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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



THE
RESURRECTION
OF JESUS
ITS MEANING
FOR YOU

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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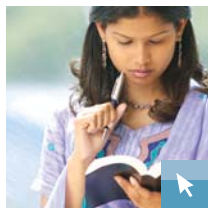
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The Resurrection of Jesus

DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?

HERODOTUS, a Greek historian who lived 2,500 years ago, told a story about the Egyptians of his day. “At rich men’s banquets,” he wrote, “after dinner a man carries round a wooden image of a corpse in a coffin, painted and carved in exact imitation, a cubit or two cubits long. This he shows to each of the company, saying ‘Drink and make merry, but look on this; for such shalt thou be when thou art dead.’”

That attitude toward life and death was not unique to the Egyptians. Today, the expression “Eat, drink, and be merry” has become a cliché. If life ends at death, why not live it up? Why aspire to lofty values? If death ends it all, living for the present makes perfect sense. The apostle Paul said as much. He described the attitude of people who do not believe in the resurrection, saying: “If the dead are not to be raised up, let us eat and

drink, for tomorrow we are to die.”—1 Corinthians 15:32.

Of course, Paul himself did not believe that death meant an eternity of oblivion. He was convinced that the dead could live again, with the prospect of never dying at all. That conviction was founded on an event of immense importance, the truthfulness of which he considered to be unassailable—the resurrection* of Christ Jesus. That resurrection, in fact, was the greatest single event that strengthened the faith of the early disciples.

What meaning, though, does the resurrection of Jesus hold for us? How do we even know it really happened? Let us see how Paul reasoned

* In the Bible, the Greek word translated “resurrection” literally means “a standing up again.” It implies that a person is restored to life, retaining his or her unique identity, personality, and memories.

“He appeared to upward of five hundred brothers at one time . . .
After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles; but last of all
he appeared also to me.”—1 Corinthians 15:6-8

on these matters when he wrote to the Christians living in Corinth.

WHAT IF CHRIST HAD NOT BEEN RAISED?

Some Christians in ancient Corinth were confused about the matter, and others did not believe in the literal resurrection at all. In his first letter to the Christians there, the apostle listed the consequences if the resurrection were not a reality. He wrote: “If, indeed, there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised up. But if Christ has not been raised up, our preaching is certainly in vain, and our faith is in vain. Moreover, we are also found false witnesses of God . . . Your faith is useless; you are yet in your sins. . . . Also, those who fell asleep in death in union with Christ perished.”—1 Corinthians 15:13-18.

Paul opened with a statement that can hardly be disputed: If the dead are not to be raised, then Christ, who died, could not have been raised to life. Supposing that Christ had not been raised, what would follow? Then, preaching the good news would be in vain, a colossal hoax. After all, the resurrection of Christ was a key element of the Christian faith, being inseparably linked to some of the Bible’s most basic teachings about God’s sovereignty, his name, his Kingdom, and our salvation. If the resurrection had not occurred, the message that Paul and the other apostles proclaimed would have consisted of nothing but empty, worthless words.

Other consequences would follow. If Christ had not been raised from the dead, Christian faith would be in vain, empty, based on a lie. Further, Paul and the others would have spoken falsely not only about the resurrection of Jesus

but also about the one whom they said resurrected him, Jehovah God. What is more, the assertion that Christ had “died for our sins” would also be untrue—for if the Savior himself had not been saved from death, he could not save others. (1 Corinthians 15:3) That would mean that Christians who had died, in some cases as martyrs, had perished with a false hope that they would be resurrected.

Paul drew the conclusion: “If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.” (1 Corinthians 15:19) Paul, like other Christians, had suffered loss, experienced persecution, endured hardship, and faced death because he believed in the resurrection and all that it entailed. How futile if the resurrection were nothing but a lie!

WHY YOU SHOULD BELIEVE

Paul did not believe any of those negative consequences to be true. He knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead, and he summarized the evidences for the Corinthians, namely, “**that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, yes, that he has been raised up the third day according to the Scriptures; and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.**”^{*} Then Paul adds: “After that he appeared to upward of five hundred brothers at one time, the most of whom remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep in death. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles; but last of all he appeared also to me.”—1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

^{*} “The twelve” is another way of saying “the apostles,” even though for a time after the death of Judas Iscariot, there were only 11. At one appearance, only 10 of them at most could have represented the 12, for Thomas was absent.—John 20:24.



Paul began with the confident statement that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was resurrected. What made Paul so sure of that? One reason was the testimony of many eyewitnesses. The resurrected Jesus appeared to individuals (including Paul himself), to small groups, and even to a crowd of 500, many of whom had no doubt been skeptical when they heard the news that Jesus had been resurrected! (Luke 24:1-11) Most of the eyewitnesses were still alive in Paul's day and could be consulted to confirm those appearances. (1 Corinthians 15:6) One or two witnesses might be easy to dismiss, but not the testimony of 500 or more eyewitnesses.

Notice, too, that Paul mentioned twice that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus were "according to the Scriptures." Those events confirmed that prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures about the Messiah had come true, thus proving that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah.

Despite the testimony of the eyewitnesses and of the Scriptures, there were and still are those who doubt that Jesus was raised up. Some say that his body was stolen by his disciples who then claimed to be witnesses to the resurrection. However, the disciples had neither the power nor the influence to overcome the Roman guards who were stationed at the entrance of the tomb. Others claim that the resurrection appearances were mere illusions. Contradicting that theory is the fact that the appearances occurred to many people at different times. Also, is it reasonable to believe that an illusion would cook and serve fish, as the resurrected Jesus did at Galilee? (John 21:9-14) Would an illusion in the form of a man invite observers to touch him?—Luke 24:36-39.

Still others charge that the resurrection was a hoax concocted by the disciples. But what benefit would there be in doing that? Bearing witness to the resurrection exposed the disciples to ridicule, suffering, and death. Why would they risk so much to support a mere lie? Moreover, they first gave their testimony in Jerusalem, right under the eyes of their opposers, who were ready to seize upon any excuse to condemn them.

The resurrection was the very thing that gave the disciples the courage to bear testimony about their Lord in spite of even the most violent persecution. The fact of the resurrection became a cen-

tral part of Christian faith. The early Christians did not risk their lives merely to bear witness about a wise teacher who was murdered. They risked their lives to proclaim Jesus' resurrection because it proved that he was the Christ, the Son of God, a powerful, living person who both supported and guided them. His resurrection meant that they too would rise from the dead. Really, if Jesus had not been raised up, there would be no Christianity. If Jesus had not been resurrected, we might never have even heard of him.

What meaning, though, does the resurrection of Christ have for us today?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who will be resurrected?

"There is going to be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous." (Acts 24:15) The righteous will include faithful men and women such as Noah, Abraham, and Sarah. The unrighteous will include those who failed to meet God's standards because of not having the opportunity to learn and follow them.

Where will the resurrected ones be?

Some will be resurrected to immortal spirit life in the heavens to rule with Christ as kings and priests over the earth. (Revelation 5:9, 10) Most, though, will be brought back to life on the earth. They will enjoy everlasting life in an earthly paradise.—Luke 23:39-43.

When will the resurrection take place?

At a time, yet future, after the wicked are removed from the earth. The Bible indicates a more extensive resurrection will occur during the thousand-year reign of Jesus, during which the earth will be transformed into a paradise.—Revelation 20:6.

Do the traditions of Easter have anything to do with the resurrection?

The customs of Easter involving bunnies, colored eggs, candles, and lilies were all adapted from pagan religions, as was the name Easter itself. None of these things have anything to do with the resurrection of Jesus, which Easter purports to represent. Does it matter? Yes. God's Word commands us to separate ourselves from false religion and to "worship the Father with spirit and truth."—John 4:23; 2 Corinthians 6:17.

If Jesus is God, as some churches teach, who resurrected Jesus?

Jesus is not God—whose name is Jehovah—but he is the Son of God. Jehovah resurrected Jesus from the dead. (Romans 10:9) One Bible scholar comments: "It is unthinkable that anyone—even Christ—could raise himself."*

* For further answers to these questions, see chapters 7 and 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses, or log on to www.jw.org.



The Resurrection of Jesus Means Life!

JESUS' resurrection is not merely an isolated, ancient occurrence that has little meaning for us today. The apostle Paul pointed out its significance when he wrote: **"Christ has been raised up from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death. For since death is through a man, resurrection of the dead is also through a man. For just as in Adam all are dying, so also in the Christ all will be made alive."**—1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

Jesus was resurrected on Nisan 16, 33 C.E., the day of the year on which the Jews presented the firstfruits of the first grain crop before Jehovah God at the temple sanctuary in Jerusalem. By calling Jesus the firstfruits, Paul implied that there would be other individuals brought back from death.

Paul's next words explain what has been made possible by Jesus' resurrection. "Since death is through a man," said Paul, "resurrection of the dead is also through a man." Because of the sin and imperfection passed on to us from Adam,

we all die. However, by giving his perfect human life as a ransom, Jesus opened the way for mankind to be released from slavery to sin and death through the resurrection. Summing up the matter nicely, Paul wrote at Romans 6:23: "The wages sin pays is death, but the gift God gives is everlasting life by Christ Jesus our Lord."

Jesus himself explained the meaning that his death and resurrection have for us. Referring to himself, he said: "The Son of man must be lifted up, that everyone believing in him may have everlasting life. For God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, in order that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life."—John 3:14-16.

Imagine—endless life without pain, suffering, or sorrow! (Revelation 21:3, 4) What a happy prospect! One scholar put the matter this way: "While graveyards may remind one of the brevity of life, the resurrection ensures the brevity of death." Yes, the resurrection of Jesus means life! ■



How did first-century Jews prepare the dead for burial?

The Jews buried their dead quickly after death, usually on the same day. There were two reasons for such prompt action. First, dead bodies decompose quickly in the hot climate of the Middle East. Second, according to the thinking of the time, leaving a body unburied for days showed dishonor to the deceased and his family.

The Gospels and the book of Acts record at least four burials that took place on the day of death. (Matthew 27:57-60; Acts 5: 5-10; 7:60-8:2) Centuries earlier, Jacob's beloved wife Rachel died while Jacob and his family were on a journey. Rather than bring her body back to their family burial place, Jacob buried her in a grave "on the way to . . . Bethlehem."—Genesis 35:19, 20, 27-29.

Bible accounts of funerary arrangements reveal that the Jews took great care in preparing the corpse for interment. Family and friends washed the body of the deceased, rubbed it with spices and fine oil, and wrapped it in cloths. (John 19:39, 40; Acts 9: 36-41) Neighbors and others could come to express their grief and console the family.—Mark 5:38, 39. ■

Was Jesus' burial typical of the Jewish burials?



Many Jewish families buried their dead in caves and tombs carved out of the soft rock common in many parts of Israel. In so doing, they followed the pattern set by the patriarchs. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and others were buried in the cave of Machpelah near Hebron.—Genesis 23:19; 25:8, 9; 49:29-31; 50:13.

Jesus was buried in a tomb carved out of a rock-mass. (Mark 15:46) Such a grave commonly had a narrow entrance. Inside, a number of niches, or shelflike spaces, were cut into the rock, where the bodies of deceased family members would be placed. After the flesh decomposed, the dried bones were collected and put in a stone box called an ossuary, as was the custom in Jesus' time. In this way, the family could make space in the tomb for future burials.

The Sabbath rest required by the Law of Moses prevented the Jews from caring for funeral arrangements on that day. Since Jesus died about three hours before the start of the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea and others buried him without having completely prepared his body for burial. (Luke 23:50-56) For that reason, some of Jesus' friends went to his tomb after the Sabbath, hoping to complete the process.—Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1. ■

Did Jesus promise the evildoer life in heaven?

The question arises because Jesus promised the criminal who was being executed alongside him a future life in Paradise. Jesus said: “Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23: 43) Note that Jesus did not say where that Paradise would be. Did Jesus mean, then, that the evildoer would join him in heaven?

First, let us consider whether that evildoer met the qualifications for heavenly life. Humans with heavenly prospects have been baptized in water and with holy spirit and are thus spirit-begotten disciples of Jesus. (John 3:3, 5) Another requirement is that they conform to God’s moral standards and manifest such qualities as honesty, integrity, and compassion. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) They must also remain loyal to God and Christ till the end of their earthly course. (Luke 22:28-30; 2 Timothy 2:12) Only by meeting those requirements can they show themselves worthy of being resurrected and qualified for the weighty responsibility awaiting them in heaven, namely, serving as priests and kings with Christ over mankind for a thousand years.—Revelation 20:6.

In contrast, the evildoer alongside Jesus lived as a criminal and died as a criminal. (Luke 23:32, 39-41) True, he showed a respectful attitude when he said to Jesus: “Remember me when you get into your kingdom.” (Luke 23:42) Nonetheless, he had not become a baptized, spirit-begotten disciple of Jesus, nor had he built a record of upright conduct and faithful endurance. Does it seem reasonable that Jesus would promise him heavenly kingship alongside his faithful followers who had proved their integrity?—Romans 2:6, 7.

To illustrate: If a man asked your forgiveness for stealing your money, you might decide not to press charges. But would you trust him to run your business or to take care of your family? You

would reserve such responsibilities only for those in whom you had the utmost confidence. Likewise, those who are given the hope of life in heaven must provide a solid basis for confidence that they will uphold God’s righteous standards when they rule over mankind. (Revelation 2:10) The evildoer, though apparently sincere in his last-minute plea, provided no such basis.

But did Jesus not tell the evildoer that he would be with him in heaven that very day? That could not be, since Jesus himself did not enter heaven that day. Instead, he was “in the heart of the earth”—the grave—for three days. (Matthew 12: 40; Mark 10:34) Even after his resurrection, he remained on earth for 40 days before ascending to heaven. (Acts 1:3, 9) Thus, the evildoer could not have been in heaven with Jesus that day.

Into what Paradise, then, was the evildoer to enter? After resurrection, he will be in the earthly Paradise, over which Jesus will rule. (Acts 24:15; Revelation 21:3, 4) To learn more about that Paradise and God’s requirements, speak to any one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. ■



“I Saw, but I Could Not Understand”

AS TOLD BY OLIVIER HAMEL

I was two years old in 1975 when my mother first suspected that there was something unusual about me. As mother held me in her arms, a friend dropped a heavy object on the floor, making a loud bang. Mother noticed that I did not even flinch. By the age of three, I was still unable to talk. Then my family heard the shocking news—specialists confirmed that I was totally deaf!

While I was still an infant, my parents divorced, and Mother was obliged to raise me and my older siblings—two brothers and a sister—alone. At that time, deaf children in France were not educated the way they are today, and the methods used sometimes resulted in much suffering. Still, since childhood I have had an advantage that many deaf people do not have. Let me explain.

For some time, many educators believed that deaf children should be taught by using speech and lip-reading. In fact, in France, where I grew up, signing was absolutely forbidden in school. Some deaf children even had their hands tied behind their back during lessons.

For the first few years of my life, I spent several hours each week with a speech therapist. I was held by the jaw or the head and obliged to produce again and again sounds that I could not hear. I was not able to communicate with other children. Those were years of suffering for me.

Then, at the age of six, I was sent to a specialized boarding school. For the first time, I came

into contact with other deaf children. Here, too, sign language was forbidden. If we gestured in class, we risked having our knuckles rapped or our hair pulled. However, we signed in secret, using codes we invented. At last, I was able to communicate with other children. So began four happy years.

When I was ten, however, I was moved to a primary school with hearing children. I was devastated! I thought that all the other deaf children had died and that I was the only one left in the world. Following the advice of doctors, who feared that I might lose the benefits of speech therapy, my family had not learned to sign and I was not allowed to associate with deaf children. I still remember a visit to a hearing specialist. He had a sign-language book on his desk. When I saw the pictures on the cover, I pointed to it and said, “I want that!” The doctor quickly hid the book.*

* It was not until 1991 that the French government officially authorized the use of sign language in educating deaf children.



When I was about five years old

MY SPIRITUAL BEGINNINGS

Mother tried to bring us children up by Christian principles. She took us to the meetings of the Mérignac Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, near Bordeaux. As a child, I understood very little at meetings. However, different ones there took turns sitting next to me to write notes about what was being said. I was touched by their love and concern. At home, Mother studied the Bible with me, but I never fully grasped what I was being taught. I felt a bit like the prophet Daniel, who, after receiving a prophecy from an angel, said: "I heard, but I could not understand." (Daniel 12:8) For me, it was a case of "I saw, but I could not understand."

Nonetheless, basic Bible truths slowly took root in me. I treasured up what I clearly understood and tried to apply it in my life. I also learned from observing the behavior of others. For example, the Bible tells us to be patient. (James 5:7, 8) That did not mean much to me. However, by watching my fellow believers display this quality, I was able to understand what patience is. Truly, the Christian congregation has been of great benefit to me.

BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT AND A WONDERFUL SURPRISE

One day, when I was in my teens, I saw some deaf youths in the street signing to each other. I started associating with them in secret and began to learn French Sign Language (FSL). I continued to attend Christian meetings, where one young Witness, Stéphane, took me under his wing. He made great efforts to communicate with me, and I felt a strong bond with him. However, a bitter disappointment awaited me. Stéphane was imprisoned for maintaining his Christian neutrality. I was devastated! With Stéphane gone, I became deeply discouraged and virtually stopped attending meetings.

Eleven months later, Stéphane was released and came back home. Imagine my surprise when Stéphane began communicating with me using sign language. I could not believe my eyes! What had happened? In prison, Stéphane had learned FSL. I watched Stéphane's hand movements and facial expressions, and my excitement grew as I contemplated all that this would mean for me.

UNDERSTANDING BIBLE TRUTH AT LAST

Stéphane started to study the Bible with me. It was from then on that I began to patch together all the pieces of Bible truth that I had retained. As a child, I loved to look at the beautiful pictures in our Bible publications, comparing the characters and examining every detail in order to impress the stories on my mind. I knew about Abraham, his "seed," and the "great crowd," but it was only when I saw these concepts explained in sign language that they took on real meaning. (Genesis 22:15-18; Revelation 7:9) It was evident that I had found my natural language, the language of my heart.

Now that I could understand what was said at the meetings, my heart was touched and my thirst for knowledge grew. With Stéphane's help, my understanding of the Bible continued to grow, and in 1992, I dedicated my life to Jehovah God and was baptized. Despite the progress I had made, however, not having been able to communicate in my early years left me introverted and cautious.

MY FIGHT AGAINST TIMIDITY

Eventually, the small group of deaf people I was with was combined with a congregation in



Stéphane helped me to understand the Bible



Giving a Bible talk in French Sign Language



My wife, Vanessa, is a real support to me



Working in the Translation Department at the branch office

Pessac, a suburb of Bordeaux. That was very helpful, and I continued to make spiritual progress. Though I was still struggling with my limited ability to communicate, my hearing friends were careful to make sure that I understood everything. One couple, Gilles and Elodie, made special efforts to communicate with me. They often invited me to share a meal or have a cup of coffee with them after the meetings, thus developing a wonderful friendship. What a joy to be among people who follow God's loving ways!

It was in this congregation that I met the charming Vanessa. I was attracted by her sensitivity and sense of justice. She never viewed my deafness as a barrier but, rather, as an enriching personal experience for her. She won my heart, and we were married in 2005. Even though communication is not my strong point, Vanessa has helped me to fight my timidity and to express myself more openly. I truly appreciate her support as I care for my responsibilities.

ANOTHER GIFT FROM JEHOVAH

The year we got married, the France branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses in Louviers invited me to come for a month of training for translation work. In recent years the branch has been working very hard to produce several publications in FSL on DVD. But with more work ahead, the translation team needed reinforcing.

Both Vanessa and I felt that for me to serve at the branch was an immense privilege and a gift from Jehovah God, but I have to admit that we were apprehensive. What would happen to our sign-language group? What would we do with our house? Would Vanessa find work in the region? In a wonderful way, Jehovah provided a solution to each problem. I really felt Jehovah's love for us and for deaf people.

SUPPORTED BY A UNITED PEOPLE

Having been involved in translation work, I can better understand all that is done to provide spiritual help for the deaf. And what a pleasure to see many fellow workers try to communicate with me! The few signs that they learn and try to use touch my heart. I do not feel left out—far from it. All those expressions of love are a demonstration of the extraordinary unity among Jehovah's people.—Psalm 133:1.

I am grateful to Jehovah that through the Christian congregation, he has always made sure that someone was there to help me. I also appreciate the small role I have had in helping my fellow deaf ones to know our loving Creator and to draw close to him. I look forward to the day when all communication barriers will be removed and all will speak the "pure language"—the truth about Jehovah God and his purposes—as part of a united human family.—Zephaniah 3:9. ■

“Which Commandment Is First of All?”

What does it take to please God? Is there an endless code of rules that we must follow? Thankfully, the answer is no. According to God's own Son, Jesus Christ, what God requires of us can be summed up in a single word.—**Read Mark 12:28-31.**

Consider first the setting of Jesus' words. He was teaching in the temple on Nisan 11, a few days before his death. His enemies tried to trip him up by asking him some controversial questions. Each time, he silenced them with his answers. Then, Jesus was asked this question: “Which commandment is first of all?”—Verse 28.

That was a challenging question. Some Jews debated which of the more than 600 laws that made up the Mosaic Law was first, or most important. Others, it seems, contended that all the laws were equally important and that it was wrong to give more weight to some than to others. How would Jesus respond to the question?

In reply, Jesus mentioned not one but two commands. First, he said: “You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and with your whole strength.” (Verse 30; Deuteronomy 6:5) The terms “heart,” “mind,” “soul,” and “strength” are not mutually exclusive.* The meaning is: Love for Jehovah must involve the whole person, all his faculties and resources. One Bible reference work puts it this way: “God is to be loved completely and totally.” If you thus love God, you will do your best to live each day in a way that wins his smile of approval.—1 John 5:3.

* In the Bible, the word “soul” refers to the entire person. Therefore “soul” can embrace “heart,” “mind,” and “strength.”

Second, Jesus said: “You must love your neighbor as yourself.” (Verse 31; Leviticus 19:18) Love of God and love of neighbor are really inseparable. The second is a by-product of the first. (1 John 4:20, 21) If we love our neighbors as ourselves, we will treat them the way we want them to treat us. (Matthew 7:12) We thereby show that we love the God who made us—and them—in his image.—Genesis 1:26.

How important are the commands to love God and neighbor? “There is no other commandment greater than these,” said Jesus. (Verse 31) In

All that Jehovah requires of his worshippers can be summed up in a single word: love

the parallel account, Jesus said that all the other commandments hang on these two.—Matthew 22:40.

Pleasing God is not complicated. All that he requires of us can be summed up in a single word: love. That has always been—and will always be—the essence of true worship. But love is not just a matter of words or feelings; it is expressed in action. (1 John 3:18) Why not learn how you can cultivate and demonstrate your love for Jehovah, the God who “is love”?—1 John 4:8. ■

SUGGESTED BIBLE READING FOR MARCH
Mark 9–Luke 6

Peter and Ananias Lied

WHAT LESSON CAN WE LEARN?

As you know, a lie is something you say that you know is not true. **Have you ever told a lie?**—* Even some grown-ups who love God have lied. You probably know about a person in the Bible who did. His name is Peter, one of Jesus' 12 apostles. Let's listen to the story about why he told some lies.

After Jesus is arrested, he is taken to the home of the high priest. It is well past the middle of the night. Peter gets into the courtyard of the priest's home without being recognized. In the light of a fire, the high priest's servant girl who let Peter in recognizes him. "You, too, were with Jesus," she says. Peter, in fear, says he was not.

The Bible says that later "another girl noticed him." She said: "This man was with Jesus." Again, Peter denies it. After a little while, others go up to Peter and say: "Certainly you also are one of them."

Peter is scared. So for the third time, he lies, saying: "I do not know the man!" A rooster crows. Jesus looks at Peter, and Peter remembers that a few hours earlier, Jesus told him: "Before a cock crows, you will disown me three times." Peter breaks down and cries. He is so sorry!

Could a thing like that happen to you?— You may be at school and hear students talking about Jehovah's Witnesses. "They don't salute the flag," one says. "They don't fight for their country," another adds. Still another claims, "They really aren't Christians, because they don't celebrate Christmas." Then one turns to you and asks, "Aren't you one of Jehovah's Witnesses?" **What will you say?**—

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

Before such a thing happens, you need to be prepared to give a good answer. Peter was not prepared. When pressure came, he lied! Yet, he was very sorry about what he had done, and God forgave him.

Ananias, another early disciple of Jesus, also lied. But God did not forgive either him or his wife, Sapphira. She had agreed with her husband to tell the lie. Let's see why God did not forgive Ananias and Sapphira.

Ten days after Jesus left the apostles and returned to God in heaven, some 3,000 people are baptized in Jerusalem. Many have come from distant lands to celebrate the Festival of Pentecost, and after becoming disciples of Jesus, they want to stay longer to learn more about their new faith. So some of Jesus' disciples use their own money to take care of them.

Ananias and his wife sell some property to get money to help the newly baptized ones. When Ananias brings the money to the apostles, he says it is the total amount from the sale. But it is not! He keeps some money for himself! God lets Peter know this, so Peter tells Ananias: "You have played false, not to men, but to God." At that, Ananias falls down dead! About three hours later, his wife comes in. Not knowing what has happened to her husband, she also tells a lie and falls down dead.

What a powerful lesson this is: Telling the truth is important! Yes, we all need to learn it! Yet, we all will make mistakes, especially when we are young. ***Are you not happy that Jehovah loves you and will forgive you even as he did Peter?***— But remember, we need to tell the truth. And if we ever make the big mistake of lying, we need to ask, yes, beg God to forgive us. That is what Peter must have done, and he was forgiven. If we try hard not to lie anymore, God will forgive us too! ■

READ IN YOUR BIBLE

Matthew 26:69-75

Acts 2:38-42;

4:32-37; 5:1-11



Why is Jesus called God's Son?

God does not have a literal wife with whom he fathered children. He is the Creator of all life. Humans were created with the capacity to imitate God's qualities. That is why the first human that God created, Adam, is called a "son of God." Similarly, Jesus is called "the Son of God" because he was created with qualities like those of his Father. —**Read Luke 3:38; John 1:14, 49.**

When was Jesus created?

God created Jesus before creating Adam. In fact, God created Jesus and then used him to make everything else, including the angels. That is why the Bible calls Jesus "the firstborn of all creation" by God.—**Read Colossians 1:15, 16.**

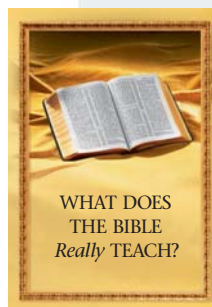
Before he was born in Bethlehem, Jesus lived as a spirit creature in heaven. When the time came, God transferred Jesus' life from heaven to Mary's womb so that he could be born as a human.—**Read Luke 1:30-32; John 6:38; 8:23.**

Why did God have Jesus born on earth as a human? What special role did Jesus fulfill? You can find the answers to those questions in the Bible, and they will greatly enhance your understanding and appreciation of what God and Jesus have done for you.

For more information,
see chapter 4 of this book,
published by Jehovah's Witnesses



Jesus was a spirit creature in heaven before he was born in Bethlehem



READ ANSWERS TO MORE
BIBLE QUESTIONS ONLINE