

FEBRUARY 1, 2012

THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

ARMAGEDDON

WHAT IS IT?
WHEN WILL IT COME?

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to 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 by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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ARMAGEDDON

WHAT DO SOME SAY IT IS?

"And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon."—REVELATION 16:16,
English Standard Version.

WHAT do you think of when you hear the word "Armageddon"? Likely, images of a major catastrophe spring to mind. Although the word appears only once in the Bible, the term is repeated often by the news media and by religious leaders.

Do popular concepts of Armageddon match what the Bible teaches? The answer is worth knowing. Why? Because the truth about Armageddon can free you from needless fear, brighten your outlook on the future, and influence the way you think about God.

Consider the three following questions, and compare popular concepts of Armageddon with what the Bible really teaches.

1. IS ARMAGEDDON A MAN-MADE DISASTER?

Journalists and researchers often use the word "Armageddon" to define catastrophes caused by humans. For instance, World Wars I and II have been referred to as Armageddon. After those wars, mankind worried that the United States and the Soviet Union would direct atomic weapons at each other. The media called that potential conflict "a thermonuclear Armageddon." Today, researchers who fear that pollution will cause drastic changes in earth's weather warn of an impending "climate Armageddon."

What their definition implies: Humans have ultimate control of the future of the earth and all life on it. If governments fail to act wisely, the earth will suffer permanent damage.

What the Bible teaches: God will not allow humans to bring the earth to ruin. The Bible assures us that Jehovah* did not create the earth "simply for nothing." Rather, he formed it "to be inhabited." (Isaiah 45:18) Instead of allowing the earth to be totally despoiled by humans, God will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:18.

2. IS ARMAGEDDON A NATURAL DISASTER?

Journalists sometimes use the word "Armageddon" as a label for major natural di-



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sasters. For example, in 2010, one report spoke about "'Armageddon' in Haiti." It was describing the suffering, damage, and loss of life caused by the massive earthquake that shattered that country. Reporters and filmmakers apply the term not only to events that have already occurred but also to those that they fear will happen. For instance, they have used the word "Armageddon" to describe the imagined effects of an asteroid striking the earth.

What their definition implies: Armageddon is a random event that indiscriminately kills innocent victims. There is little you can do to protect yourself from it.

What the Bible teaches: Armageddon is not a haphazard destroyer of communities. Instead, during Armageddon, only the wicked will be wiped out. The Bible promises that soon "the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be."—Psalm 37:10.

3. DOES GOD DESTROY THE EARTH AT ARMAGEDDON?

Many religious people believe that there will be a final confrontation between good and evil that will result in the end of our planet. A poll conducted in the United States by Princeton Survey Research Associates found that 40 percent of the adults surveyed believe that the world will end in "a battle at Armageddon."

What their teaching implies: Humans were not meant to live on earth forever, nor was

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the earth designed to last indefinitely. God created humans with the intention that they should all die at some point.

What the Bible teaches: The Bible clearly states that God “has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever.” (Psalm

104:5) Regarding earth’s inhabitants, the Bible says: “The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.”—Psalm 37:29.

Clearly, the Bible contradicts many popular concepts of Armageddon. So, what is the truth?

THE TRUTH ABOUT ARMAGEDDON

“Demonic spirits . . . go abroad to the kings of the whole world . . . , and they assembled them at *the place* that in Hebrew is called Harmagedon.”

(Italics ours.)—REVELATION 16:14, 16, New Revised Standard Version.

ARMADEDDON, sometimes rendered “Harmagedon,” is the name of *a place*. That place, however, does not seem to have existed in any literal location on earth.

What, then, is the real significance of the word “Armageddon”? Why is it so often associated with *an event*, such as a war?

Assembled at the Place Called Armageddon

The original Hebrew word *Har-Magedon* literally means “Mountain of Megiddo.” Although no such literal mountain existed, a place known as Megiddo does exist. It is located at a strategic crossroads in the

northwest of the area inhabited by the ancient nation of Israel. Many decisive battles were fought near that location. Therefore, the name Megiddo became associated with war.*

However, the real significance of Megiddo is, not *what* battles were fought there, but *why* they were fought. Megiddo was part of the Promised Land that Jehovah God gave to the Israelites. (Exodus 33:1; Joshua 12:7, 21) He vowed to those people that he would

* Association of a place with war is not uncommon. For example, the Japanese city of Hiroshima, which was obliterated by an atomic bomb, is now a symbol of the threat of nuclear war.

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⁺ Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

defend them against attackers, and he did. (Deuteronomy 6:18, 19) For example, it was at Megiddo that Jehovah miraculously defended the Israelites against the invading forces of Canaanite King Jabin and his army chief Sisera.—Judges 4:14-16.

Therefore, the word “Har-Magedon,” or “Armageddon,” has great symbolic significance. It is associated with a confrontation, one in which two powerful forces collide.

The prophecy in Revelation speaks of a time in the near future when Satan and the demons will motivate human governments to assemble their armies, thus issuing a defiant challenge to God’s interests. The attack will result in the death of millions of people when God defeats the invaders.—Revelation 19:11-18.

Why would God, whom the Bible describes as “merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness,” cause the death of so many humans? (Nehemiah 9:17) To understand God’s actions, we need to answer three questions: (1) Who starts the war? (2) Why does God become involved? (3) What lasting effect will this confrontation have on the earth and its inhabitants?

1. WHO STARTS THE WAR?

The war of Armageddon is not an act of aggression by God. Instead, God will defend good people from those who would crush them. The aggressors in this conflict are “the kings of the entire inhabited earth,” the world’s leaders. Why the attack? Because, like a puppet master, Satan will maneuver both governmental and military agencies into an all-out assault on those who worship Jehovah God.—Revelation 16:13, 14; 19:17, 18.

In view of the emphasis on freedom of speech and religion in some countries today, the idea that governments would crack down on or even try to obliterate any religious movement may seem far-fetched. However, such attacks occurred during the 20th century and are now taking place.* Even so, there are at least two major differences between previous attacks and the one associated with Armageddon. First, the scale

* The Holocaust is an example of one government’s attempt to stamp out religious and ethnic groups. During the Soviet era, religious groups within the U.S.S.R. were also severely repressed. See the article “A Peaceable People Defend Their Good Name,” which appeared in *The Watchtower* of May 1, 2011, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Jehovah God has defended his people in the past



of the attack will be global. Second, the response from Jehovah God will be of a magnitude greater than any action that he has taken in the past. (Jeremiah 25:32, 33) The Bible describes the confrontation as “the war of the great day of God the Almighty.”

2. WHY DOES GOD BECOME INVOLVED?

Jehovah instructs those who worship him to be peaceable and to love their enemies. (Micah 4:1-3; Matthew 5:43, 44; 26:52) So they will not take up arms to defend themselves when this vicious attack comes. If God did not step in to save his people, they would be wiped out. Therefore, Jehovah God’s name, or reputation, will be at stake. If the aggressors managed to do away with His people, it would make Jehovah appear to be unloving, unjust, or helpless. Such an outcome is impossible!—Psalm 37: 28, 29.

God does not want to destroy anyone, so he gives fair warning of what he will do. (2 Peter 3:9) By means of accounts preserved in the Bible, he reminds all that in the past

he has retaliated when his people were attacked. (2 Kings 19:35) The Bible also warns that in the future when Satan and his human puppets attack God’s people, Jehovah will again step in and meet force with force. In fact, God’s Word long foretold that Jehovah will destroy the wicked. (Proverbs 2:21, 22; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9) At that time, there will be no doubt in the minds of the attackers that they have picked a fight with the Almighty himself.—Ezekiel 38:21-23.

3. WHAT LASTING EFFECT WILL THIS CONFRONTATION HAVE?

The war of Armageddon results in the saving of millions of lives. In fact, it is a prelude to a period of peace on earth.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

The book of Revelation talks about an unnumbered “great crowd” who will survive this conflict. (Revelation 7:9, 14) Under God’s guidance, these will help to restore the earth to the Paradise conditions that Jehovah originally purposed.

Do we know when this attack on God’s people will come?

Jehovah will defend his people again, during the war of Armageddon



WHEN WILL THE WAR OF ARMAGEDDON COME?

"I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues . . . come out of the great tribulation."

—REVELATION 7:9, 14.

THE stage is now set for the war of Armageddon. How so?

Already there exists a worldwide association of people who serve Jehovah and live by the Bible's elevated moral standards. With God's backing, millions from all nations, tribes, and tongues are gathering together to form a harmonious, loving brotherhood. That brotherhood exists among Jehovah's Witnesses.—John 13:35.

Soon Satan will gather his armies and launch what will be his greatest assault on these peaceable and seemingly defenseless people. (Ezekiel 38:8-12; Revelation 16:13, 14, 16) How can you be sure of that fact? The Bible describes specific events that help us to know when the battle of Armageddon will come. Many of the events it identifies are already being fulfilled.

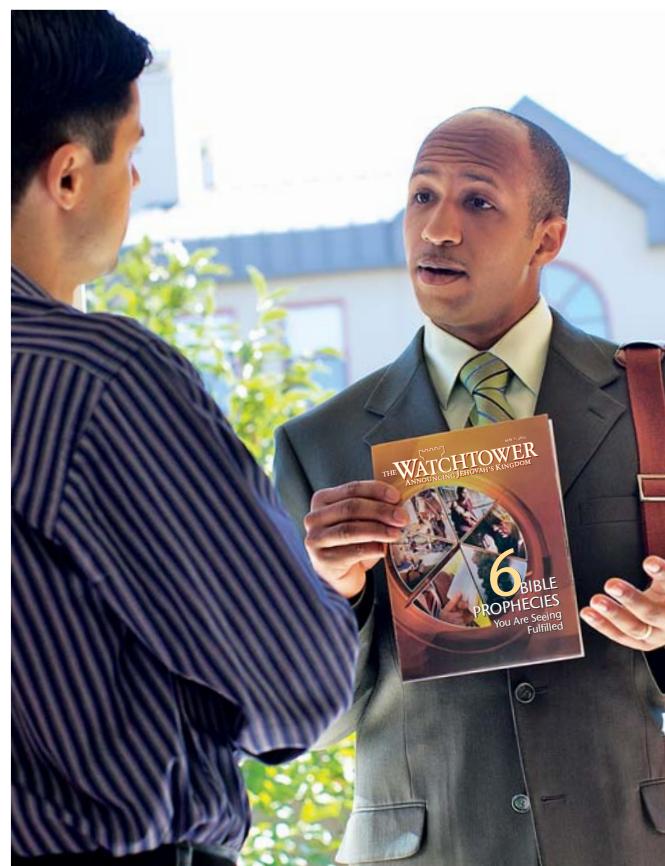
Events You Are Seeing Fulfilled

Jesus' disciples asked him how people would know when "the conclusion of the system of things" was at hand. (Matthew 24:3) Jesus answered by pointing forward to a period when, as he said, "nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." He then said: "All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress." (Matthew 24:7, 8) The apostle Paul described this same period as

"the last days," saying that those days would be "critical times hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1) Does it seem to you that those prophecies describe events happening today?

Why would this period be so difficult? The apostle John gives the reason. He fore-

Could the work of Jehovah's Witnesses be a fulfillment of Bible prophecy?



told that there would be “a short period of time” in which the activity of Satan and his demons would be confined to the earth. Satan is described as having “great anger” during this time. (Revelation 12:7-12) Do you sense that there is a spirit of anger and violence among people today, not just in one location but globally?

Jesus also said that during this time of great difficulty, an extraordinary work would be accomplished. “This good news of [God’s] kingdom,” he said, “will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) Today, in more than 235 lands, Jehovah’s Witnesses are preaching the good news of God’s Kingdom in more than 500 languages. The two Bible-based journals they produce, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!*, are by far the world’s most widely distributed magazines. The Witnesses have also translated the Bible into some 100 languages. Their work is performed by volunteers and funded entirely by voluntary donations. Could this remarkable preaching campaign be a fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy?

The Bible also outlines the events that will lead directly to war between Jehovah God and those who oppose him. Consider three such prophecies you will see fulfilled.

Events You Are Soon to See Happen

Prophecy 1. The Bible says that the nations will issue a significant declaration of “peace and security.” They may think that they are on the cusp of solving major problems. However, the events that follow this statement will be anything but peaceful.
—1 Thessalonians 5:1-3.

Prophecy 2. Next, various governments will decide to move against the world’s religious

organizations. In the Bible, these governments are symbolized by a wild beast; and the world’s false religions, by a woman who rides the back of the beast. (Revelation 17:3, 15-18) The symbolic beast will unwittingly do God’s bidding by destroying religions that falsely claim to represent God.

In symbols, the apostle John describes the drama this way: “The ten horns that you saw, and the wild beast, these will hate the harlot and will make her devastated and naked, and will eat up her fleshy parts and will completely burn her with fire. For God put it into their hearts to carry out his thought.”—Revelation 17:16, 17.

Prophecy 3. Following this successful attack on false religion, Satan will marshal the nations for an assault on those who worship Jehovah God.—Revelation 7:14; Matthew 24:21.

How Will You Be Affected?

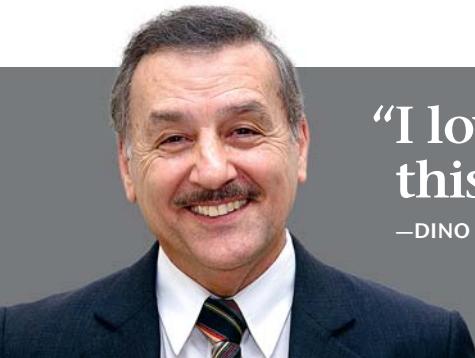
If you have not had the opportunity to study the Bible closely, you may find it difficult to believe that the events described above will occur. But there is good reason to trust that every detail will be fulfilled and that these events will take place in the near future. The long record of Bible prophecies that have already been fulfilled provides that assurance.*

Why not set aside some time to find out why Jehovah’s Witnesses are convinced that “the war of the great day of God the Almighty” is close at hand and why you do not have to be afraid of it? Have them discuss with you what the Bible says you must do to be among those whom Jehovah God protects. (Revelation 16:14) What you learn may change your view of the future.

* For evidence that Bible prophecies have come true, see chapter 2 and chapter 9 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHAT motivated a tobacco farmer to change not only his occupation but also his deeply held religious beliefs? How did an alcoholic gain the strength to change her lifestyle? Read what these people have to say.



"I love being part of this large family."

—DINO ALI

YEAR BORN: 1949

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: AUSTRALIA
HISTORY: TOBACCO FARMER



MY PAST: My parents emigrated from Albania in 1939

and settled in Mareeba, a small town in Queensland, Australia. Many Bosnians, Greeks, Italians, and Serbians, among others, also settled in this area, bringing with them their values, customs, and cultures. Mareeba was a tobacco-farming area, and my parents began growing that crop.

Soon, my older sister was born, followed by my two older brothers and me. Sadly, Dad died of a heart attack when I was a year old. Mum remarried and had four more sons. We all grew up on my stepfather's tobacco farm.

I left home in my teens. When I was in my early 20's, I married my wife, Saime, in the local mosque, since we were both Muslims. All of my uncles, aunts, and cousins followed

the Islamic faith. I read the Koran and a book about the prophet Muhammad's history. At the same time, I also read a small Bible. The Koran speaks of the prophets mentioned in the Bible, and reading the Bible helped me to understand when they lived.

Jehovah's Witnesses called at my house and regularly left magazines and books, which both Saime and I enjoyed reading. I remember having many stimulating debates with the Witnesses on various religious subjects.

On each occasion, they answered my questions from the Bible, rather than giving their personal opinion. That made a real impression on me.

The Witnesses offered to study the Bible with me and invited me to their meetings, but I always refused. My immediate priority



was to own my own farm and to have a large family. I never did own a farm, but I eventually did become the proud father of five children.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:

Nine years after my first contact with Jehovah's Witnesses, I had still not changed my religious beliefs. However, I enjoyed receiving and reading all the publications that they produced. Every Sunday, Saime and I took time to read this literature. We kept all the magazines that we had received over the years. They proved to be a very helpful resource when others began to test the faith that was growing in my heart.

For example, I met an evangelical preacher who tried to pressure me to accept Jesus as my Savior. He had succeeded in convincing Saime's brother and one of my half brothers to follow him. Soon, acquaintances from all sorts of religious backgrounds began trying to convince me to join their religious groups.

I realized that the time had come for me to act

Some gave me literature that attacked Jehovah's Witnesses. I asked these critics to show me from the Bible the reasons for the doctrines that they taught, but they could not answer my questions.

All this opposition only made me dig deeper into the Bible and do more research, using the literature I had collected from the Witnesses. Finally, I realized that the time had come for me to act on what I was learning.

I didn't have a personal Bible study with one of the Witnesses; I just began attending their meetings. At first, I was very nervous



and shy, but I met many friendly people at those meetings, and I enjoyed what I learned. I made up my mind that I would become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and in 1981, I symbolized my dedication to God by being baptized.

My wife did not oppose my decision, although she sometimes questioned whether I was being deceived. Still, she attended my baptism. I continued to share with her the many truths that I was learning. About a year after my baptism, as we were driving home from vacation, Saime expressed her desire to become a Witness. I was so surprised that I almost drove off the road! She was baptized in 1982.

Making the needed changes in our lifestyle was not easy. I had stopped growing tobacco because doing so conflicts with Bible principles. (2 Corinthians 7:1; James 2:8) It took some time before we found acceptable employment that provided a steady income. Also, for many years after that, some of our relatives refused to visit us. We tried to treat them according to Bible principles by showing them love. Eventually, the barriers came down, and now our close relatives no longer shun us.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: Going through various tests, whether overcoming my shyness, coping with financial anxieties, or dealing with family opposition, has taught me how patient Jehovah God is in helping me deal with my problems. For example, I now serve as a congregation elder and must often teach from the platform. This is still a challenge for me because I battle with stammering as a result of nervousness. But by means of constant prayer and with Jehovah's help, I am able to care for this privilege.

My wife and I have grown closer, and the bond we now enjoy is beyond value. We made mistakes when raising our children but tried our best to inculcate in them the Bi-

ble truths that we learned. (Deuteronomy 6:6-9) In fact, my oldest son and his wife are serving as missionaries.

I remember one occasion shortly after we began attending the meetings of the Witnesses as a family. I parked the car and looked inside the hall at the crowd gathering there. I asked my family, "What do you see?" Inside were people of different cultures, backgrounds, and tongues—Aborigines, Albanians, Australians, Croatians—yet they were happily mingling together. I love being part of this large family of spiritual brothers and sisters, which exists not only in Australia but all over the world.—1 Peter 5:9.



"My sister never gave up on me."

—YELENA VLADIMIROVNA SYOMINA

YEAR BORN: 1952

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: RUSSIA
HISTORY: ADDICTED TO ALCOHOL,
ATTEMPTED SUICIDE

MY PAST: I was born in Krasnogorsk, a small, peaceful city near Moscow. I grew up in a family of teachers. I was a good student and received an education in music. My future looked bright.

When I married, my husband and I moved to an area where cursing, drunkenness, and



smoking were the norm. I didn't realize it at the time, but the environment had a bad effect on me. At first, I went to parties merely to sing and play the guitar. Once I was there, however, people would invite me to smoke and drink with them. Soon I was addicted to alcohol.

My addiction began to destroy my life. It took some time for me to hit rock bottom, but when I did, I could hardly eat anything. I wanted to die, and I made a clumsy attempt at suicide. I am thankful that I did not succeed.

Through all of this, my sister visited me regularly. She had become one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and she tried to explain how the Bible could help me. I wasn't interested in



My sister showed so much patience and love that I finally agreed to study the Bible

the Bible, so at first I chased her away. But my sister never gave up on me. She showed so much patience and love that I finally agreed to study the Bible.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: After I started studying the Bible, I made a firm resolve to quit drinking. About that time, I was attacked and beaten by a neighbor who was drunk. I ended up in the hospital in serious condition. Four of my ribs were broken, and one of my retinas had been damaged. Nevertheless, that stay in the hospital helped me through the alcohol-withdrawal symptoms.

During that time, I prayed constantly. A Bible passage that brought me great comfort was Lamentations 3:55, 56, which says: “I have called out your name, O Jehovah, from a pit of the lowest sort. My voice you must hear. Do not hide your ear to my relief, to my cry for help.”

I truly believe that Jehovah answered my prayers. He gave me the strength to keep from returning to my past. There were times

when I was tempted to start drinking again. I’m happy to say that I never gave in to that temptation.

As I continued studying the Bible, I learned that I needed to support my husband in his role as head of the family. (1 Peter 3:1, 2) That wasn’t easy for me to do, as I was accustomed to bossing my husband around. I prayed for Jehovah’s help. The change didn’t happen overnight, but gradually I became a better, more supportive wife.

Upon seeing these changes, my dear husband was amazed. Up to that point, he was not interested in the Bible. But when I decided to quit smoking, he said: “If you will quit smoking, then I’ll start studying the Bible!” We both quit smoking on the same day.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: My husband kept his promise and began to study the Bible. Now we read the Bible together every day, meditate on what we read, and try to apply the counsel in our lives.

Words cannot describe how our family life has improved—not to mention how I have benefited personally. I am grateful to Jehovah for having drawn me to him. (John 6:44) I’m also grateful to my sister, who never gave up on me. As a result, I’ve learned firsthand that the Bible really does change lives.



DID YOU KNOW?

Did people really play flutes at funerals in Jesus' day?



■ The Bible speaks of flutes being played on festive occasions. (1 Kings 1:40; Isaiah 5:12; 30:29) It also states that flutes were played at a funeral. In that instance, flutes were the only instruments mentioned. Matthew's Gospel says that a Jewish ruler asked Jesus to heal his daughter, who was near death. When Jesus arrived at the ruler's house, however, he "caught sight of the flute players and the crowd in noisy confusion," for the child had already died. —Matthew 9:18, 23.

Is Matthew accurate when recording this custom? Bible translator William Barclay says: "Throughout most of the ancient world, in Rome, in Greece, in

Phoenicia, in Assyria and in Palestine, the wailing of the flute was inseparably connected with death and tragedy." According to the Talmud, even the poorest Jew who had become a widower during the first centuries C.E. would engage two flute players and a wailing woman to mourn his dead wife. Flavius Josephus, a historian who lived in the first century, records that when news reached Jerusalem of the Roman conquest of Jotapata, in Galilee, and the massacre of its inhabitants in 67 C.E., "many of the mourners hired flute-players to accompany their funeral dirges."

What was the crime of the evildoers who were executed alongside Jesus?



■ The Bible calls these evildoers "robbers." (Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27) Some Biblical lexicons point out that the Scriptures use different words to distinguish one type of criminal from another. The Greek word *kleptes* referred to a thief who acted secretly so as to escape detection. This word is applied to Judas Iscariot, who furtively stole from the disciples' money box. (John 12:6) The word *lestes*, on the other hand, usually referred to one who robbed using violence and could even refer to a revolutionary, an insurrectionist, or a guerrilla. Those executed with Jesus were of this second type. In fact, one of them is reported to have said: "We are receiving in full what we de-

serve for things we did." (Luke 23:41) That would suggest that they were guilty of more than just theft.

Like those two robbers, Barabbas is called a *lestes*. (John 18:40) That Barabbas was certainly more than a simple thief is clear from Luke 23:19, which states that he "had been thrown into prison for a certain sedition occurring in the city and for murder."

So while the evildoers executed with Jesus committed robbery, it is possible that they were also involved in sedition or even murder. Whatever the case, the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate considered them to be worthy of execution by impalement.



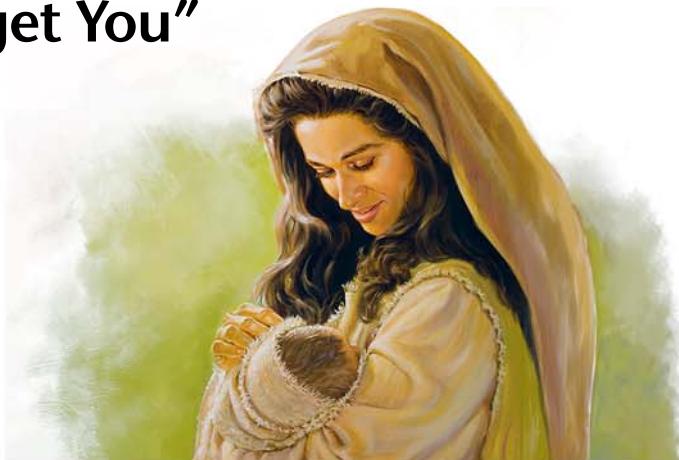
"I Myself Shall Not Forget You"

DOES Jehovah really care about his people? If so, how deep is his concern for them? There is only one way that we can know the answers to those questions—through God's own revelation. In the Bible, Jehovah clearly reveals how he feels. Consider the words found at **Isaiah 49:15**.

To illustrate the deep feelings that he has for his people, Jehovah, through Isaiah, uses one of the most touching examples that we could imagine. He begins by asking this thought-provoking question: "Can a wife forget her sucking so that she should not pity the son of her belly?" At first glance, the answer seems obvious. How could a nursing mother forget her sucking? Her baby is completely dependent on her day and night—and it lets her know when it needs attention! But there is more to Jehovah's question.

Why does a mother nurse her child and care for its every need? Is it just to quiet a crying baby? No. A mother naturally has pity for, or pities, "the son of her belly." The Hebrew verb here translated "pity" is also rendered "show mercy." (Exodus 33:19; Isaiah 54:10) This Hebrew term can convey the idea of tender compassion for the helpless or vulnerable. A mother's compassion for her sucking is one of the strongest emotions that we can imagine.

Sadly, though, not every mother has pity for the baby that longs to nurse at her breast. "Even these women can forget," says Jehovah. We are living in a world in which many men and women are "disloyal, having no natural affection." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) At times, we hear about mothers who neglect, abuse, or abandon their newborn baby. Commenting on **Isaiah 49:15**, one Bible reference work explains:



"Mothers are sinful and their love is sometimes overcome by baseness. Even the greatest of human love may fail."

"Yet," Jehovah assures us, "I myself shall not forget you." Now we can begin to see the point of the question that Jehovah raises, as stated at **Isaiah 49:15**. What he is making here is not so much a comparison as a contrast. Unlike imperfect mothers, who may fail to show compassion for their helpless infant, Jehovah will never fail or forget to show compassion for his worshippers in need. Fittingly, the reference work mentioned above says of **Isaiah 49:15**: "This is one of the strongest, if not the strongest expression of God's love in the Old Testament."

Is it not comforting to learn about "the tender compassion of our God"? (Luke 1:78) Why not learn how you can draw closer to Jehovah? This loving God assures his worshippers: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you."—Hebrews 13:5.

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR FEBRUARY:
■ **Isaiah 43-62**

AGES 3 AND
UNDER

My Bible Lessons



Who made the
earth?



Who created
you and **me?**

Who made the
sea?



Who made the
butterfly
with its colorful wings?



**Jehovah
God**
created all things
Revelation 4:11



ACTIVITIES

Teach your child:

What is God's name?
Where does Jehovah live?
What did he make?

Have your child point to:

| | | |
|-------|-----------|-------|
| Stars | Clouds | Sun |
| Boat | Earth | House |
| Sea | Butterfly | |



KEYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS

When Your Adolescent Questions Your Faith

"I don't want to follow my parents' religion anymore. I just feel like giving up."—Cora, 18.*

YOU are convinced that your religion teaches the truth about God. You believe that the Bible promotes the best way of life. It is only natural, then, that you try to instill your values in your child. (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) But what if, as he grows, your child loses interest in spiritual things?# What if he begins questioning the very faith that he seemed to accept eagerly as a child?—Galatians 5:7.

If that is happening, do not conclude that you have failed as a Christian parent. Other factors may be involved, as we will see. However, know this: How you handle your adolescent's questioning may well determine whether he will choose to *draw closer* to your faith or *pull farther away* from it. If you declare war with your adolescent over this issue, you are in for a strenuous battle—a battle that you are almost certain to lose.—Colossians 3:21.

* Names in this article have been changed.

For simplicity, we refer to the adolescent as a male in this article. However, the principles discussed apply to both genders.

As they mature, many youths choose to adopt the religion of their parents. (2 Timothy 3:14) Some, however, do not. What can you do if your growing child starts to question your faith? This article will discuss how Jehovah's Witnesses handle such a challenge.



It is far better to heed the admonition of the apostle Paul. "A slave of the Lord does not need to fight," he wrote, "but needs to be gentle toward all, qualified to teach, keeping himself restrained." (2 Timothy 2:24) How can you show yourself "qualified to teach" if your adolescent questions your faith?

Be Discerning

First, try to discern what factors might be contributing to your adolescent's view. For example:

■ **Does he feel lonely and friendless in the Christian congregation?** "Because I wanted friends, I got close to several schoolmates, and it hindered my spiritual growth for years. I lost interest in spiritual things for the most part be-

cause of bad association, and now I have many regrets.”—Lenore, 19.

■ Does he lack self-confidence, making it difficult for him to speak up about his faith?

“When I was in school, I was hesitant to share my beliefs with my classmates. I was afraid that they would view me as weird or as a ‘Bible boy.’ Any kids who were different were rejected, and I didn’t want that to happen to me.”—Ramón, 23.

■ Does he feel overwhelmed by the responsibility of living up to Christian standards? “I feel as if the Bible’s promise of everlasting life were at the top of a big stairway, and I am not even on the steps; I am far, far away from them. The fear of getting on the stairway has been so big that I have considered giving up my faith.”

—Renee, 16.

Talk It Out

What underlying issue might *your* adolescent be facing? The best way to find out is to ask him! Be careful, though, not to let the discussion deteriorate into an argument. Instead, follow the admonition of James 1:19: “Be swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.” Be patient with him. Employ “all long-suffering and art of teaching,” just as you would with someone outside the family.—2 Timothy 4:2.

For example, if your adolescent balks at attending Christian meetings, try to find out if something else is bothering him. But do so with patience. Little good is accomplished by the parent in the following scenario.

Son: I just don’t like going to meetings anymore.

Father: [hostile tone] What do you *mean* you don’t like going?

Son: I find them *boring*, that’s all!

Father: Is *that* how you feel about God? You find him *boring*? Well, that’s just too bad! As long as you live under our roof, you’re going with us—whether you like it or not!

Deceived?

Myth: Parents who are Jehovah’s Witnesses force their children to follow their faith.

Fact: Witness parents strive to inculcate love for God in their offspring, just as the Bible commands them to. (Ephesians 6:4) Nevertheless, they realize that when a child becomes an adult, he or she will make a personal choice with regard to worship.

—Romans 14:12; Galatians 6:5.

God requires that parents teach their children about him and that children obey their parents. (Ephesians 6:1) However, you want your child to do more than blindly follow your spiritual routine and reluctantly go with you to Christian meetings. If at all possible, you would like his mind and heart to come along too.

You have a better chance of accomplishing that if you discern any underlying issues that might be contributing to his attitude. With that in mind, consider how the above conversation could have been handled more effectively.

Son: I just don’t like going to meetings anymore.

Father: [calmly] Why do you feel that way?

Son: I find them *boring*, that’s all!

Father: Sitting for an hour or two *can* be boring. What do you find *most* challenging about it?

Son: I don’t know. I guess I just feel like I’d rather be somewhere else.

Father: Is that how your friends feel?

Son: Well, that’s just it! I don’t *have* any—at least not anymore. Ever since my best friend moved away, I feel like there’s no one to talk to! Everyone else is having a good time. I feel so left out!

By drawing out the adolescent, the father in the above scenario not only gets to the underlying issue—in this case, loneliness—but also builds trust, thus keeping the door open for further discussions.—See the accompanying box “Be Patient!”

In time, many young ones learn that if they confront the issue that is impeding their spiritual growth, they will usually feel better about themselves *and* their faith. Consider Ramón, the young man quoted earlier who cringed at the thought of identifying himself as a Christian at school. Eventually,

Ramón found that speaking up about his faith was not as traumatic as he imagined it would be—even when it resulted in ridicule. He relates:

“On one occasion a boy at school was poking fun at me because of my religion. I got really nervous, and I sensed that the whole class was listening. Then I decided to turn the discussion around and ask *him* about *his* faith. To my surprise, he was even more nervous than I was! Then I realized that many young people have religious beliefs, but they don’t understand them. At least I can *explain* my beliefs. Really, when it comes to talking about faith, my *classmates* should be the ones who feel awkward—not *me!*”

TRY THIS: Draw out your adolescent by asking him how he feels about being a Christian. In his own view, what are the benefits? What are the costs? Do the benefits outweigh the costs? If so, how? (Mark 10:29, 30) Your adolescent could write down his thoughts on paper using two columns—the left-hand one for the costs and the right-hand one for the benefits. Seeing his assessment on paper may help your adolescent to identify his problem and work out a solution.

Be Patient!

Talking to your adolescent might require the utmost patience on your part. But the payoff—building trust—is worth it. One teenage girl relates: “In one night’s discussion, I told my dad that I secretly had a social network page and a boyfriend and that I wanted to run away. He stayed so calm as he talked the whole thing out with me! I don’t know another dad who could just sit there and not start yelling at his daughter when he found out she had kissed a guy and was texting him nonstop. I feel like I can tell my dad anything. I know he really wants to help me.”



Your Adolescent’s “Power of Reason”

Parents and experts have observed that there is a marked difference between the way young children think and the way adolescents think. (1 Corinthians 13:11) While young children typically think in concrete, black-and-white terms, adolescents tend to reason on things more abstractly. For example, a young child can be taught that God created all things. (Genesis 1:1) However, an adolescent might wrestle with such questions as: ‘How do I know that there is a God? Why would a God of love permit evil? How

can it be true that God has always existed?"
—Psalm 90:2.

You might feel that such questioning represents a step backward in your adolescent's faith. In reality, it may well represent a step forward. After all, questioning can be an important aspect of a Christian's spiritual growth.—Acts 17:2, 3.

Furthermore, your adolescent is learning to use his "power of reason." (Romans 12: 1, 2) As a result, he is able to appreciate "the breadth and length and height and depth" of the Christian faith in a way that he simply could not as a child. (Ephesians 3:18) More than ever, now is the time to help your adolescent *reason* on his beliefs so that he can develop firm convictions regarding his faith.

—Proverbs 14:15; Acts 17:11.

TRY THIS: Go back to the basics with your adolescent, revisiting subjects that you—and he—might have taken for granted. For example, have him think about such questions as: 'What convinces *me* that there is a God? What evidence do *I* observe that shows that God cares about *me*? Why do *I* feel that it is always in my best interests to obey God's laws?' Be careful not to force your views on your adolescent. Instead, help him develop his own convictions. That way he will find it easier to build confidence in his faith.

"Persuaded to Believe"

The Bible speaks of the young man Timothy who "from infancy" knew the holy writings. Yet, the apostle Paul urged Timothy: "Continue in the things you learned and were persuaded to believe." (2 Timothy 3:14, 15) Like Timothy, your adolescent may have been educated in Bible standards from birth. Now, though, you need to persuade him so that he develops his own convictions.

The Value of a Mentor

Sometimes youths are helped when an adult outside the family provides encouragement. Do you know someone whose spiritual outlook could be an inspiration to your adolescent? Why not arrange for him or her to spend time with your son or daughter? Your purpose is not to abdicate your responsibility. But think of Timothy. He benefited greatly from the apostle Paul's example, and Paul benefited greatly by having Timothy as a companion.—Philippians 2:20, 22.*

* From the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 1, 2011 Edition, page 318, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

The book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 1, states: "As long as your adolescent lives under your roof, you have the right to require compliance with a spiritual routine. In the end, however, your goal is to instill love for God in your teen's heart—not simply to elicit some mechanical action." By keeping that goal in mind, you can help your adolescent become "solid in the faith" so that it becomes *his* way of life—not just *yours*.*—1 Peter 5:9.

* For more information, see *The Watchtower* of May 1, 2009, pages 10-12, and *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*, Volume 1, pages 315-318.

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- How do I react when my child questions my beliefs?
- How could I use the material in this article to improve the way that I react?

Musicians and Their Instruments

"Praise [God] with the blowing of the horn. Praise him with the stringed instrument and the harp. Praise him with the tambourine and the circle dance. Praise him with strings and the pipe. Praise him with the cymbals of melodious sound. Praise him with the clashing cymbals."—PSALM 150:3-5.

MUSIC and musicians have long played a vital role in the worship of Jehovah God. For example, when Jehovah miraculously delivered the Israelites through the Red Sea, Moses' sister, Miriam, led the women in a victory song and dance. The dancers accompanied themselves with tambourines. This event demonstrates how important music was to the Israelites—they had just fled from the Egyptian army, yet many of the women had their instruments handy and ready to play. (Exodus 15:20) Later, King David arranged for thousands of musicians to play their instruments as part of worship at the tabernacle. This arrangement continued at the temple built by his son Solomon.—1 Chronicles 23:5.

What were these instruments made of? What did they look like? What sounds did they produce? And when were they used?

Kinds of Musical Instruments

The instruments described in the Bible were made of precious wood, stretched animal skin, metal, and bone. Some were inlaid with ivory. Strings were made of plant fiber or animal intestines. While almost no ancient instruments remain to the present day, pictures of them have survived.



(Instruments not to scale)

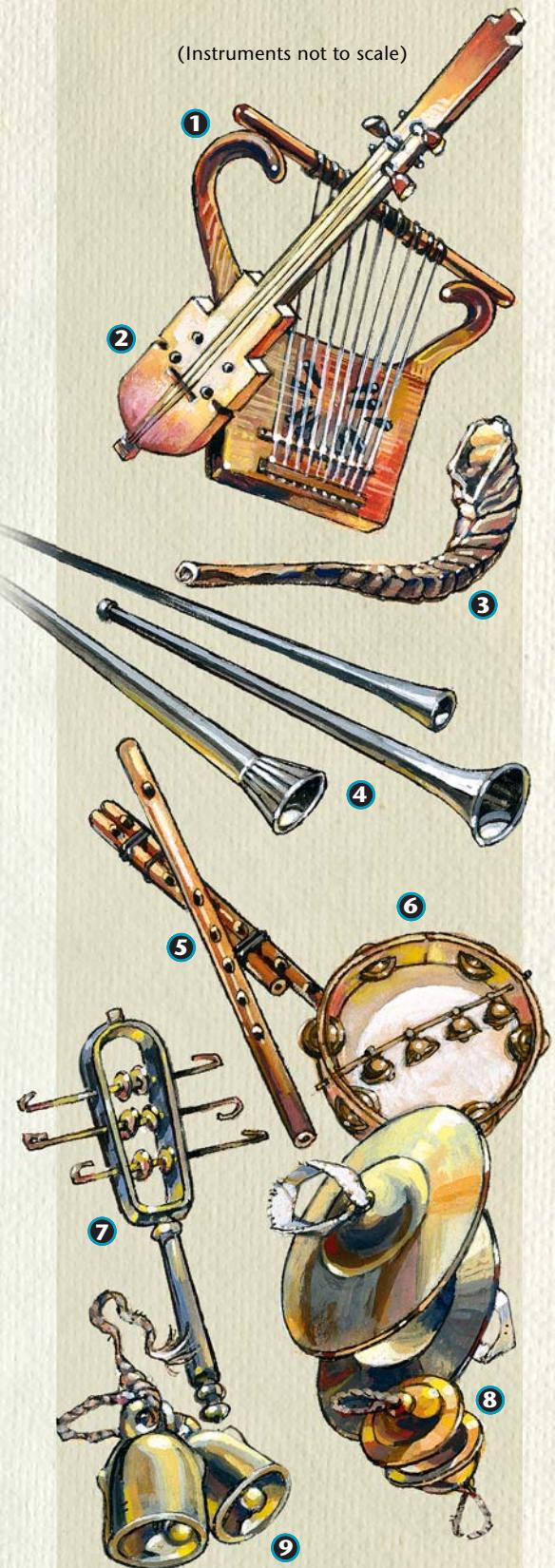
The instruments used in Bible times can be divided into three basic categories: **stringed instruments**, such as the harp, the lyre (1), and the lute (2); **wind instruments**, such as the horn, or shofar (3), the trumpet (4), the much loved flute, or pipe (5); **percussion instruments**, such as the tambourine (6), the sistrum (7), cymbals (8), and bells (9). Musicians played these instruments to accompany poetic songs, lively dancing, and singing. (1 Samuel 18:6, 7) Most important, they used them in worship of the God who had blessed them with the gift of music. (1 Chronicles 15:16) Consider more closely each group of instruments.

Stringed Instruments The harp and the lyre were light, portable instruments with strings stretched over a wooden frame. David played a stringed instrument to soothe the soul of anguished King Saul. (1 Samuel 16:23) These instruments were used in the orchestra at the dedication of Solomon's temple and on other joyous occasions, such as festivals.—2 Chronicles 5:12; 9:11.

The lute was similar to the harp, but it usually differed in shape. It often consisted of a few strings stretched over a frame that held a sounding board. The vibrating strings may have produced melodious tones not unlike the classical guitar of today. The strings were made of twisted vegetable fibers or animal intestines.

Wind Instruments These instruments are often mentioned in the Bible. One of the most ancient is the Jewish horn, known as the shofar. This hollowed-out ram's horn produced loud, piercing tones. The Israelites used the shofar to assemble troops in battle and to direct the nation to action. —Judges 3:27; 7:22.

Another type of wind instrument was the metal-tube trumpet. A document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls indicates that musicians could play a surprisingly wide range of tones on these instruments. Jehovah instructed Moses to make two trumpets of silver for use at the tabernacle. (Numbers 10:2-7) Later, at the inauguration of Solomon's temple, 120 trumpets added their mighty



sound to the celebration. (2 Chronicles 5:12, 13) Artisans made trumpets of different lengths. Some measured at least three feet (91 cm) from mouthpiece to bell-shaped front.

A favorite wind instrument of the Israelites was the flute. Its happy, melodious sound lifted the spirit of people attending family gatherings, feasts, and weddings. (1 Kings 1:40; Isaiah 30:29) The flute's lyrical voice could also be heard at funerals, where musicians played songs as part of the mourning ritual (see page 14).—Matthew 9:23.

Percussion Instruments When the Israelites celebrated, they used a variety of percussion instruments. The rhythmic sounds helped to rouse strong emotions. The tambourine, made of an animal skin stretched taut over a round wooden frame, produced a drumlike thump as the musician or dancer struck the instrument with his hand. When the musician shook the frame, loosely attached bells produced a rhythmic jingle.

Another percussion instrument was known as the sistrum. It had an oval-shaped metal frame and a handle, as well as cross-

bars that held loose metal disks. When rapidly shaken to and fro, a sistrum made a stark jingling sound.

Bronze cymbals made an even sharper sound. Cymbals were discs of two sizes. Large clashing cymbals were boldly struck together. Smaller melodious cymbals were played between two fingers. Both produced clashing sounds but of differing intensity.
—Psalm 150:5.

Following the Pattern

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses begin and end their meetings for worship with music and singing. At their larger gatherings, the orchestras that provide the recorded musical accompaniment include modern versions of stringed, wind, and percussion instruments.

By including music and songs in their worship, the Witnesses follow the pattern set by both the ancient Israelites and the first-century Christians. (Ephesians 5:19) Like God's servants of Bible times, Jehovah's Witnesses today enjoy combining poetry with melody to praise Jehovah.





OUR READERS ASK . . .

Will the earth come to an end?

■ Some believed that the earth would end on October 21, 2011. It did not. Thus, the prophecy of U.S. radio broadcaster Harold Camping rang hollow. He predicted that Judgment Day would come on May 21, 2011—a tremendous earthquake would roll across the globe, and five months later, on October 21, the earth would be annihilated.

The earth, however, will never come to an end. Earth's Creator will not allow it. His Word states: "You have solidly fixed the earth, that it may keep standing."—Psalm 119:90.

Some Bible readers may object, however, that this planet will be destroyed by fire. They point to 2 Peter 3:7, 10 to support that view: "By the same word the heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire and are being reserved to the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men. . . . Yet Jehovah's day will come as a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a hissing noise, but the elements being intensely hot will be dissolved, and earth and the works in it will be discovered." Are the apostle Peter's words to be taken literally?

No, they are not. Why not? Because the interpretation of these verses must line up with the context of Peter's letter and with the rest of the Bible. A literal view of those texts would mean that the heavens, or universe—billions upon billions of stars and other matter—will be consumed by fire because just one speck in its vastness contains wicked humans. Would you



destroy miles of shoreline of sand because one grain is not to your liking? That would not make sense! So neither would Jehovah destroy all of his created universe because rebellion erupted on just one of his creative works.

Besides, such a view is in direct conflict with the words of Jesus Christ, who said: "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:29) Would a loving father handicraft a comfortable house for his family only to burn it down? (Psalm 115:16) That would be unthinkable! Jehovah is not only the Creator but also a loving Father.—Psalm 103:13; 1 John 4:8.

Peter uses the term "earth" in a figurative sense, referring to human society—in this case *wicked* human society. Note that Peter draws a parallel with the Flood of Noah's day. (2 Peter 3:5, 6) On that occasion, only wicked mankind was destroyed; the earth itself and righteous Noah and his family survived. By the same token, Peter's use of "heavens" would also be symbolic. In this case, "heavens" refers to human rulership over the ungodly. Thus, the incorrigibly wicked will be gone, as will all wicked governments, which will be dissolved and replaced by God's heavenly rule, or Kingdom.—Daniel 2:44.

So, will planet earth come to its end? No. What will end is the symbolic earth, or wicked human society. The earth itself and the future godly human society will last forever.—Proverbs 2:21, 22.



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Why Does God Have an Organization?

1. Why did God organize the Israelites?

God organized descendants of the patriarch Abraham into a nation and gave them a body of laws. He called the nation Israel and made it the custodian of true worship and of his Word, the Holy Scriptures. (Psalm 147:19, 20) Thus, people of all nations have benefited.—*Read Genesis 22:18.*

God chose the Israelites to be his witnesses. When they were obedient, they benefited from God's laws. (Deuteronomy 4:6) By studying the history of the Israelites, we can get to know more about the true God.—*Read Isaiah 43:10, 12.*

This article raises questions you may have asked and shows where you can read the answers in your Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to discuss these answers with you.



2. Why are true Christians organized?

In time, Israel lost God's favor, and Jehovah replaced that nation with the Christian congregation. (Matthew 21:43; 23:37, 38) Formerly, the Israelites were witnesses of God. Now, true Christians serve as Jehovah's witnesses.—*Read Acts 15:14, 17.*

Jesus organized his followers to witness about Jehovah and to make disciples in all nations. (Matthew 10:7, 11; 24:14; 28:19, 20) This work is reaching its climax. For the first time, Jehovah has united millions from all nations in true worship. (Revelation 7:9, 10) True Christians are also organized so that they can encourage and help one another. Worldwide, they enjoy the same program of Bible instruction at their meetings.—*Read Hebrews 10:24, 25.*





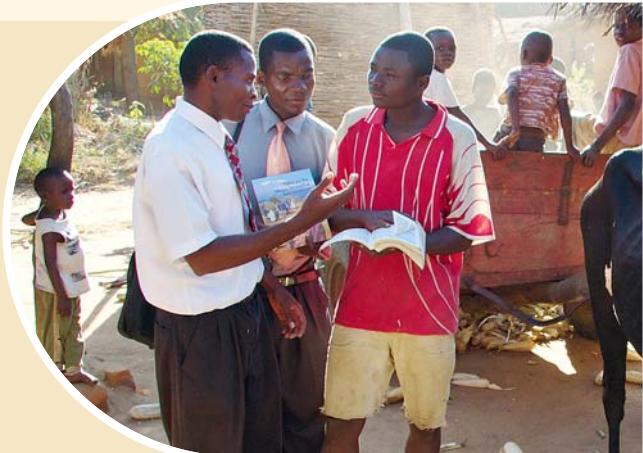
3. In modern times, how did Jehovah's Witnesses begin?

The modern-day organization of Jehovah's Witnesses began in the 1870's. A small group of Bible students began rediscovering long-lost Bible truths. They knew that Jesus organized the Christian congregation to preach. So they undertook an international Kingdom-preaching campaign. In 1931 they adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses.
—*Read Acts 1:8; 2:1, 4; 5:42.*

4. How are Jehovah's Witnesses organized today?

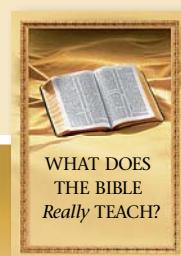
In the first century, the Christian congregations in many lands benefited from a central governing body that recognized Jesus as the Head of the congregation. (Acts 16:4, 5) Similarly today, Jehovah's Witnesses recognize Jesus as their Leader. (Matthew 23:9, 10) They also benefit from the guidance of a Governing Body of experienced elders who provide Scriptural encouragement and direction for the more than 100,000 congregations. In each congregation, qualified men serve as elders, or overseers. These men lovingly care for God's flock.—*Read 1 Peter 5:2, 3.*

Jehovah's Witnesses are organized to preach the good news and to make disciples. In order to help people everywhere, they translate, print, and distribute Bible study material in over 500 languages. Like the apostles,



they preach from house to house. (Acts 20:20) They offer to study the Bible personally with sincere lovers of truth. Since Jehovah's people focus on pleasing God and helping others, they are an organization of happy people.—*Read Psalm 33:12; Acts 20:35.*

For more information, see chapter 19 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.





131ST GILEAD GRADUATION

"Bring a Smile to Jehovah's Face"

FAMILY, friends, and well-wishers gathered on September 10, 2011, to attend the graduation of the 131st class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. At the start of the day, nerves knotted the stomachs of both speakers and students. By the end of the program, though, all 9,063 present were relaxed and smiling, having enjoyed the talks, demonstrations, and interviews.

Stephen Lett, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses and chairman for the program, delivered the opening talk. He examined Bible verses that refer to Jehovah God as having a figurative body and focused on passages that discuss how Jehovah uses his figurative eyes, ears, hands, and arms.

First, the speaker considered 2 Chronicles 16:9, which says that Jehovah's "eyes are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward him." The students were encouraged to maintain a heart that is completely devoted to Jehovah. They were told that they could imitate God by looking for the good in people. Next, Brother Lett considered 1 Peter 3:12, which says that Jehovah's ears are toward the righteous ones' supplication. He urged the students to keep the lines of communication open, remembering that Jehovah really does want to hear their prayers.

The speaker also examined Isaiah 41:13, in which Jehovah makes this promise: "I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, the One saying to you, 'Do not be afraid. I myself will help you.'" With warm sincerity, Brother Lett said: "Notice this very touching

expression of Jehovah. He reaches out his hand to take hold of our hand." He then told the students always to allow Jehovah to help them and never to resist his help. He also said that the students could imitate Jehovah by reaching out their hands to help others.

Finally, Brother Lett read Isaiah 40:11. He invited the audience to visualize the tender affection conveyed by that scripture. "Jehovah gathers us with his arms," said Brother Lett. "He carries us in his bosom." How should we respond? The students were admonished to remain soft and gentle like a little lamb so that Jehovah will want to carry them in his bosom.

"We Have This Treasure in Earthen Vessels"

David Splane of the Governing Body examined that Scriptural theme. (2 Corinthians 4:7) What is the treasure? Is it knowledge or wisdom? "No," answered the speaker. "The treasure that the apostle Paul spoke of is 'this ministry' of 'making the truth manifest.'" (2 Corinthians 4:1, 2, 5) Brother Splane reminded the students that the five months they had spent studying was in preparation for a special assignment in the ministry. That assignment is something to be highly esteemed.

The speaker explained that the "earthen vessels" refer to our fleshly bodies. He contrasted a vessel made of earth with one made of gold. Vessels of gold are not used often. Vessels made of earth, on the other hand, are meant for work. If we placed a treasure in a vessel of gold, we might focus as much on the vessel as on the treasure it contains. "You stu-

dents don't want to draw attention to yourselves," said Brother Splane. "As missionaries, you want to direct people to Jehovah. You are modest earthen vessels."

Continuing the analogy, the speaker said that in Bible times some earthen vessels were fire-resistant, and some had a tough glaze that prevented the vessel from chipping. The point? During the first months in their assignment, the missionaries will no doubt form a tough glaze. They will become less sensitive to criticism, less inclined to take offense. "You will discover that you are tougher than you think you are," said Brother Splane. Jehovah has entrusted this treasure of the ministry, not to angels, but to earthen vessels. "That shows that Jehovah has confidence in you," concluded the speaker.

"With Footmen You Have Run . . . Can You Run a Race With Horses?"

"How long and how fast can you run?" asked Samuel Herd of the Governing Body. Why raise that question with the students? The speaker drew a comparison between the experiences of the students and those of the prophet Jeremiah. That faithful man had a difficult time dealing with the challenges he was facing. But he had bigger trials ahead. So Jehovah asked him: "Because with footmen you have run, and they would tire you out, how, then, can you run a race with horses?" —Jeremiah 12:5.

Applying this point to the students, Brother Herd said: "You may feel that you have been running with horses because of all the exams you've had. But you have really been running with footmen, not with horses. In your assignments you will be racing with horses, or facing bigger challenges than you can imagine today. How will you fare? Gilead training has prepared you to run with horses and not tire out." He encouraged the students to keep training themselves spiritually, to

maintain a good routine of Bible study and prayer.

Brother Herd acknowledged that in the future some of those sent out as missionaries will face discouragement or apathy. Others will be troubled by sickness or feelings of personal inadequacy. But he reassured the students that they have a source of strength that will help them to outrun any bad situation and not tire out. "Whether you run against footmen or horses," said the speaker, "trust that God's mighty hand can sweep you past the finish line. You will then be successful missionaries to Jehovah's honor and praise."

Other Highlights of the Program

"Do Not Hold Yourself to a Few." John Ekrann, a member of the United States Branch Committee, discussed the account involving the prophet Elisha and a widow who was about to have her sons taken from her and sold as slaves. (2 Kings 4:1-7) The widow had only a small jar for oil. Elisha instructed her to collect other jars from her neighbors, saying: "Do not hold yourself to a few." Through Elisha, Jehovah miraculously filled with oil all the jars that the widow collected. The widow then sold the oil and received enough income to pay her debts and support her family for a time.

What lessons could the future missionaries learn from this account? When the widow collected the extra vessels, she was not likely to have been picky. "She would have gathered any vessel that would hold oil," said the speaker, "and probably the bigger the better." Brother Ekrann then urged the students to take any and every assignment, big or small. "Don't be picky," he said. He also reminded the students that the amount of blessings the widow received was directly related to how much attention she paid to Elisha's instructions. His point? The amount of blessings we



*Gilead students
reenact one of
their preaching
experiences*

receive is directly related to the amount of zeal and faith we demonstrate. "Don't be self-sparing," said the speaker.

"They Are Bread to Us." William Samuelson, overseer of the Theocratic Schools Department, developed this theme, taken from Numbers 14:9. He highlighted the good example set by Joshua and Caleb. The term "bread" as used in this case signified that the inhabitants of Canaan could easily be conquered and that the experience would sustain and strengthen Israel. What is the lesson for the students? "In your future spiritual activities," said the speaker, "view challenges as something that will strengthen and sustain you."

"Will Their Ship of Faith Be Anchored Solid in the Storms Ahead?" Sam Roberson, one of the instructors, discussed the apostle Paul's warning that some had "experienced shipwreck concerning their faith." (1 Timothy 1:19) He urged the students to build in others a faith that is solidly anchored in Jehovah God. "Your work," he said, "could be likened to that of a blacksmith." In what way? A blacksmith welds together the links of a chain that can safely anchor a ship. Likewise, missionaries help Bible students build spiritual qualities needed for salvation.

The speaker associated the links in a chain with the eight qualities recorded at 2 Peter 1:5-8. Brother Roberson said that if missionar-

ies help their Bible students to see how Jehovah displays those qualities, those students are likely to develop an unbreakable attachment to Jehovah. They will weather any storm of adversity that might test their faith.

Experiences and Interviews

Michael Burnett, another of the instructors, asked the Gilead students to relate and reenact some of the preaching experiences they had recently enjoyed. The audience was delighted to hear how the students were able to preach to people at a shopping mall, at an airport, in the door-to-door ministry, and even over the phone to a person who called the wrong number.

Michael Hansen of the United States Bethel Family then interviewed three men who have had years of experience as missionaries—Stephen McDowell in Panama, Mark Noumair in Kenya, and William Yasovsky in Paraguay. Their expressions highlighted the theme of the part, "Finding Delight in Doing Jehovah's Will." (Psalm 40:8) Mark Noumair, for example, mentioned specific causes for delight that he and his wife had found as they served in their assignment. The friendships they forged with the local Witnesses brought the couple great satisfaction. Other reasons for joy included seeing the brothers follow instructions, observing them make big changes in their lives, and noting how Jehovah blessed their efforts. He assured the students that their greatest joys are in the future.

After a member of the 131st class read a letter that beautifully expressed the appreciation of the students, Brother Lett concluded the program by encouraging the graduates to act wisely. If they did, he said, they would "bring a smile to Jehovah's face." These missionaries are bound to make Jehovah smile as they faithfully serve him in their assignments.—Isaiah 65:19.



131st Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Lesch, C.; Lesch, N.; Shakarjian, P.; Shakarjian, T.; Budden, R.; Budden, K.; Nash, T.; Nash, L.
 - (2) Tremblay, E.; Tremblay, C.; Garvey, D.; Garvey, G.; Gaunt, R.; Gaunt, P.; Lau, J.; Lau, J.
 - (3) Davis, S.; Davis, S.; Sergeant, J.; Sergeant, J.; Fonseca, C.; Fonseca, S.; Thenard, E.; Thenard, A.
 - (4) Petratyotin, A.; Petratyotin, R.; Reyes, N.; Reyes, N.; Eisiminger, B.; Eisiminger, S.; Hacker, J.; Hacker, C.
 - (5) Hartman, E.; Hartman, T.; Goolia, W.; Goolia, K.; Thomas, J.; Thomas, E.; Okazaki, N.; Okazaki, M.
 - (6) Mills, C.; Mills, A.; Benning, L.; Benning, T.; Sobiecki, S.; Sobiecki, T.; Gagnon, L.; Gagnon, E.
 - (7) Hansen, B.; Hansen, M.; Fahie, A.; Fahie, M.; Dalgaard, J.; Dalgaard, J.; Andersson, M.; Andersson, R.

Class assigned to the countries shown below





Is Armageddon a natural disaster?

SEE PAGE 4.



Why would a God of love kill people during the battle of Armageddon? SEE PAGE 6.



What three major events does the Bible foretell will soon take place? SEE PAGE 9.



How did an alcoholic find the strength to change her lifestyle? SEE PAGES 12-13.



Will the earth be destroyed? SEE PAGE 25.

Would you welcome a visit?

Even in this troubled world, you can gain happiness from accurate Bible knowledge of God, his Kingdom, and his wonderful purpose for mankind. If you would welcome further information or would like to have someone visit you to conduct a free Bible study, please write to Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address listed on page 4.