JANUARY 1, 2008

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

GOD'S KINGDOM

What Is It?
When Will It Come?

THE WATCHTOWER®
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

January 1, 2008 Printing Each Issue: 37,100,000 Vol. 129, No. 1

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

Publication of *The Watchtower* 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.*

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly 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, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, **Wallkill, NY 12589-3299.**

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TO OUR READERS

WE ARE pleased to inform you that beginning with this issue, there will be some changes in the format of *The Watchtower.* Before we explain what will be different, let us mention what will remain the same.

The name of this magazine, *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom,* is unchanged. Hence, *The Watchtower* will continue to honor Jehovah as the true God and to comfort its readers with the good news of his Kingdom. The articles on pages 5 to 9 of this issue discuss what that Kingdom is and when it will come. In addition, *The Watchtower* will continue to promote faith in Jesus Christ, advocate Bible truth, and explain the meaning of world events in the light of Bible prophecies, as it has been doing for many decades.

What, then, will be different? Let us explain some of the exciting new features that will appear in the edition dated the 1st of each month.*

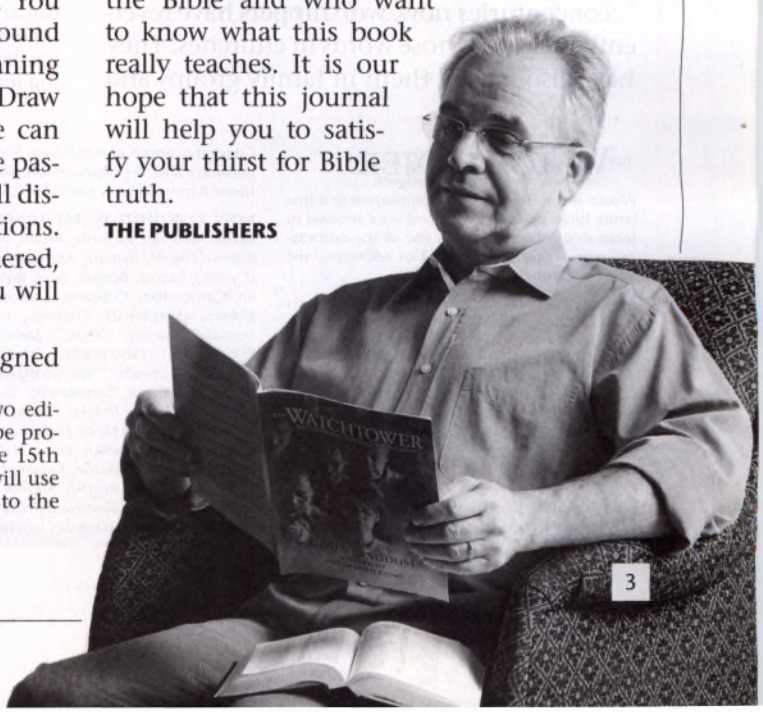
Several thought-provoking features will appear each month. The article "Did You Know?" will share interesting background information that sheds light on the meaning of selected Bible accounts. The article "Draw Close to God" will highlight what we can learn about Jehovah from specific Bible passages. The feature "Our Readers Ask" will discuss the answers to common Bible questions. For example, many people have wondered, "Is God's Kingdom in your heart?" You will find the answer on page 13.

A number of regular features are designed to benefit families. The feature "Keys to Family Happiness," which will appear four times a year, will present real-life scenarios of family problems and show how Bible principles can help to resolve the difficulties. "Teach Your Children," an article for parents to read with their children, will appear every other month. Alternating with that will be "For Our Young People," outlining a youth-oriented Bible study project.

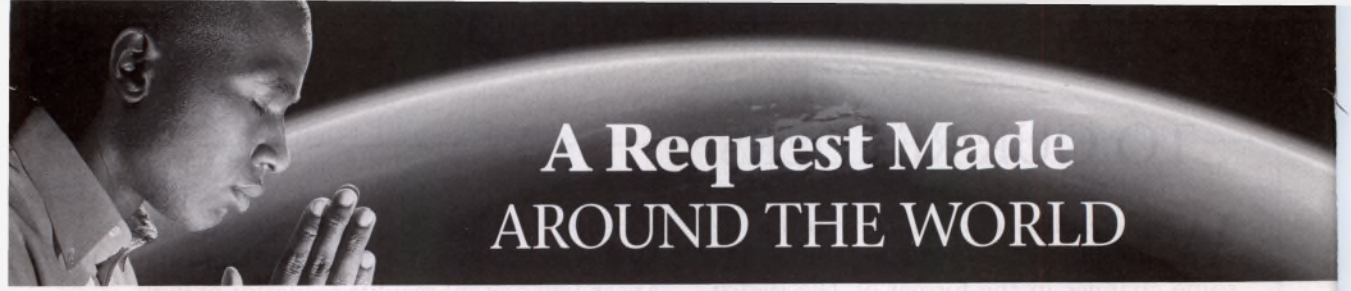
A few additional features will appear four times a year. "Imitate Their Faith" will encourage us to follow the example of a Bible character. For instance, on pages 18 to 21 of this issue, you will read a moving account about the prophet Elijah and learn how we can imitate his faith. The feature "A Letter From . . . " will present a first-person report from missionaries and others in various parts of the world. "What We Learn From Jesus" will feature basic Bible teachings in a simple format.

We are confident that *The Watchtower* will continue to appeal to readers who respect the Bible and who want to know what this book really teaches. It is our hope that this journal will help you to satisfy your thirst for Bible truth.

THE PUBLISHERS



* *The Watchtower* will now be produced in two editions. The issue dated the 1st of the month will be produced for the general public. The issue dated the 15th will be a study edition that Jehovah's Witnesses will use at their congregation meetings, which are open to the public.



A Request Made AROUND THE WORLD

IMAGINE hundreds of millions, even billions, of people, all asking for the same thing. They are asking the highest authority in the universe to fulfill a specific request. Yet, very few of them know just what it is that they are asking for. Could such a thing really happen? In fact, it happens every day. What are all these people asking for? The coming of the Kingdom of God!

By one estimate, there are some 37,000 religions that call themselves Christian, claiming Jesus Christ as their Leader. There are well over two billion members of those faiths. Vast numbers of them pray what is often called the Our Father or the Lord's Prayer. Do you know this prayer? As Jesus taught it to his followers, it begins this way: "Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified. Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth."—Matthew 6:9, 10.

For centuries now, worshippers have reverently repeated those words in churches. They have also recited them in family groups and as individuals, in good times and in bad. They have spoken the words sincerely, even fervently. Many others have learned them by rote and utter them with little or no thought to the meaning. These members of Christendom are not the only ones who have hoped and prayed for the coming of God's Kingdom.

A Request That Crosses Religious Borders

A well-known prayer of the Jewish faith is the mourner's Kaddish. Although it has little to do with death or grief, it is commonly uttered in times of bereavement. The prayer asks: "May he [God] establish his Kingdom in your lifetime . . . even speedily."* Another

* Like the model prayer that Jesus gave, the mourner's Kaddish also asks that God's name be sanctified. While there is some debate on the question of whether the Kaddish dates back to the time of Christ or even earlier, we should not be surprised by any similarities. Jesus' prayer was not intended to be innovative or revolutionary. Each request was solidly based on the Scriptures then available to all Jews. Jesus was encouraging his fellow Jews to pray for things they should have been praying for all along.

THE WATCHTOWER
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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.

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NOW PUBLISHED IN 167 LANGUAGES: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara, Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,[#⊙] Danish,[+⊙] Dutch,[+] Efik, English[+⊙] (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,[⊙] French,[#+⊙] Ga, Georgian, German,[#+⊙] Gilbertese, Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani, Gujarati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,[#+] Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,[#+⊙] Japanese,[#+] Kannada, Kaonde, Kazakh, Kikongo, Kiluba, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,[#+⊙] Kosraean, Kwanyama/Ndonga, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian Creole, Maya, Mizo, Moore, Myanmar, Nepali, Niuean, Norwegian,[+] Nyaneka, Oromo, Ossetian, Otetela, Palauan, Pangasinan, Papiamento (Curaçao), Persian, Polish,[#+] Ponapean, Portuguese,[+⊙] Punjabi, Quechua (Ayacucho), Quechua (Bolivia), Quechua (Cuzco), Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,[#+⊙] Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Seychelles Creole, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,[#+⊙] Sranantongo, Swahili, Swedish,[+⊙] Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Tatar, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tiv, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Tumbuka, Turkish, Tuvaluan, Twi, Tzotzil, Ukrainian, Umbundu, Urdu, Uruund, Uzbek, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yapese, Yoruba, Zande, Zapotec (Isthmus), Zulu

[#] *Audiocassettes also available.*
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ancient synagogue prayer speaks of the hope for the Kingdom of the Messiah from the house of David.

Others of non-Christian faiths have found the idea of God's Kingdom appealing. According to *The Times of India,* a prominent 19th-century Indian religious leader, who was interested in bridging the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian faiths, said: "The true kingdom of God will not be realised unless the east and west are joined together." And the principal of an Islamic college in Strathfield, Australia, recently wrote to a newspaper: "Like all Muslims, I believe [that] Jesus will return and establish the true Kingdom of God."

Without a doubt, those now hoping and asking for God's Kingdom number into the billions. But consider an interesting phenomenon.

You likely know that we Jehovah's Witnesses, who publish this magazine, go from house to house in your community to engage people in discussions about the Bible. As of this writing, we are doing this work all over the world, in 236 lands and in well over 400 languages. The main theme of our preaching is the Kingdom of God. In fact, note that the full title of this magazine is *The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom.* We often ask people whether they pray for that Kingdom. A great many answer yes. However, when asked what that Kingdom is, most people answer, in effect, "I don't know," or their answer is vague and uncertain.

Why do so many ask for something they cannot define? Is it because the Kingdom of God is a complex, vague concept? No. The Kingdom is thoroughly and clearly explained in the Bible. What is more, the Bible's message about the Kingdom can give you real hope in these dark times. In the following article, we will see how the Bible explains that hope. Then we will see when Jesus' prayer for the Kingdom to come will be answered.

WHAT IS GOD'S KINGDOM?

WHAT was the theme of Jesus' preaching? According to Jesus himself, it was God's Kingdom. (Luke 4:43) When people listened to him speak, they surely heard many references to that Kingdom. Were they puzzled or mystified? Did they ask him what this Kingdom was? No. The Gospels record no such questions. So was God's Kingdom a familiar concept to those people?

The fact is, the ancient Scriptures that the Jews revered as holy described that Kingdom, revealing in vivid and concrete terms what it is and what it will accomplish. Today, we can learn even more about the Kingdom in much the same way—by going to the Bible. Let us consider seven truths that the Bible teaches us about the Kingdom. The first three were readily available to the Jews of Jesus' day and earlier. The next three were revealed by Christ or by his apostles during the first century. The last one has become apparent in our own time.

1. God's Kingdom is a real government, one that will last forever. The Bible's first prophecy revealed that God would send a rescuer to faithful mankind. Called the "seed," this One would undo the terrible ills that were set in motion by the rebellion of Adam, Eve, and Satan. (Genesis 3:15) Much later, faithful King David was told something

thrilling about this "seed," or Messiah. He would rule over a Kingdom. This government would differ from all others. It would endure forever.—2 Samuel 7:12-14.

2. God's Kingdom will put an end to all human governments. The prophet Daniel was given a vision in which he saw a succession of world powers, stretching down through history into our own time. Notice the thrilling climax to that vision: "In the days of those [final human] kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite." So all the kingdoms, or governments, of this world—with their wars, oppression, and corruption—will be destroyed forever. As Daniel's prophecy shows, God's Kingdom will soon rule over the whole earth. (Daniel 2:44, 45) A concrete reality, it will remain the only government in existence.*

3. God's Kingdom will end wars, sickness, famine, even death itself. Thrilling Bible prophecies reveal what God's Kingdom will do here on the earth. That government will accomplish what no human agencies have ever done or could ever do. Imagine—all weapons of war destroyed forever! "He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth." (Psalm 46:9) No more doctors, hospitals, or disease of any kind. "No resident will say: 'I am sick.' " (Isaiah 33:24) No more famines, food shortages, malnutrition, or starvation. "There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth." (Psalm 72:16) No more funerals, wakes, cemeteries, morgues, or the misery that accompanies them. Death, our relentless enemy, will be vanquished at last. God "will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces."—Isaiah 25:8.

4. God's Kingdom has a Ruler chosen by God. The Messiah is not self-appointed, nor is he selected by imperfect humans. He is personally chosen by Jehovah God. The very titles Messiah and Christ suggest as much. Both words mean "Anointed One." So this King is anointed, or designated for his special office, by Jehovah. God says of him: "Look! My servant, on whom I keep fast hold! My chosen one, whom my soul has approved! I have put my spirit in him. Justice to the nations is what he will bring forth." (Isaiah 42:1; Matthew 12:17, 18) Who knows better than our Creator what kind of Ruler we need?

5. The Ruler of God's Kingdom has demonstrated his worthiness before all mankind. Jesus of Nazareth proved to be the foretold Messiah. He was born in the family line God had specified. (Genesis 22:18; 1 Chronicles 17:11; Matthew 1:1) When on earth, he fulfilled scores of prophecies about the Messiah that were recorded centuries earlier. He was also identified from heaven as the Messiah. How so? Well, God spoke from heaven, identifying him as His own Son; angels pointed Jesus out as the foretold Messiah; and Jesus performed miracles—often in front of hundreds or even thousands of eyewitnesses—that clearly drew on the power of God.* Jesus showed over and over again what kind of Ruler he would be. He had not only the power to help people but the desire as well. (Matthew 8:1-3) He was unselfish, compassionate, courageous, and humble. The record of his life on earth is there in the Bible for all to read.

6. God's Kingdom has 144,000 corulers with the Christ. Jesus said that others, in-

* Such prophecies as this one show that God's Kingdom is not something within our heart, as many have been taught. See the article "Our Readers Ask," on page 13.

* See, for example, Matthew 3:17; Luke 2:10-14; John 6:5-14.

cluding his apostles, would rule in heaven with him. He called this group the "little flock." (Luke 12:32) Later, the apostle John was told that this little flock would total 144,000 in number. They would have a thrilling work assignment in heaven, ruling as kings and serving as priests along with Christ. —Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1, 3.

7. God's Kingdom, now ruling in heaven, is poised to establish its rule over the whole earth. This last truth is one of the most thrilling we can learn. The Bible gives ample evidence that Jesus has been granted his authority as King in heaven. He is ruling there now, in our own time, and very soon he will extend his rule to all the earth and fulfill the magnificent prophecies we have already mentioned. But how can we be sure that God's Kingdom is ruling now? And when will it begin to rule over the earth?

When Will GOD'S KINGDOM COME?

"LORD, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?" (Acts 1:6) The apostles were eager to know when Jesus would establish his Kingdom. Today, some 2,000 years later, people are still eager to know: When will God's Kingdom come?

Since Jesus made the Kingdom the theme of his preaching, you might expect that he discussed this question. And indeed he did! He spoke extensively about a marked period of time that he called his "presence." (Matthew 24:37) That presence is closely tied to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom. What is this presence? Let us consider four truths the Bible reveals about the presence of Christ.

1. Christ's presence would begin a long time after his death. Jesus gave an illustration in which he likened himself to a man who "traveled to a distant land to secure kingly power," or to "secure a kingdom." (Luke 19:12; footnote) How was that prophetic illustration fulfilled? Well, Jesus died and was resurrected; then he traveled to the "distant land," that is, heaven. As Jesus foretold in a similar illustration, his return in kingly power would come only "after a long time."—Matthew 25:19.

Some years after Jesus ascended to heaven, the apostle Paul wrote: "This man [Jesus] offered one sacrifice for sins perpetually and sat down at the right hand of God, from then on awaiting until his enemies should be

placed as a stool for his feet." (Hebrews 10:12, 13) So a lengthy period of waiting followed Jesus' arrival in heaven. The wait finally ended when Jehovah God made his Son the King of the long-promised Messianic Kingdom. That was when Christ's presence began. Would humans on earth see this momentous event?

2. The presence is invisible to human eyes. Remember, Jesus discussed *the sign of his presence.* (Matthew 24:3) If his presence were visible to human eyes, would a sign be needed? To illustrate: Imagine that you are traveling to see the ocean. You may see road signs directing you along the way, but once you are at the shore, standing at the water's edge with the vast expanse of water stretching out to the horizon, would you expect to see a sign with a big arrow pointing ahead, emblazoned with the word "Ocean"? Of course not! Why have a sign to point out what you can easily identify with your eyes?

Jesus described the sign of his presence, not to point out something that humans could see with their eyes, but to help them discern something that would occur in heaven. Thus, Jesus said: "The kingdom of God is not coming with striking observableness." (Luke 17:20) How, then, would the sign show those on earth that Christ's presence had begun?

3. Jesus' presence would be marked by a time of profound troubles here on earth. Jesus said that his presence as King in heaven would be marked on earth by wars, famines, earthquakes, pestilences, and lawlessness. (Matthew 24:7-12; Luke 21:10, 11) What would cause all this misery? The Bible explains that Satan, "the ruler of this world," is full of rage because he knows that his time is very short now that Christ's presence as King has begun. (John 12:31; Revelation 12:9, 12) Such visible evidence of Satan's rage and of

The bad news we hear every day proves that good things are coming soon

Antiaircraft gun: U.S. Army photo

Christ's presence has been abundant in our time. Especially since 1914, a year that historians acknowledge was a turning point, has this evidence appeared on an unprecedented and global scale.

All of that may sound like bad news, but it is not. It means that the Messianic Kingdom is ruling now in heaven. Very soon, that government will exercise its rule right here over all the earth. How, though, would people know about that Kingdom in order to accept its rule and become its subjects?

4. Jesus' presence is marked by a global preaching work. Jesus said that his presence would be like "the days of Noah."*

* Jesus' statement helps to correct the wrong idea conveyed in the way some Bible versions mistranslate the word "presence." Some translations render it "coming," "advent," or "return," all of which imply a momentary event in time. Notice, though, that Jesus did not liken his presence to the Flood of Noah's day, an *event* in time, but to "the days of Noah," a climactic *period* of time. Like that ancient era, Christ's presence would be a period of time during which people would be too caught up in the day-to-day affairs of life to take note of a warning being given.

(Matthew 24:37-39) Noah was more than an ark builder; he was also "a preacher of righteousness." (2 Peter 2:5) Noah warned people that a judgment from God was on its way. Jesus said that his followers on earth would be doing something similar during his presence. He prophesied: "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.

As we saw in the preceding article, God's Kingdom will destroy all the governments of this world. The preaching work alerts people that this heavenly government is about to act, giving all an opportunity to escape the coming destruction and become subjects of that Kingdom. The key question, then, is, How will you respond?

Will God's Kingdom Mean Good News for You?

The message that Jesus preached was one of incomparable hope. After the rebellion in Eden thousands of years ago, Jehovah God purposed to form a government that would set matters right, returning faithful humans to the condition that God had in mind for them from the start—life eternal in a paradise here on earth. What could be more thrilling than the knowledge that this long-promised government is ruling right now in heaven? It is not some remote, abstract concept but a living reality!

Now, God's appointed King is ruling in the midst of his enemies. (Psalm 110:2) In this corrupt world alienated from God, the Messiah is fulfilling his Father's desire to search out all who want to come to know God as he really is and to worship him "with spirit and truth." (John 4:24) The hope of living forever under the rule of God's Kingdom is available to people of all races, ages, and social backgrounds. (Acts 10:34, 35) We urge you to take hold of the marvelous opportunity before you. Learn about God's Kingdom now, so that you can enjoy living under its righteous rule forever!—1 John 2:17.

Build Up Your Family With "Delightful Words"

WITH each passing minute, David grew more frustrated. Waiting in the car for his wife, he kept checking his watch. By the time Diane, his wife, finally came out of the house, he could not keep his mounting anger from erupting.

"How could you keep me waiting like this?" he shouted. "You're always late! Why can't you just once get yourself ready on time?"

Diane was devastated. Bursting into tears, she ran back into the house. In that instant, David realized his blunder. His outburst had only made things worse. What could he do now? He turned off the engine, sighed deeply, and slowly followed her inside.

This illustration presents a realistic scenario, does it not? Have you ever wanted to take back your words? When we speak without thinking, we often say things we later regret. For good reason, the Bible says: "The heart of the righteous one meditates so as to answer." —Proverbs 15:28.

It can be difficult, though, to think clearly before speaking, particularly when we feel angry, afraid, or hurt. Especially with close family members, any attempt to communicate our feelings can easily deteriorate into blaming or criticizing the other person. That, in turn, may cause hurt feelings or provoke an argument.

What might we do to get more positive results? How can we keep our emotions from getting the better of us? Some helpful advice can be gleaned from the Bible writer Solomon.

Consider What to Say and How to Say It

As Solomon, the writer of the Bible book of Ecclesiastes, penned his sobering exposé on the futility of life, he obviously had strong feelings about his subject. "I hated life," he said. At one point, he called it the "vanity of vanities." (Ecclesiastes 2:17; 12:8, footnote) Yet, Ecclesiastes is not a list of Solomon's frustrations. He did not think it appropriate merely to tell it as it is. In the conclusion of the book, Solomon reveals that he "sought to find the *delightful words* and the writing of *correct* words of truth." (Ecclesiastes 12:10) Another translation says that he "tried to explain these things in the best and most accurate way."—*Contemporary English Version.*

Solomon evidently realized that he had to keep his feelings in check. In effect, he kept asking himself: 'Is what I am planning to say

really true or accurate? If I use these words, will others find them delightful, acceptable?' By searching for "delightful words" of truth, he was able to keep his own feelings from clouding his thoughts.

The result is not only a literary masterpiece but also a wellspring of divinely inspired wisdom on the meaning of life. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) Could Solomon's approach to discussing an emotionally charged topic help us to communicate better with our loved ones? Consider an example.

Learn to Control Your Feelings

For the sake of illustration, let us say that a boy comes home from school carrying his report card and looking dejected. His father looks down the list of subjects and notices a failing grade in one of the classes. The father immediately gets angry, thinking back to the many times the boy put off doing his homework. The father feels like blurting out: "You're just lazy! If you keep this up, you won't amount to anything!"

Before letting negative feelings control his response, the father does well to ask himself, 'Is what I'm thinking really true or accurate?' This question can help him to separate his feelings from the facts. (Proverbs 17:27) Is the son really going to be a failure because he is having trouble in one class? Is he characteristically lazy, or is he merely putting off his homework because he is struggling with some of the concepts? The Bible repeatedly emphasizes the value of taking a reasonable, realistic view of matters. (Titus 3:2; James 3: 17) To build a child up, a parent needs to speak "correct words of truth."

Search for the Right Words

Once the father decides what to say, he might ask himself, 'How could I say it in words that my son would find delightful, acceptable?' Granted, finding the right words is not easy. But parents need to remember that adolescents often have a tendency toward all-or-nothing thinking. They may take one failure or weakness and exaggerate its importance, so that it begins to define how they see themselves. If a parent overreacts, he may reinforce negative thinking in his child. Colossians 3:21 states: "Do not be exasperating your children, so that they do not become downhearted."

Words like "always" and "never" usually generalize or exaggerate the facts. When a parent says, "You'll *never* amount to anything," what room is left for the child to keep his dignity? If many situations in life are characterized in such judgmental language, a child may begin to see himself as a total failure. That, of course, is not only discouraging but also untrue.

It is usually far better to accentuate the positive aspects of any situation. The father in our illustration might say something like this: "Son, I can see that you are upset because of your failing grade. I know, though, that you generally work hard at your assignments. So let's talk about this class and find a way to overcome any problems you might be facing." To determine how best to help his son, the father might also ask some specific questions to see if there are any underlying problems.

Such a kind and well-thought-out approach is likely to be far more effective than an emotional outburst. "Pleasant sayings," the Bible assures us, are "sweet to the soul and a healing to the bones." (Proverbs 16:24) Children—really, all members of the family—thrive in a peaceful, loving environment.

"Out of the Heart's Abundance"

Think back to the husband mentioned in the scenario at the outset. Would it not have been better if he had taken the time to search for "delightful words" of truth rather than just to blurt out his frustration to his wife? A

How can you avoid saying something you will later regret?

husband in such a situation would do well to ask himself: 'Even if my wife needs to work on being more punctual, is it really true that she is *always* late? Is this the best time to bring this matter up? Will angry, critical words ever motivate her to want to improve?' Stopping to ask ourselves such questions can help us to avoid unintentionally hurting those we love.—Proverbs 29:11.

What, though, if our family discussions repeatedly end up in an argument? We might need to look below the surface, considering the feelings behind our choice of words. What we say, especially when we are distressed or under pressure, may reveal a lot about what we are really like inside. Jesus said: "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34) In other words, our speech often reflects our innermost thoughts, desires, and attitudes.

Is our outlook on life realistic, optimistic, and hopeful? Then the tone and substance of our conversations will likely reflect that. Do we tend to be rigid, pessimistic, or judgmental? If so, we might discourage others either by what we say or by how we say it. We may not be aware of how negative our thinking or speech has become. We might even believe that our way of looking at things is correct. But we must beware of self-deception.—Proverbs 14:12.

Thankfully, we have God's Word. The Bible can help us to examine our thoughts and evaluate which ones are correct and which ones need to be adjusted. (Hebrews 4:12; James 1:25) No matter what our genetic predisposition may be or what our upbringing was like, all of us can choose to change how we think and act if we really want to.—Ephesians 4:23, 24.

In addition to using the Bible, we can do something else to evaluate our communication style. Simply ask others. For example, ask your spouse or child to tell you honestly how you are doing in this regard. Talk to a mature friend who knows you well. It will take humility to accept what they have to say and to make any adjustments that may be needed.

Think Before You Speak!

In the final analysis, if we really want to avoid hurting others with our speech, we have to do what Proverbs 16:23 says: "Intelligent [that is, wise] people think before they speak; what they say is then more persuasive." (*Today's English Version*) It may not always be easy to control our feelings. Yet, if we seek to understand others rather than accuse or put them down, then finding the right words to express ourselves may come more easily.

Of course, none of us are perfect. (James 3:2) At times, we all speak thoughtlessly. (Proverbs 12:18) But with the help of God's Word, we can learn to think before we speak and to put the feelings and interests of others ahead of our own. (Philippians 2:4) Let us be determined to search for "delightful words" of truth, especially when speaking to family members. Then our speech will not hurt and tear down but heal and build up those whom we love.—Romans 14:19.

Our Readers Ask

IS GOD'S KINGDOM IN YOUR HEART?

Many today believe that the answer to the above question is yes. For example, *The Catholic Encyclopedia* asserts: "The kingdom of God means . . . the ruling of God in our hearts." The clergy commonly teach this idea. Does the Bible really teach that God's Kingdom resides in human hearts?

Some think that Jesus himself first promoted the idea that God's Kingdom lies within the hearts of humans. Jesus did say: "Look! The kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:21) Some translations here say: "The kingdom of God is within you" or even "inside you." Are those accurate renderings of Jesus' expression? Did he really mean that God's Kingdom is found in human hearts?

First, consider what the human heart is. When referred to in the Bible, the figurative heart means the inner person, the source of a person's thoughts, attitudes, and feelings. The idea that something as sublime as the Kingdom of God resides within the human heart—in the way it changes and ennobles people, for example—may sound appealing, but does it stand to reason?

The Bible tells us: "The heart is more treacherous than anything else and is desperate." (Jeremiah 17:9) Jesus himself said: "From inside, out of the heart of men, injurious reasonings issue forth: fornications, thieveries, murders, adulteries, covetings, acts of wickedness." (Mark 7:20-22) Consider: Cannot much of the misery that we see in the world today be traced back to the sinful hearts of humans? So how could God's perfect Kingdom come from such a source? Really, the human heart could no more produce God's Kingdom than a thistle could produce figs.—Matthew 7:16.

Second, consider the audience Jesus was addressing when he spoke the words found at Luke 17:21. The preceding verse reads: "On being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them." (Luke 17:20) The Pharisees were Jesus' enemies. Jesus stated that those hypocrites were not going to enter God's Kingdom. (Matthew 23:13) Now if the Pharisees were not to enter God's Kingdom, could the Kingdom be in their hearts? Impossible! What, then, did Jesus mean?

In rendering these words of Jesus, a number of careful Bible translations use wording similar to that found in the *New World Translation*. Some say that the Kingdom is "among you" or "in the midst of you." How was God's Kingdom among those people at that time, including the Pharisees? Well, Jesus was the one whom Jehovah God appointed to be the King of the Kingdom. As the King-Designate, Jesus was right in the midst of those people. He taught about the Kingdom of God and even performed miracles, giving them a preview of what that Kingdom would accomplish. In a very real sense, then, the Kingdom was in their midst.

Clearly, there is no Scriptural support for the notion that the Kingdom of God is in the hearts of humans. Rather, it is an actual government, one that will effect dramatic changes on the earth, just as the prophets foretold. —Isaiah 9:6, 7; Daniel 2:44.

IS EVOLUTION COMPATIBLE WITH THE BIBLE?

IS IT possible that God used evolution to make men from beasts? Did God direct bacteria to develop into fish and then to continue developing through reptiles and mammals, so that finally a race of apes became humans? Some scientists and religious leaders claim to believe both the theory of evolution and the Bible. They say that the Bible book of Genesis is a parable. Perhaps you have wondered, 'Is the theory that man evolved from animals compatible with the Bible?'

Understanding our origin is vital to understanding who we are, where we are going, and how we should live. Only with knowledge of man's origin can we understand God's permission of suffering and his purpose for man's future. We cannot enjoy a fine standing with God if we are not sure that he is our Creator. So let us examine what the Bible says about man's origin, his present condition, and his future. Then we will see if the theory of evolution is compatible with the Bible.

When There Was One Man

Evolutionists generally claim that a population of animals gradually developed into a population of humans, denying that there was once only one man. However, the Bible presents a very different picture. It says that we originate from one man, Adam. The Bible account presents Adam as a historical person. It gives us the names of his wife and some of his children. It tells us in detail what he did, what he said, when he lived, and when he died. Jesus did not consider that account as just a story for uneducated people. When addressing well-educated religious leaders, he said: "Did you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" (Matthew 19:3-5) Jesus then quoted the words about Adam and Eve recorded at Genesis 2:24.

Luke, a Bible writer and a careful historian, presented Adam as a person who was as real as Jesus. Luke traced Jesus' genealogy back to the first man. (Luke 3:23-38) Also, when the apostle Paul spoke before an audience that included philosophers who were educated in the famous Greek schools, he told them: "The God that made the world and all the things in it . . . made out of *one man* every nation of men, to dwell upon the entire surface of the earth." (Acts 17:24-26) Clearly, the Bible teaches that we descended *from* "one man." Is what the Bible says about man's original condition compatible with evolution?

The apostle Paul told educated Greeks: "God . . . made out of *one man* every nation of men"

Man's Slide From Perfection

According to the Bible, Jehovah made the first man perfect. It is impossible for God to make things any other way. The creation ac-

count says: "God proceeded to create the man in his image . . . After that God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good." (Genesis 1:27, 31) What is a perfect man like?

A perfect man has free will and is able to imitate God's qualities completely. The Bible says: "The true God made mankind upright, but they themselves have sought out many plans." (Ecclesiastes 7:29) Adam chose to rebel against God. By his rebellion, Adam lost perfection for himself and his offspring. Man's fall from perfection explains why we often disappoint ourselves, even though we want to do what is good. The apostle Paul wrote: "What I wish, this I do not practice; but what I hate is what I do."—Romans 7:15.

A perfect man would live forever in perfect health, according to the Bible. It is evident from what God said to Adam that if the first man had not disobeyed God, he would never have died. (Genesis 2:16, 17; 3:22, 23) Jehovah would not have declared the creation of man to be "very good" if the man had a tendency to get sick or to rebel. The fall from perfection explains why the human body, though marvelously designed, is susceptible to deformities and disease. Evolution is therefore incompatible with the Bible. Evolution presents modern man as an improving animal. The Bible presents modern man as the degenerating descendant of a perfect man.

Evolution presents modern man as an improving animal. The Bible presents modern man as the degenerating descendant of a perfect man

The idea that God directed evolution in order to produce man is also incompatible with what the Bible says about God's personality. If God guided the process of evolution, it would mean that he guided mankind into its present diseased and distressed state. However, the Bible says of God: "The Rock, perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he. They have acted ruinously on their own part; they are not his children, the defect is their own." (Deuteronomy 32:4, 5) Therefore, mankind's present suffering is not the result of God-directed evolution. It is the result of one man's losing perfection for himself and his offspring by rebelling against God. Now that we have considered Adam, we can turn to Jesus. Is evolution compatible with what the Bible says about Jesus?

Can You Believe in Both Evolution and Christianity?

"Christ died for our sins." As you probably know, that is one of the basic teachings of Christianity. (1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 3:18) To see why evolution is incompatible with that statement, we first need to

understand why the Bible calls us sinners and what sin does to us.

We are all sinners in the sense that we cannot perfectly imitate God's glorious qualities, such as his love and justice. Therefore, the Bible says: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) The Bible teaches that sin is the cause of death. "The sting producing death is sin," says 1 Corinthians 15:56. Our inheritance of sin is also the underlying cause of sickness. Jesus indicated that there is a link between sickness and our sinful condition. He said to a paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," and the man was healed.—Matthew 9:2-7.

How does Jesus' death help us? The Bible contrasts Adam with Jesus Christ and says: "Just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive." (1 Corinthians 15:22) By laying down his life, Jesus paid the price for the sin that we inherited from Adam. Thus, all who exercise faith in Jesus and obey him will receive what Adam forfeited—the prospect of everlasting life.—John 3:16; Romans 6:23.

Do you see, then, that evolution is incompatible with Christianity? If we doubt that "in Adam all are dying," how can we hope that "in the Christ all will be made alive"?

Why Evolution Attracts People

The Bible reveals how such teachings as evolution become popular. It says: "There will be a period of time when they will not put up with the healthful teaching, but, in accord with their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves to have their ears tickled; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, whereas they will be turned aside to false stories." (2 Timothy 4: 3, 4) Although evolution is usually presented in scientific language, it is really a religious doctrine. It teaches a philosophy of life and an attitude toward God. Its beliefs are subtly attractive to mankind's selfish, independent tendencies. Many who believe in evolution say that they also believe in God. However, they feel free to think of God as one who has not created things, does not intervene in man's affairs, and will not judge people. It is a creed that tickles people's ears.

Teachers of evolution are often motivated, not by the facts, but by "their own desires"—perhaps a desire to be accepted by a scientific community in which evolution is orthodox doctrine. Professor of biochemistry Michael Behe, who has spent most of his life studying the complex internal functions of living cells, explained that those who teach the evolution of cell structure have no basis for their claims. Could evolution occur at this tiny, molecular level? "Molecular evolution is not based on scientific authority," he wrote. "There is no publication in the scientific literature—in prestigious journals, specialty journals, or books—that describes how molecular evolution of any real, complex, biochemical system either did occur or even might have occurred. . . . The assertion of Darwinian molecular evolution is merely bluster."

"Molecular evolution is not based on scientific authority"

If evolutionists lack explanations, why do they preach their ideas so loudly? Behe explains: "Many people, including many important and well-respected scientists, just don't *want* there to be anything beyond nature."

The doctrine of evolution attracts many clergymen who want to appear wise. They are similar to those described in the apostle Paul's letter to Christians in Rome. Paul wrote: "What may be known about God is manifest among them . . . His invisible qualities are clearly seen from the world's cre-

ation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable; because, although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God nor did they thank him, but they became empty-headed in their reasonings and their unintelligent heart became darkened. Although asserting they were wise, they became foolish." (Romans 1:19-22) How can you avoid being deceived by false teachers?

Evidence-Based Faith in the Creator

The Bible stresses the importance of evidence when it defines faith. It says: "Faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld." (Hebrews 11:1) True faith in God should be based on evidence that demonstrates the reality of the Creator. The Bible shows where you can find the evidence.

The inspired Bible writer David wrote: "I shall laud you because in a fear-inspiring way I am wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14) Taking time to reflect on the amazing design of our own body and of other living things fills us with awe at the wisdom of our Maker. Every part of the thousands of systems that cooperate to keep us alive is ideally designed. Also, the physical universe displays evidence of mathematical precision and order. David wrote: "The heavens are declaring the glory of God; and of the work of his hands the expanse is telling."—Psalm 19:1.

The Bible itself is a rich source of evidence about the Creator. Taking the time to examine the consistency of its 66 books, the superiority of its moral standards, and the unfailing fulfillment of its prophecies will provide you with abundant evidence that its author is the Creator. Understanding the Bible's teachings will also give you confidence that the Bible is, indeed, the Word of the Creator. For example, when you understand such Bible teachings as the cause of suffering, the Kingdom of God, the future of mankind, and the way to find happiness, you will see an evident demonstration of God's wisdom. You may come to feel as Paul did when he wrote: "O the depth of God's riches and wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable his judgments are and past tracing out his ways are!"—Romans 11:33.

The amazing design of living things fills us with awe at the wisdom of our Maker

As you examine the evidence and your faith grows, you will become convinced that when you read the Bible, you are listening to the Creator himself. He says: "I myself have made the earth and have created even man upon it. I—my own hands have stretched out the heavens, and all the army of them I have commanded." (Isaiah 45:12) Surely you will never regret making the effort to prove to yourself that Jehovah is the Creator of all things.

He Stood Up for Pure Worship

ELIJAH looked out over the crowd as they trudged up the slopes of Mount Carmel. Even in the light of early morning, the poverty and want afflicting these people were plain to see. The drought, three and a half years long, had left its mark on them.

Among them strutted the 450 prophets of Baal, full of pride and burning hatred for Elijah, Jehovah's prophet. Queen Jezebel had executed many servants of Jehovah, but this man still stood firm against Baal worship. Ah, but for how long? Perhaps those priests reasoned that a lone man could never prevail against all of them. (1 Kings 18:3, 19, 20) King Ahab had come too, riding in his royal chariot. He bore no love for Elijah either.

Ahead of that solitary prophet lay a day like no other in his life. As Elijah watched, the stage was being set for one of the most dramatic confrontations between good and evil the world has ever seen. How did he feel as that day dawned? He was not impervious to fear, being "a man with feelings like ours." (James 5:17) We can be sure, at least, of this much: Surrounded by the faithless people, their apostate king, and those murderous priests, Elijah keenly felt just how alone he was.—1 Kings 18:22.

What, though, had brought Israel to this crisis? And what does this account have to do with you today? The Bible urges us to look closely at devoted servants of God and to "imitate their faith." (Hebrews 13:7) Consider now Elijah's example.

A Long Struggle Reaches a Climax

For much of his life, Elijah had helplessly watched as the best thing about his homeland and his people was pushed aside and trampled underfoot. You see, Israel was in the grip of a long struggle, a war between pure religion and false, between the worship of Jehovah God and the idolatry of the surrounding nations. In Elijah's day, that struggle had taken an especially ugly turn.

King Ahab had married Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Sidon. Jezebel was determined to spread Baal worship in the land of Israel and eradicate the worship of Jehovah. Ahab quickly fell under her influence. He built a temple and an altar to Baal and took the lead in bowing down to this pagan god. He deeply offended Jehovah.—1 Kings 16:30-33.*

What made Baal worship so offensive? It seduced Israel, luring many away from the true God. It was also a disgusting and brutal religion. It involved male and female temple prostitution, sexual orgies, and even the sacrifice of children. Jehovah responded by sending Elijah to Ahab to announce a drought that would last until God's prophet proclaimed its end. (1 Kings 17:1) Several years passed before Elijah showed himself to Ahab and told him to gather the people and the Baal prophets to Mount Carmel.

* For more information on Elijah's earlier dealings with Ahab, see the article "Do You Have Faith Like Elijah's?" in the April 1, 1992, issue of *The Watchtower.*

What, though, does this struggle mean for us today? Some might assume that a story about Baal worship is irrelevant now, since we do not see temples and altars to Baal around us. But this account is not mere ancient history. (Romans 15:4) The word "Baal" means "owner" or "master." Jehovah told his people that they should choose him as their "baal," or husbandly owner. (Isaiah 54:5) Would you not agree that people still serve a variety of masters other than God Almighty? Indeed, whether people use their life in the service of money, career, recreation, sexual pleasure, or any of the countless gods that are worshipped instead of Jehovah, they choose a master. (Matthew 6:24; Romans 6:16) In a sense, then, the most potent elements that characterized Baal worship are thriving today. That ancient contest between Jehovah and Baal can help us make a wise choice as to whom we will serve.

"Limping"—How?

On its wind-whipped heights, Mount Carmel commands a sweeping view of Israel —from the torrent valley of Kishon below to the Great Sea (Mediterranean Sea) nearby to the mountains of Lebanon on the far northern horizon.* But as the sun rose on this climactic day, the vista was grim. A deathly pall hung over the once fertile land that Jehovah had given to the children of Abraham. It was now a land baked hard by the merciless sun, ruined by the folly of God's own people! As those people thronged together, Elijah approached them and spoke: "How long will you be limping upon two different opinions? If Jehovah is the true God, go following him; but if Baal is, go following him."—1 Kings 18:21.

* Carmel is usually lush and green, as moisture-laden winds from the sea rise along its slopes, frequently depositing rains and plentiful dew. Because Baal was credited with bringing rain, this mount was evidently an important site for Baal worship. A barren, dry Carmel thus made an ideal spot to expose Baalism as a fraud.

What did Elijah mean by the expression "limping upon two different opinions"? Well, those people did not realize that they had to choose between the worship of Jehovah and the worship of Baal. They thought that they could have it both ways—that they could appease Baal with their revolting rituals and still ask favors of Jehovah God. Perhaps they reasoned that Baal would bless their crops and herds, while "Jehovah of armies" would protect them in battle. (1 Samuel 17:45) They had forgotten a basic truth —one that still eludes many today—that Jehovah does not share his worship with anyone. He demands and is worthy of exclusive devotion. Any worship of him that is mixed with some other form of worship is unacceptable to him, even offensive!—Exodus 20:5.

So those Israelites were "limping" along like a man trying to follow two pathways at once. Many people make a similar mistake today, allowing other "baals" to creep into their life, pushing aside the worship of God! Elijah's clarion call to stop limping can help us to reexamine our own priorities and worship.

A Climactic Test

Elijah next proposed a test. It was simplicity itself. The Baal priests were to set up an altar and lay out a sacrifice on it; then they were to pray to their god to light the fire. Elijah would do the same. He said: "The true God that answers by fire is the true God." Elijah knew well who was the true God. So strong was his faith that he did not hesitate to let those Baal prophets go ahead. He gave his opponents every advantage, letting them choose their bull to sacrifice and approach Baal first.*—1 Kings 18:24, 25.

We do not live in an age of miracles. However, Jehovah has not changed. We may be

* Notably, Elijah told them: "You must not put fire to" the sacrifice. Some scholars say that such idolaters sometimes used altars with a secret cavity beneath so that a fire could appear to be lit supernaturally.

just as confident in him as Elijah was. For instance, when others disagree with what the Bible teaches, we need not fear to let them go ahead and have their say. Like Elijah, we may look to the true God to settle the matter. We do that by relying, not on ourselves, but on his inspired Word, which is designed "for setting things straight."—2 Timothy 3:16.

The Baal prophets proceeded to set up their sacrifice and call upon their god. "O Baal, answer us!" they cried again and again. They kept at it as the minutes and then the hours passed by. "But there was no voice, and there was no one answering," the Bible says. At noon Elijah began to mock them, asserting sarcastically that Baal must be too busy to answer them, that he was relieving himself in the privy, or that he was napping and someone needed to wake him up. "Call at the top of your voice," Elijah urged those charlatans. Clearly, he saw this Baal worship as ridiculous fakery, and he wanted God's people to see it for the fraud that it was.—1 Kings 18:26, 27.

In response, the Baal priests became even more frenzied, "calling at the top of their voice and cutting themselves according to their custom with daggers and with lances, until they caused blood to flow out upon them." All to no avail! "There was no voice, and there was no one answering, and there was no paying of attention." (1 Kings 18:28, 29) Indeed, there was no Baal. He was an invention designed by Satan to lure people away from Jehovah. Then as now, choosing any master other than Jehovah leads to disappointment, even shame.—Psalm 25:3; 115:4-8.

The Answer

Late in the afternoon, Elijah's turn came. He repaired an altar to Jehovah that had been torn down, no doubt by enemies of pure worship. He used 12 stones, perhaps reminding many in the 10-tribe nation of Israel that the Law given to all 12 tribes was still binding upon them. Then he laid out his sacrifice and had everything doused with water, possibly obtained from the Mediterranean Sea nearby. He even had a trench dug around the altar, filling it with water too. Just as he had given the prophets of Baal every advantage, he gave Jehovah every disadvantage—such was his confidence in his God.—1 Kings 18:30-35.

When everything was ready, Elijah said a prayer. Eloquent in its simplicity, the prayer showed clearly where Elijah's priorities lay. First and foremost, he wanted it known that Jehovah, not this Baal, was "God in Israel." Second, he wanted everyone to know that his own role was that of Jehovah's servant; all glory and credit should go to God. Finally, he showed that he still cared about his people, for he was eager to see Jehovah turn "their heart back." (1 Kings 18:36, 37) Despite all the misery that they had caused by their faithlessness, Elijah still loved them. In our own prayers to God, can we manifest similar concern for God's name, as well as humility and compassion for others who need help?

Choosing any master other than Jehovah leads to disappointment

Before Elijah's prayer, the crowds there might have wondered if Jehovah would turn out to be an empty lie as Baal was. After the prayer, though, there was no time for wondering. The account says: "At that the fire of Jehovah came falling and went eating up the burnt offering and the pieces of wood and the stones and the dust, and the water that was in the trench it licked up." (1 Kings 18:38) What a spectacular answer! And how did the people respond?

"Jehovah is the true God! Jehovah is the true God!" they cried out, all of them.

(1 Kings 18:39) At last they saw the truth. However, they had not as yet shown any faith. Frankly, to admit that Jehovah is the true God after seeing fire fall from heaven in response to a prayer is not an impressive demonstration of faith. So Elijah asked more of them. He asked them to do what they should have done many years earlier—obey the Law of Jehovah. God's Law said that false prophets and idolaters should be put to death. (Deuteronomy 13:5-9) These Baal priests were committed enemies of Jehovah God who worked deliberately against his purposes. Did they deserve mercy? Well, what mercy was ever granted to all those innocent children who were burned alive as sacrifices to Baal? (Proverbs 21:13; Jeremiah 19:5) No, those men were well beyond the reach of mercy. So Elijah ordered that they be executed, and executed they were.—1 Kings 18:40.

Some modern critics decry the conclusion to this test on Mount Carmel. Some may worry lest religious zealots use it to justify violent acts of religious intolerance. And sadly, there are only too many violent religious fanatics today. However, Elijah was no fanatic. He was acting on Jehovah's behalf in a just execution. Furthermore, genuine Christians know that they cannot follow Elijah's course in taking a sword to the wicked. After the Messiah came, the standard for all disciples of Jesus is found in Christ's words to Peter: "Return your sword to its place, for all those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) Jehovah will use his Son to carry out divine justice in the future.

The responsibility of a true Christian is to lead a life of faith. (John 3:16) One way to do so is to imitate faithful men like Elijah. He worshipped Jehovah exclusively and urged others to do the same. He boldly exposed as fraudulent a religion that Satan used to lure people away from Jehovah. And he trusted Jehovah to settle matters instead of relying on his own abilities and will. Indeed, Elijah stood up for pure worship. May each of us imitate his faith!

What Jehovah Foretells Comes to Be

"I AM the Divine One and there is no other God, nor anyone like me; the One telling from the beginning the finale, and from long ago the things that have not been done." (Isaiah 46:9, 10) So says Jehovah, the one able to foretell the future unerringly.

Man's inability to predict the future accurately is notorious. That the Bible is a book of prophecy should therefore stimulate all truth-seekers to investigate its claim of divine authorship. Let us consider some Biblical prophecies that have already come true.

Ancient Civilizations

God foretold that Babylon would suffer permanent destruction and that Edom, Moab, and Ammon would also be destroyed forever. (Jeremiah 48:42; 49:17, 18; 51:24-26; Obadiah 8, 18; Zephaniah 2:8, 9) The disappearance of these peoples as distinct national groups testifies to the accuracy of God's prophetic Word.

Of course, one might argue that anyone can predict that a nation, however mighty, will eventually pass out of existence. But that argument ignores the vital fact that the Bible went further. For example, it provided details as to just how Babylon would be overthrown. The Bible foretold that the city would be conquered by the Medes, that the invading soldiers would be under the leadership of Cyrus, and that the city's defensive rivers would be dried up.—Isaiah 13:17-19; 44:27–45:1.

Not in all cases did the Bible predict that a conquered nation or people would cease to exist forever. On the contrary, in foretelling the overthrow of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, God said that the city would experience a restoration, despite Babylon's policy of never releasing its captives. (Jeremiah 24:4-7; 29:10; 30:18, 19) This was fulfilled, and the Jews' descendants continue to exist as a distinct people to this day.

Further, Jehovah foretold that Egypt would be overthrown as a world power but that "afterward she [would] be resided in

God's Word foretold the permanent end of these civilizations . . .

WHO photo by Edouard Boubat

EDOM

Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

as in the days of old." In time, this ancient power would "become a lowly kingdom." (Jeremiah 46:25, 26; Ezekiel 29:14, 15) This proved true as well. In addition, Jehovah predicted that Greece would be overthrown as a world power, but never did he say that this nation would cease to exist. What do we learn from the disappearance of civilizations about which Jehovah predicted annihilation and the presence of others about which he made no such prediction? That God's Word contains genuine, reliable prophecy.

Alexander the Great

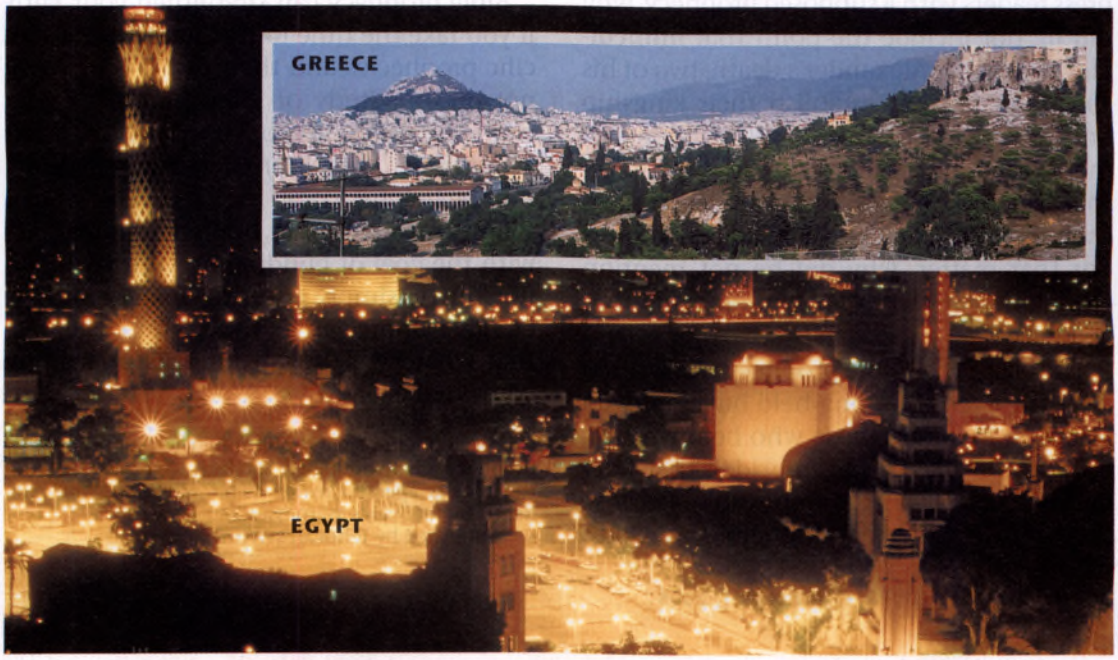
Amazing Detail

As noted above, Jehovah provided many details regarding the nature of Babylon's fall. Similarly, in foretelling the downfall of Tyre, the book of Ezekiel said that its stones, woodwork, and dust would be placed "in the very midst of the water." (Ezekiel 26:4, 5, 12) This prophecy was fulfilled in 332 B.C.E. when Alexander the Great had his army use the ruins of the vanquished mainland part of the city to build a causeway to the island part of Tyre, which was then conquered as well.

The prophecy recorded at Daniel 8:5-8, 21, 22 and 11:3, 4 also provided impressive details with regard to an unusually great "king of Greece." This ruler would be cut down at the zenith of his power, and his kingdom would then be divided into four but not among his descendants. More than 200 years after this prophecy was recorded, Alexander the Great proved to be that mighty king. Secular history tells us that he was cut down by an untimely death and that his empire was eventually split among four of his generals—not his descendants.

Critics have claimed that this prophecy must have been recorded after the fact. Look again, though, at the above-cited account in the book of Daniel. When viewed from the

. . . but not of these



PRINCIPLES FOR LIVING

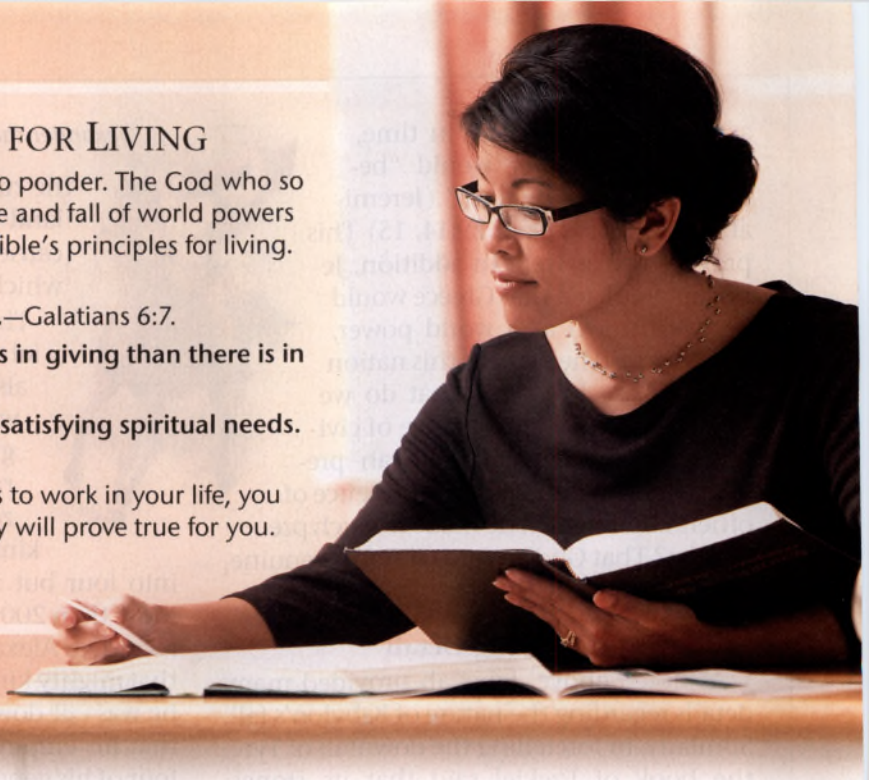
Here is another thought to ponder. The God who so accurately foretold the rise and fall of world powers is also the Source of the Bible's principles for living. Some of these are:

You reap what you sow.—Galatians 6:7.

There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.—Acts 20:35.

Happiness depends on satisfying spiritual needs.—Matthew 5:3.

If you put these principles to work in your life, you can be confident that they will prove true for you.



standpoint of prophecy, its details are remarkable. But when viewed as history masquerading as prophecy, does there not seem to be a glaring *lack* of detail? If an impostor who lived after Alexander were trying to impress readers with a supposed prophecy, why did he not include the point that immediately following Alexander's death, two of his sons would try to establish their kingship but would be assassinated? Why did he not mention that it would be decades before all four generals would establish themselves over different parts of Alexander's empire? For that matter, why did he not mention the names of the great king and his four generals?

The claim that Bible prophecy was written after the event is a long-held but unproven assertion made by those who before examining the evidence have decided that foretelling future events is impossible. Because they refuse to accept the Bible as God's Word, they are compelled to explain everything from a purely human, material standpoint. Nevertheless, God wisely inspired just enough prophetic detail to establish his authorship.*

Bible prophecy can strengthen your faith if you take the time to meditate on the specific prophecies and their fulfillment. Why not make a study of Bible prophecy? The charts on pages 343 to 346 of the book *"All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial"* may be helpful to you in that regard.# If you follow this suggestion, approach the project with the goal of building up your faith. Do not hurry, simply covering material. Rather, give appreciative thought to the fact that whatever Jehovah foretells unerringly comes to be.

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* For more information refuting the claim that Bible prophecy was written after the fact, see pages 106-11 of the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

\# Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

A Father Without Equal

Matthew 3:16, 17

"FATHER." Few words evoke deeper emotions in humans. A father who truly loves his children helps them to thrive. With good reason, the Bible refers to Jehovah God as "Father." (Matthew 6:9) What kind of Father is Jehovah? To answer that, let us examine the words Jehovah spoke to Jesus on the occasion of Jesus' baptism. After all, the way a father speaks to his children reveals much about the *kind* of parent that he is.

In about October 29 C.E., Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptized. The Bible reports what happened: "After being baptized Jesus immediately came up from the water; and, look! the heavens were opened up, and he saw descending like a dove God's spirit coming upon him. Look! Also, there was a voice from the heavens that said: 'This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.'"* (Matthew 3:16, 17) Spoken by Jehovah himself, those tender words tell us much about the kind of Father he is. Notice three things that Jehovah expressed to his Son.

First, by the words "this is my Son," Jehovah was saying, in effect, 'I am proud to be your Father.' A discerning father satisfies his children's hunger for recognition and attention. Children need to be reassured that they are valued as unique members of the family. Imagine what it must have meant to Jesus—even as an adult—to receive such recognition from his Father!

Second, by referring to his Son as "the beloved," Jehovah openly expressed his love for Jesus. In a sense, the Father was saying, 'I love you.' A good father tells his children that he dearly loves them. Such words—accompanied by wholesome affection—help children to flourish. How it must have touched the heart of Jesus to hear his Father's voice expressing love for him!

Third, by the words "I have approved," Jehovah expressed his approval of his Son. It was as if Jehovah were saying, 'Son, I am pleased with what you have done.' A loving father looks for opportunities to let his children know that he is pleased with the good things they say or do. Children draw strength and courage from parental approval. Surely it must have encouraged Jesus to hear that he had his Father's approval!

Truly, Jehovah is a Father without equal. Does your heart yearn for such a father? If so, then you can take comfort in knowing that a relationship with Jehovah is within your reach. If in faith you learn about him and sincerely try to do his will, he will respond. The Bible says: "Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you." (James 4:8) What could make you feel more secure than having a close bond with Jehovah God, the best Father imaginable?

* According to the parallel account in the Gospel of Luke, Jehovah used the personal pronoun "you," saying: "*You* are my Son, the beloved; I have approved *you*."—Luke 3:22.

Peter's Denial of Jesus

Instructions: Do this exercise in quiet surroundings. As you read the scriptures, imagine that you are part of the event. Visualize the scene. Hear the voices. Feel the emotions of the main characters.

■■■

ANALYZE THE SCENE.—***READ MATTHEW 26:31-35, 69-75.***

How many people do you imagine were in the scene? _____

Do you think that the ones who talked to Peter were friendly? curious? angry? other?

_____

_____

How do you think Peter felt when being accused? _____

Why did Peter deny Jesus? Was it lack of love or something else? _____

DIG DEEPER.—***READ LUKE 22:31-34; MATTHEW 26:55-58; JOHN 21:9-17.***

How might overconfidence have played a role in Peter's error? _____

How did Jesus show confidence in Peter, even though he knew that Peter would momentarily stumble? _____

Though he denied Jesus, in what way did Peter show even greater courage than the other disciples? _____

How did Jesus show that he forgave Peter?

Why, do you think, did Jesus *three times* ask Peter: "Do you love me?" _____

How do you think Peter felt after this discussion with Jesus, and why? _____

APPLY WHAT YOU LEARNED. ***WRITE DOWN WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT . . .***

Fear of man. _____

Jesus' compassion for his disciples, even when they erred. _____

What about this account is most meaningful to you, and why? _____

FINDING RELIEF FROM YOUTHFUL DESPAIR

AS TOLD BY
EUSEBIO MORCILLO

In September 1993, I visited a maximum-security prison. The occasion was the baptism of a prisoner, my younger sister Mariví. Some inmates and prison officials respectfully watched as I conducted the ceremony. Before I explain how she and I came to be there, let me describe our early life.

I WAS born in Spain on May 5, 1954, the first of eight children. Mariví was the third. Our grandmother reared us as devout Catholics, and I have pleasant childhood memories of feeling devoted to God while I was with her. But the environment in my parents' home was far from spiritual. Father regularly beat Mother and us children. Fear was a part of our lives, and it hurt me deeply to see Mother suffer.

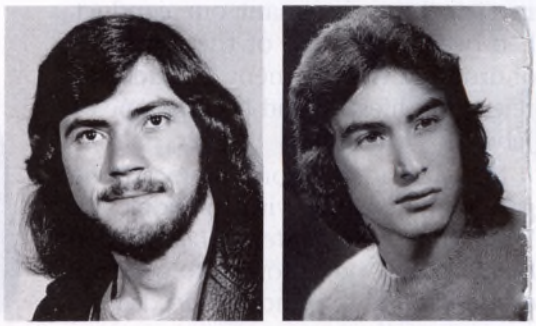
At school, I faced added disheartening conditions. One of the teachers, a priest, knocked our heads against a wall if we answered a question incorrectly. Another priest sexually abused pupils while reviewing their homework with them. Furthermore, such Catholic teachings as hellfire confused and frightened me. My devotion to God soon withered.

Trapped in a Senseless Life

Lacking any spiritual guidance, I started spending time with immoral, violent people at discotheques. Often fights broke out, with knives, chains, glasses, and stools used as weapons. Even though I did not actively participate in the violence, on one occasion I was knocked unconscious.

Eventually I tired of that environment and looked for quieter discotheques. Even at those places, drugs were common. But instead of gratification and peace of mind, the drugs gave me hallucinations and anxiety.

Although I was dissatisfied, I lured one of my younger brothers, José Luis, and a close



My brother José Luis and friend Miguel followed both my bad and my good example

friend, Miguel, into the same lifestyle. Along with many other youths in Spain at the time, we were trapped in a corrupt world. I would do almost anything to get money for drugs. I lost all dignity.

Jehovah Comes to the Rescue

During this time, I spoke several times with my friends about the existence of God and the meaning of life. I began searching for God by looking for someone to share my feelings with. I had noticed that Francisco, one of my workmates, stood out from the others. He seemed happy, honest, and kind, so I decided to open my heart to him. Francisco was one of Jehovah's Witnesses, and he gave me an issue of *The Watchtower* that contained an article on drugs.

After reading the article, I prayed to God for help: "Lord, I know that you exist, and I want to know you and to do your will. Please help me!" Francisco and other Witnesses used the Bible to encourage me and gave me Bible-based publications to read. I came to realize that they were giving me the help I had requested from God. Soon I began to speak to my friends and José Luis about the things I was learning.

One day when leaving a rock concert with some friends, I separated myself from the group. I looked at them as a detached observer, and it struck me just how repugnant our conduct had become because of the influence of drugs. At that moment, I decided to reject that lifestyle and become one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

I asked Francisco for a Bible, and he gave me one along with the book *The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life.** When I read about God's promise to wipe out every tear and to remove even death, I had no doubt that I had found the truth that can set mankind free. (John 8:32; Revelation 21:4) Later, I attended a meeting at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. The friendliness and warmth I found there impressed me greatly.

Eager to share with others my experience at the Kingdom Hall, I immediately gathered José Luis and my friends and told them all about it. Some days later, all of us attended a meeting. One girl sitting in the row in front of us glanced at us. She was obviously startled at seeing this group of long-haired hippies, and she was careful not to turn her head again. She must have been surprised when we returned to the Kingdom Hall the following week, for this time we were wearing suits and ties.

Soon afterward, Miguel and I also attended a circuit assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses. We had never experienced anything like that before—a true brotherhood of people of all ages. And strangely enough, the assembly was held in the same theater where we had just attended a rock concert. But on this occasion, the atmosphere and the music we heard lifted our spirits.

The Morcillo family in 1973

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses but now out of print.

Our entire group began to study the Bible. About eight months later, on July 26, 1974, Miguel and I were baptized. We were both 20 years old. Four others in our group got baptized a few months later. The Bible training I had received motivated me to start helping my long-suffering mother with the housework and to share my newfound faith with her. We became close. I also devoted much time to helping my younger brothers and sisters.

In time, my mother and all but one of my siblings learned Bible truth and were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1977, I married Soledad. She was the young girl who looked aghast when she saw us on our first visit to the Kingdom Hall. Within a few months, we both became pioneers, as Jehovah's Witnesses call full-time preachers of the good news.

Mariví as a prison inmate

A Beloved One Is Redeemed

My younger sister Mariví had been sexually abused as a child, and that horrible background deeply affected her. As a teenager, she took up an immoral lifestyle that involved drugs, thievery, and prostitution. At the age of 23, she was sent to jail, where she continued her wayward life.

By that time, I was serving as a circuit overseer, a traveling minister of Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1989, Soledad and I were assigned to the area where Mariví was imprisoned. The authorities had recently taken her son away from her; she was devastated, with no desire to live. One day I visited her and suggested that we study the Bible together, and she accepted the offer. After studying for a month, she stopped using drugs and tobacco. It thrilled me to see that Jehovah gave her the strength to make these changes in her life.—Hebrews 4:12.

Shortly after starting to study, Mariví began sharing Bible truths with fellow inmates and prison officials. Although she was transferred from one prison to another, she continued her preaching activity. In one prison she even witnessed from cell to cell. Over the years, Mariví started Bible studies with many inmates in different penitentiaries.

One day Mariví informed me of her desire to dedicate her life to Jehovah and get baptized. But she was not granted permission to leave the prison, nor was anybody allowed inside to baptize her. She endured four more years in the corrupt environment of that prison. What helped her to maintain her faith? At the precise time that the local congregation was holding a meeting, she reviewed the same program in the prison cell. She also had a regular program of personal Bible study and prayer.

In time, Mariví was moved to a high-security prison that had a swimming pool. She felt that these new circumstances might make her baptism possible. And sure enough, Mariví was finally granted permission. Thus it was that I found myself presenting her baptism talk. I was with her at the most important moment of her life.

As a result of her former lifestyle, Mariví developed AIDS. Nevertheless, her good conduct earned her an early release from prison, in March 1994. She lived at home with Mother and led an active Christian life until her death two years later.

Overcoming Destructive Feelings

I too have not entirely escaped the consequences of my former life. The abuse I suffered at the hands of my father as well as my

With my wife, Soledad

lifestyle as a teenager left their mark on my personality. In my adult life, I have often been plagued by feelings of guilt and a lack of self-worth. At times I have been extremely low in spirits. Yet, God's Word has been invaluable in helping me to fight these disturbing feelings. Meditating repeatedly on such scriptures as Isaiah 1:18 and Psalm 103:8-13 has over the years helped me to deaden recurring feelings of guilt.

Prayer is another spiritual weapon that I use to combat feelings of worthlessness. I have often found myself praying to Jehovah with tears welling up in my eyes. Nevertheless, the words recorded at 1 John 3:19, 20 strengthen me: "By this we shall know that we originate with the truth, and we shall assure our hearts before him as regards whatever our hearts may condemn us in, because God is greater than our hearts and knows all things."

Since I approach God sincerely with a "broken and crushed" heart, I realize that I am not as bad as I once thought. The Bible assures all those seeking Jehovah that he does not despise those who sincerely regret their past conduct and have turned to doing his will.—Psalm 51:17.

Whenever feelings of self-doubt surface, I try to fill my mind with positive thoughts, the kind of spiritual things mentioned at Philippians 4:8. I have memorized Psalm 23 and the Sermon on the Mount. When negative thoughts come to my mind, I recite to myself these Scriptural passages. This mental housecleaning is especially helpful during sleepless nights.

Another source of help has been the commendation I receive from my wife and other mature Christians. Although at first I found it hard to accept their encouraging words, the Bible has helped me to understand that love "believes all things." (1 Corinthians 13:7) And, of course, I have gradually learned humbly to accept my weaknesses and limitations.

On the positive side, my own struggles against negative feelings have helped me to be an empathetic traveling overseer. My wife

I have often been plagued by feelings of guilt and a lack of self-worth. Yet, God's Word has been invaluable in helping me to fight these disturbing feelings

and I have each spent nearly 30 years as full-time ministers of the good news. The joy I derive from serving others helps to push negative feelings and memories of my distasteful experiences more and more into the background.

Now when I look back and reflect on all the blessings Jehovah has bestowed upon me, I feel moved to say as the psalmist did: "Bless Jehovah, . . . him who is forgiving all your error, who is healing all your maladies, who is reclaiming your life from the very pit, who is crowning you with loving-kindness and mercies."—Psalm 103:1-4.

Did You Know?

When did the astrologers visit Jesus?

In Matthew's Gospel, we are told that "astrologers from eastern parts" visited Jesus, bringing him gifts. (Matthew 2:1-12; footnote) How many of these astrologers, or "magi," visited the child Jesus is not disclosed, and there is no firm basis for the traditional notion that there were three; neither are they named in the Biblical account.

The *New International Version Study Bible* makes this comment on Matthew 2:11: "Contrary to tradition, the Magi did not visit Jesus at the manger on the night of his birth as did the shepherds. They came some months later and visited him as a 'child' in his 'house.'" This is verified by the fact that Herod, when seeking to have the young child killed, ordered the slaughter of all boys two years of age and under throughout Bethlehem and its districts. He targeted that age group by calculating "according to the time that he had carefully ascertained from the astrologers."—Matthew 2:16.

Had these astrologers visited Jesus on the night of his birth and brought gold and other valuable gifts, it is unlikely that Mary would have offered only two birds 40 days later when she presented Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:22-24) This was a provision in the Law for poor people who could not afford a young ram. (Leviticus 12:6-8) However, these valuable gifts may have been timely and useful in financing the stay of Jesus' family in Egypt.—Matthew 2:13-15.

Why did it take Jesus four days to arrive at the tomb of Lazarus?

Basically, it seems that Jesus arranged matters that way. Why can we say that? Consider

the account recorded in John chapter 11.

When Lazarus, a resident of Bethany and a friend of Jesus, fell seriously ill, his sisters sent word to Jesus. (Verses 1-3) At the time, Jesus was a two-day journey or so from Bethany. (John 10:40) Lazarus evidently died about the time that the news reached Jesus. What did Jesus do? He "remained two days in the place where he was," and then he left for Bethany. (Verses 6, 7) Hence, by waiting two days and then traveling two days, he arrived at the tomb four days after Lazarus' death.—Verse 17.

Earlier, Jesus had performed two resurrections—one right after the death of the person and the other likely sometime later on the day of death. (Luke 7:11-17; 8:49-55) Could he raise up someone who had been dead for four days and whose body had already begun to decompose? (Verse 39) Interestingly, one Bible reference work says that among the Jews, there was a belief that no hope was possible "for a person who had been dead for four days; by then the body showed recognizable decay, and the soul, which was thought to hover over the body for three days, had left."

If any of those gathered at the tomb had doubts, they were about to witness Jesus' power over death. Standing before the open tomb, Jesus cried out: "Lazarus, come on out!" Then, "the man that had been dead came out." (Verses 43, 44) The resurrection, not the false notion of many that the soul lives on after death, is the real hope for the dead. —Ezekiel 18:4; John 11:25.

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