

THE BIBLE
What Makes It Unique?



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

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"All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial . . . , that the man of God may be fully competent, completely equipped for every good work."

-2 TIMOTHY 3:16, 17.

Just Another Book?

COME people hesitate to make such an **J** unqualified statement about the Bible. What about you? Which of the following best describes how you view the Bible?

- A work of fine literature
- One of several equally acceptable sacred texts
- A book of legends with underlying moral lessons
- The Word of God

A related question is, Does it matter what you believe? Consider what the Bible says about itself: "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) The Bible thus claims that it is designed to instruct and comfort us and to give us hope.

However, if the Bible were merely a work of literature or just one of many holy books, would you trust it to instruct you and guide your family, especially if its message differed from what you thought to be right? If the Bible were a collection of myths, would you derive comfort and hope from its promises?

On the other hand, millions who have studied the Bible are convinced that it is the unique Word of God. Why? What distinguishes the Bible from all other books? We invite you to consider five unique features of the Bible, described in the following articles.



"Bible prophecies are
... so numerous
as to make accidental
fulfillment almost
infinitely improbable."

—A LAWYER EXAMINES THE
BIBLE, BY IRWIN H. LINTON

PROPHECYA PERFECT RECORD

"Not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed." –JOSHUA 23:14.

HOW IS THE BIBLE DIFFERENT? Ancient oracles were notoriously ambiguous and unreliable, and modern horoscopes are no better. Futurology is based on current trends and rarely even attempts to predict specific events centuries in advance. In contrast, Bible prophecies are detailed and always come true, even if they tell "from long ago the things that have not been done."—Isaiah 46:10.

AN EXAMPLE: In the sixth century B.C.E., the prophet Daniel saw a vision that foretold the rapid defeat of Medo-Persia by Greece. It also foretold that as soon as the victorious king of Greece "became mighty," his kingship would be "broken." Who would replace him? Daniel wrote: "There are four kingdoms from his nation that will stand up, but not with his power."—Daniel 8:5-8, 20-22.

WHAT HISTORIANS SAY: Over 200 years after Daniel's time, Alexander the Great became king of Greece. Within ten years, Alexander defeated the Medo-Persian Empire and extended Grecian rule as far as the Indus River (in modern-day Pakistan). But he died suddenly at the age of 32. Finally, a battle near Ipsus in Asia Minor effectively dissolved his empire. The four victors of that battle eventually divided the Grecian Empire among themselves. However, none of them attained Alexander's degree of power.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Can any other book claim such a record of fulfilled prophecy? Or is the Bible unique?

THE WATCHTOWER

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HISTORY, NOT MYTH

"I have traced all things from the start with accuracy."

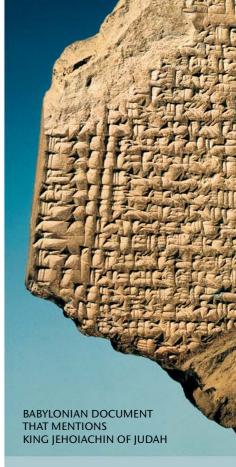
—LUKE 1:3.

HOW IS THE BIBLE DIFFERENT? Legends and myths relate fanciful tales that omit specific locations, dates, and names of historical figures. In contrast, the Bible includes countless historical details that reassure readers that its "sayings are supremely true."—Psalm 119:160, *The Psalms for Today*, by R. K. Harrison.

AN EXAMPLE: The Bible reports that "Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon... took [Judean King] Jehoiachin into exile to Babylon." Later, "Evil-merodach the king of Babylon, in the year of his becoming king, raised up the head of Jehoiachin the king of Judah out of the house of detention." Furthermore, "an allowance was constantly given him [Jehoiachin] from the king, daily as due, all the days of his life." —2 Kings 24:11, 15; 25:27-30.

WHAT ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE DISCOVERED: Among the ruins of ancient Babylon, archaeologists uncovered administrative documents dated to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II. They list rations given to prisoners and others dependent on the royal household. The lists include "Yaukin [Jehoiachin]," who was the "king of the land of Yahud (Judah)," and his household. What about the existence of Nebuchadnezzar's successor, Evil-merodach? An inscription on a vase found near the city of Susa reads: "Palace of Amil-Marduk [Evil-merodach], King of Babylon, son of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon."

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Is any other ancient religious text as specific and accurate when it touches on history? Or is the Bible unique?



"The chronological and geographical statements are more accurate and reliable than those afforded by any other ancient documents."

—A SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, BY ROBERT D. WILSON

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go, Kikuyu, Kiluba, Kimbundu, Kinyarwanda, Kirghiz, Kiribati, Kirundi, Kongo, Korean, ** Kwangali, Kwanyama, Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Luganda, Lunda, Luo, Luvale, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Marshallese, Mauritian Creole, Maya, Mixe, Mizo, Mongolian, Moore, Myanmar, Nahuatl (Northern Puebla), Ndebele, Ndonga, Nepali, Ngabere, Niuean, Norwegian, *Nyaneka, Nzema, Oromo, Otetela, Palauan, Pangasinan, Papiamento (Aruba), Papiamento (Curaçao), Persian, Polish, **Ponapean, Portuguese, *** Punjabi, Quechua (Ancash), Quechua (Ayacucho), Quechua (Bolivia), **Quechua (Cuzco), Quichua, Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian, *** Samoan, Sango, Sepedi, Serbian, Serbi

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"No one can fail to be impressed by the careful hygienic precautions of the Mosaic period."

-MANUAL OF TROPICAL MEDICINE,
BY DRS. ALDO CASTELLANI
AND ALBERT J. CHALMERS

ACCURATE SCIENCE

"Have I not written you heretofore with counselings and knowledge, to show you the truthfulness of true sayings, so as to return sayings that are the truth?"

—PROVERBS 22:20, 21.

HOW IS THE BIBLE DIFFERENT? Ancient books often feature unsound and dangerous ideas that have been thoroughly debunked by modern science. Even today, authors must update textbooks to harmonize with new discoveries. But the Bible claims that it was authored by the Creator and that his Word "endures forever."—1 Peter 1:25.

AN EXAMPLE: The Mosaic Law commanded the Israelites to dispose of sewage in a covered hole "outside the camp." (Deuteronomy 23:12, 13) If they touched a dead animal or human, the Israelites had to wash with water. (Leviticus 11: 27, 28; Numbers 19:14-16) Lepers back then were quarantined until a physical examination confirmed that they were no longer contagious.—Leviticus 13:1-8.

WHAT MODERN MEDICINE REVEALS: Proper sewage disposal, hand washing, and quarantine remain effective ways to fight disease. If there are no latrines or other sanitation systems nearby, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends: "Defecate at least 30 meters [100 feet] away from any body of water and then bury your feces." When communities dispose of excrement safely, they reduce diarrheal disease by 36 percent, according to the World Health Organization. Less than 200 years ago, physicians discovered that they infected many patients when they did not wash their hands after handling corpses. The CDC still calls hand washing "the single most effective way to prevent the transmission of disease." What about the quarantine of lepers or those with other diseases? Recently, the Saudi Medical Journal said: "In the early stages of an epidemic, isolation and quarantine may be the only and last resort to effectively control infectious diseases."

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Would you expect any other ancient holy book to harmonize with modern science? Or is the Bible unique?

A HARMONIOUS **LIBRARY**

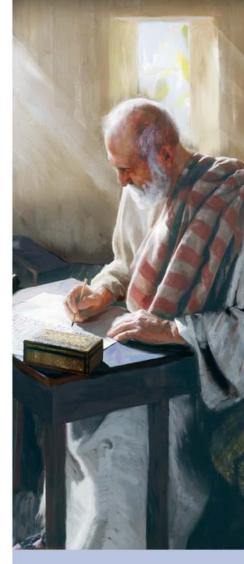
"Prophecy was at no time brought by man's will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit."-2 PETER 1:21.

HOW IS THE BIBLE DIFFERENT? Even contemporaneous records from ancient times often contradict one another. Books written by different men, in different places, at different times rarely harmonize completely. Yet, the Bible claims that all of its 66 books have but one Author—presenting a unified and harmonious message.—2 Timothy 3:16.

AN EXAMPLE: Moses, a shepherd of the 16th century B.C.E., wrote in the Bible's first book that a "seed" would come to save mankind. This book later foretold that the seed would be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Genesis 3:15; 22:17, 18; 26:24; 28:14) About 500 years later, the prophet Nathan revealed that the seed would be in the royal line of David. (2 Samuel 7:12) One thousand years after that, the apostle Paul explained that the seed would be made up of Jesus and a group of his chosen followers. (Romans 1:1-4; Galatians 3:16, 29) Finally, by the end of the first century C.E., the last book of the Bible prophesied that members of the seed would bear witness to Jesus on earth, be raised to heaven, and rule with him for 1,000 years. This composite seed will destroy the Devil and save mankind.—Revelation 12:17; 20: 6-10.

WHAT BIBLE COMMENTATORS SAY: After a thorough investigation of the Bible's 66 books, Louis Gaussen wrote that he was astonished by "the imposing unity of this book, composed during fifteen hundred years by so many authors, . . . who yet pursued one and the same plan, and advanced constantly, as if they themselves understood it, towards that one great end, the history of the world's redemption by the Son of God."-Theopneusty-The Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Would you expect a book written over a span of more than 1,500 years by some 40 different men to be totally harmonious? Or is the Bible unique?



"When these writings are put together, they constitute, structurally, one book . . . There is nothing exactly resembling it, or even approaching it, in all literature."

—THE PROBLEM OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, BY JAMES ORR



to me strongly . . . because it is such excellent medicine."

-HOWARD KELLY, M.D., FOUNDING FACULTY MEMBER OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

PRACTICAL TODAY

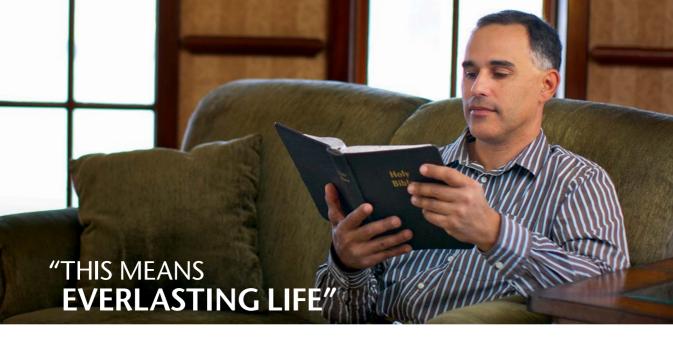
"Your word is a lamp to my foot, and a light to my roadway."—PSALM 119:105.

HOW IS THE BIBLE DIFFERENT? Literary works may be considered classics, but they are hardly guidebooks. And modern instruction manuals need to be revised constantly. The Bible, on the other hand, claims that "the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction."-Romans 15:4.

AN EXAMPLE: Though not a medical guide, the Bible contains practical suggestions on good emotional and physical health. For example, it states that "a calm heart is the life of the fleshly organism." (Proverbs 14:30) The Bible also warns: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth." (Proverbs 18:1) On the other hand, it states that "there is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving."—Acts 20:35.

WHAT RESEARCH REVEALS: Calmness, strong friendships, and generosity can improve your health. The Journal of the *American Medical Association* reports: "Men who experience outbursts of anger have twice the risk of stroke as men who control their tempers." A ten-year study in Australia found that elderly people who had "better social networks with friends and confidants" were more likely to live longer. And in 2008, researchers from Canada and the United States learned that "spending money on others promotes happiness more than spending money on oneself."

WHAT DO YOU THINK? Would you trust advice on health issues from any other book completed almost 2,000 years ago? Or is the Bible unique?



"This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—JOHN 17:3.

NOWLEDGE can save life. When tenmonth-old Nouhou fell sick, his mother—a community health worker in Niger—knew what to do. She prepared an oral rehydration solution for her son by mixing sugar, salt, and clean water. According to UNICEF, because of her "quick response and access to community health care, her child's illness was cut short."

Knowledge from the Bible can also save life. The first Bible writer, Moses, stated: "It is no valueless word for you, but it means your life, and by this word you may lengthen your days." (Deuteronomy 32:47) Can the Bible really lengthen our days? In what way does it mean our life?

The preceding five articles in this series have shown that the Bible is a book incomparable in its reliable prophecy, historical and scientific accuracy, internal harmony, and practical guidance. This stamps the Bible as unique. So, when it claims to point the

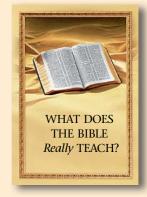
way to a longer life—everlasting life—does it not deserve your careful consideration?

We urge you to learn how accurate knowledge of the Bible can lead to peace of mind now and happiness in the future. Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to show you how to acquire such knowledge.

The Bible is also unique in that it alone gives satisfying answers to fundamental questions we ask:

- Why are we here?
- Why is there so much suffering?
- Is there any hope for my dead loved ones?

You can find the Bible's answers to these questions in this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.





Coverdale

and the
First Complete Printed
English Bible

THE first complete Bible printed in English gave no indication of the name of the one who published it. Its translator was Miles Coverdale, and his translation appeared in 1535. At the time, his friend William Tyndale was in prison for some of the scholarly work he had done in connection with translating the Bible. Tyndale was executed the following year.

A portion of Coverdale's translation was based on Tyndale's work. How did Coverdale succeed in having his translation printed and avoid execution, when other Bible translators of the day paid with their lives? What did Coverdale finally accomplish?

Seeds Are Sown

Miles Coverdale was born in Yorkshire, England, likely in the year 1488. He studied at Cambridge University and was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1514. His interest in reform was kindled by Robert Barnes, his tutor. Barnes fled to continental Europe in 1528. Twelve years later this Reformer was burned at the stake by church leaders.

By 1528, Coverdale had started to preach in church against the unscriptural Catholic practices of image worship, confession, and the Mass. Because his life was then in danger, he left England for the Continent, where he spent some seven years.

In Hamburg, Germany, Coverdale stayed with William Tyndale. The two worked to-

gether in their shared desire to produce a Bible that could be read by the people. During this time, Coverdale learned much from Tyndale about the art of Bible translating.

Time for Change

Meanwhile, the scene in England was changing. In 1534, King Henry VIII openly defied the authority of the Catholic pope in Rome. He was also open to the idea of making the Bible available to the people in English. In time, Coverdale undertook the task. Coverdale was a master of English expression but lacked the linguistic skills of his friend and mentor, Tyndale, who was fluent both in Hebrew and in Greek. Coverdale revised Tyndale's translation, working from Latin and German versions.

Coverdale's Bible was printed in Continental Europe in 1535, the year before Tyndale's execution. It included a gracious, somewhat flattering dedication to King Henry. Coverdale assured Henry that the Bible excluded Tyndale's footnotes, which were considered contentious because, among other things, they drew attention to unscriptural teachings of the Catholic Church. So Henry gave his consent for the publishing of the Bible. The tide had begun to turn.

In 1537, Coverdale's Bible reappeared in two editions, which were printed in England. In the same year, a version called



TETRAGRAMMATON, LEFT, FROM THE TITLE PAGE OF A 1537 EDITION

Matthew's Bible, printed in Antwerp, combining the work of Tyndale and Coverdale, was approved by King Henry.

The king's principal adviser, Thomas Cromwell, backed by Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, soon saw the need for a revised edition of Matthew's Bible. So he again appealed to Coverdale to revise the complete manuscript. King Henry licensed this new version in 1539 and ordered copies of it—called the Great Bible because of its size—to be put in churches for all to read. This Bible was received with joyful enthusiasm countrywide.

Coverdale's Legacy

Following the death of Henry VIII and the accession of his successor, Edward VI, Coverdale was appointed bishop of Exeter in 1551. However, when Catholic Queen Mary succeeded Edward to the throne in 1553, Coverdale was forced to flee to Denmark. Later he moved to Switzerland, where he continued his work. He also published three English editions of what is commonly called the New Testament, with Latin text as study aids for the clergy.

An unexpected aspect of Coverdale's Bible is the omission of the divine name in the form "Jehovah." Tyndale used the name of God over 20 times in his translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the book Coverdale and His Bibles, J. F. Mozley observes: "In

1535 Coverdale rejected the word [Jehovah] altogether." Nonetheless, he did subsequently include God's name, Jehovah, three times in the Great Bible.

Coverdale's Bible, however, was the earliest English Bible to feature the Tetragrammaton—the four Hebrew letters that make up the divine name—at the head of its title page. Significantly, this was the first Bible to group all the Apocryphal books into an appendix rather than have them scattered among the books of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Many of Coverdale's unique expressions and words have been used by later translators. The phrase "the valley of the shadow of death" at Psalm 23, verse 4, is an example. The word "loving-kindness" in verse 6, says Professor S. L. Greenslade, is "a special word to distinguish God's intrinsic love for his people from love in general and from mercy." The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References uses the same word, adding the footnote: "Or, 'loyal love."

Coverdale's Great Bible "was the culmination of all the work in English Bible-making ... from the day that Tyndale set about his translation of the New Testament," says The Bibles of England. Essentially, it was Coverdale's translation that helped to make it possible for English-speaking people of his day to read the Bible.



OPENED MY EYES

AS TOLD BY PATRICE OYEKA

It was late afternoon. Having spent another day in the depths of darkness—blind, lonely, listening to the radio droning on—I decided to put an end to my miserable life. I poured a poisonous powder in a cup of water and put it on the table in front of me. I wanted to take my last bath and then dress myself nicely before drinking that deadly concoction, ending it all. Why did I want to commit suicide? And how is it that I am still alive today to relate this story?

WAS born on February 2, 1958, in the province of Kasaï Oriental, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I lost my father when I was a boy of nine years, and my older brother supported me as I grew up.

After I finished school, I got a job on a rubber plantation. One morning in 1989, while preparing a report in my office, I suddenly found myself in a state of complete darkness. At first, I thought that there was a power outage, but I could hear the generator running and it was morning! Horrified, I realized that I could not see anything, not even my notes in front of me!

I immediately called one of the men who worked under me to take me to the person in charge of the infirmary. That man, in turn, recommended that I be taken to a more experienced physician in the city. Noting that my retinas were torn and my condition was serious, he sent me to the capital city, Kinshasa.

Life in Kinshasa

In Kinshasa, I consulted with many ophthalmologists, but none of them could help me. After I had spent 43 days in the hospital, the doctors concluded that I would be

blind for the rest of my life! Members of my family then took me to all kinds of churches in search of miraculous healing, but all their efforts were in vain.

Finally, I gave up hope of recovering my sight. Everything had become dark in my life. I lost my sight, and I lost my job. I also lost my wife, who left me, taking with her everything that we owned in our house. I felt ashamed to go out or to associate with other people. I became withdrawn and spent my days inside the house. I was a recluse and felt utterly useless.

Twice I attempted to end my life. The second time is described at the beginning of this story. I was saved by a small child in the family. He unintentionally took that cup and poured the contents out on the ground while I was taking my bath. Thankfully, he did not drink from it. But to my great disappointment, I could not find the cup. Then I confessed to my family members why I was looking for it and what I had intended to do.

I thank God and my family for keeping an eye on me. My plan to commit suicide was foiled.

Finding Joy in Life Again

On a Sunday in 1992, while I was sitting at home smoking, two of Jehovah's Witnesses called on me in the course of their house-tohouse ministry. Noticing that I was blind, they read Isaiah 35:5 to me: "At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped." My heart was overwhelmed with joy when I heard those words! Contrary to what I had heard in the churches I had visited, the Witnesses offered no miraculous healing. Rather, they explained that I could recover my sight in the new world that God promises, if I would just get to know God. (John 17:3) Right away, I started to study the Bible with the Witnesses, using the book You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth. I also began to attend all the Christian meetings at the local Kingdom Hall and made changes in my life. I stopped smoking.

But my blindness was hindering my spiritual progress. So I went to an institute for the blind in order to learn to read and write Braille. This enabled me to take part in the ministerial training provided at the Kingdom Hall. Soon I began to share in the preaching work in my neighborhood. I started to find joy in life again. I continued to make progress and dedicated my life to Jehovah. I was baptized on May 7, 1994.

As my love for Jehovah and for people grew, I developed a desire to enter the full-time ministry. Since December 1, 1995, I have been serving as a regular pioneer, a full-

time minister. I have also had the privilege of serving as an elder in my congregation since February 2004. Sometimes I am invited as a visiting speaker to give Bible talks to other congregations in my area. All these blessings bring me great joy and make me appre-

Giving a Bible talk; with my family and my brother

ciate that no disability can prevent us from realizing our desire to serve Jehovah God.

Jehovah Has Given Me "Eyes"

As mentioned earlier, my wife abandoned me because of my blindness. But I have received an extra blessing from Jehovah. In a special sense, he gave me eyes to see. Anny Mavambu, who accepted me to be her husband despite my disability, has become my eyes. As she too is a full-time preacher, she always accompanies me in the ministry. She also reads the source material for my talks to me so that I can write my notes in Braille. She is a special blessing to me. Because of her, I have seen the truthfulness of the words of Proverbs 19:14: "The inheritance from fathers is a house and wealth, but a discreet wife is from Jehovah."

Jehovah has also blessed Anny and me with two children—a boy and a girl. I am yearning to see their faces in Paradise! Another blessing is that my older brother, who kindly allows us to live on his property, accepted Bible truth and was baptized! All of us are in the same congregation.

Despite my disability, my heartfelt desire is to do even more to serve God because he has blessed me so much. (Malachi 3:10) Daily I pray for his Kingdom to come and to remove all suffering from the earth. Since getting to know Jehovah, I can truthfully say: "The blessing of Jehovah—that is what makes rich, and he adds no pain with it."—Proverbs 10:22.





DRAW CLOSE TO GOD



"Your Soul Will . . . Bow Low Over Me"

HUMILITY attracts. We usually feel drawn to those who have a humble spirit. Sadly, though, genuine humility is hard to find in today's world—especially in those who have power or authority over others. What about Jehovah God, the most powerful Personage in the universe? Is he humble? Let us examine the prophet Jeremiah's words found at Lamentations 3: 20, 21.—*Read*.

Jeremiah wrote Lamentations at a low point in Israel's history. He had just witnessed something that pained him deeply—the destruction of his beloved Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The anguished prophet knew that the calamity was a just execution of divine judgment upon the Israelites because of their sinful ways. But was Jeremiah left with no hope? Did he feel that Jehovah was too remote or aloof to notice repentant ones and lift them out of despair? Listen as Jeremiah speaks representatively for his people.

Amid the sorrow, Jeremiah is filled with hope. He cries out to Jehovah: "Without fail your soul* [Jehovah himself] will remember and bow low over me." (Verse 20) Jeremiah has no doubt. He knows that Jehovah will not forget him—or repentant ones among His people. What, though, will the almighty God do?—Revelation 15:3.

Jeremiah is certain that Jehovah will "bow low" over those who truly repent. Another translation says: "O remember, and stoop down

to me." Those words evoke a tender mental picture. Jehovah, "the Most High over all the earth," will stoop down, so to speak, and lift his worshippers up out of their debased condition and restore them to his favor. (Psalm 83:18) Anchored by this hope, Jeremiah finds true comfort for his wounded heart. The faithful prophet is determined to wait patiently until Jehovah's due time to deliver His repentant people.—Verse 21.

The words recorded by Jeremiah really teach us two things about Jehovah. First, he is humble. (Psalm 18:35) Although he is "exalted in power," Jehovah is willing to come down to our

Jehovah is willing to come down to our level, as it were, to help us when we are low

level, as it were, to help us when we are low. (Job 37:23; Psalm 113:5-7) Is that not a comforting thought? Second, Jehovah is merciful; he is "ready to forgive" repentant sinners and welcome them back into his favor. (Psalm 86:5) Those two qualities—humility and mercy—go hand in hand.

How thankful we are that Jehovah is not like human rulers, whose pride makes them stubborn and insensitive! Are you moved to learn more about the humble God who is willing to "stoop down" in order to lift his worshippers from despair to hope?

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR JUNE:

■ Jeremiah 51–Ezekiel 5

^{*} Ancient scribes changed this verse to say "my soul," as if referring to Jeremiah. They evidently believed that it was irreverent to speak of God as being a soul, a word the Bible uses for earthly creatures. But the Bible often describes God in human terms to help us comprehend him. Since the term "soul" can mean "the life that we possess," the phrase "your soul" means "you."

OUR READERS ASK...

Why do Jehovah's Witnesses preach from house to house?

■ In the Bible, we find this command of Jesus to his followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, . . . teaching them." (Matthew 28:19, 20) Does this apply to all Christians? Jesus' earliest disciples understood that it does. For example, the apostle Peter stated: "He [Jesus] ordered us to preach to the people and to give a thorough witness." (Acts 10: 42) And the apostle Paul wrote: "Necessity is laid upon me. Really, woe is me if I did not declare the good news!"—1 Corinthians 9:16.

Not only Paul and Peter but also first-century Christians in general acted on Jesus' command. They made preaching the hallmark of their activity. (Acts 5:28-32, 41, 42) Jehovah's Witnesses today endeavor to do so as well. They preach the same message as Jesus did, namely, "the kingdom of the heavens."—Matthew 10:7.

To whom should the Kingdom message be preached? Jesus indicated that it should be preached to all people everywhere. He told his disciples: "You will be witnesses of me... to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) He even foretold that before the end of this system arrives, "this good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness." (Matthew 24:14) Accordingly, firstcentury Christians strove to speak with all people, not just personal acquaintances or individuals without a religion. (Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4) Likewise, Jehovah's Witnesses today try to reach everyone.*

What is the most effective way to spread the Kingdom message? Jesus, who knew how to reach as many as possible, sent his disciples to cities, villages, and homes of the people. (Matthew 10:7, 11, 12) After Jesus' death and resurrection, his disciples continued to preach "from house to house." (Acts 5: 42) As Jesus did, they too preached in informal settings and in public places. (John 4:7-26; 18:20; Acts 17: 17) Today, Jehovah's Wit-



nesses use those same methods to preach to all people.

Jesus indicated that not everyone would listen. (Matthew 10:14; 24:37-39) Should that deter Christians from preaching? Consider this comparison: If you were part of a rescue team following a severe earthquake, would you stop searching simply because after a while only a few survivors were being found? No, you would persist as long as there was hope of saving one person. Jesus instructed his disciples to persevere as long as there is hope of finding some who will respond to the good news about God's Kingdom. (Matthew 10:23; 1 Timothy 4: 16) By searching out such ones from house to house, Jehovah's Witnesses show love for God and for their neighbors, whose lives depend on hearing and responding to the Kingdom message.—Matthew 22:37-39; 2 Thessalonians 1:8.

The magazine you are reading conveys that Bible message. For more information, please speak with Jehovah's Witnesses the next time they call, or write to the publisher of this magazine.

^{*} Jehovah's Witnesses are currently preaching in 236 lands. Last year, they spent 1.7 billion hours in the preaching work and conducted 8.5 million home Bible studies worldwide.



LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

Why Should We Use God's Name?

This article considers questions you may have raised and shows where you can read the answers in your Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses would be pleased to discuss these answers with you.

1. Why has God given himself a name?

Undoubtedly, you like to be called by your personal name rather than by a title, such as "man," "mister," "madam," or "woman." A name helps to distinguish you as an individual. God is called by such titles as "Sovereign Lord," "God Almighty," and "Grand Creator." (Genesis 15:2; 17:1; Ecclesiastes 12:1) But he has also given himself a name to help us to establish a personal relationship with him. In English, God's personal name is Jehovah. —Read Isaiah 42:8.

Although many Bible translators have replaced God's name with such terms as "God" and "Lord," that name is found nearly 7,000 times in ancient Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible. Clearly, God wants his name to be known.—*Read Isaiah 12:4*.



God's name in an early Hebrew manuscript



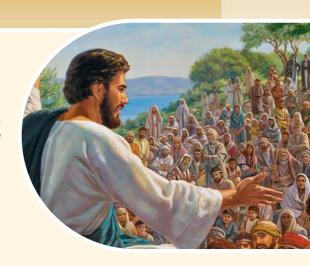
2. Why is knowing God's name vital?

Knowing God's name means more than merely knowing how to say it. To know God by name means to have a close relationship with him. The name Jehovah means "He Causes to Become." It is an assurance that God will become whatever is needed to fulfill his purpose. So, knowing God's name implies believing that God will fulfill his promises. (Psalm 9:10) The faith of people who know and use God's name moves them to trust in him and to put him first in their life. Jehovah God will protect such people.—Read Psalm 91:14.

3. Why does God want his name to be known?

God wants people to know him by name because it benefits them. It enables them to become a friend of God, with the hope of living forever. No wonder Jehovah wants us to make his name known!—Read John 17:3; Romans 10:13, 14.

Jesus made God's name known by teaching people about God's ways, His laws, and His promises. Today, Jesus' followers continue the work of making God's name known in all the nations. They do so as a united "people for [God's] name."—Read Acts 15: 14; John 17:26.



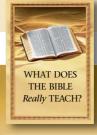


4. How will God glorify his name?

Jehovah God wants to glorify his name because it has been slandered. For example, some people say that he did not create life and that we do not need to obey him. Others say that he does not care about us and that he is responsible for suffering. Such people defame God's name. But they will not do so forever. God will act against those who dishonor his name.—*Read Psalm 83:17, 18*.

Jehovah will glorify his name when his Kingdom brings an end to all human rulership and restores peace and security to mankind. (Daniel 2:44) Soon, everyone will have to know that Jehovah is the true God.—Read Ezekiel 36:23; Matthew 6:9.

What should you do? Draw close to God by studying his Word and associating with people who love him. When Jehovah glorifies his name, he will remember his faithful servants.—Malachi 3:16.





Thessalonica

®ATHENS

Thessalonica, known today as Thessaloníki or Salonika, is a thriving seaport city in northeastern Greece. As a city, it played a prominent role in the history of the first-century Christians, especially in the ministry of Paul, the Christian apostle to the nations.

-ACTS 9:15; ROMANS 11:13.

N ABOUT the year 50 C.E., Paul and his traveling companion Silas came to Thessalonica. They were on Paul's second missionary journey, their first opportunity to bring the good news about the Christ into what is today Europe.

As they arrived in Thessalonica, the memory of the beating and imprisonment they had suffered in Philippi, the principal city of Macedonia, was no doubt still fresh in their minds. In fact, Paul later told the Thessalonians that when visiting them, he had preached "the good news of God with a great deal of struggling." (1 Thessalonians 2:1, 2) Would the situation in Thessalonica be more favorable? How would the ministry fare in this city? Would it be fruitful? First, let us take a look at that ancient city itself.

A City With a Turbulent Past

Even the name Thessalonica, derived from two Greek words meaning "Thessalians" and "victory," implies struggle and fighting. It is commonly believed that in 352 B.C.E., Macedonian King Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, defeated a tribe from central Greece in

Thessaly. It is said that in memory of that victory, he gave the name Thessalonice to one of his daughters, who later married Cassander, a successor of her brother Alexander. About 315 B.C.E., Cassander built a city on the west side of the Chalcidice Peninsula and named it after his wife. Thessalonica was buffeted by conflict throughout its troubled history.

Thessalonica was also a prosperous city. It had one of the best natural harbors in the Aegean Sea. In Roman times, it was also located on the famous highway Via Egnatia. Favored with such a strategic location on sea and land routes, Thessalonica was one of the Roman Empire's trade gateways. Over the ages, the city's prosperity made it the coveted prize of Goths, Slavs, Franks, Venetians, and Turks. Some of them conquered the place by force and bloodshed. But let us now focus on Paul's visit, when the struggle for the good news began.

Paul's Arrival at Thessalonica

When coming to a new city, Paul usually approached the Jews first because their famil-

iarity with the Scriptures provided a basis for discussion and could help them understand the good news. One scholar suggests that perhaps this custom was an indication of Paul's concern for his countrymen or an effort to use the Jews and the God-fearers as a springboard for his work among the Gentiles.—Acts 17:2-4.

So, arriving in Thessalonica, Paul first entered the synagogue, where "he reasoned with [the Jews] from the Scriptures, explaining and proving by references that it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying: 'This is the Christ, this Jesus whom I am publishing to you.'"—Acts 17:2, 3, 10.

What Paul highlighted—the Messiah's role and identity—was a controversial issue. The notion of a suffering Messiah was contrary to the Jews' ideal of a conquering warrior-Messiah. To persuade the Jews, Paul "reasoned," 'explained,' and 'proved by references' to the Scriptures—the true marks of an effective teacher.* But what was the reaction of Paul's audience as he imparted such a wealth of information to them?

A Fruitful but Eventful Ministry

Some Jews and many Greek proselytes, as well as "not a few of the principal women," accepted Paul's message. The expression "principal women" is especially fitting, for in Macedonia females enjoyed an elevated social status. They held public office, owned property, enjoyed certain civic rights, and engaged in business. Even monuments were erected in their honor. Just as the Philippian businesswoman Lydia had accepted the good news, there was now also a notable response by Thessalonian women of high rank, likely ladies of good families or wives of prominent citizens.—Acts 16:14, 15; 17:4.

The Jews, however, became full of envy. They enlisted "wicked men of the market-place idlers and formed a mob and proceeded to throw the city into an uproar." (Acts 17:5) What kind of people were these? One Bible scholar described them as "the dissipated and the worthless." He added: "It does not appear that they felt any particular interest in the subject; but they were, like other mobs, easily excited, and urged on to any acts of violence."

That mixed mob "assaulted the house of Jason [Paul's host] and went seeking to have them brought forth to the rabble." Not finding Paul, they turned to the city's highest level of administration. So "they dragged Jason and certain brothers to the city rulers, crying out: 'These men that have overturned the inhabited earth are present here also.'"—Acts 17:5, 6.

As capital of Macedonia, Thessalonica enjoyed some autonomy. Part of its selfgovernment was a people's assembly, or



^{*} Paul might have referred to what are now Psalm 22:7; 69:21; Isaiah 50:6; 53:2-7; and Daniel 9:26.

citizens' council, that handled local public issues. The "city rulers," or politarchs,* were high officials, duty-bound to keep order and defuse situations that could lead to Roman intervention and loss of the city's privileges. So they would be disturbed to hear that public peace was threatened by these "trouble-makers."

Then came a most serious charge: "These men act in opposition to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king, Jesus." (Acts 17:7) This, says a commentary, implied "sedition and rebellion" against the emperors, who "would not permit the name of [another] king to be mentioned in any of the vanquished provinces except by their permission." Also, the fact that Jesus, whom Paul proclaimed as King, had been executed by Roman authorities on the very charge of sedition added to the plausibility of the accusation.—Luke 23:2.

The city rulers were agitated. But since there was no solid evidence and the accused could not be found, "after taking sufficient security from Jason and the others they let them go." (Acts 17:8, 9) This arrangement could refer to a kind of bail by means of which Jason and other Christians guaranteed that Paul would leave the city and would not return to cause disturbance again. Perhaps Paul was alluding to this event when he mentioned that "Satan cut across [his] path" and prevented him from returning to the city. —1 Thessalonians 2:18.

In view of the situation, Paul and Silas were dispatched by night to Beroea. Paul's ministry proved fruitful there as well, but this success so enraged his Jewish opponents in Thessalonica that they made the 50-mile (80 km) trip to Beroea to stir up the crowds







TOP: THESSALONÍKI TODAY ABOVE: ARCADE AND ROMAN BATHHOUSE IN THE AGORA

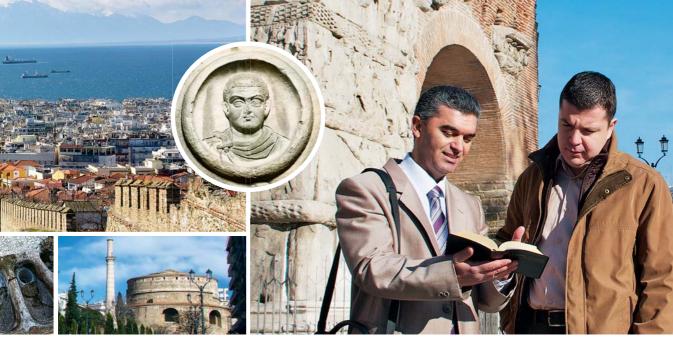
and fan the flames of opposition. Paul was soon on the road again, heading for Athens, but the struggle for the good news was to continue.—Acts 17:10-14.

The Struggles of a Fledgling Congregation

Happily, a congregation was established in Thessalonica, but opposition was not the only challenge that Christians there faced. They lived in a pagan, immoral environment, and this made Paul apprehensive. How would his brothers fare?—1 Thessalonians 2: 17; 3:1, 2, 5.

The Christians in Thessalonica knew that when they stopped taking part in the social and religious activities of the city, they would have to contend with the resentment and anger of their former friends. (John 17:14) In addition, Thessalonica abounded with sanctuaries of such Greek deities as Zeus, Artemis, and Apollo, as well as certain Egyptian gods. The imperial cult was also prominent, and all citizens had to observe its rites. Refusal

^{*} This term was not found in Greek literature. Yet, inscriptions bearing it were uncovered in the Thessalonica area, some dating to the first century B.C.E., confirming the Acts account.



THE ROTUNDA NEAR GALERIUS' ARCH; A RELIEF OF CAESAR GALERIUS; PREACHING NEAR GALERIUS' ARCH

to participate could be viewed as rebellion against Rome.

Idol worship fostered a climate of flagrant promiscuity. Cabirus, a patron god of Thessalonica; Dionysus and Aphrodite; and Isis from Egypt all had something in common: a highly sexualized worship full of orgiastic rites and revelries. Concubinage and prostitution flourished. Fornication was no sin to the people. Theirs was a society influenced by Roman culture, in which, according to a source, "citizens could draw upon the services of a whole population of men and women whose purpose was to satisfy their every desire—and physicians counseled that such desires ought not to be repressed." Understandably, Paul admonished Christians there to "abstain from fornication" and to avoid "covetous sexual appetite" and "uncleanness."—1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

A Victorious Struggle

Christians in Thessalonica had to put up a hard struggle for the faith. Yet, in spite of op-

position, hardship, and a pagan and immoral environment, they were commended by Paul for their 'faithful work, loving labor, and endurance,' as well as their contribution to the spreading of the good news far and wide. —1 Thessalonians 1:3, 8.

In 303 C.E., vicious persecution broke out in the Roman Empire against those professing Christianity. A chief instigator was Caesar Galerius, who resided in Thessalonica and adorned it with magnificent buildings. Ruins of some are still standing for tourists to see.

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses in Thessaloníki preach to their neighbors, often right in front of structures built by that cruel enemy of Christianity. Though there were periods in the 20th century when they carried out their preaching work under harsh opposition, there are now about 60 zealous congregations of the Witnesses in the city. Their efforts show that the struggle to spread the good news that started so many centuries ago is still ongoing and still successful.



How to Survive on a REDUCED INCOME

OBED is the father of two. For ten years he worked for a five-star hotel in a large African city and had little problem meeting the needs of his household. Periodically, he could squeeze in a good family vacation at game preserves in his country. All of this came to an end when he lost his job because of reduced clientele at the hotel.

In a career that spanned more than 22 years, Stephen rose through the ranks to become an executive in a large bank. Among the many benefits that came with his job were a big house, a car, house servants, and prestigious schools for his children. When the bank began a restructuring process, he found himself out of work. "My family and I were devastated," says Stephen. "I was gripped by feelings of despair, bitterness, and apprehension."

These are by no means isolated cases. The ongoing global economic slump has seen millions who had stable incomes lose their jobs. Many who have managed to find a job have had to accept low pay while contending with skyrocketing prices. Developed or not, no nation on earth is immune to the ravages of a recession.

Need for Practical Wisdom

Faced with decreased or lost income, we can easily be overwhelmed by negative thoughts. Granted, a person cannot totally avoid some measure of apprehension. However, a wise man once said: "Have you shown

yourself discouraged in the day of distress? Your power will be scanty." (Proverbs 24:10) Rather than panicking in the face of economic downturns, we need to do as God's Word urges us: "Treasure up practical wisdom."—Proverbs 2:7.

Though the Bible is not a financial guidebook, its practical counsel on handling such matters has proved helpful to millions worldwide. Let us examine some basic principles that the Bible offers.

Count the cost. Consider Jesus' words found at Luke 14:28: "Who of you that wants to build a tower does not first sit down and calculate the expense, to see if he has enough to complete it?" Applying that principle would mean making a budget and sticking to it. But as Obed acknowledges, this can be challenging. "Before losing my job," he says, "we were used to pushing cartloads of mostly nonessential goods out of the supermarket. We never had a budget because money seemed to be there for whatever we fancied." Advance planning will ensure that the reduced funds available are spent on essential family needs.

Adjust your lifestyle. To accept a lower standard of living is undoubtedly a challenge, but it is necessary. A Bible proverb states: "A shrewd man sees trouble coming and lies low." (Proverbs 22:3, *The New En-*

glish Bible) "To save money, my family had to move to our own house, smaller and with an unfinished interior," says Stephen. "The children had to transfer to less expensive schools that still provided quality education."

Open communication within the family is essential if adapting to a new lifestyle is to succeed. Austin, who worked for a financial institution for nine years before losing his job, says: "My wife and I sat down and itemized the things we *really* needed. We had to cut down on costly food items, expensive vacations, and unnecessary purchases of new clothes. I am glad that my family cooperated throughout these adjustments." Of course, young children may not fully comprehend why such adjustments are necessary, but as parents, you can help them to understand.

Be open to new types of work. If you have grown accustomed to a white-collar job, doing physical work may appear daunting. "It was psychologically difficult for me to accept menial jobs, having been used to managerial positions in a large firm," says Austin. This is hardly surprising in view of what the Bible says at Proverbs 29:25: "Trembling at men is what lays a snare." Filling your mind with what others may think will hardly put bread on the table. What can help you overcome such negative thinking?

Humility is a key. After losing his job in the hotel industry, Obed was invited to join a former workmate who owns a vehicle repair shop. This job involved walking long distances on dusty streets to procure auto paints and accessories. Obed says: "All the odds seemed to be stacked very high against me. Humility helped me adjust to a job that pays less than a quarter of my former salary but is adequate for my family's needs." Could you benefit from a similar outlook?

Be content. One dictionary defines a contented person as one who is "reasonably happy and satisfied with the way things are." Such a description may seem unrealistic to someone who is financially strapped. However, consider the words of the apostle Paul, a missionary who knew what it meant to be in want: "I have learned, in whatever circumstances I am, to be self-sufficient. I know indeed how to be low on provisions, I know indeed how to have an abundance."—Philippians 4:11, 12.

Our lot could perhaps be better, but in these changing times, it could also be much worse. We can truly benefit if we take to heart Paul's inspired counsel: "To be sure, it is a means of great gain, this godly devotion along with self-sufficiency. So, having sustenance and covering, we shall be content with these things." Without encouraging laziness, Paul was showing how to put physical needs in their proper place.—1 Timothy 6:6, 8.

Source of True Happiness

True happiness does not come from amassing everything that we might want or from living a life of ease and affluence. It was Jesus himself who said: "There is more happiness in giving than there is in receiving." Yes, happiness and satisfaction come from expending what we have to help others and to be a source of encouragement to them. —Acts 20:35.

Our Creator, Jehovah God, is very much aware of all our needs. Through his Word, the Bible, he has provided practical counsel that has helped many to improve their life and relieve unnecessary anxiety. Of course, the result will not be a sudden or dramatic improvement in a person's financial situation. But Jesus did assure those who keep on "seeking first the kingdom and [God's] righteousness" that all their daily necessities will be given them.—Matthew 6:33.



// OU need a challenge to take your mind off your exams," said my parents. "Let's go and visit your cousins in Ireland and share in preaching to people who rarely hear the good news of the Kingdom."

I didn't think it was a good idea. Besides studying for my exams, I felt nervous about the journey, as I had never been out of England or traveled on a plane. How would an active 17-year-old girl who lives in a busy London suburb cope with the slower pace of life in a small town at the southwest tip of Ireland?

I need not have worried. From the moment our plane landed, I was captivated. However, because of our very early morning start, I fell asleep soon after our journey by car began. Every now and then, I woke up to see flashes of rugged yet beautiful countryside appearing beyond the stone-walled narrow lanes.

The first night, we arrived at the town of Skibbereen and spent a delightful, spiritually upbuilding evening with a family who had moved to Ireland to help with the Kingdompreaching work. We played Bible charades. Each one of us picked the name of a Bible character out of a bag and then mimed an ex-

perience related to the character. The others had to guess who it was.

The next day, my parents, my younger brother, our cousins, another family, and I took the ferry to tiny Heir Island, home to fewer than 30 people. Jesus did say that the good news must be preached in *all* the inhabited earth. So we spent the day sharing encouraging Scriptural thoughts with these friendly and hospitable people and admiring the wonderful unspoiled landscape.

The sun shone in the clear blue sky. The air was filled with a soft, sweet fragrance, wafting from a mass of bright-yellow, coconut-scented gorse bushes. Spring flowers carpeted the island's marshy center. Sandy bays led up to rocky cliffs, where cormorants and gannets nested with their young. As far as the eye could see were scores of little islands, many uninhabited, all in the quaintly named Roaringwater Bay. How we appreciated the perfect harmony of Jehovah's creation!

Back in Skibbereen, I enjoyed making many good friends in the local congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses and tried to do things I had never done before. My favorite new experience was kayaking. There's nothing like seeing the coast of Ireland from a kayak! We





went fishing for our supper, but the seals that joined us got to the fish first. We invented our own beach games, and I even tried Irish dancing.

We took time to learn a little about Skibbereen too. When the Irish potato crop failed in the 1840's, the town and its surroundings were among the worst-affected areas. Thousands starved to death, and about 9,000 of the victims were buried in a mass grave. We felt comforted to know that soon under God's Kingdom rule, there will never again be famine, and multitudes who died so tragically will be restored to life on a paradise earth.

We joined the local Witnesses in visiting people who are seldom reached in the congregation's large territory. We drove down a narrow, steep road to houses perched on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Irish Sea. Once again, the people we met were friendly and welcoming. As we had done on Heir Island, we began by mentioning that we were on vacation and were spending some of that time sharing a heartwarming message from the Bible.

My mother talked to a woman who readily accepted our magazines, *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* When we met her again a few

days later, she said that she had enjoyed reading the magazines.

"Please come back with some more magazines and talk to me," she urged. We mentioned that we were just about to go home but would send someone to visit her.

"Well," she replied, "when you come back, please come and see me. The Irish never forget a face!"

Our last vacation day was spent on the beach with the brothers and sisters from the local congregation. We made our own barbecue out of driftwood and stones and cooked some mussels that we had gathered from among the rocks swept by the crystal-clear sea. This city girl loved every minute of it!

So, what did I think of my week in Ireland? It was the best vacation I've ever had! Not only was it great fun but it was especially satisfying to know that I was doing something pleasing to Jehovah and was bringing praise to him. I love serving our God, and when you have great friends and family who feel the same way and work along with you, it becomes even more of a joy. When I got home, I thanked Jehovah for giving me so many loving, spiritually-minded friends and for the beautiful memories that I shall treasure forever.









DID YOU KNOW?



Why were the Jews so interested in their genealogies?

■ Genealogical records were essential in establishing tribal and family relationships. They were also needed in determining land division and inheritances. Of particular importance was the lineage of the promised Messiah. The lews were well-aware that this One must come from the line of David of the tribe of Judah.—John 7:42.

Additionally, "since the offices of priest and Levite were hereditary . . . it was of the greatest importance that the purity of line remain unblemished," states scholar Joachim Jeremias. Israelite women who married into priestly families were required to produce their genealogies so that the priesthood would remain "unadulterated and pure." In Nehemiah's day, whole families of Levites were disqualified when they "looked for their register, to establish their genealogy publicly, and it was not found."-Nehemiah

Furthermore, the Mosaic Law stipulated that "no illegitimate son" nor any "Ammonite or Moabite may come into the congregation of Jehovah." (Deuteronomy 23:2, 3) For this reason, adds Jeremias, "pure ancestry had to be proved for a man to exercise any civic rights, and this fact confirms our conclusion that . . . even the simple Israelite knew his immediate ancestors and could point to which of the twelve tribes he belonged."

How did the Jews compile and preserve their genealogies?



■ The Gospel writers Matthew and Luke produced detailed genealogies of Jesus' forebears. (Matthew 1:1-16; Luke 3:23-38) Other genealogical records have also been preserved. For example, a Jewish midrash, or commentary, states concerning Hillel, a rabbi in Jesus' time: "A genealogical scroll was found in Jerusalem, in which it was written that Hillel was descended from David." First-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, in his work The Life, claimed that his ancestors were priests and that on his mother's side, he was "of royal blood." He stated that he found this information "recorded in the public registers."

As to custody of the records of priestly families, Josephus, in his work Against Apion, stated that his nation gave the task to "men of the highest character." The Jewish Encyclopedia states: "A special officer seems to have been entrusted with these records. and a court of inquiry is mentioned as having been instituted in Jerusalem." Nonpriestly Jews would register in their fathers' cities. (Luke 2:1-5) The resulting public archives were evidently consulted by the Gospel writers. Private records also seem to have been preserved by individual families.

"Impossible!"

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



"Yesterday's impossibilities [have become] the commonplace realities of today."

—RONALD REAGAN

THE *Titanic*, launched in 1912, was the largest and most luxurious ocean liner of its time. Because of its advanced scientific design, the vessel was considered "unsinkable." What happened, of course, is history. On its maiden voyage, it struck an iceberg in the North Atlantic and sank, taking down with it some 1,500 of its passengers. The ship that was said to be impossible to sink vanished in the depths of the ocean in just a few hours.

The word "impossible" can mean a number of things. We may describe something as impossible in the sense that we feel it is beyond our ability to cope with, to accomplish, or to understand. Many of today's technological accomplishments were at one time viewed as impossible because at the time, those things were beyond the ability of man to do or even to foresee. Putting a man on the moon, sending a vehicle to Mars and controlling it from Earth, mapping the human genetic code, and seeing a news event as it happens across town or across the globe-these are realities now that may have been described as impossible even just 50 years ago. The matter was well summarized by former U.S. President Ronald Reagan in an address to a group of leading figures in various fields of science: "You, on the cutting edge of technology, have already made yesterday's impossibilities the commonplace realities of today."

In view of the many astounding developments taking place, Professor John Brobeck observed: "A scientist is no longer able to say honestly something is impossible. He can only say it is improbable. But he may be able to say something is impossible to explain in terms of our present knowledge." If something appears impossible to us, the professor went on to say, "one thing that needs to be added is a source of energy unknown to us in our biological and physiological sciences. In our Scriptures this source of energy is identified as the power of God."

All Things Are Possible With God

Long before this observation was made by Professor Brobeck, Jesus of Nazareth, who has been described as the greatest man who ever lived, said: "The things impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18:27) God's holy spirit is the most powerful force in the universe. It cannot be measured in any technological way. Holy spirit can enable us to do things that are impossible in our own strength.

As humans, we often find ourselves in situations that we feel are impossible to deal with. For example, we may lose a loved one in death or our family life may become so stressful that we feel we cannot continue. Perhaps our way of life has taken us to the depths of despair and we feel there is no way out. We feel helpless and desperate. What can we do?

The Bible tells us that a person who has faith in the Almighty and prays for His holy spirit while doing everything possible to please Him can receive help to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Note Jesus' reassuring words: "Truly I say to you that whoever tells this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart but has faith that what he says is going to occur, he will have it so." (Mark 11:23) There is no situation that is impossible to bear or cope with if we allow the power of God's Word and his spirit to influence our life.

Consider, for example, a man who had been married for 38 years and lost his wife to cancer. He was shattered. He felt that his situation was impossible to live with. There were times when he wanted to die rather than continue without her. He said that he felt that he was going through a valley of deep shadow. Looking back, he believes that his tearful prayers and daily Bible reading, as well as his earnestly seeking the direction of God's spirit, helped him to cope with what he had thought was impossible.

The marriage of one couple was headed for disaster. The husband was violent and had many bad habits. Life seemed impossible for his wife. She attempted suicide. Then the husband began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. What he learned helped

> When life seems impossible, to whom do you turn?

him conquer his bad habits and violent temper. His wife was amazed at the "impossible" changes.

Another man describes his life of drugs and immorality as the pit of despair. "I lost all dignity," he says. He earnestly prayed to God: "Lord, I know that you exist. Please help me!" His prayer led to a study of the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses and, in turn, to unbelievable changes in his life. "I have often been plagued by feelings of guilt and a lack of self-worth," he says. "At times I have been extremely low in spirits. Yet, God's Word has helped me to fight these disturbing feelings. During sleepless nights, I would recite to myself Scriptural passages that I had learned. This mental housecleaning is especially helpful." He is now a happily married man. He and his wife are very active in helping others to have confidence in the power of God's Word. As a troubled young man, he would have considered his present life impossible.

These experiences demonstrate that God's Word is indeed powerful and that his holy spirit can accomplish "impossible" things in our lives. But you may say, "That takes faith!" Yes, that is true. In fact, the Bible says that "without faith it is impossible to please [God] well." (Hebrews 11:6) But think of it this way: A good friend, perhaps a bank manager



or someone in authority, tells you: "You must not worry. If you are ever in need of anything, just come to me." No doubt you would be comforted by such a promise. But, sadly, humans often fail us. Perhaps your friend comes into circumstances that make it impossible for him to fulfill his well-intentioned promise. Should your friend die, then all his good will and ability to help would come to an abrupt end. On the other hand, none of the things that can happen to humans can have any effect on God. The Bible assures us: "Nothing is impossible to God." —Luke 1:37, The Jerusalem Bible.

"Do You Believe This?"

Numerous events that attest to the truthfulness of that last statement are recorded in the Bible. Consider some examples.

A 90-year-old woman named Sarah laughed when she was told that she would give birth to a son, but the existence of the Israelite people is proof that she did. A man was swallowed by a large fish, survived the three-day experience, and lived to write his own story. His name was Jonah. Luke, a doctor who knew the difference between a state

of unconsciousness and death, records how Eutychus, a young man, fell from the window of an upper room and died but was brought back to life. These are not fables. A careful examination of each of these accounts will verify their authenticity.—Genesis 18:10-14; 21:1, 2; Jonah 1:17; 2:1, 10; Acts 20:9-12.

To his friend Martha, Jesus made this astonishing statement: "Everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all." To this seemingly impossible promise, Jesus added this soul-searching question: "Do you believe this?" That question is still valid today for our careful consideration.—John 11:26.

Live Forever on Earth—Impossible?

In a paper on the legal implications of longevity, the writers make this observation: "The time may not be far away where we may be able to live much longer than we do now—potentially forever." The New Encyclopædia Britannica explains that rather than cellular breakdown, wear and tear, or other processes, the cause of death seems to be some undetermined factor that makes the bodily processes malfunction or shut down.* It states: "It is possible that aging in an individual is actually due to a breakdown in the control mechanisms that are required in a complex performance."

While all of this is interesting, the Bible gives us a far stronger reason for believing in living forever than anything that logic and science might offer. Our Creator, Jehovah God, the Source of life, promises that "he will actually swallow up death forever." (Psalm 36:9; Isaiah 25:8) Do you believe this? That promise comes from Jehovah, and it is impossible for him to lie.—Titus 1:2.

^{*} For an in-depth discussion of aging and life span, see the cover series "How Long Can You Live?" in the May 2006 issue of *Awake!* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.





HAVE you ever been stubborn and refused to obey?—* Perhaps you watched a TV program that your mother or father said you shouldn't watch. You may have thought about it later and were sorry you disobeyed. The name of one person who at first refused to obey is Naaman. Let's see how he was helped not to be stubborn anymore.

Imagine we are living over 3,000 years ago. Naaman is an important Syrian military commander. He is used to telling his soldiers what to do, and they obey him. But Naaman gets a terrible skin disease called leprosy. It makes him look awful, and it probably hurts a lot too.

Naaman's wife has a little servant girl from Israel. One day the girl tells her mistress about a man named Elisha back in her home country. She says that he can heal Naaman. When Naaman hears of this, right away he wants to go to Elisha. He takes many gifts and travels with his soldiers to Israel. He goes to the king of Israel to let him know why he has come.

Elisha hears about this and sends a message for the king to send Naaman to him. When Naaman arrives at Elisha's house, Elisha simply sends a messenger out to tell Naaman to bathe seven times in the Jordan River. Elisha says doing this will make

^{*} If you are reading with a child, the dash provides a reminder to pause and encourage the child to express himself.

Naaman well. How do you think Naaman feels about this?—

He is angry. So he gets stubborn and refuses to obey God's prophet. He tells his soldiers: 'There are better rivers back home to bathe in.' Naaman starts to leave. *But do you know what his soldiers ask?*— 'Had it been a hard thing the prophet asked you to do, wouldn't you have done it? So why not obey when he asks you to do such a simple thing?'

Naaman listens and does what his soldiers say. Six times he jumps in the river and out again. On coming out of the water the seventh time, Naaman is amazed—his skin disease has disappeared! He is well again! Right away he travels back to Elisha's home some 30 miles (48 km) away to thank him. He wants to give Elisha expensive presents, but the prophet will not take anything.

So Naaman asks Elisha for something. Do you know what?— 'Let me have two muleloads of soil to take home.' Do you know why he wants that?— Naaman says that he wants to offer gifts of sacrifice to God on soil from the land of God's people, Israel. Naaman then promises never again to worship any god except Jehovah! He is stubborn no more but is willing to obey the true God.

Can you see how you can be like Naa-man?— If you are ever stubborn like he was, you can change. You can accept help and not be stubborn anymore.

READ IN YOUR BIBLE 2 Kings 5:1-19 Luke 4:27





What are some factors that make the Bible different from all other books? SEE THE SERIES ON PAGES 4-9.



For a glimpse of the ancient city of Thessalonica and the apostle Paul's ministry there, SEE PAGES 18-21.



How can you make ends meet when your income is reduced? SEE PAGES 22-23.



Are there some things that are said to be impossible but are really possible? SEE PAGES 27-29.

Would you welcome a visit?

Even in this troubled world, you can gain happiness from accurate Bible knowledge of God, his Kingdom, and his wonderful purpose for mankind. If you would welcome further information or would like to have someone visit you to conduct a free Bible study, please write to Jehovah's Witnesses at the appropriate address listed on page 4.

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