

MAY 1, 2014

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

CAN ANYONE  
SEE THE FUTURE?



THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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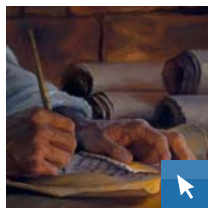
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# Some Successes, Many Failures

Would you like to know your future? The notion appeals to many. There are a lot of people who predict upcoming events—with varying results. Consider the following:

**SCIENTISTS** utilize sophisticated equipment and vast amounts of money to forecast various matters, such as how pollution will eventually affect the earth and whether it will rain in your neighborhood tomorrow.

**PROFESSIONAL ANALYSTS** predict trends in business and politics. Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest people in the world, has been dubbed an oracle for his successful business investments. Nate Silver, another analyst, has interpreted statistics to help him make predictions about everything from U.S. politics to Hollywood film awards.

**ANCIENT SOURCES** have been interpreted as prophecies. Some people see modern-day fulfillment in the vague writings of 16th-century Michel de Notredame (Nostradamus). A Mayan calendar cycle that ended on December 21, 2012, was interpreted by some as a portent of cataclysmic events.

**RELIGIOUS LEADERS** sometimes predict tragic worldwide events to warn mankind and gather followers. Doomsday prophet Harold Camping and his disciples widely advertised that the earth would be destroyed in 2011. Needless to say, the world is still here.

**PSYCHICS** claim to have special abilities to predict the future. Edgar Cayce and Jeane Dixon both made some accurate predictions about 20th-century events. Each also uttered many failed predictions. For instance, Dixon foretold the outbreak of a World War III in 1958, and Cayce predicted that New York would slide into the ocean in the mid-1970's.

Is there really any reliable way to see the future? The question is worth asking. If you were able to preview upcoming events, life could be very different for you.





# Can Anyone See the Future?

We all think about the future. We wonder what life will be like for ourselves and our loved ones. We ask such questions as these: ‘Will my children live in a better world? Will the earth be destroyed in a disaster? Is there something I can change now to make my future better?’ This curiosity is part of who we are; we naturally yearn for reassurance, certainty, order, and stability. If you could be more certain about the future, you could prepare for it, both physically and emotionally.

So, what is in your future? Can anyone know? Professionals who try to predict the future have met with some successes but also many failures. Yet, it is said that God can accurately foretell upcoming events. His Word says: “From the beginning I foretell the outcome, and from long ago the things that have not yet been done.” (Isaiah 46:10) How successful has he been?

## GOD’S SUCCESS RATE

Why should you be interested in the success rate of God’s ancient prophecies? Well, if you found a weather forecaster to be accurate every day for a long time, you would be impressed. Likely you would pay attention to what he said

about the weather tomorrow. In a similar way, if you were to learn that God has foretold events with a perfect rate of success, you would surely be interested in what he foretells about your future.

**THE DESTRUCTION OF A GREAT CITY:** For example, it would really be a remarkable feat to predict accurately that a great city, powerful for many centuries, would soon collapse. Through one of his spokesmen, God foretold just such a thing—the desolation of Nineveh. (Zephaniah 2:13-15) What have secular historians recorded? In the



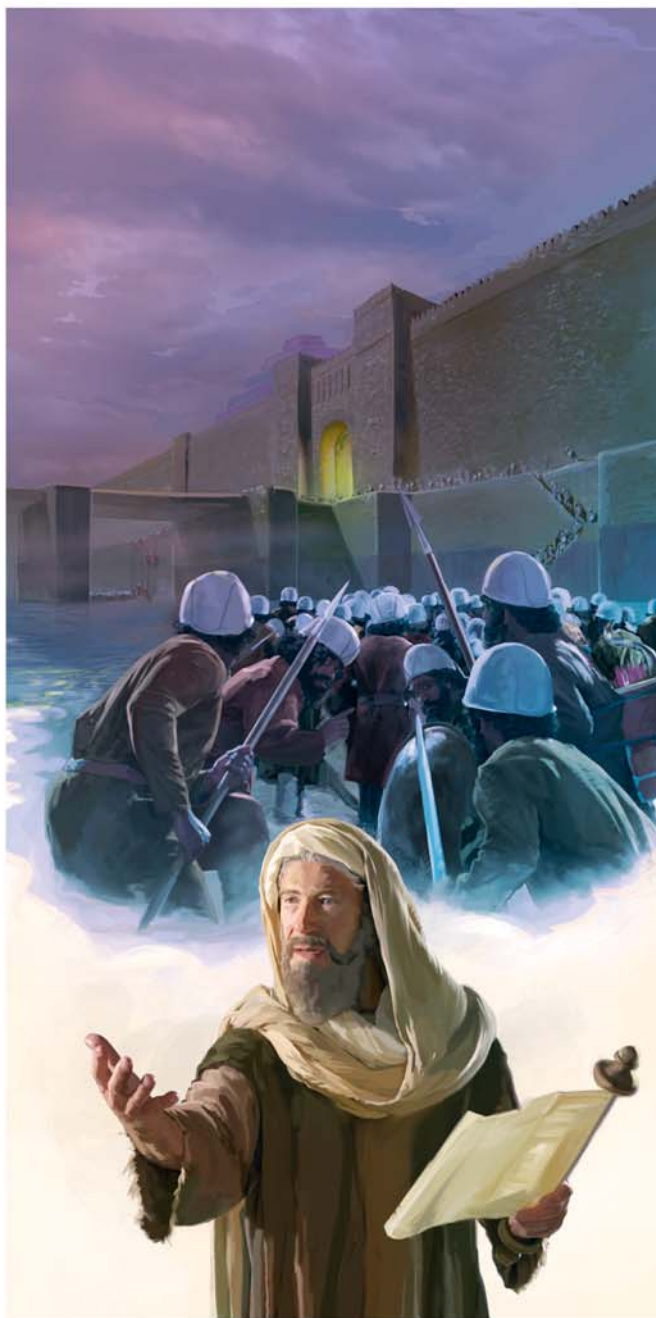
A rebuilt wall in the ruins of ancient Nineveh

Randy Olson/National Geographic Creative

seventh century B.C.E., evidently some 15 years after God made his prediction, the Babylonians and the Medes attacked and overthrew Nineveh. Additionally, God specified in advance that Nineveh would be made “desolate, as dry as a desert.” Did this advance notice prove to be accurate? Yes. Although the city and its suburbs may have covered some 200 square miles (518 sq km), the conquerors did not preserve and make use of the city, as might be expected. Instead, they destroyed it. Could any political analyst have predicted those events with such accuracy?

**HUMAN BONES WILL BURN:** Who would be so daring as to announce—300 years in advance—the exact name and specific ancestry of a man who would burn human bones on an altar, as well as the name of the town where the altar would be located? If such an unusual prediction came true, it would surely make the forecaster famous. God’s spokesman announced: “A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David . . . , and he will burn human bones” on an altar in the town of Bethel. (1 Kings 13:1, 2) About three centuries later, a king named Josiah—not a common Biblical name—came from the family lineage of David. Exactly as foretold, Josiah had “bones taken from the graves and burned them on the altar” located in Bethel. (2 Kings 23:14-16) How could anyone foretell such specific details unless guided by a super-human source?

**THE END OF AN EMPIRE:** It would be amazing if a person could successfully predict the name of a man—long before his birth—who would organize the overthrow of a major world power, even indicating the unusual strategy that he would employ. God announced that a man named Cyrus would launch the conquest of a nation. This Cyrus would also free Jewish captives and support the reconstruction of their holy temple. Additionally, God foretold that Cyrus’ battle strategy would include the drying up of rivers and indicated that gates would be left open, facilitating the



Bible prophets foretold the fall of Babylon with amazing accuracy



Examining Bible prophecies teaches us something interesting about God's personality. God notifies us of his will, showing us that he is not apathetic or coldly uninterested in mankind. Rather, he is actively concerned about our future. In fact, he wants us to live to see a bright future.

conquest. (Isaiah 44:27–45:2) Were the many details of God's prophecy fulfilled accurately? Historians agree that this conquest by Cyrus actually occurred. Cyrus' army employed the tremendous engineering feat of diverting one of Babylon's waterways—in effect, drying up rivers. What is more, the army entered the city through gates that had been left open. Cyrus thereafter freed the Jewish people and declared that they could rebuild their temple in Jerusalem. That was unusual, for Cyrus did not worship the God of the Jews. (Ezra 1:1-3) Who but God could have predicted the details of those historical events?

We have mentioned three examples showing how God successfully foretold future events. These are not isolated incidents. The Jewish leader Joshua stated a fact that was well-known to his large audience: "You well know with all your heart and with all your soul that not one word out of all the good promises that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you. Not one word of them has failed." (Joshua 23:1, 2, 14) Joshua's people could not deny the success rate of God's promises and prophecies. But how does God do it? There are major differences between God's ways and man's. This is important for you to know, for God has made some epic announcements about the near future that will definitely affect you.

### **GOD'S PROPHECIES VERSUS HUMAN PREDICTIONS**

Human predictions are often based on such factors as scientific research, analysis of available facts and trends, or even bogus spiritual insight. After making their forecasts, humans typically sit back passively and wait to see what will happen. —Proverbs 27:1.

In contrast to humans, God knows all the facts. He thoroughly understands the nature and inclination of humans; therefore, when he chooses to do so, God can foresee exactly how individu-

als and entire nations will act. But God can do more than that. He can even control and change factors and trends to ensure the outcome. He says: "My word that goes out of my mouth . . . will not return to me without results, . . . and it will have sure success." (Isaiah 55:11) In a way, then, some of God's predictions are more like announcements or declarations. He actively guarantees a perfect record of success.

### **YOUR FUTURE**

Is there a reliable forecast involving your future and that of your loved ones? If you have advance knowledge of an approaching hurricane, you can take lifesaving action. You can respond similarly to Bible prophecy. God has announced that huge worldwide changes will come soon. (See the box "What God Has Revealed About the Future.") This future is quite different from what many so-called experts forecast.

You might think of it this way: The story of this world has an overall plot. It has already been written, and you can preview the finale. God declares: "From the beginning I foretell the outcome, . . . I say, 'My decision will stand, and I will do whatever I please.'" (Isaiah 46:10) You and your family can have a wonderful future. Ask Jehovah's Witnesses about what the Bible says regarding upcoming events. The Witnesses are not psychics; nor do they claim to hear spirit voices or to have any special powers of prediction. They are students of the Bible who can show you the good things that God is actively arranging for your future. ■



## What God Has Revealed About the Future

- Contrary to what doomsday prophets say, God assures us that our planet Earth will never be destroyed.—Psalm 104:5; Ecclesiastes 1:4.
- Humans will be in the process of ruining the earth when God steps in and stops them.—Psalm 92:7; Revelation 11:18.
- God is aware that the majority of religions have slandered him and ignored the Bible, and he will destroy those institutions.—Revelation 18:4-9.
- God's heavenly government—not any humans or forces on earth—will destroy all wicked, disobedient people. “The future of wicked people will be cut off.”—Psalm 37: 10, 38; Daniel 2:44.
- God will preserve individuals whom he approves, and they will flourish on a beautiful earth. “Take note of the blameless one, and keep the upright one in sight, for the future of that man will be peaceful.”—Psalm 37:11, 37; Revelation 21:3, 4.
- God kindly explains in the Bible how you may gain his approval and how “you may succeed in escaping all these things that must occur.”—Luke 21:36; John 17:3.

# Do Jehovah's Witnesses Believe in Jesus?

The following is a typical conversation that one of Jehovah's Witnesses might have with a neighbor. Let us imagine that a Witness named Anthony has come to the home of a man named Tim.



## BELIEF IN JESUS ESSENTIAL

**Anthony:** Hi, Tim. It's good to see you again.

**Tim:** It is good to see you too.

**Anthony:** I brought the latest issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* for you. I think you will really enjoy the articles in these magazines.

**Tim:** Thank you. Actually, I'm glad you came by today because there is something I want to ask you.

**Anthony:** Sure, what is it?

**Tim:** The other day, I was speaking with a coworker. I told him about the pamphlets you gave me and how interesting they are. But he said that I shouldn't read them because Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in Jesus. Is that true? I told my coworker that I would ask the next time you visited.

**Anthony:** Well, I'm glad you asked me. It's good that you are going straight to the source. After all, what better way is there to find out what a person believes than to ask the person himself?

**Tim:** That's what I figured.

**Anthony:** The truth is, Jehovah's Witnesses most certainly believe in Jesus. In fact, we feel that exercising faith in Jesus is vital to salvation.

**Tim:** I thought you did, but when my coworker said that you don't believe in Jesus, it made me curious. I guess you and I never really discussed it before.

**Anthony:** May I show you some Bible verses

that highlight the importance of exercising faith in Jesus? These are verses that Jehovah's Witnesses often use in their ministry.

**Tim:** OK.

**Anthony:** A good place to start is with Jesus' own words recorded at John 14:6. These words are part of a conversation that Jesus had with one of his apostles. We read: "Jesus said to him: 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" According to that verse, what is the only way to approach the Father?

**Tim:** Through Jesus.

**Anthony:** Correct. And Jehovah's Witnesses firmly believe that. Let me ask you this: From what you know about God's requirements, when a person prays, in whose name should he offer the prayer?

**Tim:** In the name of Jesus.

**Anthony:** I agree. And that's why every prayer I offer is said in Jesus' name. The same is true of all the prayers of Jehovah's Witnesses.

**Tim:** That's good to know.

**Anthony:** Another scripture we might consider is John 3:16. That verse is so important that it has been called the Gospel in miniature. The idea is that if you could take everything that was written about Jesus' earthly life and ministry and boil it down to one verse, this would be it. Maybe you would like to read this scripture.



**Tim:** OK. It says: “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.”

**Anthony:** Thank you. Are you familiar with this verse?

**Tim:** Yes, I’ve heard it a lot, and I often see it quoted on signs and billboards.

**Anthony:** It is a famous verse. Looking at it carefully, notice what Jesus said. He said that God’s love makes it possible for humans to enjoy everlasting life—but only if we do what?

**Tim:** Exercise faith.

**Anthony:** Yes. Specifically, faith in the only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. And this point—that faith in Jesus opens the way to everlasting life—is made right here on page 2 of the magazine I brought you. Regarding the purpose of *The Watchtower*, it says that among other things, this magazine “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.”

**Tim:** Well, there you go. Right in your own magazine is proof that Jehovah’s Witnesses believe in Jesus.

**Anthony:** Precisely.

**Tim:** So, then, why do people say that you don’t believe in Jesus?

**Anthony:** There are probably a number of reasons why people say that. In some cases, people say it simply because they have heard other people say it. Or they may have been taught this misconception by their minister.

**Tim:** I’m just thinking here—maybe some people say that you don’t believe in Jesus because you call yourselves Jehovah’s Witnesses, not *Jesus’* Witnesses.

**Anthony:** That could be a reason too.

**Tim:** Why do you talk about Jehovah so much?

## “I HAVE MADE YOUR NAME KNOWN”

**Anthony:** For one thing, we believe that it is important to use God’s personal name, Jehovah—just as his Son, Jesus, did. Consider what Jesus said in prayer to his Father. It’s recorded at John 17:26. Would you please read that verse?

**Tim:** Sure. “I have made your name known to them and will make it known, so that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in union with them.”

**Anthony:** Thank you. Notice that Jesus said he had made God’s name known. Why do you suppose he did that?

**Tim:** Hmm. I’m not sure.

**Anthony:** Well, maybe we could look at another scripture that sheds light on the matter. I am thinking of Acts 2:21. There we read: “Everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” Now, I’m sure you would agree that if calling on

## Exercising faith in Jesus is vital to salvation

the name of Jehovah is a requirement for salvation, Jesus was no doubt aware of this requirement.

**Tim:** Yes, of course.

**Anthony:** So the salvation of his followers is one reason why it was important to Jesus that they know and use God’s name. And it’s one of the main reasons why we talk about Jehovah so much. We feel that it is important to make known God’s personal name and help others call on that name.

**Tim:** But even if people don’t know God’s name or use it directly, they still know who they’re talking about when they refer to God.

**Anthony:** That may be true. Even so, by telling us his personal name, God has made it easier for us to draw close to him.

**Tim:** What do you mean?



**Anthony:** Think of it this way: We didn't need to know Moses' personal name. We could have known him simply as the man who parted the Red Sea or the man who received the Ten Commandments. Likewise with Noah—why know his name? He could have just been referred to as the man who built an ark and saved his family and the animals. For that matter, even Jesus Christ could have been known simply as the one who came from heaven and died for our sins. Right?

**Tim:** I suppose so.

**Anthony:** But God made sure that we knew the personal names of those individuals. There's nothing that adds that special touch like a personal name. Even though we have never met Moses, Noah, or Jesus, just knowing their name makes these men more real to us.

**Tim:** I never thought of it that way before, but that makes sense!

**Anthony:** And that's another reason why Jehovah's Witnesses use God's personal name so much. We want to help people build faith in Jehovah God as a real Person whom they can draw close to. At the same time, we place great emphasis on the role that Jesus plays in our salvation. Perhaps we could read one more scripture that drives home this point.

**Tim:** Sure.

**Anthony:** Earlier we read John 14:6. Remember, Jesus said that he is "the way and the truth

and the life." Let's go back a few verses and notice his words found at John 14:1. Would you please read what Jesus said in the last part of that verse?

**Tim:** OK. It says: "Exercise faith in God; exercise faith also in me."

**Anthony:** Thank you. Would you say, then, that true faith is an either-or matter? Is it a question of belief in Jesus versus belief in Jehovah?

**Tim:** No. Jesus said we need both.

**Anthony:** That's right. And I am sure you would agree that it's not enough just to *say* that we have faith in God and in Jesus. Really, we need to live our lives in a way that backs up that claim.

**Tim:** Definitely.

**Anthony:** But just how does a person demonstrate that he truly has faith in God and in Jesus? Maybe we can discuss that question another time.\*

**Tim:** I would like that. ■

\* For more information, see chapter 12 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. It is also available on [jw.org](http://jw.org).

Do you have a particular Bible subject that you have wondered about? Are you curious about any of the beliefs or religious practices of Jehovah's Witnesses? If so, do not hesitate to ask one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He or she will be pleased to discuss such matters with you.

## Why did the execution of criminals include the breaking of their legs?



Regarding the execution of Jesus and two criminals on torture stakes, the Gospel account reads: “The Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away.”—John 19:31.

Jewish law stated that the body of a criminal hung on a stake after execution “should not remain all night on the stake.” (Deuteronomy 21:22, 23) The Jews apparently applied the same rule to those executed on a stake by the Romans. In this instance, breaking the men’s legs would hasten their death and permit their burial before the Sabbath began at sundown.

During many executions like these, a condemned man was affixed to a stake with nails that pierced his hands and his feet. When the stake was lifted upright, he would be left hanging in excruciating pain, with all his weight on those nails. In order to breathe, the individual would have to push up against the nail, or nails, in his feet. If the bones of his legs were broken, however, it would be impossible for him to do this. Death by asphyxiation—if not from shock—would quickly ensue. ■

## How were slings used in ancient warfare?



A RELIEF SCULPTURE SHOWING  
ASSYRIAN SLINGERS ATTACKING  
A JEWISH FORTIFIED TOWN

© Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY

The sling was the weapon that David used to slay the giant Goliath. David apparently learned to use this weapon during his years as a shepherd boy.—1 Samuel 17:40-50.

The sling is depicted in both the Egyptian and the Assyrian art from Bible times. The weapon consisted of an open pocket of leather or cloth attached to two straps or cords. The slinger would place in this pouch a smooth or rounded stone measuring two to three inches (5 to 7.5 cm) in diameter and weighing perhaps nine ounces (250 g). He would then whirl the sling above his head and release one of the cords, causing the stone to fly out with great force and accuracy.

Excavations in the Middle East have yielded great numbers of slingstones from wars in ancient times. Skilled warriors may have slung stones at speeds of 100 to 150 miles an hour (160 to 240 km/h). Scholars disagree on whether the sling had the range of a bow, but a sling could certainly prove just as lethal.—Judges 20:16. ■



# She Survived the Sword of Grief



**M**ARY sank to her knees, her agony too deep for words. Still echoing in her ears was her son's last outcry as he died after hours of torment. The sky had gone dark at midday. Now the earth shook violently. (Matthew 27:45, 51) It may have seemed to Mary that Jehovah himself was letting the world know that he, more than anyone else, was deeply hurt by the death of Jesus Christ.

As the afternoon light dispelled the gloom shrouding Golgotha, or Skull Place, Mary grieved for her son. (John 19:17, 25) Memories likely flooded her mind. One that may have surfaced was a recollection from some 33 years earlier. When she and Joseph had just presented their precious baby at the temple in Jerusalem, an aged man named Simeon was inspired to utter a prophecy. He foretold great things for Jesus, but he added that one day, Mary would come to feel as if she were run through by a long sword. (Luke 2:25-35) Only now, in this tragic hour, did she fully grasp the truth of those words.

It has been said that the death of one's own child is the worst, the most painful, loss that a human can face. Death is a terrible enemy, and it wounds all of us in one way or another. (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:26) Is it possible to survive such wounds? As we consider Mary's life from the start of Jesus' ministry to the time of his death and just beyond, we will learn much about the faith that helped Mary to survive the sword of grief.

## **“DO WHATEVER HE TELLS YOU”**

Let us go back three and a half years: Mary sensed that change was coming. Even in the little town of Nazareth, people were talking about John the Baptist and his stirring message of repentance. Mary could see that her eldest son viewed the news as a signal; it was time to embark on his ministry. (Matthew 3:1, 13) For Mary and her household, Jesus' absence would mean an upheaval of sorts. Why?

It seems likely that Mary's husband, Joseph, had already died. If so, Mary was no stranger to loss.\* Jesus was now called not only “the carpenter's son” but also “the carpenter.” Evidently, Jesus had taken over his father's business and had assumed the role of provider for the family, which included at least six children who were born after him. (Matthew 13:55, 56; Mark 6:3) Even if Jesus had been training James—likely the next oldest son—to carry on the trade, the departure of the eldest would not be easy for the family. Mary already bore a heavy load; did she dread this transition? We can only guess. But here is a more important question: How would she respond when Jesus of Nazareth became Jesus Christ, the long-promised Messiah? One Bible account reveals something in that regard.—John 2:1-12.

\* After figuring in an incident that occurred when Jesus was 12 years old, Joseph is absent from the Gospel record. Thereafter, Jesus' mother and her other children appear but not Joseph. Jesus is once called “the son of Mary” with no reference to Joseph.—Mark 6:3.

Jesus went to John to get baptized, then became God's Anointed One, or Messiah. (Luke 3: 21, 22) Then he began to select his disciples. Urgent though his work was, he still took time for happy occasions with family and friends. Along with his mother, his disciples, and his fleshly brothers, he went to a wedding feast at Cana, which was evidently a hilltop town some eight miles (13 km) from Nazareth. During the festivities, Mary became aware of a problem. Perhaps she noticed that some among the family of the couple exchanged panicky glances and urgent whispers. They had run out of wine! In their culture, such a lapse of customary hospitality would shame the family, marring the occasion terribly. Mary felt for them, and she turned to Jesus.

"They have no wine," she told her son. What did she expect him to do? We can only imagine, but she knew that her son was a great man who would do great things. Perhaps she hoped he would start now. In effect, she was saying to him, "Son, please do something about this!" Jesus' reply must have surprised her. He said: "Woman, why is that of concern to me and to you?" Jesus' words contained no disrespect, although they have been misinterpreted that way. His words

did, however, convey a gentle reproof. Jesus was reminding his mother that she really did not have a say in the way he directed his ministry; that was reserved for his Father, Jehovah.

Mary accepted her son's correction, for she was a sensitive and humble woman. She turned to those serving at the feast and said simply: "Do whatever he tells you." Mary saw that it was no longer her place to direct her son; rather, she and others should take direction from him. For his part, Jesus showed that he shared his mother's compassion for this newly married couple. He performed the first of his miracles, turning water into fine wine. The result? "His disciples put their faith in him." Mary too put her faith in Jesus. She looked at him not just as her son but as her Lord and Savior.

Parents today can learn much from Mary's faith. Granted, no one else has ever raised a child quite like Jesus. But when any child, however imperfect, becomes an adult, the transition may present challenges. A parent might tend to continue treating a son or daughter as a young child, though such treatment may no longer be appropriate. (1 Corinthians 13:11) How can a parent be helpful to grown offspring? One way is to express sincere confidence that a faithful son or daughter will continue to apply Bible teachings and receive Jehovah's blessing as a result. A parent's humble expressions of faith and confidence may do grown children much good. Jesus no doubt cherished Mary's support during the eventful years that followed.

#### **"HIS BROTHERS WERE . . . NOT EXERCISING FAITH IN HIM"**

The Gospels tell us relatively little about Mary during the three and a half years of Jesus' ministry. Keep in mind, though, that she was likely a widow—a single mother at that, perhaps with young ones still at home. It is quite understandable if she was unable to follow Jesus as he preached throughout his homeland. (1 Timothy 5:8) Still, she continued to meditate on spiritual things that she had learned about the Messiah

Mary was stabbed to the heart by grief



and to attend meetings in her local synagogue as had always been the family custom.—Luke 2:19, 51; 4:16.

Is it not possible, then, that she was sitting in the audience when Jesus spoke at the synagogue in Nazareth? What a thrill for her to hear her son announce that a centuries-old Messianic prophecy was now fulfilled in him! It must have been distressing, though, to see that her fellow Nazarenes did not accept her son. They even tried to kill him!—Luke 4:17-30.

Also distressing was the way her other sons responded to Jesus. We learn at John 7:5 that Jesus' four brothers did not have their mother's faith. We read: "His brothers were . . . not exercising faith in him." As to Jesus' sisters—of whom there were at least two—the Bible is silent.\* In any event, Mary came to know the peculiar pain of living in a home where differing religious viewpoints prevailed. She had to strive for the balance of remaining loyal to divine truth while working to win over the hearts of her family members without being overbearing or combative.

On one occasion, a group of relatives—no doubt including Jesus' brothers—decided to go and "seize" Jesus. They were actually saying: "He has gone out of his mind." (Mark 3:21, 31) Mary, of course, thought no such thing, but she went with her sons, perhaps in the hope that they would learn something that would help them to grow in faith. Did they? Although Jesus kept performing astounding works and teaching wonderful truths, Mary's other sons still did not believe. Did she wonder, in near exasperation, just what it would take to reach their hearts?

Do you live in a religiously divided home? Mary's faith can teach you a great deal. She did not give up on her unbelieving relatives. Rather, she chose to let them see that her faith brought her joy and peace of mind. On the other hand, she remained supportive of her faithful son. Did she miss Jesus? Did she at times wish that he

\* Joseph was not Jesus' biological father, so these siblings were technically Jesus' half brothers and half sisters.—Matthew 1:20.



Many of Jesus' illustrations show the influence of his training by Joseph and Mary

were still at home with her and her family? If so, she kept such feelings in check. She saw it as a privilege to be supportive and encouraging to Jesus. Can you likewise help your children to put God first in life?

### **"A LONG SWORD WILL BE RUN THROUGH YOU"**

Was Mary's faith in Jesus rewarded? Jehovah never fails to reward faith, and surely Mary's case was no exception. (Hebrews 11:6) Just imagine what it was like for her to hear her son speak or to hear reports of his sermons from others who heard them firsthand.

In her son's illustrations, did Mary detect some echoes of Jesus' childhood as he was growing up in Nazareth? When Jesus spoke of a woman sweeping her house to find a lost coin, grinding flour for bread, or lighting a lamp and setting it atop a stand, did Mary think of that little boy who had been at her side as she carried out such daily tasks? (Luke 11:33; 15:8, 9; 17:35) When Jesus said that his yoke was kindly and his load light, did Mary think back on some golden afternoon long ago when she watched Joseph teach a young Jesus how to make and shape a yoke with care so that an animal could bear it in comfort? (Matthew 11:30) Surely Mary found immense satis-



faction in contemplating the privilege that Jehovah had given her in life—that of helping to raise and train the son who would become the Messiah. She must have found unique joy in listening to Jesus, the greatest of human teachers, who took such commonplace objects and scenes and drew from them the most profound of lessons!

Yet, Mary remained humble. Her son never set her up for adulation, let alone worshipful devotion. During his ministry, a woman in the crowd cried out that Jesus' mother must truly be happy for giving birth to him. He replied: "No, rather, happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!" (Luke 11:27, 28) And when some in a crowd pointed out to Jesus that his mother and his brothers were near, he said that those who believed were really his mothers and brothers. Far from taking offense, Mary surely understood Jesus' point—spiritual ties are far more important than fleshly ones.—Mark 3:32-35.

Still, what words could convey the pain that Mary felt as she saw her son suffer a terrible death on a torture stake? An eyewitness to the execution, the apostle John, later included this telling detail in his account: During the ordeal, Mary was standing "by the torture stake of Jesus." Nothing could prevent that loyal, loving mother from standing by her son to the very last. Jesus saw her, and though every breath he drew was an agony and every word he uttered cost him dearly, he spoke. He placed his mother in the care

of his beloved apostle John. Since Jesus' fleshly brothers were still unbelievers, Jesus entrusted Mary to none of them but to a sincere follower of his. Jesus thus showed how important it is for a man of faith to care for those who are his own, especially when it comes to their spiritual needs.—John 19:25-27.

When Jesus' death at last came, Mary felt the pain foretold so long ago, the piercing long sword of grief. If we find it hard to imagine the extent of her grief, how much more so are we at a loss to imagine the joy she felt three days later! Mary learned of the greatest of all miracles—Jesus had been resurrected! And her joy was compounded, for Jesus later appeared to his half brother James, no doubt in private. (1 Corinthians 15:7) That meeting affected James and Jesus' other half brothers as well. We later learn that they came to believe in Jesus as the Christ. Soon, they were at Christian meetings with their mother, "persisting in prayer." (Acts 1:14) Two of them, James and Jude, later wrote books of the Bible.

We find the last mention of Mary at the meetings with her sons, praying. What a fitting end to Mary's record, and what an example she left behind! Because of her faith, she survived the sword of grief and received, at last, a glorious reward. If we imitate her faith, we too will survive whatever wounds this hard world inflicts on us and we will enjoy rewards greater than we can imagine. ■

Mary was delighted to see her other sons become loyal Christians



## Who really rules this world?

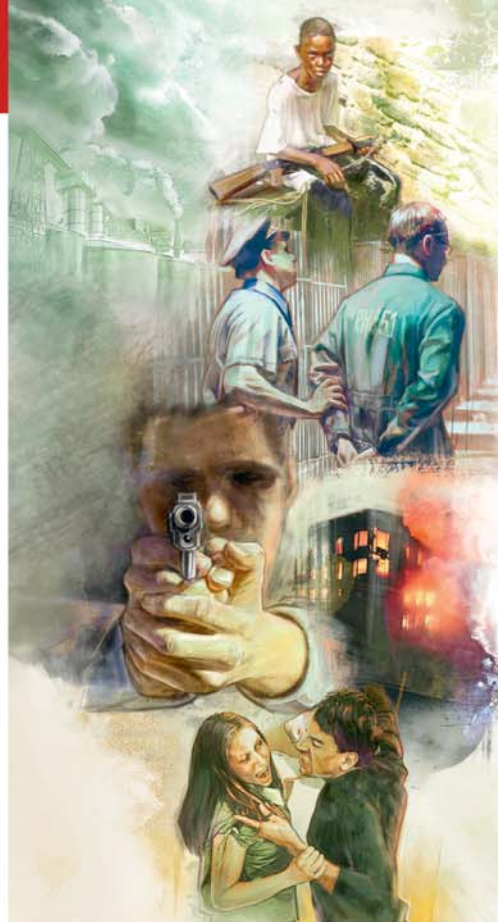
Many people believe that the true God is the ruler of this world. But if that were true, would the earth be so filled with suffering? (Deuteronomy 32:4, 5) According to the Bible, the world is under the control of someone evil.—**Read 1 John 5:19.**

How did someone evil gain control over mankind? At the beginning of human history, an angel rebelled against God and urged the first human pair to rebel too. (Genesis 3:1-6) The couple chose to obey that rebel angel, Satan, making him their ruler. Almighty God is the only rightful Ruler, but he wants people to choose his rulership because they love him. (Deuteronomy 6:6; 30:16, 19) Sadly, most of mankind have been misled into making the same bad choice as did the first human pair.—**Read Revelation 12:9.**

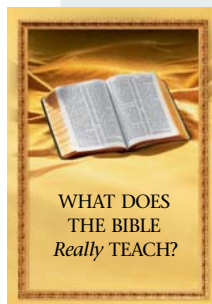
## Who will resolve man's problems?

Will God allow Satan to continue his wicked rule? No! God will use Jesus to undo the evil that Satan has done.—**Read 1 John 3:8.**

Empowered by God, Jesus will destroy Satan. (Romans 16:20) Then, God will rule mankind and restore the human race to the life of happiness and peace he originally intended.—**Read Revelation 21:3-5.**



If God were the ruler of this world, would there be so much suffering?



For more information, see chapter 3 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Also available at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org)

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