

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**Is the Bible Still
Relevant Today?**

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IS THE BIBLE RELEVANT TODAY?

With all the information available in today's high-tech world, is the Bible too old to be relevant? The Bible says:

“All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial.”—2 Timothy 3:16.

This issue of *The Watchtower* examines the Bible's claim that it can guide us in every aspect of life.



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

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Is the Bible's Guidance Relevant Today?



SOME SAY NO. One doctor compared using the Bible for guidance to using a textbook from the 1920's for teaching a chemistry class. A skeptic might even ask if you would use a manual for an old defunct computer to guide you in using a new up-to-date computer. In other words, some see the Bible as hopelessly outdated.

Why would anyone use such an ancient guide in today's modern, high-tech world? After all, countless websites and blogs send out a steady flow of the latest advice and guidance. TV pundits and talk shows feature a stream of knowledgeable psychologists, lifestyle gurus, and authors. And bookstores publish a flood of self-help books, fueling a multibillion-dollar industry.

With all that up-to-the-minute information available, why turn to the Bible—a book that was completed almost 2,000 years ago? Would not skeptics be right in saying that using such an ancient book for guidance is like using an outdated chemistry book or computer manual? Actually, the analogy is flawed. **Science and technology change rapidly, but has human nature changed?** People still want to find meaning in life as well as to have a reasonable measure of happiness and security, good family relations, and rewarding friendships.

As old as it is, the Bible addresses those needs and more. It also claims to be inspired by our Creator. It offers to guide us in every aspect of life and to equip us for any challenge that matters. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) What is more, it claims to convey counsel that is timeless—advice that *never* becomes obsolete! The Bible itself says: “The word of God is alive.”—Hebrews 4:12.

Can the Bible's claims really be true? Is it out-of-date, or is it really the most relevant and practical of books—in effect, a living book? The purpose of this edition of *The Watchtower*, the first in a series of special issues, is to help you find the answers to these questions.



Bible Teachings —Timeless Wisdom

PICTURE THIS: You are touring a museum full of ancient monuments. Most are pitted, weathered, and eroded. Some have great chunks missing. One, though, is remarkably intact; its intricate design is clear in every detail. “Is this one newer than the others?” you ask your guide. “No,” he responds, “it is older than most, and it has never been rebuilt.” “Has it been sheltered?” you ask. “No,” says your guide, “this one has faced the worst wind and rain. And many vandals have tried to mar it.” Perhaps you would wonder in amazement, “What is it made of?”

In a way, the Bible is like that remarkable monument. It is a very ancient book—older than most. There are other ancient books, of course. But like eroded old monuments, most old writings have

been badly damaged by the passage of time. Their statements on science, for instance, have been contradicted by new knowledge, provable facts. Their medical counsel often seems more dangerous than helpful. And many ancient writings are mere fragments of what they once were; parts have been lost or badly damaged.

The Bible, though, stands out as different. The writing of it began over 35 centuries ago, yet the Bible is intact. And though it has been attacked again and again over the centuries—burned, banned, and belittled—its statements have weathered every onslaught. Far from being proved obsolete in the face of new knowledge, the Bible says much that shows amazing foresight.—See the box “Outdated or Ahead of Its Time?”



VALUES WE NEED TODAY

You may wonder, though, ‘Are Bible teachings really practical for our modern day?’ To answer, ask yourself: ‘What are the worst problems facing mankind today? Which ones are the most terrifying?’ Perhaps you think of warfare, pollution, crime, or corruption. Now consider some principles that the Bible teaches. As you do, ask yourself, ‘If people lived by these values, would the world be a better place?’

LOVE OF PEACE

“Happy are the peacemakers, since they will be called sons of God.” (Matthew 5:9) “If possible, as far as it depends on you, be peaceable with all men.”—Romans 12:18.

MERCY, FORGIVENESS

“Happy are the merciful, since they will be shown mercy.” (Matthew 5:7) “Continue putting up with one another and forgiving one another freely even if anyone has a cause for complaint against another. Just as Jehovah* freely forgave you, you must also do the same.”—Colossians 3:13.

* Jehovah is God’s name as revealed in the Bible.—Psalm 83:18.

RACIAL HARMONY

God “made out of one man every nation of men to dwell on the entire surface of the earth.” (Acts 17:26) “God is not partial, but in every nation the man who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”—Acts 10:34, 35.

RESPECT FOR THE EARTH

“Jehovah God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and to take care of it.” (Genesis 2:15) God will “bring to ruin those ruining the earth.”—Revelation 11:18.

HATRED OF GREED AND IMMORALITY

“Guard against every sort of greed, because even when a person has an abundance, his life does not result from the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15) “Let sexual immorality and every sort of uncleanness or greediness not even be mentioned among you, just as is proper for holy people.”—Ephesians 5:3.

HONESTY, HARD WORK

“We wish to conduct ourselves honestly in all things.” (Hebrews 13:18) “Let the one who steals steal no more; rather, let him do hard work.”—Ephesians 4:28.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HELPING THOSE IN NEED

“Speak consolingly to those who are depressed, support the weak, be patient toward all.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14) “Look after orphans and widows in their tribulation.”—James 1:27.

The Bible does not merely list those values. In practical ways, it teaches us to value such principles and to apply them in our day-to-day life. If more people actually applied the teachings we have listed, would there not be a great impact on mankind’s worst problems? Really, then, Bible principles are more relevant and timely than ever! What, though, can Bible teachings do for you right now?

HOW BIBLE TEACHINGS CAN BENEFIT YOU NOW

The wisest of men once said: “Wisdom is vindicated by its results.” (Matthew 11:19, footnotes) Would you not agree? The real test of wisdom is how it works when you apply it. So you may reason: ‘If the Bible really is practical, should it not produce results in my life? How is it useful for the problems I face right now?’ Consider an example.

For Delphine,* life was busy, full, and rewarding. Suddenly, though, she suffered a series of tragic losses. Her teenage daughter died. Her mar-

* In this article and the three that follow, some names have been changed.

riage disintegrated. Her finances fell into chaos. She recalls: “I had no idea who I was anymore—no daughter, no husband, no home. I felt I was nothing—no identity, no strength, no thought of the future.”

Never before had Delphine seen so vividly the truth of these words: “The span of our life is 70 years, or 80 if one is especially strong. But they are filled with trouble and sorrow; they quickly pass by, and away we fly.”—Psalm 90:10.

Delphine turned to the Bible in her hour of need. What it did for her is remarkable. As the following three articles will show, many others have

OUTDATED OR AHEAD OF ITS TIME?

SCIENCE

THE BIBLE IS NOT A SCIENCE TEXTBOOK, YET IT CONTAINS STATEMENTS THAT WERE WAY AHEAD OF THEIR TIME. CONSIDER A FEW EXAMPLES.

• Did the physical universe have a beginning?

Leading scientists once felt strongly that the answer was no. Now they generally accept that there was a beginning to the universe. The Bible said that clearly all along.—Genesis 1:1.

• What is the shape of the earth?

In ancient times, many people thought that the earth was flat. In the fifth century B.C.E., Greek scientists suggested that it was a sphere. But long before that—in the eighth century B.C.E.—the Bible writer Isaiah referred to “the circle of the earth,” using a word that may also be rendered “sphere.” —Isaiah 40:22; footnote.

• Are the physical heavens subject to decay?

Greek scientist Aristotle, of the fourth century B.C.E., taught that decay happens only on the earth, while the starry heavens could never change or decay. That view prevailed for many centuries. But in the 19th century, scientists formulated the concept of entropy. It suggests that all matter, whether heavenly or earthly, tends to decay. One of the scientists who helped to advance this concept, Lord Kelvin, noted that the Bible says about heaven and earth: “Just like a garment they will all wear out.” (Psalm 102:25, 26) Kelvin believed, as the Bible teaches, that God could choose to prevent such decay

from destroying His creations. —Ecclesiastes 1:4.

• What holds up planets such as our earth?

Aristotle taught that all the heavenly bodies were encased in crystalline spheres, each one nested tightly within the next, with the earth innermost. By the 18th century C.E., scientists were accepting the idea that stars and planets might hang in a void. But in the book of Job, of the 15th century B.C.E., we read that the Creator is “suspending the earth upon nothing.”—Job 26:7.

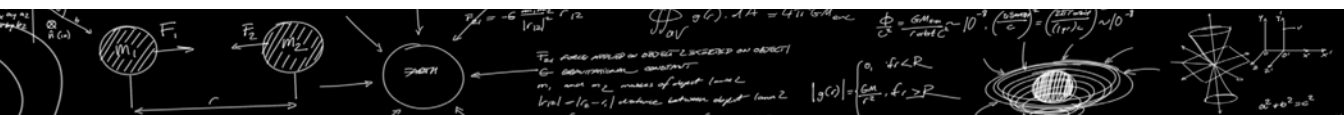
also found that the Bible has done wonders for them when they applied its counsel to the problems of life. They have come to feel that the Bible is like that monument described at the outset. It is quite unlike the countless books that grow old and obsolete. Is that because the Bible, in effect, is made of something different? Might it actually contain God's thoughts—and not merely man's?—1 Thessalonians 2:13.

Perhaps you too have found that life is short and full of problems. When problems threaten to overwhelm you, where do you turn for comfort, support, and reliable advice?

Let us consider three key ways in which the Bible can prove practical in your life. It can teach you how to

- 1** **avoid** problems where possible.
- 2** **resolve** difficulties when they arise.
- 3** **cope** successfully with situations you cannot change.

The following articles will discuss these three areas.



MEDICINE

THE BIBLE, THOUGH NOT A MEDICAL TEXTBOOK, CONTAINS SOME PRINCIPLES THAT REFLECT ADVANCED KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTH.

• Isolating sick people.

The Mosaic Law prescribed keeping people with leprosy separate from others. Not until the plagues of the Middle Ages did medical doctors learn to apply this principle, which is still deemed effective.—Leviticus, chapters 13 and 14.

• Washing after touching a dead body.

Until late in the 19th century, physicians often worked on corpses and then on living patients—without washing their hands in between. That practice caused many deaths. Yet, the Mosaic Law stated that anyone who touched a dead body was ceremonially unclean. It even directed that water be used for ceremonial cleansing in such cases.

Those religious practices surely had health benefits as well.—Numbers 19:11, 19.

• Waste disposal.

Each year, over half a million children die of diarrhea, largely because of exposure to human waste that is not disposed of properly. The Mosaic Law said that human waste should be buried, disposed of away from human habitation.—Deuteronomy 23:13.

• Timing of circumcision.

God's Law stipulated that a male child should be circumcised on the eighth day of life. (Leviticus 12:3) In newborn babies, the blood's ability to clot is understood to reach normal levels after the first

week. In Bible times, before advanced medical treatments were available, waiting for over a week before circumcision was a wise protection.

• The link between emotional health and physical health.

Medical researchers and scientists say that positive emotions such as joy, hope, gratitude, and a willingness to forgive have some beneficial effects on health. The Bible says: "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit saps one's strength."—Proverbs 17:22.

1

Help to **Avoid** Problems



The Bible says that its counsel is inspired and “beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight.” (2 Timothy 3:16) Is that true? Consider how Biblical wisdom has helped people to avoid some of life’s hardest problems before they became entrenched.

MISUSE OF ALCOHOL

Delphine, mentioned in the preceding article, felt that her anxieties were pushing her toward overdrinking. The Bible does not condemn the moderate use of alcohol, but it says: “Do not be among those who drink too much wine.” (**Proverbs 23:20**) Misuse of alcohol has been linked to serious health problems, broken and damaged relationships, and millions of untimely deaths each year. Much of this trouble could be avoided if people followed the Bible’s wise advice.

Delphine did. She now says: “I realized that the alcohol was not solving my anxiety. I applied the wisdom of **Philippians 4:6, 7**, which says: ‘Do not be anxious over anything, but . . . let your petitions be made known to God.’ Each night when I felt my thoughts racing and anxiety rising, I petitioned Jehovah. I defined all my feelings, including anger, hurt, and despair, and I pleaded with him to help me find ways to feel more positive. In the morning, I made sure that I had truly let go of those feelings. That habit seemed to focus my mind on what I *had* rather than on what I did *not have*. I chose never to drink alcohol again. Because the peace that I found was so precious, I just could not risk losing it.”

The Bible's practical guidance can help us avoid some problems



IMMORALITY

Few problems cause as much heartbreak and misery. But Bible principles can help us avoid such problems by addressing some of the leading causes—for example, inappropriate flirting and pornography. “It was so easy to flirt,” says a young man named Samuel. “Sometimes I was not attracted to the other person, but I could tell that she liked me—and that made it entertaining to flirt.” Samuel found that he was accused of flirting so often—even when he did not intend to—that he finally decided to go ahead and flirt on purpose. But the habit bothered him. “It was harmful,” he now says, “because it develops very selfish tendencies.”

Samuel read an article for young people published on the website jw.org. And he thought about **Proverbs 20:11**, which says: “Even a child [or, “boy,” footnote] is known by his actions, whether his behavior is pure and right.” How did that help? Samuel realized that his flirting was neither pure nor right. He now says: “I also learned that a youth who flirts is developing qualities that make for being a bad marriage mate. I started thinking how my future wife would feel if she saw me flirting with another woman. That made me realize that the habit is not harmless. The fact that it’s easy doesn’t make it right.” Samuel changed.

Avoiding flirting has also helped him to avoid immorality.

Antonio was in even greater danger from immorality: He was addicted to pornography. Although he was married to a woman he dearly loved, he found himself giving in to that habit again and again. He says that thinking about **1 Peter 5:8** really helped him. It says: “Keep your senses, be watchful! Your adversary, the Devil, walks about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour someone.” Antonio comments: “Pornographic images are all around us in this world, and those images can stick in the mind. That verse really helped me to think about the source of these temptations. I needed to make it a reflex to associate those dirty images with their despicable source. Now I know that only Jehovah can help me ‘keep my senses and be watchful’ so that I can fight off those attacks on my mind, my heart, and my marriage.” Antonio received the help he needed, and at last he has put his bad habit behind him. That, in turn, has helped him to avoid even worse troubles.

Clearly, the Bible provides practical advice that can help us avoid serious problems. But what about problems that have already taken root and prove to be persistent? Let us see how God’s Word can help us to resolve such difficult issues.

Help to **Resolve** Problems



Some of life's problems tend to persist, sometimes for years; they may take root before we are fully aware of them. Does the Bible give us the wisdom to resolve such persistent and frustrating problems? Consider some examples.

EXCESSIVE WORRY

Rosie says, "I got hung up on certain worries by making things worse in my mind or imagining the worst-case scenarios." What Bible verses helped? One of them is **Matthew 6:34**: "Never be anxious about the next day, for the next day will have its own anxieties. Each day has enough of its own troubles." Rosie now says that those words of Jesus helped her to stop worrying about what might happen tomorrow. She adds, "I had enough troubles as it was, without adding worries about situations that hadn't happened and probably wouldn't happen."

Yasmine too sensed her anxiety taking control over her. "I would cry a couple of days during the week, and I couldn't sleep some nights. I felt that negative thinking was eating me alive." What scripture helped? She refers to **1 Peter 5:7**: "Throw all your anxiety on [God], because he cares for you." Yasmine says: "As time went on, I kept praying to Jehovah, and he answered my prayers. I felt as if a big weight had been lifted off of my shoulders. My negative thinking does come back from time to time, but now I know how to handle it."

PROCRASTINATION

A young woman named Isabella says: “I think procrastination is genetic because my dad has it too. I put off important things in order to do nothing—just to relax or watch TV instead. It’s a harmful habit because it increases stress and causes a person to do a poor job.” A principle that helped her is reflected at **2 Timothy 2:15**, which says: “Do your utmost to present yourself approved to God, a workman with nothing to be ashamed of.” Says Isabella, “I didn’t want Jehovah to be ashamed of my work just because I procrastinated.” She has improved greatly.

Similarly, Kelsey comments: “I would have a project due and put it off till the last second. I would cry, lose sleep, and worry. It wasn’t good for me.” Kelsey found help at **Proverbs 13:16**: “The shrewd person acts with knowledge, but the fool exposes his own foolishness.” She explains what meditating on this scripture taught her: “It is wise to be practical and to plan ahead. Now I have a journal that I keep on my desk to schedule upcoming work, and this helps me to schedule myself, not leaving things till the last minute.”

LONELINESS

“My husband walked out on our marriage, leaving me with four young children,” relates Kirsten. What Scriptural principle came to her aid? **Proverbs 17:17** reads: “A true friend shows love at all times, and is a brother who is born for times of distress.” Kirsten reached out to others who serve Jehovah as she does. What did she find? “My friends rallied around me in so many ways! Some left groceries and flowers on my doorstep. Three times a small army of people helped my children and me to move from one house to another. One person helped me find a job. My friends were always there for me.”

Delphine, mentioned earlier, likewise struggled with loneliness. She recalls after all her losses: “I felt as if I were outside the store of life looking in on everybody else. I felt very lonely.” One scripture that helped her was **Psalms 68:6**: “God gives

those who are alone a home to dwell in.” She explains: “I knew that the verse could not just mean a home in a physical sense now. Rather, I came to understand that God offers us a spiritual home, a place of real safety that provides genuine connections and emotional attachment to others who love Jehovah. But I knew that I could not get closer to others until I first got closer to Jehovah. So **Psalms 37:4** helped with that: ‘Find exquisite delight in Jehovah, and he will grant you the desires of your heart.’”

She concludes: “I realized that I needed to attach myself more firmly to Jehovah. He is the finest of the fine. Then I made a list of activities that I could enjoy with others, so that I could form connections with them that were based on spiritual values. I learned to see the good in others and to treat them as if that were all that I could see.”

Of course, friends who serve God are still imperfect. Jehovah’s Witnesses struggle with problems just as everyone else does. But Bible training motivates people to help others whenever possible. It is wise to make such friends. However, can Bible principles also help with problems that cannot be solved today, such as chronic health issues and grief?

Applying Bible
counsel can help you
find supportive friends

Help to Cope With Problems



There are problems that for now can neither be avoided nor resolved. For example, if you have lost a loved one in death or if you face a chronic illness, you may have no choice but to find ways to cope with your pain. Can the Bible help in such dire situations?

CHRONIC ILLNESS

Rose says: “I have a genetic disorder that causes me severe and constant pain. My quality of life has plummeted.” One of her greatest concerns was that she was sometimes unable to focus her mind on her study of the Bible and spiritual matters. But she was greatly helped by Jesus’ words recorded at **Matthew 19:26**: “With God all things are possible.” Rose learned that there is more than one way to study. Because her pain made reading nearly impossible at times, she began listening to recordings of the Bible and Bible literature.* “Without those options,” she says, “I don’t know how I would have maintained my spirituality.”

When Rose is saddened over being unable to do what she once could, she finds comfort in the words recorded at **2 Corinthians 8:12**: “If the readiness is there first, it is especially acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what a person does not have.” Those words remind Rose that God is pleased with what she does, because she does all that she can within her limitations.

* Many such recordings are available on the website jw.org.

The Bible can help
you find comfort even
in the darkest times

GRIEF

Delphine, mentioned earlier, recalls: “After my 18-year-old daughter died, the pain was so great that I did not believe that I would be able to continue living. Nothing would be the same.” She found great comfort, though, in the words of **Psalm 94:19**, wherein the psalmist said to God: “When anxieties overwhelmed me, you comforted and soothed me.” She says, “I prayed to Jehovah to help me find things to do that would help me soothe the pain.”

She threw herself into meaningful volunteer work. In time, she came to liken herself to a child’s crayon—even the broken ones are still useful for coloring. Similarly, though she felt broken, she learned that she could still help others. She recalls: “I suddenly found that when I used Bible principles and Scriptural ways of thinking to comfort my students, that was Jehovah’s way of

soothing and comforting me.” She made a list of Bible characters who went through periods of intense grief. “Without exception,” she found, “they were all people of prayer.” She also learned that “there can be no answers if your Bible is closed.”

Studying the Bible has taught Delphine something else—to focus on the future, not the past. The hope mentioned at **Acts 24:15** comforts her: “There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.” How sure is she that Jehovah will resurrect her daughter? Let Delphine answer: “I see my daughter in the future. Our next ‘date’ is already scheduled, as if it were on my Father’s calendar. I see us together in our garden as clearly as I saw and loved her the day she was born.”

HOW CAN GOD HELP US?

The Bible’s answer is clear. It states: “Jehovah is near to all those calling on him, to all who call on him in truth. He satisfies the desire of those who fear him; he hears their cry for help, and he rescues them.” (Psalm 145:18, 19) Is that not heartwarming? How, though, will God answer the prayers of people who sincerely look to him for guidance?

• BY GIVING US STRENGTH:

Problems can often discourage and drain us—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. (Proverbs 24:10) But Jehovah “gives power to the tired one and full might to those lacking strength.” (Isaiah 40:29) The apostle Paul, who endured serious trials, said: “For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power.” (Philippians 4:13) Paul

was empowered by God’s holy spirit. You too can ask God to give you holy spirit.—Luke 11:13.

• BY GIVING US WISDOM:

What if you need help to understand and apply the Bible’s counsel? The disciple James writes: “If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching, and it will be given him.” (James 1:5) You can work in harmony with your prayers by reading the Bible and applying its teachings. (James 1:23-25) As you do, you will learn firsthand how wise its counsel is.

• BY GIVING US PEACE:

Even when you suffer deep anxiety, Jehovah can help you to feel calm. His Word says: “Do not be anxious

over anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your mental powers by means of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6, 7) Why not ask Jehovah to grant you peace?

What, though, if your problems are not quickly resolved? Do not conclude that God has forsaken you. Even if your problems persist, God can give you the courage and strength to endure. (1 Corinthians 10:13) The Bible also promises that the time will come when our problems will be resolved permanently!



The Bible and Your Future

IMAGINE you are walking along a dark path late one evening. Although the sun has long since set, you do not feel hopelessly lost, for you have in your hand a powerful flashlight. When you point it downward, you see clearly what is immediately in front of you. And when you point it forward, its piercing beam illuminates your path far into the distance.

In some ways, the Bible is like such a flashlight. As we considered in the preceding articles, God's Word can help us deal with what is immediately in front of us—the day-to-day problems that we all face in this uncertain world. But the Bible does more. It also provides an illuminating view of the future, enabling us to see and follow a path that leads to lasting happiness and contentment. (Psalm 119:105) How so?

Let us consider two ways in which the Bible gives us a practical hope for the future: **1 It helps us find purpose in life**, and **2 it teaches us how to build an eternal friendship with our Creator**.

1 PURPOSE IN LIFE

The Bible offers solid advice for dealing with our problems, yet it is far more than a mere self-help book. Rather than encouraging us to focus solely on personal concerns, the Bible teaches us to see ourselves as part of a bigger picture. Only then can our lives have real meaning.

Take, for example, this Bible principle: “There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving.” (Acts 20:35) Can you think of a time when you helped someone in need materially? Or perhaps when you gave of yourself by listening as a friend poured out his or her heart? Did you not feel a sense of fulfillment in helping to brighten someone else's day?

We find the greatest happiness when we give without expecting anything in return. One author noted: “It is virtually impossible to give yourself away without getting back more than you

give—*provided you give away with no thought of any reward.*” Yet, when we give of ourselves—especially to those who have no way of returning the favor—we *do* receive a reward. We become part of a bigger picture. Indeed, we are working hand in hand with the Creator himself, who views such acts of kindness as a loan made to him. (Proverbs 19:17) He greatly values what we do for the lowly, and he promises to repay us with nothing less than eternal life in a paradise earth—truly a thrilling hope for the future!—Psalm 37:29; Luke 14:12-14.*

Above all, the Bible teaches us that we can find real purpose in life by worshipping the true God, Jehovah. His Word encourages us to give him the praise, honor, and obedience he deserves. (Ecclesiastes 12:13; Revelation 4:11) When we do so, we accomplish something that is astounding to contemplate: We affect our Creator in a positive way. Indeed, he urges us: “Be wise . . . and make my heart rejoice.” (Proverbs 27:11) Just think—when we wisely make decisions based on the principles set out in the Bible, we bring joy to the heart of our loving heavenly Father. Why? Because he cares for us and wants us to benefit ourselves by following his guidance. (Isaiah 48:17, 18) Really, what greater purpose could we have than to worship the Sovereign of the universe and live in a way that brings joy to his heart?

2 FRIENDSHIP WITH OUR CREATOR

The Bible also teaches us to build a friendship with our Creator. “Draw close to God,” the Scriptures say, “and he will draw close to you.” (James 4:8) At times we may doubt whether it is truly possible to be friends with the almighty Creator. But the Bible assures us that if we “seek God,” we will “really find him,” for “he is not far off from each one of us.” (Acts 17:27) The Bible’s advice on becoming a friend of God is highly practical for our future. In what way?

* For more information about God’s promise of everlasting life in Paradise, see chapter 3 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Consider: Try as we may, none of us on our own can escape the ultimate enemy—death. (1 Corinthians 15:26) However, God is eternal. He will never die, and he wants his friends to live forever as well. Using the following simple yet beautiful words, the Bible expresses what Jehovah wants for those seeking him: “May you enjoy life forever.”—Psalm 22:26.

How can you build such an eternal friendship with God? Keep learning about him through the pages of his Word, the Bible. (John 17:3; 2 Timothy 3:16) Seek his help to understand the Scriptures. The Bible assures us that if we sincerely “keep asking God” for wisdom, he will grant it to us.* (James 1:5) Finally, strive to apply what you learn, letting God’s Word serve as both “a lamp to [your] foot” and a “light for [your] path”—now and throughout eternity.—Psalm 119:105.

* Jehovah’s Witnesses offer a free Bible course that can help you grow in understanding of the Scriptures. To learn about this course, please see the video *What Happens at a Bible Study?* You can find it by going to jw.org, clicking the Search button, and entering the title.

God is eternal, and he wants his friends to live forever as well

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Can the Bible help you become God's friend?

SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE . . .

that they cannot be God's friend because they feel unclean or sinful. Others say that God does not care about us. What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

God's "close friendship is with the upright." (Proverbs 3:32) If we obey God, we can become his friends.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- God wants to be our Friend.—James 4:8.
- As our Friend, God is ready to help and forgive us.—Psalm 86:5.
- God's friends love what he loves and hate what he hates.—Romans 12:9.



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What Can the Bible Teach Us?

For more information about how you can live in a way that pleases God, see chapter 12 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org


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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A full-page background image showing a night sky with the Milky Way galaxy stretching across it. Below the sky, there are dark, silhouetted mountains. In the foreground, a paved road with white dashed lines curves into the distance. The overall scene is dark and atmospheric.

**What Does the
Future Hold?**

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WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

Have you ever wondered what the future will be for you and your family? The Bible says:

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

This issue of *The Watchtower* will help you to understand God’s wonderful purpose for mankind and the earth and what you must do to benefit from that purpose.



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

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Predicting the Future



Have you ever wondered what the future will be for you and your family? Does it promise riches or ruin, love or loneliness? Will you live a long life, or will your life be cut short? People have speculated about such questions for thousands of years.

Today experts study global trends and make projections about the future. While many of their forecasts have come true, others have failed, some miserably. For example, in 1912, Guglielmo Marconi, the inventor of a wireless telegraph, was quoted as predicting: "The coming of the wireless era will make war impossible." And an agent of the Decca Record Company, who rejected the Beatles in 1962, believed that guitar-playing groups were on the way out.

Many turn to the supernatural for clues about the future. Some seek the advice of astrologers; horoscopes are a regular feature in many magazines and newspapers. Others consult fortune-tellers or psychics, who claim to "read" the future

by interpreting patterns in tarot cards, numbers, or the lines of one's hand.

In their effort to discern the future, some in the ancient world consulted oracles—priests or priestesses who passed on information from the god they claimed to represent. For instance, it is said that King Croesus of Lydia sent gifts of great value to the oracle at Delphi, Greece, with a request to learn what the outcome would be if he fought against Cyrus of Persia. The oracle said that Croesus would destroy "a great empire" if he marched against Cyrus. Confident of victory, Croesus sallied forth, but the great empire that was destroyed was his own!

The ambiguous forecast of the oracle was worthless; it would have appeared true no matter which side won the war. Croesus paid dearly for misinformation that brought him disaster. Have those who turn to today's popular methods of predicting the future fared any better?

ASTROLOGY AND FORTUNE-TELLING

—WINDOWS TO THE FUTURE?

ASTROLOGY

Astrology is a form of divination that holds that the stars, the moon, and the planets significantly influence the lives of people on earth. Astrologers claim that the position of these celestial bodies at the time of one's birth shapes his or her personality and future.

Though the roots of astrology can be traced to ancient Babylon, it remains popular. According to a 2012 survey in the United States, one third of those surveyed thought that astrology was “sort of scientific,” and 10 percent said that it was “very scientific.” Is it? No. Here is why.

- The planets and stars emit no force that could affect humans the way astrologers say they do.
- Often the predictions are so general that they could apply to anyone.
- Astrological calculations today are made according to the ancient belief that the planets revolve around

the earth. In fact, the planets revolve around the sun.

- Predictions made by different astrologers for the same individual do not match.
- Astrology classifies people under one of 12 categories, or zodiac signs, according to their date of birth. Because of changes in earth's position in space over the centuries, the dates associated with the signs of the zodiac no longer correspond to when the sun passes through the constellations for which the signs were named.

The zodiac signs are said to give clues to a person's character. In reality, people who have the same birthday do not have the same traits; one's birth date reveals nothing about his or her personality. Instead of seeing people as they really are, astrologers judge a person's behavior and character by a set of assumptions. Is this not a form of prejudice?



FORTUNE-TELLING

From ancient times, people have consulted fortune-tellers. Some practitioners looked for meaning in such things as the entrails of animals and humans or the way a rooster pecks at its grain. Others made projections based on patterns in tea leaves or coffee grounds. Today they use tarot cards, crystal balls, dice, and other means to “read” a person’s future. Is fortune-telling a reliable way to discern the future? No, it is not. Let us reason on the matter.

Consider the issue of consistency. The predictions of differing fortune-telling methods often contradict one another. Even when the same method is used, forecasts vary. For example, if a person asks two fortune-tellers the same question about the future based on the “reading” of the same cards, logically the answers should be the same. But often they are not.

Fortune-tellers’ methods or motives have come under suspicion. Critics say that the cards or crystal balls are mere props and that the fortune-teller reads the person’s reactions rather than the props. For example, a skilled fortune-teller will ask general questions and carefully watch for verbal and nonverbal clues that could reveal something about the client. The fortune-teller will then take credit for knowing facts and situations that the client has just unknowingly given away. Having won the client’s trust, some fortune-tellers have been able to obtain large sums of money from their customers.

WHAT THE BIBLE TELLS US

The practice of astrology and fortune-telling implies that our future is predetermined. But is it? The Bible tells us that we have the ability to choose what we believe or want

to do and that our choices affect our future.—Joshua 24:15.

Worshippers of God have an added reason to reject astrology and fortune-telling—God condemns all forms of divination. In the Bible we find these words: “There should not be found in you anyone . . . who employs divination, anyone practicing magic, anyone who looks for omens, a sorcerer, anyone binding others with a spell, anyone who consults a spirit medium or a fortune-teller, or anyone who inquires of the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to Jehovah.”*—Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

* The name of “the Most High over all the earth.”—Psalm 83:18.

Prophecies That Have Come True



Earlier we referred to the legend about Croesus' being misled by the oracle of Delphi, which resulted in his defeat by the king of Persia. The Bible, on the other hand, contains a remarkable prophecy involving the king of Persia that was fulfilled in minute detail.

About 200 years in advance—long before the king was born—the Hebrew prophet Isaiah mentioned Cyrus by name and described how he would conquer the mighty city of Babylon.

Isaiah 44:24, 27, 28: “This is what Jehovah says, . . . ‘the One saying to the deep waters, “Be evaporated, and I will dry up all your rivers”; the One saying of Cyrus, “He is my shepherd, and he will completely carry out all my will”; the One saying of Jerusalem, “She will be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Your foundation will be laid.”””

According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the army of Cyrus diverted the waters of the Euphrates River, which flowed through the city of Babylon. Cyrus' strategy enabled his troops to enter the city along the riverbed. After taking the city, Cyrus freed the Jews who had been captive in Babylon and allowed them to return and rebuild

Jerusalem, which had been destroyed 70 years earlier.

Isaiah 45:1: “This is what Jehovah says to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of to subdue nations before him, to disarm kings, to open before him the double doors, so that the gates will not be shut.”

The Persians entered the city through the massive two-leaved doors in the city wall, which had carelessly been left open. Had the Babylonians been aware of what Cyrus was planning, they could have shut all the gates that opened onto the river. But as it was, the city was defenseless.

This remarkable prophecy is but one of dozens found in the Bible that unerringly came true.* Unlike the predictions of men, often attributed to their false gods, Bible prophecies originate with the One who proclaimed: “From the beginning I foretell the outcome, and from long ago the things that have not yet been done.”—Isaiah 46:10.

Only the true God, whose name is Jehovah, can make such a claim. That name evidently means

* See the article “A Silent Witness to Accurate Prophecy.”

“He Causes to Become.” It points to his ability to know and shape future events in harmony with his will. It assures us that he is certain to bring about all that he has promised.

PROPHECIES BEING FULFILLED TODAY

Would you like to know what Bible prophecies have to say about our day? Some 2,000 years ago, the Bible foretold that “critical times hard to deal with” would come “in the last days.” Last days of what? Not of the earth or humankind, but of the strife, oppression, and suffering that have plagued mankind for millennia. Let us examine just a few of the prophecies that earmark “the last days.”

2 Timothy 3:1-5: “In the last days . . . , men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having an appearance of godliness but proving false to its power.”

Would you not agree that such behavior is increasingly evident in people today? Have you perceived that we are surrounded by people who adore themselves, love money, and are driven by pride? Have you not observed that people are more demanding and less willing to agree with others? Surely you notice that there is widespread disobedience to parents and that people in general love pleasures more than they love God. And things are getting worse by the day.

Matthew 24:6, 7: “You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars. . . . Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.”

Some estimates place the total number of deaths in wars and armed conflicts since 1914 at well over 100 million, a figure that surpasses the entire population of many nations. Imagine the tears, grief, and suffering represented by that co-

lossal statistic. Have the nations taken note and put an end to war?

Matthew 24:7: “There will be food shortages.”

The World Food Programme stated: “In a world where we produce enough food to feed everyone, 815 million people—one in nine—still go to bed on an empty stomach each night. Even more—one in three—suffer from some form of malnutrition.” It is estimated that each year some three million children die from hunger.

Luke 21:11: “There will be great earthquakes.”

Each year, some 50,000 earthquakes are large enough to be felt by humans. About 100 bring substantial damage to buildings, and one very great earthquake occurs about every year. According to one estimate, between 1975 and 2000, earthquakes claimed the lives of 471,000 people.

Matthew 24:14: “This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.”

Jehovah’s Witnesses, numbering more than eight million, have been preaching and bearing witness to the good news of God’s Kingdom throughout the earth in some 240 lands. They proclaim the good news in sprawling cities and remote villages, in jungles and on mountains. The prophecy foretells that when this work is completed to God’s satisfaction, “the end will come.” What will that mean? It will mean the end of human rule and the dawn of rule by God’s Kingdom. What promises will come true under God’s Kingdom? Read on to find out.

A SILENT WITNESS TO ACCURATE PROPHECY

IN CENTRAL ROME, ITALY, STANDS A TRIUMPHAL ARCH THAT ATTRACTS VISITORS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. THE ARCH HONORS ONE OF ROME'S FAVORITE EMPERORS—TITUS.

33 C.E.

Jesus Christ declared that Jerusalem faced a coming catastrophe

The Arch of Titus has two large reliefs depicting a well-known historical event. Less well-known, though, is the fascinating link between the arch and the Bible—the Arch of Titus bears silent witness to the remarkable accuracy of Bible prophecy.

A CITY CONDEMNED

Early in the first century C.E., the Roman Empire stretched from Britain and Gaul (now France) to Egypt, and the region enjoyed unprecedented stability and prosperity. But one remote area was a source of constant frustration for Rome—the restless province of Judea.

The *Encyclopedia of Ancient Rome* states: “Few territories under Rome’s control were marked by such intense dislike, on both sides, as Judaea. The Jews resented foreign masters who cared nothing for their traditions, and the Romans found Jewish stubbornness cause for severe intolerance.” Many Jews

hoped that a political messiah would expel the hated Romans and restore a golden era to Israel. But in 33 C.E., Jesus Christ declared that Jerusalem faced a coming catastrophe.

Jesus said: “*The days will come upon you when your enemies will build around you a fortification of pointed stakes and will encircle you and besiege you from every side. They will dash you and your children within you to the ground, and they will not leave a stone upon a stone in you.*”—Luke 19:43, 44.

Jesus’ words evidently puzzled his disciples. Two days later, on viewing Jerusalem’s temple, one of them exclaimed: “Teacher, see! what wonderful stones and buildings!” Indeed, some temple stones were reportedly over 35 feet (11 m) long, 15 feet (5 m) wide, and 10 feet (3 m) high! Yet, Jesus replied: “*As for these things that you now see, the days will come when not a stone will be left upon a stone and not be*

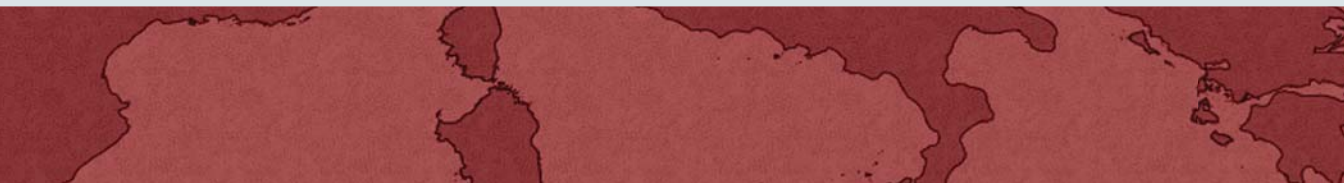
thrown down.”—Mark 13:1; Luke 21:6.

Jesus further told them: “*When you see Jerusalem surrounded by encamped armies, then know that the desolating of her has drawn near. Then let those in Judea begin fleeing to the mountains, let those in the midst of her leave, and let those in the countryside not enter into her.*” (Luke 21:20, 21) Did Jesus’ words come true?

DEATH OF A CITY

Thirty-three years passed, and Judea still chafed under the Roman yoke. But in 66 C.E. when the Roman procurator of Judea, Gessius Florus, seized funds from the sacred temple treasury, the enraged Jews had had enough. Soon, Jewish fighters swarmed into Jerusalem, slaughtered the local Roman garrison, and declared their independence from Rome.

About three months later, over 30,000 Roman troops, led by



66 C.E.

Roman troops led by Cestius Gallus advanced on Jerusalem to crush the Jewish rebellion

70 C.E.

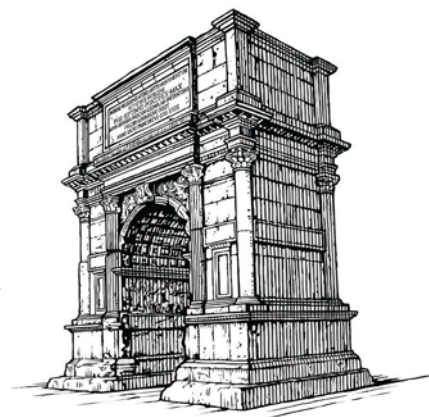
The Romans, under Titus, plundered and burned Jerusalem and its temple

71 C.E.

Titus returned to Rome to a rapturous reception

81 C.E.

Titus died, and shortly thereafter the arch was erected in his honor



The Arch of Titus in Rome today

Cestius Gallus, advanced on Jerusalem to crush the rebellion. The Romans quickly penetrated the city and undermined the outer wall of the temple area. Then, for no apparent reason, they retreated. The Jewish rebels rejoiced and promptly gave chase. With the warring parties away, the Christians, heeding Jesus' warning, fled from Jerusalem to the mountains beyond the Jordan River.—Matthew 24:15, 16.

The following year, Rome renewed its campaign against Judea, headed by General Vespasian and his son Titus. However, soon after Emperor Nero died in 68 C.E., Vespasian returned to Rome to assume the throne, leaving the Judean campaign to his son Titus with an army of some 60,000.

In June 70 C.E., Titus ordered his soldiers to strip the Judean countryside of trees, which were used in building a 4.5-mile-long (7 km) wall of pointed stakes around Jerusalem. By September, the Romans had

plundered and burned the city and its temple and had torn them apart stone by stone, just as Jesus had earlier foretold. (Luke 19:43, 44) According to a conservative estimate, “between a quarter and a half million people perished in Jerusalem and the rest of the country.”

AN IMPERIAL TRIUMPH

In 71 C.E., Titus returned to Italy to a rapturous reception from the citizens of Rome. The whole city turned out to celebrate one of the greatest triumphal processions ever staged in the capital.

The crowds marveled as untold wealth paraded through Rome's streets. They feasted their eyes on captured ships, massive floats depicting battle scenes from the war, and items plundered from Jerusalem's temple.

Titus succeeded his father Vespasian as emperor in 79 C.E. But just two years later, Titus died unexpectedly. Domitian, his brother, took the

throne and promptly erected a triumphal arch in Titus' honor.

THE ARCH TODAY

Today the Arch of Titus is much admired by the hundreds of thousands of people each year who visit the Roman Forum. Some view the arch as a majestic work of art, others as a tribute to imperial Roman power, and yet others as an epitaph to fallen Jerusalem and its temple.

Careful readers of the Bible, however, view the Arch of Titus as having even greater significance. It is a silent witness that confirms the reliability and accuracy of Bible prophecies and establishes that they are inspired by God.—2 Peter 1:19-21.

Promises That Will Come True

The good news of God's Kingdom is being preached in all the earth, just as Jesus prophesied. (Matthew 24:14) The Bible book of Daniel tells us that this Kingdom is a government by God. Chapter 2 of that book contains a prophecy that traces the progression of certain dominant human governments, or kingdoms, from ancient Babylon down to our day. Foretelling what lies ahead, verse 44 says this:

“The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. And this kingdom will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it alone will stand forever.”

This and other Bible prophecies foretell that God's Kingdom will replace all human rule and bring stability and order to people on earth. What will life be like under the Kingdom? Here are some marvelous promises that will soon come true.



NO MORE WAR

Psalm 46:9: “[God] is bringing an end to wars throughout the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the military wagons with fire.”

Imagine what the world would be like if all the money and expertise that is now being spent to create weapons were channeled into areas that would benefit people rather than kill them! That promise will become a reality under God's Kingdom.



NO MORE SICKNESS

Isaiah 33:24: “No resident will say: ‘I am sick.’”

Think about a world in which no one will suffer from heart disease, cancer, malaria, or any other ailment. Gone will be the need for hospitals and medications. Perfect health—that is the future for earth's inhabitants.



NO MORE FOOD SHORTAGE

Psalm 72:16: “There will be an abundance of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains it will overflow.”

The earth will produce enough food for everyone, and all will have access to it. Hunger and malnutrition will be no more.



NO MORE PAIN, SORROW, AND DEATH

Revelation 21:4: “[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”

That will mean life without end in perfection on a paradise earth! That is what our loving Creator, Jehovah God, has promised.

“IT WILL HAVE SURE SUCCESS”

Does all of this sound too good to be true? Though most people would readily agree that life as promised and described in the Bible is truly desirable, for various reasons many find the idea of living forever difficult to comprehend. That is not surprising, for no fellow human has ever experienced life like that to tell us about it.

Humankind has been enslaved by sin and death and has labored under the burden of pain, suffering, and adversity for so long that many people have come to accept this way of life as normal or natural. But that is far from what our Creator, Jehovah God, purposed for mankind.

To help us appreciate the certainty of all that he has promised, God said emphatically regarding his word: “It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly accomplish whatever is my delight, and it will have sure success in what I send it to do.”—Isaiah 55:11.

Jehovah is described in the Bible as the God “who cannot lie.” (Titus 1:2) Since he has promised all these wonderful things for the future, it would be prudent on our part to consider: Is it really possible for humans to live forever in the promised earthly Paradise? What must we do to benefit from God’s promise? In the following pages of this publication, you will find helpful information that answers those questions.



You **Can** Live Forever on Earth



WHAT AN AMAZING PROSPECT! Our Creator has promised to give us everlasting life, *right here on earth*. Many, however, find that difficult to believe. ‘Everyone has to die sometime,’ they say. ‘It is part of a natural cycle of life and death.’ Others feel that living forever is possible, but not here on earth. They say that everlasting life is attained only after you die and go to heaven. What do you think?

Before you decide, why not consider the Bible’s answer to these three questions: What does the way man was made show as to how long he was meant to live? What was God’s original purpose for the earth and for mankind? How did death come upon the human family?

MAN’S UNIQUE NATURE

Of all the forms of life that God has created on earth, humans are truly unique. How so? The Bible indicates that humans alone were created in God’s “image” and “likeness.” (Genesis 1:26, 27) What does that mean? It means that humankind was given characteristics and qualities that mirrored God’s own, such as love and a sense of justice.

In addition, humans were endowed with thinking and reasoning abilities, coupled with moral and spiritual capacities. That is why we can appreciate the grandeur of the universe and the wonders of nature, as well as art, music, and poetry. Above all, mankind has the unique capacity to worship the Creator. Such attributes put an immeasurable gulf between humans and all other living creatures on earth.

Thus, consider: Would God have given humans such remarkable qualities, along with a seemingly limitless potential to develop and enhance them, if he meant for us to live only a few short years? The truth is that God gave humans these unique qualities and abilities so that we could enjoy life right here on earth forever.

GOD’S ORIGINAL PURPOSE

Some say, however, that God never meant for humans to live on earth forever. They maintain that the earth was designed to be a temporary home, a testing ground to see which members of the human family deserve to go to heaven and live eternally with God. But if that were true, would it not, in effect, make God responsible for all the evil

and badness that fill the earth? That would be in direct contradiction to the very nature of God. About him, the Bible says: “For all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness who is never unjust; righteous and upright is he.”—Deuteronomy 32:4.

The Bible clearly reveals God’s original purpose for the earth in these words: “As for the heavens, they belong to Jehovah, but the earth he has given to the sons of men.” (Psalm 115:16) Yes, God created the earth to be a beautiful, permanent home for mankind, and he filled it with everything we need to enjoy meaningful, endless life.—Genesis 2:8, 9.

The Bible is also clear regarding God’s purpose for mankind. He commissioned the first human couple to “fill the earth and subdue it, and have in subjection . . . every living creature that is moving on the earth.” (Genesis 1:28) What a privilege for them to care for and expand their Paradise home earth wide! Indeed, the prospect that awaited Adam and Eve and their eventual offspring was everlasting life on earth, not a reward in heaven.

WHY DO WE DIE?

Why, then, do we die? The Bible shows that one of God’s spirit creatures, later identified as the rebel Satan the Devil, tried to sabotage God’s arrangements in Eden. How?

Satan induced our first parents, Adam and Eve, to join him in rebellion against God. When Satan claimed that God was withholding something good from them—the right to determine for themselves what is right and what is wrong—they went along with Satan and turned their backs on God. The result? In time, they died, just as God had warned. They lost the prospect of living forever in Paradise on earth.—Genesis 2:17; 3:1-6; 5:5.

Adam and Eve’s rebellion has affected all humans down to this day. God’s Word says: “Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men.” (Romans 5:12) We die because we inherited sin and death from our original parents,

not because of some predetermined, unfathomable ‘plan’ of God.

YOU CAN LIVE FOREVER ON EARTH

The rebellion in Eden did not thwart God’s original purpose for mankind and the earth. God’s perfect love and sense of justice moved him to provide a way to free us from the bondage of inherited sin and death. The apostle Paul explained: “The wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) Lovingly, God “gave his only-begotten Son [Jesus Christ], so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) By offering himself willingly as a ransom sacrifice, Jesus redeemed all that was lost through Adam.*

Soon, God’s promise of an earthly paradise will become a reality. This wonderful future can be yours if you take to heart Jesus’ admonition: “Go in through the narrow gate, because broad is the gate and spacious is the road leading off into destruction, and many are going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are finding it.” (Matthew 7:13, 14) Yes, your future is in your own hands. What will you do?

* For more information on what the ransom can do for you, see chapter 5 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org.

“As for the heavens, they belong to Jehovah, but the earth he has given to the sons of men.”

—Psalm 115:16

Your Future, Your Choice!



DO YOU HAVE ANY REAL CHOICE IN WHAT YOUR FUTURE WILL BE? Some people believe that fate or predestination, not personal choice, controls their life. When they fail to reach certain goals, they simply shrug it off as inevitable. “It was never meant to be!” they say.

Others become disillusioned when they see no way out of this oppressive and unjust world in which we live. They may have tried to make their lives better—only to see things like war, crime, natural disasters, and sickness wreck their plans time and again. ‘Why bother?’ they ask themselves.

It is true that circumstances in life can seriously affect your plans. (Ecclesiastes 9:11) However, when it comes to your ultimate destiny, you do have a very real choice. In fact, the Bible shows that your future depends on your choice. Consider what it says.

Moses, the leader of the ancient nation of Israel, told the people as they were about to enter the Promised Land: “I have put life and death before you, the blessing and the curse; and you must choose life so that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving Jehovah your God, by listening to his voice, and by sticking to him.”—**Deuteronomy 30:15, 19, 20.**

Yes! God delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and put before them the prospect of a free and happy life in the Promised Land. But all that would not come upon them automatically. To gain

those blessings, they had to “choose life.” How? ‘By loving God, by listening to his voice, and by sticking to him.’

Today, a similar choice is before you, and how you choose will determine what your future will be. By choosing to love God, to listen to his voice, and to stick to him, you will in effect be choosing life—life everlasting on a paradise earth. But what is involved in each of those steps?

CHOOSE TO LOVE GOD

Love is God’s primary attribute. “God is love,” wrote the apostle John under inspiration. (1 John 4:8) For this reason, when asked what is the greatest of all commandments, Jesus said: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.” (Matthew 22:37) A real relationship with Jehovah God must be based, not on fear or blind obedience, but on love. Why, though, should we choose to love him?

Jehovah’s love for mankind is like that of loving parents for their children. Though imperfect, loving parents instruct, encourage, support, and discipline their children because they want them to be happy and to flourish. What do parents desire in return? They want their children to love them and to take to heart what they as parents have imparted to them for their good. Is it not reasonable that our perfect heavenly Father expects us to show loving appreciation for all that he has done for us?



**“I have put life and death
before you, the blessing
and the curse; and you
must choose life.”**

—Deuteronomy 30:19

LISTEN TO HIS VOICE

In the original language of the Bible, the word “listen” often carries the sense of “obey.” Is this not what we mean when we say to a child, “Listen to your parents”? Thus, to listen to God’s voice implies learning and obeying what he says. Since we cannot literally hear God’s voice, we listen to him by reading and applying what is in his Word, the Bible.—1 John 5:3.

To show the importance of listening to God’s voice, on one occasion Jesus said: “Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every word that comes from Jehovah’s mouth.” (Matthew 4:4) As important as physical food is to us, taking in knowledge of God is, in fact, even more so. Why? Wise King Solomon explained: “Wisdom is a protection just as money is a protection, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves the life of its owner.” (Ecclesiastes 7:12) Knowledge and wisdom from God can protect us today and help us to make the wise choice that leads to everlasting life in the future.

STICKING TO HIM

Recall Jesus’ illustration that we considered in the preceding article, in which he said: “Narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life, and few are finding it.” (Matthew 7:13, 14) Traveling on such a road, we would surely benefit from having and staying close to an expert guide if we wanted to reach the destination—life everlasting. Thus, there is good reason for us to stay

close to God. (Psalm 16:8) How, though, do we do that?

Every day, there are many things that we must do and many more that we would like to do. Such things can keep us so occupied or distracted that we have little or no time to consider what God wants us to do. That is why the Bible reminds us: “Keep strict watch that how you walk is not as unwise but as wise persons, making the best use of your time, because the days are wicked.” (Ephesians 5:15, 16) We stay close to God by making our relationship with him the most important thing in our life.—Matthew 6:33.

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

Though there is nothing you can do to change your past, you can choose to secure a fine future for yourself and your loved ones. The Bible reveals that our heavenly Father, Jehovah God, deeply loves us and that he lets us know what he would like to see us do. Note the words of the prophet Micah:

“He has told you, O man, what is good. And what is Jehovah requiring of you? Only to exercise justice, to cherish loyalty, and to walk in modesty with your God!”—**Micah 6:8.**

Will you accept Jehovah’s invitation to walk with him and gain the eternal blessings he has in store for those who do? The choice is yours!

“THE MEEK WILL POSSESS THE EARTH”

Most of us have seen justice perverted and good, innocent people oppressed by evil ones. Will the time ever come when injustice and wickedness will be no more?

Psalm 37 in the Bible offers the answer, along with guidance for us now. Note what it says on the following important questions.

- **How should we react to those who oppress us?**—Verses 1, 2.
- **What will become of wicked people?**—Verse 10.
- **What is the future for those who do what is right?**—Verses 11, 29.
- **What should we do now?**—Verse 34.

The inspired words of Psalm 37 clearly point to a bright future for those who “hope in Jehovah and follow his way.” Jehovah’s Witnesses would be happy to assist you to study the Bible and to learn how you can secure that future for yourself and your loved ones.



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For more information about God’s purpose for mankind and the earth, see chapter 3 of this book, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Also available at **www.jw.org**


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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

**Does God
Care About
You?**



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Cover image depicts a refugee fleeing a natural disaster

DOES GOD CARE ABOUT YOU?

When disaster strikes or people suffer and die, we may wonder whether God sees it or cares about it. The Bible states:

“For the eyes of Jehovah are on the righteous, and his ears listen to their supplication, but the face of Jehovah is against those doing bad things.”—1 Peter 3:12.

This issue of *The Watchtower* shows how God helps us and what he is doing to remove all suffering.



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

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“WHERE
WAS
GOD?”

“CONSTANTLY
THE QUESTION
COMES UP:
WHERE WAS
GOD?”

— Pope Benedict XVI,
while visiting the former
concentration camp
at Auschwitz, Poland.



WHEN TRAGEDIES STRIKE, DO YOU EVER WONDER, ‘WHERE WAS GOD?’ OR IN YOUR OWN LIFE, HAS A TRAUMATIC EVENT MADE YOU QUESTION WHETHER GOD CARES ABOUT YOU PERSONALLY?

Perhaps you feel as did Sheila, who lives in the United States. Raised in a deeply religious family, she says: “From childhood on, I was drawn to God because he is our Maker. Yet, I never felt close to him. I thought he was watching me, but only from a distance. I didn’t feel that God hated me, but neither did I believe that he cared for me.” Why did Sheila have doubts? She explains: “My family faced one tragedy after another, and it seemed that God wasn’t helping us at all.”

Like Sheila, you may feel sure that Almighty God exists. Yet, you may wonder whether he really cares about *you*. The righteous man Job, who had faith in the power and wisdom of the Creator, had similar doubts. (Job 2:3; 9:4) After Job was pummeled by one tragedy after another—with no relief in sight—he asked God: “Why do you hide your face and consider me your enemy?”—Job 13:24.

What does the Bible say? Is God to blame when tragedy strikes? Is there any evidence that God cares about humans in general and about each one of us individually? On a personal level, can any of us really know whether he notices us, understands us, empathizes with us, or helps us with our problems?

In the following articles, we will consider what creation teaches us about God’s care for us. (Romans 1:20) Then, we will analyze what the Bible reveals about God’s care. The more you “come to know him” through his creation and his Word, the more you will have the assurance that “he cares for you.”—1 John 2:3; 1 Peter 5:7.

Does God Notice You?



WHAT CREATION TEACHES US

The first 60 minutes of a baby's life outside the womb is a crucial period of adjustment. Why? Because mothers who bond with their newborn babies during this critical time dramatically improve the growth and development of their children.*

What prompts a mother to care tenderly for her newborn baby? Professor Jeannette Crenshaw explains in *The Journal of Perinatal Education* that an elevated level of the hormone oxytocin “stimulates mothering feelings after birth as a mother touches, gazes at, and breastfeeds her newborn.” Another hormone released at this time “helps a mother respond to her baby” and reinforces her interaction with her baby. Why is that significant?

The close bond between mother and baby was designed by our loving Creator, Jehovah God.[#] King David credited God with bringing him “out of the womb” and making him feel secure in his mother's embrace. He prayed: “I have been en-

trusted to your care from birth; from my mother's womb, you have been my God.”—Psalm 22:9, 10.

CONSIDER: If God created such a complex system to ensure that a human mother will tenderly observe her baby and respond to the infant's needs, does it not seem logical that God also takes a personal interest in us, “the children of God”?—Acts 17:29.


WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES US ABOUT GOD'S WATCHFUL CARE

Jesus Christ, who knows the Creator better than anyone else, taught: “Two sparrows sell for a coin of small value, do they not? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground without your Father's knowledge. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. So have no fear; you are worth more than many sparrows.”—Matthew 10:29-31.

Few of us pay attention to every small bird we see, let alone notice when one of them falls to the ground. But our heavenly Father notices *each one* of them! And birds—even *many* birds—are never worth more to him than a human. The lesson, therefore, is clear: You should “have no fear” that God does not notice you. On the contrary, he is deeply interested in you!

* Some mothers who suffer from postpartum depression may have difficulty bonding with their baby. However, they should not feel that they are to blame. According to the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health, postpartum depression “likely results from a combination of physical and emotional factors . . . but does not occur because of something a mother does or does not do.” For more information on this subject, see the article “Understanding Postpartum Depression” in the June 8, 2003, issue of *Awake!*

[#] Jehovah is God's name as revealed in the Bible.—Psalm 83:18.



“You are worth more.”—MATTHEW 10:31

The Scriptures assure us

- “The eyes of Jehovah are everywhere, watching both the bad and the good.”—**PROVERBS 15:3**.
- “The eyes of Jehovah are on the righteous, and his ears listen to their cry for help.”—**PSALM 34:15**.
- “I will rejoice greatly in your loyal love, for you have seen my affliction; you are aware of my deep distress.”—**PSALM 31:7**.

God is keenly interested
in our welfare and
watches over us with
loving concern

“I FELT THAT I WAS NOT LOVED BY JEHOVAH”

Can it make a difference in our life if we know that God is keenly interested in our welfare and watches over us with loving concern? It most certainly can, as **Hannah,* from England**, explains:

“Many, many times I felt that Jehovah did not love me and that my prayers were not being answered. I thought it was because of a lack of faith on my part. I felt that I was being punished or ignored because I wasn’t important. I felt that God didn’t care.”

However, Hannah no longer doubts Jehovah’s attention and love. What changed how she felt? “It was a gradual change,” she explains. “I remember one Bible talk many years ago about Jesus’ ransom sacrifice that had a profound effect on me and helped me feel reassured of Jehovah’s love. And when my prayers have been answered, I have often burst into tears because I realized that Jehovah does love me after all. Also, by studying the Bible and attending Christian meetings, I have learned more about Jehovah, his personality, and the way he feels about us. Now I see clearly Jehovah’s backing and love for us all and his willing desire to look after us individually.”

What Hannah says is encouraging. But how can you be sure that God understands and remembers your feelings? The following article will examine this question.

* Some of the names in this series of articles have been changed.

Does God Understand You?



WHAT CREATION TEACHES US

Reflect on one of the closest relationships humans can have—that of identical twins. They share an especially intimate bond. Some twins even “know what it’s like to say something to someone who understands exactly what they mean without explanation,” says Nancy Segal, director of the Twin Studies Center and a twin herself. One woman described the relationship between her and her identical twin this way: “We just know everything about each other.”

What accounts for this unique understanding? Studies suggest that while environment and parenting are factors, the especially similar genetic makeup of identical twins seems to play a critical role.

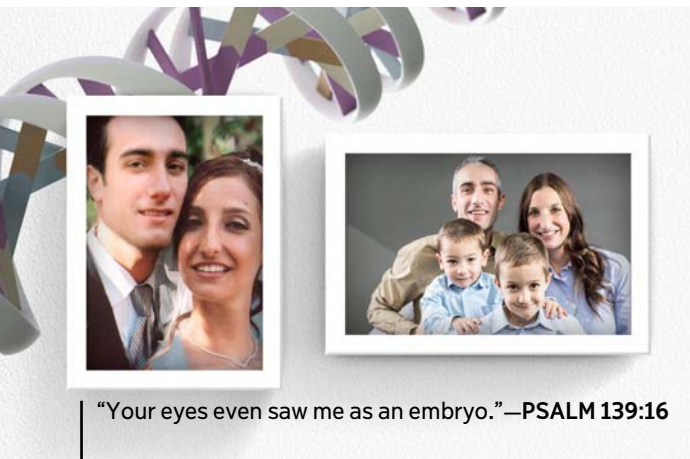
CONSIDER: The Creator of all this awesome genetic material surely has a unique understanding of the makeup of every one of us. Indeed, the psalmist David declared: “You kept me screened off in my mother’s womb. My bones were not hidden from you when I was made in secret. . . . Your eyes even saw me as an embryo; all its parts were written in your book.” (Psalm 139:13, 15, 16) God alone knows and can fully understand not only our genetic makeup but also all the events in our

life that have shaped us. God’s unique knowledge of us and our genetic makeup assures us that he does indeed understand us in every detail.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES US ABOUT GOD’S INSIGHT

David prayed: “O Jehovah, you have searched through me, and you know me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar. There is not a word on my tongue, but look! O Jehovah, you already know it well.” (Psalm 139:1, 2, 4) In addition, Jehovah is aware of our innermost feelings and even “discerns every inclination of the thoughts.” (1 Chronicles 28:9; 1 Samuel 16:6, 7) What do these verses reveal about God?

Even though we may not vocalize all our prayerful thoughts and feelings, our Creator not only observes *what* we do but also understands *why* we do it. Moreover, he understands the good we *would like to do*, even if our limitations prevent us from carrying out our heartfelt desire. Surely, because God put love in our hearts in the first place, he is willing—even eager—to observe and understand our loving thoughts and motives. —1 John 4:7-10.



“Your eyes even saw me as an embryo.”—**PSALM 139:16**

The Scriptures assure us

- “The eyes of Jehovah are on the righteous, and his ears listen to their supplication.”—**1 PETER 3:12.**
- God promises: “I will give you insight and instruct you in the way you should go. I will give you advice with my eye upon you.”—**PSALM 32:8.**

Absolutely nothing escapes God’s notice. He is even aware of our sufferings when others may not be aware of them or fully understand them

GOD IS VERY COMPASSIONATE

Can knowing that God understands our situation and feelings help us deal with adversity? Consider what happened to **Anna, from Nigeria**. “I questioned whether life was worth living because of my desperate circumstances,” she explains. “I was a widow caring for my daughter, who was in the hospital with hydrocephalus (excessive fluid in the brain), when I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had to have surgery, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy. It was extremely difficult for me to handle being in the hospital at the same time that my ailing daughter was.”

What helped Anna to cope? “I pondered over scriptures such as Philippians 4:6, 7, which says that ‘the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your mental powers.’ Each time this scripture came to mind, I felt a close personal bond with Jehovah, knowing that he understands me better than I understand myself. I also received much encouragement from my beloved spiritual brothers and sisters in the Christian congregation.

“Even though I still struggle with my health, my situation and that of my daughter have improved. Because we have Jehovah on our side, we have learned not to think negatively when we face challenges. James 5:11 assures us: ‘We consider happy those who have endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection [or, “very compassionate,” footnote] and merciful.’” Jehovah understood Job’s situation perfectly, and we can be sure that he likewise understands any difficulties we go through.

Does God Have Empathy?



WHAT CREATION TEACHES US

Empathy is defined as “the ability to share someone else’s feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in that person’s situation.” Mental-health expert Dr. Rick Hanson states that “empathy is in our bones.”

CONSIDER: Why are we endowed with empathy, a quality unmatched in any other species? The Bible explains that God created humankind in his image. (Genesis 1:26) We are made in the image of God in that we can reflect his personality and thus display a measure of his fine qualities. Hence, when empathy moves caring people to help others, they mirror the empathy of their compassionate Creator, Jehovah God.—Proverbs 14:31.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES US ABOUT GOD’S EMPATHY

God has empathy for us and hates to see us suffer. Regarding the people of ancient Israel who endured harsh slavery in Egypt followed by 40 difficult years in the wilderness the Bible says: “During all their distress it was distressing to him.” (Isaiah 63:9) Note that God was not merely aware of their distress. He could feel their pain. “I well know the pains they suffer,” he stated. (Exodus 3:7) “Whoever touches you,” says God,

“touches the pupil of my eye.” (Zechariah 2:8) When others hurt us, his heart aches with ours.

The Bible assures us that even though we may feel self-condemned and unworthy of God’s empathy, “God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.” (1 John 3:19, 20) God knows us better than we know ourselves. He is fully aware of all our circumstances, thoughts, and feelings. He has empathy for us.

We can look to God for comfort, wisdom, and support, knowing that he comes to the aid of those who are distressed



GOD NOTICES, UNDERSTANDS, AND FEELS FOR US

Can knowing that God has empathy for us help us deal with adversity? Consider **Maria's** experience:

"I felt that life was hard and unjust after I experienced the immense pain of losing my 18-year-old son following his two-year battle with cancer. I was angry with Jehovah for not intervening and curing him!

"Six years later, a loving and compassionate friend in the congregation listened as I expressed my feeling that Jehovah did not love me. After listening to me for hours without interrupting, she quoted a verse that moved me. It was 1 John 3:19, 20, which says: 'God is greater than our hearts and knows all things.' She explained that Jehovah understands our distress.

"Despite this, it was hard for me to let go of my anger! Then I read Psalm 94:19, which says: 'When anxieties overwhelmed me, you comforted and soothed me.' I felt as if the verses were written just for me! Eventually, I found it very soothing to be able to talk to Jehovah about my distress, knowing that he listens and understands."

How comforting it is to know that God understands and feels for us! But why, then, is there so much suffering? Is it because God is punishing us for wrongdoing? Will God do anything to end all suffering? These matters will be addressed in the following articles.

The Scriptures assure us

- "You will call, and Jehovah will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say, 'Here I am!'"—**ISAIAH 58:9.**
- "'For I well know the thoughts that I am thinking toward you,' declares Jehovah, 'thoughts of peace, and not of calamity, to give you a future and a hope. And you will call me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.'"—**JEREMIAH 29:11, 12.**
- "Do collect my tears in your skin bottle. Are they not recorded in your book?"—**PSALM 56:8.**

SUFFERING

Is It Punishment From God?

LUZIA LIMPS ON HER LEFT LEG. As a small child, she contracted poliomyelitis, a highly contagious disease that attacks the body's nervous system. When she was 16, a lady whom Luzia worked for told her, "God punished you with paralysis because you were disobedient and nasty to your mother." Years later, Luzia still remembers how devastated she felt.

WHEN DAMARIS LEARNED THAT SHE HAD BRAIN CANCER, her father asked her: "What have you done for this to happen to you? You must have done something very bad. That is why God is punishing you." Damaris' spirit was crushed by his comment.

The thought that sickness is punishment from God has a long history. The book *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* says that many in Christ's time believed that "sickness was caused by either the sin of the sick person, or of his relations, and that it was sent as punishment for that sin." *Medieval Medicine and the Plague* says that in the Middle Ages "some people believed that God brought plagues to punish them for their sins." So when millions throughout Europe died from the plague in the 14th century, was God executing judgment on wicked people? Or was the plague simply caused by a bacterial infection, as medical researchers have since determined? Some may wonder, does God really use sickness to make people suffer for their sins?*

CONSIDER: Why would Jesus heal people who were sick if sickness and suffering were deserved

* Although there have been times in the past when God has punished people for specific sins, the Bible does not indicate that Jehovah is now using such things as sickness or tragedies to punish people for their sins.

punishments from God? Would that not amount to undermining God's justice and righteousness? (Matthew 4:23, 24) Jesus would never counteract God's actions. He said: "I always do the things pleasing to him" and, "I am doing just as the Father has commanded me to do."—John 8:29; 14:31.

The Bible is clear. Jehovah God "is never unjust." (Deuteronomy 32:4) For example, God would never cause an airplane disaster, killing hundreds of innocent people, because he wanted to punish someone on board! In harmony with God's righteousness, Abraham, a faithful servant of God, said that God would never "sweep away the righteous with the wicked." That would be "unthinkable," he said. (Genesis 18:23, 25) The Bible also says that "God does not act wickedly"; he does not "do wrong."—Job 34:10-12.

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES US ABOUT SUFFERING

The suffering we encounter is not divine punishment for a specific sin. Jesus himself was very clear on this matter when he and his disciples saw a man who had been blind from birth. "His disciples asked him: 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?' Jesus answered: 'Neither this man sinned nor his parents, but it was so that the works of God might be made manifest in his case.'"—John 9:1-3.

In view of prevailing misconceptions, Jesus' disciples must have been surprised when he told them that neither the man nor his parents had sinned in a way that brought on misfortune. Not only did Jesus cure the man's blindness but by so doing he overturned the erroneous belief that suf-

fering is punishment from God. (John 9:6, 7) Those who suffer from serious health problems today can find comfort in knowing that God is not the cause of their affliction.

The Scriptures assure us

- “With evil things God cannot be tried, nor does he himself try anyone.” (**JAMES 1:13**) Indeed, the “evil things” that have plagued mankind for centuries, including sickness, pain, and death, will soon be eliminated.
- Jesus Christ “cured all who were suffering.” (**MATTHEW 8:16**) In healing all who came to him, God’s Son demonstrated what God’s Kingdom will accomplish on a worldwide scale.
- “He [God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”—**REVELATION 21:3-5**.

Why would Jesus heal sick people if God was punishing them for wrongdoing?

WHO IS TO BLAME?

Why, then, does mankind experience so much pain and suffering? Mankind has been pondering that question for centuries. If God is not to blame, who is responsible? The answers to those questions will be discussed in the next article.



Who Is to Blame?

If suffering is not from God, what accounts for mass starvation, grinding poverty, brutal warfare, crippling diseases, and natural disasters? God's Word, the Bible, reveals three main causes for mankind's suffering:

1. Selfishness, Greed, and Hatred. “Man has dominated man to his harm.” (Ecclesiastes 8:9) People often suffer because they are victimized by imperfect, selfish, or cruel humans.

2. Time and Unforeseen Events. Humans often suffer “because time and unexpected events overtake them.” (Ecclesiastes 9:11) That is, people are simply at the wrong place at the wrong time, accidents occur, or people are careless or make mistakes.

3. The Evil Ruler of the World. The Bible clearly identifies the primary cause of human suffering. It states: “The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) That “wicked one” is Satan the Devil, a powerful spirit creature who was originally an angel of God but “did not stand fast in the truth.” (John 8:44) Other spirit creatures joined Satan and rebelled against God in order to pursue selfish desires, thus making themselves demons. (Genesis 6:1-5) Ever since their rebellion, Satan and his demons have exerted a powerful and cruel influence over this world's affairs. This has been particularly so in our time. Now, the Devil has great anger and “is misleading the entire inhabited earth,” which has resulted in “woe for the earth.” (Revelation 12:9, 12) Indeed, Satan is a brutal dictator. He gets perverse satisfaction from human suffering. It is Satan—not God—who causes people to suffer.

CONSIDER: Only a heartless, diabolical evildoer would cause innocent people to suffer. By con-

trast, the Bible says: “God is love.” (1 John 4:8) In harmony with his loving personality, “it is unthinkable for the true God to act wickedly, for the Almighty to do wrong!”—Job 34:10.

However, you may naturally wonder, ‘How long will Almighty God permit Satan to continue his heinous rule?’ As we have seen, God abhors wickedness and our suffering causes him great pain. Furthermore, his Word urges: “Throw all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) God loves us and has the power to remove all suffering and injustice, as the following article will explain.*

* For a detailed explanation of why God has allowed suffering, see chapter 11 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available for free download at www.jw.org.



God Will Soon End All Suffering

“How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, but you do not hear? How long must I ask for help from violence, but you do not intervene?” (Habakkuk 1:2, 3) These are the words of Habakkuk, a good man who enjoyed God’s favor. Did his plea indicate a lack of faith? By no means! God reassured Habakkuk that He had an appointed time to bring an end to suffering.—Habakkuk 2:2, 3.

When you or someone close to you is suffering, it is easy to conclude that God is slow to act, that he should have intervened by now. Yet, the Bible assures us: “Jehovah is not slow concerning his promise, as some people consider slowness, but he is patient with you because he does not desire anyone to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.”—2 Peter 3:9.

WHEN WILL GOD ACT?

Very soon! Jesus revealed that a particular generation would witness a unique combination of conditions that would mark the last days of a “system of things.” (Matthew 24:3-42) The fulfillment of Jesus’ prophecy in our day indicates that God’s intervention in human affairs is imminent.*

But how will God bring an end to all suffering? When Jesus was on the earth, he demonstrated God’s power to alleviate mankind’s suffering. Consider some examples of this.

Natural Disasters: While Jesus and his apostles were sailing on the Sea of Galilee, a violent windstorm threatened to sink their boat. But Jesus showed that he and his Father can control the natural elements. (Colossians 1:15, 16) Jesus simply said: “Hush! Be quiet!” The result? “The wind abated, and a great calm set in.”—Mark 4:35-39.

* For more information about the last days, see chapter 9 of the book *What Can the Bible Teach Us?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses and available for free download at www.jw.org.

Sickness: Jesus was well-known for his ability to heal the blind and the lame, as well as those suffering from epilepsy, leprosy, or any other sort of infirmity. “He cured *all* who were suffering.”—Matthew 4:23, 24; 8:16; 11:2-5.

Food Shortages: Jesus used powers granted to him by his Father to multiply meager food supplies. It is recorded that twice during his ministry, he fed thousands.—Matthew 14:14-21; 15:32-38.

Death: That Jehovah has the power to undo death is clearly shown by the three resurrections Jesus is recorded to have performed. One of those whom he brought back to life had been dead for four days.—Mark 5:35-42; Luke 7:11-16; John 11:3-44.



HOW GOD'S CARE CAN BENEFIT YOU

God has created our bodies with the marvelous ability to heal. When a healthy body is cut, scraped, or punctured, it “orchestrates a complex cascade of events designed to heal wounds big and small.” (Johns Hopkins Medicine) The body immediately springs into action to stop the bleeding, widen the blood vessels, repair the wound, and strengthen the tissue.

CONSIDER: If the Creator designed our bodies to heal physical wounds, can we not have confidence in his promise to help us recover from emotional injuries too? “He heals the brokenhearted,” wrote the psalmist. “He binds up their wounds.” (Psalm 147:3) But if you suffer from emotional trauma or distress, how can you be sure that Jehovah will bind up *your* wounds—both now and in the future?

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES US ABOUT GOD'S LOVE

God promises: “Do not be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be anxious, for I am your God. I will fortify you, yes, I will help you.” (Isaiah 41:10) A person who knows that Jehovah cares about him has peace of mind and the strength to deal with various trials. The apostle Paul called this inner calmness “the peace of God that surpasses all understanding.” Paul added: “For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power.”—Philippians 4:4-7, 9, 13.

The Scriptures help us to build faith in Jehovah's promises for mankind's future. For example, Revelation 21:4, 5 (quoted on the next page) tells us *what* he will do and *why* we can trust him to do it:

- “He will wipe out every tear” from people's eyes. Jehovah will eliminate *all* our suffering and anxiety, even concerns that seem insignificant to others.

- “Seated on the throne” in heavenly glory, the Almighty King of all creation will exercise his power and authority to prevent suffering and to give us the help we need.

- Jehovah guarantees that his promises are “faithful and true.” That is, he stakes his reputation as the true God on the fulfillment of his promises.

Both the physical universe and the Bible reveal the personality and the attributes of our heavenly Father. While creation represents an implicit invitation to get to know God as an intimate Friend, the Bible makes that invitation explicit, saying: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” (James 4:8) Says Acts 17:27: “He is not far off from each one of us.”

As you take the time to know God, you will become increasingly convinced that “he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) What are the practical benefits of such trust in Jehovah?

Consider the case of Toru, from Japan. He was raised by a Christian mother, yet he became involved in the violent world of the yakuza, the Japanese Mafia. He relates, “I believed that God hated me, and I felt that the deaths of those around me, especially those who were very dear to me, were a punishment for me.” Toru admits that in this destructive environment and frame of mind, he became “a heartless and unfeeling person.” Regarding his ambition, he recalls, “I wanted to die young after killing someone more famous than me and thus make a name for myself.”

However, when Toru and his wife, Hannah, studied the Bible, Toru made drastic changes in his life and outlook. “I watched my husband change before my very eyes,” says Hannah. Now, Toru says with certainty: “There is a God who real-



ly cares about each one of us. He does not want anyone to die, and he is willing to forgive those who truly repent of their errors. He listens to things that we can tell no one but him and that no one else would understand. In the near future, Jehovah will remove all problems, suffering, and agony. Even now, he helps us in the most unexpected ways. He cares for us and saves us when we are low.”—Psalm 136:23.

As Toru’s experience illustrates, knowing that God can—and soon will—eliminate all tragedy and wipe away every tear not only gives us a sure hope for the future but also helps us to live a better life now. Yes, even in a world saturated with suffering, you can benefit from God’s loving care.

“‘He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.’ And the One seated on the throne said: ‘Look! I am making all things new.’ Also he says: ‘Write, for these words are faithful and true.’”—Revelation 21:4, 5.



How does God feel about your suffering?

Some people believe that God neither sees suffering nor cares about it.

CONSIDER WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

■ God both sees and cares

“Jehovah saw that man’s wickedness was great on the earth . . . , and his heart was saddened.”
—Genesis 6:5, 6.

■ God will stop all suffering

“Just a little while longer, and the wicked will be no more; you will look at where they were, and they will not be there. But the meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”
—Psalm 37:10, 11.

■ What God wants for you

“‘I well know the thoughts that I am thinking toward you,’ declares Jehovah, ‘thoughts of peace, and not of calamity, to give you a future and a hope. And you will call me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.’”
—Jeremiah 29:11, 12.

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



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