A photograph of a young man with dark hair and brown eyes, looking upwards and slightly to his right with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a dark jacket with a fur-trimmed collar. The background is a misty, forested mountain landscape with sunlight filtering through the trees.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2008

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

How Well Do You Know Your  
**HEAVENLY FATHER?**

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God's Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

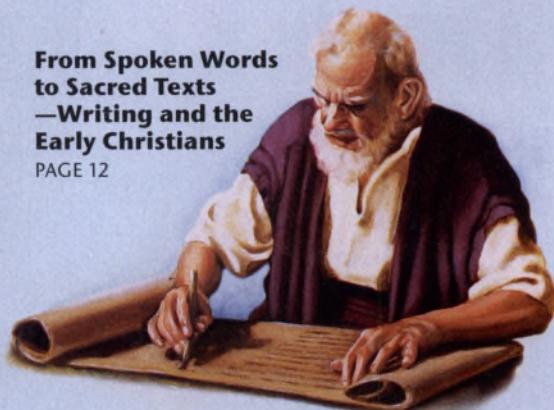
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ENGLISH

# Do You Know Your HEAVENLY FATHER?

**H**OW well do you know your father? This question may seem strange if you grew up in a loving family. ‘Of course I know him well!’ you may reply. Yes, most people know what their father likes and dislikes, how he reacts in certain situations, and how he cares for the family.

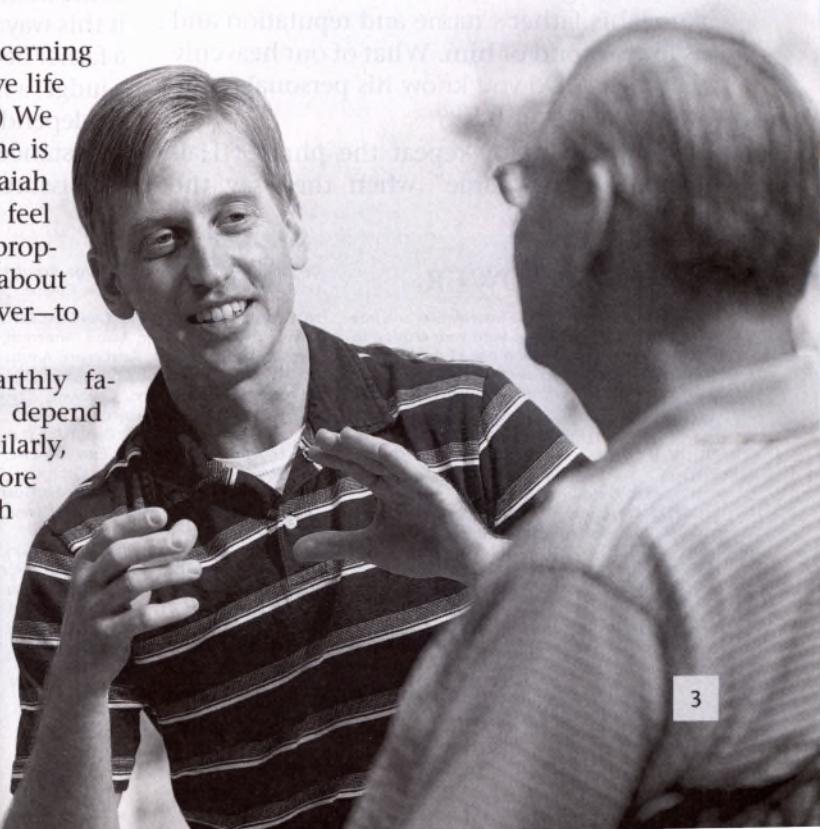
Still, there might have been times when you were surprised to see a totally unexpected facet of your father’s personality. For instance, a son may know his father as a quiet and mild person—until an emergency occurs. Suddenly, he sees his father as determined and firm in protecting his family.

How about our Creator? Concerning him, we are told: “By him we have life and move and exist.” (Acts 17:28) We owe God our life; in that sense he is Father to all who are living. (Isaiah 64:8) Perhaps that is how you feel about God, and that is good and proper. There is, however, much more about him for us to know and to discover—to our benefit and delight.

Your feelings toward your earthly father and your respect for him depend on how well you know him. Similarly, the better you know God, the more *personal* your relationship with him becomes. God can help you through life’s trials and pitfalls if you get to know him well and learn to do his will.

What kind of person is God? How should his qualities affect your feelings toward him? Does knowing him place certain responsibilities on you? You will find the answers to these questions in the following article.

**Your feelings for others  
can be affected by how  
well you know them**



# What Is Our HEAVENLY FATHER Really Like?

MANY people can recite the Our Father, or the Lord's Prayer, the model prayer that Jesus taught his disciples. (Matthew 6:9-13) Each time they say that prayer, they address God as "Our Father." How many, though, can say that they know him well?

What about you? How well do you know God? Do you enjoy a close relationship with him, talk to him, and share your joys and sorrows with him? Really, what is involved in knowing him?

## "Jehovah Is His Name"

A toddler may know his father only as Daddy. As he grows up, however, he comes to know his father's name and reputation and is likely proud of him. What of our heavenly Life-Giver? Do you know his personal name and what it stands for?

Although many repeat the phrase "Hallowed be thy name" when they say the

Lord's Prayer, they may be at a loss when asked, "What is that name?" (*King James Version*) The starry heavens, a majestic mountain, a colorful coral reef teeming with life—they provide evidence of the existence of God. Yet, they do not disclose his name. To learn that name, we need to turn to the Bible. It concisely states: "Jehovah is his name." —Exodus 15:3.

God wants us to know him by his name, Jehovah. Why? Because his name represents the person that he is. That name literally means "He Causes to Become." In other words, he becomes whatever he needs to become in order to fulfill his purpose. Think of it this way: In order to take care of his family, a father becomes a breadwinner, a counselor, a judge, a negotiator, a protector, and a teacher, depending on the family's needs and circumstances. In the same way, the name Jehovah assures us that God is fully able to carry



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<sup>\*</sup> Audiocassettes also available.

<sup>\*\*</sup> CD also available.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup> MP3 CD-ROM also available.

<sup>†</sup> Audio recordings also available at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).

out his will to the blessing of all who serve him, come what may.

Let us consider the different roles that our loving God takes on, as it were, in harmony with the meaning of his name. It will help you to appreciate what kind of God Jehovah is, as well as to learn what you must do to draw close to him.

### **"The God of Love and of Peace"**

The apostle Paul called our Maker "the God of love and of peace." (2 Corinthians 13:11) Why? Jesus Christ earlier said: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." (John 3:16) Out of his deep love for mankind, God gave his beloved Son as a ransom, making it possible for those who exercise faith in him to enjoy life without end, free from the pain and suffering that resulted from sin. That is why Paul also said: "The wages sin pays is death,

### **God wants us to know him by his name, Jehovah, which literally means "He Causes to Become"**

but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) Should that not move us to love God and draw close to him?

God expresses his love not only to mankind as a whole but also to faithful ones personally. To the ancient Israelites, who were often wayward, Moses said: "Is it to Jehovah that you keep doing this way, O people stupid and not wise? Is he not your Father who has produced you, he who made you and proceeded to give you stability?" (Deuteronomy 32:6) Do you appreciate what that means? As a loving Father, Jehovah felt

for his people, despite being aware of their shortcomings. And he provided for all their legitimate needs—material, emotional, and spiritual.

We all go through life with its many ups and downs and at times feel distressed, even depressed. We need someone to help us look at our situation and problems with the right perspective. Who can help us? Through his Word, the Bible, Jehovah proves to be a loving Counselor and Caregiver. That Sacred Volume explains why we experience so much suffering and how we can cope with it successfully. Just as a father lovingly helps his son who has fallen and hurt himself, Jehovah in his great love stoops down, as it were, to provide the help we need. Truly, Jehovah's hand is not short toward those who show faith in him.—Isaiah 59:1.

God's love for us is also shown by his being the "Hearer of prayer." (Psalm 65:2) How is that so? The apostle Paul explains: "Do not be anxious over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that excels all thought will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6, 7) By turning to God in heartfelt prayer and following the guidance he provides in his Word, you too can experience "the peace of God that excels all thought."

### **"A God of Knowledge"**

Jehovah God is described in the Bible as "perfect in knowledge." As "a God of knowledge," he understands human nature and the needs of humans better than anyone else. (Job 36:4; 1 Samuel 2:3) He made known through his servant Moses that "not by bread alone does man live but by every expression of Jehovah's mouth does man live." (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4) This means

that for true satisfaction in life, we need more than material provisions.

Our Creator provides valuable guidance and counsel for us through his Word, the Bible. When we study the Bible and apply his counsel in our life, we benefit from "every expression of Jehovah's mouth." For example, Zuzanna, a Christian woman, said this about her family life: "Our marriage was strengthened by our reading the Bible together, attending Christian meetings together, and sharing what we learned with others. Owing to God's spiritual instruction, we share the same goals and enjoy a stronger relationship."

Would you like to benefit from the spiritual counsel and direction that God provides? By having a regular study of the Bible and applying the Bible's counsel, you put yourself in line for many spiritual blessings from him.—Hebrews 12:9.

### The "God of Salvation"

The world today is full of strife. There is no certainty about what tomorrow will bring. If you live in a war-torn country, you may long for peace. In many other parts of the world, people live in fear of crime and violence, economic instability, and acts of terrorism. Who will save us from all of this? Now, as never before, humankind needs protection and deliverance.

"The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection," says the Bible. (Proverbs 18:10) Knowing God's name and relying on it can direct our attention to what he has done and what he will yet do to deliver those who show faith in him. Jehovah God has proved beyond any doubt that he can deliver his people. For instance, he saved Israel by destroying Pharaoh's war chariots and

military forces. Jehovah proved to be the God of faithfulness, the God who remembers the afflicted and desires to act in their behalf.—Exodus 15:1-4.

Our eternal future also depends on having faith in Jehovah God as the Savior. King David of ancient Israel, who had to cope with numerous hardships, demonstrated that kind of faith when he wrote about Jehovah: "You are my God of salvation." (Psalm 25:5) With confidence the apostle Peter stated: "Jehovah knows how to deliver people of godly devotion out of trial." —2 Peter 2:9.

Regarding a person who looks to him for help, God has promised: "I shall protect him because he has come to know my name." (Psalm 91:14) Modern-day servants of God have experienced the truthfulness of that promise. Henryk in Poland has served Jehovah faithfully for 70 years, despite adversity and persecution. When Henryk was only 16 years old, his father was sent to the Auschwitz concentration camp. Henryk and his brother were placed in a Nazi correctional fa-



"In all my trying situations, Jehovah never left me."

—HENRYK





"Our marriage was strengthened by our reading the Bible together, attending Christian meetings together, and sharing what we learned with others."—ZUZANNA



cility for youths. After that, he was moved from one concentration camp to another. Concerning the events of those days, Henryk recalls: "In all my trying situations, Jehovah never left me. He always helped me to remain faithful, even though several times death was staring me in the face." Yes, Jehovah gives his servants the faith and strength to endure.

Soon God will prove to be a Savior to all who exercise faith in him and look to him for deliverance. He declares: "I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior." (Isaiah 43:11) At "the war of the great day of God the Almighty," he will annihilate the wicked from the face of the earth and deliver the upright. (Revelation 16:14, 16; Proverbs 2:21, 22) Jehovah assures us: "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace."—Psalm 37:11.

### Becoming "Children of God"

In the days of the prophet Malachi, the Israelites claimed to have Jehovah as their Fa-

ther. Yet, when it came to showing honor and devotion to him, they offered as sacrifices bread that was polluted and animals that were blind and lame. That is why Jehovah asked them: "If I am a father, where is the honor to me?"—Malachi 1:6.

Do not make the same mistake as those unfaithful Israelites. Instead, we encourage you to learn about Jehovah God and draw close to him. "Draw close to God," urged the disciple James, "and he will draw close to you."—James 4:8.

Having Jehovah as Father brings certain responsibilities. If you endeavor to honor God by loyally upholding his standards in every aspect of your life, he will never forget your efforts. On the contrary, he will help you to walk the straight path that leads to the promised new world, in which "death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore." (Revelation 21:4) At that time, all obedient mankind "will be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God."—Romans 8:21.

# CONSIDER THE “End Afterward”

LIFE'S journey presents us with many choices. Surely it is the course of wisdom to try to find out what is at the end of any road before we take the first step along it. Some have bitterly regretted decisions that they have made. Perhaps you too have said, 'If only I had known how this was going to turn out, I would never have started it in the first place.'

An experienced traveler wants to know where each road leads. He may consult a map and talk to people who know the area. He will certainly take note of signposts he encounters along the way. On life's journey, though, how can you be sure which is the best path to take? Regarding the people of ancient Israel, God once said through Moses: "O that they were wise! Then they would

ponder over this. They would consider their end afterward."—Deuteronomy 32:29.

## The Best Advice

We do not need to be in doubt as to the "end afterward" of the paths that life's journey may offer. From his vantage point, God is in a unique position to advise all human travelers about the best road to take. He has seen the many ways that humans have traveled and has observed the outcome. The Bible says: "The ways of man are in front of the eyes of Jehovah, and he is contemplating all his tracks."—Proverbs 5:21.

Jehovah cares for those who love him. By means of his Word, the Bible, he maps out the best path for them. We read: "I shall make you have insight and instruct you in

the way you should go. I will give advice with my eye upon you." So before you take the first step down any road, it is wise to seek Jehovah's advice, as did King David of ancient Israel, who prayed: "Make known to me the way in which I should walk."—Psalm 32:8; 143:8.

Following the route indicated by a trusted, experienced traveler can give you a sense of confidence and security. You do not worry about where the path is leading. David asked for and followed Jehovah's guidance and direction. As a result, he enjoyed a peace of mind that is beautifully expressed in the famous 23rd Psalm. David wrote: "Jehovah is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing. In grassy pastures he makes me lie down; by well-watered resting-places he conducts me. My soul he refreshes. He leads me in the tracks of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk in the valley of deep shadow, I fear nothing bad."—Psalm 23:1-4.

### **What Will Be Their Future?**

One traveler on life's journey, a psalmist who was either Asaph or one of his descendants, admitted that he "almost turned aside" from the right way. What had happened? He had seen the prosperity of the dishonest and violent ones and had envied the "peace of wicked people." To him, they seemed to be "at ease indefinitely." What is worse, the psalmist had begun to doubt the wisdom of following the path of righteousness that he had chosen.—Psalm 73:2, 3, 6, 12, 13.

Then the psalmist entered Jehovah's sanctuary and prayerfully thought about the destiny of the wicked. "I wanted to discern their future," he said. He meditated on the prospects of those whom he envied. What would be their future? He realized that such people were "on slippery ground" and would be "brought to their finish through sudden terrors!" What of the path that the psalmist himself was taking? He acknowledged: "Afterward you [Jehovah] will take me even to glory."—Psalm 73:17-19, 24.

Reflecting on the consequences of the actions of those who achieve prosperity through expedient or questionable dealings reassured the psalmist that he was on the right path. He concluded: "As for me, the drawing near to God is good for me." Keeping close to Jehovah God always results in lasting benefits.—Psalm 73:28.

### **"Know Where You Are Headed"**

Similar choices may confront us today. You may be offered an attractive business contract, a promotion, or an invitation to become a partner in a profitable venture. Of



course, there is an element of risk in any new undertaking. Even so, can you not see the value of first considering what the “end afterward” of your choice might be? What are the likely consequences? Will you be required to be away from home, potentially creating stress for your spouse or for yourself? Will you be exposed to unwholesome company with business associates or those in hotels and elsewhere? By taking a close look at the road ahead, you will be able to make a wise decision. Heed Solomon’s advice: “Know where you are headed.”—Proverbs 4:26, *Contemporary English Version*.

All of us would do well to ponder that counsel, but especially should young people do so. One young man rented a video that he knew featured sexually stimulating scenes. He later related that after viewing the video, he felt so aroused that he sought out a prostitute, whom he knew to be living nearby. He ended up with a heavy heart, a guilty conscience, and anxiety over possible disease. What occurred was exactly as described in the Bible: “All of a sudden he is going after her, like a bull that comes even to the slaughter.” If only he had considered the “end afterward”!—Proverbs 7:22, 23.

## WHAT WILL BE THE “End Afterward”?

Young people are often exposed to temptations and pressures to experiment with things that seem popular. Here are some likely scenarios.

- Someone dares you to smoke a cigarette.
- A well-intentioned teacher urges you to pursue higher education at a university.
- You are invited to a party where alcohol and possibly drugs will be freely available.
- “Why don’t you post your profile on the Internet?” someone suggests.
- A friend invites you to watch a movie that features violence or immorality.

If you are ever confronted with any of such situations, what will you do? Will you simply give in, or will you carefully consider what the “end afterward” could be? You would be wise to ask yourself: “Can a man rake together fire into his bosom and yet his very garments not be burned? Or can a man walk upon the coals and his feet themselves not be scorched?”—Proverbs 6:27, 28.



## Trust the Signposts

Most people would agree that it is unwise to ignore signposts. Sadly, though, that is what some do on the road through life when the direction given does not fit their personal preference. Consider the case of certain Israelites in the time of Jeremiah. The nation was at a crossroads, and Jehovah God advised them: "Ask for the roadways of long ago, where, now, the good way is; and walk in it." But the people stubbornly responded that they were "not going to walk" that way. (Jeremiah 6:16) What was the "end afterward" of their rebellious course? In 607 B.C.E., the Babylonians came and completely destroyed the city of Jerusalem and took its inhabitants to Babylon as captives.

Ignoring signposts that God has set up will never work for our good. The Scriptures urge us: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." —Proverbs 3:5, 6.

Some of God's warnings are like "Do Not Enter" signs. For instance, the Bible says: "Into the path of the wicked ones *do not enter*, and do not walk straight on into the way of the bad ones." (Proverbs 4:14) Among such harmful paths is the one described at Proverbs 5:3, 4: "As a honeycomb the lips of a strange woman keep dripping, and her palate is smoother than oil. But the aftereffect from her is as bitter as wormwood; it is as sharp as a two-edged sword." To some, an immoral relationship—whether with a prostitute or anyone else—may appear exciting. But ignoring "Do Not Enter" signs that should regulate moral conduct can lead only to disaster.

Before taking the first step down such a road, ask yourself, 'Where is this leading me?' Just pausing to contemplate the potential "end afterward" may suffice to prevent you from taking a course that can have seri-

ous consequences. AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, ruined relationships, and guilty consciences litter the path of those who have chosen to ignore such signposts. The end of the road for those practicing immorality is clearly stated by the apostle Paul. They "will not inherit God's kingdom."—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

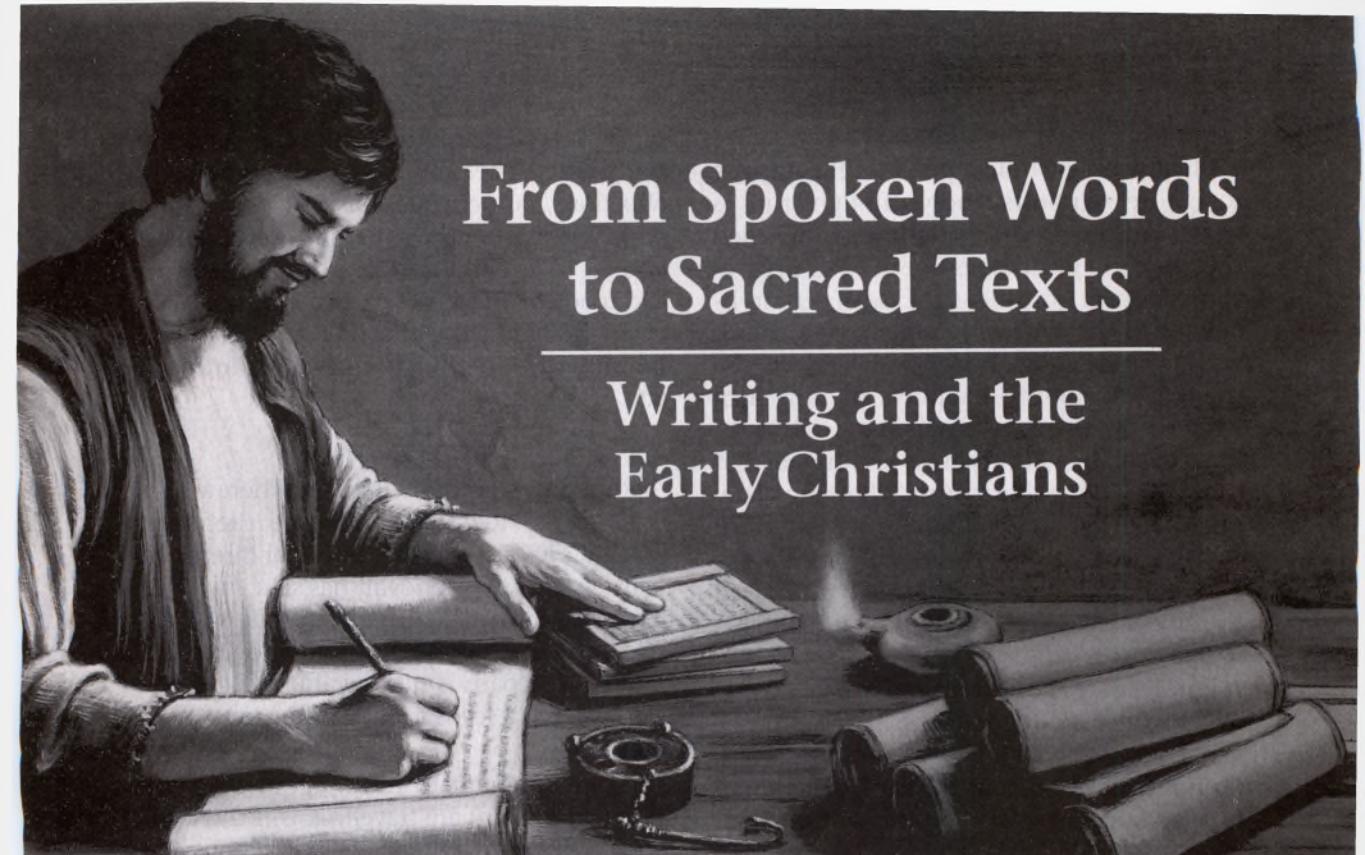
## "This Is the Way"

Sometimes it is difficult to see where a path is taking us. How thankful we are, therefore, for God's loving concern and clear direction! "This is the way," Jehovah has said, "walk in it, you people." (Isaiah 30:21) What is at the end of the path that Jehovah is showing us? Though the path is narrow and difficult, Jesus said that it leads to life everlasting.—Matthew 7:14.

Take a moment to think about the path along which you are traveling. Is it the right one? Where is it headed? Seek Jehovah's guidance in prayer. Consult the 'road map,' the Bible. You may even feel the need to consult an experienced traveler, one who has been endeavoring to walk in God's way. If you thus see the need to change direction, do so quickly.

A traveler is often encouraged when he sees a signpost that reassures him that he is on the right road. If an examination of your course in life reveals that you are walking the path of the righteous, be encouraged to continue. The most rewarding part of the journey lies just ahead.—2 Peter 3:13.

Every path leads somewhere. When you reach the end of the course that you have chosen, where will you be? Little will be gained by standing there wishing, 'Oh, if only I had chosen another way!' So before taking your next step down the path of life, ask yourself, 'What is going to be the "end afterward"?' 1 CORINTHIANS 6:9, 10; 1 JOHN 3:10



# From Spoken Words to Sacred Texts

## Writing and the Early Christians

COUNTLESS generations of believers have devoted endless hours to reading, studying, and analyzing some of the most famous writings ever produced—those of the New Testament, as the Christian Greek Scriptures are commonly called. Those writings, along with the rest of the Bible, have greatly influenced our world, framed morals and ethics, and provided inspiration for literature and the arts. Above all, they have helped millions of people—possibly including you—get accurate knowledge about God and Jesus.—John 17:3.

The Gospels, as well as the rest of the Christian Greek Scriptures, were not written immediately following the death of Jesus. Matthew apparently wrote his Gospel about 7 or 8 years later, and John wrote his about 65 years later. How were they able to record

the words and deeds of Jesus with unerring accuracy? Clearly, God's holy spirit played an active role in guiding them. (John 14:16, 26) How, though, were the teachings of Jesus passed on accurately, eventually becoming a part of the Sacred Scriptures?

### "Technically Illiterate"?

During the past century, some have speculated that Jesus' early disciples were not inclined to write down the teachings and deeds of Jesus but that they passed them on by word of mouth. For example, one scholar states: "There was a gap of several decades between the public ministry of Jesus and the writing down of his words by the authors of the Gospels. During this time what was known about Jesus was handed on orally." Some researchers even argue that Jesus'

early disciples "were technically illiterate."\* Further, they say that during the decades of oral transmission, the accounts of Jesus' ministry were expanded on, adapted, or elaborated on. The result, they claim, was far from an accurate account of the events.

Another theory favored by some scholars is that Jesus' close Jewish disciples probably followed the rabbinic method of teaching—memorization by routine and repetition—which contributed to the accuracy in oral transmission. Did the disciples rely solely on word of mouth? Or could writing have played a role in the preservation of the record of Jesus' ministry? While we cannot be absolutely certain, it is possible that writing did play such a role.

\* See the box "Were the Apostles Illiterate?" on page 15.



A waxed tablet with writing instruments from the first or second century C.E.

© British Museum/Art Resource, NY

### Everyday Use of Writing

In the first century, people of all sorts knew how to read and write. On this point, Alan Millard, professor of Hebrew and ancient Semitic languages, observed: "Writing in Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew was widespread and could be found at all levels of society." He adds: "That was the environment in which Jesus worked."

Regarding the assertion that the Gospel texts "arose in an entirely illiterate society," Professor Millard writes: "That is an unlikely picture, [as] writing would have been known about everywhere . . . Consequently, there were usually people present who could have written something they heard, whether for their own reference or to inform others."

Apparently, waxed writing tablets were readily available and could be used to jot

down information. An example of this is found in the first chapter of Luke. Zechariah, who had temporarily lost the ability to speak, was asked what name he wanted his son to have. Verse 63 says: "He asked [apparently using gestures] for a tablet and wrote: 'John is its name!'" Bible dictionaries explain that the word "tablet" may have referred to a wooden writing board probably overlaid with wax. Someone present may have had a writing board with him, readily available for Zechariah to write on.

Another example illustrates that writing boards and their use were evidently known at this time. In the book of Acts, we read that Peter was speaking to a crowd in the temple area, exhorting them: "Repent . . . get your sins blotted out." (Acts 3:11, 19) The expression 'get blotted out' comes from a Greek verb that means "wipe out, erase." *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* explains: "The image expressed by the verb here and perhaps elsewhere is most probably smoothing the surface of a wax writing-tablet for re-use."

The Gospel accounts also show that Jesus' followers and audiences included people who likely used writing in their everyday work. There were, for example, the tax collectors Matthew and Zacchaeus (Matthew 9:9; Luke 19:2); a synagogue officer (Mark 5:22); an army officer (Matthew 8:5); Joanna, wife of a high official under Herod Antipas (Luke 8:3); as well as scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and members of the Sanhedrin. (Matthew 21:23, 45; 22:23; 26:59) No doubt, many—if not all—of Jesus' apostles and disciples were able to write.

### **Students, Teachers, and Writers**

To be Christian teachers, the disciples needed not only to know what Jesus said and

did but also to understand how the Law and prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures applied to the Christ. (Acts 18:5) Interestingly, Luke recorded one meeting Jesus had with some of his disciples shortly after his resurrection. What did Jesus do? "Commencing at Moses and all the Prophets he interpreted to them things pertaining to himself in all the Scriptures." Shortly thereafter, Jesus told the disciples: "'These are my words which I spoke to you while I was yet with you, that all the things written in the law of Moses and in the Prophets and Psalms about me must be fulfilled.' Then he opened up their minds fully to grasp the meaning of the Scriptures." (Luke 24:27, 44, 45) Later, the disciples "called to mind" the insight Jesus had given them.—John 12:16.

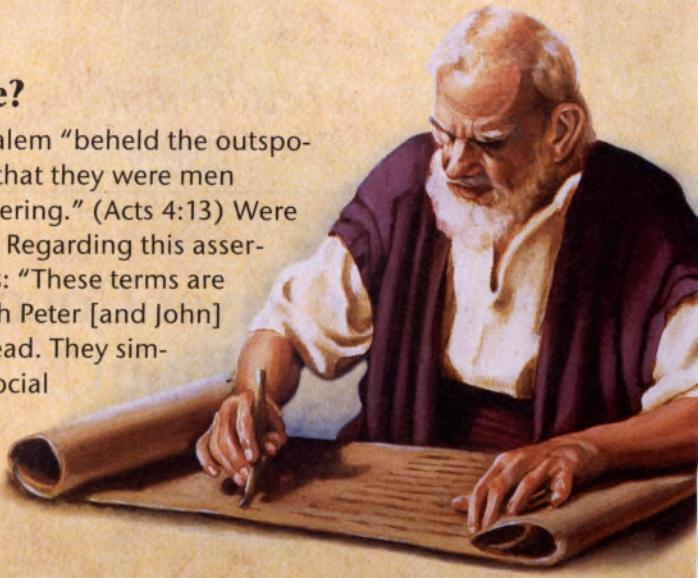
**Jesus' followers included  
people who likely used writing  
in their everyday work**



These accounts suggest that the apostles and disciples must have applied themselves diligently to searching and studying the Scriptures so that they could fully understand the meaning of what they saw and

## Were the Apostles Illiterate?

When the rulers and older men of Jerusalem "beheld the outspokeness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were men unlettered and ordinary, they got to wondering." (Acts 4:13) Were the apostles really unlettered, or illiterate? Regarding this assertion, *The New Interpreter's Bible* comments: "These terms are probably not to be taken literally as though Peter [and John] were unschooled and could not write or read. They simply recognize the profound difference in social class between those sitting in judgment and the apostles."



heard with regard to their Lord, Jesus Christ. (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 17:11) On this, Harry Y. Gamble, professor of religious studies at the University of Virginia, writes: "It can hardly be doubted that from the beginning there were Christians, probably groups of them, who devoted themselves to the close study and interpretation of Jewish scripture, constructing from it the textual warrants [proofs] of Christian convictions and making those texts serviceable for Christian preaching."

All of this indicates that rather than depending solely on oral transmission, Jesus' early disciples were very much involved in

studying, reading, and writing. They were students, teachers, and writers. Above all, they were spiritual men who relied on the holy spirit to guide them. Jesus assured them that "the spirit of the truth" would 'bring back to their minds all the things he had told them.' (John 14:17, 26) God's holy spirit helped them both to remember and to put into writing what Jesus did and said, even lengthy quotations, such as the Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew, chapters 5-7) The spirit also guided the Gospel writers in recording what Jesus at times felt and what he said in prayer.—Matthew 4:2; 9:36; John 17:1-26.

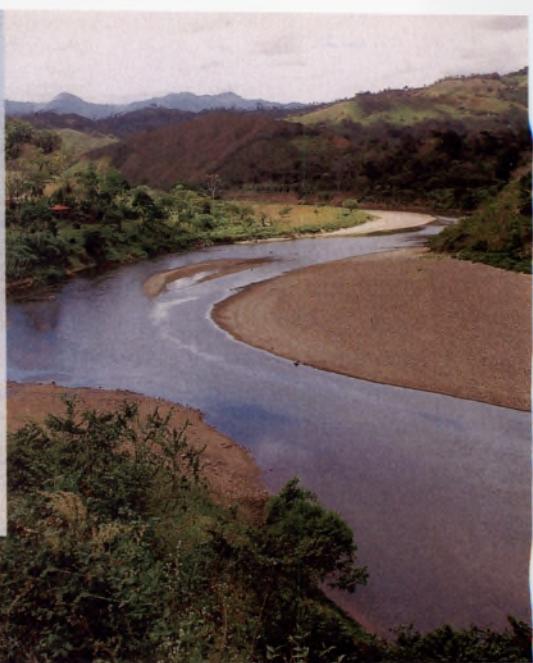
So while the Gospel writers doubtless made use of both oral and written sources, the things they recorded had a far more reliable and supremely elevated source—Jehovah God himself. Hence, we may have absolute confidence that "all Scripture is inspired of God" and can teach and guide us in doing the things pleasing to him.—2 Timothy 3:16.

**God's holy spirit  
helped Jesus' early  
disciples  
remember and  
write down what  
he did and said**



## *A Letter From Nicaragua*

# **"At the River Coco, Turn Right"**



**Y**OU will need a four-wheel-drive vehicle, a winch, and extra cans of fuel. Be prepared for axle-deep mud. At the river Coco, turn right.

I must admit that these words of a fellow missionary did nothing for my self-confidence. Nonetheless, one Tuesday morning, I began my journey to attend a Christian assembly in Wamblán, a small town in northern Nicaragua.

I set off at dawn, driving my old but sturdy truck along the smooth Pan-American Highway. At Jinotega, I took the unpaved road that the local people call *feo*, or ugly. Before leaving the town, I noticed two stores, one named Miracle of God and the other, The Resurrection.

The road twisted and turned, rose and fell. I drove at a crawl through the gulfs and gullies. My route took me past a long lake nestled in a valley high on a cloud-covered mountain. Through the mist, I saw trees lined with orchids and draped with Spanish moss.

On a hairpin turn, I narrowly missed an oncoming bus that hogged the road. It spewed out black smoke, and its tires were flinging

stones as it passed. Here in Nicaragua, you can see clearly marked on bus windshields the nickname of the aggressive driver: Conqueror, Scorpion, Python, or Hunter.

By midday I was driving across the Plain of Pantasma. There, I passed a wooden house in a yard of swept earth. The scene looked like a picture out of an old book: An elderly man sat on a bench, a dog slept beneath a tree, and two yoked oxen stood hitched to a cart with wooden wheels. In one small town, I saw a throng of children coming out of a school. In their navy-blue uniforms, they filled the main street like a wave splashing on an open beach.

The sun blazed as I approached Wiwilí and caught my first sight of the river Coco. The mighty river dominated the town as its waters pushed ever onward downstream. Recalling the instructions, I turned right and took the dreaded 23-mile track to Wamblán.

Going over rocks, ruts, and ridges, the truck splashed through eight or nine streams. As I tried to avoid the furrows in the dried mud, I succeeded in kicking up a minor dust storm. Yes, "I ate the dust," as the locals

would say. At last, the track ended, and there in deep shadow in a wooded valley was Wamblán, my destination.

Everyone seemed to be up by 4:30 a.m. the next day. Awakened earlier by the relentless crowing of roosters, I got up and walked down the main street. The mountain air was filled with the smell of tortillas baking in stone ovens.

Colorful paradise scenes painted by a local artist were seen on walls here and there. Signs on the *pulperías*, or corner stores, advertised one cola or another. Posters reminded people of the promises of the last three governments. Out-houses of shiny tin sat on concrete slabs.

I spoke first, using the Nicaraguan greeting *Adiós*. People smiled and spoke to me warmly. We chatted above the noise of local traffic—the clip-clop of horses and mules.

By Friday evening, families arrived for the two-day assembly. They came on foot, by horse, and by truck. Some little boys and girls had walked for six hours in plastic sandals. They risked land mines at the river crossings and braved leeches in the quiet waters. Some from distant communities brought with them just a little food—rice flavored with pork fat. Why had they all come?

They had come to strengthen their hope for a better future. They had come to hear the Bible explained to them. They had come to please God.

Saturday arrived. Under a tin roof, the audience of more than 300 sat on wooden benches and plastic chairs. Mothers fed their babies. Pigs grunted and cockerels crowed at the farm next door.

The temperature soared, and soon the heat



Families traveled many miles to attend the assembly in Wamblán

became almost unbearable. Yet, the audience listened with rapt attention to the counsel and guidance given. They followed along as the speakers read Bible texts, they sang the songs based on Bible themes, and they listened respectfully to the prayers being offered on their behalf.

After the sessions, I joined some others and played tag with the children. Then we reviewed the notes the youngsters had taken. I showed them images of stars and galaxies on my computer. The children were smiling, and their parents were happy.

All too soon the assembly ended, and everyone had to go home. I left the next morning, my mind filled with sweet memories and my heart full of love for my new friends. I am determined to imitate them and learn how to be content and how to wait on God.

# "The God of All Comfort"

2 Corinthians 1:3, 4

MANY things in life—suffering, disappointment, loneliness—can bring sadness, even despair. At such times you may wonder, 'Where can I turn for help?' The words of the apostle Paul found at 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4 point to an unfailing source of comfort—Jehovah God.

In verse 3, God is called "the Father of tender mercies." What does that mean? The Greek word rendered "tender mercies" can convey the idea of feeling compassion for the sufferings of others.\* One Bible reference work says that this term may be rendered "feels pity" or "cares very much." God's "tender mercies" move him to act. Knowing this aspect of God's personality makes us want to draw close to him, does it not?

Paul also refers to Jehovah as "the God of all comfort." Here Paul uses a word that is said to include "the idea of consoling someone in trouble or sorrow and the idea of giving active help or encouragement." *The Interpreter's Bible* explains: "We comfort a sufferer when we give him courage to bear his pain."

You may ask, 'How does God comfort us and give us the courage to bear our pain?' He does so mainly through his Word, the



Bible, and through the gift of prayer. Paul tells us that God lovingly gives us His Word so that "through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." Additionally, through heartfelt prayers, we can come to experience "the peace of God that excels all thought."—Romans 15:4; Philippians 4:7.

To what extent does Jehovah comfort his people? Paul says that God "comforts us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:4) No matter what pressure, anguish, or suffering we may experience, God can give us the necessary courage and strength to bear up. Is that not reassuring?

The comfort God gives does not end with the one receiving it. Paul goes on to say that God comforts us so that "we may be able to comfort those in any sort of tribulation through the comfort with which we ourselves are being comforted by God." Having received comfort in our tribulation, we are helped to have empathy for others and moved to extend a helping hand to those in need.

As "the God of all comfort," Jehovah does not necessarily make our problems or pain disappear. Yet, of this we can be sure: If we turn to him for comfort, he can fortify us to cope with any sorrow or trouble that life may bring. Such a compassionate God surely deserves our worship and praise.

\* God is called "the Father [or, source] of tender mercies" because compassion emanates from him and is part of his nature.



## “NEVER FORGET THE DOOR-TO-DOOR MINISTRY”

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AS TOLD BY  
**JACOB NEUFELD**

*“No matter what happens, never forget the door-to-door ministry.”  
With those words ringing in my ears, I walked three miles to the nearest village.  
When I arrived, I could not find the courage to go to the first house.  
After some struggle, I went into the woods and prayed very hard to God for the  
courage to preach. Finally, I was able to return to the first door  
and give my presentation.*

WHAT brought me to that village in the desert of Paraguay where I was trying to preach all by myself? Let me go back to the beginning. I was born in November 1923 in the Ukrainian village of Kronstal', in a German Mennonite colony. In the late 1700's, Mennonites had emigrated from Germany to Ukraine and were granted considerable privileges, including freedom of worship (but not to proselytize), self-government, and exemption from military service.

When the Communist Party came to power, all such privileges were taken away. In the late 1920's, large Mennonite farms were turned into collectives. People were starved into submission, and any resistance was dealt with brutally. During the 1930's, many men were taken away by the KGB (Soviet State Security Committee), usually at night, until finally in many villages there were very few men left. That was how in 1938, at the age of 14, I lost my father and never saw or heard

from him again. Two years later, my older brother was also taken away.

By 1941, Hitler's troops occupied Ukraine. For us, this was liberation from the Communist regime. However, eight Jewish families living in our village suddenly disappeared. All these experiences left many questions in my mind. Why did these things happen?

### Honesty Saves My Life

In 1943 the German troops retreated, taking with them most of the German families—including what was left of mine—to support the war effort. By this time, I had already been drafted and assigned to the German SS (*Schutzstaffel*, Hitler's elite guard) in Romania. A minor incident at this time had a major impact on my life.

The captain of my unit wanted to test my honesty. He told me to take his uniform to the dry cleaner. Inside one of the pockets, he had put some money, which I found. When



I returned it, he said that he had left nothing in the uniform. I insisted that it had come from his pocket. Shortly afterward, I was made his assistant and put in charge of handling paperwork, posting the guards, and looking after the money for our unit.

One night, the Russian army captured the whole unit except me; I had been left behind to finish some work for the captain. To the best of my knowledge, I was the only one who was not caught, and that was because I had been honest and had received that special assignment. Otherwise, I too would have been captured.

Thus, in 1944, I suddenly found myself on leave until further notice. I returned home to visit my mother. While waiting for an assignment, I became a mason's apprentice, and that training proved to be valuable later on. In April 1945 the American troops rolled into our town near Magdeburg. One month later the war officially ended. We were alive. Our future seemed bright.

One day in June, we heard an announcement by the town crier, "The American troops left last night, and the Russian troops will be arriving at 11:00 a.m. today." Our hearts sank as we realized that we were again trapped in a Communist zone. Immediately, my cousin and I began planning our escape. By midsummer, we had crossed into the American zone. Then, in November, with considerable difficulty and at great risk, we reentered the Russian sector and secretly brought our families across the border.

### **"Listen Very Carefully, and Compare"**

We settled in what was then West Germany. In time, I developed a love for the Bible. On Sundays, I would go into the woods to read the Bible, but what I read seemed so foreign, so far in the past. I was also attending catechism classes in preparation for baptism as a Mennonite. I was shocked when I

found in the catechism book the statement: "The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God," followed by the question: "Are there three Gods?" The answer was printed below: "No, these three are one." I asked the minister how that could be possible. His response was, "Young man, one should not think too deeply on these matters; some have lost their minds as a result of delving too deeply." Right then, I decided not to get baptized.

Some days later, I heard a stranger talking to my cousin. Curiosity moved me to join the conversation, and I asked a few questions. I did not know it at the time, but this stranger was Erich Nikolaizig, a survivor of the Wewelsburg concentration camp. He asked me if I wanted to understand the Bible. When I said yes, he assured me that everything he would teach me would be proved from my own copy of the Bible.

After just a few visits, Erich invited me to a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses, which I believe was one of the first to be organized after the war. I was very impressed and wrote down every scripture that was read or mentioned by the speakers. Soon I came to realize that learning what the Bible teaches brings certain responsibilities, and I decided to stop my study. I also found it difficult to understand that there could be only one true religion. When Erich saw that I was determined to go back to my old church, he gave me this advice, "Listen very carefully, and compare."

I needed only two visits to my ministers to realize that they did not know what they were talking about and that they absolutely did not have the truth. I wrote to a number of clergymen and asked them Bible ques-



*Katerina and me, shortly before our wedding in 1950*

tions. One replied, "You have no right to search around in the Scriptures because you are not born again."

A young woman whom I was courting forced me to make a difficult choice. She was a member of a born-again sect of the Mennonites. Bowing to pressure from her family, who hated Jehovah's Witnesses, she informed me that if I did not forget about this new religion, she could no longer see me. By now, the truth was clear enough to me that I knew that there was only one correct choice—I stopped seeing her.

Soon Erich came back to visit. He said that a baptism was scheduled for the next week and asked if I would like to be baptized. I had reached the

conclusion that Jehovah's Witnesses taught the truth, and I wanted to serve Jehovah God. So I accepted his invitation and was baptized in a bathtub in May 1948.

Shortly after my baptism, my family decided to immigrate to Paraguay, South America, and Mother begged me to go. I was reluctant because I needed further Bible study and training. On a visit to the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Wiesbaden, I met August Peters. He reminded me of my responsibility to care for my family. He also gave me this admonition: "No matter what happens, never forget the door-to-door ministry. If you do, you'll be just like the members of any other religion of Christendom." To this day, I recognize the importance of that advice and the need to preach "from house to house," or from door to door.—Acts 20:20, 21.

*With our first child at our home in Paraguay, 1952*



### A "False Prophet" in Paraguay

Shortly after that meeting with August Peters, I boarded a ship for South America with my family. We ended up in the Gran Chaco region of Paraguay, again in a Mennonite colony. Two weeks after our arrival, I made that difficult journey to the neighboring village to preach all by myself. Word spread very quickly that there was a "false prophet" among the new arrivals.

It was now that my training as a mason, or bricklayer, proved invaluable. Each family of immigrants needed a home, and these were constructed of adobe bricks with a thatched roof. For the next six months, I was much in demand and had many opportunities to preach informally. People were polite, but as soon as their four walls were up, they were glad to get rid of me.

Meanwhile, transport ships brought more Mennonite refugees from Germany. Among them was a young woman, Katerina Schellenberg, who had had brief contact with the Witnesses and had recognized the ring of truth almost immediately. Although not yet baptized, she had identified herself as one of Jehovah's Witnesses while on board the ship. Because of that, she was denied permission to continue on to the German colony. Left by herself in Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, she found work as a maid, learned Spanish, located the Witnesses, and was baptized. In October 1950, that courageous young woman became my wife. She has proved to be a marvelous support and help to me in all that we have gone through over the years.

In a short while, I had saved up enough money to buy a buggy and two horses, and I used these in the preaching work, always remembering Brother Peters' counsel. By then, my sister, who had also become a Witness, joined us. Together, we often got up at

4:00 a.m., traveled for four hours, preached for two or three hours, and then returned home.

I had read in our literature that public talks were held, so I arranged for one. I had never been to a congregation meeting in Germany, so I just guessed at how it should be done and spoke about God's Kingdom. Eight people attended that meeting, and this proved to be too much for the ministers of the Mennonite Church. They organized a campaign to gather up every piece of Bible literature that we had placed with the people, instructing them never to say a greeting to us.

Next, I was summoned to the administrative headquarters of the colony and questioned for several hours by the administrator and two visiting ministers from Canada. Finally, one of them said, "Young man, you can believe whatever you want, but you will have to promise that you will not speak

**My greatest joy is to see that all  
my children and grandchildren  
have benefited since infancy  
from Bible training**

to anyone about your beliefs." That was a promise I could not make. So they told me to leave the colony because they did not want a "false prophet" among the "faithful brethren." When I refused, they offered to pay the transportation costs for the whole family. I stood my ground and refused to leave.

That summer in 1953, I went to a convention in Asunción. There I spoke to Nathan Knorr, from the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. He suggested that I move to the capital and work with the small group of missionaries assigned there, especially since the results of

our preaching in the Mennonite colony had been so limited.

### Putting the Kingdom First

There were only about 35 Witnesses in all of Paraguay at that time. I talked to my wife, and though she was not thrilled about moving to a big city, she was willing to start over again. In 1954, Katerina and I—just the two of us and in our spare time—built a brick home. We never missed any meetings, and we always spoke to people about the Bible on the weekends.

One of my privileges was to accompany the circuit overseer, a traveling minister, to serve as his interpreter when he visited some of the German-speaking colonies in Paraguay. Since I knew little Spanish, the first time I interpreted a talk from Spanish to German was probably the most difficult assignment I have ever received.

Because of my wife's health, we immigrated to Canada in 1957. Then, in 1963, we moved to the United States. No matter where we have been, we have always tried to put Kingdom interests first in our life. (Matthew 6:33) I am so thankful to Jehovah God that he allowed me to learn the truth from his Word, the Bible, while I was still a young man. The spiritual training that I received has helped me in so many ways throughout my life!

It has been a grand privilege to help others learn from the Bible the wonderful truths that have brought me so much comfort. My greatest joy is that all my children and grandchildren have benefited since infancy from Bible training. All of them are following the advice of Brother Peters, who told me long ago, "No matter what happens, never forget the door-to-door ministry."

*With my extended family today*



Photo by Keith Trammel © 2000

# Jesus Astounds His Listeners

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



## **ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ LUKE 2:41-47.**

What kind of things do you imagine were discussed in the conversation described in verse 46?

### **DIG DEEPER.**

Why, do you think, was Jesus able to converse with the religious leaders at such an early age? Was it just the fact that he was perfect, or was it something more?

## **ANALYZE THE SCENE.—READ LUKE 2:48-52.**

What kind of attitude do you think Jesus reflected when he asked: "Why did you have to go looking for me?"

Why can we be sure that Jesus did not speak sarcastically or disrespectfully to his parents?

### **DIG DEEPER.**

Why were Joseph and Mary understandably distressed?

Although Jesus was perfect, why did he have to continue being in subjection to his parents?

Do you think Jesus might have felt embarrassed to be corrected in front of people who admired him?

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

Subjection.

The value of acquiring Bible knowledge while young.

## **WHAT ASPECTS OF THIS BIBLE ACCOUNT DID YOU FIND MOST MEANINGFUL, AND WHY?**



# Did You Know?

## Why was Judas offered 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus?

When Judas Iscariot met the chief priests to see how much they would give him to betray Jesus, they offered him "thirty silver pieces." (Matthew 26:14, 15) This sum appears to show the contempt that they felt for Jesus and how little they valued him.

The coins in question may have been silver shekels, the standard monetary unit among the Jews. What was the buying power of 30 shekels? The Mosaic Law established this as the price of a slave. Thirty shekels could also buy a plot of land.—Exodus 21:32; Matthew 27:6, 7.

When the prophet Zechariah called for his wages from the unfaithful Israelites for his work as shepherd of God's people, they weighed out to him "thirty pieces of silver." This was a demeaning and deliberate gesture toward God's prophet, suggesting that they valued him as no more than a slave. Hence, Jehovah ordered Zechariah: "Throw it to the treasury—the majestic value with which I have been valued from their standpoint." (Zechariah 11:



12, 13) Zechariah's action in obedience to this command reminds us of what Judas would do with the sum obtained for betraying the One whom Jehovah had designated as Israel's shepherd.—Matthew 27:5.

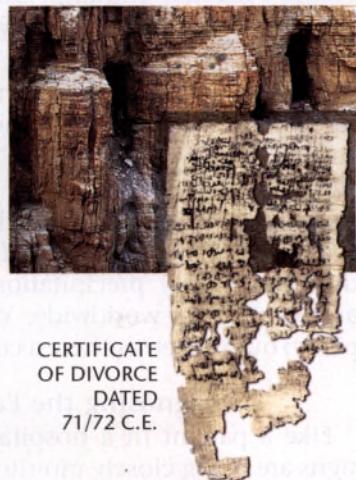
## What was the "certificate of divorce" mentioned in the Bible?

The Mosaic Law stated: "In case a man takes a woman . . . as a wife, it must also occur that if she should find no favor in his eyes because he has found something indecent on her part, he must also write out a certificate of divorce for her and put it in her hand and dismiss her from his house." (Deuteronomy 24:1) What was the purpose of this document? The Scriptures do not disclose the contents of such a certificate, but no doubt it would serve to protect the rights and interests of the rejected woman.

In 1951-1952, a number of ancient objects were recovered from caves in the north side of Wadi Murabbaat, a dry riverbed in the Judean

desert. Among the numerous manuscripts found there was a certificate of divorce written in Aramaic and dated 71 or 72 C.E. It stated what occurred on the first day of the month of Marheshvan, in the sixth year of the Jewish revolt against Rome. Joseph, son of Naqsan, living at Masada, divorced Miriam, daughter of Jonathan from Hanablata. She was then free to marry any Jewish man she liked. Joseph returned Miriam's dowry and reimbursed her fourfold for any damaged goods. The certificate was signed by Joseph himself and by three witnesses—Eliezer, son of Malka; Joseph, son of Malka; and Eleazar, son of Hanana.

CAVES AT WADI MURABAAT



CERTIFICATE  
OF DIVORCE  
DATED  
71/72 C.E.

Caves: Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com; certificate: Clara Amit, Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

# The Earth Has a “Fever”

## Is There a Cure?

Godo-Foto

**T**HE symptoms are showing—the temperature is rising. A case in point is the Alaskan village Newtok, located in the subarctic. The once frozen subsoil—known as permafrost—on which Newtok is built is melting. “I don’t want to live in permafrost [anymore],” lamented a resident named Frank. “It’s too muddy.” Studies say that within ten years, this coastal village could be washed away.

The “warming of the climate system is unequivocal,” concluded the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Rising global temperatures testify to this fact. What scientists call climate change has resulted in extreme weather, including droughts, heavy precipitation, heat waves, and hurricanes worldwide. What will happen to our planet? Is there a cure?

### Diagnosing the Earth

Like a patient in a hospital, earth’s vital signs are being closely monitored by climate

scientists. Satellites track the shrinking of glaciers, weather stations maintain rainfall readings, buoys measure deep ocean temperatures, aircraft monitor levels of atmospheric gases. This vast array of climate data is fed into supercomputers. Simulations of the climate system are run so as to predict what will happen decades, even centuries, from now.

The diagnosis? Some believe that the atmosphere is overloaded with greenhouse gases. In 2006 alone, the world’s carbon dioxide output “approached a staggering 32 billion tons,” says *Time* magazine. Like the glass panels of a greenhouse, such gases trap earth’s heat, preventing it from escaping into space, thus contributing to global warming. The future? According to the IPCC, continued gas emissions at present levels will result in “many changes in the global climate system,” which will very likely be worse than what has already been experienced. Many now agree that the solution lies in curbing carbon dioxide emissions. However, even if

the emissions of these gases were somehow stabilized, computer models suggest that likely the “warming and [resulting] sea level rise would continue for centuries.”

### Where to Turn for Answers

Climatology is admittedly a complex science. “For example, what will happen to clouds as Earth warms? Will high-flying, heat-absorbing clouds that would cause additional heating become more frequent than dense, sunlight-blocking clouds?” asks *Earth Observatory*, an online publication. The answer? “As of now, scientists can’t answer these questions.”

On the other hand, the Bible affirms that Jehovah God is the “Producer of heaven and earth,” including “the cloud masses above.” (Genesis 14:19; Proverbs 8:28) He poetically described himself as having put “wisdom in the cloud layers.” Yes, Jehovah fully understands what scientists cannot.—Job 38:36.

Regarding earth’s atmosphere, note what God said, as recorded in the Bible some 2,700 years ago: “The pouring rain descends . . . from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth.” (Isaiah 55:10) How succinctly that describes the hydrologic, or water, cycle! Water vapor in the clouds condenses and precipitates as rain, which “saturates the earth.” Solar heating causes moisture to evaporate and “return to that place,” or the atmosphere, to start the cycle again. Jehovah’s Word revealed amazing details regarding earth’s climate system centuries before non-Biblical writings did. Does that not build your confidence in the Creator and in what he is capable of doing? So when it comes to the outcome of the present climate crisis, would it not be reasonable for us to look to “the Creator of the wind,” the “father for the rain,” the one who knows how this planet functions?—Amos 4:13; Job 38:28.

### Earth Created for a Purpose

Although opinions regarding our planet’s future differ, one thing is certain: Earth is unique. Unlike other planets, it hosts a stunning diversity of life. What makes this possible? Scientists point to several factors. Specifically, the earth has an abundance of liquid water; it is located at the right distance from the sun; and it contains the right mixture of atmospheric gases, including large amounts of oxygen.

You may be surprised to learn that the Bible book of Genesis refers to these very features in the creation account. For example, Genesis 1:10 describes God’s bringing together “the waters [that] he called Seas”—a clear reference to an abundance of liquid water. At Genesis 1:3, we read: “God proceeded

*The Bible described the earth’s water cycle centuries before non-Biblical writings did*



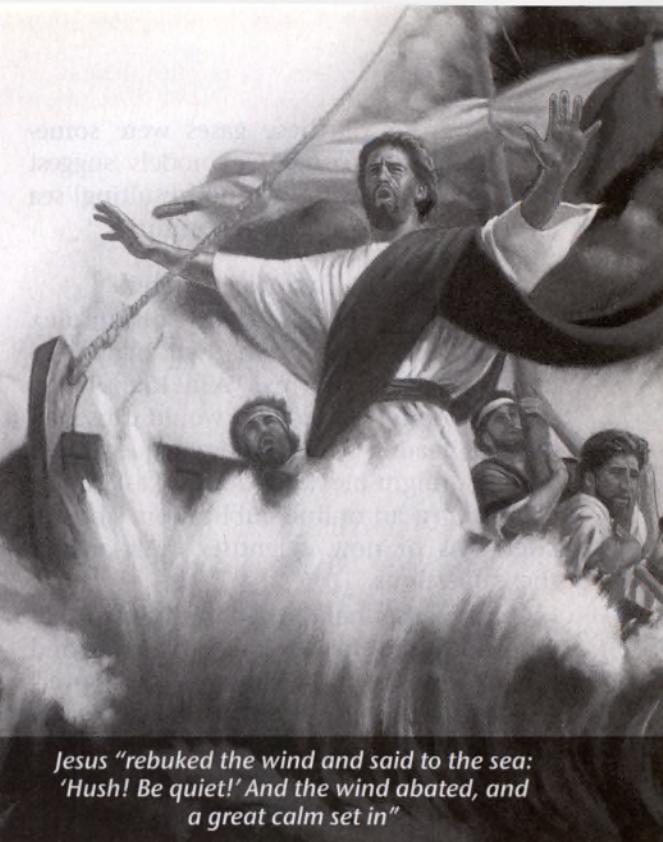
to say: 'Let light come to be.' " Our planet is located close enough to the sun that most of its water stays liquid, yet not so close to the sun that all the water would evaporate into space.

Genesis 1:6 says that God produced the "expanse," or atmosphere. Then, verses 11 and 12 describe God as causing grass, plants, and trees to appear. All of this is evidence of the existence of oxygen, which later would make it possible for man and animals to sustain their lives by breathing.

What, then, can we conclude? When God created the earth—with an abundance of liquid water, located at just the right distance from the sun, and with the right mixture of gases—he must have had a reason, a purpose. The Bible tells us: "[God] did not create [the earth] simply for nothing, [he] formed it *even to be inhabited*." (Isaiah 45:18) "As regards the heavens, to Jehovah the heavens belong," states Psalm 115:16, "but the earth he has given to the sons of men." Yes, earth was created for human habitation.

According to the Scriptures, God created the first human couple and placed them in the garden of Eden, a beautiful paradise. They were to "cultivate it and to take care of it." (Genesis 2:15) God also told them: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it." (Genesis 1:28) Just think of the marvelous prospect placed before them! They were to extend the borders of Paradise globally and to dwell in it forever. What a wonderful future!

Sadly, instead of obediently listening to God, the first human pair chose a course of defiant independence, which the majority of mankind have followed down to this day. (Genesis 3:1-6) The result? Rather than cultivating and taking care of the earth, man is "ruining the earth" on a scale never before imagined. (Revelation 11:18) Yet, we can take comfort in the fact that God's purpose for



*Jesus "rebuked the wind and said to the sea: 'Hush! Be quiet!' And the wind abated, and a great calm set in"*

the earth has not changed. The Bible assures us: "[God] has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever." (Psalm 104:5) And Jesus himself promised in the Sermon on the Mount: "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5) How will this be accomplished?

### A Bright Future Awaits

"Climate change is a global problem," said one former U.S. president. Would you not agree, then, that a global solution is needed? Jesus Christ pointed to that solution—God's Kingdom. He instructed his followers to pray: "Let your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:9, 10) According to Bible prophecy, this heavenly Kingdom is a global government that will soon "crush and put an end to all these kingdoms [present-day governments]." (Daniel

2:44) Moreover, it will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) Clearly, those who abuse the earth and squander its resources will be held accountable and will suffer destruction.

What, though, will happen to our polluted planet? Noteworthy is the fact that Jesus when on earth exercised miraculous powers over natural elements, such as the wind and the sea. He silenced a violent storm just by uttering a few words. (Mark 4:35-41) Ruling in the heavens as the "Lord of lords and King of kings," Jesus will exercise far greater powers over earth and its elements. (Revelation 17:14) In fact, Jesus described his rule as the "re-creation." (Matthew 19:28) Another translation uses the expression "the renewal of all things." (New International Version) Jesus will re-create, or renew, conditions on earth, making them similar to those that ex-

isted in the garden of Eden. Paradise will be restored. (Luke 23:43) Earth will be cured of its "fever"—by God's Kingdom.

Even now, you can benefit from Kingdom rule. How so? Jesus foretold: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations." (Matthew 24:14) As a result, millions are responding to the good news. Lives are being transformed. Deadly addictions are overcome. Family life is improved. Racial hatred is replaced with love. In fact, God's Kingdom is accomplishing what no human government can. It has united nearly seven million people from over 235 lands into a truly international brotherhood! Yes, as subjects of God's Kingdom, they are being prepared for eternal life in Paradise on this planet.

Earth's future is secure. May that also be true of *your* future!



*When Paradise is  
restored, earth will be  
cured of its "fever"*



# I Learned How PRECIOUS LIFE IS

## IT WAS THE MORNING OF APRIL 16, 2007.

As I crouched in a corner of a third-floor office in Norris Hall on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, or Virginia Tech, I was once again reminded of how grateful we should be for each precious day of life that we have.

I was in my office getting ready to go to the second floor to pick up my mail. A professor came by to ask me to go to his office to help him with a computer problem. As we entered his office, we heard repeated gunshots ringing out on the second floor. Not knowing what was happening, we hurried into his office, locked the door, and anxiously awaited what the next minutes of our life might bring. I found refuge in a corner and opened my heart to Jehovah God in prayer, asking for his guidance to face whatever lay ahead.

As we waited, an event of 15 years earlier flashed through my mind. I was working as a mechanic in an auto shop. A small pan of gasoline in the hands of my fellow worker ignited. In a panic, he accidentally threw the flaming gas right on my face! I inhaled the burning fumes and suffered second- and third-degree burns over the upper part of my body. I was taken by helicopter to a burn center and remained there in intensive care for three and a half months, fighting for my life. After five months of treatment and rehabilitation, I was able to return home, thankful just to be alive. That experience taught me to count each day of life as precious. It also reinforced my determination to use my life in

the service of the one who gave me that life, Jehovah God—as one of his Witnesses.  
—Psalm 90:12; Isaiah 43:10.

Unable to work as an auto mechanic because of complications from my injuries, I learned to work with computers and was employed by Virginia Tech. That was why I was at Norris Hall that morning.

As the shots continued, little did we realize that the deadliest shooting spree in U.S. history was taking place just one floor below us.



AP Photo/The Roanoke Times, Alan Kim

The carnage ended when the gunman killed himself after he had taken the life of 32 innocent victims. About 20 minutes after it all started, we heard police in the hallway. We called out to them, and they escorted us to safety.

This harrowing experience has taught me how fleeting and uncertain life is. (James 4:14) How important it is for us to put our trust in the Giver of life, Jehovah God, and to count each day as a precious gift from him!  
—Psalm 23:4; 91:2.

# Our Readers Ask

## WHY USE GOD'S NAME IF ITS PRONUNCIATION IS UNCERTAIN?

No one today knows exactly how God's name was pronounced in ancient Hebrew. Significantly, however, God's personal name appears in the text of the Bible some 7,000 times. Jesus made God's name manifest when on earth, and he instructed his disciples to pray for the sanctification of that name. (Matthew 6:9; John 17:6) Thus, one thing is certain—the use of God's name is of utmost importance to Christian faith. Why, then, is the original pronunciation of that name uncertain today? There are two main reasons.

First, some two thousand years ago, there arose among the Jews a superstitious tradition that it was wrong to pronounce God's name. When a reader came to the name in Bible text, he would say the word "Lord" as a substitute. In this way, after many centuries of disuse, the pronunciation of God's name faded from memory.

Second, ancient Hebrew was written without vowels, very similar to abbreviations in English and other languages. When reading the written text, the reader supplied the missing vowel sounds from memory. In time, a system was devised to prevent the pronunciation of Hebrew words from being completely forgotten. Vowel points were added to each word in the Hebrew Bible. For the divine name, however, either the vowel points for "Lord" were added to remind the reader to

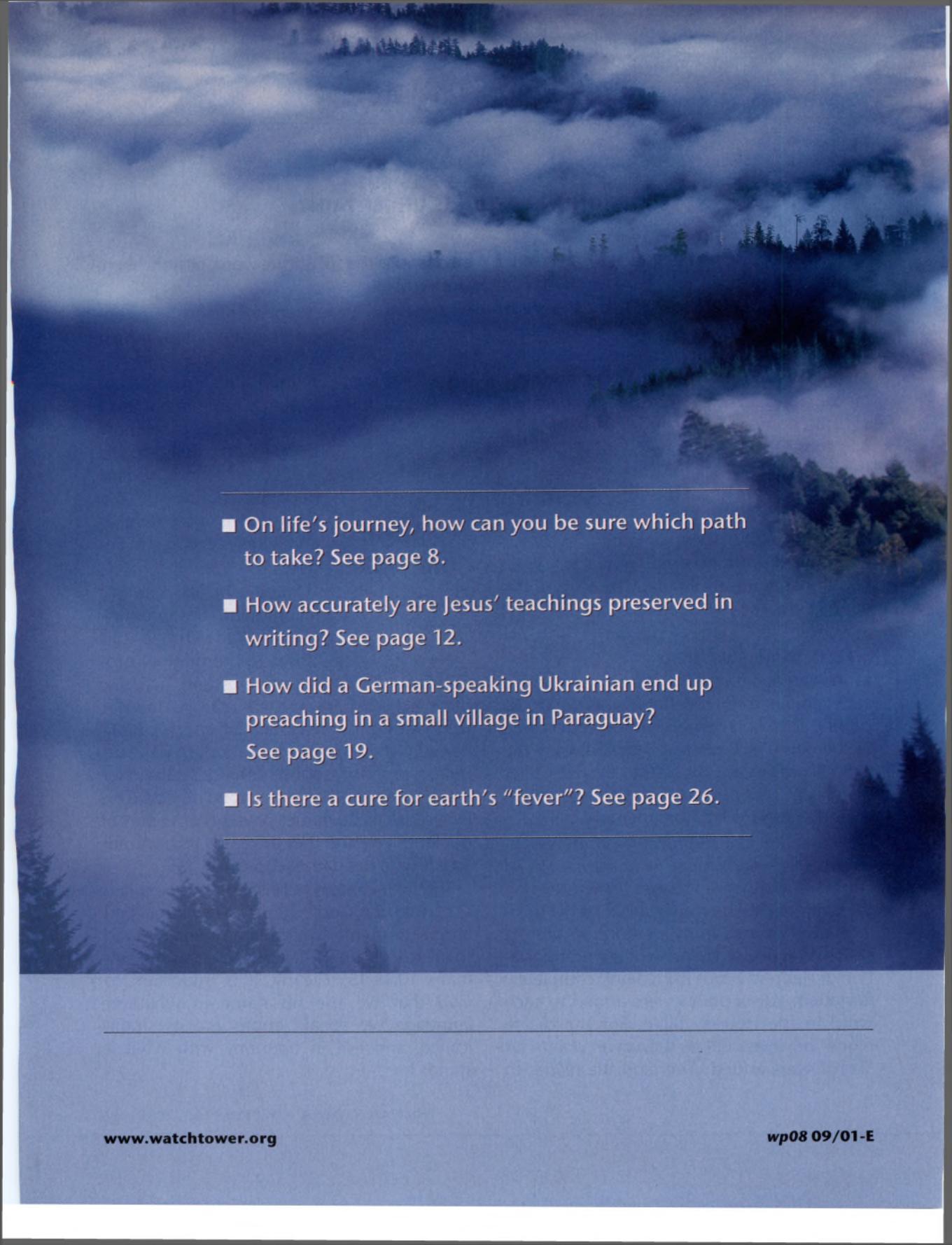
pronounce the substitute word, or none were added at all.

What survived, then, were the four consonants called the Tetragrammaton, which one dictionary defines as "the four Hebrew letters usu[ally] transliterated YHWH or JHVH that form a biblical proper name of God." It is easy to see how JHVH, with vowel points and vowel sounds added, becomes "Jehovah," the form that is most familiar and widely accepted in English.

Some scholars, though, recommend the pronunciation "Yahweh." Is that closer to the original pronunciation? No one can be certain. Actually, other scholars have cited reasons for not using this pronunciation. Of course, Bible names, when spoken in a modern-day language, probably sound nothing like the original Hebrew, and hardly anyone objects. This is because these names have become part of our language and they are easily recognized. So it is with the name Jehovah.

The first-century Christians were called a people for God's name. They preached about the name to others and encouraged them to call upon it. (Acts 2:21; 15:14; Romans 10:13-15) Clearly, it is important to God that we use his name in whatever language we speak, appreciate its significance, and live in harmony with what it stands for.

**Significantly, God's personal name appears in the text of the Bible some 7,000 times**

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- On life's journey, how can you be sure which path to take? See page 8.
  - How accurately are Jesus' teachings preserved in writing? See page 12.
  - How did a German-speaking Ukrainian end up preaching in a small village in Paraguay? See page 19.
  - Is there a cure for earth's "fever"? See page 26.
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