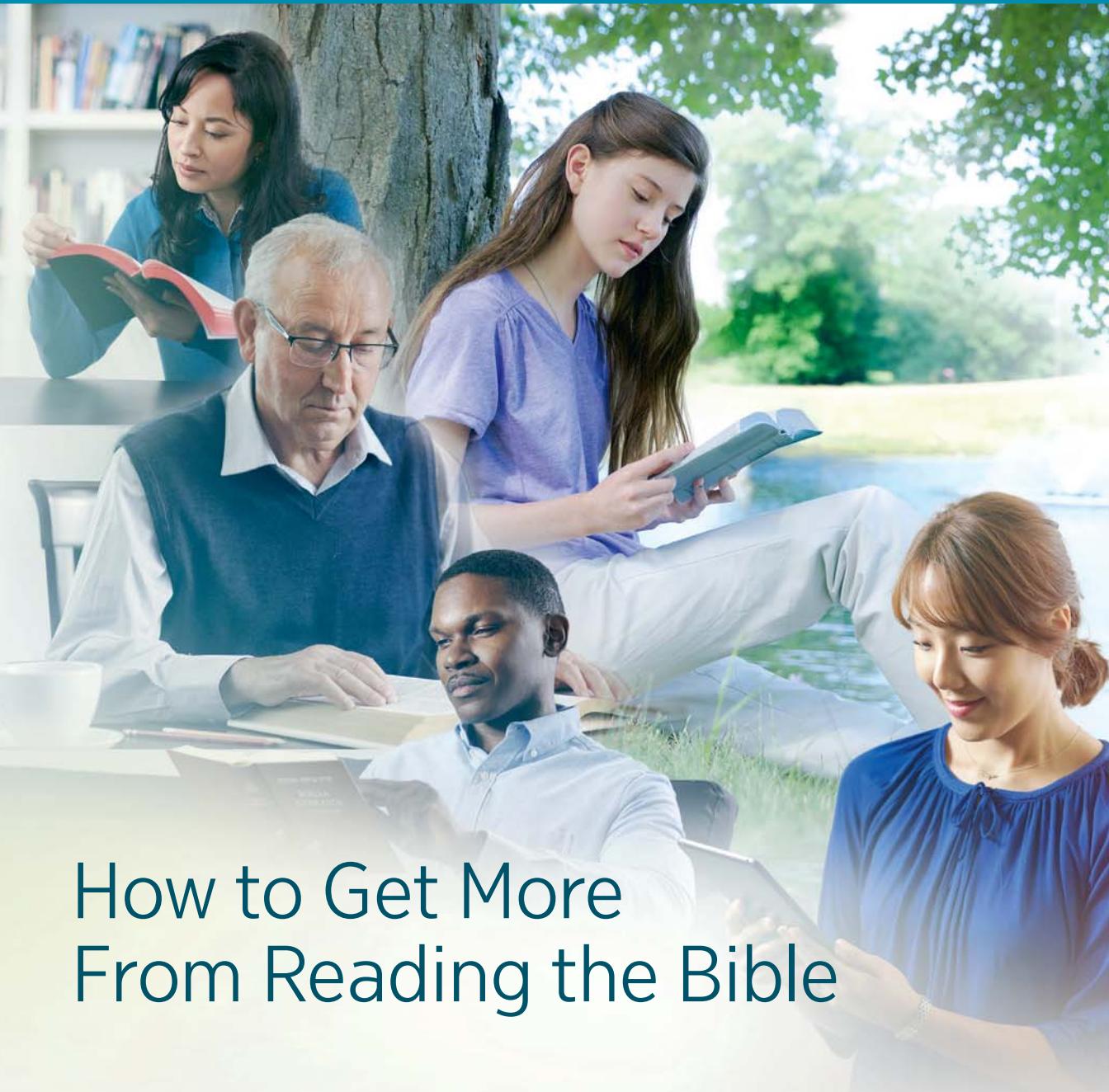


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



How to Get More From Reading the Bible



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Is the Bible outdated in our modern age? Or does it still have value? The Bible itself says: *"All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial."* —2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

This issue of *The Watchtower* highlights examples of the Bible's practical wisdom and offers suggestions on how to get the most out of your Bible reading.

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Are There Contradictions in the Bible?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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COVER SUBJECT

Why Read the Bible?

“I thought the Bible would be so hard to understand.”—Jovy

“I felt that it would be boring.”—Queennie

“When I looked at how thick the Bible is, I lost any desire to read it.”—Ezekiel

Have you ever thought about reading the Bible but held off because of feelings like those above? For many, reading the Bible seems daunting. But what if you learned that the Bible can help you to have a happier and more satisfying life? And what if you found out that there are some approaches to reading it that can make it more interesting? Would you be willing to take a look at what the Bible can offer you?

Consider just a few comments from those who found it to be rewarding when they started reading the Bible.

Ezekiel, who is in his early 20's, says: “In the past, I was like someone who is driving a car without any destination in mind. But reading the Bible has helped me have a meaningful life. It contains practical advice that I can use every day.”

Frieda, also in her 20's, explains: “I used to

be hotheaded. But because of my Bible reading, I've learned to control myself. This has made me a lot easier to get along with, so I have more friends now.”

A woman in her 50's named Eunice says of the Bible, “It is helping me to become a better person, to change my not-so-good habits.”

As those readers and millions more have learned, reading the Bible can help you to live a more enjoyable life. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Among other things, it can help you (1) make good decisions, (2) make real friends, (3) cope with stress, and (4) best of all, learn the truth about God. The Bible's advice comes from God, so you can never go wrong following it. God never gives bad advice.

The important thing is to get started. What practical tips can make getting started easier and more enjoyable?

How Can I Get Started?

What approach will help you to enjoy your Bible reading and get the most out of it? Take note of five suggestions that have worked for many.

Create the right surroundings. Try to find a setting that is quiet. Minimize distractions so you can focus on what you read. Good lighting and fresh air may help you to get the most from your reading.

Have the right frame of mind. Since the Bible is from our heavenly Father, you will benefit the most if you have the attitude of a child who is ready to learn from a loving parent. If you have

any negative, preconceived ideas about the Bible, try to set them aside so that God can teach you.

—Psalm 25:4.

Pray before you read. The Bible contains God's thoughts, so it is not surprising that we need his help to understand it. God promises to give "holy spirit to those asking him." (Luke 11:13) The holy spirit can help you to understand God's thinking. In time, it will open your mind to grasp "even the deep things of God."—1 Corinthians 2:10.

Read to understand. Do not read just to cover material. Actively think about what you are reading. Ask yourself such questions as these: 'What qualities do I see in the person I am reading about? How can I apply this in my life?'

Set specific goals. To be rewarded by your Bible reading, set out to learn something that will truly enrich your life. You may set goals like the following: 'I want to learn more about God himself.' 'I want to become a better person, a better husband or wife.' Then select portions of the Bible that will help you reach those goals.*

These five suggestions will help you get started. But how might you make your reading even more interesting? The next article offers some suggestions.

* If you are not sure what portions of the Bible would be most suitable in that regard, Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to help you.



GET MORE OUT OF YOUR READING

- ▶ Take your time, and avoid rushing
- ▶ Immerse yourself in what you read—visualize it
- ▶ Try to see how verses fit in their context
- ▶ Search for lessons in what you read

DIG INTO THE BIBLE BY GETTING TO KNOW ITS PEOPLE

Some faithful women

Abigail	1 Samuel chapter 25
Esther	Esther chapters 2-5, 7-9
Hannah	1 Samuel chapters 1-2
Mary	(Jesus' mother) Matthew chapters 1-2; Luke chapters 1-2; see also John 2:1-12; Acts 1:12-14; 2:1-4
Rahab	Joshua chapters 2, 6; see also Hebrews 11:30, 31; James 2:24-26
Rebekah	Genesis chapters 24-27
Sarah	Genesis chapters 17-18, 20-21, 23; see also Hebrews 11:11; 1 Peter 3:1-6

Some outstanding men

Abraham	Genesis chapters 11-24; see also 25:1-11
David	1 Samuel chapters 16-30; 2 Samuel chapters 1-24; 1 Kings chapters 1-2
Jesus	The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
Moses	Exodus chapters 2-20, 24, 32-34; Numbers chapters 11-17, 20, 21, 27, 31; Deuteronomy chapter 34
Noah	Genesis chapters 5-9
Paul	Acts chapters 7-9, 13-28
Peter	Matthew chapters 4, 10, 14, 16-17, 26; Acts chapters 1-5, 8-12

What Will Make It Interesting?

Boring? Or refreshing? What will Bible reading be for you? Much depends on how you approach your reading. Let us take a look at what you can do to increase your interest and enjoyment.

Select a reliable, modern-language translation. If you read material that contains a great many difficult or out-of-date words that you do not know, you are not likely to enjoy reading it. So look for a Bible that uses easy-to-understand language that will touch your heart. At the same time, though, it should be carefully and accurately translated.*

* Many have found the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* to be accurate, reliable, and very readable as well. This Bible, produced by Jehovah's Witnesses, is available in over 130 languages. You can download a copy from the website jw.org or download the JW Library app. Or if you prefer, Jehovah's Witnesses can deliver a printed copy to your home.

Use modern technology. Today the Bible is available not only as a bound, printed book but also as a digital book. Some Bibles can be read online or downloaded for personal reading on computers, tablets, or cell phones. Certain versions include additional tools that allow you quickly to check other Bible verses on the same topic or even compare several translations. If you prefer to listen rather than to read, the Bible is also available in recorded form. Many people enjoy listening while they commute by public transportation, do laundry, or engage in some other activity that permits listening. Why not try a method that suits you?

Use Bible study tools. Bible study tools can help you get much more out of your reading. There are maps of the Bible lands, which will help



BIBLE STUDY TOOLS PRODUCED BY JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

- ▶ **JW.ORG**—This website features many study tools, including the feature “Bible Questions Answered.” It also contains instructions for downloading the *JW Library* app
- ▶ **“See the Good Land”**—This brochure features maps and photographs of places mentioned in the Bible
- ▶ ***Insight on the Scriptures***—A two-volume Bible encyclopedia that includes explanations of people, places, and terms found in the Bible
- ▶ **“All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial”**—This scholarly book explains when, where, and why each book of the Bible was written and gives a summary of each book’s contents
- ▶ ***The Bible—God’s Word or Man’s?***—This small, carefully researched book examines the evidence for the Bible’s claim that it is the inspired Word of God
- ▶ ***The Bible—What Is Its Message?***—A 32-page brochure that summarizes the Bible’s overall theme

you locate places you encounter in your reading and put events in perspective. Articles such as those in this magazine or in the “Bible Teachings” section of the jw.org website can help you explore the meaning of many parts of the Bible.

Vary your approach. If reading the Bible from cover to cover seems daunting, why not stimulate your interest by starting with a portion that especially appeals to you? If you want to find out about famous people in the Bible, you could try character-based reading. A sample of that approach is included in the accompanying box “Dig Into the Bible by Getting to Know Its People.” Or maybe you want to read the Bible by topic or by the order in which events occurred. Why not try one of these approaches?

How Can the Bible Improve My Life?

The Bible is no ordinary book. It contains advice from our Creator. (2 Timothy 3:16) Its message can influence us profoundly. In fact, the Bible states: “The word of God is alive and exerts power.” (Hebrews 4:12) It has the power to improve our life in two key ways—offering guidance in our daily life now and helping us get to know God and his promises.—1 Timothy 4:8; James 4:8.

Improving your life now. The Bible can help with very personal matters. It gives practical advice about the following.



- ▶ Relationships with others.—Ephesians 4:31, 32; 5:22, 25, 28, 33.
- ▶ Emotional and physical health.—Psalm 37:8; Proverbs 17:22.
- ▶ Moral values.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.
- ▶ Economic welfare.—Proverbs 10:4; 28:19; Ephesians 4:28.*

A young couple in Asia greatly appreciated the value of the Bible's advice. Like many newly married couples, they struggled with adjusting to each other's personality and with having open communication. But they began applying what they read in the Bible. With what result? The husband, Vicent, says: "What I read in the Bible helped me to deal with challenges in our marriage in a loving way. Living by the Bible has given us a happy life together." His wife, Annalou, agrees: "Reading examples in the Bible helped us. I now feel happy and content with our marriage and our goals in life."

Getting to know God. Aside from his comments about marriage, Vicent also says: "By reading the Bible, I feel much closer to Jehovah now than ever before." Vicent's observation focuses on an important point—the Bible can help you get acquainted with God. In so doing, you will not only benefit from his advice but also find that you can get to know him as a friend. And you will see

* For more examples of the Bible's practical advice, see our website, jw.org. Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

that he reveals details about a better future, a time when you can enjoy "the real life"—which will last forever. (1 Timothy 6:19) That is something that no other book can offer.

If you set out to read the Bible and keep at it, you too can gain those benefits—improving your life now and getting to know God. However, as you read the Bible, you will likely think of numerous questions. And when you do, keep in mind the good example of an Ethiopian official who lived 2,000 years ago. He was full of questions about the Bible. When asked if he understood what he was reading, he replied: "Really, how could I ever do so unless someone guided me?"* He then eagerly accepted help from someone who was already a qualified Bible teacher, Philip, an early disciple of Jesus. (Acts 8:30, 31, 34) In the same spirit, if you would like to know more about the Bible, we invite you to submit a request online at www.jw.org or write to the nearest address, as listed in this magazine. You may also contact Jehovah's Witnesses near you or visit a Kingdom Hall in your area. Why not pick up a Bible today and let it guide you to a better life? ■

* Also see the article in this issue entitled "Is It Just a Small Misunderstanding?"

If you are wondering whether you can fully trust the Bible, please see the short video *How Can We Be Sure the Bible Is True?* You can find it by scanning the code or by going to jw.org, clicking the Search button, and entering the title





AS TOLD BY
YVONNE QUARRIE

YEAR BORN
1964
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN
ENGLAND
HISTORY
WAYWARD TEENAGE MOTHER



I Did Not Want to Die!

MY PAST

I was born in Paddington, a densely populated area of London, England. I lived with my mother and three older sisters. My father came in and out of our lives as a result of his problems with alcohol.

When I was a child, my mother taught me to pray every night. I had a small Bible containing just the Psalms, and I made up tunes so that I could sing them. I remember reading a phrase in one of my secular books that stuck in my mind: "Someday there will be no tomorrow." Those words made me lie awake at night thinking about the future. 'Surely there must be more to life,' I thought. 'Why am I here?' I did not want to die!

I became very curious about the occult. I tried to talk to the dead, visited graveyards with school friends, and watched horror movies with them. We thought it was both exciting and frightening at the same time.

I started to go wayward when I was only ten years old. I began smoking tobacco, and I quickly became addicted. Later, I progressed to smoking marijuana. By the age of 11, I was experimenting with alcohol. Although I did not like the taste of it, I liked the effect of getting drunk. I also loved music and dancing. I went to parties and nightclubs whenever I could. I used to sneak out at night and sneak back in again just before the morning light. Tired the next day, I regularly played hooky from school. When I did attend, I often drank alcohol between lessons.

I received very poor grades in my final year at school. Mostly unaware of the extent of my wayward behavior, my mother was disappointed and angry. We quarreled, and I ran away from home. For a while, I stayed with my boyfriend, Tony, who was Rastafarian. He was involved in petty crime and selling drugs and had a reputation for being extremely violent. I soon became pregnant and, at just 16 years of age, gave birth to our son.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE

I first met Jehovah's Witnesses while I was living at a hostel for unmarried mothers and their babies. I had been given a room there by the local authorities. Two female Witnesses regularly visited some of the other young mothers. One day I joined in a discussion with them. I intended to prove the Witnesses wrong. Yet they answered each one of my many questions calmly and clearly from the Bible. They were so kind and gentle, which I found very appealing. So I agreed to study the Bible with them myself.

I soon learned something from the Bible that changed my life. Ever since I was young, I had feared dying. Yet now I discovered Jesus' teaching about the resurrection! (John 5:28, 29) Also, I learned that God cared about me personally. (1 Peter 5:7) I was especially touched by the words of Jeremiah 29:11, which says: “‘For I well know the thoughts that I am thinking toward you,’ declares Jehovah, ‘thoughts of peace, and not of calamity, to give you a future and a hope.’” I began to believe that I could have the hope of living forever in Paradise on earth.—Psalm 37:29.

Jehovah's Witnesses expressed genuine love toward me. When I first attended one of their meetings, the atmosphere was warm and inviting—everyone was so friendly! (John 13:34, 35) That was a big contrast to the treatment I had received at a local church. The Witnesses welcomed me despite my circumstances. They gave me time, care, and attention, as well as much practical help. I felt as though I were part of a big, loving family.

From my Bible study, I realized that I would have to make changes in my life to meet God's high moral standards. I did not find it easy to stop smoking tobacco. At the same time, I recognized that certain music increased my desire to smoke marijuana, so I changed the music that I listened to. Wanting to stay sober, I stopped going to parties and nightclubs where I would be tempted to get drunk. And I sought out new friends whose positive influence would help me in my new lifestyle.—Proverbs 13:20.

Meanwhile, Tony had also been studying the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. As the Witnesses answered his questions from the Bible, he too became convinced of the truth of what he was learning. He made major changes in his life: he withdrew from his previous violent associates, stopped his petty criminal activities, and gave up smoking marijuana. In order to please Jehovah fully, we also both saw the need to adjust our immoral way of life and provide a stable environment for our son. We were married in 1982.

“I no longer lie awake at night worrying about the future or death”

I remember searching out articles in *Watchtower* and *Awake!** magazines with stories of people who had successfully made the changes I wanted to make. I was so encouraged by their examples! I felt strengthened to keep trying hard and not give up. I kept praying to Jehovah not to give up on me. Tony and I were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses in July 1982.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED

Developing a friendship with Jehovah God saved my life. Tony and I have also experienced Jehovah's support through difficult times. We have learned to rely on God through difficulties, and we feel that he has always helped and sustained our family.—Psalm 55:22.

I have taken delight in helping our son and daughter get to know Jehovah as I do. Now I feel similar joy as I see their children also growing in knowledge of God.

I no longer lie awake at night worrying about the future or death. Tony and I are fully occupied with traveling to different congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses each week to encourage them. We join them in teaching others that if they exercise faith in Jesus, they too can enjoy everlasting life. ■

* Also published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

“He Had Pleased God Well”



ENOCH had lived a long time. It might be hard for us to imagine, but that man's life stretched back for some 365 years—more than four very long life spans by today's standards! But he was not truly old, not in the world of his time. Back then, over 50 centuries ago, people lived far longer than they do today. Adam, the first man, had been living for over six hundred years when Enoch was born, and Adam lived on for another three centuries! Some of Adam's descendants lived even longer than that. So at 365, Enoch may still have looked fairly vibrant, like a man who had much of his life yet ahead of him. In fact, though, he did not.

Enoch was likely in grave danger. Picture him on the run, unable to put out of his mind the reaction of the people to whom he had recently spoken a message from God. Their faces were twisted with rage. Those people hated him. They despised his message, and they loathed the God who had sent him. They could not strike out at Enoch's God, Jehovah, but they could certainly strike out at this man! Perhaps Enoch wondered if he would ever see his family again. Did he think of his wife and daughters or of his son Methuselah or of his grandson Lamech? (Genesis 5:21-23, 25) Was this the end?

Enoch is a somewhat mysterious figure in the Bible record. Only three short Bible passages deal with him at any length. (Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5; Jude 14, 15) However, those verses provide, in effect, enough brushstrokes to paint a picture

of a man of great faith. Do you provide for a family? Have you ever faced the struggle of standing up for what you know to be right? If so, you may learn much from the faith of Enoch.

“ENOCH KEPT WALKING WITH THE TRUE GOD”

Mankind was in a bad way when Enoch came along. It was the seventh generation in the line of Adam. Granted, humans were much closer to the physical perfection that Adam and Eve had once possessed and lost. That is why people still lived so long. Yet, they were in a terrible condition morally and spiritually. Violence was prevalent. That trend had started in the second generation, when Cain murdered his brother Abel. One of Cain's descendants seems to have been quite proud of being even more violent and vengeful than Cain! In the third generation, a new evil arose. People began calling on the name of Jehovah, but not as a reverent act of worship. They were evidently using God's sacred name in a blasphemous, disrespectful way.—Genesis 4:8, 23-26.

That kind of corrupt religion was likely in full sway during Enoch's time. As Enoch grew up, then, he faced a choice. Would he fit in with the crowd of his day? Or would he search for the true God, Jehovah, who had made the heavens and the earth? He must have been deeply moved to learn about Abel, who had died as a martyr because he worshipped Jehovah in a way that pleased Him. Enoch decided to take a similar

stand. Genesis 5:22 tells us: “Enoch continued to walk with the true God.” That remarkable expression singles out Enoch as a godly man in a godless world. He is the first human the Bible describes in that way.

The same Bible verse says that Enoch continued to walk with Jehovah after he fathered his son Methuselah. So we see Enoch as a family man when he was about 65 years old. He had a wife, unnamed in Scripture, and an unspecified number of “sons and daughters.” If a father is to walk with God while raising and providing for a family, he must try to care for his family in God’s way. Enoch understood that Jehovah expected him to stick faithfully to his wife. (Genesis 2:24) And he surely did his best to instruct his children about Jehovah God. With what result?

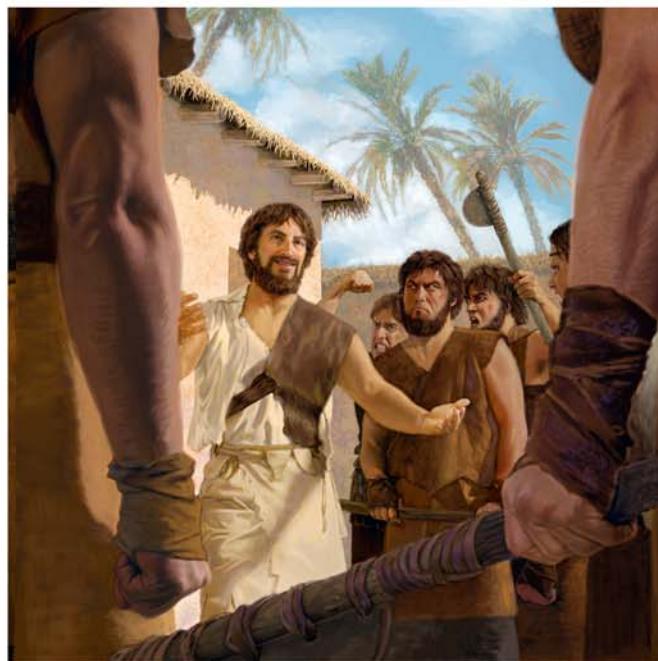
The inspired record offers only tantalizing hints on that score. It says nothing about the faith of Enoch’s son Methuselah, whose life span became the longest in the Bible record, ending in the year that the great Deluge came. However, Methuselah fathered a son named Lamech. Lamech’s life overlapped with that of his grandfather Enoch for over a century. And Lamech grew up to show notable faith. Jehovah inspired him to utter a prophecy about Noah, Lamech’s son, and that prophecy came true after the Flood. Noah, like his great-grandfather Enoch, was singled out as a man who walked with God. Noah never met Enoch. But Enoch left a rich legacy. Noah could have learned of that legacy from his own father, Lamech, or from his grandfather Methuselah or perhaps even from Jared, Enoch’s father, who died when Noah was 366 years old.—Genesis 5:25-29; 6:9; 9:1.

Think of the contrast between Enoch and Adam. Adam, though perfect, sinned against Jehovah and left his descendants a legacy of rebellion and misery. Enoch, though imperfect, walked with God and left his descendants a legacy of faith. Adam died when Enoch was 308 years old. Did Adam’s family mourn that profoundly selfish forefather? We do not know. In any case, Enoch “kept walking with the true God.”—Genesis 5:24.

If you are providing for a family, consider what you can learn from the faith of Enoch. Vital though it is to provide for your family physically, there is no need more important than the spiritual kind. (1 Timothy 5:8) You fill that need not only by what you say but what you do. If you choose to walk with God as Enoch did, letting God’s inspired standards guide you in life, you too will give your family a rich legacy—a priceless example for them to imitate.

ENOCH “PROPHESIED ABOUT THEM”

Enoch may have felt lonely as a man of faith in such a faithless world. But did his God, Jehovah, take notice of him? He did. The day came when Jehovah communicated with this faithful servant of his. God gave Enoch a message to deliver to the people of his day. He thus made Enoch a prophet, the first one whose message is revealed in the Bible. We know of this because Jude, a half brother



Enoch fearlessly proclaimed God’s message to a hostile world

of Jesus, was inspired to write down Enoch's prophetic words many centuries later.*

What was Enoch's prophecy? It went as follows: "Look! Jehovah came with his holy myriads to execute judgment against all, and to convict all the ungodly concerning all their ungodly deeds that they did in an ungodly way, and concerning all the shocking things that ungodly sinners spoke against him." (Jude 14, 15) Now, the first thing you may notice is that Enoch spoke in the past tense, as if God had already done what the prophecy describes. That is a pattern that many prophecies thereafter followed. The idea is this: The prophet is speaking of something that is so certain to occur that it may be described as if it has already happened!—Isaiah 46:10.

What was it like for Enoch to deliver that pronouncement, perhaps by preaching it to all who would hear? Notice how forceful the warning was—four times it used the word "ungodly" to denounce the people, their deeds, and the way they carried out those deeds. The prophecy thus warned all humans that the world they had built up since the expulsion from Eden was corrupt through and through. That world would face a cataclysmic end when Jehovah would come with his "holy myriads"—legions of mighty angels in battle array—to bring destruction. Enoch fearlessly shared that divine warning, and he did it alone! Perhaps young Lamech watched, in awe of his grandfather's courage. If so, we can well understand why.

* Some Bible scholars assert that Jude quoted an apocryphal work called the Book of Enoch, but that book is a fanciful work of uncertain origin, falsely attributed to Enoch. It contains an accurate mention of Enoch's prophecy, but that may have been drawn from an ancient source now lost to us—whether a written document or an oral tradition. Jude may have used the same ancient source, or he may have learned about Enoch from Jesus, who witnessed Enoch's life course from heaven.

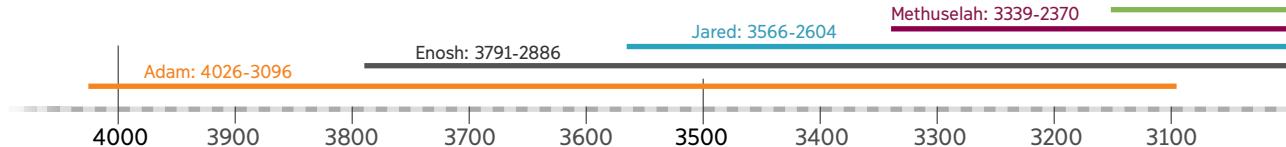
Enoch's faith may move us to ask ourselves whether we see the world in which we live as God sees it. The judgment that Enoch bravely proclaimed still stands; it applies to today's world just as it did to the world of Enoch's day. In harmony with Enoch's warning, Jehovah brought the great Deluge against that ungodly world in Noah's day. But that destruction set the pattern for a greater destruction yet to come. (Matthew 24:38, 39; 2 Peter 2:4-6) Today, as then, God stands poised with his holy myriads to bring a righteous judgment against an ungodly world. Each of us needs to take Enoch's warning to heart and share it with others. Our family and friends might stand apart from us. We may feel alone at times. But Jehovah never abandoned Enoch; neither will he abandon his faithful servants today!

"TRANSFERRED SO AS NOT TO SEE DEATH"

How did the end come for Enoch? In a way, his death is even more mysterious and intriguing than his life. The Genesis account simply says: "Enoch kept walking with the true God. Then he was no more, for God took him." (Genesis 5:24) In what way did God take Enoch? The apostle Paul later explained: "By faith Enoch was transferred so as not to see death, and he was nowhere to be found because God had transferred him; for before he was transferred he received the witness that he had pleased God well." (Hebrews 11:5) What did Paul mean by that phrase "transferred so as not to see death"? Some Bible translations say that God took Enoch to heaven. But that cannot be. The Bible shows that Jesus Christ was the first one ever resurrected to heaven.—John 3:13.

In what sense, then, was Enoch "transferred" so that he did not "see death"? Jehovah likely transferred Enoch gently from life to death, sparing

THEIR LIFE SPANS OVERLAPPED (ALL B.C.E.)



Enoch was likely facing a violent end when Jehovah took him



him any pangs of death. But first, Enoch received “the witness that he had pleased God well.” How? Just before his death, Enoch may have received a vision from God, perhaps one showing him the earth as a paradise. With that vivid sign of Jehovah’s approval, Enoch fell asleep in death. Writing about Enoch and other faithful men and women, the apostle Paul stated: “In faith all of these died.” (Hebrews 11:13) Thereafter, his enemies may have searched for the body, but it was “nowhere to be found,” perhaps because Jehovah disposed of it, preventing them from desecrating it or using it to promote false religion.*

With that Scriptural reasoning in mind, then, let us try to imagine how Enoch’s life might have ended. Picture this scenario, remembering that it is only one possibility. Enoch was on the run, nearing exhaustion. His persecutors were after him, seething with rage over his judgment message. Enoch found a place to hide and rest for a while, but he knew that he could not escape for long. A violent death loomed very near now. As he rested, he prayed to his God. Then a profound sense of peace came upon him. A vision, as vivid as if Enoch were really there, took him far away.

Imagine that a view opened before him, showing a world wholly different from the one he knew.

* Similarly, God likely ensured that the bodies of Moses and Jesus were beyond the reach of such abuses.—Deuteronomy 34:5, 6; Luke 24:3-6; Jude 9.

It seemed to him that it was as beautiful as the garden of Eden, but there were no cherubs guarding it to keep humans out. Men and women—all full of health and youthful vigor—were numerous. Peace reigned among them. There was no trace of the hatred and religious persecution that Enoch knew only too well. As for himself, Enoch sensed Jehovah’s assurance, love, and approval. He felt sure that this place was where he belonged; it would be his own home. As peace stole over him, Enoch closed his eyes and drifted into a deep, dreamless sleep.

And there he remains to this day—asleep in death, carefully preserved in the limitless memory of Jehovah God! As Jesus later promised, the day will come when all those who are in God’s memory will hear Christ’s voice and come out of the grave, opening their eyes to a beautiful and peaceful new world.—John 5:28, 29.

Would you like to be there? Imagine the thrill of meeting Enoch. Think of the fascinating things we could learn from him! He could tell us if our imaginary scenario about his final moments was close to the truth. But there is something we urgently need to learn from him right now. After discussing Enoch, Paul went on to say: “Without faith it is impossible to please God well.” (Hebrews 11:6) What a powerful reason for each of us to imitate the courageous faith of Enoch! ■

Lamech: 3152-2375

20 years

2900

2800

2700

2600

2500

2400

2300

2200

2100

2000

13

Noah: 2970-2020

IS IT JUST A SMALL MISUNDERSTANDING?

A little girl saw smoke rising from factory smokestacks and expanding into what looked like puffy clouds. She concluded that the purpose of the factory was to make clouds. Such a small misunderstanding on the part of a child can be amusing. However, a major misunderstanding can impact our lives. For example, misreading the label on a container of medicine could bring serious consequences.

Misunderstandings about spiritual matters can be even more serious. For example, some people misunderstood Jesus' teachings. (John 6: 48-68) Instead of learning more, they rejected everything that Jesus taught. What a loss!

Do you read the Bible for guidance? That is commendable. Is there a danger, though, that you might misunderstand something that you have read? It happens to many people. Consider three common misunderstandings.

► Some people misunderstand the Bible command to "fear the true God." They assume that a morbid dread of God is called for. (Ecclesiastes 12:13) But God does not want those who worship him to feel that way about him. He says: "Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you." (Isaiah 41:10) To fear God simply means to feel awe and deep respect for him.

► Some people misread these inspired words: "There is an appointed time for everything, . . . a time for birth and a time to die." They conclude that God has decided the exact moment when each human will die. (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2) However, that passage is actually commenting on the cycle of life and noting that death is our common lot. God's Word also teaches that our own deci-

sions can affect our life span. For example, we read: "The fear of Jehovah prolongs life." (Proverbs 10:27; Psalm 90:10; Isaiah 55:3) How so? For instance, respect for God's Word will move us to avoid such unhealthy practices as drunkenness and immorality.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

► Some take the Bible literally when it states that the heavens and the earth are "reserved for fire," and they conclude that God will destroy this planet. (2 Peter 3:7) But God promises that he will never allow the literal earth to be destroyed. God "has established the earth on its foundations; it will not be moved from its place forever and ever." (Psalm 104:5; Isaiah 45:18) It is this corrupt world system of things, not the literal planet, that will meet its permanent end, as if destroyed by fire. As for the heavens, when the word is meant literally, it may refer either to the sky, the starry universe, or God's place of dwelling. None of these will be destroyed.

WHY IS THE BIBLE SOMETIMES MISUNDERSTOOD?

As you can see from those examples, people often misunderstand passages they read in the Bible. But why would God allow that to happen? Some might reason: 'If God is all-wise and all-knowing, he could have provided us with a book so clearly written that everyone would easily understand it. Why did he not do that?' Consider three reasons why the Bible is often misunderstood.

1. The Bible is designed to be understood by those who are humble and willing to learn. Jesus said to his Father: "I publicly praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because

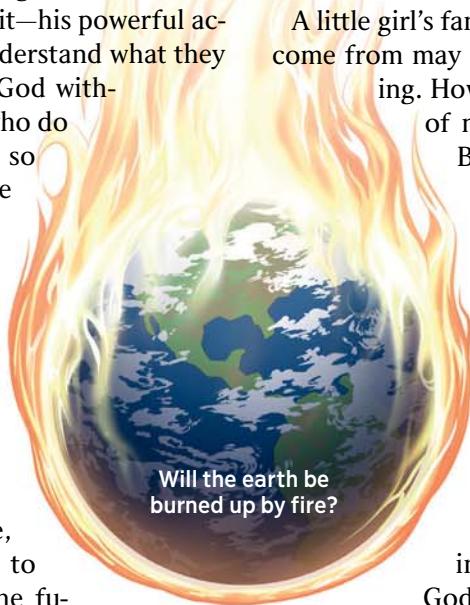
you have carefully hidden these things from wise and intellectual ones and have revealed them to young children.” (Luke 10:21) The Bible is written in such a way that only those with the right attitude would understand its message. People with a proud attitude—a common trait of “wise and intellectual ones”—tend to misunderstand the Bible. But people who read the Bible with the attitude of “young children”—humble and eager to learn—are rewarded with a better understanding of God’s message. How skillfully God has designed the Bible!

2. The Bible is directed to people who honestly want God’s help to understand it. Jesus showed that people would need help to understand fully what he taught. How would they receive it? Jesus explained: “The helper, the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things.” (John 14:26) So God provides his holy spirit—his powerful active force—to help people understand what they read in the Bible. However, God withholds his spirit from people who do not rely on him to help them, so the Bible often seems obscure to them. The holy spirit also moves more knowledgeable Christians to come to the aid of those seeking greater understanding.—Acts 8:26-35.

3. Some Bible passages can be understood by humans only at the proper time in history. For example, the prophet Daniel was told to write down a message for the future. An angel told him: “Daniel, keep the words secret, and seal up the book until the time of the end.” Over the centuries, many people have read the Bible book of Daniel but could not really understand it. In fact, even Daniel himself did not understand some of what

he wrote down. He humbly admitted: “I heard, but I could not understand.” Eventually, people would correctly understand God’s prophecy written down by Daniel, but only at the particular time in history that God selected. The angel explained: “Go, Daniel, because the words are to be kept secret and sealed up until the time of the end.” Who will understand God’s messages? “None of the wicked will understand; but those having insight will understand.” (Daniel 12:4, 8-10) So God does not reveal the meaning of certain Bible passages until the right time arrives.

Has timing ever caused Jehovah’s Witnesses to misunderstand the Bible? Yes. But when God’s time came to make matters clearer, the Witnesses readily adjusted their understanding. They believe that they thereby imitate Christ’s apostles, who humbly adjusted their thinking whenever Jesus corrected them.—Acts 1:6, 7.



A little girl’s fanciful ideas about where clouds come from may be just a small misunderstanding. However, what the Bible teaches is of major importance to you. The Bible’s message is too important for anyone to try to understand on his own by private Bible reading. So seek help to understand what you are reading. Seek out those who study the Bible with a humble attitude, people who rely on God’s holy spirit to understand the Bible, people who are convinced that we are living at a point in history when God wants us to understand the Bible as never before.

Do not hesitate to speak with Jehovah’s Witnesses or to read their careful research on the jw.org website. The Bible promises: “If you call out for understanding . . . , you will find the knowledge of God.”—Proverbs 2:3-5. ■

Does God cause suffering?

What would you say?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ Maybe

What the Bible says

"It is unthinkable for the true God to act wickedly, for the Almighty to do wrong!"
(Job 34:10) God never brings about the evil and suffering we see in the world.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ Satan the Devil, "the ruler of the world," is the main cause of suffering.—John 14:30.
- ▶ Suffering and evil also often result from the bad choices people make.—James 1:14, 15.

Will suffering ever end?

Some people believe

that humans can eliminate suffering through their combined efforts, while others see little hope of world conditions changing for the better so drastically. **What do you think?**

What the Bible says

God will eliminate suffering. "Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ God will use Jesus to undo the suffering caused by the Devil.—1 John 3:8.
- ▶ Good people will live in peace on earth forever.—Psalm 37:9-11, 29.



The world is full of suffering, but is God behind it?



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

To learn why God allows suffering,
see chapter 11 of this book, published
by Jehovah's Witnesses

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THE WATCHTOWER

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GOD'S GREATEST GIFT?



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How Is Jesus' Sacrifice "a Ransom for Many"?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What is the greatest gift that God has ever given us?

The Bible says: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son.”—John 3:16.

This issue of *The Watchtower* discusses why God sent Jesus to earth to die for us and how we can show appreciation for that gift.

WILL YOU ACCEPT GOD'S GREATEST GIFT?

- 3 A Gift Unlike Any Other
- 4 God's Greatest Gift—Why So Precious?
- 6 How Will You Respond to God's Greatest Gift?

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

8 IS CELIBACY A REQUIREMENT FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTERS?

10 ESCAPE FROM SLAVERY—THEN AND NOW

13 ENJOY THE BENEFITS OF GIVING

16 WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



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Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures.

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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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COVER SUBJECT

A Gift Unlike Any Other

THE boat-shaped pencil sharpener in Jordan's hand seems unremarkable. Yet, it is one of his most treasured possessions. Jordan explains, "Russell, an elderly family friend, gave it to me when I was very young." After Russell's death, Jordan learned that Russell had played a pivotal role in the lives of Jordan's grandfather and parents, reassuring them during difficult times. "Now that I have learned more about Russell," Jordan says, "this tiny gift is more valuable to me than ever."

As Jordan's experience illustrates, a gift may have little or no value in some people's eyes. To the appreciative recipient, though, it may be precious, even priceless. The Bible describes a gift of incalculable worth in these well-known words: "God loved the world so much that he gave his

only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:16.

A gift that can bring the receiver everlasting life! Can there be any gift of greater worth? While some may not recognize the value of that gift, true Christians esteem it as "precious." (Psalm 49:8; 1 Peter 1:18, 19) Why, though, did God offer the life of his Son as a gift for the world?

The apostle Paul explains why in these words: "Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men." (Romans 5:12) The first man, Adam, sinned by knowingly disobeying God, and he thus suffered the penalty of death. Through Adam, death came upon all his descendants—the world of humankind.

"The wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) To free mankind from the condemnation of death, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to earth to sacrifice his perfect life for the world. On the basis of that sacrifice, known as "the ransom," all who exercise faith in Jesus will have everlasting life.—Romans 3:24.

Regarding all the blessings that God extends to his worshippers through Jesus Christ, Paul declares: "Thanks be to God for his indescribable

free gift." (2 Corinthians 9:15) Yes, the ransom is so marvelous that we are incapable of fully describing it. But among all of God's gracious gifts to humankind, why is the ransom especially remarkable? In what way is it unlike any of God's other gifts?* And how should we respond to it? We invite you to read the Bible's answers to those questions in the following two articles.

* Jesus willingly "surrendered his life for us." (1 John 3:16) However, since that sacrifice was part of God's purpose, this series of articles focuses on God's role as the Provider of the ransom.

God's Greatest Gift Why So Precious?

What makes a gift truly precious to you? Likely four factors are involved:

(1) *who* gave the gift to you, (2) *why* it was given, (3) what was *sacrificed* to make the gift possible, and (4) whether the gift filled a real *need*. Giving thought to those factors can help us to deepen our appreciation for the ransom—God's greatest gift.



WHO GAVE IT?

Some gifts are precious because they were given to us by someone in authority or someone whom we highly esteem. Other gifts, though of little monetary value, are cherished because they come from a dear family member or a trusted friend. This was the case with Russell's gift to Jordan, mentioned in the preceding article. How does this apply to the gift of the ransom?

First, the Bible says that "God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might gain life through him." (1 John 4:9) That fact makes this gift truly precious. No one has greater author-

ity than God. Regarding him, a Hebrew psalmist wrote: "You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth." (Psalm 83:18) We could not receive a gift from a higher source.

Second, God is "our Father." (Isaiah 63:16) How so? He gave us life. In addition, he loyally cares for us as a devoted father cares for his children. Addressing some of his ancient people as Ephraim, God asked: "Is Ephraim not a precious son to me, a beloved child? . . . My emotions are stirred for him. And I will surely have pity on him." (Jeremiah 31:20) God feels the same way about his worshippers today. He is not only our almighty Creator but also our loyal Father and Friend. Does that not make any gift from him especially treasurable?



WHY IS IT GIVEN?

Some gifts are precious because they were given, not out of obligation, but out of genuine love. A truly unselfish giver does not expect to be repaid for his kindness.

God gave his Son in our behalf because he loved us. “By this the *love of God* was revealed in our case, that God sent his only-begotten Son,” says the Bible. To what end? “So that we might gain life through him.” (1 John 4:9) Was God obligated to do so? Not at all! “The ransom paid by Christ Jesus” is an expression of God’s “*undeserved kindness*.”—Romans 3:24.

Why is God’s gift an act of “undeserved kindness”? The Bible explains: “God recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Unselfish love prompted God to act in behalf of weak, helpless, sinful humans. We did not earn that love, nor can we ever repay him. His gift is the greatest expression of love in history.



WHAT SACRIFICE WAS MADE?

Some gifts are precious because they represent a great sacrifice made by the giver. When a person is willing to part with something that is of great value to him and gives it to us, we especially treasure the gift because of the sacrifice.

God “gave his *only-begotten Son*.” (John 3:16) He could not have offered us anyone dearer to him. During the aeons that God was creating

the universe, Jesus worked alongside him and became “the one he was especially fond of.” (Proverbs 8:30) Jesus is God’s “beloved Son” and “the image of the invisible God.” (Colossians 1:13-15) Never has a closer bond existed between two intelligent beings.

Yet, God “did not even spare his own Son.” (Romans 8:32) Jehovah gave his very best for us. No gift has cost him more.



FILLING A DESPERATE NEED

Some gifts are precious because they fill a real need, even an urgent one. For example, how grateful you would be to someone who voluntarily paid for a lifesaving medical treatment that you could not afford! That gift would be priceless indeed, would it not?

“Just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ *all will be made alive*.” (1 Corinthians 15:22) As descendants of Adam, we are all “dying,” unable to escape the stings of sickness and death or to reconcile ourselves to God and be free of guilt before him. And as lowly humans, we cannot make ourselves or anyone else “alive.” The Bible points out: “None of them can ever redeem a brother or give to God a ransom for him . . . It is always beyond their reach.” (Psalm 49:7, 8) We desperately need help because we cannot afford the price of the ransom. Left alone, we would be helpless.

Out of his great love, Jehovah willingly paid for the lifesaving “treatment” we need, so that by means of Jesus “*all will be made alive*.” How does the ransom accomplish this? “The blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” Yes, faith

in the shed blood of Jesus opens the door to forgiveness of sin and to everlasting life. (1 John 1:7; 5:13) And what will the ransom do for our dead loved ones? “Since death came through a man, resurrection of the dead also comes through a man [Jesus].”—1 Corinthians 15:21.*

No gift has ever been given by a higher source or motivated by greater love than was the sacrifice of Jesus. No one has ever given up as much for us as Jehovah God has. And no gift fills a greater need than the one sacrifice that frees us from sin and death. Yes, no gift can even approach the indescribable worth of the ransom.

* For more information about God’s purpose to resurrect the dead, see chapter 7 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available at www.jw.org.



To learn more about Jesus’ sacrifice and how you can benefit from it, watch the short video *Remember Jesus’ Death* at www.jw.org. Look under PUBLICATIONS > VIDEOS. You can also scan this code with your mobile device.



How Will You Respond to God’s Greatest Gift?

“The love the Christ has compels us . . . He died for all so that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for him who died for them.”—2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.

AN EXTRAORDINARY gift should compel us to express gratitude. Jesus highlighted that lesson after he healed ten men of a debilitating disease that had no cure at the time. One of the ten men “turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice.” Jesus said: “All ten were cleansed, were they not? Where, then, are the other nine?” (Luke 17:12-17) The lesson? How quickly we can forget the kind deeds others do for us!

The ransom is unlike any other gift. It is by far the greatest gift ever given. How, then, should you respond to what God has done in your behalf?

Come to know the Giver. The ransom does not automatically bring everlasting life to all humans. Rather, Jesus said in prayer to God: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) If someone told you that a man saved your life when you were yet a child, would you not be interested in learning more about that man and why he saved you? Jehovah God, who gave the lifesaving gift of the ransom, wants you not only to know who he is but also to come into a close relationship with him. “Draw

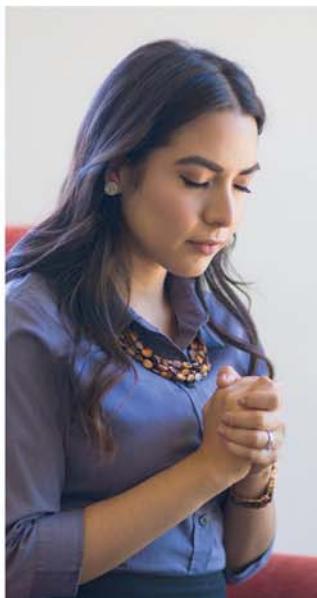
close to God,” the Bible urges, “and he will draw close to you.”—James 4:8.

Exercise faith in the ransom. “The one who exercises faith in the Son has everlasting life.” (John 3:36) What does it mean to exercise faith? It means action; to show faith in the ransom requires action. (James 2:17) What kind of action? A gift becomes yours only when you reach out and accept it. So you must reach out and accept the ransom. How? Learn how God wants you to live, and then act accordingly.* Pray to God for forgiveness and a clean conscience. Approach God in full confidence that the ransom guar-

* The best way to come to know God and to draw close to him is to study his Word, the Bible. Learn how to do this by asking one of Jehovah's Witnesses or by visiting our website, www.jw.org.

tees an eternal future of peace, security, and prosperity for all who exercise faith in it!—Hebrews 11:1.

Attend the Memorial of Jesus' death. Jesus instituted an annual event to remind us of the provision of the ransom. Regarding the observance of that event, he said: “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19) Jehovah's Witnesses will commemorate Jesus' death on **Tuesday, April 11, 2017**, after sundown. The program, which lasts about one hour, will include a discourse explaining the significance of Jesus' death and how it brings present and future benefits. Last year, some 20 million people around the world attended the Memorial. We warmly invite you to join us in response to God's greatest gift. ■



Is Celibacy a Requirement for Christian Ministers?

RELIGIONS around the world—such as the Roman Catholic Church, the various Orthodox churches, Buddhism, and others—require celibacy of their religious leaders and clergy. On the other hand, many people feel that this practice lies at the root of the recent wave of sexual scandals involving clerics of various religions.

It is, therefore, reasonable to ask, Is celibacy a Scriptural requirement for Christian ministers? To answer that question, let us consider the origin and development of this practice as well as God's view of it.

CELIBACY IN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* defines celibacy as “the state of being unmarried and, therefore, sexually abstinent, usually in association with the role of a religious official or devotee.”

Jesus visited Peter’s mother-in-law and cured her.—Matthew 8:14, 15; Mark 1:29-31

In a 2006 address to the Roman Curia, then Pope Benedict XVI linked compulsory celibacy to “a tradition that dates back to an epoch close to that of the Apostles.”

Celibacy, however, was not a religious custom practiced by first-century Christians. In fact, the apostle Paul, who lived in the first century, warned believers about men who would make “misleading inspired statements” and “forbid marriage.”—1 Timothy 4:1-3.

It was during the second century that the practice of celibacy began to make its way into the Western “Christian” churches. According to the book *Celibacy and Religious Traditions*, this was “consistent with the new wave of sexual restraint that arose in the Roman Empire.”

In the following centuries, church councils and so-called Church Fathers promoted clerical



celibacy. They thought that sexual intercourse was defiling and incompatible with clerical duties. Nevertheless, the *Encyclopædia Britannica* points out that “as late as the 10th century many priests and even some bishops had wives.”

Clerical celibacy was enforced during the Lateran Councils of 1123 and 1139, which were held in Rome, and it has remained the official position of the Roman Catholic Church to the present day. With this measure, the church prevented the loss of power and income that resulted when priests who were married willed church property to their children.

GOD'S VIEW OF CELIBACY

God's view of celibacy is clearly expressed in his Word, the Bible. In it we read Jesus' words about those who remained single, as he did, “on account of the Kingdom of the heavens.” (Matthew 19:12) Along the same line, the apostle Paul spoke about Christians who chose to follow his example of singleness “for the sake of the good news.”—1 Corinthians 7:37, 38; 9:23.

However, neither Jesus nor Paul were commanding ministers to be celibate. Jesus stated that singleness was a “gift” not possessed by all his followers. When Paul wrote about “those who have never married,” he frankly admitted: “I have no command from the Lord, but I give my opinion.”—Matthew 19:11; 1 Corinthians 7:25, footnote.

In addition, the Bible shows that many Christian ministers in the first century, including the apostle Peter, were married men. (Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 9:5) In fact, on account of the prevalence of immoral sexual practices in the Roman world of that time, Paul wrote that if a Christian overseer was married, he was to be “a husband of one wife” and have “his children in subjection.”—1 Timothy 3:2, 4.

These were not celibate marriages, for the Bible candidly states that a “husband [ought to] give to his wife her due” and that married couples should “not deprive each other” of sexual intimacies. (1 Corinthians 7:3-5) Clearly, celibacy is not required by God, nor is it compulsory for Christian ministers.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOOD NEWS

If celibacy is not compulsory, why did Jesus and Paul speak favorably of singleness? Because singleness may afford a person greater opportunities to share the good news with others. Single ones can give more of themselves, since they are spared the anxieties that married ones experience.—1 Corinthians 7:32-35.

Consider the example of David, who decided to quit his well-paying job in Mexico City to move to a rural area in Costa Rica to teach others the Bible. Does David feel that singleness helped him to do so? “Definitely,” he says. “It was a challenge to adapt to a new culture and different living conditions, but since I had only myself to care for, the adaptation process was easier.”

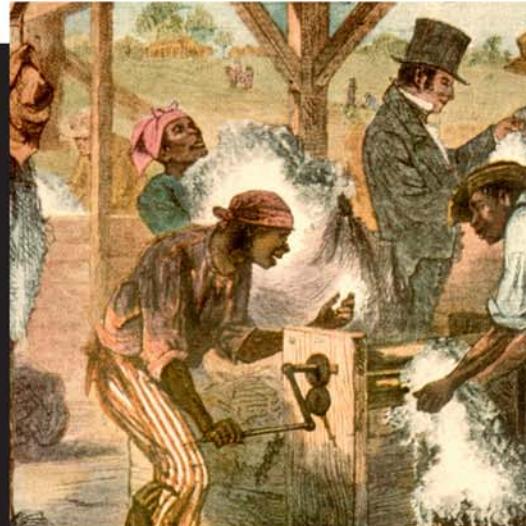
“It does not matter whether you are married or single, you will be happy if you give your best to Jehovah God.”—Claudia

Claudia, a single Christian who has moved to serve in places where evangelizers are needed, says: “I enjoy my service to God. My faith and my relationship with God are strengthened when I see how he takes care of me.”

Singleness does not have to be a burden. Claudia adds: “It does not matter whether you are married or single, you will be happy if you give your best to Jehovah God.”—Psalm 119:1, 2. ■



Depiction of captured slaves in ancient Egypt



Slave trade between Africa and the Americas was a lucrative business

Escape From Slavery

Then and Now

Blessing* arrived in Europe with the promise of getting work as a hairdresser. But after ten days of constant beatings, as well as threats of violence against her family back home, she was forced to work as a prostitute.

Blessing was expected to earn 200 to 300 euros a night to pay off a debt that her madam had set at over 40,000 euros.[#] "I often thought about escaping," Blessing explains, "but I was afraid of what they would do to my family. I was trapped." Her story is typical of some four million people enslaved in the international sex industry.

Nearly 4,000 years ago, a teenager named Joseph was sold by his brothers. He ended up in servitude in a prominent Egyptian home. Unlike

Blessing, Joseph was not maltreated by his owner at first. But when he rejected the advances of his master's wife, he found himself unjustly accused of attempted rape. He was thrown into jail and put in irons.—Genesis 39:1-20; Psalm 105:17, 18.

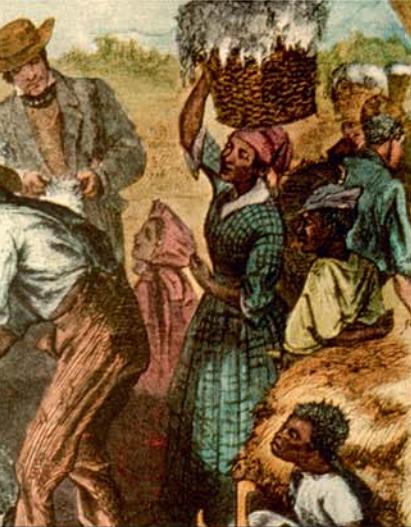
Joseph was a slave of antiquity; Blessing is a slave of the 21st century. But both were victims of the age-old practice of human trafficking, a trade that treats people as commodities and cares for nothing but economic gain.

WAR MAKES SLAVERY A BIG BUSINESS

Warfare proved to be the easiest way for nations to acquire slaves. Egyptian King Thutmose III is said to have brought back 90,000 prisoners after one military campaign in Canaan. The Egyptians put them to work as slaves in mining, building temples, and cutting canals.

* Name has been changed.

[#] At the time, the value of the euro was approximately the same as the U.S. dollar.



Millions still labor in bondage

Under the Roman Empire, wars also provided slaves in abundance, and the demand for slaves sometimes led to war. It is estimated that by the first century, slaves constituted nearly half the population of Rome. Many Egyptian and Roman slaves were harshly exploited. The life expectancy of slaves in Roman mines, for example, was only about 30 years.

As time went on, slavery did not get kinder. From the 16th century to the 19th century, the slave trade between Africa and the Americas was one of the most lucrative businesses on earth. ‘It is estimated that between 25 million and 30 million men, women, and children were abducted and sold,’ says a UNESCO report. Hundreds of thousands are said to have died during the Atlantic crossing. Olaudah Equiano, a slave who survived, reported: “The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable.”

Sadly, slavery is not just a tragedy of history. Some 21 million men, women, and children still work as slaves, under bondage and with little or no pay, according to the International Labour

Organization. Modern-day slaves work in mines, sweat shops, brick factories, brothels, and private homes. Although illegal, this kind of slavery is apparently on the increase.

ESCAPE TO FREEDOM

Brutal treatment has led many slaves to fight for freedom. In the first century B.C.E., the gladiator Spartacus and some 100,000 slaves staged an unsuccessful rebellion against Rome. In the 18th century, slaves on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola rose up against their masters. The appalling treatment the slaves had suffered on the sugar plantations sparked a 13-year-long civil war that finally led to the formation of the independent nation of Haiti in 1804.

The Israelites’ Exodus from Egypt, however, must surely count as the most successful escape from slavery in all history. Possibly three million people—an entire nation—were liberated from slavery in Egypt. They certainly deserved their freedom. The Bible describes their life in Egypt as being under “harsh conditions in every form of slavery.” (Exodus 1:11-14) One Pharaoh even



Escape From a Different Kind of Slavery

Alonso was a slave of a different sort. While still a teenager, he became enslaved to cocaine and heroin. “To pay for my drug habit, I turned to crime and became a drug trafficker,” Alonso confesses. “Although I went to four different detoxification centers, I could not break free. The police finally caught up with me, and I spent four years in prison.”

After 30 years of slavery to drugs, Alonso began to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Bible’s

message touched his heart and made him determined to overcome his addiction. “It was very tough, after so many years,” he recalls. “But Jehovah God has helped me to win the battle.” —Psalm 55:22.

“My wife is delighted to see how much I have changed,” says Alonso. “I cannot thank Jehovah enough for helping me escape from a course of self-destruction. Without his help I would still be enslaved. Or more likely, I would probably be dead.”

launched a campaign of infanticide to control the growing Israelite population.—Exodus 1:8-22.

The Israelites’ release from their unjust treatment in Egypt was unique because God himself intervened. “I well know the pains they suffer,” God told Moses. “I will go down to rescue them.” (Exodus 3:7, 8) To this day, Jews everywhere celebrate the Passover each year to commemorate that event.—Exodus 12:14.

THE FINAL ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

“With Jehovah our God there is no injustice,” says the Bible, and it assures us that he has not changed. (2 Chronicles 19:7; Malachi 3:6) God sent Jesus to “proclaim liberty to the captives . . . , to send the crushed ones away free.” (Luke 4:18) Did this mean freedom for every literal slave? Apparently not. Jesus was sent to liberate people from bondage to sin and death. He later declared: “The truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) Even today, the truth that Jesus taught liberates people in many ways.—See the box “Escape From a Different Kind of Slavery.”

Actually, God did help Joseph and Blessing to escape from slavery in different ways. You

can find Joseph’s extraordinary account in chapters 39 to 41 of the Bible book of Genesis. Blessing’s quest for freedom was no less remarkable.

After being expelled from one European country, Blessing went to Spain. There she met Jehovah’s Witnesses and began to study the Bible with them. Determined to straighten out her life, she got a regular job and convinced her former madam to lower the monthly debt payments. One day, Blessing got a phone call from the madam. She wanted to pardon Blessing’s debt and to ask for her forgiveness. What had happened? She too had started to study the Bible with Jehovah’s Witnesses! “The truth sets you free in amazing ways,” says Blessing.

Jehovah God felt grieved by the harsh treatment of Israelite slaves in Egypt; he must feel the same way about similar injustice today. True, to end all forms of slavery will require a huge change in human society. But God promises to bring about just such a change. “There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.”—2 Peter 3:13 ■

Enjoy the Benefits of Giving

"THE bus can leave, but the Chinese guy stays!" That was what Alexandra overheard while sitting on a bus, waiting to cross the border between two South American countries. She got off to see what was happening and found a young Chinese man struggling with broken Spanish as he was trying to explain his predicament to a border guard. Since Alexandra attended a Chinese-language congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, she volunteered to help as interpreter.

The man said that he was a legal resident but had been robbed of his documents and money. At first the officer did not accept this story and even suspected that Alexandra was involved in human trafficking. Finally, he accepted the man's explanation, but the hapless traveler had to pay a fine for not having the right document. Since he had no money, Alexandra offered to lend him \$20. The man could not thank her enough and said he would repay more than \$20. Alexandra explained that she was not looking for a reward; she was happy to help because she felt it was the right thing to do. She gave the man



some Bible literature and urged him to study the Bible with the Witnesses.

It is heartwarming to hear of generosity toward strangers, and doubtless, similar acts are performed by people of all religions and by people who have no religion. Would you have been willing to give of yourself in such an altruistic way? That question is of interest because Jesus said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." (Acts 20:35) It is also of scientific interest because researchers have found

that giving is good for you. Let us see in what ways this is so.

THE "CHEERFUL GIVER"

Experience shows that giving and happiness often go hand in hand. The apostle Paul wrote that "God loves a cheerful giver." He was speaking of Christians who made generous donations to help relieve the hardship of fellow believers. (2 Corinthians 8:4; 9:7) Paul was not saying that they gave because they were happy. The reverse was true—they were happy *because* they were able to give.

Indeed, according to one study, giving "activates regions of the brain associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust, creating a 'warm glow' effect." Another study found that "giving money to someone else lifted participants' happiness more than spending it on themselves."

Have you ever felt that because of your circumstances there is not much you can do? The truth is that everyone can experience the joy of being "a cheerful giver." When given with the right motive, the sum does not have to be large. One of Jehovah's Witnesses sent this message to the publisher of this magazine with a contribution from her: "All these years I have been unable to give but small

amounts of money at the Kingdom Hall.” Yet, she continued: “Jehovah God has given me back much more than I have given. . . . Thank you for making it possible for me to make this gift—it gives me comfort.”

Giving, of course, is not limited to money. There are many other ways to give.

GIVING IS GOOD FOR YOUR HEALTH

The Bible states: “A kind man benefits himself, but the cruel person brings trouble on himself.” (Proverbs 11:17) Kind people are generous, willing to give of themselves—their time, energy, care, and so forth. This approach to life benefits them in various ways, not the least of which is that such generosity is good for their health.

Studies indicate that those who volunteer to help others have been found to suffer from fewer aches and pains and less depression. Overall, they enjoy better health. Generous giving even improves the health of some who suffer from chronic health problems, such as multiple sclerosis or HIV. It has also been shown that recovering alcoholics who help others become significantly less depressed and can improve their odds of avoiding a relapse.



Giving does you and others good

As to why this is so, it is suggested that “feelings of compassion, benevolence and kindness leave less room for negative emotions.” Giving may also lower stress and blood pressure. And people who lost their spouse in death recovered from symptoms of depression sooner if they offered support to others.

There is no doubt about it. Giving does you good.

GIVING IS CONTAGIOUS

Jesus urged his followers: “Practice giving, and people will give to you. They will pour into your laps a fine measure, pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing. For with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you in return.” (Luke 6:38) When you give, people are more likely to respond to your generosity with gratitude and become generous themselves. Giving thus fosters cooperation and friendship.

Researchers who study human relations have noted that “people who consistently display altruism encourage others to follow suit.” In fact, “simply reading about extraordinary acts of kindness makes people more generous.” Hence, according to one study, “each person in a network can influence dozens or even hundreds of people, some of whom he or she does not know and has not met.” In other words, a single act of generosity can start a ripple effect that goes from person to person throughout a community. Would you not like to live in a place like that? Yes, great benefits would come if more people practiced giving.

One experience that illustrates this positive effect comes

from Florida, U.S.A. A group of Jehovah's Witnesses volunteered to do relief work after a destructive hurricane. As they were waiting for repair supplies at the house they were to work on, they noticed that a fence belonging to one of the neighbors was damaged, and they offered to fix it. "I am forever grateful," wrote the neighbor some time later in a letter to the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses. "I found these people to be among the nicest I have ever met." Gratitude moved him to send a generous contribution to be used in what he called the Witnesses' extraordinary work.

IMITATE THE GREATEST EXAMPLE OF GIVING

A remarkable finding from scientific research is that "there appears to be a fundamental human drive toward helping others." Children, says the study, "behave altruistically even before they've learned to talk." Why? The Bible provides the answer when it says that humans were created "in God's image," that is, they possess the same basic godly qualities.—Genesis 1:27.

Among the marvelous qualities of our Creator, Jehovah God, is generosity. He has given



Giving fosters cooperation and friendship

us life and everything we need to make us happy. (Acts 14:17; 17:26-28) We can become acquainted with our heavenly Father and his loving purposes for us by studying his Word, the Bible. That book also discloses that God has made provision for our future happiness.*

* For more details, see the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org. Look under PUBLICATIONS > BOOKS & BROCHURES.

(1 John 4:9, 10) Since Jehovah God is the source of generosity and you are made in his image, it should be no surprise that giving—in imitation of God—is good for you and wins you his favor. —Hebrews 13:16.

Do you remember Alexandra, mentioned at the beginning of this article? How did her story turn out? Although a fellow traveler on the bus with her said she had thrown her money away, the man she helped contacted friends in a city where the bus subsequently stopped, and the \$20 debt was promptly settled. Moreover, the man acted on Alexandra's suggestion and began studying the Bible. She was delighted to meet him again three months later at a Chinese-language convention of Jehovah's Witnesses in Peru. To express his thanks for all that Alexandra had done for him, the man invited her and those who had traveled to the convention with her to his restaurant.

Giving and helping others bring great joy. And even more so if in the process you help people to become better acquainted with the Source of all good gifts—Jehovah God! (James 1:17) Are you enjoying the benefits of such giving? ■

Are we living in “the last days”?

What would you say?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

What the Bible says

“In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here.” (2 Timothy 3:1) Bible prophecy, combined with current events, identifies our time as “the last days.”

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- The last days would be marked by wars, famines, earthquakes, and epidemics of deadly disease.—Matthew 24:3, 7; Luke 21:11.
- During the last days, human society would suffer a serious moral and spiritual breakdown.—2 Timothy 3:2-5.

What does the future hold for humankind?

Some people believe . . .

that the last days will end with the destruction of the earth and everyone on it, while others hope that conditions will improve.

What do you think?

What the Bible says

“The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”—Psalm 37:29.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- The last days will end with the removal of all wickedness.—1 John 2:17.
- The earth will be transformed into a paradise.—Isaiah 35:1, 6.



An earthly paradise awaits survivors of the last days



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

For more information about “the last days,” see chapter 9 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses
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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



THE FOUR HORSEMEN

How Their Ride Affects You



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

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

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

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



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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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COVER SUBJECT

The Four Horsemen and You

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

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

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

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

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

The Four Horsemen Who Are They?

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



THE RIDER OF THE WHITE HORSE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



THE RIDER OF THE RED HORSE

“Another came out, a fiery-colored horse, and it was granted to the one seated on it to take peace away from the earth so that they should slaughter one another, and he was given a great sword.”
—Revelation 6:4.

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

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



THE RIDER OF THE BLACK HORSE

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

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

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

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



THE RIDER OF THE PALE HORSE

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

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

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

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

The Four Horsemen Revealed



Revelation 6:1, 2

WHITE HORSE

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



Revelation 6:3, 4

FIERY-COLORED HORSE

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



U.S. Marine Corps photo



Revelation 6:5, 6

BLACK HORSE

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

Revelation 6:7, 8

PALE HORSE

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



BETTER TIMES ARE AHEAD!

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

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

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

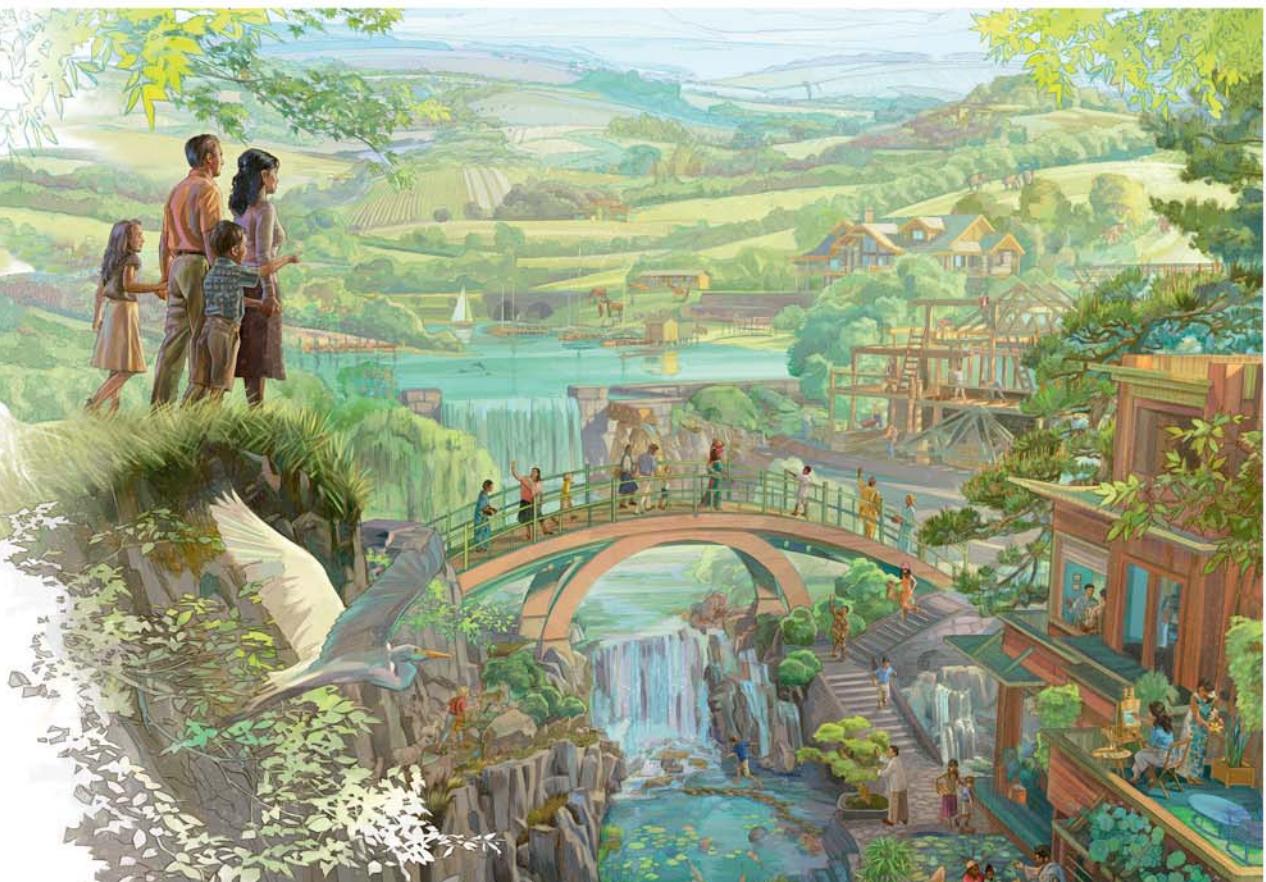
on the top of the mountains it will overflow.” —Psalm 72:16.

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

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

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

Jesus will soon reverse the effects of
the other three horsemen





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

Another Bit of Evidence

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



AS TOLD BY
SAMUEL HAMILTON

YEAR BORN

1928

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

COSTA RICA

HISTORY

CONSUMED BY PROFESSIONAL
SPORTS AND GAMBLING



I Loved Baseball More Than Anything!

MY PAST

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE

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

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

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

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

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

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

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED

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

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

I enjoy spending time with the young people in the congregation



“What a Beautiful Woman You Are”



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

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

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

“GO OUT FROM YOUR LAND”

Sarah likely grew up in Ur. Today, all that is left of that city is a desolate ruin. But in Sarah's day, merchants' vessels plied the waters and canals of the Euphrates River, bringing precious goods from far and wide to this thriving city. People

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

thronged Ur's narrow, winding streets, ships jostled one another along its wharves, and goods overflowed in its bazaars. Imagine Sarah growing up in that bustling city, coming to know many of its people by name. They surely remembered her too, for she was an extraordinarily beautiful woman. She also had a large family there.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THEY “WENT OUT OF THE LAND”

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

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

Sarah's faith moved her to leave the comforts of home behind



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

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

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

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

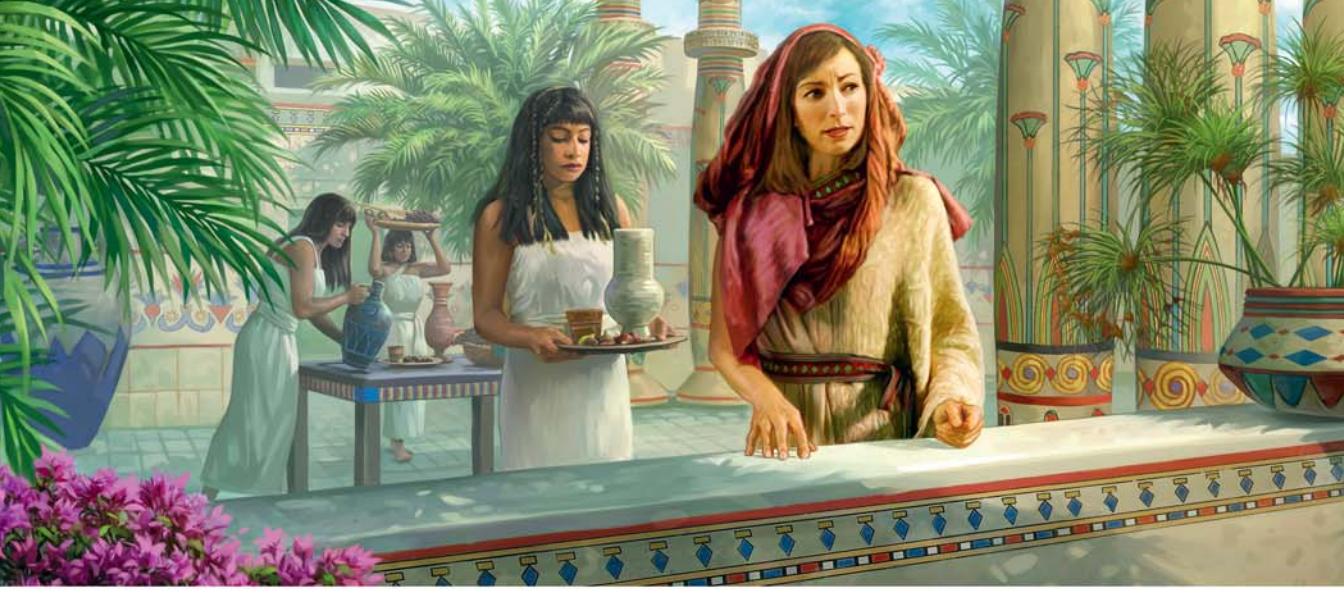
At any rate, they left Haran and pressed onward. Note, though, who was now with them. The account tells us that Abraham's family left with the wealth they had gained as well as “the people whom they had acquired in Haran.” (Gene-

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

“DOWN TOWARD EGYPT”

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Will there ever be true justice on earth?

What would you say?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ Maybe

What the Bible says

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

What else can we learn from the Bible?

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

Does God favor one group of people over another?

Some people believe

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

What the Bible says

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

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ The Bible has “good news” for “every nation and tribe and tongue and people.”—Revelation 14:6.



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

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

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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



What Does the
Bible Say About
**Life and
Death?**



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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Is death part of God's will for us? The Bible says: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more."—Revelation 21:4. This issue of *The Watchtower* examines what the Bible says about life and death.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH?

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Why Do People Die?

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COVER SUBJECT

A Puzzling Question

VIEWS about life and death are many and varied. Some feel that after death they will live on, perhaps in another form or in another place. Others feel that they will be reborn to live another existence. Still others think that death simply ends it all.

You may have your own belief on the subject, depending on your upbringing or cultural background. Since opinions as to what happens at death differ so widely, is there someone or somewhere we can turn to for reliable and truthful answers to this puzzling question?

For centuries, religious leaders have taught the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. Followers of nearly all major religions—Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and others—believe in the existence of an immortal soul, which is said to survive the death of the body and live on in the spirit realm. Buddhists, on the other hand, believe that by way of countless rebirths, the force, or mental energy, within a person can reach a blissful state called Nirvana.

On account of such teachings, the majority of people around the world have come to believe that death opens the door to life in another world. To many, death is therefore an important step in the cycle of life, and dying appears to them to be part of God's will. But what does the Bible say about the matter? Please read the following article. The answer may surprise you.



Followers of nearly all major religions believe that the human soul is immortal



What the Bible Says About Life and Death

Reading the creation account in the Bible book of Genesis, we learn that the first man, Adam, was told by God: “From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will certainly die.” (Genesis 2:16, 17) That statement clearly and simply shows that if Adam had obeyed God’s command, he would not have died but would have continued living in the garden of Eden.

Sadly, rather than choosing to obey and live forever, Adam chose to ignore God’s command, and he ate the forbidden fruit when his wife, Eve, gave it to him. (Genesis 3:1-6) The consequences of that act of disobedience are still with us today. The apostle Paul explained it this way: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) That “one man” was, of course, Adam. But what was the sin, and why did it lead to death?

What Adam did—willfully disobeying or breaking God’s law—is sin. (1 John 3:4) And the penalty for sin is death, as God told Adam. As long as Adam—and his future offspring—remained obedient to God’s command, they would have no sin and would never have to taste death. God did not create humans to die but to live—even forever.

Can Humans Live Forever?

A few years ago, researchers reported the discovery of some underwater plants that they believe have been alive for thousands of years—perhaps the longest of any living thing on earth. The plants are of the species *Posidonia oceanica*, a type of seagrass that covers huge swaths of the Mediterranean seabed between Spain and Cyprus.

If plants can live to that amazing age, what about humans? Some scientists who study aging are optimistic about the prospect of an extended life span. For example, a book on the subject is said to delve into “the multitude of cutting-edge scientific developments” in that field. Whether scientific developments will have any real impact on the human life span remains to be seen.

True prospects for living forever, though, do not hinge on modern science. The Bible points to our Creator, Jehovah God, and says: “With you is the source of life.” (Psalm 36:9) To him, Jesus Christ said in prayer: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) Indeed, our efforts to know and please Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, will be rewarded with everlasting blessings.



Biosphoto/Biosphoto/Superstock

Researchers believe that some plants of this species of seagrass have lived for thousands of years

There is no disputing that death has “spread to all men,” as the Bible stated. But does some part of us live on after we die? Many would say yes, that a part of us—something called the soul—is immortal. This, however, would amount to saying that God lied to Adam. How so? Because if a part of us moves on to live in some other realm after we die, then death would not be the penalty for sin, as God stated. The Bible says: “It is impossible for God to lie.” (Hebrews 6:18) In reality, it was Satan who lied when he told Eve: “You certainly will not die.”—Genesis 3:4.

That raises the question, If the teaching of the immortality of the soul is based on a lie, then what really happens at death?

THE BIBLE SETS THINGS STRAIGHT

The Genesis account of creation says: “Jehovah God went on to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living person.” The expression “a living person” is translated from the Hebrew word *ne’phesh*,* which literally means “a breathing creature.”—Genesis 2:7, footnote.

The Bible thus makes clear that humans are not created as individuals *with* a soul that is immortal. Rather, each individual *is* “a living person.” That is why, search as you may, you will not find any Bible text that uses the expression “immortal soul.”

Since the Bible does not say that humans possess what some call an immortal soul, why do so many religions teach the contrary? The answer takes us all the way back to ancient Egypt.

* Some Bible translations, such as the *King James Version* and the Catholic *Douay Version*, render *ne’phesh* by the words “living soul,” whereas many modern translations render it “living creature,” *The New English Bible*; “living being,” *New International Version* and *The Jerusalem Bible*; or simply “began to live,” *Today’s English Version*.



WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

Simply put, the Bible says that the dead are in the grave, awaiting the resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) They are not suffering or in any kind of pain, for “the dead know nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) In his teachings, Jesus likened death to a deep sleep. (John 11:11-14) Thus, we have no need to fear those who have fallen asleep in death or to appease them by making offerings to them. They can neither help nor harm us, because “there is no work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the Grave.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10) By means of the resurrection, however, God will do away with death forever.—1 Corinthians 15:26, 55; Revelation 21:4.

A PAGAN TEACHING FLOURISHES

Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.E., said that the Egyptians were “the first of mankind who have defended the immortality of the soul.” Another ancient culture, the Babylonians, also toyed with the idea of the immortal soul. By the time Alexander the Great

You will not find any Bible text that uses the expression “immortal soul”

conquered the Middle East in 332 B.C.E., Greek philosophers had popularized the teaching, and it soon spread throughout the Greek Empire.

In the first century C.E., two prominent Jewish sects, the Essenes and the Pharisees, taught that the soul survives the body at death. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says: “The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato.” Likewise, first-century Jewish historian Josephus attributed the teaching, not to the Holy Scriptures, but to “the belief of the sons of Greece,” which he viewed as a collection of tales by their mythologists.

As the influence of Greek culture continued to expand, professed Christians adopted this pagan teaching as well. According to historian Jona Lendering, “Plato’s hypothesis that our soul was once in a better place and now lives in a fallen world made it easy to combine platonic philosophy and Christianity.” Thus, the pagan doctrine of the immortal soul was absorbed into the “Christian” church and became a fundamental part of its beliefs.

Why You Can Trust What the Bible Says

We can have full confidence that what the Bible says is worthy of our trust. Why? Consider the following:



Unique Authorship: The Bible is composed of 66 books written by some 40 writers over a period of 16 centuries, from 1513 B.C.E. to about 98 C.E. Still, its content is harmonious and coherent throughout. This proves that its real Author is the almighty God. He revealed the information to the men who penned it.



Historical Accuracy: Events recorded in the Bible are in full harmony with proven historical facts. The book *A Lawyer Examines the Bible* remarks: "While romances, legends and false testimony are careful to place the events related in some distant place and some indefinite time, . . . the Bible narratives give us the date and place of the things related with the utmost precision."



Scientific Accuracy: The Bible is not a science textbook, but when it touches on scientific matters, it reflects an accuracy far ahead of its time. For example, in chapters 13 and 14 of the book of Leviticus, detailed laws on hygiene and quarantine were given to the Israelites, long before people knew anything about germs and contagion. The Bible also speaks of the earth as being round and suspended in space, facts that were not fully understood by science until centuries later.—Job 26:7; Isaiah 40:22.

These are just a few examples to substantiate the Bible's claim of authenticity when it says: "All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight."—2 Timothy 3:16.

"THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE"

In the first century, the apostle Paul sounded this warning: "The inspired word clearly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired statements and teachings of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1) How true those words proved to be! The doctrine of the immortal soul is but one example of "teachings of demons." It is not supported by the Bible, and it has its roots in ancient pagan religions and philosophies.

Happily for us, Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) By gaining an accurate knowledge of Bible truth, we are set free from the God-dishonoring teachings and practices promoted by so many of the world's religions. Moreover, the truth in God's Word sets us free from the shackles of the traditions and superstitions associated with death.—See the box "Where Are the Dead?"

Our Creator did not intend for humans to live just 70 or 80 years on earth and then move on to spend an eternity in another realm. His original purpose was for his human creation to live forever right here on earth as his obedient children. This grand purpose is an expression of God's love for humankind, and it will not be thwarted. (Malachi 3:6) Reassuringly, the inspired psalmist declared: "The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it."—Psalm 37:29. ■



For more information on what the Bible says about life and death, see chapter 6 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. This is also available at www.jw.org, or you can scan this code.



Early and open communication is vital

WHEN A LOVED ONE IS TERMINALLY ILL

DOREEN was shocked when her husband, Wesley, only 54 years of age, was diagnosed with an acutely aggressive brain tumor.* Doctors gave him only a few months to live. “I couldn’t believe what I was hearing,” she recalls. “I was totally numb for weeks. It felt as if it were happening to someone else, not to us. I was not prepared.”

Sadly, Doreen’s reaction is not uncommon. A terminal disease can afflict anyone at any time. Commendably, many willingly take on the task of caring for a loved one who is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Yet, caregiving is a formidable challenge. What can family members do to comfort and care for their terminally ill loved one? How can caregivers cope with the range of emotions they may experience throughout the course of the illness? As death approaches, what can be expected? First, though, let us consider why caring for the terminally ill is a unique challenge today.

A MODERN DILEMMA

Medical science has changed the nature of dying. A century or so ago, even in more developed lands, the average life span was much shorter. People died quickly from infectious diseases or accidents. Access to hospitals was limited, and most people were cared for by their families and died at home.

Today, medical advances have enabled physicians to fight illness aggressively in order to prolong life. Diseases that would have ended a person’s life quickly in times past may now stretch out over many years. However, this extended life may not represent a cure. Patients often have severe infirmities that render them incapable of caring for themselves. Caring for such individuals has become much more complicated and demanding.

Consequently, more and more, death has moved from the home to the hospital. Most peo-

* Names have been changed.

THE FINAL WEEKS OF LIFE

It is common for a patient to exhibit some or all of the following symptoms during the final weeks of life*:

- ▶ *Little interest in eating and drinking.* Swabbing glycerin on the mouth and lips and placing a moist washcloth on the forehead may keep the patient comfortable.
- ▶ *Desire to be alone or with very few people.* Keep the environment quiet and calm.
- ▶ *Increased amount of time sleeping.*
- ▶ *Restlessness.* Rather than restraining restless motions, speak calmly and reassuringly with the person.
- ▶ *Disorientation.* Identify yourself by name, and listen with respect even if the person seems confused.
- ▶ *Incontinence.* Keep the patient and his bed clean to the extent possible.
- ▶ *Breathing changes.* A moaning sound while exhaling may merely be air passing over relaxed vocal chords.
- ▶ *Congestion.* Raising the head with pillows may help to prevent the patient from gagging.
- ▶ *Skin color changes.* These are often due to the body's directing blood to the core to support vital organs.

* Source: The Metropolitan Hospice of Greater New York

joyable to him. Many people are comforted when a family member holds their hand and speaks softly to them.

It is often helpful to identify any visitors. One report states: "Hearing is said to be the last of the five senses to be lost. Hearing may still remain very acute although the [patients] may seem asleep so do not say anything in their presence you would not say to them when awake."

If possible, pray together. The Bible relates that on one occasion, the apostle Paul and

ple today are unfamiliar with the dying process, and few have ever actually witnessed someone dying. Fear of the unknown, then, may hinder or even paralyze a person's efforts to care for an ill family member. What can help?

PLAN IN ADVANCE

As illustrated in the case of Doreen, many people feel devastated when a loved one is diagnosed with a fatal illness. Amid intense anxiety, fear, and grief, what can help you to prepare for the road ahead? A faithful servant of God prayed: "Teach us how to count our days so that we may acquire a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12) Yes, pray earnestly for Jehovah God to show you how to 'count your days' wisely so that you can use the remaining days with your loved one in the best possible way.

This takes good planning. If your loved one is still able to communicate and is willing to address the matter, it may be wise to ask him who should make decisions for him when he is no longer able to do so. Frank discussion about whether he wishes to be resuscitated, hospitalized, or submitted to certain treatments can minimize misunderstandings and feelings of guilt on the part of family members who are forced to make decisions for an incapacitated patient. Early and open communication allows the family to focus on providing care during the illness. "Plans fail when there is no consultation," says the Bible.—Proverbs 15:22.

HOW TO ASSIST

Usually, the caretaker's primary role is to provide comfort. A dying person needs to be reassured that he is loved and not alone. How can this be done? Read or sing to the patient, choosing literature and songs that are upbuilding and en-

his companions were under extreme pressure and were very uncertain even of their lives. What assistance did they seek? Paul entreated his friends: “You also can help us by your supplication for us.” (2 Corinthians 1:8-11) A heartfelt prayer during extreme stress and serious illness is invaluable.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITY

The very notion of a loved one dying is often distressing. No wonder, for death is *unnatural*. We were not designed to accept death as a normal part of life. (Romans 5:12) God’s Word thus calls death an “enemy.” (1 Corinthians 15:26) So a reluctance to think about the death of a loved one is understandable, even normal.

Nevertheless, anticipating what may occur can help family members to ease their fears and focus on making things as comfortable as possible. Some of the events that may take place are listed in the box “The Final Weeks of Life.” Of course, not all these conditions occur in every patient, nor do they necessarily occur in the same order. Still, most patients experience at least some of these changes.

After the death of a loved one, it may be wise to contact a close friend who has previously agreed to help. Caregivers and family may need to be assured that their dear one’s trial is over and that he is no longer suffering. The Creator of humankind lovingly assures us that “the dead know nothing at all.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5.

THE ULTIMATE CAREGIVER

Relying upon God is essential—not only during the terminal illness of a family member but also during the grief that comes following death. He may assist you through the helpful words and deeds of others. “I learned not to turn anyone’s help away,” says Doreen. “In fact, the volume of help we received overwhelmed us. My husband and I unequivocally knew this was Jehovah saying, ‘I’m right here with you to help you through this.’ I will never forget it.”

Yes, Jehovah God is the ultimate Caregiver. As our Maker, he understands our pain and sorrow. He is able and eager to provide the necessary help and encouragement so that we can cope. Better yet, he has promised that he will soon eradicate death once and for all and resurrect the billions of humans who are in his memory. (John 5:28, 29; Revelation 21:3, 4) Then, all can echo the words of the apostle Paul: “Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?”—1 Corinthians 15:55. ■



We can learn not to turn anyone’s help away

Elias Hutter

and His Remarkable Hebrew Bibles

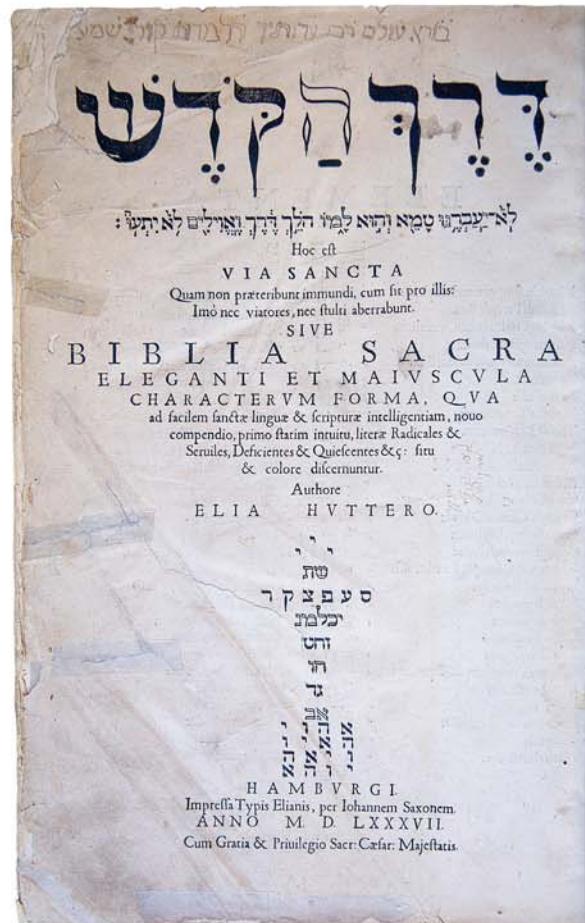
CAN you read Biblical Hebrew? Probably not. Perhaps you have never even seen a Hebrew Bible. However, you may well deepen your appreciation for your personal copy of the Holy Scriptures by learning something about the 16th-century scholar Elias Hutter and the two Hebrew Bible editions that he published.

Elias Hutter was born in 1553 in Görlitz, a small town close to Germany's present-day border with Poland and the Czech Republic. Hutter studied Oriental languages at the Lutheran University in Jena. When he was barely 24 years old, he was appointed professor of Hebrew in Leipzig. As an educational reformer, he later founded a school in Nuremberg where students could learn Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German within four years. That was then impossible at any other school or university.

"THE SPLENDOR OF THIS EDITION"

In 1587, Hutter produced a Hebrew edition of what is commonly called the Old Testament. This edition was entitled *Derekh ha-Kodesh*, taken from Isaiah 35:8 and meaning "The Way of Holiness." The beautiful typeface elicited the comment that "every thing bespeaks the splendor of this edition." But what made this Bible especially valuable was the way students could use it as an effective tool for learning Hebrew.

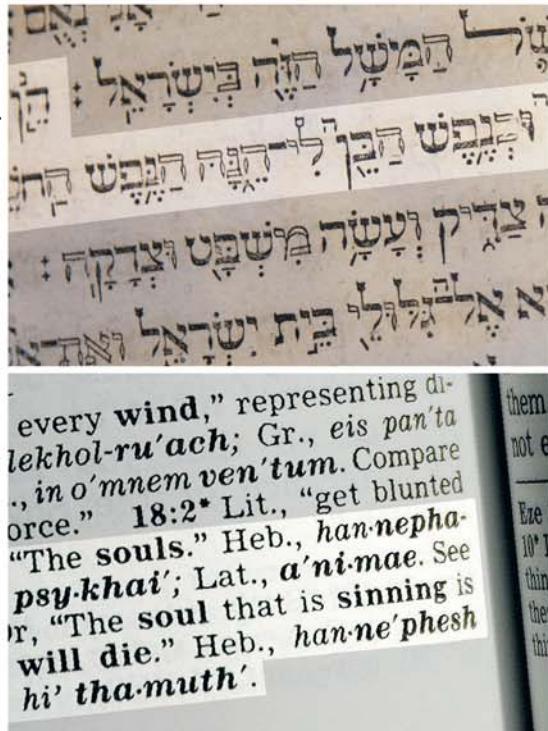
To understand why Hutter's Hebrew Bible was so helpful, consider two challenges that a learner faced when trying to read the Bible in Hebrew. First, it is in a different and unfamiliar alphabet,



Title page of Hutter's Hebrew Bible of 1587

and second, the attached prefixes and suffixes make the root words hard to recognize. For example, consider the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ (transliterated *ne'phesh*), meaning "soul." At Ezekiel 18:4, it is preceded by the prefix הַ (ha), meaning "the," thus forming the compound word הָנֶפֶשׁ (*han-ne'phesh*), or "the soul." To the untrained eye, הָנֶפֶשׁ (*han-ne'phesh*) could appear to be a totally different word from נֶפֶשׁ (*ne'phesh*).

To help his students, Hutter used an ingenious printing technique—a typeface with Hebrew letters in both solid and outline form. He printed the root of each word in solid letters. For the prefixes and suffixes, he used outline (hollow) letters. This simple device made it easier for



students to identify the root of a Hebrew word, helping them in the process of learning the language. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References* uses a similar practical approach in its footnotes.* The transliterated root is in bold type, and the prefixes and suffixes are in regular type. The highlighted portions of the illustrations show the typeface used in Hutter's Hebrew Bible at Ezekiel 18:4 and that used by the *Reference Bible* in its footnote to the same verse.

A HEBREW EDITION OF THE “NEW TESTAMENT”

Hutter also printed what is commonly called the New Testament, with the text in 12 languages. This edition was published in Nuremberg in 1599 and is often referred to as the Nuremberg Polyglot. Hutter wanted to include a Hebrew-language translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures. But he said that even if he “had been willing to pay a fortune” for such a Hebrew trans-

* See the second footnote to Ezekiel 18:4 and Appendix 3B in the *Reference Bible*.

lation, the search would have been in vain.* So he decided to translate the New Testament from Greek into Hebrew himself. Laying all other undertakings aside, Hutter finished the whole translation project in just one year!

How good was Hutter's Hebrew translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures? Noted 19th-century Hebrew scholar Franz Delitzsch wrote: “His Hebrew translation reveals a grasp of the language rare among Christians and it is still worth consulting, for in instance after instance he has been most fortunate in striking on precisely the right expression.”

A LASTING INFLUENCE

Hutter did not become rich from his translation work; evidently his editions did not sell well. Nevertheless, his work has had an important and lasting influence. For example, his Hebrew New Testament was revised and reprinted in 1661 by William Robertson and again in 1798 by Richard Caddick. In translating from the original Greek, Hutter appropriately rendered the titles *Ky·ri·os* (Lord) and *The·os'* (God) as “Jehovah” (יהוָה, JHVH) where the text is a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures or where he felt it referred to Jehovah. This is of interest because although many translations of the New Testament do not use God's personal name, Hutter's translation does and thus adds evidence in favor of restoring God's name in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The next time you see God's name, Jehovah, in the Christian Greek Scriptures or look at a footnote in the *Reference Bible*, remember the work of Elias Hutter and his remarkable Hebrew Bibles. ■

* Evidently, scholars had previously produced Hebrew translations of the New Testament. One such was Simon Atoumanos, a Byzantine monk, in about 1360. Another was Oswald Schreckenfuchs, a German scholar, in about 1565. These translations were never published and are now lost.



The Tetragrammaton, the sacred name of God, Jehovah, in Hebrew letters, read from right to left

A Powerful Reassurance From Hebrew's **Smallest** Letter

Can we really be confident that all of God's promises will come true? Jesus was convinced of it, and his teaching built faith in his listeners. Consider the illustration he gave in his Sermon on the Mount, as recorded at Matthew 5:18: "Truly I say to you that sooner would heaven and earth pass away than for one smallest letter or one stroke of a letter to pass away from the Law until all things take place."

The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet is ' (yod), which is the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, the sacred name of God, Jehovah.* In addition to the actual words and letters of God's Law, the scribes and Pharisees viewed each "stroke of a letter" as highly significant.

Jesus was saying that it was more likely that heaven and earth would pass away than that the smallest detail of the Law would go unfulfilled.

* The smallest letter of the Greek alphabet is *iota* and is evidently similar to the Hebrew ' (yod). As the Law of Moses was originally written and passed down in Hebrew, Jesus was likely referring to the Hebrew letter.

Yet the Scriptures assure us that the literal heavens and earth will remain forever. (Psalm 78:69) So this striking statement indicated that not even the smallest detail of the Law would go unfulfilled.

Does Jehovah God care about small details? Yes, indeed. Consider this: The ancient Israelites were told that they must not break any bone of the Passover lamb. (Exodus 12:46) A small detail, perhaps. Did they understand why they should not break any of the bones? Probably not. Jehovah God knew, though, that this detail was prophetic of the fact that the Messiah would not have any of his bones broken when put to death on the torture stake.—Psalm 34:20; John 19:31-33, 36.

What do Jesus' words teach us? We too can be totally confident that all of Jehovah God's promises will come true, down to every last detail. What a powerful reassurance from Hebrew's smallest letter! ■

PARADISE ON EARTH

Fantasy or Reality?

Paradise! Colorful travel brochures make tempting offers for us to fly away to some distant “paradise” to relax and forget all our worries and troubles. But as we know all too well, when we return home, the realities of life remain much the same as they were when we left them.

Nonetheless, the fascination with paradise is powerful. We cannot help but wonder: ‘Is “paradise” nothing more than a pleasant fantasy? If so, why the fascination? And can it ever be a reality?’

PARADISE TRADITION

Over the centuries, people have been intrigued by the idea of paradise. For many, their interest was prompted by the mention in the Bible of “a garden in Eden, toward the east.” What made that garden so attractive? The account tells us: “Jehovah God made to grow out of the ground every tree that was pleasing to look at and good for food.” That garden was a pleasing and good place. Most captivating of all, there was “also the tree of life in the middle of the garden.”—Genesis 2:8, 9.

In addition, the Genesis account mentions four rivers flowing out of the garden. Two of those rivers are still known to us today—the Tigris (or, Hiddekel) and the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14; footnote) These two rivers flow into the Persian Gulf through what is now Iraq, formerly part of ancient Persia.

Understandably, earthly paradise is very much a part of Persia’s cultural heritage. A 16th-century Persian carpet, in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., shows a walled garden with trees and flowers woven into its design. The Persian word for “walled garden” also means “paradise,” and the scene on the carpet mirrors

the Bible’s description of the beautiful and luxuriant garden of Eden.

In fact, stories of paradise are retold in many languages and cultures around the world. As the human family migrated to different parts of the earth, they carried with them versions of the original account, which, over centuries of time, became blended with beliefs and legends that developed locally. Even today, people almost instinctively describe places of great natural beauty as paradise.

THE SEARCH FOR PARADISE

Some explorers claimed to have located the lost paradise. For example, Charles Gordon, a British army general, on visiting the Seychelles in 1881, was so impressed by the luxuriant beauty of the Vallée de Mai—now a World Heritage site—that he declared it to be the garden of Eden. In the 15th century, Italian navigator Christopher Columbus wondered if he was close to rediscovering the Edenic garden when he landed on the island of Hispaniola, now the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Mapping Paradise, a modern history book, contains details of more than 190 ancient maps, many showing Adam and Eve in Eden. Among them is an unusual map from a 13th-century copy of the Beatus of Liébana manuscript. At its top is a small rectangle with paradise in the center. From there flow four rivers, labeled “Tigris,” “Eufrates,” “Pison,” and “Geon,” each to one of its four corners, supposedly representing the spread of Christianity to the four corners of the earth. Such depictions show that although the location of the original Paradise was unknown, memories of it evidently remained as attractive as ever.



Praslin, Seychelles, where in 1881
General Gordon found his garden of Eden

John Milton, a 17th-century English poet, is known for his poem *Paradise Lost*, based on the Genesis account of Adam's sin and expulsion from Eden. In it he highlighted the promised restoration of everlasting life on earth for humans, declaring: "For then the earth shall all be paradise." Subsequently, Milton wrote a sequel entitled *Paradise Regained*.

A CHANGE OF FOCUS

Clearly, the concept of a lost earthly paradise is a golden thread running through human history. So why is it now ignored? Basically because, as *Mapping Paradise* observes, "theologians have . . . turned their back firmly on the issue of the location of paradise."

Most churchgoers are taught that their ultimate destiny is *heaven*, not life in an *earthly* paradise. Yet the Bible says at Psalm 37:29: "The righteous will possess the *earth*, and they will live forever on it." Since our world today is hardly a paradise, what hope is there that this promise will ever be fulfilled?*

THE REALITY OF AN EARTH-WIDE PARADISE

Jehovah God, who created the original Para-

dise, has promised to restore what was lost. How? Recall that Jesus taught us to pray: "Let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth." (Matthew 6:10) That Kingdom is a world government in the hands of Jesus Christ that will replace all human rule. (Daniel 2:44) Under the rule of that Kingdom, God's will regarding a paradise earth will "take place."

Earlier, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to describe conditions in the promised Paradise, where all the tension and conflict plaguing mankind today will be gone. (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:5-7; 65:21-23) We urge you to take a few minutes and read those scriptures in your own Bible. Doing so will reassure you of what God has in store for obedient mankind. Those then living will enjoy a paradise as well as God's favor, both of which Adam lost. —Revelation 21:3.

Why can we be sure that the hope of Paradise on earth is not fantasy but reality? Because the Bible tells us: "As for the heavens, they belong to Jehovah, but the earth he has given to the sons of men." The hope of Paradise on earth is one that "God, who cannot lie, promised long ago." (Psalm 115:16; Titus 1:2) What a wonderful prospect the Bible offers—Paradise forever! ■

* It is also interesting that the Koran, in verse 105 of sura 21, *Al-Anbiya'* [The Prophets], declares: "The righteous among My servants shall inherit the earth."

Can the Bible help you to deal with anxiety?

What would you say?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ Maybe

What the Bible says

“Throw all your anxiety on [God], because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) The Bible gives the assurance that God can help you to gain relief from your anxieties.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ By prayer, you can gain “the peace of God,” which alleviates anxiety.—Philippians 4:6, 7.
- ▶ Additionally, reading God’s Word can help you to cope with stress.—Matthew 11:28-30.

Will anxiety ever be eliminated?

Some people believe . . .

that anxiety and stress are part of the human condition, while others believe that anxiety can only be relieved in an afterlife.

What do you think?

What the Bible says

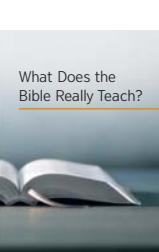
God will remove causes of anxiety. “Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”—Revelation 21:4.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ Under God’s Kingdom, people will live in peace and tranquillity.—Isaiah 32:18.
- ▶ Undue anxiety and stress will be forgotten.—Isaiah 65:17.



Under God’s Kingdom, people “will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—Psalm 37:11



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

For more information, see chapter 3
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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

ANGELS

Are They Real? Why It Matters



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Is It Necessary to Belong to an Organized Religion?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)



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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Are angels real? The Bible says:

"Praise Jehovah, all you his angels, mighty in power, who carry out his word, obeying his voice."
—Psalm 103:20.

This issue of *The Watchtower* shows what the Bible says about angels and how they affect our life now.

ANGELS—ARE THEY REAL? WHY IT MATTERS

- 3 Angels—Can They Affect Your Life?
- 4 The Truth About Angels
- 5 Do You Have a Guardian Angel?
- 6 Are There Evil Angels?
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16 WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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COVER SUBJECT

Angels—Can They Affect Your Life?

One Sunday afternoon, Kenneth and Filomena, who live in Curaçao, went to visit a married couple with whom they were conducting a Bible study.

"When we arrived," relates Kenneth, "the house was closed up and the car was gone. But something impelled me to call the wife's phone."

The woman answered the call and explained that her husband was at work. However, as soon as she realized that Kenneth and Filomena were there, she came to the door and invited them in.

They could immediately see that she had been crying. As Kenneth began the Bible study by opening with prayer, the woman started to cry again. So Kenneth and Filomena kindly asked her what was wrong.

The woman explained that she had planned to kill herself that very afternoon, and she was writing a suicide note to her husband when Kenneth's phone call stopped her. She told them that she was suffering from depression, so they shared with her some comforting thoughts from the Bible. That encouragement proved to be a lifesaver.

"We thanked Jehovah for letting us help this distraught lady," says Kenneth, "and especially for

moving us—perhaps by an angel or by His holy spirit—to make that phone call!"*

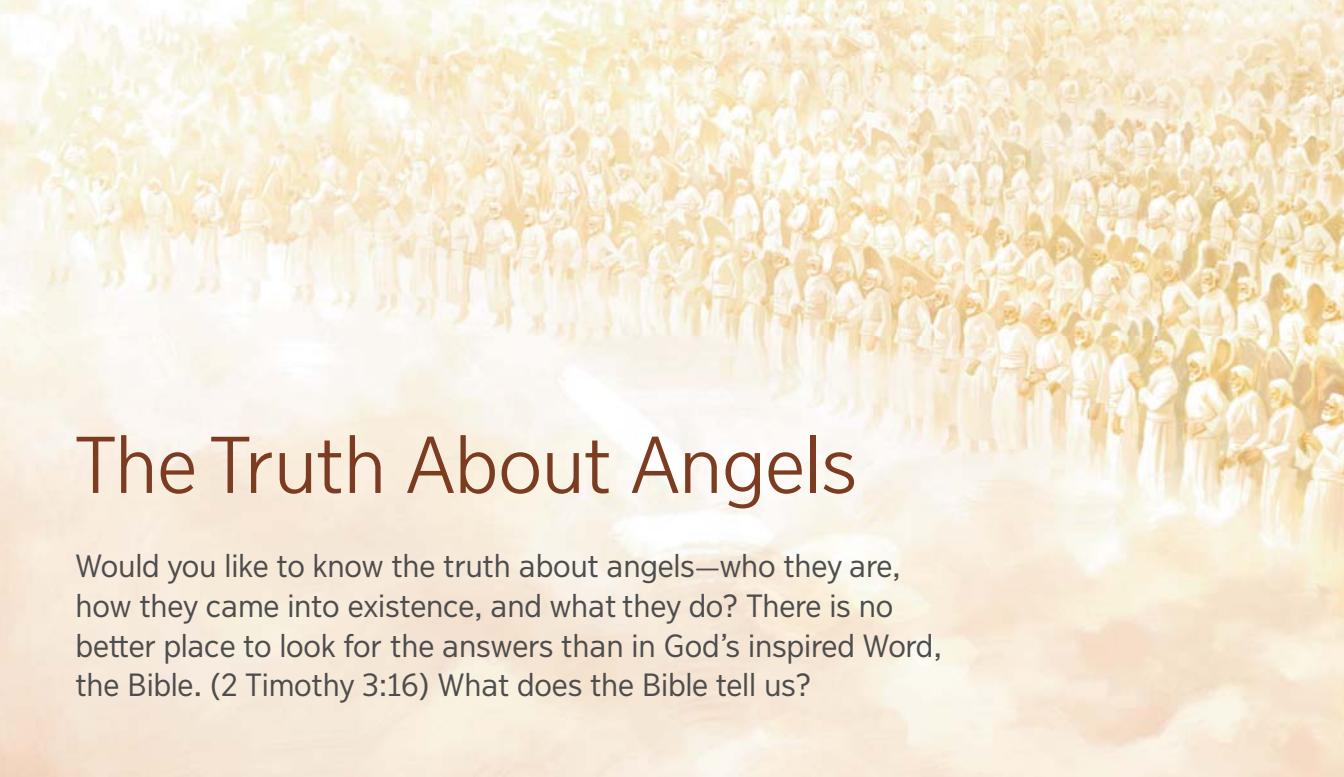
Are Kenneth and Filomena right to believe that God intervened, whether by means of an angel or by His holy spirit, or active force? Or was Kenneth's timely phone call simply a happy coincidence?

We cannot say for sure. But what we do know is that God uses his angels to help people spiritually. For example, the Bible says that God used an angel to direct the Christian evangelizer Philip to help an Ethiopian official who was looking for spiritual guidance.—Acts 8:26-31.

Various religions promote belief in supernatural spirit creatures, some of whom are portrayed as benevolent creatures who carry out God's will or act as personal guardians. Many people believe not only that angels exist but also that those spirits affect them in some meaningful way. However, many other people do not believe in angels at all.

Are angels real? If so, what is their origin? What is the truth about angels? Can they affect your life? Let us examine the evidence.

* Jehovah is the name of God as found in the Bible.—Psalm 83:18.

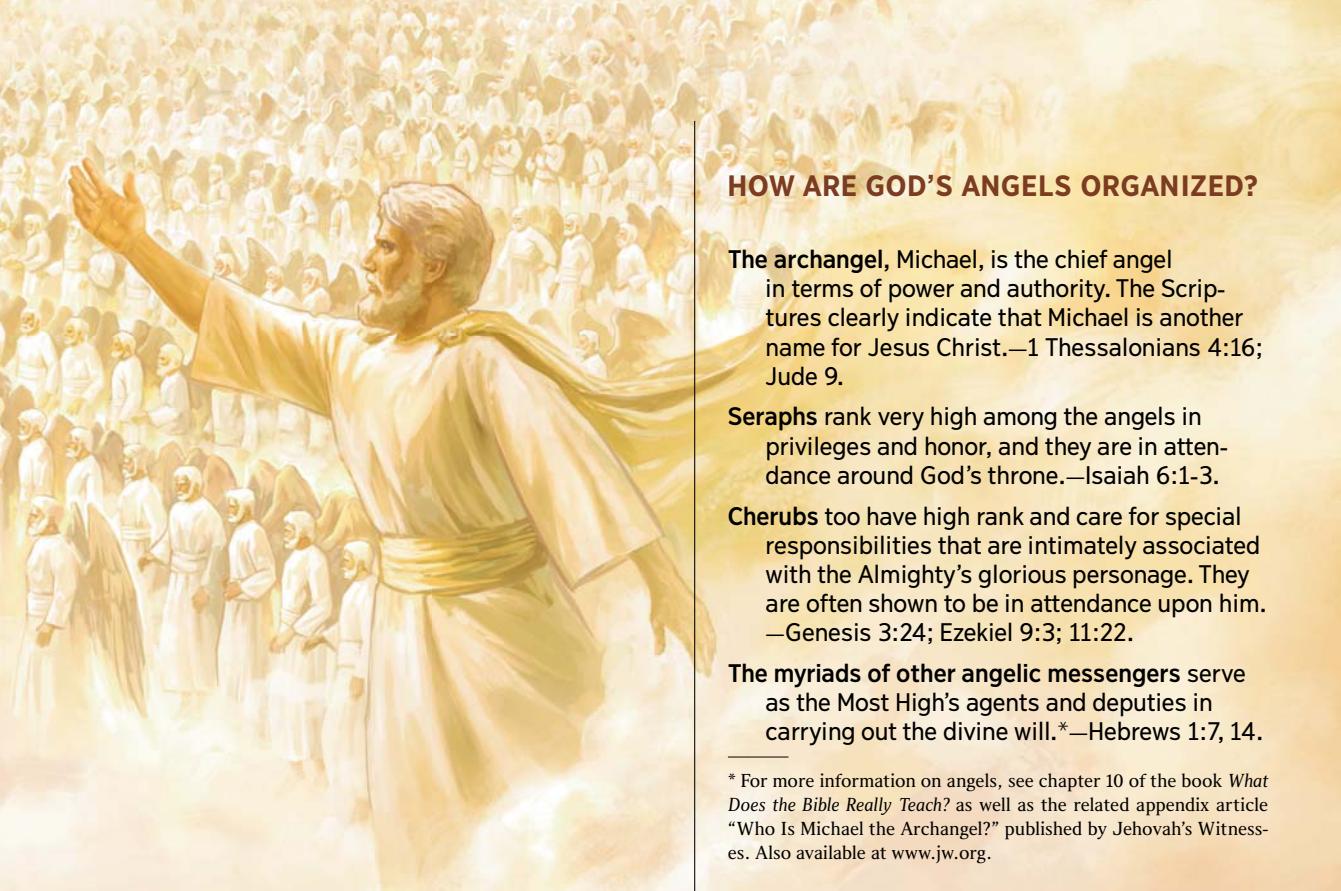


The Truth About Angels

Would you like to know the truth about angels—who they are, how they came into existence, and what they do? There is no better place to look for the answers than in God's inspired Word, the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) What does the Bible tell us?

- ▶ Just as God is a Spirit, angels too are invisible spirits who do "not have flesh and bones." The loyal angels reside in the heavens and have direct access to God's heavenly presence.—Luke 24:39; Matthew 18:10; John 4:24.
- ▶ Angels have at times appeared in human form to care for God-given assignments on earth and then dematerialized after completing their assignments.—Judges 6:11-23; 13:15-20.
- ▶ Although angels are presented in the Bible as males and have always materialized as males, there is no male or female distinction among them. They do not marry and reproduce their own kind. Moreover, angels did not first come into existence as humans on earth—whether as babies, children, or adults. Angels were created by Jehovah; thus the Bible calls them "sons of the true God."—Job 1:6; Psalm 148:2, 5.
- ▶ The Bible speaks of "the tongues of men and of angels," indicating that spirit persons have language and speech. Although God has used angels to communicate with humans, he does not permit us to worship angels or pray to them.—1 Corinthians 13:1; Revelation 22:8, 9.
- ▶ There are myriads upon myriads of angels, perhaps numbering into the billions.*—Daniel 7:10; Revelation 5:11.
- ▶ Angels are "mighty in power"—much more powerful than humans—and they have super-human intelligence. They evidently can travel at tremendous speeds, far exceeding the limits of the physical world.—Psalm 103:20; Daniel 9: 20-23.
- ▶ Despite their higher mental and spiritual powers, angels have limitations, and there are some things they do not know.—Matthew 24: 36; 1 Peter 1:12.
- ▶ Angels were created with personalities, divine qualities, and free will. Hence, like humans, they can choose to do right or wrong. Sadly, some angels chose to rebel against God.—Jude 6.

* A myriad is 10,000. One myriad times one myriad is 100 million. Yet, Revelation speaks of "myriads of myriads" of angels. That is hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of spirit creatures!



HOW ARE GOD'S ANGELS ORGANIZED?

The archangel, Michael, is the chief angel in terms of power and authority. The Scriptures clearly indicate that Michael is another name for Jesus Christ.—1 Thessalonians 4:16; Jude 9.

Seraphs rank very high among the angels in privileges and honor, and they are in attendance around God's throne.—Isaiah 6:1-3.

Cherubs too have high rank and care for special responsibilities that are intimately associated with the Almighty's glorious personage. They are often shown to be in attendance upon him.—Genesis 3:24; Ezekiel 9:3; 11:22.

The myriads of other angelic messengers serve as the Most High's agents and deputies in carrying out the divine will.*—Hebrews 1:7, 14.

* For more information on angels, see chapter 10 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* as well as the related appendix article "Who Is Michael the Archangel?" published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org.

Do You Have a Guardian Angel?

The Bible does not teach that each individual has a guardian angel. True, Jesus once said: "See that you do not despise one of these little ones [Christ's disciples], for I tell you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 18:10) However, rather than implying that each person has a guardian angel, Jesus was simply saying that angels take an active interest in each of his disciples. Hence, true worshippers do not take unwise and careless risks, presuming that God's angels will protect them.

Does that mean that angels do not help hu-

mans? No. (Psalm 91:11) Some feel quite strongly that God has provided them with angelic protection and guidance. Kenneth, mentioned in the opening article, is one who feels that way. Though we cannot be dogmatic, he may be correct. Jehovah's Witnesses frequently see evidence of angelic intervention as they engage in their preaching work. However, because angels are invisible, we cannot say to what extent God uses them in helping individuals with various matters. Nevertheless, we cannot go wrong by thanking the Almighty for whatever support he may have provided.—Colossians 3:15; James 1:17, 18.

Are There Evil Angels?



Yes, there are evil angels. Where did they come from? Recall that God created angels with the gift of free will. Shortly after the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were created, a perfect spirit creature abused his freedom of choice and instigated rebellion on earth. He succeeded in getting Adam and Eve to rebel against God. (Genesis 3:1-7; Revelation 12:9) The Bible does not specify what this spirit creature's name was or what rank he held in heaven before he rebelled. But after his rebellion, the Bible appropriately calls him Satan, which means "Resister," and the Devil, which means "Slanderer."—Matthew 4:8-11.

Sadly, the ungodly rebellion did not end there. In Noah's day an unspecified number of angels "forsook their own proper dwelling place" in God's heavenly family. They came down to the earth and took on fleshly bodies to pursue a depraved and immoral course, deviating from the purpose of their existence.—Jude 6; Genesis 6:1-4; 1 Peter 3:19, 20.

What became of those evil angels? When God brought a global deluge to sweep the earth clean, they dematerialized and returned to the spirit realm. However, God did not permit the disgraced angels to return to "their original posi-

tion." Instead, he confined them to a debased condition of "dense [spiritual] darkness," known as Tartarus. (Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:4) These demons have placed themselves under the control of Satan the Devil, "the ruler of the demons," who "keeps disguising himself as an angel of light."—Matthew 12:24; 2 Corinthians 11:14.

The Bible teaches that God's Messianic Kingdom, a heavenly government, was established in 1914.* Following that momentous event, Satan and his demons were ousted from heaven and confined to the vicinity of the earth. The rampant wickedness and gross immorality that plague our planet are evidence of their vengeful and destructive influence.—Revelation 12:9-12.

However, the increase in depravity and shocking violence confirm that the end of their reign of terror is near. Soon, these tyrannical spirit creatures will be taken out of action. After God's Kingdom has ruled over a paradise earth for 1,000 years, those wicked spirits will have one brief, final opportunity to test humankind. Then they will be destroyed forever.—Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10.

* For more information regarding God's Kingdom, see chapter 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org.

How Angels Can Help You

Faithful angels are keenly interested in human affairs and are actively involved in carrying out Jehovah's will. When God created the earth, the angels "joyfully cried out together, and all the sons of God began shouting in applause." (Job 38:4, 7) Throughout the course of history, angels have desired "to peer" into prophetic utterances regarding future events on earth.—1 Peter 1:11, 12.

The Bible shows that in order to accomplish God's will, angels have at times provided a measure of protection for true worshippers. (Psalm 34:7) For example:

- ▶ When Jehovah brought destruction on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, angels helped righteous Lot and his family to flee.
—Genesis 19:1, 15-26.
- ▶ In ancient Babylon when three young Hebrews were condemned to die in a fiery furnace, God "sent his angel and rescued his servants."—Daniel 3:19-28.
- ▶ After the righteous man Daniel spent the night in a den of ravenous lions, he explained that he had survived because "God sent his angel and shut the mouth of the lions."
—Daniel 6:16, 22.

THE ANGELS SUPPORTED THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

At times, God's angelic messengers intervened in the activities of the early Christian congregation when that was necessary to fulfill Jehovah's purpose. For example:

- ▶ An angel opened the doors of a prison and directed the apostles imprisoned there to continue preaching in the temple.—Acts 5:17-21.
- ▶ An angel instructed the evangelizer Philip to go to the desert road that ran from Jerusalem

to Gaza and preach to an Ethiopian who had gone to Jerusalem to worship.—Acts 8:26-33.

- ▶ When it was God's time for non-Jews to become Christians, an angel appeared to the Roman army officer Cornelius in a vision and instructed him to summon the apostle Peter to his home.—Acts 10:3-5.
- ▶ When the apostle Peter was imprisoned, an angel appeared to him and led him out of the prison.—Acts 12:1-11.





Angels help declare the good news throughout the earth

HOW ANGELS CAN HELP YOU

There is no evidence that God is now using angels to help people miraculously in the ways described in the Bible. However, regarding our time, Jesus said: “This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) Did you know that Christ’s disciples are doing this work under the supervision of the angels?

The book of Revelation indicates that angels would be diligently helping people earth wide to learn about Jehovah God and his purpose for mankind. The apostle John wrote: “I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people. He was saying in a loud voice: ‘Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of judgment by him has arrived, so worship the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and the springs of water.’” (Revelation 14:6, 7) Many modern-day experiences give evidence that angels are supporting the worldwide Kingdom-preaching work. Indeed, when even one sinner repents and turns to Jehovah, “joy arises among the angels of God.”—Luke 15:10.

What will happen when the preaching work is completed? Then angelic “armies in heaven” will support Jesus Christ, the King of kings, in fighting “the war of the great day of God the Almighty” at Armageddon. (Revelation 16:14-16; 19:14-16) Powerful angels will serve as executioners of divine judgment as the Lord Jesus “brings vengeance on those who . . . do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus.”—2 Thessalonians 1:7, 8.

Be assured, therefore, that the angels are personally interested in you. They have deep concern for the welfare of those who desire to serve God, and Jehovah has repeatedly used them to strengthen and protect his faithful servants on earth.—Hebrews 1:14.

Each one of us, then, has a crucial choice to make. Will we listen to and obey the good news that is being proclaimed earth wide? Jehovah’s Witnesses in your community will be happy to assist you to benefit from the loving help of God’s mighty angels.■



For more information on what the Bible says about loyal and disloyal angels, see chapter 10 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses, available on jw.org or by scanning this code.

DID YOU KNOW?



A child with a puppy, Greek or Roman statuette (first century B.C.E. to the second century C.E.)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York/
Rogers Fund, 1913/www.metmuseum.org

Was Jesus' illustration about "little dogs" meant to be insulting?

On one occasion, when Jesus was outside Israel's borders in the Roman province of Syria, a Greek woman approached to ask for help. Jesus' response included an illustration that suggested a comparison between non-Jews and "little dogs." Under the Mosaic Law, dogs were deemed to be unclean animals. (Leviticus 11:27) But did Jesus mean to insult this Greek woman and other non-Jews?

Not at all. Jesus' point, as he explained to his disciples, was that his priority at that time was to help the Jews. So he illustrated the point, saying to the Greek woman: "It is not right to take the bread of the children and throw it to the little dogs." (Matthew 15:21-26; Mark 7:26) Among the Greeks and Romans, the dog was often a beloved pet that lived in its owner's house and played with the children. So the expression "little dogs" might have called to mind a warm, endearing picture. The Greek woman picked up on Jesus' words and replied: "Yes, Lord, but really the little dogs do eat of the crumbs falling from the table of their masters." Jesus commended her faith and healed the woman's daughter.—Matthew 15:27, 28. ■



A relief carving of a large cargo ship (first century C.E.)

©Ministry of Culture/Directorate General
of Antiquities-National Museum of Beirut

Did the apostle Paul give sound advice when he recommended delaying a sea voyage?

The ship that was carrying Paul to Italy was struggling against contrary winds. During a stopover, the apostle advised that the remainder of the voyage be postponed. (Acts 27:9-12) Was there a basis for such counsel?

Sailors in antiquity well knew that navigation on the Mediterranean was hazardous during the winter months. Between mid-November and mid-March, the sea was considered closed to shipping. But the voyage Paul spoke about was to take place in September or October. In his *Epitome of Military Science*, the Roman writer Vegetius (fourth century C.E.) explained about navigation on that sea: "Some months are very suitable, some are doubtful, and the rest are impossible." Vegetius said that sailing was safe from May 27 to September 14 but that the two doubtful, or dangerous, periods ran from September 15 to November 11 and from March 11 to May 26. Paul, a seasoned traveler, was no doubt well aware of such facts. The pilot and the shipowner likely knew such things too, but they ignored Paul's counsel. The voyage ended in shipwreck.—Acts 27:13-44. ■

For Me, God Did Not Exist



AS TOLD BY
ANDREAS GOLEC

YEAR BORN

1974

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

HISTORY

ATHEIST



MY PAST

I was born in a village in Saxony, in what was then the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The atmosphere at home was warm and loving, and my parents taught me sound moral values. The GDR was a Communist state, so for most people in Saxony, religion was unimportant. And for me, God did not exist. Two ideologies shaped the first 18 years of my life: atheism and Communism.

Why did Communism appeal to me? Because I liked the idea that all people are equal. Furthermore, I believed that all property ought to be distributed fairly, since this would put an end to extremes of wealth and poverty. So I got busy in a Communist youth organization. When I was 14 years old, I spent a lot of time working on an environmental project to recycle wastepaper. The local town of Aue was so grateful for my efforts that the authorities there presented me with an award. Though still young, I got to know some top GDR politicians. I felt that I was pursuing the right goals and that my future was bright.

Then my world suddenly fell apart. In 1989 the Berlin Wall came down and with it the Communist bloc of Eastern Europe. One shock led to another. I soon discovered that injustice had been common in the GDR. For example, people who did not support Communism had been treated as second-rate citizens. How was that possible? Did we Communists not believe that all people are equal? Was Communism just an illusion? Anxiety gripped me.

So I switched priorities and focused on music and art. Since I was able to study at a music academy—with the likelihood of moving on to university—I dreamed of a career as a musician-artist. Furthermore, I threw overboard the moral values I had learned as a child. What was now important was to have a good time, which included dating several girls at once. But music, art, and a free lifestyle did not ease my anxiety. Even the pictures I painted reflected a morbid fear. What did the future hold? And what was the purpose of life?

When I finally found the answers I was looking for, they astonished me. One evening at the academy, I sat with a group of students discussing the future. Mandy* was a student and also one of Jehovah's Witnesses. That evening she pointed me in the right direction. "Andreas," she said, "if you want answers to your questions about life and the future, take a careful look at the Bible."

I felt both skeptical and curious, but curiosity won the day. Mandy directed me to Daniel chapter 2, and what I read there stunned me. This prophecy describes a series of world powers, governments that would have a major impact down to our day. Mandy showed me other Bible prophecies that concern our future. At last I was finding answers to my questions! But who wrote those prophecies, and who could predict the future so accurately? Could it be that God exists after all?

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE

Mandy put me in touch with Horst and Angelika, a Witness couple who helped me understand God's Word better. I quickly recognized that Jehovah's Witnesses are the only religious organization that consistently uses and draws attention to God's personal name, Jehovah. (Psalm 83:18; Matthew 6:9) I learned that Jehovah God offers mankind the prospect of living forever on a paradise earth. Psalm 37:9 states: "Those hoping in Jehovah will possess the earth." It appealed to me that this prospect is open to all individuals who endeavor to live up to God's standards of conduct as explained in the Bible.

However, I struggled to change my ways so as to live in harmony with the Bible. Success as a musician-artist made me proud, so I first needed to learn some humility. Moreover, it was not easy for me to abandon a morally loose lifestyle. How grateful I am that Jehovah shows patience, mercy, and understanding toward those who try their best to practice what the Bible teaches!

* Name has been changed.

Communism and atheism formed me during the first 18 years of my life; the Bible has been transforming my life ever since. What I learned quelled my anxiety about the future and gave me a purpose in life. In 1993, I got baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and in 2000, I married Tabitha, a zealous fellow believer. We spend as much time as possible helping others get to know the Bible. Many we meet have a background like mine, one shaped by Communism and atheism. I feel deep satisfaction when I show them how to get to know Jehovah.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED

When I first began to associate with Jehovah's Witnesses, my parents were horrified. Since then, however, they have come to see the positive effect that associating with the Witnesses has had on my life. To my joy, they now read the Bible and attend Christian meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Tabitha and I enjoy a good marriage because we try to follow closely the advice given in the Bible to married couples. For instance, heeding its counsel about marital faithfulness continues to strengthen our marriage.—Hebrews 13:4.

I am no longer fearful of life and anxious about the future. I feel part of a worldwide family of fellow believers, one that enjoys real peace and unity. Within this family we treat one another as equals. That is something I have believed in and wanted to achieve all my life. ■

With my wife, Tabitha, in the public ministry



God Called Her “Princess”

SARAH straightened up from her work and turned toward the horizon. Under her wise guidance, the servants were happily and busily employed. Industrious Sarah did her own part too. Picture her thoughtfully rubbing her hands together, massaging the aches away. Perhaps she had been engrossed in sewing a patch over a tear in the tent that was their home. The coarse goat-hair fabric was faded by years of sun and rain, reminding Sarah of how long they had been living a nomadic life. The afternoon fled by, and now the light was turning golden. She had watched Abraham* leave in the morning, and she gazed expectantly in the same direction. As her husband's familiar form crested a nearby hill, a smile lit up her lovely face.

A decade had passed since Abraham led his large family group across the Euphrates River and down into Canaan. Sarah had willingly supported her husband in this great journey into the unknown, for she knew that he was to play a vital role in Jehovah's purpose to produce a highly favored offspring and a nation. What part, though, could Sarah play? She had always been barren, and she was 75 years old now. She might well have wondered, 'How can Jehovah's promise come true while I am Abraham's wife?' It would

* Technically, the couple were known as Abram and Sarai until God later renamed them, but for the sake of simplicity, we will use the names by which they are most commonly known.



certainly be understandable if she felt concern—or even impatience.

We too may at times wonder when God's promises will come true. Patience rarely comes easily to us, especially when we are awaiting the fulfillment of a hope we cherish. What can we learn from the faith of this remarkable woman?

“JEHOVAH HAS PREVENTED ME”

The family had recently returned from Egypt. (Genesis 13:1-4) They were encamped in the highlands east of Bethel, or Luz, as the Canaanites called it. From this lofty plateau, Sarah could see a great deal of the Promised Land. There were Canaanite villages and roads that led travelers to far-off lands. In all that panorama, though, there was nothing like Sarah's hometown. She had grown up in Ur, a Mesopotamian city that was a 1,200-mile (1,900 km) journey away. There she had left behind many of her relatives, the conveniences of a thriving city with markets and bazaars, and her comfortable home with a solid roof and walls, perhaps even with running water! Yet, if we imagine Sarah gazing sadly to the east, pining for the comforts of her childhood home, we do not know this godly woman.

Note what the apostle Paul was inspired to write some 2,000 years later. Speaking of the faith of Sarah and Abraham, he said: "If they had kept remembering the place from which they had depart-

ed, they would have had opportunity to return.” (Hebrews 11:8, 11, 15) Neither Sarah nor Abraham looked longingly to the past. Had they indulged in such thinking, they might well have decided to return home. Back in Ur, though, they would have missed out on the remarkable privilege Jehovah was offering them. And they would surely have faded from human memory instead of becoming inspiring examples of faith that have touched millions of hearts.

Rather than looking behind, Sarah looked ahead. So she kept supporting her husband in his sojourn in the land, helping to pack up the tents, move with the herds, and set up camp again. She endured further challenges and changes. Jehovah renewed his promise to Abraham—but still no mention of Sarah!—Genesis 13:14-17; 15:5-7.

Finally, Sarah decided that it was time to speak to Abraham of a plan that had been forming in her mind. Picture her face showing conflicting emotions as she said: “Please now! Jehovah has prevented me from bearing children.” Then she asked her husband to become father to children by means of her servant girl, Hagar. Can you imagine Sarah’s anguish in asking that of her husband? It may seem a strange request to us today, but it was not unusual in those times for a man to take a secondary wife, or concubine, in order to pro-

duce an heir.* Might Sarah have felt that in this way God’s purpose to produce a nation of descendants through Abraham would be realized? At any rate, she was willing to make a difficult sacrifice. Abraham’s reaction? We read that he “listened to what [Sarah] said.”—Genesis 16:1-3.

Does the account suggest that Jehovah moved Sarah to make such an offer? No. Rather, her proposal reveals a very human outlook. She thought that God was responsible for her troubles, and she could not imagine that he had another solution. Sarah’s own solution would bring her pain and trouble. Still, her proposal showed an admirable lack of selfishness. In a world where people so often put their own personal desires ahead of all else, does not Sarah’s selfless spirit shine through? If we are willing to put God’s purposes ahead of selfish interests, we will imitate Sarah’s faith.

“YOU DID LAUGH”

It was not long afterward that Hagar became pregnant by Abraham. Perhaps convinced that her pregnancy made her more important than Sarah, Hagar began to despise her mistress. What a blow for barren Sarah! With Abraham’s

* Jehovah tolerated polygamy and concubinage for a time, but he later authorized Jesus Christ to restore marriage to the original standard of monogamy set in Eden.—Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:3-9.



Jehovah called Sarah “Princess,” but she did not expect to be treated like royalty

permission and God’s backing, Sarah in some undisclosed way chastised Hagar. A son, Ishmael, was born to Hagar, and then years passed. (Genesis 16:4-9, 16) The next time the record reveals a message from Jehovah, Sarah was 89 years old and her husband 99. And what an amazing message they received!

Again, Jehovah promised his friend Abraham that He would multiply his offspring. God also changed the man’s name. Up to this point, he had been known as Abram. But Jehovah renamed him Abraham, which means “Father of a Multitude.” And now, for the first time, Jehovah showed where Sarah fit into the picture. He changed her name from Sarai, which may have meant something like “Contentious,” to Sarah, the name familiar to us all. What does Sarah mean? “Princess”! Jehovah explained why he chose that name for this beloved woman: “I will bless her and also give you a son by her; I will bless her and she will become nations; kings of peoples will come from her.”—Genesis 17:5, 15, 16.

Jehovah’s covenant to bring forth an offspring who would bless all nations would be fulfilled through Sarah’s son! The name that God chose for the boy, Isaac, means “Laughter.” When Abraham first learned of Jehovah’s purpose to bless Sarah with a child of her own, he “fell facedown and began to laugh.” (Genesis 17:17) He was amazed and overjoyed. (Romans 4:19, 20) And what of Sarah?

Not long afterward three men, strangers, came to Abraham’s tent. It was during the heat of the day, but this elderly couple immediately hurried to welcome these guests. Abraham said to Sarah: “Quick! Get three measures of fine flour, knead the dough, and make loaves of bread.” Hospitali-

ty involved a lot of work back then. Abraham did not leave all the work to his wife; he rushed about to slaughter a young bull and prepare more food and drink. (Genesis 18:1-8) Those “men” turned out to be Jehovah’s angels! The apostle Paul likely had this incident in mind when he wrote: “Do not forget hospitality, for through it some unknowingly entertained angels.” (Hebrews 13:2) Can you imitate the splendid example of hospitality set by Abraham and Sarah?

When one of the angels repeated to Abraham God’s promise about Sarah giving birth to a son, she was out of sight, within her tent, listening. The thought of giving birth at her age struck her as being so bizarre that she could not hold back—she laughed to herself, saying: “After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I really have this pleasure?” The angel corrected Sarah with the pointed question, “Is anything too extraordinary for Jehovah?” Sarah’s reaction was fearful, defensive, and only too human. She blurted out: “I did not laugh!” The angel replied: “Yes! You did laugh.”—Genesis 18:9-15.

Was Sarah’s laughter evidence that she lacked faith? Not at all. The Bible says: “By faith also Sarah received power to conceive offspring, even when she was past the age, since she considered Him faithful who made the promise.” (Hebrews 11:11) Sarah knew Jehovah; she knew that he could fulfill any promise that he made. Who of us does not need more faith of that kind? We do well to get to know the God of the Bible better. As we do, we will see that Sarah was right to have the faith that she did. Jehovah truly is faithful and carries out his every promise—at times, he might even do so in ways that surprise us into amazed or incredulous laughter!

“LISTEN TO HER”

At 90 years of age, Sarah finally got to relish the moment she had longed for all her adult life. She bore a son to her beloved husband, now a century old! Abraham named the baby Isaac, or “Laughter,” just as God had said. We may picture Sarah’s

wearily but glowing smile as she explained: “God has brought me laughter; everybody hearing of it will laugh with me.” (Genesis 21:6) This miraculous gift from Jehovah surely delighted her till the end of her days. However, it also brought her great responsibilities.

When Isaac was five years old, the family held a feast to mark the occasion of the weaning of the child. But not all was well. We read that Sarah “kept noticing” a troubling pattern of behavior. Ishmael, the 19-year-old son of Hagar, kept mocking little Isaac. This was not mere playful teasing. The apostle Paul was later inspired to call Ishmael’s behavior persecution. Sarah saw this bullying for what it was: a serious threat to the well-being of her son. Sarah knew well that Isaac was more than just her son; he was assigned a key role in Jehovah’s purpose. So she mustered up courage and spoke forthrightly to Abraham. She asked him to send Hagar and Ishmael away.

—Genesis 21:8-10; Galatians 4:22, 23, 29.

How did Abraham respond? We read: “What she said about his son was very displeasing to Abraham.” He was fond of Ishmael, and he could not see past his own fatherly emotions on this issue. However, Jehovah saw the matter clearly, so he intervened. We read: “Then God said to Abraham: ‘Do not be displeased by what Sarah is saying to you about the boy and about your slave girl. Listen to her, for what will be called your offspring will be through Isaac.’” Jehovah assured Abraham that Hagar and the boy would be provided for. Faithful Abraham complied.—Genesis 21:11-14.

Sarah was a true wife to Abraham, a genuine complement. She did not merely tell her husband whatever he wanted to hear. When she saw a problem, one that mattered to the family and their future, she spoke candidly to her husband. Her directness should not be mistaken for disrespect. In fact, the apostle Peter, himself a married man, later referred to her as a sterling example of a wife who showed deep respect for her husband. (1 Corinthians 9:5; 1 Peter 3:5, 6) In truth, if Sarah

had kept silent about this matter, she would have failed to respect Abraham, for the cost to him and the whole family might have been great indeed. Sarah lovingly said what needed to be said.

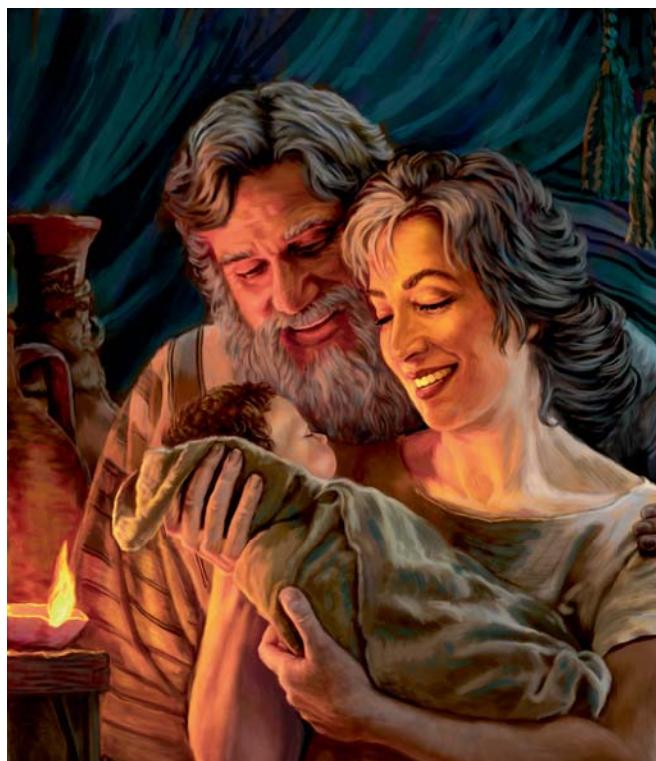
Many wives cherish Sarah’s example. From her they learn to communicate honestly and respectfully with their husbands. Some wives might wish, at times, that Jehovah would intervene as he did in Sarah’s case. Even so, they learn from Sarah’s remarkable faith, love, and patience.

Though this beloved woman was named “Princess” by Jehovah himself, she did not expect to be treated like royalty. It is small wonder that when she died at 127 years of age, Abraham “began to mourn and to weep over Sarah.”* (Genesis 23: 1, 2) He sorely missed his beloved “Princess.” Without a doubt, Jehovah God also misses this faithful woman—and he intends to restore her to life on a paradise earth. An eternal and blissful future awaits Sarah—and all who imitate her faith.

—John 5:28, 29. ■

* Sarah is the only woman in the Bible whose age at the time of her death is included in the inspired record.

Jehovah rewarded Sarah for her precious faith



Will there ever be peace on earth?

What would you say?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ Maybe

What the Bible says

Under the rule of Jesus Christ, “peace will abound until the moon is no more”—meaning forever.—Psalm 72:7.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ Wicked people will be removed from the earth, allowing good people to “find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—Psalm 37:10, 11.
- ▶ God will bring all wars to an end.—Psalm 46:8, 9.

Is real peace of mind possible now?

Some people believe . . .

that real peace of mind cannot be found as long as the world is filled with suffering and injustice. **What do you think?**

What the Bible says

Even now, those who are close to God can have “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.”—Philippians 4:6, 7.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ God promises to eliminate suffering and injustice, “making all things new.”—Revelation 21:4, 5.
- ▶ We can gain inner peace by caring for our “spiritual need.”—Matthew 5:3.



All weapons of war
will be destroyed



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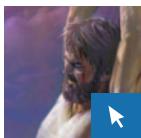
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Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe in Jesus?

(Look under ABOUT US > FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Who is the greatest gift-giver in the universe?

"Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, coming down from the Father of the celestial lights."—James 1:17.

This issue of *The Watchtower* helps us to appreciate one gift from God that is the best of all.

WHAT IS THE BEST GIFT OF ALL?

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- 4 The Quest for the Best Gift
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ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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COVER SUBJECT

“It Was the Best Gift I Had Ever Received”

That is how one 13-year-old girl felt when she received a pet dog as a gift. A successful businesswoman said that a computer her father gave her when she was in high school was a gift that changed her life. And a newlywed husband felt that his wife’s handmade first-anniversary card was the best gift he had ever received.

Each year, many people spend time and effort searching for that “best” gift for a friend or a relative on a special occasion. And most would love to hear a response like those mentioned at the outset. What about you? Would you like to be able to give or receive gifts that are truly appreciated?

That prospect can be very appealing, not only because of the effect a gift can have on the receiver but also because of the way it can make the giver feel. After all, the Bible says: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) Of course, the happiness gained from giving may be enhanced if the gift is highly valued by the receiver.

How, then, can you make your gift-giving a source of true happiness for you and for the receiver? And if giving the “best” gift is not possible, what can you do so that your gift will be truly appreciated?



The Quest for the Best Gift

Coming up with what might be considered the ideal gift for someone is not an easy task. After all, the value of the gift will be determined by the receiver. And what one recipient considers best might not be so for another.

For instance, a teenager may feel that the latest electronic gadget would be a perfect gift. An adult, on the other hand, may deeply treasure receiving a gift of sentimental value, such as a family heirloom. In some cultures, the preferred gift for young and old alike is money, allowing the receiver to use it for whatever he or she wants.

Despite the challenge, many thoughtful individuals continue in their quest for a gift most suitable for someone special. While finding such a gift may not always be possible, keeping in mind certain factors would likely increase the chances for success. Let us consider four that can contribute to satisfaction on the part of the receiver.

The recipient's desires. A man in Belfast, Northern Ireland, called a racing bike he received

when he was 10 or 11 years old the best present ever. Why? "Because I really wanted it," he explained. That remark reveals that a person's desire has much to do with whether he will cherish a gift or not. So think about the person to whom you intend to give a gift. Try to identify what he may value, because a person's values often influence his desires. For example, grandparents often *value* spending time with family. They may *desire* to see their children and grandchildren as frequently as possible. A family vacation including the grandparents would likely be more appreciated than any other gift for them.

A key to being aware of a person's desires is to be a good listener. The Bible encourages us to "be quick to listen, slow to speak." (James 1:19) As you engage in everyday conversation with your friends or relatives, listen closely for clues that indicate their likes and dislikes. Then you may be in a better position to give a gift that they will enjoy.

The recipient's needs. A recipient may highly cherish even the simplest gift if it fills a particular need. But how can you know what someone else might need?

It may seem that the easiest way to find out is to ask what the person needs—or, for that matter, wants. However, for many gift-givers, this takes away part of the joy of giving, as they much prefer to surprise the receiver with just the right gift. Furthermore, while some people may talk freely about their likes or dislikes, often they can be rather private regarding their needs.

Therefore, be observant and take special note of the person's circumstances. Is he or she young, old, single, married, divorced, widowed, employed, or retired? Then give thought to what gifts may address a need the person has.

To gain insight into the needs of the intended recipient of your gift, consult with others who have been in similar circumstances. They may be able to tell you about special needs that are not widely known by others. With such input, you may now be able to give a gift that fills a need that others would not think of.

The timing. The Bible states: “A word spoken at the right time—how good it is!” (Proverbs 15: 23) This scripture shows that the timing of our words can make a big difference. It is similar with our actions. Just as words spoken at the right time can be very pleasing to the hearer, a gift given at the right time or on the appropriate occasion can contribute greatly to the receiver's happiness.

A friend is getting married. A youth is soon to graduate from school. A married couple is expecting a baby. These are but a few of the many occasions for which gifts are often given. Some find it practical to keep a list of such special events that will take place in the coming year. In

this way they can plan ahead for the gift that would be best for each occasion.*

Of course, you need not limit gift-giving to special occasions. The joy of giving can be experienced at any time. However, a word of caution might be in order. For example, if a man were to give a woman a gift when there is no apparent reason for doing so, she might conclude that the gift was an indication of his interest in getting to know her better. Unless that is the true and appropriate intention, such a gift may lead to misunderstandings or complications. This underscores the need to consider another important factor—the giver's motives.

The giver's motives. As the previous example shows, it is good to consider whether the recipient might misinterpret the giver's motives. On the other hand, the *giver* would do well to examine his or her own motives. While most people would like to think that their motives for gift-giving are honorable, many give gifts during certain times of the year because they feel pressured to do so. Still others give in hopes of receiving preferential treatment or something in return.

What can you do to ensure that your gift-giving is done with good motives? The Bible says: “Let everything you do be done with love.” (1 Corinthians 16:14) If your giving is motivated by genuine love and concern for the recipients, your gifts will likely be received with joy and you will experience the greater happiness that comes from true generosity. When you give from the heart, you also make our heavenly Father rejoice. The apostle Paul commended the Christians in ancient Corinth when they generously and happily

* Many people also give gifts during birthday and holiday celebrations. However, these occasions often involve practices that are in conflict with what the Bible teaches. See the article “Our Readers Ask—Is Christmas for Christians?” in this magazine.

supported relief work for their fellow Christians in Judea. “God loves a cheerful giver,” Paul told them.—2 Corinthians 9:7.

Giving attention to the factors we have discussed can contribute greatly toward your giving

gifts that make others happy. These factors—and more—have played a part in God’s arrangement for mankind to receive the greatest gift of all. We invite you to consider what this grand gift is by reading the next article.

What Is the Best Gift of All?

“Every good gift and every perfect present is from above, coming down from the Father of the celestial lights.” (James 1:17) That scripture, of course, refers to the generosity of our heavenly Father, Jehovah God. Yet, of the many gifts that God has given mankind, there is one that is greater than all the rest. What is it? Jesus’ well-known words, recorded at John 3:16, tell us: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.”

The gift of God’s only-begotten Son—that would certainly be the greatest gift that any one of us could ever receive, for thereby we can be freed from the bondage to sin, old age, and death. (Psalm 51:5; John 8:34) Try as we may, on our own there is nothing we can do to be released from that bondage. However, in his great love, God provided what is needed to bring about that release. By giving his only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as the ransom, Jehovah God gave obedient mankind the prospect of life everlasting. But what exactly is the ransom? Why is it necessary? And how can we benefit from it?

A ransom is a price paid to buy back something forfeited or to bring about release from bondage. The Bible explains that our first parents, Adam and Eve, were created sinless, with the prospect of enjoying life forever on a paradise earth along with the offspring they would later produce. (Genesis 1:26-28) Sadly, they forfeited

all of that by choosing to disobey God—thus becoming sinners. What was the result? The Bible answers: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) Instead of passing on perfect life to his offspring, Adam passed on sin and its consequence, death.

In the case of a ransom, what is paid must be equal to what was lost. When Adam deliberately disobeyed God, he sinned, and the result was the loss of a perfect human life—Adam’s life. According to the Bible, that caused Adam’s offspring to become enslaved to sin and death. Hence, it took the surrendering of another perfect human life—Jesus’ life—given as a sacrifice to make release from bondage possible. (Romans 5:19; Ephesians 1:7) It is only because God lovingly paid this ransom that mankind has the prospect of enjoying what Adam and Eve lost—life forever on a paradise earth.—Revelation 21:3-5.

In view of what it accomplishes, there is no doubt that God’s gift of the ransom, which makes everlasting life possible, is the greatest gift of all. To appreciate what a “perfect present” it is, let us see how, in surpassing ways, it satisfies the factors that help us to make gifts worthwhile, as discussed in the preceding article.

Satisfies our desire. We humans have a strong innate desire to keep on living. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) Although on our own we are unable to satisfy that

desire, the ransom makes it possible for us to do so. The Bible says: “For the wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.”—Romans 6:23.

Fills our need. Humans could not provide the ransom. The Bible explains: “The ransom price for their life is so precious that it is always beyond their reach.” (Psalm 49:8) Therefore, we were in desperate need of divine assistance in order to be released from bondage to sin and death. But “through the release by the ransom paid by Christ Jesus,” God has provided just what is needed.—Romans 3:23, 24.

Is perfectly timed. The Bible tells us: “While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) Because it was given “while we were yet sinners,” the ransom provides assurance of the depth of God’s love for us despite our sinful state. And it gives us much to look forward to, even though we have to endure the consequences of sin.

Reveals a motive noble and selfless. The Bible points out what moved God to offer his Son as the ransom: “By this the love of God was revealed

in our case, that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world so that we might gain life through him. The love is in this respect, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us.”—1 John 4:9, 10.

How can you show that you appreciate the greatest gift of all? Recall that Jesus’ words at John 3:16 point out that only those “exercising faith” in him will be saved. Faith, according to the Bible, is “the assured expectation of what is hoped for.” (Hebrews 11:1) To have that assurance, accurate knowledge is essential. For this reason, we urge you to take time to learn about Jehovah God, the Giver of this “perfect present,” and to find out what you must do to enjoy the everlasting life that Jesus’ ransom sacrifice has made possible for you.

You can learn all of this by examining the Scriptural information available online at www.jw.org. Jehovah’s Witnesses are happy to help you. We are confident that as you learn about and benefit from this greatest gift, you will be moved to exclaim: “Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!”—Romans 7:25. ■



What Did Jesus Really Look Like?

No one has a photograph of Jesus. He never posed for a portrait or a sculpture. Still, he has appeared in the works of countless artists throughout the centuries.

Of course, those artists did not know what Jesus really looked like. Prevailing culture, religious beliefs, and the wishes of their patrons often dictated how the artists portrayed Jesus. Even so, their imagery could influence, even blur, people's view of Jesus and his teachings.

Some artists depicted Jesus as a frail weakling with long hair and a thin beard or emphasized a look of melancholy. In other presentations, Jesus appears supernatural, adorned with a halo, or distant from those around him. Do such portrayals correctly characterize Jesus? How can we find out? One way is to examine statements in the Bible that can shed some light on what he might have looked like. They can also help us to have the correct view of him.

"YOU PREPARED A BODY FOR ME"

Those are words that Jesus uttered in prayer apparently at the time of his baptism. (Hebrews 10:5; Matthew 3:13-17) What did that body look like? Some 30 years earlier, the angel Gabriel had revealed to Mary: "You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, . . . God's Son." (Luke 1:31, 35) Thus, Jesus was a perfect man, as was Adam at his creation. (Luke 3:38; 1 Corinthians 15:45) Jesus must have been a well-formed man, and he probably had features similar to those of his Jewish mother, Mary.

Jesus wore a beard, as was customary among Jews in contrast to Romans. Such beards were a symbol of dignity and respectability; they were not long and unkempt. Jesus undoubtedly attended to or trimmed his beard and had his hair neatly clipped. Only those set aside as Nazirites, such as Samson, did not cut their hair.—Numbers 6:5; Judges 13:5.

For the better part of 30 years, Jesus was a carpenter, working without the benefit of modern power tools. (Mark 6:3) He, therefore, must have had a sturdy build. Early in his ministry, he single-handedly "drove all those with the sheep and cattle out of the temple, and he poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables." (John 2:14-17) It takes a strong and powerful man to perform that feat. Jesus used the body that God had prepared for him to fulfill his God-given commission: "I must also declare the good news of the Kingdom of God to other cities, because for this I was sent." (Luke 4:43) It took extraordinary stamina to travel throughout Palestine on foot and declare this message.

"COME TO ME, . . . AND I WILL REFRESH YOU"

Jesus' warm countenance and appealing demeanor must have made this invitation particularly attractive to those "toiling and loaded down." (Matthew 11:28-30) His warmth and kindness underscored his promise of refreshment



for those willing to learn from him. Even young ones wanted to be close to Jesus, for the Bible says: “He took the children into his arms.”—Mark 10:13-16.

Though Jesus did experience agony before his death, he was not a melancholic individual. For example, he contributed to festivities at a marriage feast in Cana by changing water into fine wine. (John 2:1-11) At other gatherings he taught never-to-be-forgotten lessons.—Matthew 9:9-13; John 12:1-8.

Above all, Jesus’ preaching put the joyful prospect of everlasting life within the reach of his listeners. (John 11:25, 26; 17:3) When 70 of his disciples reported their preaching experiences, he became “overjoyed” and exclaimed: “Rejoice because your names have been written in the heavens.”—Luke 10:20, 21.

“YOU, THOUGH, ARE NOT TO BE THAT WAY”

Religious leaders of Jesus’ day contrived ways to draw attention to themselves and underscore

their authority. (Numbers 15:38-40; Matthew 23:5-7) Unlike them, Jesus instructed his apostles not to “lord it over” others. (Luke 22:25, 26) In fact, Jesus warned: “Beware of the scribes who want to walk around in robes and want greetings in the marketplaces.”—Mark 12:38.

By contrast, Jesus blended in with the crowd, unrecognized on occasion. (John 7:10, 11) Even among his 11 faithful apostles, he did not stand out physically. The betrayer Judas resorted to a kiss, “an agreed sign,” to identify Jesus to the mob.—Mark 14:44, 45.

So while many details are unknown, it is evident that Jesus did not look the way he has often been portrayed. More important than what he *really* looked like, however, is how we view him now.

“IN A LITTLE WHILE THE WORLD WILL SEE ME NO MORE”

Within the day that he uttered those words, Jesus was dead and buried. (John 14:19) He gave his life as “a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matthew 20:28) On the third day, God resurrected him “in the spirit” and “allowed him to become manifest” to some of his disciples. (1 Peter 3:18; Acts 10:40) How did Jesus look when he appeared to his disciples then? Apparently quite different from his original appearance, for even his closest associates did not immediately recognize him. Mary Magdalene took him for a gardener; and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, for a stranger.—Luke 24:13-18; John 20:1, 14, 15.

How should we picture Jesus today? Over 60 years after Jesus’ death, the beloved apostle John saw visions of Jesus. John did not see a dying figure on a cross. Rather, he saw the “King of kings and Lord of lords,” the King of God’s Kingdom, who will soon conquer God’s enemies, both demonic and human, and bring everlasting blessings to mankind.—Revelation 19:16; 21:3, 4. ■





A Proper View of Mistakes

Don and Margaret* enjoyed the visit of their daughter and her family. For their parting meal together, Margaret, a retired professional cook, prepared macaroni and cheese, a favorite meal of her two grandsons.

With everyone seated, Margaret brought in the main course and placed it in the center of the table. She raised the lid and to her dismay discovered that there was just hot cheese sauce in the bowl! Margaret had forgotten to add the main ingredient, macaroni!#

Regardless of age or experience, we all make mistakes. It could be a thoughtless word or a poorly timed action, or perhaps we simply overlooked something or let it slip our mind. Why do mistakes happen? How can we deal with them? Can they be avoided? A proper view of mistakes will help us answer these questions.

MISTAKES—OUR VIEW AND GOD'S

When we do something well, we gladly accept the praise and acknowledgment that we feel we deserve. When we make a mistake, even if it is unintentional or unnoticed by others, should we not similarly acknowledge our responsibility? To do so requires humility.

If we think too much of ourselves, we may well try to minimize our mistake, shift the blame, or

even deny that we made it. Such a course of action usually leads to negative consequences. The problem could remain unresolved, and other people could be unjustly blamed. Even if we should succeed in passing over our mistake now, we need to keep in mind that in the long run, “each of us will render an account for himself to God.”—Romans 14:12.

God has a realistic view of mistakes. In the book of Psalms, God is portrayed as “merciful and compassionate”; he “will not always find fault, nor will he stay resentful forever.” He knows the imperfect makeup of humans and understands our inborn frailties, “remembering that we are dust.”—Psalm 103:8, 9, 14.

Furthermore, like a merciful father, God wants us, his children, to view mistakes as he does. (Psalm 130:3) His Word lovingly provides an abundance of counsel and guidance to help us deal with our own mistakes as well as those of others.

WAYS TO COPE WITH MISTAKES

Often, when mistakes are made, a person spends much time and emotional energy apportioning blame or justifying what was said or done. Instead, when your words offend someone, why not simply apologize, put things right, and keep your friendship intact. Have you done something wrong and caused inconvenience or worse to yourself or somebody else? Rather than berate yourself or accuse others, why not simply

* Names have been changed.

Macaroni and cheese is a dish made chiefly of cooked macaroni pasta covered with a cheese sauce.

do your best to correct matters? To insist that the fault lies elsewhere will almost certainly prolong unnecessary tension and allow the problem to intensify. Instead, learn, correct, and move on.

When someone else makes a mistake, however, it is very easy for us to react in a way that shows disapproval. How much better to follow the counsel of Jesus Christ when he said: “All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must do to them.” (Matthew 7:12) When you make a mistake, even a trivial one, no doubt you want others to treat you with compassion or even to overlook your mistake completely. So why not strive to show the same kindness toward others?—Ephesians 4:32.

PRINCIPLES THAT CAN HELP REDUCE MISTAKES

Mistakes arise from “faulty judgment, inadequate knowledge, or inattention,” explains one dictionary. We have to admit that at one time or another, every person displays one or more of those traits. Nevertheless, mistakes will be fewer if we consider some fundamental principles in the Scriptures.

One such principle is found at Proverbs 18:13, which reads: “When anyone replies to a matter before he hears the facts, it is foolish and humiliating.” Yes, taking a few extra moments to hear things out and consider your response will surely help to prevent you from speaking rashly or reacting impulsively. The knowledge gained by paying close attention is invaluable in averting faulty judgment—and avoiding a mistake.

Another Bible principle says: “If possible, as far as it depends on you, be peaceable with all men.” (Romans 12:18) Do your best to promote a spirit of peace and cooperation. When working with others, be considerate and respectful and

endeavor to command and encourage them. In such an atmosphere, thoughtless words and actions can easily be forgiven or overlooked, and more serious offenses can be amiably resolved or remedied.

Learn to turn the mistake itself into a positive experience. Rather than looking for some excuse for what you said or did, see this as an opportunity to develop positive qualities in yourself. Do you perhaps need to show more patience, kindness, or self-control? What about mildness, peace, and love? (Galatians 5:22, 23) At the very least, you can learn what not to do the next time. Without being irresponsible, try not to take yourself too seriously. A sense of humor can surely help to diffuse tension.

BENEFITING FROM A PROPER VIEW

Having a proper view of mistakes will help us to cope constructively when they occur. We will be more at peace with ourselves and others. If we endeavor to learn from our mistakes, we will become wiser and more likable. We will neither become overly downhearted nor think badly of ourselves. Appreciating that others are also dealing with their mistakes will draw us closer to them. Most important, we can benefit from learning to imitate God’s love and his willingness to forgive freely.—Colossians 3:13.

Did Margaret’s mistake, mentioned earlier, spoil the family occasion? Not at all. Everyone saw the funny side of it, especially Margaret, and enjoyed the meal—without the macaroni! In later years, the two grandsons retold the story of that unforgettable family meal to their own children and recalled the fond memories they had of their grandparents. After all, it was only a mistake! ■



THE BIBLE

Why So Many?

Why are there so many different versions or translations of the Bible today? Do you view new versions as a help or a hindrance to Bible understanding? Learning about their origins can help you to assess them wisely.

First, though, who originally wrote the Bible, and when?

THE ORIGINAL BIBLE

The Bible is normally divided into two sections. The first section has 39 books containing “sacred pronouncements of God.” (Romans 3:2) God inspired faithful men to write these books over a long period of time—about 1,100 years from 1513 B.C.E. to sometime after 443 B.C.E. They wrote mostly in Hebrew, so we

call this section the **Hebrew Scriptures**, also known as the Old Testament.

The second section has 27 books that are also “the word of God.” (1 Thessalonians 2:13) God inspired faithful disciples of Jesus Christ to write these books over a much shorter time—about 60 years from about 41 C.E. to 98 C.E. They wrote mostly in Greek, so we call this section the **Christian Greek Scriptures**, also known as the New Testament.

Together these 66 inspired books make up the complete Bible—God’s message for mankind. But why were additional translations of the Bible made? Here are three of the basic reasons.

- ▶ To allow people to read the Bible in their mother tongue.
- ▶ To remove errors made by copyists and thus restore the Bible’s original text.
- ▶ To update archaic language.

Consider how these factors were involved in two early translations.

THE GREEK SEPTUAGINT

About 300 years before Jesus' day, Jewish scholars began to translate the Hebrew Scriptures into another language—Greek. This translation became known as the **Greek Septuagint**. Why was it made? To help the many Jews who by then spoke Greek rather than Hebrew to stay close to their “holy writings.”—2 Timothy 3:15.

The *Septuagint* also helped millions of non-Jewish, Greek-speaking people to get to know what the Bible taught. How? “From the middle of the first century,” says Professor W. F. Howard, “it became the Bible of the Christian Church, whose missionaries went from synagogue to synagogue ‘proving from the scriptures that the Messiah was Jesus.’” (Acts 17:3, 4; 20:20) That was one reason why many Jews soon “lost interest in the *Septuagint*,” according to Bible scholar F. F. Bruce.

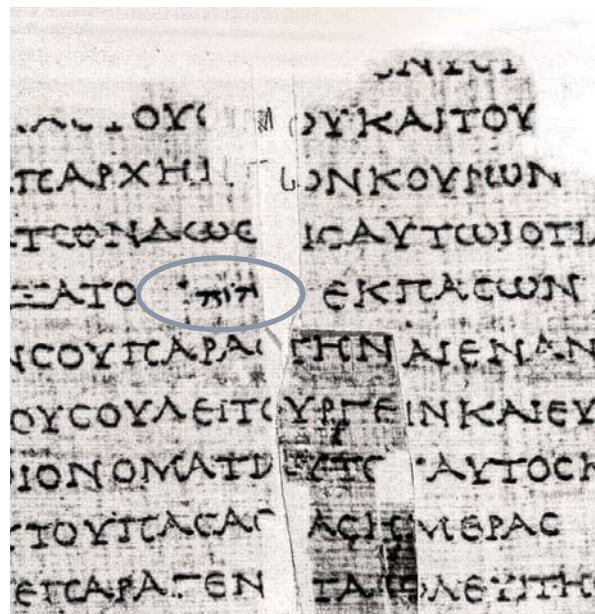
As Jesus’ disciples progressively received the books of the Christian Greek Scriptures, they put them together with the *Septuagint* translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and that came to be the complete Bible that we have today.

THE LATIN VULGATE

About 300 years after the Bible was completed, religious scholar Jerome produced a Latin translation of the Bible, which eventually came to be the **Latin Vulgate**. Latin translations in various forms already existed, so why was a new one needed? Jerome wanted to correct “wrong renderings, obvious errors, and unwarranted additions and omissions,” says *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*.

Jerome corrected many of those errors. But in time, church authorities committed the greatest disservice of all! They declared the Latin *Vulgate* to be the only approved translation of the Bible and continued to do so for centuries! Instead of helping ordinary people to understand the Bible, the *Vulgate* made it a closed book because eventually most people knew no Latin at all.

The divine name in a *Septuagint* manuscript fragment from Jesus’ day



GOD’S SACRED NAME IN THE BIBLE

The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* uses God’s sacred name Jehovah in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures. Most modern English Bibles do not. They use “Lord” instead. One reason for doing this, some translators say, is that God’s personal name, represented by the Tetragrammaton (YHWH), never appeared in the Greek *Septuagint* translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. But is that true?

In the mid-20th century, some very old fragments of the *Septuagint* that existed in Jesus’ day were found. They contain God’s sacred name written in Hebrew characters. It seems that later, copyists removed the divine name and substituted *Ky’ri-os*—the Greek word for “Lord”—in its place. The *New World Translation* restores the divine name to its rightful places in the Scriptures.

A 2,000-year-old Dead Sea Isaiah Scroll.
It matches closely what is in the Bible today



HAS THE BIBLE BEEN CORRUPTED?

Bible copyists, of course, made mistakes. But none of those mistakes corrupted the Bible. “No fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on a disputed reading.”

—*Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts.*

Jewish copyists made the fewest mistakes. “The Jewish scribes of the early Christian centuries copied and recopied the text of the Hebrew Bible with the utmost fidelity.”

—*Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls.*

For example, a scroll of Isaiah found among the Dead Sea Scrolls is 1,000 years older than the previously available texts. How does it compare with the text we have today? “Very occasionally, the odd word is added or subtracted.”

—*The Book. A History of the Bible.*

Mistakes—such as transposed letters, words, or phrases—made by less meticulous copyists are now easily identified and corrected. “There is no body of ancient literature in the world which enjoys such a wealth of good textual attestation as the New Testament.”

—*The Books and the Parchments.*

“Anxious believers can be enormously reassured by the almost exact similarity between even the earliest of the biblical papyri from Egypt and the text as it has survived during its descent through countless scriptoria and printing shops of Europe.”

—*The Book. A History of the Bible.*

So, has the Bible been corrupted?
Emphatically, no!

NEW TRANSLATIONS MULTIPLY

In the meantime, people continued to make other translations of the Bible—such as the famous Syriac *Peshitta* by about the fifth century C.E. But it was not until the 14th century that renewed efforts were made to give many ordinary people the Scriptures in the vernacular.

In England in the late 14th century, John Wycliffe began the process of breaking free from the clutches of a dead language by producing the Bible in English, a language that people in his land could actually understand. Soon after that, Johannes Gutenberg’s printing methods opened the way for Bible scholars to produce and distribute new versions of the Bible in many different living languages throughout Europe.

When English translations multiplied, critics questioned the need to make different versions in the same language. The 18th-century English cleric John Lewis wrote: “Language grows old and unintelligible, therefore it’s necessary to review old Translations to make them speak the Language in use, and be understood by the living generation.”

Today, Bible scholars are in a better position than ever to review older translations. They have a much clearer understanding of ancient Bible languages, and they have valuable ancient Bible manuscripts that have been found in recent times. These help to establish more accurately the original text of the Bible.

So there is real value in new Bible versions. Of course, there is need for caution regarding some of them.* But if the revisers have been moved by a genuine love of God in making a new Bible version, their work can be of great benefit to us. ■

* See the article “How Can You Choose a Good Bible Translation?” in the May 1, 2008, issue of this magazine.



To read the Bible in your language
online or on your mobile device, go to
www.jw.org. Look under PUBLICATIONS >
BIBLE, or scan code

Is Christmas for Christians?

Millions of people around the world believe that the Christmas tradition is the birthday celebration of Jesus Christ. However, have you ever considered whether first-century Christians, those closest to Jesus, celebrated Christmas? And are you aware of what the Bible has to say about birthdays? Finding answers to these questions can help us determine if Christmas is for Christians.

First, the Bible does not mention birthday celebrations for Jesus or any other faithful worshipper of God. The Scriptures refer to only two individuals who celebrated their birthday. Neither of them was a worshipper of Jehovah, the God of the Bible, and their birthday celebrations were cast in a negative light. (Genesis 40:20; Mark 6:21) According to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, the early Christians opposed the “pagan custom of celebrating birthdays.”

On what date was Jesus born?

The Bible does not say exactly when Jesus was born. “The day of Christ’s birth cannot be ascertained from the N[ew] T[estament] or, indeed, from any other source,” states McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia*. Surely, if Jesus wanted his followers to celebrate his birthday, he would have made certain that they knew the date of his birth.

Second, the Bible does not record that Jesus or any one of his disciples celebrated Christmas.

According to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, celebrating Christmas was first mentioned “in the *Chronograph* of Philocalus, a Roman almanac whose source material can be dated to 336 [C.E.].” Clearly, that was well after the completion of the Bible and centuries after Jesus was on earth. Thus, McClintock and Strong note that “the observance of Christmas is not of divine appointment, nor is it of N[ew] T[estament] origin.”*

What event did Jesus instruct his disciples to commemorate?

As the Great Teacher, Jesus gave clear instructions on what he wanted his followers to do, and these are recorded in the Bible. Celebrating Christmas, however, is not one of them. Just as a schoolteacher does not want his students to go beyond the instructions given them, Jesus does not want his followers to “go beyond the things that are written” in the Holy Scriptures.—1 Corinthians 4:6.

On the other hand, there is one important event the early Christians were very familiar with—the commemoration, or Memorial, of Jesus’ death. Jesus personally told his disciples when to observe this occasion and showed them how to do it. These specific instructions, as well as the calendar day of his death, are recorded in the Bible.—Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:25.

As we have seen, Christmas is a birthday celebration, and early Christians did not follow that pagan custom. Furthermore, the Bible does not mention that Jesus or anyone else celebrated Christmas. In light of these facts, millions of Christians the world over have concluded that Christmas is not for them. ■

* For more information on the origins of most Christmas traditions, see the article “Our Readers Ask . . . What Are the Facts About Christmas?” in *The Watchtower* of December 1, 2014, available online at www.jw.org.

What is Armageddon?

Some people believe . . .

that it will be a global destruction by nuclear weapons or environmental ruin.

What do you think?

What the Bible says

Armageddon is the symbolic place of “the war of the great day of God the Almighty,” his war against the wicked.

—Revelation 16:14, 16.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ God fights the war of Armageddon, not to ruin the earth, but to save it from ruin by humankind.—Revelation 11:18.
- ▶ The war of Armageddon will end all wars.
—Psalm 46:8, 9.

Is it possible to survive the war of Armageddon?

What would you say?

- ▶ Yes
- ▶ No
- ▶ Maybe

What the Bible says

“A great crowd” of people from all nations will survive “the great tribulation,” which will end with the war of Armageddon.

—Revelation 7:9, 14.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- ▶ God wants as many as possible to survive Armageddon. He destroys the wicked only as a last resort.
—Ezekiel 18:32.
- ▶ The Bible explains how to survive Armageddon.—Zephaniah 2:3.



An unnumbered
“great crowd” of people
from all nations will
survive Armageddon



Please send me a copy of
What Does the Bible Really Teach?

For more information, see
chapter 8 of this book, published
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