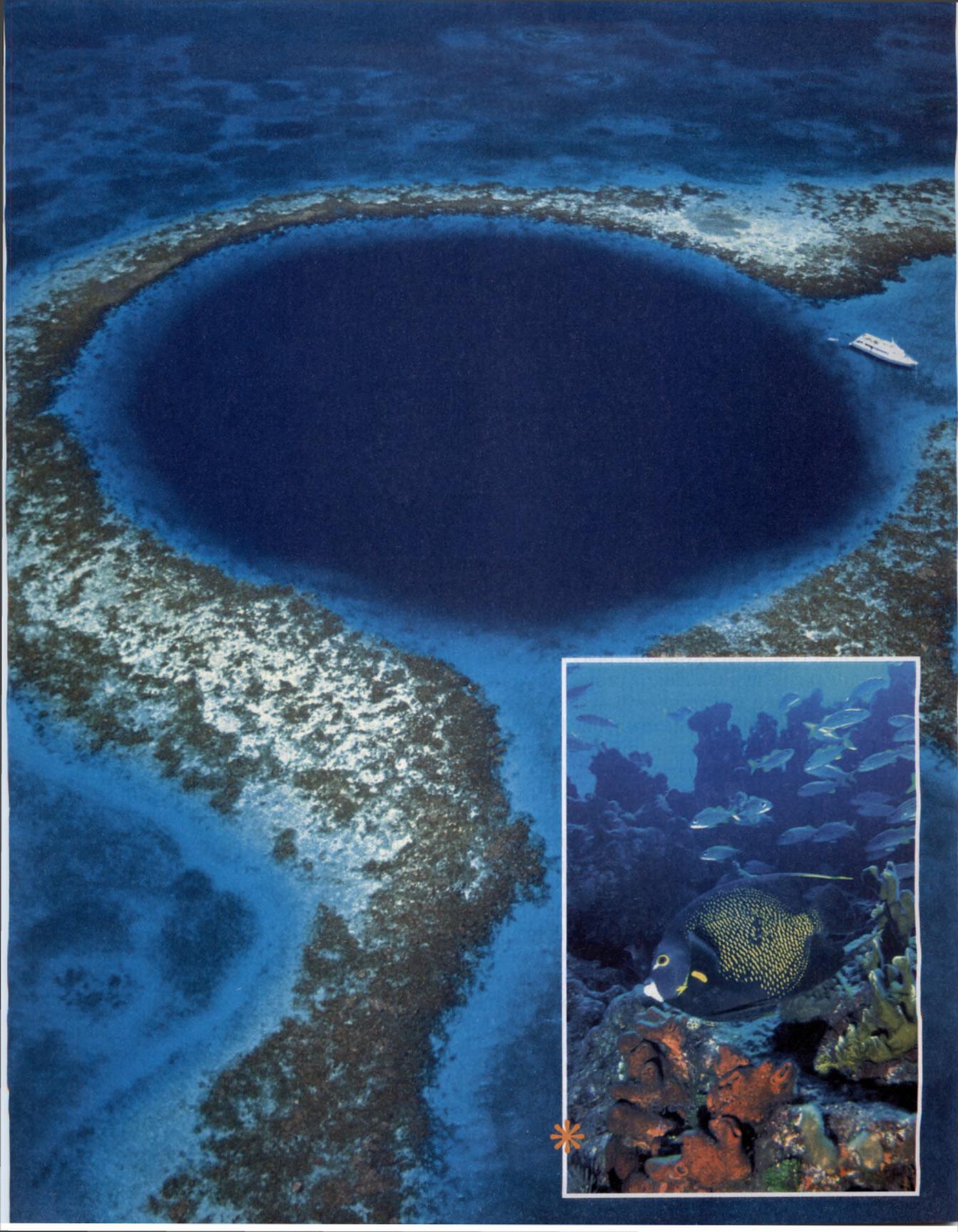
Hawksbill sea turtle

24

The Belize Barrier Reef is home to 500 species of fish

Inset: © Paul Gallaher/Index Stock Imagery ▶

* Perhaps little can be done locally about the global warming that produces elevated seawater temperatures, but the reef system's World Heritage status has encouraged Belizeans to become more active in protecting the site.



Coral Bleaching

A reef is a living wall formed by colonies of carnivorous animals called coral polyps, which have a hard external layer of calcium carbonate, or limestone. Live corals build upon the dead skeletons of past generations. Microscopic algae (zooxanthellas) live in the tissues of reef corals in a symbiotic relationship, giving off oxygen and nutrients, which the polyps utilize, and absorbing the carbon dioxide given off by the polyps. Sensitive to changes in water temperature, the polyps begin expelling the algae when the temperature rises, causing a loss of chlorophyll pigment that results in a bleached appearance. In this weakened state, corals are vulnerable to disease and death. However, coral reefs are resilient and can recover when protected.



is the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, three square miles of shallow underwater park featuring a cut, or channel, through the reef.

One of the most astounding places on earth for diving is the Blue Hole, a protected World Heritage area in the reserve system, located some 60 miles from mainland Belize on Lighthouse Reef. It was made famous by French oceanographer Jacques-Yves Cousteau during his 1970 expedition on the research ship *Calypso*. Set in a turquoise sea, the Blue Hole is an indigo-blue limestone cenote, or sinkhole, rimmed by living coral. It measures some 1,000 feet in diameter and plunges to a depth of over 400 feet. Before the sea level rose, this geologic phenomenon was a dry subterranean cavern, the roof of which later collapsed. The walls are sheer to a depth of about 110 feet, at which point mammoth stalactite formations begin to project downward from ledges. The underwater panorama is awe-inspiring, with visibility up to 200 feet. Little marine life is found in the hole other than sharks. Scuba divers should take

note that this is a decompression dive not to be attempted by the inexperienced. However, there is excellent snorkeling in the crystal-clear waters of the coral perimeter.

Nearby is another of the seven World Heritage areas, the Half Moon Cay, an idyllic island sanctuary for the rare red-footed booby. Some 98 other species of birds have been recorded here as well. The dive off the Half Moon Cay Wall, which is covered with beautiful soft corals and drops to 3,000 feet, is spectacular.

As seen from this brief visit to the Belize Barrier Reef, there is good reason to preserve this treasure for the wonderment of future generations. Its loss would truly constitute "a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations."

Background: Copyright © 2006 Tony Rath
Photography - www.trphoto.com

1. Shows mercy regarding his debt. 2. Throws him in jail. 3. Because the slave did not show mercy.
4. Moses, 1513 B.C.E. 5. Samuel, about 1100 B.C.E.
6. Luke, about 61 C.E. 7. Rebekah—Genesis 25:21.
8. Barabbas—Acts 1:23-26.
9. 23.

When can I start dating?

"At school you feel like you're only half a person if you're not dating someone—anyone!"—Brittany.

"There's a ton of pressure all around me to date. There's also a ton of cute guys."—Whitney.



■ You see a boy and girl holding hands as they stroll down the school corridor between classes. How do you feel?

- Don't care
- Slightly jealous
- Completely envious

■ You're at the movies with friends when you realize that everyone is paired off—except you! How do you feel?

- Don't care
- Slightly jealous
- Completely envious

■ Your best friend has recently begun showing interest in a member of the opposite sex and is now dating. How do you feel?

- Don't care
- Slightly jealous
- Completely envious

If you checked "slightly jealous" or "completely envious" in response to any of the above questions, you are not alone. In lands where dating is the custom, many youths would answer the same way. "Sometimes you feel left out because all your peers have boyfriends and you don't," says 14-year-old Yvette.

The urge to be with someone special—and to be with someone who thinks you are special—can be incredibly strong. "The desire to have a girlfriend gets stronger every day, and it is so hard to deal with!" says one teenage boy. Some actually begin dating at an ear-

ly age. For example, a *Time* magazine survey revealed that 25 percent of the 13-year-olds were already "going out or dating." Do you think they were ready for it? Are you ready to date? To answer that, we first need to address a more basic question.

What Is "Dating"?

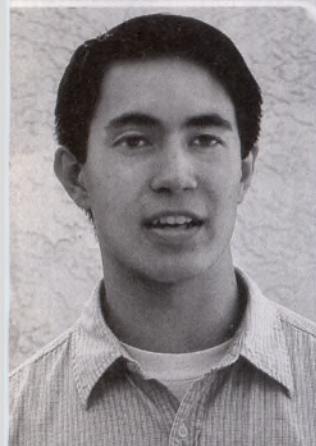
■ You regularly go out with a certain member of the opposite sex.

Are you dating? Yes No

■ Several times a day, you text-message or talk on the phone with one particular friend of the opposite sex.

Are you dating? Yes No

What Some of Your Peers Say



"I sometimes feel jealous of dating couples—even married couples. But dating is not just for fun. If it is, you are playing with someone's heart. I think that dating is to find out if this other person is really the person you want to marry."—Blaine, 17.



"I don't think that you should date boys just as a 'rehearsal' for when someone you really like comes along. That would just lead to hurt feelings."—Chelsea, 17.



"I really think that you should be old enough to get married before you begin dating. Otherwise, it would be like going to an interview for a full-time job when you're still in school and really have no intention of accepting the job."—Sondra, 21.

■ You and a member of the opposite sex have a secret friendship. Your parents don't know. You haven't told them because you know they'll disapprove.

Are you dating? Yes No

■ Every time you get together with your friends, you pair off with the same person of the opposite sex.

Are you dating? Yes No

Likely, you had no problem answering the first question, but you may have paused before responding to the others. What exactly is dating? In this discussion we will define it as any social activity in which your romantic interest is focused on one particular person and that person's romantic interest is focused on you. Whether in a group or in private, whether on the phone or in person, whether in the open or in secret, if you and a friend of the opposite sex have a special romantic understanding, it's dating.

But are you ready to go down that road? A consideration of three questions will help you to find out.

What Are Your Intentions?

In many cultures dating is regarded as a legitimate way for two people to become better acquainted. But dating should have a noble purpose—to help a young man and woman determine if they would be suitable marriage partners for each other. Why?

The Bible uses the phrase "bloom of youth" to describe the time of life when sexual feelings and romantic emotions become strong. (1 Corinthians 7:36) To maintain close association with one particular member of the opposite sex while you are still in "the bloom of youth" can fan the flames of desire and cause you to learn the hard way the wisdom of Galatians 6:7: "Whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap."

Granted, some of your peers might date without any intention of marriage. They may view their opposite-sex friend as nothing more than a trophy or an accessory to be

Mixing with members of the opposite sex in appropriate group settings can be wholesome and beneficial

seen with in public to boost their own self-esteem. Playing with someone's affections in that way is cruel, and it comes as no surprise that such relationships are often short-lived. "Many young ones who date break up with each other a week or two later," says a youth named Heather. "They come to view relationships as transitory—which in a sense prepares them for divorce rather than for marriage."

Recreational or casual dating—pairing off merely for fun or for the sake of having a boyfriend or a girlfriend—can easily lead to hurt feelings. Consider Eric, who at age 18 was innocently enjoying what he thought was just a close friendship with a girl. Then he became aware that for her the friendship meant something more. "Wow! Was I surprised at how fast she got serious," Eric says. "I really thought we were just friends!"

Of course, it's not wrong to mix with members of the opposite sex in properly supervised group settings. When it comes to dating, though, it is best to wait until you are past the bloom of youth and in a position to contemplate marriage seriously. That is what a youth named Chelsea came to appreciate. "Part of me wants to say that dating should



be just for fun," she admits, "but it's no fun when one person is taking it seriously and the other isn't."

You're How Old?

- **At what age do you think it is appropriate for a youth to start dating? —**
- **Now ask one or both of your parents the same question, and fill in their answer. —**

Chances are, the first number you wrote down is lower than the second. Or maybe not! You might be among the many youths who are wisely putting off dating until they're old enough to know themselves better. That is what a young Christian named Sondra has decided to do, even though she is already of legal age to marry. Sondra reasons: "In the dating process you want someone else to get to know you. But if you don't know yourself, how can you expect someone else to figure you out?"

Danielle, 17, feels similarly. She says: "Thinking back to two years ago, what I would have looked for in a potential mate was so different from what I would look for now. Basically, even at this point I don't trust myself to make such a decision. When I feel that

TO THINK ABOUT

- In what appropriate settings can you mix with members of the opposite sex?
- What quality do you most need to work on in order to have potential as a marriage mate?

More information can be found on pages 13-26 > of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

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

The Secret of
**FAMILY
HAPPINESS**



my personality has been stable for a couple of years, then I'll think about dating."

Are You Ready to Get Married?

Since dating is a stepping-stone to marriage, you would do well to ask yourself if you can tackle the responsibility that comes with being a husband or a wife—or even a father or a mother. How do you know if you're ready for that? Consider the following.

■ **Relationships** How do you treat your parents and siblings? Do you often lose your self-control with them, perhaps using harsh or sarcastic language to make a point? What would they say about you in this regard? How you deal with family members indicates how you will treat a mate.—Ephesians 4:31, 32.

■ **Finances** How well do you handle money? Are you always in debt? Can you hold down a job? If not, why not? Is it because of the job? the employer? Or is it because

of some undesirable trait on your part? If you cannot responsibly handle your own finances, how will you do so for a family?
—1 Timothy 5:8.

■ **Spirituality** If you are one of Jehovah's Witnesses, what are your spiritual attributes? Do you take the initiative to read God's Word, to engage in the ministry, and to participate at Christian meetings? If you are not maintaining your own spirituality, how will you encourage a mate to do so?—2 Corinthians 13:5.

These are just a few things you need to consider if you are thinking about dating and marriage. In the meantime, you may interact with members of the opposite sex in appropriate group settings. Later, if you choose to date, you will have a better idea of who you are and of what you need in a lifelong partner.

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The dating issue is certain to be thrust upon your children sooner or later. "I don't even have to do anything!" says Phillip. "Girls ask me out, and I stand there thinking, 'Oh, what am I going to do now?' It's hard to say no because some of them are very beautiful!"

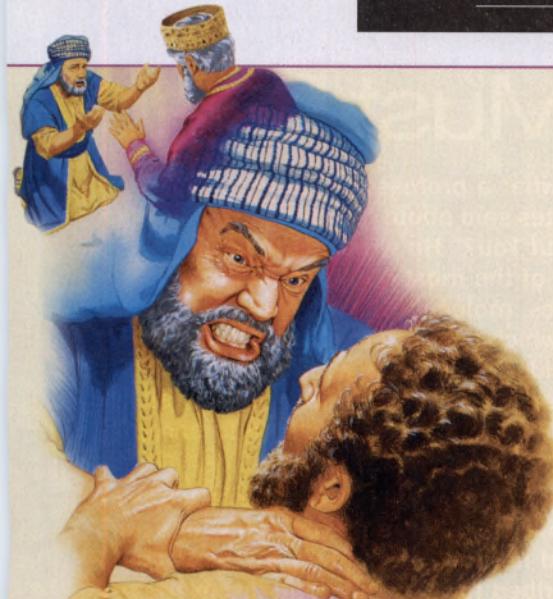
The best thing that you can do as parents is talk to your teen about dating. Why not use this article as a basis for discussion? Find out how your son or daughter feels about the challenges he or she faces at school and even in the Christian congregation. Sometimes such discussions can take place on informal occasions, such as "when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road." (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) Whatever the setting, remember to be "swift about hearing, slow about speaking."—James 1:19.

If your son or daughter expresses interest in someone of the opposite sex, do not panic. "When my dad found out that I had a boy-

friend, he was so upset!" says one teenage girl. "He tried to scare me by asking me all these questions about whether I was ready for marriage—which, when you're young, can make you feel like you want to prolong the relationship and prove your parents wrong!"

If your teen knows that dating is not even up for discussion, something tragic may happen: He or she may drive the relationship underground and date secretly. "When parents overreact," says one girl, "it only makes kids want to hide the relationship more. They don't stop. They just get sneakier."

You will get far better results by having frank discussions. A young woman, 20 years of age, says: "My parents have always been very open with me about dating. It's important for them to know who I'm interested in, and I think that's nice! My dad will talk to the person. If there are any concerns, my parents tell me. Usually I decide I'm not interested before it even reaches the dating level."



EXPLAIN THE PARABLE

- 1.** In Jesus' parable recorded at Matthew 18:23-35, what does the slave want the king to do for him?
- 2.** How does the first slave treat his fellow slave?
- 3.** Why does the king become angry with the first slave?

■ For Discussion:
When did you last forgive someone?
How had he upset you?
Why did you forgive him?



WHEN IN HISTORY?

Name the writer(s) of each of the Bible books below, and draw a line connecting the book to the date it was completed.



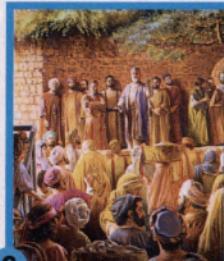
4

Genesis



5

Judges



6

Acts

1513 B.C.E.

1657 B.C.E.

About 1100 B.C.E.

(Answers on page 26)

About 56 C.E.

About 61 C.E.

FROM THIS ISSUE

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

Page 3 What health problems will soon be removed? (Isaiah 35:____)

Page 11 Why can you believe that permanent good health is possible? (Luke 18:____)

Page 20 What were the dimensions of Noah's ark? (Genesis 6:____)

Page 30 What actions should you avoid and what attitudes should you cultivate before considering marriage? (Ephesians 4:____)

WHO AM I?

- 7.** The twins I bore became two nations.

WHO AM I?

- 8.** The lots did not indicate that I should be an apostle.

Middle circle: Scott Bauer/Agricultural Research Service, USDA





“A Must-Read”

That is what a professor of physics in the United States said about *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?** He wrote: “The book deals with some of the most outstanding puzzles in astrophysics, molecular biology, and human anatomy, which are hard to explain by chance. . . . A consideration of the examples and arguments presented in the book will be valuable regardless of whether one is inclined to accept evolution or creation.”

A woman wrote: “I really do not have words to express how deeply this little book has affected me. I could not put the book down, as each page described further unfolding discoveries about our universe that scientists have brought to light. I really learned so much!”

Other things that impressed her about the book were the discussions of the four fundamental physical forces and of the uniqueness of humans compared with animals.

* Published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

◀ A photo of gaseous pillars called “Pillars of Creation” found in the NGC 6611 Nebula, or Eagle Nebula (M16). Photographed through the Hubble Space Telescope



Photo above and on cover: J. Hester
and P. Scowen (AZ State Univ.), NASA