

Awake!

DECEMBER 2007

Death Is It Really the End?

ALSO: HOW CAN I AVOID
PORNOGRAPHY? PAGE 12 |

Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 34,267,000
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- 3 Why Do We Fear Death?
- 5 Is Death Really the End?
- 15 Baikal—The World's Largest Lake
- 20 How God's Name Has Been Made Known
- 22 Something Better Than "Perfect Waves"
- 26 A King of Great Accomplishments
- 28 From Our Readers
- 29 Watching the World
- 30 Subject Index for 2007 Awake!
- 31 How Would You Answer?
- 32 Life After Death—What Does the Bible Really Teach?



Why Care for Earth's Environment? 10

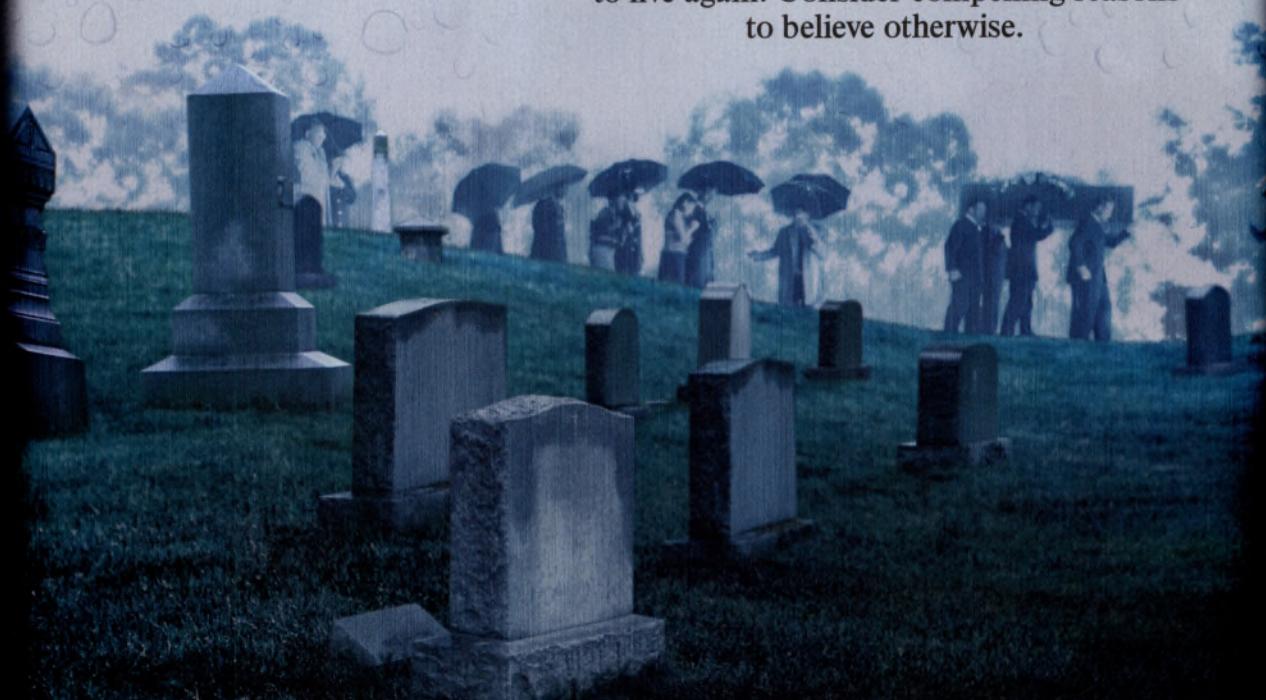
What good reasons are there for acting in ways that benefit the environment? To what degree should we feel a responsibility to do so?

How Can I Avoid Pornography? 12

Millions of Web sites host hundreds of millions of sexually explicit pages. Learn how you can avoid viewing them and escape the damage these can do.

Death Is It Really the End? 3-9

Many believe not only that death ends life now but also that there is no hope for the dead to live again. Consider compelling reasons to believe otherwise.





Why Do We Fear Death?

"Death is the most terrible of all things; for it is the end."
—Aristotle.

SHE was regarded by her peers as a pious woman, a true believer. Some even called her "a pillar of her church." She was taught that death was not really the end but, rather, a passage to the afterlife. Yet, when her own death seemed imminent, she became overwhelmed by fear. Plagued by doubts, the woman asked her spiritual counselor, "There are so many [beliefs about what happens at death]; how do you know which is the right one?"

Virtually every religion and society has embraced the notion that humans continue to exist, or will exist again, after death. Among the many beliefs, which one is true? Many people doubt the existence of an afterlife altogether. What about you? Have you been taught that human life continues after death? Do you believe that it does? Do you fear death?

The Fear of Becoming Nothing

Researchers refer to the fear of death as "death anxiety." In recent decades many books and scientific reports have been written on the topic. Still, most people prefer not

to think about death. The reality of death, however, forces us to think about it sooner or later. Human life is very fragile—over 160,000 people die on average each day! Every human, without exception, is subject to death, and this reality is frightening to many.

Experts have classified death anxiety into various categories. These include the fear of pain, the fear of the unknown, the fear of losing loved ones in death, and the fear of the negative consequences that one's death may have on survivors.

Prominent among those anxieties is the fear of ceasing to exist. Religious beliefs notwithstanding, the idea that death is the absolute end of life scares many people. And science adds fuel to this fear. After all, most functions of the human body can now be explained in scientific terms. Certainly no biologist, physicist, or chemist has ever found within us evidence of an invisible entity capable of surviving the death of the physical body. Hence, many scientists explain human death as merely a biological process.

It is no surprise, then, that many people who outwardly are devout believers in the

AN INESCAPABLE ENEMY

Death has been called man's enemy. It is a real enemy, and the evidence is all around us. According to one estimate, some 59 million people die every year—an average of 2 every second. How does death take its toll?

- One person dies as a war victim every 102 seconds.
- One person is murdered every 61 seconds.
- One person commits suicide every 39 seconds.
- One person dies in a traffic accident every 26 seconds.
- One person dies from hunger-related causes every three seconds.
- One child under the age of five dies every three seconds.

A FUTILE PURSUIT

On November 9, 1949, James Kidd, a 70-year-old copper miner, disappeared in the mountains of Arizona, U.S.A. Several years later, after he was declared legally dead, his pencil-written will was discovered, along with his investments worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. In his will Kidd stipulated that his money be used for research to find "some scientific proof of a soul of the human body which leaves at death."

Soon afterward, over 100 purported researchers and scientists applied for the funds. There were months of court hearings and thousands of claims suggesting the existence of an invisible soul. Finally, the judge awarded the money to two reputable research organizations. Well over half a century later, those researchers have yet to produce "scientific proof of a soul of the human body which leaves at death."

afterlife may inwardly dread being reduced to nothingness at death. Interestingly, in his writings ancient King Solomon ascribed to human death a finality that some may consider frightening.

"Dust"—The Final Destination?

In the 3,000-year-old book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon wrote: "The living are conscious that death will come to them, but the dead are not conscious of anything, and they no longer have a reward, because there is no memory of them. Their love and their hate and their envy are now ended." He added: "Whatever comes to your hand to do with all your power, do it because there is no work, or thought, or knowledge, or wisdom in the place of the dead to which you are going."—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10, *The Bible in Basic English*.

Solomon was inspired to say that "the fate of the sons of men and the fate of the beasts is the same. As is the death of one so is the

death of the other . . . Man is not higher than the beasts . . . All go to one place, all are of the dust, and all will be turned to dust again."—Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20, *The Bible in Basic English*.

Although written by King Solomon, the above words were inspired by God and form part of his written Word, the Bible. These scriptures, along with many others in the Bible, do not support the popular belief that something inside us survives death to live on in another form. (Genesis 2:7; 3:19; Ezekiel 18:4) Is God then telling us that "dust," or nothingness, is the ultimate end for all humans? Definitely not!

The Bible does not teach that any part of a human survives death. Yet, it does offer an unmistakably clear hope for those who die. The following article will show why you should not fear that death is the absolute end of human life.

Awake!®

THIS JOURNAL IS PUBLISHED for the enlightenment of the entire family. It shows how to cope with today's problems. It reports the news, tells about people in many lands, examines religion and science. But it does more. It probes beneath the surface and points to the real meaning behind current events, yet it always stays politically neutral and does not exalt one race above another. Most important, this magazine builds confidence in the Creator's promise of a peaceful and secure new world that is about to replace the present wicked, lawless system of things.

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Is Death Really the End?

PROBABLY no other issue has been as perplexing and persistent as the question of what happens after death. For thousands of years, brilliant minds in every civilization have pondered this question. But human philosophy and scientific research have merely yielded a jumble of theories and myths.

What about the teachings found in the Bible? Some may argue that on the subjects of death and the afterlife, the Bible is just as confusing. To be fair, however, we must face the fact that the confusion is caused by the many religions that muddy the clear waters of Bible teachings with fallacies and legends. When you ignore the traditions and myths and stick to what the Bible actually says, you discover a teaching that makes sense and offers hope.

Before You Were You

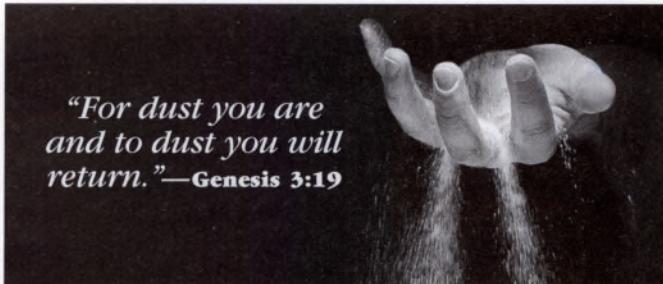
Take, for example, the two quotes from King Solomon found in the preceding article. Those scriptures make clear that the dead—both humans and animals—are conscious of nothing at all. Hence, according to the Bible, there is no activity, feeling, emotion, or thought in death.—Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10.

Is this hard to believe? Consider: What is the condition of a human before coming to

life? Where were you before the tiny cells from your parents merged to become the living person that you are? If humans possess an invisible entity that survives death, where does that entity reside before conception? The truth is, you have no prehuman existence to remember. Before you were conceived, you did not exist. It is that simple.

So it is logical to conclude that when we die, our consciousness returns to exactly the

*"For dust you are
and to dust you will
return."—Genesis 3:19*



same state it was before we were alive. It is as God told Adam after he disobeyed: "For dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19) In that sense, humans are no different from animals. Regarding the condition of the dead, it is just as the Bible says: "There is no superiority of the man over the beast."—Ecclesiastes 3:19, 20.

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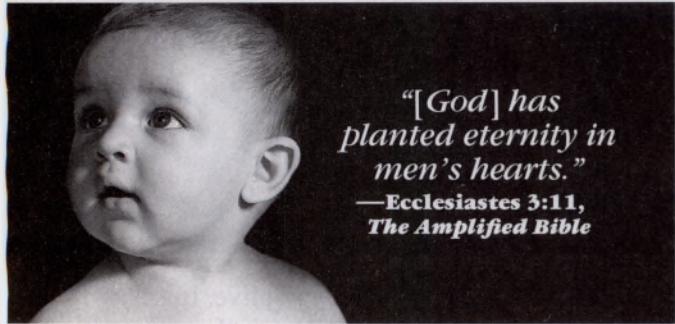
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Does this mean that human life is limited to merely a few decades followed by an eternity of nothingness? Or is there some hope for the dead? Consider the following.

An Inborn Desire to Live

Virtually everyone considers death to be an unpleasant subject. Most people especially seem to avoid discussing their own death or even thinking about it. On the other hand, they are bombarded by television and movie scenes of people dying in every imaginable way and by stories and images of real deaths featured by the media.

As a result, the death of strangers may appear to be a normal aspect of life. Still, when it comes to the death of a loved one or to our own death, there is nothing normal about it.



"[God] has planted eternity in men's hearts."
—Ecclesiastes 3:11,
The Amplified Bible

This is because humans have a deep-seated natural desire to live. We also possess a keen sense of time and a perception of eternity. King Solomon wrote that God "has planted eternity in men's hearts." (Ecclesiastes 3:11, *The Amplified Bible*) Under normal circumstances we want to keep living indefinitely. We want life with no expiration date. There is no indication that animals have such a yearning. They live with no awareness of the future.

The Enormity of Human Potential

Humans not only desire to live indefinitely but also have the potential to remain busy and productive forever. There seems to be no limit to a person's capacity to learn. It has

been said that nothing in nature compares with the human brain when it comes to complexity and resilience. Unlike animals, we have creative minds capable of reasoning and understanding abstract concepts. Scientists have barely scratched the surface when it comes to understanding the potential of the human brain.

Much of this potential remains as we grow older. Neuroscientists have recently learned that most brain functions remain unharmed by the aging process. Researchers working for The Franklin Institute's Center for Innovation in Science Learning explain: "The human brain is able to continually adapt and re-wire itself. Even in old age, it can grow new neurons. Severe mental decline is usually caused by disease, whereas most age-related losses in memory or motor skills simply result from inactivity and a lack of mental exercise and stimulation."

In other words, if we could keep the brain intellectually stimulated and free from disease, it could keep working indefinitely. "The brain," declares molecular biologist James Watson, co-discoverer of the physical structure of DNA, "is the most complex thing we have yet discovered in our universe." A book by neuroscientist Gerald Edelman explains that a section of the brain the size of a match head "contains about a billion connections that can combine in ways which can only be described as hyperastronomical—on the order of ten followed by millions of zeros."

Does it seem logical that although endowed with such potential, humans should live just a few decades? This sounds as unreasonable as using a powerful locomotive with a long train of freight cars to transport a grain of sand across a distance of just a few inches! Why, then, does mankind have such an enormous capacity for creative thought and learning? Could it be that humans, unlike animals, are not supposed to die at all—that they were created to live forever?

Hope From the God of Life

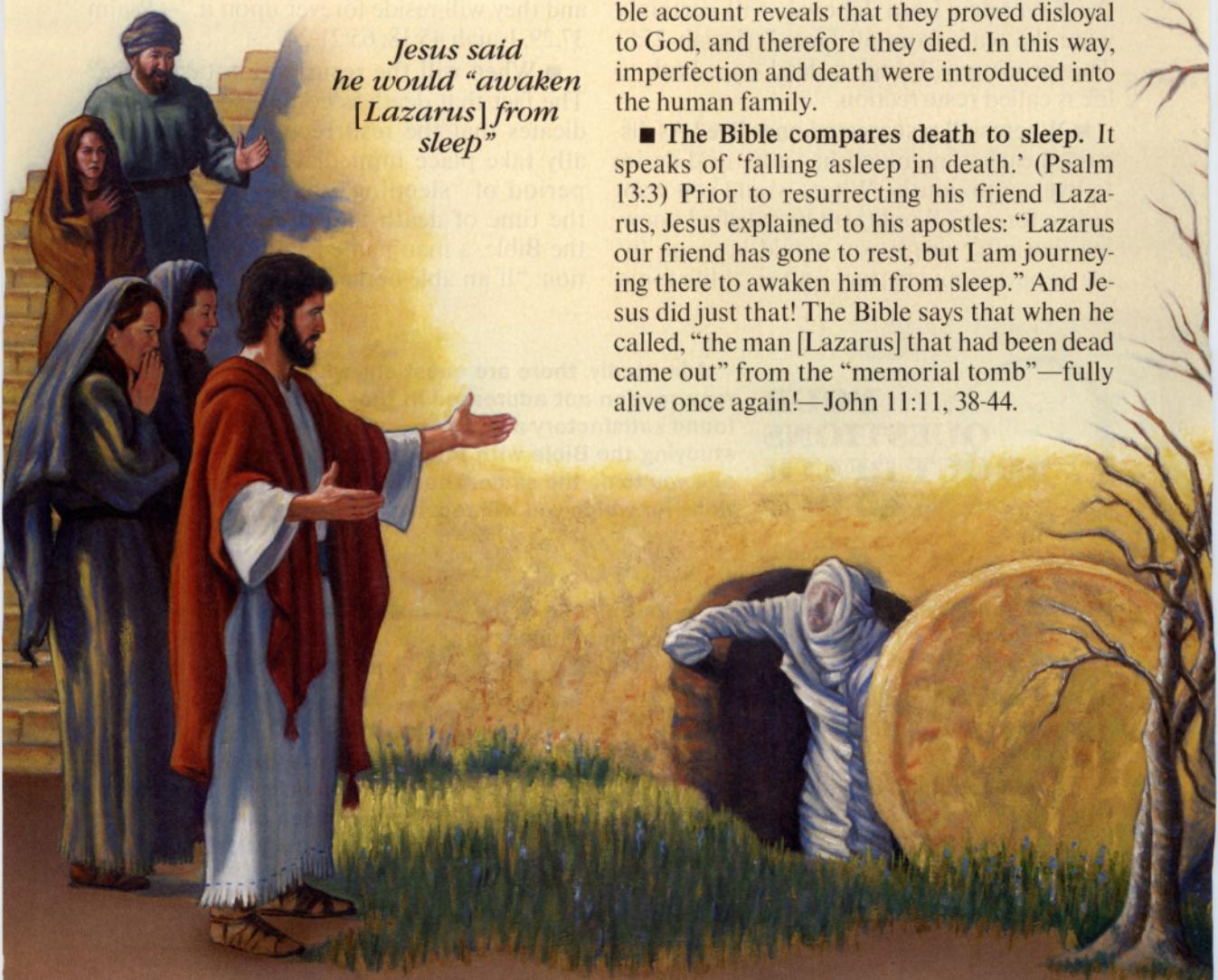
The fact that we have an inborn desire to live and an enormous capacity to learn leads to a logical conclusion: Humans are designed to live much longer than a mere 70 or 80 years. This, in turn, leads us to another conclusion: There must be a Designer, a Creator, a God. The immutable laws of the physical universe and the unfathomable complexity of life on earth fully support belief in the existence of a Creator.

If, in fact, God created us with the capacity to live forever, why do we die? And what happens after death? Is it God's purpose to bring the dead back to life? It would seem logical

that a wise and powerful God would provide us with answers to these questions, and he has. Consider the following:

■ **Death was not part of God's original purpose for mankind.** The first mention of death in the Bible indicates that dying was not what God originally intended for humans. The Bible account of Genesis explains that to allow the first human couple, Adam and Eve, opportunity to manifest their love and loyalty, God placed a simple test upon them. It consisted of a prohibition against eating from one particular tree. God said: "In the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Genesis 2:17) Adam and Eve would die only if they rebelled, thus failing the test. The Bible account reveals that they proved disloyal to God, and therefore they died. In this way, imperfection and death were introduced into the human family.

■ **The Bible compares death to sleep.** It speaks of 'falling asleep in death.' (Psalm 13:3) Prior to resurrecting his friend Lazarus, Jesus explained to his apostles: "Lazarus our friend has gone to rest, but I am journeying there to awaken him from sleep." And Jesus did just that! The Bible says that when he called, "the man [Lazarus] that had been dead came out" from the "memorial tomb"—fully alive once again!—John 11:11, 38-44.



Why did Jesus speak of death as a sleep? Because a sleeping person is inactive. During deep sleep, there is no consciousness of surroundings or of the passing of time. There is no pain or suffering. Similarly, in death there is no activity or consciousness. But the comparison goes further. With sleep, one expects to wake up. And that is exactly the hope that the Bible offers for the dead.

The Creator himself promises: “From the hand of Sheol [the common grave] I shall redeem them; from death I shall recover them. Where are your stings, O Death? Where is your destructiveness, O Sheol?” (Hosea 13:14) Another Bible prophecy states that God “will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces.” (Isaiah 25:8) This process of bringing dead ones back to life is called resurrection.

■ **Where will resurrected ones live?** As discussed earlier, mankind has a natural desire to live continuously. Where would you want to live forever? Would you be satisfied knowing that after death you would keep on living as part of an abstract universal life force,

as some religions teach? Would you desire to continue your existence as a different person, with no memories of who you were before dying? Does it appeal to you to come back to life as an animal or a tree? Given the choice, would you really want to live in a world devoid of all human experience and earthly joys?

Under ideal conditions, would you not love to live on a paradise earth? The hope offered in the Bible is exactly that, namely, to live forever right here on earth. God created the earth for that purpose—to be inhabited by those who will love and serve him forever in happiness. That is why the Bible says: “The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.”—Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 45:18; 65:21-24.

■ **When will the resurrection take place?**

The fact that death is compared to sleep indicates that the resurrection does not usually take place immediately after death. A period of “sleeping” takes place between the time of death and the resurrection. In the Bible, a man named Job raised the question: “If an able-bodied man dies can he live

YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT DEATH ANSWERED

Admittedly, there are questions regarding death and resurrection not addressed in these articles. Many have found satisfactory answers to such questions by carefully studying the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. We encourage you to do the same. The following are just a few questions for which you will receive answers:

- What is meant by the Bible terms “hell” and “lake of fire”?
- If there is no fiery hell, how are bad people punished?
- According to the Bible, the spirit leaves the body at death. What is that spirit?

- Why are there so many reports of communication with the dead?
- What is the meaning of the word “soul” in the Bible?
- When will the resurrection to a paradise earth become a reality?

- Will all who die be resurrected regardless of their conduct while alive?

Please see the back page of this magazine to learn how you may obtain a clear, Bible-based answer to each of these questions.

again?" Then he answered: "I shall wait [in the grave] until my relief comes. [God] will call, and I myself shall answer." (Job 14:14, 15) What a joy it will be when that time arrives and the dead are reunited with their loved ones!

No Need for Morbid Fear

Admittedly, the hope that the Bible offers does not necessarily remove all fear of death. It is natural to be apprehensive about the pain and distress that sometimes precede death. Understandably, you may fear the loss of a loved one. And if you fear the sad consequences that your own death might have on your loved ones, that is also natural.

Still, by revealing the true condition of the dead, the Bible helps us to dispel any morbid fear of death. There is no need to fear an after-life of torture by demons in a burning hell. No need to fear a dark ghostly realm where souls wander restlessly forever. And you need not fear that all the future has to offer is an eternal state of nonexistence. Why? Because God has a limitless memory, and he promises to bring all the dead who are in his memory back to life here on earth. The Bible guarantees this with the words: "The true God is for us a God of saving acts; and to Jehovah the Sovereign Lord belong the ways out from death."—Psalm 68:20.

*Imagine the happiness
that will result when dead loved
ones are resurrected!*





THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT

Why Care for Earth's Environment?

HUMAN activities may be damaging the health of our planet now more than at any time in history. As the threats of such problems as global warming become more alarming, scientists, governments, and industrial groups are increasing their efforts to respond.

Do we as individuals have a responsibility to help care for the environment? If so, to what degree? The Bible provides good reasons for us to act in ways that benefit the earth. It also helps us to be balanced in our efforts.

Supporting Our Creator's Purpose

Jehovah God made the earth to be a gardenlike home for mankind. He pronounced all of his work to be "very good" and assigned man "to cultivate [the earth] and to take care of it." (Genesis 1:28, 31; 2:15) How does God feel about earth's present condition? Clearly, he is deeply offended by man's mismanagement, for Revelation 11:18 foretells that he will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." So we should not be indifferent to the earth's plight.

The Bible assures us that every trace of the damage caused by man will be undone when God "makes all things new." (Revelation 21:5) However, we should not conclude that since God will in time restore the earth, our actions now do not matter. They do! How can we demonstrate that we share God's view of our planet and support his will for it to be a paradise?

Contributing to a Clean Earth

Normal human activities produce a measure of waste. Jehovah wisely

designed earth's natural cycles to process such waste, cleaning the air, the water, and the ground. (Proverbs 3:19) Our actions should be in harmony with those processes. Thus, we need to be careful not to contribute unnecessarily to earth's environmental woes. Such care shows that we love our neighbor as ourselves. (Mark 12:31) Consider an interesting example from Bible times.

God instructed the nation of Israel to bury human waste "outside the camp." (Deuteronomy 23:12, 13) This kept the camp sanitary and sped up the process of decomposition. Similarly today, true Christians strive to dispose of garbage and other waste quickly and properly. Special care should be taken when disposing of toxic materials.

Many waste products can be reused or recycled. If recycling is mandated by local laws, then obeying such laws is part of rendering "Caesar's things to Caesar." (Matthew 22: 21) Recycling may require extra effort, but it demonstrates a desire for a clean earth.

Conserving Earth's Resources

In order to fill our needs for food, shelter, and fuel and thus sustain our lives, we must consume natural resources. How we use those resources reveals whether we recognize that they are gifts from God. When the Israelites desired meat to eat in the wilderness, Jehovah provided an abundance of quail. Greed caused them selfishly to abuse that gift, greatly angering Jehovah God. (Numbers 11:31-33) God has not changed since then. Accordingly, responsible Christians avoid needless waste, which could be a sign of greed.

Some may view the unlimited consumption of energy or other resources as their right. But natural resources should not be squandered simply because we can afford them or

there is an abundance. After Jesus miraculously fed a large crowd, he directed that the remaining fish and bread be gathered. (John 6:12) He was careful not to waste what his Father had provided.

Being Balanced in Our Efforts

Every day we make choices that affect the environment. Must we take an extreme approach, withdrawing from human society to avoid any negative impact on the earth? Nowhere does the Bible recommend such a course. Consider Jesus' example. While on earth, he led a normal life, which allowed him to accomplish his God-assigned preaching work. (Luke 4:43) Furthermore, Jesus refused to get involved in politics as a means of solving the social problems of his day. He clearly stated: "My kingdom is no part of this world."—John 18:36.

It is proper, though, for us to consider the environmental impact of our choices in such areas as household purchases, transportation, and recreation. For example, some choose to purchase products that have been produced or that operate in ways that minimize damage to the environment. Others strive to reduce their share in activities that create pollution or unduly consume natural resources.

There is no need for one person to enforce his environmental decisions on others. Personal and local circumstances vary. Still, we remain individually accountable for our decisions. As the Bible states, "each one will carry his own load."—Galatians 6:5.

The Creator placed upon humans the responsibility to care for the earth. Appreciation for this assignment and humble respect for God and his creative works should motivate us to make thoughtful, conscientious decisions regarding how we treat the earth.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Will God act to solve earth's environmental problems?—Revelation 11:18.
- What responsibility for the earth has God entrusted to humans?—Genesis 1:28; 2:15.
- What example did Jesus Christ set in avoiding wastefulness?—John 6:12.

How can I avoid pornography?

"A boy at school had a picture of a naked girl pasted inside the door of his locker. His locker wasn't far from mine."

—Robert.*

"I was doing research on the Internet for a school report when suddenly I came across a pornographic Web site."

—Annette.

WHEN your parents were your age, people who wanted to view pornography had to look for it. Today, it seems that pornography looks for you. Like Robert, quoted above, you may find that your eyes fall upon a schoolmate's porn. Or, like Annette, you could inadvertently see it online. Says one 19-year-old girl, "Sometimes I'm browsing or shopping on the Internet or even just checking bank statements online when *wham*—pornography pops up!"[#]

This is hardly unusual. In one study, 90 percent of youths between the ages of 8 and 16 said that they had unintentionally encountered pornography online—in most cases while doing homework! The fact is, with millions of Web sites hosting *hundreds* of mil-

lions of sexually explicit pages, pornography is more accessible than ever. It can even be accessed through a cell phone. "It's a big thing at my school," says 16-year-old Denise. "On Monday, conversation seems to be, 'What pictures did you download to your cell over the weekend?'"

Knowing that so many people are looking at pornography, you might wonder, 'Is it really all that bad?' The answer is *yes*, for several reasons. Consider just three of them:

■ **Pornography demeans both those who produce it and those who look at it.**—1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.

■ **An interest in pornography mimics the inordinate sexual fixation of the wicked spirits in Noah's day.**—Genesis 6:2; Jude 6, 7.

* Names in this article have been changed.

[#] The term *pornography* refers to sexually explicit material that is designed to arouse the viewer, reader, or listener. It can include pictures as well as written and audio material.

■ Looking at pornography is often a stepping-stone to committing sexual sins.
—James 1:14, 15.

Pornography has devastating effects on those who are ensnared by it. Consider just two examples:

“I was exposed to pornography at a very young age, and it was really a struggle for me to break free from it. It’s been years, but those images are indelibly burned into my memory. The thoughts always seem to be lurking in the back of your mind, and your conscience never seems truly clean. Pornography destroys your self-esteem and can leave you feeling dirty and worthless. You always have this silent burden to carry.”—Erica.

“I was addicted to pornography for 10 years, and I’ve been free of it for 14. Even now, though, it’s a daily battle. The desire, although much more subdued, is still there. The curiosity is still there. The images are still there. I wish I’d never started down this hideous path. It seemed so harmless at first. But now I know better. Pornography is damaging, it is perverse, and it is demeaning to all parties concerned. Despite what its proponents may claim, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—positive about pornography.”—Jeff.

Are some of your schoolmates likely to send pornography via cell-phone attachments?



Making an Evaluation

How can you avoid even unintentionally stumbling across pornography? First, analyze the situation.

How frequently do you encounter pornography by accident?

- Never
- Occasionally
- Weekly
- Daily
- TV
- Other

Where does this most often occur?

- Internet
- School
- TV
- Other

Is there a pattern to your encounters?

Consider the following examples:

Are some of your schoolmates likely to send pornography via e-mail or cell-phone attachments? Knowing this may impel you to delete such attachments without opening them.

When you’re online, do pop-ups occur when you enter certain words in a search engine? Knowing that this is possible could help you to be more specific in your use of key words.

Below, list any circumstances that have led to your encountering pornography.

In view of the above, what might you do to reduce the number of times you inadvertently encounter pornography? (Write your thoughts here.)

How do you respond when you stumble across pornography?

- I turn away immediately.
- Curiosity causes me to stare at it briefly.
- I continue to look at it and even search out more.

If you checked the second or third response, what goal could you set in this matter?

Breaking Free

Some who are unwittingly exposed to pornography become curious and, in time, develop a habit of viewing it. Breaking such a habit isn't easy. Jeff, quoted earlier, says: "Before studying the Bible, I had experimented heavily with nearly every major drug. But of all my addictions, pornography was by far the most difficult to break."

If you have fallen into a habit of viewing pornography, do not despair. You *can* get help. How?

■ **Understand pornography for what it is.** It's nothing less than a satanic attempt to degrade something that Jehovah created to be honorable. Understanding pornography in this light will help you to "hate what is bad." —Psalm 97:10.

■ **Think of the consequences.** Pornography destroys marriages. It devalues women and men. It debases the person who views it. For good reason the Bible says: "Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself." (Proverbs 22:3) Write below one example of a calamity that could befall you if you were to view pornography habitually.

■ **Make a commitment.** "I have made a solemn promise never to look with lust at a girl," said the faithful man Job. (Job 31:1, *Today's English Version*) The following are a few 'solemn promises' you could make to yourself:

- I will not use the Internet when I am alone in a room.
- I will immediately exit any pop-up or site that is explicit.

I will talk to a mature friend if I have a relapse.

Can you think of one or two other resolves that could help you in the battle against pornography? If so, list them below.

.....
.....
.....

■ **Pray about the matter.** The psalmist prayed to Jehovah: "Make my eyes pass on from seeing what is worthless." (Psalm 119:37) Granted, it can be difficult to resist something that is appealing to the sinful flesh. But Jehovah God wants you to succeed, and he can supply you with "power beyond what is normal" so that you can do what is right! —2 Corinthians 4:7.

■ **Talk to someone.** Embarrassed? Probably! Yet, think of how relieved you will be to unburden yourself. The person you confide in can be like "a brother that is born for when there is distress." (Proverbs 17:17) Choosing a confidant is often an important step in breaking the habit.

If you have a habit of viewing pornography, write below the name of a mature person whom you would feel comfortable approaching about the matter.

Be assured that you *can* be successful in the war against pornography. In fact, each time you turn away from it, you have won a significant victory. Tell Jehovah about that victory, and thank him for the strength he has given you. Always remember that by avoiding the plague of pornography, you make Jehovah's heart rejoice!—Proverbs 27:11.

TO THINK ABOUT

- How does pornography degrade something that is honorable?
- What practical measures can protect you from pornography?
- How would you help a sibling who had a problem with pornography?

More articles from the "Young People Ask . . ." series can be found at the Web site
www.watchtower.org/ype



Baikal

THE WORLD'S LARGEST LAKE

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN RUSSIA



THROUGHOUT the ages, Mongolian tribes in the remote region known today as southern Siberia have viewed this lake with reverence. Although a number of lakes have a larger surface area, it is the deepest freshwater lake in the world and has by far the largest volume of water. One surviving name for the lake is Baikal, believed to mean "Rich Lake" or "Sea." In fact, because the lake is "so huge and volatile," sailors along its shores sometimes talk of "going to sea."

The mention of Lake Baikal strikes a deep chord in the hearts of Russians. One scientist from Moscow called it "a beautiful piece of music that everyone learned as a child." The "notes" are many—breathtaking shores, fantastically clear water, and a medley of unusual creatures found nowhere else.

From space, Lake Baikal—about 395 miles in length and 50 miles in width at its widest point—looks like a half-opened blue eye. Herein lies one fifth of all the freshwater on earth, more than in North America's five Great Lakes combined! Lake Baikal is well over a mile deep. If it were suddenly drained dry, it would take all the water flowing in all

the rivers of the world a whole year to fill it up again!

The Clash of Continents

Geologists theorize that in earth's distant past, a subcontinent drifting northward slammed into Asia. The impact crumpled up huge sections of bedrock as if it were aluminum foil and pushed up the earth's surface to form the Himalayas. Some believe the impact from the colliding continents reactivated a number of deep rifts in Siberia. One such is now known as the Baikal Rift. Over time, the runoff from the surrounding mountains filled this rift with over four miles of silt. Water filled it to the brim, forming Lake Baikal. Now over 300 rivers and streams flow into the lake, but only one, the Angara, runs out of it.

Unlike most of the world's ancient lakes, Baikal has not filled with sediment or turned into swamps. Scientists believe the reason is that the active tectonic plates beneath the lake are still moving apart and widening the rift. So instead of filling up over time, the lake is actually becoming deeper and deeper every year! These active plates also make possible

the spouting of columns of hot water from the lake's floor.

A Glimpse Inside Lake Baikal

Some find a boat ride across the middle of Lake Baikal unnerving because there one may see down 150 feet through dazzlingly clear water as if looking through air! A community of minuscule crustaceans called *epischura* serve as the lake's filter and strain out the algae and bacteria that cloud many lakes. Helping them are numerous crayfish species that roam the lake, eating organic waste that would otherwise decompose. Thus, the water is so pure that less than two decades ago, a sample taken for examination in a laboratory became contaminated by the glass container!

In addition to its famous transparency, the water in Lake Baikal is unusually rich in oxygen. Some deep lakes run out of oxygen at a certain depth, forcing most of their aquatic

life to take up residence in relatively shallow waters. In Lake Baikal, however, vertical and horizontal currents carry oxygen to the lake's lowest depths and mix its waters thoroughly. As a result, the entire lake teems with life.

An underwater forest thrives in the cold, clean water. Green sponges branching like corals provide cover for a multitude of small aquatic creatures. Many warmth-loving organisms cluster around the lake's hydrothermal vents. Out of the more than 2,000 aquatic species that live in the lake, 1,500 are found only here.

Lake Baikal is famous for the omul, a tasty arctic whitefish prized by fishermen. Other creatures here are unusual, even bizarre. One kind of flatworm grows to over a foot in length and eats fish. There are even one-celled organisms living between sand particles! The lake is also noteworthy for the golomyanka—unique to Baikal. It is perhaps the strangest fish here.

A SEAL THAT LIVES EXCLUSIVELY IN FRESHWATER

Lake Baikal is home to tens of thousands of nerpa, or Baikal seals, that feed year-round on the lake's deepwater fish. No one is sure how the nerpa ended up in the middle of Siberia and nowhere else. Its nearest relative lives about 2,000 miles away.

Nerpa have very large eyes, set rather close together in a flat face, and are the world's smallest seals, measuring up to four feet six inches. They are often found sunning themselves on boulders in friendly groups, without the usual biting and pushing that are characteristic of most seals. Indeed, the gentle nerpa might be the most amiable seal on earth.

A seal biologist noted that the nerpa "is even gentler than the equable ringed seal,



Dr. Konstantin Mikhailov/Naturfoto-Online

permitting itself to be handled without biting when caught in nets for scientific purposes." One reference work mentions deepwater divers who swam right up to nerpa sleeping in the water. They reported that the seals failed to wake up when touched or even when turned over.

The tiny golomyanka is translucent, with an iridescent glow. It lives near the bottom of the lake and gives birth to live young. A third of its body consists of fat, rich in vitamin A. It withstands the crushing pressure at depths of 700 to 1,600 feet; yet, when it is exposed to sunlight, its body melts away, leaving only its bones and fat. The golomyanka is a delicacy for perhaps the most famous resident of Lake Baikal—the nerpa, or Baikal seal. This is the only seal that lives exclusively in freshwater.

The Changing Seasons

For about five months of the year, Lake Baikal is encased in ice. By late January the ice is three or more feet thick. It is patterned with seams like those of a mosaic and sparkles in the sun like windowpanes. The ice also appears deceptively thin—it is so clear that people walking on it can see rocks on the bottom of the lake. Actually, the ice is usu-

ally unbelievably strong. A century ago, during the winter of the Russo-Japanese War, the Russian army laid out a railroad track across this ice and successfully hauled 65 locomotives over it!

From late April to June, the ice breaks up with thunderous, shattering cracks. The constant noises from the lake create seasonal “ice music” familiar to locals. Naturalist Gerald Durrell wrote that the ice “tinkles like tiny cymbals [and] purrs like a basketful of cats.” Soon, as the weather warms, the wind and waves sweep the ice into glittering heaps and hurl it to the shore.

As the lake’s waters become visible, the birds return. Some of Lake Baikal’s birds, such as the dipper, sit out the whole winter at the head of the Angara River, the only part of the lake that never freezes. Now

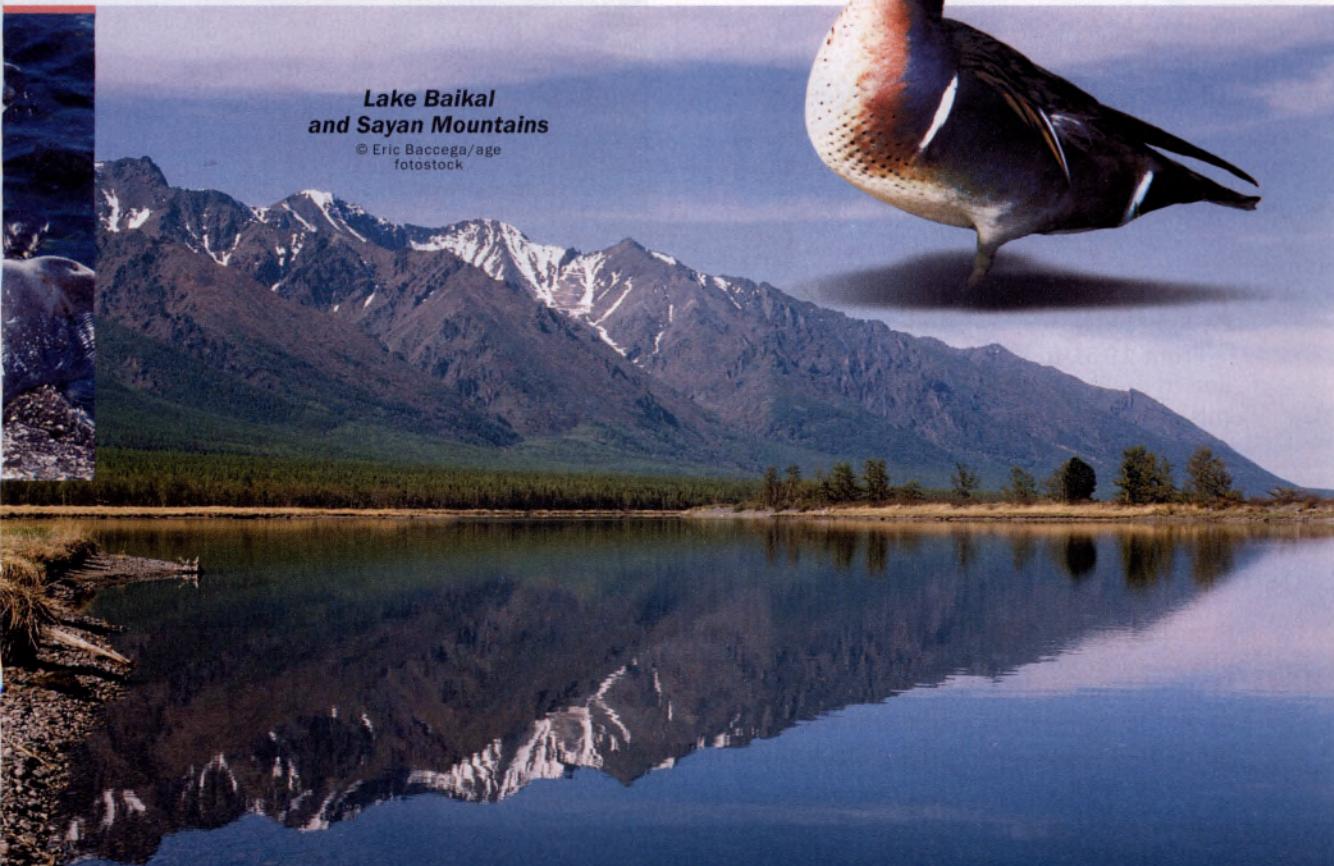
Baikal teal

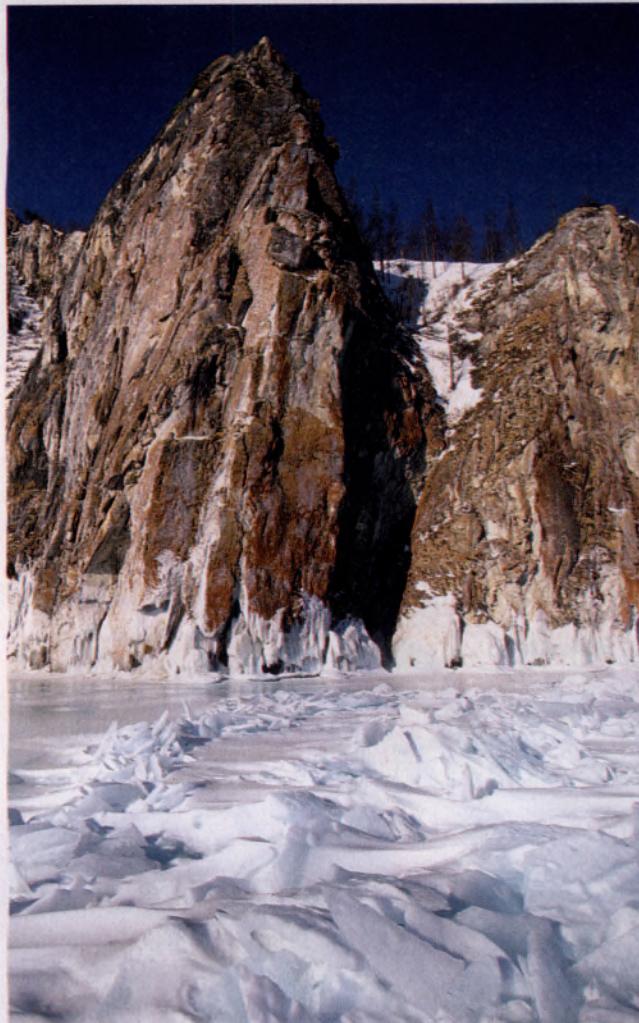
Dr. Erhard Neger/
Naturfoto-Online



Lake Baikal
and Sayan Mountains

© Eric Baccega/age
fotostock





▲ © Eric Baccega/age fotostock;
Boyd Norton/Evergreen Photo Alliance ▶



A PLACE OF EXILE

From 1951 to 1965, many of Jehovah's Witnesses were exiled to the Lake Baikal region because they refused to compromise their religious beliefs. In 1951, Praskovya Volosyanko was taken to Olkhon, Baikal's largest island. Along with other exiled Witnesses, she worked to survive by catching fish in nets. Yet, she found ways to engage in another kind of "fishing" work by using her Bible to share the good news of God's Kingdom with many of Olkhon's inhabitants.

In 1953, Praskovya and six other Witnesses were arrested for their preaching activity, and she was sentenced to 25 years in prison. After her release, she faithfully served in a congregation in Usol'ye-Sibirskoye, Irkutsk region, before her death in 2005. About 30 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses now thrive in the Baikal region and in the nearby city of Irkutsk.



they mingle with other waterfowl—such as ducks, geese, whooper swans, and herons.

Visitors to the lake in June may see families of bears lumbering to the water's edge to eat fly larvae that hatch on the rocks in swarms. The bears blissfully lick up the insects with their tongues, oblivious to the buzzing around them. Many animals and birds make their way to the shore at this time, attracted by the lakeside feeding frenzy.

In the early spring and summer, the lake briefly blooms with algae, which provide food for small crustaceans and give the water a green hue. Usually, however, as seen from the shore, Lake Baikal's waters are turquoise and the open depths are a deep, dark blue—the color of an ocean.

The shoreline includes both sand dunes and majestic cliffs. Many picturesque bays and capes yield breathtaking views over what one writer called "a soft pearly expanse of shifting distances"—an ever-changing landscape of water and sky.

Later in the year, the lake often becomes stormy. Autumn brings winds that sometimes descend on the lake with hurricanelike intensity. They can swiftly churn up the placid surface into furious waves, reaching 15 to 20 feet in height. Even at other times of the year, winds have been known to sink large passenger ships and fishing boats.

A Land of Many Landscapes

The harshness of Siberia might make Lake Baikal seem like a cold, solitary giant, but in reality it is surrounded by an abundance of wildlife and a variety of landscapes. The four majestic mountain ranges encircling the lake are home to reindeer as well as the endangered Siberian mountain goat.

At lower altitudes are steppes. Some of these grassy plains might be called Siberia's flower beds because of the extraordinary variety of wildflowers found here. Among the rare species of birds in the steppes are the el-

egant demoiselle crane and the bustard, the largest bird in Asia.

Important to Lake Baikal is the taiga, the dense coniferous forest that surrounds it. The taiga is twice the size of Brazil's Amazon rain forest. Like it, the taiga plays a crucial role in maintaining the world's ecology and climate. A number of bird species live here, including the capercaillie, a type of grouse, with its magnificent courtship display and song. The elegant Baikal teal, seen on page 17, also frequents the lake.

One noteworthy mammal is the famous Barguzin sable. Once mercilessly overhunted for its lustrous fur, the sable is making a comeback, thanks to conservationists. Efforts to save this beautiful creature led in 1916 to the creation of the Barguzin Nature Reserve on the shores of Lake Baikal. Now three natural reserves border the shores of the lake, along with three national parks open to the public.

Contemplating Creation's Depths

Lake Baikal is a UNESCO World Heritage site and a popular tourist destination. Over 300,000 tourists from around the world visit here every year. "Baikal is today a naturalist's paradise and an idyllic holiday destination," reports one travel source. "With fine beaches, excellent hiking, birdwatching, and pleasure boating, Baikal is well-positioned to become one of the most attractive vacation spots in Asia."

The lake is a fitting place to contemplate God's superlative wisdom and the majesty of his creation. Who but God could have created all the unique natural processes that sustain life in such abundance in this marvelous lake? Standing on the shores of Lake Baikal, one might echo the words of the Bible writer who exclaimed: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge!"—Romans 11:33.

HOW God's Name HAS BEEN MADE KNOWN

THE Bible psalmist David sang: "I will praise the name of God with song." David knew God's name, and in a song, he urged: "Blessed be Jehovah . . . Blessed be his glorious name." (Psalm 69:30; 72:18, 19) The commonly used form of God's name in English is Jehovah, translated from the Hebrew יְהוָה, which appears some 7,000 times in the Bible.

In recent centuries God's name has been used in many places besides the Bible. For example, the Latin words *Benedictus Sit Iehova Deus*, meaning "May Jehovah God Be Praised," are found on gold coins that were minted for many years in Switzerland [1]. In fact, within the past several hundred years, God's name in Hebrew and Latin has appeared on over a thousand different kinds of coins, tokens, medals, and jetons (substitute coins).

What led to such widespread use of the divine name, examples of which can be seen on this page and the accompanying one?

Why the Use of God's Name?

Beginning in the 16th century, religious battles between Roman Catholics and Protestant Reformers raged throughout Western Europe. Several provincial territories belonging to Spain broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, which had been the dominant religion, preferring instead the Reformed Church. This led to religious civil war. Coins and the images on them were used to transmit the message that God was supporting either one side or the other.



Coin 1 and tools:
Hans-Peter-Marquardt.net;
coin 2: Mit freundlicher Genehmigung
Sammlung Julius Hagander



How the Divine Name Was Used

Die engravers represented God's name, Jehovah, by the four Hebrew letters known as the Tetragrammaton. These are transliterated into English as JHVH or YHWH. Generally, neither die engravers nor the people in general could read Hebrew. So when the Tetragrammaton was copied over and over again, the four Hebrew letters of God's name came to be written in different ways.

Sweden minted a coin with God's name on it in about the year 1568 [2], and Scotland did so about 1591. About 1600, Sweden's King Charles IX put God's name—spelled variously as *Ihehova*, *Iehova*, and *Iehovah*—on money [3]. He had one type of coin minted in gold—a magnificent showpiece valued at over four months' wages for a manual laborer!

More than 60 different so-called Jehovah coins are known from the time of Christian IV, the king of Denmark and Norway, who ruled from 1588 to 1648. By the mid-17th century, "Jehovah coins" also appeared



**Die engraver's tools
for making coins**



Coins 3 and 4:
Mit freundlicher Genehmigung
Sammlung Julius Hagander

in Poland and Switzerland, and they found their way into Germany as well.

During the Thirty Years' War, which was fought in Europe from 1618 to 1648 and which began as a religious war, such coins proliferated. After the victorious Battle of Breitenfeld in 1631, Swedish King Gustav II Adolph had coins minted that bore the Tetragrammaton [4]. These were produced in towns such as Erfurt, Fürth, Mainz, and Würzburg. About the same time, Sweden's allied principalities also began minting coins with God's name on them.

During the some 150 years after the end of the dreadful Thirty Years' War, God's name

continued to be struck on coins, medals, and tokens. Such coinage was minted in Austria, France, Mexico, and Russia, among other countries. However, by the early 18th century, God's name was used in that way less and less often. Eventually, it almost totally disappeared from dies and stamps.

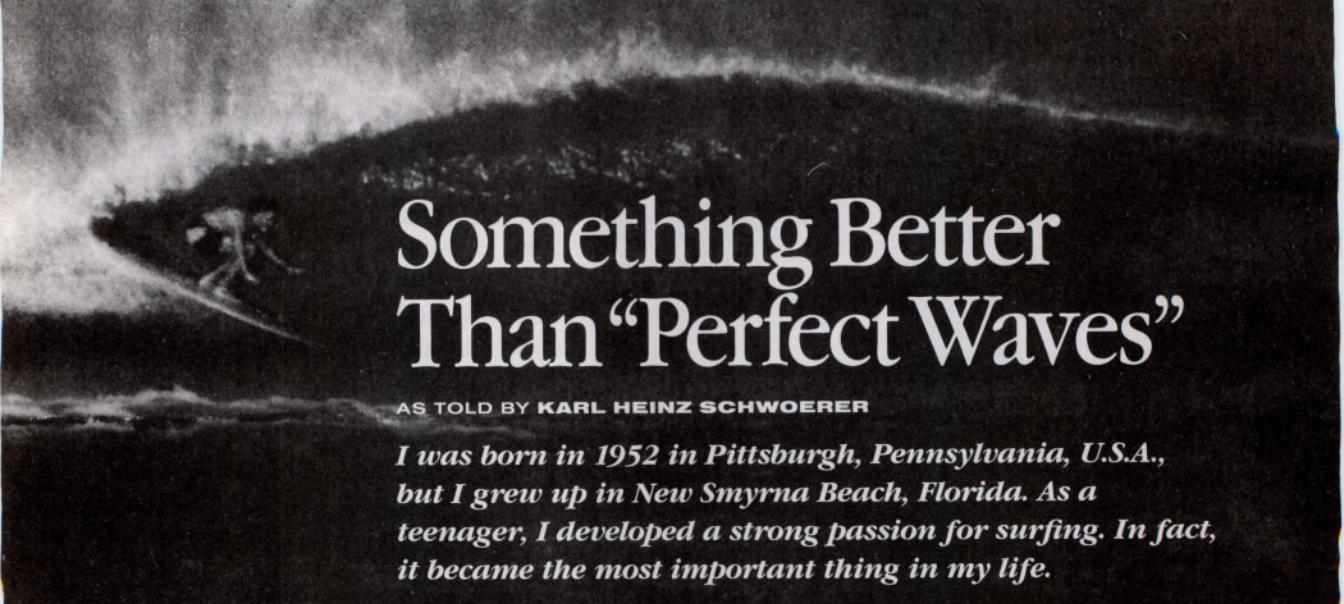
Making God's Name Known

While God's name may not be found on currency used today, it is receiving unprecedented proclamation. God long ago chose a people to serve him and said to them: "You are my witnesses, . . . and I am God." (Isaiah 43:12) No coin can fulfill that vital role. In fact, those who used God's name on their coins gave a false witness about him, for they were claiming his support in their vicious wars. Today, though, some humans are making God's name known in the way he approves.

Jehovah's Witnesses encourage you to learn more about the true God, Jehovah, and what his name stands for. Of him a Bible psalmist wrote: "That people may know that you, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18) Knowledge of Jehovah is vital, as His dear Son revealed when he prayed: "This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ." —John 17:3.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- **Violence Against Women—What Is the Bible's View?**
- **Should I Play Electronic Games?**
- **What Does Headship in Marriage Really Mean?**



Something Better Than "Perfect Waves"

AS TOLD BY KARL HEINZ SCHWOERER

I was born in 1952 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S.A., but I grew up in New Smyrna Beach, Florida. As a teenager, I developed a strong passion for surfing. In fact, it became the most important thing in my life.

IN 1970, I entered Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, with the intention of becoming a commercial pilot. However, I became increasingly disappointed with the government, which was then waging what I believed to be an unjust war in Vietnam. Disgusted with the entire system of things, as were other youths of the time, I quit school and pursued a hippie lifestyle. I wore my hair long and used drugs.

Soon I met Susan, an adventurous girl who had great talent for painting and photography. I calculated that by keeping our lives simple, I could work in construction six to eight months in Florida and we could spend the rest of the year camping on the beaches of the Pacific Coast of Mexico and Central America.

Conscious of a Spiritual Need

Living a carefree life on beautiful tropical beaches—with Sue painting and taking pictures and me surfing—was definitely very enjoyable. But after a couple of years, we came to realize that our life was unfulfilling. Something seemed to be missing. Thus, in mid-1975, while living on the Pacific Coast of Costa Rica, I began to seek spiritual enlightenment. I read books on Eastern reli-

gions and philosophies, which were popular at the time.

Since the books I read often quoted the Bible as proof for the truthfulness of their teachings, I reasoned that the Bible should be the basis for truth. So I traded some hallucinogenic mushrooms for an old King James Version of the Bible. Every afternoon, after having surfed all morning, I sat and read the Bible. Despite my great enthusiasm for the Bible, however, my understanding of it was limited.

"Have You Any Bible Questions?"

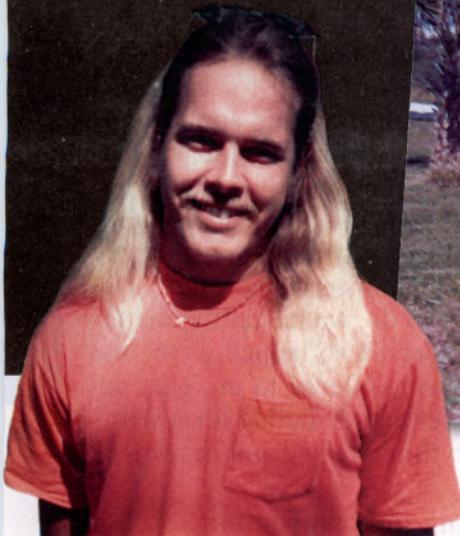
On our way from Costa Rica to the United States in August 1975, Sue and I stopped at a pharmacy in El Salvador to buy some medicine. As we were having trouble communicating with the pharmacist, a customer named Jenny offered to help us. She was a 16-year-old American girl who spoke Spanish fluently. She mentioned that she and her parents were Jehovah's Witnesses and that they had moved to El Salvador to teach people about the Bible.

Jenny asked me, "Have you any Bible questions?"

"Yes, I do!" I answered. In spite of our hippie appearance, Jenny immediately invited

◀ A photo of me surfing, which was used in a Summer Surf Festival poster

When I was 13 ▶



◀ I found my hippie lifestyle unfulfilling

us to her home to meet her parents, Joe and Nancy Trembley. We accepted her invitation. We spent all afternoon asking Bible questions and were very impressed with the way Joe and Nancy answered our queries. They always said, "Turn to this scripture in your Bible and read it."

Soon it was late in the evening, so they invited us to stay overnight at their home. However, they did not allow Sue and me to share the same bedroom, since we were not married. During the night, Sue and Jenny stayed awake for hours considering many Bible subjects—from Adam to Armageddon.

The Green Bible

The next day, before we left town, Joe and Nancy gave us many copies of *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines, some books, and a Bible. The Bible was the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, which at the time was produced with a green hard cover. Joe also took us to see the Kingdom Hall. It was a simple, modest building where Jehovah's Wit-

nesses meet for Bible study. 'What a contrast,' I thought, 'to the ostentatious churches of Christendom, where people learn so little from the Bible!'

Later that day, when we stopped at the checkpoint before crossing the border into Guatemala, the green Bible caused confusion among the officials. They were puzzled because they recognized it as one commonly used by Jehovah's Witnesses. Yet, we definitely did not look like Witnesses. Despite our appearance, the officials discharged us after a few minutes. This baffled us because they normally searched our car and belongings for drugs or smuggled goods. So we began to view the green Bible as an amulet, or a charm.

As we continued to read the Bible and the Bible study aids, we were convinced we had found the truth about God. While we were driving through Mexico, I was looking forward to two weeks of surfing at Puerto Escondido—my favorite surf spot. After enjoying those "perfect waves," I was determined to return to Florida and become one of Jehovah's servants.

I spent the next two weeks surfing in the mornings. In the afternoons on the beach, I read my Bible along with Bible study aids. The green Bible caught the attention of an eight-year-old girl, who insisted on taking us somewhere in the evening. We could not understand where she wanted us to go, but we understood it had to do with the green Bible. We refused, but she kept inviting. Finally, after some days we decided to go with her. She took us to the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses, a small bamboo structure with a thatched roof. Everyone there greeted us with handshakes and hugs as if we were old friends.

We were impressed with the respectful behavior of all in attendance. Some children stared at us during the meeting, probably because they had never seen people with such long blond hair. Their parents had to remind them constantly to concentrate on the meeting. Yet, Jehovah had used a young person like them to get us to attend our first meeting.

Determined to Serve Jehovah

After two weeks of perfect waves, I sold my boards, and we drove directly to Florida. There we started studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and attending all the congregation meetings. Determined to serve Jehovah, we stopped living together and having close association with our former friends. I shaved off my beard and got a haircut, and Sue bought a few dresses. Four months later we were married, and in April 1976, we were baptized in symbol of our dedication to serve God.

Now our lives had a purpose. Grateful to Jehovah for all our blessings, we were eager to return to a Spanish-speaking country to preach the good news about God's Kingdom. But Christian elders in our congregation advised us: "Do not go yet. First, build up your spirituality in order to have something to offer there." We accepted their advice, and thereafter our goal was to become pioneers, as Jehovah's Witnesses call full-time ministers.

Sue started to pioneer in January 1978. I also wanted to pioneer, but I was still deeply in debt for university tuition fees. I came up with a simple solution. I would declare bankruptcy and be free to pioneer.

The elders, however, wisely advised against that plan, explaining that it would not be in harmony with Bible principles, which require us to be 'honest in all things.' (Hebrews 13:18) So I continued working to pay off my debts. Finally, in September 1979, I reached my goal of joining Sue in the pioneer work.

Afterward, by keeping our lives simple, I had to work only a couple of days a week to make ends meet.

Serving at Brooklyn Bethel

In April 1980, after less than a year of pioneering together, we received a big surprise. Earlier, in response to a call for construction workers, we had submitted applications to serve at Bethel, the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York. We now received an invitation to come in 30 days! We had mixed feelings, since we were enjoying our pioneering so much. Unsure about what to do, we talked the matter over with two elders, who helped us see the great privilege being offered to us. They advised, "Go, try serving at Bethel for a year." So we sold everything we had and headed for Brooklyn.

After working in construction for two years, I was invited to work in the Construction Engineering Office, where I was trained in structural design. Sue worked in the Bindery for a year, and then she was invited to the Graphics Department. Annually, on our wedding anniversary, we reflected on the previous year and evaluated our circumstances and desires and decided to continue serving at Bethel.

As the years passed, we made some wonderful close friends. Moreover, since Bethel allowed us to serve Jehovah and our worldwide brotherhood in a very meaningful way, we remained determined to stay. In 1989 we began studying Spanish, which enabled us to be assigned to a Spanish congregation in Brooklyn. As a result, we felt we had the best of two worlds—serving at Bethel and serving in a foreign-language congregation.

On one occasion Jenny, mentioned previously, visited us at Brooklyn Bethel, and it was interesting to hear her side of the story about the day we met in El Salvador. She had been at a Bible study and started to feel sick.

"I still enjoy surfing, but I have found something better than 'perfect waves'"



Top: Assisting with Kingdom Hall construction
Right: With Sue today

On her way home, she decided to stop and get some medicine. For some reason she did not go to the pharmacy she had been to before but to the one where we were.

Serving in Other Countries

One day in 1999, my overseer at Bethel surprised me with the question, "Would you be willing to go to the Australia branch and work on a project in the Regional Engineering Office for three months?"

"Yes," I responded without hesitation. Soon we were on our way to Australia, where we served for three years. It was a pleasure to assist in the design of branch facilities for several countries in the Orient and in the South Pacific. When we returned to Brooklyn in 2003, an additional surprise awaited us. We were invited to another foreign assignment—to serve in the Regional Kingdom Hall Office located at the branch in Brazil, at some distance from the large city of São Paulo.

This is where we are still located. The office supervises the building of Kingdom Halls in the majority of countries in South America. My assignment includes traveling to assist



with such construction work and to encourage those working on the many projects—and Sue is able to accompany me.

Maintaining Our Priorities

I must say that I still enjoy surfing, but I have found something better than "perfect waves." Thus, I have kept surfing in its proper place, as a form of recreation. With the loving support of Sue, I have concentrated on something more important, serving our loving God, Jehovah.

Our main concern now is to use our lives and skills to advance Kingdom interests and promote the pure worship of Jehovah God. We have learned that the most important thing is not where we are serving Jehovah but that we are serving him whole-souled wherever we are.—Colossians 3:23.

A KING OF GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN CAMEROON

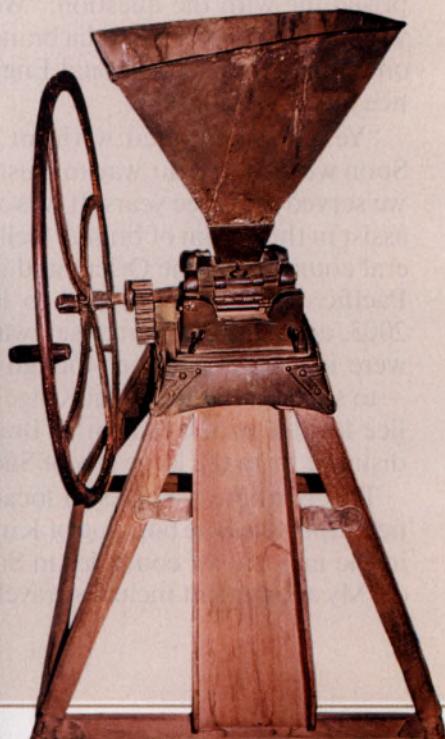
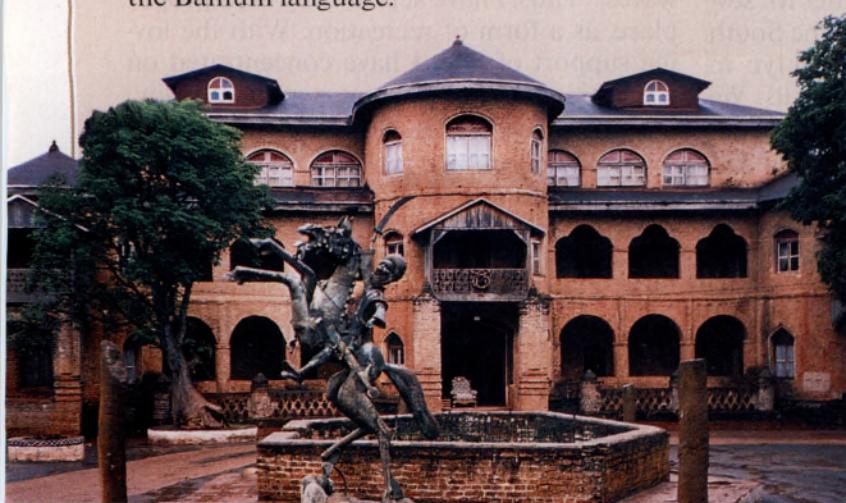
IBRAHIM NJOYA was the 17th king of the Bamum, a large ethnic group whose people still inhabit the grasslands of western Cameroon. He was king from 1889 until his death in 1933, as shown in the accompanying list of rulers, whose reigns date back to the 14th century. During Njoya's reign, the French and Germans were attempting to colonize the area.

From his youth Njoya showed himself to be a highly intelligent and intuitive man, and he surrounded himself with like-minded intellectuals and innovators who shared his vision. The magnificent palace he built, seen in the photograph below, testifies to his expertise in architecture. He is also credited with the invention of a mill used for grinding corn, as seen here. Especially noteworthy, however, is his development of a new system of writing the Bamum language.

Making Possible a Written Record

At the end of the 19th century, the history of the Bamum people was being preserved mainly by oral transmission from one generation to the next. Njoya recognized the danger of details being omitted or added. He was familiar with the Arabic language after obtaining books in that language from traders and traveling merchants who passed through his kingdom. He was also probably aware of the earlier Vai script, which at the time was being used throughout the grasslands region. So he

All photos:
Courtesy and
permission of
Sultan Ibrahim
Mbombo Njoya,
Foumban,
Cameroon



set out to develop a system to write his own language.

Njoya started with several hundred signs, mostly pictographs and ideograms. That system required his subjects to memorize what each sign depicted. Over the years, with the help of his trusted courtiers, he simplified the system. They minimized the number of signs necessary by using a system of syllables. Through combining a number of the signs, or letters, of his new script, specific words were formed. The reader had to memorize far fewer letters and their corresponding sounds. When Njoya finished, his new writing system, called A-ka-u-ku, had 70 letters.

Njoya encouraged the use of the Bamum script by requiring that it be taught in schools and used at all levels of government. He directed the writing of an impressive history of his dynasty and his country in his new script. Thus, for the first time, Bamum people could read about their traditions, laws, and customs. Njoya even had pharmaceutical recipes recorded using the new Bamum script. Over 8,000 of those original documents are still preserved in the palace archives.

An advantage of this new system of writing became evident shortly after the arrival of German colonialists in 1902. Although Njoya profited from the economic development, he did not always see eye to eye with German authorities. So he used his new invention, which the Germans had not yet deciphered. How enduring has Bamum been?

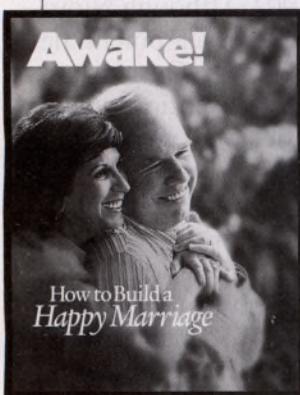
During World War I (1914-18), Germany lost its control of Njoya's domain. Eventually, the newly formed League of Nations transferred the mandate of Bamum territory to France. Although Njoya was open to new ideas, he was proud of his heritage and desperately wanted to preserve and develop the culture of his people. This inevitably led to his opposition to French colonial rule over his realm. As was the case with chiefs who did not demonstrate loyalty to the colonialists, in 1931 he was deposed by the French. Two years later Njoya died in exile.

With a French ban against use of the Bamum script in schools and without Njoya to promote the script, it soon fell into disuse and was forgotten by the majority of the Bamum people. When missionaries of Christendom arrived on the scene, they studied the spoken language of the Bamum people and prepared a grammar to be used in their schools. Unlike Njoya, they borrowed most elements from the already existing Roman alphabet and its phonetics.

Recently, efforts have been made to renew interest in the Bamum script. The present-day sultan, Ibrahim Mbombo Njoya, has opened a school in the palace that his grandfather built. Here local schoolchildren are once again learning this writing system so that it will not fall into extinction.

A plaque showing the Bamum dynasty from the 14th century down to today, written in the Roman alphabet on the left and the Bamum script on the right

DYNASTIE BAMOUN	
1. NCHARÉ YËN	1394-1418
2. NGOUOPOU	1418-1461
3. MONJOU	1461-1498
4. MENGAP	1498-1515
5. NGOUHÌ	1513-1544
6. FIFEN	1544-1568
7. NGOUHÌ	1568-1590
8. NGAPNA	1590-1629
9. NGOULOURE	1629-1672
10. KOUOTOU	1672-1757
11. MBOUTOMBOU	1757-1814
12. GBETKOM	1814-1817
13. MBIEKOUD	1817-1818
14. NGOUHOUD	1818-1863
15. NGOUNGOURE SHETFON	30 minutes
16. NSANGOU	1863-1889
17. NJOYA IBRAHIM	1889-1933
18. NJIMOLUH NJOYA SEIDOU	1933-1992
19. MBOMBO NJOYA IBRAHIM	1992-



Can Marriage Withstand the Storm? (July 2006) I am a regular reader of *Awake!* magazine. I am a Catholic, but I find your magazine to be very interesting and educational. However, I beg to differ with your statement: "In 1983 the church relaxed its rules concerning marriage bonds and made it easier for Catholics to end a marriage."

G.V.M., Zambia

"Awake!" responds: We were referring to the procedural changes in the 1983 Code of Canon Law. The effects of such changes have been dramatic, particularly in the United States. According to Roman Catholic Bishop Mark A. Pivarunas, in 1968 only 338 annulments were granted in the United States. By 1990, however, that number had soared to 62,824. Why the increase?

Canon lawyer Edward Peters stated: "Some very significant changes in canonical procedure have been made over the last 30 years, changes which facilitated both the filing of marriage nullity petitions and the chances that such petitions will be proven." After citing a number of canon changes, Peters added: "Each of these Roman changes in procedural canon law has indisputably contributed to the dramatic increase in declarations of marriage nullity." Regardless of their intention, the direct result of these canon changes was—at least in the United States—as "Awake!" stated: "[The church] made it easier for Catholics to end a marriage."

Is There a Creator? (September 2006) This special issue of *Awake!* was a masterpiece. The arguments presented were simple, powerful, logical, and sensible. I thoroughly enjoyed the format, whereby the whole magazine dealt with the same theme from different angles.

A. B., Spain

Thank you for this brilliant as well as fascinating magazine. The manifold arguments and illustrations honor Jehovah. He deserves to be praised in such a way.

R. B., Switzerland

I was won over by the disarmingly simple proofs in favor of creation. That evolution is a hoax was exposed without animosity but with all the intellectual rigor required in science.

L. G., France

The Roma—A Thousand Years of Joy and Sorrow

(October 2006) I have always felt affection for the Roma. Sadly, prejudice against them persists. I'm sure that your article will be thought provoking for many people. How reassuring to know that Jehovah is not partial and that Roma are among his worshippers!

B. B., France

We are Roma people. My father is not yet one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and he is not very eager to read. However, he wanted to have this magazine, and now it is on his table!

A. G., Finland

- 1. Jerusalem. ♦ Find the baby and report back to him.
- 2. So he could kill him.
- 3. Jesus' half brother Jude, 65 C.E. ♦ The apostle John, 98 C.E.
- 4. The apostle John, 98 C.E.
- 5. Gaius, -3 John 1, 3-6.
- 6. Enoch.—Jude 14.

Man-Made Earthquakes?

Since the 19th century, human activity has caused more than 200 strong earthquakes, says a report in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*. Mining triggered half of these quakes. Other causes appear to be the extraction of gas, oil, or water; fluid injection; and the creation of reservoirs. A 1989 earthquake in Newcastle, Australia, which scientists attribute to underground coal mining, left 13 people dead, 165 injured, and damage to the tune of \$3.5 billion (U.S.). It is calculated that the losses caused by that quake exceeded the total amount of money earned from mining in Newcastle since operations began there two centuries ago.

The State of French Catholicism

In 1994, 67 percent of people in France claimed to be Catholic. Today the figure is 51 percent, says the magazine *Le Monde des Religions*. A survey revealed that half of French Catholics only go to church for special events such as weddings. Though 88 percent claim to know the Our Father prayer by heart, 30 percent never pray. Nearly half of Catholic homes have a Bible, but this does not necessarily mean that it is read.

Speech Disorders Among Children

"More and more children start speaking late and use a very limited vocabulary," says the Polish magazine *Wprost*, "because adults do not talk with them." Mothers spend 30 minutes a day with their chil-

■ In 2006, "167 journalists and support staff," such as drivers and interpreters, "died trying to cover the news." Most were reporting on crime, corruption, or localized conflicts. Some 133 were murdered.—INTERNATIONAL NEWS SAFETY INSTITUTE, BELGIUM.

■ Between 10 and 14 billion rounds of ammunition are produced every year, "enough bullets to kill every person in the world twice over."—ROYAL MELBOURNE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, AUSTRALIA.

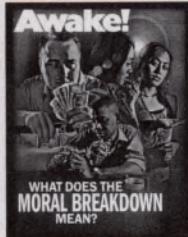
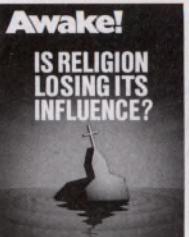
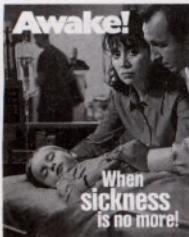
dren, on average, and fathers, a "mere seven minutes." As a result, almost 1 child out of every 5 "suffers from certain speech development disorders resulting solely from its parents' negligence." Michał Bitniok, a speech therapist and linguist at the Silesian University, warns: "If such children are not treated early enough and remain uncared for, their speech disorders might cause them difficulties at school and in their adult life."

Using Superstition in Japan

Illegal dumping on municipal land is a headache in Japan. Daytime security patrols are unable to prevent it. People simply bring their junk at night. Now, by erecting *torii*, red wooden gates designed to look like entrances to Shinto shrines, local governments are using superstition as a deterrent. "The concept is pretty simple," explains the newspaper *IHT Asahi Shimbun*. "People generally regard torii as sacred, so dumping litter near one would bring bad luck." Sure enough, people no longer leave waste close to them. "A bit further away," says the newspaper, "it's a different story."



SUBJECT INDEX FOR 2007 AWAKE!



ANIMALS AND PLANTS

- Chukar (bird), 2/07
- Delicacies From Forest (berries), 9/07
- Emperor for Lunch (caterpillar), 5/07
- Instinct Guides Birds, 7/07
- Ladybird (ladybug), 1/07
- Perfumer's Fruit (bergamot), 6/07
- Pollen, 4/07
- Roses From Africa, 10/07
- Shark, 10/07
- Shark Bay, 7/07
- Water Bear (tardigrade), 3/07
- Willows, 2/07

ECONOMICS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Love of Money, 6/07

HEALTH AND MEDICINE

- "Contribution to Medical Science" (nonblood treatment), 9/07
- Optimism, 9/07
- Sickness No More! 1/07
- Toothache, 9/07
- Why Do I Faint? 4/07
- Why Visit Dentist? 5/07

HUMAN RELATIONS

- Abstinence Pledges, 2/07
- Keep Children Safe (sexual abuse), 10/07
- Meeting Needs of Youth, 3/07
- Show Yourselves Thankful!, 10/07
- Steps to Better Parenting, 8/07

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

- Baikal Lake (Russia), 12/07
- "Contribution to Medical Science" (nonblood treatment), 9/07
- Creation* book, 8/07
- Electric Energy to Spiritual Light (Italy, Kingdom Hall), 10/07
- "Follow the Christ!" District Conventions, 5/07, 6/07
- Godly Training Bears Fruit, 8/07

LANDS AND PEOPLES

- Baikal—World's Largest Lake (Russia), 12/07
- Belize Barrier Reef, 1/07
- "Black Swan" of Venice (Italy), 5/07
- Brazil's Indians, 10/07
- Christmas Island, 8/07

East Timor, 5/07

- Egypt to Cities of World (obelisks), 4/07
- Emperor for Lunch (Zambia), 5/07
- Kamchatka—Russia's Wonderland, 3/07
- King of Great Accomplishments (Cameroon), 12/07
- King's Search for Wisdom (Spain), 1/07
- Laundrymen of Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), 6/07
- Majestic Monolith (Canada), 4/07
- "Nature's Wisdom" (Expo 2005, Japan), 3/07
- Roses From Africa, 10/07
- Shark Bay (Australia), 7/07
- Spanish Armada, 8/07
- Svalbard—Land of Cold Coasts (Norway), 2/07
- Terror in Mumbai (India), 6/07
- Toledo (Spain), 6/07
- Vanuatu, 9/07
- Voice of "Eternal City" (Trevi Fountain, Rome), 8/07

LIFE STORIES

- "Jehovah, Please Let Me Serve You" (D. Hall), 7/07
- More Lasting Than Art (R. Koivisto), 4/07
- My Love for Music, Life, Bible (B. Gulashevsky), 8/07
- Right Career Choice (S. Quevedo), 3/07
- Slave to Alcohol No More, 5/07
- Something Better Than "Perfect Waves" (K. H. Schwoerer), 12/07
- Why I Left the Circus (M. Neim), 6/07

MISCELLANEOUS

- Cloth Dyeing, 4/07
- Guidance That Surpasses Instinct, 7/07
- Learn Another Language, 3/07
- Pencil, 7/07
- Slumbering Giant (volcanoes), 2/07

RELIGION

- Baptisteries, 9/07
- Death Really the End? 12/07
- Enduring Expression of God's Love (Bible), 11/07
- God Responsible for Natural Disasters? 9/07
- God's Name Made Known, 12/07

How Bible Came to Us, 11/07

- Losing Its Influence? 2/07
- Myth or Fact? (Bible teachings), 11/07
- Noah's Ark and Naval Architecture, 1/07
- Really Live That Long? (pre-Flood world), 7/07
- Trust the Bible? 11/07
- Unique Book (Bible), 11/07
- What Is Bible About? 11/07

SCIENCE

- Archaeology Support the Bible? 11/07
- Color-Vision Deficiency, 7/07
- Feathers, 7/07

THE BIBLE'S VIEWPOINT

- "Being Good," 7/07
- Can Worshipping God Be Enjoyable? 8/07
- Christianity Failed? 1/07
- Contraception Wrong? 9/07
- Humility a Weakness or a Strength? 3/07
- Satan Real? 2/07
- What Happens at Death? 10/07
- What It Means to Be Christian, 4/07
- Who Authored the Bible? 11/07
- Why Care for Earth's Environment? 12/07
- Wise View of Money, 6/07
- Your Life Predestined? 5/07

WORLD AFFAIRS AND CONDITIONS

- "Engines of Destruction" Foreseen (military aircraft), 10/07
- Moral Breakdown, 4/07
- Trials of Traffic, 2/07
- Unequal Opportunities, 5/07

YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

- Caught Between Cultures, 9/07
- Dating Secretly, 6/07
- Homosexuality—How Avoid It? 2/07
- How Avoid Pornography? 12/07
- How Stop Gossip? 8/07
- Parents Argue, 10/07
- This Person Right for Me? 5/07
- What if Invited to "Hook Up"? 3/07
- When Start Dating? 1/07
- Why Compared With Others? 4/07
- Why Left Out? 7/07
- Why Live by Bible Standards? 11/07



Jericho
Bethany
Bethlehem



WHERE DID IT HAPPEN?

Read the Bible account at Matthew 2:1–16, and answer the following questions.

- 1.** To which city did the star first lead the astrologers?

Circle your answer on the map.

- ♦ What did King Herod want the astrologers to do?

- ♦ Why did Herod want to know where Jesus could be found?

■ For Discussion:

What differences do you note between the Bible account and traditional Christmas stories?

WHEN IN HISTORY?

Name the writer(s) of the Bible books below, and draw a line connecting the book to the approximate date it was completed.

(Answers on page 28)



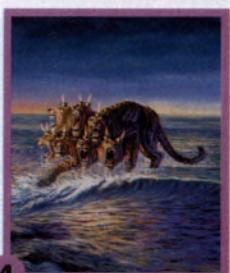
2

1 John



3

Jude



4

Revelation

50 C.E.

65 C.E.

77 C.E.

96 C.E. 98 C.E.

WHO AM I?

- 5.** John commended me for my hospitality and love.

WHO AM I?

- 6.** Although seventh in line from Adam, my prophecy is recorded in the book of Jude.

Children's Picture Search

Can you find these pictures in this issue? In your own words, describe what is happening in each picture.

FROM THIS ISSUE

Answer these questions, and provide the missing Bible verse(s).

- Page 4** The dead are conscious of what? (Ecclesiastes 9:____)

- Page 8** What will God do with death? (Isaiah 25:____)

- Page 10** What will God do to those ruining the earth? (Revelation 11:____)

- Page 14** To avoid pornography, what must you learn to do? (Psalm 97:____)



Life After Death

What Does the Bible *Really* Teach?

It does not teach what many have been told it does. For example, it does not teach . . .

- That all good people are rewarded with life in heaven.
- That dead relatives are to be worshipped or venerated.
- That dead ones can either harm or benefit the living.
- That humans possess an immortal soul—a doctrine shared by many religions, which forms the basis for a number of unscriptural teachings, such as hellfire torment and reincarnation.

