

OCTOBER 1, 2009

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

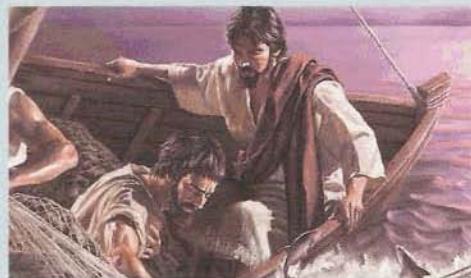
WHAT IS THE
HOLY SPIRIT?

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

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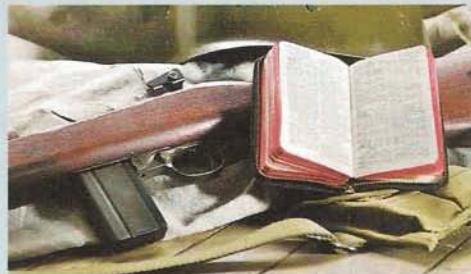
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THE HOLY SPIRIT

Why the Confusion?

WHAT is the holy spirit? The question seems straightforward enough, but finding a simple answer may prove difficult. Pope Benedict XVI told a crowd in Australia: "A clear understanding of the Spirit almost seems beyond our reach."

Certainly there are many opinions and much uncertainty when it comes to the question, What is the holy spirit? Following are some typical replies:

- A real person who lives inside Christ's disciples.
- Divine science, a law of God in action.
- God's presence at work in the world.
- The third person of the Trinity.

Why such confusion? It dates back to the fourth century C.E. when some theologians claimed that the holy spirit was a person who was somehow equal to God. This, however, was not an idea taught in the Scriptures or by the early followers of Christ. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* explains: "The Old Testament clearly does not envisage God's spirit as a person . . . God's spirit is simply God's power." The same source adds: "The majority of New Testament texts reveal God's spirit as something, not someone; this is especially seen in the parallelism between the spirit and the power of God."

Understandably, people find it hard to think of a power as a person. Thus, a recent survey in the United States revealed that

most people reject the idea that the holy spirit is a person or a "living entity." Are they right? Or should we believe the theologians who insist that "the Holy Ghost is a Person really distinct as such from the Father and the Son"?

To get a reliable answer, we need to go to God's Word, the Bible, which describes the holy spirit in detail. The apostle Paul wrote: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error." —2 Timothy 3:16, *Today's English Version*.

Why should you seek to discover the truth about the holy spirit? Because knowing that truth may open the way for you to receive help from God. Do you sometimes feel unable to carry on in your own strength? Jesus promised his disciples: "Keep on asking, and it will be given you . . .

The Scriptures
reveal to us the nature
of the holy spirit

If you . . . know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more so will the Father in heaven give holy spirit to those asking him!"—Luke 11:9, 13.

In the following articles, we will let the Scriptures reveal to us the nature of the holy spirit. And we will see how it can be a force for good in our lives.

What Is THE HOLY SPIRIT?

JESUS once asked his disciples: "Which father is there among you who, if his son asks for a fish, will perhaps hand him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he also asks for an egg, will hand him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11, 12) The children of Galilee enjoyed eating eggs and fish; they knew what they wanted.

Jesus said that we should keep on asking persistently for the holy spirit, like a hungry child asking for food. (Luke 11:9, 13) Understanding the nature of the holy spirit will enable us to grasp the key role it can play in our lives. So let us first examine what the Bible teaches us about the holy spirit.

"Power of the Most High"

The Scriptures make clear that the holy spirit is a force that God uses to accomplish his will. When the angel Gabriel an-

nounced to Mary that she would have a son even though she was a virgin, the angel told her: "Holy spirit will come upon you, and power of the Most High will overshadow you. For that reason also what is born will be called holy, God's Son." (Luke 1:35) According to Gabriel's words, there is a link between the holy spirit and the "power of the Most High."

A similar idea appears elsewhere in the Bible. The prophet Micah said: "I myself have become full of power, with the spirit of Jehovah." (Micah 3:8) Jesus promised his disciples: "You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you." (Acts 1:8) And the apostle Paul spoke of "the power of holy spirit."—Romans 15:13, 19.

So, what may we conclude from the foregoing? There is a close connection between the holy spirit and the power of God. The



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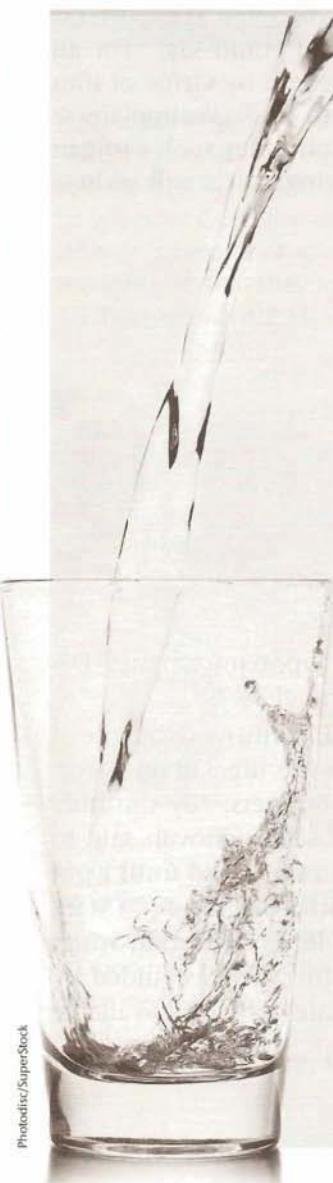
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^o CD also available.

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holy spirit is the means by which Jehovah exerts his power. Put simply, the holy spirit is God's applied power, or his active force. And what a force that is! We cannot comprehend the power needed to create the entire universe. Through the prophet Isaiah, Jehovah suggested that we reflect on the following: "Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One

who is bringing forth the army of them even by number, all of whom he calls even by name. Due to the abundance of dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power, not one of them is missing."—Isaiah 40:26.

Thus the Bible indicates that the universe in all its order and harmony exists thanks to the "dynamic energy," or power, of Almighty God. Clearly, God's active force is

Why the holy spirit is not a person

The Bible compares the holy spirit to water. When promising future blessings for his people, God said: "I shall pour out water upon the thirsty one, and trickling streams upon the dry place. I shall pour out my spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your descendants."—Isaiah 44:3.

When God pours out his spirit upon his servants, they become "full of holy spirit," or "filled with holy spirit." Jesus, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and the disciples who were gathered together on the day of Pentecost 33 C.E. are all described as being full of, or filled with, holy spirit.—Luke 1:15; 4:1; Acts 4:8; 9:17; 11:22, 24; 13:9.

Consider this: Could a person be 'poured out' on many different individuals? Would you say that one person could 'fill' a whole group of people? That defies logic. The Bible does refer to people becoming filled with wisdom, understanding, or even accurate knowledge, but it never describes anyone as being filled with another person.—Exodus 28:3; 1 Kings 7:14; Luke 2:40; Colossians 1:9.

The Greek word translated "spirit" is *pneu'ma*, which also conveys the idea of an invisible power. According to Vine's *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, the word *pneu'ma* "primarily denotes the wind . . . also breath; then, especially the spirit, which, like the wind, is invisible, immaterial and powerful."

Clearly, then, the holy spirit is *not a person*.*

* For more information, see "The Truth About the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit," pages 201-204, in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

immense, and our own existence depends on it.—See the box “The Holy Spirit in Action.”

Jehovah may use his holy spirit on a grand scale, as in the creation of the universe. But he can also use it in behalf of his human creation. The Bible abounds in references to how God’s active force infused his servants on earth with power.

“Jehovah’s Spirit Is Upon Me”

The ministry of Jesus gives us a fascinating glimpse of how God’s holy spirit can empower his servants. “Jehovah’s spirit is upon me,” Jesus told the people of Nazareth. (Luke 4:18) What did Jesus accomplish in “the power of the spirit”? (Luke 4:14) He healed every sort of sickness, calmed the

waves of a raging sea, fed thousands of people with a few loaves and fish, and even raised the dead. The apostle Peter described Jesus as “a man publicly shown by God . . . through powerful works and portents and signs that God did through him.”—Acts 2:22.

The holy spirit is not currently bringing about such miracles. Nonetheless, it can do remarkable things for us. Jehovah willingly gives his holy spirit to his worshippers, as Jesus assured his disciples. (Luke 11:13) Thus, the apostle Paul could say: “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me.” (Philippians 4:13) Could the holy spirit play such a role in your life? The following article will address that question.

THE HOLY SPIRIT A Force You Need in Your Life

“DO NOT throw me away from before your face; and your holy spirit O do not take away from me.” (Psalm 51:11) This was King David’s fervent prayer after he had made a tragic mistake.

David had long experienced the power of the holy spirit. When he was still a teenager, it had enabled him to vanquish Goliath—a formidable soldier. (1 Samuel 17:45-50) It had also empowered him to write some of the most beautiful psalms ever composed. “The spirit of Jehovah it was that spoke by

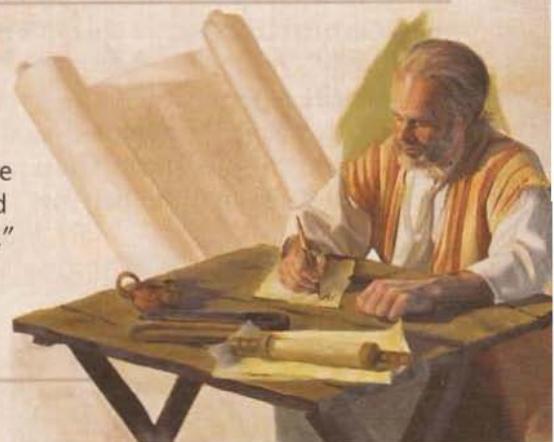
me, and his word was upon my tongue,” David explained.—2 Samuel 23:2.

Jesus Christ himself confirmed the role of the holy spirit in David’s life. On one occasion, Jesus told his listeners: “By the holy spirit David himself said, ‘Jehovah said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies beneath your feet.”’” (Mark 12:36; Psalm 110:1) Jesus knew that when David wrote his psalms, he was guided by holy spirit. Is that same holy spirit available to help us?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTION

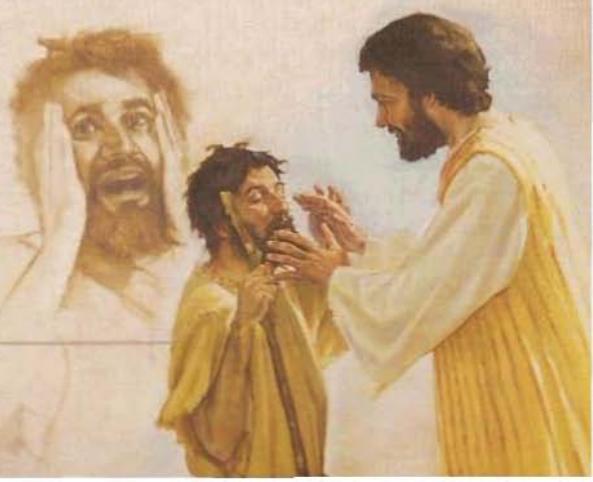
God used the holy spirit to *create the earth and the rest of the universe.* "How many your works are, O Jehovah! All of them in wisdom you have made. The earth is full of your productions," the psalmist exclaimed. "If you send forth your spirit, they are created."—Psalm 104:24, 30; Genesis 1:2; Job 33:4.

Holy spirit inspired godly men to write the Bible.
"All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial," wrote the apostle Paul. (2 Timothy 3:16) The Greek word translated "inspired of God" literally means "breathed into by God." Jehovah's breath, or spirit, guided the Bible writers' thoughts, so that they transmitted "the word of God."
—1 Thessalonians 2:13.



Holy spirit empowered God's servants to foretell the future with accuracy. The apostle Peter explained: "No prophecy of Scripture springs from any private interpretation. For prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit."—2 Peter 1:20, 21; Joel 2:28.

Holy spirit helped Jesus and other men of faith to preach the good news of God's Kingdom and to perform miracles. Jesus said: "Jehovah's spirit is upon me, because he anointed me to declare good news to the poor, he sent me forth to preach a release to the captives and a recovery of sight to the blind."—Luke 4:18; Matthew 12:28.



"Keep On Asking, and It Will Be Given You"

You may never write a psalm. But you may well face obstacles as daunting as a towering Goliath. For example, consider Isabel.* Her husband abandoned her for a younger woman. He left her saddled with debt, and he gave her no economic support to help her provide for their two young daughters. "I felt betrayed and treated like dirt," she says. "Nevertheless, since he left me, I have felt that God's holy spirit has sustained me."

Did Isabel expect to receive holy spirit automatically? No, she implored God every day to send her his spirit. She knew she needed God's strength to help her face the

*'I prayed fervently
every day, asking God to
give me strength.
I knew I could not succeed
on my own. And I saw
how he answered my
prayers'*

future with courage, to care properly for her children, and to rebuild her shattered sense of self-worth. She took to heart Jesus' words: "Keep on asking, and it will be given you; keep on seeking, and you will find; keep on knocking, and it will be opened to you." —Matthew 7:7.

Roberto also felt that he needed God's spirit but for different reasons. He was addicted to tobacco and hashish, which he smoked constantly. He fought his addiction for two long years, and he relapsed several

* Some names have been changed.

times. "You suffer anxiety when you stop taking drugs," Roberto explains. "The body keeps on clamoring for the drug day after day."

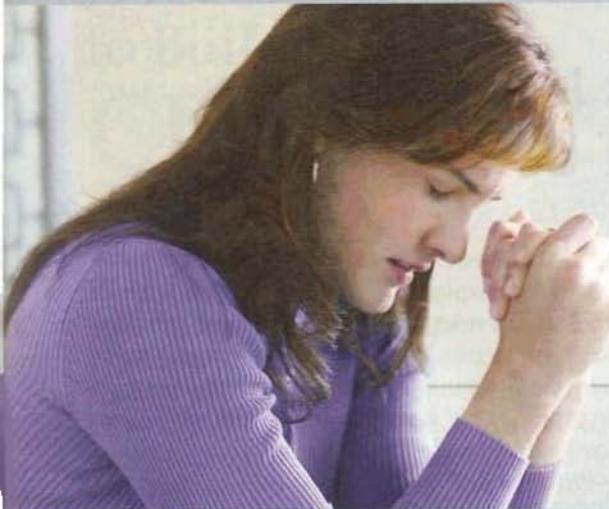
Roberto continues: "But I was determined to change my life so that I could serve God acceptably. I tried to fill my mind with positive thoughts from the Bible. I prayed fervently every day, asking God to give me the strength to clean up my life. I knew I could not succeed on my own. And I saw how Jehovah answered my prayers, especially when I felt demoralized after a relapse. I believe that God's holy spirit gave me renewed strength; without his spirit I would never have overcome my addiction."—Philippians 4:6-8.

Mounting Up "With Wings Like Eagles"

Like Isabel and Roberto, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses have experienced the power of the holy spirit in their lives. Jehovah's active force—the force behind the creation of the universe—can be made available to you if you wish. God is willing and eager to share his spirit with you if you earnestly request it. But to receive that spirit, you need to learn the truth about him and sincerely seek to do his will.—Isaiah 55:6; Hebrews 11:6.

Under the empowering force of holy spirit, you may receive the strength to serve God successfully and to face whatever challenges may arise in your life. This is what the Bible assures us: "[Jehovah] is giving to the tired one power; and to the one without dynamic energy he makes full might abound. . . . Those who are hoping in Jehovah will regain power. They will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not tire out."—Isaiah 40:28-31.

WAYS IN WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN HELP US

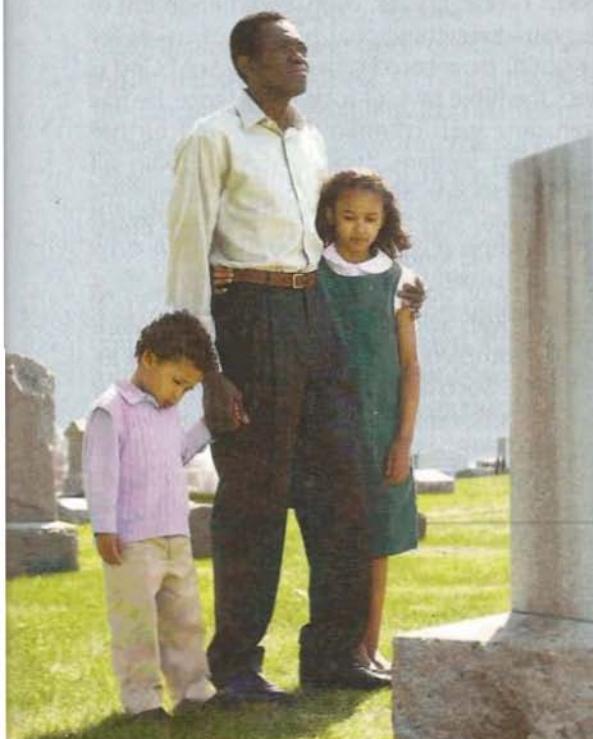


Holy spirit can strengthen you to fight temptation and overcome harmful habits. The apostle Paul said: "God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear, but along with the temptation he will also make the way out in order for you to be able to endure it."—1 Corinthians 10:13.



Holy spirit can help you to cultivate godly qualities. "The fruitage of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, mildness, self-control."

—Galatians 5:22, 23.



Holy spirit can fortify you to endure trials. "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me."

—Philippians 4:13.

What Does Jehovah Ask of Us?

Deuteronomy 10:12, 13

TO OBEY or not to obey—the decision is not always an easy one. A superior who is harsh or overly demanding may win only grudging compliance from those under him. Jehovah God, however, wins willing obedience from his worshippers. Why? To answer that, let us examine the words of Moses found at Deuteronomy 10:12, 13.*

When summing up God's requirements, Moses raised an intriguing question: "What is Jehovah your God asking of you?" (Verse 12) God has the right to ask whatever he wants of us. After all, he is the Sovereign Lord and the Source and Sustainer of life. (Psalm 36:9; Isaiah 33:22) Jehovah could not have a stronger claim on our obedience. Yet, he does not want forced obedience. What does he ask of us? That we be "obedient from the heart."—Romans 6:17.

What could motivate us to obey God willingly? Moses mentions one factor, saying: "Fear Jehovah your God."# (Verse 12) This is not a morbid dread of bad consequences but, rather, a healthy, reverential regard for God and his ways. If we are filled with a profound awe of God, we will want to avoid displeasing him.

What, though, should be our primary motive for obeying God? Moses states: "Love him [Jehovah] and . . . serve Jehovah your God with all your heart and all your soul." (Verse 12) Love of

* Although Moses' words applied to Israel of old, in principle they apply to all who want to please God today.—Romans 15:4.

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, Moses stresses that fear of God should be a guiding principle in the lives of His servants.—Deuteronomy 4:10; 6:13, 24; 8:6; 13:4; 31:12, 13.

God involves more than feelings. One reference work explains: "Hebrew verbs for feelings sometimes refer as well to the actions that result from them." This same work says that to love God means "to act lovingly" toward him. In other words, if we truly love God, we will act in ways that we know are pleasing to him.—Proverbs 27:11.

How far should we go in obeying God? Moses says: "Walk in all his [God's] ways." (Verse 12) Jehovah wants us to do everything that he asks of us. Might such complete obedience work against our best interests? That would be impossible.

Our willing obedience will bring blessings. Moses writes: "Keep the commandments . . . that I am commanding you today, for your good." (Verse 13) Yes, every commandment of Jehovah—everything that he asks of us—is for our good. How could it be otherwise? "God is love," the Bible says. (1 John 4:8) Hence, he has given only such commands as would further our lasting welfare. (Isaiah 48:17) Doing all that Jehovah asks of us will spare us many frustrations now and lead to endless future blessings under his Kingdom rule.*

To obey or not to obey—when it comes to what Jehovah asks of us, there is but one wise choice. Complete and willing obedience is always best. Such a faithful course draws us ever closer to Jehovah, the loving God who always has our best interests at heart.

* For more information, see chapter 3, "What Is God's Purpose for the Earth?," in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Is It Possible to Build Faith in a CREATOR?

“WHEN I thought about the possibility of a Creator, it made me angry to think that someone might have the power to prevent human suffering but was not prepared to use it!” Thus said one former atheist who lost family members in the Holocaust. He was hardly alone in feeling as he did.

When faced with atrocities, many find it difficult to believe in God, or they seek solace in the idea that God does not exist. What are the major factors that cause some not to believe? Would humankind be better off, as some think, without God or religion? Is it possible for an atheist to build faith in a loving Creator?

Religion’s Failure

Ironically, a leading cause of atheism is religion. Historian Alister McGrath explains: “What propels people toward atheism is above all a sense of revulsion against the excesses and failures of organized religion.” Religion is often seen as a factor behind wars and violence. An atheist and philosopher named Michel Onfray muses on how it is possible that the same religious book could inspire two types of men, one “aspiring to saintliness,” the other “carrying out an act of inhuman cruelty”—terrorism.

Many people have bitter memories of their involvement with religion. During his military service, Bertil, a young Swedish man, heard the army chaplain justifying vi-

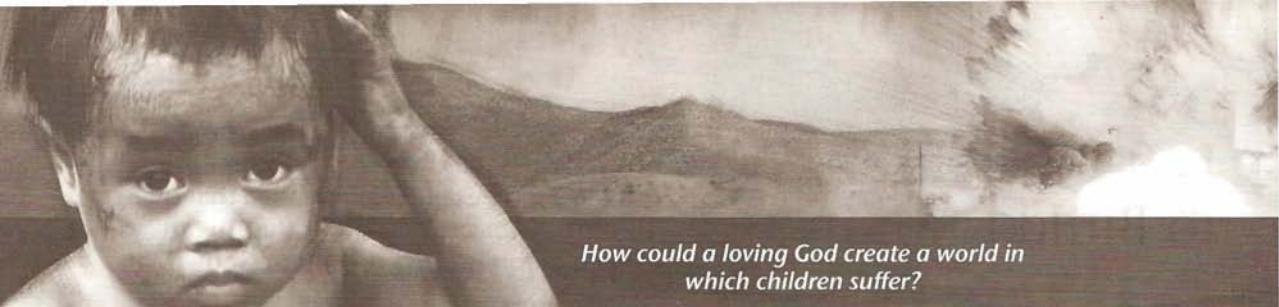
olence by referring to Jesus’ warning that those who took the sword would perish by the sword. The chaplain reasoned that there must be *somebody* to wield that sword, so the soldier must be a servant of God!—Matthew 26:52.*

Bernadette, whose father was killed in France during the second world war, remembers feeling outraged by the words of the priest at the funeral of her three-year-old cousin: “God has called this child to be an angel.” Bernadette later gave birth to a disabled child, and she received no comfort from the church on that score either.

Ciarán, who grew up against the backdrop of the violence in Northern Ireland, was repulsed by the doctrine of hellfire. He used to declare that he hated any God responsible for such wickedness and challenged God, if He existed, to strike him down. Ciarán is not alone in his revulsion for such harsh church teachings. In fact, church dogma may have helped prepare the way for the theory of evolution. According to Alister McGrath, it was Darwin’s “visceral distaste” for the doctrine of hellfire—not his belief in evolution—that raised doubts in his mind about the existence of God. McGrath also notes Darwin’s “deep grief over the death of his daughter.”

For some, the practice of religion is synonymous with mindlessness and fanaticism. Irina, who was disgusted with empty religious sermons and repetitive litanies, relates: “It seemed to me that religious people did not think.” Louis, repelled by the acts of barbarity perpetrated by religious fanatics, took a more radical position: “After showing me its boring face for years, religion now revealed to me its hideous

* As to whether genuine Christians should be involved in war, see the article “Is War Compatible With Christianity?” on pages 29-31.



How could a loving God create a world in which children suffer?

face. I became aggressively opposed to all religion."

Better Off Without God?

Not surprisingly, then, many people view religion as an obstacle to human progress and peace. Some have even asked themselves if humankind would be better off without God and religion. However, would such a wholesale rejection of religious thinking bring its own problems?

The 18th-century philosopher Voltaire bitterly protested the abuses of the corrupt church of his time. Yet, he considered the existence of a Supreme Being to be fundamental to our moral sense. Later, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche famously proclaimed that God is dead, but he was afraid of the moral vacuum and the possible harm that might result from atheistic thinking. Were such fears justified?

Author Keith Ward notes that as mankind entered the modern era, barbarism did not decrease but instead "reached heights never previously imaginable." Nor have experiments with atheism freed mankind from the failings of human nature, such as corruption and intolerance. These facts have led many thinking people, even atheists, to recognize the moral value of belief in God.

Keith Ward highlights the beneficial influence of belief in God: "Faith adds an insistent moral demand, a responsibility to care for the world that God has created." Numerous recent studies have indicated that there is an increased level of altru-

ism among the religious. Altruism, in turn, tends to bring on a measure of satisfaction. Such findings reinforce the value of the principle set out by Jesus: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

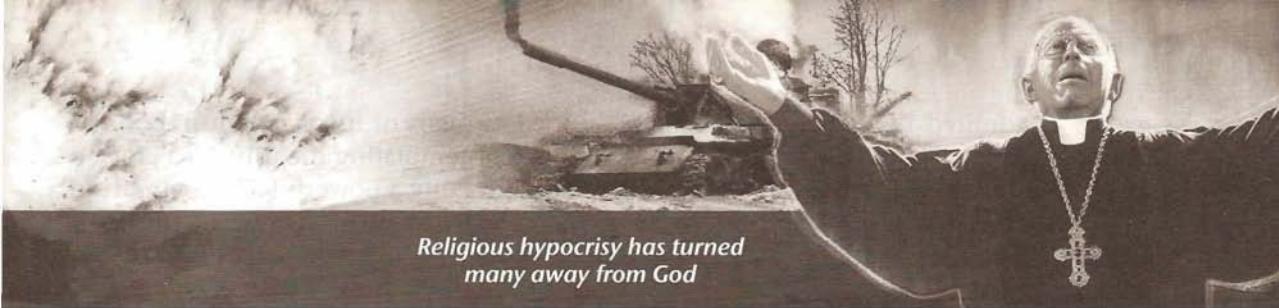
One former atheist, a social worker, came to be impressed by the Bible's ability to influence lives. He said: "Having spent many years, with very limited success, trying to help people change behavior that was damaging to them and others, I found it remarkable to see how dramatically people could change for the better. I also learned that the changes were sustained."

Nevertheless, as far as some atheists are concerned, belief in God has produced far more massacres and conflicts than goodness and altruism. They may recognize that faith has a good effect on some, but they themselves remain profoundly skeptical. Why?

Further Causes of Disbelief

Many are taught that evolution is an established fact. Anila, for example, was educated in atheistic Albania. "In school, we were taught that to believe in God was naive and backward," she relates. "I regularly learned wonderful things about plants and organic life, but I attributed everything to evolution, since this made us look as if we were in harmony with scientific thinking." She admits today that the "proofs that were given had to be accepted blindly."

A sense of bitterness may pose an obstacle to some. Jehovah's Witnesses often encoun-



Religious hypocrisy has turned many away from God

ter this attitude when they go from door to door, offering hope from the Bible. Bertil, mentioned earlier, received such a visit from a young Witness. Bertil remembers saying to himself: ‘Poor fanatic. You have come to the wrong place!’ He says: “I let him in and began to vent my indignation concerning God, the Bible, and religion.”

Gus, from Scotland, was troubled by injustice. Initially, he was very argumentative and challenging during discussions with Jehovah’s Witnesses. He asked questions that were reminiscent of those of the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk, who said to God: “Why is it that you make me see what is hurtful,

Questions Left Unanswered by Evolution

- How could life come from something without life?—PSALM 36:9.
- Why do animals and plants reproduce only according to their kinds?—GENESIS 1: 11, 21, 24-28.
- If humans descend from inferior monkeys, why did not a single superior ape-man survive?—PSALM 8:5, 6.
- How can altruism be explained by the theory of the survival of the fittest?
—ROMANS 2:14, 15.
- Does mankind have any real hope for the future?—PSALM 37:29.

and you keep looking upon mere trouble?”—Habakkuk 1:3.

God’s seeming indifference to wickedness has also long troubled humans. (Psalm 73: 2, 3) Simone de Beauvoir, a French writer, once said: “It was easier for me to think of a world without a creator than of a creator loaded with all the contradictions of the world.”

However, does the inability of many religions to explain such contradictions mean that there *is* no explanation? Gus said that he did at last find “a satisfactory explanation for why the all-powerful Creator has to allow human suffering for a while.” That, he said, “was an important step for me.”*

Some individuals claiming to be atheists may actually have doubts about evolution, may sense their own spiritual need, and may even pray. Let us see what caused some atheists and agnostics to think more deeply about the subject and eventually build a close relationship with their Creator.

What Helped Them Build Faith in a Creator?

Appealing to common sense, the young man who called on Bertil showed him that there is an enormous distinction between true Christianity and the religion practiced by those who are Christians in name only. Bertil explains what impressed him, beyond arguments in favor of the existence of a

* For a detailed explanation of God’s permission of wickedness, see the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses, pages 106 to 114.

Creator: "I admired his patience with my stubbornness. . . . He remained very calm, and he always had some literature for me and was well prepared."*

Svetlana, who was influenced by evolution and Communism, was convinced that only the fittest survive. She was nonetheless troubled by this harsh concept of life. What she was taught in medical school added to her confusion: "During lessons on atheism, we learned about the survival of the fittest. But in medical courses, we were taught that we should help the weak." She also wondered why humans, who were supposed to be an evolutionary improvement over monkeys, suffered from emotional problems that did not afflict monkeys. The explanation for these contradictions came from an unexpected source: "My grandmother explained to me from the Bible that it is our imperfection that causes negative emotions." Svetlana was also thrilled to learn the Bible's answer to such questions as why honest people suffer.

Leif, of Scandinavian origin, was a firm believer in evolution and considered the Bible to be a book of fairy tales. One day, however, a friend challenged his convictions: "Are you aware that you are only repeating what others have said, without knowing a thing about the Bible?" Explaining the effect of those words on him, Leif says: "I realized that I had never called evolution into question, but I had swallowed it whole. . . . I think that among other things a knowledge of Bible prophecies and their fulfillment can help an atheist to start thinking." —Isaiah 42:5, 9.

Ciarán, mentioned earlier, was disillu-

sioned by years of involvement in politics. When contemplating life, this idea crossed his mind: Only a powerful and loving God could resolve the problems facing the earth and show him the way out of his personal misery. 'Oh, how I wish I could find such a God,' he groaned within himself. In extreme distress, he prayed: "If you are there to hear me, show me somehow, and show me a way out of my own misery and the pain suffered by the human family." A few days later, one of Jehovah's Witnesses knocked on his door. The Witness explained what the Bible teaches about the wicked influence behind human governments. (Ephesians 6:12) This explanation confirmed Ciarán's own observations and stimulated his curiosity. After further Bible study, his faith in a loving Creator began to grow strong.

Mankind's Creator and You

Religious hypocrisy, such atheistic teachings as evolution, and the prevalence of wickedness have caused many to doubt or even deny the existence of a Creator. However, if you allow it to, the Bible can provide satisfying answers to your questions. It also reveals God's thoughts, "thoughts of peace, and not of calamity, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11) For Bernadette, whose child was born disabled and who doubted the existence of a Creator, that hope became like a comforting dressing on the wounds of her personal suffering.

The Bible's explanation of God's permission of suffering has touched the mind and heart of many former atheists. By taking the time to find the Bible's answer to such vital questions, you too may come to be convinced that there is a God who is, in fact, "not far off from each one of us."—Acts 17:27.

* For arguments in support of creation, see *Awake!* of September 2006, "Is There a Creator?," published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Our Readers Ask

IS THE DEVIL REAL?

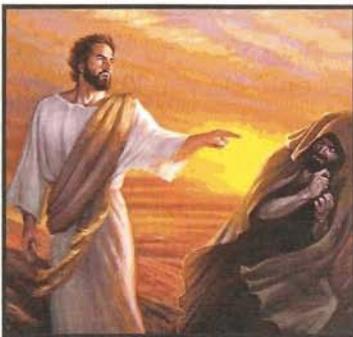
Yes, the Bible teaches that Satan the Devil is, indeed, a real person. Critics of the Bible, however, scoff at such a portrayal of the Devil. Satan, they say, merely represents the principle of evil that resides in humans.

Should we be surprised by the confusion regarding Satan's true identity? Not at all.

To illustrate: A criminal might wipe his fingerprints from a crime scene so that he may conceal his identity and thus continue his illegal activity undetected. Similarly, Satan is a criminal mastermind who is content to operate behind the scenes, promoting moral corruption. Jesus clearly identified Satan as the one responsible for the evil state of human affairs. Jesus called Satan "the ruler of this world."—John 12:31.

Where did the Devil come from? Originally created as a perfect spirit creature in heaven, this outlaw angel made himself the Devil when he became obsessed with the desire to have humans worship him instead of God. The Bible records a conversation here on earth between Satan and Jesus in which the Devil revealed his selfish ambition. Satan tried to get Jesus to "fall down and do an act of worship" to him.—Matthew 4:8, 9.

Likewise, in conversations with God, as recorded in the book of Job, Satan revealed his motives. He would stop at nothing to influence humans to renounce God.—Job 1:13-19; 2:7, 8.



Consider: If Satan conversed with Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, how could Satan possibly be merely the principle of evil that resides in others? There is absolutely no evil in God or his Son! Clearly, then, Satan is a real person—an evil spirit creature who has no respect for Jehovah or for Jesus.

The corrupt state of human affairs bears testimony to the existence of a real Devil. The nations of this world let surplus food rot while their hungry populations starve. The nations store up weapons of mass destruction for mutual annihilation. They pollute earth's environment. Yet, most people are blind to the source of such hateful, self-destructive behavior. Why?

The Bible reveals that Satan "has blinded the minds of the unbelievers." (2 Corinthians 4:4) To manipulate humanity, Satan employs an invisible organization. He is "the ruler of the demons." (Matthew 12:24) Just as a boss of an organized crime ring can run a large illegal empire without revealing himself to all those involved, so Satan uses his insidious organization of wicked angels to control masses of people who remain largely unaware of his role or influence.

How thankful we can be that the Bible unmasks the Devil and exposes his organization! We can thus take steps to resist the Devil's influence. The Bible admonishes us: "Subject yourselves . . . to God; but oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you."—James 4:7.

Shem Saw the Badness of Two Worlds

NOAH'S son Shem survived the end of one world, and he lived on into another one. Do you know why the first world Shem lived in was destroyed and how he and the rest of his family were able to live on into a second one?—* Let's talk about this.

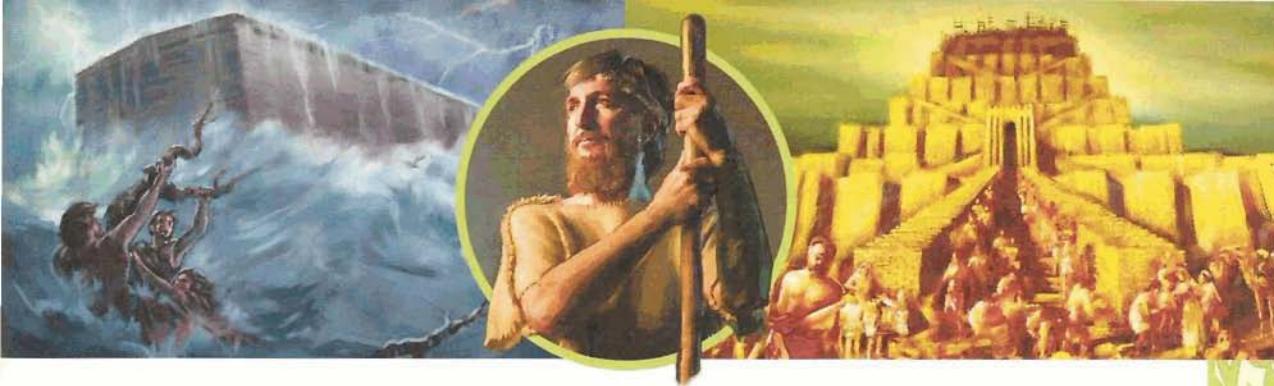
When Shem was young, “the badness of man” was great, the Bible says. Everything people thought about was “bad all the time.” So do you know what God did?—He brought a flood that wiped out that wicked world. The apostle Peter wrote: “The world of that time suffered destruction when it was [flooded] with water.”—Genesis 6:5; 2 Peter 3:6.

Do you see why God destroyed that world?—The people were bad, and they thought about what was “bad all the time.” Jesus talked about this. “Before the flood,” he said, people were having a good time “eating and drinking” as well as “marrying and . . . being given in marriage.” Jesus added: “*They took no note* until the flood came and swept them all away.”—Matthew 24:37-39.

What did those people fail to note, or see?—Shem’s father, Noah, was “a preacher of righteousness,” but the people did not listen to what he was saying. Noah listened to God and built an ark, a floating vessel, that would carry him and his family safely through the Flood. Only Noah, his wife, their sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth—and their wives took note of what God wanted them to do. The rest did only what *they* wanted to do, so they were swept away in the Flood.—2 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 3:20.

About a year after the Flood began, Shem and his family came out of the ark onto dry land. All bad people were gone, but that soon changed. Canaan, the son of Shem’s brother Ham, did something so bad that Noah said: “Cursed be Canaan.” Nimrod, a grandson of Ham, was bad too. He opposed the true God, Jehovah, and told people to build a high tower called

* If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.



Babel to make a name for themselves. How do you think this made Shem and his father feel?—Genesis 9:25; 10:6-10; 11:4, 5.

They were sad, and Jehovah was too. Do you know what Jehovah did?—He confused the language of people so that they could not understand one another. Then the people had to stop building and go to different places with those who spoke the same language. (Genesis 11:6-9) But God did not change the language of Shem and his family. So they could stay close to one another and help one another serve God. Have you ever thought about how long Shem served Jehovah?—

Shem lived to be 600 years old. He lived for 98 years before the Flood and 502 years afterward. We can be sure that he helped Noah build the ark and warn people of the coming Flood. But what do you think Shem did for the more than 500 years he lived after the Flood?—Noah referred to Jehovah as “Shem’s God.” Shem must have kept on serving Jehovah and helping the members of his family to do the same. Later, Shem’s family came to include Abraham, Sarah, and Isaac.—Genesis 9:26; 11:10-31; 21:1-3.

Think now about today’s world, which has been growing ever more wicked since Shem’s day. What will happen to it?—The Bible says that it “is passing away.” But note the promise: “He that does the will of God remains forever.” So if we do God’s will, we may be among those who survive into God’s new world. Then, with God’s help we can live on forever in happiness on earth!—1 John 2:17; Psalm 37:29; Isaiah 65:17.

Questions:

- What world did Shem first live in, and for what two reasons did God destroy it?
- How long did Shem live, and what kind of man was he?
- What will soon happen to this world?
- What must we do to survive the end of this world?

The Vatican Codex

WHY A TREASURE?

THE Vatican is a veritable treasure trove. Its frescoes, sculptures, and architecture are prized for their beauty and splendor. Yet, access to one of its greatest treasures was limited for hundreds of years. Housed in the Vatican Library, a precious manuscript illuminates portions of God's Word that were written thousands of years ago. It is known as the Vatican Codex.*

The Alexandrine and Sinaitic codices, two other early Bible manuscripts that are prized by scholars, have intriguing histories of discovery and rescue from destruction. The origin of the Vatican Codex, on the other hand, is murky at best.

A Hidden Treasure

Where did the Vatican Codex come from? The earliest reference to it is a 15th-century entry in the Vatican Library catalog. Scholars have suggested that it may have been produced in Egypt, Caesarea, or even Rome. After evaluating these theories, however, Professor J. Neville Birdsall of the University of Birmingham, England, concluded: "In short, we cannot be certain of the exact date nor the place of origin of Codex Vaticanus, nor, in spite of scholarly efforts, can its history before the fifteenth century be traced."

* The Vatican Codex is also referred to as Vatican Manuscript 1209 or Codex Vaticanus and is designated "B" by most scholars. The codex was the prototype of today's book. See "From Scroll to Codex—How the Bible Became a Book," in the June 1, 2007, issue of this magazine.

Nevertheless, the Vatican Codex has been called one of the most important single Bible manuscripts. Why?

Over the centuries, some copyists introduced errors into the Bible text. The challenge for translators seeking textual integrity, then, is to find reliable manuscripts that convey what appeared in the original writings. So imagine how eager scholars were to examine the Vatican Codex, a Greek manuscript dating from the fourth century C.E., less than 300 years after the Bible was completed! This codex contains a complete text of the Hebrew and the Christian Greek Scriptures, except for a few portions that were lost over time.

For a long time, Vatican authorities were reluctant to make the codex available to Bible scholars. Eminent textual scholar Sir Frederic Kenyon related: "In 1843 [Bible scholar Konstantin von] Tischendorf, after waiting for several months, was allowed to see it for six hours. . . . In 1845 the great English scholar Tregelles was allowed indeed to see it but not to copy a word." Tischendorf applied to see the codex again, but he was denied permission after copying 20 pages. Yet, as Kenyon reported, "renewed entreaty procured him six days' longer study, making in all fourteen days of three hours each; and by making the very most of his time Tischendorf was able in 1867 to publish the most perfect edition of the manuscript which had yet appeared."

The Vatican later made a better copy of the codex available.

"Careful Preservation"

What kind of text did the Vatican Codex reveal? *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible* states that it "shows both consistency of spelling and accuracy of copying, and a quality in the text thus carefully reproduced." The same reference work continues: "It is thus possible to conclude that this text is the product of a tradition of scholarly copying."

Two noteworthy scholars who were struck by the virtues of the Vatican Codex were B. F. Westcott and F.J.A. Hort. Their *New Testament in the Original Greek*, released in 1881 and based on the Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts, is still the primary text for several modern translations of the Christian Greek Scriptures, including *The Emphasised Bible*, by J. B. Rotherham, and the *New World Translation*.

Some critics, however, thought that Westcott and Hort's trust in the Vatican Codex was misplaced. Was the codex an accurate rendering of the original text? The publication of the Bodmer papyri between 1956 and 1961 excited scholars because the papyri included portions of Luke and John from the early third century C.E. Would these support what later appeared in the Vatican Codex?

"There is a remarkable convergence between the text of *Vaticanus* and the surviving text of the Bodmer papyri," wrote Philip B. Payne and Paul Canart in *Novum Testamentum*. "In light of this convergence, it is reasonable to conclude that the original scribe of *Vaticanus* copied a manuscript closely related to the Bodmer papyri. Thus, the scribe must have copied either a very old manuscript or one that was based on a very

old manuscript." Professor Birdsall stated: "The two manuscripts stand in close relationship with one another. . . . [The Codex] is a careful text: the editing lying behind it has a tradition of careful preservation of what has been received."

Useful to Translators

Of course, the oldest manuscript does not always qualify as being closest to the original text. However, comparing the Vatican Codex with other manuscripts has been very helpful to scholars in determining what appeared in the original text. For example, the surviving part of the Sinaitic Manuscript, also produced in the fourth century C.E., is missing most of the historical books from Genesis to 1 Chronicles. But their appearance in the Vatican Codex helps to confirm their rightful place in the Bible canon.

According to *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Bible*, "passages touching on the person of Christ and on the holy Trinity" were particularly controversial among scholars. How has the Vatican Codex helped to clarify these passages?

Consider an example. As recorded at John 3:13, Jesus said: "No man has ascended into heaven but he that descended from heaven, the Son of man." Some translators have added the words "which [or, who] is in heaven." Those additional words suggest that Jesus was in heaven and on earth at the same time—a notion that supports the idea of the Trinity. That added phrase appears in a few manuscripts from the fifth and tenth centuries C.E. However, its omission in the earlier Vatican and Sinaitic manuscripts has led many modern translators to remove the phrase. This clears up confusion about the identity of Christ and harmonizes with the rest of the Scriptures. Rather than being in

two places at the same time, Jesus had come from the heavens and would soon return to the heavens, "ascending to" his Father.—John 20:17.

The Vatican Codex also sheds light on verses regarding God's purpose for the earth. Note an example. According to the *King James Version*, the apostle Peter prophesied that "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." (2 Peter 3:10) Other translations read similarly, basing this rendering on the fifth-century Alexandrine Codex and later manuscripts. Many sincere Bible readers have thus concluded that God will destroy the earth.

However, about a century before the Alexandrine Codex was produced, the Vatican Codex (and the contemporary Sinaitic Manuscript) rendered Peter's prophecy "earth and the works in it will be discovered." Does this harmonize with the rest of the Bible? Certainly! The literal earth "will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever." (Psalm 104:5) How, then, will the earth be "discovered"? Other scriptures show that the expression "earth" can be used figuratively. "The earth" can speak a language and

sing songs. (Genesis 11:1; Psalm 96:1) So "earth" can refer to mankind, or human society. Is it not comforting to know that God will not destroy our planet but will thoroughly expose and bring an end to wickedness and those who promote it?

"It Will Last to Time Indefinite"

Sadly, access to the Vatican Codex was severely curtailed for centuries, and Bible readers were often misled as to the true meaning of certain Bible texts. However, since its publication, the Vatican Codex and modern, reliable Bible translations have helped truth-seekers to learn what the Bible really teaches.

Early copyists often included in their manuscripts the note: "The hand that wrote [this] moulders in a tomb, but what is written abides across the years." Today we appreciate the tireless efforts of those anonymous copyists. But the credit for preserving the Bible ultimately goes to its Author, who long ago inspired his prophet to write: "The green grass has dried up, the blossom has withered; but as for the word of our God, it will last to time indefinite."—Isaiah 40:8.

Dating Ancient Manuscripts

Although some copyists recorded the date they completed their work, most Greek manuscripts lack this specific information. How, then, do scholars determine when a Bible manuscript was produced? Just as language and artwork differ from one generation to the next, so too does handwriting. For example, uncial letters, characterized by curved capital letters and even lines of text, were used by the fourth century and continued for hundreds of years. Careful scholars who compare undated uncial manuscripts with similar

dated documents can more precisely determine when early manuscripts were produced.

There are, of course, limits to this method. Princeton Theological Seminary Professor Bruce Metzger noted: "Since the style of a person's handwriting may remain more or less constant throughout life, it is unrealistic to seek to fix upon a date narrower than a fifty-year spread." Based on such careful analysis, there is general agreement among scholars that the Vatican Codex was produced in the fourth century C.E.

He Fought Against Fear and Doubt

PETER strained against the oar and peered into the night. Was that a faint glow he saw on the eastern horizon, a sign of dawn at last? The muscles of his back and shoulders burned from long hours of rowing. The wind that whipped his hair about had churned the Sea of Galilee into a rage. Wave after wave crashed against the prow of the fishing boat, soaking him with cold spray. He rowed on.

Somewhere back there on shore, Peter and his companions had left Jesus by himself. That day, they had seen Jesus feed a hungry crowd of thousands with just a few loaves and fish. The people responded by seeking to make Jesus king, but he wanted no part of politics. He was also determined to keep his followers from cultivating such ambitions. Evading the crowds, he compelled his disciples to board the boat and head for the opposite shore while he went up into the mountain alone to pray.—Mark 6:35-45; John 6:14, 15.

The moon, nearly full, had been high overhead when the disciples set out; now it was plunging slowly toward the western horizon. Yet, they had managed to travel only a few miles. The exertion and the constant roar of the wind and the waves made conversation difficult. Likely, Peter was alone with his thoughts.

How much there was to think about! He had been following Jesus of Nazareth for over two eventful years. He had learned a great deal, but he still had much to learn. His

willingness to do so—to struggle against such obstacles as doubt and fear—make him an outstanding example for us to imitate. Let us see how.

"We Have Found the Messiah"!

Peter would never forget the day he met Jesus of Nazareth. His brother, Andrew, had first brought him the astounding news: "We have found the Messiah." With those words, Peter's life began to change. It would never again be the same.—John 1:41.

Peter lived in Capernaum, a city on the shore of a freshwater lake called the Sea of Galilee. He and Andrew were partners with James and John, the sons of Zebedee, in a fishing business. Living with Peter were not only his wife but also his mother-in-law and his brother, Andrew. To support such a household by fishing surely required hard work, energy, and resourcefulness. We can imagine the countless long nights of labor—the men letting out the dragnets between two boats and hauling aboard whatever catch the lake afforded. We can also picture toilsome daylight hours as the fish were sorted and sold, the nets mended and cleaned.

Andrew, the Bible tells us, was a disciple of John the Baptist. Peter surely listened to his brother's reports about John's message with intense interest. One day, Andrew saw John point out Jesus of Nazareth and say: "See, The Lamb of God!" Andrew immediately became a follower of Jesus and eagerly told



Peter of this thrilling news: The Messiah had arrived! (John 1:35-40) After the rebellion in Eden some 4,000 years earlier, Jehovah God had promised that a special individual would come to provide real hope for mankind. (Genesis 3:15) Andrew had met this very Rescuer, the Messiah himself! Peter hurried off to meet Jesus as well.

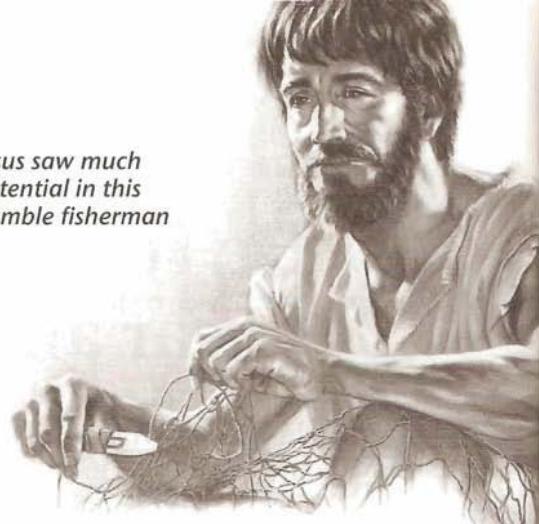
Until that day, Peter was known by the name Simon, or Simeon. But Jesus looked at him and said: “‘You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Cephas’ (which is translated Peter).” (John 1:42) “Cephas” is a common noun meaning “stone,” or “rock.” Evidently, Jesus’ words were prophetic. He foresaw that Peter would become like a rock—a stable, sturdy, and reliable influence among Christ’s followers. Did Peter see himself that way? It seems doubtful. Even some modern-day readers of the Gospel accounts see little that is rocklike in Peter. Some have suggested that he appeared to be unsteady, inconstant, vacillating.

Peter did have his faults. Jesus was not blind to those. But Jesus, like his Father, Jehovah, was always looking for the good in people. Jesus saw much potential in Peter, and He sought to help him build on those good qualities. Jehovah and his Son look for the good in us today too. We may have a hard time believing that there is much good in us for them to find. However, we need to trust their viewpoint and prove ourselves willing to be trained and molded as Peter was.—1 John 3:19, 20.

“Stop Being Afraid”

Peter likely accompanied Jesus on part of the preaching tour that ensued. He may thus have seen Jesus perform his first miracle, turning water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana. More important, he heard Jesus’ marvelous and hope-filled message about the Kingdom of God. Still, he tore himself

Jesus saw much potential in this humble fisherman



away and returned to his fishing business. Some months later, though, Peter was again face-to-face with Jesus—and this time Jesus invited Peter to follow him full-time as a way of life.

Peter had just endured a discouraging night’s work. Again and again, the fishermen had let out their nets, only to haul them in empty. Peter surely brought all his experience and ingenuity to bear on the problem, trying various spots in the lake to find where the fish were feeding. No doubt, there were times when he, like so many fishermen, wished he could peer right into the murky waters to find the schools of fish or somehow will them into his nets. Of course, such thoughts could only deepen his frustration. This was no pleasure sport for Peter; people depended on him to catch fish. Finally, he came ashore empty-handed. Still, the nets had to be cleaned. He was thus busily engaged when Jesus approached.

A crowd was pressing around Jesus, hanging on his every word. Hemmed in by them, Jesus got into Peter’s boat and asked him to pull away a bit from land. With his voice carrying clearly over the water, Jesus taught the crowd. Peter listened with rapt attention, as did those ashore. He never tired of hearing Jesus develop the central theme of his preaching—the Kingdom of God. What a



*"I am a
sinful man, Lord"*

privilege it would be to help the Christ spread this message of hope throughout the land! But would that be practical? What would they live on? Perhaps Peter thought again of the long and fruitless night behind him.—Luke 5:1-3.

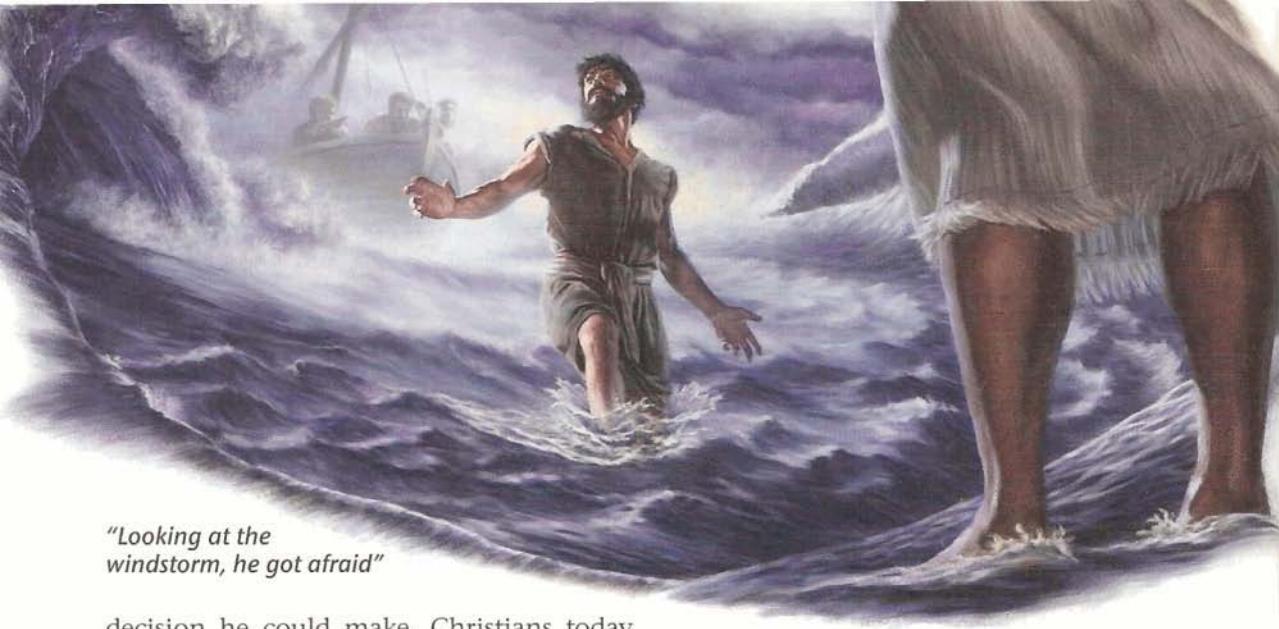
When Jesus finished speaking, he told Peter: “Pull out to where it is deep, and you men let down your nets for a catch.” Peter was full of doubt. He said: “Instructor, for a whole night we toiled and took nothing, but at your bidding I will lower the nets.” Surely the last thing Peter wanted to do was lower those nets yet again—especially now when the fish would not even be feeding! Still, he complied, likely signaling to his partners in a second boat to follow them.—Luke 5:4, 5.

Peter felt an unexpected weight as he started hauling in the nets. Incredulous, he pulled harder, and before long, he could see a great mass of fish wriggling within the mesh! Frantically, he motioned to the men in the second boat to come to help. As they did, it soon became apparent that one boat could not contain all these fish. They filled both vessels, and still there were too many—the boats started to sink under the weight.

Peter was overwhelmed with astonishment. He had seen Christ’s power in action before, but this instance was so personal! Here was a man who could even cause the fish to enter the nets! Fear welled up in Peter. He sank to his knees and said: “Depart from me, because I am a sinful man, Lord.” How could he ever prove worthy to associate with One who wielded the very power of God in such ways?—Luke 5:6-9.

Jesus kindly said: “Stop being afraid. From now on you will be catching men alive.” (Luke 5:10, 11) This was no time for doubt or fear. Peter’s doubts about such practical matters as fishing were unfounded; his fears about his own faults and inadequacies were just as baseless. Jesus had a great work to do, a ministry that would change history. He served a God who “will forgive in a large way.” (Isaiah 55:7) Jehovah would take care of their needs, both physical and spiritual.
—Matthew 6:33.

Peter responded quickly, as did James and John. “They brought the boats back to land, and abandoned everything and followed him.” (Luke 5:11) Peter put faith in Jesus and the One who sent him. It was the best



"Looking at the windstorm, he got afraid"

decision he could make. Christians today who overcome their doubt and fear to take up service to God are likewise showing faith. Such trust in Jehovah is never misplaced.
—Psalm 22:4, 5.

"Why Did You Give Way to Doubt?"

Some two years after meeting Jesus, Peter rowed through that windy night on the Sea of Galilee mentioned at the outset. Of course, we cannot know what memories crossed his mind. There were so many to choose from! Jesus had healed Peter's mother-in-law. He had delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Again and again, through his teaching and his powerful works, he had demonstrated that he was Jehovah's Chosen One, the Messiah. As the months passed, Peter's faults, such as his tendency to give in to impulses of fear and doubt, had surely subsided to a degree. Jesus had even chosen Peter to be one of the 12 apostles! Still, Peter had not yet vanquished fear and doubt, as he would soon learn.

During the fourth watch of that night, or sometime between 3:00 a.m. and sunrise, Peter suddenly stopped rowing and sat bolt upright. There—across the waves—something was moving! Was it the spray of the

waves catching the moonlight? No, it was too steady, too upright. It was a man! Yes, a man, and he was walking on the surface of the sea! As the figure neared, it looked as though he was going to walk right by them. Terrified, the disciples thought it was some kind of apparition. The figure spoke: "Take courage, it is I; have no fear." It was Jesus!
—Matthew 14:25-28.

Peter responded: "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you over the waters." His first impulse was a courageous one. Full of excitement at this unique miracle, Peter sought to have his faith further confirmed. He wanted to be part of the action. Kindly, Jesus beckoned him. Peter clambered over the side of the vessel and down onto the undulating surface of the sea. Imagine Peter's sensation as he found solid footing beneath him and then stood on top of the waters. He must have been filled with wonder as he made his way toward Jesus. However, another impulse soon welled up in him.—Matthew 14:29.

Peter needed to keep his focus on Jesus. It was Jesus, using the power of Jehovah, who was keeping Peter above the waves. And Je-

sus was doing so in response to Peter's faith in him. But Peter got distracted. We read: "Looking at the windstorm, he got afraid." Peter took in an eyeful of those waves crashing against the boat, tossing spray and foam to the wind, and he panicked. He probably imagined himself sinking in that lake, drowning there. As fear rose in his heart, his faith sank. The man who had been named Rock because of his potential for steadiness began to sink like a stone because of his wavering faith. Peter was an able swimmer, but he did not rely on that ability now. He cried out: "Lord, save me!" Jesus caught him by the hand and pulled him up. Then, while still on the water's surface, he drove home this important lesson to Peter: "You with little faith, why did you give way to doubt?" —Matthew 14:30, 31.

"Give way to doubt"—what an apt phrase! Doubt can be a powerful, destructive force. If we yield to it, it can eat away at our faith

and cause us to sink spiritually. We need to fight back vigorously! How? By keeping the right focus. If we dwell on what scares us, what discourages us, what distracts us from Jehovah and his Son, we will find our doubts growing. If we focus on Jehovah and his Son, on what they have done, are doing, and will do for those who love them, we will keep corrosive doubts at bay.

As Peter followed Jesus back aboard the boat, he saw the storm die down. Quiet fell on the Sea of Galilee. Peter joined his fellow disciples in declaring, "You are really God's Son." (Matthew 14:33) As dawn broke over the lake, Peter's heart surely soared. He repudiated doubt and fear. Granted, he had a long way to go before he became the rock-like Christian that Jesus foresaw. But he was determined to keep trying, to keep growing. Do you have such determination? You will surely find that Peter's faith is worth imitating.

FISHING ON THE SEA OF GALILEE

WHAT was life like for a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee back in the first century? The answer sheds light on many Gospel accounts, such as those considered in the preceding article.

That "sea" is actually a freshwater lake measuring some 13 miles by about 8 miles. Fishermen have long exploited its abundant supply of fish. Jerusalem's Fish Gate was evidently the location of a fish market. (Nehemiah 3:3) The Sea of Galilee was one source of the fish sold there.





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The apostle Peter came from a town on the Sea of Galilee called Bethsaida, which may mean "House of the Fisherman." Another town on the lake was called Magadan, or Magdala, to which Jesus led his disciples after he walked on the water. (Matthew 15:39) According to one writer, the Greek name of that town could be translated "Processed-Fishville." It was noted for its extensive fish factories, where locally caught fish were dried and salted—or pickled to produce a sauce that was preserved in clay jars called amphoras. These products were packed and shipped, likely to all parts of Israel and even beyond.

Catching, processing, and marketing fish was thus big business in the Galilee of Jesus' day. It would be easy to assume that this brought economic advantages to many people in the area. Yet, that was not necessarily the case. Fishing "was not the 'free enterprise' which modern readers of the New Testament may imagine," says one scholar. It was part of "a state regulated, elite-profitting enterprise."

Herod Antipas governed Galilee as the district ruler, or territorial prince, appointed by Rome. He thus controlled his territory's roads, harbors, and natural resources, such as mines, forests, agriculture, and fisheries. Those resources were a major source of tax revenue for Herod. We do not have

detailed information on tax collection policies in first-century Galilee. However, it appears that Herod's general approach did not differ greatly from that of Hellenistic rulers or from that used by the Romans in their other eastern provinces. Much of the profit derived from the area's economic activities and the exploitation of its natural resources may have gone to the elite rather than to the common people, who did most of the work.

The Burden of Taxes

In Jesus' day, the best lands in Galilee belonged to the royal house and were divided into large estates, which Herod Antipas parceled out as gifts to his grandees and other beneficiaries. Herod's subjects had to finance the huge costs of his luxurious living, his ambitious building projects, his elaborate administration, and his various grants to friends and cities. The burden of taxes, tolls, and duties levied on the common people is said to have been extremely oppressive.

Herod also held a complete monopoly over the exploitation of inland waters. Fishing would thus be managed either as part of a large-scale royal concern or by the holders of individual gift estates. For areas under direct royal administration, tax brokers or chief tax collectors—wealthy individuals

who bought at auction the right to collect taxes—would have authority to stipulate contracts with fishermen for the lease of fishing rights. Some commentators have suggested that since Matthew's tax office was in Capernaum—an important fishing center on the Sea of Galilee—he may have worked for these chief tax collectors as a local "contractor of royal fishing rights."⁶

Evidence from the first and second centuries B.C.E. shows that taxes in Palestine were often paid "in kind," rather than in cash. Some professional fishermen thus paid some 25 to 40 percent of their catch in exchange for the right to fish. Ancient documents indicate that in at least some areas under Roman administration, fishing remained a State monopoly overseen by inspectors. In Pisidia, a sort of fishing police made sure that no one fished without authorization and that fishermen sold their catch only to authorized middlemen, or wholesalers, whose activity was also subject to State supervision and taxation.

What all these controls and taxes finally meant, says one analyst, is that "the king or holder of the estate made a large amount of profit, whereas the fishermen made very little." The profits made by those employed in other sectors of economic activity were similarly limited by oppressive taxation. Taxes have never been popular with those who have to pay them. However, the general hostility toward tax collectors that emerges from the Gospel accounts was doubtless augmented by the real dishonesty and greed of men who grew rich by extorting all they could from the common people.—Luke 3:13; 19:2, 8.

⁶ The apostle Peter evidently moved from Bethsaida to Capernaum, where he was involved in a fishing business with his brother, Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee. Jesus also resided at Capernaum for a time.—Matthew 4:13-16.

Fishermen in the Gospels

The Gospels reveal that Simon Peter had partners in his fishing business. Those who came to help Peter haul in a miraculous catch were his "partners in the other boat." (Luke 5:3-7) Scholars explain that "fishermen could form 'cooperatives' . . . in order to bid for fishing contracts or leases." This may have been the way that the sons of Zebedee, Peter, Andrew, and their partners obtained authorization to carry on their fishing business.

Whether these Galilean fishermen owned the boats and equipment they used is not specifically stated in the Scriptures. Some believe that they did. Jesus, in fact, is said to have boarded a boat "which was Simon's." (Luke 5:3) However, notes one specialized article on the subject, "it is at least *possible* that the boats were actually owned by the brokers and used by the cooperative." Be that as it may, the Scriptures speak of James and John mending their nets. Fishermen would presumably also have to bargain to sell their catch and, as necessary, to hire day laborers.

So there was more to the activity of first-century Galilean fishermen than meets the eye. Their business was part of a complex system of economic relationships. Bearing this in mind gives greater depth of meaning to the Gospel accounts and to Jesus' words about fishing and fishermen. More than that, this information also helps us to appreciate the faith of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Fishing was their livelihood. Whatever their exact economic condition when Jesus called them, they readily abandoned the trade that they knew—and that provided them with a reliable source of income—in order to become "fishers of men."—Matthew 4:19.

Did You Know?

Who was "the captain of the temple," and what was his role?

Among the Jewish religious leaders who had the apostles Peter and John arrested while they were preaching was "the captain of the temple." (Acts 4:1-3) The Bible gives no description of the temple captain's responsibilities, but some historical sources provide interesting background.

It seems that by the time of Jesus, that official position was held by a priest who was second in authority to the high priest. The temple captain maintained order in and around the temple in Jerusalem. He supervised temple worship as well as what may be called a temple police force. Subordinate captains under his command oversaw the watchmen who opened the temple gates in the morning and closed them at night, ensured that no one entered restricted areas, and guarded the temple treasury.

The priests and Levites who worked at the temple were organized into 24 divisions, each of which served for one week at a time in rotation, twice a year. Each division

likely had its own captain.—1 Chronicles 24:1-18.

These temple captains were men of influence. They are mentioned along with the chief priests who conspired to have Jesus put to death, and they also employed the forces under their command to have Jesus arrested.—Luke 22:4, 52.

Matthew 3:4 says that John the Baptizer ate "locusts and wild honey." Were locusts a common food at that time?

Some have doubted that John actually ate insects, claiming that Matthew was referring to pods of the locust tree, wild fruit, or even a variety of fish. However, the Greek word Matthew used designates a family of grasshoppers known today as Acrididae. The most common in Israel was the desert locust, known to form devastating swarms.—Joel 1:4, 7; Nahum 3:15.

Locusts were considered a delicacy by such ancient peoples as the Assyrians and the Ethiopians and are still eaten today by certain Bedouins and Yemenite Jews. In Israel, locusts were consid-

ered a food of the poor. After the head, legs, and abdomen were removed, the thorax was eaten raw or roasted or after being dried in the sun. Sometimes the locusts were salted or soaked in vinegar or honey. Historian Henri Daniel-Rops says that they taste somewhat like shrimp.

Since John preached in the wilderness, locusts would likely have been accessible to him. (Mark 1:4) As they contain about 75 percent protein, locusts, along with wild honey, made a highly nutritious meal.

ASSYRIAN ATTENDANTS CARRYING LOCUSTS AND POMEGRANATES



From the book *Discoveries Among the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (1853)

IS WAR COMPATIBLE WITH Christianity?

"Against what moral standard is war a crime or a sin? Here, indeed, is a puzzle."

—OLIVER O'DONOVAN, PROFESSOR OF CHRISTIAN ETHICS

A PAINTING named Sacrifice, inspired by World War I and displayed at the Canadian War Museum, depicts slain soldiers, battle-worn survivors, and their families back home. Above the scene hangs Jesus Christ, impaled on a cross. Some observers are shocked that Jesus, the "Prince of Peace," is painted next to scenes of carnal warfare. (Isaiah 9:6) Others, grateful for the sacrifices made by their countrymen, feel that God and his Son expect Christians to fight battles that protect the security and freedom of their nation.

Religious leaders have preached a message favoring warfare for centuries. In the year 417 C.E., church theologian Augustine wrote: "You must not think that no one who serves as a soldier, using arms for warfare, can be acceptable to God. . . . Others are fighting invisible enemies on your behalf by praying, while you struggle against visible barbarians on their behalf by fighting." In the 13th century, Thomas Aquinas explained that "wars are licit and just in so far as they protect the poor and the whole commonweal[th] from an enemy'[s] treachery."

What do you think? When military action is launched for a seemingly noble cause—to defend a nation's freedom or to liberate the oppressed—does it have God's blessing? To what "moral standard" might Christians turn to discern God's will in the matter?

Jesus Christ's Example

Is it possible to get God's mind on a complex issue like modern warfare? The apostle Paul acknowledged our predicament, asking: "'Who has come to know the mind of Jehovah, that he may instruct him?' But we do have the mind of Christ." (1 Corinthians 2:16) To help us, Jehovah God sent Jesus to earth as our Exemplar. What Jesus said and did reflected Jehovah's own thoughts and ways. So, what did Jesus say about warfare? What stand did he take on war?

There would seem to be no cause more worthy of armed defense than the life and security of Jesus Christ. One of his apostles felt that way. When Jesus was betrayed and arrested by an armed mob in the middle of the night, his friend Peter "reached out his hand and drew his sword and struck the slave of the high priest and took off his ear."

Justifiable use of such weaponry? Jesus said to Peter: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword."—Matthew 26:47-52.

Jesus' reaction is hardly surprising. Two years earlier, he had said: "You heard that it was said, 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' However, I say to you: Continue to love your enemies and to pray for those persecuting you; that you may prove yourselves sons of your Father who is in the heavens, since he makes his sun rise upon wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous." (Matthew 5:43-45) Is it reasonable to think that a Christian could love and pray for his enemies while waging war against them?

History reveals that Christians had many enemies. For example, the Romans sentenced and executed Jesus Christ. Soon thereafter, merely professing to be a Christian became a capital offense. Jesus anticipated that Christians might be tempted to bear arms and revolt against Roman oppres-

sion, as some of the Jews had done. Hence, he said of his followers: "They are no part of the world, just as I am no part of the world." (John 17:16) Christians chose to remain politically neutral. No injustice or threat to them or the country in which they lived justified taking part in military action.

Champions of God's Kingdom

Genuine Christians upheld Jesus' wishes and stayed neutral. Consider what happened in Iconium, an ancient city in Asia Minor. "When a violent attempt took place on the part of both people of the nations and Jews with their rulers, to treat [Paul and Barnabas] insolently and pelt them with stones, they, on being informed of it, fled to the cities of Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe and the country round about; and there they went on declaring the good news." (Acts 14: 5-7) Note that when faced with violent opposition, Christians did not take up arms in defense, nor did they retaliate. Instead, they continued to preach "the good news." What good news did they have to share?

WARS THAT GOD BLESSED

Ancient Israel, a nation uniquely chosen by God centuries before Christianity was established, was at times authorized to assemble an army and engage in warfare. Before entering Canaan, the land that God had promised to Abraham, the Israelites were told: "Jehovah your God will certainly abandon [seven nations] to you, and you must defeat them. You should without fail devote them to de-

struction. You must conclude no covenant with them nor show them any favor." (Deuteronomy 7:1, 2) Thus, Israelite General Joshua defeated those enemy nations "just as Jehovah the God of Israel had commanded."—Joshua 10:40.

Was this a ruthless conquest wherein Israel greedily subjugated foreign countries? Not at all. Those nations had become full of idolatry, blood-

shed, and degraded sexual practices. Even children were killed in sacrificial fires. (Numbers 33:52; Jeremiah 7:31) God's holiness, justice, and love for his people compelled him to remove all uncleanness from the land. Even so, Jehovah searched the hearts of everyone—something no military commander can do today—and spared those who were willing to abandon wicked ways and serve him.



Did Jesus expect his followers to fight in defense of him or fellow Christians?

Christians preached the same message that Jesus did. He said: "I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God." (Luke 4:43) Jesus and his followers championed God's Kingdom. Christ never used a national military force to defend that Kingdom. "My kingdom is no part of this world," he said. "If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source." —John 18:36.

"Have Love Among Yourselves"

Neutrality during wartime is a characteristic of true worship. Jesus said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:35) Millions have been happy to discover a group who display such love, even when their refusal to bear arms has brought ridicule, imprisonment, or execution.

In Nazi-occupied Europe, officials imprisoned an estimated 10,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses because of their Christian neutrality, including some 3,000 who were sent to concentration camps. Meanwhile, during the same period, over 4,300 Witnesses in the United States were imprisoned for their refusal to join the military. Neither German nor American Witnesses bore arms and fought against their Christian brothers or anyone else. How could they and still claim to have love among themselves and to love their fellow man?

Many people feel that military action is a necessary form of self-defense. But consider: Although first-century Christians were cruelly persecuted and refused to fight back, they survived. The powerful Roman Empire was not able to wipe out Christianity. True Christians thrive even today, and they continue to maintain a neutral stand. Rather than taking matters into their own hands, they confidently look to God for help. His Word, the Bible, states: "Do not avenge yourselves, beloved, but yield place to the wrath; for it is written: 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay,' says Jehovah." —Romans 12:19.



A group of Jehovah's Witnesses after their release from the Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945

- Is the holy spirit a person? See pages 4 to 7.
- Does God ask too much of us? See page 10.
- Is it possible for an atheist to build faith in a Creator? See pages 11 to 14.
- Is the Devil real? See page 15.
- What can we learn from the apostle Peter's struggle with doubt and fear? See pages 21 to 25.