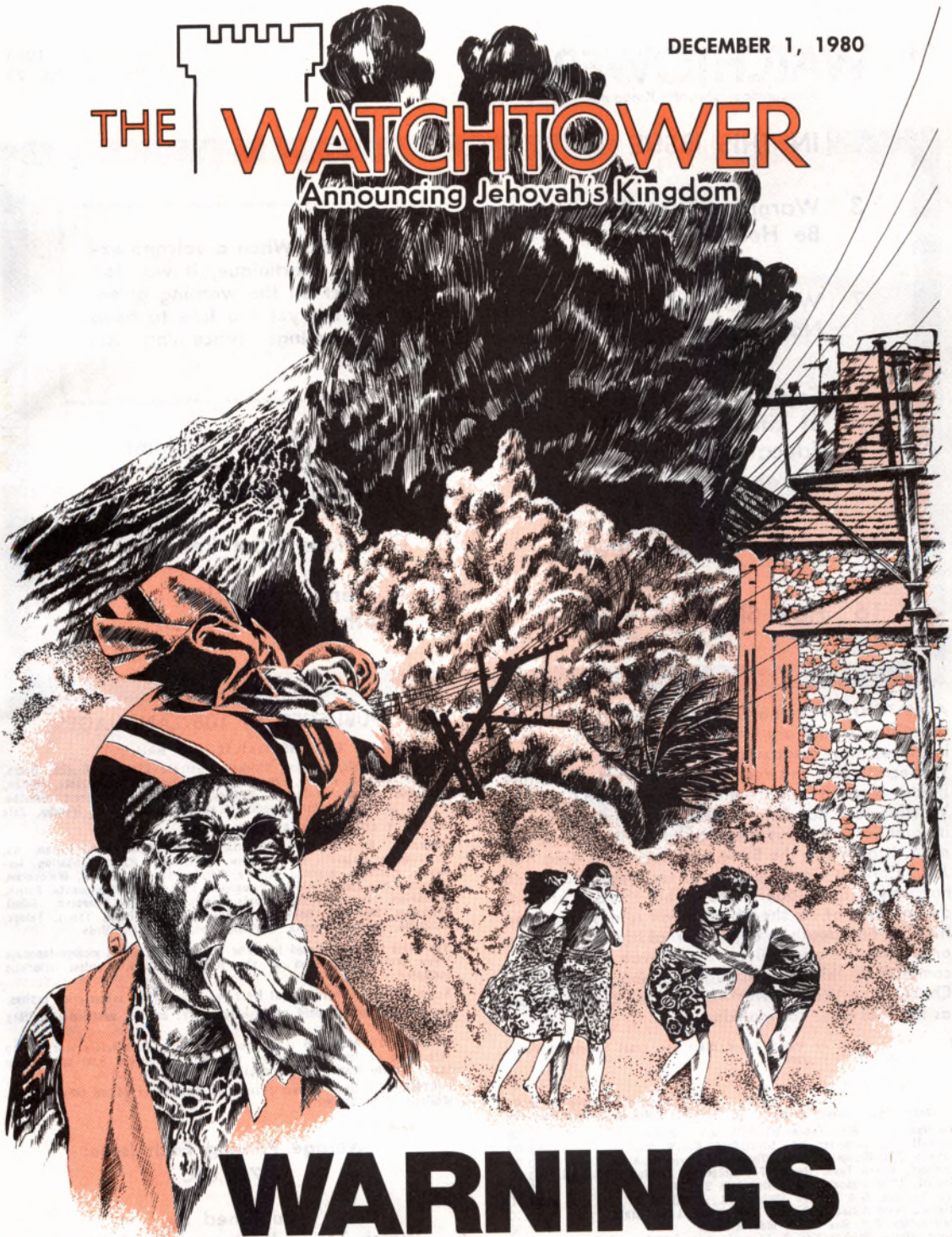


DECEMBER 1, 1980

THE WATCHTOWER

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



WARNINGS

That Should Be Heeded

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A WATCHTOWER enables a person to look far into the distance and announce to others what is seen. Likewise, this magazine, published by Jehovah's Witnesses, aids the reader to see what the future holds. Since it began publication in 1879, "The Watchtower" has held faithfully to God's Word as its authority. It stays clear of all political involvement. It points to the Bible prophecies showing that Jesus Christ is God's means for restoring peace and harmony to this globe. It shows that this Son of God, on the basis of his shed blood, will release mankind from sin and death to enjoy eternal life in happiness on a paradise earth. Because Jehovah God will accomplish all this soon through his kingdom by Jesus Christ, "The Watchtower" announces that kingdom as the real hope for mankind.

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WARNINGS

That Should Be Heeded



are obliged to wear wet handkerchiefs to protect them from the strong fumes."

Early in May volcanic activity increased with frequent loud explosions. *Les Colones*, the St. Pierre newspaper, said that "the rain of ashes never ceases . . . the passing of carriages is no longer heard in the streets. The wheels are muffled." A St. Pierre resident wrote her brother in Marseilles, France:

"I write under the gloomiest impressions, although I hope I exaggerate the situation. My husband laughs; but I can see that he is full of anxiety. . . . The heat is suffocating.

We cannot leave anything open, as the dust enters everywhere, burning our faces and eyes. All the crops are ruined."

It should have been evident that real danger was imminent. But were the warnings coming from Mt. Pelée heeded?

ATTITUDE OF CITY LEADERS

Because the sugarcane harvest was approaching, St. Pierre's businessmen assured the people that there was no danger at all. The politicians, concerned with the upcoming election, did not want the people to be fleeing either, so they spoke in a similar vein. In fact, the mayor from another city came to St. Pierre to convince the people that there was no cause for alarm. The religious leaders, the Catholic clergy, cooperated with the business and political groups in trying to persuade their parishioners that all was well.

IT WAS springtime of the year 1902. All things were going on as usual on the beautiful Caribbean island of Martinique. The sugarcane harvest seemed promising, and, at the island's most populous city of St. Pierre, the politicians were busily involved in an election campaign.

But then, late in March, there was a phenomenon that seemed to mar the blissful scene. Mt. Pelée, located about five miles (8 km) from St. Pierre, became active. At first the people did not pay much attention. In April, however, as smoke, ash and bits of rock belched forth, along with acrid fumes, townspeople became apprehensive. Toward the end of April a woman wrote her sister in the United States:

"The city is covered with ashes. The smell of sulphur is so strong that horses on the street stop and snort. Many of the people



**Hundreds, who refused to heed the warnings,
took refuge in a church and lost their lives**

Then it happened. Shortly before 8 a.m., May 8, Mt. Pelée exploded with a stupendous roar. Gigantic superheated black clouds raced with unbelievable speed down toward St. Pierre. A writer states:

"The many thousands of bodies in the ruins all told much the same story, of practically instantaneous death when the searing hurricane from Mt. Pelée reached them. There had been no time to attempt to flee, or even to struggle; hundreds simply died in their tracks. The hot gas did its work swiftly, extinguishing thousands of lives in the space of two or three minutes."

Practically everyone in St. Pierre died—some 30,000 or more persons. Only three persons survived, and two of these soon died of their injuries. The lone person to recover from his injuries and live was a young prisoner. He had been put into the dungeon at the bottom of the prison, where he was found several days after the blast.

To this day there are many ruins, including the dungeon, at St. Pierre bearing

witness to this holocaust. Also, a plaque tells of the many hundreds who lost their lives in a Catholic church while attending Mass.

Just plain common sense should have dictated leaving St. Pierre when the air got so bad it was difficult to breathe. And had the businessmen, the politicians and the clergy been more concerned about the lives of their people than with their own immediate advantage, then, rather than trying to persuade the people to stay, they would have joined them in fleeing from the city. It would have saved their lives.

WARNINGS TODAY

Recently warnings of an even greater destruction have been widely broadcast. What warnings are we talking about? Not those given by Mount St. Helens, of Washington State, U.S.A., earlier this year. One resident there wrote: "The mountain continued to 'act up' with greater intensity, almost as though it was warning us to

get ready for the *real* explosion." State and local officials added their voices, also telling of the great danger to those in the area of the volcano.

But it is not warnings of some anticipated *local* destruction that we have in mind. Rather, it is warnings, now being broadcast earth wide, of an imminent world destruction—Armageddon—that we are talking about. Foretelling this destruction, Jesus Christ said: "*For then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now, no, nor will occur again.*" (Matt. 24: 21) Based on Jesus' description, this "*great tribulation*" will be more destructive of human life than all the natural disasters of human history put together.

"Impossible!" you say? Yet God's prophet, Jesus Christ, has never been wrong before. "The war of the great day of God the Almighty," commonly called Armageddon, is sure to come. (Rev. 16:14-16) It will be the final part of the "*great tribulation.*" So does it not make sense, at least, to give consideration to the warnings that Armageddon is near, within the lifetime of most persons now living?

ARMAGEDDON—WHEN?

In connection with the "*great tribulation,*" including Armageddon, Jesus went on to say in this vital prophecy: "For just as the days of Noah were, so *the presence of the Son of man will be.* For as they were in those days before the flood, eating and drinking, men marrying and women being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark; and they took no note until *the flood came and swept them all away, so the presence of the Son of man will be.*" —Matt. 24:37-39.

Thus Jesus made clear that the coming world destruction—which would exceed even the Flood in magnitude—is associated with his presence. This is 'when he

arrives in glory and sits down on his glorious throne' to rule as king. (Matt. 25:31) Do we have any way of knowing the time of Armageddon?

Yes, we do. Jesus' disciples were interested in these matters. So they asked him about them. The very question that started off Jesus' discussion in which he spoke about the "*great tribulation*" was this: "When will these things be, and what will be *the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?*" (Matt. 24:3) Surely we should be extremely interested in identifying "the sign" that Jesus gave.

You can check that "sign" for yourself. It is recorded in the Bible at Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark chapter 13 and Luke chapter 21. There you will find that Jesus said his presence and the nearness of the "*great tribulation*" would be marked by great troubles on earth. There would be wars, including nation rising against nation, great earthquakes, food shortages, pestilences, as well as such an increase of lawlessness that the love of the greater number would cool off. Also, Jesus foretold that his followers would be persecuted, and yet the "*good news of the kingdom* will be preached in all the inhabited earth . . . and then the end [including Armageddon] will come."

In another prophecy, the apostle Paul was inspired to write: "*In the last days* critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power."—2 Tim. 3:1-5.

Would you say that the prophecies of

Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul about "the last days" are now being fulfilled? Over two million Jehovah's Witnesses believe they are, and that is why Jehovah's Witnesses are everywhere sounding the warning that Armageddon is near. They invite people to examine the evidence to determine for themselves whether these warnings have any real basis.

SHOULD THEY BE HEEDED?

Obviously, some warnings are without basis, and it would be foolish to heed them. But the fact that many—including prominent members of a community—scoff at or belittle warnings is not sufficient basis for ignoring the warnings. Recall the situation with Mt. Pelée. On May 5, three days before its major eruption, the volcano sent forth a flow of scalding material that killed dozens of people in its path. Many persons considered this due warning to flee, as Peter Francis writes in his recent book *Volcanoes*:

"Many tried to leave St. Pierre, heading for Fort-de-France, Martinique's second town. The local authorities, however, did not welcome the prospect of a large-scale evacuation. Apart from the problem of dealing with large numbers of frightened refugees, there was also an election coming up on 10 May, and the political factions in the town were anxious that nothing should interfere with it, so there was a concerted effort to play down the possible risk. A 'scientific commission' comprising some of the most learned people on the island was set up, and they produced a report designed to set fears at rest."

They succeeded, to an extent, in doing this. The people stayed—and they all perished, with one exception!

Today the Bible's prophecies regarding "the last days" are being fulfilled. All the features of the composite "sign" Jesus gave can be seen. Yes, what Christ and his apostles foretold would occur just prior to the "great tribulation" is now happen-

ing. The evidence is overwhelming. As Jesus foretold, there is "on the earth anguish of nations, not knowing the way out." Also, "men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth."—Luke 21:25, 26.

Illustrating the fulfillment of these things are the comments of the editor of the Miami *Herald*, Jim Hampton. Although not viewing Armageddon entirely from the Biblical viewpoint, he wrote on May 4, 1980:

"Do you have, growing deep in your gut these days, the same kind of knot I have growing in mine? The awful, keep-you-awake-nights knot that tells you something is dreadfully wrong with your country, with the whole world? The knot that makes you shiver sometimes because it has just dawned on you that Armageddon isn't just some allegory you read about in the Bible, it's real? And that for the first time in your life the match is so close to the fuse that Armageddon is actually possible?

"I have that knot. And I'm not ashamed to admit it, because I have asked a dozen of my friends if they have it too, and not one doesn't."

There are those who will scoff at the thought of God's bringing an end to wickedness. Others will belittle the evidence that Bible prophecies are in the course of fulfillment. But the Bible foretold this very situation, saying: "In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as from creation's beginning.'"—2 Pet. 3:3, 4.

But such ridiculers are mistaken. The fact is, *things have changed*. Bible prophecies *are* being fulfilled. The evidence is just as clear that Armageddon is near as it was clear earlier this year that Mount St. Helens was due to erupt. Yet many there refused to heed the warnings to keep

out of the danger zone. They paid with their lives. One woman interviewed on TV expressed her disapproval of the travel restrictions that were imposed to keep people away from the area. After the eruption she appeared on TV again to express humble thanks for the restrictions, which, she said, saved her life.

WHERE SAFETY IS TO BE FOUND

Faced with a volcanic eruption, it is quite obvious where safety is to be found—well away from the volcano. Amazingly, the “kill zone” from the St. Helens eruption was reported to have covered 150 square miles (380 km²). Trees were flattened for as much as 14 miles (23 km) in three directions, and everything was seared for several miles beyond that! But where can safety be found during the near-at-hand “great tribulation”?

It is not in any physical location. Just as at the Flood, Jehovah God will have the

means to destroy wicked ones wherever they might seek to hide. By the same token, he will be able to preserve any whom he chooses, regardless of where they live. The key to safety is given by the apostle John, when he says: “The world [of disobedient humankind] is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.”—1 John 2:17.

The only place of safety is in a person's proper relationship with Jehovah, which can be enjoyed only by *doing his will*. But before we can do Jehovah's will, we must learn what he requires of us. That involves study of his Word, the Bible, and then applying it in our lives. Are you willing to do this? Jehovah's Witnesses will be pleased to help you. By all means, do not dismiss the Bible-based warnings they are sounding of Armageddon's approach. These are warnings that deserve careful examination—and should be heeded.

WHEN GOD'S COUNSEL IS NOT HEEDED

A young Witness in her early 20's tells of the results of her failing to heed God's counsel. She writes:

“I made a terrible mistake a couple of years ago. I committed fornication with an unbaptized young man who was studying the Bible at the time. I was baptized. I wanted him to love me. Instead, we both broke Jehovah's law. . . .

“Now my life is a series of If Onlys. If only as a youth who loved Jehovah I was stronger. If only I paid more attention to God's requirements. If only I thought about the seriousness of my actions when I did wrong. Now I must reap what I've sown. . . . The sleepless nights, the tearful periods of despair are part of the price I must pay for disobeying Jehovah. . . .

“I only wish young people would realize that the elders and Jehovah love them and don't want to see them hurt. God's requirements are only for our happiness. Once a mistake is made there's no going back to undo it. We must always trust Jehovah and be determined to stick to his righteous and loving principles. Our very happiness as youths is involved. We must always consider the future; our relationship with Jehovah. To do that we must choose our courses wisely now, according to Scriptural principles. It's a lesson I've learned, unfortunately, the hard way. Others hopefully will avoid all wrongdoing, trusting in Jehovah.

“I truly love Jehovah. It hurts me that I disobeyed him. But I'm determined to press forward, to work hard, to build a strong and lasting relationship with Jehovah. I'm eagerly looking forward to the time when Jehovah's gift to his loyal subjects, a new system prevailing in moral brilliance, will be realized and enjoyed by all. Only then will I forget the heartache and pain my sin has caused.”

COPING WITH THE "REALITIES OF LIFE"—

A Worldwide Educational Program Shows How

LIFE had been cruel to the 17-year-old French girl. After a miserable childhood, she grabbed for happiness through marriage. This soon soured and she was viciously abused by her husband. Once, after regaining consciousness from a beating, she seized a rifle and fired—her husband fell dead. Her troubles were just beginning.

Upon being released after a two-year prison sentence, she looked for love from another man. But the cruel reality was that all she received was an illegitimate child. Lonely, hopeless, completely lost and tired of living, one Sunday morning she decided to end her empty existence and take her children with her. She turned on the gas and waited to die.

But rather than becoming another suicide victim, amazingly, this young woman was among a joyful throng of over 90,000 conventioners who assembled in France this past summer. In fact, her life had now taken on real meaning. She had hope and now could cope with the problems of life. She was among the 25,276 baptized worldwide thus far in this series of conventions held by Jehovah's Witnesses.

What made the difference? She became acquainted with a worldwide teaching program. The very moment that this woman had turned on the gas someone knocked on her door. It was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the message was so heartwarming that it led to a weekly study of the Bible with the Witnesses and finally to her baptism this past summer. For many decades the Witnesses have been obeying Jesus' command: "Go therefore and make

disciples of people of all the nations, . . . *teaching them* to observe all the things I have commanded you." Thousands have been assisted yearly.—Matt. 28:19, 20.

KEY FEATURE OF TEACHING PROGRAM

These annual conventions, which currently carry the theme "Divine Love," are a key feature of the teaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses. There has been an outstanding response to these conventions. Last year, in over 80 lands, more than 3,400,000 attended such conventions. This is a 43-percent increase over the number that attended the conventions just five years earlier. In Japan, for instance, just a decade ago a national convention drew 12,615—a thrilling new peak attendance at that time. This past summer 105,534—over eight times as many—attended!

Already in 33 countries, 2,267,955 have convened and there are yet many conventions planned in the southern hemisphere for the end of this year and the beginning of 1981. Present reports indicate that the total may top 3,600,000. But is it numbers alone that make this educational program outstanding?

A PRACTICAL EDUCATION

Though today education is stressed worldwide, many have been disillusioned with the results of mere academic learning. "We need to start giving our children practical educations that prepare them and train them for the *realities of life*," stressed the mayor of Nairobi, Kenya. You may agree. Such education is needed not merely for children. Most of us realize that

to cope with the pressures of today's 'real world' we need more than knowledge of 'reading, writing and arithmetic.'

Right standards of conduct, the strength to overcome bad habits, the ability to get along with others, and moral integrity are but a few qualities that need to be developed if a person is to cope with life's realities and find genuine happiness. Using primarily the Bible, the Witnesses try to help individuals to develop such qualities.

Bible aids are also used. One of these, a word-and-picture story of the Bible (on the far right below), is a favorite of children. A note found in a convention contribution box in Japan, signed "A five-year-old girl," said: "I have saved 745 yen [\$3.35, U.S.] from the money I received helping my mother. It is only a little amount but I will be happy if you use it to print such pretty books as *My Book of Bible Stories*."

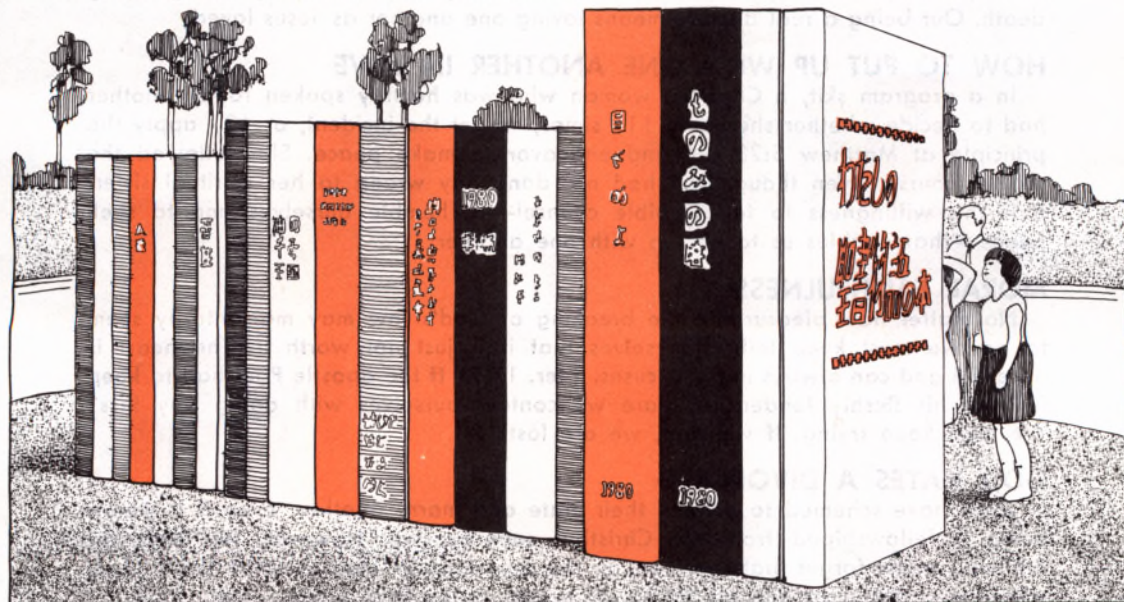
So, with the assistance of such literature, this educational program helps create gen-

uine disciples of Christ. Outsiders were often impressed by the conduct of these disciples at their recent conventions. "I am not a flatterer," said the manager of a stadium in Naples, "but I feel it my duty to tell you that you are the most serious, orderly and *educated* people that I have ever met."

Yes, this man could see that the education Jehovah's Witnesses receive had created some very desirable qualities. After observing the Witnesses, a policeman on traffic control in Nagoya, Japan, declared: "It is quite obvious that the people here are learning something that lifts them up above the average person." No, this knowledge does not make them feel superior to others, but it does elevate their thinking so that they can develop qualities that are sadly missing in today's world.

But what is taught at these conventions? The next two pages give highlights from the program of the current "Divine Love" Conventions, including epitomes of the three Bible dramas presented there.

Books used in educational program represented at Osaka, Japan



What Was Taught?

WHY A LOVING GOD EXACTS VENGEANCE

It is because God loves righteousness and hates wickedness. (Ps. 11:5-7) His great name and purposes need to be vindicated. When he soon exacts vengeance, God will cleanse our earth of all corruption and enable redeemed mankind to advance to perfection. Blind eyes then will be opened, deaf ears will be unstopped. Radiant health will be the portion of all.

ALLEGIANCE TO GOD'S KINGDOM

The following resolution was endorsed by literally millions of delegates: "Be it resolved that we intensify our efforts to proclaim zealously the good news of the Kingdom as well as boldly declare God's judgment message within the time divinely allowed. We will continue to give our whole-souled allegiance to God's kingdom and strive to be loyal subjects of it."

YOUTHS HATE WHAT IS BAD

Serving God must be a decision of the heart, for, when faced with temptation to commit immorality, many have said: "My mind kept saying, 'No! No! No!' but my heart kept saying, 'Yes! Yes! Yes!'" But one youth who overcame a serious moral weakness told how: "Whenever I was faced with a strong immoral sexual desire, I would repeat to myself, 'Jehovah hates it so I hate it.'"

TRAIN CHILDREN IN RIGHTEOUSNESS

Love of God is not inherited. Parents must not only punish their children at times, but also train them in righteousness. This requires reasoning with the child, showing him the undesirable outcome to which a wrong attitude will lead.

NEED FOR SELF-SACRIFICING LOVE

Self-sacrificing love, like that demonstrated by Jesus, is the identifying "badge" of Christianity. (John 13:35) This love cost Jesus plenty—including an agonizing death. Our being a real disciple means loving one another as Jesus loved.

HOW TO PUT UP WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE

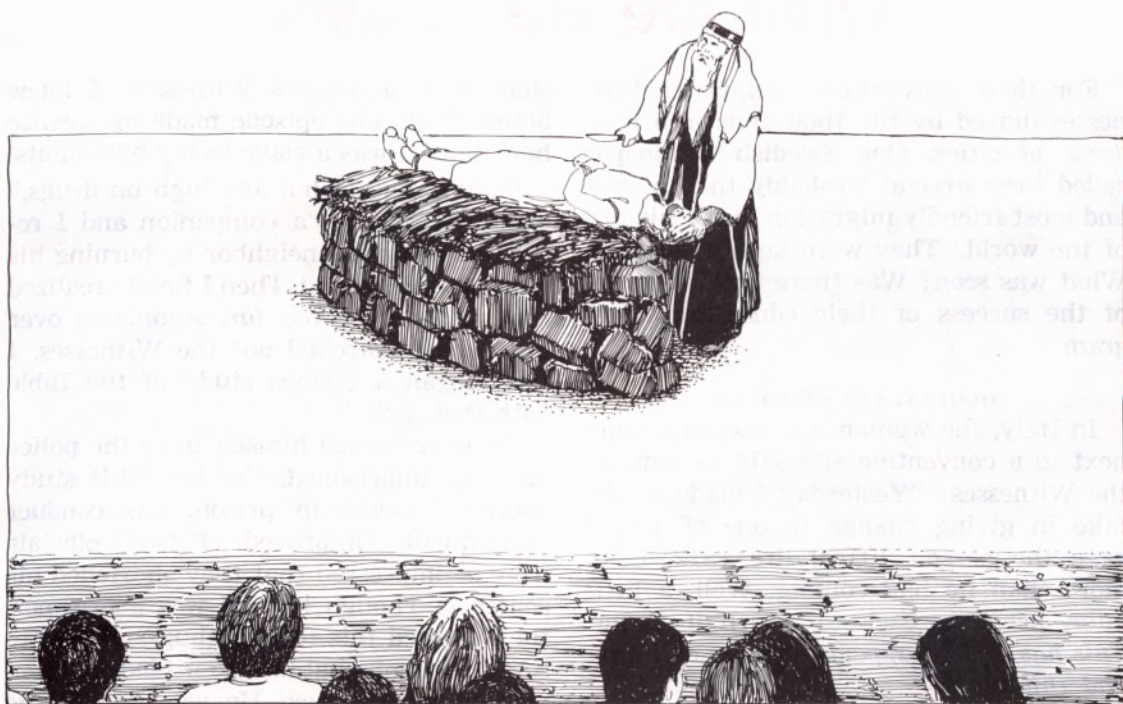
In a program skit, a Christian woman who was harshly spoken to by another had to decide whether she could (1) simply forget the incident, or (2) apply the principle at Matthew 5:23, 24 and endeavor to make peace. She followed the second course, even though she had not done any wrong to her spiritual sister. It is this willingness to follow Bible counsel—to humble ourselves and to seek peace—that enables us to put up with one another.

MORAL FAITHFULNESS

No matter how pleasurable the breaking of God's law may momentarily seem to be, we must keep telling ourselves that it is just not worth it. The heart is deceitful and can always make excuses. (Jer. 17:9) If the apostle Paul had to keep fighting his fleshly tendencies, dare we content ourselves with doing any less? We must keep trying. If we stop, we are lost!

GOD HATES A DIVORCING

Some have schemed to divorce their mate and marry another, even if it means being disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation. However, let these individuals never forget that even though the congregation may reinstate them, God, who knows the heart and all the circumstances, is the final Judge.—Heb. 13:4.



Bible Dramas

DO NOT DESPISE SACRED THINGS

Jacob imitated the faith of his grandfather Abraham, who, at God's instruction, attempted to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice. Esau, Jacob's brother, despised sacred things by exchanging his birthright for a meal. He put his own interests ahead of God's. Do we build our lives around our sacred relationship with God or does it really take second place? Nobody wants to think of himself as an Esau, but if Jehovah thinks of him that way, will he get the promised reward?

JEHOVAH WILL GUARD THE WAY OF HIS LOYAL ONES

A few today have stumbled because of the imperfections of some outstanding teachers associated with the congregation. A similar test of loyalty occurred during the time of King David. Despite his mistakes, over which he humbly repented, he remained God's anointed one. Those who dealt loyally with David were rewarded; disloyal ones lost God's favor. How vital that we never forget which organization God is using today and the need for heartfelt loyalty!

THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS, BUT GOD'S

There are enemies who would like to destroy Jehovah's Witnesses as a people. Yet we can have the same confidence as that of King Jehoshaphat, who looked to God for protection from enemies who threatened to destroy his nation. The nation was delivered because the king made sure God's laws were known and obeyed by the people. So today, if we practice true worship in all our ways and keep our congregations morally clean by the administering of God's laws, we will have God's protection and soon will see him deliver us from our enemies forever.

What Are the Results?

For their conventions, Jehovah's Witnesses moved by the thousands into hundreds of cities. One Swedish newspaper called their arrival 'probably the quietest and most friendly migration in the history of the world.' They were keenly watched. What was seen? Was there tangible proof of the success of their educational program?

DISHONESTY REMOVED

In Italy, the woman who owned a store next to a convention site said to some of the Witnesses: "Yesterday I made a mistake in giving change to one of you. I gave the person 10,000 lire (\$12, U.S.) more than he had coming. Well, a little later, he came back to return it to me. *This has never happened as long as I have had this store.*"

Just an isolated incident? No. The honesty of the Witnesses is well known. As she was paying her hotel bill by check, one of the conventioners in the United States asked if she needed some identification. "Oh, no!" replied the clerk. "If we can't trust you people, whom can we trust?"

STRENGTH TO OVERCOME BAD HABITS

Perhaps you may know of some of your friends or neighbors whose lives were ruined because of slavery to bad habits, such as alcoholism, drug abuse or others. However, the Italian newspaper *La Nazione* reported: "Amongst them [newly baptized Witnesses] were ex-drug addicts, ex-alcoholics and persons of various ages who had found the strength to overcome serious family and social misfortunes."

A man who attended one of the 108 conventions held in the United States admitted: "I had hit rock bottom in my life. It seems I was bent on living a degraded life, even though, through earlier discus-

sions with Jehovah's Witnesses, I knew better. Then one episode made me realize how much I was a slave to my bad habits.

"Drunk on alcohol and high on drugs," explained David, "a companion and I retaliated against a neighbor by burning his house to the ground. Then I finally realized that *I had gone too far*. Agonizing over my guilt I searched out the Witnesses. I then began a serious study of the Bible with their help."

He later turned himself in to the police and was imprisoned. Yet his Bible study continued—even in prison. His conduct dramatically improved. Prison officials were so impressed that they shortened his sentence. Though he still was a prisoner, they allowed this former thug—a slave to several ruinous habits—to attend the convention *on his own!* He was one of the 1,034,364 who attended the conventions in the United States.

PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER

"Never would we have imagined that persons like you existed if we had not seen you at work with our own eyes," observed the caretakers of the stadium in Ascoli Piceno, Italy. They watched the Witnesses remove all the chairs in the covered stands, clean under them and put them back. "To do a work of this kind for us would be *unthinkable*," declared the caretakers. Yet when people love one another many "unthinkable" tasks can be done.

For instance, in Japan a large sheet used in one of the halls as a floor covering was soiled the day before the convention. Usually a week is needed to clean it. To the astonishment of the management, the Witnesses cleaned it in *90 minutes!*

"More than 1,200 local male members of the Jehovah's Witnesses laid 8,000

sheets of plywood on the Astrodome floor last weekend in exchange for free rent this summer at the Astroarena for the Witnesses' two ["Divine Love"] district conventions," stated the Houston *Chronicle* of May 3, 1980. This unusual arrangement had developed because the officials of the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, were impressed by the Witnesses' efficiency when previously using the stadium.

For two years the Witnesses have tackled the job of completely covering the playing field of the gigantic Astrodome with a double layer of 8,000 four-by-eight-foot* plywood sheets and nailing them together in time for an incoming exhibition. The plywood was needed to protect the field from the heavy displays that were to be set up. Then after the exhibition ended, it would be necessary to remove the sheets, take out the nails and restack the sheets in the basement.

The Witnesses covered the field in record time—in only about four hours. (It

previously had taken professionals 11 hours!) The Witnesses were so fast that one observer said, "It looked like the floor was being poured!" Then, after the exhibition finished, they came back and picked up the plywood, removed the thousands of nails and restacked it, all within eight hours. This normally took weeks!

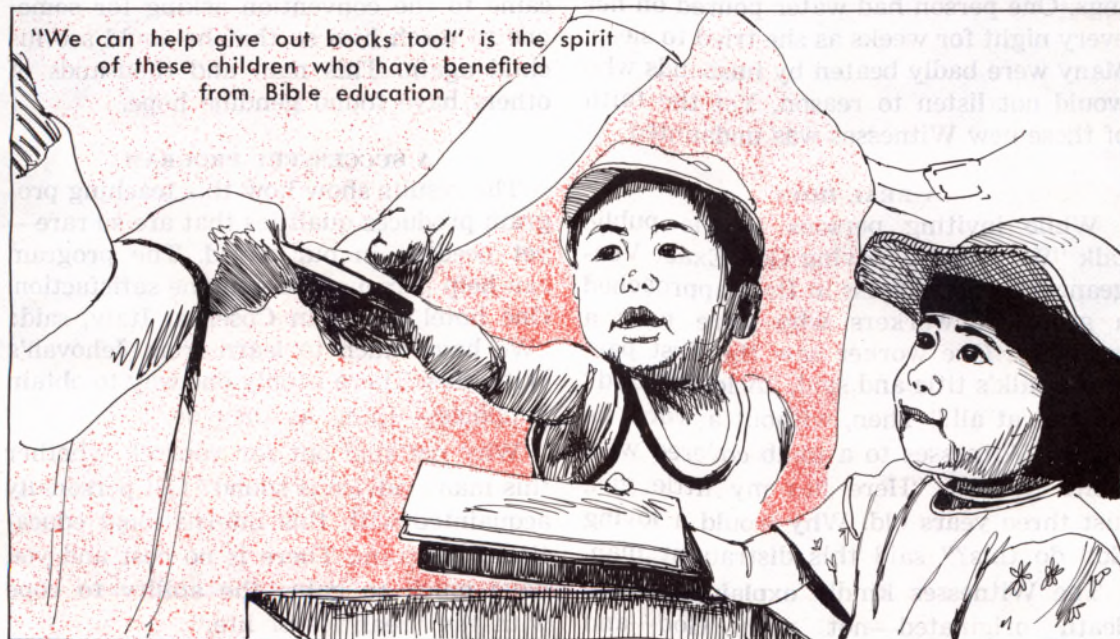
However, just how deep-rooted are the qualities developed by this educational program? What happens when real pressure is applied to make the Witnesses abandon their Bible principles?

UNDAUNTED BY PERSECUTION

"Go out on the veranda and yell for God's help," taunted the schoolteacher. The one addressed was a teenaged Witness in Japan. She was mocked before the entire class because of her stand for Bible principles. Despite repeated taunts and abuses, she stuck to her faith and was one of the 1,860 persons baptized at the conventions in Japan.

Others baptized in Japan had been

* One foot equals .3 meter.



SURPRISE GUESTS FROM CUBA—INTEGRITY-KEEPERS

"Among the highly publicized groups . . . who arrived in the United States in the Cuban boatlift," reported the *York (Nebraska) News Times*, "is another less publicized group whose only crime is that they continued to worship God in their own way despite the fact their sect was outlawed."

Many of these Witnesses who were ordered out of Cuba attended the "Divine Love" Conventions in the United States. They told of the persecution they endured in Cuba. For instance, two young daughters of a Witness, while in Cuba, refused to participate in a patriotic ceremony. They were threatened with death. They were told to turn their back to a soldier with a machine gun and that they would be shot. The girls calmly turned and expected to die. Click! The gun was empty. The authorities realized that even the threat of death could not break their faith, so they released them.

Another refugee, Miriam, was confronted by the Cuban police at 3 a.m. She and her husband were then given **one hour** to be ready to leave the country. Shortly afterward, while on an overcrowded boat headed for the United States, they faced a dreadful storm. Some of the nearby boats sank. Miriam and her children sat next to a convicted murderer. She prayed loudly to Jehovah for protection. Finally, she fell asleep. The next morning the murderer woke her up and said: "It looks like your prayers have been answered. There is Key West [U.S]."

The faith of these Cuban Witnesses was an inspiration to all in the audience.

locked out of their houses and forced to sleep outside for months in all kinds of weather because they attended Bible meetings. One person had water poured on her every night for weeks as she tried to sleep. Many were badly beaten by husbands who would not listen to reason. Yet the faith of these new Witnesses was undaunted.

A REAL HOPE

While inviting persons to the public talk "Why Will a Loving God Exact Vengeance?", one Witness in Italy approached a group of workers who were near a cemetery. One worker saw the first part of the talk's title and said, "A loving God? No, not at all!" Then, without a word, he led the Witnesses to a tomb covered with white flowers. "Here lies my little girl, just three years old. Why would a loving God do this?" said this distraught man.

The Witnesses kindly explained where death originated—not with God—and

showed the man the Bible's hope of a resurrection. (Rom. 5:12; Acts 24:15) He was deeply moved. That very evening he came to the convention asking for someone to teach him so that he could see his child again. This man and thousands of others have found genuine hope.

A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM

The results show how this teaching program produces qualities that are so rare—yet needed—in our world. The program can help persons find genuine satisfaction. One hotel owner in Cosenza, Italy, said: "We have much to learn from Jehovah's Witnesses. There is only one way to obtain happiness—think as they do."

Why not find out for yourself whether this man's advice is sound? Get personally acquainted with this international educational program. There is no cost and you have much to gain—the ability to cope with the "realities of life."

INSIGHT ON THE NEWS

● An advisory panel for America's National Council of Churches (NCC) has urged that "sexist" terms be removed from the Bible. The group claims that male references to God in the Bible "are accidents of the limitations of human language." They also wrote: "We think it proper

"Sexist" Language in Bible?

to speak of Jesus Christ as the Child of God [instead of "Son of God"] and we believe alternate renderings for Son of Man should be explored." They recommended that the "Revised Standard Version" ("RSV"), published by the NCC, should be altered to reflect such changes.

But are the masculine references to God and Christ truly "accidents of the limitations" of the original Bible languages? Well, God himself uses the figure of a "husband" to illustrate his relationship to Israel. (Isa. 54:5; Jer. 31:32, "RSV"), and alludes to a similar relationship with his heavenly organization, or "woman," the "Jerusalem above." (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:1-6; Gal. 4:26) Christ is also figuratively referred to as a "bridegroom," a "husband," and as having a "wife." (John 3:28, 29; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 21:9) Such references can hardly be described as "limitations of human language."

● "I am appalled at the schizophrenic [double-standard] thinking of American physicians," wrote Leroy Howell, M.D., in a letter to "American Medical News."

Double Standard on Life

Howell explained that, in one recent issue, the magazine had reported on the American Medical Association Judicial Council's position "that it is unethical for physicians to give or order lethal injections for murderers" as a means of capital punishment. Yet he noted that the very next issue of "American Medical News" reported that "a director of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists was upset because the federal government would no longer pay for [aborting] babies who had never done anything wrong to anyone."

Similarly another doctor wrote about the medical complaints over government refusal

to pay for some abortions. Apparently such medical officials feel that mothers have a "right" to do away with their unborn babies. But, asked the physician, "does proclaiming something to be a right mean that it must be subsidized by government? I have a right to buy a house. Does this also mean the house should be paid for by the government? I don't think so." Yet, as noted above, the same medical men who have no qualms over accepting government payments to destroy millions of unborn babies often oppose, on so-called moral grounds, the execution of a few murderers. An observer might even be led to believe that the amount of monetary return has become a factor in deciding whether destroying life is moral or not.—Rom. 13:8-10.

● When Pope John Paul II visited a poor slum of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, last summer, he was

Empty Gesture

said to have been moved so much that he took a gold ring from his finger and gave it to the poverty-stricken people. "For Vidigal [the slum]," he reportedly said to priest Italo Coelho, who received it in behalf of the people. But by late August, the ring had not helped the poor. Priest Coelho admitted that it was located in the parish church that serves an area including Vidigal. But the church itself is "in Leblon, one of Rio's wealthiest communities," reports the New York "Times."

Will the ring ever be sold to help the poor? "We will not sell it. That is absolutely clear," answers the priest.

This situation reminds one of the parable Jesus told about a "rich man" who "feasted sumptuously every day" and a destitute beggar named Lazarus who was "desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table." Not only have many top church leaders maintained a life-style of opulence like the "rich man," offering the poor only meager "crumbs," like the pope's ring, from their lavish "table"; but, more importantly, have they not done similarly in caring for the spiritual hunger of the people? Instead of solid Biblical "food," often only "crumbs" of sanctimonious ritual and political pronouncements are offered.—Luke 16:19-22, Catholic "Douay Version."

How Shall We Escape?

"Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man." — Luke 21:36.

ESCAPE! That is always an exciting word. We do not use it unless there is real danger and a need for urgent action. For instance, after a Christian meeting at the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, for some reason we might have to hurry home. But we would not say that we had to escape, unless we saw a sudden cloud of smoke. Or consider another illustration: We see an apartment building on fire and hurry to the scene. There at an upper-story window is a terrorized woman with a child in her arms! She is up too high to jump and it would be very risky to drop the child. What hope is there? Either firemen must reach these victims by ladder, or they must promptly use the fire escape.

² Actually, there is always more than one feature to an escape story. There are these principal factors: (1) a place or threatening situation from which we must flee with a sense of urgency; (2) the need for a place of refuge to which we can go for protection and security; and (3) the necessity of heeding the instructions of someone who sees our plight, can provide a place of safety and is willing to help us to get there. Such a person is of utmost importance.

1. Why is the mention of escape always exciting, and how might this be illustrated?
2. What factors are involved in escape?

"THE PROVIDER OF ESCAPE"

³ Jehovah God is the unequalled Provider of escape. Please turn to Psalm 18 and note that the superscription says it was composed by David "in the day that Jehovah had delivered him out of the palm of all his enemies and out of the hand of Saul." Just the mention of Israel's first human king, Saul, may well remind us of how often David must have felt that death was staring him in the face. Why, three times the king tried to pin David to the wall with a spear! (1 Sam. 18:11; 19:10) Thereafter, for several years David was kept on the run, relentlessly hunted down by Saul. (1 Sam. 26:20) With this in mind, we can well imagine the depth of feeling with which David uttered the opening words of Psalm 18, where we read: "I shall have affection for you, O Jehovah my strength. Jehovah is my crag and my stronghold and the Provider of escape for me. My God is my rock. I shall take refuge in him, my shield and my horn of salvation, my secure height. On the One to be praised, Jehovah, I shall call, and from my enemies I shall be saved. The ropes of death encircled me; flash floods of good-for-nothing men also kept terrifying me. . . . In my distress I kept calling upon Jehovah, and to my God I kept crying for help. Out of his temple he proceeded to hear my voice, and my own cry before him for help now came into his ears."—Vss. 1-6.

⁴ What a grand and comforting title was thereby ascribed to Jehovah—"the Provider of escape." And did Jehovah God prove true to it? Indeed he

3. (a) The superscription of Psalm 18 may remind us of what?
- (b) What factors are emphasized at Psalm 18:1-6?
4. What grand title is ascribed to Jehovah, and how does Psalm 18 bear out the appropriateness of it?

did, for after describing mighty deeds of Jehovah, David went on to say: "He was delivering me from my strong enemy, and from those hating me; because they were stronger than I was. They kept confronting me in the day of my disaster, but Jehovah came to be as a support for me. And he proceeded to bring me out into a roomy place; he was rescuing me, because he had found delight in me."—Ps. 18:17-19.

⁵ Many times throughout the Psalms David took up this same theme. In four of the Psalms, he calls Jehovah the "Provider of escape." (Ps. 18:2; 40:17; 70:5; 144:2) When we, as Jehovah's Witnesses, talk to others about Jehovah's fine qualities and purposes, we often refer to portions of Psalm 37. But note now its grand conclusion: "The salvation of the righteous ones is from Jehovah; he is their fortress in the time of distress. And Jehovah will help them and provide them with escape. He will provide them with escape from wicked people and save them, because they have taken refuge in him." (Vss. 39, 40) How these words should move Jehovah's people to place their confidence in him!

⁶ Psalm 70 vividly conveys a sense of urgency. It was when David felt in desperate need that he pleaded: "O God, to deliver me, O Jehovah, to my assistance do make haste. . . . I am afflicted and poor. O God, do act quickly for me. You are my help and the Provider of escape for me. O Jehovah, do not be too late."—Ps. 70:1, 5.

⁷ Have you ever felt that way? It is both comforting and faith-strengthening to know that we, as servants of Jehovah, can have confidence that he will "act quickly" for us. He knows our needs and how to supply them. Our loving heavenly Father is indeed "the Provider of escape" just when we need it. Sometimes, like David, we realize that our own shortcomings have brought us into a bad situation. But, like David, we can approach Jehovah in sincerity, perhaps with "a broken spirit," confident that He will hear and answer our prayer. We can plead, even as David

did: "Create in me even a pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one." —Ps. 51:10, 17.

⁸ Another factor to keep in mind is that our God has provided a High Priest who can "sympathize with our weaknesses" and through whom we can approach "the throne of undeserved kindness, that we may obtain mercy and find undeserved kindness for help at the right time." We are indeed grateful for this sympathetic High Priest, Jesus Christ, who, under the Father's direction, can "emancipate" us or provide the way of escape from spiritual bondage. —Heb. 2:15; 4:15, 16.

⁹ According to the Gospel records, only once did Jesus Christ, the Greater David, mention "escaping." When he was discussing "the conclusion of the system of things," he urged his disciples: "Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in *escaping* all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man." (Luke 21:36; Matt. 24:3) However, before examining that passage in detail, we will review certain exciting accounts of escape recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, noting some of the important lessons that we should learn and apply to ourselves. When we are in danger, invariably there are essential steps that must be taken and certain things that must be avoided in order to succeed in escaping. This we shall see as we consider historical incidents.

5, 6. (a) How does Psalm 37 help Jehovah's people to place confidence in him as "the Provider of escape"? (b) How is a sense of urgency highlighted in Psalm 70?

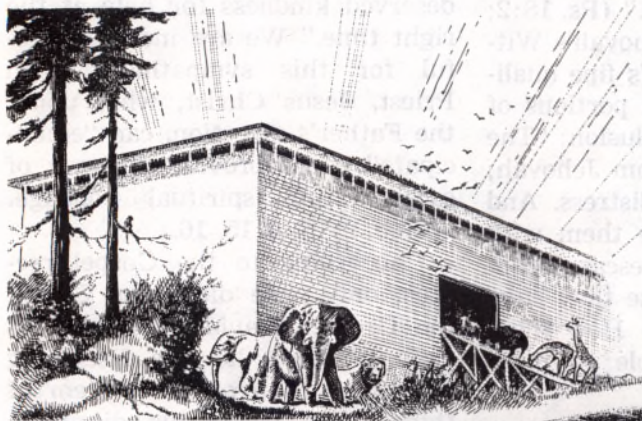
7. With what attitude can we fittingly pray to Jehovah when in urgent need of help?

8. What role does Jesus Christ play in our receiving "help at the right time"?

9. (a) When only did Jesus speak of "escaping"? (b) What two things must be observed when making an escape?

ESCAPING THE DELUGE

¹⁰ The first account to be considered certainly is exciting, for it involved global destruction of the wicked. Would there be escape for anyone? Remember, Jehovah said to Noah: "As for me, here I am bringing the deluge of waters upon the earth to bring to ruin all flesh in which the force of life is active from under the heavens. *Everything* that is in the earth will ex-

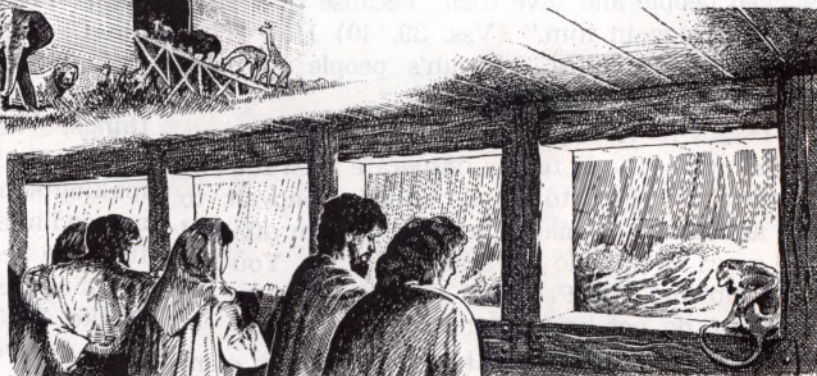


Noah and his family
heeded God's warning

pire." (Gen. 6:17) However, Jehovah already had given Noah detailed instructions for the building of an ark. Following the warning about an earth-wide flood, God instructed Noah as to what he and his family had to do in order that they, along with certain other living creatures, might be preserved alive and might escape being engulfed by that destructive deluge.

¹¹ On what was escape dependent? This is clearly shown by the words: "And Noah proceeded to do according to all that God had commanded him. *He did just so.*" (Gen. 6:22) When God gives explicit commands or directions, unquestioning obe-

dience is required. If anything by way of direction or warning is ignored, escape becomes impossible. Then the result would be similar to what happened to the rest of the human family in Noah's day. Jesus said of their attitude and its consequences: "They took no note until the flood came and swept them all away." (Matt. 24:39) Escape was not possible for such individuals because they did not acknowledge the threatening situation and they paid no attention to any instructions for escape given by "the Provider of escape" through Noah.



¹² In this account, one more point is especially noteworthy. Just how did those "eight souls" escape? Observe carefully the apostle Peter's answer. They "were carried safely *through* the water." (1 Pet. 3:20) They were 'right in the thick of things' and were not relieved by being taken away from the earth, for example, on a trip to the moon. As we shall see, a similar thing can be true of those serving Jehovah today.

10, 11. On what was escape dependent for Noah and his family, but when does escape become impossible?

12. According to 1 Peter 3:20, how did the "eight souls" escape in Noah's day?

LOT'S ESCAPE FROM SODOM

¹³ Next, let us consider Lot's escape from Sodom. Recall the background. Because of insufficient pasture grounds for all their animals, Abraham gave Lot the opportunity to decide which way he would go. "Then Lot chose for himself the whole District of the Jordan, and Lot moved his camp to the east. . . . Finally he pitched tent near Sodom. And the men of Sodom were bad and were gross sinners against Jehovah." Lot surely must have known about the bad reputation of Sodom's residents. But the potential for material prosperity lay in that district, for "it was a well-watered region . . . like the garden of Jehovah."—Gen. 13:5-13.

¹⁴ In due course, two angels, materialized as men, came to Sodom and told Lot of Jehovah's decision "to bring the city to ruin." At once, Lot warned his prospective sons-in-law. But did they recognize the threatening situation and the need for urgent flight, one of the prime factors in any successful escape? No, "but in the eyes of his sons-in-law [Lot] seemed like a man who was joking." (Gen. 19:12-14) At dawn, "the angels became urgent with Lot," with a view to his taking immediate action. What was his response? "*He kept lingering.*" But "then in the compassion of Jehovah upon him," the angels swiftly conducted Lot, his wife and his two daughters out of the city. Then they were urged on with the words: "Escape for your soul! Do not look behind you. . . . Escape to the mountainous region for fear you may be swept away!" Again, what was Lot's response? "Then Lot said to them: 'Not that, please, Jehovah! . . . Please, now, this city is nearby to flee there and it is a small thing. May I, please, escape there—is it not a small thing?—and my soul will live on.'" In Jehovah's merciful compas-

sion, Lot's request was granted and he escaped to the city of Zoar. But what about Lot's wife? She deliberately ignored explicit instructions. "His wife began to look around from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."—Gen. 19:15-26.

¹⁵ What do we learn from all of this? Was it totally on Lot's own account that he succeeded in escaping? No, for Abraham's earnest petitions for mercy also played a part. (Gen. 18:20-33) Accordingly, "when God brought the cities of the District to ruin God kept *Abraham* in mind in that he took steps to send Lot out of the midst of the overthrow." (Gen. 19:29) Moreover, God delivered Lot because, as a "righteous" man, he was completely out of sympathy with the wicked conduct of "the law-defying people" among whom he had been residing. (2 Pet. 2:7) Yet, Lot was in no hurry to get out of Sodom, where certain of his interests lay. He had to be urged and even taken by the hand. (Gen. 19:16) Reflecting on Lot's escape, we may well ask ourselves: Are we really out of sympathy with ungodly, law-defying people? And, to escape, are we willing to place greater emphasis on spiritual interests than on supposed material advantages?—Matt. 6:33.

¹⁶ In contrast to Lot's reticence to flee quickly, consider what happened when "God put Abraham to the test" and told him to present his beloved son Isaac as a burnt offering. True, the element of escape was not involved. But how did Abraham respond? Did he linger? Or did he plead that there should be some alternative offering? No! "Abraham got up early in the morning" and immediately started on the three-day trip, with Isaac at his side. He even got to the point of taking "the slaughtering knife to kill his son," when

13. How did Lot come to reside in Sodom?

14. When urgent warning was given, what was the reaction of: (a) Lot's sons-in-law? (b) Lot himself in two instances? (c) Lot's wife?

15. (a) Was it on Lot's own account that he escaped destruction? (b) Lot's escape may raise what personal questions?

16. What contrast in responses was there between Lot and Abraham?

God intervened so that Isaac was spared alive.—Gen. 22:1-14.

¹⁷ Here is a lesson that we can take to heart. Let us not pursue a righteous course in just a passive way, being content with avoiding actual bad conduct. Never should we linger and see how close we can stay to the edge of this wicked system of things, keeping on good terms with it and trying to get all its material advantages and all the “fun” out of it that we can. That Jesus’ followers were not to be worldly in attitude was made evident when Christ said in prayer to God: “I have given your word to them, but the world has hated

17. (a) In reflecting on the matters just discussed, what lesson should we take to heart? (b) What words of Jesus help us, as his followers, to evaluate our position with regard to the present system of things?

them, because they are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world.” —John 17:14.

HOW TO SUCCEED IN ESCAPING

¹⁸ On one occasion, Jesus closely linked the accounts about Noah and Lot, saying that they were prophetic of the coming “days of the Son of man.” While they had a fulfillment on the generation of Jesus’ day, they have a greater fulfillment in our day, at this “time of the end.” (Luke 17: 26-33; Dan. 12:1-4) In “the days of Lot,” according to the Bible account, people were not only eating and drinking, as in Noah’s day, but also buying, selling, planting and building. How like today, when it is so

18. How did Jesus link the accounts of Noah and Lot, and does this apply to us today?



easy to become completely absorbed in the day-to-day affairs of life! Indeed, the adverse pressures resulting from such things as inflation and nationalism, along with the enticements to "do your own thing" and get on in the world, are greater than ever before.

¹⁹ Consider, now, Jesus' great prophecy, which describes the buildup of things that would happen in our day, resulting in a very threatening and dangerous situation from which escape would be imperative. He said there would be "anguish of nations, . . . while men become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the inhabited earth." This would culminate in the "great tribulation," when Satan's 'heavens and earth' will be removed. (Luke 21:10-33; Matt. 24:21; 2 Pet. 3:7) Then comes the timely exhortation: "But pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you as a snare. For it will come in upon all those dwelling upon the face of all the earth. Keep awake, then, all the time making supplication that you may succeed in escaping all these things that are destined to occur, and in standing before the Son of man."—Luke 21:34-36.

²⁰ How, then, shall we escape? Not by being taken away from the scene of action. Rather, we need to copy the example of Noah, who was careful to be obedient in building and then, with his family, getting inside that divine provision, the ark. Throughout those difficult years, he maintained a standing of approval before Jehovah. "Noah walked with the true God." (Gen. 6:9) Like Noah, we need to recognize that there is a threatening situation

from which we must flee with a sense of urgency. Also, like that man of faith, we should be careful to obey "the Provider of escape," complying with divine instructions in these perilous times. On the one hand, we must avoid being self-indulgent in satisfying our appetites to an excess or becoming weighed down with the anxieties of daily living, which would result in a sleepy and lingering attitude. Thus we would lose out when that day comes as a sudden snare. On the other hand, we must at all times be alert and must keep awake spiritually, prayerfully going to God with earnest entreaties. There must be no doubt in our own minds as to which side we are on—the side of God's kingdom under his King, Christ Jesus.—Matt. 6:31-34.

²¹ It is imperative that we seek to maintain a standing of approval before the Son of man, Jesus Christ, right through these critical times. Doing this may be trying, but it will not be more difficult than we can bear if we keep awake and obedient. The apostle Paul assures us: "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out [not necessarily to get away from the situation, but] in order for you to be able to endure it." Thus, we need to cultivate endurance, that we may overcome the temptations and trials in order to keep "standing," faithful, at this 'end of the systems of things.'—1 Cor. 10:11-13; Matt. 24:3.

²² However, is there more to be said in answer to the questions: How shall we escape? Where shall we flee? There is, and, in this regard, let us examine further the Word of our God, Jehovah, who knows of our needs and will care for us as we humbly seek his guidance.—1 Pet. 5:6, 7.

19. In his great prophecy on earth, what buildup did Jesus give as to a threatening situation, followed by what exhortation?

20. (a) How did Noah 'walk with the true God' at all times? (b) Similarly, what should we be careful to do?

21. How are we encouraged to maintain a standing of approval at all times?

22. Where should we look for guidance in order to escape, and why?

Flee To God's Kingdom!

THE apostle Paul, in his letter to the Hebrews, has some important things to say relative to escape. He covers two aspects: things to be observed and things to be avoided. In backing up his argument, he frequently quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures, with which his readers of that time—Jews who had become Christians—would be very familiar.

² In the first chapter of Hebrews, Paul emphasizes the superior position of God's Son over the angels. Then the apostle says: "That is why it is necessary for us [Christians] to pay more than the usual attention to the things heard by us, that we may never *drift away*. For if the word spoken through angels proved to be firm, . . . how shall we escape if we have neglected a salvation of such greatness in that it began to be spoken through our Lord [Jesus Christ] . . . ?"—Heb. 2:1-4.

³ The hope of salvation given through Jesus Christ is far better and greater than what was offered through the Law "transmitted through angels" at Mount Sinai. (Gal. 3:19) It is better because it is based on a "better covenant . . . legally established upon better promises," a far better sacrifice (made "once for all time," giving a "better hope") and a superior priesthood, similar to that of Melchizedek. (Heb. 7:15-25; 8:6; 9:23-28) However, coupled with this "better hope" there is greater responsibility. Hence, there is the need to pay close attention and be careful so as

to avoid any neglect, "that we may never drift away." And while heavenly salvation is referred to here, similar responsibilities rest on those who have the hope of earthly salvation under God's kingdom.

⁴ How much effort is required to start drifting? None whatever. If we are on a river, whether in a boat or in the water, we just get carried downstream by the current. It is the same in real life. If we, as Christians, commence to drift, we go along with whatever influences may float our way, either externally or from inward inherited tendencies. We begin to lose appreciation for spiritual values. This can develop gradually and is to be guarded against. Otherwise, we would no longer be keeping "a firm hold on the real life" and would be in danger of losing life altogether. (1 Tim. 6:19) As Paul pointed out, how can we escape the final disastrous consequences if this neglectful attitude and course remain unchecked?

⁵ By the apostle's further words to Hebrew Christians, we are alerted to an even more dangerous course. He wrote: "Beware, brothers, for fear there should ever develop in any one of you a wicked heart lacking faith by *drawing away* from the living God; but keep on exhorting one another each day, as long as it may be called 'Today,' for fear any one of you should become hardened by the deceptive power of sin."—Heb. 3:12, 13.

⁶ To start drifting away requires no effort; but to commence "drawing away"

1. In Paul's letter to the Hebrews, what can be noted relative to escape?

2. How did Paul compare God's Son with the angels, this leading to what conclusion?

3. (a) The hope of salvation through Christ Jesus is better than what other hope, and in what ways?

(b) What is coupled with this "better hope"?

(c) There is what need, whether our hopes are heavenly or earthly?

4. What does it mean to drift, and how would this apply to Christians?

5. Against what dangerous condition of heart are we alerted by Paul's further words to Hebrew Christians?

6. (a) What is meant by "drawing away" from someone? (b) What causes a "drawing away from the living God," and how can it be avoided?

from someone involves the taking of definite action. Though we may still be facing a person in an endeavor to retain his favor, yet we may begin to recede or retreat from him by taking backward steps. Why would anyone begin "drawing away from the living God"? The answer is: Due to a lack of faith. As the context shows, Paul is not speaking about a weak faith that has resulted from insufficient knowledge or incorrect understanding. Rather, he quotes the warning, "Do not harden your hearts." That is what the fleshly Israelites did in the wilderness, although they had there seen Jehovah's "works for forty years," having enjoyed his constant miraculous provisions and protection. (Heb. 3: 7-11) Hence, all true Christians today need continually to help and encourage one another so as to avoid taking backward steps due to becoming "hardened by the deceptive power of sin." We should exhort one another to keep our faith alive. How? By works of faith. Remember, Abraham acted obediently in faith under severe test and thus "came to be called 'Jehovah's friend.'" We, as witnesses of Jehovah today, will win out only "if we make fast our hold on the confidence we had at the beginning firm to the end."—Heb. 3:13, 14; Jas. 2:21-26.

⁷ Toward the end of his letter to the Hebrews, Paul takes up the same line of argument as he did at Hebrews 2:1-4. He shows the greater responsibility resting on Christians, as compared with the ancient fleshly Israelites. However, he uses an even stronger expression and says: "For if they did not escape who begged off from him who was giving divine warning upon earth, much more shall we not [escape] if we *turn away* from him who speaks from the heavens."—Heb. 12:25.

7. Toward the end of his letter to the Hebrews, how does Paul show that the responsibility resting on Christians is greater than that placed on fleshly Israelites?

⁸ To turn away from someone means deliberately to turn our back on that one and often indicates rejection. This was the attitude and course taken by the fleshly Israelites as a nation right down to Malachi's time, when Jehovah said to them: "From the days of your forefathers you have turned aside from my regulations and have not kept them." (Mal. 3:7) And if an anointed Christian, a spiritual Israelite, takes these progressively bad steps, what will be the outcome? There is grave danger that he will come into the category of those regarding whom Paul writes: "It is impossible as regards those who have once for all been enlightened, . . . but who have *fallen away*, to revive them again to repentance." (Heb. 6:4-6) Of course, only Jehovah God and Christ Jesus can determine if a person has reached the point where it is impossible for him to be revived again to repentance.

⁹ We should take these warnings to heart. Loss of faith may begin with our allowing ourselves to take things for granted, showing a spirit of indifference, almost imperceptibly drifting away. One false step or attitude easily leads to another until we have gone too far, and we find we have fallen away to the point of no recovery. Before that happens Jehovah will no doubt subject us to some discipline, which Paul talks about in this same letter and which counsel we should wisely accept. Paul wrote to those Hebrew Christians: "You have entirely forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons: 'My son, do not belittle the discipline from Jehovah, neither give out when you are corrected by him; for whom Jehovah loves he disciplines; in fact, he scourges every one whom he receives as a son.' . . . True,

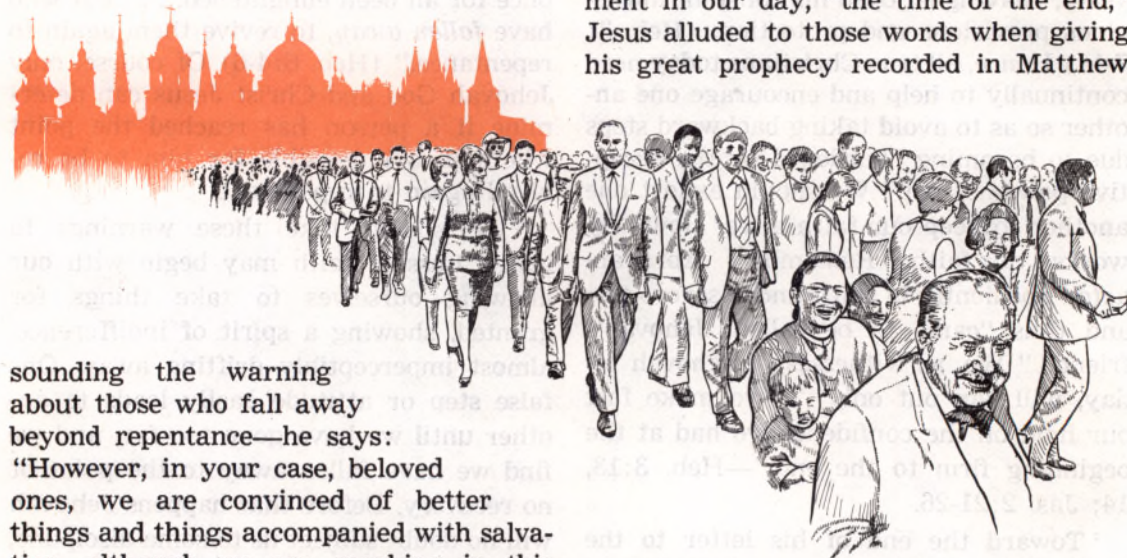
8, 9. (a) What is involved in turning away from someone, and, in spiritual matters, to what possible outcome can this lead? (b) How and why should we take these warnings to heart? (c) What will occur if we accept divine discipline?

no discipline seems for the present to be joyous, but grievous; yet afterward to those who have been trained by it it yields peaceable fruit, namely, righteousness.” —Heb. 12:5-11.

¹⁰ From the foregoing, we should not conclude that Paul was taking a negative or pessimistic view of his spiritual brothers. Neither should we today look upon ourselves or others in the congregation in such a way. Even after the apostle told those Hebrew Christians that they had ‘become dull in their hearing’ and were ‘needing milk, not solid food’—and after

critical situation in which Christians now find themselves are these words that the prophet Daniel was inspired to write: “During that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who is standing in behalf of the sons of your people. And there will certainly occur a time of distress such as has not been made to occur since there came to be a nation until that time. And during that time your people will escape, every one who is found written down in the book.” (Dan. 12:1) Yes, Daniel’s people—actually the people of God—would escape. What a marvelous assurance!

¹² Pointing to a grand and major fulfillment in our day, “the time of the end,” Jesus alluded to those words when giving his great prophecy recorded in Matthew



sounding the warning about those who fall away beyond repentance—he says: “However, in your case, beloved ones, we are convinced of better things and things accompanied with salvation, although we are speaking in this way.” Paul then gives fine encouragement to “be imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”—Heb. 5:11, 12; 6:4-6, 9-12.

ESCAPE FROM BABYLON

¹¹ A key factor in any escape is fleeing from a threatened place or situation and doing so with a sense of urgency. Is there a need to take such action today? Indeed there is. Having a direct bearing on the

chapter 24. He said: “Then there will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, nor will occur again.” (Dan. 12:4; Matt. 24:21) Since 1914 C.E. Jesus Christ has been the heavenly prince, Michael, who has stood up and shown his power on behalf of God’s people of today. And who are they? Not fleshly Israelites, but the remnant of spiritual Israelites whose “circum-

10. Why should we never take a negative or pessimistic view of our spiritual brothers or even of ourselves?
11. In what prophecy was Daniel inspired to foretell escape for God’s people?

12. (a) When did Jesus allude to that prophecy of Daniel? (b) When and in behalf of whom has Michael stood up and shown his power?

cision is that of the heart by spirit, and not by a written code.”—Rom. 2:29.

¹³ However, particularly since 1919 C.E. has this faithful and purified remnant heeded the call: “Flee, then, you people, from the land of the north. . . . Hey there, Zion! Make your escape, you who are dwelling with the daughter of Babylon.” (Zech. 2:6, 7; Jer. 51:45) Prior to that date and during World War I, this remnant had been in bondage to Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion.

¹⁴ As Daniel was told, every one of this remnant is “found written down in the book.” They are part of “the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens.” (Heb. 12:23; see also Malachi 3:16.)



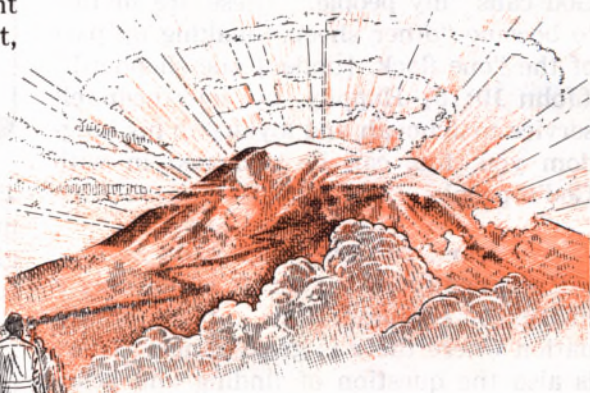
Added to these who escape the destruction of the wicked, there is a “great crowd” not of spiritual Israel, but who are “foreigners” by comparison. Yet these, too, “love the name of Jehovah” and have become his loyal servants. With what prospects? Jehovah responds, saying: “I will also bring them to my holy mountain and make them rejoice inside my house of prayer.” These

13. Since when has the remnant of spiritual Israelites been called upon to make their escape from Babylon the Great, and what was their condition prior to that time?

14. (a) Who are those “written down in the book”? (b) Do others escape destruction and, if so, who are they?

of the “great crowd” render God sacred service in his temple. They survive “the great tribulation” and are guided to “fountains of waters of life.”—Isa. 56:6, 7; Rev. 7:9-17.

¹⁵ For confirmation of the foregoing prophecies, we read further in the last prophetic book of the Bible, addressed to



God’s people of today. It gives a final warning concerning Babylon the Great, that false religious empire, in these words: “Get out of her *my people*, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind. . . . In one day her plagues will come . . . and she will be completely burned with fire, because Jehovah God, who judged her, is strong.”—Rev. 18:4-8.

¹⁶ There is still time to escape! The warning to flee is being sounded with power and clarity. It is an urgent message that is being declared by Jehovah’s Witnesses. This time it is no mere house that is on fire. Rather, an entire “city” will be set

15. What final warning is given about fleeing from Babylon the Great?

16. (a) Why can it be said that there is still time to escape destruction with Babylon the Great? (b) How can you be reckoned in with those whom God calls “my people”?

ablaze. Once that fire is started, it will be too late to flee. Those who are Babylonians at heart do not and will not respond to the warning. But there is still opportunity for others to show that at heart they want to serve Jehovah God with loyalty to his kingdom under Christ Jesus. Thus they still have time to demonstrate that they can suitably be counted among those whom God calls "my people." These are invited to become "other sheep," making up part of the "one flock, [under] one shepherd." (John 10:16) Happily, by your heartfelt service to Jehovah and loyalty to his kingdom you, too, can be reckoned in with God's people.

FLEE TO GOD'S CITY—ZION

¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, it is not only a matter of escaping from a place or situation where there is great danger. There is also the question of finding and being helped to a place of security. Has the great "Provider of escape" taken care of this? Has he warned his people to flee from the "city" about to be destroyed by fire, only to leave them wandering in a wilderness? Notice the answer given in his Word: "It must occur that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe; for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will prove to be the escaped ones, just as Jehovah has said, and in among the survivors, whom Jehovah is calling."—Joel 2:32.

¹⁸ So the Bible tells of two cities—the one from which to flee and the one where-in we can find refuge with many others. The ancient capital of Israel, often spoken of as Zion, or Jerusalem, pictures the "heavenly Jerusalem," God's heavenly kingdom, represented on earth by the remnant of the "faithful and discreet slave" class of which Jesus spoke at Matthew 24:

17. What provision has Jehovah made for those who escape?

18. How does the ancient capital of Israel have a modern counterpart?

In Coming Issues

- **Are You a Loyal Proclaimer of God's Kingship?**
- **"Working Hard and Exerting Ourselves"**
- **Is God's "Day of Vengeance" Near?**

45-47. (Heb. 12:22) Jehovah inspired many of his faithful servants of old to give words of encouragement and guidance for all who flee to his kingdom.

¹⁹ Isaiah was one of these faithful servants, and he foretold a most joyful time, in these words: "Many peoples will certainly go and say: 'Come, you people, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah . . . and he will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.' For out of Zion law will go forth, and the word of Jehovah out of Jerusalem." Under that law and word they would learn how to live in peace and not "learn war anymore."—Isa. 2:2-4; see also Zephaniah 2:3.

²⁰ Later in his prophecy, Isaiah was inspired to give further details as to how this would be accomplished, saying: "In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: 'We have a strong city. He sets salvation itself for walls and rampart. Open the gates, you men, that the righteous nation that is keeping faithful conduct may enter. The inclination that is well supported you will safeguard in continuous peace, because it is in you that one is made to trust. Trust in Jehovah, you people, for all times, for in Jah Jeho-

19, 20. What guidance and encouragement was given through Isaiah (a) at Isaiah 2:2-4, and (b) at Isaiah 26:1-4?

vah is the Rock of times indefinite.”—Isa. 26:1-4.

²¹ Toward the close of his prophecy, and widening out his vision to take in the whole land belonging to Zion, Isaiah described in glowing terms the restored spiritual paradise where all the escaped ones would find delightful activity in ‘rebuilding the long-standing devastated places.’ Not only would the spiritual Israelites take the lead in this, but it is stated that “strangers will actually stand and shepherd the flocks of you people, and the foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.” Such prophecies speak loudly, not of a ‘narrow escape’ but of complete deliverance and liberation. Therefore, all of us can gladly join with the remnant of Jehovah’s faithful anointed “slave” in this expression of praise: “Without fail I shall exult in Jehovah. My soul will be joyful in my God.”—Isa. 61:4-11.

²² While you may agree that what we have considered thus far is true of God’s people as a whole, you may be wondering how it affects you personally. Are you in need of escape from one or more personal problems? Who is not? The old saying is true that, humanly speaking, life is but a short journey from the cradle to the grave. Is there no escape from bondage to sin and death? Interestingly, both sin and death are spoken of as kings, and both will be vanquished. (Rom. 5:14; 6:12) In writing to fellow Christians, the apostle Paul explains how the way of escape has been

21. How is a spiritual paradise invitingly described at Isaiah 61:4-11?

22. (a) On a personal level, what provision has been made for escape? (b) To get the benefit of this, what part must we play?

opened up, that is, “through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus.” For “God set him forth as an offering for propitiation through faith in his blood.” (Rom. 3:24, 25) Yes, by exercising faith in that atoning sacrifice, we can come into God’s favor. Granted, we are still imperfect and daily need to request forgiveness of our sins. But our sinful tendencies need not and should not have free rein in our lives. Paul wrote: “Do not let sin continue to rule as king in your mortal bodies. . . . For sin must not be master over you.” To aid us in this respect, God has provided help through his Word and his faithful servants, as well as by his holy spirit. —Rom. 6:12-14; 8:11; Jas. 5:14, 15.

²³ Also, beyond these “critical times hard to deal with” and when Satan’s “system of things” has been brought to a complete end, what a glorious prospect opens up before us! (2 Tim. 3:1; 2 Cor. 4:4) No more will sin and death rule as kings. Instead, escape into full and lasting freedom will be complete. When Christ’s joint heirs have entered into their heavenly reward, then “the creation itself [mankind] also will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.” Christ Jesus “must rule as king until God has put all enemies under his feet. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing.” What joy is ahead for all loyal escapees—for those who flee to God’s kingdom! All praise and thanks be to Jehovah, the grand “Provider of escape”!—Rom. 8:19-21; 1 Cor. 15:25, 26.

23. What grand prospect lies before us, and under whose kingship?

Anyone dwelling in the secret place of the Most High will procure himself lodging under the very shadow of the Almighty One. I will say to Jehovah: “You are my refuge and my stronghold, my God, in whom I will trust.”—Ps. 91:1, 2.

"Like Father, Like Son"



Not in Asa's Case!

WHAT was your father like? Or, if you are a woman, what was your mother like?

A common English saying is "Like father, like son." The same idea is carried in the German *Der Apfel fällt nicht weit vom Stamm*. (The apple falls not far from the trunk.) These sayings spring from the fact that a child often has traits and attitudes that his parent had before him.

Is that so with you? Maybe persons have even said that you act or think like your parent. Are you pleased with that? Do you *want* to be like your father or mother?

Probably you can think of many admirable things about your parent that you would be happy to display yourself. But what if a person honestly saw that his parent's way of life ran counter to some Bible principles? Of course, he would not rebel openly against such a parent. But in view of how strong parental influence is, a son or a daughter in that situation would need to put forth sincere, persistent effort to develop ways or attitudes that did not follow the parental pattern. Yet it would be worth doing so, especially if this would bring the offspring closer to God, our heavenly Father. We can see this from the interesting Biblical example of Asa.

THE COURSE ASA TOOK

In the 10th century B.C.E. Asa became king of Judah. His father Abijah

had set a bad example; instead of zealously trusting in Jehovah God, Asa's father tolerated idolatrous practices at "high places" of false worship. In this, Abijah was "walking in all the sins of his father," Rehoboam. (1 Ki. 14:22-24; 15:3) So do you think that Abijah's son Asa could break away from the unfaithful pattern? Or, would it be, "Like father, like son"?

The revealing history recorded in the Scriptures shows that Asa did not follow in the steps of his father or grandfather. "Asa proceeded to do what was right in the eyes of Jehovah, like David his forefather." Yes, he chose not to be like his immediate father, or even his grandfather. He patterned himself after his great-great-grandfather, David, in zeal for true worship. The Bible goes on to say about Asa: "He had the male temple prostitutes pass out of the land and removed all the dungy idols that his forefathers had made." (1 Ki. 15:11, 12; 2 Chron. 14:2-5*) He carried on a vigorous campaign against idolatry.

* Second Chronicles 15:17 and 1 Kings 15:14 indicate that 'Asa did not remove the high places.' This may mean that, despite having been destroyed earlier, the high places cropped up again during Asa's rule. Or, it may be that high places as centers of idolatry were removed, whereas improper worship of Jehovah at high places continued.

REWARDED BY JEHOVAH

Asa's faith in Jehovah was grandly rewarded. How? Well, in time a force of a million men under Zerah the Ethiopian came against the kingdom of Judah. The king appealed to the Most High with the words: "O Jehovah, as to helping, it does not matter with you whether there are many or those with no power. Help us, O Jehovah our God, for upon you we do lean, and in your name we have come against this crowd. O Jehovah, you are our God."—2 Chron. 14:9-11.

God listened to this king who was proving to be different from his father. With divine help, Asa's subjects succeeded in administering a humiliating defeat to the enemy Ethiopians.—2 Chron. 14:12, 13.

After this the prophet Azariah met Asa and encouraged him and his subjects to remain faithful to Jehovah, saying: "Jehovah is with you as long as you prove to be with him; and if you search for him, he will let himself be found by you, but if you leave him he will leave you." Possibly referring to the turbulent period of Israel's unfaithfulness before the start of the monarchy, Azariah continued: "Many were the days that Israel had been without a true God. . . . There were many disorders among all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were crushed to pieces, nation against nation and city against city, because God himself kept them in disorder with every sort of distress." But it did not need to be that way. If both people and king proved different from their unfaithful forefathers, the prophet said that "there exists a reward for your activity."—2 Chron. 15:1-7.

Asa and his subjects responded well to the words of Azariah. They continued the start that had been made in cleansing the nation of idolatry. At the temple of Jehovah, they put the altar again in a proper condition, for it evidently had been defiled earlier. During an assembly held in the

15th year of Asa's rule, the people covenanted to serve Jehovah and agreed that those who deliberately refused to do so should not live. Among those assembled were many from the northern 10-tribe kingdom who had deserted to Asa "when they saw that Jehovah his God was with him."—2 Chron. 15:8-15.

As for Asa, he did not even hold back from taking action against his idolatrous grandmother Maacah, who was regarded as a kind of 'first lady' in the kingdom. "Because she had made a horrible idol to the sacred pole," or the goddess Asherah, Asa did not permit her to continue in her position.—1 Ki. 15:13; 2 Chron. 15:16.

THE TENDENCY TO SLIP

Anyone who has chosen to be different in some respect from a godless parent may find that continued effort is needed in order to cultivate a Christian personality. For some time a person may seem to succeed in being different, but then slip back into the pattern of his godless parent when he grows older or comes under special pressure. We can note that danger from Asa's life.

It was "in the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa"* that Israelite King Baasha made a move against the southern kingdom of Judah. To prevent his subjects from deserting to Asa, Baasha began fortifying the border city of Ramah. Instead of continuing to trust in Jehovah's protection, Asa resorted to intrigue. Asa bribed Syrian King Ben-hadad to break his covenant with the Israelite 10-tribe kingdom. Syrians raided Israelite cities in the north, forcing Baasha to stop his building work and to withdraw his forces from Ramah. Asa mustered his subjects and also invaded the territory of the 10-tribe kingdom. They seized the building materials at Ra-

* Evidently counting not his actual rule but from the time that the 10 tribes broke away from the royal house of David.

mah and used these to do building work at Geba and Mizpah.—2 Chron. 16:1-6.

However, Asa's faithless action did not escape the notice of Jehovah. Through his prophet Hanani, God told Asa: "You leaned upon the king of Syria and did not lean upon Jehovah your God. . . . Did not the Ethiopians and the Libyans themselves happen to be a very great military force in multitude, in chariots and in horsemen; and because of your leaning upon Jehovah did he not give them into your hand? For, as regards Jehovah, his eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him. You have acted foolishly respecting this, for from now on there will exist wars against you."—2 Chron. 16:7-9.

QUESTIONS from READERS

● Should a distinction be made between God's kingdom and Christ's kingdom? Also, since the apostle Peter refers to "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," how is it that Jesus' rulership comes to an end when he "hands over the kingdom to his God and Father"?—2 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 15:24.

Jesus taught his followers to pray, "Let your [the Father's] kingdom come." (Matt. 6:9, 10) So the kingdom is God's, but Jehovah, the "King of eternity," has given rulership responsibilities to his only-begotten Son for a limited time and for a specific purpose. During this designated period Jesus serves as a deputy ruler sent forth from his Father's right hand.—1 Tim. 1:17; Ps. 110:1, 2; Dan. 4:17.

In view of the rebellion of the spirit son who became the Devil, as well as of the first humans on earth, Jehovah purposed a new expression of his rulership. This would be through

On hearing these words, did Asa humble himself? No. He took offense, commanding that Hanani be imprisoned. Asa also began to oppress some others among his subjects. The final three years of Asa's life were not happy ones. He suffered from an affliction of his feet, possibly gout. But in this case, too, he did not look to Jehovah God for help but sought the aid of healers who may have resorted to occult means in an effort to bring about cures. After having ruled for about 41 years, Asa died.—1 Ki. 15:23, 24; 2 Chron. 16:10, 12-14.

Asa's life demonstrates clearly that we cannot ignore the influence of our parents, an influence for good or for bad. But Asa showed that "Like father, like son" need not be an inevitable rule.

the "seed" of promise. (Gen. 3:15; Eph. 1:8-12) Jesus told his disciples on the day of his death: "I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." Yet the Father would select those who would rule with him and assign them places in the Kingdom government.—Matt. 20:23; Luke 12:32; 22:29, 30; Rom. 8:16, 17.

Because of this delegated authority to rule, along with the 144,000 associate kings, it can be properly said that Jesus has a kingdom, the Messianic kingdom. Daniel envisioned the then future installing into office of Jesus and these "holy ones," saying: "To the Ancient of Days [Jehovah] he gained access, and they brought him up close even before that One. And to him there were given rulership and dignity and kingdom, that the peoples, national groups and languages should all serve even him. His rulership is an indefinitely lasting rulership that will not pass away, and his kingdom one that will not be brought to ruin. . . . 'And the kingdom and the rulership and the grandeur of the kingdoms under all the heavens were given to the people who are the holy ones of the Supreme One.'"—Dan. 7:13, 14, 27.

This constituted authority operates within Jehovah's universal kingdom or governmental arrangement, so that when Jesus begins to rule as the Messianic king, heavenly voices appropriately sing out: "The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ [or, one anointed by God], and he [Jehovah] will rule as king forever and ever." Thus, the Messianic kingdom derives its power and authority from Jehovah, who is Universal Sovereign over all his creation.—Rev. 11:15; 4:11; John 5:19, 30.

On being resurrected, the glorified Jesus Christ waited at the right hand of his Father until the time for him to begin ruling from the heavens over mankind in general. (Acts 2:32-36; Heb. 10:12, 13) This corresponds to the time when a loud voice from heaven proclaims: "Now have come to pass the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ." (Rev. 12:10; compare 11:17, 18.) With Jesus, 144,000 chosen from among mankind rule as joint heirs, it being said of them that they "will be priests of God and of the Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years."—Rev. 20:6; 14:1, 3.

By the end of his millennial reign, all humans on earth who have availed themselves of Kingdom benefits will stand perfected before God. They will be comparable to Adam before he sinned. Having accomplished what his Father assigned him to do, Jesus then "hands over the kingdom to his God and Father." (1 Cor. 15:24-28) No subsidiary kingdom remains between Jehovah and obedient mankind thereafter. Messianic aspects end, but Jehovah's kingdom continues eternally. The rulership of Christ and his kingdom heirs is "never . . . brought to ruin" and is "not . . . passed on to any other people." (Dan. 2:44) The special authority delegated will be merely absorbed again by Jehovah. "Then the Son himself will also subject himself to the One who subjected all things to him, that God may be all things to everyone."—1 Cor. 15:28.

The benefits of that Kingdom by Christ will be "everlasting," though it actually will have been only "age-lasting," in one sense of the Greek word *ai-o-ni-os* used at 2 Peter 1:11. Relatively speaking, his reign of 1,000 years is eternal. In contrast to the length of rule of any human king who has reigned on earth, Jesus' kingdom over mankind continues on for many

centuries. His reign continues for longer than the age length of the oldest man in human history, namely, Methuselah, who lived 31 years short of a millennium. (Gen. 5:27) Besides that, Jesus will still be an honorary king, for his position of kingship does not end simply because he turns the Messianic kingdom back to his Father. He will always have an interest in mankind, for as Jehovah's Master Worker he is represented as saying: "The things I was fond of were with the sons of men." (Prov. 8:31) And he will always have a special warm spot in the hearts of humans because of all that he did for them. This accords with what Hebrews 7:17 says about Jesus' being "a priest forever."

Just what Jesus and his joint rulers will be assigned to do after the millennial reign, the Bible does not say. In describing the citylike New Jerusalem in the heavens, Revelation 22:5 mentions those who "rule as kings forever and ever," evidently referring to Jesus' associate rulers, the 144,000 making up his bride. We can be sure that Jehovah has many fine privileges and opportunities in store for them in caring for assignments of service throughout his creation.

"WATCHTOWER" STUDIES FOR THE WEEKS

January 4: How Shall We Escape? Page 16.
Songs to Be Used: 30, 57.

January 11: Flee to God's Kingdom! Page 22.
Songs to Be Used: 80, 13.

A Clergyman Takes Another Look at HELL



RECENTLY a United Methodist clergyman's doubts about the existence of a fiery hell were published in *U.S. Catholic* magazine. He wrote: "There are in fact so many strong biblical, doctrinal, and logical arguments against the existence of a literal hell that this question naturally arises: Why do the churches teach it and why do people often believe it?" The minister, Robert Short, suggests that the answer lies in the churches' "faithless fear of giving up 'the gospel at gun-point.'" He said: "The churches tend to believe, consciously or unconsciously, that fear—rather than love—conquers all."

The clergyman asserted that the "most powerful argument against the existence of a literal hell is . . . that we can know a thing by its fruits. (Matt. 7:16, 20)" Using this test, he observed: "It has become painfully apparent that the 'Christian'

doctrine which has yielded the most poisonous fruits is the teaching of a literal hell. For not only can it be proven that this doctrine has produced cruel, self-righteous 'Christians' throughout Western history, Christians who have felt justified in hating and even killing since it can be argued that any action is justified if it saves more people from hell, but a literal hell's more modern and even deadlier fruit has been atheism."

In conclusion, Short declared: "Only if the teaching of hell were true would the churches be justified in retaining it. And a growing number of theologians—both Catholic and Protestant—are now saying it is not true. If it is not true, then the churches have no time to lose in loudly and clearly saying this to the world."

Jehovah's Witnesses had a hundred-year head start in "clearly saying this to the world."—*U.S. Catholic*, April 1980, pp. 37-40.