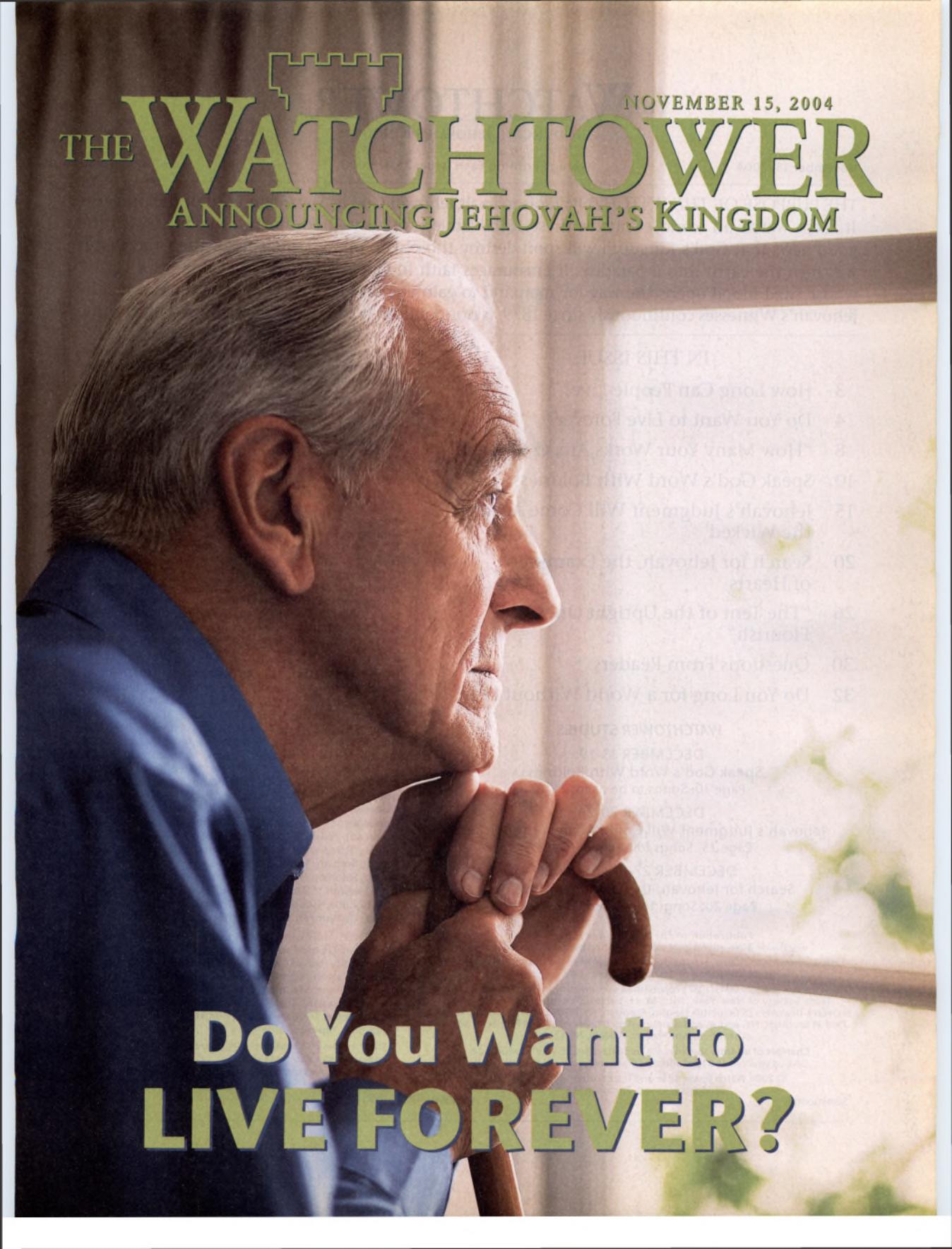


NOVEMBER 15, 2004

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Do You Want to  
LIVE FOREVER?**



# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

November 15, 2004

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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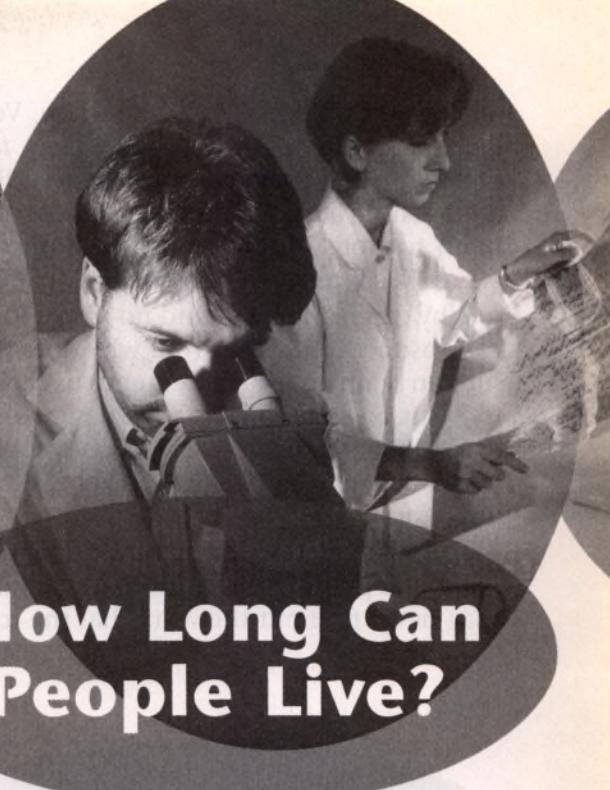
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Juan Ponce de León sought a fountain of youth

Ponce de León: Harper's Encyclopædia of United States History

**O**N March 3, 1513, Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León embarked on a noteworthy expedition. He set sail from Puerto Rico in hopes of reaching the island of Bimini. Legend has it that he sought a miraculous spring—the Fountain of Youth. But he landed in what is now the state of Florida, U.S.A. Of course, he never found the nonexistent fountain.

Today, humans in general do not live much longer than 70 or 80 years. Although the Bible lists people with far greater life spans, the 2002 *Guinness Book of World Records* says that the age of the oldest person who ever lived was 122 years and 164 days. (Genesis 5:3-32) However, bioethicist John Harris said: "New research now allows a glimpse into a world in which aging—and even death—may no longer be inevitable." A number of 21st-century researchers speak of "practical immortality," "no limit to the life span of human beings by

## How Long Can People Live?

2099," "a capacity to have an immortal propagation of cells," and the like.

In his book *The Dream of Eternal Life*, Mark Benecke notes: "Nearly all of the body is renewed several times during the course of a life. . . . After about seven years, we are new people in the truest sense of the word." However, this does not go on indefinitely because cells stop multiplying after a predetermined number of divisions. If that was not the case, though, says Benecke, "the human body could regenerate itself for a very long time—even eternally."

Consider, too, the astounding capacity of the human brain, which greatly exceeds any use we might make of it during our rather short life. According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the human brain "is endowed with considerably more potential than is realizable in the course of

one person's lifetime." (1976 Edition, Volume 12, page 998) The book *How the Brain Learns*, by David A. Sousa, states: "For all practical purposes, the capacity of the brain to store information is unlimited." —Page 78, Second Edition, copyright 2001.

Why can researchers find no physiological reason why we die? And why does the human brain have such tremendous capacity? Is it possible that we were designed to keep on taking in knowledge forever? Why are we able to conceive of everlasting life at all?

The Bible states: "Even time indefinite [God] has put in their heart, that mankind may never find out the work that the true

God has made from the start to the finish." (Ecclesiastes 3:11) These words indicate that God implanted in us the idea of living forever. For that matter, we would always have something to learn about God and his works. If we lived for untold billions of years—yes, forever—we would always be able to learn more about the marvels of God's creative works.

The words of Jesus Christ also show that eternal human life is possible. He 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) What about you? Do you want to live forever?

## Do You Want to Live Forever?

"I AM not afraid of dying," said an elderly woman in Japan. "But it distresses me that I will have to part from these flowers." A Christian minister visiting her home understood the remark, for the woman had a beautiful garden. Many who say that they have no fear of dying really appreciate the wonders of creation and may actually long to live forever.

Living forever? Many would brush aside such a thought. Some may even say that



they have no interest in living forever. Why would anyone feel that way?

### Everlasting Life—Boring?

Some think that it would be boring to

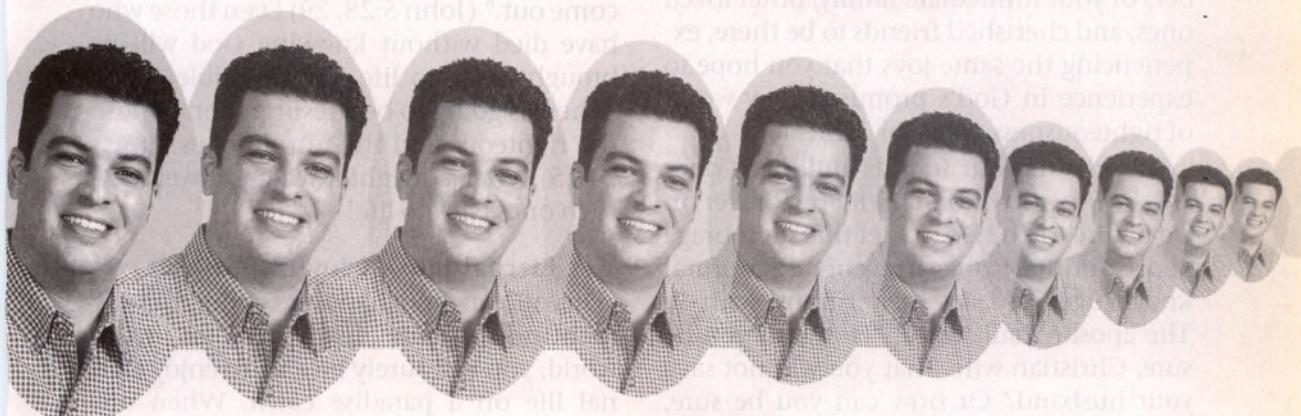
live forever. They may point out the monotonous life of many retired people who have little to do but sit and stare at the television screen. If that is how you feel, consider what astronomer Robert Jastrow said when asked if everlasting life would be a blessing or a curse. Jastrow replied: "It would be a blessing to those who have curious minds and an endless appetite for learning. The thought that they have forever to absorb knowledge would be very comforting for them. But for others who feel they have learned all there is to learn and whose minds are closed, it would be a dreadful curse. They'd have no way to fill their time."

Whether you would find everlasting life boring or not depends much on your attitude. If you have 'a curious mind and an endless appetite for learning,' think of what you could accomplish in the

Being able to show and experience love forever would make eternal life satisfying indeed. We are created with the capacity for showing love, and we thrive when we feel loved. Sharing real love brings deep satisfaction that does not fade with the passing of time. Living forever would offer an endless opportunity to cultivate love not only for fellow humans but especially for God. "If anyone loves God," said the apostle Paul, "this one is known by him." (1 Corinthians 8:3) What a wonderful prospect—to know and to be known by the Sovereign of the universe! Furthermore, there is no end to learning about our loving Creator. How, then, could everlasting life be boring and unrewarding?

#### **Life—Transient and Precious**

Some feel that the shortness of life is what makes it so precious. They may compare life to gold, which exists only in limited amounts. If gold could be found everywhere, they point out, its value would be



fields of art, music, architecture, gardening, or whatever worthy pursuits interest you. Eternal life on earth would provide wonderful prospects for developing your potential in various fields of endeavor.

diminished. Nevertheless, gold would still be beautiful. Surely the same is true of life.

We might compare enjoying eternal life to having an abundance of air. Sailors in a malfunctioning submarine would consider air to be especially valuable. After they

were rescued, do you think they would unappreciatively complain about again enjoying air in abundance? Surely not!

Like such sailors, we can be rescued but with the even greater prospect of everlasting life. "The wages sin pays is death," wrote the apostle Paul, "but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) Through Jesus' ransom sacrifice, God will remove human imperfection and death and will bestow upon obedient mankind the gift of everlasting life. How grateful we should be for such a loving arrangement!

### What About Your Loved Ones?

Some individuals may think: 'What about my loved ones? Life eternal on earth would not mean much to me if they were not with me.' Perhaps you have taken in knowledge of the Bible and have learned about the possibility of enjoying everlasting life in an earthly paradise. (Luke 23:43; John 3:16; 17:3) Naturally, you want members of your immediate family, other loved ones, and cherished friends to be there, experiencing the same joys that you hope to experience in God's promised new world of righteousness.—2 Peter 3:13.

But what if your friends and loved ones are showing no interest in living forever on a paradise earth? Do not let that discourage you. Continue to take in accurate Scriptural knowledge, and act in harmony with it. The apostle Paul wrote: "How can you be sure, Christian wife, that you will not save your husband? Or how can you be sure, Christian husband, that you will not save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:16, *Today's English Version*) People can change. For example, one man who once opposed Christianity changed and later became an elder in the Christian congregation. He says: "I

am so grateful that my little family loyally stood by their Bible principles through all my opposition."

God is very concerned about your life and the lives of your loved ones. Indeed, "Jehovah . . . does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Jehovah God wants you and your loved ones to live forever. His love is greater than that of imperfect humans. (Isaiah 49:15) So why not cultivate a good relationship with God? Then you may be able to help your loved ones to do the same. Even if they do not now have the hope of living forever, their attitude may change when they see you act in harmony with accurate knowledge of the Bible.

What about the dear ones you may have lost in death? For millions who have died, the Bible holds out the wonderful hope of a resurrection—of awakening from death and living in Paradise on earth. Jesus Christ promised: "The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will . . . come out." (John 5:28, 29) Even those who have died without knowing God will be brought back to life, for the Bible states: "There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) What a delight it will be to welcome such ones back to life!

### Eternal Life—A Joyful Prospect

If you can find happiness and contentment now despite all the troubles in this world, you will surely be able to enjoy eternal life on a paradise earth. When one of Jehovah's Witnesses pointed out the blessings that everlasting life would bring, however, one woman said: "I don't want to live forever. This life of 70 or 80 years is enough for me." A Christian elder who happened to be present asked her: "Have

you ever thought about how your children would feel if you died?" Tears ran down her cheeks when she thought about the grief they would experience at the loss of their mother. "For the first time, I realized how selfish I had been," she admits, "and I could see that everlasting life is not a selfish hope but that it involves living for others."

Some may feel that it does not matter to anyone whether they live or they die. Yet, it does matter to our Life-Giver, who says: "As I am alive, . . . I take delight, not in the death of the wicked one, but in that someone wicked turns back from his way and actually keeps living." (Ezekiel 33:11) Since

God is that concerned about the life of even the wicked, surely he cares deeply for those who love him.

King David of ancient Israel had confidence in Jehovah's loving care. David once said: "In case my own father and my own mother did leave me, even Jehovah himself would take me up." (Psalm 27:10) David was likely sure of his parents' love for him. But even if his parents—his closest human contacts—were to leave him, he knew that God would not desert him. Out of love and concern, Jehovah offers us everlasting life and unending friendship with him. (James 2:23) Should we not gratefully accept these wonderful gifts?

*Love for God and neighbor  
will make living forever  
worthwhile*



## "How Many Your Works Are, O Jehovah!"

**W**HETHER we live in the country or in a city, high up in the mountains or way down by the sea, we are surrounded by the awe-inspiring splendor of creation. Fittingly, the *2004 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses* features a panorama of Jehovah God's astounding handiwork.

Appreciative humans have always concerned themselves with God's works. For example, consider Solomon, whose wisdom "was vaster than the wisdom of all the Orientals." The Bible says: "He would speak about the trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that is coming forth on the wall; and he would speak about the beasts and about the flying creatures and about the moving things and about the fishes." (1 Kings 4:30, 33) Solomon's father, King David, often meditated on God's masterpieces. He was moved to exclaim to his Maker: "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions."—Psalm 104:24.\*

We too do well to observe and study creation. For instance, we might well "raise [our] eyes high up" and ask: "Who has created these things?" Why, it is Jehovah God, who has an "abundance of dynamic energy" and who truly is "vigorous in power"!—Isaiah 40:26.

How should meditation on Jehovah's creative works affect us? In at least three ways. It can (1) remind us to cherish our life, (2) move us to help others to learn from creation, and (3) impel us to get to know and appreciate our Creator more fully.

\* See the *2004 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses*, November/December.

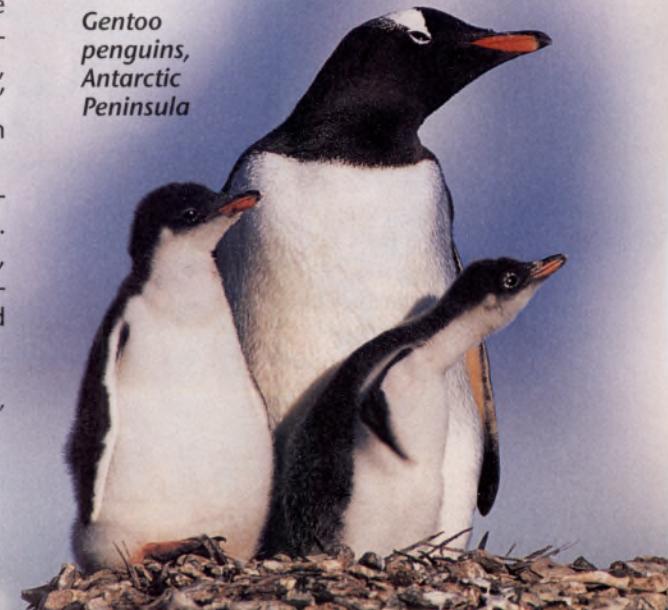
Our life as humans, far superior to that of "unreasoning animals," enables us to observe and value the wonders of creation. (2 Peter 2:12) Our eyes can see the graceful landscape. Our ears can hear the melodious songs of birds. And our sense of time and place gives us reference points that become fond memories. Even though our present life is not perfect, it is definitely worth living!

Parents can enjoy their children's natural fascination with creation. How children love to find shells on the seashore, to pet an animal, to climb a tree! Parents will want to help their young ones to see the connection between creation and the Creator. The awe and respect that children develop for Jehovah's creation can stay with them throughout life.

—Psalm 111:2, 10.

We would be extremely shortsighted were we to admire the creation but fail to appreciate the Creator. Isaiah's prophecy helps us to reflect on this very point when it says: "Have

Gentoo  
penguins,  
Antarctic  
Peninsula





*Grand Teton National Park,  
Wyoming, U.S.A.*

### Praise for the Creator

Many appreciative scientists see the hand of God in creation. Following are a few examples:

"The significance and joy in my science comes in those occasional moments of discovering something new and saying to myself, 'So that's how God did it.' My goal is to understand a little corner of God's plan."—Henry Schaefer, professor of chemistry.

"As to the cause of the Universe, in context of expansion, that is left for the reader to insert, but our picture is incomplete without Him [God]."  
—Edward Milne, British cosmologist.

"We know that nature is described by the best of all possible mathematics because God created it."—Alexander Polyakov, Russian mathematician.

"In our study of natural objects we are approaching the thoughts of the Creator, reading his conceptions, interpreting a system that is His and not ours."—Louis Agassiz, American biologist.

you not come to know or have you not heard? Jehovah, the Creator of the extremities of the earth, is a God to time indefinite. He does not tire out or grow weary. There is no searching out of his understanding."

—Isaiah 40:28.

Yes, Jehovah's works give evidence of his peerless wisdom, his unrivaled power, and his deep love for us. When we see the beauty around us and discern the qualities of the One who made it all, may we be moved to echo David's words: "There is none like you . . . , O Jehovah, neither are there any works like yours."—Psalm 86:8.

We can be assured that obedient humans will continue to be fascinated by Jehovah's creative works. Throughout eternity, we will have endless opportunities to learn more about Jehovah. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) And the more we learn about him, the more we will come to love our Creator.

# SPEAK GOD'S WORD WITH BOLDNESS

*"Go, prophesy to my people."*—AMOS 7:15.

**W**HILE engaging in the ministry, a witness of Jehovah was confronted by a priest. The priest cried out: 'Stop preaching! Leave this area!' What did the witness do? Did he give in to the demand, or did he continue to speak God's word with boldness? You can find out because that witness recorded his experiences in a book that bears his name. It is the Bible book of Amos. Before we learn more about the encounter with the priest, though, let us consider some background information regarding Amos.

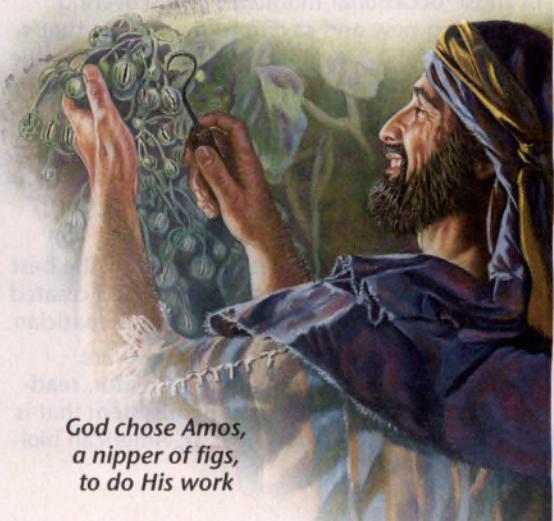
2 Who was Amos? When and where did he live? We find the answers to those questions at Amos 1:1, where we read: "The words of Amos, who happened to be among the sheep raisers from Tekoa, . . . in the days of Uzziah the king of Judah and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, the king of Israel." Amos was a resident of Judah. His hometown was Tekoa, ten miles south of Jerusalem. He lived at the end of the ninth century B.C.E. when King Uzziah ruled in Judah and Jeroboam II was king of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. Amos was a sheep raiser. In fact, Amos 7:14 says that he was not only "a herdsman" but also "a nipper of figs of sycamore trees." So he spent part of the year as a seasonal worker. He nipped, or pierced, figs. This work was done to speed up the ripening of the figs. It was tedious work.

1, 2. Who was Amos, and what does the Bible reveal about him?

## **"Go, Prophesy"**

<sup>3</sup> Amos candidly said: "I was not a prophet, neither was I the son of a prophet." (Amos 7:14) He was neither born as a prophet's son nor trained as a prophet. Of all the people in Judah, though, Jehovah chose Amos to do His work. At that time, God did not select a powerful king, a learned priest, or a wealthy chieftain. This provides a reassuring lesson for us. We may possess little in the way of secular status or formal education. But should that make us feel unqualified to preach God's word? By no means! Jehovah can equip us to proclaim his message—even in challenging territories. Since that is exactly what Jehovah did for Amos, it will be instructive for all who desire to speak God's word with boldness to

3. How does learning about Amos help us if we feel unqualified to preach?



*God chose Amos,  
a nipper of figs,  
to do His work*

consider the example set by that courageous prophet.

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah commanded Amos: "Go, prophesy to my people Israel." (Amos 7:15) That assignment was a challenge. At the time, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel enjoyed peace, security, and material prosperity. Many had 'winter houses' as well as 'summer houses' made, not of ordinary mud brick, but of expensive "hewn stone." Some owned elegant ivory-inlaid furniture and drank wine produced in "desirable vineyards." (Amos 3:15; 5:11) As a result, many people were complacent. In fact, the territory assigned to Amos may have been similar to that in which some of us perform our ministry today.

<sup>5</sup> It was not wrong for the Israelites to have material possessions. However, some Israelites were amassing riches by dishonest means. The rich were "defrauding the lowly ones" and "crushing the poor ones." (Amos 4:1) Powerful merchants, judges, and priests conspired to rob the poor. Let us now go back in time and observe what these men were doing.

### God's Law Violated

<sup>6</sup> We first go to the marketplace. There dishonest merchants made "the ephah small" and "the shekel great," even selling "mere refuse" as grain. (Amos 8:5, 6) The merchants cheated their customers in the quantity of what they sold, the price was too high, and the quality was inferior. After the merchants exploited the poor to the point of ruin, those unfortunates had to sell themselves as slaves. Next, the merchants bought them "for the price of a pair of sandals." (Amos 8:6) Just imagine! Those greedy merchants considered their fellow Israelites to be of no more

4. Why was it a challenge for Amos to prophesy in Israel?

5. What unjust things were being done by some Israelites?

6. How did Israelite merchants exploit others?

value than mere footwear! What a crushing humiliation of the needy, and what a gross violation of God's Law! Yet, the same merchants observed "the sabbath." (Amos 8:5) Yes, they were religious but only outwardly.

<sup>7</sup> How did the merchants get away with breaking God's Law, which commands: "You must love your fellow as yourself"? (Leviticus 19:18) They succeeded because those who should have enforced the Law—the judges—were their partners in crime. At the city gate, where legal cases were handled, the judges 'took hush money and turned aside poor people.' Instead of protecting the poor, the judges betrayed them for a bribe. (Amos 5:10, 12) So the judges too were ignoring God's Law.

<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, what role were Israel's priests playing? To find out, we must turn our attention to another location. See what sins the priests permitted "at the house of their gods"! Through Amos, God said: "A man and his own father have gone to the same girl, for the purpose of profaning my holy name." (Amos 2:7, 8) Imagine that! An Israelite father and his son committed sexual immorality with the same temple prostitute. And those wicked priests were turning a blind eye to such immorality!—Leviticus 19:29; Deuteronomy 5:18; 23:17.

<sup>9</sup> Referring to other sinful conduct, Jehovah said: "On garments seized as a pledge they stretch themselves out beside every altar; and the wine of those who have been fined they drink at the house of their gods." (Amos 2:8) Yes, priests and people in general also ignored the law recorded at Exodus 22:26, 27, which said that a garment taken as a

7. What made it possible for Israel's merchants to break God's Law?

8. To what conduct were wicked priests turning a blind eye?

9, 10. Of what violations of God's Law were the Israelites guilty, and what parallel can be drawn with our day?

pledge had to be returned before nightfall. Instead, they used it as a blanket on which to sprawl while feasting and drinking to false gods. And with the fines they extracted from the poor, they bought wine to drink at false religious festivals. How far they had strayed from the path of pure worship!

<sup>10</sup> The Israelites were shamelessly violating the two greatest commandments of the Law—to love Jehovah and to love their fellow humans. God thus sent Amos to condemn them for their unfaithfulness. Today, the nations of the world, including those of Christendom, reflect the corrupt condition of ancient Israel. While some people prosper, many others are ruined financially and damaged emotionally by the immoral practices of dishonest leaders of big business, politics, and false religion. But Jehovah is concerned about those who are suffering and who are moved to search for him. Therefore, he has assigned his present-day servants to do a work like that of Amos—to preach His word boldly.

<sup>11</sup> Because of the similarities between our work and that of Amos, we will benefit greatly from considering his example. In fact, Amos shows us (1) what we should preach, (2) how we should preach, and (3) why opposers cannot stop our preaching work. Let us consider these points one at a time.

### How We Can Imitate Amos

<sup>12</sup> As Jehovah's Witnesses, we center our Christian ministry on the Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making work. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 13:10) Nevertheless, we also draw attention to God's warnings, even as Amos declared that Jehovah would bring adverse judgment upon the wicked.

11. What can we learn from the example of Amos?

12, 13. How did Jehovah show that he was displeased with the Israelites, and what was their reaction?

For instance, Amos 4:6-11 shows that Jehovah repeatedly made clear his displeasure with Israel. He gave the people "want of bread," "withheld from [them] the downpour," struck them with "scorching and mildew," and sent among them "a pestilence." Did these things move Israel to repent? "You did not come back to me," God said. Indeed, the Israelites rejected Jehovah time and again.

<sup>13</sup> Jehovah punished the unrepentant Israelites. First, however, they received a prophetic warning. In line with this, God declared: "The Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not do a thing unless he has revealed his confidential matter to his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7) God had revealed to Noah that the Flood was coming and had instructed him to sound a warning. Similarly, Jehovah told Amos to give a final warning. Sadly, Israel ignored that divine message and failed to take the right action.

<sup>14</sup> No doubt you will agree that there are some striking similarities between the time of Amos and our own day. Jesus Christ prophesied that numerous calamities would take place during the time of the end. He also foretold a worldwide preaching work. (Matthew 24:3-14) As in Amos' day, though, most people today ignore both the signs of the times and the Kingdom message. For such individuals, the consequences will be the same as those faced by the unrepentant Israelites. Jehovah warned them: "Get ready to meet your God." (Amos 4:12) They met God by experiencing his adverse judgment when Assyria conquered them. Today, this ungodly world will 'meet God' at Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14, 16) Yet, as long as Jehovah's patience continues, we exhort as many people as possible: "Search for Jehovah, and keep living."—Amos 5:6.

14. What similarities are there between the time of Amos and our day?



### Facing Opposition as Amos Did

<sup>15</sup> We can imitate Amos not only in what we preach but also in how we preach. That fact is highlighted in chapter 7, where we encounter the priest mentioned at the beginning of our discussion. He was “Amaziah the priest of Bethel.” (Amos 7:10) The city of Bethel was a center of Israel’s apostate religion, which involved calf worship. So Amaziah was a priest of the State religion. How did he react to the bold pronouncements of Amos?

<sup>16</sup> Amaziah told Amos: “O visionary, go, run your way off to the land of Judah, and there eat bread, and there you may prophesy. But at Bethel you must no longer do any further prophesying, for it is the sanctuary of a king and it is the house of a kingdom.” (Amos 7:12, 13) In effect, Amaziah said: ‘Go home! We have our own religion.’ He also tried to get the government to ban the activi-

*Like Amos, are you boldly proclaiming Jehovah’s message?*

ties of Amos, telling King Jeroboam II: “Amos has conspired against you right inside the house of Israel.” (Amos 7:10) Yes, Amaziah accused Amos of treason! He told the king: “This is what Amos has said, ‘By the sword Jeroboam will die; and as regards Israel, it will without fail go into exile from its own ground.’”—Amos 7:11.

<sup>17</sup> Into those words, Amaziah packed three misleading statements. He said: “This is what Amos has said.” Yet, Amos had never claimed to be the source of the prophecy. Instead, he had always stated: “This is what Jehovah has said.” (Amos 1:3) Amos was also accused of saying: “By the sword Jeroboam will die.” As recorded at Amos 7:9, however, Amos had prophesied: “I [Jehovah] will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with a sword.” God had foretold such calamity for Jeroboam’s “house,” his posterity. Furthermore,

15-17. (a) Who was Amaziah, and how did he react to the pronouncements of Amos? (b) Amaziah leveled what allegations against Amos?

Amaziah alleged that Amos had said: ‘Israel will without fail go into exile.’ But Amos had also prophesied that any Israelites who returned to God would receive blessings. Clearly, Amaziah used distorted half-truths in an effort to obtain an official ban on the preaching work done by Amos.

<sup>18</sup> Have you noticed the parallels between the methods used by Amaziah and those employed by opposers of Jehovah’s people today? Just as Amaziah tried to silence Amos, so certain priests, prelates, and patriarchs of our day try to block the preaching work of Jehovah’s servants. Amaziah falsely accused Amos of treason. Today, some clergymen likewise falsely accuse Jehovah’s Witnesses of being a threat to national security. And just as Amaziah turned to the king for help in combating Amos, so the clergy often turn to political allies for support in persecuting Jehovah’s Witnesses.

### Opposers Cannot Stop Our Preaching Work

<sup>19</sup> How did Amos react to Amaziah’s opposition? First, Amos asked the priest: “Are you saying: ‘You must not prophesy against Israel?’” Without hesitation, God’s courageous prophet then spoke words that Amaziah cer-

18. What parallels are there between the methods used by Amaziah and those employed by clerics today?

19, 20. How did Amos react to the opposition from Amaziah?

### How Would You Answer?

- Under what circumstances did Amos fulfill his God-given commission?
- Like Amos, what should we preach?
- With what attitude should we do our preaching work?
- Why are opposers unable to stop our witnessing activity?

tainly did not want to hear. (Amos 7:16, 17) Amos was not intimidated. What an excellent example for us! When it comes to speaking God’s word, we will not disobey our God, even in lands where modern-day Amazias are fomenting cruel persecution. Like Amos, we keep on proclaiming: “This is what Jehovah has said.” And opposers can never stop our preaching work, for “the hand of Jehovah” is with us.—Acts 11:19-21.

<sup>20</sup> Amaziah should have known that his threats would be futile. Amos had already explained why no one on earth could stop him from speaking—and that is our third point for consideration. According to Amos 3:3-8, Amos used a series of questions and illustrations to show that every effect has a cause. Then he made this application: “There is a lion that has roared! Who will not be afraid? The Sovereign Lord Jehovah himself has spoken! Who will not prophesy?” In other words, Amos told his listeners: ‘Just as you cannot help being afraid when you hear the roar of a lion, so I cannot help preaching God’s word, since I have heard Jehovah’s command to do so.’ Godly fear, or deep reverence for Jehovah, impelled Amos to speak with boldness.

<sup>21</sup> We too hear Jehovah’s commission to preach. How do we react? Like Amos and like Jesus’ early followers, with Jehovah’s help we speak His word with boldness. (Acts 4:23-31) Neither persecution incited by opposers nor complacency displayed by those to whom we preach will silence us. Showing zeal like that of Amos, Jehovah’s Witnesses around the globe are impelled to continue declaring the good news with boldness. We have the responsibility to warn people of Jehovah’s coming judgment. What does that judgment involve? That question will be answered in the following article.

21. How do we respond to God’s command that we preach the good news?

# JEHOVAH'S JUDGMENT WILL COME AGAINST THE WICKED

*"Get ready to meet your God."*—AMOS 4:12.

**W**ILL Jehovah ever put an end to wickedness and suffering on this earth? At the beginning of the 21st century, that question looms larger than ever. It seems that everywhere we turn, we see evidence of man's inhumanity to man. How we long for a world free of violence, terrorism, and corruption!

<sup>2</sup> The good news is that we can have complete confidence that Jehovah will end wickedness. God's qualities make it certain that he will take action against the wicked. Jehovah is righteous and just. At Psalm 33:5, his Word tells us: "He is a lover of righteousness and justice." Another psalm says: "Anyone loving violence [Jehovah's] soul certainly hates." (Psalm 11:5) Surely, Jehovah, the all-powerful God, who loves righteousness and justice, will not forever tolerate what he hates.

<sup>3</sup> Consider another reason why we can be sure that Jehovah will remove wickedness. The record of his past dealings guarantees this. Striking examples of Jehovah's pattern of dealing with wicked ones are found in the Bible book of Amos. A further consideration of the prophecy of Amos will emphasize three things about divine judgment. First, it

- 1, 2. Why can we be confident that God will end wickedness?
3. What will be emphasized in a further consideration of the prophecy of Amos?

is always deserved. Second, it is inescapable. And third, it is selective, for Jehovah executes judgment upon evildoers but extends mercy to repentant and rightly disposed individuals.—Romans 9:17-26.

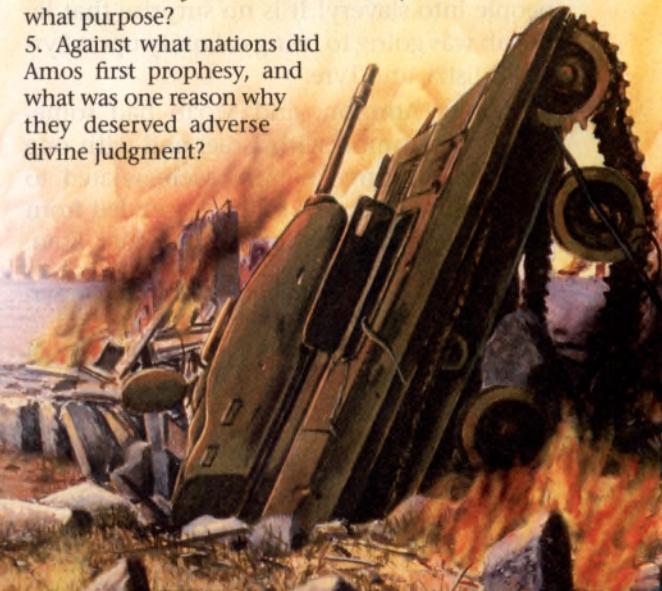
## Divine Judgment Always Deserved

<sup>4</sup> In the days of Amos, the Israelites were already split into two kingdoms. One was the southern two-tribe kingdom of Judah. The other was the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. Jehovah commissioned Amos to serve as a prophet, sending him from his hometown in Judah to Israel. There Amos would be used by God to proclaim divine judgment.

<sup>5</sup> Amos did not begin his work by pronouncing Jehovah's judgment against the wayward northern kingdom of Israel. Rather, he began by declaring adverse divine judgment against six nearby nations. These

4. Where did Jehovah send Amos, and for what purpose?

5. Against what nations did Amos first prophesy, and what was one reason why they deserved adverse divine judgment?





nations were Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab. But did they really deserve to experience God's adverse judgment? They definitely did. For one thing, they were hard-set enemies of Jehovah's people.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Jehovah condemned the Syrians "on account of their threshing Gilead." (Amos 1:3) The Syrians took territory away from Gilead—a region of Israel east of the Jordan River—and inflicted serious injury on God's people there. What about Philistia and Tyre? The Philistines were guilty of taking Israelite exiles, or captives, and selling them to the Edomites, and some Israelites came into the hands of Tyrian slave traders. (Amos 1:6, 9) Imagine that—selling God's people into slavery! It is no surprise that Jehovah was going to bring calamity upon Syria, Philistia, and Tyre.

<sup>7</sup> Edom, Ammon, and Moab had something in common with Israel and with one another. All three nations were related to the Israelites. The Edomites descended from Abraham through Jacob's twin brother, Esau.

6. Why was God going to bring calamity upon Syria, Philistia, and Tyre?

7. What did Edom, Ammon, and Moab have in common with Israel, but how did they treat the Israelites?

In a sense, therefore, they were Israel's brothers. The Ammonites and the Moabites were descendants of Abraham's nephew Lot. But did Edom, Ammon, and Moab treat their Israelite relatives in a brotherly manner? Far from it! Edom mercilessly used the sword against "his own brother," and the Ammonites were sadistic in their treatment of Israelite captives. (Amos 1:11, 13) Although Amos does not directly mention Moab's mistreatment of God's people, the Moabites had a long record of opposing Israel. The punishment for those three kindred nations would be severe. Jehovah would send a fiery destruction upon them.

### Divine Judgment Is Inescapable

<sup>8</sup> Without question, the six nations addressed early in the prophecy of Amos deserved adverse divine judgment. Moreover, there was no way for them to escape it. From Amos chapter 1, verse 3, through chapter 2, verse 1, Jehovah says six times: "I shall not turn it back." True to his word, he did not turn his hand back from against those nations. Recorded history proves that each of them later suffered calamity. Why, at least

8. Why were God's judgments against the six nations near Israel inescapable?



### *The kingdom of Israel did not escape divine judgment*

four of them—Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Edom—eventually ceased to exist!

<sup>9</sup> The prophecy of Amos next focused attention on a seventh nation—his home territory of Judah. His listeners in the northern kingdom of Israel may have been surprised to hear Amos proclaim judgment against the kingdom of Judah. Why did the inhabitants of Judah deserve adverse judgment? “On account of their rejecting the law of Jehovah,” says Amos 2:4. Jehovah did not take lightly such willful disregard for his Law. According to Amos 2:5, he foretold: “I will send a fire into Judah, and it must devour the dwelling towers of Jerusalem.”

<sup>10</sup> Unfaithful Judah could not escape the coming woe. For the seventh time, Jehovah said: “I shall not turn it back.” (Amos 2:4) Judah received the foretold punishment when she was desolated by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E. Once again we see that for the wicked, there is no escaping divine judgment.

<sup>11</sup> The prophet Amos had just declared Jehovah’s judgment on seven nations. Anyone

9. What did the inhabitants of Judah deserve, and why?

10. Why could Judah not escape woe?

11-13. Amos prophesied primarily against what nation, and what forms of oppression existed there?

who thought that he had completed his prophesying, however, was mistaken. Amos was far from finished! He had been commissioned primarily to declare a scathing judgment message against the northern kingdom of Israel. And Israel deserved adverse divine judgment because the moral and spiritual decay of the nation was deplorable.

<sup>12</sup> The prophesying of Amos exposed the oppression that had become common in the kingdom of Israel. In this regard, Amos 2:6, 7 reads: “This is what Jehovah has said, ‘On account of three revolts of Israel, and on account of four, I shall not turn it back, on account of their selling someone righteous for mere silver, and someone poor for the price of a pair of sandals. They are panting for the dust of the earth on the head of lowly persons; and the way of meek people they turn aside.’”

<sup>13</sup> Righteous ones were being sold “for mere silver,” possibly meaning that judges who accepted silver as a bribe were sentencing the innocent. Creditors were selling the poor into slavery for the price of “a pair of sandals,” perhaps for some minor debt. Heartless men ‘panted,’ or eagerly sought, to bring “lowly persons” down to such a state that these poor ones would throw dust on

their own heads as a sign of distress, mourning, or humiliation. Corruption was so rampant that "meek people" could not hope to find any justice.

<sup>14</sup> Notice who were being mistreated. They were the righteous, poor, lowly, and meek inhabitants of the land. Jehovah's Law covenant with the Israelites demanded that compassion be shown to the vulnerable and needy. For such individuals in the domain of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, however, conditions could not have been worse.

### "Get Ready to Meet Your God"

<sup>15</sup> Since immorality and other sins were rampant in Israel, it was with good reason that the prophet Amos warned the rebellious nation: "Get ready to meet your God." (Amos 4:12) Unfaithful Israel could not escape the approaching execution of divine judgment because for the eighth time, Jehovah declared: "I shall not turn it back." (Amos 2:6) Regarding wicked ones who might try to hide, God said: "No one fleeing of them will make good his flight, and no one escaping of them will make his getaway. If they dig down into Sheol, from there my own hand will take them; and if they go up to the heavens, from there I shall bring them down."—Amos 9:1, 2.

<sup>16</sup> The wicked could not evade the execution of Jehovah's judgment upon them by digging "down into Sheol," figuratively denoting attempts to hide in the lowest parts of the earth. Neither could they escape divine judgment by going "up to the heavens," that is, trying to find refuge on high mountains. Jehovah's warning was clear: There is no hiding place beyond his reach. Divine justice re-

quired that the kingdom of Israel be called to account for its wicked deeds. And that time did come. In 740 B.C.E.—about 60 years after Amos recorded his prophecy—the kingdom of Israel fell to the conquering Assyrians.

### Divine Judgment Is Selective

<sup>17</sup> The prophecy of Amos has helped us to see that divine judgment is always deserved and is inescapable. But the book of Amos also indicates that Jehovah's judgment is selective. God can find the wicked and execute judgment upon them wherever they hide. He can also find repentant and upright ones—those to whom he chooses to extend mercy. This is beautifully highlighted in the final chapter of the book of Amos.

<sup>18</sup> According to Amos chapter 9, verse 8, Jehovah said: "I shall not completely annihilate the house of Jacob." As noted in verses 13 to 15, Jehovah promised that he would "gather back the captive ones" of his people. They would be shown mercy and would enjoy security and prosperity. "The plowman will actually overtake the harvester," Jehovah promised. Imagine that—a harvest so abundant that some of it would not yet be gath-

17, 18. What does Amos chapter 9 reveal about God's mercy?

*In 537 B.C.E., a remnant of Israel and Judah returned from Babylonian captivity*



ered in when the next time for plowing and sowing seed came around!

<sup>19</sup> It can be said that Jehovah's judgment against wicked ones in both Judah and Israel was selective in that repentant and rightly disposed ones were shown mercy. In fulfillment of the restoration prophecy recorded in Amos chapter 9, a repentant remnant of Israel and Judah returned from Babylonian captivity in 537 B.C.E. Back in their beloved homeland, they restored pure worship. In security, they also rebuilt their houses and planted vineyards and gardens.

### **Jehovah's Adverse Judgment Will Come!**

<sup>20</sup> Our consideration of the divine judgment messages proclaimed by Amos should assure us that Jehovah will put an end to wickedness in our day. Why can we believe this? First, these examples of God's past dealings with the wicked indicate how he will act in our day. Second, the execution of divine judgment upon the apostate kingdom of Israel makes it certain that God will bring destruction upon Christendom, the most reprehensible part of "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion.—Revelation 18:2.

<sup>21</sup> There is no question that Christendom deserves adverse divine judgment. Her deplorable religious and moral conditions speak for themselves. Jehovah's judgment against Christendom—and the rest of Satan's world—is deserved. It is also inescapable, for when it is time to execute judgment, the words of Amos chapter 9, verse 1, will apply: "No one fleeing of them will make good his flight, and no one escaping of them will

19. What happened to a remnant from Israel and Judah?

20. Of what should our consideration of the judgment messages declared by Amos assure us?

21. Why does Christendom deserve God's adverse judgment?

make his getaway." Yes, no matter where the wicked may hide, Jehovah will find them.

<sup>22</sup> Divine judgment is always deserved, inescapable, and selective. This can be seen from the apostle Paul's words: "It is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus." (2 Thessalonians 1:6-8) "It is righteous on God's part" to repay those who deserve adverse judgment for bringing tribulation upon his anointed ones. That judgment will be inescapable, for the wicked will not survive 'the revelation of Jesus with his powerful angels in a flaming fire.' Divine judgment will also be selective in that Jesus will bring vengeance "upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news." And the execution of divine judgment will bring comfort to godly ones who suffer tribulation.

### **Hope for the Upright**

<sup>23</sup> The prophecy of Amos contains a wonderful message of hope and comfort for rightly disposed individuals. As foretold in the book of Amos, Jehovah did not completely annihilate his people of ancient times. He eventually gathered back the captive ones of Israel and Judah, returning them to their homeland and blessing them with abundant security and prosperity. What does this mean for our day? It makes us certain that during the execution of divine judgment, Jehovah will find the wicked wherever they hide and will locate individuals he considers deserving

22. What points regarding divine judgment are made clear at 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8?

23. What hope and comfort can be drawn from the book of Amos?

of his mercy, no matter where they may live on this earth.

<sup>24</sup> While we await the time for Jehovah's judgment to come against the wicked, what is our experience as his faithful servants?

24. In what ways have Jehovah's modern-day servants been blessed?

### How Would You Answer?

- How does the prophecy of Amos show that Jehovah's adverse judgments are always deserved?
- What proof does Amos provide to show that divine judgment is inescapable?
- How does the book of Amos show that the execution of God's judgment is selective?

Why, Jehovah is blessing us with overflowing spiritual prosperity! We enjoy a way of worship that is free of the lies and distortions that have resulted from Christendom's false teachings. Jehovah has also blessed us with spiritual food in abundance. Remember, though, that with these rich blessings from Jehovah comes a great responsibility. God expects us to warn others about the coming judgment. We desire to do all we can to find those who are "rightly disposed for everlasting life." (Acts 13:48) Yes, we desire to help as many as possible to share in the spiritual prosperity that we now enjoy. And we want them to survive the approaching execution of divine judgment upon the wicked. Of course, to share in these blessings, we must have the proper heart condition. As we will see in the next article, this too is highlighted in the prophecy of Amos.

## SEARCH FOR JEHOVAH, THE EXAMINER OF HEARTS

*"Search for me, and keep living."*—AMOS 5:4.

JEHOVAH GOD told the prophet Samuel: "Mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah, he sees what the heart is." (1 Samuel 16:7) How is it that Jehovah "sees what the heart is?"

<sup>2</sup> In the Scriptures, the heart is often used figuratively to represent what a person is inside—his desires, his thoughts, his emotions, and his affections. So when the Bible says that God sees the heart, it means that he

1, 2. What is meant when the Scriptures say that Jehovah "sees what the heart is?"

looks beyond outward appearances and focuses on what a person really is.

### God Examines Israel

<sup>3</sup> As the Examiner of hearts looked down upon the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel in the days of Amos, what did He see? Amos 6:4-6 speaks of men who were 'lying down on couches of ivory and sprawling on their divans.' They were "eating the rams out of a flock and the young bulls from among

3, 4. According to Amos 6:4-6, what conditions existed in the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel?

fattened calves." Such men had "devised for themselves instruments for song" and were "drinking out of bowls of wine."

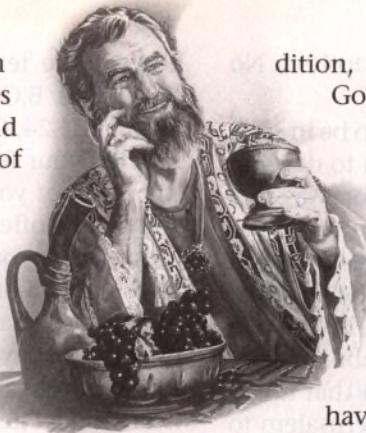
<sup>4</sup> At first glance, this might appear to be a pleasant scene. In the comfort of their well-appointed homes, the rich enjoyed the best in food and drink and were entertained by the finest in musical instruments.

They also had "couches of ivory." Archaeologists have found exquisitely carved ivories in Samaria, the capital city of the kingdom of Israel. (1 Kings 10:22) Very likely, many of these had been attached to furniture and inlaid in wall paneling.

<sup>5</sup> Was Jehovah God displeased that the Israelites were living comfortably, savoring tasty meals, drinking fine wine, and listening to beautiful music? Of course not! After all, he provides such things richly for man's enjoyment. (1 Timothy 6:17) What displeased Jehovah were the wrong desires of the people, their wicked heart con-

5. Why was God displeased with the Israelites of Amos' day?

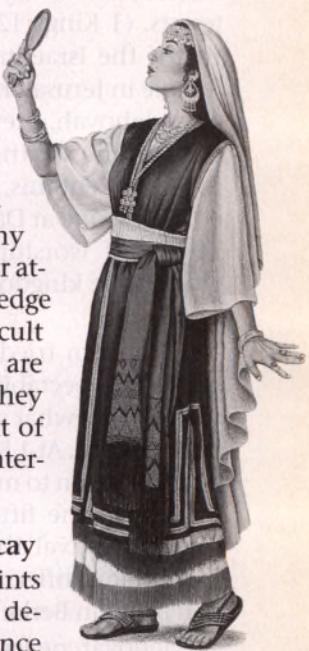
*Many Israelites lived in luxury but did not enjoy spiritual prosperity*



dition, their irreverent attitude toward God, and their lack of love for fellow Israelites.

<sup>6</sup> Those 'sprawling on their divans, eating the rams out of a flock, drinking wine, and devising instruments for song' were in for a surprise. Those men were asked: "Are you putting out of your mind the calamitous day?" They should

have been greatly distressed over conditions in Israel, but they had "not been made sick at the catastrophe of Joseph." (Amos 6:3-6) Looking beyond the nation's economic prosperity, God saw that Joseph—or Israel—was in a catastrophic spiritual situation. Yet, the people went about their daily affairs unconcerned. Many people today have a similar attitude. They may acknowledge that we are living in difficult times, but as long as they are not affected personally, they care little about the plight of others and manifest no interest in spiritual matters.

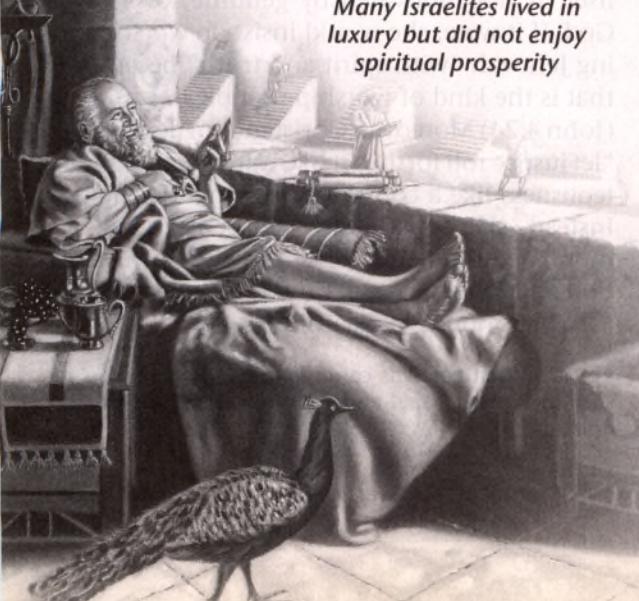


### Israel—A Nation in Decay

<sup>7</sup> The book of Amos paints a picture of a nation in decay, its outward appearance notwithstanding. Because of their failure to heed divine warnings and correct their viewpoint, Jehovah would abandon them to their enemies. The Assyrians would snatch them from their splendid ivory

6. What was the spiritual condition of Israel during the time of Amos?

7. What would happen if the people of Israel did not heed divine warnings?



couches and drag them off into captivity. No more comfort for them!

<sup>8</sup> How had the Israelites come to be in such a state? This situation had begun to develop in 997 B.C.E., when King Solomon was succeeded by his son Rehoboam and ten tribes of Israel separated from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The first king of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel was Jeroboam I, “the son of Nebat.” (1 Kings 11:26) Jeroboam convinced the people of his domain that it was too much for them to travel to Jerusalem to worship Jehovah. However, he was not truly concerned about the welfare of the people. Instead, he was trying to protect his own interests. (1 Kings 12:26) Jeroboam was afraid that if the Israelites continued to go to the temple in Jerusalem for annual festivals honoring Jehovah, they would eventually switch their loyalties to the kingdom of Judah. Seeking to prevent this, Jeroboam set up two golden calves, one at Dan and the other at Bethel. Thus calf worship became the State religion in the kingdom of Israel.—2 Chronicles 11:13-15.

<sup>9</sup> Jeroboam tried to give the new religion an air of respectability. He arranged for observances somewhat similar to the festivals held in Jerusalem. At 1 Kings 12:32, we read: “Jeroboam went on to make a festival in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the festival that was in Judah, that he might make offerings upon the altar that he had made in Bethel.”

<sup>10</sup> Jehovah never approved of such false religious festivals. He certainly made that clear through Amos more than a century later during the reign of Jeroboam II, who became

8. How had Israel come to be in a bad spiritual state?

9, 10. (a) What religious observances were arranged for by King Jeroboam I? (b) How did God view the festivals held in Israel in the days of King Jeroboam II?

king of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel in about 844 B.C.E. (Amos 1:1) According to Amos 5:21-24, God said: “I have hated, I have rejected your festivals, and I shall not enjoy the smell of your solemn assemblies. But if you people offer up to me whole burnt offerings, even in your gift offerings I shall find no pleasure, and on your communion sacrifices of fatlings I shall not look. Remove from me the turmoil of your songs; and the melodious sound of your stringed instruments may I not hear. And let justice roll forth just like waters, and righteousness like a constantly flowing torrent.”

### Present-Day Parallels

<sup>11</sup> Clearly, Jehovah examined the hearts of those engaging in Israel’s festivals and rejected their observances and offerings. Similarly today, God rejects Christendom’s pagan celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter. For worshipers of Jehovah, there can be no partnership between righteousness and lawlessness, no fellowship between light and darkness.—2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

<sup>12</sup> Other parallels can be noted between worship carried on by the calf-worshiping Israelites and that found in Christendom. Although some professed Christians accept the truth of God’s Word, Christendom’s worship itself is not motivated by genuine love for God. If it were, she would insist on worshiping Jehovah “with spirit and truth” because that is the kind of worship that pleases him. (John 4:24) Moreover, Christendom does not “let justice roll forth just like waters, and righteousness like a constantly flowing torrent.” Instead, she consistently soft-pedals God’s moral requirements. She tolerates fornication and other gross sins and even goes so far as to bless homosexual unions!

11, 12. What parallels can be drawn between worship in ancient Israel and that found in Christendom?

## "Love What Is Good"

<sup>13</sup> To all who yearn to worship Jehovah in an acceptable way, he says: "Hate what is bad, and love what is good." (Amos 5:15) Love and hate are strong emotions that emanate from the figurative heart. Since the heart is treacherous, we must do everything in our power to safeguard it. (Proverbs 4:23; Jeremiah 17:9) If



*Encourage full-time servants to keep up their good work*

we allow our heart to nurture wrong desires, we may find ourselves loving what is bad and hating what is good. And if we act on such desires by practicing sin, all the zeal in the world will not bring us back into God's favor. Let us therefore pray for God's help to "hate what is bad, and love what is good."

13. Why do we need to comply with the words of Amos 5:15?

<sup>14</sup> Not all Israelites were doing what was bad in Jehovah's eyes. For instance, Hosea and Amos 'loved what was good' and served God faithfully as prophets. Others took vows as Nazirites. For the length of their Nazirite-ship, they abstained from the use of products of the vine, especially wine. (Numbers 6: 1-4) How did the other Israelites view the self-sacrificing course of such doers of good things? The shocking answer to that question reveals the extent of the nation's spiritual decay. Says Amos 2:12: "You kept giving the Nazirites wine to drink, and upon the prophets you laid a command, saying: 'You must not prophesy.' "

<sup>15</sup> Upon seeing the faithful example of the Nazirites and the prophets, those Israelites should have been ashamed and should have been moved to change their ways. Instead, they unlovingly sought to discourage the loyal ones from giving glory to God. Let us never urge fellow Christians who are pioneers, missionaries, traveling overseers, or members of the Bethel family to discontinue their full-time service simply to return to a so-called normal life. Rather, let us encourage them to keep up their good work!

<sup>16</sup> Although many Israelites were enjoying a materially satisfying life in the days of Amos, they were "not rich toward God." (Luke 12:13-21) Their forefathers had eaten only manna in the wilderness for 40 years. They had not feasted on manger-fed bulls or sprawled sluggishly on couches of ivory. However, Moses had rightly told them: "Jehovah your God has blessed you in every deed of your hand. . . . These forty years Jehovah your God has been with you. You have not lacked a thing." (Deuteronomy 2:7) Yes,

14, 15. (a) In Israel, who were among those doing what was good, but how were some of them being treated? (b) How can we encourage those who are in full-time service today?

16. Why had the Israelites been better-off in Moses' day than they were in the time of Amos?

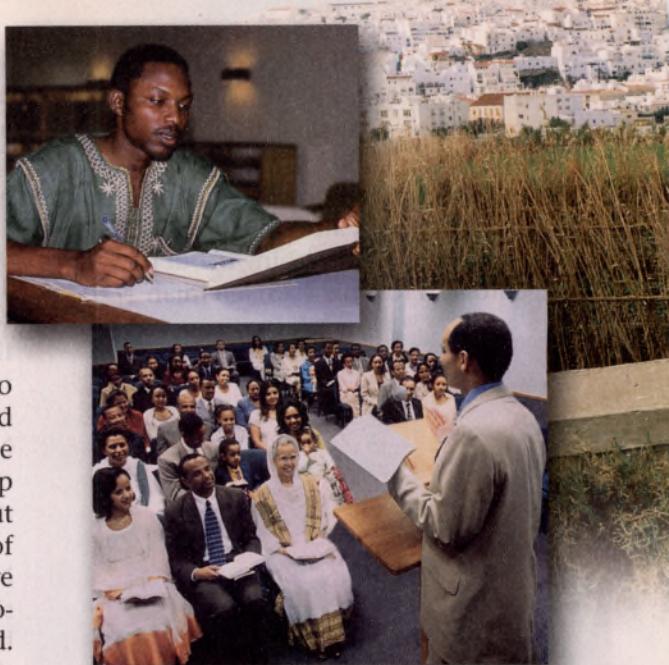
the Israelites in the wilderness always had what they truly needed. Best of all, they had God's love, protection, and blessing!

<sup>17</sup> Jehovah reminded the contemporaries of Amos that He had brought their ancestors into the Promised Land and had helped them to clear it of all their enemies. (Amos 2:9, 10) But why had God led those early Israelites out of Egypt and into the land of promise? Was it so that they could live a life of idle luxury and reject their Creator? No! Rather, he had done so to make it possible for them to worship him as a free and spiritually clean people. But the inhabitants of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel did not hate what was bad and love what was good. Instead, they were giving glory to graven images, not to Jehovah God. How shameful!

### Jehovah Holds an Accounting

<sup>18</sup> God was not going to ignore the disgraceful conduct of the Israelites. He made his position clear when he said: "I shall hold an accounting against you for all your errors." (Amos 3:2) Those words should make us reflect on our own deliverance from slavery to modern-day Egypt, this present wicked system of things. Jehovah has not set us free spiritually so that we can pursue selfish goals. Instead, he has done this so that we can give him heartfelt praise as a free people engaging in clean worship. And all of us will render an account for the way we are using our God-given freedom.—Romans 14:12.

<sup>19</sup> Sadly, the powerful message delivered by Amos went unheeded by most inhabitants of Israel. The prophet exposed their spiritually diseased heart condition in these words re-

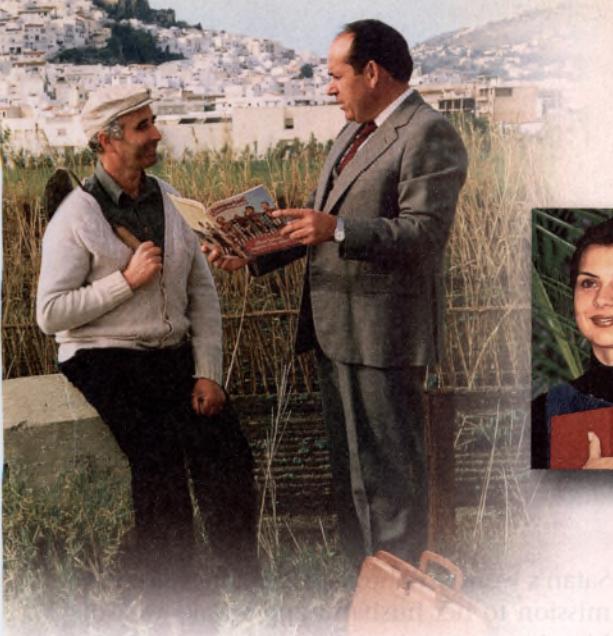


corded at Amos 4:4, 5: "Come, you people, to Bethel and commit transgression. At Gilgal be frequent in committing transgression, . . . for that is the way you have loved, O sons of Israel." The Israelites had not cultivated proper desires. They had not safeguarded their hearts. As a result, most of them had come to love what was bad and to hate what was good. Those obstinate calf worshipers did not change. Jehovah would hold an accounting, and they would have to die in their sins!

<sup>20</sup> It must not have been easy for anyone living in Israel in those days to remain faithful to Jehovah. It is difficult to swim against the current, so to speak, as Christians today, young and old, well know. Yet, love for God and a desire to please him did motivate some Israelites to practice true worship. Jehovah extended to them the warm invitation recorded at Amos 5:4: "Search for me, and keep living." Today, God similarly shows mercy to

17. Why did Jehovah lead the early Israelites into the Promised Land?
18. Why has Jehovah set us free spiritually?
19. According to Amos 4:4, 5, what had most Israelites come to love?

20. How can one pursue a course in harmony with Amos 5:4?



### ***There is no spiritual famine among Jehovah's happy people***

those who repent and search for him by taking in accurate knowledge of his Word and then doing his will. It is not easy to pursue this course, but doing so leads to everlasting life.—John 17:3.

### **Prosperity Despite Spiritual Famine**

<sup>21</sup> What awaited those who did not support true worship? Famine of the worst kind—spiritual famine! “There are days coming,”

<sup>21</sup>. What famine befalls those who do not practice true worship?



said the Sovereign Lord Jehovah, “and I will send a famine into the land, a famine, not for bread, and a thirst, not for water, but for hearing the words of Jehovah.” (Amos 8:11) Christendom is in the throes of such a spiritual famine. But honest-hearted ones in her midst can see the spiritual prosperity of God’s people and are flocking to Jehovah’s organization. The contrast between the situation in Christendom and that prevailing among true Christians is aptly shown in Jehovah’s words: “Look! My own servants will eat, but you yourselves will go hungry. Look! My own servants will drink, but you yourselves will go thirsty. Look! My own servants will rejoice, but you yourselves will suffer shame.”—Isaiah 65:13.

<sup>22</sup> As Jehovah’s servants, do we personally appreciate what we have in the way of spiritual provisions and blessings? When we study the Bible and Christian publications and attend our meetings, assemblies, and conventions, we do indeed feel like crying out joyfully because of the good condition of the heart. We rejoice in the clear understanding that we have of God’s Word, including the divinely inspired prophecy of Amos.

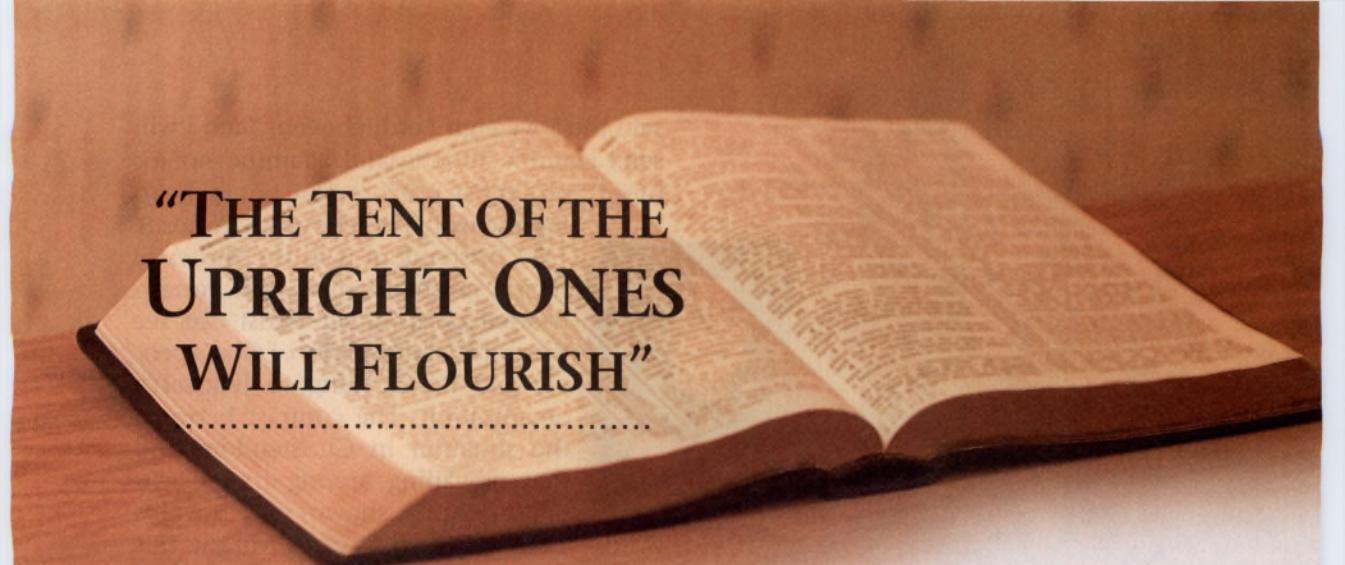
<sup>23</sup> For all humans who love God and want to give him glory, the prophecy of Amos contains a message of hope. No matter what our present economic situation or what trials we must face in this troubled world, we who love God are enjoying divine blessings and the best spiritual food. (Proverbs 10:22; Matthew 24:45-47) All glory, then, goes to God, who provides all things richly for our benefit. May we, therefore, be determined to give him our heartfelt praise forever. That will be our joyous privilege if we search for Jehovah, the Examiner of hearts.

<sup>22</sup>. Why do we have reason to rejoice?

<sup>23</sup>. What do those who glorify God enjoy?

### **How Would You Answer?**

- What conditions existed in Israel in the days of Amos?
- The state of affairs in the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel has what present-day parallels?
- What foretold famine now exists, but who are not affected by it?



# "THE TENT OF THE UPRIGHT ONES WILL FLOURISH"

**W**HEN the storm of Har-Magedon breaks loose and brings an end to Satan's wicked system of things, "the house of wicked people will be annihilated." What about "the tent of the upright ones"? Why, in the new world of God's making, it "will flourish."—Proverbs 14:11.

Until the time when 'the wicked are cut off from the very earth and the treacherous are torn away from it,' however, the blameless must exist side by side with them. (Proverbs 2:21, 22) Can the upright ones flourish under these circumstances? Verses 1 to 11 of chapter 14 in the Bible book of Proverbs show that by letting wisdom guide our speech and actions, we can enjoy a measure of prosperity and stability even now.

## When Wisdom Builds Up a Household

Commenting on the wife's influence on the welfare of the family, King Solomon of ancient Israel says: "*The truly wise woman has built up her house, but the foolish one tears it down with her own hands.*" (Proverbs 14:1) How does a woman possessing wisdom build up her household? A wise woman respects God's arrangement of headship. (1 Corinthians 11:3) She is not influenced by the spirit of independence that permeates

Satan's world. (Ephesians 2:2) She is in submission to her husband and speaks well of him, increasing the respect others may have for him. A wise woman takes an active part in the spiritual and practical education of her children. She works hard for the good of the household, making the home a pleasant and comfortable place for the family. Her style of management is marked by prudence and economy. A truly wise woman contributes to the prosperity and stability of her household.

A foolish woman lacks respect for God's arrangement of headship. She does not hesitate to speak ill of her husband. Not being thrifty, she squanders the household's hard-earned resources. She also wastes time. As a result, the house is not well kept, and the children suffer physically and spiritually. Yes, the foolish one tears down her household.

What, though, determines whether a person is wise or foolish? Proverbs 14:2 states: "*The one walking in his uprightness is fearing Jehovah, but the one crooked in his ways is despising Him.*" The upright one fears the true God, and "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom." (Psalm 111:10) A truly wise person knows that it is his obligation to "fear the true God and keep his commandments." (Ecclesiastes 12:13) On the other hand, the

foolish one follows a course that is not in harmony with God's standards of uprightness. His ways are crooked. Such a person despises God, saying in his heart: "There is no Jehovah."—Psalm 14:1.

### When Lips Are Guided by Wisdom

What can be said about the speech of a person who fears Jehovah and of the one who despises Him? "*The rod of haughtiness is in the mouth of the foolish one,*" says the king, "*but the very lips of the wise ones will guard them.*" (Proverbs 14:3) Lacking the wisdom from above, a foolish person is neither peaceable nor reasonable. The wisdom that guides his steps is earthly, animal, demonic. He utters words that are contentious and arrogant. The haughtiness in his mouth stirs up much trouble for himself and others.—James 3:13-18.

The lips of a wise person guard, or protect, him, adding to his sense of well-being. How? The Scriptures state: "There exists the one speaking thoughtlessly as with the stabs of a sword, but the tongue of the wise ones is a healing." (Proverbs 12:18) The words of a wise person are not rash or cutting. His heart meditates so as to answer. (Proverbs 15:28) His well-thought-out speech is healing—it encourages the depressed souls and refreshes the downtrodden. Rather than irritating others, his lips promote peace and calmness.

### When Wisdom Guides Human Endeavors

Solomon next presents an intriguing proverb that seems to deal with the need to weigh the advantages and the disadvantages of undertaking a certain task. He says: "*Where there are no cattle the manger is clean, but the crop is abundant because of the power of a bull.*"—Proverbs 14:4.

*A wise woman builds up her house*

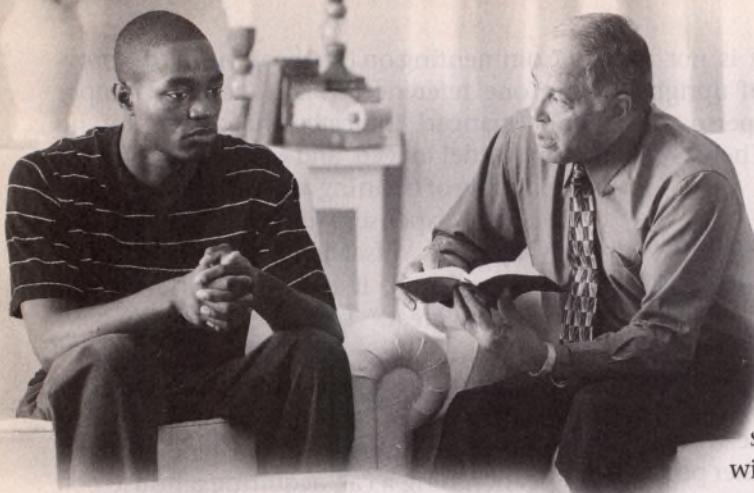
Commenting on the meaning of this proverb, one reference work states: "An empty crib [manger] indicates that there are no oxen [cattle] to feed, and hence one is free of the trouble of cleaning and caring for the animals, and expenses would be less. But this 'advantage' is offset in v[erse] 4b: without the use of oxen, it is implied, the harvest will not be great." The farmer must choose wisely.

Would not the principle of this proverb also apply when we consider changing employment, choosing a certain type of housing, purchasing a car, acquiring a house pet, and the like? A wise person would weigh the advantages and the disadvantages and evaluate whether the endeavor is really worth the effort and expense.

### When a Witness Is Wise

"*A faithful witness is one that will not lie,*" continues Solomon, "*but a false witness launches forth mere lies.*" (Proverbs 14:5) The lies of a false witness certainly can do much harm. Naboth the Jezreelite was stoned to death because two good-for-nothing men falsely testified against him. (1 Kings 21:7-13) And did not false witnesses come forward against Jesus, leading to his death? (Matthew 26:59-61) False witnesses also testified





against Stephen—the first disciple of Jesus to be killed because of his faith.—Acts 6:10, 11.

A man of untruth may go unexposed for the time being, but consider his future. Jehovah hates “a false witness that launches forth lies,” states the Bible. (Proverbs 6:16-19) Such a man’s portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur—the second death—along with such wrongdoers as murderers, fornicators, and idolaters.—Revelation 21:8.

The faithful witness does not commit perjury when testifying. His testimony is not tainted with lies. However, this does not mean that he is under obligation to give full information to those who may want to bring harm to Jehovah’s people in some way. The patriarchs Abraham and Isaac withheld facts from some who did not worship Jehovah. (Genesis 12:10-19; 20:1-18; 26:1-10) Rahab of Jericho misdirected the king’s men. (Joshua 2:1-7) Jesus Christ himself refrained from divulging total information when doing so would have caused needless harm. (John 7:1-10) He said: “Do not give what is holy to dogs, neither throw your pearls before swine.” Why not? So that “they may never . . . turn around and rip you open.”—Matthew 7:6.

*“The tongue of the wise ones is a healing”*

### When “Knowledge Is an Easy Thing”

Is wisdom a possession of all people? Proverbs 14:6 states: “*The ridiculer has sought to find wisdom, and there is none; but to the understanding one knowledge is an easy thing.*” A ridiculer, or scoffer, may seek wisdom, but true wisdom eludes him. Since a ridiculer arrogantly scoffs at the things of God, he fails to gain the basic prerequisite for wisdom—accurate knowledge of the true God. His pride and arrogance prevent him from learning about God and gaining wisdom. (Proverbs 11:2) Why does he even bother to look for wisdom? The proverb does not say, but perhaps he does so in order that others may think that he is wise.

“Knowledge is an easy thing” to an understanding person. Understanding is defined as “a mental grasp: comprehension,” “the capacity to apprehend general relations of particulars.” It is the ability to connect various aspects of a subject and see the whole matter, not just the isolated parts. This proverb is saying that knowledge comes easy to a person who has this ability.

In this regard, consider your own experience of gaining knowledge of Scriptural truth. When you started to study the Bible, very likely the basic teachings about God, his promises, and his Son were among the first truths you learned. For a time they remained separate details. But as you continued to study, the pieces began to fit together and you could clearly see how various details related to Jehovah’s overall purpose for humans and the earth. The truth from the Bible became logical and connected. Learning and

remembering new details then became easier because you could see where to place them in the total picture.

The wise king warns of where knowledge is not to be found. "*Go away from in front of the stupid man*," he says, "*for you will certainly not take note of the lips of knowledge.*" (Proverbs 14:7) A stupid person lacks true knowledge. Lips that utter knowledge do not belong to him. The advice is to get away from such a man, and it is wise to stay away from him. Anyone "having dealings with the stupid ones will fare badly."—Proverbs 13:20.

"*The wisdom of the shrewd is to understand his way,*" continues Solomon, "*but the foolishness of stupid ones is deception.*" (Proverbs 14:8) A wise person gives thought to his actions. He considers the various options that are open to him and ponders the possible outcome to which each one leads. He chooses his course wisely. What about a stupid person? He chooses a foolish way, believing that he knows what he is doing and that he is making the best choice. His foolishness deceives him.

### When Wisdom Guides Relationships

The one guided by wisdom has peaceful relationships with others. "*Foolish are those who make a derision of guilt,*" observes the king of Israel, "*but among the upright ones there is agreement.*" (Proverbs 14:9) The feeling of guilt, or remorse, is a laughing matter to a fool. He has damaged relationships at home and elsewhere because he is "too arrogant to make amends" and seek peace. (*The New English Bible*) The upright person is willing to make allowances for the shortcomings of others. He is ready to apologize and make amends when he himself is in the wrong. Because he pursues peace, he enjoys happy and stable relationships with others.—Hebrews 12:14.

Solomon next points to a limiting factor in human relationships. He says: "*The heart is aware of the bitterness of one's soul, and with its rejoicing no stranger will intermeddle.*" (Proverbs 14:10) Can we always express our innermost emotions—whether sadness or joy—to others and share with them precisely what we are experiencing? And can one at all times fully understand how another person feels? The answer to both questions is no.

As an example, consider suicidal feelings. The one having them often cannot clearly communicate these feelings to a family member or a friend. And others cannot always recognize signs of such feelings in their associates. We need not feel guilty when we do not see these signs and fail to take helpful action. This proverb also teaches that although it is comforting to turn to an empathetic friend for emotional support, humans are limited in the comfort they can offer. We may have to rely on Jehovah alone when it comes to enduring some difficulties.

### "Valuable Things and Riches Are in His House"

"*The house of wicked people will be annihilated,*" states the king of Israel, "*but the tent of the upright ones will flourish.*" (Proverbs 14:11) A wicked person may prosper in this system of things and may live in a well-built house, but of what benefit will that be to him when he himself is no more? (Psalm 37:10) On the other hand, the dwelling place of an upright one may be quite humble. But "valuable things and riches are in his house," says Psalm 112:3. What are these?

When our words and deeds are guided by wisdom, we have the "riches and glory" that exist with wisdom. (Proverbs 8:18) They include a peaceful relationship with God and our fellowman, a sense of well-being, and a measure of stability. Yes, "the tent of the upright ones" can flourish even now.

# Questions From Readers

## Where will the demons be during the Thousand Year Reign of Christ?

The Bible does not explicitly answer this question. However, we can come to a logical conclusion about where the demons will be during Christ's Millennial Reign.

Providing a foreview of what will take place at the beginning and at the end of this Millennium, the apostle John states: "I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not mislead the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After these things he must be let loose for a little while." (Revelation 20:1-3) These verses speak only of the abysming of Satan and of his eventual release for a little while. Although the demons are not mentioned, it stands to reason that when the angel with the key to the abyss—the glorified Jesus Christ—seizes and abysses the Devil, he will do the same with the demons.—Revelation 9:11.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Right and Wrong—How Should You Decide?

Maintain a Balanced View of the Use of Alcohol

Trusting in Jehovah's Loving Care

Upon becoming King in heaven in 1914, Jesus Christ took an action that had a profound effect on Satan as well as the demons. Revelation 12:7-9 states: "War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels [the demons] battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him." Ever since then, Satan and his demons have been confined to the vicinity of the earth. We can logically assume that when Jesus Christ further restricts Satan's activity in order to free the earth of his wicked influence, He will do the same with the demons.

Consider also the very first prophecy of the Bible. It reads: "I [God] shall put enmity between you [Satan] and the woman [Jehovah's heavenly organization] and between your [Satan's] seed and her seed [Jesus Christ]. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel." (Genesis 3:15) The bruising of the serpent in the head involves keeping Satan abysmed during Christ's Thousand Year Reign. The prophecy further states that there is enmity between the One doing the bruising and Satan's seed. This seed, or organization, includes an invisible part composed of the wicked angels, or demons. So it is reasonable to conclude that when Jesus abysses Satan, he also binds and abysses the demons. The fact that the wicked spirits have shown great fear of the abyss indicates that they are aware of this forthcoming restraint.—Luke 8:31.

Is it possible, though, that Revelation 20:



1-3 does not mention the demons because they are destroyed at Armageddon along with the visible part of Satan's seed? The Bible renders this possibility unlikely. Concerning Satan's final destiny, it states: "The Devil who was misleading them was hurled into the lake of fire 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)

The wild beast and the false prophet are political entities and are a part of Satan's visible organization. (Revelation 13:1, 2, 11-14; 16:13, 14) They meet their end at Armageddon, when God's Kingdom crushes and puts an end to all the kingdoms of the world. (Daniel 2:44) The Bible refers to "the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil *and his* angels." (Matthew 25:41) Satan and his demons will be thrown into the same "lake of fire and sulphur" as the wild beast and the false prophet in that they too will be destroyed forever. Had the more powerful invisible spirit part of Satan's seed been destroyed at Armageddon, the demons would surely have been mentioned as already being in that symbolic lake along with the wild beast and the false prophet. Their absence at Revelation 20:10 indicates that the demons are not destroyed at Armageddon.

Since the demons are not explicitly mentioned as being hurled into the abyss, neither are they specifically spoken of as being released from there. However, their destiny is the same as that of the Devil. After being released with the Devil and cooperating with him during the final test of mankind at the end of the thousand years, the demons too will be hurled into the lake of fire and will thus experience everlasting destruction.—Revelation 20:7-9.

Hence, even though Revelation 20:1-3 speaks only of Satan's being seized and hurled into the abyss of inactivity, we can logically conclude that his angels too will be bound and abyssed. Neither Satan nor his demon hordes will be allowed to interfere with the fulfillment of God's purpose to transform the earth into a paradise and restore mankind to perfection during the Thousand Year Reign of Christ.

# Do You Long for a World Without Fear?

***"We're living in a 'chronic heightened state of alertness and . . . helplessness,' prompted by a 'poorly defined . . . danger that could strike at any time in any form without warning.'"***

THESE words, quoted last year in *Newsweek* magazine, reflect the feelings of many people living in today's turbulent world. Jesus Christ indicated that such emotions would intensify in the near future. He foretold a time when there would be such anguish among nations that they would not know the way out and men would become faint out of fear and expectation of the things coming upon the earth. We, though, will not need to feel fearful or helpless, for Jesus added: "As these things start to occur, raise yourselves erect and lift your heads up, because your deliverance is getting near."—Luke 21:25-28.

Describing the living conditions of his people on earth after that deliverance, Jehovah God declared: "My people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of full confidence and in undisturbed resting-places." (Isaiah 32:18) Through his prophet Micah, Jehovah said: "They will actually sit, each one under his vine and under his fig tree, and there will be no one making them tremble."—Micah 4:4.

What a contrast that is with life today! No unknown danger will loom over mankind. Instead of a chronic state of alertness and helplessness, there will be an unending state of peace and happiness.