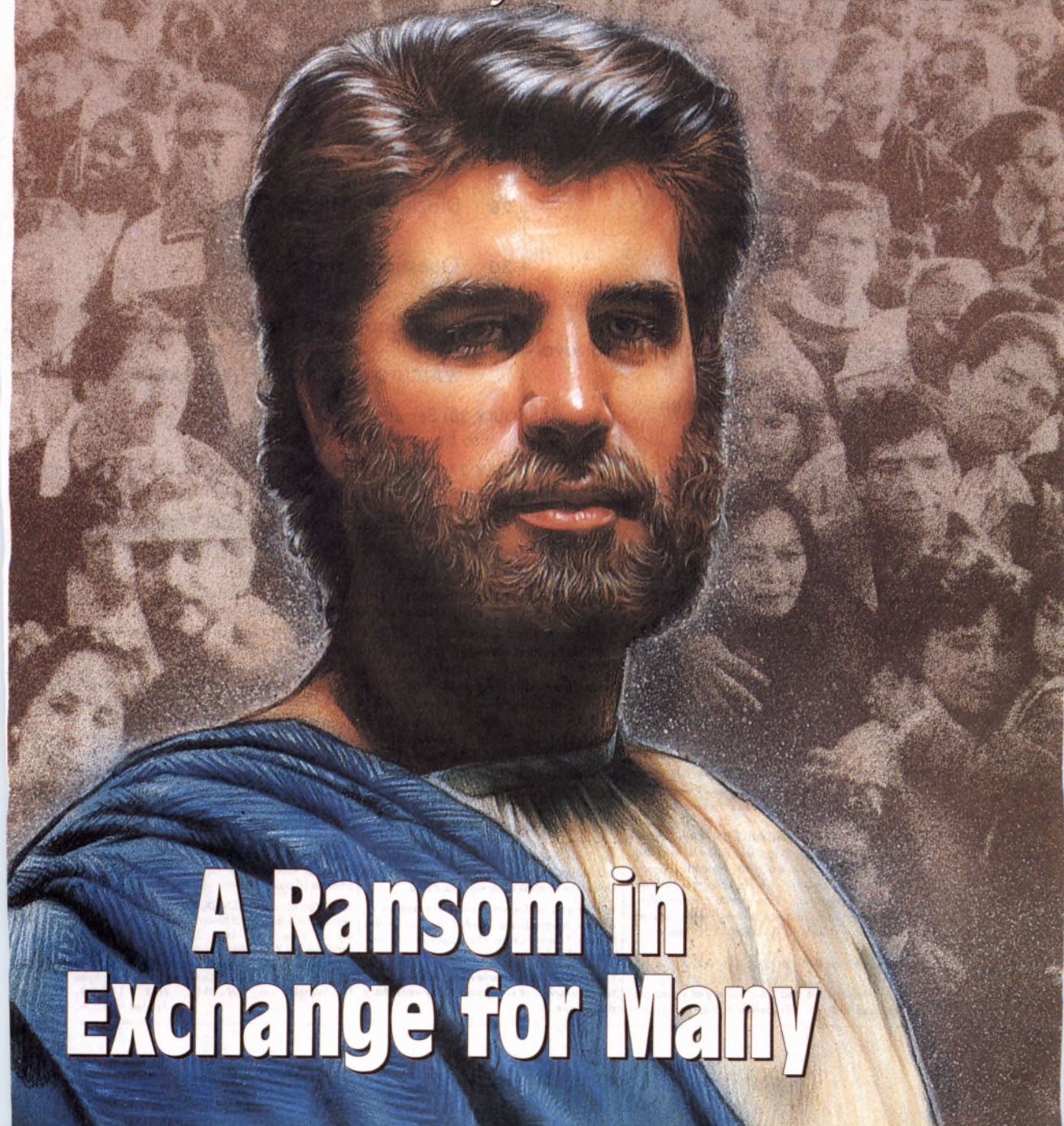


JUNE 15, 1992

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**A Ransom in
Exchange for Many**

THE WATCHTOWER[™]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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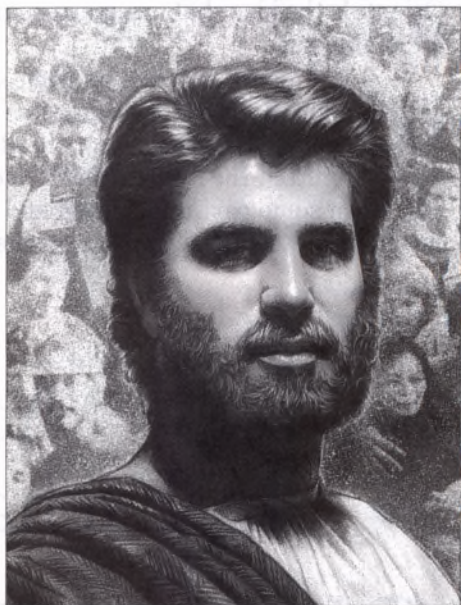
Is There a Way Out Of Man's Sinful State?

WITH her four teenage children, Chisako used to clean public toilets in a city 400 miles from her home. While doing so, she chanted a sutra, the meaning of which she did not understand. It was one of the practices of a religious group seeking to discover what is at the actual core of all religions.

"Despite continued austere practices," Chisako recalls, "I could not change my personality. Deep down in my heart, I couldn't forgive others and couldn't show love with a sincere motive."

Even in Oriental lands, where most people have no concept of sin as taught in the Bible, many feel qualms of conscience over their sinful tendencies, as Chisako did. (Romans 2:14, 15) Who has not suffered uncomfortable feelings for not showing kindness to someone in a pitiful situation or has not felt some depressing remorse for words that should never have been uttered? (James 4:17) And does not an ugly monster of jealousy lurk inside young and old alike?

Why do people have such troubled feelings? Because, whether they realize it or not, they have an inner sense of wrong, of sin. Indeed, whether people are aware of the Bible's teaching of sin or not, all are affected by sinful tendencies. An expert on this subject once concluded: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."—Romans 3:23.



Can Sin Be Wiped Away?

Many people today, especially in Christendom, are busy trying to erase feelings of sin and guilt from their consciences. "The very word 'sin' . . . has almost disappeared," said Dr. Karl Menninger in his book *Whatever Became of Sin?* However, avoiding the word "sin" helps little more than an elderly man's wanting to avoid the word "old." We should face the fact that we have sinful tendencies and need to be rescued from that miserable condition. But by whom?

The Christian apostle Paul asked that question after admitting his own tendencies to sin despite wanting to do otherwise: "Miserable

man that I am! Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?" Paul then proceeded to answer: "Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Why? Because God had arranged for forgiveness of sin through Jesus' ransom sacrifice.—Romans 7:14-25.

However, many of the 3,500,000,000 non-Christians of the world (twice the number of so-called Christians) find the idea of a ransom very difficult to grasp. For example, the doctrine of the ransom became the biggest stumbling block to a Muslim living in Japan who studied the Bible for a while. For many Orientals the idea that one man could die for all is unusual.

This is understandable, as even some in Christendom find this basic doctrine hard to comprehend. "The theology of the Redemption," admitted the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, "is in some part unachieved and continues to pose itself as a problem in theology."

The extent of the confusion over this doctrine is well illustrated in the words of the religious writer N. H. Barbour: "Christ's death was no more a settlement of the penalty of man's sins than would the sticking of a pin through the body of a fly and causing it suffering and death be considered by an earthly parent as a just settlement for misdemeanor in his child." Then affiliated with Barbour was Charles T. Russell, who saw the urgent need to defend the teaching of the ransom. He disassociated himself from Barbour and in 1879 began publishing a new magazine, which later became the journal that you are reading. From its beginning, *The Watchtower* has been a champion of Jesus Christ's ransom sacrifice.

But can this doctrine ever be acceptable to those without a "Christian" background? To find out, let us take a closer look at this teaching of one man dying for all.

A Ransom in Exchange for Many

ON MARCH 31, 1970, a jetliner was hijacked near Mount Fuji in Japan. Nine members of a group known as the Japanese Red Army Faction took more than 120 passengers and crew members as hostages and demanded a safe trip to North Korea.

When the plane landed in Seoul, Republic of Korea, Japanese vice-minister of transportation Shinjiro Yamamura volunteered to risk his life in behalf of the captives. Agreeing to accept him as a guarantee of their own safety,

the hijackers released all the hostages except the flight personnel. They then flew to Pyongyang, where they surrendered to North Korean authorities. Mr. Yamamura and the pilot later returned to Japan unharmed.

In this case, one person served as an exchange for the lives of over 120 hostages. This may help us to see how one man could give his life as a ransom in exchange for many. But to understand the Bible's doctrine of the ransom, we must examine this subject more thoroughly.

For one thing, we need to trace the origin of sin. "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men because they had all sinned," explains the Bible. (Romans 5:12) How did that occur? The man there mentioned was Adam, the first human created. You can read the historical account of his creation and what led to his defection from God's standard. This is set out in the first three chapters of the Bible book of Genesis.

That account reveals that there was an instigator behind the scenes when Adam first committed sin. To satisfy his own lust for power, that instigator schemed to dominate Adam and any offspring he might have. The instigator was Satan the Devil. He is also called "the original serpent" because he used a serpent in leading Adam to sin. (Revelation 12:9) Although mankind's loving Creator had told Adam to respect His right to decide what is good and what is bad, the serpent lured Adam's wife, Eve, into disobeying God. She then induced her husband to disobey. By that course, Adam declared independence from God, willfully became sinful, and could only pass that kind of life on to his offspring.

We are still suffering the consequences. How so? Well, the Creator had justly decreed that if Adam and Eve deliberately chose disobedience, the result would be death. By sinning, therefore, Adam sold all mankind into slavery to sin and death.—Genesis 2:17; 3:1-7.

How could humankind be redeemed from that sinful state? Jesus Christ came to the earth "to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many," and this opened the way to redeem mankind.—Matthew 20:28.

Covering and Releasing

The Bible shows that the process of redeeming mankind involved two steps: (1) buying back and (2) releasing. Regarding the Greek word (*ly'tron*) translated "ransom," Bible scholar Albert Barnes wrote: "The word *ransom* means literally a price paid for the redemption of captives. In war, when prisoners are taken by an enemy, the money demanded for their release is called a ransom; that is, it is the *means* by which they are set at liberty. So anything that releases anyone from a state of punishment, or suffering, or sin, is called a ransom."

Yes, "anything that releases anyone" can be referred to as *ly'tron*. So this Greek

word highlights the act or process of releasing.*

The apostle Paul used the related word *an-ti'ly'tron* to emphasize the value of the price paid as the ransom. At 1 Timothy 2:6, he wrote that "[Jesus] gave himself" as "a corresponding ransom for all." Commenting on this, Parkhurst's *Greek and English Lexicon to the New Testament* says: "It properly

* In the Hebrew Scriptures, *pa-dhah'* and related words are rendered "redeem" or "redemption price," highlighting the releasing that was involved.—Deuteronomy 9:26.



Courtesy of the Mainichi Shimbun

signifies a price by which captives are redeemed from the enemy; and that kind of exchange in which the life of one is redeemed by the life of another." Stress here is on the corresponding nature or the efficacy of the ransom price paid in balancing the scales of justice. How could Jesus' ransom sacrifice be deemed "a corresponding ransom"?

A Corresponding Ransom

Adam sold all of mankind, including us, into sin and death. The price, or penalty, he paid was his perfect human life, with the potential of living forever. To cover this, another perfect human life—a corresponding ransom—had to be paid. However, nobody born from imperfect men could provide the needed perfect human life. (Job 14:4; Psalm 51:5) In his wisdom, however, God opened up a way out of these straits. He transferred the perfect life of his only-begotten Son from the heavens to the womb of a virgin, letting him be born as a perfect man. (Luke 1:30-38; John 3:16-18) This teaching of Jesus' virgin birth is not a story contrived to exalt the founder of a religion. Rather, it explains a logical step in God's provision of the ransom.

In order to accomplish the redeeming, Jesus had to maintain a clean record all the time he was on the earth. This he did. Then he died a sacrificial death. In this way, Jesus paid the price of his perfect human life as the ransom to deliver mankind. (1 Peter 1:19) So we can accurately say that "one man died for all." (2 Corinthians 5:14) Yes, "just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive."—1 Corinthians 15:22.

One Man in Exchange for Many

In the hijacking case mentioned earlier, the hostages had no way to liberate themselves, even if they were rich. Outside help

was needed, and the man serving as an exchange had to satisfy certain conditions. The same is true in a far more profound way in connection with the ransom needed to redeem mankind. A psalmist wrote: "Those . . . who keep boasting about the abundance of their riches, not one of them can by any means redeem even a brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; (and the redemption price of their soul is so precious that it has ceased to time indefinite)." (Psalm 49:6-8) Indeed, there was a need for outside help for mankind. The life of one man would be enough to redeem all mankind provided he satisfied the conditions required to balance God's scales of justice. Jesus Christ has been the only perfect human to meet the qualifications.

Jehovah God has provided for the deliverance of mankind through the paying of the ransom by Jesus Christ. But God has done more. He has passed a death sentence on Satan the Devil, the one who led mankind into sin. (Revelation 12:7-9) Jehovah will soon confine that guilty one and will finally execute judgment by 'hurling him into the lake of fire and sulphur,' symbolizing eternal destruction. (Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10, 14) With the elimination of this wicked spirit creature and through the application of the ransom, mankind will enjoy deliverance not only from the grip of sin and death but also from the influence of Satan. Thus freed and with the merit of Christ's ransom sacrifice applied to the full, obedient mankind will progress to human perfection.

The Ransom Arrangement and You

Upon learning about the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ, many in the Orient have deeply appreciated what God has done for them. Kazuo is an example. His life was centered on inhaling and getting high on paint thinner. When driving under its influence,

he repeatedly wrecked his cars. Three of his friends committed suicide after they had ruined their health. Kazuo too tried to commit suicide. Later, he began studying the Bible. Moved by the truth he learned, he decided to clean up his life. He struggled with his habit of abusing his body with paint thinner, and there were many setbacks. He was torn between his fleshly desire and a longing to do what is right. How happy he was to be able to pray to God for forgiveness through the merit of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ! Through prayer and with help from Christian friends, Kazuo overcame his vice and is now serving Jehovah as a happy minister with a clean conscience.

Do you recall Chisako, mentioned at the beginning of the preceding article? Through a study of the Bible, she also came to understand the loving arrangement of the ransom. She was deeply moved when she learned that God gave his Son to release mankind from sin. Chisako dedicated her life to Jehovah. Even now, at the age of 77, she spends some 90 hours every month telling others about Jehovah's great love and the undeserved kindness that he shows.

✓ The ransom should be important to you too. By means of it, God will open

up the way to true freedom for mankind—freedom from sin and death. A grand future of eternal life on a paradise earth lies ahead for those who accept the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Please get in touch with Jehovah's Witnesses and examine for yourself how you can enjoy freedom from sin and death through the loving ransom arrangement.





The Spanish Bible's Battle for Survival

ON AN October day in 1559, some 200,000 Spanish Catholics flocked to the northern city of Valladolid. The attraction was an auto-da-fé, where "two victims were burned alive, ten were strangled." They were "heretics."

The popular young king Philip II himself presided over the event. When a condemned man appealed for mercy, the king retorted: "If my own son were such a wretch as you are, I myself would carry the faggots to burn him." What was the hapless victim's crime? He had

simply been reading the Bible.

At the same time, the apparatus of the Catholic Inquisition was busy in the Andalusian city of Seville. There, a group of monks at the monastery of San Isidro del Campo, had just received a secret consignment of the Bible in Spanish. Would informers betray them? Some who realized that they were in mortal danger fled the country. But 40 of those who remained were less fortunate and were burned at the stake, among them the very man who had smuggled the Bibles into the country. Sixteenth-century Spain was a perilous place for Bible readers—few eluded the clutches of the Inquisition.

Among the few was a former monk, Casiodoro de Reina (c. 1520-94). He fled to London, but even there he could not find safety. The Inquisition put a price on his head, and the Spanish ambassador to the English court schemed to lure him back to Spanish-controlled territory by hook or by crook. In a short time, false accusations of adultery and homosexuality forced him to leave England.

With scanty resources and an ever growing family to sustain, he first found refuge in Frankfurt. Later, his quest for religious asylum led him to France, Holland, and finally Switzerland. Yet during all this time, he kept busy. 'Except for

the time I was sick or traveling, . . . the pen didn't fall from my hand,' he explained. He spent many years translating the Bible into Spanish. Printing of 2,600 copies of Reina's Bible was finally started in 1568 in Switzerland and completed in 1569. One outstanding feature of Reina's translation was that he used *Iehoua* (*Jehová*) rather than *Señor* for the Tetragrammaton, the four Hebrew letters of God's personal name.

The Spanish Bible in the Making

Paradoxically, at a time when, thanks to the invention of the printing press, Bibles were proliferating in Europe, in Spain they were becoming a rarity. It had not always been this way. For centuries the Bible was Spain's most widely distributed book. Handwritten copies were available in Latin and, for a few centuries, even in the Gothic language. One historian explained that during the Middle Ages, "the Bible—as a source of inspiration and authority, as a standard for faith and conduct—was more prominent in Spain than in Germany or England." Diverse Bible histories, Psalters (or, Psalms), glossaries, moral stories, and similar works became best-sellers of the age.

Trained copyists painstakingly reproduced exquisite Bible manuscripts. Although it took 20 scribes a whole year to

produce just one first-class manuscript, many Latin Bibles and thousands of commentaries on the Latin Bible were circulating in Spain by the 15th century.

Furthermore, when the Spanish language began to develop, interest arose in having the Bible in the vernacular. As early as the 12th century, the Bible was translated into Romance, or early Spanish, the language the common people spoke.

A Short-Lived Awakening

But the awakening was not to last long. When Waldensians, Lollards, and Hussites used the Scriptures to defend their beliefs, the reaction was swift and violent. The Catholic authorities viewed Bible reading with suspicion, and the fledgling translations in the common languages were denounced outright.

The Catholic Council of Toulouse (France), which met in 1229, declared: "We prohibit that any layman possess the books of the Old or New Testament translated into the common language. If some pious person wishes, he may have a Psalter or a Breviary [book of hymns and prayers] . . . but under no circumstances should he possess the above-mentioned books translated into Romance." Four years later, James I of Aragon (king over a large region of the peninsula) gave all those who owned a Bible in the common tongue just eight days to hand them over to the local bishop for burning. Failure to do so, whether by clergyman or by lay person, would make the possessor suspect of heresy.

Despite these proscriptions—which were not always strictly observed—some Spaniards could boast the possession of a Romance Bible during the latter part of the Middle Ages. This came to an abrupt end with the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition under Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand in 1478. In 1492, in the city of Salamanca alone, 20 priceless handwritten copies of the Bible were burned. The only Romance biblical manuscripts to survive were those housed in the personal libraries of the king or a few powerful noblemen who were above suspicion.

For the next two hundred years, the only official Catholic Bible published in Spain—apart from the Latin *Vulgate*—was the Complutensian Polyglott, the first

polyglot Bible, sponsored by Cardinal Cisneros. It was certainly a scholarly work, definitely not meant for the man in the street. Only 600 copies were made, and few could understand it because it had the Bible text in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin—not in Spanish. Furthermore, the price was exorbitant. It cost three gold ducats (equivalent to six months' pay for a common laborer).

The Spanish Bible Goes Underground

In the early 16th century, a Spanish "Tyndale" arose in the person of Francisco de Enzinas. Son of a rich Spanish landowner, he began to translate the Christian Greek Scriptures into Spanish while still a young student. Later he had the translation printed in the Netherlands, and in 1544 he valiantly tried to obtain royal permission for its distribution in Spain. The emperor of Spain, Charles I, was in Brussels at the time, and Enzinas took advantage of this opportunity to request royal consent for his project.

The extraordinary conversation between the two men has been reported as follows: "What kind of book is this?" asked the emperor. Enzinas replied: "This is the part of the Holy Scriptures that is called the New Testament." "Who is the book's author?" he was asked. "The holy spirit," he replied.

The emperor authorized publication but on one condition—that his private confessor, a Spanish monk, also give his seal of approval. Unfortunately for Enzinas, such approval was not forthcoming, and he soon found himself imprisoned by the Inquisition. After two years he managed to escape.

A few years later, a revised edition of this translation was printed in Venice, Italy, and it was this edition of the Scriptures that Julián Hernández secretly spirited into Seville, Spain. But he was caught, and after two years of torture and imprisonment, he was executed along with other fellow Bible students.*

At the Council of Trent (1545-63), the Catholic Church

* At that time no book whatsoever could be imported without a special license, and no librarian could open any shipment of books without the official permission of the Holy Office (Inquisition).

reiterated its condemnation of Bible translations in the vernacular. It published an index of prohibited books, which included all those Bible translations that had been produced without the church's approval. In practice this meant that all Spanish vernacular Bibles



Courtesy of the Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid, Spain

The Complutensian Polyglott has been reproduced and thus can readily be examined. (See page 8)

were outlawed and that the mere possession of one could end in a warrant for the person's death.

A few years after the publication of Reina's translation, Cipriano de Valera, another ex-monk who escaped the wrath of the Inquisition in Seville, revised it. This version was printed in Amsterdam in 1602 C.E., and some copies

were spirited into Spain. In its original and revised versions, the Reina-Valera Bible is still the most widely used translation among Spanish-speaking Protestants.

The Floodgates Open

Finally, in 1782 the tribunal of the Inquisition decreed that the Bible could be published as long as it included annotations on history and dogma. In 1790 the Catholic bishop of Segovia, Felipe Scio de San Miguel, using the Latin *Vulgate*, translated a Bible into Spanish. Unfortunately, it was expensive—1,300 reals, a prohibitive price at that time—and the wording was obscure, so much so that one Spanish historian described it as “very unfortunate.”

Some years later, Spanish king Fernando VII ordered the bishop of Astorga, Félix Torres Amat, to make an improved translation, also based on the Latin *Vulgate*. This translation came out in 1823 and received a wider distribution than the translation of Scio. However, as it was not based on the original Hebrew and Greek, it had the usual drawbacks of a translation of a translation.

Despite this progress, the church and the country's rulers were still not convinced that the Scriptures should be read by ordinary people. When George Borrow, a representa-

tive of the British and Foreign Bible Society, asked for permission in the 1830's to print Bibles in Spain, he was told by government minister Mendizábal: “My good sir, it is not Bibles we want, but rather guns and gunpowder, to put the rebels down with, and above all, money, that we may pay the troops.” Borrow went on to translate the Gospel of Luke into the language of the Spanish Gypsies, and in 1837 he was imprisoned for his efforts!

Finally, the tide could not be held back anymore. In 1944 the Spanish church printed its first translation of the Holy Scriptures based on the original languages—some 375 years after the translation of Casiodoro de Reina. This was the translation of Catholic scholars Nácar and Colunga. This was followed in 1947 by the translation of Bover and Cantera. Since then there has been a flood of Spanish translations of the Bible.

Victory Assured

Although the Spanish Bible for centuries had to struggle to survive, the battle was finally won. The great sacrifices of valiant translators like Reina were certainly not in vain. How many people who buy a Bible today stop to think of the time when possession of a Bible was forbidden?

Today, the Bible is a best-seller in Spain and in Spanish-speaking countries, and many translations are available. Included among these are the *Versión Moderna* (Modern Version, 1893), which consistently uses God's name, *Jehová*; the Pauline Edition of the Bible (1964), which uses the name *Yavé* in the Hebrew Scriptures; the *Nueva Biblia Española* (New Spanish Bible, 1975), which unfortunately uses neither *Jehová* nor *Yavé*; and the *Traducción del Nuevo Mundo* (New World Translation, 1967), published by the Watch Tower Society, which uses *Jehová*.

Jehovah's Witnesses visit the homes of millions of Spanish-speaking people every week in order to help them to appreciate the value of the Holy Bible—a book worth dying for, a book worth living by. In fact, the story of the Spanish Bible's battle to survive is one further proof that “the word of our God . . . will last to time indefinite.”—Isaiah 40:8.

SERVING AS FISHERS OF MEN

"Jesus said to Simon: 'Stop being afraid. From now on you will be catching men alive.'"—LUKE 5:10.

FOR thousands of years, mankind has fished for food in earth's seas, lakes, and rivers. Fish from the Nile were an important part of the diet in ancient Egypt. When the Nile waters were turned into blood in Moses' day, Egyptians suffered not only because a water shortage resulted but also because the fish died, affecting their food supply. Later, at Sinai, when Jehovah gave Israel the Law, he told them that certain fish could be eaten but that others were unclean, not to be eaten. This indicated that the Israelites would eat fish when they came to the Promised Land, so some of them would be fishermen.—Exodus 7:20, 21; Leviticus 11:9-12.

² However, almost 2,000 years ago, another kind of fishing was introduced to mankind. This was a spiritual kind of fishing that would benefit not only the fishermen but also the fish! This kind of fishing is still being practiced today, with immense benefits to millions worldwide.

"Catching Men Alive"

³ In the year 29 C.E., Jesus, the One who would introduce this new form of fishing, was baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptizer. A few weeks later, John pointed Jesus out to two of his disciples and said:

1, 2. (a) What part has fishing played in mankind's history? (b) What new kind of fishing was introduced almost 2,000 years ago?

3, 4. Which two fishermen showed great interest in Jesus Christ?

"See, the Lamb of God!" One of these disciples, whose name was Andrew, quickly told his brother Simon Peter: "We have found the Messiah"! Interestingly, both Andrew and Simon were fishermen by trade.—John 1:35, 36, 40, 41; Matthew 4:18.

⁴ Quite some time later, Jesus was preaching to the crowds beside the Sea of Galilee, not far from where Peter and Andrew lived. He was telling the people: "Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near." (Matthew 4:13, 17) We can imagine that Peter and Andrew were eager to hear his message. Likely, though, they did not realize that Jesus was about to say something to them that would change their lives forever. Moreover, what Jesus was to say and do in their presence has an important meaning for all of us today.

⁵ We read: "On an occasion when the crowd was pressing close upon him and listening to the word of God, he was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret. And he saw two boats docked at the lakeside, but the fishermen had got out of them and were washing off their nets." (Luke 5:1, 2) Back then, professional fishermen often worked at night, and these men were cleaning their nets after a night of fishing. Jesus decided to use one of their boats in order to preach more effectively to the crowd. "Going aboard one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to pull away a bit from land. Then

5. How was the fisherman Peter able to be of service to Jesus?

he sat down, and from the boat he began teaching the crowds.”—Luke 5:3.

⁶ Notice that Jesus had something more in mind than teaching the crowds: “When he ceased speaking, he said to Simon: ‘Pull out to where it is deep, and you men let down your nets for a catch.’” Remember, these fishermen had already been working all night. Not surprisingly, Peter replies: “Instructor, for a whole night we toiled and took nothing, but at your bidding I will lower the nets.” What happened when they did this? “They enclosed a great multitude of fish. In fact, their nets began ripping apart. So they motioned to their partners in the other boat to come and assist them; and they did come, and they filled both boats, so that these began to sink.”—Luke 5:4-7.

⁷ Jesus had performed a miracle. That stretch of sea had been barren all night; now it was teeming with fish. This miracle had a strong effect on Peter. “Simon Peter fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying: ‘Depart from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord.’ For at the catch of fish which they took up astonishment overwhelmed him and all those with him, and likewise both James and John, Zebedee’s sons, who were sharers with Simon.” Jesus calmed Peter and then said the words that were to change Peter’s life. “Stop being afraid. From now on you will be catching men alive.”—Luke 5:8-10.

Fishers of Men

⁸ Jesus thus compared men to fish, and he invited this humble fisherman to give up his secular trade for a far grander form of fishing—catching men alive. Peter, and his brother Andrew, accepted the invitation.

6, 7. What miracle involving fishing did Jesus perform, leading up to what statement about fishing?

8. How did four professional fishermen respond to the invitation to ‘catch men alive’?

“At once abandoning the nets, they followed him.” (Matthew 4:18-20) Jesus next called out to James and John, who were in their boat mending their nets. He invited these also to become fishers of men. How did they respond? “At once leaving the boat and their father, they followed him.” (Matthew 4:21, 22) Jesus showed skill as a fisher of souls. On this occasion he caught four men alive.

⁹ A professional fisherman makes a living by selling his catch, but a spiritual fisherman cannot do that. Hence, these disciples showed great faith when they abandoned all to follow Jesus. They had no doubt, however, that their spiritual fishing would be successful. Jesus had been able to make unproductive waters teem with literal fish. Similarly, when they let their nets down into the waters of the Israelite nation, the disciples could be sure that, with God’s help, they would catch men alive. The work of spiritual fishing that began back then continues, and Jehovah is still giving a rich harvest.

¹⁰ For more than two years, those disciples were trained by Jesus in fishing for men. On occasion he gave them careful instructions and sent them ahead of him to preach. (Matthew 10:1-7; Luke 10:1-11) When Jesus was betrayed and killed, the disciples were stunned. But did Jesus’ death mean no more fishing for men? Events soon gave the answer.

Fishing in the Sea of Mankind

¹¹ Shortly after Jesus’ death outside Jerusalem and his resurrection, the disciples went back to Galilee. On one occasion seven of them were together near the Sea of

9, 10. What faith did Peter and his companions show, and how were they trained in spiritual fishing?

11, 12. After his resurrection, what miracle did Jesus perform that had to do with fishing?

Galilee. Peter said he was going fishing, and the others joined him. As usual, they fished at night. In fact, they again cast their net into the sea all night without catching anything. Then at dawn, a figure seen standing on the shore called to them across the water: "Young children, you do not have anything to eat, do you?" The disciples called back: "No!" So the one standing on the shore told them: "'Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.' Then they cast it, but they were no longer able to draw it in because of the multitude of the fishes." —John 21:5, 6.

¹² What an astounding experience! Likely the disciples remembered the earlier miracle involving fishing, and at least one of them realized who the figure on the shore was. "That disciple whom Jesus used to love said to Peter: 'It is the Lord!' Hence Simon Peter, upon hearing that it was the Lord, girded about himself his top garment, for he was naked, and plunged into the sea. But the other disciples came in the little boat, for they were not a long way from land, only about three hundred feet away." —John 21:7, 8.

¹³ What did this miracle indicate? That the work of fishing for men was not finished. This fact was emphasized when Jesus three times went on to tell Peter—and through him all the disciples—to feed Jesus' sheep. (John 21:15-17) Yes, a spiritual feeding program lay ahead. Before his death, he had prophesied: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) Now it was time for the first-century fulfillment of that prophecy to begin. His disciples were about to lower their nets into

the sea of mankind, and the nets would not come up empty. —Matthew 28:19, 20.

¹⁴ Before he ascended to his Father's throne in heaven, Jesus said to his followers: "You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) When holy spirit was poured out on the disciples at Pentecost 33 C.E., the great work of spiritual fishing commenced internationally. On the day of Pentecost alone, three thousand souls were caught alive, and soon thereafter "the number of the men became about five thousand." (Acts 2:41; 4:4) The increase continued. The record tells us: "Believers in the Lord kept on being added, multitudes both of men and of women." (Acts 5:14) Soon, Samaritans responded to the good news, and shortly thereafter so did uncircumcised Gentiles. (Acts 8:4-8; 10:24, 44-48) Some 27 years after Pentecost, the apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian Christians that the good news had been "preached in all creation that is under heaven." (Colossians 1:23) Clearly, the disciples of Jesus had fished far from the waters of Galilee. They had let their nets down among the Jews dispersed around the Roman Empire, as well as in the apparently unpromising seas of the non-Jewish peoples. And their nets came up full. For the needs of the first-century Christians, Jesus' prophecy at Matthew 24:14 was fulfilled before Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 C.E.

Fishing for Men in "the Lord's Day"

¹⁵ However, more lay ahead. Near the end

14. In what way was the fishing of Jesus' followers blessed in the years before the destruction of Jerusalem?

15. In the book of Revelation, what further fishing work was prophesied, and when was it to be carried out?

13. After Jesus' ascension to heaven, what international fishing program was begun?



of the first century, Jehovah granted the last surviving apostle, John, a revelation of things that were to happen during "the Lord's day." (Revelation 1:1, 10) One outstanding feature was to be the telling of the good news worldwide. We read: "I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." (Revelation 14:6) Under angelic direction God's servants would preach the good news literally in all the inhabited earth, not just throughout the Roman Empire. A global work of fishing for souls was to be undertaken, and our day has seen a fulfillment of that vision.

¹⁶ How has the fishing been during this 20th century? Early on, the fishermen were comparatively few. After World War I ended, there were only about four thousand active preachers of the good news, zealous men and women who were mostly of the anointed. They cast their nets wherever Je-

16, 17. When did the latter-day spiritual fishing work begin, and how has Jehovah blessed it?

After Jesus' resurrection, his apostles extended the divine work of fishing for men

hovah opened the way, and many souls were caught alive. Following the second world war, Jehovah opened up new waters for fishing. Missionaries who had attended the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead spearheaded the work in many lands. Countries such as Japan, Italy, and Spain, which may initially have seemed quite barren, eventually yielded rich harvests of souls. We have also recently learned how successful the fishing has been in Eastern Europe.

¹⁷ Today, in many countries the nets are almost breaking. The great harvest of souls has necessitated the organizing of new congregations and circuits. To accommodate these, new Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls are being built all the time. More elders and ministerial servants are needed to care for the increase. A mighty work was begun by those faithful ones back in 1919. In a literal way, Isaiah 60:22 has been fulfilled. 'The little one has become a thousand,' as those four thousand fishers have become

more than four million today. And the end is not yet.

¹⁸ What does all of this mean for us as individuals? The scripture says that when Peter, Andrew, James, and John were invited to become fishers of men, "they . . . abandoned everything and followed [Jesus]." (Luke 5:11) What a fine example of faith and dedication! Can we cultivate the same spirit of self-sacrifice, the same readiness to serve Jehovah no matter what the cost? Millions have answered that they can. In the first century, the disciples fished for men wherever Jehovah permitted. Whether it was among Jews or Gentiles, they fished without reservation. Let us also preach to everyone without any restraint or prejudice.

¹⁹ What, though, if your territory at present seems unproductive? Do not be discouraged. Remember, Jesus filled the nets of the disciples after they had fished all night without result. The same can happen in a spiritual way. In Ireland, for example, faithful Witnesses labored for years with rather limited results. Yet, recently that has changed. The *1991 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses* reports that by the end of the 1990 service year, Ireland had enjoyed 29 peaks in a row! Perhaps your territory will some day produce similarly. As long as Jehovah permits, keep on fishing!

²⁰ In Israel, fishermen went fishing at night, when everyone else was warm and comfortable in bed. They went out, not when it was convenient for them, but when they could catch the most fish. We too should study our territory so that we go fishing, as it were, when the majority of people are at

18. How can we imitate the fine example of first-century spiritual fishers of men?

19. What should we do if the waters where we are fishing do not seem productive?

20. When should we engage in fishing for men?

home and receptive. This may be during the evenings, on weekends, or at some other time. Whenever it is, let us do everything we can to locate righthearted people.

²¹ What if our territory is frequently covered? Professional fishermen in the world often complain that their fishing grounds are overfished. But can our spiritual fishing grounds be overfished? Not really! Many territories yield increase even when frequently covered. Some produce better because of being well worked. Nevertheless, when homes are visited often, be extra sure that all not-at-homes are noted and later contacted. Learn a variety of subjects for conversation. Keep in mind that someone will visit again soon, so do not overstay your welcome or unwittingly antagonize the household. And develop your skills in street work as well as informal witnessing. Let down your spiritual nets on every occasion and in every possible way.

²² Remember, in this fishing both the fish-

21. What should we remember if our territory is frequently worked?

22. What grand privilege do we enjoy at this time?

Can You Recall?

- ☐ What work did Jesus train his followers to do?
- ☐ How did Jesus show that the spiritual fishing work was not ended by his death?
- ☐ In what way did Jehovah bless the spiritual fishing work in the first century?
- ☐ What rich harvest of fish has been netted during "the Lord's day"?
- ☐ How can we as individuals be even more successful fishers of men?

ers and the fish benefit. If those we catch persevere, they can live forever. Paul encouraged Timothy: "Stay by these things, for by doing this you will save both yourself and those who listen to you." (1 Timothy 4:16) It was Jesus who first trained his disciples in spiritual fishing, and this work is

still being done under his direction. (Compare Revelation 14:14-16.) What a grand privilege we have to work under him in getting it done! Let us keep letting down our nets as long as Jehovah allows. What greater work could there possibly be than that of catching souls alive?

WHAT DO THE DRAGNET AND FISH MEAN FOR YOU?

*"To you it is granted to understand the sacred secrets of
the kingdom of the heavens."*—MATTHEW 13:11.

DO YOU enjoy knowing a secret or solving a puzzle? What if doing so would help you to see more clearly your part in God's purpose? Happily, you can gain such privileged insight by means of an illustration that Jesus gave. It confounded many who heard it and has puzzled countless others since, but you can understand it.

² Note what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 13 about his use of illustrations. His disciples asked: "Why is it you speak to them by the use of illustrations?" (Matthew 13:10) Yes, why did Jesus use illustrations that most people would not understand? He replied in verses 11 to 13: "To you it is granted to understand the sacred secrets of the kingdom of the heavens, but to those people it is not granted. . . . This is why I speak to them by the use of illustrations, because, looking, they look in vain, and hearing, they

hear in vain, neither do they get the sense of it."

³ Jesus then applied Isaiah 6:9, 10, which described a people who were spiritually deaf and blind. We, though, need not be like that. If we understand and act on his illustrations, we can be very happy—now and into the endless future. Jesus offers us this warm assurance: "Happy are your eyes because they behold, and your ears because they hear." (Matthew 13:16) That assurance covers all of Jesus' illustrations, but let us focus on the brief parable of the dragnet, recorded at Matthew 13:47-50.

An Illustration With Deep Meaning

⁴ "The kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet let down into the sea and gathering up fish of every kind. When it got full they

3. How can understanding Jesus' illustrations bring us benefits?

4. What did Jesus relate by way of illustration, as recorded at Matthew 13:47-50?

1, 2. Why might we be interested in Jesus' illustrations?



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

hauled it up onto the beach and, sitting down, they collected the fine ones into vessels, but the unsuitable they threw away. That is how it will be in the conclusion of the system of things: the angels will go out and separate the wicked from among the righteous and will cast them into the fiery furnace. There is where their weeping and the gnashing of their teeth will be.”

⁵ You have probably seen men fishing with a net, at least on film or on television, so Jesus’ parable is not difficult to envision. But what about the details and the meaning? For example, Jesus said that this illustration is about “the kingdom of the heavens.” Yet, surely he did not mean that “every kind” of person, the fine and the unsuitable, or wicked, will be in the Kingdom. Also, who do the fishing? Did this fishing and separating occur in Jesus’ day, or might it be confined to our time, “the conclusion of the system of things”? Do you see yourself in this parable? How can you avoid ending up among those who weep and gnash their teeth?

5. What sort of questions arise as to the meaning of the dragnet parable?

Fishing operations have taken place on the Sea of Galilee for centuries

⁶ Such questions show that this illustration is not simple after all. Do not forget, though: “Happy are your eyes because they behold, and your ears because they hear.” Let us see if we can delve into its meaning so that our ears are not unresponsive and our eyes are not shut as to its import. Actually, we already have a vital key to unlocking its meaning. The preceding article told of Jesus’ inviting Galilean fishermen to leave that occupation and take up a spiritual work as “fishers of men.” (Mark 1:17) He told them: “From now on you will be catching men alive.”—Luke 5:10.

⁷ In line with that, the fish in this parable stand for humans. Hence, when verse 49 speaks of separating the wicked from the righteous, it refers, not to righteous or wicked marine life, but to righteous or wicked people. Similarly, verse 50 should not make

6. (a) Why should we be keenly interested in understanding the dragnet parable? (b) What is a key to its understanding?

7. What was Jesus illustrating when he spoke of fish?

us think of sea animals that weep or gnash their teeth. No. This parable is about the gathering of humans and their later separation, which is very serious, as the outcome shows.

⁸ Note that the unsuitable fish, that is, the wicked, will be cast into the fiery furnace, where they will have to weep and gnash their teeth. Elsewhere Jesus linked such weeping and gnashing to being outside the Kingdom. (Matthew 8:12; 13:41, 42) At Matthew 5:22 and 18:9, he even mentioned “fiery Gehenna,” referring to permanent destruction. Does that not show how vital it is to get the meaning of this illustration and to act accordingly? All of us know that there neither are nor will be wicked ones in God’s Kingdom. Hence, when Jesus said that “the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet,” he must have meant that in connection with God’s Kingdom, there is a feature like a net let down to collect various sorts of fish.

⁹ After the dragnet was let down and the fish collected, there would be a separating work. Who did Jesus say were involved? Matthew 13:49 identified these fishermen-separators as angels. So Jesus was telling us about angelic oversight of an instrument on earth that is used to identify men—some fine and suitable for the Kingdom of heaven, others proving unsuitable for that calling.

The Fishing—When?

¹⁰ The context helps us to find out when this applies. Just before this, Jesus gave an illustration about the sowing of fine seed,

8. (a) What can we learn as to the outcome for the unsuitable fish? (b) In view of what was said about unsuitable fish, what can we conclude regarding the Kingdom?

9. How are angels involved in the dragnet illustration?

10. By what reasoning can we determine that the fishing extended over a considerable period of time?

but then weeds were oversown in the field, which pictures the world. He explained at Matthew 13:38 that the fine seed represented “the sons of the kingdom; but the weeds are the sons of the wicked one.” These grew up side by side for many centuries, until the harvest in the conclusion of the system of things. Then the weeds were separated and afterward burned up. Paralleling this with the illustration of the dragnet, we see that the drawing of creatures into the net was to extend over a long period of time.—Matthew 13:36-43.

¹¹ According to Jesus’ parable, fish would be gathered indiscriminately, that is, the dragnet took in both fine fish and unsuitable fish. While the apostles were alive, the angels guiding the fishing operation used God’s Christian organization to catch “fish” who became anointed Christians. You might say that before Pentecost 33 C.E., Jesus’ fishing for men netted about 120 disciples. (Acts 1:15) But once the congregation of anointed Christians was established, the fishing with the dragnet instrument began, and thousands of fine fish were caught. From 36 C.E., the fishing spread widely into international waters, as Gentiles were drawn to Christianity and became members of Christ’s anointed congregation.—Acts 10:1, 2, 23-48.

¹² In the centuries after the apostles left the scene, there continued to be some Christians striving to find and hold to divine truth. At least some of these had God’s approval, and he anointed them with holy spirit. Still, the death of the apostles removed a restraining influence, allowing a widespread apostasy to develop. (2 Thessalonians 2:7, 8) An organization grew up that

11. How did an international fishing operation get under way in the first century?

12. What developed after the death of the apostles?

unworthily professed to be God's congregation. It falsely claimed to be the holy nation anointed with God's spirit to rule with Jesus.

¹³ Do you think that unfaithful professors of Christianity had any part in the illustration of the dragnet? Well, there is reason to answer, yes, they did. The symbolic dragnet included Christendom. True, for ages the Catholic Church tried to keep the Bible from the common people. Nevertheless, over the centuries members of Christendom played a key role in translating, copying, and distributing God's Word. Churches later formed or supported Bible societies, which rendered the Bible into the languages of remote lands. They also sent out medical missionaries and teachers, who made rice Christians. This gathered vast numbers of unsuitable fish, who did not have God's approval. But at least it exposed millions of non-Christians to the Bible and to a form of Christianity, although corrupted.

¹⁴ All the while, the scattered faithful ones adhering to God's Word exerted themselves as best they could. At any given time, they constituted God's true anointed congregation on earth. And we may be sure that they too were catching fish, or men, many of whom God would view as fine and whom he would anoint with his spirit. (Romans 8: 14-17) These fine professors of Christianity were able to bring Bible truth to many who had become rice Christians or who had gained limited Biblical knowledge from the Scriptures translated into their tongues by Christendom's Bible societies. True, the collecting of fine fish was going on, even though most being gathered by Christendom were unsuitable from God's standpoint.

13. Why can it be said that Christendom had a role in the dragnet operation?

14. How was fishing for fine fish aided by some work done by the churches of Christendom?

¹⁵ So the dragnet represents an earthly instrument that professes to be God's congregation and that gathers in fish. It has included both Christendom and the congregation of anointed Christians, the latter having continued to collect fine fish, under the invisible guidance of the angels, in line with Matthew 13:49.

Our Time Is Special

¹⁶ Let us now consider the time element. For centuries the dragnet instrument gathered fine fish as well as many unsuitable, or wicked, ones. Then the time came when the angels got involved in doing a crucial separating work. When? Well, verse 49 clearly says that it is during "the conclusion of the system of things." This matches what Jesus said in the illustration of the sheep and the goats: "When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."—Matthew 25:31, 32.

¹⁷ Hence, in accord with Matthew 13: 47-50, a crucial separating work under angelic guidance has been in progress since "the conclusion of the system of things" began in 1914. This became particularly evident after 1919, when the remnant of anointed ones were freed from temporary spiritual bondage, or captivity, and became a more effective instrument for accomplishing the fishing work.

¹⁸ What was to happen to the separated fine fish? Verse 48 says that the angelic

15. Pointedly, what is represented by the dragnet of the parable?

16, 17. Why is the time we live in so important in the outworking of Jesus' illustration of the dragnet?

18. How have the fine fish been gathered into vessels?

fishermen-separators “collected the fine [fish] into vessels, but the unsuitable they threw away.” The vessels are protective containers into which fine fish are put. Has this occurred in our time? Definitely. As symbolic fine fish have been caught alive, they have been gathered into congregations of true Christians. These vessellike congregations have helped to protect and to reserve them for divine service, do you not agree? Still, someone could think, “This is all well and good, but what does it have to do with my present life and my future?”

¹⁹ The outworking of what was here illustrated was not limited to the centuries between the apostles’ time and 1914. During that period, the dragnet instrument came to gather both false and true professors of Christianity. Yes, it was gathering in both unsuitable fish and fine fish. Furthermore, the separating work done by angels did not end back around 1919. No, indeed. In some aspects this illustration of the dragnet is applicable right down to our time. We are involved and so is our immediate future. It is imperative for us to understand how and why that is so if we want these words to describe us: “Happy are your eyes because they behold, and your ears because they hear” with understanding.—Matthew 13:16.

²⁰ You likely know that after 1919 the anointed remnant got busy in the preaching work in cooperation with the angels, who continued to use the symbolic dragnet to haul fish onto the beach, to separate the fine ones from the unsuitable ones. Statistics from that period show that the catch of fine fish for anointing with God’s spirit continued as the last ones of the 144,000 were gathered by the symbolic net. (Revelation 7:

19, 20. (a) Why is it vital today to get the sense of this parable? (b) What important fishing work has been done since 1919?

1-4) But by the mid-1930’s, the collecting of fine fish for anointing with holy spirit basically ended. Was the congregation of the anointed remnant then to discard the net, as it were, and simply sit idle, waiting for their heavenly reward? Not at all!

Your Involvement in the Fishing

²¹ Jesus’ illustration of the dragnet focused on fine fish who would be rewarded with a place in the Kingdom of the heavens. Yet, aside from that illustration, there is other symbolic fishing occurring on a vast scale, even as was illustrated in the preceding article. This fishing is, not for the fine anointed fish mentioned in Jesus’ illustration, but for symbolic fish to be caught alive and given the marvelous hope of life on a paradise earth.—Revelation 7:9, 10; compare Matthew 25:31-46.

²² If you entertain that hope, then you can rejoice that Jehovah has allowed a lifesaving fishing work to continue till now. This has made it possible for you to gain a marvelous

21. What other fishing has occurred in our time? (Luke 23:43)

22. What happy outcome can we experience, and what is the alternative?

Do You Recall These Points?

- ☐ What is represented by the two types of fish in Jesus’ parable of the dragnet?
- ☐ In what sense have the churches of Christendom been involved in the dragnet operation?
- ☐ Why is the fishing occurring in our time so critical?
- ☐ The parable of the dragnet should lead each of us to make what sort of self-analysis?

prospect. Prospect? Yes, that is the fitting word to use, since the outcome will be in accord with our continued faithfulness to the One who is directing the ongoing fishing effort. (Zephaniah 2:3) Recall from the illustration that not all fish drawn up by the dragnet experience a favorable outcome. Jesus said that the unsuitable, or wicked, ones will be separated from the righteous ones. To what end? At Matthew 13:50, Jesus described the serious consequence for the unsuitable, or wicked, fish. These will be cast into the fiery furnace, meaning eternal destruction.—Revelation 21:8.

²³ For the fine anointed fish, as well as for the symbolic fish who may live forever on earth, there is a glorious future. With good reason, then, the angels are seeing to it that

23. What makes the fishing work today so important?

right now a successful fishing operation is being carried on around the globe. And what a catch is being made! You would be right in saying that in its own way, it is just as miraculous a catch as that of the literal fish that the apostles enjoyed when they let down their nets at Jesus' direction.

²⁴ Are you having as active a share as possible in this lifesaving work of spiritual fishing? No matter how extensive our individual share has been up to this time, each of us can beneficially look at what is being accomplished globally in the grand fishing and lifesaving work now in progress. Doing so should stimulate us to even greater zeal in letting down the nets for a catch in the days right ahead!—Compare Matthew 13:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:1.

24. What should we want to do respecting the spiritual fishing?

FISHING FOR MEN IN GLOBAL WATERS

"If, now, I am declaring the good news, it is no reason for me to boast, for necessity is laid upon me. Really, woe is me if I did not declare the good news!"

—1 CORINTHIANS 9:16.

WHO in this 20th century have truly met the challenge presented by Paul's words above? Who have gone out into the world by the millions

1, 2. (a) Who have truly met the challenge implied at 1 Corinthians 9:16, and why do you so answer? (b) What responsibility have Jehovah's Witnesses accepted?

to fish for men and women who are "conscious of their spiritual need"? (Matthew 5:3) Who have risked imprisonment and death, and who have suffered such in many lands because of fulfilling Christ's command at Matthew 24:14?

² The record answers: Jehovah's Witnesses. Last year alone over four million Wit-

nesses went from house to house 'declaring the good news' in 211 countries and territories and in more than 200 languages. These were not just a select group of trained missionaries. No, all of Jehovah's Witnesses feel a responsibility to preach and teach from house to house and on every appropriate occasion. Why do they feel that need to share their beliefs with others? Because they recognize that knowledge brings responsibility.—Ezekiel 33:8, 9; Romans 10:14, 15; 1 Corinthians 9:16, 17.

Fishing for Men, a Global Challenge

³ This great fishing work is not confined, as it were, to some river or lake or even one ocean. No, as Jesus commanded, it is to be carried out "in all the nations." (Mark 13:10) Before ascending to his Father, Jesus told his disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

⁴ To Jesus' Jewish followers, that must have been a startling commission. He was telling his Jewish disciples that they would now have to go out to the "unclean" Gentiles of all the nations and teach them. It took some readjusting for them to absorb the impact of and act on that assignment. (Acts 10:9-35) But there was no getting around it; Jesus had told them in a parable that "the field is the world." Therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses today view the whole world as the scene for their fishing rights. There can be no "12-mile limit" or "territorial waters"

3. How extensive must the fishing work be?

4. (a) What must have surprised Jesus' early Jewish followers? (b) How do Jehovah's Witnesses view the extent of their preaching work?

restricting their commission from God. Sometimes discretion is needed where religious freedom does not exist. Nevertheless, they fish with a sense of urgency. Why is that? Because world events and the fulfillment of Bible prophecy indicate that we are in the final part of the global fishing work.—Matthew 13:38; Luke 21:28-33.

Progress in the Global Fishing Work

⁵ Most of the anointed Kingdom heirs were "fished" from the nations prior to 1935, so their full number has basically been completed. Therefore, especially since 1935, Jehovah's Witnesses have been seeking those humble persons who might be described as "meek ones" who "will possess the earth." (Psalm 37:11, 29) These are people who "are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done." They are making a move in favor of God's Kingdom rule before the "great tribulation" strikes Satan's depraved and corrupt system of things and his worshipers are assigned to "the fiery furnace" of final destruction.—Ezekiel 9:4; Matthew 13:47-50; 24:21.

⁶ Has the global fishing work been successful so far? Let the facts speak for themselves. Back in 1943, World War II was still raging, yet the faithful anointed brothers at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York, foresaw that a vast global fishing operation would have to be carried out. So, what steps were taken?—Revelation 12:16, 17.

* See also *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, pages 185 and 186, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

5. What kind of people are responding to the global fishing work?

6, 7. (a) What steps were taken in 1943 with regard to the preaching work? (b) What have the results been?

RESULTS OF INTERNATIONAL FISHING

Year	Lands	Witnesses
1939	61	71,509
1943	54	126,329
1953	143	519,982
1973	208	1,758,429
1983	205	2,652,323
1991	211	4,278,820

⁷ In 1943 the Watchtower Society established a missionary school called Gilead (Hebrew, "Witness Heap"; Genesis 31: 47, 48) that began training a hundred missionaries every six months so that they could be sent out as symbolic fishers earth wide. Back then, there were only 126,329 Witnesses actively fishing for men in 54 lands. Within ten years those figures had virtually jumped to 519,982 Witnesses in 143 lands! Surely, Gilead School was producing intrepid fishermen and fisherwomen, willing to go out to foreign cultures and adapt to new fishing waters. As a result, thousands of honesthearted people responded. Those missionaries, and local Witnesses they worked with, laid a foundation for the marvelous increase that is now taking place.

⁸ Many faithful veterans from those early classes of Gilead are still serving in their foreign assignments, even though they are now over 70 or even 80 years of age. One example that typifies many of these is that of 82-year-old Eric Britten and his wife, Christina, who graduated from Gilead's

8, 9. (a) What examples might be cited of outstanding missionary work? (b) How have missionaries seen outstanding growth in their fields? (See also the 1992 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses.)

15th class in 1950 and are still serving in Brazil. When they went to serve in Brazil, there were fewer than 3,000 Witnesses in that country. Now there are over 300,000! Surely, the 'small one has become a mighty nation' in Brazil because the fishing work has been productive.—Isaiah 60:22.

⁹ And what can we say about the missionaries in Africa? Most have adapted to a very different culture and have come to love the African peoples. Typical are the brothers John and Eric Cooke and their wives, Kathleen and Myrtle, presently serving in South Africa. John and Eric were graduated from the eighth class in 1947. Between them they have served in Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and South Africa. Some missionaries died in Africa because of disease, and others because of war and persecution, such as Alan Battey and Arthur Lawson, who died during the recent civil war in Liberia. Yet, the African waters have proved to be very productive. There are now over 400,000 Witnesses spread throughout that vast continent.

All Have a Part

¹⁰ However, it has to be recognized that while the foreign missionaries have numbered some thousands, the local publishers and pioneers* have become millions. They are doing the bulk of the preaching work earth wide. In 1991 there was an average of over 550,000 pioneers and traveling ministers. What an impressive figure that is when we think of all these faithful Witnesses making a special effort to participate in the great fishing work, averaging anywhere

* "Pioneer publisher . . . A full-time worker of the Jehovah's Witnesses."—*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*.

10. Why and in what way are pioneers doing a commendable work?

from 60 to 140 hours of preaching each month. Many do this at great personal sacrifice and expense. But why? Because they love Jehovah their God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and they love their neighbors as themselves.—Matthew 22:37-39.

¹¹ What can we say of the over three and a half million other Witnesses who are not in full-time service but nevertheless give 100 percent in Jehovah's service, according to their circumstances? Some are wives, even mothers caring for small children, who nevertheless devote some of their valuable time to the global fishing work. Many are husbands or fathers with a full-time secular job; yet, they set aside time on weekends and evenings to teach the truth to strangers.

11. What sure evidence is there of Jehovah's spirit at work among his people?

ers. Then there is the great crowd of single men and women and young ones who share in preaching and who recommend the truth by their conduct. What other religious group has over four million unpaid volunteers who every month preach the good news of God's Kingdom rule? Surely this evidences Jehovah's spirit at work!—Psalm 68:11; Acts 2:16-18; compare Zechariah 4:6.

Factors That Contribute to Growth

¹² This vast preaching work is bringing remarkable results every year. In 1991 over 300,000 new Witnesses were baptized by total immersion in water. That is the equivalent of over 3,000 congregations of 100

12. Why and in what numbers are people responding to the truth?

The witness work is still being done among Galilean fishermen



Witnesses each! How is all of this achieved? Let us remember what Jesus said: "No man can come to me unless the Father, who sent me, draws him . . . It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by Jehovah.' Everyone that has heard from the Father and has learned comes to me." Therefore, it is not just by human effort that one responds to the global fishing. Jehovah perceives the heart condition and draws toward himself those worthy ones.—John 6:44,45; Matthew 10:11-13; Acts 13:48.

¹³ Human fishers are the agents, however, that Jehovah uses to draw people to him. Therefore, their attitude toward the people and the territory where they fish is important. How encouraging it is to see that the vast majority have taken to heart Paul's words to the Galatians: "So let us not give up in doing what is fine, for in due season we shall reap if we do not tire out."—Galatians 6:9.

¹⁴ Many faithful Witnesses have been preaching for decades, while closely watching world developments. They have seen the rise and fall of Nazism, Fascism, and other totalitarian systems. Some have witnessed the many wars that have taken place since 1914. They have seen world leaders pin their hopes on the League of Nations and then on the United Nations. They have seen Jehovah's work banned and later legalized in many lands. Through all of this, Jehovah's Witnesses have not given up in doing what is fine, including serving as fishers of men. What an outstanding record of integrity!—Matthew 24:13.

¹⁵ There are other factors that have con-

13, 14. What fine attitude have many Witnesses manifested?

15. (a) What help have we had in adapting to the needs of our worldwide territory? (b) How have publications helped in your assignment?

tributed to this worldwide growth. One is the flexible attitude of the fishers of men toward the needs of the territory. With the migration of peoples of different cultures, religions, and languages, Jehovah's Witnesses have broadened their understanding of these diverse viewpoints. And the worldwide congregation has helped tremendously by preparing Bibles and Bible literature in over 200 languages. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, whole or in part, is now in 13 languages, including Czech and Slovak. The brochure *Enjoy Life on Earth Forever!* is now available in 198 languages, ranging from Albanian to Zulu, with a printing of 72 million copies. The book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived* is already available in 69 languages. *Man-kind's Search for God*, published in 29 languages, gives insight into the origin and beliefs of the major religious systems of the world and is proving a unique aid in the global fishing.

¹⁶ What else has furthered the global fishing work? Thousands have been willing to respond to the 'Macedonian call.' Just as Paul was willing to move from Asia Minor to Macedonia in Europe, at God's call, many Witnesses have moved to lands and territories where there is a greater need for Kingdom preachers, as well as for elders and ministerial servants. They have been like literal fishermen who find their local waters to be well fished and move out into waters where there are fewer boats and the fish are plentiful.—Acts 16:9-12; Luke 5:4-10.

¹⁷ Recent classes of the Gilead missionary school have included students from various European countries who have learned En-

16. How have some responded to the needs in other lands?

17. What examples do we have of those who have responded to the 'Macedonian call'?

glish and have then offered themselves for service in other lands and cultures. Likewise, through the Ministerial Training School, many single brothers are given two months of intensive training and are then sent to other nations to strengthen the congregations and the circuits. Other unique fishing grounds are in the territories that are now opening up in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics.—Compare Romans 15:20, 21.

¹⁸ An additional aid in the worldwide fishing work is the Pioneer Service School that regular pioneers attend. Through two weeks of intensive coverage of the publication *Shining as Illuminators in the World*, prepared exclusively for pioneers, they improve their ministerial ability as they consider such subjects as “Pursuing the Way of Love,” “Follow Jesus as a Model,” and “Developing the Art of Teaching.” How grateful all the congregations are to have these teams of qualified house-to-house fishers who can train many in this great fishing work!—Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:15; 2 Timothy 2:1, 2.

Can We Improve?

¹⁹ Like Paul, we want to have a positive, forward-looking attitude. (Philippians 3:13, 14) He adapted to all kinds of people and circumstances. He knew how to find common ground and how to reason on the basis of local attitudes and culture. We can start Bible studies by being alert to a household-er’s reactions to the Kingdom message and then adapting our presentation to the person’s needs. With the wide variety of Bible study aids we have, we can offer the one that

18. (a) Why are pioneers usually effective ministers? (b) How can they help others in the congregation?

19. Like the apostle Paul, how can we improve in our ministry?

suits the individual’s outlook. Our flexibility and alertness are also important factors in productive fishing.—Acts 17:1-4, 22-28, 34; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

²⁰ Why is this unique global fishing work so important now? Because from Bible prophecies reflected in the events that have taken place and that are taking place, it is evident that Satan’s world system is heading for a disastrous climax. So, what should we, Jehovah’s Witnesses, be doing? The three study articles in this magazine have highlighted our responsibility to be industrious and zealous in our fishing activity in our portion of the global waters. We have the solid assurance from the Bible that Jehovah will not forget our diligent fishing activity. Paul stated: “God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name, in that you have ministered to the holy ones and continue ministering. But we desire each one of you to show the same industriousness so as to have the full assurance of the hope down to the end.”—Hebrews 6:10-12.

20. (a) Why is our fishing work so important now? (b) What is our individual responsibility now?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ Why do Jehovah’s Witnesses view the whole world as the scene for their fishing activities?
- ☐ What blessing has the Gilead missionary school been to the fishing work?
- ☐ What are some factors that have contributed to the success of Jehovah’s Witnesses?
- ☐ How can we individually improve in our Christian ministry?

Diocletian Attacks Christianity

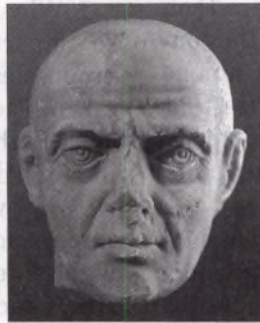
AT THE festival of the Roman god Terminus on February 23, 303 C.E., held at Nicomedia in Asia Minor, the empire's new capital, men vied with one another to express their patriotism. But the sizable Christian community was notably absent.

From their palace vantage point, Emperor Diocletian and subordinate Galerius Caesar viewed the local Christian meeting place. At a given signal, soldiers and government officials forced their way into the Christians' building, pilaged it, and burned the copies of the Bible they found. Finally, they razed the structure to the ground.

Thus began a period of persecution that stained Diocletian's reign. Historians label it "the last great persecution," "the most violent persecution," even "nothing less than the extermination of the Christian name." A look at the background of these dramatic events proves most revealing.

Paganism Versus Christianity

Diocletian, born in Dalmatia, a region of what became Yugoslavia, rose to prominence through the ranks of the Roman army. Acclaimed as emperor in 284 C.E., he became famous for political reform when he established a tetrarchy, a collective leadership of four, to head the empire. Diocletian appointed Maximian, an old comrade-in-arms, to serve alongside him as second emperor, a second Augustus, with special responsibility in the western part of the em-



Musei Capitolini, Roma

pire. Both Diocletian and Maximian had a subordinate Caesar to whom succession rights were granted. Constantius Chlorus served as Caesar to Maximian, while Galerius from Thrace held power under Diocletian.

Galerius Caesar was, like Diocletian, an ardent worshiper of the pagan gods. Ambitious to succeed the emperor, Galerius

pretended to fear treachery in the army. He disliked the growing influence of soldiers who claimed to be Christians. From the emperor's viewpoint, their refusal to participate in pagan worship amounted to a challenge to his authority. So Galerius urged Diocletian to take steps to exterminate Christianity. Finally, in the winter of 302/303 C.E., the emperor bowed to the Caesar's anti-Christian feeling and agreed to purge the army and the court of these individuals. But Diocletian ruled against bloodshed, fearing that martyrs to the Christian cause would spur others to resolute defiance.

Still, dissatisfied with this approach to the problem, Diocletian consulted military commanders and officials, including Hierocles, governor of Bithynia. This ardent Hellenist supported violent action against all the Christians. Diocletian's support of Rome's traditional gods led to conflict with Christianity. The outcome, according to *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, by Stephen Williams, was "unrestricted war to the finish between the gods of Rome and the god of the Christians."

The Edicts

To prosecute his campaign of persecution, Diocletian promulgated four successive edicts. The day after the attack in Nicomedia, he ordered all Christian meeting places and property destroyed and decreed that sacred books be surrendered and burned. Christians holding an official State position were to be demoted.

When two fires broke out right inside the emperor's palace, the blame fell on Christians employed there. This prompted a second edict, which ordered the arrest and imprisonment of all bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Authorizing torture if necessary, the third edict attempted to make these men apostatize, demanding that they sacrifice to the Roman gods. The fourth decree went further and made it a capital offense for anyone to profess Christianity.

The resulting wave of brutality produced a class branded *traditores* (meaning, "those who surrendered"), traitors to God and Christ who attempted to secure their lives by surrendering their copies of the Scriptures. According to historian Will Durant, "thousands of Christians recanted . . . But most of the persecuted stood firm; and the sight or report of heroic fidelity under torture strengthened the faith of the wavering and won new members for the hunted congregations." Christians in Phrygia, Cappadocia, Mesopotamia, Phoenicia, Egypt, and most other parts of the Roman Empire suffered martyrdom.

Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea reckoned that thousands of Christians perished during the persecution. On the other hand, Edward Gibbon, author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, claims a figure of less than two thousand. "Gibbon treats many of these stories with some scepticism, coming as they do from highly col-

oured Christian sources bent on glorifying the martyrs and edifying the faithful," explains one writer. "There is no doubt," he continues, "exaggeration in writers who easily turn a few deaths into 'multitudes', who make no distinction between unsolicited martyrdoms and those resulting from deliberate provocation; and who relate how wild beasts in the amphitheatres furiously mangled all other criminals but were stopped by a 'supernatural power' from touching the Christians. But, even allowing a margin for invention, what remains is terrible enough." Certainly a most brutal persecution did occur with racks, burnings, flaying, and pincers used for torture.

Some authorities hold the view that Galerius, rather than Diocletian, was the instigator of the persecution. "It is not without a deep moral significance," claims Professor William Bright in *The Age of the Fathers*, "that the supreme effort of the pagan world-power to trample out the life of the Kingdom that is not of this world should bear the name of Diocletian, rather than of its true originator Galerius." Yet, even within the tetrarchy, Diocletian retained supreme control, as writer Stephen Williams asserts: "There is no doubt that Diocletian had control of every major policy in the Empire until 304, and has the major responsibility for the persecution until that date." Diocletian fell sick and eventually relinquished control in 305 C.E. For some six years thereafter, the continuing persecution reflected Galerius' bitter hatred of all things Christian.

Fourth Century Christianity

These horrific events early in the fourth century confirm what had been predicted by the apostles Paul and Peter, as well as other inspired writers. The foretold "man of

lawlessness,” the ruling clergy class of professed Christians, was already entrenched, as Diocletian’s edicts, particularly the second, testify. (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Peter 2:12) By the fourth century, apostate practices were already commonplace. Not a few professed Christians were members of the Roman army. Were there no Christians back then who were faithful to “the pattern of healthful words” received from the apostles?—2 Timothy 1:13.

Eusebius names some of the victims of the persecution, even graphically describing their torture, suffering, and eventual martyrdom. Whether all these martyrs died in integrity to the revealed truth available at that time, we cannot presently know. No doubt some had taken to heart Jesus’ warnings to avoid sectarianism, immorality, and compromise of any sort. (Revelation 2:15, 16, 20-23; 3:1-3) Evidently, some faithful ones who survived remained hidden from historic view. (Matthew 13:24-30) Indeed, so successful were the measures to stifle public Christian worship that a Spanish

monument of the period hails Diocletian for having ‘abolished the superstition of Christ.’ Nevertheless, efforts to seize and destroy copies of the Scriptures, a key aspect of Diocletian’s attack on Christianity, failed to wipe out God’s Word completely.—1 Peter 1:25.

Unsuccessful in completely obliterating Christianity, Satan the Devil, the ruler of the world, continued his crafty acts through Emperor Constantine, who ruled from 306 to 337 C.E. (John 12:31; 16:11; Ephesians 6:11, footnote) Pagan Constantine did not fight the Christians. Rather, he found it expedient to fuse pagan and Christian beliefs into a new State religion.

What a warning there is for all of us! When we face brutal persecution, our love for Jehovah will help us avoid compromise for the sake of any temporary physical relief. (1 Peter 5:9) Similarly, we will not allow a peaceful period to sap our Christian vitality. (Hebrews 2:1; 3:12, 13) Strict adherence to Bible principles will keep us loyal to Jehovah, the God who can deliver his people.—Psalm 18:25, 48.

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

How do Jehovah’s Witnesses view the purchasing of stolen goods?

Christians avoid knowingly having any part in buying stolen merchandise or materials.

Stealing is certainly wrong. God’s Law for Israel stated unequivocally: “You must not steal.” (Exodus 20:15; Leviticus 19:11) If a thief was caught, he had to make compensation twofold, fourfold, or fivefold, depending on the circumstances.

From ancient times, thieves have tried to pass on stolen goods so as to make a quick profit and not be

caught with proof of their guilt. To this end they often sell stolen goods at a low price that many buyers find hard to refuse. Such a practice may have been involved in what we read at Exodus 22:1: “In case a man should steal a bull or a sheep and he does slaughter it or sell it, he is to compensate with five of the herd for the bull and four of the flock for the sheep.”

Sensing implications in such laws, Rabbi Abraham Chill writes: “It is forbidden to buy or accept stolen property, even if the property is not recognized as such. One must therefore not buy a goat from a shep-

herd, because the shepherd is probably making the sale without the knowledge of his employer and intends to keep the money." — *The Mitzvot—The Commandments and Their Rationale*.

Actually, God's law does not forbid 'buying a goat from a shepherd' just on the suspicion that he might keep his employer's money, in effect selling a stolen goat. But on the other side of the issue, Jehovah's servants should not consciously be party to a sale (goat or any other object) when it seems clear that the seller does not own it or that it may be stolen. God's law shows that He recognizes private property, but a thief deprives an owner of his property. Someone who buys what is known to be stolen may not be a thief as such, but his purchase decreases the likelihood that the owner will ever get his property back.—Proverbs 16:19; compare 1 Thessalonians 4:6.

All of us understand that buyers seek to buy merchandise at the best price. Women the world over look for good sales, try to delay making purchases until the season when prices are low, or buy at bulk markets or shops with little overhead and thus at better prices. (Proverbs 31:14) Yet, such interest in getting a bargain should have moral limits. Loyal ones in the days of Nehemiah refused to make purchases on the Sabbath, even if they might have got good deals on those days. (Nehemiah 10:31; compare Amos 8:4-6.) It is similar with Christians. Their rejection of stealing helps them to control any temptation to buy low-priced goods that were evidently stolen.

It may be common knowledge that certain sellers deal in stolen goods. Or a furtively mentioned price might be so exceptional that any normal person would conclude that the merchandise likely was illegally obtained. Even the law of the land may acknowledge the need for such reasonableness. A volume on jurisprudence comments:

"It is not necessary to the requisite guilty knowledge that the accused know from whom or by whom the property was stolen, or when or where it was stolen, or the circumstances under which it was stolen, but it is sufficient that he knows that it was stolen. . . . Some courts take the view that the existence of guilty knowledge may be predicated on the fact that the defendant received the property under such circumstances as would satisfy a man of ordinary intelligence and caution that it was stolen."

This adds sound reason for a Christian to avoid buying stolen goods. His buying such goods could make him a lawbreaker. In fact, in some countries a person buying stolen items under any circumstances will be considered guilty of breaking the law. Many people have no scruples about breaking the law if they think they can get away with it. That is not true of Christians, who want to "be in subjection to the superior authorities." Being law-abiding protects them from prosecution as criminals, and it contributes to having a good conscience before Jehovah.—Romans 13:1, 4, 5.

God's friend Abraham set a fine example as to conscience. In his day, four eastern rulers defeated the kings where Lot lived, carrying off many valuables in a form of military theft. Abraham pursued, overcame the enemies, and brought back the stolen goods. The king of Sodom told Abraham: "Take the goods for yourself" as a reward. Instead, Abraham turned over the goods to their rightful owner, saying: "No, I shall take nothing from anything that is yours, in order that you may not say, 'It was I who made Abram rich.'" —Genesis 14:1-24.

Christians are not interested in any financial advantage that might be possible by means of stolen goods. Jeremiah wrote: "As the partridge that has gathered together what it has not laid is the one making riches, but not with justice." (Jeremiah 17:11) So, beyond showing wisdom by not breaking Caesar's laws about stolen property, Christians desire to uphold God's justice by refusing to be connected in any way with the injustice of stealing. David well wrote: "Better is the little of the righteous one than the abundance of the many wicked ones." —Psalm 37:16.

In Our Next Issue

Hope Conquers Despair!

Elders, Judge With Righteousness

Busy in Dead Works
or in Jehovah's Service?

They Can Learn From the Bees

"In recent years, engineers and product designers have increasingly realized something that bees apparently have always known: configuring even a very thin material into a six-sided honeycomb pattern makes it much stronger than it would be in some other shape."

—*The New York Times*, October 6, 1991.

IT IS not surprising that men can profit from a careful study of insects. An ancient man of faith, Job, once said: "Ask, please, the domestic animals, and they will instruct you; also the winged creatures of the heavens, and they will tell you. . . . Who among all these does not well know that the hand of Jehovah itself has done this?" (Job 12:7-9) Yes, the wisdom of the Creator is evident in such common things as the hexagonal shape of the cells that you can see in honeycomb.

While the wax walls of these cells are a mere 1/80 inch thick, they are extremely strong. In fact, they can bear some 30 times their weight.

This strength can be utilized in practical applications, such as in cushioning equipment against blows. It is even protecting military equipment being parachuted to earth. *The New York Times* notes about this: "Objects as heavy as jeeps are fastened to platforms with blocks of honeycomb underneath to absorb the blow of landing."

Man-made products with this design can be formed from many materials. The most common seems to be paper. Nylon-fiber paper and resin are being used to form honeycomb that goes into the fuselages of some large airplanes. The strength comes with relatively little weight. Why? Most of the space between the panels is air, so there is little weight. The air has good insulating qualities too.

The simple bee does not really "know" all of this, for it does not have a degree in engineering. Yet, daily it goes about its work with the instinctive wisdom provided by the Creator, Jehovah.

