

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 The Sad Reality of Death
- 4 The Search for Long Life
- 6 We Are Designed to Live
- 8 Why Do We Grow Old and Die?
- 10 Conquering the Enemy Death—How?
- 12 How Can You Have More Than This Life?
- 14 Making the Most of Life Today
- 16 What Hope for the Dead?



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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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THE SAD REALITY OF DEATH



IMAGINE yourself watching a video about a celebrity, perhaps a famous musician whom you admire. It starts with scenes of her childhood, her music lessons, and her endless practice. Then you see her performing in concerts, traveling far and wide, and becoming an international celebrity. Before long, come images of her golden years, and finally as the video ends—she dies.

This video is not fiction, but it provides glimpses of a life that is no more. Whether the subject was a musician, a scientist, an athlete, or some other well-known person, the story would basically be the same. The person might have accomplished much, but do you not wonder how much more he or she could have achieved had it not been for the harsh reality of old age and death?

Sad as it is, this is what awaits us all. (Ecclesiastes 9:5) No matter how hard we try, we have not been able to escape the effects of aging and death. Not only that, our life may be cut short by a sudden accident or a cruel illness. As described in the

Bible, we are like a morning mist that "appears for a little while and then disappears."—James 4:14.

To some, life seems so uncertain and pointless that they follow the "let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we are to die" lifestyle. (1 Corinthians 15: 32) But would you not agree that living in such a way is really an acceptance of the sad reality of death? Sooner or later—and especially when undergoing a painful ordeal—you may ask, 'Is this life all there is?' Where can you find the answer?

Many today turn to science. Progress in science and medicine has extended our life expectancy. And some scientists are working to extend life even longer. Whatever the outcome of their efforts, the questions remain: Why do we grow old and die? Is there hope that our enemy death will be conquered? The following articles will examine these topics and answer the question, Is this life all there is?

THE SEARCH FOR LONG LIFE

"I have seen the occupation that God has given to the sons of men to keep them occupied. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has even put eternity in their heart."—Ecclesiastes 3:10, 11.

THOSE ancient words of wise King Solomon accurately describe the feelings humans have about life. Perhaps because life is short and death is unavoidable, humans have over the centuries yearned for something better. History has many stories and legends of man's search for the secret to a long life.

Take, for example, Gilgamesh, a Sumerian king. Many fanciful legends were told about his life. One, as recounted in the Epic of Gilgamesh, purported that he made a dangerous journey to learn how to escape death. He failed in his attempt.

In the fourth century B.C.E., alchemists in China tried to concoct an elixir that was believed to prolong life. They came up with a potion laced with mercury and elements of arsenic. It is thought that this elixir brought death to several Chinese emperors. In medieval Europe, some alchemists attempted to make gold digestible because they believed that its corrosion-resistant properties could extend human life.

Today, some biologists and geneticists are trying to unlock the secret of aging. Like the quest for the "elixir of life," their search shows that the hope of overcoming aging and death is still very much on people's minds. But what have been the results of such research?

SEEKING THE CAUSES OF AGING TODAY

Scientists who study the human cell have come up with more than 300 theories to explain why we grow old and die. In recent years, molecular biol-



A medieval alchemist in his laboratory

ogists have succeeded in manipulating genes and proteins to slow down the aging process in laboratory animals and in human cells. Such advances have prompted some prominent citizens to finance research on "the problem of death." What directions have such investigations taken?

Turning back the internal clock. Some biologists believe that a key factor in aging lies in the end sections of our chromosomes, called telomeres. Telomeres protect the genetic information in our cells as they reproduce. But each time the cells divide, the telomeres shorten. Eventually, the cells stop dividing and aging sets in.



Has the manipulating of human genes led to the secret of long life?

The 2009 Nobel laureate Elizabeth Blackburn and her team identified an enzyme that delays the shortening of the telomeres and, as a result, the aging of the cell. However, their report acknowledges that telomeres "are not magical life extenders—they don't let us live past the normal human life span as we know it."

Cellular reprogramming is another approach to curb aging. When our cells become too old to replicate, they may send wrong signals to nearby immune cells, causing inflammation, chronic pain, and disease. Recently, scientists in France have reprogrammed cells taken from elderly people, some of whom were over 100 years old. The research team leader, Professor Jean-Marc Lemaître, declared that their work demonstrated "the reversibility of aging" in the cells.

CAN SCIENCE LENGTHEN OUR LIVES?

Not all scientists agree that antiaging treatments can prolong human life far beyond what is attainable today. True, human life expectancy has steadily increased since the 19th century. But this is mainly due to better hygiene, successful measures against infectious diseases, and the use of antibiotics and vaccines. Some geneticists believe that the human life span has more or less reached its natural limit.

About 3,500 years ago, the Bible writer Moses acknowledged: "The span of our life is 70 years, or 80 if one is especially strong. But they are filled with trouble and sorrow; they quickly pass by, and away we fly." (Psalm 90:10) Despite man's efforts to extend our life span, life remains basically the way Moses described it.

On the other hand, creatures like the red sea urchin or one species of the quahog clam can live over 200 years, and trees like the giant sequoia can live thousands of years. When we compare our life span with that of these and other living things, do we not wonder, 'Is this life of 70 or 80 years all there is?'

GOD HAS
"PUT ETERNITY
IN THEIR HEART."

—ECCLESIASTES 3:10, 11

WE ARE DESIGNED TO LIVE

WHO OF us does not want to enjoy a long and happy life? Just think how wonderful it would be if we could live forever in health and happiness! We could spend more time with loved ones, travel the world, develop new skills, grow in wisdom, and learn thoroughly about whatever interests us, to our heart's content.



Is such a desire unnatural? Far from it! The Scriptures tell us that God has put that desire within us. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) They also say that "God is love." (1 John 4:8) Does it make sense that a loving God would create in us a desire to live forever and then make that desire impossible to realize?

Clearly, death is no friend. In fact, the Bible describes it as an unwelcome "enemy." (1 Corinthians 15:26) For some it comes early; for others it comes later. But it always comes. For many, thinking about it is uncomfortable, even frightening. Will this enemy ever be conquered? Is that really possible?

EVIDENCE FOR HOPE

Would it surprise you to know that it was never God's purpose for humans to die? The Bible book of Genesis provides evidence that it was God's purpose for humans to live forever on earth. Jehovah God took great care to prepare the earth for human habitation. Then he created the first man, Adam, and placed him in a paradise, a garden in Eden. After that, "God saw everything he had made, and look! it was very good."—Genesis 1:26, 31.

Adam was created perfect, in God's image. (Deuteronomy 32:4) Adam's wife, Eve, too was

without defect of any kind, perfect in mind and body. Jehovah said to them: "Be fruitful and become many, fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection the fish of the sea and the flying creatures of the heavens and every living creature that is moving on the earth."—Genesis 1:28.

To fill the earth with their offspring would take time. Eve would have children, and those children would bear children until the earth became fully inhabited just as God intended. (Isaiah 45:18) Is it reasonable to think that Jehovah would offer Adam and Eve that prospect if they were meant to live only long enough to see their children and perhaps grandchildren, and never know the outcome?

Think, too, about the commission to have the animals in subjection. Adam was told to name the animals, and that would have taken time. (Genesis 2:19) But to have them in subjection would have meant that he would have had to learn about them and to understand how to care for them. That would have taken far more time.

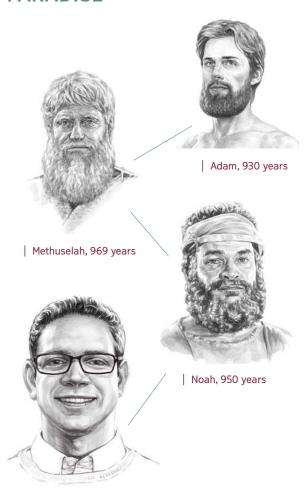
So God's instructions to fill the earth and to have animals in subjection indicate that the first human couple were designed to live for a long time. In fact, Adam did live for a very long time.

THEY LIVED VERY LONG LIVES

The Bible shows that humans once lived far longer than we do today. It says: "All the days of Adam's life amounted to 930 years." Then, it goes on to list six other men who lived for more than 900 years! They were Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Jared, Methuselah, and Noah. All of them lived before the Flood of Noah's day—Noah having lived for 600 years before the Flood came. (Genesis 5:5-27; 7:6; 9:29) How was such a long life possible?

All those men lived close to the time when humans were perfect. Likely that was a major factor in their longevity. But how is perfection linked to living a long life? And how will death be conquered? To find the answers, we first need to understand why we grow old and die.

GOD'S PURPOSE IS FOR HUMANS TO LIVE FOR-EVER IN AN EARTHLY PARADISE



Today, 70-80 years

WHY DO WE GROW OLD AND DIE?

IT WAS not God's purpose for humans to die. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created perfect in mind and body; they could have been alive today. This is clear from what Jehovah said to Adam concerning a certain tree that grew in the garden of Eden.

"In the day you eat from [the tree]," God told Adam, "you will certainly die." (Genesis 2:17) That command would have made no sense if Adam was meant to grow old and die anyway. Adam knew that if he did not eat from the tree, he would not die

Adam and Eve did not need to eat from that tree to sustain their life—there were many fruit-bearing trees in the garden. (Genesis 2:9) By not eating from the tree, the first couple would have shown their obedience to the One who gave them life. It would also have shown that they recognized God's right to direct their ways.

WHY ADAM AND EVE DIED

To understand why Adam and Eve died, we need to examine a conversation that had far-reaching effects. Satan the Devil used a serpent to convey a malicious lie. The Bible account says: "Now the serpent was the most cautious of all the wild animals of the field that Jehovah God had made. So it said to the woman: 'Did God really say that you must not eat from every tree of the garden?'"—Genesis 3:1.

To that Eve replied: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. But God has said about the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden: 'You must not eat from it, no, you must not touch it; otherwise you will die.'" Next the serpent said to her: "You certainly will not die. For God knows that in the very day you eat from it, your eyes will

God told Adam: "In the day you eat from it you will certainly die."

-GENESIS 2:17

be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and bad." Thus, Satan asserted that Jehovah was a liar who was holding back something good from our first parents.—Genesis 3:2-5.

Eve believed what she heard. She gazed at the tree. It looked so pleasing, so desirable! She reached out, took some of the fruit, and began to eat it. Then the Bible says: "Afterward, she also gave some to her husband when he was with her, and he began eating it."—Genesis 3:6.

How it must have saddened God to see that his beloved children had willfully disobeyed him! What did he do? To Adam, Jehovah said: "You will ... return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:17-19) As it turned out, "all the days of Adam's life amounted to 930 years, and then he died." (Genesis 5:5) Adam did not go to heaven or pass on to some spirit realm. He had no existence before Jehovah created him from the dust of the ground. So when he died, he became as lifeless as



the dust from which he was created. He ceased to exist. How tragic!

PERFECTION IS NOT OURS

Because of their deliberate disobedience, Adam and Eve lost their perfection and the prospect of living forever. They underwent a physical change; they became imperfect and sinful. But their sin of disobedience did not affect them alone. They passed on their sinful condition to their offspring. Romans 5:12 says: "Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned."

The Bible describes sin and death as "the shroud that is enveloping all the peoples and the covering that is woven over all the nations." (Isaiah 25:7) This shroud envelops humankind like a poisonous mist from which there is no escape. Truly, "in Adam all are dying." (1 Corinthians 15:22) The question that arises, as posed by the apostle Paul, is: "Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?" Could anyone?—Romans 7:24.

IT WAS NOT GOD'S PURPOSE FOR HUMANS TO DIE

CONQUERING THE ENEMY DEATH—HOW?

EVEN though the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, brought sin and death to all humankind, it did not change God's purpose for the human family. Throughout his written Word, the Bible, God repeatedly confirms that his purpose has not changed.

- "The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it."
 Psalm 37:29.
- "He will swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will wipe away the tears from all faces."
 —Isaiah 25:8.
- "The last enemy, death, is to be brought to nothing."—1 Corinthians 15:26.
- "Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:4.

How will God "swallow up death," bringing the enemy death "to nothing"? As noted, the Bible clearly says that "the righteous . . . will live forever." But it also says that "there is no righteous man on earth who always does good." (Ecclesiastes 7:20) To conquer death, will God abandon his own standard? That is unthinkable! He will never do so, because "God . . . cannot lie." (Titus 1:2) What, then, will God do to fulfill his loving purpose in creating humans?

CONQUERING DEATH BY PAYING A RANSOM

Jehovah God made a loving provision to redeem mankind from death—by paying a ransom. The

basic idea of a ransom is something of equal value paid to cover damages or satisfy the demands of justice. Since all humans are sinners and under the penalty of death, the Bible frankly says: "None of them can ever redeem a brother or give to God a ransom for him, (the ransom price for their life is so precious that it is always beyond their reach)."—Psalm 49:7, 8.

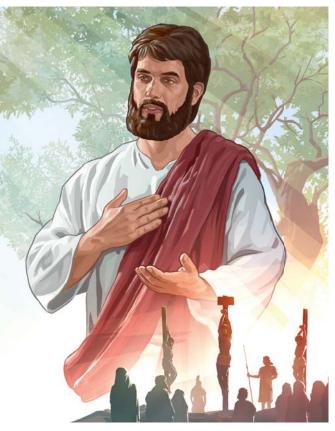
When an imperfect human dies, he can only pay the penalty for his own sins; he cannot redeem himself, nor can he pay for the sins of anyone else. (Romans 6:7) We needed a person who was perfect and sinless to offer his life, not for his own sins, but for our sins.—Hebrews 10:1-4.

That is exactly what God arranged to have done. He sent his Son, Jesus, from heaven to be born on earth as a perfect, sinless human. (1 Peter 2:22) Jesus said he came to "give his life as a ransom in exchange for many." (Mark 10:45) He died to conquer the enemy death so that we may have life.—John 3:16.

WHEN WILL DEATH BE CONQUERED?

Today, in fulfillment of Bible prophecy, we live in "critical times hard to deal with," proving that we live in the "last days" of this evil system of things. (2 Timothy 3:1) The last days will culminate in "the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly people." (2 Peter 3:3, 7) But people who love God will survive that destruction and be blessed with "everlasting life."—Matthew 25:46.

Millions of others will have the opportunity of gaining everlasting life when they are resurrected. Jesus performed a resurrection when he visited the city of Nain. The only son of a widow had died, and Jesus, "moved with pity," raised him to life



again. (Luke 7:11-15) Also, the apostle Paul said: "I have hope toward God . . . that there is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." This solid hope is an extraordinary demonstration of God's love for mankind.—Acts 24:15.

Billions can look forward to living forever. The Bible says: "The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it." (Psalm 37:29) At that time, they will personally experience the stirring yet comforting words that the apostle Paul wrote some 2,000 years ago: "Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) Mankind's formidable enemy death will have been conquered!



Jesus came to "give his life as a ransom in exchange for many."—Mark 10:45

GOD "WILL SWALLOW UP DEATH FOREVER." —ISAIAH 25:8

HOW CAN YOU HAVE MORE THAN THIS LIFE?

LIFE today is not the way God intended it to be. The earth should have been filled with people who respect the Creator's sovereignty, benefit from his guidance, and reflect his loving personality. They were to cooperate happily with one another as they raised families, discovered new things, and made all the earth a paradise.

GOD PROMISES TO CHANGE LIFE ON EARTH TO THE WAY HE INTENDED IT TO BE

- "He is bringing an end to wars throughout the earth."—Psalm 46:9.
- "The appointed time came . . . to bring to ruin those ruining the earth."
 Revelation 11:18.
- "No resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.
- "The work of their hands my chosen ones will enjoy to the full."
 —Isaiah 65:22.

How will these prophecies be fulfilled? God has appointed his Son, Jesus, as King of a perfect government that will rule from heaven over the earth. The Bible calls it the Kingdom of God. (Daniel 2: 44) The Bible says of Jesus: "God will give him the throne . . . , and he will rule as King."—Luke 1: 32, 33.

While on earth, Jesus performed many powerful works to show that as Ruler he will make human life much better than the life that we have now.

JESUS DEMONSTRATED HOW HE WILL BENEFIT OBEDIENT MANKIND

- He cured every sort of disease, demonstrating how he will eliminate infirmities from mankind.
 - -Matthew 9:35.
- He calmed the sea, showing how he will protect people by controlling the forces of nature.—Mark 4:36-39.
- He fed thousands, showing that he will provide people with life's necessities.—Mark 6:41-44.
- He turned water into wine at a wedding, proving that he will help people to enjoy life.—John 2:7-11.

How can you have the sort of life that God is preparing for those who love him? There is a "road" you need to take. The Bible describes it as "the road leading off into life, and few are finding it." —Matthew 7:14.

FINDING THE ROAD TO A BETTER LIFE

What is the road to life? God says: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One guiding you in the way you should walk." (Isaiah 48:17) Walking on this road is the best way of life possible.

Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life." (John 14:6) It is by believing the truths that Jesus taught and by imitating the example that he



God wants humans to do more than merely work, eat, play, and raise a family. We can know our Creator and become his friend. We can show that we love him by doing his will. Jesus said: "This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God."—John 17:3.

TAKING THE FIRST STEP ON YOUR JOURNEY

Learning to please the only true God may require making certain changes. That can seem challenging. But in reality, it is a delightful journey that, like any other, begins with taking the first step. To help you find answers to basic questions about God, Jehovah's Witnesses offer a free Bible study course at a time and place convenient to you. You can contact us by using our website at www.iw.org.

set that we can draw close to God and benefit ourselves.

How can you find the road to life? There are many religions, but Jesus warned: "Not everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of the heavens, but only the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will." (Matthew 7:21) He also said: "By their fruits you will recognize them." (Matthew 7:16) The Bible can help you identify true worship and distinguish it from false worship.—John 17:17.

How can you follow the road to life? It involves getting to know the Source of life: Who is he? What is his name? What is he like? What is he doing? What does he want us to do?*

THROUGH THE BIBLE, GOD TEACHES YOU "TO BENEFIT YOURSELF."

-ISAIAH 48:17

^{*} See The Watchtower, No. 1 2019.

MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE TODAY

LIFE without the painful effects of sickness, old age, and death—that wonderful future can be yours! Even so, life today is still filled with harsh realities and problems. What can help you to make the most of life today? The Bible offers guidance that can lead you to a happy and satisfying life now. Consider some of life's challenges and how the Bible can help.

FINDING CONTENTMENT

The Bible's advice: "Let your way of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things."

—Hebrews 13:5.

The world today bombards us with countless musthave products and services. Yet, the Bible says that we can be "content with the present things." How?

Avoid "the love of money." People sacrifice health, family, friendships, morals, even their dignity—all for "the love of money." (1 Timothy 6:10) What a high price to pay! In the end, a lover of wealth "will never be satisfied."—Ecclesiastes 5:10.

Value people, not things. Granted, material things have their place. But things cannot love or appreciate us; only people can do that. Having "a true friend" contributes to our contentment in life. —Proverbs 17:17.

COPING WITH POOR HEALTH

The Bible's advice: "A joyful heart is good medicine."—Proverbs 17:22.

Like "good medicine," joy can help us to cope with poor health. But how can we find joy when we suffer from poor health?

Be appreciative. If we dwell on our afflictions, "all the days" will appear bad. (Proverbs 15:15) Instead, "show yourselves thankful," says the Bible. (Colossians 3:15) Learn to appreciate the good things in life, however small. A beautiful sunset, a gentle breeze, the smile of a loved one—these things can enrich our life.

Do things for others. Even if our health is not good, "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) When others appreciate our efforts, we feel a warm glow of satisfaction, and this takes our mind off our problems. We can make our life better by helping others to make their life better.



WE CAN MAKE THE MOST OF LIFE TODAY BY FOLLOWING THE BIBLE'S GUIDANCE

STRENGTHENING MARRIAGE

The Bible's advice: "Make sure of the more important things."—Philippians 1:10.

Couples who spend little time together risk drifting apart. Husbands and wives are thus wise to give priority to their marriage—one of the *more* important things in life.

Do things together. Instead of pursuing personal interests alone, why not plan on doing things together? "Two are better than one," says the Bible. (Ecclesiastes 4:9) Together, you can cook a meal, exercise, relax over a beverage, or take up a hobby.

Express your love. The Bible encourages a husband and a wife to love and respect each other. (Ephesians 5:28, 33) A warm smile, a loving embrace, or a small gift can do much to strengthen a marriage. Of course, spouses should reserve expressions of sexual intimacy only for each other.

—Hebrews 13:4

"AT LAST, I FOUND PURPOSE IN LIFE!"

—Told by Ryoko Miyamoto, Japan.

Life was hard. My husband abused alcohol and could not keep a job. He abandoned his responsibilities as father to our four children. No matter how hard I worked, there seemed to be no light at the end of the tunnel. I wondered, 'Was this fate, or was this punishment for sins I had committed in a previous life?'

Then, one of Jehovah's Witnesses came to my door. With a warm smile, she spoke enthusiastically about God's Kingdom and everlasting life. She offered me a Bible study. I soon learned that God exists and that he is wise, just, and loving. I also learned about the condition of the dead and that my sufferings were not due to fate.

Above all, I came to appreciate that a truly satisfying life is built on a relationship with God. Knowing Bible truth has brought me much encouragement, freedom, and refreshment. At last, I found purpose in life!

WHAT HOPE FOR THE DEAD?

Death affects every one of us. But does death end it all? Are the dead forgotten forever? Is there any hope for the dead?

CONSIDER WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS:

THE DEAD ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

"All those in the memorial tombs will . . . come out."—John 5:28, 29.

God remembers the dead; those in his memory will come back to life.

THERE WILL BE A RESURRECTION ON EARTH

"There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."—Acts 24:15.

Billions will be brought back to life with the hope of living forever in an abundance of peace.

THE RESURRECTION HOPE IS BELIEVABLE

"[God] counts the number of the stars; he calls all of them by name."—Psalm 147:4.

Being able to call all the stars by name, God can easily remember people whom he will resurrect.





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For more information about how to draw close to God, see chapter 1 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org

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