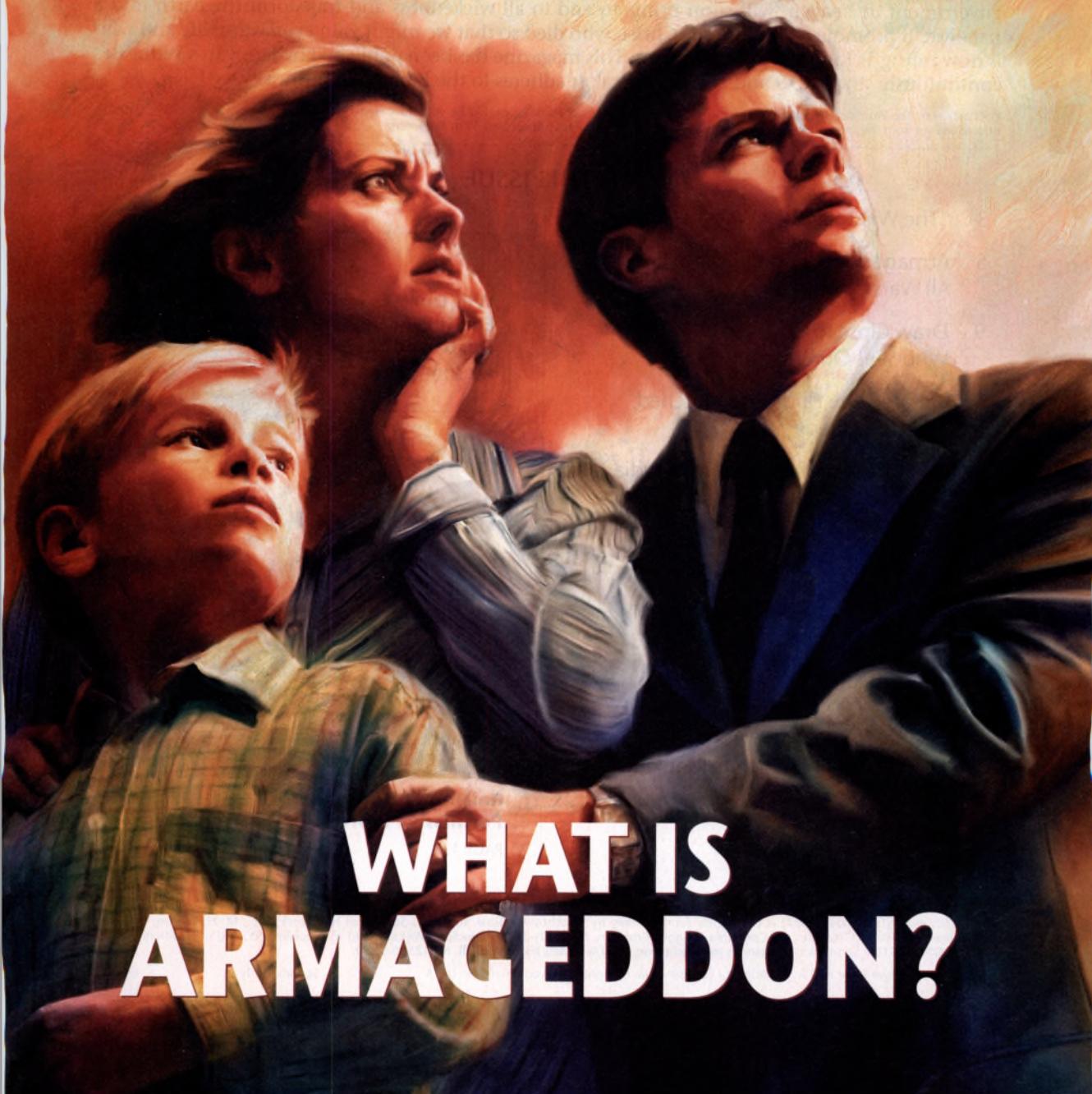


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

APRIL 1, 2008



**WHAT IS
ARMAGEDDON?**

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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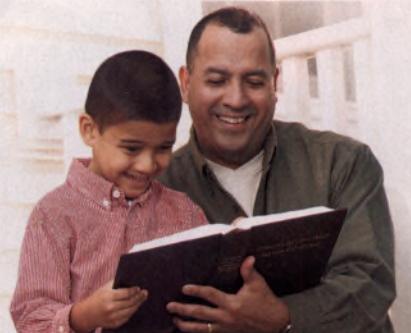
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NASA/The Visible Earth
(<http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/>)



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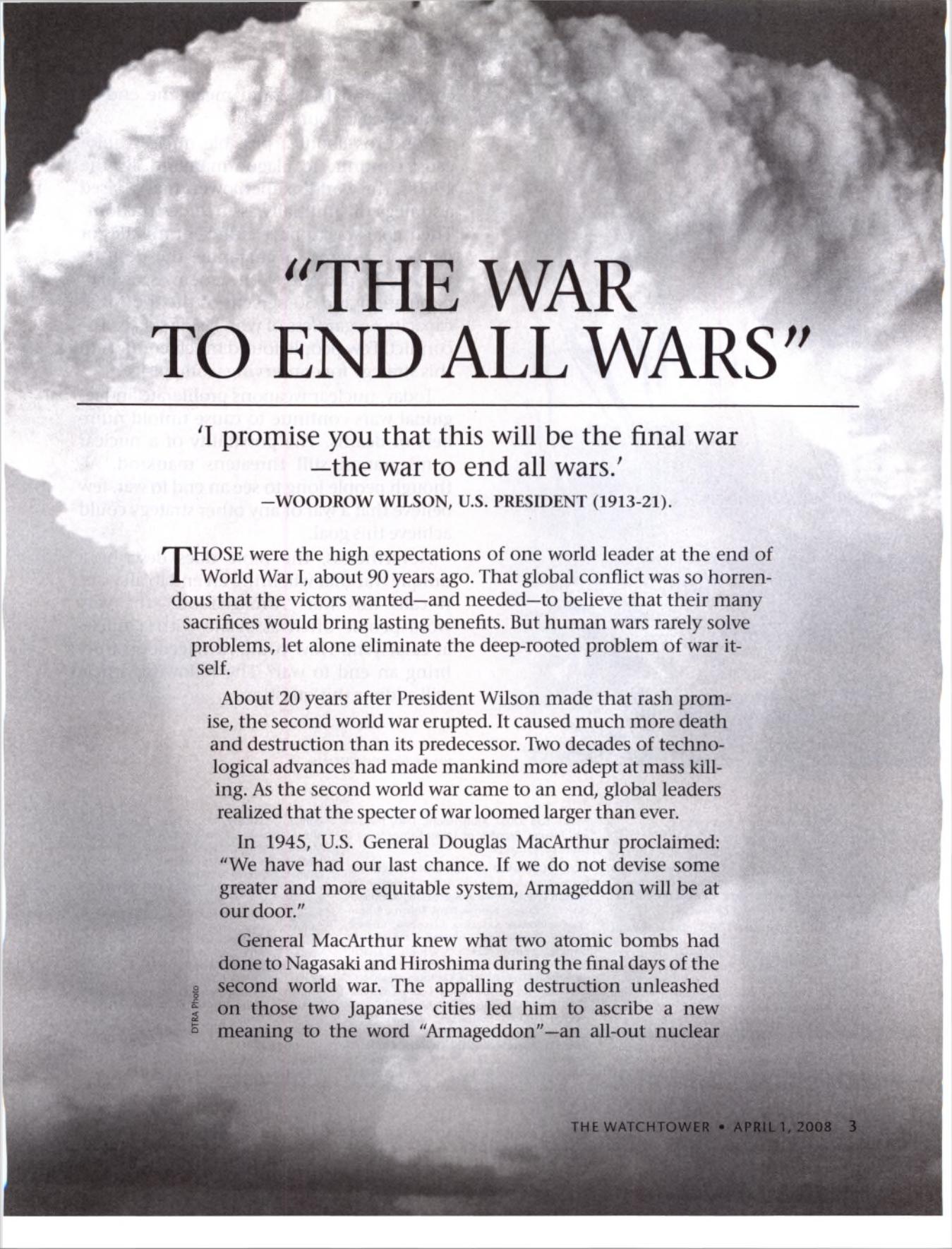
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"THE WAR TO END ALL WARS"

'I promise you that this will be the final war
—the war to end all wars.'

—WOODROW WILSON, U.S. PRESIDENT (1913-21).

THOSE were the high expectations of one world leader at the end of World War I, about 90 years ago. That global conflict was so horrendous that the victors wanted—and needed—to believe that their many sacrifices would bring lasting benefits. But human wars rarely solve problems, let alone eliminate the deep-rooted problem of war itself.

About 20 years after President Wilson made that rash promise, the second world war erupted. It caused much more death and destruction than its predecessor. Two decades of technological advances had made mankind more adept at mass killing. As the second world war came to an end, global leaders realized that the specter of war loomed larger than ever.

In 1945, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur proclaimed: "We have had our last chance. If we do not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door."

General MacArthur knew what two atomic bombs had done to Nagasaki and Hiroshima during the final days of the second world war. The appalling destruction unleashed on those two Japanese cities led him to ascribe a new meaning to the word "Armageddon"—an all-out nuclear

DTRA Photo



conflagration that could mean the end of civilization on our planet.

Concerns about a possible nuclear holocaust continue to plague mankind. By the 1960's, the world's superpowers had devised a strategy of "mutually assured destruction." Their goal was to have sufficient missiles or delivery systems to guarantee the destruction of 25 percent of the enemy's civilian population and 50 percent of the industrial capacity—regardless of which side started the conflict. Few people found much comfort in this strategy for conserving world peace.

Today, nuclear weapons proliferate and regional wars continue to cause untold numbers of deaths. The possibility of a nuclear conflagration still threatens mankind. Although people long to see an end to war, few believe that a war or any other strategy could achieve this goal.

Nevertheless, the Bible does describe a unique war that will bring an end to all wars. It calls this war "Armageddon"—the very word people often associate with a nuclear cataclysm. How could Armageddon truly bring an end to war? The following article will address this question.

Nagasaki, Japan, 1945: USAF photo

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ARMAGEDDON GOD'S WAR TO END ALL WARS

"They hold it atrocious to kill a fellow creature; therefore, war is in their eyes incomprehensible and repulsive, a thing for which their language has no word."

—DESCRIPTION OF THE INUIT PEOPLE OF GREENLAND BY NORWEGIAN EXPLORER FRIDTJOF NANSEN IN 1888.

WHO would not love to live in a society where war was "incomprehensible and repulsive"? Who does not long for a world where even the word for war does not exist because warfare is unknown? Such a world may sound far-fetched, especially if we put our hope in humans to bring it about.

However, in the prophecy of Isaiah, God himself promises to bring such a world into existence: "They will have to beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore."—Isaiah 2:4.

Clearly, the world today with its 20 million soldiers on active duty and some 20 wars currently raging would have to change enormously for this promise to be fulfilled. Not surprisingly, the almighty God, Jehovah, would have to intervene in human affairs. This intervention on Jehovah's part culminates in what the Bible calls Armageddon.—Revelation 16:14, 16.

Although the word "Armageddon" has in recent years been used to signify a worldwide nuclear conflagration, one dictionary de-

scribes the principal meaning of the word this way: "The place of a great and final conflict between the forces of good and evil." Will good ever conquer evil, or is such a battle the stuff of fantasy?

We can take heart by noting that the Bible repeatedly speaks of an end to wickedness. "The sinners will be finished off from the earth," the psalmist foretells. "As for the wicked, they will be no longer." (Psalm 104:35) "The upright are the ones that will reside

God's intervention in human affairs is called Armageddon

in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it," says the book of Proverbs. "As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it." —Proverbs 2:21, 22.

The Bible also makes clear that the wicked will not relinquish their power peacefully; hence the need for a conclusive act of God that eliminates all evil, including the evil of



MEGIDDO

Gideon and his men won a decisive battle near Megiddo



war. (Psalm 2:2) The name that the Bible assigns to this unique conflict, Armageddon, is highly significant.

Past Battles Fought Near Megiddo

The word "Armageddon" means "Mountain of Megiddo." The ancient city of Megiddo, along with its surrounding Plain of Jezreel, has a long history of decisive battles. "Throughout history, Megiddo and the Jezreel Valley have been ground zero for battles that determined the very course of civilization," writes historian Eric H. Cline in *The Battles of Armageddon*.

As Cline points out, the battles fought near Megiddo often proved decisive. Mongol armies, which overran much of Asia in the 13th century, suffered their first defeat in this valley. Not far from Megiddo, British forces under General Edmund Allenby defeated the Turks during the first world war. A military historian described Allenby's victory as "one of the most quickly decisive campaigns and

the most completely decisive battles in all history."

Decisive Biblical battles were also fought near Megiddo. There, Judge Barak conquered the Canaanite forces of Sisera. (Judges 4:14-16; 5:19-21) Gideon, with a small band of 300 men, routed a huge Midianite army in the vicinity. (Judges 7:19-22) King Saul and his son Jonathan died on nearby Mount Gilboa when Philistine forces defeated the Israelite army.—1 Samuel 31:1-7.

Because of its strategic geographic location, Megiddo and the neighboring valley have seen dozens of battles over the last 4,000 years. One historian counted at least 34!

Megiddo's history and its strategic location doubtless have a bearing on the figurative use of the word "Armageddon." Although that word occurs only once in the Bible, its setting in the book of Revelation makes it very clear that Armageddon will touch the lives of everyone on earth.

Armageddon According to the Bible

Although many past wars fought near Megiddo proved decisive, none eliminated wickedness. None really pitted the forces of good against the forces of evil, in the absolute sense. Logically, that type of conflict must originate with God. As Jesus once said, "nobody is good, except one, God." (Luke 18:19) Furthermore, the Bible specifically refers to Armageddon as God's war.

In the Bible, the book of Revelation says that "the kings of the entire inhabited earth" will be gathered together "to the war of the great day of God the Almighty." (Revelation 16:14) The prophetic account then adds: "And they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon," or Armageddon.* (Revelation 16:

* For a discussion of whether Armageddon is a literal place, see the article "Our Readers Ask," on page 31.

*When Armageddon is over,
people everywhere will view war as
incomprehensible and repulsive*

16) Later on, Revelation explains that "the kings of the earth and their armies" will be "gathered together to wage the war with the one seated on the horse and with his army." (Revelation 19:19) This horseman is identified as none other than Jesus Christ.—1 Timothy 6:14, 15; Revelation 19:11, 12, 16.

What are we to conclude from these verses? That Armageddon is a war between God and the forces of disobedient mankind. Why would Jehovah and his Son, Jesus Christ, fight such a war? For one thing, Armageddon will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) In addition, it will usher in a peaceful world, "a new earth that we are awaiting according to his [God's] promise," where "righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:13.



Why Is Armageddon Necessary?

Do you find it hard to imagine that Jehovah, a “God of love,” would assign his Son, the “Prince of Peace,” to fight a war? (2 Corinthians 13:11; Isaiah 9:6) Understanding their motives will doubtless make matters clear. The book of Psalms describes Jesus as a mounted warrior. Why does he fight? Christ rides, the psalmist explains, “in the cause of truth and humility and righteousness.” He wages war because he loves righteousness and hates wickedness.—Psalm 45:4, 7.

Likewise, the Bible describes Jehovah’s reaction to the injustice that he sees in the world today. “The LORD has seen this, and he is displeased that there is no justice,” writes the prophet Isaiah. “He will wear justice like a coat of armor and saving power like a helmet. He will clothe himself with the strong desire to set things right and to punish and avenge the wrongs that people suffer.”—Isaiah 59:15, 17, *Today’s English Version*.

As long as wicked people hold power, righteous people will not enjoy peace and securi-

ty. (Proverbs 29:2; Ecclesiastes 8:9) Realistically, we cannot divorce corruption and wickedness from the people who practice them. Thus, lasting peace and justice come at a price—the removal of the wicked ones. “The wicked is a ransom for the righteous one,” Solomon wrote.—Proverbs 21:18.

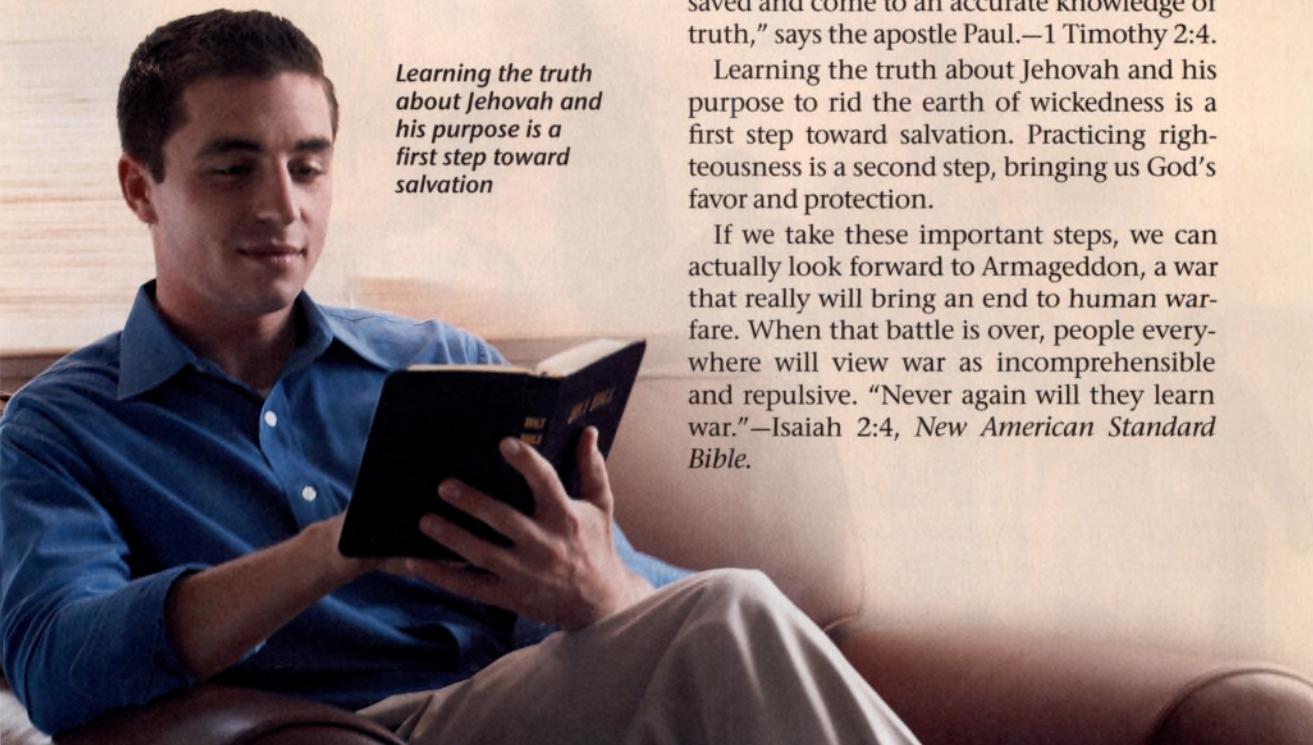
Since God is the Judge, we can be sure that in every case the judgments against the wicked will be righteous. “Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?” asked Abraham. The answer, Abraham learned, is that Jehovah is *always* right! (Genesis 18:25) Furthermore, the Bible assures us that Jehovah finds no delight in destroying the wicked; he does so only as a last resort.—Ezekiel 18:32; 2 Peter 3:9.

Taking Armageddon Seriously

Whose side will we be on in this decisive conflict? Most of us automatically assume that we are aligned with the forces of good. But how can we be sure? “Seek righteousness, seek meekness,” urges the prophet Zephaniah. (Zephaniah 2:3) The will of God is that “all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth,” says the apostle Paul.—1 Timothy 2:4.

Learning the truth about Jehovah and his purpose to rid the earth of wickedness is a first step toward salvation. Practicing righteousness is a second step, bringing us God’s favor and protection.

If we take these important steps, we can actually look forward to Armageddon, a war that really will bring an end to human warfare. When that battle is over, people everywhere will view war as incomprehensible and repulsive. “Never again will they learn war.”—Isaiah 2:4, *New American Standard Bible*.



Learning the truth about Jehovah and his purpose is a first step toward salvation

An Observer Who Sees Our Worth

Luke 12:6, 7



OUR hearts may condemn us.” With those words, the Bible acknowledges that at times our heart may cause us to be overly critical of ourselves. Indeed, it may insist that we are unworthy of God’s love and care. Yet, the Bible reassures us: “God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.” (1 John 3:19, 20) God knows us better than we know ourselves. His view of us may be very different from the way we view ourselves. What, then, are we worth in the eyes of the one who really matters—Jehovah God? The answer can be found in a touching illustration that Jesus used on two separate occasions.

On one occasion, Jesus said that “two sparrows sell for a coin of small value.” (Matthew 10:29, 31) According to Luke 12:6, 7, Jesus also said: “Five sparrows sell for two coins of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them goes forgotten before God. . . . Have no fear; you are worth more than many sparrows.” This simple but powerful illustration teaches us how Jehovah views each of his worshippers.

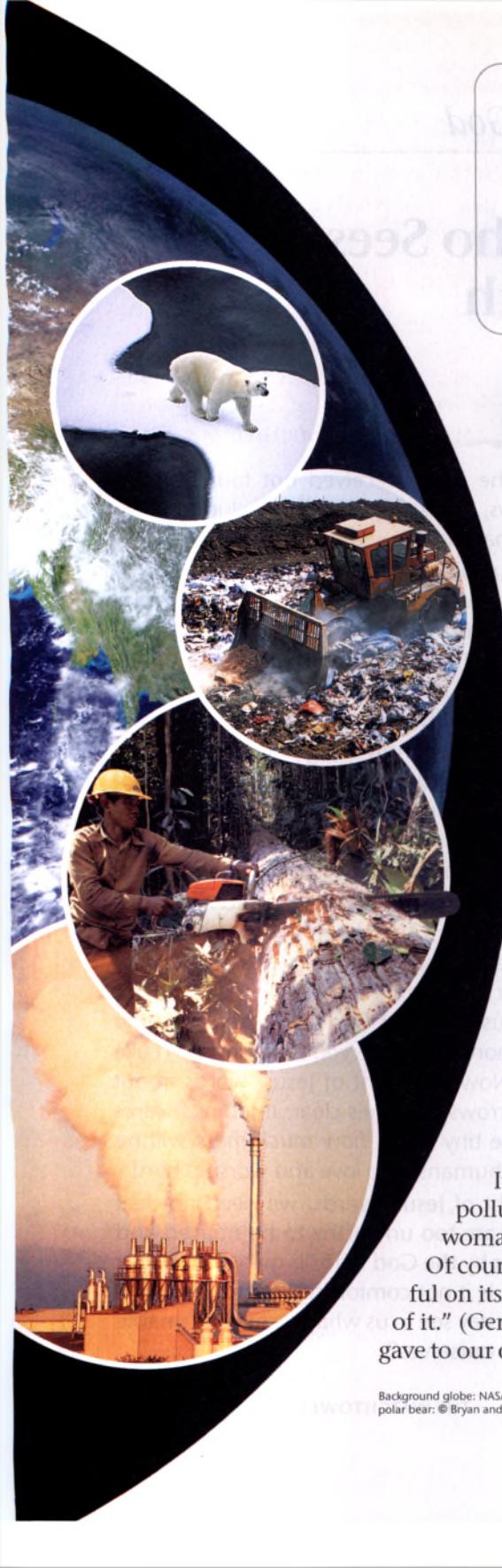
Sparrows were among the cheapest of all birds used for food. Jesus had no doubt observed poor women—perhaps even his own mother—in the marketplace buying these tiny birds to feed their family. For one assarion, a coin worth less than five cents in modern values, a buyer could purchase two sparrows. These birds were so inexpensive that for two

coins, the buyer received not four but five sparrows, an extra one being included at no additional charge.

Jesus explained that not a single sparrow “goes forgotten before God” or falls “to the ground without” the Father’s knowledge. (Matthew 10:29) Jehovah notices each time a sparrow falls to the earth perhaps because it is injured or alights on the ground in search of food. The seemingly insignificant birds that were not too little for Jehovah to create are not too little for him to remember. In fact, he values them, for they are precious living things. Do you see the point of Jesus’ illustration?

In his teaching, Jesus often used contrasts, reasoning from the lesser to the greater. For example, Jesus also said: “Ravens neither sow seed nor reap, and they have neither barn nor storehouse, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more worth are you than birds?” (Luke 12:24) Now the point of Jesus’ words about the sparrows becomes clear: If Jehovah cares for these tiny birds, *how much more* will he care for humans who love and worship him!

In light of Jesus’ words, we need not feel that we are too unworthy to be noticed and cared for by the God who “is greater than our hearts.” Is it not comforting to know that our Creator may see in us what we may be unable to see in ourselves?



Will Our EARTH Ever Be DESTROYED?

HAVE you ever wondered, 'What is the future of our earth?' Because of what they see happening to our beautiful planet, many people believe that our earth may not survive.

Indeed, today the earth is being ruined by the abuse of precious resources, such as water, forests, and the delicately balanced atmosphere. Also, some scientists warn that the earth and all life on it may be threatened by such things as a large meteorite, an exploding star, or the exhaustion of the sun's hydrogen fuel.

Scientists believe that the earth will gradually—perhaps over many billions of years—lose the ability to sustain human life. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* describes this as "the irreversible tendency toward disorder."

Happily, the Bible assures us that Jehovah God will not allow our earth to be destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. As Creator, he has limitless "dynamic energy," so he can sustain the universe indefinitely. (Isaiah 40:26) Thus, you can put faith in these words: "[God] has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever." "Praise him, you sun and moon. Praise him, all you stars of light. . . . For he himself commanded, and they were created. And he keeps them standing forever."—Psalm 104:5; 148:3-6.

God's Purpose for the Earth

It was never God's purpose that the earth be abused and polluted as it is today. Instead, God created the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, and placed them in a beautiful garden. Of course, their Paradise home would not have remained beautiful on its own. God assigned them "to cultivate it and to take care of it." (Genesis 2:8, 9, 15) What delightful and satisfying work God gave to our once perfect parents!

But God's purpose for the earth involved much more than caring for that original garden. He wanted the whole earth to be transformed into a paradise. That is why God gave this command to Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and become many and 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 upon the earth."—Genesis 1:28.

Sadly, God's purpose was opposed by a proud angel who came to be known as Satan. He craved to be worshipped by Adam and Eve. Using a snake as his mouthpiece, Satan got them to rebel against God's rulership. (Genesis 3:1-6; Revelation 12:9) How their selfish lack of appreciation must have hurt our Creator! But one thing that their rebellion did not do was change Jehovah God's purpose for the earth. He states: "My word that goes forth from my mouth will . . . not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it."—Isaiah 55:11.

For good reason, Jehovah has allowed Satan's rebellion to continue down till our day. During this time, mankind has been able to experiment with many forms of self-government, and the results have proved that independence from God, as promoted by Satan, is a total failure.*—Jeremiah 10:23.

On the positive side, during the millenniums that have passed, God has blessed certain upright humans. He has also preserved in the Bible a record of the consequences of either obeying God or rejecting his rule. In addition, Jehovah has done wonderful things for our future benefit. He has lovingly provided mankind with a Savior by sending his beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to teach us the

* For a discussion of why God has allowed suffering, see pages 106-14 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

best way to live and to give his life for us. (John 3:16) Because Jesus did not deserve to die, his death has been used by God as a legal basis to buy back what Adam and Eve lost, namely, the prospect of everlasting life in an earth-wide paradise.* To that end, Jehovah God has established a heavenly government to rule over all mankind, and he has appointed his Son, the resurrected Jesus Christ, to be King of that Kingdom. This marvelous arrangement will ensure that God's purpose for the earth is fulfilled.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

Thus, you can have absolute confidence in these wonderful promises recorded in the Bible: "Evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth. The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." "'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.' And the One seated on the throne said: 'Look! I am making all things new!'"—Psalm 37:9, 29; Revelation 21:3-5.

The Bible Does Not Contradict Itself

Some, though, may wonder, 'How can we harmonize the above-quoted Bible texts with other verses that seem to speak about the earth's coming to an end?' Let us consider some examples. Such an examination will demonstrate that the Bible does not contradict itself.

Long before scientists recognized the "tendency toward disorder" in all physical things, a Bible psalmist wrote: "You [that is, God] laid the foundations of the earth itself, and

* For more information about Jesus' sacrificial death, see pages 47-56 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

the heavens are the work of your hands. They themselves will perish, but you yourself will keep standing; and just like a garment they will all of them wear out. Just like clothing you will replace them, and they will finish their turn. But you are the same, and your own years will not be completed.”—Psalm 102:25-27.

In recording these words, the psalmist was not contradicting God’s everlasting purpose for the earth. Rather, he was contrasting God’s eternal existence with the perishability of all the matter that God had created. Without God’s eternal renewing power, the universe—including the solar system that we depend on for stability, light, and energy—would descend into total disorder and ultimate destruction. Thus, *if left to itself*, our earth would “wear out,” or come to a permanent end.

There are other verses in the Scriptures that may also appear at first glance to contradict God’s stated purpose for the earth. For example, the Bible speaks of heaven and earth as ‘passing away.’ (Revelation 21:1) Surely these words do not contradict Jesus’

The Bible promises that our earthly home will last forever

promise: “Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5) What, then, does the Bible mean when it speaks of heaven and earth as ‘passing away’?

The Bible frequently uses the expression “earth” in a figurative sense, meaning human society. For example, consider the following verse: “All the earth continued to be of one language and of one set of words.” (Genesis 11:1) Obviously, “earth” here refers to the people who were living on the earth.

Another example is Psalm 96:1, which according to the *King James Version* states: “Sing unto the LORD, all the earth.” Clearly, in this and many other passages, the word “earth” is used figuratively to refer to people.—Psalm 96:13.

The Bible sometimes likens the ruling powers on earth to the heavens or to heavenly bodies. For example, the oppressive Babylonian rulers were described as being star-like because they elevated themselves above those around them. (Isaiah 14:12-14) As foretold, the figurative Babylonian “heavens,” or ruling class, and “earth,” the supporters of that rulership, came to an end in 539 B.C.E. (Isaiah 51:6) This allowed repentant Jews to return to Jerusalem, where a “new heavens,” a new ruling body, ruled over “a new earth,” a righteous society of people.—Isaiah 65:17.

The Bible’s words about heaven and earth ‘passing away’ apparently refer to the end of today’s corrupt human governments and their ungodly supporters. (2 Peter 3:7) That will open the way for God’s new heavenly government to bless a righteous new human society, for “there are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to [God’s] promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.”—2 Peter 3:13.

Thus, you can have faith in God’s promise that our earthly home will last forever. Moreover, the Bible shows what you must do to share in that wonderful time when the earth will be transformed into a global paradise. Jesus said: “This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) Why not make it your goal to examine what the Bible teaches about the future of the earth and humankind? Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area will be delighted to assist you in this regard.

Raising Children in a Permissive World

HAVE you ever watched a child begging for a certain toy that the parent does not wish to buy? Or a child who wants to run and play when the parent has said, "Stay put"? You can see that in cases like these, the parent wants to act in the child's best interests. Nonetheless, all too often the parent gives in. Under a barrage of whining, the parent changes no to yes.

Many parents seem to believe that good parenting means bending to the will of their children in most things. In the United States, for example, a poll was taken of 750 children aged 12 to 17. When asked how they respond when their parents tell them no, nearly 60 percent of the children said that they keep asking. Some 55 percent found that this tactic usually worked. Their parents may feel that such permissiveness shows love, but does it really?

Consider this wise proverb from ancient times: "If one is pampering one's servant from youth on, in his later life he will even become a thankless one." (Proverbs 29:21) Granted, a child is not a servant. Would you not agree, though, that the principle applies to child rearing? Pampering children, giving them all they want, may cause them to grow up to be "thankless"—spoiled, willful, unappreciative adults.



Do parents show love for their children by giving in to their every demand?

In contrast, the Bible advises parents: "Train up a boy according to the way for him." (Proverbs 22:6) Wise parents follow this direction, setting and enforcing clear, consistent, and reasonable rules. They do not confuse love with permissiveness; nor do they reward children for whining, nagging, or throwing tantrums. Rather, they agree with Jesus' wise words: "Just let your word Yes mean Yes, your No, No." (Matthew 5:37) What, though, is involved in training children? Consider a powerful illustration.

"Like Arrows in the Hand"

The Bible illustrates the parent-child relationship in a way that highlights a child's need for parental guidance. Psalm 127:4, 5 says: "Like arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the sons of youth. Happy is the able-bodied man that has filled his quiver with them." So children are likened to

arrows, and the parent is likened to a mighty warrior. Just as an archer knows that his arrows will not hit the target by chance, loving parents realize that child rearing cannot be a haphazard business. They want their children to reach a "target"—a fulfilling life as happy, responsible adults. They want their children to make good choices, to be wise and avoid needless problems, and to achieve worthwhile goals. But wanting such things is not enough.

If an arrow is to reach its target, what is needed? It must be thoroughly prepared, well protected, and powerfully directed toward its target. Likewise, children need to be prepared, protected, and directed if their journey toward adulthood is going to be successful. Let us consider these three aspects of child rearing one at a time.

Thoroughly Preparing the Arrow

The arrows used by archers in Bible times were prepared very carefully. The shaft, perhaps made of a lightweight wood, had to be carved by hand and made as straight as possible. The tip had to be sharp. At the other end of the shaft, feathers were attached to stabilize the arrow in flight, keeping it on course.

Parents want their children to be like those straight arrows—upright, free from deviation. Therefore, if they are wise, they do not turn a blind eye to serious faults but lovingly help their children to work on these and overcome them. There will be plenty of such work to do with any child, for "foolishness is tied up with the heart of a boy." (Proverbs 22:15) The Bible thus exhorts parents to discipline their children. (Ephesians 6:4) Indeed, discipline plays a vital role in forming and straightening out a child's mind and character.

No wonder, then, that Proverbs 13:24 says: "The one holding back his rod is hating his son, but the one loving him is he that does

look for him with discipline." In this context, the rod of discipline represents a means of correction, whatever form it may take. By administering loving discipline, a parent seeks to correct faults that if they were to become deeply rooted, would cause the child much misery in adult life. Truly, withholding such discipline amounts to hate; administering it is an act of love.

A loving parent also helps the child to understand the reasons behind the rules. Discipline thus involves not only the giving of commands and the meting out of punishment but, more important, the imparting of understanding. The Bible notes: "An *understanding* son is observing the law."—Proverbs 28:7.

The feathers, or fletching, that an archer attaches to his arrows help them to fly straight after they leave his bow. Likewise, Bible teachings from the Originator of the family arrangement can stay with children even after they leave home, benefiting them throughout life. (Ephesians 3:14, 15) How, though, can parents make sure that such teachings are really "attached" to their children?

Notice God's counsel to Israelite parents in Moses' time: "These words that I am commanding you today must prove to be on your heart; and you must inculcate them in your son." (Deuteronomy 6:6, 7) So parents need to do two things. First, they need to learn and apply God's Word themselves, actually coming to love God's laws. (Psalm 119:97) Then they are in a position to apply the second part of the scripture—to "inculcate" God's laws in their children. That means impressing the value of such laws on their children's hearts through effective teaching and frequent repetition.

Clearly, there is nothing old-fashioned or out-of-date about teaching Bible principles or using loving discipline to correct serious



A loving parent explains the reasons behind family rules

faults. These are vital ways to prepare those precious "arrows" for a straight and steady flight toward adulthood.

Protecting the Arrow

Let us return to the illustration recorded at Psalm 127:4, 5. Recall that the archer "filled his quiver" with his arrows. Once prepared, arrows had to be protected. Thus, the archer carried them in a quiver, where they would not be easily damaged or broken. Interestingly, the Bible speaks prophetically of the Messiah as a polished arrow that his Father "concealed . . . in his own quiver." (Isaiah 49:2) Jehovah God, the most loving Father imaginable, did indeed protect his beloved Son, Jesus, from all manner of harm until the appointed time came for the Messiah to be put to death as foretold. Even then, God protected his Son from being permanently harmed by death, bringing him safely back to heaven, to live eternally.

Likewise, good parents are concerned about pro-

tecting their children from the dangers of this degraded world. It may be that parents prohibit certain activities that would unnecessarily expose their children to dangerous influences. For example, wise parents take this principle seriously: "Bad associations spoil useful habits." (1 Corinthians 15:33) Protecting children from association with those who do not respect the moral standards of the Bible will likely keep young ones from making a number of costly, even deadly, mistakes.

Children may not always appreciate parental protection. In fact, they may well resent it at times, for protecting your children will often mean telling them no. A respected author of books on child rearing comments: "Though they don't always show it and probably won't thank you at that moment, children really do want parents to provide safe, predictable structure in their lives. We can do that by being an authoritative parent who sets limits on behavior."

Yes, protecting your children from anything that might rob them of their peace,

Good parents protect their children from the dangers of this degraded world



their innocence, or their clean standing before God is an essential way to show that you love them. In time, they will likely come to understand your motives, and they will appreciate your loving protection.

Directing the Arrow

Note that Psalm 127:4, 5 likens the parent to "a mighty man." Does this mean that only a father can be effective in the parental role? Not at all. In fact, the principle of this illustration applies to both fathers and mothers—and to single parents as well. (Proverbs 1:8) The phrase "mighty man" suggests that a considerable amount of strength was required to shoot an arrow from a bow. In Bible times, bows were sometimes mounted with copper, and a soldier was said to 'tread the bow,' perhaps bracing the bow with his foot so that he could string it. (Jeremiah 50:14, 29) Clearly, much energy and effort went into pulling that taut string back in order to shoot those arrows toward their mark!

Similarly, raising children requires considerable effort. They do not simply rear themselves, any more than an arrow launches itself toward its target. Sadly, many parents today seem unwilling to expend the kind of effort that is needed. They take the easy way out. They let television, school, and peers teach their children about right and wrong, about morals, about sex. They let their children have whatever they want. And when saying no seems like too much work, they simply say yes—often excusing their decision by saying that they do not want to hurt their children's feelings. In reality, it is their permissiveness that will do their children real, lasting harm.

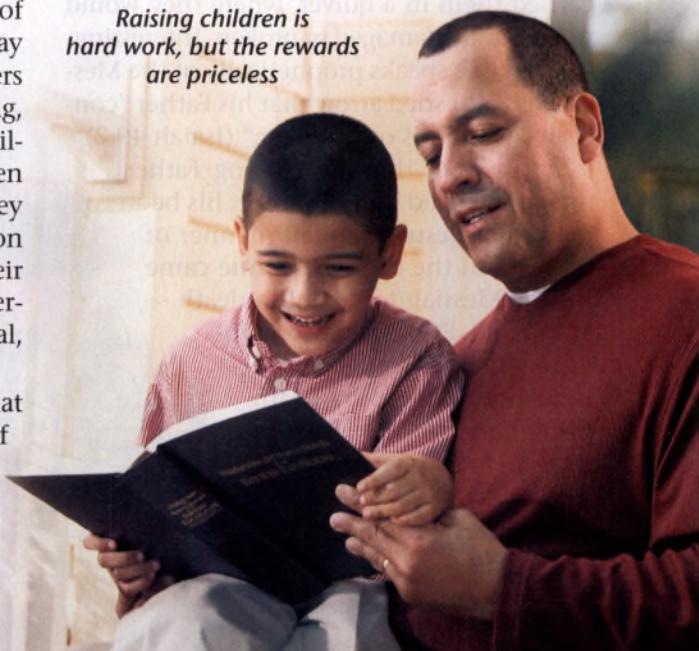
Raising children is hard work. Doing that work wholeheartedly with the guidance of God's Word is certainly demanding, but the rewards are priceless. *Parents* magazine noted: "Studies . . . have found that

children brought up by loving but authoritative parents—those who are supportive of their children yet maintain firm limits—excel academically, develop better social skills, feel good about themselves, and are happier overall than kids whose parents are either too lenient or excessively harsh."

There is an even better reward. Earlier we considered the first part of Proverbs 22:6: "Train up a boy according to the way for him." The verse continues with these heart-warming words: "Even when he grows old he will not turn aside from it." Does this inspired proverb offer a guarantee of success? Not necessarily. Your child has free will and will grow up to exercise it. But this verse offers parents a loving assurance. What is that?

If you train your children according to the Bible's counsel, you are creating the most favorable circumstances to bring about a marvelous result—seeing your children grow up to be happy, fulfilled, and responsible adults. (Proverbs 23:24) By all means, then, prepare those precious "arrows," protect them, and expend yourself in directing them. You will never regret it.

*Raising children is
hard work, but the rewards
are priceless*



He Watched, and He Waited

Elijah longed to be alone with his heavenly Father. But the throngs of people around him had just seen this true prophet call down fire from heaven, and many of them were no doubt eager to curry favor with him. Before Elijah could ascend to the windswept heights of Mount Carmel and approach Jehovah God in private prayer, he faced an unpleasant task. He had to speak to King Ahab.

The two men could hardly have been more different. Ahab, bedecked in royal finery, was a greedy, weak-willed apostate. Elijah wore the official garb of a prophet—a simple, rustic robe possibly of animal skin or of woven camel or goat hair. He was a man of great courage, integrity, and faith. The day that was now drawing to a close had revealed much about the character of both men.*

It had been a bad day for Ahab and other Baal worshippers. The pagan religion that Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel, championed in the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel had been dealt a terrible blow. Baal had been exposed as a fraud. That lifeless god had failed to light a simple fire in response to the frantic pleas, dances, and ritual bloodletting of his prophets. Baal had failed to protect those 450 men from their well-deserved execution. But the false god had failed in some-

* For details, see the article "He Stood Up for Pure Worship," in the January 1, 2008, issue of *The Watchtower*.

thing else, and that failure was about to be made complete. For over three years, the Baal prophets had implored their god to end the drought afflicting the land, but Baal had proved unable to do so. Soon, Jehovah himself would demonstrate his supremacy by ending the drought.—1 Kings 16:30-17:1; 18:1-40.

When, though, would Jehovah act? How would Elijah conduct himself until then? And what can we learn from this man of faith? Let us see as we examine the account recorded at 1 Kings 18:41-46.

A Prayerful Attitude

Elijah approached Ahab and said: "Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the turmoil of a downpour." (Verse 41) Had this wicked king learned anything from the day's events? The account does not say specifically, but we find here no words of repentance, no request that the prophet help him approach Jehovah and seek forgiveness. No, Ahab simply "proceeded to go up to eat and drink." (Verse 42) What about Elijah?

"As for Elijah, he went up to the top of Carmel and began crouching to the earth and keeping his face put between his knees." While Ahab went off to fill his stomach, Elijah had an opportunity to pray to his Father. Note the humble posture described here—Elijah on the ground with his head bowed so low that his face was near his knees. What was Elijah doing? We need not guess. The Bible, at James 5:18, tells us that Elijah prayed



Elijah's prayers reflected his earnest desire to see God's will done

for the drought to end. No doubt he was offering such a prayer on top of Carmel.

Earlier, Jehovah said: "I am determined to give rain upon the surface of the ground." (1 Kings 18:1) So Elijah prayed that his Father's stated will be accomplished, much as Jesus taught his followers to pray some one thousand years later.—Matthew 6:9, 10.

Elijah's example teaches us much about prayer. Foremost in Elijah's thoughts was the accomplishment of his Father's will. When we pray, it is good to remember: "No matter what it is that we ask according to [God's] will, he hears us." (1 John 5:14) Clearly, then, we need to know what God's will is in order to pray acceptably—a good reason to make Bible study a part of our daily life. Surely Elijah also wanted to see an end to the drought because of all the suffering among the people of his homeland. His heart was likely full of thanksgiving after the miracle he had seen Jehovah perform that day. Con-

cern for the welfare of others and heartfelt thanksgiving should mark our prayers as well.—2 Corinthians 1:11; Philippians 4:6.

Confident and Watchful

Elijah was sure that Jehovah would act to end the drought, but he was not sure *when* Jehovah would act. So, what did the prophet do in the meantime? Note what verse 43 says: "He said to his attendant: 'Go up, please. Look in the direction of the sea.' So he went up and looked and then said: 'There is nothing at all.' And he went on to say, 'Go back,' for seven times." Elijah's example teaches us at least two lessons. First, note the prophet's confidence. Then, consider his watchfulness.

Elijah eagerly sought evidence that Jehovah was about to act, so he sent his attendant up to a high vantage point to scan the horizon for any signs of impending rain. Upon his return, the attendant delivered this unenthusiastic report: "There is nothing at all." The horizon was clear, and the sky, evidently cloudless. Now, did you notice something unusual? Remember, Elijah had just told King Ahab: "There is the sound of the turmoil of a downpour." How could the prophet say such a thing when there were no rain clouds to be seen?

Elijah knew of Jehovah's promise. As Jehovah's prophet and representative, he was sure that his God would fulfill His word. Elijah was confident—so much so that it was as if he could already hear the downpour. We might be reminded of the Bible's description of Moses: "He continued steadfast as seeing the One who is invisible." Is God that real to you? He provides ample reason for us to put that kind of faith in him and his promises.—Hebrews 11:1, 27.

Next, notice how watchful Elijah was. He sent his attendant back, not once or twice, but seven times! We might imagine the at-

tendant tiring of such a repetitive task, but Elijah remained eager for a sign and did not give up. Finally, after his seventh trip, the attendant reported: “Look! There is a small cloud like a man’s palm ascending out of the sea.” (Verse 44) Can you picture that attendant holding his arm outstretched and using his palm to gauge the size of one little cloud coming up over the horizon of the Great Sea?* The attendant may have been unimpressed. To Elijah, though, that cloud was significant. He now gave his attendant urgent directions: “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Hitch up! And go down that the downpour may not detain you!’”

* Today, the Great Sea is known as the Mediterranean.

Again, Elijah set a powerful example for us. We too live at a time when God will soon act to fulfill his stated purpose. Elijah awaited the end of a drought; God’s servants today await the end of a corrupt world system of things. (1 John 2:17) Until Jehovah God acts, we need to remain watchful, as Elijah was. God’s own Son, Jesus, advised his followers: “Keep on the watch, therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” (Matthew 24:42) Did Jesus mean that his followers would be completely in the dark as to when the end would come? No, for he spoke at length about what the world would be like in the days leading up to the end. Each of us can learn about this

Jehovah’s prophet Elijah announced to King Ahab that the long drought would end soon. That happened “in the third year”—evidently counting from the day Elijah first announced the drought. (1 Kings 18:1) Jehovah sent rain soon after Elijah said that He would. Some might conclude, then, that the drought ended during the course of its third year and that it was therefore less than three years long. However, both Jesus and James tell us that the drought lasted “three years and six months.” (Luke 4:25; James 5:17) Is this a contradiction?

Not at all. You see, the dry season in ancient Israel was quite long, lasting up to six months. No doubt Elijah came to Ahab to announce the drought when the dry season was already proving to be unusually long and severe. In effect, the

How Long Was the Drought in Elijah’s Day?



drought had begun nearly half a year earlier. Thus, when Elijah announced the end of the drought “in the third year” from his previous announcement, the drought had already lasted nearly three and a half years. The full “three years and six months” had elapsed by the time all the people assembled to witness the great test on Mount Carmel.

Consider, then, the timing of Elijah’s first visit to Ahab. The people believed that Baal was “the rider of the clouds,” the god who would bring rains to end the dry season. If the dry season was unusually long, people likely wondered: ‘Where is Baal? When will he bring the rains?’ Elijah’s announcement that neither rain nor dew would occur until he said so must have been devastating to those Baal worshippers.—1 Kings 17:1.

detailed sign of "the conclusion of the system of things."—Matthew 24:3-7.*

Each facet of that sign furnishes powerful, convincing evidence. Is such evidence enough to move us to act with urgency? One little cloud rising from the horizon was enough to convince Elijah that Jehovah was about to act. Was the faithful prophet disappointed?

Jehovah Brings Relief and Blessings

The account continues: "It came about in the meantime that the heavens themselves darkened up with clouds and wind and a great downpour began to occur. And Ahab kept riding and made his way to Jezreel." (Verse 45) Events began to unfold at remarkable speed. While Elijah's attendant was delivering the prophet's message to Ahab, that little cloud became many, filling and darkening the sky. A great wind blew. At last, after three and a half years, rain fell on the soil of Israel.[#] The parched ground drank in the drops. As the rain became a downpour, the river Kishon swelled, no doubt washing away the blood of the executed Baal prophets. The wayward Israelites too were being given a chance to wash away the terrible stain of Baal worship on the land.

Surely Elijah hoped that it would be so! Would Ahab repent and turn away from the pollution of Baal worship? The events of the day had furnished powerful reasons to make such changes. Of course, we cannot know what was going through Ahab's mind at the moment. The account simply tells us that the king "kept riding and made his way to Jezreel." Had he learned anything? Was he resolved to change his ways? Later events

* For more information on the evidence that Jesus' words are undergoing fulfillment today, see chapter 9 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

[#] Some wonder if the Bible contradicts itself regarding the length of the drought. See the box on page 19.

suggest that the answer is no. Still, the day was not yet over for Ahab—nor for Elijah.

Jehovah's prophet began to make his way along the same road Ahab had taken. A long, dark, wet trek lay ahead of him. But something unusual happened next.

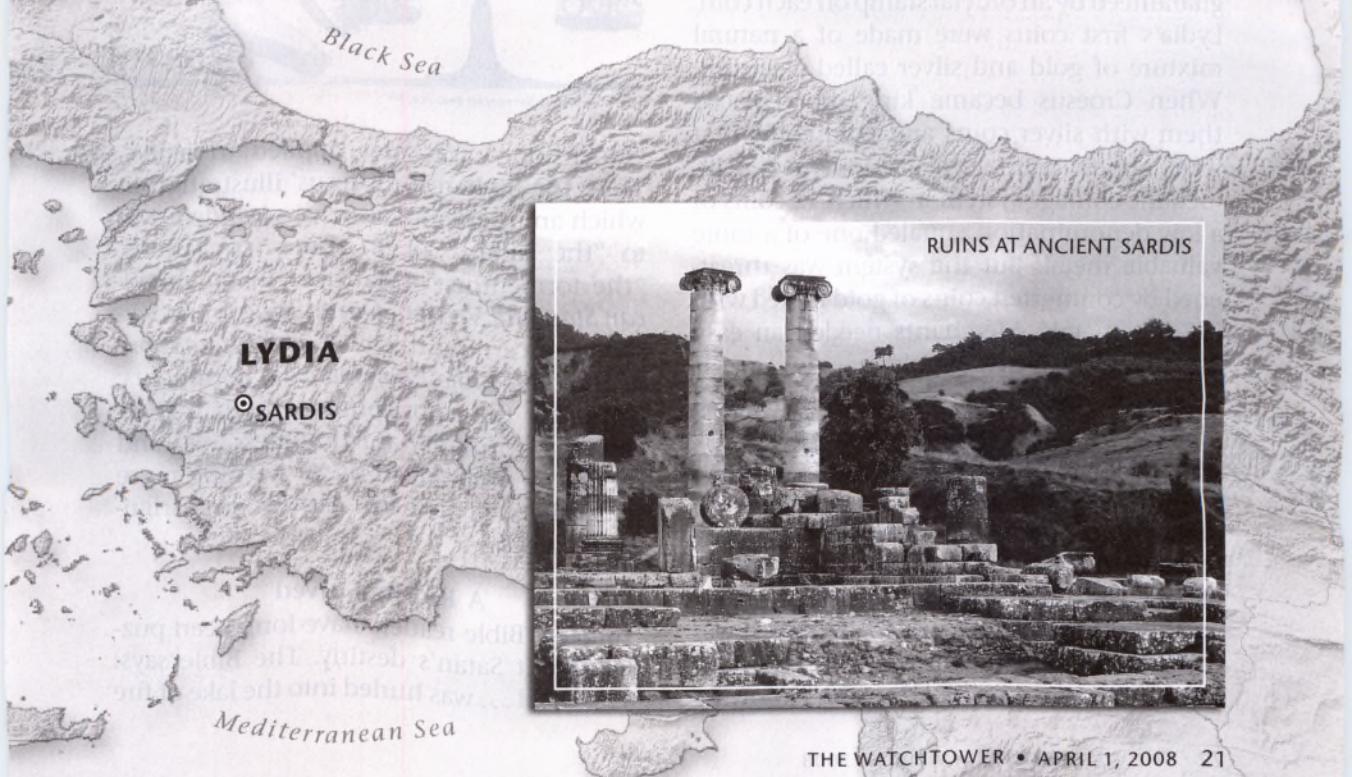
"The very hand of Jehovah proved to be upon Elijah, so that he girded up his hips and went running ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel." (Verse 46) Clearly, "the very hand of Jehovah" was acting upon Elijah in a supernatural way. Jezreel was some 20 miles distant, and Elijah was no youth.* Just picture that prophet girding up his long garments, tying them at his hips so that his legs would have freedom of movement, and then running along that rain-drenched road—running so fast that he caught up with, passed, and outpaced the royal chariot!

What a blessing that must have been for Elijah! To feel such strength, vitality, and stamina—perhaps even more than he had ever felt in his youth—must have proved a thrilling experience. We might be reminded of the prophecies that guarantee perfect health and vigor to faithful ones in the coming earthly Paradise. (Isaiah 35:6; Luke 23:43) As Elijah raced along that wet road, he surely knew that he had the approval of his Father, the only true God, Jehovah!

Jehovah is eager to bestow blessings. Reaching out for them is worth every effort we can make. Like Elijah, we need to be watchful, carefully weighing the powerful evidence showing that Jehovah is about to act in these dangerous and urgent times. Like Elijah, we have every reason to place complete confidence in the promises of Jehovah, "the God of truth."—Psalm 31:5.

* Soon after this, Jehovah would assign Elijah to train Elisha, who would become known as the one "who poured out water upon the hands of Elijah." (2 Kings 3:11) Elisha acted as Elijah's attendant, evidently offering practical assistance to an older man.

How the Ancient Kingdom of Lydia Affects Us Today



YOU may never have heard of the ancient kingdom of Lydia, so it may surprise you to learn that a discovery made there changed the way the world does business. Bible readers may also be surprised to learn that a Lydian invention sheds light on a puzzling Bible prophecy. What did Lydians discover? Before answering, it will be interesting to learn something about the life and times of this almost forgotten empire.

RUINS AT ANCIENT SARDIS



The kings of Lydia ruled from their capital, Sardis, in the western part of what was then called Asia Minor but is now called Turkey. Lydia's last king, Croesus, amassed fabulous wealth, but then about 546 B.C.E., he lost his empire to Cyrus the Great of Persia—the very same Cyrus who conquered the Babylonian Empire a few years later.

Lydia's innovative businessmen are said to have been the first to use coins. Gold and silver had long been used as money, but because of the irregular size of gold bars and rings, people had to weigh the money each time they made a transaction. In Israel, for example, God's prophet Jeremiah bought some land and wrote: "I began to weigh out to him the money, seven shekels and ten silver pieces."—Jeremiah 32:9.

In Lydia, contemporaries of Jeremiah discovered something to simplify trade—the use of coins the standard weight of which was guaranteed by an official stamp on each coin. Lydia's first coins were made of a natural mixture of gold and silver called electrum. When Croesus became king, he replaced them with silver coins and gold coins that were almost pure. Lydians invented a bimetallic coinage system in which 12 coins of a low denomination equaled one of a more valuable metal. But the system was threatened by counterfeit coins of gold mixed with inferior metals. Merchants needed an easy way to test the purity of gold.

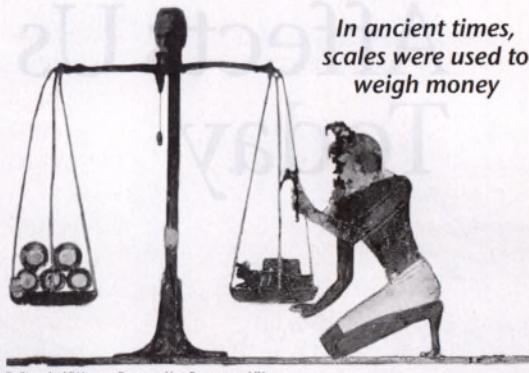
Lydians discovered that a type of local black stone called Lydian stone would solve their problem. When a coin is rubbed on this smooth, slightly abrasive stone, it makes a mark. When the color of the mark is compared with the color of marks made by sample needles of known gold content, the proportion of gold in the coin is revealed. It was this discovery, the touchstone test, that made reliable coinage possible. How does knowing

about touchstones help us to understand the Bible?

Figurative Touchstones in the Bible

As the testing of gold with a touchstone became a common practice among traders, the word for "touchstone" came to mean a method of testing. In Greek, the language in which part of the Bible was written, the word was also applied to the torment of men being tested with torture.

Because jailers were the ones who tormented prisoners, the word derived from

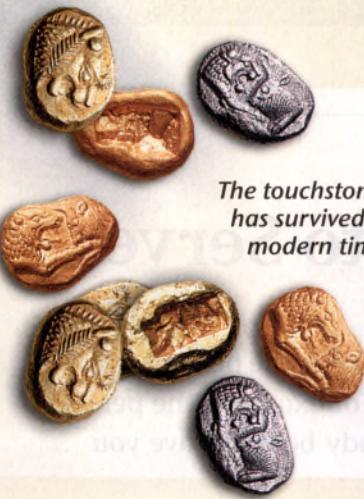


In ancient times, scales were used to weigh money

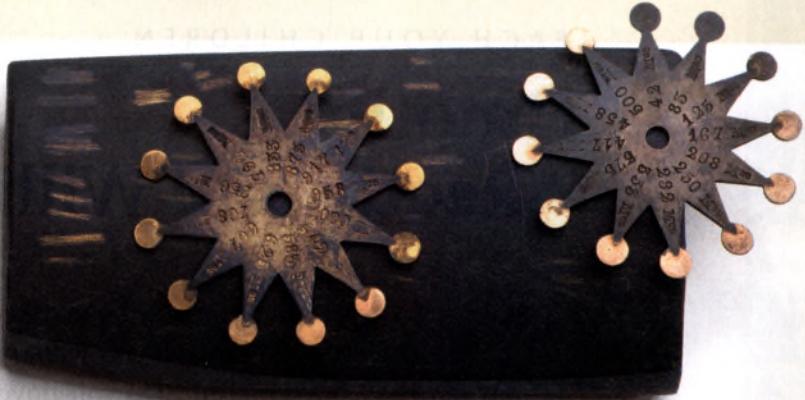
"touchstone" was also applied to jailers. Thus, the Bible records Jesus' illustration in which an ungrateful slave was handed over to "the jailers," or in some translations, "the tormentors." (Matthew 18:34; *American Standard Version, Darby, King James Version*) Concerning this text, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* comments: "Probably the imprisonment itself was regarded as 'torment' (as it doubtless was), and the 'tormentors' need mean nothing more than jailers." This helps explain an intriguing Bible text.

A Riddle Solved

Sincere Bible readers have long been puzzled about Satan's destiny. The Bible says: "The Devil . . . was hurled into the lake of fire



The touchstone test has survived into modern times



Coins: Courtesy Classical Numismatic Group, Inc.; touchstone: Science Museum/Science & Society Picture Library

and sulphur, where both the wild beast and the false prophet already were; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.” (Revelation 20:10) Surely, for Jehovah to consign someone to everlasting life in torment runs counter to God’s love and justice. (Jeremiah 7:31) In addition, the Bible presents everlasting life as a gift, not as a punishment. (Romans 6:23) Clearly, then, Revelation 20:10 is written in symbolic language. The wild beast and the lake of fire are figurative. (Revelation 13:2; 20:14) Is the torment also figurative? What could this expression possibly mean?

As we have seen, the Greek word for “torment” is derived from the word for “touch-

stone” and may refer to the torment of imprisonment. Thus, Satan’s eternal torment may refer to his being forever locked away in the securest of prisons—death itself.

Lydia’s touchstone test helps us to understand something else about Satan’s eternal “torment” that harmonizes with God’s love. In some languages, a “touchstone” is a norm by which to test things. For example, in English, “touchstone” means “a test or criterion for determining the quality or genuineness of a thing.” Thus, Satan’s eternal “torment” suggests that his judgment will serve as an everlasting touchstone that could be used should any rebellion ever arise against Jehovah in the future. Never again will a challenge to Jehovah’s rulership need to be tested for an extended time to prove the challenger wrong.

Understanding why traders everywhere adopted Lydia’s touchstone test and understanding the figurative expressions the practice gave rise to shed light on what will happen to Satan. His fate will forever serve as the touchstone of judgment that will make it unnecessary for God ever again to tolerate rebellion.—Romans 8:20.

**Satan’s symbolic
torment suggests
that his judgment will
forever serve as a
touchstone**



Timothy —Ready and Willing to Serve

ARE you ready?" Have you ever been asked that?— Well, the person who asked wanted to know if you were *prepared*. For example, the person may have meant: 'Do you have your study books? Have you read your lessons?' As we will see, Timothy was ready.

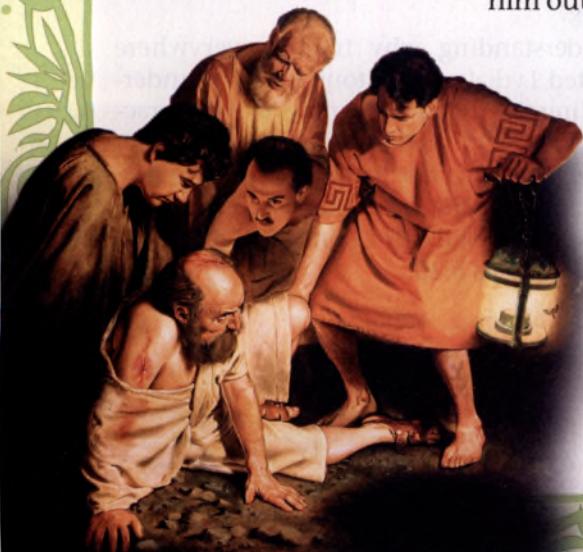
Timothy was also willing. Do you know what that means?— When Timothy was invited to serve God, he had the attitude of another one of God's servants, who said: "Here I am! Send me." (Isaiah 6:8) Because he was ready and willing to serve, Timothy enjoyed an exciting life. Would you like to hear about it?—

Timothy was born hundreds of miles away from Jerusalem, in Lystra. His grandmother Lois and his mother, Eunice, were good students of the Scriptures. Even when Timothy was a baby, they began teaching him about God's Word.—2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15.

When Timothy was probably still a teenager, the apostle Paul, along with Barnabas, visited Lystra on his first long preaching trip. It is likely at this time that Timothy's mother and grandmother became Christians. Would you like to hear about the trouble Paul and Barnabas faced?— Well, people who did not like Christians threw stones at Paul, knocked him down, and dragged him outside the city. They thought he was dead.

Those who believed what Paul was teaching gathered around him, and he got up. The next day, Paul and Barnabas left, but they returned to Lystra a little later. When they did, Paul gave a talk and told the disciples: "We must enter into the kingdom of God through many tribulations." (Acts 14:8-22) Do you know what Paul meant?— He meant that others would make trouble for those who serve God. Paul later

What has happened?



wrote to Timothy: 'All those who desire to live a godly life will be persecuted.'
—2 Timothy 3:12; John 15:20.

After Paul and Barnabas left Lystra, they returned home. Some months later, Paul picked Silas to travel with him, and together they went back to encourage the new disciples in the places Paul had visited. When they arrived at Lystra, how happy Timothy must have been to see Paul again! Timothy was even happier when he was invited to travel with Paul and Silas. Timothy accepted the invitation. He was ready and willing to go.—Acts 15:40–16:5.

The three traveled together, walking many miles, and then they boarded a boat. After going ashore, they walked to Thessalonica in Greece. Here many became Christians. But others were angry and formed a mob. The lives of Paul, Silas, and Timothy were in danger, so they left for Beroea.—Acts 17:1–10.

Paul was worried about the new believers in Thessalonica, so he sent Timothy back there. Do you know why?—Paul later explained to the Christians in Thessalonica: 'To make you firm and to comfort you that no one might be discouraged.' Do you know why Paul sent young Timothy on such a dangerous assignment?—Well, Timothy was not as well-known to the opposers, and he was *willing* to go. That took a lot of courage! How did the visit turn out? When Timothy returned to Paul, he told Paul how faithful the Thessalonians were. So Paul wrote to them: "We have been comforted over you."
—1 Thessalonians 3:2–7.

Timothy served with Paul for the next ten years. Then Paul was imprisoned in Rome, and Timothy, who himself had recently been released from prison, went to be with him. While in prison, Paul wrote a letter to the Philippians, perhaps using Timothy as a secretary. Paul said: 'I am hoping to send Timothy to you, for I have no one else who is so faithful and will serve you better.'—Philippians 2:19–22; Hebrews 13:23.

How happy those words must have made Timothy! Paul came to love Timothy very much because he was ready and willing to serve. We hope that you will be too.

Questions:

- Where did Timothy grow up, and what happened when Paul first visited there?
- What did Timothy do when he was invited to travel with Paul and Silas?
- How did Timothy show courage, and why did Paul love him so much?

THE EUCHARIST

The Facts Behind the Ritual

PEOPLE the world over observe the ceremony regularly—whether several times a year, weekly, or even daily. Yet, it is called a mystery of faith, and many of those who practice it do not claim to understand it. It is viewed as sacred and is even supposed to be miraculous.

The ceremony is the Eucharist—that part of the Catholic Mass when the priest says a blessing over the bread and wine and the congregation is invited to receive Christ in Holy Communion.* Pope Benedict XVI said that for Catholics, this ceremony is “the sum and summary of our faith.” Not long ago, the church observed the “Year of the Eucharist” as part of an effort to “reawaken and increase eucharistic faith.”

Even Catholics who struggle with their faith feel strongly about this ritual. For example, in a recent essay in *Time* magazine, a woman described as a young, progressive Catholic wrote: “Whatever our issues with the tenets of Catholicism the religion, we still cling to what unites us in Catholicism the faith: our devotion to the celebration of the Eucharist.”

* The ceremony is also called the Lord’s Supper, the breaking of the bread, the Eucharistic assembly, the Holy Sacrifice, the Holy and Divine Liturgy, Communion, and Holy Mass. The word “Eucharist” is derived from the Greek *eu-kha-ri-sti'a*, which means gratitude, thankfulness, or thanksgiving.



What, though, is the Eucharist? Are Christ’s followers required to observe it? Let us first consider how the tradition of the Eucharist developed. Then we can focus on a more important question: Does the Eucharist really reflect the observance instituted by Jesus Christ nearly 2,000 years ago?

The Eucharist and Christendom

It is not hard to see why the Eucharist is viewed as miraculous. The key moment of the ceremony comes during the Eucharistic prayer. At that point, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “the power of the words and the action of Christ, and the power of the Holy Spirit” make Jesus’ body and blood “sacramentally present.” The priest, after partaking of the bread

and wine, invites the faithful to receive Communion, usually by eating only the bread, or the Host.

The Catholic Church teaches that the bread and the wine are miraculously transformed into the literal body and blood of Christ—a doctrine called transubstantiation. This teaching arose gradually, with the word first being defined and used officially in the 13th century. In the days of the Protestant Reformation, certain aspects of the Catholic Eucharist were called into question. Luther rejected the doctrine of transubstantiation in favor of consubstantiation. The distinction is subtle. Luther taught that the bread and the wine coexist with, rather than transform into, the flesh and blood of Jesus.

Over time, other differences regarding the meaning of the Eucharist as well as the manner and frequency of its celebration developed among the denominations of Christendom. Nonetheless, in some form

What was the original observance that Jesus instituted like?

this ritual has remained of fundamental importance throughout Christendom. What, though, was the original observance that Jesus instituted like?

The Institution of “the Lord’s Evening Meal”

Jesus himself instituted “the Lord’s evening meal,” or Memorial of his death. (1 Corinthians 11:20, 24) However, did he set up a mysterious rite in which his followers would actually eat his body and drink his blood?

Jesus had just celebrated the Jewish Passover and dismissed Judas Iscariot, the apostle who was about to betray him. Matthew, one

of the 11 apostles present, reported: “As they continued eating, Jesus took a loaf and, after saying a blessing, he broke it and, giving it to the disciples, he said: ‘Take, eat. This means my body.’ Also, he took a cup and, having given thanks [Greek, *eu-kha-ri-ste’sas*], he gave it to them, saying: ‘Drink out of it, all of you; for this means my “blood of the covenant,” which is to be poured out in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins.’”—Matthew 26:26-28.

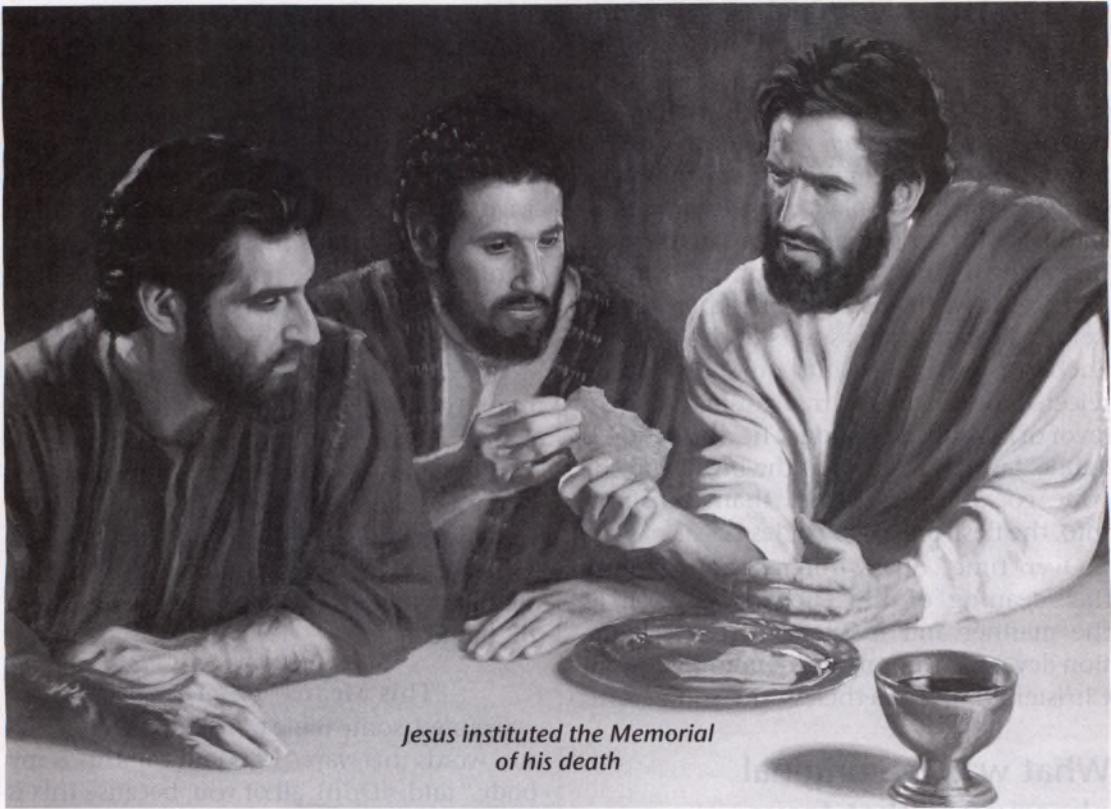
For Jesus, as for all of God’s servants, asking a blessing on the food was a matter of course. (Deuteronomy 8:10; Matthew 6:11; 14:19; 15:36; Mark 6:41; 8:6; John 6:11, 23; Acts 27:35; Romans 14:6) Is there any reason to believe that in thus giving thanks, Jesus was also performing a miracle, causing his followers literally to consume his flesh and his blood?

“This Means” or “This Is”?

Granted, some Bible translations render Jesus’ words this way: “Take and eat; this *is* my body,” and, “Drink all of you, because this *is* my blood.” (Matthew 26:26-28, *Conferenza Episcopale Italiana; The New Jerusalem Bible*) It is also true that the Greek word *e-stin*, a form of the Greek verb “to be,” essentially means “is.” But the same verb can also mean “signify.” Interestingly, in many versions of the Bible, this verb is frequently translated “mean” or “stand for.”* It is the context that determines the most precise rendering. For instance, at Matthew 12:7, *e-stin* is rendered “means” in many Bible translations: “If you had known what this means [Greek, *e-stin*]: I want mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the blameless.”—CEI; *Douay Version*.

In this regard, many respected Bible

* See, for example, Matthew 13:38; 27:46; Luke 8:11; Galatians 4:24 as they are rendered in *The New English Bible*.



*Jesus instituted the Memorial
of his death*

scholars have agreed that the word “is” does not accurately render the thought Jesus was expressing here. For example, Jacques Dupont considered the culture and society in which Jesus lived and concluded that “the most natural” rendering of the verse should be: “This means my body” or, “This represents my body.”

At any rate, Jesus could not have meant that his followers were literally to eat his flesh and drink his blood. Why not? After the Flood of Noah’s day, when God gave man permission to eat the flesh of animals, he directly forbade man to consume blood. (Genesis 9:3, 4) This command was repeated in the Mosaic Law, which Jesus obeyed fully. (Deuteronomy 12:23; 1 Peter 2:22) And the apostles were inspired by holy spirit

to renew the command against consuming blood, making that law binding upon all Christians. (Acts 15:20, 29) Would Jesus institute an observance that would require his followers to violate a sacred decree of Almighty God? Impossible!

Clearly, then, Jesus used the bread and wine as symbols. The unleavened bread meant, or represented, his sinless body that would be sacrificed. The red wine signified his blood that would be poured out “in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins.”—Matthew 26:28.

**The Purpose of
the Lord’s Evening Meal**
Jesus concluded the first observance of the Lord’s Evening Meal with these words: “Keep

doing this in remembrance of me." (Luke 22:19) The observance does indeed help us to remember Jesus and the wonderful things accomplished by his death. It reminds us that Jesus upheld the sovereignty of his Father, Jehovah. It also reminds us that by means of his death as a perfect, sinless human, Jesus gave "his soul a ransom in exchange for many." The ransom makes it possible for any who would exercise faith in his sacrifice to be freed from sin and to attain to everlasting life.
—Matthew 20:28.

Primarily, though, the Lord's Evening Meal is a communion meal. Those involved are (1) Jehovah God, who arranged for the ransom, (2) Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God," who provided the ransom, and (3) Jesus' spiritual brothers. By partaking of the bread and wine, the latter show that they are fully united with Christ. (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17) They also show that they are in "the new covenant" as spirit-anointed disciples of Jesus. These are the ones who will reign with Christ in heaven as kings and

priests.—Luke 22:20; John 14:2, 3; Revelation 5:9, 10.

When should the Memorial be observed? The answer becomes clear when we remember that Jesus chose a particular date to institute this celebration—the Passover. God's people had annually been observing that date, Nisan 14 on their calendar, for over 1,500 years in order to commemorate a remarkable salvation that Jehovah performed for his people. Clearly, Jesus was directing his followers to use the same date to commemorate the far greater act of salvation that God would make possible through the death of Christ. Jesus' true followers thus attend the Lord's Evening Meal every year on the date corresponding to Nisan 14 on the Hebrew calendar.

Do they do so out of love for ritual? Frankly, that is what appeals to many about celebrating the Eucharist. Said the author of the aforementioned *Time* magazine essay: "There is something deeply soothing about participating in ancient rituals practiced by so many." Like a number of Catholics today, this author prefers that the ceremony be performed in Latin as it was in the past. Why? She writes: "I want to hear Mass sung in a language I don't understand because too often I don't like what I hear in English."

Jehovah's Witnesses, along with millions of interested ones, enjoy observing the Lord's Evening Meal in their own language wherever they live. They delight in improving their understanding of the meaning and value of Christ's death. Such truths are worthy of contemplation and discussion throughout the year. The Witnesses find that observing the Memorial is the best way to keep remembering the profound love of Jehovah God and of his Son, Jesus Christ. It helps them to "keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives."—1 Corinthians 11:26.



Commemorating the Memorial of Jesus Christ's death

Did You Know?

Why did Jesus heal a blind man gradually?

At Mark 8:22-26, we read of Jesus' healing a blind man at Bethsaida. The account says that Jesus first put saliva on the man's eyes and then asked him what he could see. The man's response showed that he was somewhat confused: "I see men, because I observe what seem to be trees, but they are walking about." Jesus then touched the man's eyes again, with this result: "The man saw clearly, and he was restored, and he was seeing everything distinctly." Evidently, Jesus healed the man gradually, or in stages. Why?

The Bible does not fully answer, but we might consider a possible explanation in this particular case. Beginning to see for the first time after being blind for years—or even for life—is a major adjustment. To illustrate: Pit ponies were once kept in mines to work there. They became so accustomed to the dark that when they came above ground, they needed as much as a full day to adjust to daylight. With blindness, the adjustment would be even greater. In modern times, surgeons have in a few in-

stances been able to repair mechanical problems in the eyes of blind people, restoring the eyes' ability to see. However, the patients have often been overwhelmed by the flood of information coming from their eyes to the brain. Baffled by a world of color, shape, and perspective, they have found themselves confused and unable to recognize even familiar objects. Over time, the brain learns to interpret what the eyes see.

Jesus' healing the blind man in stages in this instance may have been a reflection of loving concern for the man. Finally, the man "was seeing everything distinctly," making sense of all that he saw.

In Jesus' day, why was reading from a scroll quite an undertaking?

A common size of the sheets that were used in making scrolls was from 9 to 11 inches long and from 6 to 9 inches wide. A number of

these sheets were joined together side by side with paste or sewn together with linen thread. In some cases, longer sheets were used. The Dead Sea Scroll of Isaiah was made of 17 parchment strips, totaling approximately 24 feet in length in its present state of preservation. The scroll of Isaiah that Jesus used in the synagogue in Nazareth may have been of a similar length.

—Luke 4:16, 17.

With regard to this account, Alan Millard says in his book *Discoveries From the Time of Jesus*: "The reader held the book [scroll] and unrolled it with his left hand, taking the outer edge in his right and rolling it again as he read, column by column. To reach Isaiah 61, the chapter he read in the synagogue, Jesus would have unrolled most of the scroll and re-rolled it again."

At that time, there were no chapter and verse divisions for the book of Isaiah as we know them today. When the scroll of Isaiah was handed to Jesus in the synagogue in Nazareth, he had to locate the passage that is now marked as Isaiah 61:1, 2 in our Bibles. Jesus easily "found the place," showing how familiar he was with God's Word.



WHERE WILL THE BATTLE OF ARMAGEDDON BE FOUGHT?

The battle of Armageddon will not be fought on any one specific battlefield. Instead, the entire earth will be the battleground. Why? Because the two opposing sides are so large that they cannot be contained at any one site.

Armageddon, or Har-Magedon, is also known as "the war of the great day of God the Almighty." Jehovah God will use his Son, Christ Jesus, to muster an angelic army to war against the combined forces of all the wicked rulers of the earth.—Revelation 16:14; 19:11-16.

The nations are somehow lured by satanic forces to join the battle. The Bible speaks of "expressions inspired by demons" as going forth "to the kings [rulers] of the entire inhabited earth, to gather them together to the . . . place that is called in Hebrew Har-Magedon."—Revelation 16:14-16.

Like no other Bible book, Revelation has fired the imagination of countless Bible readers. Many literal-minded readers have pinpointed the exact spot where they believe that the battle will begin, and they have kept a nervous eye on events surrounding that region. The notion that Armageddon refers to a precise locale can be found in the earliest extant Greek commentary on Revelation, written in the sixth century C.E. by Oecumenius.

Echoing a popular viewpoint among the Fundamentalist clergy, John F. Walvoord, former president of Dallas Theological Seminary,

says that Armageddon is "the final suicidal battle of a desperate world struggle centered in the Middle East." Walvoord identifies as the focal point of this great future conflict "'the Mount of Megiddo,' a small mountain located in northern Palestine at the end of a broad valley."

However, the book of Revelation is not a road map to a literal place called Armageddon. Its opening words state that the account is presented "in signs." (Revelation 1:1) Jehovah's Witnesses long ago stated in their publication *Studies in the Scriptures*, Volume IV: "We are not to expect any gathering of the people literally to the Hill of Megiddo."

Historical Megiddo suggests a cornered condition, or situation, with no escape for the enemies of God. Thus, at Armageddon, God will make certain that all corruption and wickedness, no matter where it may be found on this globe, is crushed out of existence.—Revelation 21:8.

Lovers of Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, need not fear Armageddon. God's battle is directed solely against those humans whom God judges to be incorrigibly wicked. His war will be selective in its destruction. "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion," says the Bible. (2 Peter 2:9) A heart-warming promise at Psalm 37:34 says: "Hope in Jehovah and keep his way, and he will exalt you to take possession of the earth. When the wicked ones are cut off, you will see it."

WHO IS QUALIFIED TO RULE MANKIND?

WHAT RULER CAN

- solve economic woes, guaranteeing abundant food and excellent housing for all people?
- prevent natural disasters, sparing humans the devastation caused by tsunamis, hurricanes, or earthquakes?
- eliminate all diseases, even restoring the aged to youthful vigor?
- put an end to all wars, enabling his subjects to live in peace and security?
- restore the earth's ecology to perfect balance, transforming the earth into a paradise?

There is only one Ruler who can bring about all these blessings. Who is this Ruler? That question will be answered in the public discourse "Who Is Qualified to Rule Mankind?" This Bible talk will be given worldwide in over 230 lands. In most places, it will be delivered at the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses on Sunday, April 6, 2008. The Witnesses in your area will be glad to provide you with the time and address. You are warmly invited to attend.