

Awake!

MAY 2008



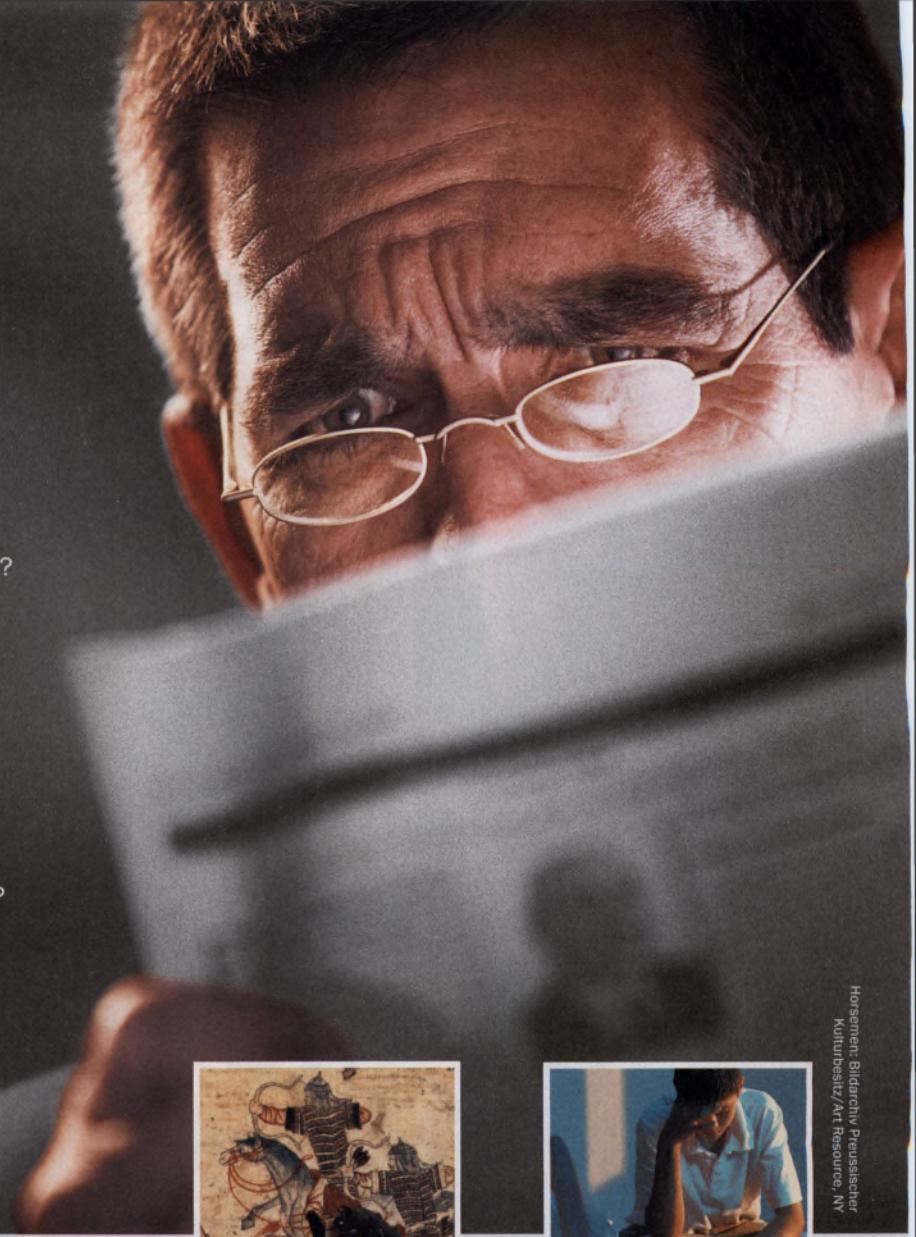
SHOULD YOU FEAR THE FUTURE?

ALSO: WILL
EARTH BE A
PARADISE?
PAGE 10

Awake!

AVERAGE PRINTING 35,754,000
PUBLISHED IN 81 LANGUAGES

- 3 Why Many Despair
- 4 Can Humans Guarantee a Happy Future?
- 7 A Secure Future Under God's Rule
- 8 A Future You Can Count On!
- 10 The Bible's Viewpoint
Will Earth Be a Paradise?
- 16 Is That Really a Tree?
- 19 Is Philanthropy the Answer?
- 22 Music—God's Gift to the Heart
- 24 A Splendid Gulf
- 30 Watching the World
- 31 How Would You Answer?
- 32 "Reap Blessings Through Jehovah's Spirit-Guided King"



SHOULD YOU FEAR THE FUTURE? 3-9

In today's troubled world, many people fear the future. But is tomorrow as dark as it seems? **Is our future really in the hands of the leaders of business, politics, religion, and science?** Read the comforting answer.



Asian Nomads Who Forged an Empire 12

Read about nomads, known for their horsemanship, who in just 25 years subjugated more territories than the Romans conquered in four centuries.

Why Not Just End It All? 26

Many young people commit suicide each year, and millions attempt it. See how one can gain victory over painful emotions.

WHY MANY DESPAIR

Around the world, disturbing trends are causing fear of the future. In a growing number of cities, surveillance cameras monitor citizens. Because of fear of terrorists, many busy airports have almost become military camps. Prowling the Internet in growing numbers, thieves and pedophiles prey on unsuspecting victims. On the environmental front, pollution, deforestation, extinction, and global warming threaten future life on our planet.

UNTHINKABLE two or three generations ago, these concerns are global today. For good reason many people wonder what is happening to the world and what kind of life awaits them and their children. Is the time coming when people will be too afraid to board a bus, a train, or a plane? With prices rising and earth's resources being taxed more and more, will future generations be able to afford good medical care, quality food, and sufficient fuel?

"The future looks very, very scary," said a Canadian health minister in regard to rising health costs. Alarm bells are also sounding with regard to food and fuel. Why? In order to reduce their dependency on fossil fuel, some countries are investing heavily in bio-fuel, such as ethanol, which is derived from vegetation. Hence, for the first time in history, the human stomach is competing with the automotive gas tank for the produce of available land. The resulting inflation in food prices is already being felt.

Meanwhile, the disparity between the rich and the poor is growing, adding to social ten-

Does our only hope for a decent future depend on the leaders of business, politics, religion, and science?

sions. "In this first decade of the 21st century, immense advances in human well-being co-exist with extreme deprivation," says a World Health Organization report. "Life expectancies have collapsed in some of the poorest countries to half the level of the richest." The causes are primarily disease and social and economic chaos in politically failed states.

Throw into this mix the specter of global warming, which may cause increased desertification and more extreme weather, and it comes as no surprise that many informed people are jittery about tomorrow. The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, which sets the so-called Doomsday Clock, expressed fears of a bleak future "as scientists continue to observe cascading effects [of global warming] on Earth's complex ecosystems."

Are our prospects as bleak as they appear to be? Does our only hope for a decent future depend on the leaders of business, politics, religion, and science? 'What other choice do we have?' some say. 'We got ourselves into this mess; we have to get ourselves out.' Others feel that it is simply beyond the ability of humans to find the way out and that our only hope for a safe and secure future lies with God. If so, what assurance do we have that God is interested in us, that he will save us from ourselves? The following articles will address these questions.

CAN HUMANS GUARANTEE A HAPPY FUTURE?

You have just moved into what appears to be a sturdy and attractive new brick home. It is what you have always wanted. The future looks good! But within just a few years, the house develops serious structural defects and has to be demolished. Your heart is broken. But you are not alone. The same problems have developed in other houses in your area. Investigation reveals that the causes were architectural incompetence and flawed bricks.

LIKE that house, the world is in big trouble. Despite countless social and political experiments and almost miraculous advances in science and technology, the very fabric of society seems to be coming apart. In a number of lands, lawlessness and anarchy are already the order of the day. Will desperation drive humans to resolve their problems, to create good government at last? Consider what some authorities have said about mankind's track record.

"We Have Tried Everything"

In an effort to make the world a better place, thinkers from Greek philosopher Plato to German political philosopher and socialist Karl Marx have proposed numerous political ideologies. The results? An article in the journal *New Statesman* said: "We have not abolished poverty or constructed world peace. On the contrary, we seem to

have achieved exactly the opposite. It is not as though we haven't tried. We have tried everything from communism to the pure market; from the League of Nations to nuclear deterrence. We have fought too many 'wars to end war' to believe that we know how to end war, and our inner cities look as though there was a continuing blitzkrieg." The article continued: "We began the [20th] century enthusiastically believing that the scientists would save us and we end it not believing a single word they say."

In 2001 emeritus professor of economic and social history at London University Eric Hobsbawm wrote that mankind's political systems "face an age when the impact of human action on nature and the globe has become a force of geological proportions." The solution, or mitigation, of these problems "will require measures for which, almost cer-

Awake!®

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

Publication of *Awake!* is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

Awake! (ISSN 0005-237X) is published monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to *Awake!*, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2008 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

tainly, no support will be found by counting votes or measuring consumer preferences. This is not encouraging for the long-term prospects of either democracy or the globe.”

Seeing catastrophe staring mankind in the face, world-famous astrophysicist and best-selling author Stephen Hawking asked: “In a world that is in chaos politically, socially and environmentally, how can the human race sustain another 100 years?”

Why Such a Dismal Record?

Only the Bible satisfactorily explains mankind’s abysmal failure at self-government. For one thing, the Bible gives us a truly frank assessment of the human condition. Consider, for example, the following four fundamental truths.

We are all imperfect. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3: 23) Just as flaws within bricks might cause a building to weaken and crumble, inherited imperfection in humans manifests itself in ways that can weaken society. These include tendencies toward corruption, dishonesty, greed, and the abuse of power. This is nothing new. Some three thousand years ago, a wise Bible writer observed: “Man has dominated man to his injury.”—Ecclesiastes 8:9.

Leaders in government and the judiciary acknowledge our imperfections and weaknesses and try to counteract these with reams of legislation. But they do so knowing full well that one cannot legislate love for one’s fellow man or the desire to be law-abiding.

FLAWED “BRICKS” OF HUMAN SOCIETY

- We are all imperfect.
- Death overtakes us.
- Good self-rule is beyond us.
- Humans are influenced by a hidden ruler.

Death overtakes us. “Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs. His spirit [or life force] goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish.” (Psalm 146:3, 4) Considered to be one of the wisest rulers of all time, King Solomon of ancient Israel saw how futile his hard work might turn out to be. He wrote: “I, even I, hated all my hard work at which I was working hard under the sun, that I would leave behind for the man who would come to be after me. And who is there knowing whether he will prove to be wise or foolish? Yet he will take control over all my hard work . . . This too is vanity.”—Ecclesiastes 2:18, 19.

Good self-rule is beyond us. “To earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step.” (Jeremiah 10:23) Our imperfections aside, the Bible teaches that according to God’s original purpose, humans have neither the God-given right to rule themselves nor the ability to do so effectively. Why, for example, do people tend to chafe at the thought

Languages: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Ciembba, Croatian, Czech, [#] Danish, ^{#+} Dutch, ⁺ English, ^{#+} Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish, ^o French, [#] Georgian, German, [#] Greek, Gujarati, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian, [#] Japanese, [#] Kannada, Kirghiz, Korean, [#] Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Norwegian, ⁺ Polish [#] Portuguese, [#] Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian, [#] Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Silioti, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, [#] Swahili, Swedish, ^o Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

[#] Audiocassettes also available.

⁺ CD also available.

^o MP3 CD-ROM also available.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah’s Witnesses, using one of the addresses below. For a complete list of addresses, see www.watchtower.org/address. **America:** United States of: 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. **Bahamas:** Box N-1247, Nassau, N.P. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** P.O. Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Niederselters, Am Steinfels, D-65618 Selters. **Guam 96913:** 143 Jehovah St., Barrigada. **Guyana:** 352-360 Tyrell St., Republic Park Phase 2 EBD. **Hawaii 96819:** 2055 Kam IV Rd., Honolulu. **Jamaica:** P.O. Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. **Japan:** 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa Pref., 243-0496. **Puerto Rico 00970:** P.O. Box 3980, Guaynabo. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago, Republic of:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe, 1740.

HUMANS WILL NOT RUIN THE EARTH!

The Creator's purpose for the earth to be a safe, peaceful home for God-fearing humans is well supported in the Bible. Consider the following scriptures.

"He has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever."—Psalm 104:5.

"You have solidly fixed the earth, that it may keep standing."—Psalm 119:90.

"A generation is going, and a generation is coming; but the earth is standing even to time indefinite."—Ecclesiastes 1:4.

"The earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea."—Isaiah 11:9.

"[Jehovah is] the Former of the earth and the Maker of it, He the One who firmly established it, who did not create it simply for nothing, who formed it even to be inhabited."—Isaiah 45:18.

of another human or group of humans telling them what to do or setting moral or ethical standards for them? The answer: We were created to look to a higher authority than ourselves for guidance in life. That Authority is God.—Isaiah 33:22; Acts 4:19; 5:29.

Humans are influenced by a hidden ruler. "The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one"—Satan the Devil. (1 John 5:19) If the top management of a company was utterly corrupt—and untouchable—what could the average employee do to correct things? Little, if anything. The same is true in regard to correcting the problems ultimately attributable to the hidden rulers of this world—invisible, evil spirit creatures working under the overlordship of Satan. The Bible describes those rulers as "governments," "authorities," "world rulers of this darkness,"

and "wicked spirit forces in the heavenly places."—Ephesians 6:12.

The Bible does not, however, simply expose mankind's failings and the world's unseen rulers. It also provides good news in the form of a sure solution to all our problems, thus giving us a sound basis for hope.

Our Creator to the Rescue!

Left to our own devices, we could never find a solution to these problems. Not even the most intelligent, powerful, or wealthy human has the power to change a single one of the four realities mentioned in this article.* But as explained in the following article, our Creator has neither forgotten us nor abandoned us. In fact, as earth's rightful Sovereign, he will address every obstacle that lies in the way of our happiness. (1 John 4:8) What is more, he will do so soon. How do we know?

As explained in last month's issue of this magazine, world events and social conditions make it abundantly clear that we are deep into "the last days" of the present world. (2 Timothy 3:1; Matthew 24:3-7) No, the end will not come in the form of a nuclear holocaust or a collision with an asteroid or in some other way that indiscriminately annihilates both the good and the bad. Rather, it will be the result of divine intervention aimed specifically at the wicked, including those who insist on perpetuating human sovereignty. (Psalm 37:10; 2 Peter 3:7) At the same time, God will bring to an end all the suffering that such opposers of God have caused.**—2 Thessalonians 1:6-9.

Thereafter, the Creator will solve our problems of government by granting full authority over the earth to a rulership called "the kingdom of God." (Luke 4:43) As we shall now see, that world government puts tomorrow in a totally new light.

* See the article "Is Philanthropy the Answer?" on page 19.

** The question "Why Does God Allow Suffering?" is addressed on page 106 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

A SECURE FUTURE UNDER GOD'S RULE

SOON our anxieties about the future will be over, for God will take charge of planet Earth by putting in place his own government, called God's Kingdom. Jesus Christ had that wonderful prospect in mind when he taught his followers to pray: "Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:9, 10.

God's Kingdom will neither cooperate with nor work through human political leaders. Rather, it will eliminate every vestige of human self-rule, as indicated in the following prophecy of Daniel about "the last days," the time in which we live. (2 Timothy 3:1) "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these [man-made] kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." (Daniel 2:44) Those words offer no comfort or hope to people who prefer rulership by man, but to all who desire God's sovereignty as expressed through his Kingdom, they glow with promise.

A Wonderful Future!

When God's Kingdom rules over the entire earth, its subjects will not be divided by politics, race, religion, or lines on a map. Rather, they will form a global brotherhood unit-

ed by spiritual truth and genuine love. (John 13:34, 35; 17:3, 17) Yes, under Kingdom rule, "the righteous one will sprout," and there will be an "abundance of peace until the moon is no more."—Psalm 72:7.

Besides these things, God's Kingdom will elevate submissive humans to perfection in mind and body, eradicating all sickness, suffering, and death. (Revelation 21:3, 4) The result? Our planet will be a paradise in every respect, thus fulfilling God's original purpose as stated in Eden.*—Genesis 1:28.

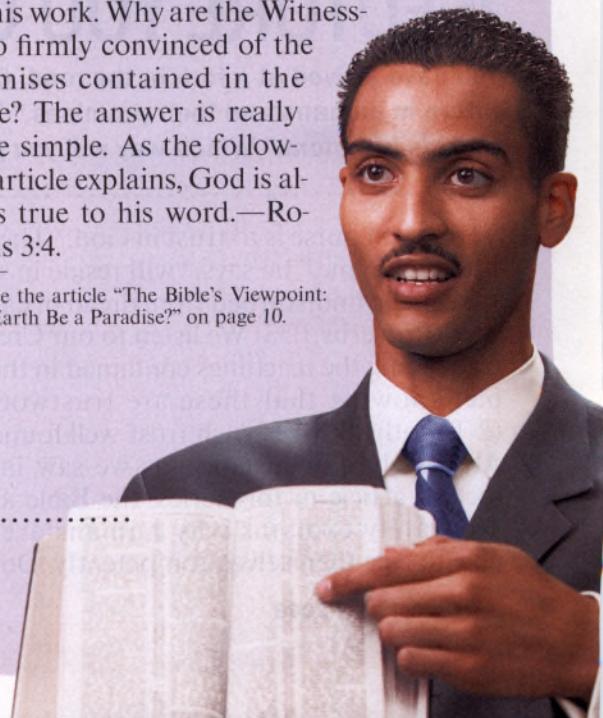
The Only Real Good News

When giving his composite sign of "the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus included a particularly noteworthy element. (Matthew 24:3-7) He 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.

In harmony with God's will, in 2007 almost seven million Witnesses of Jehovah in 236 lands shared the Kingdom message with their neighbors, joyfully contributing well over 1.4 billion hours of their personal time to this work. Why are the Witnesses so firmly convinced of the promises contained in the Bible? The answer is really quite simple. As the following article explains, God is always true to his word.—Romans 3:4.

* See the article "The Bible's Viewpoint: Will Earth Be a Paradise?" on page 10.

The Bible says that there will be an "abundance of peace"





A FUTURE YOU CAN COUNT ON!

You have arrived at a fork in the road. One sign says, “Invest your future in humans and their promises.” The other reads, “Trust in God and his Kingdom.” Which way will you go?

THE wise course is to trust in God. “The one listening to me,” he says, “will reside in security and be undisturbed from dread of calamity.” (Proverbs 1:33) We listen to our Creator by heeding the teachings contained in the Bible, knowing that these are trustworthy. (2 Timothy 3:16) Is such trust well-founded? Absolutely! For instance, as we saw in the second article in this series, the Bible alone accurately explains why humans are unable to rule themselves competently. Do you

not agree that what the Bible says fits the facts?

The same accuracy is reflected in Bible prophecy. For example, the Bible foretold the woeful conditions marking the present “last days.” We can see these with our own eyes. (Matthew 24:3-7; 2 Timothy 3:1-5) The Bible even predicted that humans would threaten the very health of the planet. God will “bring to ruin those *ruining the earth*,” says Revelation 11:18.

When those words were penned some 2,000 years ago, phenomena such as pollution of air, sea, and land; global warming; and mass extinction of species caused by humans would have been inconceivable. But not now! Yes, God never lies. His written Word is always fulfilled in every detail.* (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6: 18) In fact, God stakes his name on his word.

A Name You Can Trust

Just as a signature validates a check, God's personal name—Jehovah—guarantees all the promises recorded in the Bible.[#] "In his holy name we have put our trust," said a Bible writer who often experienced God's loving care.—Psalm 33:21; 34:4, 6.

Linking the name of God to his fatherly care, Proverbs 18:10 states: "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection." Likewise, Romans 10:13 reads: "Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved." Of course, God's personal name is not a charm that wards off evil. Rather, it is God himself who does the saving, and those who call on him as that text says do this because they trust him implicitly, knowing full well his flawless reputation. Says Psalm 91:14: "Because on me [Jehovah] he has set his affection, I shall also provide him with escape. I shall protect him because he has come to know my name."

Ask yourself, 'Where do I place my trust—in God or in man?' Jehovah's Witnesses have made their choice for God and his Kingdom, not out of irrational sentiment or blind credulity, but on the basis of strong conviction rooted in an accurate knowledge of the Bible. (Hebrews 11:1; 1 John 4:1) As a result, they do not fear the future but "rejoice in the hope" set before them. They invite you to share that same sunny outlook.—Romans 12:12.

* See the November 2007 special issue of this magazine, which deals entirely with the question "Can You Trust the Bible?"

[#] See the accompanying box "Both a Name and a Guarantee."

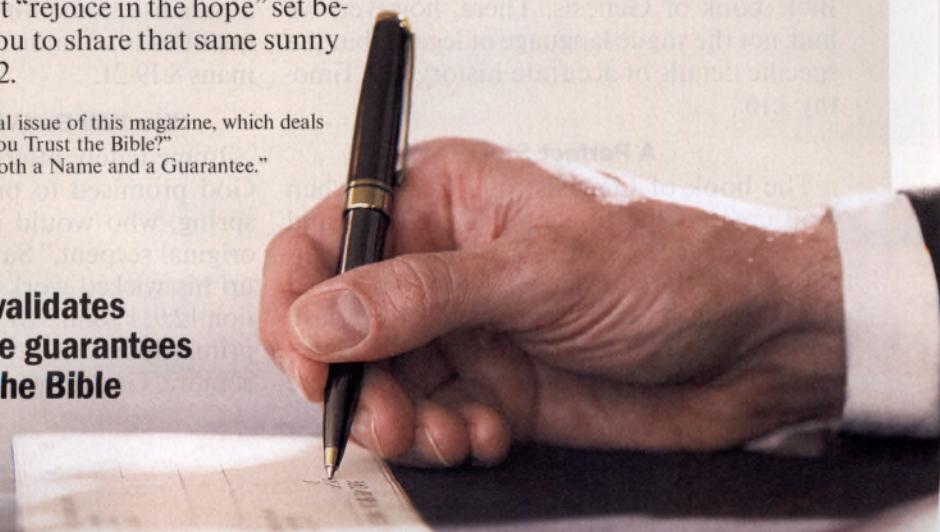
BOTH A NAME AND A GUARANTEE

God's name, Jehovah, is not a mere label.* How so? That name means "He Causes to Become." Simply put, God has the love, power, and wisdom to become whatever he deems necessary in order to accomplish his purpose and fulfill his word. For example, he can become a Savior of the righteous, a Destroyer of the wicked, a Hearer of prayer, or a loving Father—whatever he chooses to become.

"I am the Divine One," Jehovah says, "the One telling from the beginning the finale, . . . the One saying, 'My own counsel will stand, and everything that is my delight I shall do.' " (Isaiah 46:9, 10) Because God is always true to himself and because his name, or reputation, is involved, his written Word is certain of fulfillment. "God is not a man that he should tell lies."—Numbers 23:19.

* The name Jehovah is distinct from the titles Almighty, Creator, God, and Lord. It appears approximately seven thousand times in the original text of the Holy Bible. God gave himself that name. Says Exodus 3:15: "Jehovah . . . is my name for ever."—American Standard Version.

**Just as a signature validates
a check, God's name guarantees
all the promises in the Bible**



Will Earth Be a Paradise?



LEGENDS of a golden age in which man was guiltless, lived in close communion with God, and was free from sickness and death can be found in the traditions of many peoples—among them Egyptians, Mexicans, Peruvians, and Tibetans. These legends also incorporate the concept of a fall into sin.

Although distorted and embellished, the legends have too many common elements to be coincidental. This has led many to the conclusion that the stories were derived from historical events. Indeed, the picture that emerges bears a remarkable similarity to what is found in the opening chapters of the Bible book of Genesis. There, however, we find, not the vague language of legend, but the specific details of accurate history.—2 Timothy 3:16.

A Perfect Start

The book of Genesis tells us that when God created the first humans—Adam and Eve—he placed them in a well-watered garden called the Garden of Eden. They had perfect health and the prospect of everlasting life. Death was the penalty for sin. (Genesis 2:8-17; Romans 5:12) Adam and Eve were

to “be fruitful and become many and fill the earth and subdue it.” (Genesis 1:28) The result would be a global paradise filled with perfect humans in joyful subjection to God, their Ruler.

Sadly, Adam and Eve disobeyed God, forfeiting both their opportunity to fulfill their Creator’s purpose and their prospect of living forever. Nevertheless, Jehovah God will fulfill his purpose for the earth. “My word that goes forth from my mouth . . . will not return to me without results,” he said, but “it will have certain success.” (Isaiah 55:11) Indeed, Jehovah’s purpose for the earth to be a paradise home for humans who reflect his qualities is a major theme of the Bible.—Romans 8:19-21.

“You Will Be With Me in Paradise”

Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned, God promised to produce a “seed,” or offspring, who would ultimately destroy “the original serpent,” Satan the Devil, and break up his wicked works. (Genesis 3:15; Revelation 12:9; 1 John 3:8) That “seed” proved to be primarily Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:16) What is more, God appointed him King of a heav-

only Kingdom, or government, that will rule over the earth.—Daniel 7:13, 14; Revelation 11:15.

Christ will fully accomplish what Adam failed to do. In fact, the Bible calls Jesus “the last Adam.” (1 Corinthians 15:45) Moreover, in his model prayer, Jesus linked earth’s future to God’s Kingdom, saying: “Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.”—Matthew 6:10.

When Jesus was on earth, he—as earth’s future King—could rightly say to the repentant evildoer impaled alongside him: “You will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43) The Paradise that Jesus had in mind would be on earth, as God originally purposed. This fact is well supported in the Bible. Consider the following texts.

“The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.” (Psalm 37:29) “There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow.” (Psalm 72:16) “The upright are the ones that will reside in the earth, and the blameless are the ones that will be left over in it.” (Proverbs 2:21) “They [the blameless] will not do any harm or cause any ruin in all my holy mountain; because the earth will certainly be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering the very sea.”—Isaiah 11:9.

In harmony with those statements, in his famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5:5) Later, the apostle John wrote: “The tent of God is with mankind . . . He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be

no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21:3, 4) Clearly, these Bible texts refer, not to a heavenly “paradise,” but to a physical one here on earth.

What Bible Scholars Have Said

Many Bible scholars maintain that under Christ’s Kingdom, earth will become a paradise. Said theologian Joseph A. Seiss: “The whole earth under the Messiah must then ultimately become . . . what it . . . would have been if Adam had never sinned.” In the commentary *The New Testament for English Readers*, Henry Alford wrote: “That kingdom of God . . . shall work onwards till it shall become *actually a kingdom over this earth*, and

**“Happy are the mild-tempered ones,
since they will inherit the earth.”**

—Matthew 5:5

its subjects shall *inherit the earth . . .*, finally in its renewed and blessed state for ever.”—Italics his.

Likewise, famous scientist and keen student of the Bible Isaac Newton wrote: “The earth shall continue to be inhabited by mortals [humans] after the day of judgment and that not only for 1000 years, but even for ever.”

Because the earth will come under the direct rule of Jesus Christ, wickedness will never again take root. (Isaiah 11:1-5, 9) Yes, the earth will be a paradise in every respect, forever a credit to its Creator.

HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- What was God’s original purpose for mankind and the earth?—Genesis 1:28.
- What will God’s Kingdom accomplish?—Matthew 6:10.
- Why will wickedness never again take root?—Isaiah 11:1-5, 9.

Asian Nomads

WHO FORGED AN EMPIRE



Fear and confusion gripped Russia. Like locusts, hordes of mounted warriors from the east swept across the steppes slaying, plundering, and annihilating any army that opposed them. The only part of Russia that escaped was the principality of Novgorod. From there a bewildered chronicler wrote of this as an invasion by "unknown tribes" with a strange language.

THE invaders were the Mongols, a people who hailed from the grassland plateau of what is today Mongolia, in central and north-east Asia. Their lightning conquests, beginning in the early 13th century C.E., changed the face of Asia and of half of Europe. In just 25 years, the Mongols subjugated the inhabitants of more territories than the Romans had conquered in four centuries. At the apex of their power, they ruled from Korea to Hungary and from Siberia to India—the largest contiguous land empire in recorded history!

Besides shedding light on the history of Asia and Europe, the annals of the relatively short-lived Mongol Empire underscore many Biblical teachings about human nature and man's dominion over his fellow man. These truths include the following: Human glory is vain and fleeting. (Psalm 62:9; 144:4) "Man has dominated man to his injury." (Eccle-

siastes 8:9) And as symbolized in the Bible, powerful political kingdoms have behaved like wild beasts in aggressively seeking dominance over other nations.*

Who Were the Mongols?

The Mongols were tribal nomads and skilled horsemen who subsisted on herding, trading, and hunting. Unlike most other peoples—of whom only a small percentage were trained and equipped for warfare—virtually every Mongol male with a horse and a bow was a tough and ferocious warrior. And each tribe was steadfastly loyal to its leader, called a khan.

After 20 years of fighting, one khan, Temüjin (c. 1162-1227), united some 27 Mongol tribes under his leadership. Later, Muslims of Turkic origin called Tatars fought alongside the Mongols. In fact, when the Mongol juggernaut rode west, terrified Europeans called the invaders Tartars.[#] In 1206, when Temüjin was a little over 40 years of age, the Mongols made him Genghis Khan—a title that may mean "strong ruler" or "univer-

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

- How Well Do You Know Your Children?
- When Is Self-Defense Justified?
- More Than Just Toys

* Note the references to both beasts and political rulership, or government, in the following *Bible passages*: Daniel 7:6, 12, 17, 23; 8:20-22; Revelation 16:10; 17:3, 9-12.

[#] Europeans thought that the Tatars were devils from "Tartarus." (2 Peter 2:4) Thus, they called the invaders Tartars.

sal ruler." He was also known as the Great Khan.

Genghis Khan's hordes of mounted archers attacked with speed and fury, often on multiple fronts stretching thousands of miles. Militarily, "he was the equal of Alexander the Great or Napoleon I," says *Encarta Encyclopedia*. Persian historian Juzjani, a contemporary of Genghis Khan, described him as "possessed of great energy, discernment, genius and understanding." He also labeled him "a butcher."

Beyond Mongolia

Northern China was occupied by the Manchu, who called their dynasty Jin, or "Golden." To reach Manchu territories, the Mongols crossed the forbidding Gobi Desert—no great obstacle for nomads who, if necessary, could survive on the milk and blood of horses. Although Genghis Khan extended his rule into China and Manchuria, the fighting dragged on for some 20 years. From among the Chinese, he recruited scholars, artisans, and traders, as well as engineers who could build siege engines, catapults, and gunpowder bombs.

After securing control over the Silk Road trade routes toward lands farther west, Genghis Khan sought a trading partnership with the neighboring Turkic Sultan Muhammad. The sultan ruled a vast empire that covered today's Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and most of Iran.

In 1218 a Mongol delegation, ostensibly interested in trade, arrived at the sultan's frontier. But the local governor executed them, triggering events that led to the first Mongol invasion of a Muslim land. For the next three years, the Mongols, said to be more numerous than ants, systematically pillaged and burned

From conquest to commerce

During its heyday the Yuan dynasty, founded by Kublai Khan, fostered trade and travel, leading to what has been termed "the greatest expansion of commerce in Eurasian history." This was the era of the great Venetian traveler Marco Polo (1254-1324).^{*} Traveling overland or by ship, Arabian, Persian, Indian, and European traders took with them horses, carpets, gems, and spices, which they exchanged for ceramics, lacquerware, and silk.

In 1492, Christopher Columbus, with a copy of Marco Polo's travels in hand, sailed westward from Europe, hoping to reestablish trading contact with the Mongol court. He was, however, unaware that the empire had ceased to exist more than a century earlier! Its fall had caused a collapse of communications, and the Muslims barred use of the land route from Europe to the East.

* For an account of Marco Polo's journey to China, see the June 8, 2004, issue of *Awake!*

cities and fields and slaughtered Sultan Muhammad's people en masse, except for those who had skills the Mongols desired.

Mongol forces, estimated to number about 20,000, then rode through Azerbaijan and Georgia to the steppes north of Caucasia, defeating every army they met, including a Russian force of 80,000. In a ride of some 8,000 miles, the Mongols circled the Caspian Sea in what some consider to be one of the greatest cavalry exploits in history. Their string of conquests set a precedent for the future invasion of Eastern Europe by later Mongol rulers.

Genghis Khan's Successors

Ögödei, the third of Genghis Khan's four sons by his principal wife, was made the next Great Khan. Ögödei reasserted control over

Known for their religious tolerance

Although they were animists, the ancient Mongols tolerated other beliefs. The book *The Devil's Horsemen* explains that when Westerners entered the Mongol capital, Karakorum, they were amazed not only at its wealth but also at its religious freedom—churches, mosques, and temples stood side by side.

Nominal Christianity came to the Mongols by means of the Nestorians, who had broken away from the Byzantine, or Eastern, Church. The Nestorians made many converts among the Turkic clans of Asia, whom the Mongols encountered. Some female converts even married into the Mongol royal family.

Present-day Mongols hold a variety of religious beliefs. The approximate portion of the population professing indigenous beliefs is 30 percent; Lamaist (Tibetan) Buddhism, 23 percent; and Islam, 5 percent. The remainder, for the most part, are nonreligious.

the conquered lands, received tribute from vassal rulers, and completed the conquest of the Jin dynasty in northern China.

In order to maintain both the empire and the lavish lifestyle to which the Mongols had become accustomed, Ögödei eventually decided to go to war again—but against lands not yet plundered. He launched attacks on two fronts—against European lands to the west and against the Sung dynasty in southern China. The European campaign was a success, but the other was not. Despite some gains, the Mongols failed to conquer the main territory of the Sung.

The Western Campaign

In 1236, an estimated 150,000 warriors rode west toward Europe. First they targeted the regions along the Volga River; then they attacked Russian city-states, reducing Kiev

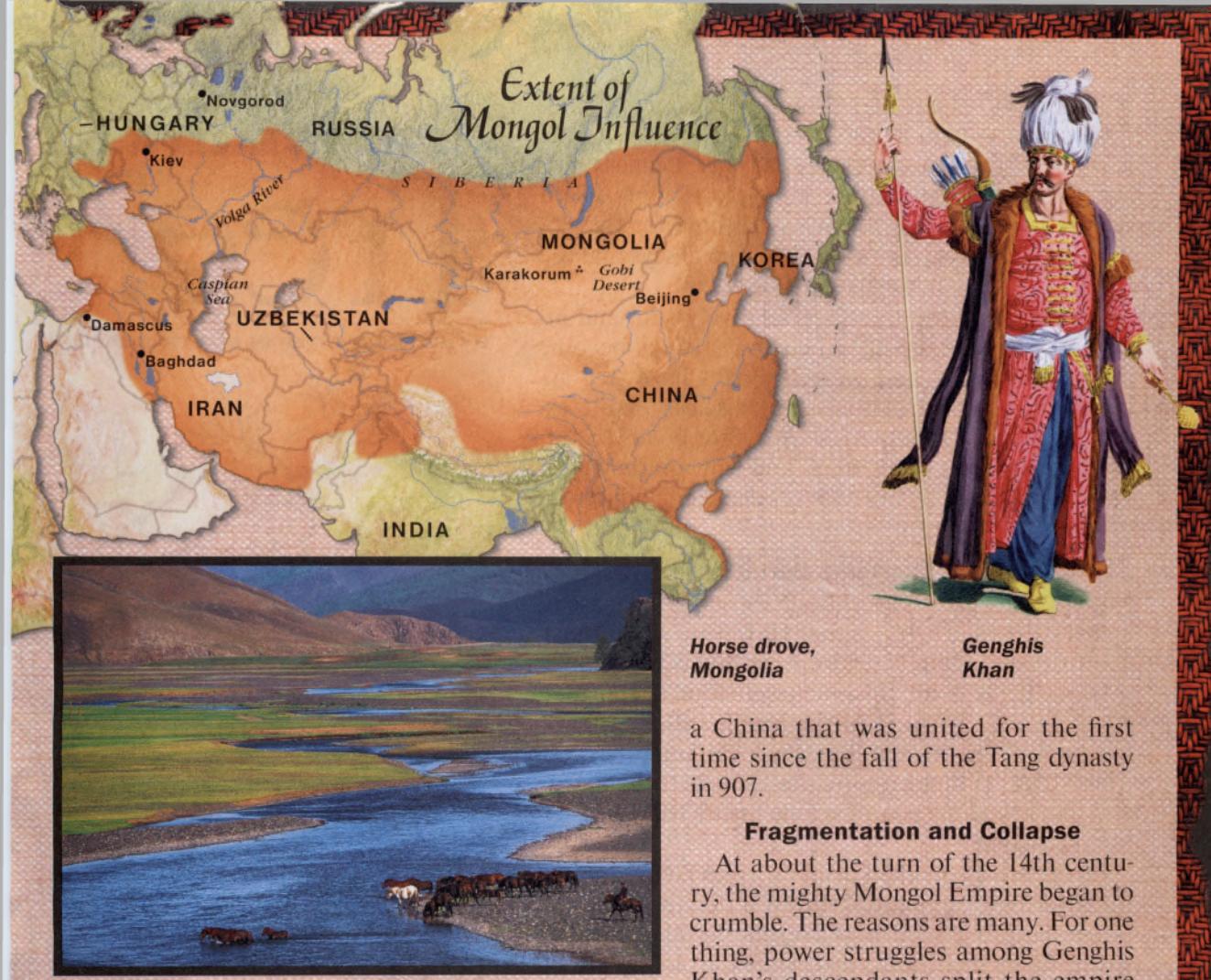
to ashes. The Mongols promised to spare the cities if the people gave them one tenth of everything. But the Russians preferred to fight. Using catapults, the Mongols pelted the enemy with rocks, burning naphtha, and saltpeter. When city walls were breached, the invaders poured in, inflicting such slaughter that, as one historian wrote, “No eye remained open to weep for the dead.”

Mongol forces ravaged Poland and Hungary, coming close to the border of what is now Germany. Western Europe braced itself for attack, but it never came. In December 1241, Ögödei Khan died, apparently in a drunken stupor. So the Mongol commanders hastened home to their capital, Karakorum, 4,000 miles away, to elect a new ruler.

Ögödei’s son, Güyük, became his successor. One who witnessed Güyük’s enthronement was an Italian friar who made the 15-month journey through Mongol-controlled territory to deliver a letter from Pope Innocent IV. The pope sought assurance that Europe was safe from new invasions, and he urged the Mongols to accept Christianity. Güyük made no promises. Instead, he told the pope to come with a delegation of kings to pay homage to the Khan!

Another Assault on Two Fronts

The next Great Khan was Mongke, enthroned in 1251. He and his brother Kublai launched assaults on the Sung dynasty in southern China, while another force headed west. The latter laid waste to Baghdad and made Damascus surrender. The so-called Christians who had been crusading against the Muslims gloated, and the “Christians” who lived in Baghdad looted and killed their Muslim neighbors.



Horse drove,
Mongolia

Genghis
Khan

a China that was united for the first time since the fall of the Tang dynasty in 907.

Fragmentation and Collapse

At about the turn of the 14th century, the mighty Mongol Empire began to crumble. The reasons are many. For one thing, power struggles among Genghis Khan's descendants split the empire into a number of khanates. Also, Mongols became assimilated into some of the civilizations they had conquered. In China, power struggles weakened the authority of Kublai's descendants. In 1368 the Chinese, weary of inept rule, corruption, and heavy taxes, overthrew their Yuan masters, forcing them back to Mongolia.

Like a savage storm, the Mongol tempest came swiftly, remained briefly, and then left. Still, it made its mark on the history of Europe and Asia, including the unification of Mongolia and of China. Indeed, modern-day Mongolians hail the first great khan, Genghis Khan, as the father of their nation.

At that decisive moment—when the Mongols seemed poised to crush the Muslim world—history repeated itself. News arrived that Mongke had died. Once again, the invaders turned for home, this time leaving just 10,000 men to maintain the frontier. Soon thereafter, this inadequate force was annihilated by an army from Egypt.

The assault into southern China against the wealthy Sung dynasty was victorious. In fact, Kublai Khan proclaimed himself founder of a new Chinese dynasty, naming it Yuan. The site of his new capital is today known as Beijing. After defeating the remaining Sung holdouts in the late 1270's, Kublai ruled over

SITTING squat and rotund in a scrubby landscape, Australian boab trees, also called bottle trees, may appear odd, even ugly. Leafless during the dry season, mature boabs look more like a strange creature with tentacles reaching for the sky than they do a tree. An Aboriginal legend says that the tree was cursed and turned upside down!

While young, the trees are relatively slim and attractive. But as they age, their gray trunks become bulbous, battered, and scarred. Boabs have “the appearance of suffering from some disease,” wrote explorer George Grey in 1837. Why are boabs so different from most other trees, and why are they both valued and loved by outback residents, including Aborigines?

Shorter Is Better

Boab trees grow naturally in Africa, Madagascar, and northwestern Australia. However, while most countries call them baobabs, Australians have long used the name boab. Bushmen were fond of shortening names—because of the likelihood of swallowing the ever-present flies, say local humorists. Thus, they trimmed the name baobab to boab, and the new name soon became firmly rooted in the vernacular.

Boabs are also called dead-rat trees. Why this unflattering designation? From a distance, the tree’s dangling seed pods resemble dead rats strung up by their tails. Also, when the blooms are bruised or damaged, they soon ferment, mimicking the stench of rotting meat. When healthy, however, the flowers are large, white, and fragrant.

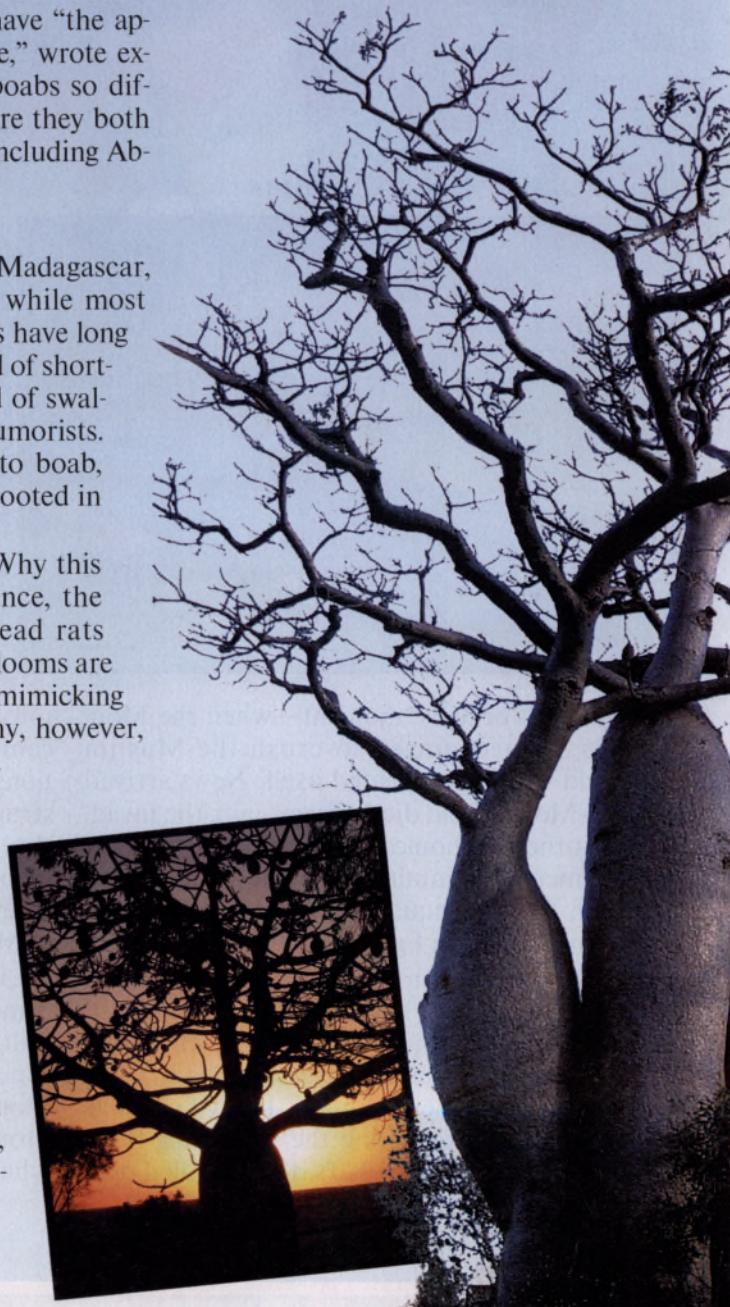
Designed for Extremes

Boabs thrive in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia and in the neighbor state the Northern Territory. There the seasons alternate between the wet, which is the relatively short season of torrential monsoon rains, and the dry.

The resilience of boabs is legendary. They often live for many centuries. “Even if the tree is hollowed out by fire, or completely ringbarked, it usually sur-

IS THAT REALLY A Tree?

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN AUSTRALIA





vives and, after repairing the damage, continues its growth," says plant physiologist D. A. Hearne.* He adds: "The tree's vitality is such that, failing complete destruction, it will continue almost normal growth." Determined to survive, one boab that was crated and awaiting overseas shipment sent roots through the gaps in the wood and into the soil below!

Growing in stony creek beds, on rocky escarpments, or on sandy plains, boabs often stand taller than neighboring trees. In the Kimberley Plateau, some boabs tower to 80 feet or more and measure almost the same around their girth.

The secret behind boab bulk is water. Like a sponge, boab wood is soft, fibrous, and capable of storing a massive amount of liquid. After soaking up water from monsoon rains, a boab's trunk visibly swells. As the dry season progresses, the tree slowly returns to its previous size.

During the harsh winter months, deciduous trees survive by shedding their leaves. For the boab, this occurs in the long dry sea-

* A tree is ringbarked, or girdled, when a ring of bark is stripped from around its trunk. This cuts off the supply of sap and kills most trees.

Flowers bloom at night and die just hours later



son. As the dry season comes to an end, flowers emerge and new foliage bursts forth. Because of this visual announcement of the approaching wet season, locals sometimes call the boab the calendar plant.

The flowers bloom only at night, last for just a matter of hours, and begin to wilt after sunrise. The flower pods mature into large seed nuts, or gourds, which fall to the ground, break apart, and spread their seeds.

Tree of Life

Kimberley Aborigines have long valued boab seeds, leaves, resin, and roots as important sources of food. Before they dry out, the seeds have a soft, white pulp that is pleasant to eat. In times of drought, Aborigines chewed the fibrous wood of the tree and its roots, which provided precious moisture. During good wet seasons, the native people sometimes found water trapped in hollows in the tree and at the base of branches.

In 1856, when members of Augustus Gregory's expedition to the Kimberley Plateau developed scurvy, they boiled the pith of boab nuts to make "an agreeable jam." Rich in vitamin C, the pulp soon restored the men to good health.

Windows to the Past

In the past, boabs served as useful message boards for Aborigines and Europeans alike. In 1820 the survey vessel *Mermaid* beached for repairs on the Kimberley coast. Obeying Admiralty instructions to leave some evidence that could not be mistaken of their having landed, Captain Phillip Parker King carved the inscription "HMC Mermaid 1820" on the trunk of a large boab.

At the time, the Mermaid Tree, as it came to be called, measured 29 feet in circumference. Today, its girth measures just over 40 feet. Though now less clear, the inscription still serves as a memorial to those early explorers. Messages carved deep on some old boabs remain visible to this day and have been seen by tourists from around the world.

When European settlers arrived on the Kimberley Plateau, sprawling boabs became signposts, meeting places, and campsites in an unfamiliar land. Traveling stockmen allowed their cattle to rest under boabs emblazoned with colorful names, such as Oriental Hotel, Club Hotel, or Royal Hotel.

When hostile Aborigines stole German settler August Lucanus' boat in 1886, his traveling party faced a 60-mile trek to the town of Wyndham. Crocodile-infested creeks and rivers lay in their path. Lucanus later wrote that he and his party knew from the diary of an early explorer "where he had planted some carpenter's tools near Pitt Springs under a big boab tree, with his initials cut in it." Amazingly, the men located the tree and the tools. They then "cut down a fine big boab tree," and in five days built a canoe. It floated well, and all made it home safely.

Two of the best-known boab trees are the so-called Derby and Wyndham Prison Trees,

both named after nearby towns. Popular folklore says that these hollowed-out giants, each one large enough to shelter several men, served as jails in the 19th century. Some modern historians, however, question these claims. Still, the trees are impressive specimens and popular with tourists.

Boab Art

At one time people carved pictures and messages on boab trunks. Nowadays, though, outback artists spare the trees and use their skills on the egg-shaped boab nuts, which may be up to ten inches long and six inches in diameter.

After picking a suitable nut from a tree, a local artist, using a pocketknife, carves intricate pictures on the brown shell. Popular subjects include native animals, Aboriginal hunting scenes, and human faces and figures. The finished products are often sought by collectors. Other buyers include tourists and local retail shops.

True, the boab may not be as grand as a sequoia, as stately as a poplar, or as colorful as a maple in the fall. Yet, in its own unique way, this hardy, resilient plant is a valuable asset to the outback, a credit to the Creator and, perhaps, an indication that he has a good sense of humor.

Boab nut carved with the image of a frilled lizard



Is Philanthropy the Answer?

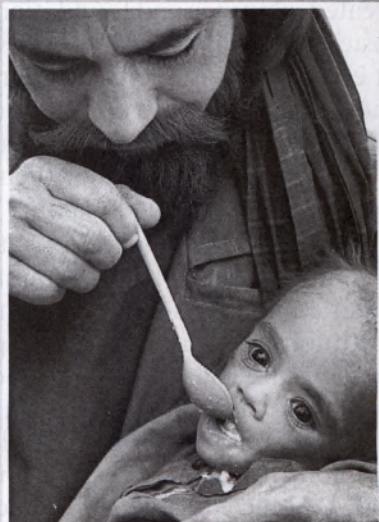


ALTHOUGH natural disasters, poverty, hunger, disease, and looming environmental threats dominate the news, a happier trend has also been observed—one of generosity. Announcements of wealthy individuals donating hundreds of millions, even billions, of dollars to worthy causes sometimes make the news. Celebrities are commonly seen using their fame to spotlight serious problems. Even many people of modest means contribute to a variety of causes. To what extent, though, can financial generosity help, especially in the long term?

A Golden Age of Giving?

The trend in giving seems to be gathering momentum in some lands. "At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there are more [philanthropic] foundations holding more assets in more countries than ever before," noted one source. As the ranks of the rich swell, giving is expected to continue. Not only will some have more to give but as the wealthy die and bequeath their assets, the share going to charities is expected to increase. For good reason, the British news journal *The Economist* stated that we may be seeing the dawn of "a golden age of philanthropy."

A factor in this trend is the failure of governments to address pressing global problems. A UN special envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa cited a "vacuum of political leadership" as one reason for growing celebrity



© Chris de Bode/Panos Pictures

Money cannot eradicate the root causes of human sickness and suffering

involvement in global health issues. Whether the problem involves poverty, health care, the environment, education, or social justice, the rich in particular have “a growing impatience with the inadequacy of governmental and international efforts to solve or ameliorate those problems,” says Joel Fleishman in his book *The Foundation: A Great American Secret—How Private Wealth Is Changing the World*. Eager to make a difference now, some wealthy philanthropists try to apply methods that gave them success in business.

Philanthropy's Power

The dawn of the 20th century saw an earlier so-called golden age of philanthropy. Such financial titans as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, Sr., decided to use their fortunes to help the needy. These benefactors saw that traditional charities, while feeding starving men or nursing sick children, did not address underlying causes. Sensing the need for a more strategic approach to giving, they created institutes and foundations that would foster social change and fund research aimed at eliminating problems at their roots. Since those early years, literally tens of thousands of such organizations have been established worldwide, well over 50 of them with assets exceeding one billion dollars.

There is no denying the good that has been accomplished as a result. Countless schools, libraries, hospitals, parks, and museums bear testimony to that. Likewise, programs to boost crop yields and food production have helped to provide more food in poverty-stricken lands. Funding for medical research has contributed to advances in health care and, in some cases, to the eradication of certain diseases, such as yellow fever.

Today with global problems being fought with greater urgency and with more resources than ever before, the opportunity for success seems bright to many people. A former U.S. president declared to a group of philanthropists in 2006: “It is impossible to overstate the impact private giving will have on public good.”

Many, though, are more cautious in their outlook. Laurie Garrett, an expert in the field of global health care, wrote: “One might think that with all this money on the table, the solutions to many global health problems would at least now be in sight. But one would be wrong.” Why? She cites costly bureaucracy, corruption, the lack of coordinated effort, and the trend among donors to restrict which health issue—AIDS, for example—their funds are to be used for.

Because efforts are uncoordinated and money is being “directed mostly at specific high-profile diseases—rather than at public health in general,” Garrett feels that “there is a grave danger that the current age of generosity could not only fall short of expectations but actually make things worse.”

Why Money Is Not Enough

The success of philanthropy, no matter what its aim, will always be limited. Why? For one thing, neither money nor a good secular education can eliminate such problems as greed, hatred, prejudice, nationalism, tribalism, and false religious beliefs. Although these things add to mankind’s woes, they are not the root causes of suffering. As the Bible points out, even more fundamental factors are involved.

One factor is human imperfection born of sin. (Romans 3:23; 5:12) Our imperfect state inclines us toward wrong thinking and wrong conduct. “The inclination of the heart of man is bad from his youth up,” says Genesis 8:21. By giving in to this wrong inclination, millions engage in sexual immorality and drug abuse. These activities, in turn, contribute to

- 1. Damascus. ■ Jesus. ■ He was struck blind.
- 2. Isaac.—Luke 3:4. 3. Jacob.—Luke 3:4. 4. Judah.
- Luke 3:33.

ANSWERS TO PAGE 31

the spread of various diseases, including AIDS.—Romans 1:26, 27.

A second root cause of human suffering is our inability to rule ourselves effectively. “It does not belong to man . . . even to direct his step,” says Jeremiah 10:23. The “vacuum of political leadership,” referred to earlier, is one reason why many philanthropic organizations bypass government. The Bible explains that humans were meant to look to the Creator as Ruler, not one another.—Isaiah 33:22.

What is more, the Bible promises that the Creator, Jehovah God, will address all the problems afflicting mankind. Indeed, he has already taken major steps to that end.

The Greatest Philanthropist

The word “philanthropy” comes from a Greek word that means “love of mankind.” No one has greater love for mankind than our Creator. Says John 3:16: “God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” Yes, Jehovah gave much more than mere money to free humans from the viselike grip of sin and death. He gave his precious Son as “a ransom in exchange for many.” (Matthew 20:28) The apostle Peter wrote of Jesus: “He himself bore our sins in his own body upon the stake, in order that we might be done with sins and live to righteousness. And ‘by his stripes you were healed.’”—1 Peter 2:24.

Jehovah has also addressed the problem of rulership. To that end, he has put in place a world government called God’s Kingdom. Ruling from the heavens, that Kingdom will remove all the wicked and will bring peace and harmony to Planet Earth.—Psalm 37:10, 11; Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14.

“God Loves a Cheerful Giver”

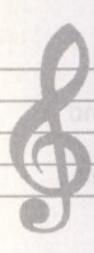
That statement, found in the Bible at 2 Corinthians 9:7, is a guiding principle for Jehovah’s Witnesses. When giving of their time, energy, and material possessions for the benefit of others, they strive to heed the exhortation: “Love, neither in word nor with the tongue, but in deed and truth.”—1 John 3:18.

When the need arises, such as when natural disasters strike, the Witnesses view it as a privilege to help those affected. For example, after Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma hit the southern regions of the United States, many thousands of Witness volunteers poured into the affected areas to assist with relief work and reconstruction. Under the supervision of local relief committees, the volunteers repaired and restored over 5,600 homes of Jehovah’s Witnesses and 90 Kingdom Halls—virtually all that were damaged.

Jehovah’s Witnesses do not tithe or in any other way solicit funds. Their work is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.—Matthew 6:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 8:12.



By fully addressing the root causes of human suffering, God will accomplish what is well beyond all humans, individually and collectively. Accordingly, rather than set up philanthropic organizations, Jehovah’s Witnesses, in imitation of Jesus Christ, prefer to devote their time and financial resources to announcing the “good news of [God’s] kingdom.”—Matthew 24:14; Luke 4:43.



Music

GOD'S GIFT TO THE HEART

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN SPAIN

MUSIC has power. It can calm us, stir us, and lift our spirits. It can express both our joys and our sorrows. Common to virtually all cultures—past and present—music is a language of both the mind and the heart. Yes, music truly is a gift from God.—Genesis 4:21.

From the time we were born, we likely heard some form of music. Perhaps our mother sang lullabies to help us fall asleep. During our teenage years, we may have developed a fondness for music that stirred our heart. Even as adults, many of us enjoy relaxing music while driving or at home at the end of a busy day.

The lyrics of a song may embody certain aspects of a country's culture or history. The ancient Israelites commemorated a number of special occasions with song. (Exodus 15:1-21; Judges 5:1-31) The prophet Moses prepared a song that included history and heartfelt admonition for the people. (Deuteronomy 32:1-43) No doubt such songs were good memory aids.

You Can Make Music!

Perhaps you are thinking, 'I'm not musically inclined.' Well, reflect for a moment on your voice. Thanks to the versatility of this built-in instrument, nearly everyone can make music to some extent, with or without other instruments. All you have to do is open your mouth and sing. And when you do, never mind if your voice will not win you any cheers or prizes. Practice, and you should improve.

"The voice is directly in contact with the seat from which our deepest emotions spring, and it is the most efficient instrument for expressing them," says the Spanish magazine *Psychologies*. "[Singing] is exciting," says soprano Ainhoa Arteita. "I would recommend that

anyone who feels like expressing himself in song do so freely and spontaneously."

Because music can have a powerful influence on the heart, we should be selective. Beautiful melodies, for instance, may sugarcoat ugly lyrics that make light of or even promote hatred, immorality, or violence—themes that no person of principle would find entertaining. (Ephesians 4:17-19; 5:3, 4) "More than all else that is to be guarded," says God's Word, "safeguard your heart, for out of it are the sources of life." (Proverbs 4:23) Yes, your choice of music is no minor matter.*

Good Music Can Be Good Medicine

"Among the reasons for the existence of music in virtually every culture [is] its ability to elicit and maintain human health and well-being," says the book *Principles and Practice of Stress Management*. When we are singing, notes another reference, our entire body resounds and vibrates. In turn, gentle vibrations help tissues relax and dilate, which may help to reduce pain.

Accordingly, some therapists encourage patients suffering from stress to listen to soothing music, which can also improve one's mood. Some hospitals even pipe music into intensive care units. Premature babies as well as surgery patients often respond well to pleasant music. According to *Principles and*

* Besides rejecting songs that exalt hatred, immorality, or violence, lovers of God and of their fellow man also refuse to listen to music that promotes idolatry, nationalism, or religious falsehoods.—Isaiah 2:4; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; 1 John 5:21.

Practice of Stress Management, studies suggest that listening to relaxing music “produces significant reductions in stress hormone levels during surgery.”

Music may also reduce anxiety in pregnant women by promoting relaxation during labor and delivery. Dentists sometimes play soothing music to create a more relaxed atmosphere for tense patients. But music and song can do much more. They can help us in a spiritual way.

'With Song I Shall Laud God'

Did you know that about a tenth of the Bible is written in the form of songs? The foremost examples are the Psalms, the Song of Solomon, and Lamentations. Understandably, the majority of the approximately three hundred references to song relate to the worship of God. “Jehovah is my strength . . . , and with my song I shall laud him,” wrote Israelite King David, a gifted musician and composer.—Psalm 28:7.

In fact, David organized 4,000 men who belonged to the tribe of Levi to serve as musicians and singers in Jerusalem. Of these, 288 were “trained in song to Jehovah, all experts.” (1 Chronicles 23:4, 5; 25:7) No doubt these singers practiced assiduously. Indeed, music was

so important to the worship of God that singers were relieved of other temple duties in order to concentrate on their profession.—1 Chronicles 9:33.

The night before Jesus died, he and his apostles sang praises to God, likely Psalms 113 to 118. By Jesus’ time, these psalms—termed “Hallel Psalms”—were sung during the Passover celebration. (Matthew 26:26-30) The designation “Hallel Psalms” refers to their repeated use of the exclamation “Hallelujah!” which means “Praise Jah!” “Jah” is a shortened, poetic form of *Jehovah*, the name of the Most High God.—Psalm 83:18.

Singing also became a part of Christian worship. The book *The History of Music* states: “Singing in public and private worship was a matter of course for the early Christians. For Jewish converts this was a continuance of synagogue customs . . . In addition to the Hebrew Psalms . . . , the new faith tended constantly to produce new hymns.” Today, too, Christian Witnesses of Jehovah delight in praising him in song, both privately and at their Christian meetings.

Because music enables us to express virtually every emotion and because it can have such a powerful influence on heart, mind, and body, we should accord this “perfect present . . . from above” the deepest respect. (James 1:

17) Yes, may we use it both generously and wisely.



A Splendid Gulf

BY AWAKE! WRITER IN MEXICO

BEWEEN mainland Mexico and the Baja California peninsula lies the turquoise-blue Gulf of California (indicated below), originally known as the Sea of Cortés. Much of this region of desert coastline and rugged islands has been declared a World Heritage site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. Why is the area so special?

Over 700 miles long and an average of 95 miles wide, the Gulf of California, as well as its surroundings, is both beautiful and rich with life. The gulf also has one of the biggest tidal surges on the planet, up to 30 feet at the northern end. Ample sunlight and an upwelling of nutrient-rich waters results in swarms of plankton and extraordinary biodiversity. These factors and the clear waters in much of the region moved ocean explorer Jacques-

Yves Cousteau to call the gulf the “aquarium of the world.”

Boasting more than 890 species of fish, some 90 of which are unique to the region, the gulf is a natural laboratory for the study of marine life. Sadly, though, many species are in decline, including an elusive porpoise called the vaquita, Spanish for “little cow.”

The smallest member of the porpoise family, the vaquita grows to nearly five feet in length. Its skin color varies from a subdued gray to tawny brown, and it has black patches around the eyes. Found only in the shallow, murky waters of the gulf near the Colorado River estuary, this shy little animal is rarely seen and little understood. In fact, it was not discovered until 1958 when three skulls were found on a Baja California beach.

Satellite view: NASA/The Visible Earth (<http://visibleearth.nasa.gov/>); reef: ©Dirschler Reinhard/age fotostock



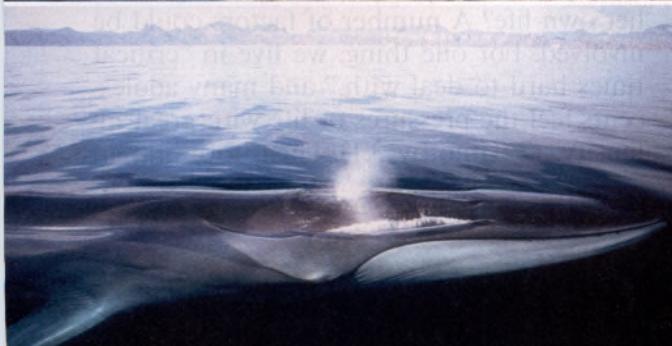
With a population of just hundreds, the vaquita is listed as critically endangered. Even so, dozens drown each year in nets set by local fishermen. To help ensure the survival of this rare mammal, Mexico has created a nature reserve that embraces part of the vaquita's habitat. The gulf's other residents and migratory visitors include whales, giant manta rays, leatherback sea turtles, sea lions, marlins, sailfish, and huge schools of tuna.

In the southern part of the gulf, deep down, scientists have found exotic life forms that very few people have seen. The reason is that these organisms live in the Guaymas trench, which is nearly 7,000 feet deep. The abyss boasts hydrothermal vents that support thriving communities of creatures that obtain energy, not from sunlight, but from hydrogen sulfide. One vent creature is the tube worm, a mouthless, gutless, crimson-

plumed worm that lives in groups, stands upright with one end attached to the ocean floor, and waves like a wand in both the cold ocean water and the warm vent effluent. Each tube worm sustains itself by means of a symbiotic relationship with bacteria living inside its trunk. The worm's crimson plume is really its gill.

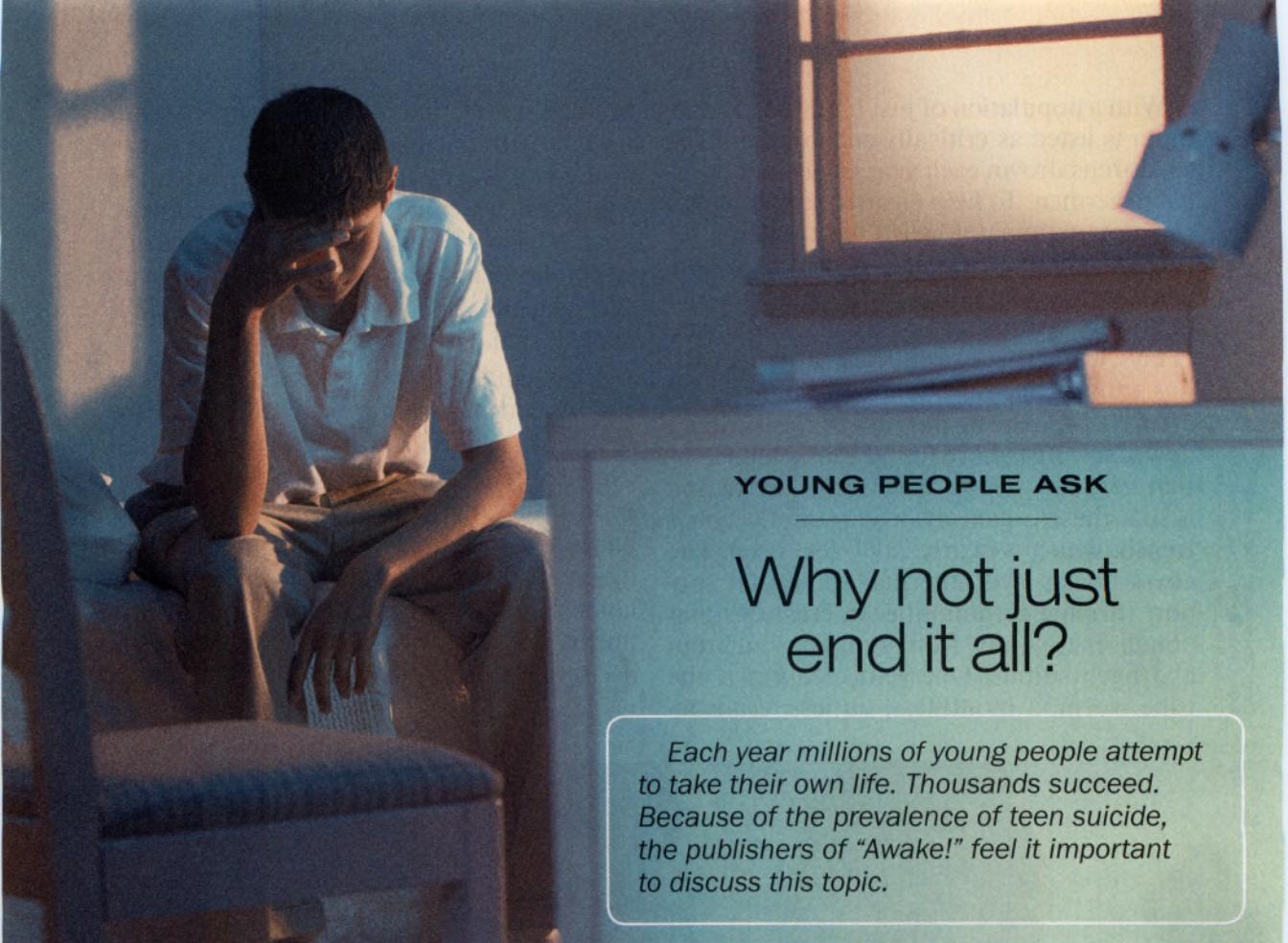
Although the biodiversity of the gulf is at risk, its long-term future is promising. How so? Because the Creator cares. In fact, he cares so much for all the earth that he will soon intervene to protect it from further harm and thereafter restore it according to his original purpose. (Genesis 1:26-28; Revelation 11:18) How beautiful the Gulf of California will then be is hard to imagine. Indeed, the word "splendid" may barely do it justice.

Beach: Mexico Tourism Board; whale:
© Mark Jones/age fotostock; tube worms:
© Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution



◀ Fin whale

Tube worms ➤



YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

Why not just end it all?

Each year millions of young people attempt to take their own life. Thousands succeed. Because of the prevalence of teen suicide, the publishers of "Awake!" feel it important to discuss this topic.

"**L**ET me die. I am better off dead than alive." Who said those words? Someone who didn't believe in God? Someone who had left God? Someone whom God left? None of the above. The speaker was the devout but distraught man Jonah.* (Jonah 4:3, *Today's English Version*) The Bible doesn't say that Jonah was about to take his life. Nevertheless, his desperate plea reveals a sobering fact—at times even a servant of God can be overwhelmed by anguish.—Psalm 34:19.

Some youths feel such intense despair that they see no reason to continue living.

* Similar expressions were made by Rebekah, Moses, Elijah, and Job.—Genesis 25:22; 27:46; Numbers 11:15; 1 Kings 19:4; Job 3:21; 14:13.

They may feel as did 16-year-old Laura,* who states: "For years, I have had recurring bouts of depression. I often think about killing myself." If you know someone who has expressed a desire to end it all—or if you have considered that idea yourself—what can you do? First, let's take a closer look at why such a thought might occur.

Behind the Despair

Why would anyone consider taking his or her own life? A number of factors could be involved. For one thing, we live in "critical times hard to deal with," and many adolescents feel the pressures of life with great intensity. (2 Timothy 3:1) Then, too, human

* Names in this article have been changed.

imperfection can cause some to harbor deeply negative thoughts about themselves and the world around them. (Romans 7:22-24) Sometimes this is because of mistreatment. In other cases, a medical issue may be involved. Significantly, it is estimated in one country that more than 90 percent of those who did take their life were suffering from some type of mental illness.*

Of course, no one is immune to adversity. Indeed, the Bible says that “all creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together.” (Romans 8:22) That includes young people. In fact, youths can be profoundly affected by negative events, such as the following:

- The death of a relative, friend, or pet
- Family conflict
- Academic failure
- The breakup of a romance
- Mistreatment (including physical or sexual abuse)

Granted, sooner or later virtually all youths encounter one or more of the situations listed above. Why are some better equipped to ride out the storm than others? Experts say that youths who want to give up the fight feel utterly helpless and hopeless. In other words, such youths believe that there is nothing they can do to improve their plight, and they see no light on the horizon. “Quite often,” Dr. Kathleen McCoy told *Awake!* “these youths do not really want to die. They just want the pain to stop.”

No Way Out?

You might know someone who ‘wants the pain to stop’—so much that he or she has expressed a desire to end it all. If that is the case, what can you do?

If a friend is distressed to the point of wanting to die, urge that person to get help. Then, regardless of how he or she feels about it, talk

* It is important to note, however, that most youths who have a mental illness do not commit suicide.

to a responsible adult. Don’t worry about ruining your friendship. By reporting the matter, you show that you’re a “true companion,” one who is “born for when there is distress.” (Proverbs 17:17) You may well save that person’s life!

But what if you yourself have had thoughts of ending it all? “Reach out,” urges Dr. McCoy. “Tell someone how you’re feeling—a parent, another relative, a friend, a teacher, a minister—someone who cares, who will take you seriously, listen to you, and help other important people in your life hear what you need to say.”

You have nothing to lose—and everything to gain—by talking out your problems. Consider a Bible example. At one point in his life, the righteous man Job said: “My soul certainly feels a loathing toward my life.” But then he added: “I will give vent to my concern about myself. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul!” (Job 10:1) Job was in despair, and he needed to talk about his pain. You may find some relief by confiding in a mature friend.

Christians who are distressed have an added resource—congregation elders. (James 5:14, 15) Of course, talking about your problems won’t make your problems disappear.

A future article in the “Young People Ask” series will deal with coping with the death of a sibling who has committed suicide

But it might help you to put them in perspective, and the support of a trusted confidant may be just what you need to work out some practical solutions.

Things Change

When undergoing distress, remember this: No matter how dire a situation may seem, *in time things will change*. The psalmist David,



The most important form of communication is prayer

who was no stranger to adversity, said in prayer: “I have grown weary with my sighing; all night long I make my couch swim; with my tears I make my own divan overflow.” (Psalm 6:6) Yet, in another psalm he wrote: “You have changed my mourning into dancing for me.”—Psalm 30:11.

David knew from experience that life’s problems ebb and flow. True, some may seem overwhelming—at least for now. But be patient. Things change, often for the better. In some cases, problems might be alleviated in ways that you couldn’t have predicted. In other cases, you may discover a way of coping that you hadn’t considered. The point is, distressing problems will *not* stay the same forever.—2 Corinthians 4:17.

The Value of Prayer

The most important form of communication you can have is prayer. You can pray as did David: “Search through me, O God, and know my heart. Examine me, and know my disquieting thoughts, and see whether there is in me any painful way, and lead me in the way of time indefinite.”—Psalm 139: 23, 24.

TO THINK ABOUT

- It has been said that suicide doesn’t end your problems; it merely passes them on to someone else. How is that true?
- To whom could you talk if you experience intense anxiety?

Prayer is not a mere crutch. It is real communication with your heavenly Father, who wants you to “pour out your heart” to him. (Psalm 62:8) Consider the following basic truths about God:

- He is aware of the circumstances that contribute to your distress.—Psalm 103:14.
- He knows you better than you know yourself.—1 John 3:20.
- “He cares for you.”—1 Peter 5:7.
- In his new world, God will “wipe out every tear” from your eyes.—Revelation 21:4.

When the Problem Is Health Related

As mentioned earlier, suicidal feelings are often rooted in some type of illness. If that’s the case with you, do not be ashamed to seek help. Jesus acknowledged that those who are ailing need a physician. (Matthew 9:12) The good news is that many conditions can be treated. And treatment may help you to feel much better!

The Bible promises that in God’s new world, “no resident will say: ‘I am sick.’” (Isaiah 33:24) In the meantime, do your best to cope with life’s challenges. Heidi, who lives in Germany, did just that. “At times, my depression was so intense that I just wanted to die,” she says, “but now I have my life together again, thanks to persevering in prayer and receiving treatment.” The same can be true for you!*

* For more information on coping with feelings of distress, see the series “Help for Depressed Teens,” in the September 8, 2001, issue of *Awake!* and the series “Understanding Mood Disorders,” in the January 8, 2004, issue.

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

A NOTE TO PARENTS

In some parts of the world, suicide among the young is disturbingly common. In the United States, for example, suicide is the third leading cause of death among young people between the ages of 15 and 25, and during the past two decades, the suicide rate among those between the ages of 10 and 14 has doubled. Those most at risk include youths who suffer from a mental-health disorder, those who have a family history of suicide, and those who have attempted suicide in the past. Warning signs that a youth may be thinking of taking his or her life include the following:

- **Withdrawal from family and friends**
- **A change in eating and sleeping patterns**
- **A loss of interest in activities that were once pleasurable**
- **A marked change in personality**
- **Drug or alcohol abuse**
- **Giving away prized possessions**
- **Talking about death or being preoccupied with subjects related to it**

Dr. Kathleen McCoy told *Awake!* that one of the greatest mistakes a parent can make is to ignore such warning signs. "No one wants to think that something could be wrong with their child," she says, "so some parents go into denial. They tell themselves, 'It's a phase' or 'It will pass' or 'She always was a bit dramatic.' That's dangerous. All threats should be taken seriously."

Do not be ashamed to get help for your son or daughter if he or she suffers from severe depression or another mental disorder. And if you suspect that your teen is thinking about ending it all, ask him about it. *The notion that talking about suicide will encourage the act is false.* Many youths are relieved when

parents bring up the subject. So if your teen admits to having thoughts of suicide, find out if a plan has been devised and if so, how detailed it is. The more detailed the plan, the more urgently you need to intervene.*

Do not assume that the depression will lift on its own. And if it does seem to lift, do not think that the problem is solved. Some experts say that this is the most dangerous point. Why? "A teenager who has been severely depressed may be too immobilized to act on suicidal feelings," says Dr. McCoy. "When the depression lifts, the teen may have enough energy to go through with it."

It is indeed tragic that as a result of their despair, some youths consider ending it all. By being attentive to the signs and responding to them, parents and other caring adults may "speak consolingly to the depressed souls" and prove to be like a place of refuge for young ones.—1 Thessalonians 5:14.

* Experts also warn that households with potentially lethal prescription medication or loaded and accessible firearms are particularly at risk. Regarding the latter, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention notes: "Although most gun owners reportedly keep a firearm in their home for 'protection' or 'self defense,' 83 percent of gun-related deaths in these homes are the result of a suicide, often by someone other than the gun owner."



A Majority Break the Law

"The presumed 'law-abiding majority' is nothing but a cosy myth," says London's *Times* newspaper. "Most Britons admit that they obey only the laws they want, when they want." Research for the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at King's College, London, reveals that the majority of offenders come from the "respectable" core of society. One third of those questioned pay cash to avoid taxation, one third keep the money if given too much change, and one fifth admit stealing at work. Researchers conclude that this behavior is "indicative of the moral state of society—perhaps much more so than violent and street crime."

Nuclear Weapons "in God's Hands"?

The Russian Orthodox Church has given its blessing to the work done by the men and women responsible for storing and maintaining Russia's nuclear arsenal. In a message read during a ceremony in Christ the Savior Cathedral, Moscow, and reported by the newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the Russian Orthodox patriarch, Alexis II, said: "I offer prayers to God . . . that the nuclear weapons created by you and entrusted to you will always remain in God's hands and will only be weapons of deterrence and retaliation."

■ "There are so many scientific proofs in favour of evolution which appears to be a reality we can see and which enriches our knowledge of life."—POPE BENEDICT XVI.

■ "Officials scrambled . . . to find the money to inspect and repair about 74,000 'structurally deficient' bridges in the U.S., after a 40-year-old highway bridge in Minneapolis [Minnesota] full of rush-hour traffic abruptly plunged 60 feet into the Mississippi River, killing [13 people]."—*THE WEEK*, U.S.A.

Honey in Ancient Israel

"Archaeological proof of the Biblical description of Israel . . . as 'the land of milk and honey' (or at least the latter) has been uncovered," says the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Institute of Archaeology. The find, at Tel Rehov in Israel's Beth Shean Valley, consists of three rows of cylindrical clay beehives stacked at least three tiers high. The colony dates "from the 10th to early 9th centuries B.C.E." and "would have contained some 100 beehives," says the report. Beekeepers estimate that the site may have produced "as much as half a ton of honey" each year.

Pets Come First

According to an Internet survey, "one in four Australians say their pet is the most valuable member of the family, even more important than their partner or parents," reports *The Sydney Morning Herald* online. One in three respondents to a survey conducted by an Australian financial services company spent "more time and money on their pet than on their own medical needs." Pet treatment options include magnetic resonance imaging, keyhole surgery, bone grafts, chemotherapy, organ transplants, hip replacement, and even brain surgery.





Where Did it Happen?

1. Saul was traveling to which city when this miracle occurred?

CLUE: Read Acts 9:1-9.

Circle your answer on the map.

■ Who spoke to Saul from heaven?

■ What happened to Saul when the bright light appeared?

FOR DISCUSSION: Why was Saul persecuting Christians? If you talk to others about Jehovah, why might some people treat you badly? How can the above account give you courage?

Who Is Part of Jesus' Family Tree?

Consider the clues. Look up the scriptures. Then write the correct names in the spaces provided.

2

CLUE: My mother laughed when she overheard that she would give birth to me.

Read Genesis 17:19; 18:10-14.



■ Answers on page 20

From This Issue

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

PAGE 5 In whom should we not put our trust?

Psalm 146:_____

PAGE 6 With what will the earth be filled?

Isaiah 11:_____

PAGE 11 What will the righteous possess?

Psalm 37:_____

PAGE 27 What did the distressed man Job give vent to? Job 10:_____



Children's Picture Search

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

3

CLUE: My brother sold his birthright to me for some lentil stew.

Read Genesis 25:29-34.

4

CLUE: My father described me as "a lion cub."

Read Genesis 49:9.

“Reap Blessings Through Jehovah’s Spirit-Guided King”



■ “Man has dominated man to his injury.” That statement, found in the Bible at Ecclesiastes 8:9, aptly describes the history of human rulership. Can we do better? Or is the pattern of the past the template for the future? Those questions will be discussed in the public discourse to be delivered at the **2008/2009 “Guided by God’s Spirit” District Conventions of Jehovah’s Witnesses.** The talk, entitled “Reap Blessings Through Jehovah’s Spirit-Guided King,” will focus on the one person who will rule with true justice and love—Jesus Christ, who gave his life in our behalf.—Matthew 20:28.

What makes Jesus different from all other rulers? God’s prophet Isaiah answers: “Upon him the spirit of Jehovah [God] must settle down, the spirit of wisdom and of under-

standing, the spirit of counsel and of mightiness, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Jehovah; and there will be enjoyment by him in the fear of Jehovah. And he will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes, nor reprove simply according to the thing heard by his ears. And with righteousness he must judge the lowly ones, and with uprightness he must give reproof in behalf of the meek ones of the earth.”—Isaiah 11:2-4.

Does that description appeal to you? If so, you are invited to attend the public address at one of the hundreds of district conventions that will be held around the world beginning this month. To find the location nearest you, contact Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area or write to the publishers of this magazine at one of the addresses listed on page 5. The March 1, 2008, issue of our companion magazine, *The Watchtower*, lists convention locations in the United States.