



In Guatemala City, the largest city in Central America, skyscrapers stand among palaces and parks of colonial times. Most Central American cities enjoy the pleasant climate of the highlands.

look—but not because the people are unusually rich. Guatemala City is located in an earthquake zone.

Earthquakes often occur near a **fault line**, a place where underground rock layers shift and bend. In Central America, one main fault line runs along the Pacific coast. Another one passes through Guatemala near Guatemala City.

On February 4, 1976, an earthquake struck Guatemala City and destroyed

200,000 buildings in thirty seconds. But the city recovered as it had done many times before. Guatemala has a long history of disasters caused by earthquakes and volcanoes. As many as five hundred tremors may be recorded in a single year.

Why does God allow the suffering and damage that result from earthquakes? We do not know all of His reasons, but He does allow them to draw people's attention to Himself and to help them realize their need of Him. Earthquakes are in God's control, as Psalm 104:32 tells us: "[God] looketh on the earth, and it trembleth."

Highlands of El Salvador. El Salvador is a land of fertile highlands enriched by volcanoes that stand among jewel-like lakes. It was called "Land of Jewels" by its Indian inhabitants. Its capital, San Salvador, nestles in one of the highland valleys. *San Salvador* means "Holy Saviour" in Spanish.

El Salvador is poor in natural jewels but rich in another way. It is one of the most densely populated countries in the Western Hemisphere, with an average of 643 people per square mile (248 per km²). Because of its high population, El Salvador has very



In the early morning hours of February 4, 1976, a powerful earthquake killed 25,000 people and left about one-fifth of Guatemala's people homeless in less than one minute. In villages like this one, human suffering and property damage was great, for the massive earthquake sent roofs and walls crashing onto sleeping families. Helpful people from all over the world sent food, medicines, and money for building supplies to aid the stricken country.