

NOVEMBER 1, 2008

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

SHOULD
YOU FEAR
Hell?

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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A WIDESPREAD BELIEF

"I had nightmares of burning in hell! I dreamed of being thrown into a fiery place and would wake up screaming. Needless to say, I tried very hard not to sin."—Arline.

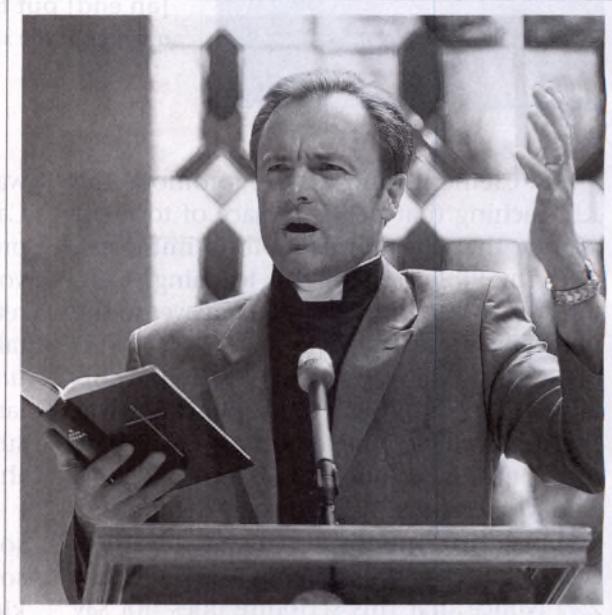
DO YOU believe that hell is a place of torment reserved for sinners? Many people do. For example, in 2005 a scholar at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland found that a third of the Scottish clergy believed that those separated from God would suffer "eternal mental anguish in hell." A fifth believed that those in hell would suffer physical torment.

In many countries, belief in hell is widespread. For instance, in the United States, a Gallup poll conducted in 2007 found that about 70 percent of those surveyed believe in hell. Even in predominantly secular countries, belief in hell lingers. A Gallup poll in 2004 found that in Canada, 42 percent of the people believed in hell. And in Great Britain, 32 percent were sure that hell exists.

What the Clergy Teach

Many of the clergy have backed off from teaching that hell is a place of literal fiery torment. Rather, they promote a definition similar to that expressed in a *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published in 1994. "The chief punishment of hell," states that reference, "is eternal separation from God."

Even so, belief that hell is a place of mental or physical suffering persists. Those who promote this doctrine claim that such a teaching is based on the Bible. R. Albert Mohler, president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, asserts: "It's simply a fact of Scripture."



Why Does It Matter What You Believe?

If hell really is a place of torment, you certainly should fear it. However, if this teaching is not true, religious leaders who teach the doctrine create confusion and cause needless mental anguish to those who believe them. They also defame God.

What does God's Word, the Bible, say on this subject? The following articles will use both Catholic and Protestant Bible translations to answer three questions: (1) **What really happens to a person at death?** (2) **What did Jesus teach about hell?** (3) **How can learning the truth about hell affect you?**



WHAT REALLY HAPPENS AT DEATH?

"All souls are immortal, even those of the wicked . . . Punished with the endless vengeance of quenchless fire, and not dying, it is impossible for them to have [an end] put to their misery."—*Clement of Alexandria*, a writer of the second and third centuries C.E.

LIKE Clement, those who promote the teaching that hell is a place of torment assume that the human soul is immortal. Does the Bible support this teaching? Consider what God's Word says in answer to the following questions.

Did the first man, Adam, have an immortal soul? The Protestant translation known as the *King James Version*, or *Authorized Version*, says about the creation of Adam: "The LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." (Genesis 2:7) Notice that this scripture does not say that Adam was given a soul.

What eventually happened to Adam after he sinned? The punishment God decreed

was not eternal torment in hell. Rather, the Catholic *New American Bible* renders God's pronouncement this way: "By the sweat of your face shall you get bread to eat, until you return to the ground, from which you were taken; *for you are dirt, and to dirt you shall return.*" (Italics ours; Genesis 3:19) God's declaration gives no hint that any part of Adam survived his death. When Adam died, Adam the soul died.

Does any human possess an immortal soul? God told the prophet Ezekiel: "The soul who sins is the one who will die." (Ezekiel 18:4, *The Holy Bible—New International Version*) The apostle Paul wrote: "Through one person [Adam] sin entered the world, and through sin, death, and thus death came



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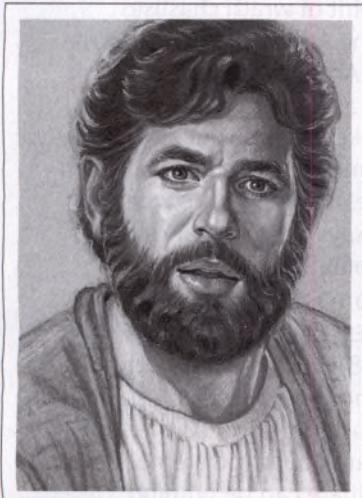
to all, inasmuch as all sinned." (Romans 5:12, NAB) If all humans sin, then the logical conclusion is that all souls die.

Does a dead soul know or feel anything? God's Word says: "The living know that they are to die, but the dead no longer know anything." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, NAB) Describing what happens to a man at death, the Bible states: "He returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." (Psalm 146:4, KJ) If the dead "no longer know anything" and

their "thoughts perish," how could they sense any torment in hell?

Jesus Christ likened death, not to some form of consciousness, but to sleep.* (John 11:11-14) Some may object, though, saying that Jesus did teach that hell was hot and that sinners would be cast into hellfire. Let us consider what Jesus actually did say about hell.

* For a more detailed discussion, see the article "What We Learn From Jesus—About Hope for the Dead" on pages 16 and 17.



WHAT DID JESUS TEACH ABOUT HELL?

"If your eye causes you to sin," said Jesus, "get rid of it. You would be better off to go into God's kingdom with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell. The worms there never die, and the fire never stops burning."

—MARK 9:47, 48, *Contemporary English Version*.

On another occasion, Jesus spoke of a judgment period when he would say to the wicked: "Depart from me, you accursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." He also said that these ones will "go off to eternal punishment."—MATTHEW 25:41, 46, *The New American Bible*.

AT FIRST glance, the above words of Jesus may seem to promote the teaching of hellfire. Obviously, Jesus did not intend to contradict God's Word, which clearly states: "The dead no longer know anything."—Ecclesiastes 9:5, NAB.

To what, then, was Jesus referring when he spoke of a person's being thrown "into hell"? Is "the eternal fire" Jesus warned of literal or symbolic? In what sense do the wicked "go off to eternal punishment"? Let us examine these questions one at a time.

To what was Jesus referring when he spoke of a person's being thrown "into hell"? The original Greek word translated "hell" at Mark 9:47 is *Ge'en-na*. This word comes from the Hebrew *Geh Hinnom'*, meaning "Valley of Hinnom." The Valley of Hinnom hugged the outskirts of ancient Jerusalem. In the days of the Israelite kings, it was used for child sacrifice—a disgusting practice that God condemned. God said that he would execute those who performed such an act of false worship. The Valley of Hinnom would then be called "the

valley of slaughter," where "the carcases of this people" would lie unburied. (*Jeremiah 7:30-34, King James Version*) Jehovah thus foretold that the Valley of Hinnom would become a place, not for the torture of live victims, but for the mass disposal of dead bodies.

In Jesus' day, the inhabitants of Jerusalem used the Valley of Hinnom as a garbage

dump. They threw the bodies of some vile criminals into this dump and kept a fire constantly burning there to dispose of the refuse and the carcasses.

When Jesus spoke of the undying worms and unquenchable fire, he was apparently alluding to *Isaiah 66:24*. Regarding "the carcases of the men that have transgressed against [God]," *Isaiah* says that "their worm

A BRIEF HISTORY OF HELL

ROOTS IN PAGAN BELIEFS: The ancient Egyptians believed in a fiery hell. *The Book Am-Tuat*, dated 1375 B.C.E., speaks of those who "shall be cast down headlong into the pits of fire; and . . . shall not escape therefrom, and . . . shall not be able to flee from the flames." Greek philosopher Plutarch (c.46-120 C.E.) wrote of those in the world below: "[They] raised a cry of wailing as they underwent fearful torments and ignominious and excruciating chastisements."

SECTS OF JUDAISM ARE INFECTED: The historian Josephus (37-c.100 C.E.) reported that the Essenes, a Jewish sect, believed that "the souls are immortal, and continue forever." He added: "This is like the opinion of the Greeks . . . They allot to bad souls a dark and tempestuous den, full of never-ceasing punishments."

INTRODUCED INTO "CHRISTIANITY": In the second century C.E., the apocryphal book *Apocalypse of Peter* said of the wicked: "There is spread out for them unquenchable fire." It also stated: "Ezrael, the angel of wrath, brings men and women with the half of their bodies burning and casts them into a place of darkness, the hell

of men; and a spirit of wrath chastises them." During the same time period, writer Theophilus of Antioch quotes the Greek prophetess Sibyl as foretelling the punishments of the wicked: "Upon you burning fire shall come, and ever ye shall daily burn in flames." These are among the words that Theophilus says are "true, and useful, and just, and profitable to all men."

HELLFIRE USED TO JUSTIFY VIOLENCE IN THE MIDDLE AGES: Mary I, queen of England (1553-1558), known as "Bloody Mary" for burning nearly 300 Protestants at the stake, reportedly said: "As the souls of heretics are hereafter to be eternally burning in hell, there can be nothing more proper than for me to imitate the Divine vengeance by burning them on earth."

A RECENT DEFINITION: In recent years, some denominations have revised their teaching about hell. For example, the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England said in 1995: "Hell is not eternal torment, but it is the final and irrevocable choosing of that which is opposed to God so completely and so absolutely that the only end is total non-being."



WHAT IS “THE LAKE OF FIRE”?

Revelation 20:10 says that the Devil will be cast into “the lake of fire” and “tormented day and night for ever and ever.” (*King James Version*) If the Devil were to be tortured for all eternity, God would have to preserve him alive, but the Bible says that Jesus will “destroy him.” (*Hebrews 2:14, KJ*) The symbolic fiery lake represents “the second death.” (*Revelation 21:8*) This is not the death first mentioned in the Bible—death because of Adam’s sin—death from which one may be released by a resurrection. (*1 Corinthians 15:21, 22*) Because the Bible does not say that “the lake of fire” would release those in it, “the second death” must mean another kind of death, an irreversible one.

In what sense are those in “the lake of fire” tormented eternally? At times, “to torment” can mean “to restrain” someone. Once when Jesus confronted the demons, they cried out: “Art thou come hither to torment us [restrain us in the abyss] before the time?” (*Matthew 8:29; Luke 8:30, 31; KJ*) So all of those in “the lake” will suffer the “torment” of everlasting restraint, or “the second death.”

shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched.” (*KJ*) Jesus and his listeners knew that these words in Isaiah referred to the treatment of the carcasses of those not deserving a burial.

Therefore, Jesus used the Valley of Hinnom, or Gehenna, as a fitting symbol of death without hope of a resurrection. He drove this point home when he warned that God “can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” (*Matthew 10:28, NAB*) Gehenna is a symbol of eternal death, not eternal torture.

Is “the eternal fire” Jesus warned of literal or symbolic? Note that “the eternal fire” mentioned by Jesus and recorded at Matthew 25:41 was prepared “for the devil and his angels.” Do you think that literal fire can

burn spirit creatures? Or was Jesus using the term “fire” symbolically? Certainly “the sheep” and “the goats” mentioned in the same discourse are not literal; they are word pictures that represent two types of people. (*Matthew 25:32, 33*) The eternal fire that Jesus spoke of completely burns up the wicked in a figurative sense.

In what sense do the wicked “go off to eternal punishment”? Although most translations use the word “punishment” at Matthew 25:46, the basic meaning of the Greek word *ko'la·sin* is “checking the growth of trees,” or pruning, cutting off needless branches. So while the sheeplike ones receive everlasting life, the unrepentant goatlike ones suffer “eternal punishment,” being forever cut off from life.

What Do You Think?

Jesus never taught that humans have an immortal soul. However, he often did teach about the resurrection of the dead. (Luke 14:13, 14; John 5:25-29; 11:25) Why would Jesus say that the dead would be resurrected if he believed that their souls had not died?

Jesus did not teach that God would maliciously torture the wicked forever. Rather, Jesus said: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eter-

nal life." (John 3:16, NAB) Why would Jesus imply that those who did not believe in him would die? If he really meant that they would live forever, suffering misery in a fiery hell, would he not have said so?

The doctrine that hell is a place of torment is not based on the Bible. Rather, it is a pagan belief masquerading as a Christian teaching. (See the box "A Brief History of Hell," on page 6.) No, God does not torture people eternally in hell. How can learning the truth about hell affect your attitude toward God?



HOW DOES LEARNING THE TRUTH ABOUT HELL AFFECT YOU?

THOSE who teach that hell is a place of torment promote a gross misrepresentation of Jehovah God and his qualities. Granted, the Bible does say that God will destroy the wicked. (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9) But righteous anger is not God's dominant quality.

God is not malicious or vindictive. He even asks: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" (Ezekiel 18:23, King James Version) If God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, how could he for all eternity delight in watching these ones being tormented?

God's preeminent quality is love. (1 John 4:8) Indeed, "the LORD is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made." (Psalm 145:9, *The Holy Bible—New International Version*) In return, God wants us to develop heartfelt love for him.—Matthew 22:35-38.

Fear of Hell or Love of God —Which Motivates You?

The teaching that souls suffer in hell promotes a morbid fear of God. By contrast, a person who learns the truth about God and comes to love him will develop a healthy fear of him. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; prudent are all who live by it," explains Psalm 111:10. (*The New American Bible*) This fear of God is, not abject terror, but awe of and profound reverence for the Creator. It engenders in us a healthy fear of displeasing him.

Consider how learning the truth about hell affected Kathleen, a 32-year-old former drug user. Her life had been filled with parties, violence, self-hate, and immorality. She admitted: "I would look at my one-year-old daughter and think, 'Look at what I'm doing to her. I will burn in hell for this.'" Kath-

WHO WILL BE RELEASED FROM HELL?

Some Bible translations create confusion by rendering two different Greek words—*Ge'en-na* and *Hai'des*—as just the one word, “hell.” In the Bible, the term *Ge'en-na* refers to total destruction, without hope of a resurrection. By contrast, those in *Hai'des*, or Hades, do have the hope of being resurrected.

Thus, after Jesus died and was raised up, the apostle Peter assured his audience that Jesus “was not left in hell.” (Acts 2:27, 31, 32; Psalm 16:10; *King James Version*) The word translated “hell” in this verse is the Greek word *Hai'des*. Jesus did not go to some fiery place. Hades, or “hell,” was the grave. But Jesus is not the only one whom God releases from Hades.

In connection with the resurrection, the Bible says: “Death and hell delivered up the



dead which were in them.” (Revelation 20:13, 14, *KJ*) Emptying “hell” will mean restoring to life all those whom God judges worthy of a resurrection. (John 5:28, 29; Acts 24:15) What a marvelous hope for the future—seeing our dead loved ones brought back from the grave! Jehovah, the God of infinite love, will do this.

leen tried to stop using drugs, but nothing worked. “I wanted to be good,” she said, “but everything in my life and in the world was so pathetic. There seemed no reason to be good.”

Kathleen then met Jehovah’s Witnesses. “I learned that there is no burning hell. The Scriptural evidence made perfect sense,” said Kathleen. “Knowing that I would not have to burn in hell was a tremendous relief.” But she also learned of God’s promise that humans could live forever on an earth cleansed of wickedness. (Psalm 37:10, 11, 29; Luke 23:43) “I now had a real hope—to live forever in Paradise!” she exclaimed.

Would Kathleen be able to stop abusing

drugs without the threat of a fiery hell hanging over her? She related: “When I had a strong craving for drugs, I would pray, begging Jehovah God for help. I thought of his view of such defiling habits, and I did not want to disappoint him. He answered my prayers.” (2 Corinthians 7:1) This fear of displeasing God enabled Kathleen to break free from her addictions.

Yes, cultivating love for God and a healthy fear of him—not fear of torment in hell—can motivate us to do God’s will in order to enjoy lasting happiness. The psalmist wrote: “Blessed is every one that feareth Jehovah, that walketh in his ways.”—Psalm 128:1, *American Standard Version*.

A Lover of Justice

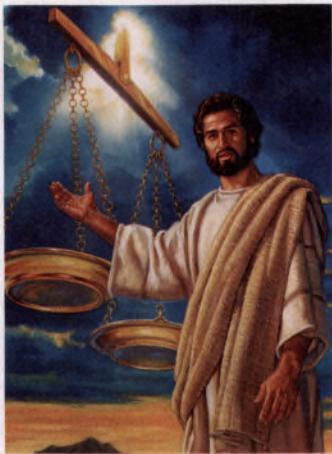
Hebrews 10:26-31

HAVE you ever been a victim of unjust or cruel treatment, perhaps by someone who appeared to get away with it and showed no remorse? Few things can be harder to cope with than such gross inequity, especially if the pain was inflicted by someone whom you expected to love you and care for you. You may wonder, 'Why does God allow such things to happen?*' The truth is that Jehovah God hates all injustice. His Word, the Bible, assures us that hard-hearted practitioners of sin will not escape divine retribution. Let us consider the apostle Paul's words recorded at Hebrews 10:26-31.

Paul writes: "If we practice sin willfully after having received the accurate knowledge of the truth, there is no longer any sacrifice for sins left." (Verse 26) Willful sinners are most reprehensible. Why? First, they do not commit an isolated sin in a moment of weakness—the kind of mistake we all make at times because we are imperfect. They make a practice of sin. Second, their sins are intentional. As *The Bible in Basic English* puts it, they "do evil on purpose." Deeply ingrained badness fills their heart. Third, their sins are not the result of ignorance. They have an "accurate knowledge of the truth" about God's will and ways.

How does God view unrepentant, malicious

* For a discussion of why God has allowed suffering, see pages 106-114 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



sinners? "There is no longer any sacrifice for sins left," says Paul. The sacrifice of Christ—God's gift to humankind—covers the sins we commit because of our imperfection. (1 John 2:1, 2) But those who practice sin without repentance show that they have no regard for this precious gift. In God's eyes, they have "trampled upon the Son of God and . . . esteemed as of ordinary value the blood of" Jesus. (Verse 29) By their course, they show contempt for Jesus and treat his blood "as a cheap thing," as having no more value than that of any imperfect human. (*Today's English Version*) Such ingrates are in no position to benefit from Christ's sacrifice.

What can the wicked expect? The God of justice has promised: "Vengeance is mine; I will recompense." (Verse 30) Let all who are bent on practicing sin at the expense of others beware. No one can flout God's righteous laws with impunity. Often, their wicked ways catch up with them. (Galatians 6:7) At the latest, they will stand before God in the near future when he comes to rid this earth of all injustice. (Proverbs 2:21, 22) Paul warns: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." —Verse 31.

Learning that Jehovah God does not condone willful sin is both comforting and reassuring, especially for those who have been hurt by a hardened wrongdoer. We can confidently leave the avenging of wrong squarely in the hands of God, who hates all injustice.

DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Break Up Marriages?

"I F ONE partner changes his or her religion, the marriage will break up." So goes the claim of many people. At times, this warning is delivered to a marriage partner who chooses to become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. But is this assertion always true?

Understandably, when a married person starts to take an interest in religion or to change long-held religious views, it can come as a shock to the mate. It may cause feelings of anxiety, disappointment, and even resentment.

It is often the wife who first feels the need to change her religion. If your wife is studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, how might this affect your marriage? If you are a wife who is associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, what can you do to ease any anxiety your mate may feel?

A Husband's Perspective

Mark, who lives in Australia, had been married for 12 years when his wife began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. "I was happily married and had a satisfying career," says Mark. "Life was good. Then my wife decided to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. I suddenly felt that my lifestyle was threatened. At first, I was unsettled by my wife's newfound interest in the Bible, but when she told me that she had decided to



be baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I became seriously concerned."

Mark began to wonder if his marriage would end because of his wife's new faith. He thought about stopping her Bible study and forbidding her to have any contact with the Witnesses. Instead of reacting impulsively, though, Mark allowed some time to pass. What happened to his marriage?

"Happily," says Mark, "our marriage is even stronger now than it was before. It has continued to improve since my wife was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses 15 years ago." What helped the marriage to succeed? "Thinking back," says Mark, "it was largely because my wife applied the good advice

found in the Bible. She has always tried to treat me with respect."

Advice From Successful Wives

If you are a wife who is associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, what can you do and say to help ease any anxiety that your mate may experience? Consider the comments of these women from various parts of the world.

Sakiko, Japan: "I have been married for 31 years and have three children. I have been one of Jehovah's Witnesses for the last 22 years. Living with a husband who does not share my beliefs is sometimes a challenge. But I work hard to apply the Bible's counsel to be 'swift about hearing, slow about speaking, slow about wrath.' (James 1:19) I try to be kind to my husband and to yield to his wishes when they do not conflict with Bible principles. This has helped our marriage succeed."

Nadezhda, Russia: "I have been married for 28 years and have been a baptized Witness for the last 16 years. Before studying the Bible, I didn't think that my husband ought to be head of the family. I liked to make many decisions on my own. However, I gradually found that applying Bible principles contributed to the peace and happiness of our family. (1 Corinthians 11:3) Slowly it became easier for me to be submissive, and my husband has noticed these changes in me."

Marli, Brazil: "I have two children and have been married for 21 years. Sixteen years ago, I became a baptized Witness. I learned that Jehovah God desires married couples to stay together, not to separate. So I try to be a good wife, to speak and act in a way that makes Jehovah and my husband happy."

Larisa, Russia: "When I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses about 19 years ago, I realized that the most important thing was for me to make changes in my life. My husband

can see the way the Bible has influenced me for good—that it has helped me to appreciate him more. Initially, we would have disagreements regarding child training, but we have resolved those differences. My husband allows our children to come with me to the religious meetings I attend because he appreciates that they are being taught only what is beneficial for them."

Valquíria, Brazil: "I have one child and have been married for 19 years. Thirteen years ago, I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. At first, my husband didn't want me to engage in the public preaching work. But I learned to reply to his concerns in a mild manner and to help him see that the Bible was having a positive effect on my personality. My husband gradually understood how important it is for me to engage in the preaching work. Today, he gives me full support in my spiritual activities. When I conduct Bible studies in outlying rural areas, he even drives me there in his car and patiently waits outside until I am finished."

A Force for Good

If your spouse is associating with Jehovah's Witnesses, do not fear that this will break up your marriage. As many husbands and wives in all parts of the world have found, the Bible is a force for good in a marriage.

One husband who is not one of Jehovah's Witnesses honestly admitted: "I initially felt some anguish when my wife embraced the faith of Jehovah's Witnesses, but I now feel the gain was worth the pain." Another had this to say about his wife: "My wife's faithfulness, determination, and integrity have caused me to have great admiration for Jehovah's Witnesses. Our marriage has benefited greatly as a result of her religious beliefs. We have made allowances for each other and have treated our marriage as a lifelong partnership."

How Do Jehovah's Witnesses View Marriage?

Jehovah's Witnesses view the Bible as God's inspired Word. So they take seriously what it says about marriage. Note what the Bible says in the answers to the following questions:

■ **Do Jehovah's Witnesses encourage their members to separate from a marriage mate who is not a Witness?** No. The apostle Paul wrote: "If any brother has an unbelieving wife, and yet she is agreeable to dwelling with him, let him not leave her; and a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and yet he is agreeable to dwelling with her, let her not leave her husband." (1 Corinthians 7:12, 13) Jehovah's Witnesses abide by this command.

■ **Is a wife who is one of Jehovah's Witnesses encouraged to ignore her husband's wishes if he does not share her beliefs?** No. The apostle Peter wrote: "You wives, be in subjection to your own husbands, in order that, if any are not obedient to the word, they may be won without a word through the conduct of their wives, because of having been eyewitnesses of your chaste conduct together with deep respect."—1 Peter 3:1, 2.

■ **Do Jehovah's Witnesses teach that a husband's authority is absolute?** No. The apostle Paul said: "I want you to know that the head of every man is the Christ; in turn the head of a woman is the man; in turn the head of the Christ is God." (1 Corinthians

11:3) A Christian wife will respect her husband as being the head of the family. However, a husband's authority is not absolute. He is accountable to God and Christ. Therefore, if a husband commands that his wife behave in a way that breaks God's law, a Christian wife will "obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:29.

■ **Do Jehovah's Witnesses teach that divorce is prohibited?** No. Jesus Christ said: "I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, *except on the ground of fornication [sexual immorality]*, and marries another commits adultery." (Matthew 19:9) Therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses hold to Jesus' view that adultery provides grounds for divorce. But they also strongly believe that marriages should not be dissolved for trivial reasons. They encourage their members to abide by Jesus' words: "A man will leave his father and his mother and will stick to his wife, and the two will be one flesh. . . . Therefore, what God has yoked together let no man put apart."—Matthew 19:5, 6.



An Open House With a Purpose

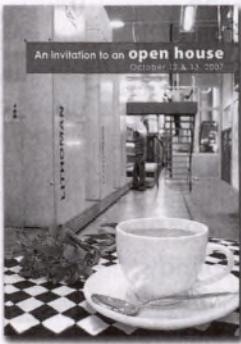
WHAT do they do there?" Many who drive past the large complex of Jehovah's Witnesses at Mogale City (Krugersdorp), near Johannesburg, South Africa, ask that question. So the Witnesses decided to hold an open house at the branch complex on October 12 and 13, 2007. The purpose was twofold—to dispel false rumors and to show the public what the branch office is doing to support the work commanded by Jesus Christ.—Matthew 28:19, 20.

Those serving at the branch office placed large signs at the entrance welcoming the public, and they delivered special invitations to neighbors. Business associates and their families were invited. The response? Over 500 visitors who are not Witnesses toured the facilities.

A big attraction was the MAN Roland Lithoman web-offset press that prints up to 90,000 magazines an hour. The vast shipping area that processes over 14 tons of literature daily also impressed the visitors, as did the bookbindery. Witnesses in the various departments prepared attractive displays, including one that summarized the history of mechanized printing, from Gutenberg



Tours arriving at the branch complex

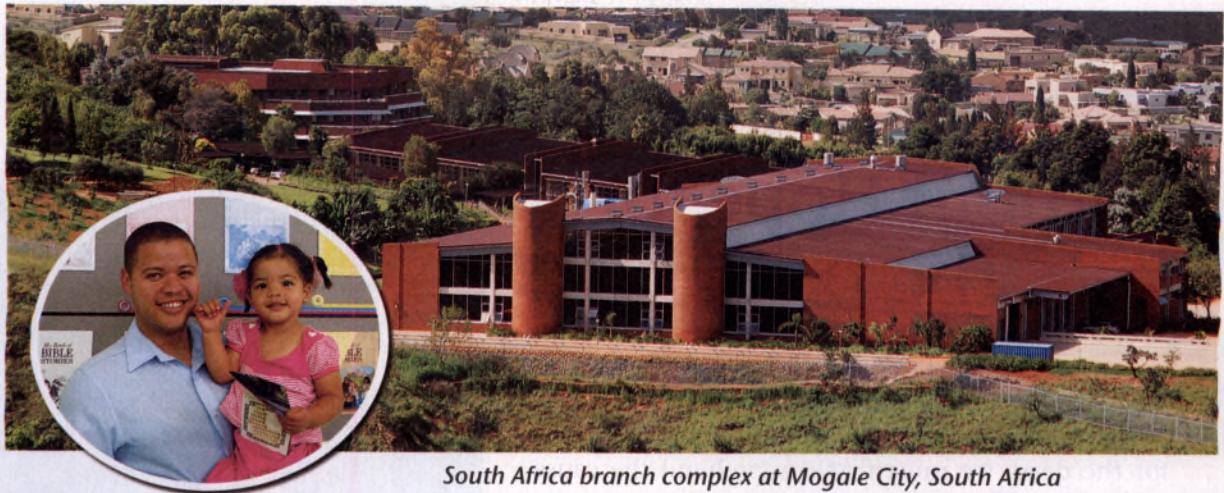


Invitation

to modern litho-offset printing. Another display highlighted how the branch takes care of the environment. For example, a special unit eliminates toxic gases and odors from dryers on the presses, and filters collect paper dust for disposal.

A local newspaper ran an article stating that the 700 volunteers living on the property "are ordained ministers who have dedicated themselves to Jehovah." It also commented on "the impeccable cleanliness and timely fashion at which every thing runs" in the printery. A man who was opposed to Jehovah's Witnesses came on tour. Afterward he wrote a letter that read: "Congratulations. It is not often that one can experience excellence on such a scale."

Many visitors expressed appreciation for the tour of the facilities and were surprised to see that the branch is stocked with Bible-based literature in 151 languages and prints publications for 18 countries in southern and central Africa. Branch facilities of Jehovah's Witnesses around the world are open for tours during work hours. Why not find out the time available for a tour by contacting the branch in your locality?



South Africa branch complex at Mogale City, South Africa



MAN Roland Lithoman web-offset press



Bookbindery



Shipping

About Hope for the Dead

Jesus resurrected at least three persons, thus demonstrating that there is hope for the dead. (Luke 7:11-17; 8:49-56; John 11:1-45) To understand the hope for the dead, we must first comprehend the cause and origin of death.

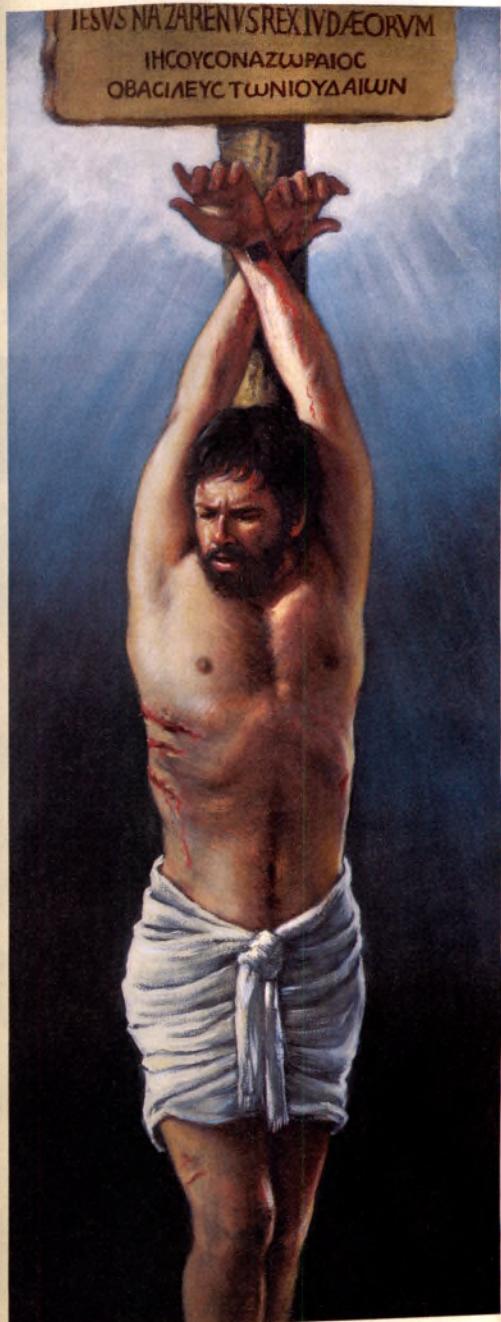
Why Do We Get Sick and Die?

When Jesus forgave people their sins, they were cured. For example, when confronted with a paralyzed man, Jesus said: “‘Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven, or to say, Get up and walk? However, in order for you to know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins—’ then he said to the paralytic: ‘Get up, pick up your bed, and go to your home.’” (Matthew 9:2-6) So sin is the cause of sickness and death. Our inherited sinful condition originated with the first man, Adam.—Luke 3:38; Romans 5:12.

Why Did Jesus Die?

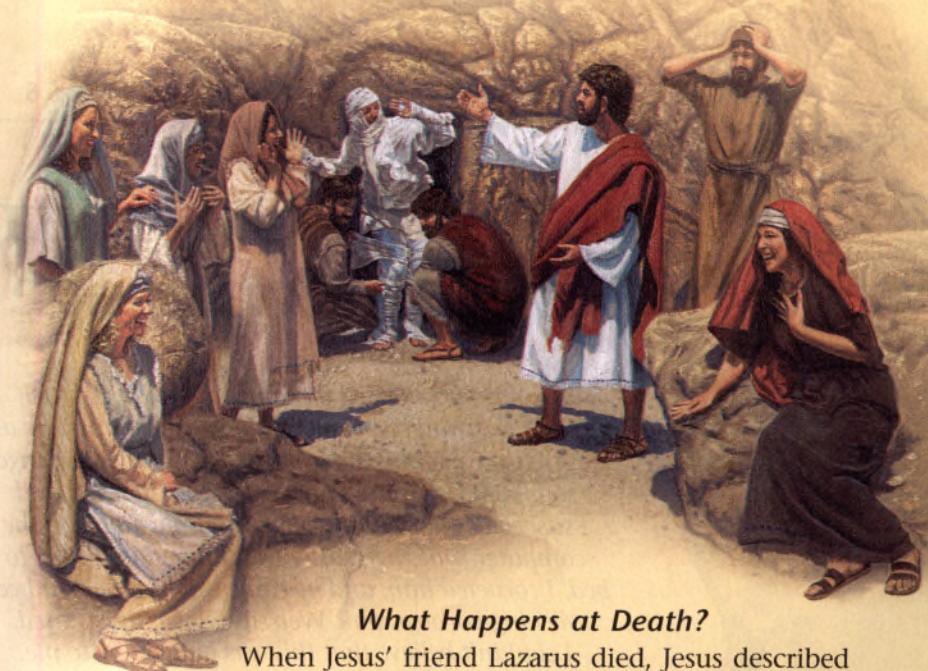
Jesus never sinned. Therefore, he did not deserve to die. By dying in place of us, Jesus paid the price of our sins. He said that his blood would “be poured out in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins.”—Matthew 26:28.

Jesus also said: “The Son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister and to give his soul a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matthew 20:28) Jesus called the price he paid “a ransom” because it released others from death. Jesus also said: “I have come that they might have life and might have it in abundance.” (John 10:10) To understand the hope for the dead completely, we must also know about their present condition.



**For more information,
see chapter 6
of the book
*What Does the
Bible Really
Teach?****

* Published by
Jehovah's Witnesses.



What Happens at Death?

When Jesus' friend Lazarus died, Jesus described what happens at death. He said to his disciples: "‘Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying [to Bethany] to awaken him from sleep.’ . . . They imagined he was speaking about taking rest in sleep. At that time, therefore, Jesus said to them outspokenly: ‘Lazarus has died.’" Thus, Jesus made it clear that the dead are sleeping, unconscious.—John 11:1-14.

When Jesus resurrected him, his friend Lazarus had been dead for four days. Yet, the Bible records no comment from Lazarus about his experience during that time. While dead, Lazarus was unconscious and knew nothing.—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10; John 11:17-44.

What Is the Hope for the Dead?

The dead will come back to life with the prospect of living forever. Jesus said: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will hear his [Jesus'] voice and come out."—John 5:28, 29.

This hope is an expression of God's love. Jesus said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16; Revelation 21:4, 5.



Maintaining Commitment in Your Marriage

She says: "I noticed for some time that Michael, my husband, had been emotionally distant from me and was treating our children coldly.* His behavior changed soon after we were connected to the Internet, and I suspected that he was viewing pornography on the computer. One night after the children had gone to bed, I cornered him, and he confessed that he had been viewing pornographic Web sites. I was devastated. I couldn't believe that this was happening to me. I completely lost trust in him. To make matters worse, a workmate had recently started to express a romantic interest in me."

He says: "Some time ago my wife, Maria, discovered a picture stored on our computer and confronted me about it. When I admitted that I regularly visited pornographic Web sites, she was livid. I felt horribly embarrassed and very guilty. I thought it was the end of our marriage."

WHAT do you think happened to Michael and Maria's relationship? You may think that viewing pornography was Michael's main problem. But as Michael came to realize, this vice was really a symptom of a deeper issue—a lack of commitment to the marriage.[#] When Michael and Maria were first married, they looked forward to a life of shared love and enjoyable experiences. Like many couples, though, their commitment to the marriage waned over time, and they seemed to drift apart.

* Names have been changed.

While the example here is of a man who viewed pornography, a woman who did the same would also be displaying a lack of commitment to the marriage.

Do you feel that the bond between you and your mate has weakened as the years have passed? Would you like to reverse that trend? If so, you need to know the answers to three questions: What does it mean to be committed to your marriage? What challenges can undermine such commitment? And what can you do to strengthen your commitment to your mate?

What Is Commitment?

How would you define commitment in marriage? Many would say that it springs from a sense of duty. For example, a couple may remain committed to their marriage because of their children or because of a

duty they feel toward God, the Originator of marriage. (Genesis 2:22-24) Certainly, such motives are admirable and will help a marriage survive difficult times. But to be happy, marriage mates need to feel more than just a sense of obligation to each other.

Jehovah God designed marriage to bring a couple deep-seated joy and contentment. He intended for a man to “rejoice with [his] wife” and for a woman to love her husband and to feel that her husband loves her as he does his own body. (Proverbs 5:18; Ephesians 5:28) To create that sort of bond, a couple must learn to trust each other. Equally important, they need to develop a lifelong friendship. When a man and woman earn each other’s trust and work at becoming the best of friends, their commitment to the marriage will grow. They will form a bond the Bible describes as being so close that it is as if the two people were “one flesh.”—Matthew 19:5.

Commitment, therefore, could be likened to the mortar that binds the bricks of a sturdy house. Mortar is made from a combination of ingredients, including sand, cement, and water. Similarly, commitment is formed from a combination of such factors as duty, trust, and friendship. What may weaken that bond?

What Are the Challenges?

Commitment requires hard work and self-sacrifice. It demands that you be willing to forgo your own preferences in order to please your mate. However, the concept of yielding to someone else’s wishes—of giving without asking, ‘What’s in it for me?’—has become unpopular with many and even offensive to some. But ask yourself, ‘How many selfish people do I know who have a happy marriage?’ Likely the answer is, Few if any. Why? A selfish individual

will not likely remain committed to a marriage when personal sacrifice is required, especially when there is no immediate payoff for the small concessions he or she may make. Without commitment, a relationship will sour, no matter how sweet the romantic feelings were when a couple first fell in love.

The Bible realistically acknowledges that marriage is hard work. It states that “the married man is anxious for the things of the world, how he may gain the approval of his wife,” and that “the married woman is anxious for the things of the world, how she may gain the approval of her husband.” (1 Corinthians 7:33, 34) Unfortunately, even marriage mates who normally are unselfish do not always acknowledge each other’s anxieties or value their mate’s sacrifices. When a couple fail to show appreciation for each other, their marriage is bound to cause them more “tribulation in their flesh” than it would otherwise.—1 Corinthians 7:28.

If your marriage is to survive difficult times and to thrive during good times, you need to develop a long-term view of your relationship. How can you develop such an attitude, and how can you encourage your mate to remain committed to you?

How to Strengthen Commitment

A key factor is humbly to apply the advice of God’s Word, the Bible. By doing so you will “benefit yourself” and your mate. (Isaiah 48:17) Consider just two practical steps you can take.

1. Make your marriage a priority. “Make sure of the more important things,” wrote the apostle Paul. (Philippians 1:10) In God’s eyes, the way a husband and wife treat each other is very important. A man who honors his wife will be honored by God. And a woman who respects her husband has

"great value in the eyes of God."—1 Peter 3:1-4, 7.

How important is your marriage to you? Usually, the more important an endeavor, the more time you spend on it. Ask yourself: 'Over the past month, how much time did I set aside just to spend with my mate? What specific things have I done to reassure my mate that we are still good friends?' If you invested little or no time in maintaining your marriage, your mate may find it difficult to believe that you are committed to the union.

Does your mate think that you are committed to your marriage? How can you find out?

TRY THIS: Write on a piece of paper the following five categories: money, work, marriage, entertainment, and friends. Now number the list according to what you believe to be your spouse's priorities. Ask your mate to do the same about you. When completed, exchange lists with your mate. If your mate feels that you are not investing enough time and energy in the marriage, discuss what changes you may need to make to strengthen your commitment to each other. Also, ask yourself, 'What can I do to take more of an interest in the things that are important to my mate?'

2. Avoid all forms of infidelity. Jesus Christ said: "Everyone that keeps on looking at a woman so as to have a passion for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) When a person engages in sexual intercourse outside of marriage, he or she delivers a devastating blow to the union, one that the Bible says is grounds for divorce. (Matthew 5:32) However, Jesus' words quoted above show that a wrong desire can exist in the heart long before a person actually engages in



Make time for your mate

the physical act of adultery. Entertaining that wrong desire is in itself a form of betrayal.

To maintain your commitment to your marriage, make a solemn pledge not to view pornography. Despite what many may say, pornography is poison to a *marriage*. Note the way one wife expresses her feelings about her husband's viewing habits: "My husband says that watching pornography spices up our love life. But it just makes me feel that I'm worthless, that I'm not enough

for him. I cry myself to sleep when he watches it." Would you say that this man is strengthening his commitment to his marriage, or is he undermining it? Do you think that he is making it easier for his wife to remain committed to the marriage? Is he treating her as his closest friend?

The faithful man Job expressed his commitment to his marriage and to his God by making 'a covenant with his eyes.' He was determined not to 'show himself attentive to a virgin.' (Job 31:1) How can you imitate Job?

In addition to avoiding pornography, you need to guard your heart from forming an inappropriate attachment to a member of the opposite sex. True, many feel that flirting with members of the opposite sex does no harm to a marriage. But God's Word warns us: "The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate. Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) Has your heart fooled you? Ask yourself: 'To

Infidelity begins in the heart



whom am I most attentive—my spouse or some other member of the opposite sex? With whom do I share good news first—my spouse, or someone else? If my spouse asked me to limit my contact with an associate of the opposite sex, how would I react? Would I be resentful, or would I happily make the requested change?

TRY THIS: If you find yourself attracted to someone other than your mate, limit your contact with that one to only what is necessary and keep all encounters on a purely professional level. Do not focus on ways in which you think this person is superior to your mate. Instead, focus on your mate's positive qualities. (Proverbs 31:29) Recall the reasons why you fell in love with your mate. Ask yourself, 'Has my mate really lost these qualities, or have I become blind to them?'

Take the Initiative

Michael and Maria, quoted at the outset, decided to ask for advice on how to resolve their issues. Of course, seeking advice is just the first step. But by being willing to face their problems and seek help, both Michael and Maria sent a clear message that they are committed to their marriage, that they are willing to work hard to make it succeed.

Whether your marriage is stable or strained, your mate needs to know that you are committed to making the marriage a success. Take whatever appropriate steps are necessary to convince your mate of that fact. Are you willing to do that?

ASK YOURSELF . . .

- What activities could I cut back on to allow more time for my mate?
- What could I do to assure my mate that I am committed to our marriage?

Did You Know?

Why were the Jews so widely scattered by the time of Jesus?

When Jesus told a group of listeners that where he was going they could not come, the Jews asked themselves: "Where does this man intend going . . . ? He does not intend to go to the Jews dispersed among the Greeks . . . does he?" (John 7:32-36)

Not long after, Christian missionaries preached the good news among Jews dispersed throughout the Mediterranean basin.—Acts 2:5-11; 9:2; 13:5, 13, 14; 14:1; 16:1-3; 17:1; 18:12, 19; 28:16, 17.

This dispersion, or Diaspora, arose because the Jews were exiled from their homeland by conquering nations—first by the Assyrians, in 740 B.C.E., then by the Babylonians, in 607 B.C.E. Only a remnant of the exiles ever returned to Israel. (Isaiah 10:21, 22) The rest remained scattered.

Hence, in the fifth century B.C.E., Jewish communities were found in the 127 jurisdictional districts of the Persian Empire. (Esther 1:1; 3:8) Jewish efforts to win converts to Judaism meant that, in time, a large number of people came to have some knowl-

edge of Jehovah and of the Law that he gave to the Jews. (Matthew 23:15) Jews from many lands were present in Jerusalem for the Festival of Pentecost in 33 C.E., at which they heard the good news about Jesus. Therefore, the dispersion of Jews throughout the Roman Empire contributed to the rapid spread of Christianity.

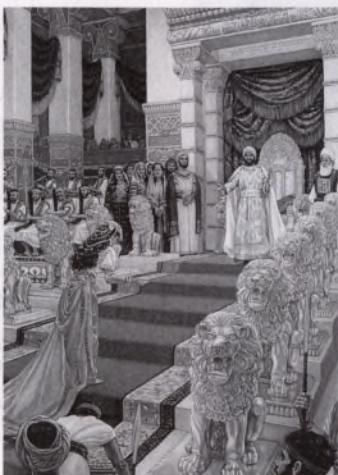
How much gold did King Solomon own?

The Scriptures say that Hiram, king of Tyre, sent four tons of gold to Solomon, the queen of Sheba gave him a similar amount, and Solomon's fleet brought over 15 tons of gold from Ophir. "The weight of the gold that came to Solomon in

one year," says the account, "amounted up to six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold," or more than 25 tons. (1 Kings 9:14, 28; 10:10, 14) Is this plausible? How big were royal gold reserves in antiquity?

An ancient inscription, which scholars judge as credible, states that Pharaoh Thutmose III of Egypt (second millennium B.C.E.) presented some 13.5 tons of gold to the temple of Amun-Ra at Karnak. During the eighth century B.C.E., the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III received over 4 tons of gold in tribute from Tyre, and Sargon II gave the same amount of gold as a gift to the gods of Babylon. King Philip II of Macedonia (359-336 B.C.E.) is reported to have extracted more than 28 tons of gold each year from the mines of Pangaeum in Thrace.

When Philip's son Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.E.) captured the Persian city of Susa, he is said to have taken some 1,180 tons of gold from it and almost 7,000 tons from the whole of Persia. So when compared with these reports, the Bible's description of King Solomon's gold is not exaggerated.



A Murderous Plot Backfires!

Instructions: Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the event. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the main characters. Let the account come to life.

ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ DANIEL 6:1-28.

What do you think? What type of man is Darius? Describe his physical appearance as you imagine him. What tone do you “hear” in his voice? (Reread verses 14, 16, 18-20.) _____

What is the pit like, and how would you describe the lions? _____

Describe what you imagine happened during the first few minutes after the lions’ pit was sealed with Daniel inside. _____

DIG DEEPER.

Why were Darius’ officials jealous of Daniel? (Reread verse 3.) _____

Why did Daniel choose to pray openly when he could have done so in secret? (Reread verses 10, 11.) _____

Why might Darius have found the proposed law about prayer appealing? (Reread verse 7.) _____

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT... .

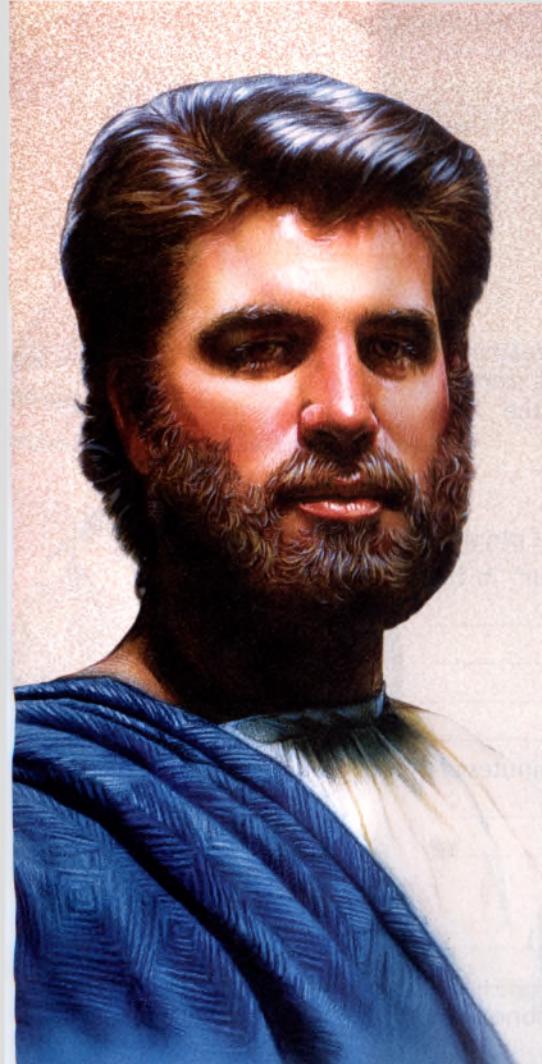
Courage in the face of opposition. _____

The importance of prayer. _____

Jehovah’s care for his loyal servants. _____

WHAT ABOUT THIS ACCOUNT IS MOST MEANINGFUL TO YOU, AND WHY?





Was the Word “God” or “a god”?

THAT question has to be considered when Bible translators handle the first verse of the Gospel of John. In the *New World Translation*, the verse is rendered: “In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” (John 1:1) Some other translations render the last part of the verse to convey the thought that the Word was “divine,” or something similar. (*A New Translation of the Bible*, by James Moffatt; *The New English Bible*) Many translations, however, render the last part of John 1:1: “And the Word was God.”—*The Holy Bible—New International Version*; *The Jerusalem Bible*.

Greek grammar and the context strongly indicate that the *New World Translation* rendering is correct and that “the Word” should not be identified as the “God” referred to earlier in the verse. Nevertheless, the fact that the Greek language of the first century did not have an indefinite article (“a” or “an”) leaves the matter open to question in some minds. It is for this reason that a Bible translation in a language that was spoken in the earliest centuries of our Common Era is very interesting.

► JOHN 1:1. SAHIDIC COPTIC TEXT; P. CHESTER BEATTY-813;
WITH INTERLINEAR TRANSLATION

ΩΠΤΟΥΟΥΕΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ	In	the beginning	existed	the Word
ΩΞΑΥΜΗΩΧΕΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ	and	the Word	existed	with
ΩΡΙΟΥΟΥΕΓΓΕΛΙΟΝ	the God	and	a god	was
ΩΙΩΧΩ	the Word			

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The language is the Sahidic dialect of Coptic. The Coptic language was spoken in Egypt in the centuries immediately following Jesus' earthly ministry, and the Sahidic dialect was an early literary form of the language. Regarding the earliest Coptic translations of the Bible, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* says: "Since the [Septuagint] and the [Christian Greek Scriptures] were being translated into Coptic during the 3d century C.E., the Coptic version is based on [Greek manuscripts] which are significantly older than the vast majority of extant witnesses."

The Sahidic Coptic text is especially interesting for two reasons. First, as indicated above, it reflects an understanding of Scripture dating from before the fourth century, which was when the Trinity became official doctrine. Second, Coptic grammar is relatively close to English grammar in one important aspect. The earliest translations of

the Christian Greek Scriptures were into Syriac, Latin, and Coptic. Syriac and Latin, like the Greek of those days, do not have an indefinite article. Coptic, however, does. Moreover, scholar Thomas O. Lambdin, in his work *Introduction to Sahidic Coptic*, says: "The use of the Coptic articles, both definite and indefinite, corresponds closely to the use of the articles in English."

Hence, the Coptic translation supplies interesting evidence as to how John 1:1 would have been understood back then. What do we find? The Sahidic Coptic translation uses an indefinite article with the word "god" in the final part of John 1:1. Thus, when rendered into modern English, the translation reads: "And the Word was a god." Evidently, those ancient translators realized that John's words recorded at John 1:1 did not mean that Jesus was to be identified as Almighty God. The Word was a god, not Almighty God.

THE RISE AND FALL OF "the Ships of Tarshish"

*"The ships of Tarshish crossed
the seas for your trade."*

—EZEKIEL 27:25,
THE JERUSALEM BIBLE

THE ships of Tarshish helped make King Solomon rich. The people who built them influenced the development of the Greek and Roman alphabets. They also founded a city that gave its name, Byblos, to the most influential book ever published.

Who built and sailed the ships of Tarshish? How did the ships get their name? And how do events involving these people and their ships attest to the accuracy of the Bible?

Lords of the Mediterranean

The Phoenicians built the vessels that came to be known as the ships of Tarshish. Phoenicians had already become expert seamen about a thousand years before the time of Christ. Their homeland was a narrow strip of coast

that more or less corresponds to modern-day Lebanon. Other nations occupied the land to the north, east, and south. To the west lay the vast Mediterranean Sea. To gain wealth, the Phoenicians looked to that sea.

The Phoenician seamen gradually built a thriving merchant fleet. As profits grew and technology advanced, they constructed larger ships that could handle longer voyages. After reaching Cyprus, Sardinia, and the Balearic Islands, the Phoenicians followed the North African coastline in a westerly direction until they reached Spain. (See the accompanying map.)

Phoenician shipwrights built boats a hundred feet long. These oceangoing vessels were apparently called "ships of Tarshish" since they could undertake the 2,500-mile journey from Phoenicia to southern Spain, the possible location of Tarshish.*

* Over time, the term "ships of Tarshish" came to signify a *type* of ship, one capable of long sea voyages.

The Phoenicians may not have been bent on ruling the world, only on making money from it. They did so by establishing trading posts. As traders, however, they became the lords of the Mediterranean.

Beyond the Mediterranean

In their quest for profit, Phoenician explorers ventured into the Atlantic Ocean. Their ships continued to hug the southern coast of Spain until they came to an area called Tartessus. About the year 1100 B.C.E., they founded a city that they called Gadir. This port, now known as Cádiz, Spain, became one of the first large cities of Western Europe.

The Phoenicians traded salt, wine, dried fish, cedar, pine, metalwork, glass, embroidery, fine linen, and cloth dyed the famous Tyrian purple. What wealth did Spain have to offer in return?

Southern Spain proved to be the Mediterranean's richest source of silver and other valuable metals. Regarding Tyre, the princi-

Museo Naval, Madrid



pal port of the Phoenicians, the prophet Ezekiel said: "You did business in Spain and took silver, iron, tin, and lead in payment for your abundant goods."—Ezekiel 27:12, *Today's English Version*.

The Phoenicians discovered a seemingly inexhaustible supply of these minerals near the river Guadalquivir, not far from Cádiz. The same minerals are still extracted from this area, now called Río Tinto. These mines have been producing high-quality ore for some three thousand years.

With the Spanish-Phoenician shipping line firmly established, the Phoenicians claimed a monopoly on Spanish silver. The silver flooded into Phoenicia and even into nearby Israel. King Solomon of Israel formed joint business ventures with Phoenician King Hiram. As a result, in Solo-

A coin depicting a Phoenician ship, third to fourth century B.C.E.



Remains from a Phoenician settlement, Cádiz, Spain



mon's day silver was counted as "nothing at all."—1 Kings 10:21.*

Although the Phoenicians became successful merchants, they could be ruthless. Reportedly, they sometimes lured people aboard ship on the pretense of showing them their wares, only to enslave them. In time, they even turned on their former trading partners, the Israelites, and sold them into slavery. Hence, Hebrew prophets predicted the destruction of the Phoenician city of Tyre. These prophecies were finally fulfilled by Alexander the Great in 332 B.C.E. (Joel 3:6; Amos 1:9, 10) This destruction marked the end of the Phoenician era.

The Phoenician Legacy

Like all good businessmen, the Phoenician traders put their agreements in writing. They used an alphabet very similar to ancient Hebrew. Other nations saw the advantages of the Phoenician alphabet. With modifications, it became the basis for the Greek alphabet, which in turn was the forerunner of the Roman script, one of the most widely used alphabets today.

In addition, the important Phoenician city of Byblos became a center for the distribution of papyrus, the precursor of modern paper. The use of papyrus in writing encouraged the development of books. In fact, the English word for the world's most widely distributed book, the Bible, is derived from the name Byblos. Indeed, the historical record of the Phoenicians and their ships builds confidence that the Bible is firmly rooted in fact.

* Solomon's "fleet of ships of Tarshish" collaborated with Hiram's fleet, probably operating out of Ezion-geber and trading in the Red Sea and beyond.—1 Kings 10:22.

Our Readers Ask

DO JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO WILL BE SAVED?

Jehovah's Witnesses think that they have found the true religion. If they did not think so, they would change their beliefs. Like adherents of many religious faiths, Jehovah's Witnesses hope to be saved. However, they also believe that it is not their job to judge who will be saved. Ultimately, God is the Judge. He decides.—Isaiah 33:22.

God's Word reveals that those who would be saved must not only want salvation but also cooperate with the Savior. To illustrate: Suppose that a hiker becomes lost in a wilderness. He desperately wants to find his way out. Will he perish, or will he survive? The outcome depends on the way he responds to help. Out of pride, he may refuse the help of a rescuer, or savior. On the other hand, he could humbly accept help and reach safety.

In a similar way, salvation belongs to those who cooperate with mankind's Rescuer, Jehovah God. Salvation is a gift from God, yet not all people will attain it. God's Son, Jesus, said: "Not everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but the one doing the will of my Father who is in the heavens will."—Matthew 7:21.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that God saves only those who exercise faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus and closely follow Jesus' teachings. (Acts 4:10-12) Consider three important requirements for salvation that are revealed in God's Word.

(1) "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves," Je-



sus told his companions. (John 13:35) Jesus' own example of giving his life in behalf of others stressed the importance of love. Those who love others are demonstrating a quality vital for salvation.

(2) "I have made your name known to them," said Jesus in prayer to his Father. (John 17:26) Jesus knew how important God's personal name, Jehovah, was to his Father. Jesus prayed for his Father's name to "be sanctified." (Matthew 6:9) Sanctifying God's

name includes knowing that name and treating it as important and holy. Like Jesus, those seeking salvation need to use God's name. They also need to teach others about God's name and qualities. (Matthew 28:19, 20) In fact, only those calling on God's name will be saved.—Romans 10:13.

(3) "My kingdom is no part of this world," Jesus said to Pontius Pilate. (John 18:36) Few today demonstrate faith in God's Kingdom, or government, of which Jesus is King. Instead, they place their trust in human institutions. By contrast, those who will be saved loyally support God's Kingdom and teach others about how it will liberate all faithful mankind.—Matthew 4:17.

After learning some of the requirements for salvation, Jesus' disciples said: "Who possibly can be saved?" Jesus answered: "The things impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:18-30) Jehovah's Witnesses diligently try to meet these requirements for salvation. They also work hard to help others to be saved.

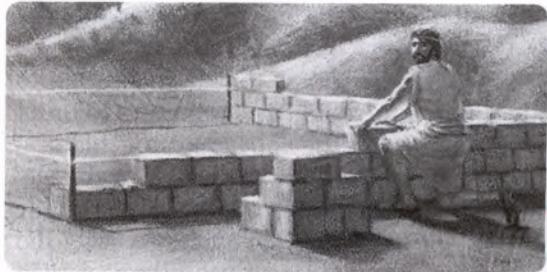
Are You Building on Sand or on Rock?

DO YOU enjoy reading the Bible? Do you even set aside some time to study the Bible regularly with one of Jehovah's Witnesses? If so, you no doubt feel that the knowledge you have acquired has helped you to understand better why this world is currently engulfed by problems. (Revelation 12:9, 12) In addition, numerous Bible passages have given you comfort during times of distress as well as hope for the future.—Psalm 145:14; 147:3; 2 Peter 3:13.

Acquiring accurate Bible knowledge is a vital step for those desiring to become followers of Christ. But is it the only step? No. To remain a true Christian—especially when one's faith is tested—a Bible student needs to take another crucial step. What is it? To find the answer, let us briefly consider the Sermon on the Mount, a discourse delivered by Jesus on a mountain in Galilee.—Matthew 5:1, 2.

Two Houses Tested

Are you familiar with the contents of the Sermon on the Mount? You can find this famous discourse in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. (Matthew 5:1-7:29; Luke 6:20-49) It takes just 20 minutes to read the entire sermon. Still, it is packed with more than 20 quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures and more than 50 figures of speech. One figure of speech—involving the building of two houses—stands out because Jesus used it as the



conclusion of his discourse. If you understand the significance of that concluding illustration, you will be helped to see how you can continue to stand firm as a follower of Christ no matter what tests of faith you may encounter.

Jesus said: "Everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does them will be likened to a discreet man, who built his house upon the rock-mass. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and lashed against that house, but it did not cave in, for it had been founded upon the rock-mass. Furthermore, everyone hearing these sayings of mine and not doing them will be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain poured down and the floods came and the winds blew and struck against that house and it caved in, and its collapse was great."—Matthew 7:24-27.

A Man "Who Dug and Went Down Deep"

What important truth did Jesus convey to his disciples with this illustration about the two builders? To find out, take a closer look at Jesus' words. What do you note about the two houses? Both were exposed to the same calamitous events. The houses may have looked similar. They may also have stood in the same general location—even side by side. Still, one was built on sand, the other on rock. How could that be? Because, as noted in the Gospel of Luke, the discreet man "dug and went down deep" in order to reach a

layer of rock. (Luke 6:48) As a result, the house of the discreet man stood firm.

What was the point that Jesus wanted to highlight? Jesus told the illustration in order to highlight, not the appearance or the location of the houses nor the power of the elements, but the actions of the builders. One man dug down deep, whereas the other did not. How can you be like the discreet man and dig down deep? Jesus himself summarized the point of the illustration by stating: "Why, then, do you call me 'Lord! Lord!' but do not do the things I say? Everyone that comes to me and hears my words *and does them*, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man . . . who dug and went down deep and laid a foundation upon the rock-mass."

—Luke 6:46-48.

Our standing firm depends on applying what we learn



Indeed, merely listening to Bible teachings or reading the Bible at home is like putting a house on top of sand—no digging required. But to do, or apply, Christ's teachings is challenging. It involves digging down deep to reach solid rock.

Hence, whether you stand firm as a follower of Christ or not depends on whether you *apply* what you hear or not. When you apply in your daily life what you learn through Bible study, you are like the discreet man who dug down deep. Therefore, each Bible student should pause and ask himself: 'Am I a hearer, or am I a doer? Do I merely read and study the Bible, or do I follow the Bible's commands when making decisions?'

The Results of Digging Deep

Consider the experience of José. His parents raised him to respect the Bible's moral standards, but he never studied God's Word for himself. "When I moved out of the house," says José, "I tried to be good, but I surrounded myself with bad associates. I started using drugs, engaged in immoral sex, and constantly fought with others."

Eventually, José decided to change his lifestyle and took a serious interest in studying the Bible. "One thing that really motivated me to change," says José, "was reading and understanding Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. But it took time for me to make changes in my personality and lifestyle. At first, I was afraid of what my 'friends' would think of me, but I overcame that fear. I stopped lying and using obscene speech and began attending the meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses. I learned that just as Jesus promised, leading a simple life and applying the Bible's advice really does bring lasting happiness."—Matthew 5:3-12.

What will be the results when you dig deep to build on rock—that is, when you diligently apply what you read in God's Word? Je-

sus stated: “When a flood arose, the river dashed against that house, but was not strong enough to *shake it*, because of its being well built.” (Luke 6:48) Certainly, if you build well by applying what you learn, stormlike tests not only will fail to break your house but will not even shake it. What a comforting thought!

The disciple James, a half brother of Jesus, mentions yet another blessing for Bible students who are not just hearers but truly doers of God’s written Word. James wrote: “Become doers of the word, and not hearers only . . . He who peers into the perfect law that belongs to freedom and who persists in it, this man, because he has become, not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, will be happy in his doing it.”—James 1:22-25.

Certainly, those who apply the Bible’s counsel are truly happy. Such happiness, in turn, gives followers of Christ the strength to stand firm against the stormlike trials that

test their faith and the genuineness of their devotion to God.

What Will You Do?

When Jesus delivered his Sermon on the Mount, he emphasized that serving Jehovah God is often a matter of, not this *and* that, but this *or* that. For example, Jesus taught that a person has either a simple eye or a wicked one, that he slaves either for God or for riches, that he walks either on the cramped road or on the broad one. (Matthew 6:22-24; 7:13, 14) Then, in his concluding illustration of the two builders, Jesus gave his followers one more choice: Act either as a discreet man or as a foolish one.

If you continue to apply wholeheartedly what you are learning from a study of the Bible, you are acting discreetly. Yes, digging deep to build on rock will lead to blessings for you now and in the future.—Proverbs 10:25.



- Who will be released from hell? See page 9.
- What did Jesus say that death is like? See page 17.
- What two steps can you take to strengthen your marriage? See pages 19 and 20.
- Do Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they are the only ones who will be saved? See page 28.
- How can you build your faith on solid rock? See page 29.