

DECEMBER 1, 2009

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

GOD WILL END ALL SUFFERING!

WHEN? HOW?

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

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations. Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*.

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The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; M. H. Larson, President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299.

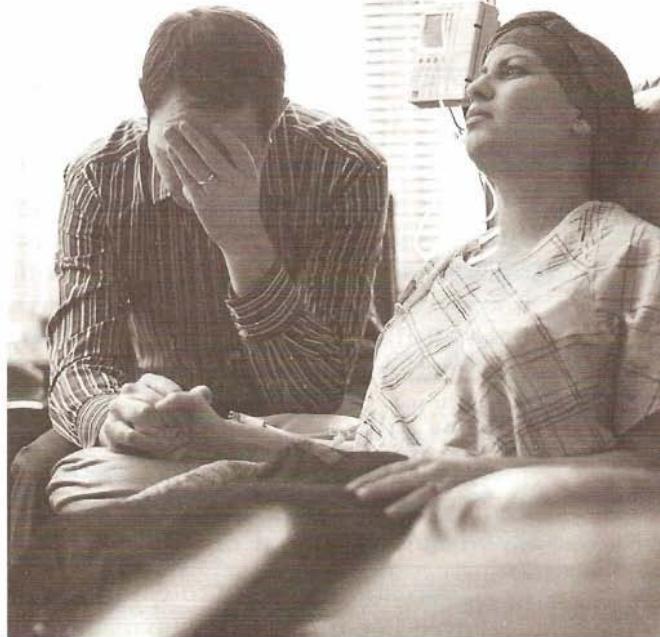
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Semimonthly

ENGLISH

"How Long ... Must I Cry for Help?"

"I just want the pain to stop!" wept Jayne. She had cancer, and it was spreading through her body. How her family and friends wished they could simply remove her disease and her agony! They prayed to God to help her. Would he listen? Did he care?



GOD is aware of the condition of the human family. His Word, the Bible, says: "All creation keeps on groaning together and being in pain together." (Romans 8:22) God knows that there are hundreds of millions of people who, like Jayne, are in pain every day, be it physical, emotional, or mental. God sees the 800 million people who go to bed hungry every night, the millions of others who suffer from domestic violence, and the many parents who fret about the future and the welfare of their children. Have you ever wondered whether God will take action? Surely, since we want to help our loved ones, would not God want to help the human family, his creation?

If you have asked those same questions, you are not alone. Over 2,600 years ago, a faithful man, Habakkuk, felt as many today do, and he asked God: "How long, O Jehovah, must I cry for help, and you do not hear? How long shall I call to you for aid

from violence, and you do not save? Why is it that you make me see what is hurtful, and you keep looking upon mere trouble? And why are despoiling and violence in front of me, and why does quarreling occur, and why is strife carried?" (Habakkuk 1: 2, 3) Habakkuk, a Hebrew prophet, witnessed shocking acts of mindless violence and aggression in his day. Today, such acts are everyday news that appalls compassionate people.

Did God belittle Habakkuk's concerns? No. He listened to Habakkuk's sincere questions and then comforted and encouraged the distressed man. Jehovah God fortified Habakkuk's faith with a promise that He will end suffering. God's message of hope can reassure you too, as it did Jayne and her family. The following articles will answer these questions: How can we be sure that God really cares about us? What will God do to end suffering, and when?

God Really Cares

HOW WE KNOW

IT IS an old but important question, one that people have pondered for millenniums: If God loves us, why is there so much suffering? You probably agree that if you love someone, you do not want that person to suffer, and if he or she were in trouble, you would try to help. Accordingly, many feel that since there is so much suffering in the world, God cannot possibly care for us. It is important, therefore, that we first consider the evidence that God really does love us, that God cares.

Creation Testifies to God's Love

Jehovah God is "the One who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all the things in them." (Acts 4:24) As we contemplate what Jehovah has produced, we surely must conclude that he cares for us. Think, for example, about the things that give you delight and pleasure. Do you like good food? Jehovah could have provided just one kind of food to sustain our life. Instead, he created an endless variety of foods to delight our



The ability to love is a gift from a God who loves

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rica: Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago:** Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

NOW PUBLISHED IN 176 LANGUAGES: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara, Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese¹ (audio Mandarin only), Chinese (Simplified), Chitonga, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,² Danish,³ Dutch,⁴ Eifik, English⁵ (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,⁶ French,⁷ Ga, Georgian, German,⁸ Gilbertese, Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani, Gujarati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,⁹ Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,¹⁰ Japanese,¹¹ Kannada, Kaonde, Kazakh, Kikongo, Kiluba, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean,¹² Kosraean, Kwangali, Kwanyama, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Lvulave, Macedo-

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¹ CD also available.

² MP3 CD-ROM also available.

³ Audio recordings also available at www.jw.org.

palate. Likewise, Jehovah has adorned the earth with a marvelous array of trees, flowers, and landscapes to make life enjoyable and interesting for us.

Consider also the way we are made. Our sense of humor, our ability to enjoy music, and our capacity for appreciating beauty are not necessary to sustain life—all are gifts from God that enrich our life. And think about your relationship with others. Who does not enjoy the warm companionship of good friends or the embrace of someone for whom we have deep affection? Why, the ability to love is itself a gift from a God who loves! Since God created in humans the ability to love, that quality must be a part of God's personality.

The Bible Assures Us of God's Love

The Bible tells us that God is love. (1 John 4:8) Not only is his love manifest in creation but it is also evident in his Word, the Bible. For example, the Bible gives guidelines that contribute to good health, encourages moderation in all things, and warns against drunkenness and gluttony.—1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.

The Bible also gives wise counsel about human relations, urging us to love one another and to treat others with respect, dignity, and kindness. (Matthew 7:12) It condemns practices and attitudes that bring suffering—greed, gossip, envy, adultery, and murder. If everyone tried to live by the fine counsel found in the Scriptures, there would surely be much less suffering worldwide.

The greatest manifestation of God's love, however, was the giving of his Son, Jesus, to ransom mankind. John 3:16 states: "God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life." Thus Jehovah has already arranged to bring a permanent end to death and every form of suffering.—1 John 3:8.

Clearly, there is abundant proof that Jehovah loves us. It follows, then, that it gives him no pleasure to see us suffer. He *will* act to end suffering. We do not have to speculate on the matter—the Bible tells us exactly *how* God will eliminate suffering.

A GLOBAL PROBLEM, a Global Solution

SUFFERING is seen everywhere, and many are those who respond to it compassionately. Medical personnel, for example, work long shifts in hospitals to help those who are ill or injured. Firefighters, police, lawmakers, and rescue personnel strive to alleviate or prevent the suffering of others. Such efforts do much to help people on a personal level, but it is beyond the reach of any individual or organization to eliminate suffering

earth wide. In contrast, God can and will bring about a global solution.

Assurance is found in the last book of the Bible: "[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 21:4) Consider the scope of that promise. It summarizes God's purpose to bring an end to *all* suffering. He will

do that by ridding the earth of war, hunger, sickness, and injustice, along with all the wicked people. No human can accomplish that.

What God's Kingdom Will Do

God will fulfill his promises through the second most powerful person in the universe—the resurrected Jesus Christ. The time is coming when Jesus will rule unopposed as King over the entire earth. Mankind will no longer be governed by human kings, presidents, or politicians. Instead, they will be ruled by one King and one government—the Kingdom of God.

That Kingdom will do away with every human government. Long ago, the Bible foretold: “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite.” (Daniel 2:44) Peoples of all the earth will be united under one righteous government—God’s Kingdom.

When he was on earth as a man, Jesus spoke on many occasions about that Kingdom. He referred to it in the model prayer, instructing his disciples to pray in this way: “Let your kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also upon earth.” (Matthew 6:10) Notice that Jesus indicated that the Kingdom is linked to God’s will being done on the earth, and it is God’s will to eliminate suffering earth wide.

God’s righteous government will bring blessings that no human government ever could. Recall that Jehovah gave his Son as a ransom so that humans might receive everlasting life. Under the benevolent rulership of the Kingdom, people will progress to perfection. The result? Jehovah “will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign

Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces.”—Isaiah 25:8.

Some might ask: ‘Why has God not acted before now? What is he waiting for?’ Jehovah could have acted long ago to eliminate or even prevent all suffering. Instead, he has allowed it to continue, not for any selfish reason, but for the everlasting benefit of his children on earth. Loving parents will allow their child to undergo hardships if they know that this will bring long-term benefits. Similarly, there are good reasons why Jehovah has allowed humans to suffer temporarily, and these reasons are explained in the Bible. They involve such things as free will, sin, and an issue concerning the rightfulness of Jehovah’s rulership. The Bible also explains that, for a limited time, an evil spirit creature has been allowed to rule the world.*

Though space limits our discussing those reasons here, there are two facts that can give us hope and encouragement. The first is this: *Jehovah will more than make up for any suffering we may have experienced*. Moreover, God assures us: “The former things will not be called to mind, neither will they come up into the heart.” (Isaiah 65:17) God will undo, completely and permanently, the misery and suffering resulting from the temporary permission of evil.

The second fact is this: *God has set an unalterable time to end suffering*. Recall that the prophet Habakkuk asked how long Jehovah would permit violence and strife. Jehovah replied: “The vision is yet for the appointed time . . . It will not be late.” (Habakkuk 2:3) As we will see in the next article, that “appointed time” is near.

* For a detailed discussion on the reasons why God permits suffering, see chapter 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Scriptures That Point to a Bright Future

NO MORE WARS:

"Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth."—Psalm 46:8, 9.

LOVED ONES RETURN:

"There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous."—Acts 24:15.

FOOD FOR ALL:

"There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow."—Psalm 72:16.

SICKNESS WILL BE NO MORE:

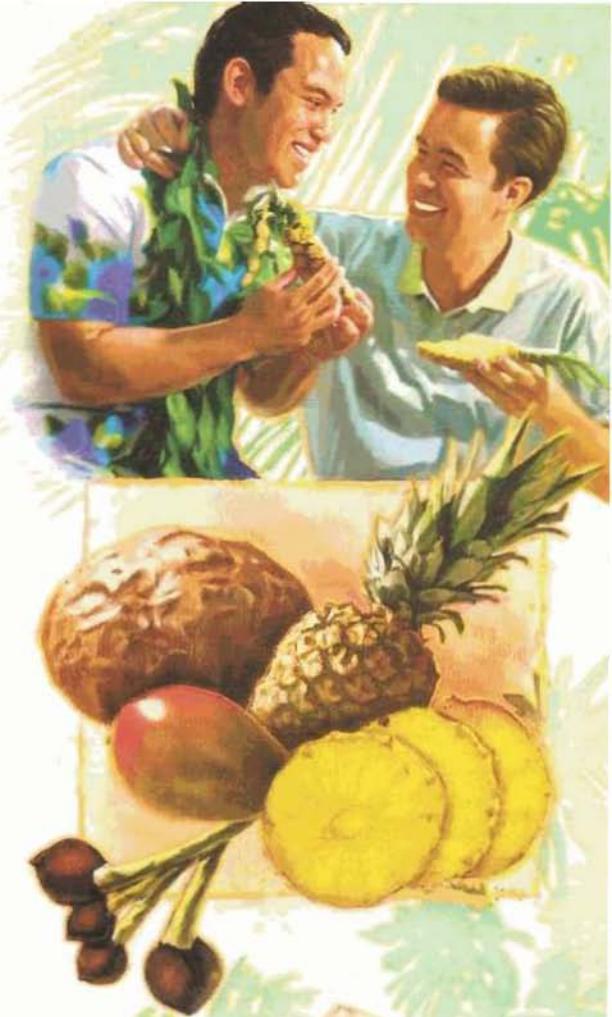
"No resident will say: 'I am sick.'"—Isaiah 33:24.

WICKED PEOPLE WILL BE GONE:

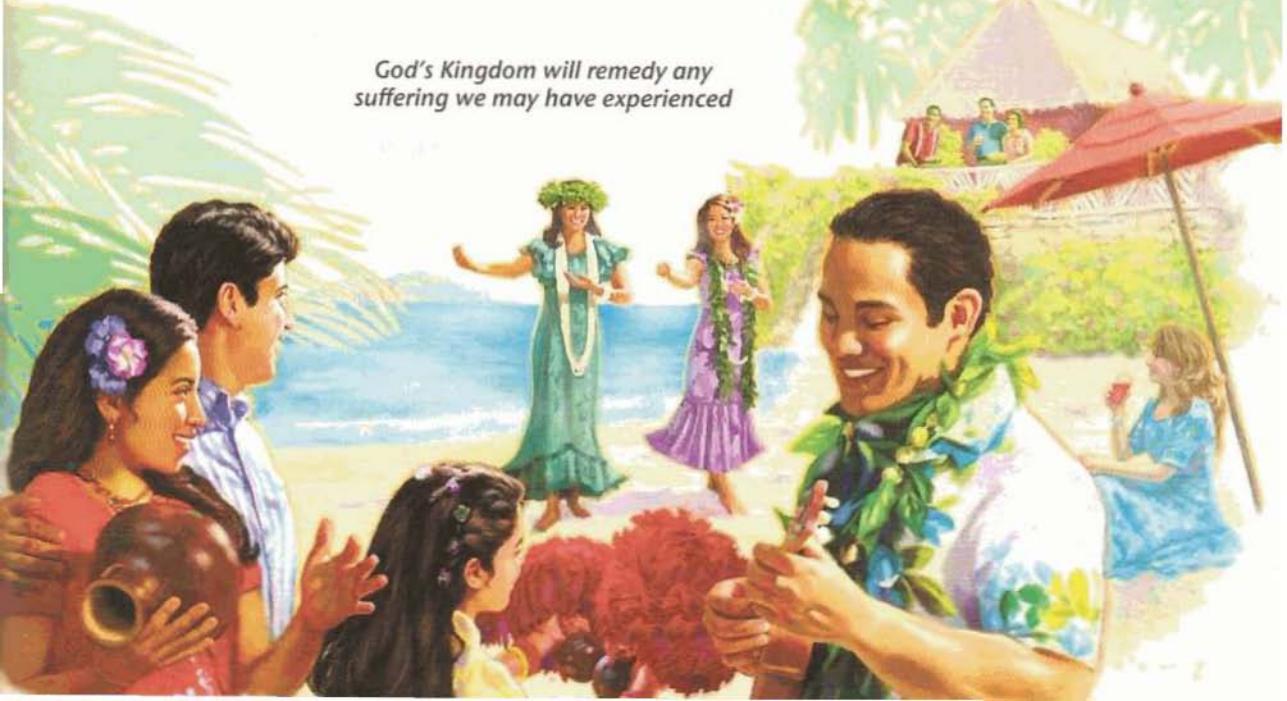
"As regards the wicked, they will be cut off from the very earth; and as for the treacherous, they will be torn away from it."—Proverbs 2:22.

JUSTICE WILL PREVAIL:

"Look! A king [Christ Jesus] will reign for righteousness itself; and as respects princes, they will rule as princes for justice itself."
—Isaiah 32:1.



God's Kingdom will remedy any suffering we may have experienced



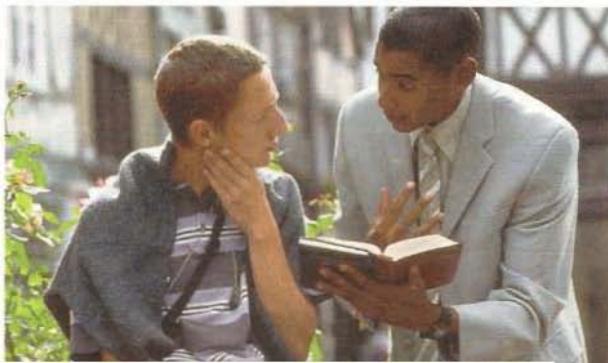
THE “APPOINTED TIME” Is Near

LIKE the prophet Habakkuk, the disciples of Jesus yearned to see an end to suffering. Having learned what the Kingdom of God would do to correct matters on earth, they asked Jesus: “When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence [in Kingdom power] and of the conclusion of the system of things?” (Matthew 24:3) In reply, Jesus said that only Jehovah God knew the precise time when the Kingdom would take full control of the earth. (Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32) However, Jesus and others did foretell certain developments that would show that the time was near.—See box at right.

Would you not agree that these things are commonplace today? Jesus also foretold that an educational work would be accomplished earth wide. He said: “This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.”—Matthew 24:14.

That is exactly what is happening today. Jehovah’s Witnesses are doing that work. In some 236 lands, more than seven million Witnesses are telling people what the Kingdom will do, and they are helping them to conform to the righteous requirements of God, whose will it is to end suffering and pain. Continue to learn about God’s Kingdom, and you will have the prospect of living in a world without suffering—forever.

Earth wide, Jehovah’s Witnesses teach others about God’s Kingdom



Scriptures That Point to the Last Days

MATTHEW 24:6, 7; REVELATION 6:4

- Unprecedented warfare

MATTHEW 24:7; MARK 13:8

- Great earthquakes
- Food shortages

LUKE 21:11; REVELATION 6:8

- Pestilences

MATTHEW 24:12

- Increasing lawlessness
- Love cooling off

REVELATION 11:18

- Ruining of the earth

2 TIMOTHY 3:2

- Inordinate love of money
- Disobedience to parents
- An excessive love of self

2 TIMOTHY 3:3

- A lack of natural affection
- People not open to any agreement
- Self-control lacking at all levels of society
- Widespread loss of love of goodness

2 TIMOTHY 3:4

- Loving pleasures more than God

2 TIMOTHY 3:5

- Many hypocritically claiming to be Christian

MATTHEW 24:5, 11; MARK 13:6

- Many false prophets active

MATTHEW 24:9; LUKE 21:12

- Persecution of true Christians

MATTHEW 24:39

- People taking no note of Biblical warnings

SCHOOLROOM MASSACRE

COMFORT IN THE AFTERMATH

THE front page of the newspaper was all black. Across it was printed one word: "Why?" This was the question asked over and over again after a 17-year-old went on a shooting spree in Winnenden in southern Germany, killing 15 people and finally turning the gun on himself. Flags all over Germany were flown at half-mast, and news of this tragic event flashed around the world.



Winnenden is a prosperous and idyllic town, flanked by vineyards and orchards. March 11, 2009, started as an ordinary morning at the Albertville Secondary School. Suddenly, at 9:30 a.m., violence and chaos broke out.

A young man stormed into his former school with a gun taken from his parents' bedroom. In quick succession, he shot dead nine students and three teachers in three classrooms and the hallway, wounding several more. Within minutes, the police arrived. The killer fled to the grounds of a nearby psychiatric clinic. There he killed a maintenance worker. He then hijacked a car, holding the driver at gunpoint. Some 25 miles away, the driver managed to escape. At a car dealership, the gunman killed a salesman and a customer and seriously injured two of the policemen who were closing in on him. When the police finally caught up with him, he shot himself in the head.

According to those who knew the gunman, he was an ordinary teenager who wanted to be accepted and to have friends. What went wrong? He might have had depressive moods, and he played with air guns and some popular violent computer games. But so do thousands of other youngsters, some say. And the victims? Did he choose certain ones, or were they shot at random? There was speculation about why he shot eight girls and only one boy. No one could give any sound explanation.

Immediate Reactions

"When our son called and told me about a shooting at school, I couldn't believe it," recalls Heike. "But when I heard more and more police cars and ambulances rushing by, I panicked." The quick response of the police likely prevented the gunman from killing more people at the school. After the

school was evacuated, paramedics, counselors, and chaplains came on the scene and worked to the point of exhaustion caring for the students.

Reporters quickly converged on the school, trying to interview students, many of whom were still in shock. One pupil counted 28 television vehicles belonging to 26 different stations parked in front of the school. Competition was fierce among the media, leading to reports of unconfirmed details. One reporter called on the family of a murdered girl on the very day of the massacre to ask for pictures, and others paid students to pose for photographs. Seized by the frenzy of the moment, some reporters seemed to have difficulty finding the balance between getting newsworthy stories ahead of others and showing consideration and respect for the victims.

As is often the case in such instances, people turned to religion to find comfort and explanations. On the day of the massacre, an ecumenical religious service was held. Many appreciated the support. But those looking for comfort from God's Word or for

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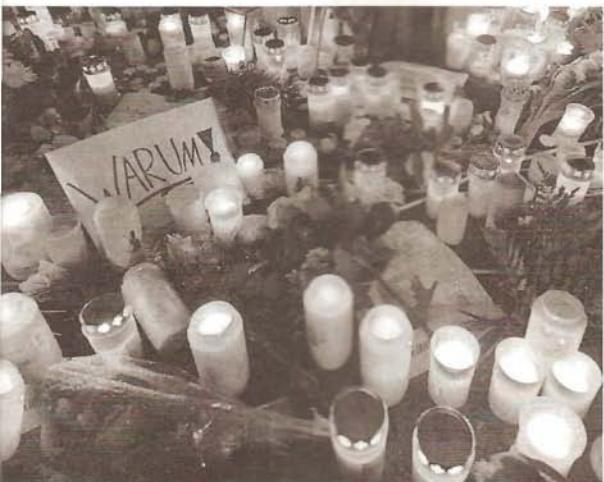


Foto: picture alliance

answers to their perplexing questions were sadly disappointed. One family attended the funeral of their son's classmate. The mother said: "A bishop talked about the sufferings of Job. I waited for him to explain the lesson to be learned or to offer some comfort—but nothing. No word about the reasons or about the final outcome."

One man was quite upset at the empty words he heard. The man had studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses some 30 years before but had stopped. Now he started to attend their meetings again.

Valisa, a 14-year-old girl who has a regular Bible study with the Witnesses, was in a classroom near the scene of the bloodshed. Upon hearing the gunshots, she started to pray to Jehovah. Later, when asked how she was coping, she said that the events confirmed what she had learned from the Bible about these critical last days. (2 Timothy 3: 1-5) Two Witnesses were busy sharing some comforting words with their neighbors. An elderly woman approached and said, "Many more should do what you are doing." As sad and shocking as the massacre was, it moved some to open their ears to the hope and comfort from God's Word.

Lingering Traumatic Aftermath

Of course, not even the most heartfelt words of comfort can eliminate all the shock and despair felt by those affected directly. No words can completely ease the pain of a parent who has lost a child or the devastation of the police officer who rushed to the school only to discover his wife among the murdered.

Students who survived the ordeal, along with their families, were deeply traumatized, each in his own way. Vassilios jumped out of an emergency exit as soon as the gunman opened fire. "When I jumped out the window," he recalled, "I prayed to Jehovah. I thought I was going to die. I was sure this was my last prayer." In the following weeks, he was tormented by nightmares, and he did not want to talk to anyone. He was especially vexed to see the commercialization of the massacre and the insensitivity of those who pried for details. In time, he was again able to deal with reality.

Jonas was in the same classroom as Vassilios and witnessed the killing of five of his classmates. He said: "Right afterward, I had no problem describing what happened; it was like a horror movie. But now, to talk about how I am doing—that's difficult. My mood varies. Sometimes I don't want to talk about it; at other times, I talk about it a lot." He too suffers from nightmares and sleeping problems.

After some days, the students were given back their personal belongings from the classrooms. Traumatologists warned that seeing such items could bring back memories of the tragedy. At first, Jonas did not want to touch his jacket, schoolbag, and motorcycle helmet. He was also terrified every time he saw someone who looked like the gunman or who carried a backpack like the gunman's. When his parents watched a movie and a shot rang out, it rattled his

nerves. Therapists tried to help victims to break free from such mental connections to the traumatic event.

Jürgen, Jonas' father, works in the clinic where one worker was killed. He mentioned that many parents and colleagues were tormenting themselves with questions of why? and what if? For example, an employee of the clinic, who from a balcony saw the gunman walking by, was so troubled by the thought that he could have shot her as well that she needed psychiatric treatment.

How Some Were Helped to Cope

What have some found helpful in coping with such a horrendous experience? Jürgen remarks: "Although it is hard at times, it feels good to be with others. To know that others care, that you are not alone, is helpful."

Jonas also appreciates that others care: "Many send cards and messages. Some men-

*Jonas received a card saying,
"We are thinking about you"*



tion Bible texts, which I then read. That is nice." What else helps him? "When I wake up at night and can't cope anymore, I pray. Sometimes I listen to music or to recordings of *Awake!*"* He adds that the Bible tells us why all of this happened: Satan rules the world, and we live in the time of the end. His father mentions that such insight helps them to cope.

Soon No More Suffering

Within a few days, candles, flowers, and letters covered the area in front of the school. Kerstin noticed that several people wrote notes asking why this happened and why God allowed it. Feeling that these questions deserved an answer, she and two other Witnesses wrote a letter and placed it among the others.

At the official memorial observance, a television station showed her letter and quoted the first lines: "Why? In the last days, this question has been sounding out louder and louder, and especially the questions: Where was God? And why did he allow it?" Regrettably, the quote stopped there.

Why regrettably? Because the letter went on to explain the origin of all suffering and stated that God "will see to it that all the harm humans have caused will be undone." Then it adds: "In the last book of the Bible, God says that he will wipe out every tear from people's eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." Jehovah God will even bring back the dead. Under his Kingdom that is soon to come, there will be no more tragedies, massacres, or suffering. God promised: "Look! I am making all things new."—Revelation 21:4, 5.

* *Awake!* magazine in print and on audio recordings is published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



"IN THE DAYS OF HEROD THE KING"

IN AN attempt to kill the infant Jesus, Herod the Great, king of Judea, sent envoys to massacre all baby boys in Bethlehem. History records numerous events that took place "in the days of Herod the king," events that throw light on the context of Jesus' life and ministry.—Matthew 2:1-16.

What made Herod want to kill Jesus? And why was it that when Jesus was born, the Jews had a king, but when Jesus died, Pontius Pilate, a Roman, governed them? To get the full picture of Herod's role in history and to understand why he is important to Bible readers, we need to look back several decades before Jesus' birth.

Power Struggles in Judea

In the first half of the second century B.C.E., Judea was ruled by the Syrian Seleucids, one of the four dynasties that formed after the breakup of the empire of Alexander the Great. However, in about 168 B.C.E., when the Seleucid king attempted to replace worship of Jehovah with the cult of Zeus at their temple in Jerusalem, the Jews, led by the Maccabee family, revolted. The Maccabees, or Hasmoneans, ruled Judea from 142-63 B.C.E.

In 66 B.C.E., two Hasmonean princes, Hyrcanus II and his brother Aristobulus, fought for succession to the throne. Civil war ensued, and both sought the aid of Pompey, a Roman general who at the time was in Syria. Pompey jumped at the chance to interfere.

The Romans, in fact, were extending their influence eastward, and by this time, they controlled much of Asia Minor. A series of weak rulers in Syria, however, had allowed the area to sink into anarchy, menacing the peace that the Romans desired to maintain in the East. So Pompey had stepped in to annex Syria.

His solution to the Hasmonean quarrel was to back Hyrcanus, and in 63 B.C.E., the Romans stormed Jerusalem to

Herod was just one in a succession of rulers who dominated Judea in the two centuries prior to Jesus' ministry

install their nominee. Hyrcanus, however, was not going to be an independent ruler. The Romans now had a foot in the door and were not about to remove it. Hyrcanus became a Roman ethnarch, one who ruled by the grace of the Romans, dependent on their goodwill and support to retain his throne. He could administer internal affairs as he wished, but in foreign relations, he had to conform to Roman policy.

The Rise of Herod

Hyrcanus was a weak-willed ruler. He was supported, though, by Antipater, an Idumean and the father of Herod the Great. Antipater was the power behind the throne. He kept restless Jewish factions at bay and soon took effective control of Judea. He helped Julius Caesar fight his foes in Egypt, and the Romans rewarded Antipater by raising him to the position of procurator, answerable directly to them. Antipater, in turn, appointed his sons, Phasael and Herod, as governors of Jerusalem and of Galilee respectively.

Antipater taught his sons that nothing could be achieved without Rome's consent. Herod remembered that lesson well. Throughout his career, he juggled the demands of his Roman patrons with those of his Jewish subjects. He was aided by his skills as an organizer and a general. On his appointment as governor, 25-year-old Herod promptly won himself the admiration of Jews and Romans alike by vigorously eliminating bands of bandits from his territory.

After rivals poisoned Antipater in 43 B.C.E., Herod became the most powerful man in Judea. Yet, he had enemies. The Jerusalem aristocracy considered him a usurper and sought to persuade Rome to remove him. The attempt failed. Rome was loyal to Antipater's memory and valued his son's abilities.

Made King of Judea

Pompey's solution to the Hasmonean succession crisis some 20 years earlier had embittered many. The unsuccessful faction repeatedly attempted to retake power, and in 40 B.C.E., they succeeded with the help of Rome's enemies, the Parthians. Exploiting the chaos created by civil war in Rome, they invaded Syria, deposed Hyrcanus, and installed an anti-Roman member of the Hasmonean family.

Herod fled to Rome, where he received a warm welcome. The Romans wanted the Parthians ousted from Judea and the territory returned to their control with an acceptable ruler. They needed a reliable ally and saw Herod as their man. The Roman Senate thus crowned Herod king of Judea. In an act symbolic of the many compromises that Herod would have to make to maintain his grip on power, he led a procession from the Senate to the temple of Jupiter, where he sacrificed to pagan gods.

Helped by Roman legions, Herod defeated his enemies in Judea and claimed his throne. His revenge upon those who had opposed him was brutal. He eliminated the Hasmoneans and the Jewish aristocracy who had supported them, as well as any others who chafed at having a friend of the Romans rule over them.

Herod Consolidates His Power

In 31 B.C.E. when Octavius emerged as the undisputed ruler of the Romans by defeating Mark Antony at Actium, Herod realized that his long-standing friendship with Mark Antony would be viewed with suspicion. So Herod hastened to assure Octavius of his loyalty. The new Roman ruler, in turn, confirmed Herod as king of Judea and enlarged his territories.

In the years that followed, Herod stabilized and enriched his kingdom, transforming Jerusalem into a center of Hellenistic culture. He embarked upon great construction projects—building palaces, the port city of Caesarea, and grand new edifices for Jerusalem's temple. All the while, the focus of his policy and the source of his strength were friendship with Rome.

Herod's control over Judea was total; his authority, absolute. Herod also manipulated the high priesthood, appointing to this office whomever he wished.

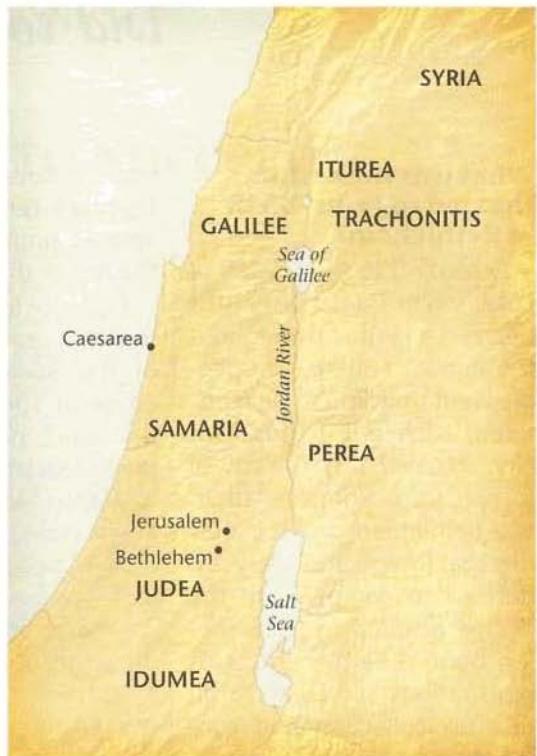
Murderous Jealousies

Herod's private life was turbulent. Many of his ten wives wanted one of their sons to succeed his father. Palace intrigues aroused Herod's suspicions and his cruelty. In a fit of jealousy, he had his favorite wife, Mariamne, executed, and he later had two of her sons strangled for alleged plots against him. Matthew's account of the Bethlehem massacre thus harmonizes with what is known of Herod's temperament and his resolve to eliminate possible rivals.

Some say that, aware of his own unpopularity, Herod was determined that his death should be met with national mourning rather than rejoicing. In a scheme to achieve that goal, he arrested Judea's leading citizens and ordered that they all be executed when his own death was announced. The order was never carried out.

The Legacy of Herod the Great

On Herod's death, Rome decreed that Archelaus succeed his father as ruler of Judea and that two other sons become independent princes, or tetrarchs—Antipas over Galilee and Perea, Philip over Iturea and Trachonitis. Archelaus proved unpopular with his



*Palestine and surrounding areas
in Herod's time*

subjects and masters. After a decade of his ineffectual dominion, the Romans removed him and appointed their own governor, the predecessor of Pontius Pilate. In the meantime, Antipas—whom Luke simply calls Herod—and Philip continued to govern their own tetrarchies. This was the political situation at the start of Jesus' ministry.—Luke 3:1.

Herod the Great was an astute politician and a ruthless murderer, probably his worst act being his attempt to kill the infant Jesus. Examining Herod's historical role is useful for Bible readers—it helps illuminate key events of the period, explains how the Romans became rulers of the Jews, and sets the stage for Jesus' earthly life and ministry.

Did You Know?

What was the census that led to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem?

According to the Gospel of Luke, when Caesar Augustus decreed a census throughout the Roman Empire, "all people went traveling to be registered, each one to his own city." (Luke 2:1-3) The city of Joseph, Jesus' adoptive father, was Bethlehem, and the journey that Joseph and Mary undertook to comply with the decree resulted in Jesus' being born in Bethlehem. Such registrations served to facilitate tax collection and conscription for military service.

When the Romans conquered Egypt in 30 B.C.E., the census was already a tried and tested feature of Egyptian bureaucracy. Scholars believe

that the Romans adopted the Egyptian census system and applied similar procedures to the rest of their empire.

Evidence for one such registration is provided by an edict of the Roman governor of Egypt in 104 C.E. A copy of that edict, now conserved in the British Library, reads: "Gaius Vibius Maximus, Prefect of Egypt (says): Seeing that the time has come for the house to house census, it is necessary to compel all those who for any cause whatsoever are residing out of their districts to return to their own homes, that they may both carry out the regular order of the census, and may also attend diligently to the cultivation of their allotments."

Why did Joseph contemplate giving Mary a certificate of divorce when the two were only engaged?

According to Matthew's Gospel, Joseph learned that Mary was pregnant while she "was promised in marriage to Joseph" but before they were united. Not knowing that Mary was pregnant "by holy spirit," Joseph must have thought that she had been unfaithful to him, and

thus he intended to divorce her.—Matthew 1:18-20.

Among the Jews, engaged couples were viewed as already married. The two, however, did not begin living together as husband and wife until the wedding formalities had been completed. Engagement was so binding that if—because of a change of heart on the part of the bridegroom or for some other compelling reason—the marriage did not take place, the young woman was not free to marry until she had obtained a divorce certificate. If an engaged woman's husband died before the wedding, she was considered a widow. On the other hand, if she committed fornication during her engagement, she was considered an adulteress and was sentenced to death.—Deuteronomy 22:23, 24.

Joseph evidently pondered the consequences of Mary's becoming a public spectacle. Though he felt obligated to bring the matter to the proper authorities, he wanted to protect her and avoid scandal. Thus, he decided to divorce her quietly. A single mother's possession of a divorce certificate would, after all, indicate that she had already been married.

CENSUS EDICT BY ROMAN GOVERNOR OF EGYPT, 104 C.E.

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He Wants Us to Succeed

Joshua 1:6-9

CARING parents are eager to see their children succeed, to live a meaningful and satisfying life. Jehovah, our heavenly Father, likewise wants his earthly children to succeed. As an expression of his tender care, he tells us how to be successful. Consider, for example, the words he spoke to Joshua, as recorded at Joshua 1:6-9.

Imagine the setting, shown at right. Following Moses' death, Joshua is the new leader of Israel, which numbers into the millions. The Israelites are preparing to enter the land that God promised to their forefathers. God has some advice for Joshua. If followed, it will help him to succeed. But this counsel is not given just for Joshua's benefit. By applying it, we too can succeed.—Romans 15:4.

Jehovah tells Joshua to be courageous and strong—not once but three times. (Verses 6, 7, 9) To be sure, Joshua will need courage and strength to lead the nation successfully into the Promised Land. How, though, can he summon these noble qualities?

Joshua can draw courage and strength from the inspired writings. "Take care to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you," Jehovah says. (Verse 7) At the time, Joshua likely has just a few books of the Bible in written form.* However, the mere pos-



session of God's Word will not guarantee success. In order to benefit from it, Joshua needs to do two things.

First, Joshua must regularly fill his heart with God's word. Jehovah says: "You must in an undertone read in it day and night."

(Verse 8) One reference work states: "God was commanding Joshua to remember His Law by 'muttering' it to himself, 'pondering' it, or 'musings over' it." Reading and meditating on God's Word each day will help Joshua to handle the challenges that lie ahead.

Second, Joshua needs to apply what he learns from God's Word. Jehovah tells him: "Take care to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way successful." (Verse 8) Joshua's success is linked to his doing God's will. How could it be otherwise? God's will always succeeds.—Isaiah 55:10, 11.

Joshua heeded Jehovah's advice. As a result, he lived a full and satisfying life as a faithful worshipper of Jehovah.—Joshua 23:14; 24:15.

Do you want to live a fulfilling life, as Joshua did? Jehovah wants you to succeed. But merely possessing his Word, the Bible, is not enough. One longtime faithful Christian suggested: "Get that Bible off its printed page, and get it into your heart." If you regularly fill your heart with God's word and apply it in your life what you learn, then you, like Joshua, "will make your way successful."

* The inspired writings available to Joshua likely included the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), the book of Job, and one or two psalms.



A Trip Into the Past



IMAGINE how interesting it would be to take a trip to see how your ancestors lived. In a sense, we made such a trip. It took us from Switzerland to the United States of America. Most think of the United States as highly modern in every way, but our trip took us back two hundred years into the past. Let us tell you about it.

Because we speak the Swiss German dialect, we were invited to spend three months in the state of Indiana. Our goal was to share the good news of God's Kingdom with Amish families who have kept the dialect of their ancestors. Hundreds of these families live in Indiana.

The Amish are descendants of a group of 17th-century Anabaptists. Their name derives from their leader, Jacob Amman, who lived in Switzerland. From their study of the Bible back then, these God-fearing people recognized that infant baptism and military service were wrong. Because of their stand, the government persecuted them. A few even paid for their religious convictions with their lives. Persecution continued to increase, and a number of them were forced to flee to other parts of Switzerland and to France. By the middle of the 19th century,

thousands had fled to the United States. With them, they brought their culture and the Swiss German dialect.

When we visited these gentle people, they were astonished to find us at their door, speaking in their dialect! Picture the scene.

"How is it that you speak like us?" they ask in Swiss German.

"Because we come from Switzerland," we reply.

"But you are not Amish!" They are puzzled.

Many doors swing open, and we get a glimpse of a lifestyle that seems to belong in the distant past. Instead of lightbulbs, there are oil lamps; instead of cars, horse and buggy; instead of running water, a well and windmill; instead of radios, singing.

What impresses us the most is the humility and modesty of those whom we are visiting. Many Amish make it a point to read the Bible daily, and they value and appreciate Bible discussions. This opens up the opportunity to have conversations about God's purpose for mankind and for the earth.

Soon, word spreads that there are visitors from Switzerland in the area. Many request that we visit their relatives, which we gladly

do. An invitation to visit an Amish school raises our level of excitement and anticipation. What awaits us?

We knock on the school door. The teacher opens it and immediately invites us into the classroom, where 38 pairs of curious eyes focus on four strangers. Eight classes are gathered in one room, the students ranging in age from 7 to 15. The girls are uniformly dressed in blue outfits and white caps; the boys wear black pants and dark-blue shirts. The room has a high ceiling. Three of the walls are painted marine blue, and on the front wall is a blackboard. Close by are a globe and some rolled-up world maps. In the corner is a large iron stove.

As we take our seats in front of the class, the children observe us with great curiosity. Each class is called up to the teacher's desk and is questioned on yesterday's homework assignment. We are pleasantly surprised when the teacher quizzes the children on a lesson about the Swiss Alps. The textbooks are rather old, and the teacher asks us if Switzerland is still as his books describe it. Do the cows still go up to the high meadows in the summertime, or is there still snow on the mountains? When we share our color photos of snowcapped peaks to complement the black-and-white ones in his textbook, he beams.

The teacher's wife, who is his assistant, asks a frequently posed question, "Can you yodel?" We cannot. However, knowing how accomplished the Amish are at singing and yodeling, we ask that they sing a song for us. Our wish is granted, and we listen spellbound to this 40-voice choir. Next, the teacher sends the children out for recess.

The teacher's wife now asks us to sing something for them. Forearmed with the texts of several folk songs in Swiss German, we agree. The word spreads on the playground, and in a flash, all the children are

back in the classroom. Standing in front of the class, we do our best in singing for them.

Later, we are invited to eat a noon meal with an Amish family of 12. A long wooden table is loaded with good things to eat—mashed potatoes, ham, corn, bread, cheese, vegetables, pastries, and other desserts. Before the meal, each one says a silent prayer. As the dishes are passed, we chat about Switzerland, the country of their ancestors, and they tell us something of their life on the farm. The children whisper and giggle throughout the meal. When everyone is finished eating, there is a second prayer, and that is the signal that the children are allowed to leave the table—but not to play. Each one has an assignment in clearing the table and doing the dishes, which means first pumping the water and heating it.

While the children are washing the dishes, the parents invite us to join them in the living room. There is no sofa, but we seat ourselves in comfortable wooden rocking chairs. An old German Bible comes out of the cupboard, and as is common in Amish households, we are soon in an animated spiritual discussion. What is Jehovah God's purpose for the earth and for mankind? What did Jesus mean when he said that the meek would inherit the earth? Does God really intend to torture wicked people in a fiery hell forever? Who is carrying out Jesus' command to preach the good news to the entire inhabited earth? Discussing all these questions—and many more—with spiritually-minded people who have their Bible in hand brings joy to our hearts.

We now look back fondly on our trip into the past, which was so full of wonderful experiences. We hope and pray that these visits and conversations in Swiss German opened not only many doors but also many hearts to receive accurate knowledge of truth found in God's Word, the Bible.



Photo: Panoramic Stock/age fotostock

LUNAR NEW YEAR IS IT FOR CHRISTIANS?

EVERY year in January or February, Asia hosts the largest annual human migration in the world. Hundreds of millions of Asians return to their families to celebrate the Lunar New Year.*

Lunar New Year is the most important festival on the Asian calendar. “[It’s] like New Year’s Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, and Christmas all rolled into one,” says an American writer. The festival begins on the first new moon of the Chinese lunar calendar, or between January 21 and February 20 on Western calendars. It lasts from several days up to two weeks.

The basic concept of the New Year’s celebration is renewal, closing off the old and welcoming the new. To prepare for the festival, people clean and decorate their homes, buy new clothes, prepare foods with names that rhyme with “good fortune” or “prosperity,” and settle their debts and differences. On New Year’s Day, they may exchange gifts and good wishes, usually for wealth and prosperity, hand out red packets of so-called lucky money, eat special foods, set off firecrackers, watch colorful dragon or

lion dances, or just enjoy the holiday with family and friends.

These customs are rich in meaning. The book *Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts: Festivals of China* explains: “The primary concerns of family, friends, and relatives are to ensure good luck, pay respects to the gods and spirits, and wish good fortune for the coming year.” Since so many traditional and religious elements are involved, how should Christians view the celebration? Should they simply go along with the customs? Is it for Christians?

“Remember the Source”

A popular Chinese proverb says: “When you drink water, remember the source.” This reflects the deep respect that many Asians traditionally have for their parents and forebears. Because parents gave them life, it is natural for children to show such respect, which plays an important role in the New Year’s observance.

A highlight for many Asian families is undoubtedly New Year’s Eve. On that night, most families assemble for a special banquet. This is an occasion for family reunion that people in that part of the world do everything possible not to miss. At the banquet table, places are set not only for family

* Also called Chinese New Year, Spring Festival, *Chunjie* (China), *Tet* (Vietnam), *Solnal* (Korea), or *Losar* (Tibet).

members who are present but also for those deceased, who are believed to be present in spirit. At this meal “real communication exists between ancestors and family members,” says one encyclopedia. “With the bond between living and dead thus renewed, the ancestors will protect the family throughout the year,” notes another reference work. How should Christians view this custom?

Love and respect for parents are important to Christians as well. They heed the divine direction: “Listen to your father who caused your birth, and do not despise your mother just because she has grown old.” (Proverbs 23:22) They also obey the Bible command: “‘Honor your father and your mother’; which is the first command with a promise: ‘That it may go well with you and you may endure a long time on the earth.’” (Ephesians 6:2, 3) Yes, true Christians want to love and honor their parents!

The Bible also speaks highly of upbuilding family gatherings. (Job 1:4; Luke 15:22-24) Yet, Jehovah commands: “There must never be anyone among you who . . . consults ghosts or spirits, or calls up the dead.” (Deuteronomy 18:10, 11, *The Jerusalem Bible*) Why this prohibition? Because the Bible reveals the true condition of the dead. It says: “The living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all.” Since the dead are conscious of nothing, they cannot share in the activities of the living; neither can they help us or harm us. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10) God’s Son, Jesus Christ, likened death to a deep sleep, and the dead will wake up from this sleep only in the coming resurrection.—John 5:28, 29; 11:11, 14.

Furthermore, the Bible shows that the “ghosts” and deceased “spirits” are really wicked spirit creatures pretending to be the

deceased. For what purpose? To mislead people and bring them under their evil control! (2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10) God’s commands actually protect us from serious harm. So out of love for Jehovah and a desire to be safe, Christians wisely avoid any customs that involve the worship of family “spirits” or that seek to gain their protection.—Isaiah 8:19, 20; 1 Corinthians 10:20-22.

On the other hand, Christians also want to honor “the Father, to whom every family in heaven and on earth owes its name.” (Ephesians 3:14, 15) Who is this Father? He is our Creator and Life-Giver, Jehovah God. (Acts 17:26) Hence, when considering Lunar New Year customs, we do well to ask: How does Jehovah view these customs? Do they have his approval?—1 John 5:3.

Honoring Household Gods

The Lunar New Year celebrations include many popular customs that pay respect to or honor numerous household gods and deities, such as the god of the door, the god of the earth or guardian spirit, the god of wealth or fortune, and the god of the kitchen or stove. Consider the popular custom of honoring the kitchen god.* The belief is that a few days before New Year’s, this god journeys to heaven to bring a report on the family to the Jade Emperor, the supreme being in the Chinese pantheon. Hoping that the kitchen god gives a favorable report, the family sends him off with a special meal, with offerings of sweets and sticky pastries. To wish him a speedy journey, the family takes down his portrait, sometimes smearing his lips with the sweets, and burns it outside. On New Year’s Eve, they place a

* The customs described in this article vary throughout Asia but are based on common original ideas. For further information, see *Awake!* December 22, 1986, pages 20-21, and *Awake!* January 8, 1970, pages 9-11.

new picture of the god above the kitchen stove, inviting him back into the home for the coming year.

Though many of the customs may seem innocent, Christians want to follow what God's Word directs when it comes to worship. In this regard, Jesus Christ said: "It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service." (Matthew 4:10) Clearly, God wants us to worship him alone. Why? Consider this: Jehovah is our heavenly Father. How would any father feel if his children ignored him and turned to another father instead? Would he not be deeply hurt?

Jesus recognized his heavenly Father as "the only true God," and Jehovah himself clearly told his worshippers that they should "not have any other gods" besides him. (John 17:3; Exodus 20:3) True Christians, therefore, want to please Jehovah, not to disappoint or hurt him by serving other gods.—1 Corinthians 8:4-6.

Superstition and Spiritism

The Lunar New Year is also closely linked to astrology. In the lunar calendar, each year is named after one of the 12 animals in the Chinese zodiac—dragon, tiger, monkey, rabbit, and so on. The animal allegedly determines the personality and behavior of those born that year or makes the year auspicious for pursuing certain activities. Many other Lunar New Year customs, including the honoring of the god of wealth or fortune, are specifically designed to garner "good luck." How should Christians view these customs?

In his Word, the Bible, Jehovah censured those who turned to "the worshipers of the heavens, the lookers at the stars, those giving out knowledge at the new moons concerning the things that will come upon

[them]." He also denounced the worship of "the god of Good Luck" and "the god of Destiny." (Isaiah 47:13; 65:11, 12) Rather than trusting in some mysterious or unseen influences supposedly linked to the spirit realm or the stars, true worshippers are told: "Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Yes, superstitions keep people in bondage, but Bible truths set them free.—John 8:32.

Show Your Love for God

Knowing the background of the customs and beliefs of Lunar New Year celebrations is one thing; deciding not to participate is quite another. If you live in a community where it is the custom to celebrate the annual Lunar New Year or if your family observes the New Year's customs as a matter of tradition, you have a weighty decision to make.

Granted, it takes courage and determination to stand firm under pressure. "I was so afraid because everyone around me was celebrating the New Year's festival, and I was not," says one Christian woman who lives in Asia. What helped her? "Only by cultivating a strong love for God was I able to stand firm."—Matthew 10:32-38.

Do you have such strong love for Jehovah? You have every reason to love him. Your life comes, not from some mysterious deity, but from Jehovah God, of whom the Bible says: "With you is the source of life; by light from you we can see light." (Psalm 36:9) Rather than the god of fortune or the god of the kitchen, it is Jehovah who provides for you and makes a happy life possible. (Acts 14:17; 17:28) Will you love him in return? Be assured that if you do, Jehovah will bless you richly.—Mark 10:29, 30.



Reassurance to Friends and Relatives

Understandably, when one member of the family stops sharing in Lunar New Year celebrations, it can come as a shock to his or her friends and relatives. They may feel upset, hurt, or even betrayed. However, there is much that can be done to maintain a happy family relationship. Consider these comments from Christians who live in various parts of Asia:

Jiang: "Well before the New Year, I visited my relatives and tactfully explained why I would no longer share in certain popular customs. I carefully avoided belittling their beliefs and respectfully answered their questions from the Bible. This led to some fine spiritual discussions."

Li: "Prior to the Lunar New Year, I tactfully and respectfully told my husband that I must obey my conscience to be truly happy. I also promised him that I would not embarrass him when we visited his family during the holiday period. Surprisingly, on the day his

family worshipped their ancestors, he took me to a different area to attend a Christian meeting."

Xie: "I reassured my family of my love and told them that my beliefs would make me a better person. I then worked hard to display such Christian qualities as mildness, tact, and love. Gradually, they came to respect my religion. Later, my husband studied the Bible and also became a true Christian."

Min: "I spoke to my parents in a mild, respectful way. Instead of wishing them 'good luck,' I told them that I always pray to Jehovah, our Creator, in their behalf, asking him to bless them and lead them to peace and happiness."

Fuong: "I told my parents that I did not need to wait for the New Year in order to visit my family. I visited them often. This made my parents very happy, and they stopped criticizing me. My younger brother also became interested in learning Bible truth."

Jeremiah Did Not Quit

DO YOU ever get discouraged and feel like quitting?—* Many do. Young Jeremiah did. However, he did not let what others said or did cause him to give up. Let's talk about how Jeremiah was someone special to God, yet even he felt like quitting.

Before Jeremiah was born, the true God, Jehovah, chose him to be a prophet to warn the people that they were not pleasing God. Do you know what Jeremiah told Jehovah years later?—“I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy.”

How do you think Jehovah answered Jeremiah?—In a kind but firm way, he said: “Do not say, ‘I am but a boy.’ But to all those to whom I shall send you, you should go; and everything that I shall command you, you should speak. *Do not be afraid.*” Why not? “I am with you to deliver you,” Jehovah said.—Jeremiah 1:4-8.

Still, as noted before, Jeremiah later became discouraged. This is because he was ridiculed for serving God. ‘Everyone laughs at me all day long and makes fun of me,’ he said. So he decided to quit. “I am not going to make mention of [Jehovah], and I shall speak no more in his name,” he said. But did he really quit?

‘In my heart,’ Jeremiah said, ‘the word of Jehovah was like a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I got tired of holding in.’ (Jeremiah 20:7-9) Even though Jeremiah at times became afraid, his love for Jehovah would not let him quit. Let's see how Jeremiah was protected because he did not quit.

Jehovah told Jeremiah to warn the people that Jerusalem would be destroyed if they did not change their bad ways. When Jeremiah gave that warning, the people became angry and said: “To this man the judgment of death belongs.” Jeremiah, however, pleaded with them to “obey the

* If you are reading with children, the dash provides a reminder to stop and direct the question to them.

voice of Jehovah." Then he said: 'You should know that if you put me to death, you are killing an innocent man, for God sent me to speak to you.' Do you know what happened then?—

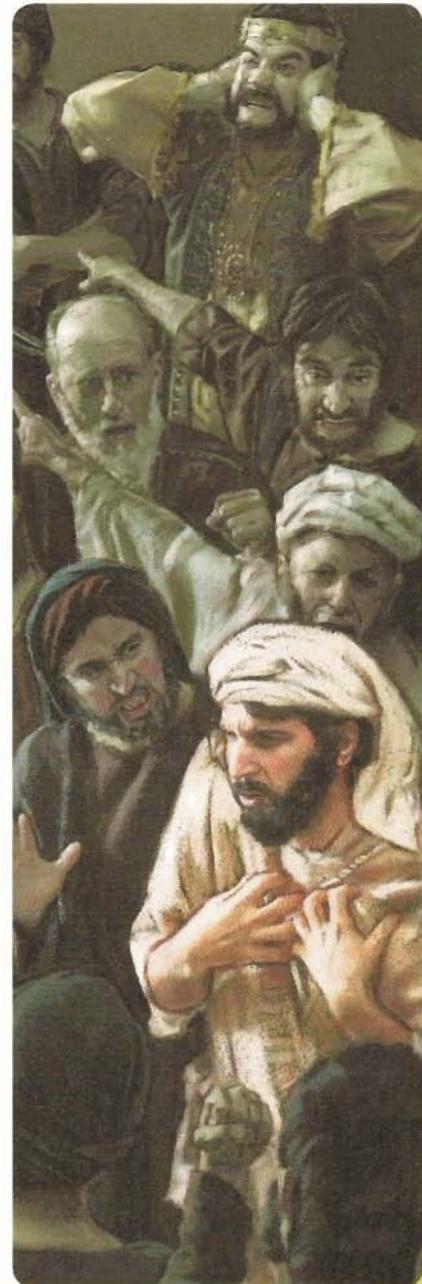
The Bible says: "The princes and all the people said to the priests and to the prophets: 'There is no judgment of death belonging to this man, for it was in the name of Jehovah our God that he spoke to us.'" So when Jeremiah did not let fear cause him to quit, Jehovah protected him. Let's see now what happened to Urijah, another prophet of Jehovah, who acted quite differently.

'Urijah kept prophesying against Jerusalem with the same words Jeremiah did,' the Bible says. But when King Jehoiakim became angry with Urijah, do you know what Urijah did?— He became afraid, quit doing God's will, and ran off to Egypt. So the king sent men to find him there and to bring him back. When they did, do you know what the bad king did?— He killed Urijah with a sword! —Jeremiah 26:8-24.

Why would you say that Jeremiah was protected by Jehovah and Urijah was not?— Well, Jeremiah may have been afraid, as Urijah was, but Jeremiah did not give up serving Jehovah and run away. *He did not quit.* What lesson would you say we can learn from the example of Jeremiah?— That sometimes we may find it hard to do what God says, but we should always trust in and obey him.

Questions:

- What work did God choose for Jeremiah?
- Why did Jeremiah feel like quitting?
- Why was Jeremiah protected, but Urijah was not?
- What have you learned from Jeremiah's example?





KING DAVID AND MUSIC

If there is one name that brings to mind the music of Bible times, it is that of David, a remarkable man who lived some 3,000 years ago. In fact, much of what we know about music back then comes from the Bible's record of David's activities—from the time he was a young shepherd to when he became a king and an able organizer.

There is a great deal that we can learn about music in Bible times through David. For example, what sort of instruments were played, and what types of songs were sung? What role did music play in David's life and, on a larger scale, in the nation of Israel?

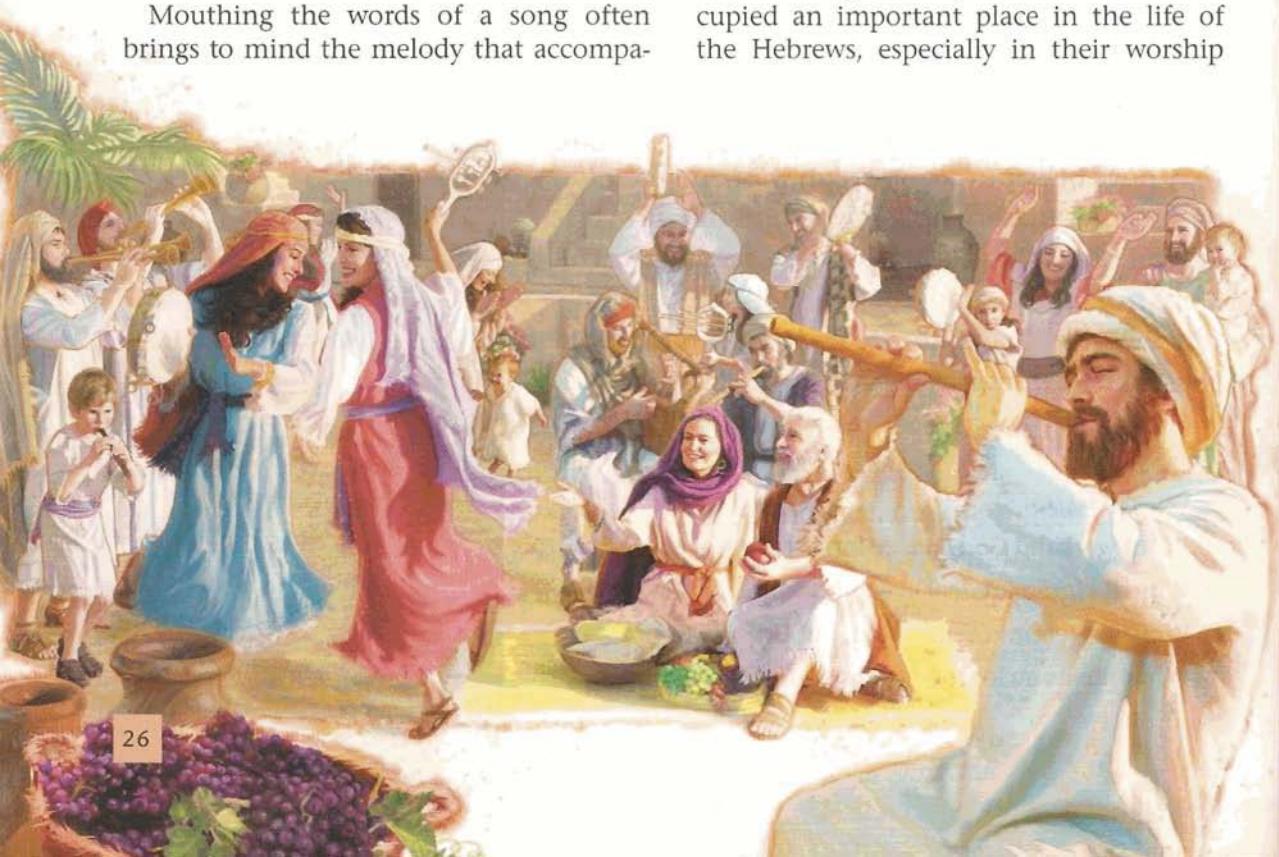
The Place of Music in Ancient Israel

Mouthing the words of a song often brings to mind the melody that accompa-

nies them. The Bible contains the lyrics of numerous songs, the music of which regrettably remains unknown. It must have been beautiful, even sublime. The poetic loftiness of the book of Psalms suggests that the music that accompanied them was of equally great beauty.

As far as the instruments are concerned, the Bible describes them only briefly. (See the box "Instruments in Bible Times.") Even what type of harp David used is not known for certain. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that the Israelites invented several instruments, such as rare and precious wooden harps.—2 Chronicles 9:11; Amos 6:5.

One thing is sure, however. Music occupied an important place in the life of the Hebrews, especially in their worship





*"In the day of your rejoicing
and in your festal seasons . . . you must
blow on the trumpets."* —NUMBERS 10:10

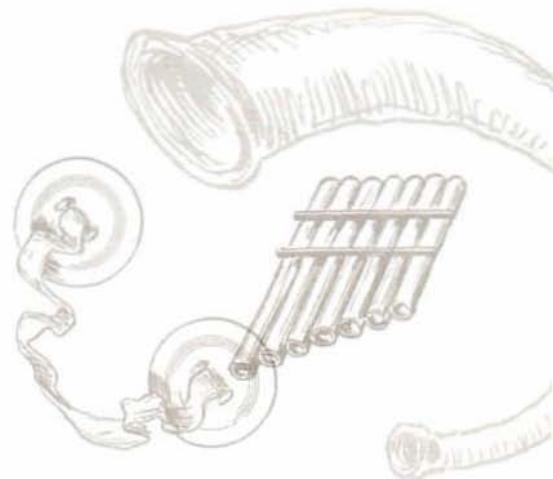
of God. Music was performed at coronations, it was used in religious ceremonies, and it played a part in warfare. It also enchanted the royal court, enlivened weddings and family gatherings, and provided atmosphere during the festivals of the grape and grain harvests. Sadly, music was also associated with places of ill repute. Finally, when death struck, music consoled the survivors in their grief.

In Israel, music played yet other roles. It was known to elevate the mind and make prophets spiritually receptive. It was at the sound of a stringed instrument that Elisha found divine inspiration. (2 Kings 3:15) Music was also used to mark events on the calendar. New moons and festivals were announced with the sound of two silver trumpets. On the day of Jubilee, the sound of the horn proclaimed freedom to the slaves and the return of forfeited land and houses to their owners. How joyful the poor people must have been when they heard music announcing the return of their freedom or possessions!—Leviticus 25:9; Numbers 10:10.

Certain Israelites must have been exceptional musicians or singers. In fact, according to an Assyrian bas-relief, King Sennacherib asked for a tribute from King Hezekiah in the form of male and female musicians. It seems that they were first-class performers. But it was David who stood out among all virtuosos.

A Remarkable Musician

David was remarkable in that he was both a musician and a poet. Over half of



the psalms are attributed to him. While a boy, he was a shepherd, and his sensitive and perceptive mind was nourished with the pastoral scenes of Bethlehem. He had known the simple joys of listening to babbling brooks and the bleating of lambs responding to his voice. Touched by the beauty of this "music" in the world around him, he took up his harp and raised his voice in praise to God. What a moving experience it must have been to hear the music that David composed to Psalm 23!

As a young man, David played the harp so beautifully that he was recommended to Saul, the king, who took him into his service. When Saul was seized with anguish and mental agitation, David came to him and produced on his harp the melodious and restful refrains that calmed the heart of the king. The dark thoughts that haunted Saul vanished, and his agitation left him.
—1 Samuel 16:16.

*"Jehovah is my Shepherd. I shall lack nothing.
In grassy pastures he makes me lie down; by well-watered
resting-places he conducts me."* —PSALM 23:1, 2



Instruments in Bible Times

Stringed instruments included lutes, harps, and ten-stringed instruments. (Psalm 92:3) They were tuned to Alamothe and Sheminith, expressions perhaps referring to upper and lower octaves. (1 Chronicles 15:20, 21, footnote) Among the brass and wind instruments were the pipe, the flute, the horn, as well as trumpets, which were 'loudly sounded.' (2 Chronicles 7:6; 1 Samuel 10:5; Psalm 150:3, 4) At the temple dedication, trumpets and singers were "causing one sound to be heard." (2 Chronicles 5:12, 13) This seems to mean that they were in tune and that there was no discord. Percussion instruments included tambourines and sistums, a kind of musical rattle, as well as "all sorts of instruments of juniper wood." There were also cymbals—small ones "of melodious sound" and large ones called "clashing cymbals." —2 Samuel 6:5; Psalm 150:5.

Above: Detail from the Arch of Titus, Rome, Italy, depicting trumpets taken from the temple in Jerusalem in 70 C.E. Coins dated about 130 C.E., featuring Jewish musical instruments

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Music, which David loved so much and which filled him with happiness, sometimes caused problems. One day, when David and Saul returned victorious from their combat with the Philistines, triumphant and joyful music came to the ears of the king. The women were singing: "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." At this, Saul became so angry and jealous that he "was continually looking suspiciously at David from that day forward." —1 Samuel 18:7-9.

Moved by Music

David's divinely inspired compositions excelled in many ways. His songs include both contemplative and pastoral psalms. They range from expressions of praise to narrative history, from the joys of the grape harvest to the pomp of the palace inauguration, from reminiscences to hope, from request to entreaty. (See Psalms 32, 23, 145, 8, 30, 38, 72, 51, 86 and their superscriptions.) At the death of Saul and his son Jonathan, David composed a dirge, called "The Bow," beginning with the words: "The beauty, O Israel, is slain upon your high places." The tone was gloomy. David knew how to express a wide range of feelings, both in words and in music on his harp.—2 Samuel 1:17-19.

With his exuberant personality, David loved joyful, lively music that was highly rhythmic. When he brought the ark of the covenant up to Zion, he leaped and danced with all his power to celebrate the event. The Bible account indicates that the music must have been extremely rousing. Can you

*"There were . . . four thousand givers of praise to Jehovah
on the instruments that David said 'I have made
for giving praise.'" —1 CHRONICLES 23:4, 5*

imagine the scene? It brought recriminations from his wife Michal. But it did not matter to David. He loved Jehovah, and this music, which filled him with such joy, caused him to leap before his God.—2 Samuel 6:14, 16, 21.

As if all of this were not enough, David also distinguished himself by developing new musical instruments. (2 Chronicles 7:6) Overall, David seems to have been an exceptionally gifted artist, being an instrument maker, a poet, a composer, and a performer. However, David did even greater things.

Singing and Music at the Temple

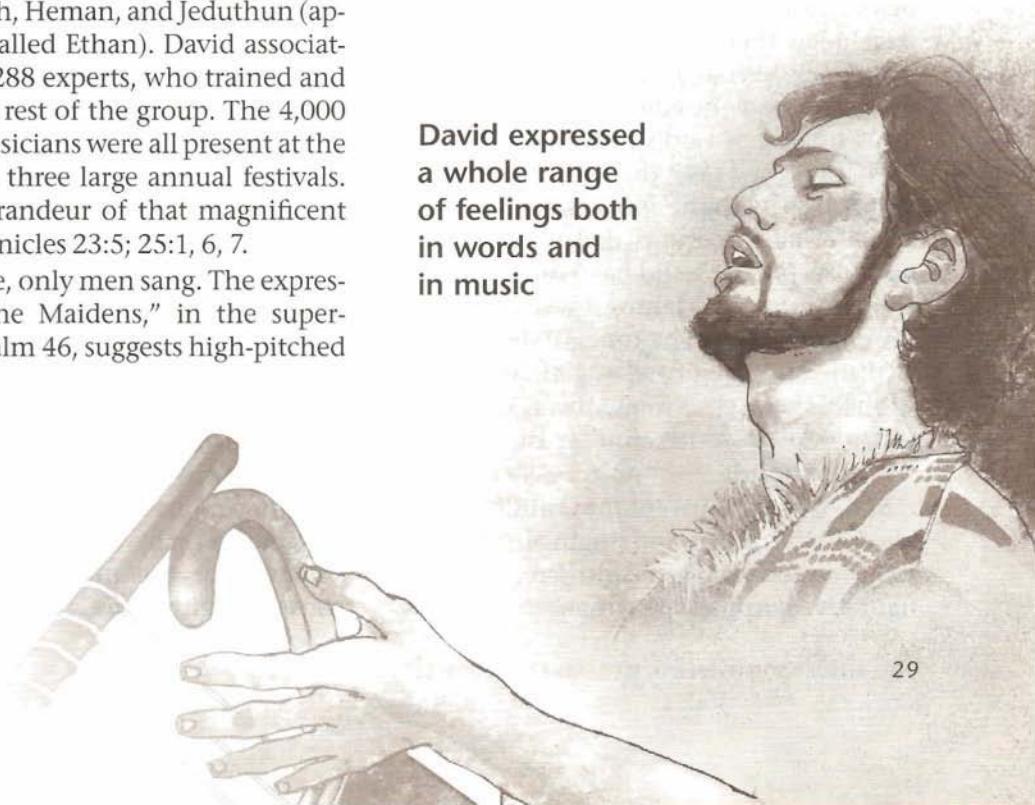
A legacy of David was the organization of singing and music in the house of Jehovah. At the head of 4,000 singers and musicians, he placed Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun (apparently also called Ethan). David associated them with 288 experts, who trained and supervised the rest of the group. The 4,000 singers and musicians were all present at the temple for the three large annual festivals. Imagine the grandeur of that magnificent choir!—1 Chronicles 23:5; 25:1, 6, 7.

At the temple, only men sang. The expression “upon The Maidens,” in the superscription of Psalm 46, suggests high-pitched

voice or instrument. They sang in unison, as indicated at 2 Chronicles 5:13: “The singers were as one.” The songs could be melodies, such as Psalm 3 and many other psalms of David, and sometimes included refrains, such as the one at Psalm 42:5, 11 and 43:5. Songs using antiphony, in which choirs and/or soloists responded to one another, were also much appreciated. This is the case in Psalm 24, which was no doubt composed for the time when David brought the ark of the covenant to Zion.—2 Samuel 6:11-17.

Singing, however, was not restricted to the Levites. It was the people who sang when they went up to Jerusalem for the annual festivals. This is perhaps what is meant by “A Song of the Ascents.” (Psalms 120

**David expressed
a whole range
of feelings both
in words and
in music**



*"Praise Jah, you people!
Praise him with the tambourine and the circle dance.
Every breathing thing—let it praise Jah."* —PSALM 150:1, 4, 6

to 134) In Psalm 133, for example, David exalts the brotherhood that the Israelites tasted in those moments. He opens with these words: "Look! How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!" Try to imagine the music that accompanied this song!

Music and Worship of Jehovah

One tenth of the Bible is made up of such songs, and the book of Psalms encourages all humans to pour forth praises. (Psalm 150) Music has the power to cause one to forget life's worries, and singing can act as a balm to wounded hearts. However, the Bible also recommends that those who are in good spirits sing psalms.—James 5:13.

Singing is an act by which one can express one's faith and love for God. The night before Jesus' execution, he and the apostles concluded their meal with singing. (Matthew 26:30) What a voice the Son of David must have had—he who had known the glorious singing of God's heavenly court! It is likely that they sang the *Hallel*, Psalms 113 to 118. If so, with the apostles, who were unaware of all the events that were about to take place, Jesus would have sung out loud: "I do love, because Jehovah hears my voice, my entreaties. . . . The ropes of death encircled me and the distressing circumstances of Sheol themselves found me. . . . 'Ah, Jehovah, do provide my soul with escape!'" —Psalm 116:1-4.

Man is not the inventor of music. The Bible describes music and singing in the heavens themselves, where spirit creatures play figurative harps and sing praises around Je-



hovah's throne. (Revelation 5:9; 14:3; 15:2, 3) Jehovah God gave music to mankind, implanting in their heart a feeling for music and the irrepressible urge to express their sentiments by playing an instrument or by singing. For the man of faith, music is above all a gift from God.—James 1:17.

Our Readers Ask

DID THREE WISE MEN REALLY VISIT BABY JESUS?

Christmastime lore from South America to Eastern Europe to Asia depicts a Nativity scene with three kings, or wise men, bearing precious gifts for the babe Jesus. Is this story true? Does it line up with the facts? Let us see.

Two Gospels, Matthew and Luke, chronicle the birth of Jesus. These accounts show that only lowly shepherds from nearby fields visited Jesus at his birth. The so-called kings, or wise men, were in reality astrologers, not royalty, and they are not numbered. The astrologers did not journey to the side of a newborn in a manger but arrived when Jesus was a child and was living in a house. Their presence even jeopardized the life of Jesus!

Look closely at the account of Jesus' birth by Bible writer Luke, and you will find that it says: "There were . . . shepherds living out of doors and keeping watches in the night over their flocks. And suddenly Jehovah's angel stood by them, and . . . said to them: ' . . . You will find an infant bound in cloth bands and lying in a manger.' . . . And they went with haste and found Mary as well as Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger."—Luke 2:8-16.

Only Joseph, Mary, and the shepherds were present with baby Jesus. No one else is listed in Luke's report.

Now examine the account at Matthew 2:1-11 from the King James Bible: "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem . . . And when they were come into the house, they



saw the young child with Mary his mother."

Notice that the account states just "wise men," not "three wise men," and that they first traveled from the east to Jerusalem, not to the birth city of Jesus, Bethlehem.

By the time they finally reached Bethlehem, Jesus was a "young child"—no longer a baby—and no longer in a stable but in a house.

Also, while the King James Bible uses the words "wise men" in describing these visitors, other translations use "Magi" or "astrologers." According to *A Handbook on the Gospel of Matthew*, the expression "wise men" translates "a Greek noun which originally referred to Persian priests who were experts in astrology." And *The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines the word as "a wizard, sorcerer, a pretender to magic powers, a professor of the arts of witchcraft."

Although astrology and witchcraft are still popular today, the Bible warns against their use. (Isaiah 47:13-15) They are forms of spiritism and are practices that Jehovah God abhors. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12) That is why no angel of God announced the birth of Jesus to the astrologers. However, by means of divine intervention in a dream, they were warned not to report back to wicked King Herod, since he sought to kill Jesus. So "they withdrew to their country by another way."—Matthew 2:11-16.

Would true Christians want to perpetuate a fabled Nativity that distorts the truth surrounding the birth of Jesus? Surely the answer is no.

- Find out about a global solution to today's global problems. See page 5.
- Survivors of the school shooting in Winnenden, Germany, tell how they cope with the traumatic aftermath. See page 9.
- Who was King Herod who sought to kill the infant Jesus? See page 13.
- What do you know about the Lunar New Year celebrated by people in the Orient? See page 20.
- Learn about music in Bible times by considering the life of King David. See page 26.
- Were there really three kings, or wise men, who came to worship Jesus while he was in the manger? See page 31.

Starving children: WHO/OXFAM

