

AUGUST 15, 2006

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

WHO WILL INHERIT THE EARTH?



THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

"I imagine that nature will be transformed and reconciled. . . Not tomorrow morning, but in an immensely far-off age, when there will be a new heaven and a new earth."

—Jean-Marie Pelt, French environmental specialist.

DISTRESSED by environmental and social conditions on earth, many would love to see our planet transformed into a paradise. Yet, this aspiration is not just a 21st-century dream. Long ago, the Bible promised the restoration of Paradise on earth. Jesus' declarations "the meek . . . shall inherit the earth" and "thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," are among the most well-known passages in Scripture. (Matthew 5:5; 6:10, Revised Standard Version) Today, however, not many share a belief in an earthly paradise inhabited by the meek. For most who claim to be Christians, Paradise has been lost.

The French weekly magazine *La Vie* explains why belief in a paradise—whether on earth or in heaven—has been abandoned, at least in the Catholic Church: "After dominating Catholic pastoral teachings for at least 19 centuries, [the notion of a] paradise has disappeared from spiritual retreats, Sunday sermons,

theology courses, and catechism classes." The very word is said to be shrouded in a "heavy fog" of "mystery and confusion." Some preachers deliberately avoid it because it "conveys too many images of earthly happiness."

For Frédéric Lenoir, a sociologist who specializes in religion, the notions of a paradise have become "stereotyped images." Likewise, Jean Delumeau, historian and author of several books on the subject, thinks that the fulfillment of Bible promises is primarily symbolic. He writes: "To the question, 'What is left of Paradise?' Christian faith continues to reply: Thanks to the resurrection of the Savior, one day we shall all join hands and our eyes shall see happiness."

Is the message of an earthly paradise still relevant? What exactly does the future hold for our planet? Is the vision of the future blurred, or can it be brought into focus? The following article will answer these questions.

"As in Heaven, Also Upon Earth"

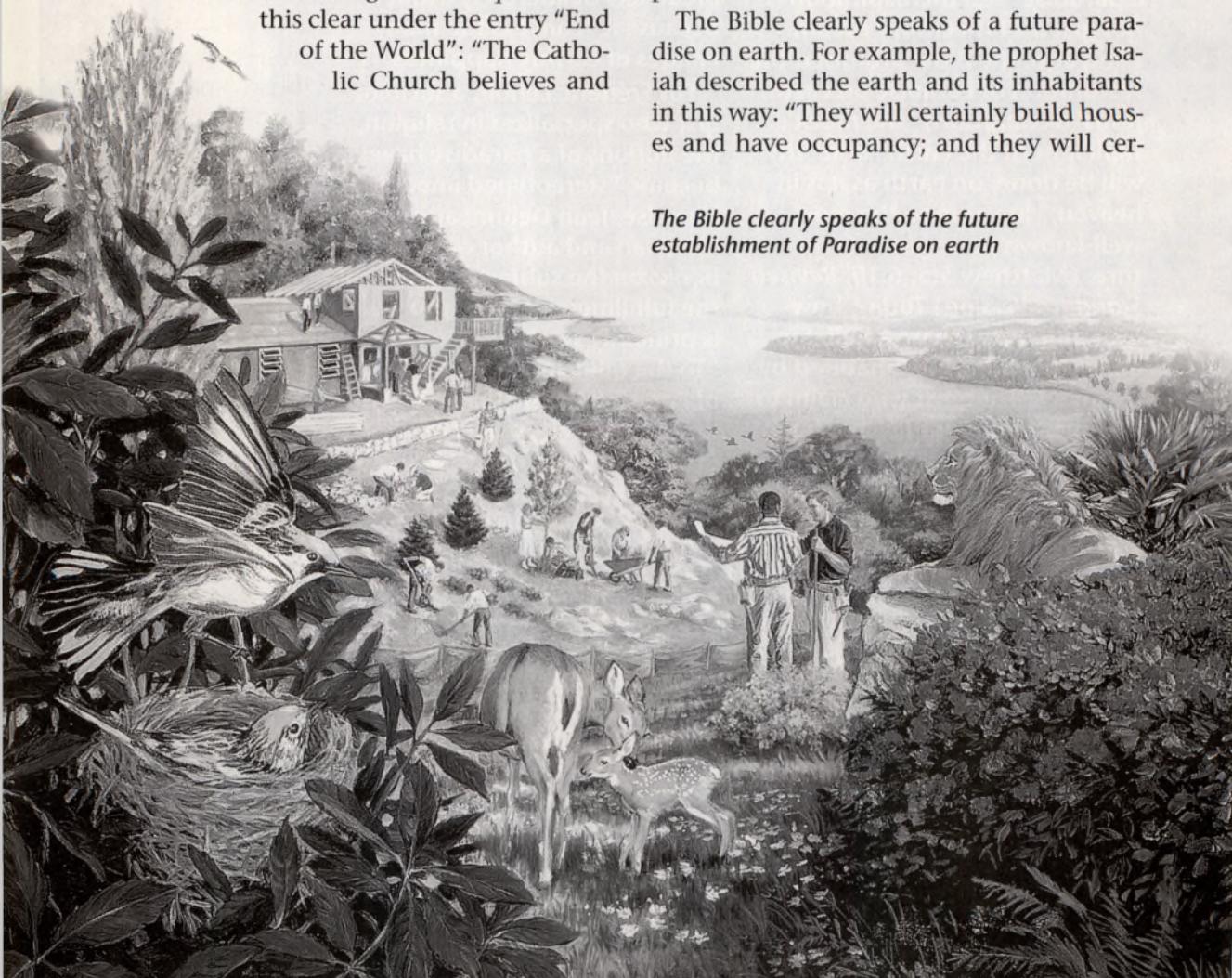
"Catholic belief specifies Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Hell, Heaven."—Catholicism, edited by George Brantl.

NOTE that in this list of possibilities for mankind, the earth is absent. That is hardly surprising because the Catholic Church, like a number of other religions, adheres to the notion that the earth will one day be destroyed. The *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* makes this clear under the entry "End of the World": "The Catholic Church believes and

teaches that the present world, as God created it and as it exists, will not last eternally." A recent Catholic catechism also takes up this idea: "Our world . . . is destined to disappear." But if our planet is going to disappear, what of the Bible's promises of an earthly paradise?

The Bible clearly speaks of a future paradise on earth. For example, the prophet Isaiah described the earth and its inhabitants in this way: "They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will cer-

The Bible clearly speaks of the future establishment of Paradise on earth



tainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not build and someone else have occupancy; they will not plant and someone else do the eating. For like the days of a tree will the days of my people be; and the work of their own hands my chosen ones will use to the full." (Isaiah 65:21, 22) The Jews, to whom God gave these promises, were certain that their land—indeed, the whole earth—would one day become a paradise for mankind's everlasting benefit.

Psalm 37 confirms this hope. "The meek ones themselves will possess the earth." (Psalm 37:11) This verse is not talking about just a temporary restoration of the nation of Israel to the Promised Land. The same psalm specifies: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it." (Psalm 37:29)* Note that this psalm says that everlasting life on earth is to be a reward for "the meek." In a French Bible, a comment on this verse says that the word "meek" "has a far wider meaning than is apparent in translations; it includes the unfortunate, those afflicted or persecuted for Yahweh's sake, humble hearts that are submissive to God."

On Earth or in Heaven?

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made a promise that reminds us of the scriptures quoted above: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." (Matthew 5:5, *Revised Standard Version*) Once again, the earth is to be a lasting reward for the faith-

* While many Bible translations render the Hebrew term 'e'rets "land" instead of "earth," there is no reason to limit 'e'rets at Psalm 37:11, 29 to just the *land* given to the nation of Israel. *Old Testament Word Studies* by William Wilson defines 'e'rets as "the earth in the largest sense, both the habitable and uninhabitable parts; with some accompanying word of limitation, it is used of some portion of the earth's surface, a land or country." So the first and primary meaning of the Hebrew word is our planet, or globe, the earth.—See *The Watchtower*, January 1, 1986, page 31.

ful. However, Jesus made it clear to his apostles that he was preparing a place for them "in the house of [his] Father" and that they would be in heaven with him. (John 14:1, 2; Luke 12:32; 1 Peter 1:3, 4) How, then, should we understand promises of earthly blessings? Are they relevant today, and to whom do they apply?

Various Bible scholars say that "the earth" mentioned in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and even in Psalm 37 is merely symbolic. In his comments in the *Bible de Glaire*, F. Vi-gouroux saw in these verses "a figure of heaven and of the Church." To M. Lagrange, a French Bible researcher, this blessing "is, not a promise that the meek shall possess the earth on which they live, neither under the present system nor under a more perfect order, but the place, wherever it might be, which is the kingdom of the heavens." For another, it is a "symbolic use of earthly values to speak of heaven." For still others, "the land of promise, Canaan, is taken in a spiritual sense and represents the homeland above, the kingdom of God, the possession of which is guaranteed to those who are meek. That is also the meaning of this image in Psalm 37 and elsewhere." But should we be quick to exclude the physical earth from God's promises?

An Eternal Purpose for the Earth

In the beginning, the earth was directly linked to God's purpose for humans. "As regards the heavens, to Jehovah the heavens belong, but the earth he has given to the sons of men," wrote the psalmist. (Psalm 115:16) God's original purpose for mankind was thus connected with the earth, not with heaven. Jehovah gave the first human couple the commission to expand the garden in Eden to cover the earth. (Genesis 1:28) This purpose was not temporary. Jehovah affirms

in his Word that the earth will last forever: "A generation is going, and a generation is coming; but the earth is standing even to time indefinite."—Ecclesiastes 1:4; 1 Chronicles 16:30; Isaiah 45:18.

God's promises never sink into oblivion, for he is the Most High, and he ensures their fulfillment. Using the natural water cycle as an illustration, the Bible explains that the fulfillment of God's promises is inevitable: "Just as the pouring rain descends, and the snow, from the heavens and does not return to that place, unless it actually saturates the earth and makes it produce and sprout, . . . so my word [God's word] that goes forth from my mouth will prove to be. It will not return to me without results, but it will certainly do that in which I have delighted, and it will have certain success in that for which I have sent it." (Isaiah 55:10, 11) God makes promises to humans. A certain amount of time may pass before those promises are realized, but they do not fall by the wayside. They "return" to him having accomplished all that was uttered.

Jehovah certainly "delighted" in creating the earth for mankind. At the end of the sixth creative day, he declared that everything was "very good." (Genesis 1:31) The transformation of the earth into a lasting paradise is part of the divine purpose that has not yet been accomplished. Nevertheless, God's promises 'will not return to him without results.' All the promises of perfect life on earth, where humans will live eternally in peace and security, will be fulfilled.—Psalm 135:6; Isaiah 46:10.

God's Purpose Achieved Without Fail

The sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, temporarily disturbed God's original purpose of making the earth a paradise. After their disobedience, they were expelled from

the garden. They thus lost the privilege of sharing in the fulfillment of the divine purpose of having perfect humans reside on a paradise earth. Still, God arranged things to accomplish his purpose. How?—Genesis 3:17-19, 23.

The situation in Eden was similar to that of a man who starts to build a house on an excellent plot of land. Just as he lays the foundation, someone comes along and destroys what has been laid. Rather than abandon his project, the man takes steps to ensure the completion of the house. Even if this additional work entails extra cost, it does not call into question the advisability of the initial project.

Likewise, God made arrangements to ensure the accomplishment of his purpose. Soon after the sin of our first parents, he announced a hope for their descendants—a "seed" who would undo the damage done. In fulfilling this prophecy, the primary part of the seed proved to be God's Son, Jesus, who came to earth and offered his life as a sacrifice to repurchase mankind. (Galatians 3:16; Matthew 20:28) Once resurrected to heaven, Jesus would become the King of the Kingdom. Primarily, he is the meek one who inherits the earth together with selected faithful ones who are resurrected to heaven to become corulers in this Kingdom. (Psalm 2:6-9) In time, this government will take earth's affairs in hand in order to accomplish God's original purpose and transform the earth into a paradise. Countless millions of meek ones "inherit the earth" in the sense that they benefit from the rule of this Kingdom by Jesus Christ and his corulers.—Genesis 3:15; Daniel 2:44; Acts 2:32, 33; Revelation 20:5, 6.

"As in Heaven, Also Upon Earth"

This salvation with two destinies, heavenly and earthly, is mentioned in a vision seen



Would Jesus' model prayer make sense if the earth were to disappear?

by the apostle John. He saw kings on heavenly thrones who had been chosen from among Christ's faithful disciples. The Bible specifically states regarding these associates of Christ that "they are to rule as kings over the earth." (Revelation 5:9, 10) Note the dual aspect in the accomplishing of God's purpose—a restored earth under the direction of a heavenly Kingdom made up of Jesus Christ and his joint heirs. All these divine arrangements make possible the final restoration of the earthly Paradise in accord with God's original purpose.

In his model prayer, Jesus invited his disciples to pray for God's will to take place "as in heaven, also upon earth." (Matthew 6:9, 10) Would these words make sense if the earth disappeared or was merely a symbol of heaven? Similarly, would they make sense if all the righteous went to heaven? God's will

for the earth is clearly evident in the Scriptures, from the account of the creation right up to the visions of the book of Revelation. The earth is to become what God purposed—a paradise. This is the will that God promises to accomplish. The faithful on earth pray for the fulfillment of that will.

Everlasting life on earth is what the Creator, the God who 'has not changed,' originally purposed. (Malachi 3:6; John 17:3; James 1:17) For more than a century, this magazine, *The Watchtower*, has explained these two aspects in the accomplishing of the divine purpose. This allows us to understand the promises of an earthly restoration that are found in the Scriptures. We invite you to look into the matter further, either by having a discussion with Jehovah's Witnesses or by contacting the publishers of this magazine.



REFRESHING GROWTH on a Beautiful Island

VISITORS to Taiwan cannot help but be impressed by the verdant tropical growth covering the island. The beautiful green of young rice plants ripens to golden at harvesttime. Thick, luxuriant forests cover the mountainsides. In contrast with the crowded cities, the lush green growth in the fields and mountains proves to be most refreshing. After all, that was what moved the first Westerner who saw the island to choose the name *Ilha Formosa*, or "Island Beautiful."

Yes, Taiwan is a beautiful but small island—just 240 miles long and about 100 miles across at the widest point. High mountains cover most of the island. Yü Shan (Mount Morrison) is higher than Japan's Mount Fuji or New Zealand's Mount Cook. Surrounding the central mountains and reaching down to the sea are narrow coastal plains, teeming with Taiwan's bustling

population, which is now well over 22 million.

A New Kind of Growth

There is, however, another kind of growth that is becoming more and more evident in Taiwan—spiritual growth. This is reflected in the zeal that people, young and old, display once they come to know the true God, Jehovah. It is truly impressive to observe the growth in the number of those who are zealously working to help others learn about Jehovah and his purpose.

Growth necessitates expansion. In December 1990, property was purchased for an enlarged branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses. The former facility, located in Taipei, had become too limited for looking after the activities of the 1,777 Kingdom publishers in Taiwan at that time. After several years of diligent work by international and local

volunteers of all age groups, the fine new facilities at Hsinwu were ready for use in August 1994. By that time there were 2,515 sharing in spreading the good news from God's Word, the Bible. Now, over ten years later, this number has more than doubled, passing the 5,500 mark, and every month about one quarter of that number are sharing in the full-time evangelizing work. Of special note are the young men and women who are like refreshing morning "dew-drops."—Psalm 110:3.

Spiritual Growth Among the Young

Many of the zealous publishers of the good news are quite young. Some are grade-school students. For example, in a town in northern Taiwan, a married couple were invited for the first time to attend the Theocratic Ministry School, where Jehovah's Witnesses learn how to teach Bible truths. The couple were astounded to see a small boy, Weijun, read the Bible from the platform more skillfully than many adults could. Then at the other meetings they attended, they were deeply impressed that even preschool children gave intelligent answers. This couple commented on how well-behaved the young children at the Kingdom Hall are.

Why are these young ones so focused on Bible education in this predominantly Buddhist and Taoist country? It is because their Christian parents have applied Bible principles and have built a happy family life centered on a relationship with Jehovah. Because Weijun's parents endeavor to make the family Bible study and the field ministry enjoyable, this little boy's older brother and sister are already baptized Witnesses. When Weijun recently asked to share in the public preaching work, his mother commented that the boy had already placed

more magazines that month than the rest of the family put together. He obviously enjoys talking about the truth, commenting at meetings, and sharing with others what he has learned.

As They Grow Older

How do such young ones do as they grow older? Most continue to show real love for Jehovah and for the ministry. For example, Huiping is a student. One day her teacher mentioned that members of one religion would not accept blood but that he did not know who they were. After the class was dismissed, this young Christian explained to her teacher that they are Jehovah's Witnesses and why they take such a stand.

Another instructor showed a video on sexually transmitted diseases. The video mentioned 1 Corinthians 6:9, but she claimed that the Bible does not condemn homosexuality. Again Huiping was able to present to the instructor God's view of the matter.

When classmate Shuxia was preparing a report on family violence, Huiping gave her the November 8, 2001, *Awake!* with the cover title "Help for Battered Women" and explained that it contained much Bible-based information on the subject. In time, Shuxia became an unbaptized publisher. She and Huiping now share the good news with others.

Many Christians in school find that it is not easy to be known as people who live by Bible principles. This is especially so in small rural towns. Zhihao had to deal with peer pressure because of his faith and preaching activity. He says: "I felt so frustrated that I feared meeting my classmates while I was engaging in the ministry. At times, there would be ten of them taunting me!" One day, the teacher assigned Zhihao

MORE KINGDOM HALLS NEEDED

With the growth in Taiwan, the need for more Kingdom Halls has become a great challenge. Why? Because except in some rural areas, land suitable for building Kingdom Halls is almost nonexistent. Besides, land prices are exorbitant, and zoning laws are strict. In larger towns and cities, the only recourse is to purchase office spaces and convert them into Kingdom Halls. Even so, most offices have very low ceil-

ings, high maintenance fees, restricted entry, or other factors that make them unsuitable for use as Kingdom Halls.

Still, in recent years, Jehovah's Witnesses in Taiwan have been able to acquire a number of new Kingdom Halls. The search for new property goes on as the Witnesses show themselves willing to take on the financial responsibility as well as to develop the necessary building skills.

to give a talk about his religion to the class. "I decided to start my talk with Genesis chapter 1 and then discuss such questions as: Who made the earth and all the things in it? And how did man come to be? As soon as I read from the Scriptures, some started to laugh at me, saying I was superstitious. However, I went on and finished my presentation. Afterward, I had the opportunity to speak with some of my classmates personally about our work and our faith. Now, when they see me in the ministry, they no longer laugh at me!"

Zhihao continues: "Because my parents are Witnesses, we discuss the daily text every morning. We also study the Bible and attend meetings regularly. That is why I can face up to any who might still want to taunt me when I am trying to share refreshing Biblical truths with others."

Tingmei is a student at a girls' technical school. Once she was invited to go on a picnic with some of her classmates together with boys from a boys' school. She could see the moral danger in such association and declined to go. She was invited several times, even though she shared with her

classmates fine material from the book *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work*.^{*} The girls ridiculed her, saying that she was old-fashioned. However, the wisdom of following Bible principles was soon borne out when one of the girls became pregnant and had an abortion. Tingmei says: "Doing what Jehovah directs has given me a clean conscience. As a result, I have inner joy and a feeling of deep satisfaction."

Overcoming Obstacles to Growth

One of Tingmei's close friends is Ruiwen. In her younger days, Ruiwen felt that going to Christian meetings and sharing in the field ministry was just a wearisome routine. However, seeing the contrast between the genuine love of those in her congregation and the shallow friendship of her classmates, she became convinced that she needed to make some changes in her life. Ruiwen began to preach to her schoolmates and soon saw more clearly what she should do. She started to serve as an auxiliary pioneer, spending more than 50 hours a month in the ministry. Then she began to

* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

regular pioneer, spending more than 70 hours a month in service. Ruiwen says: "It is hard for me to express my gratitude to Jehovah. He never gave up on me. Even though I did things that disappointed him, he still loved me. My mother and others in the congregation showed the same loving attitude. Now that I am conducting five Bible studies, I feel that I am involved in the most satisfying work."

In one rural high school, two Witness children were assigned to represent the school in a folk-dance contest. When they learned about the nature of the contest, the Witness youths felt that taking part would violate their Christian conscience. When they tried to explain their view and asked to be excused, their request was denied. Instead, the teachers told them that because they were assigned, they must go. Not about to compromise, the Witness youths logged on to the education department's Web site and sent a letter explaining their problem. Though the youths did not get a personal reply, the school soon received direction not to force anyone to share in such a contest. How happy these two youngsters were to see that the Bible training they had received not only molded their conscience but also gave them the strength to take their stand for what is right!

Even those with physical limitations take great pleasure in sharing their Bible hope with others. Minyu has been paralyzed since birth. Not able to use her hands, she turns the pages of the Bible with her tongue and finds the text she wants to read. During her talk assignments in the Theocratic Ministry School at the Kingdom Hall, she lies on a low couch, and her assistant sits on a low stool and holds the microphone for her. How heartwarming to see the effort Minyu puts into these talks!

When Minyu wanted to become a Kingdom publisher, some sisters in the congregation learned how to do telephone witnessing in order to help her. She presses the buttons with her tongue while the sisters help her keep a record of her calls. She enjoys the work so much that she has become an auxiliary pioneer, talking to others about God's Kingdom 50 to 60 hours each month over the phone. She has found some who accept Bible literature and allow her to make return calls. She is now conducting three Bible studies with individuals whom she contacted in this way.

Yes, like refreshing dewdrops, the young men—and women—in the 78 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in Taiwan are willingly and zealously bringing the life-sustaining Kingdom good news to the teeming millions on this crowded island. This is only a small part of the worldwide fulfillment of the following Bible prophecy: "Your people will offer themselves willingly on the day of your military force. In the splendors of holiness, from the womb of the dawn, you have your company of young men just like dewdrops." (Psalm 110:3) What a source of encouragement these young people are to the older ones among their fellow workers, and above all, what a source of joy they are to their heavenly Father, Jehovah God!—Proverbs 27:11.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

Worship That Is Good for You

When a Loved One Leaves Jehovah

"Let Your Petitions
Be Made Known to God"

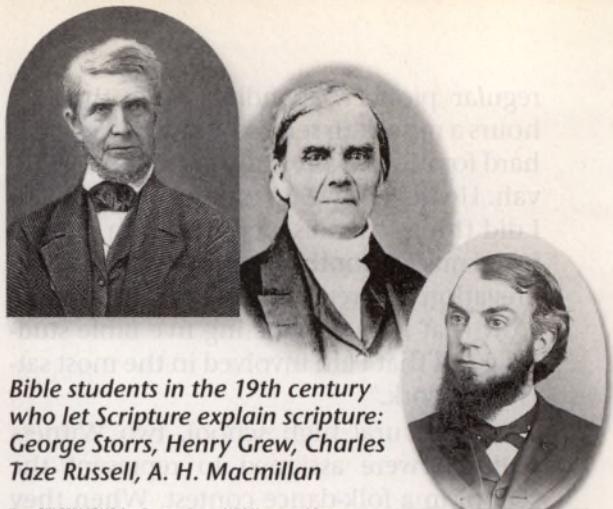
"LET US COMPARE SCRIPTURE WITH SCRIPTURE"

A MAN found a pamphlet on the floor of a railway car bound for New York City. 'The human soul is mortal,' said the pamphlet. Intrigued, the man, a minister, started to read. He was amazed because he had never before doubted the teaching of the immortality of the soul. At the time, he could not tell who had written the pamphlet. Still, he found the argument plausible and Scriptural and the material worthy of serious study.

The minister was George Storrs. The incident took place in 1837, the year that Charles Darwin first recorded in his notebook thoughts that would later develop into his theory of evolution. The world was still religious, and most people believed in God. Many read the Bible and looked up to it as having authority.

Storrs later found out that the pamphlet was written by Henry Grew of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Grew held fast to the principle that "the scripture . . . is its own best interpreter." Grew and his associates had been studying the Bible with the aim of conforming their lives and activities to its counsel. Their studies revealed some beautiful Scriptural truths.

Stimulated by Grew's writing, Storrs carefully looked into what the Scriptures had to say about the soul and discussed the matter with some of his fellow ministers. After five years of serious study, Storrs finally decided to publicize his newly found gem of Scrip-



Bible students in the 19th century who let Scripture explain scripture: George Storrs, Henry Grew, Charles Taze Russell, A. H. Macmillan

Top: SIX SERMONS, by George Storrs (1855); second from top: Collection of The New-York Historical Society/69288

tural truth. At first, he prepared one sermon to give on a Sunday in 1842. However, he felt the need to give a few more sermons to do justice to the subject. Eventually, his sermons on the mortality of the human soul numbered six, which he published in *Six Sermons*. Storrs compared scripture with scripture in order to uncover the beautiful truth buried beneath the God-dishonoring doctrines of Christendom.

Does the Bible Teach the Immortality of the Soul?

The Bible speaks of Jesus' anointed followers putting on immortality as a reward for their faithfulness. (1 Corinthians 15:50-56) If immortality is a reward for the faithful, Storrs reasoned, the soul of the wicked cannot be immortal. Instead of speculating, he went to the Scriptures. He considered Matthew 10:28, *King James Version*, which reads: "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." So the soul can be destroyed. He also referred to Ezekiel 18:4, which says: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (KJ) When the whole Bible was put into



perspective, the beauty of the truth stood out. "If the view I take of this subject be correct," wrote Storrs, "then many portions of Scripture, which have been obscure on the common theory, become clear, beautiful and full of meaning and force."

But what about scriptures like Jude 7? It reads: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (KJ) Reading this text, some may conclude that the souls of those who were killed in Sodom and Gomorrah are tormented by fire forever. "Let us compare Scripture with Scripture," wrote Storrs. He then quoted 2 Peter 2:5, 6, which reads: "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah . . . , bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." (KJ) Yes, Sodom and Gomorrah were turned into ashes, destroyed forever with their inhabitants.

"Peter throws light on Jude," Storrs explained. "Both together show most clearly what displeasures God has manifested against sinners. . . . Those judgments inflicted on the old world, Sodom and Gomorrah, are a standing, and perpetual, or 'eternal' admonition, warning, or 'example' to all men to the end of the world." So Jude referred to the effect of the fire that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah as eternal. That in no way alters the fact that the human soul is mortal.

Storrs was not putting together scriptures that supported his view while ignoring others. He considered the context of each text as well as the overall tenor of the Bible. If a verse seemed to contradict other scriptures,

Storrs looked into the rest of the Bible for a logical explanation.

Russell's Studies in the Scriptures

Among those who became associated with George Storrs was a young man who was organizing a Bible study group in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His name was Charles Taze Russell. One of his first articles on Scriptural themes was published in 1876 in the magazine *Bible Examiner*, edited by Storrs. Russell acknowledged that earlier Bible students had an influence on him. Later, as the editor of *Zion's Watch Tower*, he appreciated Storrs' giving him much assistance, by both word and pen.

At the age of 18, C. T. Russell organized a Bible study class and established a pattern for studying the Bible. A. H. Macmillan, a Bible student associated with Russell, described this method: "Someone would raise a question. They would discuss it. They would look up all related scriptures on the point and then, when they were satisfied on the harmony of these texts, they would finally state their conclusion and make a record of it."

Russell was convinced that the Bible, when taken as a whole, must reveal a message harmonious and consistent with itself and with the character of its Divine Author. Whenever any part of the Bible seemed difficult to understand, Russell felt that it should be clarified and interpreted by other parts of the Bible.

Scriptural Tradition

However, neither Russell nor Storrs nor Grew was the first to let the Scriptures become their own interpreter. The tradition goes all the way back to the Founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ. He used a number of scriptures to clarify the true meaning of a text. For instance, when the Pharisees

criticized his disciples for plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath, Jesus demonstrated from the account recorded at 1 Samuel 21:6 how the Sabbath law should be applied. The religious leaders were familiar with that account, in which David and his men ate the loaves of presentation. Jesus then referred to the part of the Law that said that only the Aaronic priests were to eat the showbread. (Exodus 29:32, 33; Leviticus 24:9) Still, David was told to go ahead and eat the loaves. Jesus concluded his persuasive argument by quoting from the book of Hosea: "If you had understood what this means, 'I want mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless ones." (Matthew 12: 1-8) What a wonderful example of comparing a scripture with other scriptures to reach an accurate understanding!

Jesus' followers held to the pattern of using scripture references to shed light upon a scripture. When the apostle Paul taught people in Thessalonica, "he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving by references that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead." (Acts 17:2, 3) In his divinely inspired letters too, Paul let the Bible become its own interpreter. Writing to the Hebrews, for instance, he quoted one scripture after another to prove that the Law was a shadow of the good things to come.—Hebrews 10:1-18.

Yes, sincere Bible students in the 19th and early 20th centuries were simply restoring this Christian pattern. The tradition of comparing scriptures with other scriptures continues in the *Watchtower* magazine. (2 Thessalonians 2:15) Jehovah's Witnesses use this principle when they analyze a scripture.

Let the Context Speak

When we are reading the Bible, how can we imitate the fine examples of Jesus and his faithful followers? First, we can consider

the immediate context of the scripture in question. How can the context help us understand the meaning? To illustrate, let us take Jesus' words recorded at Matthew 16: 28: "Truly I say to you that there are some of those standing here that will not taste death at all until first they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." Some may feel that these words were not fulfilled because all of Jesus' disciples who were present when he said those words died before the establishment of God's Kingdom in the heavens. *The Interpreter's Bible* even says of this verse: "The prediction was not fulfilled, and later Christians found it necessary to explain that it was metaphorical."

However, the context of this verse, as well as that of the parallel accounts by Mark and Luke, helps us understand the real meaning of the scripture. What did Matthew relate right after the words quoted above? He wrote: "Six days later Jesus took Peter and James and John his brother along and brought them up into a lofty mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them." (Matthew 17:1, 2) Both Mark and Luke also linked Jesus' comment about the Kingdom with the account of the transfiguration. (Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:27-36) Jesus' coming in Kingdom power was demonstrated in his transfiguration, his appearing in glory in the presence of the three apostles. Peter verifies this understanding by speaking of "the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ" with regard to his witnessing Jesus' transfiguration.—2 Peter 1:16-18.

Do You Let the Bible Be Its Own Interpreter?

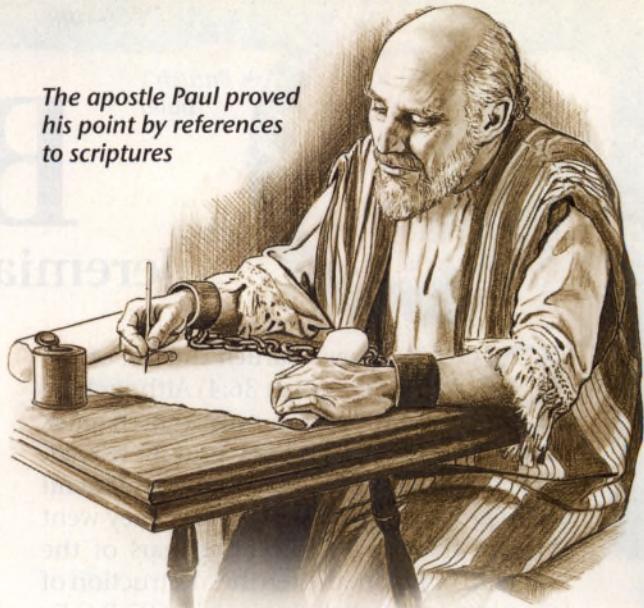
What if you cannot understand a scripture even after you have considered its context? You may benefit from comparing it with other scriptures, having in mind the overall tenor of the Bible. One excellent tool

for doing this can be found in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, now available in whole or in part in 57 languages. This tool is a list of marginal references, or cross-references, that appears in the center column of each page in many of its editions. You can find more than 125,000 of them in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*. The “Introduction” to that Bible explains: “A careful comparison of the marginal references and an examination of the accompanying footnotes will reveal the interlocking harmony of the 66 Bible books, proving that they comprise one book, inspired by God.”

Let us see how use of the cross-references can help us to understand a scripture. Take the example of the history of Abram, or Abraham. Consider this question: Who took the lead when Abram and his family went out of Ur? Genesis 11:31 reads: “Terah took Abram his son and Lot, . . . and Sarai his daughter-in-law, . . . and they went with him out of Ur of the Chaldeans to go to the land of Canaan. In time they came to Haran and took up dwelling there.” Just reading this, one might conclude that Abram’s father, Terah, took the lead. However, in the *New World Translation*, we find 11 cross-references on this verse. The last one takes us to Acts 7:2, where we read Stephen’s admonition to the first-century Jews: “The God of glory appeared to our forefather *Abraham* while he was in Mesopotamia, before he took up residence in Haran, and he said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your relatives and come on into the land I shall show you.’” (Acts 7:2, 3) Was Stephen confusing this with Abram’s *leaving* Haran? Obviously not, for this is part of the inspired Word of God.—Genesis 12:1-3.

Why, then, does Genesis 11:31 state that “Terah took Abram his son” and others of

The apostle Paul proved his point by references to scriptures



his family and went out of Ur? Terah was still the patriarchal head. He agreed to go with Abram and thus was credited with moving the family to Haran. By comparing and harmonizing these two scriptures, we can see in our mind’s eye exactly what took place. Abram respectfully convinced his father to go out of Ur in accord with God’s command.

When we read the Scriptures, we should take into account the context and the overall tenor of the Bible. Christians are admonished: “We received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that have been kindly given us by God. These things we also speak, not with words taught by human wisdom, but with those taught by the spirit, as we combine spiritual matters with spiritual words.” (1 Corinthians 2:11-13) Indeed, we must implore Jehovah for help to understand his Word and try to “combine spiritual matters with spiritual words” by checking the context of the scripture in question and by looking up related scriptures. May we keep finding brilliant gems of truth through the study of God’s Word.



◀ Baruch's
bulla

Baruch

Jeremiah's Faithful Secretary

DO YOU know "Baruch the son of Neriah"? (Jeremiah 36:4) Although he is mentioned in only four chapters of the Bible, he is well-known to Bible readers as the personal secretary and close friend of the prophet Jeremiah. Together they went through the last 18 turbulent years of the kingdom of Judah, the terrible destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 607 B.C.E., and the ensuing exile into Egypt.

In recent years discoveries of two bullae* from the seventh century B.C.E. with the text "Belonging to Berekhyahu [Baruch's Hebrew name], son of Neriyahu [Neriah's Hebrew name], the Scribe," have aroused scholars' interest in this Bible character. Who was Baruch? What were his family background, education, and status? What does his firm stand with Jeremiah reveal? What can we learn from him? Let us search for the answers by looking at the Biblical and historical information available.

Background and Status

Many scholars today believe that Baruch belonged to a prominent scribal family in Judah. They point to a number of reasons for this conclusion. For example, the Bible account refers to Baruch by a special title, "the secretary," or "the scribe" in some translations. The Scriptures also mention that Seraiah, his brother, was an important official at the court of King Zedekiah.—Jeremiah 36:32; 51:59.

* A bulla is a small lump of clay used to seal the string tying an important document. The clay was impressed with a seal that identified the owner or sender.

Archaeologist Philip J. King writes regarding scribes in Jeremiah's day: "Scribes, members of a professional class, were prominent in Judah during the late seventh and early sixth centuries B.C.E. . . . The title was held by high royal officials."

In addition, the account in Jeremiah chapter 36, which we will consider in detail, conveys the impression that Baruch had access to the king's counselors and was allowed to use the dining room, or the cabinet room, of Gemariah, a prince or an official. Bible scholar James Muilenberg argues: "Baruch could enter the cabinet room of the scribe because he had a rightful place there and was himself a member of the royal officials who had come together on the crucial occasion of the public reading of the scroll. He was among colleagues."

The publication *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* adds another argument for the status of Baruch: "Since the bulla of Berekhyahu was found together with a large group of bullae of other high officials, it is reasonable to assume that Baruch/Berekhyahu was acting within the same official framework in which the other officials were operating." The available information seems to indicate that Baruch and his brother Seraiah were high officials who supported the faithful prophet Jeremiah in the eventful years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

Public Support of Jeremiah

Chronologically, Baruch first appears in Jeremiah chapter 36, in "the fourth year of

Jehoiakim," or about 625 B.C.E. By this time Jeremiah had served as a prophet for 23 years.—Jeremiah 25:1-3; 36:1, 4.

Jehovah now told Jeremiah: "Take for yourself a roll of a book, and you must write in it all the words that I have spoken to you against Israel and against Judah and against all the nations, . . . since the days of Josiah, clear down to this day." The account continues: "Jeremiah proceeded to call Baruch the son of Neriah that Baruch might write at the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of Jehovah."—Jeremiah 36:2-4.

Why was Baruch called? Jeremiah told him: "I am shut up. I am unable to enter into the house of Jehovah." (Jeremiah 36:5) Evidently, Jeremiah had been barred from the temple area where Jehovah's message was to be read, perhaps because earlier messages had angered the authorities. (Jeremiah 26:1-9) Baruch was without doubt a sincere worshipper of Jehovah, and he "proceeded to do according to all that Jeremiah the prophet had commanded him."—Jeremiah 36:8.

Writing the warnings that had been given over the past 23 years took time, and perhaps Jeremiah was also waiting for the right moment. But in November or December 624 B.C.E., Baruch boldly "began to read aloud from the book the words of Jeremiah at the house of Jehovah, in the dining room of Gemariah . . . , in the ears of all the people."—Jeremiah 36:8-10.

Micaiah the son of Gemariah informed his father and a number of princes of what had happened, and they invited Baruch to read the roll aloud a second time. "Now it came about," says the account, "that as soon as they heard all the words, they looked at one another in dread; and they proceeded to say to Baruch: 'We shall without fail tell the king all these words. . . . Go, conceal yourself, you and Jeremiah, so that no one at all will know where you men are.'"—Jeremiah 36:11-19.

When King Jehoiakim heard what Baruch had written at Jeremiah's dictation, he angrily tore up the roll, pitched it into the fire, and commanded his men to arrest Jeremiah and Baruch. On Jehovah's command, the two men made a duplicate roll while in hiding.—Jeremiah 36:21-32.

There is no doubt that Baruch understood the dangers involved in this assignment. He must have known of the threats against Jeremiah a few years earlier. He would also have heard about the fate of Urijah, who had prophesied "in accord with all the words of Jeremiah" but who was killed by King Jehoiakim. Still, Baruch was willing to use his professional skills and his connections with government officials to support Jeremiah in this assignment.—Jeremiah 26:1-9, 20-24.

Do Not Seek "Great Things"

During the writing of the first roll, Baruch went through a period of distress. He exclaimed: "Woe, now, to me, for Jehovah has added grief to my pain! I have grown weary because of my sighing, and no resting-place have I found." What was the reason for this crisis?—Jeremiah 45:1-3.

No direct answer is given. But try to picture Baruch's situation. Summarizing 23 years of warnings to the people of Israel and Judah must have made their apostasy and rejection of Jehovah very evident. Jehovah's decision to destroy Jerusalem and Judah and exile the nation for 70 years to Babylon—information that Jehovah revealed that same year and perhaps included in the roll—must have shocked Baruch. (Jeremiah 25:1-11) Moreover, there was the risk that his firm support for Jeremiah at this crucial time could cost him his position and career.

Whatever the case, Jehovah himself intervened to help Baruch keep in mind the forthcoming judgment. "What I have built up I

am tearing down, and what I have planted I am uprooting, even all the land itself," said Jehovah. Then he counseled Baruch: "But as for you, you keep seeking great things for yourself. Do not keep on seeking."—Jeremiah 45:4, 5.

Jehovah did not specify what these "great things" were, but Baruch must have known whether they were selfish ambitions, prominence, or material prosperity. Jehovah counseled him to be realistic and remember what lay ahead: "Here I am bringing in a calamity upon all flesh, . . . and I will give you your soul as a spoil in all the places to which you may go." Baruch's most precious possession, his life, would be preserved wherever he might go.—Jeremiah 45:5.

After these events described in Jeremiah chapters 36 and 45, which took place from 625 to 624 B.C.E., the Bible is silent about Baruch until some months before the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and Judah in 607 B.C.E. What happened then?

Baruch Supports Jeremiah Again

During the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, Baruch reappears in the Bible account. Jeremiah was "under restraint in the Courtyard of the Guard" when Jehovah told him to buy his cousin's tract of land at Anathoth as a sign that there would be a restoration. Baruch was called upon to help with the legal proceedings.—Jeremiah 32:1, 2, 6, 7.

Jeremiah explained: "I wrote in a deed and affixed the seal and took witnesses as I went weighing the money in the scales. After that I took the deed of purchase, the one sealed . . . and the one left open; and I then gave the deed of purchase to Baruch." He then commanded Baruch to seal these deeds of purchase in an earthenware vessel for safe-keeping. Some scholars believe that when Jeremiah said that he "wrote" the deed, he would have dictated it to Baruch, the professional scribe, who would do the actual writing.—Jeremiah 32:10-14; 36:4, 17, 18; 45:1.



Baruch and Jeremiah followed the legal practices of the time. One feature was the double deed. The book *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* explains: "The first deed was called the 'sealed deed' because it was rolled up and sealed with a bulla or bullae; it contained the original version of the contract. . . . The second, 'open deed' was a copy of the sealed, binding version, and was intended for normal perusal. Thus, there were two texts, an original and a duplicate copy, written on two separate sheets of papyrus." Archaeological discoveries testify to the custom of storing the documents in a clay vessel.

At length, the Babylonians captured Jerusalem, burned it, and took all except a few poor people into exile. Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah as governor. He was murdered two months later. The remaining Jews planned to move to Egypt, against the inspired advice of Jeremiah, and it is in this context that Baruch is again mentioned. —Jeremiah 39:2, 8; 40:5; 41:1, 2; 42:13-17.

The Jewish leaders told Jeremiah: "It is a falsehood that you are speaking. Jehovah our God has not sent you, saying, 'Do not enter into Egypt to reside there as aliens.' But Baruch the son of Neriah is instigating you against us for the purpose of giving us into the hand of the Chaldeans, to put us to death or to take us into exile in Babylon." (Jeremiah 43:2, 3) The accusation seems to reveal a belief among the Jewish leaders that Baruch exerted considerable influence over Jeremiah. Did they believe that because of Baruch's position or his long-standing friendship with Jeremiah, he was acting as more than a mere scribe for the prophet? Perhaps, but whatever the Jewish leaders thought, the message *did* come from Jehovah.

Despite divine warnings, the remaining Jews departed and took "Jeremiah the prophet and Baruch the son of Neriah" with them. Jeremiah recorded: "They finally came into

the land of Egypt, for they did not obey the voice of Jehovah; and they came gradually as far as Tahpanhes," a frontier city in the eastern Nile delta, bordering Sinai. At that, Baruch disappears from the Bible account.—Jeremiah 43:5-7.

What Can We Learn From Baruch?

There are many valuable lessons we can learn from Baruch. One outstanding lesson is his willingness to use in Jehovah's service his professional skills and contacts, regardless of the consequences. Many of Jehovah's Witnesses today—men and women—show the same spirit, offering their skills in connection with Bethel service, construction work, and the like. How can you show this Baruchlike spirit?

When Baruch was reminded that during the last days of Judah, there was no time for personal "great things," he evidently responded in a positive way, for he did receive his soul as a spoil. It is reasonable to apply this counsel to ourselves, as we too live in the last days of a system of things. Jehovah's promise to us is the same—our life will be spared. Can we respond to such reminders as Baruch did?

There is also a practical lesson to be learned from this story. Baruch helped Jeremiah and his cousin to go through the necessary legal procedures in their business dealing, *even though* the two men were relatives. This serves as a Scriptural precedent for Christians who have business dealings with their spiritual brothers and sisters. It is Scriptural, practical, and loving to follow this example of putting business agreements in writing.

Although Baruch appears only briefly in the Bible, he is worthy of note by all Christians today. Will you imitate the fine example of this faithful secretary of Jeremiah?

JOB—A MAN OF ENDURANCE AND INTEGRITY

*"Have you set your heart upon my servant Job,
that there is no one like him in the earth, a man blameless and upright,
fearing God and turning aside from bad?"—JOB 1:8.*

THERE was a man who seemed to have everything—wealth, prestige, good health, and a happy family life. Then tragedy struck three times in quick succession. Overnight, he lost his wealth. Next, a freak storm took the lives of all his children. Soon thereafter, he contracted a debilitating disease that left his whole body covered with painful boils. You probably recognize that the man was Job, a key figure in the Bible book bearing his name.—Job, chapters 1 and 2.

² "O that I were as in the lunar months of long ago," he groaned. (Job 3:3; 29:2) When calamity strikes, who does not long for the former days? In Job's case, he had lived a good life, seemingly sheltered from misfortune. Prominent people respected him and sought his counsel. (Job 29:5-11) He was wealthy, but he kept money in its proper place. (Job 31:24, 25, 28) When he encountered widows or orphans in need, he helped them. (Job 29:12-16) And he remained faithful to his wife.—Job 31:1, 9, 11.

³ Job led a blameless life because he worshipped God. "There is no one like him in the earth," Jehovah said, "a man blameless and upright, fearing God and turning aside from bad." (Job 1:1, 8) But despite Job's moral integrity, tragedies ripped apart his com-

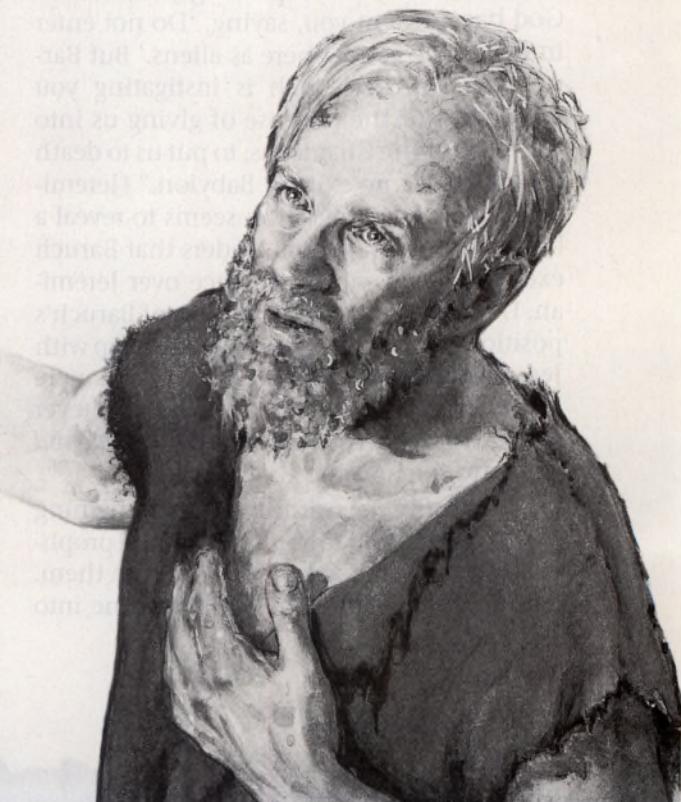
1, 2. (a) What unexpected tragedies did Job experience? (b) Describe Job's life before the tragedies struck.

3. How did Jehovah view Job?

fortable lifestyle. All he had worked for disappeared, and his true mettle was tested by pain, anguish, and frustration.

⁴ Of course, Job is by no means the only servant of God to have suffered a personal catastrophe. Many Christians today can easily relate to his experience. For this reason, two questions are well worth considering: How can remembering Job's ordeal help us when we face tragedy? And how can it teach us to be more empathetic toward others who suffer?

4. Why will it be helpful to consider Job's ordeal?



An Issue of Loyalty and a Test of Integrity

⁵ Job's case was exceptional. Unbeknownst to Job, the Devil had questioned Job's motives for serving God. When during a heavenly gathering Jehovah drew attention to Job's fine qualities, Satan replied: "Have not you yourself put up a hedge about him and about his house and about everything that he has all around?" Satan thus claimed that selfishness motivated Job—and by inference all other servants of God. "Thrust out your hand, please, and touch everything he has and see whether he will not curse you to your very face," Satan said to Jehovah.—Job 1:8-11.

⁶ The issue was an important one. Satan challenged the way Jehovah exercises his sovereignty. Is it really possible for God to rule the universe by love? Or, as Satan implied, will selfishness always triumph in the end? Jehovah allowed the Devil to involve Job as a test case, confident in the integrity and loyalty of His servant. Thus, Satan himself brought on the calamities that befell Job in rapid succession. When Satan failed in his initial attacks, he afflicted Job with a painful disease. "Skin in behalf of skin, and everything that a man has he will give in behalf of his soul," the Devil alleged.—Job 2:4.

⁷ While most Christians today do not suffer to the extent that Job did, tribulations of different kinds do afflict them. Many face persecution or family problems. Economic hardship or ill health can be devastating. Some have sacrificed their lives for their faith. Of course, we must not assume that Satan personally causes each tragedy that we suffer. Actually, some problems could even

5. According to Satan, why was Job serving God?
6. What important issue did Satan raise?
7. In what ways are God's servants today subject to trials similar to those of Job?

be caused by our own mistakes or by an inherited physical condition. (Galatians 6:7) And all of us are subject to the ravages of old age and natural disasters. The Bible makes clear that at the present time, Jehovah does not miraculously shield his servants from these afflictions.—Ecclesiastes 9:11.

⁸ Nevertheless, Satan may use the tribulations we suffer to undermine our faith. The apostle Paul mentioned being afflicted by "a thorn in the flesh, an angel of Satan," that kept "slapping" him. (2 Corinthians 12:7) Whether this was a physical problem, such as poor eyesight, or something else, Paul understood that Satan could use the problem and resulting frustration to sap Paul of his joy and integrity. (Proverbs 24:10) Today, Satan may incite family members, schoolmates, or even dictatorial governments to persecute God's servants in some way.

⁹ How can we face these problems successfully? By viewing them as an opportunity to demonstrate that our love for Jehovah and our submission to his sovereignty are not fickle. (James 1:2-4) Whatever the cause of our distress, understanding the importance of loyalty to God will help us to maintain our spiritual balance. The apostle Peter wrote to Christians: "Beloved ones, do not be puzzled at the burning among you, which is happening to you for a trial, as though a strange thing were befalling you." (1 Peter 4:12) And Paul explained: "All those desiring to live with godly devotion in association with Christ Jesus will also be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12) Satan still challenges the integrity of the Witnesses of Jehovah, as he did in the case of Job. In fact, the Bible indicates that Satan has increased

8. How may Satan seek to use the tribulations we suffer?
9. Why should adversity or persecution not unduly surprise us?

his attacks on God's people during these last days.—Revelation 12:9, 17.

A Misunderstanding and Some Bad Advice

¹⁰ Job suffered a disadvantage, one that we need not experience. He did not know why these calamities had come upon him. Job mistakenly concluded that in some way "Jehovah himself [had] given, and Jehovah himself [had] taken away." (Job 1:21) Possibly, Satan deliberately sought to give Job the impression that it was God who had caused his affliction.

¹¹ Job became profoundly discouraged, although he refused to curse God, as his wife urged him to do. (Job 2:9, 10) 'The wicked seem to fare much better than I do,' he said. (Job 21:7-9) 'Why is God punishing me?' he must have wondered. There were times when he just wanted to die. "O that in Sheol you would conceal me, that you would keep me secret until your anger turns back!" he exclaimed.—Job 14:13.

¹² Job had three companions who visited him, as if to "sympathize with him and comfort him." (Job 2:11) Nevertheless, they proved to be "troublesome comforters." (Job 16:2) Job might have benefited from friends to whom he could unburden himself about his problems, but these three added to Job's confusion and intensified his feelings of frustration.—Job 19:2; 26:2.

¹³ Understandably, Job might have asked himself: 'Why me? What have I done to deserve all this calamity?' His companions offered explanations that were totally misleading. They assumed that Job had brought his suffering upon himself by committing some serious sin. "Who that is innocent has

ever perished?" asked Eliphaz. "According to what I have seen, those devising what is hurtful and those sowing trouble will themselves reap it."—Job 4:7, 8.

¹⁴ Granted, problems may arise if we sow according to the flesh rather than the spirit. (Galatians 6:7, 8) Yet, in this present system, trouble can arise regardless of our conduct. Furthermore, in no way can it be said that the innocent are spared all calamity. Jesus Christ, who was "undefiled, separated from the sinners," suffered a painful death on a torture stake, and the apostle James suffered a martyr's death. (Hebrews 7:26; Acts 12:1, 2) The faulty reasoning of Eliphaz and his two companions moved Job to defend his good name and insist on his innocence. Still, their stubborn allegations that Job's suffering was deserved may have influenced his view of God's justice.—Job 34:5; 35:2.

Finding Help When Faced With Tribulation

¹⁵ Is there a lesson here for us? Tragedies, illness, or persecution may seem so unfair. Other people appear to escape many of such problems. (Psalm 73:3-12) At times, we may have to ask ourselves these fundamental questions: 'Does my love for God move me to serve him come what may? Do I long to give Jehovah "a reply to the one who is taunting Him?"' (Proverbs 27:11; Matthew 22:37) We must never allow the thoughtless comments of others to make us doubt our heavenly Father. One faithful Christian who suffered from a chronic illness for many years once said: "I know that whatever Jehovah permits, it will be all right. I know he will give me the needed strength. He always has."

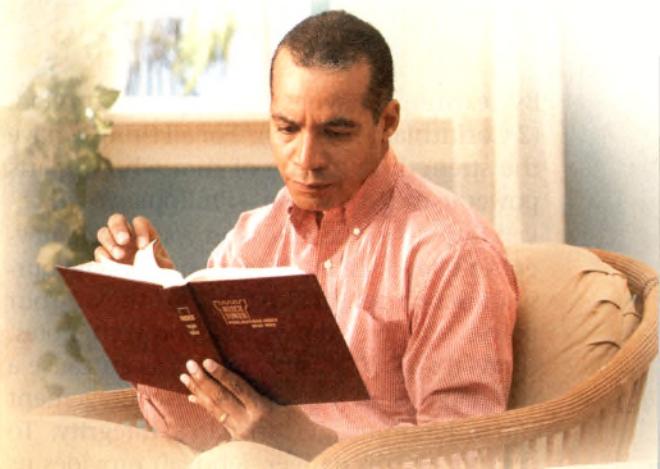
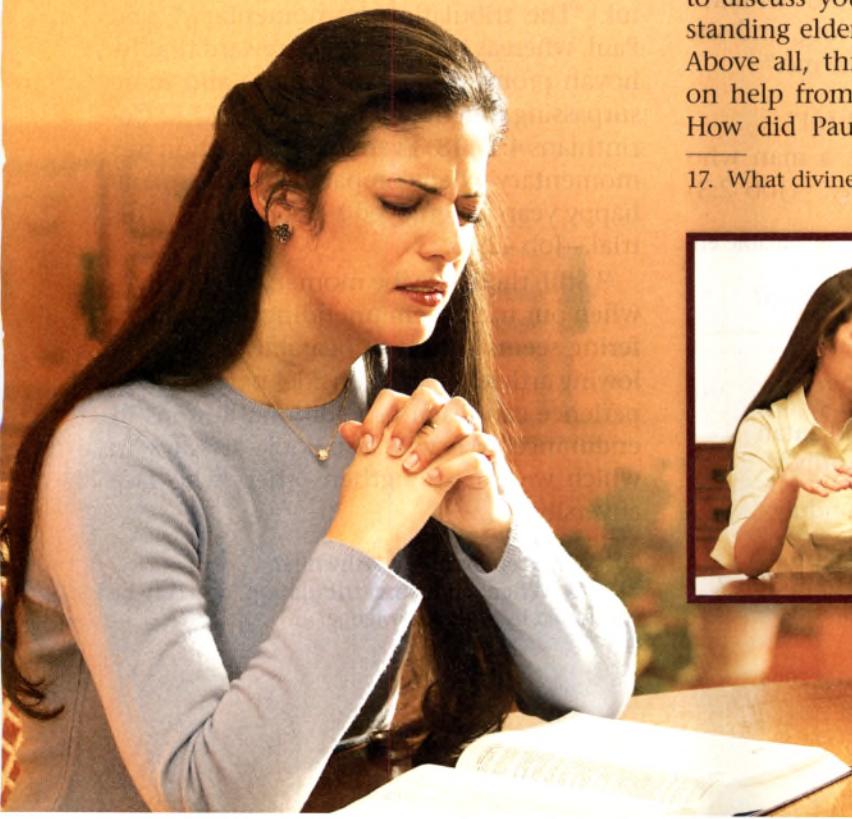
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10. What disadvantage did Job suffer?
 11. Explain Job's reaction to his calamities.
 - 12, 13. How did the comments of Job's three companions affect him?

14. Why should we not automatically equate suffering with improper conduct?
15. What reasoning will help us in the face of suffering?

¹⁶ With regard to Satan's tactics, we have an understanding that Job did not have. "We are not ignorant of his designs," or evil schemes. (2 Corinthians 2:11) Furthermore, we have a wealth of practical wisdom on which to draw. In the Bible, we find accounts of faithful men and women who endured all manner of hardships. The apostle Paul, who suffered more than most, wrote: "All the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction, that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) One Witness in Europe who was imprisoned for his faith during the second world war exchanged three days' rations for a Bible. "How rewarding that exchange proved to be!" he says.

16. How does God's Word provide help to those facing hardships?

Doing research, talking with mature Christians, and pouring out our heart in prayer can help us to endure



"Despite my physical hunger, I received the spiritual food that helped sustain me as well as others in our trials during those troublous times. I have kept that Bible to this day."

¹⁷ Besides the comfort from the Scriptures, we have many Bible study aids that offer sound guidance for coping with problems. If you consult the *Watch Tower Publications Index*, you will likely find an experience of a fellow Christian who has had a trial similar to your own. (1 Peter 5:9) It may also be helpful to discuss your circumstances with understanding elders or other mature Christians. Above all, through prayer, you can count on help from Jehovah and his holy spirit. How did Paul resist the 'slaps' of Satan?

17. What divine provisions can help us to endure?



By learning to rely on the power of God. (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10) “For all things I have the strength by virtue of him who imparts power to me,” he wrote.—Philippians 4:13.

¹⁸ So help is available, and you should never hesitate to seek it. “Have you shown yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty,” the proverb notes. (Proverbs 24:10) Just as termites can cause a wooden house to topple, discouragement can undermine a Christian’s integrity. To counteract this danger, Jehovah provides us with support through our fellow servants of God. An angel appeared to Jesus and strengthened him on the night he was arrested. (Luke 22:43) While journeying toward Rome as a prisoner, Paul “thanked God and took courage” when he met the brothers at the Marketplace of Appius and Three Taverns. (Acts 28:15) A German Witness still remembers the help she received upon her arrival at Ravensbrück concentration camp as an apprehensive teenager. “A fellow Christian found me right away and gave me a hearty welcome,” she recalls. “Another faithful sister took me under her wing, and she became like a spiritual mother to me.”

“Prove Yourself Faithful”

¹⁹ Jehovah described Job as a man who was “holding fast his integrity.” (Job 2:3)

18. How can fellow Christians offer invaluable encouragement?

19. What helped Job to resist Satan’s efforts?

How Would You Answer?

- What fundamental issue did Satan raise concerning Job’s integrity?
- Why should adversity not unduly surprise us?
- How does Jehovah help us to endure?

Despite feeling discouraged and not understanding why he suffered, Job never wavered on the vital issue of loyalty. Job refused to deny everything for which he had lived. He insisted: “Until I expire I shall not take away my integrity from myself!”—Job 27:5.

²⁰ Similar determination will help us to maintain our integrity under any circumstances—in the face of temptations, opposition, or adversity. “Do not be afraid of the things you are about to suffer,” Jesus told the congregation in Smyrna. “Look! The Devil will keep on throwing some of you into prison that you may be fully put to the test, and that you may have tribulation [trouble, distress, or oppression] ten days. Prove yourself faithful even to death, and I will give you the crown of life.”—Revelation 2:10.

²¹ In this system ruled by Satan, our endurance and integrity will be put to the test. Nevertheless, Jesus assures us that as we look to the future, we have no reason to fear. The important thing is to prove ourselves faithful. “The tribulation is momentary,” said Paul, whereas the “glory,” or reward that Jehovah promises us, “is of more and more surpassing weight and is everlasting.” (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18) Even Job’s tribulation was momentary when compared with the many happy years he enjoyed before and after his trial.—Job 42:16.

²² Still, there may be moments in our lives when our trials seem unending and our suffering seems almost unbearable. In the following article, we will consider how Job’s experience can teach us additional lessons in endurance. We will also look at ways in which we can strengthen others who face adversity.

20. Why is endurance worthwhile?

21, 22. When enduring tribulation, we can be comforted by what knowledge?

"YOU HAVE HEARD OF THE ENDURANCE OF JOB"

"You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful."—JAMES 5:11.

HARALD ABT had been one of Jehovah's Witnesses for less than a year when Hitler's army took control of Danzig (now Gdańsk) in northern Poland. Then things became difficult, yes dangerous, for true Christians there. The Gestapo tried to force Harald to sign a document renouncing his faith, but he refused. After some weeks in prison, Harald was sent to Sachsenhausen concentration camp, where time and again

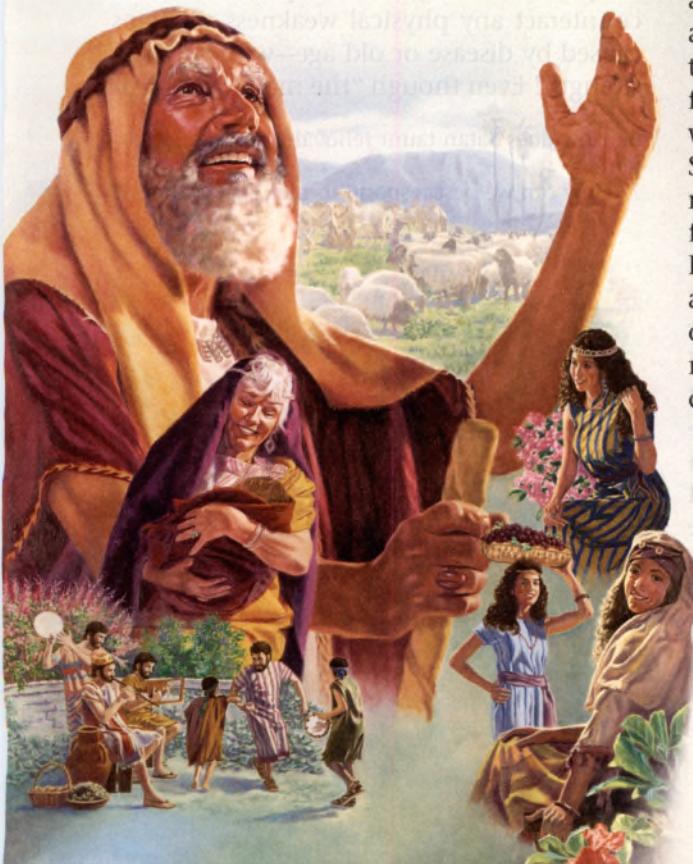
1, 2. What trial did one couple in Poland face?

he was threatened and beaten. An officer pointed to the chimney of the crematorium and told Harald, "You will be ascending there to your Jehovah within 14 days if you stick to your faith."

² When Harald was arrested, his wife, Elsa, was still breast-feeding their ten-month-old baby girl. But the Gestapo did not overlook Elsa. Before long, her baby was taken from her, and she was sent to the extermination camp at Auschwitz. Yet, she was able to survive for years, as was Harald. In *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1980, you can read more about how they endured. Harald wrote: "In all, I have spent 14 years of my life in concentration camps and prisons because of my faith in God. I have been asked: 'Was your wife a help to you in enduring all of this?' She has been indeed! I knew from the beginning that she would never compromise her faith, and this knowledge helped sustain me. I knew that she would rather see me dead on a stretcher than know that I was free because of having compromised. . . . Elsa endured many hardships during her years in German concentration camps."

³ Suffering evil is by no means easy, as many Witnesses can testify. For this reason, the Bible counsels all Christians: "Take as a pattern of the suffering of evil and the exercising of patience the prophets, who

3, 4. (a) Whose examples can encourage Christians to endure? (b) Why does the Bible urge us to examine Job's experience?



spoke in the name of Jehovah." (James 5:10) Over the centuries, many servants of God were persecuted without cause. The examples provided by this great "cloud of witnesses" can encourage us to keep running with endurance our Christian race.—Hebrews 11:32-38; 12:1.

⁴ In the Bible record, Job stands out as a model of endurance. "Look! We pronounce happy those who have endured," wrote James. "You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome Jehovah gave, that Jehovah is very tender in affection and merciful." (James 5:11) Job's experience gives us a glimpse of the reward that awaits faithful ones, whom Jehovah blesses. More important, it reveals truths that will benefit us during times of adversity. The book of Job helps us answer these questions: When under trial, why must we try to understand the principal issues involved? What qualities and attitudes help us to endure? How can we fortify fellow Christians who suffer affliction?

Grasping the Complete Picture

⁵ To maintain spiritual balance in the face of adversity, we need to comprehend the overall picture. Otherwise, personal problems may cloud our spiritual vision. The issue of loyalty to God is of prime importance. Our heavenly Father makes an appeal that we can personally take to heart: "Be wise, my son, and make my heart rejoice, that I may make a reply to him that is taunting me." (Proverbs 27:11) What a unique privilege that is! Despite our frailties and imperfections, we can make our Creator rejoice. We do so when our love for Jehovah enables us to withstand trials and temptations. True Christian love endures all things. It never fails.—1 Corinthians 13:7, 8.

5. What is the principal issue to keep in mind when we are faced with trials or temptations?

⁶ The book of Job clearly identifies Satan as the one who taunts Jehovah. It also reveals the evil nature of this invisible enemy and his desire to destroy our relationship with God. As illustrated in Job's case, Satan essentially accuses all of Jehovah's servants of selfish motives and seeks to prove that their love for God can cool off. He has taunted God for thousands of years. When Satan was cast out of heaven, a voice from heaven described him as "the accuser of our brothers" and said that he makes such accusations "day and night before our God." (Revelation 12:10) By our faithful endurance, we can show that his accusations are unfounded.

⁷ We must remember that the Devil will take advantage of any tribulation we may face in order to try to distance us from Jehovah. When did he tempt Jesus? It was when Jesus was hungry after fasting for many days. (Luke 4:1-3) Jesus' spiritual strength, however, enabled him to reject the Devil's temptations firmly. How important it is to counteract any physical weakness—perhaps caused by disease or old age—with spiritual strength! Even though "the man we are out-

6. How does Satan taunt Jehovah, and to what extent?

7. How can we best respond to physical weakness?



side is wasting away," we do not give up because "the man we are inside is being renewed from day to day."—2 Corinthians 4:16.

⁸ In addition, negative emotions can tend to damage one spiritually. 'Why does Jehovah allow this?' one might wonder. 'How can a brother treat me like that?' another might ask after being treated unkindly. Such feelings may cause us to overlook the principal issues and concentrate entirely on personal circumstances. Job's frustration with his three misguided companions seemed to do as much damage to him emotionally as his infirmity did physically. (Job 16:20; 19:2) Similarly, the apostle Paul indicated that prolonged anger can "allow place [or, an opportunity] for the Devil." (Ephesians 4:26, 27) Rather than venting frustration or anger on individuals or concentrating overmuch on the injustice of a situation, Christians do better to imitate Jesus in "committing [themselves] to the one who judges righteously," Jehovah God. (1 Peter 2:21-23) Having the "mental disposition" of Jesus can be a major defense against Satan's attacks.—1 Peter 4:1.

⁹ Above all, we must never see our problems as certain evidence of God's displeasure. Such a misunderstanding hurt Job at a time when he was being assailed by the harsh words of his would-be comforters. (Job 19:21, 22) The Bible assures us with these words: "With evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." (James 1:13) On the contrary, Jehovah promises to help us bear whatever burden falls upon us and to provide escape from any temptation that besets us. (Psalm 55:22; 1 Corinthians 10:13) By drawing close to God in times of distress, we can keep things in perspective and successfully oppose the Devil.—James 4:7, 8.

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8. (a) How can negative emotions have an undermining effect? (b) What attitude did Jesus have?
 9. What assurance does God give us regarding burdens we have to bear or temptations we face?

Aids to Endurance

¹⁰ Despite Job's dire situation—including the verbal abuse from his "comforters" and his own confusion over the true cause of his calamity—Job still kept his integrity. What can we learn from his endurance? Without doubt, the fundamental reason for his success was his faithfulness to Jehovah. 'He feared God and turned aside from bad.' (Job 1:1) That was his way of life. Job refused to turn his back on Jehovah, even when he did not understand why things had suddenly gone wrong. Job believed that he should serve God in good times and in bad.—Job 1:21; 2:10.

¹¹ Having a good conscience also proved comforting to Job. At a time when it seemed that his life was coming to an end, he had the comfort of knowing that he had done his best to help others, that he had held to Jehovah's righteous standards, and that he had avoided any form of false worship.—Job 31:4-11.

¹² The fact remains, of course, that Job needed help to adjust his viewpoint in some respects. And he humbly accepted that help—another key to his enduring successfully. Job listened respectfully to Elihu's wise counsel, and he responded positively to Jehovah's correction. "I talked, but I was not understanding," he admitted. "I make a retraction, and I do repent in dust and ashes." (Job 42:3, 6) Despite the disease that still plagued him, Job rejoiced that this adjustment in his thinking had drawn him closer to God. "I have come to know that you [Jehovah] are able to do all things," Job said. (Job 42:2) Thanks to Jehovah's description of His grandeur, Job understood much more clearly his own position in relation to the Creator.

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- 10, 11. (a) What helped Job to endure? (b) How did having a good conscience help Job?
 12. How did Job respond to the help that he received from Elihu?

¹³ Finally, Job provides an outstanding example of mercy. His false comforters hurt him deeply, yet when Jehovah asked Job to pray for them, he did so. Thereafter, Jehovah restored Job's health. (Job 42:8, 10) Clearly, bitterness will not help us to endure, whereas love and mercy will. Letting go of resentment refreshes us spiritually, and it is a course that Jehovah blesses.—Mark 11:25.

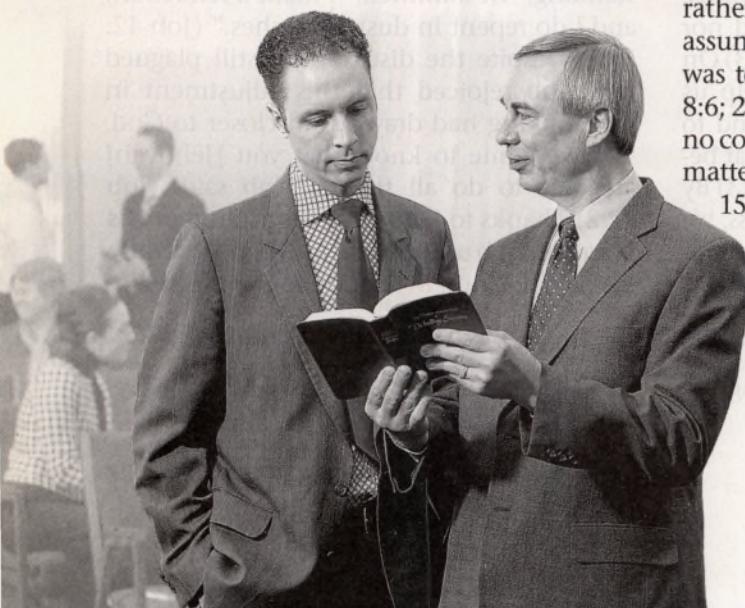
Wise Counselors Who Help Us Endure

¹⁴ A further lesson we can learn from Job's account is the value of wise counselors. Such ones are brothers "born for when there is distress." (Proverbs 17:17) However, as Job's experience shows, some counselors can hurt rather than heal. A good counselor needs to show empathy, respect, and kindness, as Elihu did. Elders and other mature Christians may have to adjust the thinking of brothers weighed down with problems, and in this,

13. How did showing mercy prove beneficial for Job?

14, 15. (a) What qualities will enable a counselor to heal others? (b) Explain why Elihu was successful in helping Job.

A good counselor shows empathy, respect, and kindness



such counselors can learn much from the book of Job.—Galatians 6:1; Hebrews 12:12, 13.

¹⁵ There are many fine lessons in how Elihu handled the matter. He listened at length before responding to the mistaken remarks of Job's three companions. (Job 32:11; Proverbs 18:13) Elihu used Job's name and appealed to him as a friend. (Job 33:1) Unlike the three false comforters, Elihu did not consider himself superior to Job. "From the clay I was shaped, I too," he said. He did not want to add to Job's suffering by thoughtless words. (Job 33:6, 7; Proverbs 12:18) Rather than criticizing Job's former conduct, Elihu commended him for his righteousness. (Job 33:32) Most important, Elihu saw things from God's viewpoint, and he helped Job to focus on the fact that Jehovah would never act unjustly. (Job 34:10-12) He encouraged Job to wait on Jehovah, rather than to strive to demonstrate his own righteousness. (Job 35:2; 37:14, 23) Christian elders and others can surely benefit from such lessons.

¹⁶ Elihu's wise counsel contrasts with the hurtful words of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. "You men have not spoken concerning me what is truthful," Jehovah told them. (Job 42:7) Even if they claimed that they had had good intentions, they acted as tools of Satan rather than as faithful companions. All three assumed from the outset that Job himself was to blame for his calamities. (Job 4:7, 8; 8:6; 20:22, 29) According to Eliphaz, God has no confidence in his servants, and it does not matter to Him if we are righteous or not. (Job

15:15; 22:2, 3) Eliphaz even accused Job of errors he had not committed. (Job 22:5, 9) Elihu, on the other hand, did help Job spiritually, which is always the goal of a loving counselor.

16. How did Job's three false comforters become tools of Satan?



Elsa and Harald Abt



¹⁷ There is another lesson about endurance that we can draw from the book of Job. Our loving God observes our situation and is both willing and able to help us in various ways. We previously noted the experience of Elsa Abt. Reflect on the conclusion that she reached: "Before I was arrested, I had read a sister's letter that said that under severe trial Jehovah's spirit causes a calmness to come over you. I thought that she must have been exaggerating a bit. But when I went through trials myself, I knew that what she had said was true. It really happens that way. It's hard to imagine it, if you have not experienced it. Yet it really happened to me. Jehovah helps." Elsa was not speaking about what Jehovah could do or did do millenniums ago in Job's day. She was speaking about our time. Yes, "Jehovah helps"!

Happy Is the Man Who Endures

¹⁸ Few of us will have to face tribulation as severe as that of Job. But whatever trials this system of things may bring upon us, we have sound reasons for maintaining our integrity, as Job did. In fact, endurance enriched Job's life. It perfected him, making him complete. (James 1:2-4) It strengthened his relationship with God. "In hearsay I have heard

17. What should we bear in mind when under trial?
18. What benefits did Job derive from having endurance?

about you, but now my own eye does see you," Job affirmed. (Job 42:5) Satan was proved a liar in that he could not break Job's integrity. Hundreds of years later, Jehovah still referred to his servant Job as an example of righteousness. (Ezekiel 14:14) His record of integrity and endurance motivates God's people even today.

¹⁹ When James wrote to first-century Christians about endurance, he referred to the satisfaction that endurance brings. And he used Job's example to remind them that Jehovah richly rewards his faithful servants. (James 5:11) We read at Job 42:12: "As for Jehovah, he blessed the end of Job afterward more than his beginning." God gave Job double what he had lost, and he lived a long, happy life. (Job 42:16, 17) Similarly, any pain, suffering, or heartache we may endure during the end of this system of things will be wiped away and forgotten in God's new world. (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:4) We have heard of the endurance of Job, and we are determined, with Jehovah's help, to imitate Job's example. The Bible promises: "Happy is the man that keeps on enduring trial, because on becoming approved he will receive the crown of life, which Jehovah promised to those who continue loving him."—James 1:12.

19. Why do you feel that endurance is worthwhile?

How Would You Answer?

- How can we make Jehovah's heart rejoice?
- Why should we not conclude that our problems are evidence of God's displeasure?
- What factors helped Job to endure?
- How can we imitate Elihu in fortifying fellow believers?

Do You Remember?

Have you appreciated reading the recent issues of *The Watchtower*?

Well, see if you can answer the following questions:

- **How will Jesus “deliver the poor one,” as Psalm 72:12 foretold?**

During his reign, there will be justice for all, with no corruption. War often brings poverty, but Christ will bring perfect peace. He feels for people and will unite all, and he will see that there is ample food for mankind. (Psalm 72:4-16)—5/1, page 7.

- **How can we as Christians manifest our “freeness of speech”? (1 Timothy 3:13; Philemon 8; Hebrews 4:16)**

We can do so by zealously preaching to others with boldness, by teaching and giving counsel promptly and effectively, and by pouring out our hearts to God in prayer, confident that he will hear and respond.—5/15, pages 14-16.

- **Under the Law, why did certain natural sexual functions make a person “unclean”?**

The laws concerning uncleanness ascribed to seminal emissions, menstruation, and childbirth fostered good hygiene and a healthy lifestyle, stressed the sanctity of blood, and showed the need for atonement for sins.—6/1, page 31.

- **If a person wants to be happy, why would it be good for him to consider the book of Psalms?**

The composers of the Psalms knew that happiness results from having a good relationship with God. (Psalm 112:1) They stressed that no human relationship, no possession, and no accomplishment can

bring the happiness that comes from belonging to “the people whose God is Jehovah.” (Psalm 144:15)—6/15, page 12.

- **What special relationship with Jehovah did the ancient Israelites have?**

In 1513 B.C.E., Jehovah brought the Israelites into a new relationship with him, into a covenant. (Exodus 19:5, 6; 24:7) Thereafter, Israelites were born as members of God’s chosen nation dedicated to him. Still, each individual had to make a personal decision to serve God.—7/1, pages 21-2.

- **Why should we do all things “free from murmurings”? (Philippians 2:14)**

Many Scriptural examples show that murmuring caused damage among God’s people. We do well to think seriously about the corrosive influence it could have today. Imperfect humans have a tendency to complain, and we should be on guard to detect any sign of this and avoid it.—7/15, pages 16-17.

- **How do we know that the wisdom described at Proverbs 8:22-31 is not wisdom in the abstract?**

That wisdom was “produced,” or created, as the beginning of Jehovah’s way. God has always existed and been wise; his wisdom was not created. The wisdom of Proverbs 8:22-31 was beside God as “a master worker,” which applies to the spirit creature who became Jesus and who worked closely with God in creation. (Colossians 1:17; Revelation 3:14)—8/1, page 31.

Questions From Readers

After the final test at the end of the Millennium, will it be possible for humans to sin and die?

Two scriptures found in Revelation bear on this: "Death and Hades were hurled into the lake of fire. This means the second death, the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:14) "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."—Revelation 21:4.

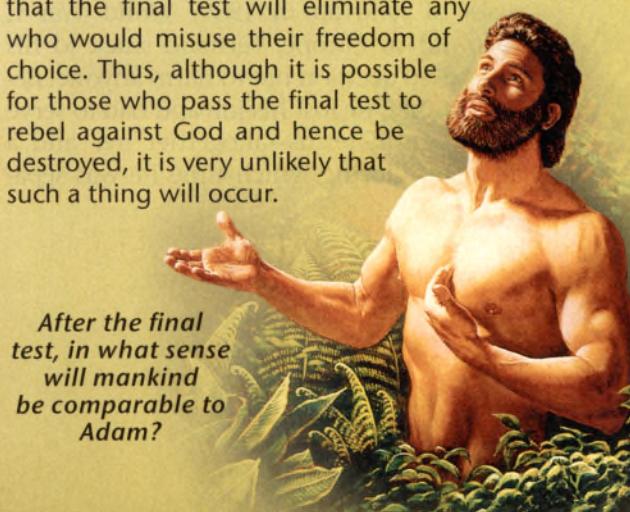
Note the timing involved here. The hurling of "death and Hades" into the lake of fire takes place after the Armageddon survivors, the resurrected dead, and any born after Armageddon have been judged out of the "things written in the scrolls," or Jehovah's detailed requirements for mankind during the thousand years. (Revelation 20:12, 13) The apostle John records another vision, found in Revelation chapter 21, which will be fulfilled during the Millennial Reign of Christ Jesus. The complete fulfillment of that vision, however, awaits the end of the thousand-year Judgment Day. Jehovah will then reside with mankind in the fullest sense without any intercessors, Jesus having handed the Kingdom over to his Father. Jehovah will reside spiritually with "his peoples" in a permanent and direct way. "Death will be no more" in the complete sense when mankind will have gained perfection as a result of having the merit of Christ's ransom sacrifice applied to the full.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Thus, the death mentioned in the scriptures quoted above is the Adamic death, which will be nullified by Christ's ransom. (Romans 5:12-21) With death that mankind inherited from the first man canceled, humans will be just like Adam when he was

created. Adam was perfect, but that did not mean that there was no possibility of his dying. Jehovah told Adam not to eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and bad" and said: "In the day you eat from it you will positively die." (Genesis 2:17) That was death from deliberate sin. After the final test at the end of the Thousand Year Reign, humans will still be free moral agents. (Revelation 20:7-10) They will still be able to choose of their own free will whether to continue serving Jehovah or not. It cannot be said that no human will ever turn his back on God, as Adam did.

What would happen to the one who chose to rebel after the final test when there is no death or Hades? At that time, Adamic death is no more. And Hades, the common grave of mankind with the hope of resurrection, is no more. Still, Jehovah can annihilate any rebel in the lake of fire, denying him any hope of a resurrection. That death would be like the death that Adam and Eve experienced, not the death that humans inherited from Adam.

However, we have no reason to expect any such outcome. Those who pass the final test will differ from Adam in one crucial sense. They will have been fully tested. We can be confident of the thoroughness of the final test because Jehovah knows how to examine people inside and out. We can rest assured that the final test will eliminate any who would misuse their freedom of choice. Thus, although it is possible for those who pass the final test to rebel against God and hence be destroyed, it is very unlikely that such a thing will occur.



After the final test, in what sense will mankind be comparable to Adam?



AGED but Not Caged

rated from his wife and little daughter.

Looking back, Fernand said: "To many people, it seemed that I gave up a stable job and left my family in

the lurch. People despised me and treated me like a criminal. Still, when I think of those difficult years, I remember more than anything else how Jehovah supported and helped us. Many years have passed since then, but my trust in Jehovah is still as firm as it was at that time."

This faith impelled Fernand to share his Scriptural hope with others over the phone. If he had a good conversation with someone, he mailed Bible literature to that person. Later, he called the individual again to see if he or she had enjoyed the publication. Sometimes people would respond with a letter of appreciation, which made him very happy.

You may be contacted by someone like Fernand in your locality. Why not listen to what he has to say in order to find out what he believes? Jehovah's Witnesses are always happy to share their beliefs with you.

WHEN age takes its toll, many become disabled, isolated from others in society. That was not the case with Fernand Rivarol, who died at the age of 95 in Geneva, Switzerland. He lived alone, for his wife had passed away and his married daughter had her own home. Although he was mostly confined to his home, he was not lonesome. He would often sit at a table in the living room, with the telephone receiver in his hand, and call people to engage them in a spiritual conversation.

During his eventful life, there was a time when Fernand was literally caged. Why? Just as Fernand and his wife became active Witnesses of Jehovah in 1939, World War II broke out in Europe. Fernand stuck to his Bible-based decision not to harm anyone. Because of that, he lost his job and had to serve several prison terms—altogether five and a half years—during which time he was sepa-