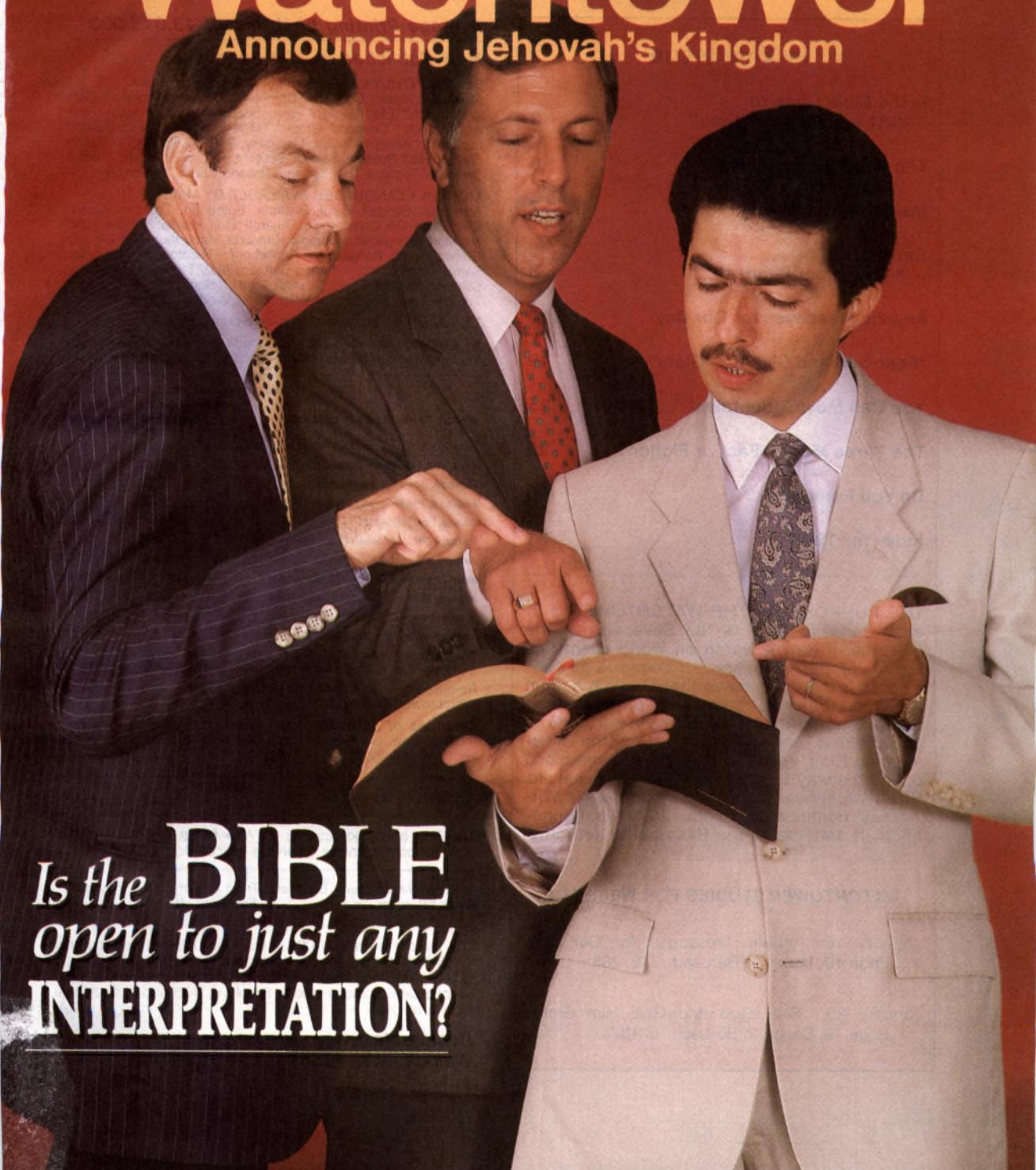


The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom

December 15, 1988



*Is the BIBLE
open to just any
INTERPRETATION?*

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THE PURPOSE OF THE WATCHTOWER is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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"YOU are just skipping around in the Bible, picking out the scriptures that fit your interpretation," complained the lady to one of Jehovah's Witnesses who was calling at her door.

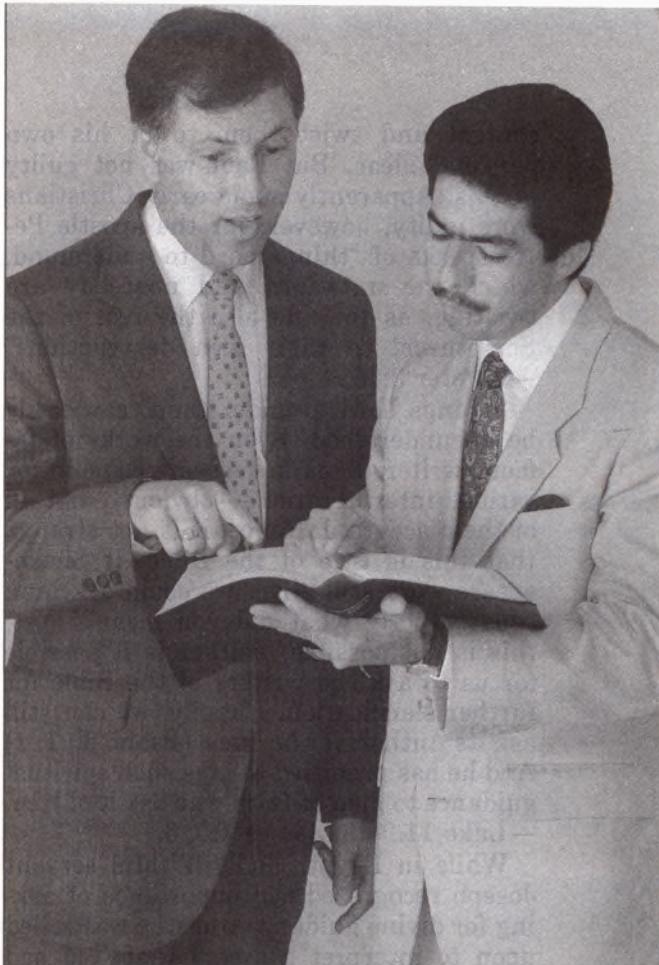
But is referring to texts in different parts of the Bible actually a proof that a person is trying to interpret it to fit his own ideas? And if so, does this mean that the Bible is open to just *any* interpretation—one being just as legitimate as any other?

Is the BIBLE open to just any INTERPRETATION?

Let the Author Have His Say

Whereas the Bible has only one Author, Jehovah God, it does have many writers. These some 40 Bible writers never contradict one another—which, by the way, is a proof of God's authorship—yet no one Bible writer says all there is to say about any particular subject. So to understand what the Author of the Bible says about a subject, it is necessary to gather together all the scriptures germane to the subject under discussion. This is what the above-mentioned Witness was trying to do.

He was on sound footing. For instance, open your Bible to Romans chapter 9. Here you will find an outstanding example of how the faithful



Christian Paul did the same thing. In this one chapter alone, Paul quotes 11 times from other parts of the Bible. Some critic might even charge that Paul does a considerable amount of "skipping around." Starting with the first book of the Bible, he skips over to the 39th book, before continuing with the 2nd, the 28th, and finally, the 23rd book of the Bible.*

Of course, it would have been wrong for Paul to take scriptures out of their

* The quotations are found in Romans chapter 9, verses 7 (Genesis 21:12), 9 (Genesis 18:14), 12 (Genesis 25:23), 13 (Malachi 1:2, 3), 15 (Exodus 33:19), 17 (Exodus 9:16), 25 (Hosea 2:23), 26 (Hosea 1:10), 27, 28 (Isaiah 10:22, 23), 29 (Isaiah 1:9), and 33 (Isaiah 28:16).

context and twist them to fit his own personal ideas. But Paul was not guilty of this. Apparently some early Christians were guilty, however, for the apostle Peter speaks of "things hard to understand, which the untaught and unsteady are twisting, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction." —2 Peter 3:16.

"Things hard to understand" can easily be misunderstood. Even the works of famous writers like Shakespeare come in for various interpretations—obviously not all of them accurate. Hence, it is not strange that this is true of the Bible. If Shakespeare were still alive, we could ask him: "Just exactly what did you mean?" Yet, this is not possible; neither is it possible for us to ask the writers of the Bible for further clarification. Happily, we can still ask its Author, for he lives! (Psalm 90:1, 2) And he has promised to give such spiritual guidance to men of faith who ask it of him.

—Luke 11:9-13; James 1:5, 6.

While in Egypt, God's faithful servant Joseph recognized the importance of asking for divine guidance when he was called upon to interpret a dream that God had given to Egypt's ruler. "Do not interpretations belong to God?" he had earlier asked. After Joseph gave the correct interpretation, Pharaoh was moved to say: "Can another man be found like this one in whom the spirit of God is?" And to Joseph he said: "Since God has caused you to know all this, there is no one as discreet and wise as you are." —Genesis 40:8; 41:38, 39.

The variety of contradicting interpretations we find today among so-called Christians is not the fault of the Bible's Author, nor is it the fault of Bible writers. As God's prophets, these "spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit." (2 Peter 1:20, 21) It is the fault of Bible readers who have failed to follow the leadings of God's spirit in allowing God to

interpret his own Word. They have allowed personal ideas to cloud their view of what the Bible's Author himself says. Let us take two examples.

What Is the Punishment for Sin?

Some people have been taught to believe that the punishment for sin is everlasting conscious torment in hellfire. Such people may read Revelation 20:10, which speaks of the Devil's being "hurled into the lake of fire and sulphur," and they interpret it to support their views. Of course, this does not agree with Ecclesiastes 9:5, which says that the dead "are conscious of nothing at all"; nor does it agree with Romans 6:23, which states that "the wages sin pays is death," not conscious torment. Still, some might wonder, does not Revelation 20:10 say that Satan (and, supposedly, persons misled by him) "will be tormented day and night forever and ever"?

In the first century, the Greek word for "torment"—here used by the Bible writer John—had a special connotation. Since prisoners were sometimes tortured (although this was contrary to God's law), jailers became known as tormentors.

Another Bible writer refers to this when speaking about an unfaithful slave whose master "delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him." (Matthew 18:34, *King James Version*) Commenting on this text, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* says: "Probably the imprisonment itself was regarded as 'torment' (as it doubtless was), and the 'tormentors' need mean nothing more than jailers."

We can thus see that by comparing scriptures and taking into consideration their meaning in the languages in which the Bible was written, it is possible to arrive at an interpretation that agrees with the rest of the Bible. Free from pre-

conceived ideas, we can clearly see that Revelation 20:10 is no proof of everlasting torment in hellfire. The fate for all rebels against God is everlasting imprisonment in death. Their destruction is as complete as though they were hurled into a literal fiery lake.

What Is Earth's Destiny?

According to 2 Peter 3:10 (*KJ*), "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." Some people interpret this to mean that the globe will be destroyed, possibly in a nuclear holocaust. Yet, in view of what the Bible's Author says elsewhere, how can that be? At Psalm 104:5 (*KJ*) the psalmist, under inspiration, stated that God "laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever." Wise King Solomon, also speaking under inspiration, said at Ecclesiastes 1:4 (*KJ*) that "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever."

A contradiction? No, the Bible's Author, a God of truth, cannot contradict himself. Then how can these two verses be reconciled? Let us consider the context of 2 Peter 3:10.

In verses 5 and 6 Peter speaks about the Flood of Noah's day and likens it, in verse 7, to the destruction to come on "the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." What was destroyed in the Flood? Verse 6 says "the world that then was . . . perished." This earthly globe did not perish. Rather, a wicked worldly system did. And when God promised Noah, at Genesis 9:11 (*KJ*), that never again would there "be a flood to destroy the earth," he was obviously not speaking of the planet, for it had not been destroyed. So "the earth" to be destroyed, according to 2 Peter 3:10, is the same kind of "earth" that was destroyed at the Flood—not the planet Earth but a wicked earthly society of people.

—Compare Genesis 11:1, where "earth" is used in a similar way.

Search as you may, you will find no Bible text that contradicts this interpretation. Of necessity then, it must be the correct one from the Bible's Author himself.

Why Not Open to Just Any Interpretation?

What would a housewife think of a recipe book that was open to just any interpretation? Or of what benefit would it be to spend money for a dictionary that allowed its reader to interpret the meaning of words just any way he chose? Is that the kind of guidebook we would expect God to give his creatures? Indeed, in such a case, would it even be proper to speak of it as a guidebook?

Honest, God-fearing persons are not interested in twisting the Scriptures "to their own destruction." (2 Peter 3:16) To avoid doing this, they find all the scriptures dealing with the subject they are trying to understand. When scriptures are found that clearly contradict previously held views, those views are quickly discarded, as they cannot be correct.

Because of having this kind of meek attitude, millions of people who were formerly religiously divided have now achieved religious unity with Jehovah's Witnesses. Instead of wanting to interpret the Bible to fit personal ideas, they have been willing to conform to the obvious interpretation made by the Bible's Author himself.

How good it is to know that the Bible is not open to just any interpretation. When we allow its Author to interpret it for us, it is truly "beneficial for teaching, for reproofing, for setting things straight, for disciplining in righteousness." Then, and only then, will it make us "fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

THE Alexandrine Codex was the first of the major Bible manuscripts to be made accessible to scholars. Its discovery led to the constructive criticism of the Greek Bible text for the benefit of all subsequent translators of the Holy Scriptures. How and when did it come to light?

Kyrillos Loukaris, patriarch of Alexandria, Egypt, was a great collector of books, and in the year 1621, when he became patriarch in Constantinople, Turkey, he

shared in writing it, and the text has been corrected throughout. It is written on vellum, two columns to each page, in uncial (capital) letters without any spaces between words. Most of Matthew is missing, as are some portions of Genesis, Psalms, John, and 2 Corinthians. Now officially designated *Codex A*, it consists of 773 leaves and remains an early witness of considerable importance.

Most Bible manuscripts can be placed into groups, or families, on account of similarities that exist between them. These arose when scribes made their copies from the same source or close exemplars. With the Alexandrine Codex, however, the scribes seemed concerned with bringing together

readings from different families so as to provide as good a text as possible. In fact, it proved to be older and better than any of the Greek manuscripts used as the basis for the *King James Version* of 1611.

The Alexandrine reading of 1 Timothy 3:16 provoked much controversy when it was published. The *King James Version* here reads: "God was manifest in the flesh," in referring to Christ Jesus. But in this ancient codex, the con-

traction for "God," formed by two Greek letters "ΘC," appears originally to have read "OC," the word for "who." Obviously, this meant that Christ Jesus was not "God."

It took more than 200 years and the discovery of other older manuscripts to confirm the rendering "who" or "which" as being correct. Bruce M. Metzger in his *Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* concludes: "No uncial (in the first hand) earlier than the eighth or ninth century . . . supports Θεός [the-os']; all ancient versions presuppose ὁς or ὁ; and no patristic writer prior to the last third of the fourth century testifies to the reading Θεός [the-os']. Today, most translations concur in omitting any reference to "God" in this text."

In 1757 the king's Royal Library became part of the British Library, and this fine codex is now clearly displayed in the manuscript room of the British Museum. It is a treasure well worth seeing.

took with him this Codex Alexandrinus. With the unrest in the Middle East, however, and the possibility that the manuscript might be destroyed if it fell into the hands of Muslims, Loukaris felt that it would be much safer in England. Accordingly, in 1624 he offered it to the British ambassador in Turkey as a gift for the English king, James I. The king died before the manuscript could be handed over, so it was given instead to his successor, Charles I, three years later.

Was this manuscript as valuable as Kyrillos Loukaris felt it was? Yes. It dates back to the early part of the fifth century C.E. Several scribes evidently

Insight on the News

A House Divided

Jesus said that "if a house becomes divided against itself," it cannot stand. (Mark 3:25) This is how the United Church of Canada, that nation's largest Protestant church, finds itself over the issue of homosexuality and ordination of gay men and women.

A resolution adopted by the 32nd General Council of the United Church of Canada permits practicing homosexuals to function as clergymen. According to *The Globe and Mail*, a Canadian newspaper, the resolution states that regardless of their sexual orientation, any "who profess faith in Jesus Christ and obedience to Him are welcome to be or become full members of the Church," and "all members of the Church are eligible to be considered for ordered ministry." A 125-page United Church report says: "There are a variety of sexual orientations: homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual. These ought to be seen as natural and as a gift from God."

Commenting on the church's decision to accept homosexuals as clergymen, the *Globe* explains that "the overriding issue was the church's survival." Since 1972, reports reveal, the church has been steadily losing membership and is in financial trouble. The reason? Clergyman John Tweedie cites "an ongoing exodus from the church as people see it drifting away from its Christian roots." "Hence," reports *The Post of Canada*, "their acceptance of such things as homosexuality, sex outside the marriage bond, abortion on demand, and dissolvable marriages is an overture to a younger generation."

However, does obedience to Christ allow for a compromise of Bible principles? On the contrary, God's Word is clear: "Do not fool yourselves; people who are immoral . . . homosexual perverts . . . none of these will possess God's Kingdom."—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, *Today's English Version*.

Using the Rod

"Spare the Rod, but Note the Consequences" was the title of an article appearing in *The Natal Mercury*, a South African newspaper, lamenting the modern trend of holding back physical punishment from children at home and in school. Who is responsible for this changed attitude toward spanking? Professor Smythe, a pediatrician at the University of Natal, South Africa, places the blame squarely on child psychologists. "Usually on delving into the roots of an emotional issue," Smythe explains, "one finds the change in attitude starting with psychological dogma. At first violently opposed to any form of physical punishment, then appalled by the consequences of the indiscipline resulting from a creed of no frustrations and no inhibitions."

Smythe advocates a balance. "Extremes of permissiveness are as bad as extremes of punishment," he notes, "but the fact that remediation is easier with the overdisciplined than the underdisciplined child favors leaning on the side of discipline when in doubt." The professor emphasizes that the motive for giving physical punishment should be loving concern for the child's present and future welfare.

Such advice is not new but a

return to the infallible Biblical guidance: "The one holding back his rod is hating his son, but the one loving him is he that does look for him with discipline."—Proverbs 13:24; see also Proverbs 23:13, 14.

Gambling Not Sinful?

A Roman Catholic parish recently became the first religious institution in Wisconsin, U.S.A., to apply for a permit to sell lottery tickets, reports *The Sheboygan Press*. While the sales are described as an effort to "augment" weekly collections, the *Press* notes that the main reason behind the proposed selling of lottery tickets "is to increase attendance at its bingo games." The church is reported already to be operating bingo games with profits that "range from \$800 to \$1,000" nightly.

When asked if gambling is really sinful, parish priest Robert Fleishman replied: "I don't know." While conceding that the church's promotion of bingo or the sale of lottery tickets "is perhaps a little out of context with our overall spiritual calling," he added that "if they don't come here, they'll go elsewhere" to spend their money.

Should a religious leader who claims to be a follower of Christ promote gambling? Hardly! Gambling in any form appeals to one of the worst qualities in humans—greed. Those who promote it encourage people to believe that it is right to profit from the losses of others. Yet, God's inspired Word flatly states that greedy persons will *not* inherit God's Kingdom.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3.

Entertained by a Prominent Pharisee

JESUS is a guest in the home of a prominent Pharisee, where he has just healed a man suffering from dropsy. Now, as Jesus observes fellow guests choosing prominent places at the meal, he teaches a lesson in humility.

"When you are invited by someone to a marriage feast," Jesus counsels, "do not lie down in the most prominent place. Perhaps someone more distinguished than you may at the time have been invited by him, and he that invited you and him will come and say to you, 'Let this man have the place.' And then you will start off with shame to occupy the lowest place."

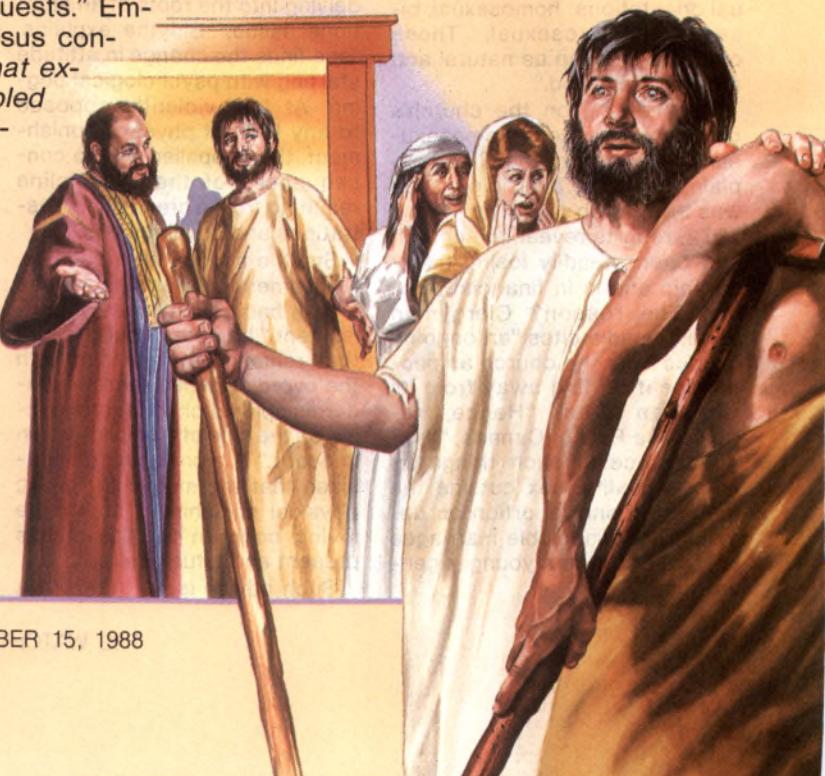
So Jesus advises: "When you are invited, go and recline in the lowest place, that when the man that has invited you comes he will say to you, 'Friend, go on up higher.' Then you will have honor in front of all your fellow guests." Emphasizing the lesson, Jesus concludes: "*For everyone that exalts himself will be humbled and he that humbles himself will be exalted.*"

Next, Jesus addresses the Pharisee who invited him and describes how to provide a dinner having real merit with God. "When you spread a dinner or evening meal, do not call your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors. Perhaps sometime they

might also invite you in return and it would become a repayment to you. But when you spread a feast, invite poor people, crippled, lame, blind; and you will be happy, because they have nothing with which to repay you."

Providing such a meal for the unfortunate will bring happiness to the provider of it because as Jesus explains to his host: "You will be repaid in the resurrection of the righteous ones." Jesus' description of this meritorious meal calls to the mind of a fellow guest another kind of meal. "Happy is he who eats bread in the kingdom of God," this guest says. Yet, not all properly prize that happy prospect, as Jesus goes on to show by an illustration.

"A certain man was spreading a grand evening meal, and he invited many. And he sent his slave out . . . to say to the invited ones, 'Come, because things are



now ready.' But they all in common started to beg off. The first said to him, 'I bought a field and need to go out and see it; I ask you, Have me excused.' And another said, 'I bought five yoke of cattle and am going to examine them; I ask you, Have me excused.' Still another said, 'I just married a wife and for this reason I cannot come.'

What lame excuses! A field or live-stock are normally examined before they are bought, so no real urgency exists to look at them afterward. Similarly, a person's marriage should not prevent him from accepting such an important invitation. So on hearing about these excuses, the master becomes angry and commands his slave:

"Go out quickly into the broad ways and the lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' In time the slave said, 'Master, what you ordered has been done, and yet there is room.' And the master said to the slave, 'Go out

into the roads and the fenced-in places, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.... None of those men that

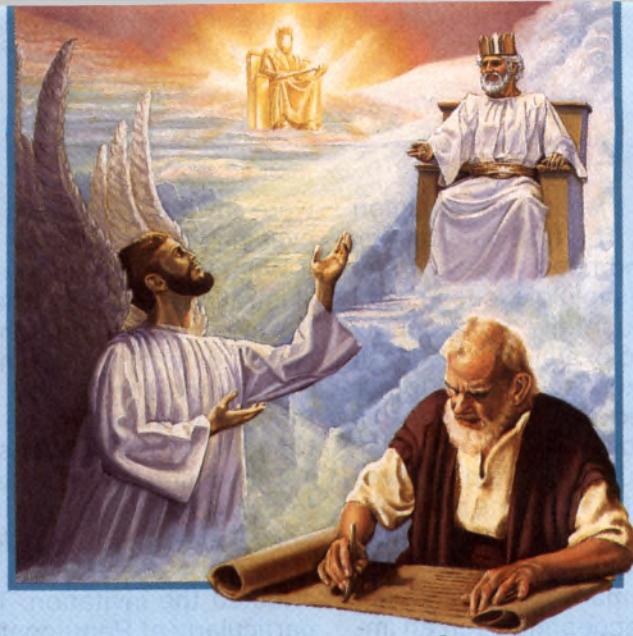
were invited shall have a taste of my evening meal."

What situation is described by the illustration? Well, "the master" providing the meal represents Jehovah God; "the slave" extending the invitation, Jesus Christ; and the "grand evening meal," the opportunities to be in line for the Kingdom of the heavens.

Those first to receive the invitation to come in line for the Kingdom were, above all others, the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day. However, they rejected the invitation. Thus, beginning particularly at Pentecost 33 C.E., a second invitation was extended to the despised and lowly ones of the Jewish nation. But not enough responded to fill the 144,000 places in God's heavenly Kingdom. So in 36 C.E., three and a half years later, the third and final invitation was extended to uncircumcised non-Jews, and the gathering of such ones continued into the 20th century. Luke 14:1-24.

- ♦ What lesson in humility does Jesus teach?
- ♦ How can a host provide a meal having merit with God, and why will it bring him happiness?
- ♦ Why are the excuses of the invited guests lame?
- ♦ What is represented by Jesus' illustration of the "grand evening meal"?





Angelic Messages for Our Day

"God . . . sent forth his angel and presented it in signs."
—REVELATION 1:1.

APOCALYPSE. How often has that name been heard in this 20th century—but how woefully misunderstood! In the Biblical sense, it does not refer to the annihilation of all mankind in a nuclear holocaust. Rather, this Greek word means "unveiling." By prophetic pictures, the Bible book Apocalypse, or Revelation, unveils developments that climax in the dawning of an age of eternal happiness for humanity. Thus, Jesus' apostle John introduces Revelation with the words: "Happy is he who reads aloud and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and who observe the things written in it; for the appointed time is near."—Revelation 1:3.

² The world today is not happy. The reason for its unhappiness is stated in a song that Moses composed some 3,460 years ago: "They have acted ruinously on their own part; they are not [God's] children, the defect

is their own. A generation crooked and twisted!" (Deuteronomy 32:5) How well those words fit the modern generation, whose values are so twisted and warped! For example, the foreword of *World Military and Social Expenditures* 1987-88 states bluntly: "Lives of all nations are warped by the arms race. The United States and the Soviet Union together spend about \$1.5 billion a day on military defense. Yet the United States ranks eighteenth among all nations in infant mortality, the USSR forty-sixth. The developing countries spend almost four times as much on arms as on health care of their people. Yet hundreds of millions in those countries are hungry; 20 percent of their children die before their fifth birthday."

³ Other factors add to this ruinous course—the breakdown in morals and in the family unit, the crime and terror that stalk the earth, the lovelessness and lawlessness of the present generation. How happy we can be that Jehovah purposes "to bring to ruin those ruining the earth"! (Revelation 11:18) In thrilling detail, the Bible book of Revelation,

1. What misunderstanding is there about the name Apocalypse, and what does Revelation reveal about the future?

2, 3. Why is this such an unhappy world, and what does Jehovah purpose to do?

in a series of 16 visions, describes how he will accomplish this.

"Angels" and "Signs"

⁴ Revelation sheds light on the Bible's first prophecy, at Genesis 3:15, showing how enmity between Satan and God's womanly organization, and between their two 'seeds,' is resolved. It discloses Jehovah's judgment of his enemies and of those who love him and support his sovereignty. Revelation is conveyed to John "in signs" by an angel. Other angels, or messengers, share in making known and acting out those signs. The most prominent angel is introduced at Revelation 1:5 as "Jesus Christ, 'the Faithful Witness,' 'The firstborn from the dead,' and 'The Ruler of the kings of the earth.'" The "signs," or visions, depict him also as a "Lion," as a "Lamb," as "Michael," and several times as a mighty angel.—Revelation 5:5, 13; 9:1, 11; 10:1; 12:7; 18:1.

⁵ The first vision, at Revelation 1:10–3:22, features stirring messages that the glorified Jesus conveys to the "angels," or overseers, of seven Asian congregations that picture the entire global congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses in "the Lord's day." So the messages are for *us* today! We should be diligent to "hear what the spirit says to the congregations," for these warnings and admonitions are for *our* encouragement, that we may be faithful—approved because of our deeds and our "love and faith and ministry and endurance."—Revelation 1:10; 2:7, 10, 19.

⁶ Like the congregation at Ephesus, we may have labored loyally and hated the deeds of sectarian apostates, but if our own love has dimmed in any way, let us return repentantly to our first love, with all its fire of enthusiasm! Like the spiritually rich Christians in Smyrna,

4. How are angels involved in Revelation, and how do the visions depict the most prominent angel?
5. What is featured in the first vision of Revelation, and how does it involve us?
6. How can we benefit from each of the messages sent to the seven Asian congregations?

let us fearlessly strive for the reward, proving ourselves "faithful even to death," should that be necessary. Like those tried by Satan in Pergamum, we should repent of any past idolatry, immorality, or sectarianism. The Thyatirans were called on to guard against similar enticements, especially Jezebel-like influences. We too must be on guard! Any who have become dead spiritually, like the Christians in Sardis, must awaken before it is too late. An opened door of service is set before us, as it was before the Philadelphians; may we have power to conquer in the hour of test, as they did! If any of us have become lukewarm like the Laodiceans, we must wake up to our spiritual nakedness and repent. Jesus stands knocking at the door. May all of us welcome him and enjoy an ongoing spiritual meal with him in our 55,000 congregations around the globe!—Revelation 1:11; 2:7, 10, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

God's Throne, a Scroll, and a Question

⁷ In the second vision John sees Jehovah's glorious celestial throne. Our magnificent God appears amid transcendent splendor, attended by four cherubs, hosts of angels, and the resurrected Christian conquerors. How soul-stirring is their song of praise: "You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created!" Jehovah hands a scroll to the One worthy to open it—the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the slaughtered Lamb who becomes our Redeemer. All creation praises Jehovah and the Lamb.—Revelation 4:11; 5:2–5, 11–14.

⁸ Now for the third vision! The Lamb proceeds to open the scroll's seven seals. What do we see? First, the newly crowned Jesus

7. What praises are sung in the second vision, and how do you react?
8. What do we see in Revelation's third vision, and how does it relate to our day?

rides forth in the heavens on a white horse, depicting righteous warfare. Next, the rider of a fiery-red horse engulfs the earth in total warfare. Then comes the black horse of famine, and after it the pale horse of pestilence, whose rider is named Death! Hades follows, to gobble up millions of victims. All of this begins with the "pangs of distress" that struck mankind in 1914-18 and that surviving oldsters of that generation well remember. (Matthew 24:3-8) Those horsemen continue to gallop! And with the opening of the fifth and sixth seals, events move toward 'the great day of the wrath of Jehovah and of the Lamb.' The question is asked: "Who is able to stand?"—Revelation 6:1-17.

Those "Able to Stand"

⁹ The fourth vision unfolds, showing who will survive the day of God's wrath, and why. Angels hold back four winds of destruction from the earth so that the sealing of spiritual Israel—the 144,000—may be completed. "After these things," the vision expands into an awe-inspiring panorama: "Look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne [of God] and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. And they keep on crying with a loud voice, saying: 'Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" (Revelation 7:1-10) Do you see yourself in this picture?

¹⁰ In 1935 attendance worldwide at the Memorial observance of Jesus' death was 32,795. Of these, 27,006 partook of the emblems as being the remaining ones on earth of the 144,000, whose hope is heavenly. Later in that same year, the identity of the great

9. What thrilling disclosure is made in the fourth vision?

10. (a) What does a comparison of the Memorial reports for 1935 and 1987 indicate as to the fulfillment of the fourth vision? (b) What question now involves each of us, and why?

crowd flashed clearly into view. These meek persons, who look forward to life eternal on a paradise earth, also exercise faith in Jesus' shed blood; they come to Jehovah in dedication, submit to baptism, and serve God zealously with the happy prospect of passing alive through "the great tribulation." At the Memorial of 1987, attendance was 8,965,221, with only 8,808 partakers. This indicates that millions today either are of the great crowd or are interested in becoming of that number. Will you be "able to stand" as one of these during 'the great day of the wrath of Jehovah and of the Lamb'? It means your survival to take steps to that end.—Revelation 6:15-17; 7:14-17.

Trumpeting God's Judgments

¹¹ The seventh seal is opened! Into view flashes the fifth vision of Revelation. Seven angels stand before God. They are given seven trumpets, and with these they sound forth proclamations that have been echoed earth wide by Jehovah's people since 1922. The first four announce judgments upon "a third" of mankind, evidently those living in Christendom. These "trumpets" indicate that Christendom's part of "the earth" (Satan's seemingly permanent system of things) and of "the sea" (the restless masses of mankind), as well as her 'rivers and fountains of waters' (the doctrines and philosophies of Christendom) and her darkened luminaries (the clergy, devoid of spiritual light), are all targets of God's wrath. A flying "eagle," picturing an angel, next appears in midheaven, announcing that the three trumpet blasts yet to come will mean "woe, woe, woe to those dwelling on the earth."—Revelation 8:1-13.

¹² So the fifth angel sounds his trumpet. Behold! "A star"—the Lord Jesus—opens the smoky pit of the abyss, and a horde of locusts

11. What judgments are trumpeted forth in the fifth vision, and how do these relate to our day?

12. Who opens the pit of the abyss, and how in modern times has a swarm of "locusts" stung the clergy?

swarms forth. Strikingly, this depicts Jesus releasing God's anointed witnesses from inactivity in 1919. With divine authority, these devastate the pastures of the clergy, exposing their false teachings and hypocrisy "five months"—the normal life span of a locust. This confirms that the generation of modern-day locusts "will by no means pass away" until Jehovah and Christ will have completed judging the nations. Already, the locust band have left with the people thousands of millions of Bible-based publications, with fiery judgment messages that sting like scorpion tails. John comments: "The one woe is past. Look! Two more woes are coming after these things."—Revelation 9:1-12; Matthew 24:34; 25:31-33.

¹³ The sixth trumpet sounds, introducing the second "woe." Four angels are released from the vicinity of the Euphrates River, aptly picturing the release in 1919 of God's anointed witnesses from Babylonian captivity. They have been prepared to "kill a third of the men," making known that Christendom's clergy are dead from Jehovah's viewpoint. But help is needed to expand this witness work, and Jehovah provides this by bringing in a great crowd of fellow workers. The anointed witnesses and these helpers charge forth together as the innumerable cavalry, "two myriads of myriads." Their authority is "in their mouths" in that they speak Jehovah's judgment messages at the people's homes, and it is "in their tails" in that they leave behind them Bible literature proclaiming his fast-approaching day of vengeance.—Revelation 9:13-21; Acts 20:20, 21.

¹⁴ Now the sixth vision unfolds. We behold

13. (a) Who are pictured by the four angels that are released from the vicinity of the Euphrates River, and what work do they have? (b) Who are the myriads of cavalry, and how is it that their authority is "in their mouths and in their tails"?

14. (a) Who is the "strong angel" in the sixth vision, and what does he do and say? (b) What is denoted by the little scroll's tasting "sweet as honey" and yet "bitter to the belly"?

a "strong angel," evidently the Lord Jesus in a special role. He has a little scroll in his hand. Voices and thunders are heard, and then the angel swears by our Grand Creator: "There will be no delay any longer; but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to blow his trumpet, the sacred secret of God . . . is indeed brought to a finish." John is told to take the little scroll and eat it. In his mouth it is "sweet as honey," just as the Kingdom message, with its promised blessings of "a new heaven and a new earth," is so delectable to the anointed John class and its companions today. But, by contrast, the commission to declare God's day of vengeance "with regard to peoples and nations and tongues and many kings" is hard for some to stomach. Take courage, though! Be strong in faith that Jehovah will provide the needed strength as you proclaim his day of vengeance.—Revelation 10:1-11; 21:1, 4; 1 John 5:4; Isaiah 40:29-31; 61:1, 2.

The Seventh Trumpet and the Third Woe

¹⁵ After foretelling the enemy's attempt in 1918 to "kill" God's witnesses, and after describing how remarkably "spirit of life from God" revived them in 1919 to give a global witness, John writes: "The second woe is past. Look! The third woe is coming quickly." In what way? The record continues: "And the seventh angel blew his trumpet." So the third woe is linked with the sounding of that last trumpet. And listen! "Loud voices occurred in heaven, saying: 'The kingdom of the world did become the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and ever.'" This is God's Kingdom by Christ Jesus, who with his 144,000 joint heirs brings God's sacred secret to a finish, vindicating the eternal sovereignty of Jehovah

15. (a) What happens when the third woe is announced and the seventh angel blows his trumpet? (b) In what way is the Kingdom proclamation a woe?

CHAPTERS AND VERSES OF EACH VISION:					
<input type="checkbox"/> 1ST VISION	1:10-3:22	<input type="checkbox"/> 6TH VISION	10:1-11:19	<input type="checkbox"/> 11TH VISION	17:1-18
<input type="checkbox"/> 2ND VISION	4:1-5:14	<input type="checkbox"/> 7TH VISION	12:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 12TH VISION	18:1-19:10
<input type="checkbox"/> 3RD VISION	6:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 8TH VISION	13:1-18	<input type="checkbox"/> 13TH VISION	19:11-21
<input type="checkbox"/> 4TH VISION	7:1-17	<input type="checkbox"/> 9TH VISION	14:1-20	<input type="checkbox"/> 14TH VISION	20:1-10
<input type="checkbox"/> 5TH VISION	8:1-9:21	<input type="checkbox"/> 10TH VISION	15:1-16:21	<input type="checkbox"/> 15TH VISION	20:11-21:8
				<input type="checkbox"/> 16TH VISION	21:9-22:5

God, the Almighty. Is this Kingdom proclamation a woe? To the wicked, yes! For it shows how God will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth."—Revelation 11:1-19.

¹⁶ The seventh vision now flashes into view! See, there, God's dutiful heavenly organization, his "woman." She is pregnant and in agony to give birth to a long-awaited child. For the first time—but not the last—in Revelation, a fiery-colored dragon, "the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth," appears, poised to devour the child at birth. The foretold "enmity between [the serpent] and the woman" moves toward a showdown! The woman gives birth to "a son, a male," who is immediately caught away to God's throne.—Revelation 12:1-6, 9; Genesis 3:15; Daniel 2:44; 7:13, 14.

¹⁷ This is the man-child Kingdom, established in the heavens in the historic year 1914. Its King, Christ Jesus, is also called Michael, which means "Who Is Like God?" He answers that question without delay by warring with Satan and hurling that old dragon and his demons down to the earth. Since 1914, it has been "woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time." So this woe, reflected in the sorry condition of mankind today, is

16. What dramatic disclosures are made in the seventh vision?

17. (a) Who is Michael, and how has he lived up to his name since 1914? (b) Distinguish between the 'three woes' and the "woe for the earth" of Revelation 12:12.

not to be confused with the 'three woes' that Jehovah brings on the wicked in judging them.—Revelation 12:7-12.

¹⁸ The Devil has tried to make woe also for Jehovah's loyal slaves on earth. Before and during World War II, he spewed forth a deluge of persecution in an effort to drown out the work of "the remaining ones" of God's womanly organization—those of the 144,000 still serving among mankind. Jehovah saw to it that the earth, Satan's own system of things, swallowed up that flood. However, a wrathful Satan is still bent on waging war against Jehovah's Witnesses. (Revelation 12:13-17) What will the final outcome be? Nine visions are yet to come, and these will tell us!—Habakkuk 2:3.

18. (a) What woe did Satan the Devil try to make for Jehovah's loyal slaves before and during World War II? (b) What is the Devil still determined to do, and what will the remaining visions reveal?

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

- How did Jehovah use angels with regard to the book of Revelation?
- How should Jesus' messages to the seven congregations affect us?
- What has resulted from the blowing of the seven trumpets?
- What is depicted by the swarm of locusts and the innumerable cavalry?
- Why is the birth of God's Kingdom linked to "the third woe"?

THE 16 APOCALYPTIC VISIONS—SOME HIGHLIGHTS



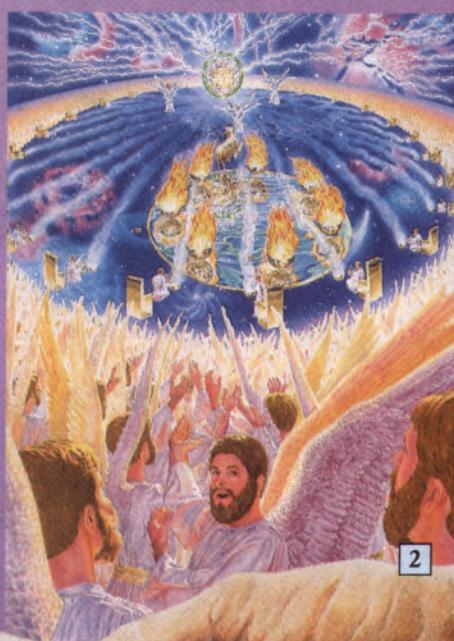
1

1] Jesus, in midst of seven congregational lampstands, sends loving messages through seven stars, the anointed overseers

2] Before Jehovah's celestial throne the victorious Lamb receives a scroll of judgment messages

3] Christ Jesus rides forth to the conquest, as other horsemen afflict mankind and God's day of wrath approaches

4] As angels hold back the great tribulation, gathering of the 144,000 and of the great crowd is completed



2



3

4



5

5 Angels trumpet forth judgment messages, and Jehovah's Witnesses swarm forth like locusts in exposing false religion



6 At the blowing of the seventh trumpet, God's "witnesses" are revived to announce the incoming Kingdom of Jehovah and his Christ

7 Following the birth of the Kingdom in 1914, Christ hurls Satan and his demons down to the earth

8 Two wild beasts appear, and the second political beast breathes life into an image of the first, the UN combine



8

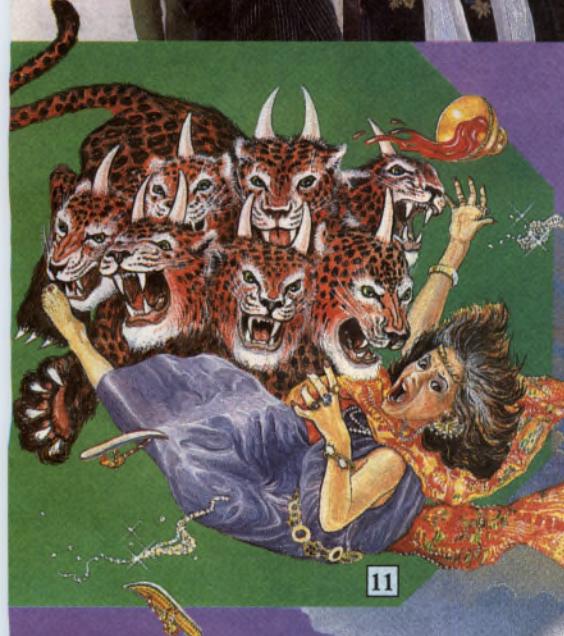
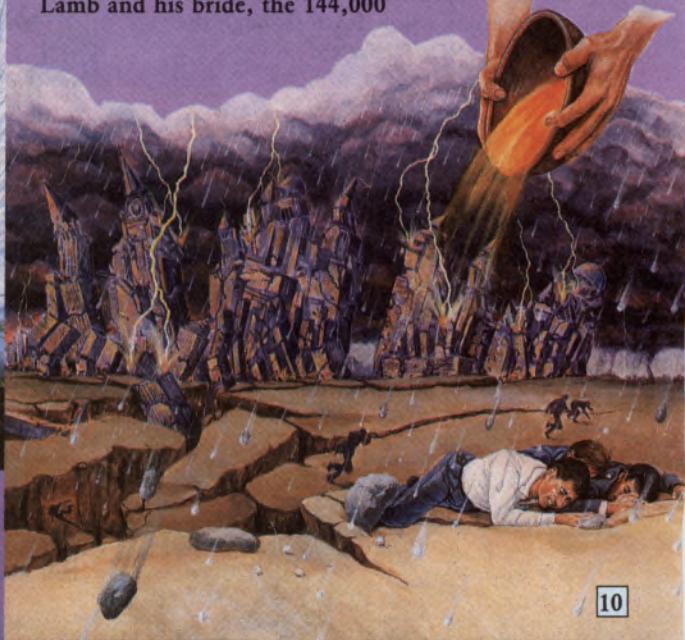


[9] Those of mankind who “fear God and give him glory” are reaped for everlasting life, others for destruction

[10] The pouring out of seven bowls of God’s anger culminates in the execution of all who are motivated by Satan’s polluted “air”

[11] The great harlot, false religion, is unseated from the political “beast,” which then devastates her

[12] Following the destruction of Babylon the Great, preparations are finalized for the marriage of the Lamb and his bride, the 144,000



11



12

[13] After the great harlot's demise, Jesus leads the heavenly armies in destroying the rest of Satan's earthly system

[14] The abyssing of Satan opens the way for the Thousand Year Reign of Christ and his bride, the 144,000

[15] Under the "new heaven" of Christ Jesus and his bride, the "new earth" society of mankind will enjoy untold blessings from Jehovah

[16] God's provisions of healing and life for mankind flow forth through the glorious New Jerusalem



"Fear God and Give Him Glory"

"Fear God and give him glory."—REVELATION 14:7.

WHOM SHOULD WE FEAR? Surely not the fiery-red dragon, Satan, and his hosts of demons! Christ Jesus hurled these out of heaven following the Kingdom's birth in 1914. But the visions of Apocalypse next reveal the organization that Satan uses here on earth in his last-ditch effort to thwart God's purposes. Prominent in this picturization are two ferocious wild beasts and a drunken prostitute—Babylon the Great. Should we be afraid of these? Far from it! Rather, we should fear Jehovah and his Christ, whose Kingdom has now brought Satan's corrupt world to its final judgment.—Proverbs 1:7; Matthew 10:28; Revelation 12:9-12.

Blasphemous Beasts

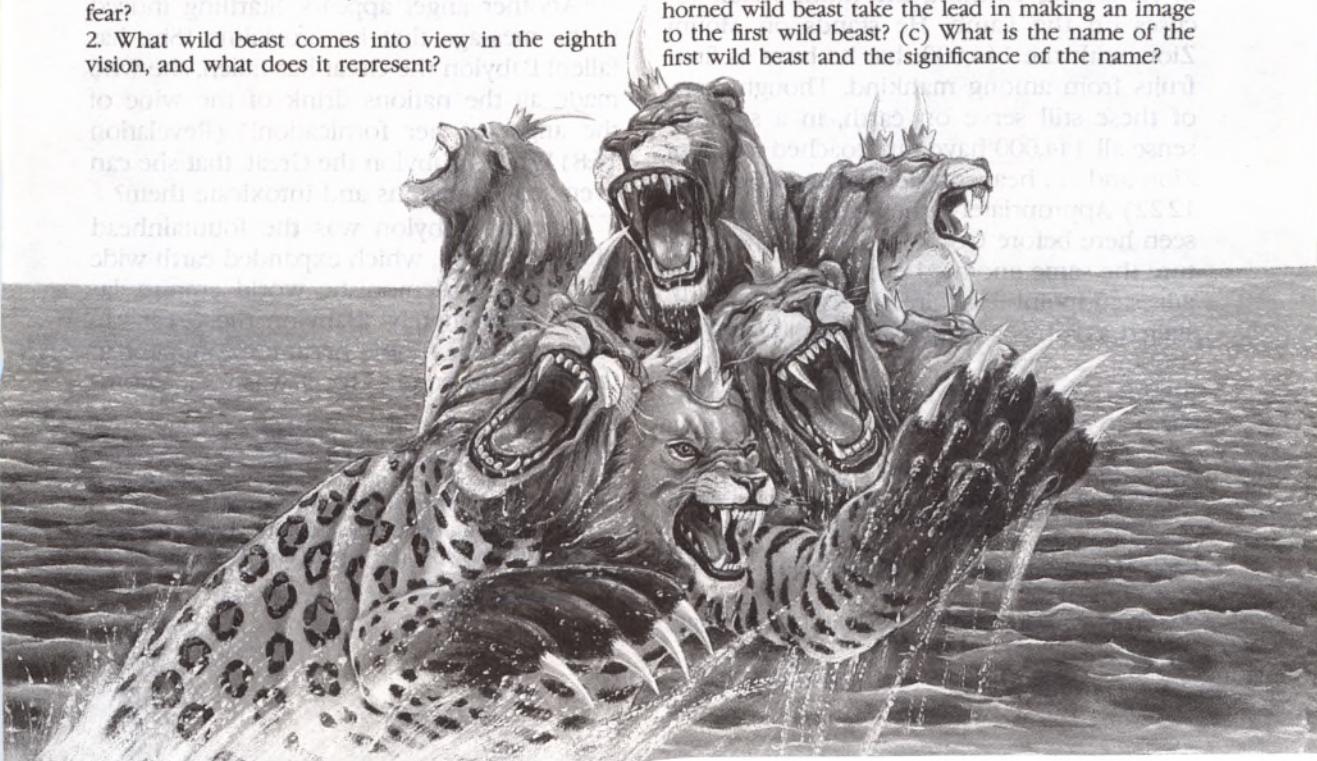
² As the eighth vision of Revelation unfolds, a wild beast rises from the turbulent sea of humankind. It has seven heads and ten horns with ten diadems, signifying regal

1. Whom should we fear, and what should we not fear?
2. What wild beast comes into view in the eighth vision, and what does it represent?

authority bestowed on it by Satan. It blasphemers Jehovah, mauling His servants as would a leopard, a bear, or a lion; but its authority is temporary, being derived from the dragon, Satan, whom it closely resembles. The prophet Daniel had earlier described earthly political governments as beasts, and the governments themselves have often chosen creatures of the wild as their national symbols, such as the British lion and the American eagle. (Daniel 8:5-8, 20-22) Now, though, we see a composite beast, embracing all the political powers of Bible history that have so often oppressed God's true servants on earth. Outstanding "heads" among these have been Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and lastly the Anglo-American Dual World Power.—Revelation 13:1, 2; 12:3, 7-9.

³ During the world war of 1914-18, Great Britain, as the seventh world power,

3. (a) How did one of the heads of the wild beast receive a "sword-stroke"? (b) How does the two-horned wild beast take the lead in making an image to the first wild beast? (c) What is the name of the first wild beast and the significance of the name?



received a "sword-stroke" that could have been fatal. But the United States of America came to her rescue. Since then, America and Britain have cooperated as a dual world power, which John goes on to describe as a wild beast with two horns, coming out of an established human society, "the earth." This two-horned beast takes the lead in making an image to the first wild beast and breathing life into it, portraying how the Anglo-American World Power became chief sponsor and life-giver both to the League of Nations and to its successor, the United Nations. The first wild beast has a number-name, 666. Six is an imperfect number—short of the Biblically perfect seven—so that six to the third degree suggests the woeful imperfection of today's human rulers. Though Jehovah's Witnesses respect government and are exemplary in obeying the laws of the land in which they live, they courageously refuse to *worship* "the wild beast" or its image.—Revelation 13:3-18; Romans 13:1-7.

Fear God—Why?

⁴ For the present, enough of those beasts! In refreshing contrast, the ninth vision focuses on the Lamb. He stands on Mount Zion, with the 144,000 that he buys as first-fruits from among mankind. Though some of these still serve on earth, in a spiritual sense all 144,000 have "approached a Mount Zion and . . . heavenly Jerusalem." (Hebrews 12:22) Appropriately, the 24 elders are also seen here before God's throne, for they picture the same anointed group from a different standpoint—as already raised and installed as kings and priests. The 144,000 are singing "a new song." It stems from their unique experience in being bought from the earth to become Kingdom heirs. The great

4. (a) Who are seen standing on the heavenly Mount Zion, and who are pictured by the 24 elders before God's throne? (b) What is the distinction between the "new song" sung by the anointed and the "new song" sung by the great crowd?

crowd also "sing to Jehovah a new song," but this differs in that they sing in prospect of attaining to everlasting life in the earthly realm of the Kingdom.—Revelation 7:9; 14:1-5; Psalm 96:1-10; Matthew 25:31-34.

⁵ The vision now expands. John sees another angel flying in midheaven. And what glad tidings he has to proclaim! It is everlasting good news, for it means eternal life for those out of every nation and tribe and tongue and people who obey God in this hour of his judgment. In contrast with the gruesome beasts that John has just described, why should not this marvelous God be worshiped, yes, adored? He is the One who created heaven and earth. He is the Source of everything that exists, animate and inanimate. There is strong reason, then, for the angel to command in stentorian tones: "FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY"! The voice of the angel is heard around the earth, and Jehovah's Witnesses echo his rousing invitation to all mankind in some 200 languages.—Revelation 14:6, 7; Isaiah 45:11, 12, 18.

Great Babylon's Fall

⁶ Another angel appears. Startling indeed is the message that he proclaims: "She has fallen! Babylon the Great has fallen, she who made all the nations drink of the wine of the anger of her fornication!" (Revelation 14:8) Who is Babylon the Great, that she can even seduce nations and intoxicate them?

⁷ Ancient Babylon was the fountainhead of false religion, which expanded earth wide to become a demonistic world empire, labeled appropriately "Babylon the Great." In course of time, Rome became prominent in that religious empire, for it was under Rome

5. (a) What news is being proclaimed by the angel flying in midheaven, and why is it everlasting? (b) What command does the angel issue in a loud voice, and why is it so appropriate?

6. What startling news does another angel proclaim?
7. What is Babylon the Great, and how did it develop?

that apostate Christianity developed. Rome continues to be a world center for Babylonish religion. This was clearly apparent in 1986 when the world's religious leaders answered the call of the pope of Rome by assembling with him at Assisi, near Rome, to pray in behalf of the International Year of Peace proclaimed by the United Nations.

⁸ However, Babylon the Great has suffered a great fall! Since 1919 this has been in evidence in the dwindling support for false religion worldwide. Atheistic communism now controls large areas of the earth. Today's youth are being taught evolution, which contradicts God's Word. In Protestant Europe few people attend church anymore, and an itinerant pope is struggling to hold his Catholic empire together. Prayers to the multiplicity of gods of the world's religions obviously go unanswered. Ruth L. Sivard reported: "Twenty-two wars were underway in 1987, more wars than in any previous year in recorded history. The total death toll in these wars so far is at least 2,200,000—and rising fast."^{*} How ineffectual the Assisi prayer meeting proved to be! And yet the pope marked the 1987 anniversary of that assembly by producing a medal with his likeness on one side and a symbol of the prayer meeting on the other. They keep "saying, 'There is peace! There is peace!' when there is no peace."—Jeremiah 6:14.

Babylon's Harlotry Exposed

⁹ Revelation 14:8 shows that Babylon the Great is a fornicatrix. Her clergy have become notorious for their immoral ways. TV evangelizers have sheared their flocks of hundreds of millions of dollars, while at the

same time they were committing blatant immorality. The Catholic priesthood is also much in question, as is indicated by the following report in *The Beacon Journal* of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, January 3, 1988: "Hundreds of children molested by Catholic priests in the United States during the past five years have suffered severe emotional trauma, say parents, psychologists, police officers and attorneys involved in the cases." Sexual immorality has blackened the reputation of many of the clergy of Babylon the Great.

¹⁰ "The wine of the anger of her fornication," though, has particular reference to false religion's courting the rulers, supporting their political campaigns and wars, and compelling the people to worship some nationalistic segment of the wild beast. Politicians have often found religion to be a useful partner in gaining their ends, as can be seen in Hitler's concordat with the Vatican in 1933 and the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39. During World War II, the clergy of Catholic, Protestant, Buddhist, and other religions on both sides acted as though intoxicated by the nationalistic fervor of war. They share a heavy bloodguilt for the tens of millions of soldiers and civilians who have died in war since 1914. The clergy who supported the Fascists and the Nazis are also bloodguilty on account of the Witnesses of Jehovah, and others, who were executed or who died in concentration camps.—Jeremiah 2:34; Revelation 18:3, 24.

¹¹ During the past 74 years, loyal anointed Christians, together with increasing numbers of the great crowd, have continued to FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY. We have

10. (a) At Revelation 18:3, what is denoted by the "fornication" of Babylon the Great? (b) As noted at Revelation 18:24, why do the clergy of Babylon the Great share a heavy bloodguilt?

11. (a) What have the anointed Christians and the great crowd refused to worship? (b) What grand prospects give powerful reason for fearing God and giving him glory?

* *World Military and Social Expenditures 1987-88.*

8. (a) How did Babylon the Great suffer a great fall, and since when is this in evidence? (b) What shows that the prayers of religious leaders for peace go unanswered?

9. The clergy of Babylon the Great have become notorious for what immoral ways?

steadfastly declined to worship any nationalistic segment of the wild beast. We have refused to glorify the beast's image—the League of Nations and the UN—for we realize that "the kingdom of our Lord [Jehovah] and of his Christ" alone can bring in true peace and security. We have been determined to observe "the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." That endurance has its reward! Anointed Christians who "die in union with the Lord" have been counted happy, for "the things they did go right with them." As for any of the great crowd who may die under persecutions, from illness, or by accidents, the friendship that they have cultivated with God assures them of an early resurrection into the "new earth" society. These grand prospects give powerful reason indeed for FEARING GOD AND GIVING HIM GLORY.—Revelation 11:15, 17; 12:10; 14:9-13; 21:1.

¹² As the judgment proceeds, angels call for two harvestings. The first Harvester is clearly Jesus, enthroned in Kingdom glory since 1914, for he rides on a white cloud, is crowned, and is "like a son of man." Now, in the Lord's day, he reaps the earth, first of the remaining anointed Christians and then of the millions of the great crowd. (Compare Matthew 25:31-34; John 15:1, 5, 16.) In contrast, the second harvest is that of "the vine of the earth," which is thrown into "the great winepress of the anger of God." This is the judgment executed at Har-Magedon, when a wicked, tangled human society is uprooted and its poisonous fruit crushed to a pulp. May Jehovah be glorified in clearing the earth of this poisonous vine!—Revelation 14:14-20; 16:14, 16.

"Jehovah . . . Righteous and True"

¹³ In the tenth vision of Revelation, we again behold celestial events before God's

12. What two harvestings take place, and when?

13. (a) In the tenth vision, what song are resurrected anointed ones singing, and what are its words? (b) How are God's righteous judgments clearly expressed in this vision?

throne. What rejoicing attends his presence! Resurrected anointed ones—who came off victorious because of FEARING GOD AND GIVING HIM GLORY—are singing 'the song of Moses and of the Lamb': "Great and wonderful are your works, Jehovah God, the Almighty. Righteous and true are your ways, King of eternity. *Who will not really fear you, Jehovah, and glorify your name*, because you alone are loyal? For all the nations will come and worship before you, because your righteous decrees have been made manifest." God's judgments are indeed righteous and true, as so clearly expressed throughout this vision! The angels pour out seven bowls of God's anger, leading to the gathering of all nations to Har-Magedon and a reminder that "Babylon the Great was remembered in the sight of God"! Timely indeed is the call to FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY.—Revelation 15:1-16:21.

¹⁴ Babylon the Great comes up for repeated mention in Revelation. We see her again as a key figure in visions 11 and 12. She "sits on many waters," controlling peoples and making them drunk with her poisonous, lying doctrines. She herself is drunk with "the blood of the holy ones," whom she has killed in persecutions, and she is bloodguilty with respect to "all those who have been slaughtered on the earth," because of her treacherous warmongering. Her trading partnerships with big business and her monetary bleeding of the people have brought in much ill-gained wealth. Most reprehensible has been her political philandering, even to the point of jockeying for prominence in riding the peace and security beast—the UN. But militarized horns of that very beast are due to rip her apart and destroy her. It is high time for all who FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY to abandon her, "for her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and

14. In visions 11 and 12, what prominent role does Babylon the Great play, and why is it high time to abandon her?

God has called her acts of injustice to mind."—Revelation 17:1-18:24.

¹⁵ The execution of Babylon the Great comes, therefore, as a righteous judgment from Jehovah. In appreciation of this, 'Hallelujahs' ring forth, in heaven and then on earth, attributing salvation, glory, and power to Jehovah. These choruses of "Praise Jah, you people!" express great joy over the eternal destruction of the great harlot. How her devastation contrasts with a most happy event in heaven—the marriage of the Lamb, Christ Jesus, and his bride, the 144,000 faithful overcomers! A thunderous song of praise is raised to "Jehovah our God, the Almighty," yes, "let us rejoice and be overjoyed, and let us give him the glory, because the marriage of the Lamb has arrived and his wife has prepared herself!"—Revelation 19:1-10.

¹⁶ However, before that celestial marriage takes place, vision 13 shows how the issue involving Jehovah's sovereignty is settled. His King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus, accompanied by hosts of angels, "judges and carries on war in righteousness," treading the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty. Every remaining part of Satan's

15. The destruction of the great harlot leads to what songs of praise and is followed by what other happy event?

16. According to vision 13, what issue will finally be settled, and how?

earthly system is smashed to pieces, pulverized! (Revelation 19:11-21) As we view that rapidly approaching triumph through the visions of Revelation, surely we have every reason to FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY!

Glorifying God for Eternity

¹⁷ Visions 14 and 15 of Revelation reveal the happy outcome to all who FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY. With Satan and his demons

abyssed for a thousand years, the heavenly marriage of the Lamb and his bride takes place, and these 144,001 kings and priests rule for a thousand years as they raise humankind to perfection. After a final test, those who continue to FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY will triumph and be approved for everlasting life. These will include billions of the resurrected dead, "the great and the small," who prove worthy of having their names written in the book of life. "A new heaven and a new earth"



This bronze medal was issued in October 1987 on the anniversary of the Prayer for Peace at Assisi. On one side is an image of the "Holy Father" around which is the date and the inscription: "John Paul II Pontifex Maximus." On the other side "Saint Francis" calls for "Peace the Gift of God" at the Assisi Prayer for Peace Meeting

will bring untold blessings to mankind, blessings that are assured, for as Maker of "all things new," Jehovah declares: "Write, because these words are faithful and true."—Revelation 20:1-21:8.

¹⁸ Vision 16 brings to view the climax of

17. What do visions 14 and 15 reveal about the happy outcome to all who fear God and give him glory?

18. According to vision 16, what is the climax of the book of Revelation?



Revelation. What is that? It is a vision of a city. This city, New Jerusalem, is far different from any that man has ever built here on earth—far, far different from Babylon the Great, the city whose apostasy, filthy morals, and political harlotry have so dishonored God. The holy city is pure, clean, precious. It is the Lamb's bride, his helpmeet in dispensing everlasting life to the world of mankind. (John 3:16) No wonder that the call sounds forth loudly, clearly, to get out of the counterfeit city, Babylon the Great!—Revelation 18:4; 21:9–22:5.

¹⁹ Jehovah's dynamic spirit channels through the bride class the impelling invitation: "Come!" Yes, all you meek ones who desire life eternal in a global paradise, come to the "river of water of life," accepting all of Jehovah's provisions through Christ and

19. (a) What invitation is being issued through the bride class, and how do meek ones respond? (b) Our giving a positive response to the command "Fear God and give him glory" will result in what?

his bride for gaining everlasting life! What a marvelous prospect—human life in perfection on a paradise earth! It will be the reward to the many who give a positive answer to the command: "FEAR GOD AND GIVE HIM GLORY"!—Revelation 22:6–21.

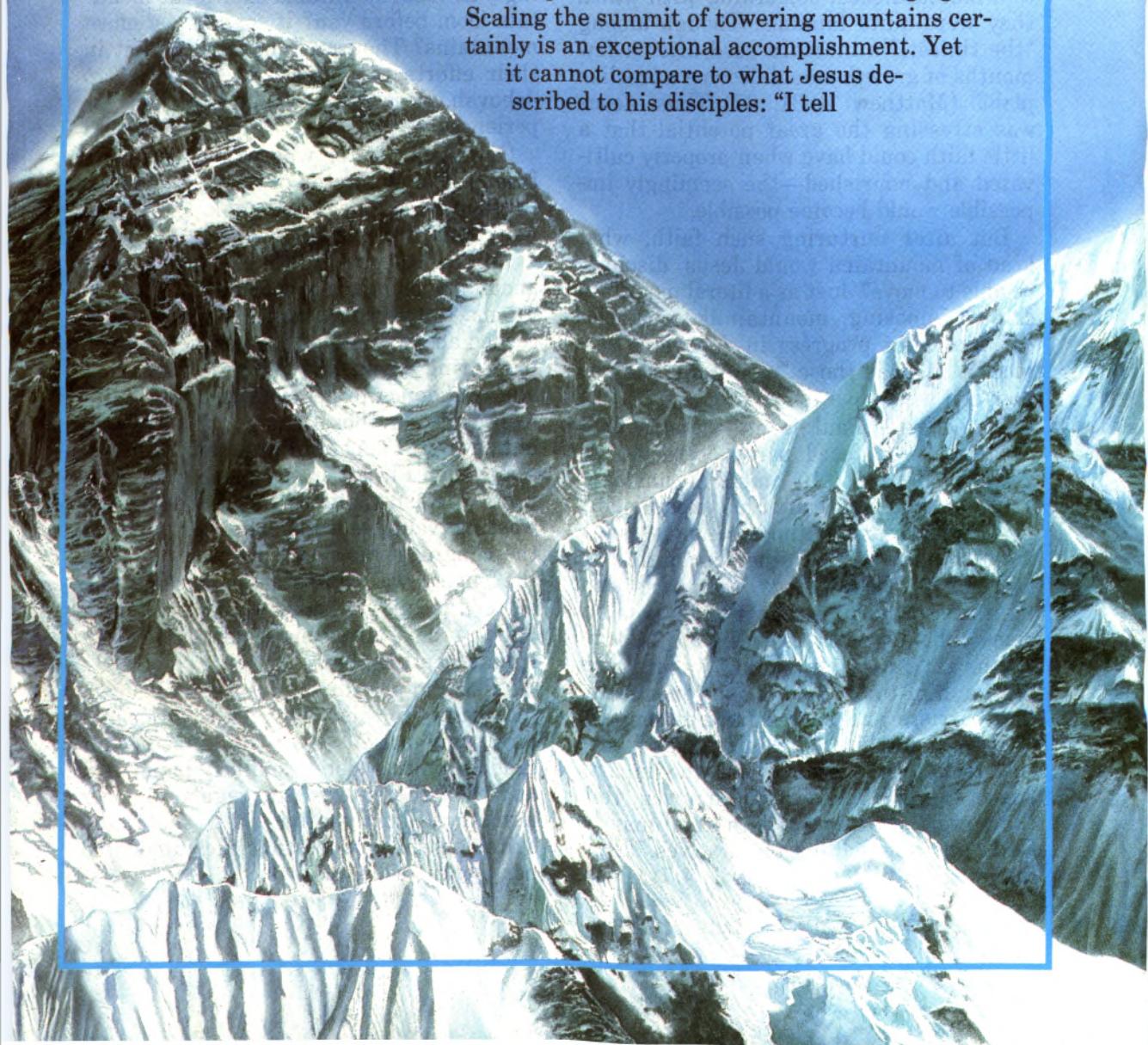
HOW WOULD YOU ANSWER?

- What timely instruction is there for us in the vision of the two wild beasts?
- How should we respond to the proclamation of the angel flying in midheaven?
- How is Babylon the Great involved in fornication, and how is this regarded by those who fear God?
- How is the earth harvested during the Lord's day?
- What happy events close out Revelation, and how may God's people share therein?

You can move Mountains!

MAY 29, 1953, was reportedly the first time man stood on top of the highest mountain peak in the world—Mount Everest, 29,028 feet above sea level. With the backing of more than 450 men, Edmund Hillary of New Zealand and Tenzing Norgay, a Nepalese Sherpa, successfully overcame the dangers of slippery ice, blinding snow, and lack of oxygen to reach the top of their five-and-a-half-mile-high goal.

Scaling the summit of towering mountains certainly is an exceptional accomplishment. Yet it cannot compare to what Jesus described to his disciples: "I tell



you solemnly, if your faith were the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there', and it would move; nothing would be impossible for you." Imagine, not climbing but moving a mountain!—Matthew 17:20, *The Jerusalem Bible*.

What prompted Jesus to say this to his disciples? They had just failed to heal a demon-possessed boy. Jesus stressed why they failed: They needed more faith. (Matthew 17:14-20) He compared faith to a mustard seed, something with which they were quite familiar. Though among "the tiniest," a mustard seed after a few months of growth would become a treelike plant. (Matthew 13:31, 32) Thus, Jesus was stressing the great potential that a little faith could have when properly cultivated and nourished—the seemingly impossible would become possible.

But after nurturing such faith, what kind of mountains would Jesus' disciples be able to move? Just as a literal mountain can be imposing, mountainlike obstacles can block our progress in Jehovah's service. What may those "mountains" be and how can we "move" them?

The apostle Paul is an example of a Christian who faced many obstacles. At 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 and 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, you can read of his experiencing privations, beatings, imprisonment, shipwreck, and a host of other calamities. In addition to these things, there was that figurative "thorn in the flesh," possibly some difficulty with his eyesight. (2 Corinthians 12:7; Acts 14:15) How was it possible for him to surmount such mountainlike barriers and successfully accomplish God's will for him? "For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me," Paul wrote. This was "that the power beyond what is normal may be God's and not that out of ourselves." (Philippians 4:13; 2 Corinthians 4:7) Thus,

Paul had implicit trust in Jehovah's ability to fortify him at the critical moment. He had faith.

Moving Mountains Today

Is it your desire to increase your service to Jehovah? Like hundreds of thousands who have joined the growing ranks of full-time preachers (pioneers), you too may feel the urgency of the times and may seriously be thinking of expanding your ministry. However, does an obstacle seemingly as insurmountable as a great mountain loom before you? If so, can you move mountains? Thousands have done that in their efforts to increase their service to Jehovah. Here are just a few of their experiences.

One young sister who was to graduate from school at the top of her class desired to pioneer, but lack of employment was her mountain. She relates:

"My own negative thinking and doubts about my pioneering became an obstacle for me to overcome. Since I was so concerned about finding a job before I started pioneering, I was not putting my full trust and confidence in Jehovah and his ability to provide for those who put the worship of him first. I kept thinking, 'First I'll find a job, then I'll put in my pioneer application.' I wasn't pioneering; I really was wasting valuable time. However, one of the congregation elders pointed out that the longer I waited to start pioneering, the better the full-time jobs would look, since I didn't have anything holding me back from accepting them."

What did she do? "I prayed to Jehovah incessantly for his holy spirit to guide and direct my actions and thinking." After graduation this sister auxiliary pioneered, and then she entered the regular pioneer ministry. Shortly after that, she found suitable secular work that accommodated her pioneer schedule.

One elder, whose wife was in the pioneer service and who had two children to raise, felt he had to do more than just support his family financially. To some observers, the circumstances blocking him from pioneer service seemed insurmountable, and yet he desired to expand his ministry. What had to change?

"I think the biggest obstacle I had to overcome was really myself," he says. "The field ministry was something I always enjoyed, and talking with those in the full-time ministry and seeing their blessings, I found the fine spirit they displayed contagious. I could see myself in the full-time ministry some day. The problem with my thinking was that pioneering became something that I only *thought* about. But I had never given myself a date as to when I would like to have the goal realized."

After prayerful consideration, this brother began to work toward his goal of full-time service. He approached his supervisor at work, explained his intentions, and asked to be allowed to work fewer hours each week. As far as company policy was concerned, the type of schedule he sought was unprecedented.

He continues: "My supervisor ended the conversation by saying that I would most likely not receive the schedule I was requesting. I was pretty sure that if the decision was solely up to him, the answer would be no. And so the approval could only come by way of Jehovah's backing. A week and a half later, the approval of my new schedule came down from the executive level. After thanking my supervisor, I went out to my car, drove a few blocks, pulled over to the side, and expressed my thanks and appreciation to Jehovah. Yes, my goal of full-time service could become a reality."

How did a married sister "move" her mountain? She relates: "I have four chil-

dren and an unbelieving husband. When I began thinking about pioneering, I had quite a few obstacles. For one thing, my husband was temporarily unemployed, since his job was seasonal, and I was working part-time to help with the bills. So I said to myself that even though I had the desire, I couldn't pioneer because of my circumstances. However, here is where I had to adjust my thinking. I realized that if I kept thinking that I couldn't, I would never put forth the effort to try. The next important question I had to answer was, Where will I get the strength to pioneer? I found the answer at Philippians 4:13. Not only did I pray to Jehovah about the matter but I began relying more and more on him. I also took practical steps toward reaching my goal by arranging a good schedule and enrolling as an auxiliary pioneer. As time went by, Jehovah continued to open the way for me to enter the pioneer service. My husband was able to return to work, and I managed to limit my part-time work to one day a week. Not long after this, I became a regular pioneer."

In addition, the privilege of attending the Pioneer Service School opened up to her, which proved to be a great help in her ministry. "I just want to tell anyone who is thinking about pioneering to pray to Jehovah and put it in his hands," she says. "Then put forth the effort, and he will bless you for trying."—Psalm 37:5.

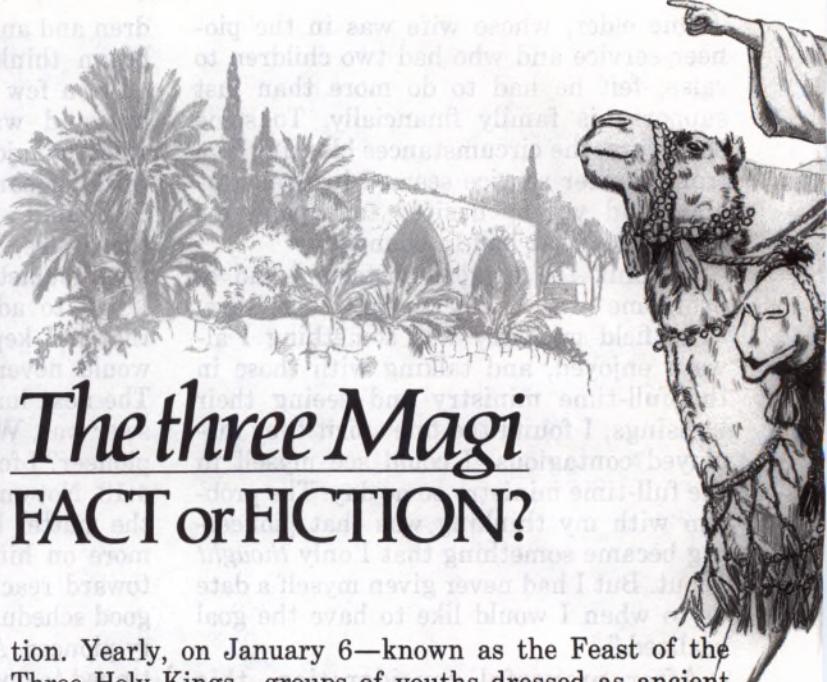
Do not these experiences help you see how faith when exercised can help a Christian overcome mountainlike obstacles? Thus, if it is your desire to pioneer, examine your circumstances. Talk to others who are pioneering, and learn from their experiences. Take practical steps toward reaching your goal. And above all, pray to Jehovah about your desire; then rely on him to bless your efforts. Yes, you too can move mountains!



"C + M + B"

Do these letters mean anything to you? If you live within a Roman Catholic area of the Federal Republic of Germany, they might. There you will often see the letters along with the year chalked on doorposts. Why is that?

Popular legend has it that these letters are the initials in German of the so-called three Magi, or "wise men," Gaspar (German, Caspar), Melchior, and Balthasar.* Supposedly, the Magi's bones were transferred to Cologne in the year 1164 and later deposited in the city's cathedral, thus making Cologne the center of their devo-



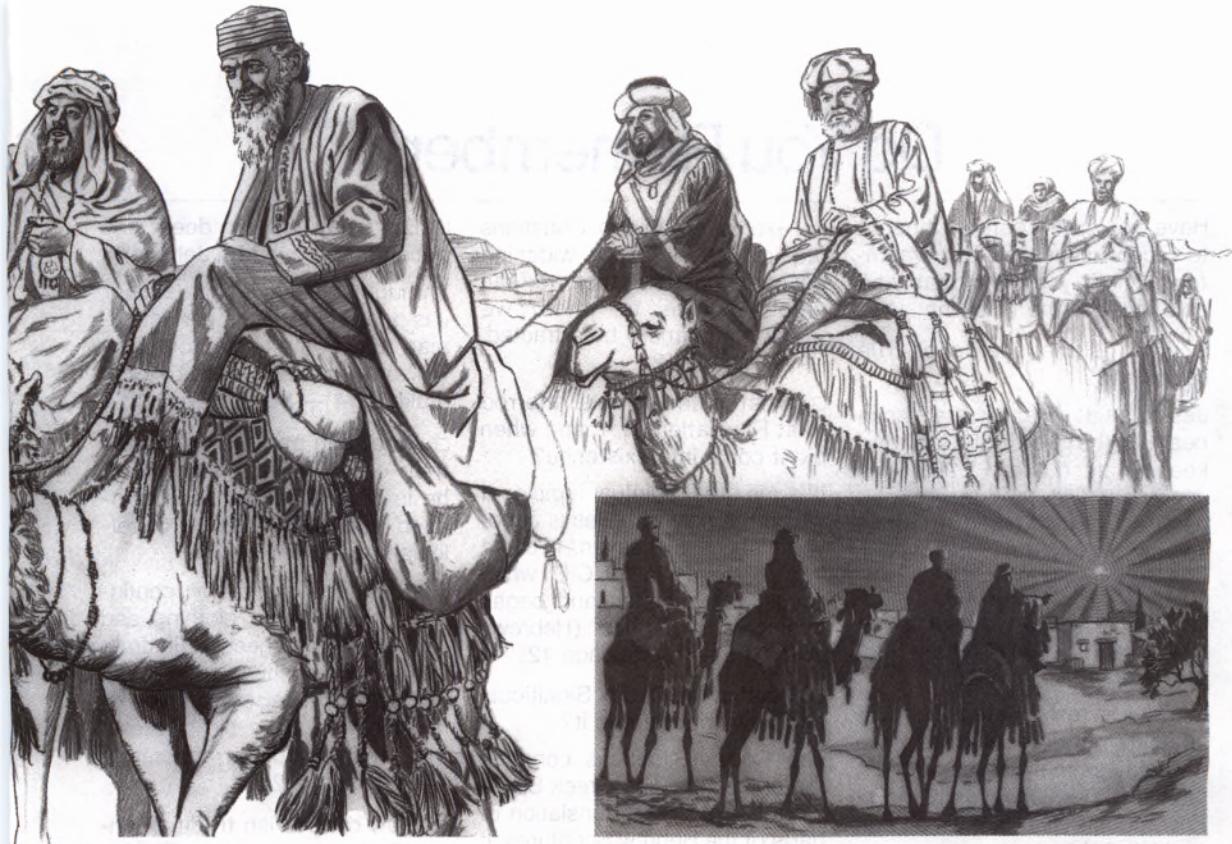
The three Magi FACT or FICTION?

tion. Yearly, on January 6—known as the Feast of the Three Holy Kings—groups of youths dressed as ancient kings go from door to door chalking the letters onto doorposts. According to custom, this offers householders protection from misfortune.

Religious art and tradition imply that the three Magi, or "kings," were led by a "star" to where Jesus was born. In view of the honor, even devotion, accorded these "kings," the question arises as to whether this belief is based on the Scriptures.

Matthew is the only Gospel that refers to these visitors. (2:1-12) But does Matthew mention that there were three and that they were kings, and does he record their names? The Catholic newspaper *Kirchenzeitung für das Bistum Aachen* admits: "The Three Holy Kings are not referred to as such in the Bible. Starting in the sixth century, the wise men were understood to have been . . . three kings. . . . As to the number of astrologers, . . . Matthew gives no details. . . . In the ninth century they first appeared under the names Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar." Furthermore, the Catholic reference work *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* notes that the Greek word *ma'goi* does not mean kings but, rather, "ones having secret knowledge of astrology." Justin Martyr, Origen, and Tertullian each understood the word to mean "astrologer." Modern Bible

* The clergy point also to the Latin phrase *Christus mansionem benedicat*, "May Christ bless this house," as an explanation.



translations also use "astrologers" at Matthew 2:1, 7.—*The Living Bible; An American Translation*.

Although Nativity scenes of Jesus as a baby invariably include the "three kings," were they present at his birth? The lexicon adds: "Matthew 2:16 indicates that the visit took place perhaps one year or more after the birth of Jesus." Indeed, verse 11 speaks of a "house," not a stable, where they "saw the young child."—King James Version.*

What about the term "Holy Kings"? Can the visitors properly be called holy? Scripture never describes them as such. They were, in fact, violators of divine principle. At Isaiah 47:13, 14, God condemns "worshipers [“astrologers,” according to the Septuagint] of the heavens, the lookers at the stars." (Compare Deuteronomy 18:10.) These astrologers came "from eastern parts," most likely the then center of occult worship, *unholy Babylon*, where they worshiped false gods. Thus, they were guided by what they thought was a moving "star," which no one else is reported to have seen. Also, Matthew shows that the "star" led them first to King Herod, who then tried to

have Jesus killed.—Matthew 2:1, 2.

No, God did not send a "star" to conduct them to Jesus. Is it not more likely that this "star" was sent by someone seeking to destroy Jesus before he was able to fulfill his God-given assignment?—Compare Genesis 3:15.

Jesus warned that the Word of God could be made "invalid" by mixing it with "tradition." (Matthew 15:6) The traditions surrounding these persons are clearly unscriptural. Therefore, do you not agree that it would be wrong to venerate the astrologers or to regard them as holy?

* For further information regarding the arrival of the astrologers, see the December 15, 1979, issue of *The Watchtower*, page 30.

Do You Remember?

Have you given careful thought to recent issues of *The Watchtower*? If so, you will probably be able to recall the following:

□ What is the source of true happiness?

Jesus said: "Happy are those hearing the word of God and keeping it!" (Luke 11:28) Thus Jesus showed that true happiness is found in being a faithful servant of God and doing his will.—8/15, page 8.

□ What is one way in which we can resist Satan's subtle and crafty acts?

In order to resist Satan, we must examine ourselves. Do we have a weakness that Satan could exploit or is exploiting right now? For example: Do we have an ego problem? Must we always be number one? If we know ourselves, then we can rectify such problems, provided that we are humble. In this way, we will not leave ourselves open to Satan.—9/1, pages 15, 16.

□ What is the symbolic mark that the antitypical 'man in linen' puts on those who become Christ's "other sheep"? (Ezekiel 9:2-4; John 10:16)

The "mark" is the evidence that such sheeplike ones are dedicated, baptized individuals with a Christlike personality.—9/15, page 14.

□ What did the apostle Peter mean when he said that we should "love one another intensely from the heart"? (1 Peter 1:22)

"Intensely" literally means "outstretchedly." For such a love to

be expressed among Christians requires effort and a widening out of our hearts so that they can enfold people to whom we would not normally be attracted.—10/1, page 12.

□ What is the temple referred to at Revelation 11:1, and when did it come into existence?

It is the great spiritual temple, of which the holy of holies is Jehovah's abode in heaven. It came into existence in 29 C.E. when Jesus was anointed and began to serve as high priest. (Hebrews 3:1; 10:5)—10/15, page 12.

□ What is the Codex Sinaiticus, and how important is it?

The Codex Sinaiticus contains the entire Christian Greek Scriptures and a Greek translation of parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is at least 1,600 years old, and it forms a vital link in our catalog of Bible manuscripts.—10/15, pages 30, 31.

□ What makes for the greatest happiness in marriage?

Each partner must make sure that God is in their marriage. In this way, spiritual needs will be satisfied, and the marriage bond will be strengthened. (Ecclesiastes 4:12; Matthew 5:3)—11/1, page 16.

□ What is "the peace of God" that the apostle Paul speaks about at Philippians 4:7?

This peace is a God-given tranquillity and calmness, even amid the most trialsome circumstances. It results from a close relationship with Jehovah and a conviction that what one is doing is pleasing in his eyes.—11/1, page 30.

□ By what means does one become approved by Jehovah?

Through dedication and baptism, it is possible for an imperfect human to become a 'man of goodwill,' or a man approved by God. (Luke 2:14)—11/15, page 11.

□ What can parents do to help their erring minor child even if he is disqualified as an unbaptized publisher or he is disfellowshipped?

Just as the parents will continue to provide food, clothing, and shelter, so they need to instruct and discipline him in line with God's Word. They can study with him alone or have him share in the family study arrangement.—11/15, page 20.

□ How did Jewish tradition annul God's command at Exodus 20:12 that children should honor their parents?

A person could pledge his property to be later donated to the temple by declaring it "corban," which meant, "a gift dedicated to God." (Mark 7:11) This corban could still be used by that person to his own advantage, but he could deny it to his parents.—12/1, pages 4, 5.

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■ "To Jehovah Belongs the Battle"

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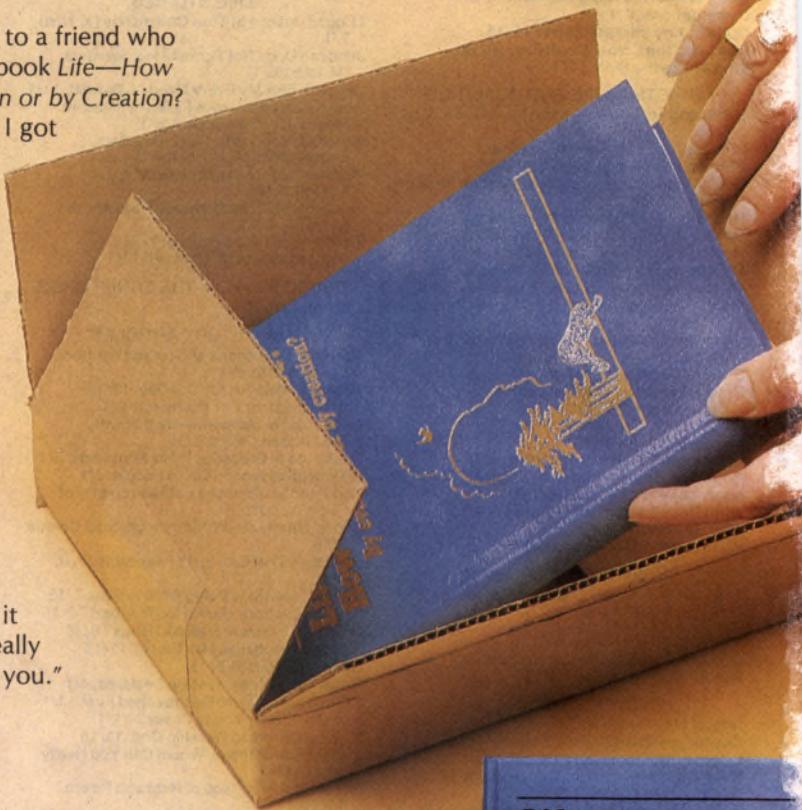
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'I did not expect to enjoy it'

THAT is what a person wrote to a friend who had sent a gift copy of the book *Life—How Did It Get Here? By Evolution or by Creation?* "I'm sure you have wondered if I got the book," the person wrote. "Yes! Thank you! Did I read it? Also yes. I was very surprised to find it thrilling.

"I did not at all expect to enjoy it, in fact, just started it so I could say to you 'Well, I tried.' To my dismay I wasn't able to put it aside. . . . It took maybe 10 days to finish. I was entranced. I quickly told some friends about it—loaned it to two of them and promised it to a third! So at least 4 of us here will read it and many more, I expect. It is really a wonderful book. Again, thank you."



**Life—
How did it get here?
By evolution or by creation?**

