

The background of the entire page is a detailed oil painting. It depicts a biblical scene, likely the crossing of the Red Sea. A colossal, cascading waterfall of blue and white water dominates the left side of the frame. In the foreground, a chariot pulled by several brown horses is moving from left to right. A warrior in a purple and gold Egyptian-style headdress and armor sits in the chariot, holding a sword aloft. Other figures are visible in the chariot and in the background, which shows more horses and a hazy, golden-hued sky. The overall mood is one of divine power and historical drama.

AUGUST 1, 2012

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

# MIRACLES

DO THEY REALLY HAPPEN?

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

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

## FROM OUR COVER

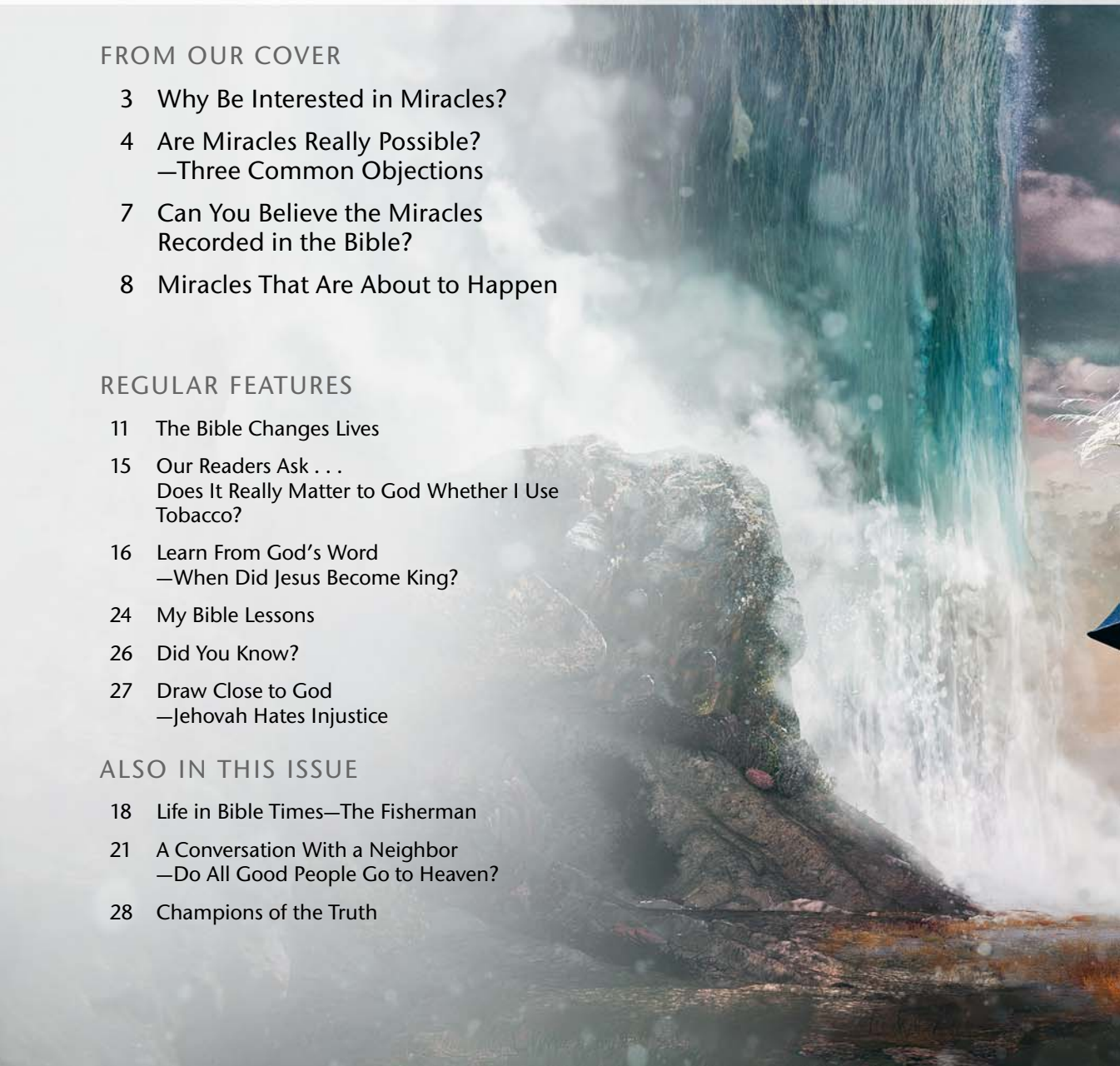
- 3 Why Be Interested in Miracles?
- 4 Are Miracles Really Possible?  
—Three Common Objections
- 7 Can You Believe the Miracles  
Recorded in the Bible?
- 8 Miracles That Are About to Happen

## REGULAR FEATURES

- 11 The Bible Changes Lives
- 15 Our Readers Ask . . .  
Does It Really Matter to God Whether I Use  
Tobacco?
- 16 Learn From God's Word  
—When Did Jesus Become King?
- 24 My Bible Lessons
- 26 Did You Know?
- 27 Draw Close to God  
—Jehovah Hates Injustice

## ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 18 Life in Bible Times—The Fisherman
- 21 A Conversation With a Neighbor  
—Do All Good People Go to Heaven?
- 28 Champions of the Truth







# WHY BE INTERESTED IN Miracles?

“Miracles, by definition, violate the principles of science.”  
—RICHARD DAWKINS, FORMER PROFESSOR FOR PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING  
OF SCIENCE.

“Belief in miracles is entirely rational. Far from being an embarrassment to religious faith, they are signs of God’s love for, and continuing involvement in, creation.”  
—ROBERT A. LARMER, PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

“DO YOU believe in miracles?” As shown by the above quotations, opinions vary drastically. But how would *you* answer that question?

You may be hesitant to answer, “Yes, I believe.” Perhaps you feel that to do so might indicate that you are somewhat superstitious or uneducated. Many feel that same way.

On the other hand, you may be convinced that miracles really do happen. You might believe in the miracles recorded in the Bible, such as Moses’ parting of the Red Sea. You may also believe that miracles occur in our time. In fact, a report recently issued revealed that “a significant proportion of the population of the Western world—for example around three-quarters of those in the United States and 38 per cent in Britain—continue to believe in miracles.” (*The Cambridge Companion to Miracles*, edited by Graham H. Twelftree) Moreover, belief in miracles is not limited just to Christians. According to the *Britannica Encyclopedia of World Religions*, belief in miraculous events “is a feature of practically all religions.”

Or you may belong to a third group, who would answer: “I don’t know, and I don’t care! Miracles don’t happen in my life!” Really, why should you be interested in miracles?

## WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

It is an event that surpasses all known human and natural powers and is usually attributed to some sort of supernatural power.

Consider this scenario: Imagine that you have an incurable disease. If you were to read a report in a reputable medical journal about a new medicine that might cure your sickness, would it not be worthwhile to expend at least a little time and energy to investigate the facts? Similarly, the Bible promises that soon some amazing miracles

will occur. They will affect the lives of every living creature on this planet. Would it not be worth some of your time and energy to find out whether that promise is reliable?

However, before we examine what those promised miracles are, let us answer three common objections concerning miracles.

# Are Miracles Really Possible?

## THREE COMMON OBJECTIONS

**OBJECTION 1: Miracles are impossible because they violate the laws of nature.** Our understanding of the laws of nature is based on what scientists have observed happening in the natural world around us. However, those laws are similar to the grammar rules for a language—there may be some exceptions to the rule. Our understanding of these “rules” may, in fact, be very limited. (Job 38:4) A dedicated scientist may have spent a lifetime studying a certain law of nature. But all it takes is one “exception” for him to have to reevaluate his understanding of that law. As the saying goes, “Just one black swan undoes the theory that all swans are white.”

A humorous story illustrates how easy it is to base an opinion on incomplete facts. John Locke (1632-1704) related this story about the Dutch ambassador and the king of Siam:

While describing his country, Holland, to the king, the ambassador mentioned that at times it was possible for an elephant to walk on water. The king rejected the idea and felt that the ambassador was lying to him. However, the ambassador was merely describing something that was beyond the king’s personal experience. The king did not realize that when water freezes and becomes ice, it can support the weight of an elephant. This seemed impossible to the king because he did not have all the facts.

Consider some modern accomplishments that may have been considered impossible just a few decades ago:

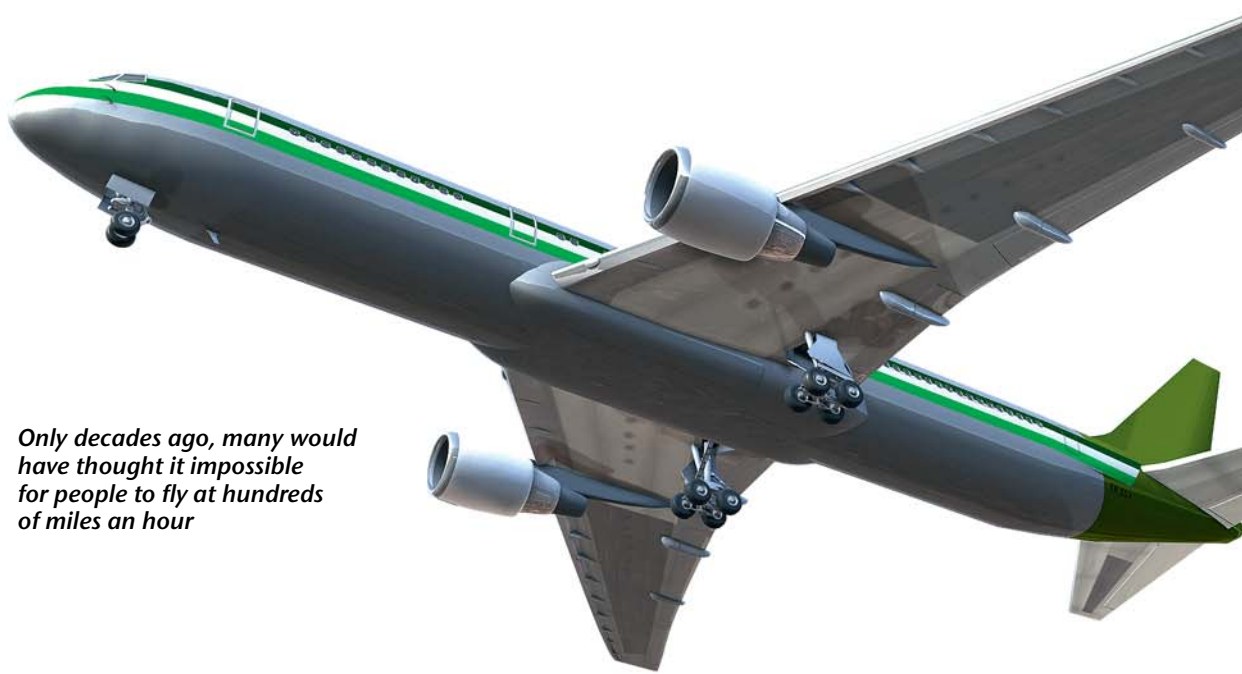
- An airplane can transport more than 800 passengers nonstop from New York to Singapore, traveling at a cruising speed of 560 miles per hour (900 km/h).



Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Jehovah’s Witnesses, using one of these addresses. For a complete list of addresses, see [www.watchtower.org/address](http://www.watchtower.org/address).

*America, United States of:* 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. *Australia:* PO Box 280, Ingleburn, NSW 1890. *Britain:* The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. *Canada:* PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. *Germany:* 65617 Selters. *Guam:* 143 Jehovah St, Barrigada, GU 96913. *Jamaica:* PO Box 103, Old Harbour, St. Catherine. *Japan:* 4-7-1 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa-Pref, 243-0496. *Puerto Rico:* PO Box 3980, Guaynabo, PR 00970. *South Africa:* Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. *Trinidad and Tobago:* Lower Rapsey Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe.

*The Watchtower* (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Walkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2012 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Printed in Canada.



*Only decades ago, many would have thought it impossible for people to fly at hundreds of miles an hour*

- Video conferences can enable people on different continents to engage in face-to-face conversations.
- Thousands of songs can be stored on a device smaller than a box of matches.
- Surgeons can transplant hearts and other body parts.

What logical conclusion can we draw from such facts? This: If humans can accomplish feats that just a few years ago seemed impossible, then surely the God who created the universe and all that is in it can perform amazing acts that we do not yet fully understand or cannot presently replicate.\*—Genesis 18:14; Matthew 19:26.

\* If you question the existence of God, please see the brochures *Does God Really Care About Us?* and *Was Life Created?* or ask the person who gave you this magazine for more information.

**OBJECTION 2: The Bible relies on miracles to make people believe.** The Bible does not tell us to believe all miracles. In fact, the opposite is true. The Bible *warns* us to be very careful when it comes to trusting miracles and powerful signs. Notice this clear warning: “The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives.” —2 Thessalonians 2:9, 10, *New International Version*.

Jesus Christ also warned that many would claim to follow him but would not be his genuine followers. Some would even say to him: “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” (Matthew 7:22, *NIV*) But Jesus said that he would not

**NOW PUBLISHED IN 195 LANGUAGES:** Acholi, Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Armenian, Armenian (West), Aymara,<sup>°</sup> Azerbaijani, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Baoulé, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cambodian, Catalan, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese (Simplified), Chinese (Traditional)<sup>°</sup> (audio Mandarin only), Chitonga, Chitumbuka, Chuukese, Cibemba, Croatian, Czech,<sup>°</sup> Danish,<sup>°</sup> Dutch,<sup>°</sup> Efik, English,<sup>°</sup> Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish,<sup>°</sup> French,<sup>°</sup> Ga, Garifuna, Georgian, German,<sup>°</sup> Greek, Greenlandic, Guarani,<sup>°</sup> Gujarati, Gun, Haitian Creole, Hausa, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian,<sup>°</sup> Icelandic, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Isoko, Italian,<sup>°</sup> Japanese,<sup>°</sup> Kannada, Kazakh, Kikaonde,

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

Serbian (Roman), Sesotho, Seychelles Creole, Shona, Si-lozi, Sinhala, Slovak, Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish,<sup>°</sup> Sranantongo, Swahili, Swati, Swedish,<sup>°</sup> Tagalog,<sup>°</sup> Tahitian, Tamil, Tatar, Telugu, Tetum, Thai, Tigrinya, Tiv, Tok Pisin, Tongan, Totonac, Tshiluba, Tshwa, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Tuvaluan, Twi, Tzotzil, Ukrainian, Umbundu, Urdu, Urund, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Waray-Waray, Wolaita, Xhosa, Yapese, Yoruba, Zande, Zapotec (Isthmus), Zulu

<sup>°</sup> Braille also available.

<sup>+</sup> CD also available.

<sup>°</sup> MP3 CD-ROM also available.

<sup>°</sup> Audio recordings also available at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).

accept those people as his followers. (Matthew 7:23) Obviously, then, Jesus did not teach that all miracles are from God.

God does not tell his worshippers to base their faith simply on miracles. Rather, their faith should be firmly established on facts.—Hebrews 11:1.

Let us consider, for example, one of the well-known miracles recorded in the Bible, the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Years after that event, some Christians in Corinth started to question whether Jesus had been resurrected. How did the apostle Paul help those Christians? Did he simply say, “Have more faith”? No. Notice how he reminded them of established facts. He stated that Jesus “was buried, yes, . . . he has been raised up the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that he appeared to upward of five hundred brothers at one time, the most of whom remain to the present.”—1 Corinthians 15:4-8.

Did it matter whether those Christians believed in that miracle? Paul goes on to say: “If Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:14) Paul did not take the matter lightly. Either the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus was true or it was not! And Paul knew that it was true because of the hundreds of eyewitness accounts of people who were still living at that time. In fact, those eyewitnesses were willing to die rather than deny what they had seen.—1 Corinthians 15:17-19.

**OBJECTION 3: Miracles are just natural phenomena that are misunderstood by uneducated people.** Some scholars try to explain the miracles in the Bible as merely natural events that occurred without divine intervention. They feel that this makes the Biblical accounts more believable. While it is true

that natural phenomena may have been associated with some miracles—such things as earthquakes, plagues, and landslides—these explanations have one thing in common. They disregard *the timing* of the miracle as explained in the Scriptures.

For example, some have argued that the first plague brought upon Egypt, the turning of the Nile River into blood, was actually the result of red soil that had been washed down the Nile, along with reddish organisms called flagellates. However, the Bible account says that the river was turned into blood, not red mud. A careful reading of Exodus 7:14-21 shows that this miracle occurred at the time that Aaron, at Moses’ direction, struck the Nile River with his rod. Even if the transformation of the river were caused by a natural occurrence, the timing of Aaron’s striking the river was in itself miraculous!

As another example of the importance of the timing of a miracle, consider what happened when the nation of Israel was poised to enter the Promised Land. Their way was blocked by the Jordan River at flood stage. The Bible account tells us what happened next: “At the instant that the carriers of the Ark came as far as the Jordan and the feet of the priests carrying the Ark were dipped in the edge of the waters . . . , then the waters descending from above began to stand still. They rose up as one dam very far away at Adam.” (Joshua 3:15, 16) Was this the result of an earthquake or a landslide? The account does not say. But the timing of this event was miraculous. It occurred exactly at the time Jehovah had said that it would.—Joshua 3:7, 8, 13.

So, then, are there such things as miracles? The Bible says that there are. According to what it tells us, these are not just natural phenomena. Really, then, is it logical to say that it is impossible for them to happen just because they do not occur every day?



# CAN YOU BELIEVE THE MIRACLES Recorded in the Bible?

**I**F YOU were told an amazing story, would not the credibility of the person telling the story affect whether you believe that story or not? Such credibility would involve not only the way the person told the story but also his personal record of truthfulness. After all, if over the years he had always told you the truth and had never deliberately lied to you, you would have good reason to believe what he now told you.

The same is true of miracles recorded in the Bible. None of us were alive when those

events occurred. But we can determine if the Bible's story is credible—if it has the ring of truth. How? Here are some factors that add credibility to Bible accounts of miracles.

**Many miracles were performed in public places.** At times, they were seen by thousands, if not millions, of observers. (Exodus 14:21-31; 19:16-19) They were not performed in secret, away from the eyes of the public.

**The miracles were marked by simplicity.** There were no special props or flashy displays, and there was no trick lighting. For the most part, the miracles recorded in the Bible occurred in response to chance encounters and requests from individuals. (Mark 5:25-29; Luke 7:11-16) In such cases the events could not have been staged by the one performing the miracle.

**The motive of those performing the miracles was not to gain fame, glory, and riches for themselves.** Rather, it was to bring glory to God. (John 11:1-4, 15, 40) Any effort by individuals to gain wealth from such miraculous powers was condemned.—2 Kings 5:15, 16, 20, 25-27; Acts 8:18-23.

**The variety of miracles recorded in the Bible indicates that they could not be merely the works of men.** For instance, the sea and the wind were calmed, water was changed into wine, rain was stopped and started, sick people were cured, and sight was restored to the blind. All those miracles and many more show that a superhuman power that can exercise influence over all forms of matter must have been behind such miracles.—1 Kings 17:1-7; 18:41-45; Matthew 8:24-27; Luke 17:11-19; John 2:1-11; 9:1-7.

**Opposers who observed the miracles did not question that they had occurred.** When Jesus resurrected his friend Lazarus, Jesus' religious enemies did not question that Lazarus had been dead. How could they? Lazarus

*Jesus' opposers did not question that Lazarus had been dead*



had been buried for four days. (John 11: 45-48; 12:9-11) Even centuries after Jesus' death, the writers of the Jewish Talmud continued to acknowledge that Jesus had miraculous powers. They simply questioned the *source* of those powers. Similarly, when Jesus' disciples were brought before a Jewish court, the question they were asked was not "Did you perform a miracle?" But they were asked: "By what power or in whose name did you do this?"—Acts 4:1-13.

So can you believe what the Bible tells us about miracles? From what we have just considered, it is clear that Bible accounts about miracles have the earmarks of credibility. There are other reasons for trusting these Bible accounts. For example, when the Bible relates an event, it often gives us the time, the place, and the names of the people involved. Even critics of the Bible have been amazed by the accuracy of the historical details found in the Bible. Hundreds of Bible prophecies have been fulfilled, even in the smallest of details. In addition, the Bible contains much advice about how to make human relationships happy—advice that has helped people of all ages and walks of life. When it comes to human relationships, the advice found in the Bible has proved to be without equal.

If you have not yet gained full confidence in the Bible, why not take the time to examine it more carefully? The more you get to know it, the more you will grow to trust it. (John 17:17) You will realize that you can trust what it tells you about the miracles that occurred in the past. Once you believe those accounts, you will have a good basis for trusting what the Bible says will happen in the near future.

# Miracles

## THAT ARE

# About to Happen

**I**F A surgeon was scheduled to perform a complicated procedure on you, how would you feel if you found out that he had never performed this type of surgery? No doubt you would be concerned. But what if, on the other hand, you found out that this doctor was the leading surgeon in his field and that he had performed hundreds of successful operations like the one you were about to have? Would you not have much more confidence that he could help *you*?

The sick world in which we find ourselves today needs drastic "surgery." Through his Word, the Bible, Jehovah God has promised that he will restore Paradise to this earth. (2 Peter 3:13) But for that to happen, wickedness will first have to be removed, completely cut away. (Psalm 37:9-11; Proverbs 2:21, 22) All the woeful conditions that we see around us must be eradicated before a paradise can be reestablished. It will literally take a miracle for that to happen! —Revelation 21:4, 5.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that those massive changes will soon occur. Why? Because the miracles Jehovah God has already performed prove that he has the power to fulfill his promises. Compare just six of the miracles recorded in the Bible with the promises it makes for the future.



**MIRACLE:**

**JESUS FED THOUSANDS WITH A FEW LOAVES AND FISHES.**

—MATTHEW 14:13-21; MARK 8:1-9; JOHN 6:1-14.

**PROMISE:**

*"The earth itself will certainly give its produce;  
God, our God, will bless us."*—PSALM 67:6.

**MEANING FOR US:**

**NO ONE WILL EVER AGAIN SUFFER FROM HUNGER.**



**MIRACLE:**

**JESUS RESTORED SIGHT TO THE BLIND.**

—MATTHEW 9:27-31; MARK 8:22-26.

**PROMISE:**

*"The eyes of the blind ones will be opened."*  
—ISAIAH 35:5.

**MEANING FOR US:**

**ALL BLIND PEOPLE WILL RECEIVE SIGHT.**

**MIRACLE:**

**JESUS CURED THE DISABLED.**

—MATTHEW 11:5, 6; JOHN 5:3-9.

**PROMISE:**

*"The lame one will climb up just as a stag does."*  
—ISAIAH 35:6.

**MEANING FOR US:**

**ALL PHYSICAL DISABILITIES WILL BE CURED.**



**MIRACLE:**

**JESUS CURED A VARIETY OF SICKNESSES.**

—MARK 1:32-34; LUKE 4:40.

**PROMISE:**

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

**MEANING FOR US:**

**ALL DEBILITATING SICKNESSES WILL BE REMOVED.  
WE WILL ENJOY PERFECT HEALTH.**



**MIRACLE:**

JESUS CONTROLLED THE ELEMENTS.

—MATTHEW 8:23-27; LUKE 8:22-25.

**PROMISE:**

*“They will certainly build houses and have occupancy; and they will certainly plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. They will not toil for nothing.”—ISAIAH 65:21, 23.*

*“You will be far away from oppression—for you will fear none—and from anything terrifying, for it will not come near you.”—ISAIAH 54:14.*

**MEANING FOR US:**

NATURAL DISASTERS WILL BE NO MORE.



**MIRACLE:**

JESUS RAISED THE DEAD.

—MATTHEW 9:18-26; LUKE 7:11-17.

**PROMISE:**

*“All those in the memorial tombs will . . . come out.”—JOHN 5:28, 29.*

*“The sea gave up those dead in it, and death and Hades gave up those dead in them.”—REVELATION 20:13.*

**MEANING FOR US:**

OUR DEAD LOVED ONES WILL BE RESURRECTED.

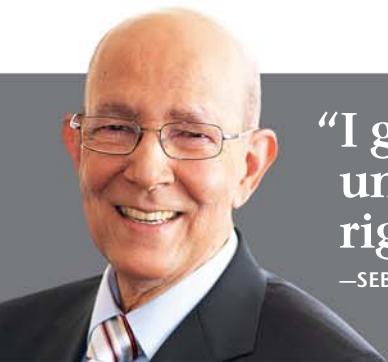


May you continue to learn about the Bible's promises for our future. As your faith grows, so will your hope—a hope to live at a time when you will personally benefit from the miracles that Jehovah performs.



# THE BIBLE CHANGES LIVES

WHY did a man who was raised in a staunch Catholic family and who had a successful career in law enforcement become one of Jehovah's Witnesses? What moved a terrorist to give up violence and become a minister of religion? Read what these people have to say.



**"I gained a deeper understanding of right and wrong."**

—SEBASTIÃO ALVES JUNQUEIRA

YEAR BORN: 1946

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: BRAZIL

HISTORY: JUDGE



**MY PAST:** My family lived in the country, some four miles (6 km) from the town of Piquete. My parents had a small farm, and the land provided our basic needs. The school I attended was in Piquete, so I eventually bought an old bicycle, which made traveling to town easier. The people in our area were poor, but the town was clean and had a relatively low crime rate. Most of the men in town worked in a factory that made weapons for the military.

I was studious and managed to enter the Aeronautical Military School in a nearby city where, in 1966, I graduated as a sergeant. I then went to law school and got my law degree. Later, I applied for the position of police chief. In 1976, I passed a government test and was chosen for the job. Sometimes my

work included being an administrator at the jail. During this time, Jehovah's Witnesses would often come and ask permission to preach to the prisoners. They always shared a Bible message with me too. I had a lot of respect for God. I was impressed to learn that God has a name, Jehovah, and that we can develop a friendship with him.

Gradually, I worked my way up the judicial ladder. In 1981, I passed another government exam and was made a state judge. Then, in 2005, I was appointed as a court of appeals judge in the court of São Paulo.

## **HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:**

Soon after I graduated from law school, I started reading the Bible—an act that brought about quite a change in my thinking. I was a staunch Catholic. We had priests and a bishop in the family, and I assisted the priest during Mass. Before he gave a sermon, I read assigned parts of the prayer book. It wasn't the norm in Catholic households to read the Bible. My mother was terribly upset when she learned that I was reading the Bible. She tried to discourage me, saying I risked losing my mind. Even so, I went on reading; I could see no harm in it.



I suppose that my curiosity spurred me on in my Bible reading. I wanted to know more about priests and their role in the church. I also started reading about the liberation theology movement, but the reasoning and logic used by its proponents was so flawed that I couldn't make any sense of it.

At the same time, my dentist, who was a Buddhist, offered me a book that had been given to him. The title of the book was *Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation?*\* I accepted the book, thinking that it would be interesting to read it along with *The Origin of Species*, by Charles Darwin. The arguments in *Did Man Get Here by Evolution or by Creation?* were forceful, logical, and convincing. There was no doubt in my mind that the evolution theory was unfounded.

My mother was terribly upset when she learned that I was reading the Bible

Reading the book on the topic of creation heightened my curiosity. I wanted to get hold of more books published by Jehovah's Witnesses. I was told that a mechanic in the aeronautics school was one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I talked to him, and he gave me some books to read. At the time, I didn't accept the offer to study the Bible with the Witnesses. I thought I could study it on my own.

When I started reading the Bible, I decided that since I was now married, it would be wise to read it with my family too. We had a family study every week and read the Bible together. As Catholics, my family's world revolved around the priests and bishops. So what I read at John 14:6 grabbed my attention: "Je-

---

\* Published by Jehovah's Witnesses but now out of print.

sus said to him [the disciple Thomas]: 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" After extensively investigating the subject, I was convinced that our salvation comes from Jehovah through Jesus. We had been led to believe that our salvation came from the priests.

Two other Bible passages changed my attitude toward the Catholic Church and its teachings. One is at Proverbs 1:7, which says: "The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge. Wisdom and discipline are what mere fools have despised." And the other is at James 1:5, which states: "If any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him." I had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and wisdom, which was not being satisfied by going to church. So I stopped attending.

In 1980, my wife started studying the Bible with the Witnesses. Whenever I was at home, I would sit in on the study. In time, I accepted a Bible study. However, we took a long time before we decided to get baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses. My wife was baptized in 1994, and I in 1998.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** My four children have benefited by being brought up to live by Jehovah's standards. (Ephesians 6:4) I have two sons, both of whom work hard to care for the spiritual needs of other Witnesses in the congregation where they attend. My two daughters are very zealous in preaching to others. My wife spends many hours each month helping people learn about the Bible, and I enjoy serving as an elder in the local congregation.

When I became one of Jehovah's Witnesses, I gained a deeper understanding of right and wrong. As a judge, I try to put Jehovah's way of dealing with different issues into practice in court—taking into consideration

all the circumstances, being reasonable, and being compassionate when there are mitigating circumstances.

I have dealt with many cases of violence, crime, and child abuse, as well as other serious criminal offenses. Even so, I haven't be-

come desensitized. As I watch the news, I am disgusted with the rampant moral decay and depravity in this world. I'm grateful to Jehovah that I've come to understand the reason behind the increase in crime, as well as the hope that we have of better days.



**“Prison didn’t rehabilitate me.”**

—KEITH WOODS

YEAR BORN: 1961

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:  
NORTHERN IRELAND  
HISTORY: TERRORIST

**MY PAST:** I was born in 1961 in Portadown, a busy town in Northern Ireland. I came from a Protestant background, and I grew up in a housing estate with a mixture of Catholic and Protestant neighbors. Most families were relatively poor. There wasn't a lot of money about, and we all lived in and out of one another's houses.

I had a lifestyle that I'm not proud of. In 1974, I got involved in the “Troubles” that then existed in Northern Ireland. About that time, things got worse in our communities. For example, one night my father, who was a manager of the Ulster Carpet Factory, was at work training two young Catholic lads who lived next door to us in our housing estate.



Meanwhile, someone hurled a bomb through the living room window of the home where the Catholic boys lived, killing their father, mother, and brother.

Problems escalated, and open war broke out. Protestants were burned out of Catholic areas, and Catholics were harassed in Protestant communities. Our estate became mainly Protestant. It wasn't long before I was arrested and sentenced to three years in prison for my involvement in bombing activity.

While in jail, I became good friends with a prisoner who

was a well-known figure in the loyalist community. We were like brothers, and later I was his best man at his wedding. Prison didn't rehabilitate me or him. When we were released, we went straight back to our political activities, only this time in a bigger way. As a result, my friend again found himself in prison. While there, he was murdered.

I also became a target, and on one occasion my car was blown up. But those events only made my determination to be active in the campaign for “God and Ulster” more firm.

During this time, I was involved in a documentary regarding the “Troubles,” which aired on British TV. The documentary created additional problems for me. For instance, one night I went home and discovered that my wife had left me. Shortly afterward, as a result of the TV program, my son was taken from me. I recall looking into a mirror and saying, “If there is a God out there, help me.”

The following Saturday, I met an acquaintance of mine named Paul, who had become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He started talking to me about the Bible. Two days later, Paul sent me a copy of *The Watchtower*. An article in that magazine quoted Jesus’ words recorded at John 18:36. He said: “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.” Those words made a big impression on me. That was the day my life began to change.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** Paul started to study the Bible with me. Later on, Bill, another Witness, continued the study. I know that I was a difficult student; I had so many questions! I also brought many religious ministers to my home to prove Bill wrong. But the truth of God’s Word shone through.

I recall on one occasion telling Bill not to come to my house for the study because there were roadblocks around the estate and his car would surely be confiscated and burned. However, Bill came for the study as usual. He left his car at home and rode his bicycle. Who would want to confiscate that? On another occasion, Bill and I were sitting in my home having a Bible study when the police and the army came to arrest me. As they carted me away, Bill called out and told

me to trust in Jehovah. Those occasions made a big impression on me.

The first time that I attended a meeting of Jehovah’s Witnesses at the Kingdom Hall must have been a shock for some of them. I had long hair and an earring, and I wore a trademark leather jacket. However, I couldn’t believe how well the Witnesses treated me. Their kindness really impressed me.

Even though I was studying the Bible, I was still involved with my old associates. Eventually, however, the truths I learned from the Bible began to sink deeper into my heart. I realized that if I wanted to serve Jehovah, I had to change my political viewpoints and associations. That wasn’t easy to do. But as I learned more about the Bible and drew strength from Jehovah, I was able to make changes. I cut my hair, removed my earring, and bought a suit. What I was learning also started to improve my attitude toward other people.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** I had lived a life of crime and terrorism. My face was well-known by the law-enforcement groups in the community. Now things are different. For example, when I attended my first convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses, which was held in the town of Navan, the law-enforcement authorities escorted me all the way through Ireland and Northern Ireland. Now, though, I travel to conventions without an escort. I also now share freely with my fellow Witnesses Paul and Bill and the rest of the congregation in the preaching work.

As my life changed for the better, I settled into the congregation. There I met a Witness named Louise, and we were married. In addition, my son and I were reunited.

When I look back on my life, I regret having caused hurt and harm to others. But I can confirm that the Bible really does enable people like me to change from a life of misguided actions to one of purpose and hope.



## Does it really matter to God whether I use tobacco?

■ A sincere person may ask that question, since no law in the Bible mentions tobacco products. Does that fact mean that God's thinking on the matter is difficult to discern? No, not at all.

The Bible says that "all Scripture is inspired of God." (2 Timothy 3:16) The Scriptures contain clear principles and statements that reveal how God wants us to care for our health. First, let us review what researchers have discovered about the impact that tobacco use has on human health. Then we will consider how Bible principles relate to those findings.

**Tobacco damages a user's health and is a leading cause of preventable death.** In the United States, tobacco use is to blame for 1 out of every 5 deaths. In that country, it kills more people each year than "alcohol, illegal drug use, homicide, suicide, car accidents, and AIDS combined," states a report from the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

**Those who smoke tobacco harm others.** There is no safe amount of exposure to cigarette smoke. Nonsmokers who inhale secondhand smoke increase the risk of developing lung cancer and heart disease by up to 30 percent. In recent years, doctors have identified another danger that they call "third-hand smoke." This term refers to the chemical residues left on clothes, carpets, and other surfaces that linger long after the visible smoke dissipates. Those poisonous chemicals especially harm the health of children and can retard their ability to learn.

**Tobacco is addictive.** It makes the user a slave to the damaging habit. In fact, researchers believe that addiction to nicotine, a key chemical in tobacco, is one of the most difficult addictions to break.

How do Bible principles relate to those facts? Note the following:

**God wants us to respect life.** In the Law, which God gave to the nation of Israel, he indicated that those who want to please him must respect human life. (Deuteronomy 5:17) Israelites had to build a parapet, or low wall, around the edge of the roof of their houses. Why? The roofs were flat and were used as a living space. The wall prevented the family and others from falling and being injured or killed. (Deuteronomy 22:8) In addition, the Israelites had to ensure that the animals they owned did not cause injury to others. (Exodus 21:28, 29) A person who uses tobacco violates the principles that underpin those laws. He willingly damages his own health. In addition, his smoking endangers the health of those around him.

**God expects us to love him and to love our neighbor.** Jesus Christ stated that his followers should obey the two greatest commandments. They must love God with their whole heart, soul, mind, and strength and love their neighbor as themselves. (Mark 12:28-31) Since life is a gift from God, a person who uses tobacco shows a gross lack of respect for that gift and thus a lack of love for God. (Acts 17:26-28) That person's habit can cause serious harm to others, so he belies any claim he makes to love his neighbor.

**God requires that we avoid unclean habits.** The Bible instructs Christians to cleanse themselves of "every defilement of flesh and spirit." (2 Corinthians 7:1) Tobacco use obviously defiles a person. Those who want to quit smoking to please God face a difficult challenge. But with God's help, they can break free from this defiling addiction.



## LEARN FROM GOD'S WORD

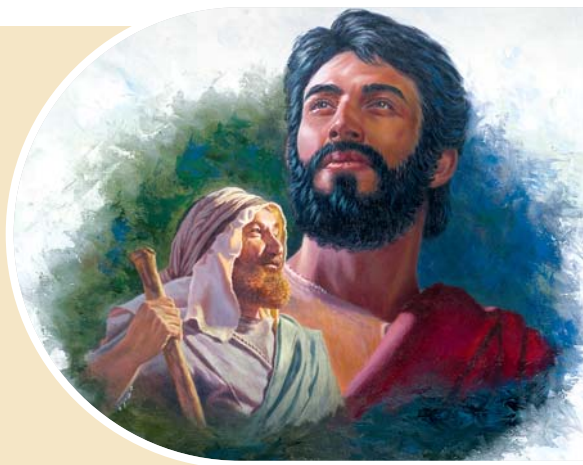
# When Did Jesus Become King?

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. What kingdom was Jesus promised?

God promised that a descendant of King David would sit upon His throne to time indefinite. That foretold descendant is Jesus, and in heaven he is now reigning as King of God's Kingdom.—*Read Psalm 89:4; Luke 1:32, 33.*

When David was still a boy, God chose him to be king over Jehovah's people, Israel. When David died, Solomon, whom Jehovah had chosen, sat upon "Jehovah's throne." (1 Chronicles 28:4, 5; 29:23) After Solomon died, many kings ruled in Jerusalem, but most were unfaithful. Finally, Jehovah allowed the armies of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and to remove its reigning king. That happened in the year 607 B.C.E. Since that time, no king in David's family line has ruled from the literal city of Jerusalem.—*Read Ezekiel 21:27.*



### 2. For how long did the rulership that David and Jerusalem represented lie dormant?

Shortly after Jerusalem's destruction, Jehovah told his prophet Daniel that God would choose a king who would rule from heaven. When would his rule begin?—*Read Daniel 7: 13, 14.*

Daniel interpreted a vision in which God ordered that an immense tree be cut down, just as God had ordered that the kingdom in Jerusalem be cut down and destroyed. But the tree's root was to be left in the ground

so that after "seven times" it would grow again. The Bible indicates that three and a half "times" equals 1,260 days, so "seven times" equals 2,520 days. (Revelation 12:6, 14) In Bible prophecy, days often represent years. (Numbers 14:34) So, God's Kingdom would lie dormant for 2,520 years.—*Read Daniel 4: 10-17.*

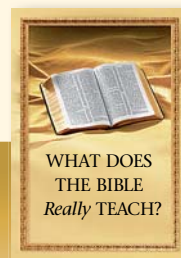
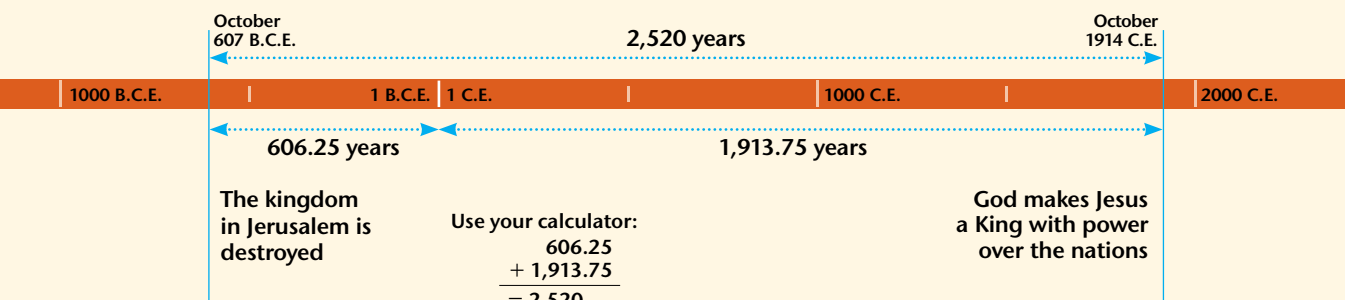
### 3. When did Jesus become King?

God enthroned Jesus as King in heaven in 1914, exactly 2,520 years after Jerusalem's destruction. Jesus' first act as King was to expel Satan and his demons from heaven. (Revelation 12:7-10) That event was invisible to human eyes, but it resulted in a visible crisis for mankind. (Revelation 12:12) Events since 1914 confirm that Jesus became King in that year.—*Read Matthew 24:14; Luke 21: 10, 11, 31.*



### 4. What does Jesus' kingship mean for you?

The fulfillment of prophecies about Jesus' kingship proves that you can rely on God's Word. Soon, Jesus will use his kingly power to relieve mankind of all suffering.—*Read Psalm 72:8, 12, 13; Daniel 2:44.*



For more information, see pages 215-218 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



# The Fisherman

*“Walking alongside the sea of Galilee he [Jesus] saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, letting down a fishing net into the sea, for they were fishers. And he said to them: ‘Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.’”*

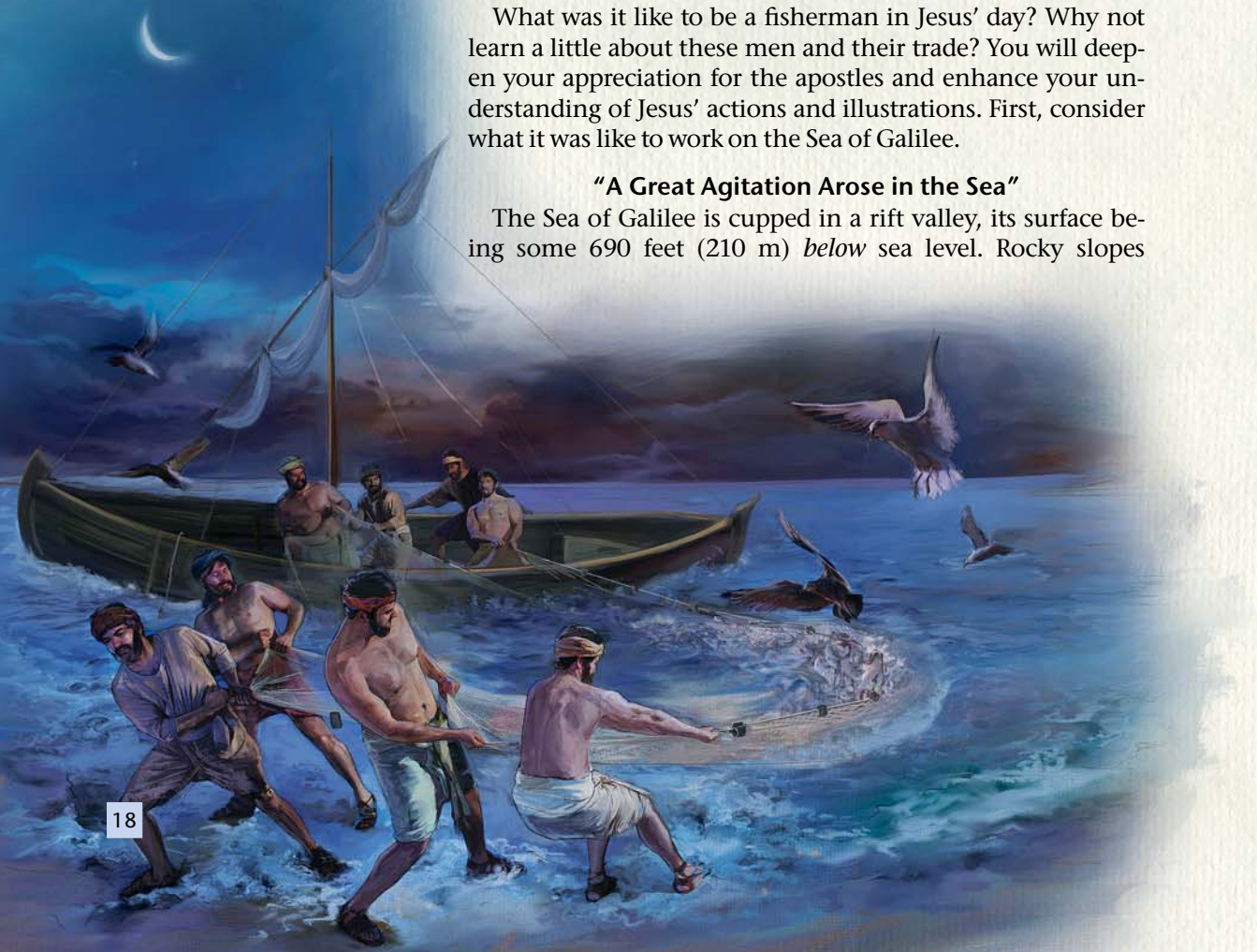
—MATTHEW 4:18, 19.

**F**ISH, fishing, and fishermen are mentioned often in the Gospel accounts. In fact, Jesus used a number of illustrations about fishing. And no wonder! He spent much of his time teaching near or on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. (Matthew 4:13; 13:1, 2; Mark 3:7, 8) This beautiful freshwater lake is some 13 miles (20.92 km) long and 7 miles (11.27 km) wide. As many as seven of Jesus’ apostles—Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Thomas, and Nathanael—may have been fishermen.—John 21:2, 3.

What was it like to be a fisherman in Jesus’ day? Why not learn a little about these men and their trade? You will deepen your appreciation for the apostles and enhance your understanding of Jesus’ actions and illustrations. First, consider what it was like to work on the Sea of Galilee.

## “A Great Agitation Arose in the Sea”

The Sea of Galilee is cupped in a rift valley, its surface being some 690 feet (210 m) *below* sea level. Rocky slopes





flank its shores, and to the north, majestic Mount Hermon juts into the sky. In winter, frigid winds may at times whip up choppy waves. In summer, hot air blankets the surface waters. With little notice, violent storms tumble down from the surrounding mountains and release their fury on sailors traversing the sea. Jesus and his disciples were caught in just such a storm.—Matthew 8: 23-27.

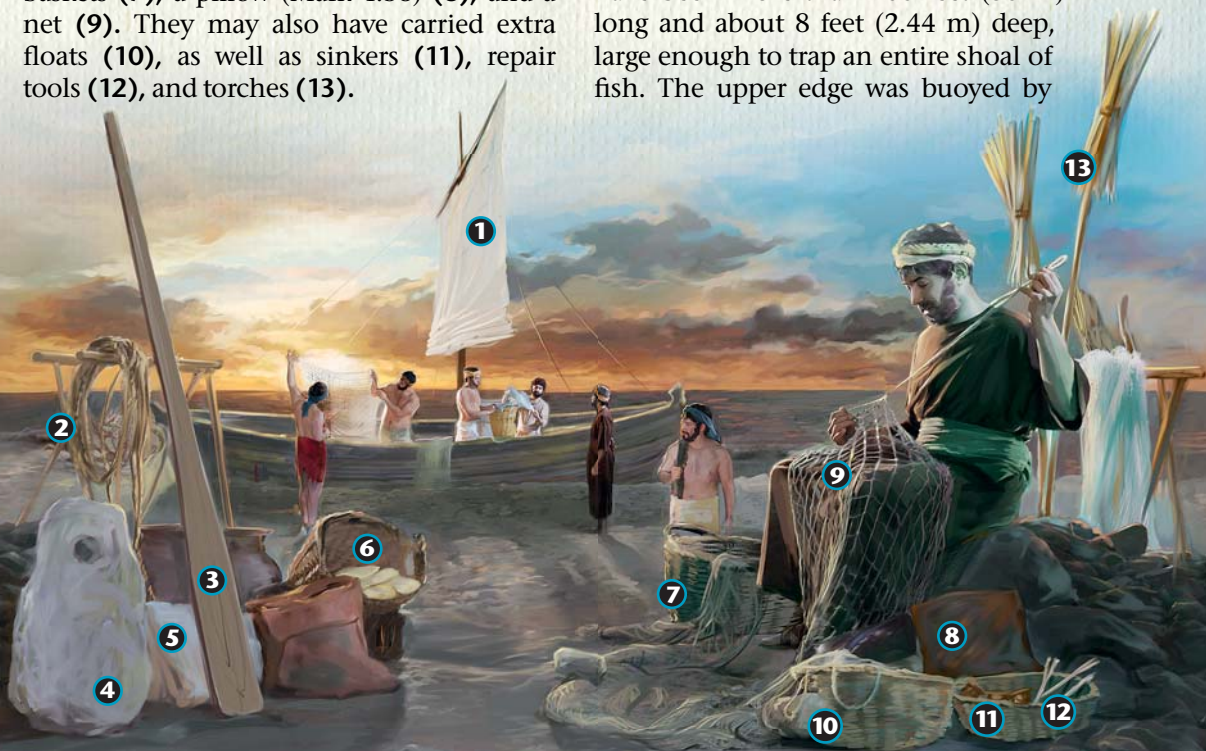
Fishermen sailed wooden boats that were approximately 27 feet (8.27 m) long with about a 7.5-foot (2.3 m) beam. Many of their boats had a mast and a cabinlike shelter under the stern deck. (Mark 4:35-41) These slow but sturdy craft bore the stress of winds that pushed the sail and mast in one direction while the weight of a net tugged in the other.

Men maneuvered the boat using oars mounted on both sides. A crew might consist of six or more fishermen. (Mark 1:20) In addition, the boats likely carried gear and supplies, such as a linen sail (1), rope (2), oars (3), a stone anchor (4), warm, dry clothes (5), food provisions (Mark 8:14) (6), baskets (7), a pillow (Mark 4:38) (8), and a net (9). They may also have carried extra floats (10), as well as sinkers (11), repair tools (12), and torches (13).

### **“They Enclosed a Great Multitude of Fish”**

Today, as in the first century, the most productive fishing grounds in the Sea of Galilee are located near the mouths of the many springs and rivers that feed the sea. At these locations, vegetable matter enters the sea and draws the fish. To catch their quarry, fishermen in Jesus’ day often worked at night, using torches. On one occasion, some of Jesus’ disciples fished all night without success. But the next day, at Jesus’ direction, they let down their nets again and caught so many fish that they almost sank their boats.—Luke 5:6, 7.

Sometimes the fishermen sailed to deep waters. At the fishing grounds, two boats worked as a team. The men stretched a net between the boats; then the crews rowed strenuously in opposite directions, letting out the net as they encircled the fish. The boats completed the circle, and the trap closed. The fishermen then heaved on the ropes attached to the corners of the net, hauling the catch into the boat. The net might have been more than 100 feet (30 m) long and about 8 feet (2.44 m) deep, large enough to trap an entire shoal of fish. The upper edge was buoyed by





floats, and the lower fixed with weights. The fishermen set their net, and then hauled it in again and again, hour after hour.

In shallower waters, a team of fishermen would use a different technique. A boat took one end of the dragnet from the beach out to sea and circled back to shore, enclosing the fish. Men on shore then hauled in the net, dumped the catch onto the beach, and sorted the fish there. They placed the acceptable ones in vessels. Some were sold fresh locally. Most were dried and salted or pickled, stored in clay amphoras, and exported to Jerusalem or foreign lands. Creatures without scales or fins, such as eels, were considered unclean and were discarded. (Leviticus 11:9-12) Jesus referred to this method of fishing when he likened “the kingdom of the heavens” to a dragnet and the different types of fish to good and bad people.—Matthew 13:47-50.

A lone fisherman might use a line with baited bronze hooks. Or he could use a small casting net. To cast the net, he would wade into the water, position the net on his arm, and then toss it up and away from his body. The dome-shaped net would spread out, land on the water, and then sink. If the fisherman was fortunate, the net enclosed a few fish as he drew it back by its center rope.

Nets were expensive and required hard

work to maintain, so the men used them with care. Much of a fisherman’s time was spent mending, washing, and drying nets—chores he performed at the completion of every fishing trip. (Luke 5:2) The apostles James and his brother John were sitting in their boat mending their nets when Jesus invited them to follow him.—Mark 1:19.

Among the species of fish sought by first-century fishermen was the abundant tilapia. This species was a regular part of the diet for most people in Galilee, and Jesus likely ate this good-tasting fish. It could have been dried-and-salted tilapia that Jesus used when performing the miracle of feeding the thousands with two fish. (Matthew 14:16, 17; Luke 24:41-43) This same species of fish often swims with its young in its mouth. However, when not carrying its young, it may carry a pebble in its mouth, or it might even gather up a shiny coin lying on the bottom of the sea.—Matthew 17:27.

In the first century, successful fishermen were patient, hardworking, and willing to endure hardship in the pursuit of a worthwhile reward. Those who accepted Jesus’ invitation to join him in the disciple-making work likewise needed such qualities if they were to be effective “fishers of men.”—Matthew 28: 19, 20.







JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES enjoy discussing the Bible with their neighbors. Do you have a particular Bible question that you have wondered about? Are you curious about any of the beliefs or religious practices of Jehovah's Witnesses? If so, do not hesitate to bring up the subject the next time you come in contact with a Witness. He or she will be pleased to discuss such matters with you.

## A Conversation With a Neighbor

# Do All Good People Go to Heaven?

The following is a typical conversation that one of Jehovah's Witnesses might have with a neighbor. Let us imagine that a Witness named Marcus has come to the home of a man named Robert.

---

### What Will Those Who Go to Heaven Do There?

**Marcus:** When you consider the future, do you think that things are likely to improve, become worse, or stay the same?

**Robert:** I feel that things will improve. I look forward to going to heaven to be with the Lord.

**Marcus:** That's a wonderful hope. The Bible talks a lot about what heaven is like and the privilege of going there. Have you given much thought to what those who go to heaven will do there?

**Robert:** We will be with God and praise him forever.

**Marcus:** That's certainly an appealing prospect. Interestingly, the Bible talks not only about the *privileges* that those who go to heaven will receive but also about an important *responsibility* they'll have.

**Robert:** What's that?

**Marcus:** It's the responsibility mentioned here in Revelation 5:10. That verse says: "You [Jesus] made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth." Did you notice, Robert, what responsibility those who go to heaven will shoulder?

**Robert:** The verse says that they'll rule as kings over the earth.

**Marcus:** That's an interesting thought, isn't it?

### Over Whom Will They Rule?

**Marcus:** Now, would you not agree that if those who go to heaven will rule as kings, there must be people over whom they'll rule? After all, what's the point of a government without any subjects?

**Robert:** I see your point.

**Marcus:** So a logical question to ask is, Whom will they rule over?

**Robert:** I suppose we'll rule over the people on earth who haven't died and gone to heaven yet.

**Marcus:** That would seem reasonable—if *all* good people go to heaven. But here's another possibility to consider. Could it be that

some people—*some* good people—will not go to heaven?

**Robert:** I've never heard of any Christians who believe that.

**Marcus:** I raise the question because of what we read at Psalm 37:29. Would you please read this verse?

**Robert:** OK. It says: "The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it."

**Marcus:** Thank you. Did you notice where many good people will live?

**Robert:** The verse says they'll reside on the earth.

**Marcus:** Precisely—and not just for a short time. Notice that the verse says: "They will reside *forever* upon it."

**Robert:** Maybe that just means that there will always be good people on earth. When we die and go to heaven, we're replaced by other good people who have been born.

**Marcus:** Many would probably interpret the verse that way. But is it possible that the verse means something else altogether? Could it be saying that good people themselves will live forever on earth?

**Robert:** I'm not sure I follow you.

### A Future Earthly Paradise

**Marcus:** Well, consider what another portion of the Bible says about life on earth in the future. Let's read Revelation 21:4. Concerning people who will live at that future time, the verse says: "He [God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away." Isn't that an appealing prospect?

**Robert:** Yes. But I think that's talking about what life will be like in heaven.

**Marcus:** Well, it's true that those who go to heaven will experience similar blessings. But

look at the verse again. What does it say will happen to death?

**Robert:** It says that "death will be no more."

**Marcus:** Exactly. Now, I'm sure you would agree that for something to be no more, it had to exist in the first place.

**Robert:** Of course.

**Marcus:** But there has never been death in heaven, has there? It's only here on earth that people die.

**Robert:** Hmm. I'll have to think about that.

**Marcus:** You see, Robert, the Bible teaches that some good people will go to heaven but that many others will live forever here on earth. In fact, I'm sure you've heard the famous words: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."—Matthew 5:5, *King James Version*.

**Robert:** Yes, I've heard that passage read at church many times.

**Marcus:** If the meek inherit the earth, doesn't that imply that people will be living on the earth? Those who live on the earth will enjoy the benefits foretold here in Revelation. They will see our world completely change because God will do away with everything bad—even death.

**Robert:** I see what you're getting at, but I'm not sure that just one or two Bible verses prove your point.

**Marcus:** Of course not. Actually, there are a number of scriptures that talk about what life here on earth will be like in the future. Perhaps I can show you one of my favorite passages, if you have a moment?

**Robert:** Yes, I have a few minutes.

### "The Wicked One Will Be No More"

**Marcus:** Earlier we read verse 29 of Psalm 37. Let's go back to that psalm. This time, we'll read verses 10 and 11. Would you please read those verses?



**Robert:** Sure. “And just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be. But the meek ones themselves will possess the earth, and they will indeed find their exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”

**Marcus:** Thank you. Looking at verse 11, where will “the meek ones,” or good people, live?

**Robert:** It says they “will possess the earth.” However, I feel that this verse applies right now; after all, good people live on earth today.

**Marcus:** That’s true. However, notice that the verse also says that good people will enjoy an “abundance of peace.” We don’t see much peace in the world today, do we?

**Robert:** No, we don’t.

**Marcus:** So how will the promise be fulfilled? Maybe I could use this comparison: Imagine you own an apartment building. Some of the tenants are good people—they take care of their apartment and try to be good neighbors. You’re glad to rent an apartment to them. But others are bad tenants; they damage the property and make life miserable for their neighbors around them. Now, if those bad tenants refused to clean up their act, what would you do?

**Robert:** I’d evict them.

**Marcus:** That’s exactly what God is going to do to the bad people around us today. Look again at verse 10. It says: “The wicked one will be no more.” In other words, God will “evict” the people who make trouble for others. Then good people will be able to enjoy life on earth in peace. I realize that this idea of good people living forever on earth may be somewhat different from what you’ve been taught in the past.

**Robert:** Yes, I’ve never heard that idea at my church.

**Marcus:** And as you mentioned before, it’s not enough to consider just one or two verses on the subject. Really, we need to examine what the Bible *as a whole* says about the future of good people. But based on the scriptures we’ve read today, do you think it’s possible that some good people will go to heaven, while many other good people will live forever here on earth?

**Robert:** I’m not sure. But I have to admit that it does appear that way from the scriptures you just read. I’ll have to think about it some more.

**Marcus:** As you consider the subject further, there may be other questions that come to mind. For example, what about good people who have lived before us? Did they all go to heaven? If not, where are they now?

**Robert:** Interesting questions.

**Marcus:** Perhaps I can do two things for you. First, let me jot down a few scriptures that have a bearing on the topic.\* Second, I’d like to come back and discuss those scriptures after you’ve had a chance to read them and think about them. Would that be OK?

**Robert:** Yes, that sounds good. Thank you.

\* See Job 14:13-15; John 3:13; and Acts 2:34.



## *My Bible Lessons*

Caleb learns that his friend is sick.

So, he says: “I know what **I’ll do.**”



I’ll write him  
**a letter**

to make him  
**feel better,**





and then I'll  
**deliver it too!"**

**Show kindness,  
and you'll both be  
happy!**

*1 Peter 3:8*

**ACTIVITIES**

**Have your child point to:**

House  
Sun

Desk  
Bird

Caleb  
Tree

Mention a friend who is not feeling well, and talk to your child about how both of you can encourage that person.

## DID YOU KNOW?

### Where did the precious stones on the breastpiece of Israel's high priest come from?



■ After the Israelites left Egypt and entered the wilderness, God gave them orders to make this breastpiece. (Exodus 28:15-21) The breastpiece had stones of ruby, topaz, emerald, turquoise, sapphire, jasper, *leshem*, agate, amethyst, chrysolite, onyx, and jade.\* Did the Israelites really have access to those types of gems?

In Bible times, people prized precious stones and traded them. The ancient Egyptians, for example, obtained gemstones from as far away as what is now modern-day Iran, Afghanistan, and possibly even India. Egyptian mines produced a number of different

precious stones. The Egyptian monarchs had a monopoly on mineral extraction in the territories they controlled. The patriarch Job described how his contemporaries used shafts and underground galleries to search for treasures. Among other items dug from the ground, sapphire and topaz are specifically mentioned by Job.—Job 28:1-11, 19.

The Exodus account states that the Israelites “stripped the Egyptians” of their valuables when leaving the land. (Exodus 12:35, 36) So it is possible that the Israelites obtained from Egypt the stones used on the high priest’s breastpiece.

\* It is difficult to identify all these stones according to modern terminology.

### Why was wine used as medicine during Bible times?



PEASANTS TREADING GRAPES, FROM THE TOMB OF NAKHT, THEBES, EGYPT

Gianni Dagli Orti/The Art Archive at Art Resource, NY

■ In one of his parables, Jesus spoke of a man who had been beaten by robbers. Jesus said that the man was helped by a Samaritan who bound up his wounds and poured “oil and wine upon them.” (Luke 10:30-34) When writing to his friend Timothy, the apostle Paul advised him: “Do not drink water any longer, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent cases of sickness.” (1 Timothy 5:23) Were both the practice Jesus described and the advice Paul gave medically sound?

The book *Ancient Wine* describes wine as “an analgesic, disinfectant, and general remedy all rolled into one.” In

ancient times wine had a central role in Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Syrian health treatment. *The Oxford Companion to Wine* describes it as “man’s oldest documented medicine.” As for Paul’s advice to Timothy, the book *The Origins and Ancient History of Wine* says: “It has been shown experimentally that living typhoid and other dangerous microbes rapidly die when mixed with wine.” Modern research confirms that some of the more than 500 compounds found in wine have those and a number of other medicinal benefits.



# Jehovah Hates Injustice

**“M**AN has dominated man to his injury.” (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Those words, recorded some 3,000 years ago, accurately describe the world in which we live. Humans tend to abuse power, no matter who they are or where they live. All too often they victimize the vulnerable and the disadvantaged. How does Jehovah feel about such injustices? We find the answer at Ezekiel 22:6, 7, 31.—**Read.**

In his Law to Israel, Jehovah made it clear that those in positions of authority must never misuse their power. He would bless the nation only if the leaders treated the lowly and the poor with kindness and consideration. (Deuteronomy 27:19; 28:15, 45) In Ezekiel’s day, however, chieftains in Jerusalem and Judah were abusing their power in heinous ways. What was happening?

The chieftains were using their “arm for the purpose of shedding blood.” (Verse 6) The term “arm” represents power or authority. Another translation thus says: “The princes of Israel . . . have used their power to shed blood.” How can there be justice when leaders who should preserve and promote lawfulness abuse their power and snuff out innocent lives?

Following this, Ezekiel evidently indicts not just the leaders but also those who followed them in disobeying Jehovah’s Law. “Father and mother they have treated with contempt,” says Ezekiel. (Verse 7) By disregarding the rightful place of parents, the people tore apart the basic fabric of the nation—the family.—Exodus 20:12.

The corrupt people exploited the vulnerable among them. Each unlawful act showed a disregard for the loving spirit behind God’s Law to Israel. For example, God’s Law directed the Israelites to show special consideration for the non-Israelites dwelling among them. (Exodus 22:21;

23:9; Leviticus 19:33, 34) But the people “acted with defrauding” toward the alien resident.—Verse 7.

The people also maltreated those who were defenseless—the “fatherless boy and widow.” (Verse 7) Jehovah is especially sensitive to the needs of those who lose a parent or a spouse in

Jehovah made it clear that those in positions of authority must never misuse their power

death. God promised that he himself would execute judgment on those who afflicted a helpless child or widow.—Exodus 22:22-24.

In these and other ways, the Israelites in Ezekiel’s day broke God’s Law and trampled on the loving spirit embodied in it. What would Jehovah do? “I shall pour out my denunciation upon them,” he promised. (Verse 31) True to his word, he allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and take her people captive in 607 B.C.E.

Ezekiel’s words teach us these two lessons about Jehovah and injustice: First, he hates it; second, he has compassion for its innocent victims. God has not changed. (Malachi 3:6) He promises that soon he will remove injustice and those who foment it. (Proverbs 2:21, 22) Why not learn more about the God who “is a lover of justice” and how you can draw closer to him? —Psalm 37:28.

---

**SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR AUGUST:**

■ **Ezekiel 21-38**

---



## Champions of the Truth

**M**ARCH 10, 2012, was a special day at the educational center of Jehovah's Witnesses in Patterson, New York. Thousands of well-dressed people, including visitors from foreign lands, were coming together to attend the graduation of the 132nd class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead. Many filed into the auditorium at Patterson; others gathered to watch the program on video monitors at satellite locations. In all, 9,042 attended.

Anticipation was high. Unlike those who attended previous classes of the missionary school, all of the graduating students had already been in some form of special full-time service—having served as Bethelites, special pioneers, traveling overseers, or missionaries—although not having previously attended Gilead. What would be said to these experienced students?

The audience did not have to wait long to find out. Gerrit Lösch, a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, was chairman for the program and delivered the opening talk. He asked a thought-provoking question, **"Are You a Champion?"** He explained that Christians are champions of the truth, defending the entire body of Christian teachings. Upholding the truth involves not only teaching people the truth but also helping people to love the truth.

"How do we know we have the truth?" asked Brother Lösch. He noted that the proof is not found in the numbers of people who accept it. Though there are millions today who have accepted pure worship, there were only a few at Pentecost 33 C.E. He listed five

ways by which we know we have the truth: (1) We remain in Jesus' teaching, (2) we love one another, (3) we adhere to God's high moral standards, (4) we remain neutral in the controversies of this world, and (5) we are God's name people.

### **"Follow Through and Obey Direction"**

Those in the audience wondered what was coming next when Geoffrey Jackson of the Governing Body strolled to the lectern carrying a suitcase! The title of his talk was "Follow Through and Obey Direction," based on Isaiah 50:5. Speaking prophetically of Jesus Christ, that verse says: "I, for my part, was not rebellious. I did not turn in the opposite direction."

Brother Jackson urged the students to be sensitive to the direction Jehovah gives through his holy spirit, the Bible, and his organization. In the parable of the talents, recorded at Matthew 25:14-30, each slave got the same amount, in a sense, because what the slaves received was according to their ability. They were expected to do their best. Two slaves were commended and were called "good and *faithful*" slaves. Faithfulness does not necessarily depend on results but on following through and obeying direction.

The third slave was called "wicked and sluggish" and "good-for-nothing." What was his problem? He buried his talent. A talent was, not a coin, but a unit of weight the equivalent of 6,000 denarii, which would weigh 45 pounds (20 kg). That is about the weight a person is allowed in a suitcase when traveling internationally. It would have tak-



en effort to bury anything the size of a suitcase. So the slave did *something*—he buried the talent—but that was not what he was directed to do. Similarly, a missionary may be busy—but busy doing what? Writing newsletters, surfing the Internet, socializing, or engaging in business? Such a person could be totally exhausted at the end of the day after engaging in such activities, but he did not do what he was directed to do. Brother Jackson concluded: “Always follow direction!”

### **“Rid Your Mind of Doubts”**

That was the theme of the talk given by Anthony Morris of the Governing Body. “The Bible never links faith and doubt as belonging together,” he said. “Faith repels doubt.” Satan succeeded in planting doubts in the mind of a perfect woman, Eve, so he can plant doubts in our mind. “Feed your faith, and doubts will starve to death,” Brother Morris said. He drew attention to the account of Peter, who “walked over the waters” but then, on “looking at the windstorm,” got afraid and started to sink. After catching hold of him, Jesus asked him: “Why did you give way to doubt?” (Matthew 14:29-31) “As busy as you missionaries will be in full-time service, others may be impressed at all that you do, as though you were walking on water, but when storms hit, do not give way to doubt.”

Brother Morris continued, observing that while going through stormy times can be difficult, eventually the winds die down. As to hard times, he exhorted the students to consider what Paul and Silas did when jailed in Philippi. Acts 16:25 relates: “About the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and praising God with song; yes, the prisoners were hearing them.” Note this detail: They did not just pray, they sang. Their singing was loud enough for other prisoners to hear. Most of us, Brother Morris comment-

ed, do not have trained voices, but we should not shy away from singing, especially when going through a crisis. Brother Morris concluded by reading the words of “Enduring to the End,” Song number 135 in the songbook *Sing to Jehovah*.

### **Other Talks of Encouragement**

“Will You Love Enough Days?” was the title of the talk given by Robert Luccioni, of the Purchasing Department. The theme was drawn from King David’s words recorded at Psalm 34:12. Brother Luccioni’s talk considered how to handle difficult times and still maintain a good relationship with Jehovah. Much may be learned from the account at 1 Samuel chapter 30. While David, his men, and their families were on the run from King Saul, they lived in exile in Ziklag. When their families were taken captive by Amalekite raiders, the men blamed David and wanted to stone him. David’s reaction? He did not give in to discouragement but “took to strengthening himself by Jehovah his God.” (1 Samuel 30:6) He inquired of Jehovah, acted in harmony with God’s direction, and rescued the captives. The speaker assured the students that if they show similar trust in Jehovah and obey his direction, they will love enough days to see good. They will have a delightful life in the precious privilege they have been given.

“Keep Your Eyes Ahead of the Night Watches” was the theme of the talk delivered by Michael Burnett, one of the Gilead School instructors. The Israelites divided the night from sundown to sunrise into three watches of four hours each. The final one, from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m., was the darkest and coldest and was the time it was most difficult to stay awake. The psalmist occupied his mind with Jehovah’s sayings so that during the final watch of the night, he would

not drift off to sleep. (Psalm 119:148) "You will need to be watchful," Brother Burnett told the students. "You will have some dark discouraging days and will see the effects of the cold, loveless world. You need a plan of action." He then reminded them that they should tackle challenging study projects in order to keep themselves spiritually watchful. Brother Burnett illustrated his point: "Each day, you pray to Jehovah because you want him to be your friend. So, let Jehovah, as your friend, talk to you every day through the pages of the Bible. The night is well along, so plan how you will use your days ahead, and in that way you will keep your eyes ahead of the night watches."

**"Trained for the Work Ahead,"** based on 1 Peter 5:10, was the theme chosen by Mark Noumair, another Gilead instructor. He posed this question to the students: "Since you are experienced ministers, why were you invited to the Watchtower Educational Center?" The answer: "Because you are professionals in your field. Many professionals take time off from work to attend classes to sharpen their skills. During the past five months, Jehovah has been making you 'firm' and 'strong' by a thorough study of his Word and organization so that you can carry the weighty responsibilities that come your way. Timbers that are firm do not warp, twist, or pull apart under pressure. The results of your training will be revealed as you work with your fellow brothers and sisters. Will the pressure cause you to pull away from godly principles, or will you hold firm, straight in line with what you learned from God's Word? Something that is strong can carry a load. The strength of timbers lies in a tightly woven grain. Your strength is determined by the innermost fibers of who you are. Jehovah brought you here to make you strong, reliable, and trustworthy for the work ahead."

God has done his part, so our prayer is that you do your part and allow your 'Grand Instructor' to finish your training."

### Experiences and Interviews

It is always refreshing at Gilead graduations to hear from the students themselves, and this time was no exception. During one portion of the program, the students reenacted some of their recent witnessing activity. One French couple, for example, had a six-hour wait at an airport on their way to Gilead School. At the airport restaurant, they struck up a conversation with two men who were also waiting for flights. When one of the men said that he was from Malawi, they spoke to him in Chichewa. Surprised, he asked them how they knew his language. They explained that they were missionaries in Malawi. When the other man said he was from Cameroon, they switched to French, to his surprise. Both men thought highly of Jehovah's Witnesses, and the missionaries witnessed to them.

Two student couples were interviewed by Nicholas Ahladis, of Translation Services. One couple had moved from Australia to take up a missionary assignment in war-torn East Timor. The other couple had left Korea to serve in Hong Kong. Both couples were eager to return to their foreign assignments to apply what they learned at the school.

After diplomas were handed out to the graduates, a student representing the class read a letter of appreciation for the instruction they had received. Then, Brother Lösch, in his concluding remarks, employed some beautiful figures of speech, saying that truth is like a rainbow for beauty, like an oasis in the desert, and like an anchor in a stormy sea. "What a blessing it is to know the truth," he said. "Be a champion of the truth, and help others to be champions as well."

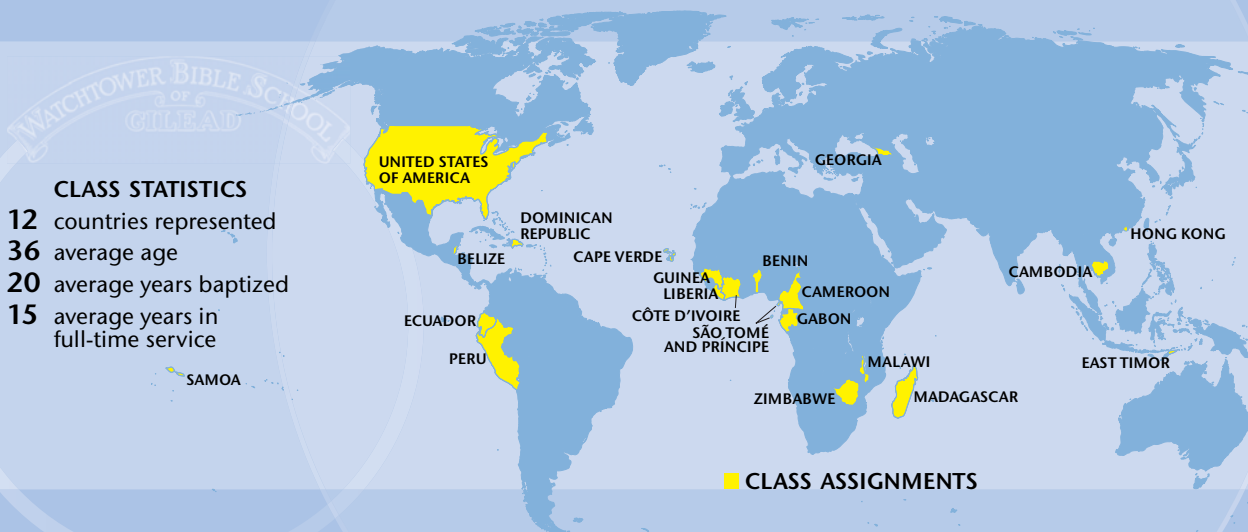


## 132nd Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back, and names are listed from left to right in each row.

- (1) Iap, R.; Iap, J.; Ng, T.; Ng, P.; Laurino, F.; Laurino, B.; Won, S.; Won, S.
- (2) Morales, N.; Morales, M.; Zanutto, J.; Zanutto, M.; Rumph, I.; Rumph, J.; Germain, D.; Germain, N.
- (3) Atchadé, Y.; Atchadé, Y.; Thomas, C.; Thomas, E.; Estigène, C.; Estigène, P.
- (4) Ehrman, D.; Ehrman, A.; Bray, J.; Bray, A.; Amorim, M.; Amorim, D.; Seo, Y.; Seo, Y.
- (5) Simon, J.; Simon, C.; Seale, C.; Seale, D.; Erickson, J.; Erickson, R.
- (6) McCluskey, D.; McCluskey, T.; Brown, A.; Brown, V.; Mariano, D.; Mariano, C.; Loyola, Y.; Loyola, C.
- (7) Rutgers, P.; Rutgers, N.; Foucault, P.; Foucault, C.; Wunjah, J.; Wunjah, E.

Class assigned to the countries shown below:







**Is it reasonable to believe in miracles?**

SEE PAGES 4-8.



**Does it really matter to God whether a person uses tobacco?** SEE PAGE 15.



**When did Jesus become King?**

SEE PAGES 16-17.



**Do all good people go to heaven?**

SEE PAGES 21-23.



**How can you help your child to show kindness?**

SEE PAGES 24-25.

## **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.