

NOVEMBER 15, 2005

THE WATCHTOWER  
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Is the  
**DEVIL**  
Real?

# THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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# Is the DEVIL Real?

*How difficult it can be to identify someone who is determined to remain concealed behind a mask!*

HOW do you view the Devil? Do you think of him as a real person who tempts people to do wicked things, or does he merely represent the principle of evil? Is the Devil someone to be feared, or should he be dismissed as nothing more than a superstitious notion or a mythological unreality? Does the word "devil" refer to some abstract destructive force in the universe? Could the term simply be a symbol of the evil traits in humans, as many modern theologians claim?

It is not surprising that mankind is divided on the question of who the Devil is. Imagine how difficult it can be to discover the true identity of someone who is a master of disguise! Particularly is that so if he is determined to remain concealed behind a mask. The Bible describes the Devil as such a personality. Referring to him as Satan, it says: "Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light." (2 Corinthians 11:14) Though he is evil, the Devil presents himself as good in order to misguide others. And if he gets people to believe that he simply does not exist, that suits his purpose even better.

Really, then, who is the Devil? When and how did he come into existence? How does he influence mankind today? What, if anything, can we do to resist that influence? The Bible contains the accurate history of the Devil from his very beginning and provides truthful answers to these questions.

# How Real Is the DEVIL to You?



THE Scriptures portray the Devil as a real person. He is invisible to humans for the same reason that God is invisible to human eyes. "God is a Spirit," says the Bible. (John 4:24) The Devil is a spirit creature. Unlike the Creator, however, the Devil had a beginning.

Long before Jehovah God created humans, he made a multitude of spirit creatures. (Job 38:4, 7) In the Bible these spirits are called angels. (Hebrews 1:13, 14) God created all of them perfect—not a single one was a devil or had any evil trait. How, then, did the Devil come to be? The word "devil" means "slanderer" and thus refers to someone who tells malicious lies about others. "Satan" means "Resister," or opposer. Just as a formerly honest man makes himself a thief by stealing, one of the perfect spirit sons of God acted upon an improper desire and made himself Satan the Devil. The Bible explains the process of self-corruption this way: "Each one is tried by being drawn out and enticed by his own desire. Then the desire, when it has become fertile, gives birth to sin; in turn, sin, when it has been accomplished, brings forth death."—James 1:14, 15.

This is apparently what happened. When Jehovah God created the first human pair, Adam and Eve, the angel who was about to rebel against God took note. He knew that Jehovah commanded Adam and Eve to fill the earth with righteous people, who would worship the Creator. (Genesis 1:28) This angel saw that there was a possibility that he could gain honor and importance. Motivated by greed, he coveted what rightly belongs only to the Creator—worship from humans. Instead of rejecting such an improper desire, this spirit son of God nurtured it until it gave birth to a lie and then to rebellion. Consider what he did.

The rebellious angel used a serpent to speak to the first woman, Eve. "Is it really so

that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?" the serpent asked Eve. When Eve cited God's command and the penalty for disobeying it, the serpent declared: "You positively will not die. For God knows that in the very day of your eating from [the tree that is in the middle of the garden] your eyes are bound to be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad." (Genesis 3:1-5) The assertion was that God had not told Adam and Eve the truth. By eating the fruit of that tree, Eve would supposedly become like God, having the authority to decide what was good and what was bad. That was the first lie ever spoken. Telling it made that angel a slanderer. He also became an opposer of God. The Bible thus identifies this enemy of God as "the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan."—Revelation 12:9.

### "Be Watchful"

The lie that the Devil told Eve worked just as he had planned. The Bible says: "Consequently the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was something to be longed for to the eyes, yes, the tree was desirable to look upon. So she began taking of its fruit and eating it. Afterward she gave some also to her husband when with her and he began eating it." (Genesis 3:6) Eve believed Satan and disobeyed God. She was able to get Adam to break God's law too. The Devil thus succeeded in setting the first human couple on a course of rebellion against God. Ever since then, Satan has exercised unseen influence over human affairs. His goal? To turn people away from worshipping the true God and gain their worship for himself. (Matthew 4:8, 9) With good rea-



son, then, the Scriptures warn: "Keep your senses, be watchful. Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone."—1 Peter 5:8.

How clearly the Bible portrays the Devil as a real spirit person—an angel that became corrupt and dangerous! The first essential step in our keeping watchful is to recognize that he really exists. But keeping our senses and remaining watchful involves more. It is also important not to be ignorant of Satan's "designs" and of his methods of misleading people. (2 Corinthians 2:11) What are his schemes? And how can we stand firm against them?

### The Devil Exploits Man's Inherent Need

The Devil has observed humans since the creation of mankind. He knows man's makeup—his needs, his interests, and his desires. Satan is well-aware that man was created with a spiritual need, and the Devil has cleverly exploited this need. How? By feeding mankind religious untruths. (John 8:44)

Many religious teachings about God are contradictory and confusing. Whose purpose do you think this serves? Contradictory teachings cannot all be true. Is it not possible, then, that many religious teachings are expressly designed and used by Satan to misguide people? In fact, the Bible refers to him as "the god of this system of things," who has blinded people's minds.—2 Corinthians 4:4.

Divine truth provides protection against religious deceptions. The Bible likens the truth of God's Word to the girdle that a soldier of ancient times wore to help protect his loins. (Ephesians 6:14) If you take in

knowledge of the Bible and keep its message close to you, as if you were girded with it, God's Word will safeguard you from being misled by religious lies and errors.

Man's spiritual inclination has led him to explore the unknown. This has exposed him to another of Satan's deceptive devices. Exploiting man's curiosity about what is strange and mysterious, Satan has used spiritism to bring many under his control. As a hunter uses bait to attract his prey, Satan employs such devices as fortune-telling, astrology, hypnotism, witchcraft, palmistry, and magic to attract and entrap people around the world.—Leviticus 19:31; Psalm 119:110.

How can you protect yourself from being ensnared by spiritism? Deuteronomy 18:10-12 states: "There should not be found in you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, anyone who employs divination, a practicer of magic or anyone who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead. For everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah, and on account of these detestable things Jehovah your God is driving them away from before you."

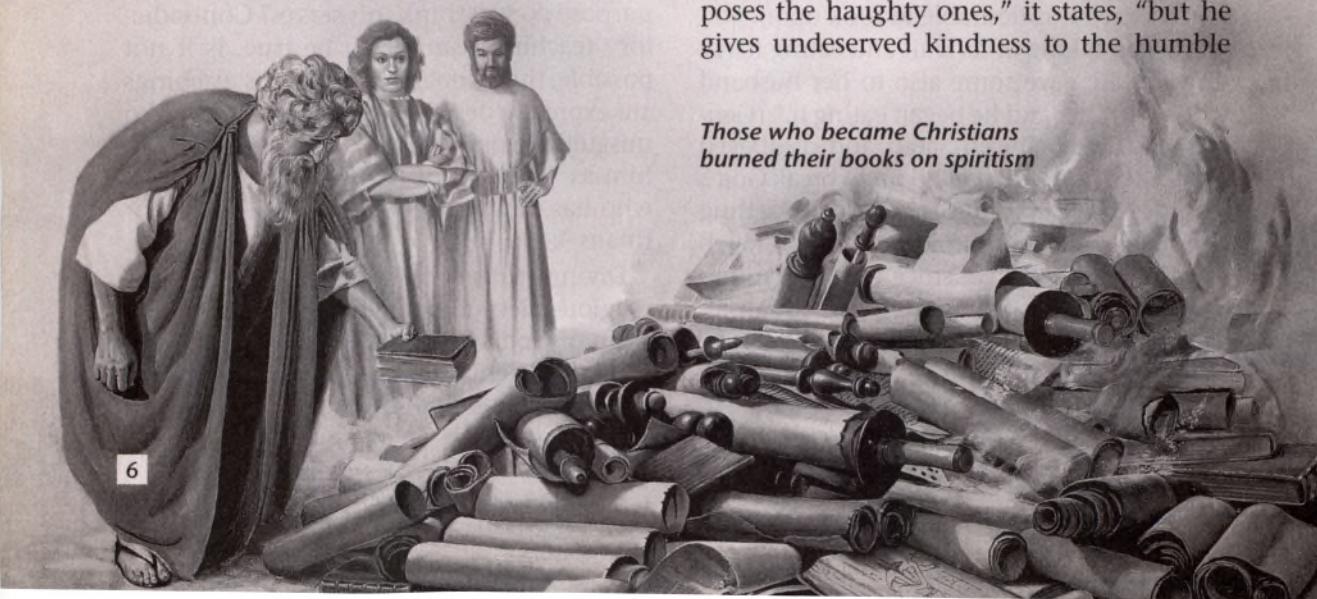
The Scriptural advice is direct: Have nothing to do with spiritism. What if you have been sharing in some practice of spiritism and now want to break free? You can follow the example of early Christians in the city of Ephesus. When they accepted "the word of Jehovah," the Bible says, "quite a number of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them up before everybody." Those books were costly. They were worth 50,000 pieces of silver. (Acts 19:19, 20) Yet, Christians in Ephesus did not hesitate to destroy them.

### Satan Preys on Human Weaknesses

A perfect angel became Satan the Devil because he gave in to the desire for self-exaltation. He also awakened in Eve a proud, selfish longing to be like God. Today, Satan keeps many in his grip by arousing in them the feeling of pride. For example, some feel that their race, ethnic group, or nationality is better than that of others. How contrary this is to what the Bible teaches! (Acts 10:34, 35) The Bible clearly states: "[God] made out of one man every nation of men."—Acts 17:26.

An effective defense against Satan's appeal to pride is humility. The Bible admonishes us "not to think more of [ourselves] than it is necessary to think." (Romans 12:3) "God opposes the haughty ones," it states, "but he gives undeserved kindness to the humble

*Those who became Christians  
burned their books on spiritism*



ones." (James 4:6) One sure way to resist Satan's efforts is to manifest in your personal life humility and other qualities approved by God.

The Devil is also eager to exploit the human weakness of yielding to improper sensual desires. Jehovah God intended for humans to enjoy life. When desires are fulfilled within the limits of God's will, the result is genuine happiness. But Satan tempts humans to satisfy their cravings in immoral ways. (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10) It is much better to keep the mind focused on things that are chaste and virtuous. (Philippians 4:8) This will help you to exercise firm control over your thoughts and emotions.

### Keep Resisting the Devil

Can you succeed in resisting the Devil? Yes, you can. The Bible assures us: "Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) Even if you oppose Satan, he will not give up immediately and refrain from causing you any further trouble as you take in knowledge of God. No, the Devil will try again at "another convenient time." (Luke 4:13) However, you need not be afraid of the Devil. If you continue to resist him, he will not be able to turn you away from the true God.

Resisting the Devil, however, requires knowledge of who he is and how he misleads people as well as of the protective measures you can take against his schemes. There is only one accurate source of that knowledge—God's Word, the Bible. So be firm in your determination to study the inspired Scriptures, and apply in your life what you learn from them. Jehovah's Witnesses in your area will be happy to assist you free of charge with such a study at a time convenient to you. Please do not hesitate to contact them or to write the publishers of this magazine.

As you undertake a study of the Bible, you need to realize that Satan may use opposition or persecution to get you to stop learning the truth from God's Word. Some of your loved ones may become angry with you because you study the Bible. This may happen because they do not know the wonderful truths found in it. Others may make fun of you. But would succumbing to such pressures really please God? The Devil wants to discourage you so that you will stop learning about the true God. Why should you let Satan win? (Matthew 10:34-39) You owe him nothing. You owe Jehovah your very life. So, then, be determined to resist the Devil and 'make Jehovah's heart rejoice.'—Proverbs 27:11.

*Make a firm decision to study the Bible*



## Self-Sacrifice Brings Jehovah's Blessing

A MAN travels by bicycle in the deep forest of Cameroon. For hours, he cycles along flooded roads and through mud, facing danger in order to strengthen others. To teach an isolated group, some in Zimbabwe walk nine miles through flooding rivers, balancing their clothes and shoes on their head to keep them dry. Elsewhere, a woman gets up at four o'clock in the morning to visit and teach a nurse who can spare an hour only early in the day.

What do the people making such efforts have in common? They are all full-time ministers of Jehovah's Witnesses engaging in the work of teaching Bible truth. They include regular and special pioneers, missionaries, traveling overseers, and thousands of volunteers at Bethel homes around the world. And self-sacrifice is their hallmark.\*

### Proper Motive

Jehovah's Witnesses are heeding the apostle Paul's admonition to Timothy: "Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of, handling the word of the truth aright." (2 Timothy 2:15) But what motivates hundreds of thousands of Witnesses to serve as full-time ministers?

When full-time servants are asked why they are exerting themselves in Jehovah's service, their answer involves love for God and for fellow humans. (Matthew 22:37-39) This is most appropriate, for without love as the motive, any amount of effort would be in vain.—1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

\* See 2005 Calendar of Jehovah's Witnesses, November/December.

### Self-Sacrificing Service

All dedicated Christians have accepted Jesus' call: "If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me." (Matthew 16:24) To disown ourselves means to submit willingly to being owned and directed by Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. For many, this has led to self-sacrificing service in the full-time ministry.

Many Witnesses make great efforts to expand their service to Jehovah. Consider 56-year-old Júlia, a regular pioneer in São Paulo, Brazil. "A Chinese brother telephoned to ask me if I was willing to learn Chinese," she recalls. "Because of my age, I had not considered learning a new language. But after some days, I accepted the challenge. Today, I am able to give Scriptural presentations in Chinese."

The branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Peru reports: "In recent years, hundreds of regular pioneers have moved to un-

### JEHOVAH CHERISHES HIS DEVOTED SERVANTS

*"Become steadfast, unmovable, always having plenty to do in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in connection with the Lord."*

—1 Corinthians 15:58.

*"God is not unrighteous so as to forget your work and the love you showed for his name."*

—Hebrews 6:10.

***"Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force."***

—PSALM 110:3

assigned territories, displaying a courageous and self-sacrificing spirit. They move to distant towns where there are no basic services and work opportunities are limited. These brothers and sisters are willing to do whatever it takes to remain in their assignments. But most important, their activity in the ministry is a blessing in one place after another. Traveling overseers report that new groups have been formed with the help of these self-sacrificing regular pioneers."

Some Christians have risked their lives in order to help fellow believers. (Romans 16:3, 4) A circuit overseer in a war-torn area of Africa reports: "Before reaching the last roadblock between the territories occupied by the rebels and that controlled by the government, my wife and I were surrounded by four rebel military commanders and their bodyguards, who inquired about our identity. While checking our identity cards, they saw that we were from the government-controlled area, so they became nervous. I was accused of being a spy. Therefore, they decided to throw me into a pit. I explained who we were, and they eventually let us go." How grateful the congregations were that this self-sacrificing couple succeeded in visiting them!

Despite the difficulties encountered, the ranks of such full-time ministers are swelling worldwide. (Isaiah 6:8) These diligent workers cherish their privilege of serving Jehovah. With a similar spirit of self-sacrifice, millions of others are now praising Jehovah. In turn, he blesses them abundantly. (Proverbs 10:22) Confident of continued blessing and support, such hard workers reflect the attitude of the psalmist who sang: "My help is from Jehovah."—Psalm 121:2.





# The Art of Listening With Love



**T**HANKS for listening." Has anyone said that to you lately? What a compliment that is! A good listener is appreciated by just about everyone. By listening well, we can refresh people who are distressed or loaded down with problems. And does not being a good listener help us to enjoy people? In the Christian congregation, listening with love is an essential part of 'considering one another to incite to love and fine works.' —Hebrews 10:24.

Many people, however, are poor listeners. They like to give advice, relate their own experiences, or present their viewpoint instead of giving a listening ear to what others have to say. Listening really is an art. How can we learn to listen with love?

## A Vital Key

Jehovah is our "Grand Instructor." (Isaiah 30:20) He can teach us much about listening. Consider how Jehovah helped the prophet Elijah. Frightened by Queen Jezebel's threats, Elijah ran away into the wilderness and expressed a wish to die. There God's angel spoke to him. As the prophet explained his fears, Jehovah listened and then displayed His great power. The result? No longer afraid, Elijah returned to his assignment. (1 Kings 19:2-15) Why does Jehovah take time to listen to the concerns of his servants? Because he cares for them. (1 Peter

5:7) Here is a key to becoming a good listener: Care for others, and show genuine concern for them.

When a man in Bolivia committed a serious wrong, he appreciated receiving such care from a fellow believer. The man explains: "I was then at one of the lowest points in my life. I might easily have given up trying to serve Jehovah if it hadn't been for a brother who took time to listen to me. He didn't say much, but knowing that he cared enough to listen really strengthened me. I didn't need a solution; I knew what I had to do. I just needed to know that someone cared about how I felt. His listening saved me from being swallowed up by despair."

A great Exemplar in the art of listening with love is Jesus Christ. Shortly after Jesus' death, two of his disciples were journeying from Jerusalem to a village some seven miles away. No doubt they were discouraged. So the resurrected Jesus Christ began walking with them. He asked carefully phrased questions to draw them out, and the disciples responded. They expressed the hopes they had entertained and the disappointment and confusion they now felt. Jesus cared for them, and his listening with love prepared the two disciples to listen. Then Jesus "interpreted to them things pertaining to himself in all the Scriptures."—Luke 24:13-27.

Listening first is a loving way to get others to listen to us. "My parents and my in-laws began objecting to the way I was raising my children," says a Bolivian woman. "I resented their comments, but I felt unsure of myself as a parent. About that time, one of Jehovah's Witnesses called on me. She spoke to me about God's promises. However, it was the way she asked my opinion that told me that this person was willing to listen. I invited her in, and soon I was explaining my problem to her. She listened with patience. She asked what I wanted for my children and how my husband felt about it. It was a relief to be with someone who was willing to try to understand me. When she began showing me what the Bible says about family life, I knew I was speaking to someone who cared about my situation."

"Love . . . does not look for its own interests," says the Bible. (1 Corinthians 13:4, 5) Listening with love, then, implies that we put our own interests aside. This may call for switching off the television, putting down the newspaper, or turning off the cell phone when others are speaking to us about a serious matter. Listening with love means becoming intensely interested in the other person's thoughts. It requires that we refrain from starting to talk about ourselves by saying something like, "That reminds me of what happened to me some time ago." While such an exchange is acceptable in a friendly conversation, we need to put personal interests aside when someone is discussing a serious problem. Genuine interest in others can be manifested in yet another way.

### Listen to Discern Feelings

Companions of the man Job heard no fewer than ten of his discourses. Still, Job exclaimed: "O that I had someone listening to me!" (Job 31:35) Why? Because their listen-

ing provided no comfort. They neither cared about Job nor wanted to understand his feelings. They surely did not have fellow feeling as sympathetic listeners. But the apostle Peter counsels: "All of you be like-minded, showing fellow feeling, having brotherly affection, tenderly compassionate, humble in mind." (1 Peter 3:8) How can we show fellow feeling? One way is by showing concern for the other person's feelings and trying to understand them. Making such sympathetic comments as "that must have been upsetting" or "you must have felt misunderstood" is one way to show that we are concerned. Another way is to put what the person is saying in our own words, thus showing that we understood what he said. Listening with love means paying attention not only to the words but also to the emotions subtly expressed.

Robert\* is an experienced full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses. He relates: "I became frustrated with my ministry at one point. So I asked to speak with the traveling overseer. He really listened and tried to understand my feelings. He even seemed to

\* Name has been changed.

*When listening, we must put  
our own interests aside*



comprehend my fear that he would criticize me for my attitude. The brother assured me that my feelings were understandable, for he himself had experienced similar feelings. This really helped me to carry on."

Can we listen without agreeing with what is being said? Can we say to someone that we appreciate being told how he feels? Yes. What if a young son gets into a fight at school or a teenage daughter comes home and says that she is in love? Is it not better for a parent to listen and try to understand what is going on in the mind of the youth before explaining what is proper and improper behavior?

"Counsel in the heart of a man is as deep waters," says Proverbs 20:5, "but the man of discernment is one that will draw it up." If a wise and experienced person is not inclined to give unsolicited advice, we may have to draw him out to get his counsel. The situation is similar when we listen with love. It takes discernment to draw a person out. Ask-

ing questions helps, but we must be careful that our questions do not pry into private matters. It may be helpful to suggest that the one speaking start with matters he feels comfortable mentioning. For example, a wife who wants to talk about problems in her marriage may find it easier to start by talking about how she and her husband met and got married. A person who has become inactive in the Christian ministry may find it easier to begin by explaining how he learned the truth.

### Listening With Love—A Challenge

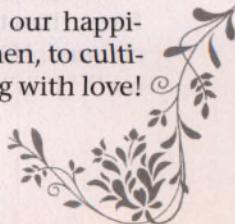
Listening when someone is upset with us can be challenging, for our natural inclination is to defend ourselves. How can we meet the challenge? "An answer, when mild, turns away rage," says Proverbs 15:1. Kindly inviting the person to talk and then patiently listening as he expresses his grievance is one way to reply with mildness.

Heated arguments often consist of two people merely repeating what they have already said. Each one feels that the other individual is not listening. How good it

would be if one of them would stop and really listen! Of course, it is important to exercise self-control and express oneself in a discreet and loving way. The Bible tells us: "The one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly."—Proverbs 10:19.

The ability to listen with love does not come naturally. However, it is an art that can be learned through effort and discipline. It certainly is a skill worth acquiring. Really listening when others speak is an expression of our love. It also contributes to our happiness. How wise it is, then, to cultivate the art of listening with love!

*Listening when someone is upset can be a challenge*



# Wonders of Creation EXALT JEHOVAH



**J**EHOVAH GOD is more exalted than imperfect humans can imagine. His creative works on earth and in the heavens bring him praise and fill us with awe.—Psalm 19:1-4.

As the Creator and Universal Sovereign, Jehovah certainly deserves to be heard when he speaks. But how amazed we would be if he were to speak to us mere humans here on earth! Suppose he spoke to you, perhaps through an angel. Surely you would pay attention. The upright man Job must have listened very attentively when God addressed him some 3,500 years ago. What can we learn from God's words to Job regarding the earth and the material heavens?

## Who Founded the Earth, and Who Controls the Sea?

Out of a windstorm, God asks Job about the earth and the sea. (Job 38:1-11) No human architect decided how big the earth should be and then helped to form it. Comparing the earth to a building, God asks Job: "Who laid its cornerstone?" Not man! God's angelic sons looked on and rejoiced as Jehovah created this planet.

The sea is an infant in relation to God, who figuratively clothes it with garments. It

"began to go forth as when it burst out from the womb." God confines the sea as if by bars and bolted doors, and tides are regulated by lunar and solar attractions.

Says *The World Book Encyclopedia*: "The wind causes most ocean waves, from small ripples to giant hurricane waves more than 100 feet (30 meters) high. . . . After the wind stops, the waves continue to move over the ocean surface and can travel great distances from where they originated. They become smoother and longer. Finally, the waves reach the shoreline, where they break and form the surf." The sea obeys God's command: "This far you may come, and no farther; and here your proud waves are limited."

## Who Makes the Dawn Ascend?

God next asks Job about the effects of light and other matters. (Job 38:12-18) No human can command the succession of night and day. Morning light figuratively lays hold of the ends of the earth and shakes out the wicked. Sinners may perform unrighteous acts in "evening darkness." (Job 24:15, 16) But dawn disperses many evildoers.

In God's hand, morning light is as a seal from which the earth gets a beautiful impression. Sunlight brings to view many colors, so that the globe seems to be arrayed in splendid garments. Job had nothing to do with this and had not walked about in the watery deep to take inventory of its treasures. Why, to this day researchers have only limited knowledge of oceanic life!

### Who Has Storehouses of Snow and Hail?

No man has escorted either light or darkness to its home or has entered the storehouses of snow and hail that God keeps back for "the day of fight and war." (Job 38:19-23) When Jehovah used hail against his foes at Gibeon, "there were more who died from the hailstones than those whom the sons of Israel killed with the sword." (Joshua 10:11) He may use hailstones of undisclosed size to destroy wicked humans led by Gog, or Satan.

—Ezekiel 38:18, 22.

### IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Armageddon—A Catastrophic End?

A Testimony to Love, Faith,  
and Obedience

Becoming Progressive  
and Adaptable Ministers

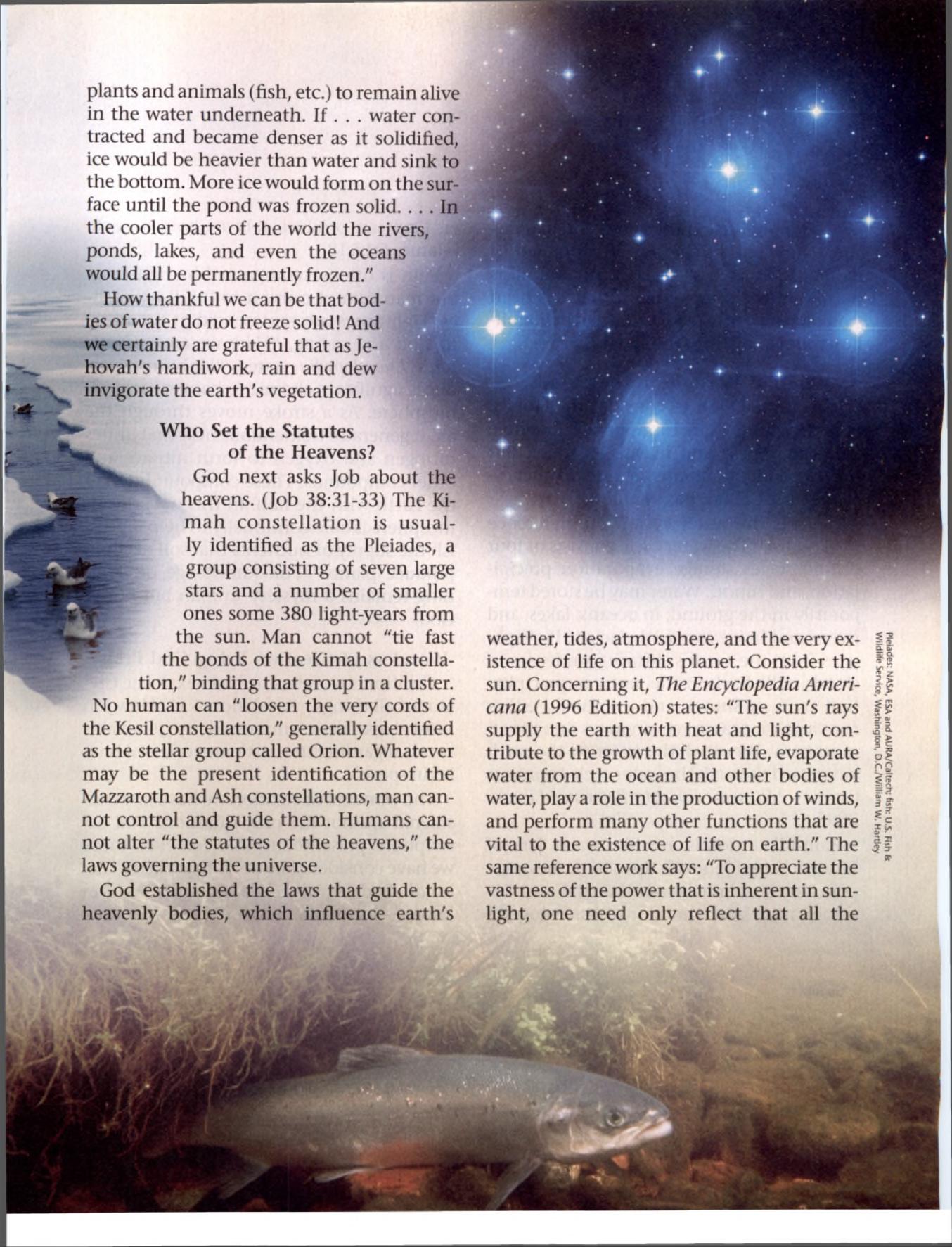
Egg-size hailstones killed 25 people and injured 200 others in central Henan Province, China, in July 2002. Regarding a hailstorm in 1545, Italian sculptor Benvenuto Cellini wrote: "We were one day distant from Lyons . . . when the heavens began to thunder with sharp rattling claps. . . . After the thunder the heavens made a noise so great and horrible that I thought the last day had come; so I reined in for a moment, while a shower of hail began to fall without a drop of water. . . . The hail now grew to the size of big lemons. . . . The storm raged for some while, but at last it stopped . . . We showed our scratches and bruises to each other; but about a mile farther on we came upon a scene of devastation which surpassed what we had suffered, and defies description. All the trees were stripped of their leaves and shattered; the beasts in the field lay dead; many of the herdsmen had also been killed; we observed large quantities of hailstones which could not have been grasped with two hands." —*Autobiography* (Book II, 50), *Harvard Classics*, Volume 31, pages 352-3.

What will happen when Jehovah opens his storehouses of snow and hail against his enemies? They cannot possibly survive when snow or hail is used to carry out his will.

### Whose Handiwork Are Rain, Dew, Frost, and Ice?

Jehovah next asks Job about rain, dew, frost, and ice. (Job 38:24-30) God is the great Rainmaker, and even "the wilderness in which there is no earthling man" enjoys his blessing. Rain, ice, and frost have no human father or originator.

The *Nature Bulletin* states: "The strangest and perhaps the most important property [of ice] is that water expands as it freezes . . . The blanket of ice that forms and floats on a pond in winter makes it possible for aquatic



plants and animals (fish, etc.) to remain alive in the water underneath. If . . . water contracted and became denser as it solidified, ice would be heavier than water and sink to the bottom. More ice would form on the surface until the pond was frozen solid. . . . In the cooler parts of the world the rivers, ponds, lakes, and even the oceans would all be permanently frozen."

How thankful we can be that bodies of water do not freeze solid! And we certainly are grateful that as Jehovah's handiwork, rain and dew invigorate the earth's vegetation.

### Who Set the Statutes of the Heavens?

God next asks Job about the heavens. (Job 38:31-33) The Kimah constellation is usually identified as the Pleiades, a group consisting of seven large stars and a number of smaller ones some 380 light-years from the sun. Man cannot "tie fast the bonds of the Kimah constellation," binding that group in a cluster.

No human can "loosen the very cords of the Kesil constellation," generally identified as the stellar group called Orion. Whatever may be the present identification of the Mazzaroth and Ash constellations, man cannot control and guide them. Humans cannot alter "the statutes of the heavens," the laws governing the universe.

God established the laws that guide the heavenly bodies, which influence earth's

weather, tides, atmosphere, and the very existence of life on this planet. Consider the sun. Concerning it, *The Encyclopedia Americana* (1996 Edition) states: "The sun's rays supply the earth with heat and light, contribute to the growth of plant life, evaporate water from the ocean and other bodies of water, play a role in the production of winds, and perform many other functions that are vital to the existence of life on earth." The same reference work says: "To appreciate the vastness of the power that is inherent in sunlight, one need only reflect that all the

Pleiades: NASA, ESA and AURA/CfA/tech; fish: U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C./William W. Hartley



power represented in the winds and in dams and rivers and all the power contained in natural fuels such as wood, coal, and oil is nothing more than sunlight that has been stored up by a tiny planet [the earth] 93 million miles away from the sun."

### Who Put Wisdom in the Clouds?

Jehovah tells Job to consider the clouds. (Job 38:34-38) Man cannot order a single cloud to appear and release its water. But how dependent humans are on the water cycle that the Creator has established!

What is the water cycle? One reference work states: "The water cycle consists of four distinct stages: storage, evaporation, precipitation, and runoff. Water may be stored temporarily in the ground; in oceans, lakes, and rivers; and in ice caps and glaciers. It evaporates from the earth's surface, condenses in clouds, falls back to the earth as precipitation (rain or snow), and eventually either runs into the seas or reevaporates into the atmosphere. Almost all the water on the earth has passed through the water cycle countless times."—*Microsoft Encarta Reference Library 2005*.

Rain-filled clouds are like water jars of heaven. When Jehovah tips them, they may pour down so much rain that the dust becomes mire and the clods cleave together.

er. God can produce rain or hold it back.  
—James 5:17, 18.

Rain is often accompanied by lightning, but man cannot cause it to fulfill his wishes. Lightnings are represented as reporting to God and saying, "Here we are!" *Compton's Encyclopedia* states: "Lightning produces significant chemical changes in the atmosphere. As a stroke moves through the air, it generates tremendous heat that unites nitrogen and oxygen to form nitrates and other compounds. These compounds fall to the Earth with the rain. In this way, the atmosphere is able continually to help replenish the supply of nutrients that soil needs to produce plants." Full knowledge of lightning remains a mystery to man but not to God.

### Wonders of Creation Bring God Praise

Creation's wonders truly do exalt the Creator of all things. (Revelation 4:11) How Job must have been impressed by Jehovah's words regarding the earth and celestial bodies in space!

The wonders of creation we have just considered are not the only questions and descriptions presented to Job. Yet, even those we have considered move us to exclaim: "Behold! God is more exalted than we can know."—Job 36:26.

# HOSEA'S PROPHECY HELPS US TO WALK WITH GOD

*"After Jehovah they will walk."*—HOSEA 11:10.

DO YOU enjoy dramas with fascinating characters and intriguing plots? The Bible book of Hosea contains a symbolic drama.\* That drama deals with the family affairs of God's prophet Hosea and is related to the figurative marriage that Jehovah contracted with ancient Israel by means of the Mosaic Law covenant.

<sup>2</sup> The setting for this drama is found in Hosea chapter 1. Hosea apparently lived in the territory of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel (also called Ephraim, for its dominant tribe). He prophesied during the reigns of Israel's last seven rulers and of Kings Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah of Judah. (Hosea 1:1) So Hosea prophesied for at least 59 years. Though the book bearing his name was completed not long after 745 B.C.E., it is relevant today, when millions are pursuing a course like that foretold in the words: "After Jehovah they will walk."—Hosea 11:10.

## What an Overview Reveals

<sup>3</sup> A brief overview of Hosea chapters 1 through 5 will strengthen our resolve to walk

\* A symbolic drama is presented at Galatians 4:21-26. Concerning it, see Volume 2, pages 693-4, of *Insight on the Scriptures*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

1. What symbolic drama is found in the book of Hosea?

2. What is known about Hosea?

3, 4. Briefly explain what is covered in Hosea chapters 1 through 5.



with God by exercising faith and pursuing a course in harmony with his will. Although inhabitants of the kingdom of Israel became guilty of spiritual adultery, God would be merciful to them if they repented. This was illustrated by the way Hosea dealt with his wife, Gomer. After she bore one child to him, she apparently had two illegitimate children. Yet, Hosea took her back, just as

Jehovah was willing to show mercy to repentant Israelites.—Hosea 1:1-3:5.

<sup>4</sup> Jehovah had a legal case against Israel because there was no truth, loving-kindness, or knowledge of God in the land. He would hold an accounting against both idolatrous Israel and the wayward kingdom of Judah. When God's people were "in sore straits," however, they would seek Jehovah.—Hosea 4:1-5:15.

## The Drama Unfolds

<sup>5</sup> "Go," God commanded Hosea, "take to yourself a wife of fornication and children of fornication, because by fornication the land positively turns from following Jehovah." (Hosea 1:2) How widespread was fornication in Israel? We are told: "The very spirit of fornication has caused [the people of the ten-tribe kingdom] to wander off, and by fornication they go out from under their God. . . .

5, 6. (a) How widespread was fornication in the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel? (b) Why is the warning given to ancient Israel significant for us?

Your daughters commit fornication and your own daughters-in-law commit adultery. . . . As to the men, it is with the harlots that they get off to themselves, and with the female temple prostitutes that they sacrifice."—Hosea 4:12-14.

<sup>6</sup> Fornication was rampant in Israel in both a physical and a spiritual sense. Jehovah would therefore hold "an accounting" against the Israelites. (Hosea 1:4; 4:9) This warning has significance for us because Jehovah will hold an accounting against those practicing immorality and engaging in unclean worship today. But those walking with God meet his standards for clean worship and are aware that "no fornicator . . . has any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and of God."—Ephesians 5:5; James 1:27.

<sup>7</sup> When Hosea married Gomer, she evidently was a virgin, and she was a faithful wife at the time she "bore to him a son." (Hosea 1:3) As portrayed in the symbolic drama, shortly after freeing the Israelites from Egyptian bondage in 1513 B.C.E., God similarly made a covenant with them that was like a contract for a clean marriage. By agreeing to the covenant, Israel promised to be faithful to her "husbandly owner," Jehovah. (Isaiah 54:5) Yes, this figurative marriage of Israel to God was symbolized by Hosea's clean marriage to Gomer. But how things changed!

<sup>8</sup> Hosea's wife "proceeded to become pregnant another time and to give birth to a



*Do you know whom Hosea's wife represents?*

daughter." That girl and a later child were probably conceived by Gomer in adultery. (Hosea 1:6, 8) Since Gomer represented Israel, you might ask, 'How did Israel come to prostitute herself?' In 997 B.C.E., ten of Israel's tribes separated from the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Calf worship was set up in the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel so that its people would not go to Judah to worship Jehovah at his temple in Jerusalem. Worship of the false god Baal, with its sex orgies, became entrenched in Israel.

<sup>9</sup> At the birth of Gomer's likely illegitimate second child, God told Hosea: "Call her name Lo-ruhamah [meaning "She Was Not Shown Mercy"], for I shall no more show mercy again to the house of Israel, because I shall positively take them away." (Hosea 1:6) Jehovah 'took them away' when the Assyrians carried the Israelites into captivity in 740 B.C.E. However, God showed mercy to the two-tribe kingdom of Judah and saved her but not by bow, sword, war, horses, or horsemen. (Hosea 1:7) During a single night in 732 B.C.E., just one angel killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers who were threatening Judah's capital city, Jerusalem.—2 Kings 19:35.

#### **Jehovah's Legal Case Against Israel**

<sup>10</sup> Gomer left Hosea and became "a wife of fornication," living adulterously with another man. This illustrated how the kingdom of Israel entered into political alliances with idolatrous nations and began to depend upon them. Instead of crediting Jehovah

7. What was symbolized by Hosea's marriage to Gomer?

8. How did the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel come into existence, and what can you say about its worship?

9. As foretold at Hosea 1:6, what happened to Israel?

10. Gomer's adulterous conduct illustrated what?

with her material blessings, Israel attributed these to the gods of such nations and violated her marriage covenant with God by engaging in false worship. No wonder Jehovah had a legal case against the spiritually adulterous nation!—Hosea 1:2; 2:2, 12, 13.

<sup>11</sup> What penalty did Israel pay for leaving her Husbandly Owner? God caused her “to go into the wilderness” of Babylonia, the nation that conquered Assyria, where the Israelites had been exiled in 740 B.C.E. (Hosea 2: 14) When Jehovah thus caused the 10-tribe kingdom to end, he did not cancel his marriage covenant with the original 12-tribe nation of Israel. In fact, when God let Jerusalem be destroyed by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E. and allowed the people of Judah to become captives, he did not abolish the Mosaic Law covenant by which 12-tribe Israel had entered into a figurative marriage with him. That relationship was done away with only after Jewish leaders rejected Jesus Christ and had him put to death in 33 C.E.—Colossians 2:14.

### Jehovah Admonishes Israel

<sup>12</sup> God admonished Israel to “put away her fornication,” but she wanted to go after those passionately loving her. (Hosea 2:2, 5) “Therefore,” said Jehovah, “here I am hedging your way about with thorns; and I will heap up a stone wall against her, so that her

11. What happened to the Law covenant when Jehovah allowed Israel and Judah to go into exile?

12, 13. What is the substance of Hosea 2:6-8, and how did those words apply to Israel?

own roadways she will not find. And she will actually chase after her passionate lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will certainly look for them, but she will not find them. And she will have to say, ‘I want to go and return to my husband, the first one, for I had it better at that time than now.’ But she herself did not recognize that it was I who had given to her the grain and the sweet wine and the oil, and that I had made silver itself abound for her, and gold, which they made use of for Baal [or, which “they made into a Baal image,” footnote].”—Hosea 2:6-8.

<sup>13</sup> Although Israel sought the help of nations that had been her “passionate lovers,” none of them were able to assist her. She was hedged about as if by an impenetrable thicket, so that they were unable to get any help to her. After a three-year Assyrian siege, her capital city, Samaria, fell in 740 B.C.E., and the ten-tribe kingdom was never reestablished. Only some individuals among the captive Israelites would realize how good things had been when their forefathers had served Jehovah. That remnant would reject Baal worship and seek a renewed covenant relationship with Jehovah.

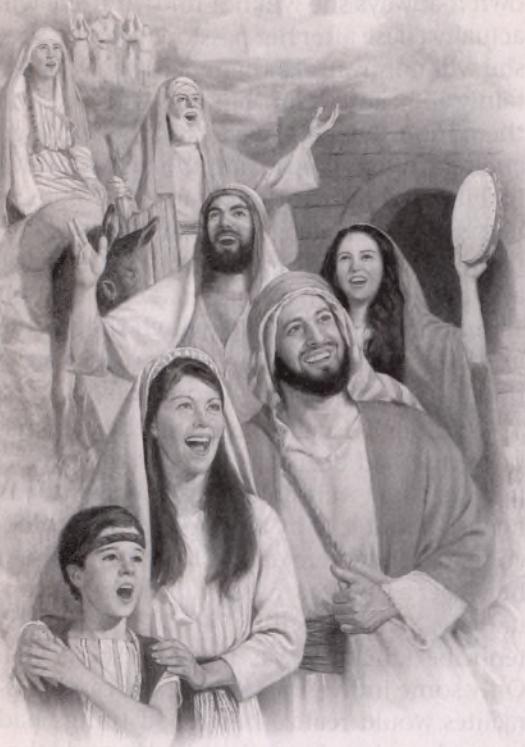
### Another Look at the Drama

<sup>14</sup> To understand more fully the connection between Hosea’s domestic affairs and Israel’s relationship with Jehovah, consider these words: “Jehovah went on to say to me:

14. How did it come about that Hosea renewed marital relations with Gomer?

*The inhabitants of Samaria were conquered by the Assyrians in 740 B.C.E.*





### *Joyful people return to their homeland*

'Go once again, love a woman loved by a companion and committing adultery.' " (Hosea 3:1) Hosea complied with this command by repurchasing Gomer from the man with whom she had been living. Afterward, Hosea firmly admonished his wife: "For many days you will dwell as mine. You must not commit fornication, and you must not come to belong to another man." (Hosea 3:2, 3) Gomer responded to the discipline, and Hosea renewed marital relations with her. How did this apply to God's dealings with the people of Israel and Judah?

<sup>15</sup> While exiles from Israel and Judah were captives in Babylon, God used his prophets to

15, 16. (a) Under what circumstances could God's disciplined nation receive his mercy? (b) How has Hosea 2:18 been fulfilled?

'speak to their heart.' To receive divine mercy, his people had to manifest repentance and go back to their Husbandly Owner, as Gomer had returned to her husband. Then Jehovah would take his disciplined wifelike nation out of the Babylonian "wilderness" and bring her back to Judah and Jerusalem. (Hosea 2:14, 15) He fulfilled that promise in 537 B.C.E.

<sup>16</sup> God also fulfilled this promise: "I shall certainly conclude a covenant in that day in connection with the wild beast of the field and with the flying creature of the heavens and the creeping thing of the ground, and the bow and the sword and war I shall break out of the land, and I will make them lie down in security." (Hosea 2:18) The Jewish remnant who returned to their homeland lived in security, with nothing to fear from animals. This prophecy also had a fulfillment in 1919 C.E., when the remnant of spiritual Israel was freed from "Babylon the Great," the world empire of false religion. They now dwell in security and enjoy life in a spiritual paradise with their companions, who hope to live forever on earth. Animalistic traits do not exist among these true Christians.—Revelation 14:8; Isaiah 11:6-9; Galatians 6:16.

### **Take the Lessons to Heart**

<sup>17</sup> *God is merciful and compassionate, and that is how we should be.* That is one lesson taught by the early chapters of Hosea. (Hosea 1:6, 7; 2:23) God's willingness to extend mercy to repentant Israelites is in harmony with the inspired proverb: "He that is covering over his transgressions will not succeed, but he that is confessing and leaving them will be shown mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) Also comforting to repentant wrongdoers are the psalmist's words: "The sacrifices to God are a

17-19. (a) What qualities of God are we here urged to imitate? (b) How should we be affected by Jehovah's mercy and compassion?

broken spirit; a heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not despise.”—Psalm 51:17.

<sup>18</sup> Hosea’s prophecy highlights the compassion and mercy of the God we worship. Even if some deviate from his righteous ways, they can repent and turn around. If they do, Jehovah welcomes them. He showed mercy to repentant members of the nation of Israel, with which he had entered a figurative marriage. Though they disobeyed Jehovah and ‘pained the Holy One of Israel, he was merciful and kept remembering that they were flesh.’ (Psalm 78:38-41) Such mercy should move us to keep walking with our compassionate God, Jehovah.

<sup>19</sup> Even though such sins as murder, stealing, and the committing of adultery were rampant in Israel, Jehovah ‘spoke to her heart.’ (Hosea 2:14; 4:2) Our own hearts should be stirred and our personal attachment to Jehovah strengthened as we reflect on his mercy and compassion. Let us therefore ask ourselves: ‘How can I better imitate Jehovah’s mercy and compassion in my dealings with others? If a fellow Christian who has offended me asks for forgiveness, am I as ready to forgive as God is?’—Psalm 86:5.

<sup>20</sup> *God gives true hope.* For example, he promised: “I will give her . . . the low plain of Achor as an entrance to hope.” (Hosea 2:15) Jehovah’s ancient wifelike organization had the sure hope of being restored to her homeland, where “the low plain of Achor” was located. Fulfillment of that promise, in 537 B.C.E., gives us sound reason to rejoice in the sure hope that Jehovah sets before us.

<sup>21</sup> *To continue walking with God, we need to keep on taking in knowledge of him and applying it in our life.* Knowledge of Jehovah was sorely lacking in Israel. (Hosea 4:1, 6) Yet,

20. Give an example to show that we should have confidence in God-given hope.

21. What role does knowledge play in our walking with God?

some prized divine teaching highly, acted in harmony with it, and were greatly blessed. Hosea was one of them. So were the 7,000 who in Elijah’s day had not bent the knee to Baal. (1 Kings 19:18; Romans 11:1-4) Our own gratitude for divine instruction will help us to keep on walking with God.—Psalm 119:66; Isaiah 30:20, 21.

<sup>22</sup> *Jehovah expects men taking the lead among his people to reject apostasy.* However, Hosea 5:1 says: “Hear this, O priests, and pay attention, O house of Israel, and you, O house of the king, give ear, for with you people the judgment has to do; because a trap is what you have become to Mizpah and as a net spread over Tabor.” Apostate leaders were a trap and a net for the Israelites, enticing them to practice idolatry. Mount Tabor and a place named Mizpah likely were centers of such false worship.

<sup>23</sup> So far, Hosea’s prophecy has shown us that Jehovah is a merciful God who gives hope and blesses those applying his instruction and rejecting apostasy. Like repentant Israelites of the past, let us therefore seek Jehovah and always endeavor to please him. (Hosea 5:15) By doing so, we will reap what is good and have the incomparable joy and peace experienced by all who faithfully walk with God.—Psalm 100:2; Philippians 4:6, 7.

22. How is apostasy to be viewed?

23. How have you benefited from a study of Hosea chapters 1 through 5?

### How Would You Answer?

- What did Hosea’s marriage to Gomer symbolize?
- Why did Jehovah have a legal case against Israel?
- Which lesson in Hosea chapters 1 to 5 impressed you?

# WALK WITH GOD, AND REAP WHAT IS GOOD

*"It is wind that they keep sowing, and a storm wind is what they will reap."*—HOSEA 8:7.

A TRIP through a dangerous region would be safer if an experienced guide led the way. It would be wise to walk with such a guide rather than heading off on our own. In some respects, this illustrates the situation that we are in. Jehovah has, in effect, offered to guide us through the vast desert of the present wicked world. We are wise to walk with him rather than trying to direct our own steps. How can we walk with God? By following the guidance he provides in his Word.

<sup>2</sup> The preceding article discussed the symbolic drama found in Hosea chapters 1 to 5. As we have seen, that drama contains lessons that can help us to walk with God. Let us now discuss some highlights of chapters 6 through 9. It would be helpful to begin with an overview of these four chapters.

## A Brief Overview

<sup>3</sup> Jehovah sent Hosea to prophesy primarily to the northern ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. That nation, also known as Ephraim after the name of its dominant tribe, had turned away from God. Hosea chapters 6 through 9 show that the people displayed disloyalty by overstepping Jehovah's covenant and practicing wickedness. (Hosea 6:7) They trusted in worldly alliances rather than returning to Jehovah. Because they kept sowing what was bad, they would reap what was bad. In oth-

1. How can we walk with Jehovah?
2. What will be discussed in this article?
3. Briefly relate the contents of Hosea chapters 6 through 9.

er words, adverse judgment was coming. But Hosea's prophecy also contains a heart-warming message. The people were assured that they could return to Jehovah and would be shown mercy if they gave evidence of heartfelt repentance.

<sup>4</sup> From these four chapters of Hosea's prophecy, we can obtain further guidance that will help us to walk with God. Let us consider four practical lessons: (1) True repentance is manifested by deeds, not just words; (2) sacrifices alone do not please God; (3) Jehovah feels hurt when his worshippers turn away from him; and (4) to reap what is good, we must sow what is good.

## How True Repentance Is Manifested

<sup>5</sup> Hosea's prophecy teaches us much about repentance and mercy. At Hosea 6:1-3, we read: "Come, you people, and do let us return to Jehovah, for he himself has torn in pieces but he will heal us. He kept striking, but he will bind us up. He will make us alive after two days. On the third day he will make us get up, and we shall live before him. And we will know, we will pursue to know Jehovah. Like dawn, his going forth is firmly established. And he will come in like a pouring rain to us; like a spring rain that saturates the earth."

- 6 Who spoke the words recorded in these
4. What practical lessons from Hosea's prophecy will we consider?
5. Give the essence of what is said at Hosea 6:1-3.
- 6-8. What was wrong with Israel's repentance?

verses? Some ascribe these statements to the unfaithful Israelites and say that the disobedient people were feigning repentance and presuming upon God's mercy. Others, however, say that the prophet Hosea was speaking, begging the people to come back to Jehovah. Regardless of who made these statements, the crucial question is, Did the people of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel in general return to Jehovah, manifesting genuine repentance? The answer is no. Jehovah says through Hosea: "What shall I do to you, O Ephraim? What shall I do to you, O Judah, when the loving-kindness of you people is like the morning clouds and like the dew that early goes away?" (Hosea 6:4) What a testimony to the deplorable spiritual condition of God's people! Loving-kindness, or loyal love, had almost disappeared—like the morning mist that quickly vanishes with the rising of the sun. Although the people apparently pretended to repent, Jehovah found no basis for extending mercy. What was the problem?

<sup>7</sup> Israel's repentance was not truly from the heart. Hosea 7:14 says this about Jehovah's displeasure with his people: "They did not call to me for aid with their heart, although they kept howling on their beds." Verse 16 adds: "They proceeded to return, not to any-

thing higher"—that is, "not to an elevated form of worship." (Footnote) The people were not willing to return to Jehovah's exalted worship by making the changes that were needed to restore their relationship with him. Indeed, they did not really want to walk with God.

<sup>8</sup> There was another problem with Israel's repentance. The people were continuing to practice sin—actually, a great variety of sins, including fraud, murder, stealing, idolatry, and forming unwise alliances with other nations. At Hosea 7:4, the people are likened to "a furnace," or baker's oven, evidently because evil desires were burning within them. In view of such a deplorable spiritual condition, did the people deserve mercy? Certainly not! Hosea tells the rebellious people that Jehovah will "remember their error" and "give attention to their sins." (Hosea 9:9) No mercy for them!

<sup>9</sup> As we read Hosea's words, what do we learn about repentance and mercy? The warning example of the faithless Israelites teaches us that in order to benefit from Jehovah's mercy, we must demonstrate heartfelt repentance. How is such repentance manifested? Jehovah is not deceived by tears or

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9. Hosea's words teach us what about repentance and mercy?

*Like morning clouds,  
Israel's loyal love vanished*



*Israel's evil desires  
burned like a furnace*

mere words. Genuine repentance is made apparent by actions. In order to receive mercy, a wrongdoer must completely abandon his sinful course and bring his life into harmony with the high standards of Jehovah's elevated worship.

### Sacrifices Alone Do Not Please Jehovah

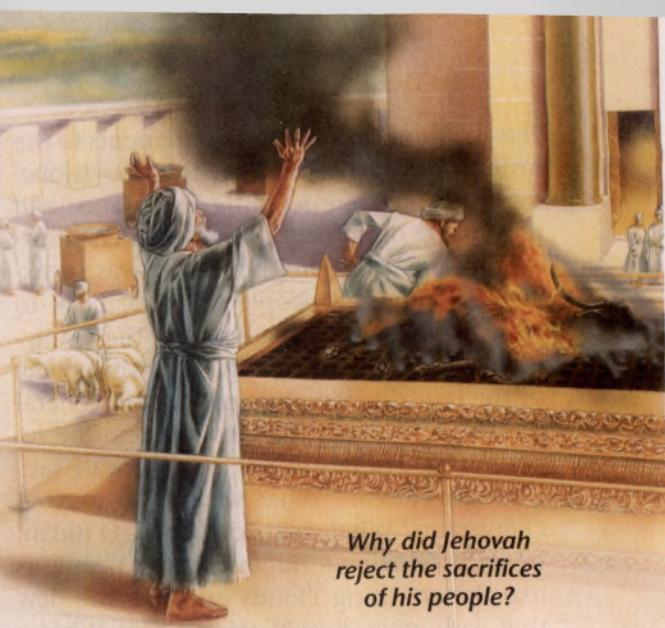
<sup>10</sup> Now let us discuss a second lesson that can help us to walk with Jehovah. It is this: Sacrifices alone do not please God. Hosea 6:6 says: "In loving-kindness I [Jehovah] have taken delight, and not in sacrifice; and in the knowledge of God rather than in whole burnt offerings." Notice that Jehovah takes delight in loving-kindness, or loyal love—a quality of the heart—and in knowledge about him. But you may be wondering: 'Why does this verse say that Jehovah does *not* take delight in "sacrifice" and in "whole burnt offerings"?' Were those not required under the Mosaic Law?'

<sup>11</sup> Sacrifices and offerings were required under the Law, but there was a serious problem with Hosea's contemporaries. Evidently, there were Israelites who dutifully made such offerings in a showy display of devotion. At the same time, they were practicing sin. By their sinfulness they indicated that their hearts were devoid of loyal love. They also showed that they had rejected knowledge of God, for they were not living in harmony with it. If the people did not have the proper heart condition and were not pursuing the right way of life, of what value were their sacrifices? Their sacrifices were offensive to Jehovah God.

<sup>12</sup> Hosea's words contain a warning for many churchgoers today. They make offerings to God in the form of religious practices.

10, 11. As illustrated in the case of Israel, why do sacrifices alone not please Jehovah?

12. Hosea 6:6 contains what warning for people living today?



*Why did Jehovah reject the sacrifices of his people?*

But their worship has little, if any, real influence on their daily conduct. Are such people really pleasing to God if their hearts do not motivate them to take in accurate knowledge of him and to apply that knowledge by turning away from sinful practices? Let no one imagine that religious works alone please God. Jehovah finds no delight in humans who try to earn his favor by a mere form of worship instead of truly living by his Word.  
—2 Timothy 3:5.

<sup>13</sup> As true Christians, we bear in mind that sacrifices alone do not please God. It is true that we do not offer animal sacrifices to Jehovah. Nevertheless, we do "offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) It is vital that we do not become like the sinful Israelites of Hosea's day, thinking that we can compensate for wrongdoing by offering such spiritual sacrifices to God. Consider the example of one youth who secretly engaged in sexual immorality. She later admitted: "I increased my field ministry, thinking that this would somehow cover up the wrong." That was similar to what the

13. What kind of sacrifices do we offer, but what should be borne in mind about their value?

wayward Israelites tried to do. However, our sacrifice of praise is acceptable to Jehovah only if it is accompanied by the proper heart motivation and godly conduct.

### Jehovah Is Hurt When His Worshippers Leave Him

<sup>14</sup> A third lesson we learn from Hosea chapters 6 to 9 is regarding how Jehovah feels when his worshippers turn away from him. God has both strong and tender feelings. He has tender feelings of joy and compassion toward those who repent of their sins. When his people are unrepentant, though, he takes strong, decisive action. Because God has deep concern for our welfare, he rejoices when we faithfully walk with him. “Jehovah is taking pleasure in his people,” says Psalm 149:4. Yet, how does God feel when his servants are unfaithful?

<sup>15</sup> Referring to the unfaithful Israelites, Je-

14. Hosea’s prophecy reveals what about God’s feelings?

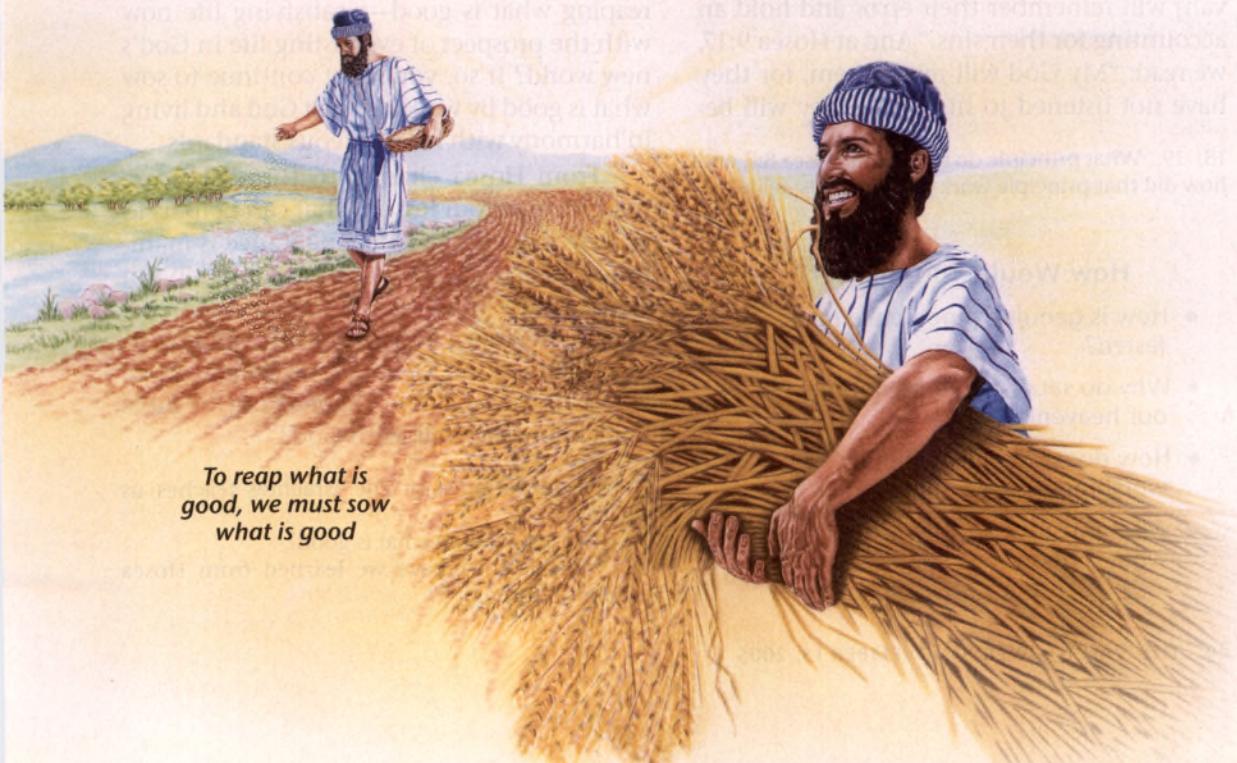
15. According to Hosea 6:7, how were some Israelites acting?

hovah says: “They themselves, like earthling man, have overstepped the covenant. There is where they have dealt treacherously with me.” (Hosea 6:7) The Hebrew word rendered ‘deal treacherously’ also means “deal deceitfully, (deal) unfaithfully.” At Malachi 2:10-16, the same Hebrew word is used to describe the disloyal conduct of those Israelites who were unfaithful to their marriage partner. Regarding the use of this term at Hosea 6:7, one reference work says that it is “a marriage metaphor that infuses personal qualities into the relationship . . . The situation is a personal one in which love has been violated.”

<sup>16</sup> Jehovah viewed Israel as his figurative wife by reason of his covenant with the nation. So when his people violated the terms of that covenant, it was as if they were committing adultery. God was like a faithful husband, but his people deserted him!

<sup>17</sup> What about us? God cares about whether we walk with him or not. We do well to

16, 17. (a) How did Israel act with respect to God’s covenant with that nation? (b) What should we remember regarding our actions?



*To reap what is good, we must sow what is good*

remember that “God is love” and that our actions affect him. (1 John 4:16) If we pursue a wrong course, we may cause Jehovah pain and will certainly displease him. Our keeping this in mind can be a powerful deterrent to yielding to temptation.

### How We Can Reap What Is Good

<sup>18</sup> Let us consider a fourth lesson from Hosea’s prophecy—how we can reap what is good. Regarding the Israelites and the folly and vanity of their faithless course, Hosea writes: “It is wind that they keep sowing, and a storm wind is what they will reap.” (Hosea 8:7) Here we find a principle that we do well to keep in mind: There is a direct relationship between what we do now and what happens to us later. How did this principle prove true in the case of the unfaithful Israelites?

<sup>19</sup> By practicing sin, those Israelites were sowing what was bad. Would they be able to continue doing so without reaping bad consequences? They surely would not escape adverse judgment. Hosea 8:13 states: “He [Jehovah] will remember their error and hold an accounting for their sins.” And at Hosea 9:17, we read: “My God will reject them, for they have not listened to him, and they will be-

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18, 19. What principle do we find at Hosea 8:7, and how did that principle work out for the Israelites?

### How Would You Answer?

- How is genuine repentance manifested?
- Why do sacrifices alone not please our heavenly Father?
- How does God feel when his worshippers leave him?
- What must we sow if we are to reap what is good?

come fugitives among the nations.” Jehovah would hold the Israelites accountable for their sins. Because they sowed what was bad, they would reap what was bad. God’s judgment against them was carried out in 740 B.C.E., when the Assyrians overthrew the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel and led its inhabitants into captivity.

<sup>20</sup> The experience of those Israelites teaches us a basic truth: We reap what we sow. God’s Word warns us: “Do not be misled: God is not one to be mocked. For whatever a man is sowing, this he will also reap.” (Galatians 6:7) If we sow what is bad, we will reap what is bad. For example, those who pursue an immoral way of life will reap bitter consequences. There will be an unhappy outcome for an unrepentant wrongdoer.

<sup>21</sup> How, then, can we reap what is good? That question can be answered with a simple illustration. If a farmer wants to harvest wheat, would he plant barley? Of course not! He must plant what he wants to reap. Similarly, if we want to reap what is good, we must sow what is good. Do you want to continue reaping what is good—a satisfying life now with the prospect of everlasting life in God’s new world? If so, you must continue to sow what is good by walking with God and living in harmony with his righteous standards.

<sup>22</sup> From Hosea chapters 6 through 9, we have learned four lessons that can help us to walk with God: (1) True repentance is manifested by actions; (2) sacrifices alone do not please God; (3) Jehovah feels hurt when his worshippers turn away from him; and (4) to reap what is good, we must sow what is good. How can the final five chapters of this Bible book help us to walk with God?

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20. The experience of the Israelites teaches us what?  
21. How can we reap what is good?  
22. What lessons have we learned from Hosea chapters 6 through 9?

# "THE WAYS OF JEHOVAH ARE UPRIGHT"

*"The ways of Jehovah are upright, and the righteous are the ones who will walk in them."—HOSEA 14:9.*

**J**EHOVAH gave the Israelites an upright start in the days of the prophet Moses. By the early eighth century B.C.E., however, their situation had become so bad that God found them guilty of gross wrongdoing. This is evident from Hosea chapters 10 through 14.

<sup>2</sup> Israel's heart had become hypocritical. The people of that ten-tribe kingdom had "plowed wickedness" and reaped unrighteousness. (Hosea 10:1, 13) "When Israel was a boy, then I loved him," said Jehovah, "and out of Egypt I called my son." (Hosea 11:1) Although God had delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, they repaid him with lying and deception. (Hosea 11:12) Jehovah therefore gave them this counsel: "To your God you should return, keeping loving-kindness and justice."—Hosea 12:6.

<sup>3</sup> Rebellious Samaria and its king would have a disastrous end. (Hosea 13:11, 16) But the final chapter of Hosea's prophecy opens with the plea: "Do come back, O Israel, to Jehovah your God." If the Israelites repented, sought forgiveness, God would extend mercy. Of course, they would have to acknowledge that "the ways of Jehovah are upright" and walk in them.—Hosea 14:1-6, 9.

<sup>4</sup> This section of Hosea's prophecy con-

- 1, 2. Jehovah gave the Israelites what kind of start, but what happened to them?
3. What was to happen to rebellious Samaria, but how could the Israelites receive mercy?
4. We will consider what principles from Hosea's prophecy?

tains many principles that can help us to walk with God. We will consider these: (1) Jehovah requires unhypocritical worship, (2) God shows his people loyal love, (3) we need to hope in Jehovah constantly, (4) Jehovah's ways are always upright, and (5) sinners can return to Jehovah.

## **Jehovah Requires Unhypocritical Worship**

<sup>5</sup> *Jehovah expects us to render sacred service to him in a clean, unhypocritical manner.* However, Israel had become an unproductive "degenerating vine." Israel's inhabitants had 'multiplied altars' for use in false worship. These apostates had even put up pillars—perhaps obelisks designed for use in unclean worship. Jehovah was going to break down these altars and destroy such pillars.—Hosea 10:1, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Hypocrisy has no place among Jehovah's servants. Yet, what had happened to the Israelites? Why, 'their heart had become hypocritical!' Although they had once entered a covenant with Jehovah as a people dedicated to him, he found them guilty of hypocrisy. What can we learn from this? If we have dedicated ourselves to God, we must not be hypocrites. Proverbs 3:32 warns: "The devious person is a detestable thing to Jehovah, but His intimacy is with the upright ones." In order to walk with God, we must display love "out of a clean heart and out of a

5. What kind of service does God expect from us?
6. To walk with God, we must be free of what trait?



### *Accept spiritual help from Christian elders*

good conscience and out of faith without hypocrisy.”—1 Timothy 1:5.

### **God Shows His People Loyal Love**

<sup>7</sup> If we worship Jehovah in an unhypocritical and upright way, we will be recipients of his loving-kindness, or loyal love. The wayward Israelites were told: “Sow seed for yourselves in righteousness; reap in accord with loving-kindness. Till for yourselves arable land, when there is time for searching for Jehovah until he comes and gives instruction in righteousness to you.”—Hosea 10:12.

<sup>8</sup> If only the Israelites would repentantly search for Jehovah! Then he would gladly ‘give them instruction in righteousness.’ If we have personally sinned seriously, let us search for Jehovah, praying to him for forgiveness and seeking spiritual help from Christian elders. (James 5:13-16) May we also seek the guidance of God’s holy spirit, for “he who is sowing with a view to his flesh will reap corruption from his flesh, but he who is sowing with a view to the spirit will reap everlasting life from the spirit.” (Galatians 6:8) If we ‘sow with a view to the spirit,’ we will continue to enjoy God’s loyal love.

<sup>9</sup> We can have confidence that Jehovah always deals with his people in a loving way.

7, 8. (a) Under what circumstances can we enjoy God’s loyal love? (b) What should we do if we have sinned seriously?

9, 10. How does Hosea 11:1-4 apply to Israel?

Evidence of this is found at Hosea 11:1-4, where we read: “When Israel was a boy, then I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son. . . . To the Baal images they took up sacrificing, and to the graven images they began making sacrificial smoke. But as for me, I taught Ephraim [the Israelites] to walk, taking them upon my arms;

and they did not recognize that I had healed them. With the ropes of earthling man I kept drawing them, with the cords of love, so that I became to them as those lifting off a yoke on their jaws, and gently I brought food to each one.”

<sup>10</sup> Here Israel is compared to a small child. Jehovah lovingly taught the Israelites to walk, taking them upon his arms. And he kept drawing them with “the cords of love.” What a touching picture! Imagine that you are a parent helping your child to take his first steps. Your arms are outstretched. You may be using cords for your little one to hold on to so that he does not fall. Well, Jehovah’s love for you is just as tender. He is delighted to lead you with “the cords of love.”

<sup>11</sup> In dealing with the Israelites, Jehovah “became to them as those lifting off a yoke on their jaws, and gently [he] brought food to each one.” God acted as one who lifts off or pushes back a yoke far enough to enable an animal to eat comfortably. Only when the people of Israel broke their yoke of submission to Jehovah did they come under the oppressive yoke of their enemies. (Deuteronomy 28:45, 48; Jeremiah 28:14) May we never fall into the clutches of our archenemy, Satan, and suffer the pains of his oppressive yoke. Instead, let us continue loyally walking with our loving God.

11. In what way did God ‘become as one lifting off a yoke’?

## Hope in Jehovah Constantly

<sup>12</sup> To go on walking with God, we must hope in him constantly. The Israelites were told: "As respects you, to your God you should return, keeping loving-kindness and justice; and let there be a hoping in your God constantly." (Hosea 12:6) Israel's inhabitants could provide evidence of a repentant return to Jehovah by displaying loving-kindness, by exercising justice, and by 'hoping in God constantly.' Regardless of how long we have walked with God, we must be determined to display loving-kindness, exercise justice, and hope in God constantly.

—Psalm 27:14.

<sup>13</sup> Hosea's prophecy involving the Israelites gives us a special reason to hope in God. "From the hand of Sheol I shall redeem them," said Jehovah. "From death I shall recover them. Where are your stings, O Death? Where is your destructiveness, O Sheol?" (Hosea 13:14) Jehovah was not going to rescue the Israelites from physical death at that time, but he would eventually swallow up death forever and nullify its victory.

<sup>14</sup> Addressing fellow anointed Christians, Paul quoted from Hosea's prophecy and wrote: "When this which is corruptible puts on incorruption and this which is mortal puts on immortality, then the saying will take place that is written: 'Death is swallowed up forever.' 'Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?' The sting producing death is sin, but the pow-

12. According to Hosea 12:6, what is required in order for us to go on walking with God?

13, 14. How does Paul apply Hosea 13:14, giving us what reason to hope in Jehovah?



Hosea's prophecy gives us reason to hope in Jehovah's resurrection promises

er for sin is the Law. But thanks to God, for he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Corinthians 15:54-57) Jehovah raised Jesus from death, providing a comforting guarantee that people in God's memory will be resurrected. (John 5:28,

29) What a blessed reason to hope in Jehovah! Yet, something in addition to the resurrection hope motivates us to walk with God.

## Jehovah's Ways Are Always Upright

<sup>15</sup> Our conviction that "the ways of Jehovah are upright" helps us to continue walking with God. The inhabitants of Samaria did not walk in God's righteous ways. Consequently, they would have to pay a price for their sin and lack of faith in Jehovah. It was foretold: "Samaria will be held guilty, for she is actually rebellious against her God. By the sword they will fall. Their own children will be dashed to pieces, and their pregnant women themselves will be ripped up." (Hosea 13:16) Historical records show that the Assyrians, who conquered Samaria, were capable of such dreadful atrocities.

<sup>16</sup> Samaria was the capital city of the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. Here, though, the name Samaria may apply to the entire territory of that kingdom. (1 Kings 21:1) Assyrian King Shalmaneser V laid siege to the city of Samaria in 742 B.C.E. When Samaria finally fell in 740 B.C.E., many of its leading residents were exiled to Mesopotamia and

15, 16. What was foretold regarding Samaria, and how was the prophecy fulfilled?

Media. Whether Samaria was captured by Shalmaneser V or by his successor, Sargon II, remains uncertain. (2 Kings 17:1-6, 22, 23; 18:9-12) Nevertheless, Sargon's records refer to the deportation of 27,290 Israelites to places in the Upper Euphrates and Media.

<sup>17</sup> Samaria's inhabitants paid dearly for their failure to comply with Jehovah's upright ways. As dedicated Christians, we too would suffer tragic consequences if we were to become practitioners of sin, treating God's righteous standards with contempt. May we never pursue such a wicked course! Rather, let each of us apply the apostle Peter's counsel: "Let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a busybody in other people's matters. But if he suffers as a Christian, let him not feel shame, but let him keep on glorifying God in this name."—1 Peter 4:15, 16.

<sup>18</sup> We "keep on glorifying God" by walking in his upright ways instead of doing things our own way. Cain committed murder because he went his own way and failed to heed Jehovah's warning that sin was about to pounce on him. (Genesis 4:1-8) Balaam accepted payment from Moab's king but tried in vain to curse Israel. (Numbers 24:10) And God put the Levite Korah and others to death

17. Rather than treating God's standards with contempt, what should we do?

18. How can we "keep on glorifying God"?

### How Would You Answer?

- If we render clean worship to God, how will he deal with us?
- Why should we hope in Jehovah constantly?
- Why are you convinced that Jehovah's ways are upright?
- How can we continue to walk in Jehovah's upright ways?

for rebelling against the authority of Moses and Aaron. (Numbers 16:1-3, 31-33) Surely we do not want to go in the murderous "path of Cain," rush into "the erroneous course of Balaam," or perish in "the rebellious talk of Korah." (Jude 11) If we should err, however, Hosea's prophecy gives us comfort.

### Sinners Can Return to Jehovah

<sup>19</sup> Even those who have stumbled by committing serious sin can return to Jehovah. At Hosea 14:1, 2, we find this entreaty: "Do come back, O Israel, to Jehovah your God, for you have stumbled in your error. Take with yourselves words and come back to Jehovah. Say to him, all you people, 'May you pardon error; and accept what is good, and we will offer in return the young bulls of our lips.'"

<sup>20</sup> Repentant Israelites were able to offer God 'the young bulls of their lips.' These were sacrifices of sincere praise. Paul alluded to this prophecy when he urged Christians to "offer to God a sacrifice of praise, that is, the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name." (Hebrews 13:15) What a privilege it is to walk with God and offer such sacrifices today!

<sup>21</sup> Israelites who abandoned their wayward course and turned back to God offered him 'the young bulls of their lips.' They thus experienced spiritual restoration, even as God had promised. Hosea 14:4-7 says: "I [Jehovah] shall heal their unfaithfulness. I shall love them of my own free will, because my anger has turned back from him. I shall become like the dew to Israel. He will blossom like the lily, and will strike his roots like Lebanon. His twigs will go forth, and his dignity will become like that of the olive tree, and his fragrance will be like that of Lebanon. They

19, 20. Repentant Israelites were able to offer what sacrifices?

21, 22. What restoration would repentant Israelites experience?



*Keep on walking with God  
with everlasting life in view*

will again be dwellers in his shadow. They will grow grain, and will bud like the vine. His memorial will be like the wine of Lebanon.”

<sup>22</sup> Repentant Israelites would be healed spiritually and would again enjoy God’s love. Jehovah would become like refreshing dew to them in that he would bless them abundantly. His restored people would have dignity “like that of the olive tree,” and they would walk in God’s ways. Since we ourselves are determined to walk with Jehovah God, what is required of us?

### Keep Walking in Jehovah’s Upright Ways

<sup>23</sup> If we are to continue walking with God, we must exercise “the wisdom from above” and always act in harmony with his upright ways. (James 3:17, 18) The last verse of Hosea’s prophecy reads: “Who is wise, that he may understand these things? Discreet, that he may know them? For the ways of Jehovah are upright, and the righteous are the

23, 24. The book of Hosea concludes with what encouraging prophecy, and how does it affect us?

ones who will walk in them; but the transgressors are the ones who will stumble in them.”—Hosea 14:9.

<sup>24</sup> Instead of being guided by the wisdom and standards of this world, let us be determined to walk in God’s upright ways. (Deuteronomy 32:4) Hosea did that for 59 years or more. He faithfully delivered divine messages, knowing that those who were wise and discreet would understand such words. What about us? As long as Jehovah allows us to give a witness, we will keep on looking for those who will wisely accept his undeserved kindness. And we are delighted to do this in full cooperation with “the faithful and discreet slave.”—Matthew 24:45-47.

<sup>25</sup> Our consideration of Hosea’s prophecy should help us to go on walking with God with everlasting life in his promised new world in view. (2 Peter 3:13; Jude 20, 21) What a splendid hope! That hope will become a personal reality if we prove by word and deed that we mean it when we say: “The ways of Jehovah are upright.”

25. Our consideration of Hosea’s prophecy should help us to do what?



## 'The Love of All of You Is Increasing'

A NUMBER of natural disasters struck Japan in 2004. Among these were typhoons, floods, and earthquakes. They drastically affected the lives of many, including Jehovah's Witnesses. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) These adversities, though, provided opportunities for Witnesses to show brotherly affection for one another.—1 Peter 1:22.



For example, because of heavy rains in July, a river in central Japan overflowed its banks.

Flooding damaged more than 20 homes of Jehovah's Witnesses. In one Kingdom Hall, the water rose some three feet above the floor. Immediately, Witnesses from neighboring congregations pitched in to help. Hundreds of volunteers cleaned the mud-soaked houses. The Kingdom Hall was fully cleaned up and repaired within just two weeks.

On October 23, an earthquake measuring 6.8 on the Richter scale struck the same area. At least 40 lives were lost, and over 100,000 people had to be evacuated from their homes. Water, gas, and electric-

ity were cut off. Although the epicenter of the quake was just 30 miles away, the renovated Kingdom Hall was not damaged. It immediately became a temporary relief center. Christian overseers quickly checked on the safety of their fellow believers and were relieved to learn that none had been hurt or killed. Early the next morning, six Witnesses who had been victims of the July flood eagerly volunteered to deliver food and water to the affected area. Within hours of the earthquake, relief goods were made available.

"Those who were victims of the floods considered the relief work for those affected by the earthquake to be an opportunity to express their appreciation for the help they themselves had received," relates one overseer. "They worked hard from early morning till late night. And how their faces shone with happiness!"

Neither floods nor earthquakes are threats to the bond of love that binds the Christian brotherhood of Jehovah's Witnesses. On the contrary, when such disasters strike, Christians experience what the apostle Paul told fellow believers in Thessalonica: "The love of each and all of you is increasing one toward the other."—2 Thessalonians 1:3.