

JANUARY 1, 2013

# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



SHOULD YOU FEAR  
THE END OF THE WORLD?

THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end 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 continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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## To Our Readers

The magazine you are now reading began to be published in July 1879. Times have changed since then—and so has this journal. (See photos above.) Beginning with this issue, you will notice further changes in the format of *The Watchtower*. What will be different?

Look at the table of contents on page 2, and notice the heading “Read More Online.” Each month, you will see under that heading the titles of articles that will be available only on the Web site **www.jw.org**. Why publish some articles online?

In many countries, more and more people obtain information online and feel comfortable with this approach. With the click of a mouse, they can tap into sources of information available only on the Internet. Many books, magazines, and newspapers can be read online.

With this trend in mind, we recently re-designed our Web site **www.jw.org**, making it more appealing and easier to navigate. Visitors to the site can read publications that have appeared in more than 430 languages. Beginning this month, however, visitors to our Web site can also read selected features that have regularly appeared in our printed magazines but will now appear only on our Web site.\*

\* Among the articles that will appear only online are the following: “For Young People,” which outlines youth-oriented Bible study projects, and “My Bible Lessons,” a series designed for parents to use with children who are three years of age and under.

Since we will be publishing more articles only online, the public edition of *The Watchtower* will be reduced from 32 pages to 16, effective with this issue. Already *The Watchtower* is published in 204 languages. With the shorter format, it may now be possible to translate this journal into even more languages.

It is our hope that these adjustments will enable us to reach more people with the Bible’s lifesaving message. We are determined to continue providing a rich supply of enlightening and appealing information—both in print and online—to benefit our many readers who respect the Bible and who want to know what it really teaches.

### *The Publishers*

ONLINE 

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# THE END OF THE WORLD

## FEAR, FASCINATION, AND FRUSTRATION

How do you feel about December 21, 2012, the date on the Maya calendar that many have been saying would bring worldwide change? Depending on what you expected, you might be relieved, disappointed, or indifferent. Was it just another incorrect prediction for the end of the world?

What about “the end of the world” described in the Bible? (Matthew 24:3, *King James Version*) Some fear that the earth will be burned up. Others are fascinated by end-time scenarios. Many have simply grown tired of being told that the end is near. But could those be reactions to fiction rather than to fact?

You might be surprised to learn what the Bible really says about the end of the world. Not only does the Bible give reasons to look forward to the end but it also acknowledges the frustration that can set in if the end seems to be overdue. We invite you to consider the Bible’s answers to some common questions about the end of the world.



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## Will the earth be burned up?

**THE BIBLE'S ANSWER:** “[God] has founded the earth upon its established places; it will not be made to totter to time indefinite, or forever.”—PSALM 104:5.

The earth will not be destroyed, either by fire or by any other means. Instead, the Bible teaches that this planet is mankind’s eternal home. Psalm 37:29 says: “The righteous themselves will possess the earth, and they will reside forever upon it.”—Psalm 115:16; Isaiah 45:18.

After God created the earth, he said that it “was very good,” and he still feels that way. (Genesis 1:31) Far from planning to destroy it, he promises to “bring to ruin those ruining the earth” and to protect it from permanent damage.—Revelation 11:18.

You may wonder, though, about 2 Peter 3:7. That Bible verse says: “The heavens and the earth that are now are stored up for fire.” Does this not show that the earth will be burned up? Actually, the Bible sometimes uses the terms “heavens,” “earth,” and “fire” figuratively, as symbols. For example, when Genesis 11:1 says: “All the earth continued to be of one language,” it uses “earth” to mean human society.

The context of 2 Peter 3:7 shows that the heavens, earth, and fire mentioned there are also symbols. Verses 5 and 6 draw a parallel with the Flood of Noah’s day. On that occasion, an ancient world was destroyed, yet our planet did not disappear. Instead, the Flood wiped out a violent society, or “earth.” It also destroyed a kind of “heavens”—the people who ruled over that earthly society. (Genesis 6:11) In the same way, 2 Peter 3:7 foretells the permanent destruction of wicked society and its corrupt governments as if by fire.

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## What happens at the end of the world?

**THE BIBLE'S ANSWER:** “The world is passing away and so is its desire, but he that does the will of God remains forever.”—1 JOHN 2:17.

“The world” that is to pass away is, not the earth, but the world of mankind whose lives are not in harmony with God’s will. Just as a surgeon might remove a cancerous tumor to save a patient’s life, God will “cut off” the wicked so that good



people can truly enjoy life on earth. (Psalm 37:9) In that sense, “the end of the world” is a good thing.

Such a positive view of “the end of the world” is implied by the Bible translations that render this expression “the conclusion of the system of things” or “the end of the age.” (Matthew 24:3; *New International Version*) Since both humankind and the earth survive the end, does it not seem reasonable that a new age, a new system of things, would follow? The Bible answers yes, for it speaks of “the coming system of things.” —Luke 18:30.

Jesus called that future period “the renewal of all things.” At that time, he will restore humanity to the conditions that God originally intended. (Matthew 19:28, *NIV*) We will then enjoy

- A paradise earth with security and prosperity for all.  
—Isaiah 35:1; Micah 4:4.
- Work that is meaningful and satisfying.  
—Isaiah 65:21-23.
- The curing of all disease.—Isaiah 33:24.
- The reversal of aging.—Job 33:25.
- The resurrection of the dead.—John 5:28, 29.

If we do “the will of God,” what he asks of us, we need not fear the end of the world. Instead, we can look forward to it.

## Is the end of the world really near?

**THE BIBLE’S ANSWER:** “When you see these things occurring, know that the kingdom of God is near.”

—LUKE 21:31.

In the book *The Last Days Are Here Again*, Professor Richard Kyle writes that “sudden change and social chaos create an atmosphere conducive to predictions of the end of the world.” That is especially the case when the change and chaos seem hard to explain.

However, the Bible prophets who spoke about the end were not trying to explain baffling events of their day. Instead, they were *inspired by God* to describe conditions that would indicate an imminent end of the world. Consider some of those prophecies and decide for yourself whether they are being fulfilled in our time.

- Wars, famines, earthquakes, and epidemics of deadly disease.—Matthew 24:7; Luke 21:11.
- Significant increase in crime.—Matthew 24:12.
- The ruining of the earth by mankind.—Revelation 11:18.
- People who love themselves, money, and pleasures but do not love God.—2 Timothy 3:2, 4.
- The breakdown of the family.—2 Timothy 3:2, 3.
- General apathy toward the evidence of the approaching end.—Matthew 24:37-39.
- The preaching of the good news of God's Kingdom worldwide.—Matthew 24:14.

As Jesus said, seeing “all these things” lets us know that the end of the world is near. (Matthew 24:33) Jehovah’s Witnesses believe that the evidence is convincing, and they share their faith with others by preaching in 236 lands.

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Do mistaken expectations about the end mean that it will never come?

**THE BIBLE’S ANSWER:** *“Whenever it is that they are saying: ‘Peace and security!’ then sudden destruction is to be instantly upon them just as the pang of distress upon a pregnant woman; and they will by no means escape.”—1 THESSALONIANS 5:3.*

The Bible likens the world’s destruction to the onset of labor—the mother’s pain is inevitable and comes suddenly. The time leading up to the end is also like a pregnancy, for an expectant mother is aware of ever-increasing signs of the coming birth. Her doctor might estimate the birth date; yet, even if the event should delay, she would still be sure that her baby will soon be born. Similarly, any mistaken expectations about the end do not alter the unmistakable features identifying these as “the last days.”—2 Timothy 3:1.

‘If the sign that we are near the end is so obvious,’ you might ask, ‘why do so many people fail to recognize it?’ The Bible shows that when the end is near, many will belittle the evidence. Rather than acknowledge the fundamental changes during the last days, they would scoff: “From the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly



as from creation’s beginning.” (2 Peter 3:3, 4) In other words, the sign of the last days is clear, but many will ignore it.—Matthew 24:38, 39.

This article has considered just some of the Scriptural evidence that the end is near.\* Would you like to learn more? If so, why not contact Jehovah’s Witnesses to accept their offer of a free Bible study? Study sessions can be held in your home, at another place convenient to you, or even over the phone. The only cost is your time, and the potential benefits are priceless. ■

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\* For more information, see chapter 9, “Are We Living in ‘the Last Days’?,” of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

## HAVE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES GIVEN INCORRECT DATES FOR THE END?

Jehovah’s Witnesses have had wrong expectations about when the end would come. Like Jesus’ first-century disciples, we have sometimes looked forward to the fulfillment of prophecy ahead of God’s timetable. (Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2) We agree with the sentiment of longtime Witness A. H. Macmillan, who said: “I learned that we should admit our mistakes and continue searching God’s Word for more enlightenment.”

Why, then, do we continue to highlight the nearness of the end? Because we take

seriously Jesus’ words: “Keep looking, keep awake.” The alternative, to be found “sleeping” by Jesus, would prevent us from gaining his favor. (Mark 13:33, 36) Why?

Consider this example: A lookout in a fire tower might see what he thinks is a wisp of smoke on the horizon and sound what proves to be a false alarm. Later, though, his alertness could save lives.

Likewise, we have had some wrong expectations about the end. But we are more concerned with obeying Jesus and saving lives than with avoiding criticism. Jesus’ command to

“give a thorough witness” compels us to warn others about the end.—Acts 10:42.

We believe that even more important than focusing on *when* the end will come, we must be confident that it *will* come, and we must act accordingly. We take seriously the words of Habakkuk 2:3, which says: “Even if [the end] should delay [compared to what you thought], keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true. It will not be late.”



# “You Have . . . Revealed Them to Babes”

Do you want to know the truth about God—who he is, what he stands for, and what his will is? In his Word, the Bible, Jehovah God reveals the whole truth about himself. But not just anyone can read the Bible and fully grasp that truth. Why? Because grasping such spiritual truth is a matter of privilege; not everyone receives it. Let us consider what Jesus said in this regard.—**Read Matthew 11:25.**

That verse begins with the words: “At that time Jesus said in response.” So, what Jesus is about to say is perhaps in response to what has just occurred. He has just rebuked the unresponsive people of three Galilean cities where he had performed powerful works. (Matthew 11:20-24) You might wonder, ‘How could anyone see Jesus’ miraculous works and not respond to the truths he taught?’ The unresponsiveness of the people had to do with their stubborn attitude of heart.—Matthew 13:10-15.

Jesus knew that to unlock the spiritual truth found in the Bible, we need two things: God’s help and the right heart attitude. Jesus explains: “I publicly praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and intellectual ones and have revealed them to babes.” Do you see why it is that grasping the spiritual truth found in the Bible may be considered a matter of privilege? Jehovah, the “Lord of heaven and earth,” may hide or reveal the truth according to his sovereign will. But God is not arbitrary in this matter of revelation. On what basis does he reveal Bible truth to some and not to others?

Jehovah favors the humble, not the haughty. (James 4:6) He hides the truth from “wise and

intellectual ones”—worldly-wise and learned ones who in their pride and self-reliance feel no need for his help. (1 Corinthians 1:19-21) But he reveals the truth to “babes”—those who come to him with sincere hearts, showing childlike humility. (Matthew 18:1-4; 1 Corinthians 1:26-28) God’s Son, Jesus, saw such responses firsthand. Many proud, highly educated religious leaders did not get the sense of Jesus’ message, but humble fishermen did. (Matthew 4:18-22; 23:1-5; Acts 4:13) At the same time, some wealthy and educated ones *who showed genuine humility* became Jesus’ followers.—Luke 19:1, 2, 8; Acts 22:1-3.

We come back to the question raised at the outset: Do you want to know the truth about God? If so, you may find comfort in knowing that God does not favor those who consider themselves worldly-wise. On the contrary, he favors those whom the worldly-wise may look down on. If you study God’s Word with the right attitude of mind and heart, you may be among those to whom Jehovah gives a precious gift—an understanding of the truth about him. Grasping that truth will add meaning to your life now and can lead to “the real life”—endless life in God’s promised new world of righteousness soon to come.\*—1 Timothy 6:12, 19; 2 Peter 3:13. ■

\* Jehovah’s Witnesses would be pleased to help you to learn the truth about God and his purposes. They offer free home Bible studies, using the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR JANUARY  
Matthew 1-21



AS TOLD BY BRIAN HEWITT

YEAR BORN:

1981

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN:

UNITED STATES

HISTORY:

PRODIGAL SON



## “I have finally found true freedom”

**MY PAST:** I was born in Moundsville, a quiet town along the Ohio River in northern West Virginia, U.S.A. I was the second of four children, three of whom were boys, so there was seldom a dull moment in our home. My parents were hardworking, honest people with a love for others. We never had a lot financially, but we always had what we needed. As Jehovah’s Witnesses, my parents did their best to instill Bible principles in us when we were young.

By the time I was an adolescent, however, my heart had already begun to be lured away from what I had been taught. I questioned whether a life guided by Bible principles could be meaningful or satisfying. I reasoned that absolute freedom was the only way to be truly happy. Before long, I stopped attending Christian meetings. Two of my siblings joined me in the same rebellious course. Our parents did everything they could to try to help us, but we rejected their efforts.

Little did I realize that the so-called freedom I desired would lead me into the clutches of addiction. One day while I was walking home from school, a friend offered me a cigarette. I accepted. From that day forward, I said yes to many other destructive practices. In time, I was abusing drugs and alcohol and living immorally. Over the next several years, I progressively experimented with harder drugs and became a slave to many of them. Spiraling deeper into my addictions, I began selling drugs to support my lifestyle.

As much as I tried to ignore my conscience, it regularly reminded me that the way I was living was wrong. Yet, I felt that the damage had been done and that there was no turning back. Despite being surrounded by people at parties and concerts, I would often feel alone and depressed. At times, I would think of how decent and good my parents are and wonder how I had strayed so far.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** Even though I had given up on myself, others had not. In the year 2000, my parents invited me to attend a district convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I reluctantly went along. To my surprise, so did my two siblings who had also strayed.

While at the convention, it dawned on me that I had been to the same venue for a rock concert about a year earlier. The contrast I saw touched my deepest emotions. At the concert, the facility was littered with garbage and filled with cigarette smoke. Most of the concertgoers were unfriendly, and the message in the music was depressing. But at the convention, I was surrounded by genuinely happy people—people who warmly welcomed me, even though I hadn’t seen them in

**“The Bible empowered me to stop using and selling drugs and become a productive member of society”**

years. The facility was clean, and the message being presented was one of hope. Seeing the positive effect of Bible truth made me wonder why I had ever rejected it!—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

Immediately following the convention, I decided to return to the Christian congregation. My siblings, also moved by what they had experienced at that convention, decided to return as well. All three of us accepted personal Bible studies.

A Bible verse that especially moved me was James 4:8, which says: “Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you.” I realized that if I wanted to draw close to God, I would have to clean up my life. Among other changes, I needed to stop using tobacco and stop abusing drugs and alcohol.—2 Corinthians 7:1.

I broke off my old friendships and replaced them with new ones—from among Jehovah’s worshippers. The Christian elder who studied the Bible with me was particularly helpful. He regular-

ly phoned me and stopped by to see how I was doing. To this day, he is one of my closest friends.

In the spring of 2001, I symbolized my dedication to God by water baptism, as did my two siblings. You can imagine the joy of my parents and faithful younger brother when our family was finally united in worshipping Jehovah.

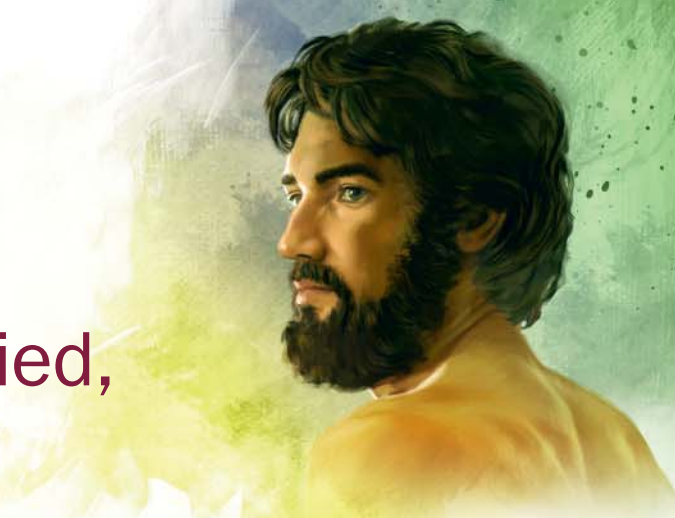
**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** I used to think that Bible principles are too restrictive, but I now regard them as an invaluable protection. The Bible empowered me to stop using and selling drugs and become a productive member of society.

I have the privilege of being part of a worldwide brotherhood of Jehovah’s worshippers. These people truly love one another, and they are united in serving God. (John 13:34, 35) Out of that brotherhood came a very special blessing—my wife, Adrienne, whom I deeply love and cherish. It brings us much joy to serve our Creator together.

Instead of pursuing a selfish course of life, I now volunteer as a full-time minister, teaching people how they too can benefit from God’s Word. This work has brought me the greatest happiness of all. I can say with tremendous conviction that the Bible changed my life. I have finally found true freedom. ■



# “He, Although He Died, Yet Speaks”



**A**BEL looked at his flock of sheep grazing peacefully on the hillside. Then, perhaps he looked far beyond his sheep to a spot in the distance where he could just make out a faint glow. He knew that right there a flaming blade was turning, ever turning, blocking the way into the garden of Eden. His parents once lived there, but neither they nor their children could enter now. Picture the late afternoon breeze ruffling Abel’s hair as he turned his gaze upward and thought about his Creator. Would the breach between man and God ever be healed? Abel wanted nothing more than that.

Abel speaks to you today. Can you hear him? You might say that such a thing is impossible. After all, this second son of Adam died a long time ago. His remains are long lost, mingled with the dust of nearly 60 centuries. Regarding the dead, the Bible teaches us: “They are conscious of nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) Further, Abel never uttered a single word that is recorded in the Bible. So how can he speak to us?

The apostle Paul was inspired to say this about Abel: “Through it he, although he died, yet speaks.” (Hebrews 11:4) Through what does Abel speak? Through faith. Abel was the first human ever to develop that sterling quality. So powerfully did he demonstrate faith that his example is alive, a vibrant standard that we can apply today. If we learn from his faith and seek to imitate it, then the record of Abel is speaking to us in a very real and effective way.

What, though, can we learn of Abel and his faith when so little is said of him in the Bible? Let us see.

## GROWING UP WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG

Abel was born near the dawn of human history. Jesus later associated Abel with “the founding of the world.” (Luke 11:50, 51) Jesus evidently meant the world of people who have the hope of being redeemed from sin. While Abel was the fourth human to exist, it seems that he was the first one whom God saw as redeemable.\* Clearly, Abel did not grow up among the best of influences.

Though the world was young, a pall of sadness hung over the human family. Abel’s parents, Adam and Eve, were likely beautiful, dynamic people. But they had fallen far in life, and they knew it. They were once perfect, with the prospect of eternal life before them. Then they rebelled against Jehovah God and were banished from their Paradise home in the garden of Eden. By putting their own desires ahead of all else—even the needs of their offspring—they lost perfection and eternal life.—Genesis 2:15–3:24.

\* The expression “the founding of the world” involves the idea of casting down seed, suggesting procreation, so it has to do with the earliest human offspring. Why, though, did Jesus connect Abel with “the founding of the world” and not Cain, who was the first human born? Cain’s decisions and actions amounted to a willful rebellion against Jehovah God. Like his parents, Cain does not appear to be in line for resurrection and redemption.



Exiled to life outside the garden, Adam and Eve found their existence hard. Yet, when their first child was born, they named him Cain, or “Something Produced,” and Eve proclaimed: “I have produced a man with the aid of Jehovah.” Her words suggest that she may have had in mind the promise Jehovah made in the garden, foretelling that a certain woman would produce a “seed” that would one day destroy the wicked one who had led Adam and Eve astray. (Genesis 3:15; 4:1) Did Eve imagine that she was the woman in the prophecy and that Cain was the promised “seed”?

If so, she was sadly mistaken. What is more, if she and Adam fed Cain such ideas as he grew up, they surely did his imperfect human pride no good. In time, Eve bore a second son, but we find no such high-flown statements about him. They named him Abel, which may mean “Exhalation,” or “Vanity.” (Genesis 4:2) Did the choice of that name reflect lower expectations, as if they put less hope in Abel than in Cain? We can only guess.

In any case, parents today may learn much from those first parents. By your words and actions, will you feed your children’s pride, ambition, and selfish tendencies? Or will you teach them to love Jehovah God and seek friendship with him? Sadly, the first parents failed in their responsibility. Yet, there was hope for their offspring.

## ABEL DEVELOPED FAITH—HOW?

As the two boys grew up, Adam likely trained them in work that had to be done to provide for the family. Cain took up farming; Abel took up shepherding.

However, Abel did something far more important. Over the years, he developed faith—that beautiful quality of which Paul later wrote. Think of it. Abel had no human example to whom he could look. How, then, did he develop faith in Jehovah God? Consider three solid bases upon which his faith likely rested.

**Jehovah’s creation.** True, Jehovah had placed a curse upon the ground, causing it to produce thorns and thistles that impeded agriculture. Still, the earth generously produced the food that kept Abel’s family alive. And there was no curse on the animals, including birds and fish; nor on the mountains, lakes, rivers, and seas; nor on the skies, clouds, sun, moon, and stars. Everywhere Abel looked, he saw evidence of the profound love, wisdom, and goodness of Jehovah God, the one who created all things. (Romans 1:20) Meditating appreciatively on such things strengthened his faith.

Abel surely took time to ponder spiritual matters. Picture him tending his flock. A shepherd’s life required a great deal of walking. He led the gentle creatures over hills, through valleys, across rivers—ever seeking the greenest grass, the

All his life, Abel could see that the cherubs were faithful and obedient servants of Jehovah



best watering holes, the most sheltered resting-places. Of all of God's creatures, sheep seemed the most helpless, as if they were designed to need man to guide and protect them. Did Abel see that he too needed guidance, protection, and care from Someone far wiser and more powerful than any human? No doubt he expressed many such thoughts in prayer, and his faith continued to grow as a result.

**Jehovah's promises.** Adam and Eve must have related to their sons the events in the garden of Eden that led to their expulsion. Thus, Abel had rich food for meditation.

## In creation, Abel found a solid basis for faith in a loving Creator

Jehovah said that the ground would be cursed. Abel could clearly see the thorns and thistles that fulfilled those words. Jehovah also foretold that Eve would suffer pain in pregnancy and childbirth. As Abel's siblings were born, he no doubt learned that those words came true as well. Jehovah foresaw that Eve would feel an unbalanced need for her husband's love and attention and that Adam would, in turn, dominate her. Abel saw that sad reality playing out before his eyes. In every case, Abel saw that Jehovah's word is completely reliable. Thus, Abel had solid reasons for putting faith in God's promise about a "seed" who would one day right the wrongs that had begun in Eden.—Genesis 3:15-19.

**Jehovah's servants.** Abel did not find any good examples in the human family, but humans were not the only intelligent creatures on the earth at that time. When Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden, Jehovah made sure that neither they nor their offspring would gain access to that earthly Paradise. To guard the entrance, Jehovah posted cherubs—very high-ranking angels—along with the flaming blade of a sword that turned continually.—Genesis 3:24.

Imagine Abel seeing those cherubs when he was a boy. In their materialized form, their appearance surely bespoke immense power. And that "sword," ever flaming, ever turning, inspired awe as well. As Abel grew up, did he ever find that those cherubs got bored and left their post? No. Day and night, year after year, decade after decade, those intelligent, powerful creatures stayed right in that spot. Abel thus learned that Jehovah God had righteous, steadfast servants. In those cherubs, Abel saw a kind of loyalty and obedience to Jehovah that he could not find in his own family. Surely that angelic example strengthened his faith.

Meditating on all that Jehovah revealed about himself through creation, divine promises, and the examples of His servants, Abel found that his faith grew ever stronger. His example speaks to us, does it not? Young people in particular may find it reassuring to know that they can develop genuine faith in Jehovah God, no matter what their family members do. With the wonders of creation all around us and the entire Bible at our disposal, as well as many human examples of faith, we have ample basis for building faith today.

### ABEL'S SACRIFICE—WHY IT EXCELLED

As Abel's faith in Jehovah grew, he wanted to find a way to express that faith in action. Yet, what could a mere man give to the Creator of the universe? God surely did not need any gift or help from humans. In time, Abel came to grasp a profound truth: If—with the right motive—he simply offered Jehovah the best of what he had, his loving heavenly Father would be pleased.

So Abel prepared to offer up some sheep from his flock. He selected the best, the firstlings, and offered up what seemed to be the choicest pieces. Meanwhile, Cain too sought God's blessing and favor, preparing an offering from his crops. But his motives were not like those of Abel. The difference became apparent when the brothers presented their offerings.



Abel offered his sacrifice in faith;  
Cain did not

It was different with Cain. Jehovah “did not look with any favor upon Cain and upon his offering.” (Genesis 4:5) It was not that Cain’s offering was faulty in itself; God’s Law later allowed the offering of the produce of the ground. (Leviticus 6:14, 15) But the Bible says of Cain that “his own works were wicked.” (1 John 3:12) Like so many to this day, Cain evidently thought that the mere outward show of devotion to God was enough. His lack of real faith in or love for Jehovah quickly became apparent through his actions.

When Cain saw that he had not won Jehovah’s favor, did he seek to learn from Abel’s example? No. He seethed with hatred for his brother. Jehovah saw what was happening in Cain’s heart and patiently reasoned with him. He warned Cain that his course was leading toward serious sin, and He offered hope of “an exaltation” if Cain would only change his ways.—Genesis 4:6, 7.

Cain ignored God’s warning. Instead, he invited his trusting younger brother to walk with him in the field. There Cain assaulted Abel and murdered him. (Genesis 4:8) In a sense, Abel thus became the first victim of religious persecution, the first martyr. He was dead, but his story was far from finished.

Figuratively, Abel’s blood cried out to Jehovah God for vengeance, or justice. And God saw justice done, punishing wicked Cain for his crime. (Genesis 4:9-12) More important, the record of Abel’s faith speaks to us today. His life span—perhaps about a century long—was short for humans of that era, but Abel made his years on this earth count. He died knowing that he had the love and approval of his heavenly Father, Jehovah. (Hebrews 11:4) We can be confident, then, that he is safe in Jehovah’s limitless memory, awaiting a resurrection to life in an earthly paradise. (John 5:28, 29) Will you meet him there? You may if you are determined to listen as Abel speaks and to imitate his outstanding faith. ■

Both sons of Adam may have used altars and fire for their offerings, perhaps within sight of the cherubs, who were the only living representatives of Jehovah on earth at that time. Jehovah responded! We read: “Jehovah was looking with favor upon Abel and his offering.” (Genesis 4:4) How God made his favor evident, the account does not say. But why did he favor Abel?

Was it the offering itself? Abel did offer a living, breathing creature, shedding its precious life-blood. Did Abel realize how valuable such a sacrifice would be? Many centuries after Abel’s time, God used the sacrifice of an unblemished lamb to picture the sacrifice of His own perfect Son, “the Lamb of God,” whose innocent blood would be shed. (John 1:29; Exodus 12:5-7) However, much of that surely lay well beyond Abel’s knowledge or understanding.

What we know for certain is this: Abel offered up the very best of what he had. Jehovah looked with favor not only on the offering but on the man himself. Motivated by love for Jehovah and by genuine faith in him, Abel acted.



## What is God's name?

Our family members all have personal names. Even pets have names! Wouldn't it be reasonable for God to have a name? In the Bible, God has many titles, such as God Almighty, Sovereign Lord, and Creator, but he also has a personal name.—**Read Isaiah 42:8.**

Many translations of the Bible contain God's personal name at Psalm 83:18. For example, in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*, that verse says: "You, whose name is **Jehovah**, you alone are the Most High over all the earth."

## Why should we use God's name?

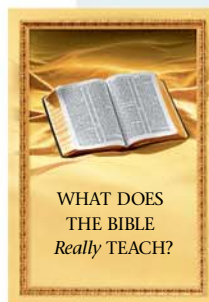
God wants us to use his personal name. We use personal names when we talk with those we love, such as our close friends—especially if they invite us to do so. Should it be different when it comes to talking with God? Furthermore, Jesus Christ encouraged the use of God's name.—**Read Matthew 6:9; John 17:26.**

However, to be God's friend, we need to know more about him than just his name. For instance, what is God like? Is it really possible to get close to God? You can find the answers to those questions in the Bible.

For more information,  
see chapter 1 of this book,  
published by Jehovah's Witnesses



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READ ANSWERS TO MORE  
BIBLE QUESTIONS ONLINE

