

# Awake!

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## Is Religion a Force for Peace?



# **Awake!**

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# Is Religion a Force for Peace?

**A**CCLAIMED by some as the holiest church in Christendom, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem has also become a symbol of religious strife and hostility. According to tradition, the church marks the place “where Christ is supposed to have been buried and to have risen from the dead.” However, this revered site has also been the stage for many violent confrontations. Monks and priests from six different “Christian” denominations have attacked one another over issues of church-usage rights. The rivalry has intensified in recent years. Riot police armed with assault rifles have had to intervene and take temporary control of the church.

## A History of Violence

The events at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre are part of a long history of bloodshed and carnage linked to religious fervor. In a review of recent conflicts in different parts of the world, the book *Violence in God’s Name* says: “From Indonesia to Northern Ireland, the Middle East to Kashmir, India to Nigeria, the Balkans to Sri Lanka, Christians, Buddhists, Jews, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs justify the use of violence on the grounds that they are protecting their religious identity and interests.”

Yet, most religions embrace peace and harmony as central tenets. Through the ages, altruistic principles such as love of neighbor and the sanctity of human life have been ardently promoted by religion. Should not religion, then, exercise its formidable powers in behalf of peace? Sincere worshippers do well to examine this question.



# Is Religion to Blame?

**E**ARLY 18th-century cleric and author Jonathan Swift wrote: “We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one-another.” Many have argued that religion is in fact a force for division rather than unity. But not everyone agrees.

For example, consider the conclusion that was reached by a group of researchers at the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University in the United Kingdom. The group was commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation to provide a sound answer to the question of whether religion is a force for peace or for war.

In a published report, the researchers said: “After reviewing historical analyses by a diverse array of specialists, we concluded that there have been few genuinely religious wars in the last 100 years.” The investigative team explained that some wars “often painted in the media and other places as wars over religion, or wars arising from religious differences, have in fact been wars of nationalism, liberation of territory or self-defense.”

However, many others argue that the clergy, by their actions or by their silence, have condoned and actively supported many

armed conflicts, as indicated by the following quotes:

● “Religion seems to be connected with violence virtually everywhere. . . . In recent years, religious violence has erupted among right-wing Christians in the United States, angry Muslims and Jews in the Middle East, quarrelling Hindus and Muslims in South Asia, and indigenous religious communities in Africa and Indonesia. . . . The individuals involved in these cases have relied on religion to provide political identities and give license to vengeful ideologies.”—*Terror in the Mind of God—The Global Rise of Religious Violence*.

● “Ironically, nations with fervent religion often have the worst social evils. . . . The saturation of religion has failed to prevent the severe crime level. . . . The evidence seems clear: To find living conditions that are safe, decent, orderly, and ‘civilized,’ avoid places with intense religion.”—*Holy Hatred*.

● “Baptists are much better known for fighting than for peacemaking. . . . When the [American] slavery issue and other developments divided the denominations and then the nation in the nineteenth century, Baptists North and South supported the war effort as a righteous crusade and assumed that

## Awake!®

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God was on their side. Baptists also identified with the national effort in wars with England (1812), Mexico (1845), and Spain (1898), justifying the last two ‘mainly on the grounds of bringing religious liberty to oppressed peoples and opening new areas for mission work.’ The point is not that Baptists desired war rather than peace, but that, for the most part, when war became a reality Baptists supported and participated in the effort.”—*Review and Expositor—A Baptist Theological Journal*.

● “Religious motivation to combat has been located by historians in most eras and among virtually all the world’s diverse peoples and cultures, and usually on both sides in any given war. The hoary cry that ‘the gods are on our side’ was among the earliest and most potent of incitements to battle.”—*The Age of Wars of Religion, 1000-1650—An Encyclopedia of Global Warfare and Civilization*.

● “Religious leaders . . . need to reflect more critically on their own failure to provide more effective leadership and witness to the true fundamental values of their respective faiths. . . . It is true that all religions aspire to peace but it is questionable whether religion has ever fulfilled that role.”—*Violence in God’s Name—Religion in an Age of Conflict*.

Throughout history, the clergy of all the major religions of Christendom (Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant) have provided an endless supply of priests and chaplains to raise the morale of the troops and pray for the dead and dying—on both sides of any conflict. By this support they have condoned the bloodshed and given their blessing to all the military forces.

Some might still argue that religion cannot be blamed for warfare. But the question is, Has religion succeeded in any of its efforts to unite mankind?

**“The Rev. Dr. Charles A. Eaton, pastor of Madison Avenue Baptist Church, announced from his pulpit yesterday that the parish house of the church was to be turned into a recruiting station for men desiring to enlist in either the army or navy.**

**“He was one of a dozen clergymen in the city who preached war sermons at their regular Sunday morning services, and who urged the men and women to attest their loyalty to the nation and democracy by offering their services in the war at the earliest opportunity. Flags decorated many churches.”—“The New York Times,” April 16, 1917.**

**Languages:** Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional)<sup>+</sup> (audio Mandarin only), Chitonga, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,<sup>+</sup> Danish,<sup>+</sup> Dutch,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> English,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,<sup>+</sup> French,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Georgian, German,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Greek, Gujarati, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hungarian, Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Japanese,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Kannada, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Korean,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Myanmar, Norwegian,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Polish,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Portuguese,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Punjabi, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Silozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish,<sup>+</sup><sup>o</sup> Swahili, Swedish,<sup>+</sup> Tagalog, Tamil, Thai, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Vietnamese, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

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# The Problem With Religion



**T**O SAY that religion is the principal cause of all conflict implies that there would be few wars if religion did not exist. Is that argument feasible? Could we eliminate war by merely eliminating religion? However you answer, one fact is undeniable: Religion has not united mankind. Consider some of the reasons why this is true.

## Divided by Religion

The human family is divided by religion, with several major religious powers locked in perpetual rivalry. Is there any reason to believe that Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, and Muslims will ever exist together peacefully?

Another sad reality is the fragmentation that exists within each of those principal religious blocks. For instance, according to one estimate, Christendom is broken up into more than 30,000 denominations. Islam is also divided by conflicting beliefs. According to a Middle East news agency, a Muslim scholar, Mohsen Hojjat, recently acknowledged that "disunity among Muslims is the root cause of problems in the Islamic world." Other influential religions, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism, are likewise fractured into many conflicting sects.

## Religion in Politics

Religion seems to influence nearly every aspect of secular life. The news magazine *The Economist* observes that "religious people are getting more vocal in all sorts of fields, including business. Religion is also cropping up in economics." This results in dividing people rather than uniting them. But a more damaging influence has to do with the

long-standing history of religion meddling in politics.

In a recent report referred to in the preceding article, a group of historians noted that "religion is more likely to be a cause of war when religion and the state authorities become closely allied or intertwined." And therein lies another undeniable reality: Religion has been, and is to this day, tightly interlocked with political and military entities.

## An Explosive Mix

In many lands, predominant religions have become symbols of patriotic and racial identities. As a result, the lines between nationalistic hatred, racial prejudice, ethnic rivalry, and religious enmity are virtually indistinguishable. This explosive cocktail has the necessary ingredients to tear our world apart.

The perplexing paradox in all of this is that much of religion claims to represent the God of the Bible, the Creator. Does it make any sense that an almighty, all-wise, loving Creator would have anything to do with divisive and bloodguilty religions?



*Thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses have been imprisoned for choosing the course of neutrality*

# Will Religion Ever Be a Force for Peace?



**L**E'TS make the world a better place. Let's get rid of religion." That is what Dutch philosopher Floris van den Berg recommends in his published lecture entitled "How to Get Rid of Religion, and Why." Around the world experts in various fields of knowledge are likewise promoting the abolition of religion.

"The world needs to wake up from its long nightmare of religious belief," declares Nobel laureate and physicist Steven Weinberg. The idea that the evils of this world could be greatly minimized by eliminating religion has been loudly articulated in recent years. Books against religion proliferate and are quite popular.

Leading scientists have gathered to discuss what they consider to be the urgent need to eradicate religion. An emerging wave of atheists is flooding the media with their unapologetic hatred of religion. Are these well-respected thinkers on the right track?

## True Religion?

If all religions were false and there was no God, then it might seem reasonable to eliminate religion. But what if there is a God? What if there is a group of people on earth who rightfully represent God—a true religion?

A careful study of the history of religion points to one form of worship that stands out as very different from all other religions. It is a form of worship practiced by relatively few people today. This religion was established by Jesus Christ and his apostles. But it is not represented by what Christendom has practiced for many centuries.

How do Christendom and the true religion established by Jesus Christ differ? In many ways. Let us consider one of them.

## No Part of This World

The first Christians did not take sides in political issues. This is in harmony with the neutral stand that Jesus himself took. The Bible reports that on at least two occasions, Jesus firmly refused offers to become a political ruler. (Matthew 4:8-10; John 6:15) Jesus even rebuked his disciples for wanting to use violent means to prevent his arrest.—Matthew 26:51, 52; Luke 22:49-51; John 18:10, 11.

When the Roman governor of Judea asked specific questions about Jesus' alleged political ambitions, Jesus set the record straight by saying: "My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from this source." (John 18:36) Clearly, Jesus would not get involved with the political and military structures of his day.

Jesus' disciples followed the same pattern. A study on the role of religion in war compiled by the team of researchers referred to earlier in this series explains: "Early Christians believed in nonviolence. . . . Most Christians refused to join the army and fight." The teachings of Jesus and his apostles emphasized love of neighbor, including strangers and those of different ethnic backgrounds and races. (Acts 10:34, 35; James 3:17) This religion was indeed a force for peace.

Eventually the original concepts of Christianity became contaminated by the divisive



**Jehovah's  
Witnesses  
are united  
by love**

forces of philosophy, tradition, and nationalism. The previously mentioned historical review of the role religion plays in armed conflicts states: “[Roman Emperor] Constantine’s conversion led to the militarization of the Christian movement—no longer guided by the compassionate teachings of Christ, but rather spearheaded by the Emperor’s goals of political and geographical conquest. Christians, including the Emperor were compelled to find religious justifications for war.” A counterfeit version of Christianity was born.

#### **A “Distinctive” Group**

Is original Christianity lost forever? By no means. There is one group today that deserves special consideration. Jehovah’s Witnesses emulate the first Christians like no other religious people. They are not linked to any religion in Christendom. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* describes them as “distinctive,” because they base all their beliefs on “the authority of the Bible, which entirely supplants tradition.”

Like the first Christians, Jehovah’s Witnesses do not take sides in political conflicts. A paper published by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine states that Jehovah’s Witnesses aim to overcome “racial, national, religious, social, and economical differences.” The study explains that Jehovah’s Witnesses do not engage in “anti-state

activity” and are “law-abiding citizens of their country.”

Professor Wojciech Modzelewski, from the Warsaw University in Poland, wrote in his book *Pacifism and Vicinity*: “Jehovah’s Witnesses make up the largest community in the world today that objects to wars.” Because they closely follow the pattern of first-century Christians, it could be said that Jehovah’s Witnesses have successfully reinstated the form of worship that was established by Christ and his apostles. That is the kind of Christianity that is indeed a force for peace. —See the box on the next page.

#### **A Bright Future**

Granted, many sincere worshippers—and even a number of religious leaders—are appalled by the hypocrisy of their own religions. Due acknowledgment must be given to the many religious people who are devoted to the promotion of peace and harmony in the world.

Still, as sincere as they may be, humans are limited in their power to fix the world’s problems. The ancient prophet Jeremiah wrote: “To earthling man his way does not belong. It does not belong to man who is walking even to direct his step.”—Jeremiah 10:23.

But there is a bright future. God’s Word teaches that a peaceful new human society will be established on earth. This new society will be a veritable brotherhood. All races will live

in harmony, and mankind will not be divided by territorial borders, ethnic hatreds, or religious ideologies. The one uniting element will be the pure worship of Jehovah God.

The Bible also foretells the demise of religion that dishonors God. Jesus said: “Every kingdom divided against itself comes to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand.” (Matthew 12:25) In time, God will make sure that those words come true regarding all false religion.

The Bible long ago foretold that God would “certainly render judgment among the nations and set matters straight.” This prophecy also says that people will “beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning shears. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither will they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:4) This prophecy is undergoing fulfillment today. True religion, as practiced by Jehovah’s Witnesses, is already a force for peace.

## How Are Jehovah’s Witnesses Different?

Many people are amazed when they learn how different Jehovah’s Witnesses are from all the other religions that claim to follow Christ. The following are some of the things that make Jehovah’s Witnesses unique:

### STRUCTURE

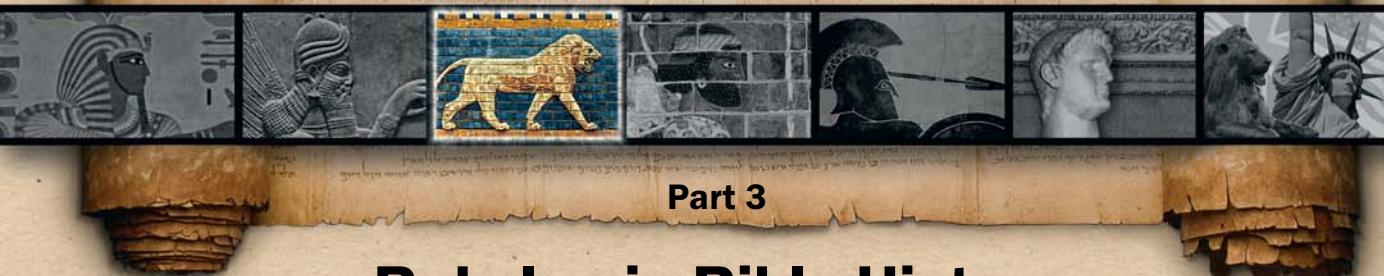
- They have no clergy class.
- Their elders, teachers, and missionaries are unsalaried.
- They neither tithe nor take up money collections at their places of worship, known as Kingdom Halls.
- All their activities are supported by anonymous donations.
- They remain neutral with regard to politics.
- They advocate peace and do not participate in warfare.
- They are globally united in their faith and Bible-based beliefs.
- They are fully integrated, with no social, ethnic, racial, or class divisions.
- They are not affiliated with any other religion, whether Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant.

### DOCTRINE

- They believe that there is only one true God, whose name is Jehovah.
- They do not believe that Jesus Christ is Almighty God, nor do they believe in the Trinity doctrine.
- They follow the teachings of Jesus and honor him as the Son of God.
- They do not venerate the cross, nor do they use idols in their worship.
- They do not believe in a fiery hell where all bad people go after death.
- They believe that God will bless obedient mankind with perfect everlasting life in an earthly paradise.

Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that they have successfully reestablished first-century Christianity, the form of Christianity that Jesus’ apostles practiced.

A BOOK YOU CAN TRUST



## Part 3

# Babylon in Bible History

*This is the third in a series of seven articles in consecutive issues of “Awake!” that discuss the seven world powers of Bible history. The objective is to show that the Bible is trustworthy and inspired of God and that its message is one of hope for an end to the suffering caused by man’s cruel domination of his fellow man.*

SITUATED on a fertile plain some 50 miles (80 km) south of modern-day Baghdad, the ancient city of Babylon was truly magnificent. With massive double walls and a surrounding moat, Babylon seemed impregnable. The city was renowned for its majestic temples, hanging gardens, and temple towers. As one of the greatest cities of the ancient world, Babylon has recently been dubbed the city of wonders.

In the Bible, it was named “Mistress of Kingdoms” and was the capital of the third

world power of Bible history. (Isaiah 47:5) Like the Egyptian and the Assyrian empires before it, the Babylonian Empire played a prominent role in Bible history, enabling us to compare what the Bible says about it with what secular sources say.

### Trustworthy History

The Bible book of Daniel tells us that a man by the name of Belshazzar once ruled as king in Babylon. (Daniel 5:1) However, some secular sources have stated in the past that

Time line: Egyptian wall relief and bust of Nero: Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum; Persian wall relief: Musée du Louvre, Paris;

**Artist's rendition of the ancient city of Babylon**



Belshazzar, though powerful, was never king. Was the Bible wrong? Archaeologists have uncovered a number of clay cylinders in the ruins of Ur in Mesopotamia. The cuneiform inscription on one cylinder included a prayer by Babylonian King Nabonidus for “Bel-sar-ussur, my eldest son.” Later findings confirmed that Belshazzar had “acted as regent for more than half his father’s reign,” states the *New Bible Dictionary*, “during which time he was to all intents and purposes king.”

History also shows that ancient Babylon was an extremely religious city, rife with astrology and divination. For example, at Ezekiel 21:21, we read that the king of Babylon resorted to divination in order to determine whether to attack Jerusalem. The king “looked into the liver,” the Bible says. Why the liver? The Babylonians used this organ in quest of omens. The book *Mesopotamian Astrology* tells us that at just one site



**Clay cylinder containing the name Belshazzar**

### Trustworthy Prophecy

How would you respond if someone told you that a major capital—such as Beijing, Moscow, or Washington, D.C.—would become an uninhabited ruin? You would rightly be skeptical. Yet, that is what happened with ancient Babylon. Some 200 years in advance, about the year 732 B.C.E., Jehovah God inspired the Hebrew prophet Isaiah to put in writing a prophecy about the demise of mighty Babylon. He wrote: “Babylon, the decoration of kingdoms, . . . must become as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. She will never be inhabited, nor will she reside for generation after generation.”—Isaiah 13:19, 20.

But why would God foretell Babylon’s destruction? In 607 B.C.E., Babylonian armies destroyed Jerusalem and took the survivors off to Babylon, where they were treated cruelly. (Psalm 137:8, 9) God foretold that his people would have to endure this bitter treatment for 70 years because of their own wicked deeds. Then God would deliver them and let them return to their homeland.—Jeremiah 25:11; 29:10.

True to God’s prophetic Word, in 539 B.C.E.—just as Judah’s 70-year exile was about to end—the seemingly invincible city of Babylon was overthrown by Medo-Persian

**“I have excavated for thirty years . . . , and in matters of historical perspective I have never found the Bible to be in error.”**

—Nelson Glueck

in ancient Babylon, archaeologists found “32 [clay] liver models, all inscribed” with omens.

Noted archaeologist Nelson Glueck once said: “I have excavated for thirty years with a Bible in one hand and a trowel in the other, and in matters of historical perspective I have never found the Bible to be in error.”

armies. In time, the city became a heap of ruins—just as predicted. No human could foretell such a striking achievement. Without a doubt, the act of prophesying, or foretelling events in advance, sets the Author of the Bible—the true God, Jehovah—apart from any other god.—Isaiah 46:9, 10.

### A Hope You Can Trust

Yet another prophecy is having a remarkable fulfillment in our day. The prophecy involves King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and a dream that he had about an immense image. The body was divided into five parts—the head, the breasts and arms, the belly

and thighs, the legs, and the feet—each one with a different metal composition. (Daniel 2:31-33) These metal parts stood for a succession of governments, or kingdoms, that started with Babylon and continues down to the Anglo-American World Power, the seventh of Bible history.—Daniel 2:36-41.

Daniel discloses that in the feet and toes of the image, there was a noteworthy change of materials. How so? Pure metal was replaced with a mixture of iron and moist clay. By way of explanation, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar: “Whereas you beheld iron mixed with moist clay, they will come to be mixed with the offspring of mankind; but

## FORETOLD BY NAME

One of the most remarkable prophecies regarding the downfall of Babylon involved its conqueror, King Cyrus of Persia. Nearly two centuries before Cyrus rose to power, Jehovah God mentioned him by name and foretold that he would be the one to conquer Babylon.

Pointing forward to Cyrus' conquest, Isaiah was inspired to write: “This is what Jehovah has said to his anointed one, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have taken hold of, to subdue before him nations, . . . to open before him the two-leaved doors, so that even the gates will not be shut.” God also foretold that the Euphrates River would, in effect, dry up.—Isaiah 45:1-3; Jeremiah 50:38.

Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon confirm the fulfillment of this amazing prophecy. They reveal that Cyrus diverted the Euphrates River, causing its waters to recede. Cyrus' armies thus gained access to the city through its gates, which had been left open. As foretold, mighty Babylon fell “suddenly,” in one night.—Jeremiah 51:8.

## BABYLON THE GREAT

The Bible book of Revelation mentions a symbolic harlot named “Babylon the Great.” (Revelation 17:5) What does this harlot represent? The evidence points to its being a religious entity.

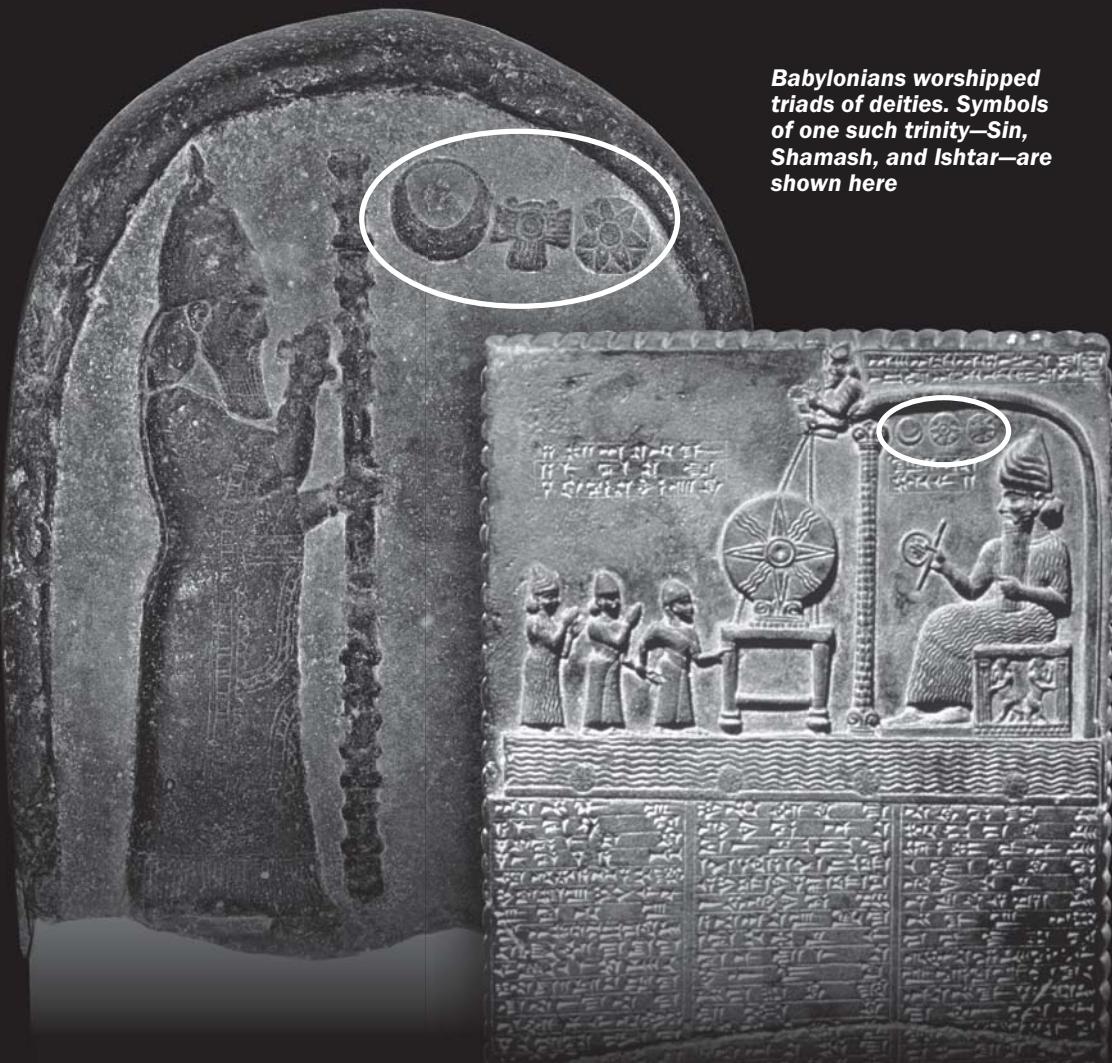
Ancient Babylon was an extremely religious city, having over 50 temples dedicated to various deities. The Babylonians believed in trinities of gods and an immortal soul that at death would descend to a dark nether-world. There, “human existence beyond the grave is at best only a dismal, wretched reflection of life on earth,” says *Funk & Wagnalls New Encyclopedia*.

In time, those teachings spread throughout the world. Today they, or modified versions of them, can be found in the religions of Christendom. Together, these religions make up a major part of the global religious entity Babylon the Great!

they will not prove to be sticking together, this one to that one, just as iron is not mixing with molded clay." (Daniel 2:43) Yes, mixing iron and clay results in a fragile union; there is no "sticking together." How accurately this describes the politically divided world in which we live today!

Daniel also reveals another significant development. In his dream, King Nebuchadnezzar saw a stone that was cut out of a large mountain. This stone was lifted up, and "it struck the image on its feet of iron and of molded clay and crushed them." (Daniel 2:34) What does that mean? Daniel himself answers: "In the days of those kings [dur-

ing the time of the final world power] 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) That prophecy pointed forward to a Kingdom unlike any other government known to mankind. Its King is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. As mentioned in previous articles of this series, Jesus will crush Satan and all his followers, human and spirit, thus bringing about universal peace and harmony.—1 Corinthians 15:25.



**Babylonians worshipped triads of deities. Symbols of one such trinity—Sin, Shamash, and Ishtar—are shown here**

Both images: Photograph taken by courtesy of the British Museum

## Too Few Germs?

"Our research suggests that ultra-clean, ultra-hygienic environments early in life may contribute to higher levels of inflammation as an adult, which in turn increases risks for a wide range of diseases," states Thomas McDade, associate professor at Northwestern University, Illinois, U.S.A. In a study that compared Filipino children with their American counterparts, it was found that, overall, the Filipinos suffered many more infectious diseases as youngsters. Yet, contrary to expectations, young Filipino adults had much lower blood levels of C-reactive protein, the concentration of which rises in response to inflammation. The conclusion? Greater childhood exposure to common bacteria may actually protect adults from deadly illnesses.

## Lost Work Ethic

Many Finnish employers are perplexed by a new generation of job applicants who do not seem to have a clue about the social skills necessary to hold a job. "The recruits tend to interpret work hours freely and think that they can clock in and out whenever they please," says Anne Mikkola, a restaurateur, in an interview made by a Finnish national

**The average number of people served by each doctor in Tanzania is 64,000.**

—THE CITIZEN, TANZANIA.

**'There are at least 1 billion poor people living with chronic under-nourishment,** and the United Nations Millennium Development Goal of substantially reducing the number of the world's hungry by 2015 will not be met.'—SCIENCE, U.S.A.

**"The world's 100 largest arms-producing companies" registered \$385 billion in sales in 2008,** an increase of \$39 billion over 2007.—STOCKHOLM INTERNATIONAL PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE, SWEDEN.

service broadcasting company. Codes of conduct and dress also present difficulties. Especially in the service sector, employers often have to point out which types of attire are not appropriate. That the line between work and private life has blurred is also seen when recruits' friends drop in at the workplace just to visit.

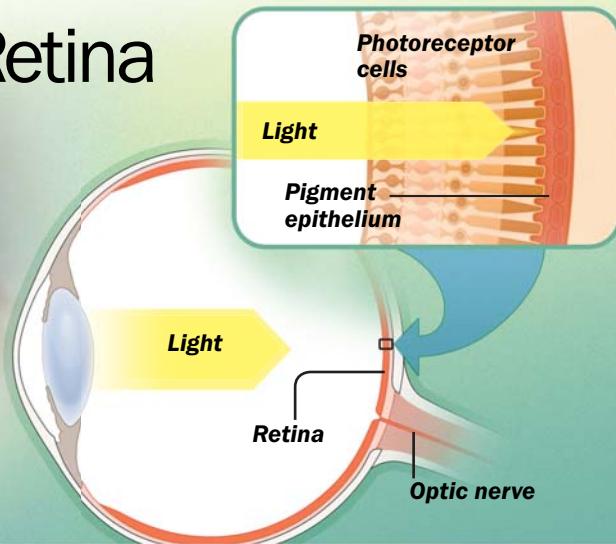
## Territorial Dispute "Resolved"

A long-standing territorial dispute between Bangladesh and India over a small island in the Bay of Bengal has been resolved—by a rise in sea level. The uninhabited territory, known to the Indians as New Moore Island and to the Bangladeshis as South Talpatti Island, never extended more than six feet (1.9 m) above sea level. However, satellite images show that the sea has recently submerged it. "What these two countries could not achieve from years of talking has been resolved by global warming," says Professor Sugata Hazra, of Calcutta's Jadavpur University School of Oceanographic Studies.



## WAS IT DESIGNED?

# The Inverted Retina



● The human eye contains a retina—a membrane with approximately 120 million cells called photoreceptors, which absorb light rays and convert them into electric signals. Your brain interprets these signals as visual images. Evolutionists have contended that where the retina is placed in the eyes of vertebrates, creatures with a backbone, proves that the eye had no designer.

**Consider:** The retina of vertebrates is inverted, placing the photoreceptors at the back of the retina. To reach them, light must pass through several layers of cells. According to evolutionary biologist Kenneth Miller, “this arrangement scatters the light, making our vision less detailed than it might be.”

Evolutionists thus claim that the inverted retina is evidence of poor design—really, *no design*. One scientist even described it as a “functionally stupid upside-down orientation.” However, further research reveals that the photoreceptors of the invert-

ed retina are ideally placed next to the pigment epithelium—a cell layer that provides oxygen and nutrients vital to keen sight. “If the pigment epithelium tissue were placed *in front* of the retina, sight would be seriously compromised,” wrote biologist Jerry Bergman and ophthalmologist Joseph Calkins.

The inverted retina is especially advantageous for vertebrates with small eyes. Says professor Ronald Kröger, of the University of Lund, Sweden: “Between the lens of the eye and the photoreceptors, there must be a certain distance to get a sharp image. Having this space filled with nerve cells means an important saving of space for the vertebrates.”

Additionally, with the nerve cells of the retina tightly packed and close to the photoreceptors, analysis of visual information is fast and reliable.

**What do you think?** Is the inverted retina an inferior structure, a product of mere chance? Or was it designed?



# The Amazing Process of Childbirth

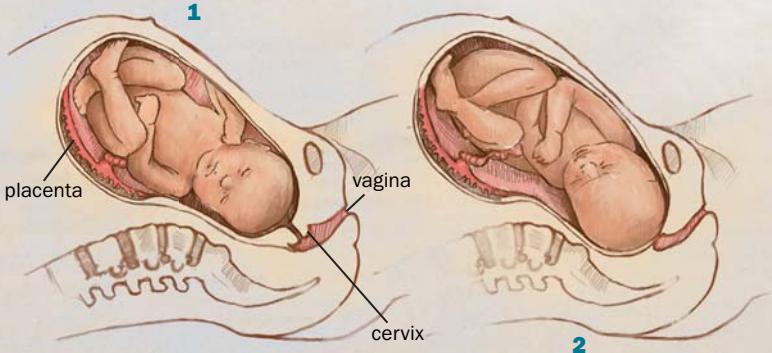
THE nine-month wait is finally over, and the baby so longed for is about to be born.\* The expectant mother's cervix has remained firmly shut, keeping the fetus safely in the womb. But now her cervix thins, softens, and relaxes. The miracle of birth begins.

What is behind the marvelous process of childbirth? Of the several factors involved, two are especially amazing. First, oxytocin, a hormone produced in the brain, is released. Both men and women produce this substance, but a great quantity of it is released in the pregnant mother when labor begins, causing the cervix to dilate and the uterus to contract.

\* Gestation usually lasts between 37 and 42 weeks.

## Childbirth Process

- 1** Fetal position before labor
- 2** Movement of fetus toward the birth canal
- 3** Dilation of the cervix
- 4** Expulsion of fetus



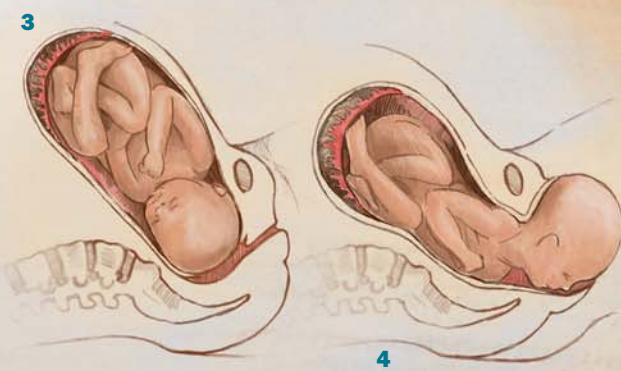
Just how the pituitary gland of the expectant mother knows when to begin releasing this hormone is a mystery. The book *Incredible Voyage—Exploring the Human Body* states: “Somehow her brain senses that gestation is complete and that it is time for the powerful uterine muscles . . . to take on their brief but heroic job.”

A second factor involved in this process is the role of the placenta, which stops producing progesterone. During pregnancy, progesterone has prevented strong contractions. But now, without the restriction of progesterone, the uterus begins to contract. Generally after between 8 and 13 hours of labor, the baby is pushed out through the relaxed, dilated cervix. Afterward, the placenta is also expelled.

Now the newborn must quickly adapt to new conditions of life, very different from those of its maternal environment. For example, while in the uterus, the lungs of the fetus were full of amniotic fluid, which was squeezed out when the infant passed through the birth canal. Now the lungs must be filled with air to initiate breathing, the onset of which is usually indicated by the first cry. Drastic changes also occur in the heart and the rest of the circulatory system. A hole connecting the two atria of the heart and a blood vessel bypassing the pulmonary circulation close, in order to reroute the blood through

the lungs, thus enabling the blood to absorb oxygen. It is astonishing that this adaptation to the outside world happens so rapidly.

The entire process of labor and birth reminds us of the words of the Bible: “For everything there is an appointed time, even a time for every affair under the heavens.” That includes “a time for birth.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2) You will surely agree that this series of biochemical and physical events, which all occur within just a few hours, eloquently points to design on the part of our Creator, whom the Bible calls “the source of life.” —Psalm 36:9; Ecclesiastes 11:5.





# The Miniature Mansions of Istanbul

● Wooden birdhouses are seen in many parts of the world. They are ideal places for birds to feed, keep warm, make a nest, raise young, and gain protection from predators and the elements. In Istanbul, birdhouses have been designed to look like full-size structures. Some resemble mansions; others mosques or palaces.\* They are known as pigeonries, bird mansions, and even sparrow palaces.

The oldest of these birdhouses date at least as far back as the 15th century, and they incorporate Ottoman architecture. They are simple structures, but starting in the 18th century, birdhouses became grand, luxurious residences. Some had receptacles for food and water, walkways, and even balconies where the birds could, as it were, take in the view. These houses were usually positioned on the



side of the building that got the most sun and provided the best shelter from the wind—far away from the reach of cats, dogs, and people. Sometimes these features were added not just for the sake of the birds but to decorate the building as part of its overall design. Birdhouses can be seen on the sides of mosques, large and small, as well as on public drinking fountains, libraries, bridges, and private homes.

Sadly, many of those miniature mansions have deteriorated under the constant barrage of the elements, while others have been intentionally destroyed by people who did not recognize their value. Birdhouses are seen less and less. However, if you visit Istanbul and you have a taste for historical architecture, see if you can spot these delicate little structures nestled in the eaves. Now that you know what they are, noticing these miniature mansions will enrich your visit to the city.

\* Although realistic, these birdhouses are not usually modeled after specific buildings.

# In Grandfather's Time

The mechanical clock was likely invented in China over 900 years ago. Since then, improvements to clocks have been many. An outstanding improvement came in the mid-1600's, when the pendulum came into use in mechanical clocks. Thanks to that revolutionary innovation, clocks became so accurate that a new feature appeared on their faces—a minute hand! The new design—with its pendulum, weights, and relatively heavy mechanism—naturally required a sturdy, upright housing. This resulted in what became familiar to people around the world as longcase, or grandfather, clocks, described by one clock expert as "highly reliable and reasonable time-keepers even in adverse conditions."\*

At first, these prized clocks were manufactured only in big European cities, such as London and Paris. Little by little, however, their production spread to the farthest corners of the European continent. Thus, local artistic styles began to embellish the basic design. The clock's shape could be straight or curved; its structure, slender or bulky. It could be made of pine, ebony, mahogany, oak, or walnut, and its case could be plain or adorned with ornamentation. The grandfather clock therefore gained popularity not only as a superior timekeeper but also as an elegant and dignified addition to the furnishings of a room.

There may be an additional reason why people continue to find the grandfather clock fascinating and attractive. In a way, it appears human. "It is about the size of an average human being and has an expressive and meaningful face," notes Finnish researcher Dr. Sinikka

\* The name grandfather clock, as longcase clocks are called in some lands, is said to derive from a popular 1876 song entitled "My Grandfather's Clock."

Mäntylä. Its audible ticktock even resembles a heartbeat. Today, precise and inexpensive quartz-controlled clocks have replaced most of these big upright masterpieces. But even in our hurried times, the presence of a grandfather clock still inspires a measure of tranquillity. The book *Keeping Time—Collecting and Caring for Clocks* observes: "A long-case clock with its steady and unhurried tick can also somehow soothe the spirit and is redolent of what we think of as a more peaceful age."



A clock that possibly dates back to the early 1800's



# Sleep

## How Important Is It?

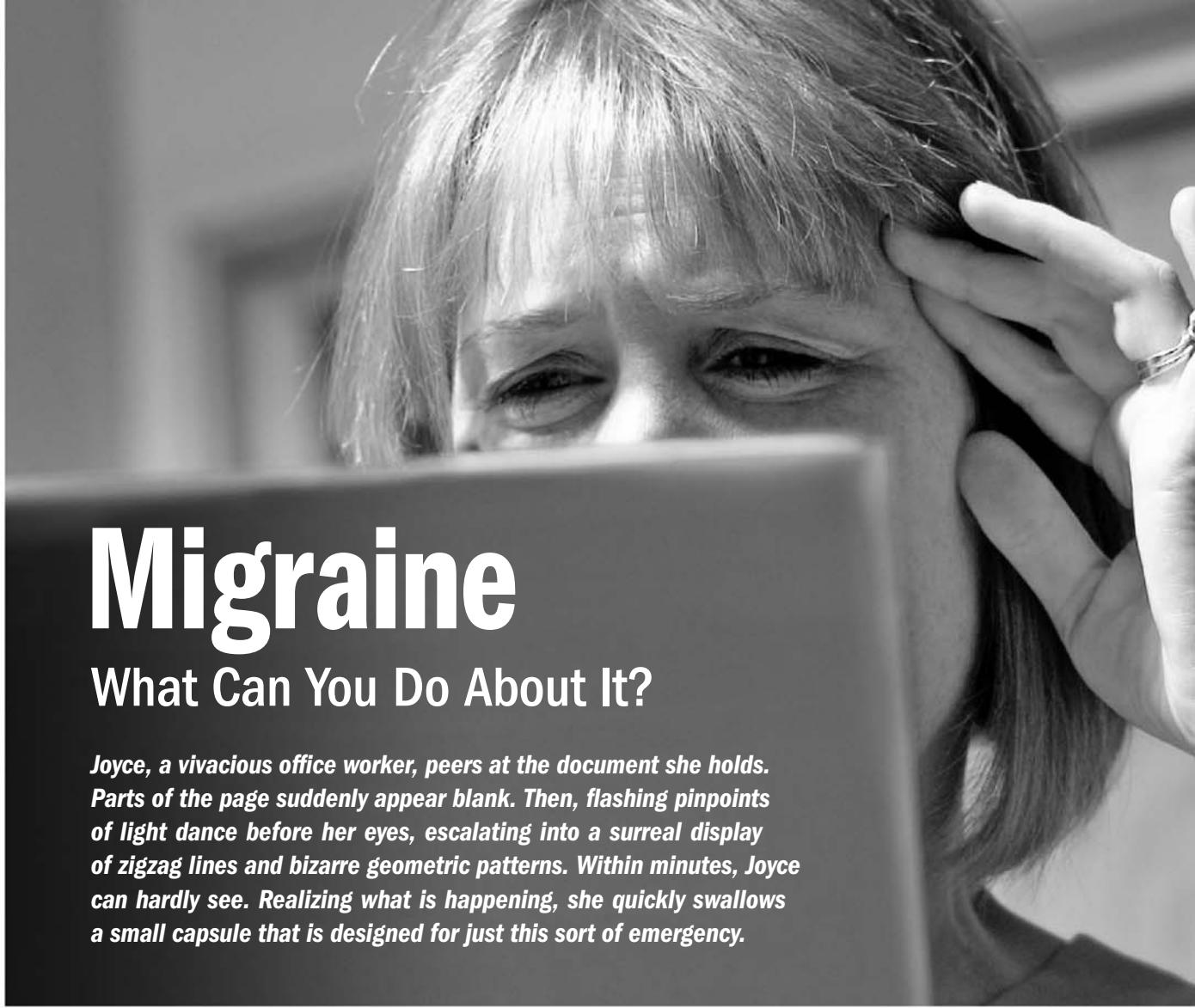
- Current studies show that the average North American now gets between seven and seven and a half hours of sleep a night.\* How important is sleep? While asleep, you go through phases of sleep called rapid eye movement every 60 to 90 minutes throughout the night. During these phases, the brain is most active, and researchers believe that it is per-

\* See "Sleep Debt—Are You a Victim?" in the February 8, 2004, issue of Awake!

forming some kind of self-repair. Some experts say that when the sleep cycle is interrupted and sleep is lost, it has a cumulative effect on the body. Brain function is affected, which results in inefficiency and a host of other physical ailments.

Substances such as caffeine can for the short term block the chemical compound that signals the need for sleep. Yet, our brain has a mechanism to cause sleep to occur when our body has not had enough, resulting in what have been called microsleeps. According to *The Toronto Star*, "no matter what you happen to be doing, your sleep-deprived brain will periodically go into the first stage of sleep for anywhere between ten seconds and just over a minute at a time." Imagine driving a car at 30 miles (48 km) an hour and experiencing a ten-second microsleep. During that time, you would have traveled more than the length of a football field. Additionally, sacrificing needed sleep can weaken your immune system, for it is during sleep that the body produces T cells that fight against pathogens. During sleep our body also produces the hormone leptin, which helps to regulate appetite. Indeed, the body needs sleep as much as it needs proper exercise and nutrition.

Is extra work robbing you of much-needed sleep? How about anxieties of life and worries about what you have stored up for the future? The wise King Solomon once observed: "Sweet is the sleep of the one serving, regardless of whether it is little or much that he eats; but the plenty belonging to the rich one is not permitting him to sleep."—Ecclesiastes 5:12.



# Migraine

## What Can You Do About It?

*Joyce, a vivacious office worker, peers at the document she holds. Parts of the page suddenly appear blank. Then, flashing pinpoints of light dance before her eyes, escalating into a surreal display of zigzag lines and bizarre geometric patterns. Within minutes, Joyce can hardly see. Realizing what is happening, she quickly swallows a small capsule that is designed for just this sort of emergency.*

**J**OYCE suffers from migraine, a condition that differs from simple headache in several ways. For example, unlike random headaches, migraines follow a recurring pattern. Also, the condition is severe enough to make the sufferer abandon normal activities.

The symptoms of migraine? The pain throbs and may affect only one side of the head. The sufferer may also become nauseated and unable to bear bright light. The attack can last anywhere from several hours to several days.

Although most people have occasional tension headaches, only 1 person in 10 suffers from migraine. More women are affected than men. Some cases are more severe than others, but most victims lose several days of work each year. Migraine causes loss of income and can adversely affect family and social life. Thus, the World Health Organization ranks it among the world's 20 leading causes of disability.

Shortly before a migraine attack, some victims have such symptoms as cold hands,

fatigue, hunger, or mood changes. Then, just before the headache starts, there may be dizziness, a buzzing sound in the ears, a pins-and-needles sensation, double vision, speech difficulty, or muscle weakness.

The causes of migraine are not completely understood, but it is thought to be a disorder of the nervous system that affects blood vessels in the head. The throbbing nature of the pain apparently corresponds to blood going through irritated vessels. The journal *Emergency Medicine* says: "Patients with migraine inherit a uniquely sensitive nervous system, which can be disrupted by numerous life events, such as sleep deprivation, strong odors, traveling, skipping meals, stress, and changes in hormone levels." People who suffer from migraines may also be susceptible to irritable bowel syndrome, anxiety attacks, and depression.

### How Can You Relieve Migraine?

You cannot change the nervous system you have inherited. But you may be able to prevent migraine attacks from being triggered. By keeping a diary, some have been able to identify certain foods or circumstances that provoke attacks.

Each person's case is different. Lorraine discovered that her migraine attacks matched her monthly cycle. "Around mid-cycle," she says, "any excess activity or stimulus—hard work, heat or cold, loud noise, even spicy food—would bring on a migraine attack. So I aim for calm and moderation during this time." Joyce, who has endured migraine attacks for more than 60 years, states, "I have found that oranges, pineapples, and red wine

immediately provoke a migraine attack, so I avoid them."

Identifying triggers is not easy because several factors usually combine to produce an attack. For example, on one occasion you may eat chocolate with no ill effect, but at another time it gives you migraine, perhaps because of an additional contributing factor.

Even if you are unable to identify or avoid things that trigger your migraine, there are other ways to reduce the possibility of an attack. Experts recommend trying to maintain a regular pattern of sleep seven days a week. If you want to sleep later on the weekend, they recommend that you get up at the usual time, do something for a few minutes, and then return to bed. A change in caffeine consumption can trigger a migraine, so try limiting yourself to two cups of coffee or two cola drinks per day. Since hunger can provoke migraine, avoid skipping meals. Stress, so often a factor in migraine, is not easy to avoid, but you may be able to find ways to relax, perhaps by adjusting your schedule, reading the Bible, or listening to soft music.

### What Treatment for Migraine?

A wide range of options are available to help treat migraine.\* For example, sleep is one of the best remedies. Nonprescription painkillers may bring sufficient relief for the sufferer to be able to sleep.

In 1993, triptans, a new class of prescription medicines, became available, specifically for treating migraine. *The Medical Journal of Australia* called this "a major advance in therapy," adding: "The advent of the triptans . . . was to migraine and cluster headache almost the equivalent of penicillin to bacterial infection!"

Migraine is not life threatening. So the cure for migraine does not save lives, as did the cure for infections. Nevertheless, triptans

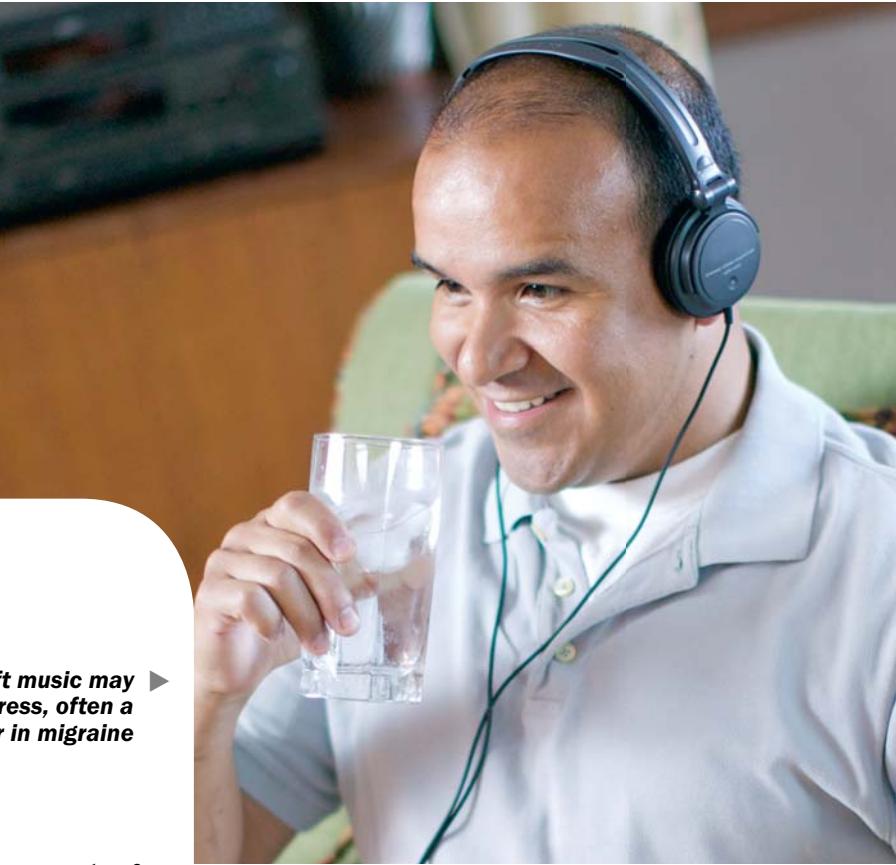
- be two fishes. **4.** 75,000. **5.** C.  
**6.** loaves of bread. **3.** Instead of two corncobs, there should be five  
food supply. **2.** Instead of five apples, there should be five  
**7.** There should be a little boy, not a girl, holding the

\* *Awake!* does not endorse any particular method of treatment. Each person should carefully evaluate his or her options before making a decision.



▲ **By keeping a diary, some have been able to identify certain foods or circumstances that provoke attacks**

**Listening to soft music may help reduce stress, often a factor in migraine**



have brought dramatic relief to some who for years were regularly disabled by migraine. Patients must still make the changes in activities mentioned earlier, but some migraineurs have called triptans miracle drugs.

Still, all medicines have advantages and disadvantages. What is the bad news about triptans? First, each triptan tablet can cost as much as a meal in a nice restaurant, so their use is generally reserved for those with moderate to severe migraine. Also, triptans do not work for everyone, and some people have a health condition that makes it inadvisable even to try them. While there is no known cure for the physical condition that migraine sufferers inherit, *Emergency Medicine* concludes: "With the availability of new and improved migraine medications, there is no reason for patients to continue to suffer."

**Migraine is an inherited, disabling disease that doctors can often treat effectively**



# Am I addicted to electronic media?



**W**HEN your parents entered their teens, TV and radio were the main forms of electronic media. Back then, phones were just phones—they only carried voice transmissions and likely were anchored to a wall. Sound hopelessly old-fashioned? A girl named Anna would say so. “My parents grew up in the technological dark ages,” she says. “They’re just now figuring out how to use some of the features on their cell phone!”

Today you can take a call, listen to music, watch a show, play a game, e-mail your friends, take a picture, and access the Internet—all on a single device you can carry in your pocket. Because you’ve grown up with computers, cell phones, TV, and the Internet, you may think nothing of using them all the time. Your parents, though, may feel that you’re addicted. If they express concern, don’t write off their comments as being out of touch with reality. “When anyone is replying to a mat-

## What do these three people have in common?

*“I love, love, love texting! I think it’s the greatest thing ever. I guess you could say that it has taken over my life.”*  
—Alan.\*

*“My mom bought a TV for my room, and I was ecstatic! Instead of going to sleep at night, though, I stayed up for hours on end watching it. I chose to watch TV rather than spend time with family and friends.”*—Teresa.

*“For a time, I couldn’t go anywhere or do anything without wondering if someone had posted something for me on my Web page. If I woke up in the middle of the night, I had to go online. Any chance I got, I updated my blog.”*—Anna.

## Which of the above three youths would you say is describing addiction to some form of electronic media?

- Alan    Teresa    Anna

\* Some names in this article have been changed.

ter before he hears it,” said wise King Solomon, “that is foolishness on his part.”—Proverbs 18:13.

Do you wonder why your parents might be concerned? Take the test that follows to see if you show signs of addiction to some form of electronic media.

## ‘Am I Addicted?’

One encyclopedia defines addiction as “habitual repetition of excessive behavior that a

person is unable or unwilling to stop, despite its harmful consequences.” In view of that definition, all three youths quoted at the outset of this article *are* or have been addicted to electronic media. What about you? Look at the breakdown of that definition below. Read the quotes, and see if you have said or done anything similar. Then fill in your answers.

**Uncontrolled behavior.** “I would spend hours playing electronic games. They robbed me of sleep and dominated my conversations with others. I isolated myself from my family and became lost in the imaginary worlds of the games I played.”—Andrew.

In your opinion, how much time each day is it reasonable to spend using electronic media? \_\_\_\_

How much time do your parents think you should spend? \_\_\_\_

What is the *total* amount of time each day that you actually spend texting, watching TV, uploading pictures and comments onto a Web site, playing electronic games, and so on? \_\_\_\_

After looking at your answers above, would you say that your use of electronic media is excessive?  Yes  No

**Unable or unwilling to stop.** “My parents see me texting all the time and tell me that I’m doing it too much. But compared to other kids my age, I hardly text at all. I mean, compared to my parents, sure, I text more than they do. But that’s like comparing apples to oranges—they’re 40 and I’m 15.”—Alan.

Have your parents or friends said that you spend too much time on some form of electronic media?  Yes  No

Have you been unwilling or unable to control your use of that form of media?  Yes  No

**Harmful consequences.** “My friends text all the time—even while driving. How unsafe is *that!*”—Julie.

“When I first got my cell phone, I was always calling someone or texting someone.

## WHAT YOUR PEERS SAY

“ My parents used to tell me, ‘We might as well glue your hands to your cell phone, the way you use it!’ At first, I found that funny, but then I realized that they were serious. Now I limit my texting, and I have never been happier! ”



Jovarny



Mariah

“ I used to feel that I had to check the Internet for messages every time it was available. I was neglecting my homework and other studies. Now that I’ve cut back, it’s like a tremendous weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Moderation is the key. ”

It was all I did. It damaged my relationship with my family and even with some of my friends. Now I notice that when I’m out with my friends and talking to them, they constantly interrupt and say: ‘Oh, hold on. I have to answer a text message.’ That’s one reason I’m not closer to those friends.”—Shirley.

Do you ever read text messages or send them while driving or during class?  Yes  No

When you are conversing with family or friends, do you constantly interrupt to answer e-mails, phone calls, or text messages?  Yes  No

Is your use of electronic media stealing time from needed sleep or distracting you from studying?  Yes  No

## "I WAS A SOCIAL-NETWORKING-SITE ADDICT"

"A few years ago, my family moved. I wanted to keep in touch with my friends, and they invited me to join a photo-sharing site. That seemed like a great way to stay connected. I would be talking only to people I knew, not strangers, so what could possibly go wrong?"

"At first, all worked well. I would go online once a week to look at my friends' pictures and post comments and read their comments on my pictures. But I soon became obsessed. Before I knew it, I was on the site all the time. Since I was online that much, people who are friends of friends began to notice, and they invited me to be their friends. You know how it is—a friend says that this person is good fun, so you accept. Before you know it, you have 50 online friends."

"Soon, I found that I was constantly thinking about being online. Even when I was on the Web site, I was thinking about when I could get back to check it next time and that I needed to post new pictures. I'd read a comment here, post a video there, and before I knew it, hours would fly by."

"It took about a year and a half, but I eventually realized that I was an addict. Now, though, I tightly control my use of the Internet and focus on making friends face-to-face with people who I know share my moral standards. Some of my friends don't understand my actions, but I've learned my lesson."—Ellen, 18.

## How to Be Balanced

If you use some form of electronic media—whether a computer, a cell phone, or another device—ask yourself the four questions below. Applying the Bible-based advice and following a few simple dos and don'ts will help you to stay safe and in control.

**1. What is the content?** "Fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable."—Philippians 4:8, *Today's English Version*.

**Do** keep in contact with friends and family, and share upbuilding news and viewpoints.—Proverbs 25:25; Ephesians 4:29.

**Don't** spread harmful gossip, share immoral text messages or pictures, or watch morally degrading video clips or programs.—Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 4:15.

**2. When am I using it?** "For everything there is an appointed time."—Ecclesiastes 3:1.

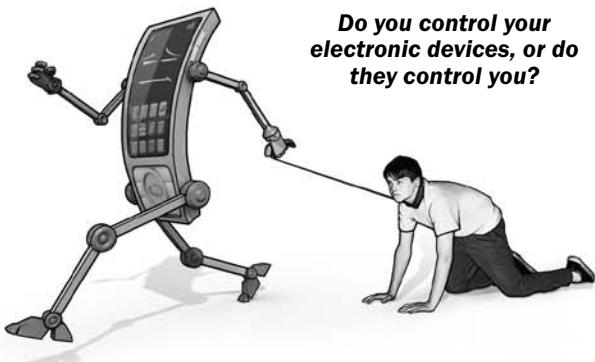
**Do** set a limit on how much time you will spend sending and receiving calls and text messages, watching programs, or playing games. Out of respect, turn off your device while at important events, such as meetings for worship. You can always respond to messages later.

**Don't** allow your use of electronic media to interrupt time you have set aside to spend

## WHY NOT ASK YOUR PARENTS?

Sometimes you might be surprised when you strike up a conversation with your parents about entertainment. "Once my dad suspected that one of my music CDs was bad," says a girl named Cheryl. "I asked him if we could sit down together and listen to the entire CD. He agreed. Afterward, he told me that he found nothing objectionable in it!"

Below, write a question you would like to ask your parents about electronic media.



with friends and family, to study, or to engage in spiritual activities.—Ephesians 5:15-17; Philippians 2:4.

**3. With whom am I associating?** “Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits.”—1 Corinthians 15:33.

**Do** use electronic media to strengthen the ties you have with people who encourage you to develop good habits.—Proverbs 22:17.

**Don’t** fool yourself—you will adopt the standards, language, and thinking of those you

choose to socialize with through e-mail, texting, TV, video, or the Internet.—Proverbs 13:20.

**4. How much time am I spending?** “Make sure of the more important things.”—Philippians 1:10.

**Do** keep track of how much time you spend using electronic media.

**Don’t** ignore the comments of your friends or the direction of your parents if they say that you’re spending too much time with some form of media.—Proverbs 26:12.

Speaking of using electronic media in a balanced way, Andrew, quoted earlier, sums up the matter well: “Electronics are fun, but only for a brief amount of time. I’ve learned not to allow technology to become a wedge that separates me from my family and friends.”

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More articles from the “Young People Ask” series can be found at the Web site  
**[www.watchtower.org/ype](http://www.watchtower.org/ype)**

## A NOTE TO PARENTS

Does your adolescent spend too much time online, send and receive too many text messages, or have a better relationship with his MP3 player than he has with you? If so, what can you do?

You could just take the device away from your child. But do not write off all electronic media as evil. After all, likely you use some form of electronic media that was not available to your parents. So instead of simply confiscating your adolescent’s device—unless there is compelling rea-

son to do so—why not use this as an opportunity to train your son or daughter to use electronic media wisely and with moderation? How can you do that?

Sit down and discuss the matter with your adolescent. First, state your concerns. Second, *listen* to what he or she has to say. (Proverbs 18:13) Third, work out practical solutions. Do not be afraid to set firm limits, but be reasonable. (Philippians 4:5) “When I had a problem with texting,” says Ellen, mentioned earlier, “my parents didn’t take away my phone; they set guidelines. The way they handled it has helped me to be balanced in

my use of texting, even when my parents aren’t there to monitor me.”

What if your son or daughter reacts defensively? Do not conclude that your counsel has fallen on deaf ears. Instead, be patient and give your adolescent some time to think about the matter. Chances are, he or she already agrees with you and will make needed adjustments. Many youths are similar to a teen named Hailey, who says: “At first I was offended when my parents told me I was addicted to my computer. But later, the more I thought about it, the more I realized that they were right.”

## Are Faith and Reason Incompatible?

**F**AITH is a negation of reason,” writes British philosopher A. C. Grayling. His words sum up the feelings of countless writers and philosophers who over the centuries have claimed that faith and reason are incompatible.

Some religious beliefs do fly in the face of all reason. But consider this: Many strongly held scientific beliefs have proved to be wrong. Does that mean that all scientific beliefs are wrong or are not based on reason? Why view religious beliefs any differently? In fact, the faith described in the Bible does not exist without knowledge but is, instead, solidly based on knowledge and sound reason. As you review the evidence, see how true faith and reason are compatible.

### Faith Firmly Based on Reason

The Bible says, for example, that if your worship is to be “acceptable to God,” it must be “a sacred service with your *power of reason*.” In other words, you must worship God “in a way that is worthy of thinking beings.” (Romans 12:1; *The Jerusalem Bible*) So the faith described in the Bible is not something blind and irrational, or a leap of faith, as some have called it. And it is not credulity. Rather, it is something you have thought through carefully—resulting in trust in God and his Word, which is firmly based on reason.

Of course, if you are to reason properly, you need accurate information. Even the most powerful computer programs designed

on solid principles of logic will come up with some very strange conclusions if they are fed inaccurate data. Likewise, the quality of your faith will depend greatly on what you hear or on how dependable the information you feed your mind proves to be. Appropriately, the Bible says that “faith follows the thing heard.” —Romans 10:17.

A fundamental requirement for faith is “an accurate knowledge of truth.” (1 Timothy 2:4) Only “the truth,” says the Bible, “will set you free,” free from misleading beliefs, whether they are scientific or religious. (John 8:32) The Bible warns you not to put faith “in every word.” (Proverbs 14:15) Rather, it says that you should “make sure of all things”—or test out the things you hear before believing them. (1 Thessalonians 5:21) Why should you do research and test out your beliefs? Because faith based on falsehood is only a delusion. Some noble-minded people from the ancient city of Beroea set a fine example in acquiring proper faith. Even though these individuals really wanted to believe what Christian missionaries taught them, they made a point of “carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so.”—Acts 17:11.

### Building Faith in the Bible

What, though, if you are unsure of the reliability of the Bible? How can you build your confidence in it as a source of accurate knowledge? Well, how do you build your confidence in people? Surely, it is by getting to know them—by watching how they behave over a period of time and seeing how their conduct

**God rewards an earnest quest for truth**



turns out. Why not do the same with the Bible?\*

The Bible describes true faith as “the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration of realities though not beheld.” (Hebrews 11:1) Clearly, far from being naive, a person with real faith has based his beliefs on a careful scrutiny of all available data. Reasoning on such information produces the conviction that even things that cannot be seen with the literal eye are, nonetheless, realities.

What, though, if what you learn seems to contradict some of your deeply held beliefs? Should you just ignore it? Of course not. There may well be times when it is eminently reasonable to consider powerful evidence that appears to contradict what you believe. In the Bible, God promises to reward sincere individuals who search for truth by granting them knowledge, discernment, and thinking ability.—Proverbs 2:1-12.

The kind of faith built on what the Bible teaches is compatible with reason. What kind

of faith do you have? Many people have “inherited” their religious beliefs and have never seriously examined them in the light of reason. Yet, it is not a sign of disrespect to examine what you believe so as to ‘prove to yourself’ that your thinking is in harmony with God’s Word. (Romans 12:2) The Bible admonishes us to “test the inspired expressions to see whether they originate with God.” (1 John 4:1) If you do that, you will be in a position, even when your beliefs are challenged, to “make a defense before everyone that demands of you a reason for the hope in you.”—1 Peter 3:15.

#### HAVE YOU WONDERED?

- Does the Bible discourage the use of reason?—Romans 12:1, 2.
- What kind of knowledge is vital if you are to develop true faith?—1 Timothy 2:4.
- What can be learned from the Bible’s definition of faith?—Hebrews 11:1.

\* If you need help to find reliable information about the Bible, write to the publishers of this magazine.

## What Is Wrong With This Picture?

**Read John 6:5-13.** What three features of this drawing are incorrect? Write your answers on the lines below, and complete the picture by coloring it.

1. ....

2. ....

3. ....

- Answers to pages 30 and 31 on page 22

**FOR DISCUSSION:** What did Jesus have the disciples collect, and why? What does this teach you about Jesus? What can you do to avoid being wasteful?

**FAMILY ACTIVITY:** Read the Bible account together. If possible, have one person read the part of the narrator, a second the part of Jesus, a third the part of Philip, and a fourth the part of Andrew.



# Collect and Learn

## JOSHUA

BIBLE  
CARD

1



### QUESTIONS

- How did Joshua and his army bring down the walls of Jericho?
- Complete Joshua's statement: "As for me and my household, . . ."
- Joshua had been known by what other names?



Cut out, fold in half, and save



## JOSHUA

**PROFILE** Son of Nun. He ministered to Moses and was later appointed to lead Israel. (Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 34:9; Joshua 1:1, 2) Joshua fearlessly led God's people into the Promised Land. He trusted Jehovah's promises, obeyed his direction, and served him faithfully.

### ANSWERS

- They obeyed God by marching around the city.—Joshua 6:1-27.
- ". . . we shall serve Jehovah."—Joshua 24:15.
- Hoshea and Jehoshua.  
—Numbers 13:8, 16.

## Peoples and Lands

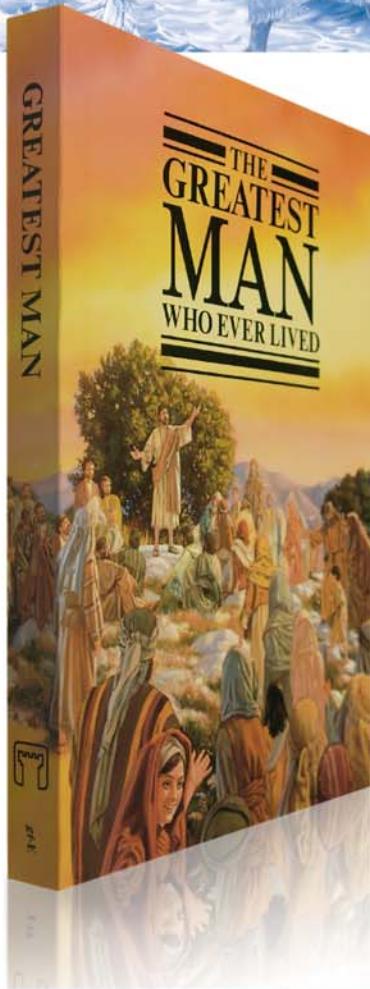
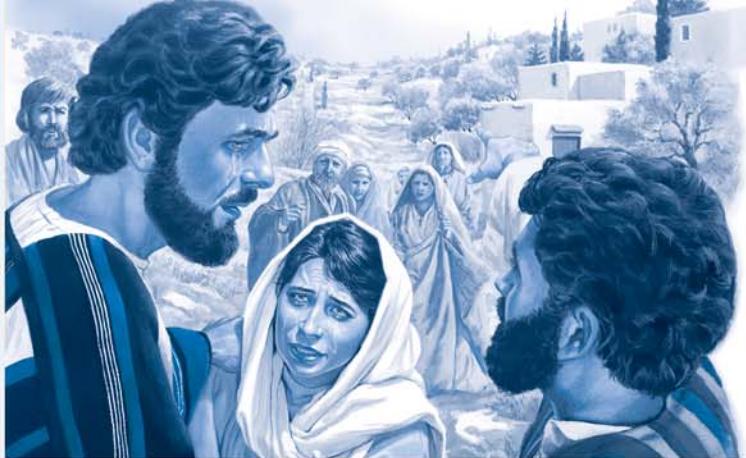
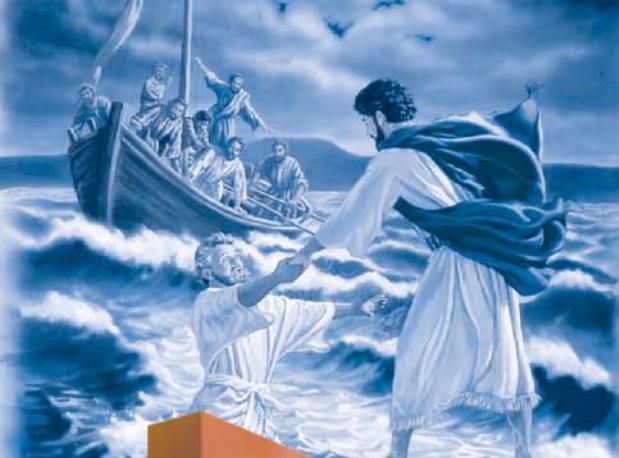
4. My name is Victor. I am 7 and live in Malawi, which is in Africa. About how many of Jehovah's Witnesses live in Malawi? Is it 750, 7,500, or 75,000?

5. Which dot shows where I live? Circle it, and draw a dot where you live, and see how close you are to Malawi.

## Children's Picture Search

Can you find these pictures in this issue? In your own words, describe what is happening in each picture.





## "I Cried When I Read It"

- The above is what a woman in Illinois, U.S.A., wrote about reading the book *The Greatest Man Who Ever Lived*. She explained in her letter to the book's publishers, "I just hope and pray that more people will enjoy reading about Jesus as much as I do."

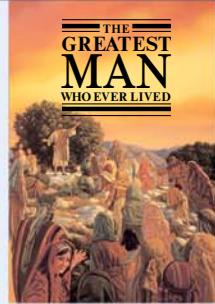
The *Greatest Man* book gives an account of the life of Jesus based on the inspired writings of four of his contemporaries, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew and John were apostles and traveling companions of Jesus. Mark was a close friend of Peter, one of Jesus' apostles. And the physician Luke was a traveling companion of the apostle Paul.

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