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The Book of Revelation —What Does It Mean?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The ride of the four horsemen of the Apocalypse is one of the best-known scenes from the book of Revelation. Some are scared by it. Others are intrigued. Note what the Bible says about such prophecies:

"Happy is the one who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy."—Revelation 1:3.

This issue of *The Watchtower* explains how the ride of the four horsemen can mean good news for us.

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They burst forth, hooves thundering! The four mighty horses and their riders make a picture so vivid that it almost seems to leap from the pages of the Bible! The first horse is white—its rider a glorious, newly crowned king. Behind him comes a horse the color of fire, bearing a rider who takes peace away from all the earth. There follows a third horse, black as midnight, carrying a rider who holds aloft a pair of scales as a doleful message is proclaimed about a lack of basic foodstuffs. The fourth horse is a sickly pale color, a harbinger of disease and other lethal threats, ridden by Death itself. And the Grave, the common grave of mankind, follows closely, reaping a terrible harvest of lives!—Revelation 6:1-8.

"I was scared the first time I read about the four horsemen. I felt that Judgment Day was coming and that since I was not ready, I would not survive."—*Crystal*.

"I was fascinated by the four distinctive riders on different-colored horses. Once I understood what the vision meant, it all made sense."—Ed.

Can you identify with the way Crystal felt about the four horsemen of the Apocalypse? Or do you feel the way Ed did? In either case, the epic ride of those horsemen forms one of the best-known scenes in Revelation, the last book of the Bible. Did you know that you can benefit personally by understanding this vision? How? God promises that you can find real happiness by reading, learning from, and living by the things written in that prophetic book.—Revelation 1:1-3.

While some are frightened by the vision of the four horsemen, it is not designed to scare you. In fact, millions have found that this vision strengthens their faith and even points them to the hope of a bright future. It can mean the same for you! Please read on.

The Four Horsemen Who Are They?

The four horsemen may seem mysterious and terrifying, but that does not have to be the case. Why not? Because the Bible and the events of modern history help us to identify clearly what each horseman pictures. And although their ride has signaled calamity on earth, it can also mean good news for you and your family. How so? First, let us determine the identity of each horseman.



THE RIDER OF THE WHITE HORSE

The vision begins this way: "I saw, and look! a white horse, and the one seated on it had a bow; and a crown was given him, and he went out conquering and to complete his conquest."—Revelation 6:2.

Who is the rider of the white horse? The key to his identity is found in the same Bible book, Revelation, which later identifies this heavenly rider as "The Word of God." (Revelation 19:11-13) That title, The Word, belongs to Jesus Christ, for he acts as God's spokesman. (John 1:1, 14) In addition, he is called "King of kings and Lord of lords" and is described as "Faithful and True." (Revelation 19:16) Clearly, he has authority to act as a warrior-king, and he does not wield his power in any corrupt or abusive way. Yet, some questions arise.

Who gives Jesus the authority to conquer? (Revelation 6:2) The prophet Daniel saw a vision in which the Messiah, likened to "a son of man," was given "rulership, honor, and a kingdom" by none other than "the Ancient of Days," Jehovah God.* (Daniel 7:13, 14) Thus, it is Almighty God

who grants Jesus the power and right to rule and execute judgment. The white horse is an appropriate symbol for warfare justly carried out by God's Son, for the Scriptures often use the color white to symbolize righteousness.—Revelation 3:4; 7:9, 13. 14.

When did the horsemen begin their ride? Note that the first rider, Jesus, begins his ride when he receives a crown. (Revelation 6:2) When was Jesus crowned as King in heaven? It was not when he returned to heaven after his death. The Bible shows that a period of waiting began back then. (Hebrews 10:12, 13) Jesus gave his followers a means of recognizing the end of that waiting period and the beginning of his reign in heaven. He said that at the beginning of his rule, world conditions would take a decisive turn for the worse. There would be warfare, food shortages, and pestilences. (Matthew 24:3, 7; Luke 21:10, 11) Soon after World War I broke out in 1914, it became apparent that mankind had entered that era, a troubled time on earth that the Bible calls "the last days."-2 Timothy 3:1-5.

But why have we seen conditions that are worse, not better, since Jesus received his crown in 1914? Because at that time, Jesus began ruling in *heaven*, not on earth. War then broke out in heaven, and the newly installed King, Jesus, referred to as Michael, cast Satan and his demons to the earth. (Revelation 12:7-9, 12) Confined here, Satan has been full of rage ever since, knowing that his days are numbered. Indeed, it will not be long before God will carry out his will against Satan here on the earth. (Matthew 6:10) Now, let us see how the other three horsemen help to confirm that we are, in fact, living during the troubled "last days." Unlike the first horseman, who clear-

^{*} Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.

ly pictures a specific individual, the three that follow represent global conditions that have swept across human society.



THE RIDER OF THE RED HORSE

"Another came out, a fiery-colored horse, and it was granted to the one seated on it to take peace away from the earth so that they should slaughter one another, and he was given a great sword."

—Revelation 6:4.

This rider represents warfare. Notice that he takes peace away from not just a few nations but the whole earth. In 1914, for the first time in history, a global war erupted. It was followed by a second world war, which was even more destructive. Some estimates place the total number of deaths due to wars and armed conflicts since 1914 at more than 100 million! In addition, vast numbers of other individuals suffered debilitating injuries.

To what extent does warfare characterize the present time? For the first time in history, mankind appears to have the ability to extinguish all human life. Even so-called peacekeeping organizations, such as the United Nations, have not been able to stop the rider of the red horse.



THE RIDER OF THE BLACK HORSE

"I saw, and look! a black horse, and the one seated on it had a pair of scales in his hand. I heard what sounded like a voice in the midst of the four living creatures say: 'A quart of wheat for a denarius and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the olive oil and the wine.'"—Revelation 6:5, 6.

This rider represents famine. We find here a picture of food rationing so severe that a quart (1.08 L) of wheat would cost one denarius, a

whole day's wage in the first century! (Matthew 20:2) The same coin could purchase three quarts (3.24 L) of barley, a grain viewed as inferior to wheat. How far would that go to feed a large family? People are then warned to be frugal even with daily foodstuffs, aptly pictured by such basic staples of that time and culture as olive oil and wine.

Since 1914, have we seen evidence that this rider of the black horse has been on the move? Yes! About 70 million people died in famines during the 20th century. One authority estimated that "805 million people—about one in nine of the world's population—were chronically undernourished in 2012-14." Another report states: "Hunger kills more people every year than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined." In spite of many earnest efforts to feed the hungry, the rider of the black horse continues to ride.



THE RIDER OF THE PALE HORSE

"I saw, and look! a pale horse, and the one seated on it had the name Death. And the Grave was closely following him. And authority was given them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with a long sword and with food shortage and with deadly plague and by the wild beasts of the earth." —Revelation 6:8.

The fourth rider represents death due to plague and other causes. Soon after 1914, the Spanish flu killed tens of millions. Possibly some 500 million people were infected, about 1 out of every 3 humans then alive!

But the Spanish flu was just the beginning. Experts estimate that hundreds of millions died of smallpox during the 20th century. To this day, the lives of millions are cut short by AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, despite intensive medical research.

The result is the same, death—whether due to war, famine, or plague. The Grave relentlessly gathers up the victims, offering no hope.

The Four Horsemen Revealed



Revelation 6:1, 2

WHITE HORSE

The rider pictures Jesus Christ. He began ruling in 1914 and will soon complete his conquest, ending all suffering.



Revelation 6:3, 4

FIERY-COLORED HORSE

The rider represents warfare. World wars and smaller conflicts have taken countless lives since 1914.



U.S. Marine Corps photo



BLACK HORSE

The rider denotes famine. Food shortages have ended or ruined the lives of tens of millions.

PALE HORSE

The rider brings premature death due to disease and other factors. The Grave gathers up the victims.





© Robin Hammond/Panos Pictures

BETTER TIMES ARE AHEAD!

The present times of trouble will soon end. Remember this: Jesus "went out conquering" in 1914, confining Satan to the earth, but Jesus did not then *complete* his conquest. (Revelation 6:2; 12:9, 12) Soon, during Armageddon, Jesus will remove Satan's influence and will destroy the Devil's human supporters. (Revelation 20:1-3) Jesus will not only terminate the ride of the other three horsemen but even *reverse* the effects of their destructive ride. How so? Consider what the Bible promises.

Instead of war, peace will reign. Jehovah "is bringing an end to wars throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear." (Psalm 46:9) As for peace-loving people, "they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace." —Psalm 37:11.

Instead of famine, there will be plenty of food. "There will be an abundance of grain on the earth;

on the top of the mountains it will overflow."

—Psalm 72:16.

Instead of plague and death, there will be perfect health and eternal life for all. God "will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:4.

When Jesus lived on earth, he provided a heartwarming preview of future conditions under his rulership. He promoted peace, miraculously fed thousands, cured the sick, and even raised the dead to life again.—Matthew 12:15; 14:19-21; 26: 52; John 11:43, 44.

Jehovah's Witnesses would be delighted to show you in your Bible how you can be ready when the ride of those horsemen ends. Will you accept an invitation to learn more?

Jesus will soon reverse the effects of the other three horsemen





This cuneiform tablet has the name Tattannu written on one of its edges

Another Bit of Evidence

Is there archaeological evidence supporting the Bible record? In 2014 an article in the magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review* addressed the question: "How many people in the Hebrew Bible have been confirmed archaeologically?" The answer given: "At least 50!" One man who did not make the list in that article was Tattenai. Who was he? Let us review his brief role in the Bible record.

Jerusalem was once part of a vast Persian Empire. The city lay in an area that the Persians called Across-the-River, that is, to the west of the Euphrates. After conquering Babylonia, the Persians released Jewish captives and authorized them to rebuild Jehovah's temple in Jerusalem. (Ezra 1:1-4) Enemies of the Jews, however, opposed the project and used it as a pretext to accuse the Jews of rebelling against Persia. (Ezra 4:4-16) During the reign of Darius I (522-486 B.C.E.), a Persian official named Tattenai led an inquiry into the matter. The Bible calls him "the governor of the region Beyond the River."—Ezra 5:3-7.

A number of cuneiform tablets bearing the name Tattenai have survived as part of what may have been a family archive. The tablet that links one member of this family to the Bible character is a promissory note dated to the 20th year of Darius I. 502 B.C.E. It identifies a witness to the

transaction as a servant of "Tattannu, governor of Across-the-River"—the same Tattenai who appears in the Bible book of Ezra.

What was this man's role? In 535 B.C.E., Cyrus the Great reorganized his dominions into provinces, one of which was called Babylon and Across-the-River. The province was later split into two parts, one of which was simply called Across-the-River. It included Coele-Syria, Phoenicia, Samaria, and Judah and was likely ruled from Damascus. Tattenai governed this region from about 520 to 502 B.C.E.

After traveling to Jerusalem to investigate the accusation of rebellion, Tattenai reported to Darius that the Jews claimed to have received authorization from Cyrus to rebuild Jehovah's temple. Investigations in the royal archives substantiated that claim. (Ezra 5:6, 7, 11-13; 6:1-3) So Tattenai was ordered not to interfere, and he obeyed. —Ezra 6:6, 7, 13.

To be sure, "Tattenai the governor of the region Beyond the River" merits only a footnote in history. Note, though, that the Scriptures mention him and apply to him exactly the *right* title. That fact gives us yet another bit of evidence that archaeology repeatedly supports the Bible's historical accuracy.



AS TOLD BY

SAMUEL HAMILTON

YEAR BORN 1928

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN COSTA RICA

HISTORY CONSUMED BY PROFESSIONAL SPORTS AND GAMBLING



I Loved Baseball More Than Anything!

MY PAST

I grew up in and around Puerto Limón, a port city on the eastern coast of Costa Rica. My parents had eight children, of whom I was the seventh. My father died when I was eight years old. Thereafter, my mother raised us children as a single parent.

Baseball was always part of my life. I enjoyed the sport as a child. In my late teens, I joined an amateur league team. While I was playing in the amateur league in my 20's, a scout asked me to play for a professional team in Nicaragua. However, because my mother had poor health at the time and I was looking after her, I did not want to live in Nicaragua. So I turned down that offer. Later, another scout invited me to play for Costa Rica's national baseball team, made up of selected amateur league players. This time, I accepted the offer. I was on the national team from 1949 till 1952, and I played a series of games in Cuba, Mexico, and Nicaragua. I was a baseman and did well, even playing a stretch of 17 games without making a single error. I loved to hear the crowds chant my name!

Regrettably, I also led an immoral lifestyle. Although I had only one girlfriend, I was always involved with other women. I drank heavily too. One day I got so drunk that when I woke up in my bed the next day, I couldn't remember how I had returned home! I also gambled on domino games and played the lottery.

While I was living that way, my mother became one of Jehovah's Witnesses. She tried to interest me in her faith, but she was unsuccessful at first because I was completely absorbed in my sport. If I was on the field training during mealtimes, I wouldn't even feel hungry! My mind was focused only on the game. I loved baseball more than anything!

However, at age 29, I suffered a serious injury while trying to catch a ball during a game. After recuperating, I

quit playing professionally. Nonetheless, I stayed involved with organized baseball by training players in an amateur league team near my home.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE

In 1957, I accepted an invitation to attend a convention that Jehovah's Witnesses were holding in a stadium where I had played baseball. As I sat in the audience, I couldn't help but notice the contrast between the respectful conduct I saw among the Witnesses and the rowdy behavior I had seen among the crowds at baseball games. What I saw at that convention moved me to start studying the Bible with the Witnesses and attending their congregation meetings.

I was impressed by many of the Bible teachings that I learned. For example, Jesus foretold that in the last days, his disciples would preach the good news of God's Kingdom worldwide. (Matthew 24: 14) I also learned that true Christians do not carry out their ministry for financial gain. Jesus said: "You received free, give free."—Matthew 10:8.

As I studied the Bible, I compared what it says with what I saw among Jehovah's Witnesses. I admired their tireless efforts to spread the good news of God's Kingdom worldwide. I saw in them the giving spirit that Jesus commanded Christians to display. So when I read Mark 10:21 and saw Jesus' invitation, "Come be my follower," I wanted to become a Witness.

It took me some time, however, to follow through decisively. For example, for many years I had played my "lucky" number each week in the national lottery. However, I learned from the Bible that God condemns worshippers of the "god of Good Luck," as well as greedy persons. (Isaiah 65: 11; Colossians 3:5) So I decided to stop gambling. The first Sunday after I quit playing the lottery, my "lucky" number won! People mocked me because I did not play that week, and they strongly pressured me to play again, but I didn't. I never went back to gambling.

I faced another test of my "new personality" on the very day that I was baptized at a convention

of Jehovah's Witnesses. (Ephesians 4:24) That evening, I returned to the hotel where I was staying and found my ex-girlfriend waiting outside the door to my room. "Come on, Sammy," she urged me. "Let's have a good time!" But I immediately replied, "No!" I reminded her that I was now living by the moral standards of the Bible. (1 Corinthians 6:18) "What?" she blurted out. Then she trivialized the Bible's view of sexual immorality and insisted that we resume our relationship. However, I simply went into my room and locked the door behind me. Today, I am happy to say that since I became a Witness in 1958, I have faithfully held to the changes I made in my lifestyle.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED

I feel as if I could write a book about the benefits I have received from following the Bible's guidance! Some of those benefits are that I now have many genuine friends, a life full of purpose, and true happiness.

I still enjoy baseball, but I have adjusted my values. In baseball I gained prestige and money, but these things did not last. However, my relationship with God and the brotherhood that I am a part of will last forever. The Bible says: "The world is passing away and so is its desire, but the one who does the will of God remains forever." (1 John 2:17) Now I love Jehovah God and his people more than anything!

I enjoy spending time with the young people in the congregation



"What a Beautiful Woman You Are"



SARAH stood in the middle of the room and looked around. Picture a Middle Eastern woman with a striking pair of dark, expressive eyes. Did a trace of sadness show there? If so, it would not be hard to understand why. There was a lot of history in this house. She and her beloved husband, Abraham, had spent countless happy hours here.* Together, they had made it a home.

They lived in Ur, a prosperous city with plenty of artisans, craftsmen, and merchants. So they surely had possessions. But Sarah's home was more to her than a mere place in which to keep her belongings. Here she and her husband had shared years of joys and disappointments. Here they had prayed countless times to their beloved God, Jehovah. Sarah had ample reason to love this place.

Yet, Sarah was willing to move away from all that was familiar. Though perhaps about 60 years old, she would travel to parts unknown and take up a life fraught with danger and hardship, with no prospect of coming back. What led her to such a sweeping change in her life? And what can we today learn from her faith?

"GO OUT FROM YOUR LAND"

Sarah likely grew up in Ur. Today, all that is left of that city is a desolate ruin. But in Sarah's day, merchants' vessels plied the waters and canals of the Euphrates River, bringing precious goods from far and wide to this thriving city. People thronged Ur's narrow, winding streets, ships jostled one another along its wharves, and goods overflowed in its bazaars. Imagine Sarah growing up in that bustling city, coming to know many of its people by name. They surely remembered her too, for she was an extraordinarily beautiful woman. She also had a large family there.

Sarah is known in the Bible for her great faith—but it was not faith in the moon-god widely worshipped in Ur, where a tower to that god loomed over the city. Rather, Sarah worshipped the true God, Jehovah. The inspired record does not say how she gained that faith. Her father, for a time at least, was an idolater. At any rate, she married Abraham, a man ten years her senior.* (Genesis 17:17) He later became known as "the father of all those having faith." (Romans 4:11) Together they built a fine, strong marriage, one that was marked by respect, good communication, and a mutual willingness to work through difficult problems together. Above all, though, their union was marked by their love for their God.

Sarah loved her husband dearly, and the two set up their home among their relatives in Ur. Before

^{*} Initially, their names were Abram and Sarai, but they are better known by the names Jehovah later bestowed on them.—Genesis 17:5, 15.

^{*} Sarah was the half sister of Abraham. Terah was father to both of them, but they had different mothers. (Genesis 20:12) While such a marriage is improper today, it is important to keep in mind how different things were back then. Humans were closer to the perfection that Adam and Eve had enjoyed but lost. For such robust people, marriage between close relatives evidently did not present genetic dangers to offspring. Some 400 years later, though, life spans were similar to ours. At that time, the Mosaic Law outlawed all sexual unions between close relatives. —Leviticus 18:6.

long, though, they faced a disappointment. The Bible tells us that Sarah "was barren; she had no child." (Genesis 11:30) In that culture and time, Sarah's condition was particularly trying. But Sarah stayed true to her God and to her husband. Their fatherless nephew Lot evidently became like a son to them. Life went on—until the day when everything changed.

Abraham came to Sarah brimming with excitement. He could hardly believe what had just happened. The God they worshipped had just spoken to him—had even appeared to him, no doubt by means of an angel! Imagine Sarah, her lovely eyes intent on her husband, breathlessly asking: "What did he say to you? Please tell me!" Perhaps Abraham first sat down to collect his thoughts; then he told her what Jehovah had said: "Go out from your land and from your relatives and come into the land that I will show you." (Acts 7:2, 3) After the initial excitement abated, they contemplated the assignment Jehovah was putting before them. They were to leave their stable, comfortable life and live as nomads! How would Sarah respond? No doubt Abraham watched her keenly. Would she willingly support him in such a great change in their life?

The choice facing Sarah may sound foreign to us. We might think, 'Well, God has never asked me

or my spouse to do anything like that!' Nonetheless, do we not all face a similar choice? We live in a materialistic world, one that may urge us to put first in life our own comforts, our possessions, or our sense of security. But the Bible urges us to make another choice—to seek spiritual things first, to put pleasing God ahead of pleasing ourselves. (Matthew 6:33) As we contemplate what Sarah did, we might ask ourselves, 'What choice will I make in life?'

THEY "WENT OUT OF THE LAND"

As Sarah packed her things, she faced the dilemma of what to keep and what to leave behind. She could keep no item that was too big for a caravan of donkeys and camels to carry, nothing that would be impractical in a nomadic life. No doubt many of their possessions would have to be sold or given away. Gone, too, would be the conveniences of city living—the ready access to markets or bazaars where she could shop for grain, meats, fruit, clothing, and other necessities and comforts.

Perhaps it was harder still for Sarah to give up her home itself. If it was like many of the houses that archaeologists have uncovered in Ur, Sarah faced the loss of some very real comforts. Some of those houses had over a dozen rooms, as well as freshwater fountains and plumbing. Even a



humble house might offer a solid roof, walls, and a door that could be bolted shut. Could a tent offer similar protection against thieves? Or against lions, leopards, bears, and wolves—all of which were common in the Bible lands in those times?

And what of family? Whom would Sarah be leaving behind? God's command to "go out from your land and from your relatives" may have been especially challenging for her. A warm, affectionate woman, she may well have had brothers and sisters, nieces and nephews, and aunts and uncles to whom she was very attached and whom she might never see again. Yet, Sarah bravely went forward, day by day, getting ready for departure.

Despite the challenges, Sarah was packed and ready to go on the appointed day. Terah, as family patriarch, was to accompany Abraham and Sarah, though he was about two centuries old. (Genesis 11:31) Sarah would no doubt have much to do with caring for this elderly parent. Lot too would join them as they obeyed Jehovah and "went out of the land of the Chaldeans."—Acts 7:4.

The caravan journeyed first to Haran, some 600 miles (960 km) to the northwest, following the course of the Euphrates. At Haran, the family settled for a time. Terah may have been ailing at this point, unable to travel farther. The family stayed until he died at 205 years of age. At some point before the next phase of their journey, Jehovah spoke again to Abraham, telling him once more to leave this land and go to the land that Jehovah would show him. In this instance, though, God added a thrilling promise: "I will make you a great nation." (Genesis 12:2-4) But when they left Haran, Abraham was 75 and Sarah 65, and they were childless. How could a nation come from Abraham? Would he take another wife? Polygamy was a common practice in those days, so Sarah may well have wondered about that.

At any rate, they left Haran and pressed onward. Note, though, who was now with them. The account tells us that Abraham's family left with the wealth they had gained as well as "the people whom they had acquired in Haran." (Gene-

sis 12:5) Who were those people? Servants, most likely. However, Abraham and Sarah doubtless shared their faith with those who were willing to listen. Some ancient Jewish paraphrases thus say that the people referred to in this verse were also proselytes, people who had joined Abraham and Sarah in worshipping Jehovah. If so, Sarah's deep faith no doubt made her very convincing when she spoke to others about her God and her hope. That is useful for us to contemplate, for we live in an age when faith and hope are in desperately short supply. When you learn something good from the Bible, could you share it with someone?

"DOWN TOWARD EGYPT"

After they crossed the Euphrates, likely on Nisan 14, 1943 B.C.E., they made their way south into the land Jehovah had promised them. (Exodus 12:40, 41) Picture Sarah turning to look this way and that, taken by the beauty, the variety, and the pleasant climate of the land. Near the big trees of Moreh, near Shechem, Jehovah appeared to Abraham again, this time saying: "To your offspring I am going to give this land." Ah, this expression, "offspring," would have rich meaning for Abraham! It surely made him think back to the garden of Eden, where Jehovah had foretold that an offspring would one day destroy Satan. Jehovah had already told Abraham that the nation that came from him would open the way for blessings to people of all the earth.—Genesis 3:15; 12:2, 3, 6, 7.

Still, the family was not immune to the troubles of this world. A famine struck the land of Canaan, and Abraham decided to lead his family south toward Egypt. However, he sensed a particular danger in that region. So he spoke to Sarah: "Please listen! I know what a beautiful woman you are. So when the Egyptians see you, they will surely say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but keep you alive. Please say you are my sister, so that it may go well with me because of you, and my life will be spared." (Genesis 12:10-13) Why did Abraham make such an unusual request?



Despite the temptations of Pharaoh's palace, Sarah was loyal to her marriage mate

Abraham was neither a liar nor a coward, as some critics have charged. Sarah was, in truth, his half sister. And Abraham's caution was well-founded. Abraham and Sarah knew that nothing was more important than God's purpose to produce a special offspring and nation through Abraham, so Abraham's safety became of paramount importance. What is more, archaeological evidence has shown that it was not unheard of for men of power in Egypt to abduct a man's wife and kill the husband. So Abraham acted wisely, and Sarah humbly cooperated with his decision.

Before long, events proved that Abraham's fears were well-founded; some of Pharaoh's princes noticed Sarah's stunning beauty—a remarkable trait at her age. They reported on her to Pharaoh, and he ordered that the woman be taken! It is hard to imagine the anguish of Abraham or the fears that must have afflicted Sarah. However, it seems that she was treated, not as a hostage, but as an honored guest. Perhaps Pharaoh planned to woo her and impress her with his wealth and then negotiate with her "brother" to obtain her as a wife.—Genesis 12:14-16.

Think of Sarah, looking out over the Egyptian landscape from a palace window or balcony. How did she feel, living within walls again, with a roof over her head, with fine foods put before her? Was

she tempted by a life of luxury—perhaps a life even more opulent than anything she had known back in Ur? Imagine how pleased Satan would have been if she had sought to abandon Abraham and become the wife of this Pharaoh! But Sarah did nothing of the kind. She was loyal to her husband, to her marriage, and to her God. If only every married person in today's immoral world would show such loyalty! Can you imitate Sarah's loyalty in your dealings with your own loved ones and friends?

Jehovah intervened to protect this beloved woman, sending plagues against Pharaoh and his household. When Pharaoh somehow learned that Sarah was Abraham's wife, he sent her back to her husband and asked the whole family group to leave Egypt. (Genesis 12:17-20) How delighted Abraham was to get his dear wife back! Remember that he had lovingly said to her: "I know what a beautiful woman you are." But he appreciated another kind of beauty in Sarah far more—a beauty that ran deeper than her mere appearance. Sarah had true inner beauty, the kind that Jehovah values. (1 Peter 3:1-5) That is a kind of beauty that all of us can cultivate. If we put spiritual things ahead of material things, try to share our knowledge of God with others, and loyally uphold God's moral standards in the face of temptations, we will imitate the faith of Sarah.

Will there ever be true justice on earth?

What would you say?

▶ Yes ▶ No ▶ Maybe

What the Bible says

"I know that Jehovah will defend the lowly and give justice to the poor." (Psalm 140:12) God's Kingdom will bring true justice to the earth.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ God sees the world's current injustice, and he will correct it.—Ecclesiastes 5:8.
- ▶ Justice from God will bring peace and security to the earth.—Isaiah 32:16-18.

Does God favor one group of people over another?

Some people believe

that God has blessed or cursed specific groups of people, while others believe that God treats all people the same. **What do you think?**

What the Bible says

"God is not partial, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." (Acts 10:34, 35) In God's view, all people are equal.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

► The Bible has "good news" for "every nation and tribe and tongue and people." —Revelation 14:6.





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To learn about the time when true justice will fill the earth, see chapter 3 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses

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