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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



THE WAR THAT CHANGED
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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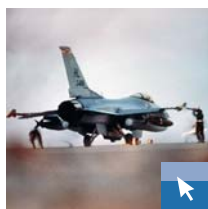
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The War That Changed the World

A century ago, millions of young men left the security of their homes and went off to war. They went eagerly, swept along by a wave of patriotism. “I am happy and full of excitement over the wonderful days ahead,” wrote an American volunteer in 1914.

Soon, though, their enthusiasm turned to bitterness. No one foresaw the way those huge armies would get bogged down for years in the mud of Belgium and France. At the time, people termed it the “Great War.” Today, we know it as the first world war.

The first world war was decidedly great in terms of casualties. By some estimates, it left about 10 million dead and 20 million mutilated. It was also the result of great blunders. European statesmen were unable to stop international tensions from escalating into a global conflict. More important, perhaps, is the fact that the “Great War” left great scars. It changed the world in ways that still affect us today.

MISTAKES THAT DESTROYED TRUST

The first world war broke out because of miscalculations. European leaders acted like a “generation of sleepwalkers that stumbled unawares over the ledge of doom during that halcyon summer of 1914,” explains the work *The Fall of the Dynasties—The Collapse of the Old Order 1905-1922*.

Within weeks, the assassination of an Austrian archduke plunged all the major European powers into a war that they did not want. “How did it all happen?” the German chancellor was asked a few days after hostilities began. “Ah, if only one knew,” he sadly replied.

The leaders who made the fateful decisions that led up to the war had no inkling of the consequences. But reality soon dawned on the soldiers in the trenches. They discovered that their statesmen had failed them, their clergy had deceived them, and their generals had betrayed them. How so?

**Their statesmen had failed them,
their clergy had deceived them, and
their generals had betrayed them**



The statesmen promised that the war would open the way to a new and better world. The German chancellor proclaimed: “We are fighting for the fruits of our peaceful industry, for the inheritance of a great past, and for our future.” American President Woodrow Wilson helped to coin a reassuring popular slogan that the war would “make the world safe for democracy.” And in Britain, people thought it would be “a war to end war.” They were all mistaken.

The clergy supported the war enthusiastically. “The guardians of God’s word led the martial chorus. Total war came to mean total hatred,” states *The Columbia History of the World*. And clerics fanned rather than quenched the flames of hatred. “Clergymen were unable, and for the most part unwilling, to place Christian faith before nationality,” observes *A History of Christianity*. “Most took the easy way out and equated Christianity with patriotism. Christian soldiers of all denominations were exhorted to kill each other in the name of their Saviour.”

The generals promised a quick and easy victory, but it was not to be. Before long, the opposing armies came to a grueling stalemate. Thereafter, millions of soldiers faced what one historian described as “perhaps the cruelest large-scale ordeal that the flesh and spirit of man have endured.” Despite appalling losses, generals kept throwing their men against barricades of barbed wire and barrages of machine-gun fire. Not surprisingly, widespread mutinies broke out.

How did the first world war affect society? One historical work quotes a veteran as saying: “The war . . . scorched the minds and character of a generation.” Indeed, in the wake of that war, entire empires disappeared. That tragic conflict proved to be the prelude to the bloodiest century mankind has ever known. Revolutions and strikes came to seem almost commonplace.

Why did the war turn the world upside down? Was it really just a colossal accident? Do the answers reveal anything about our future?

The True Culprit Behind War and Suffering

On November 11, 1918, World War I came to an end. Businesses shut down, and people danced in the streets. But the dancing did not last long. Another menace—even more lethal than the machine gun—followed hot on the heels of the world war.

A deadly plague known as the Spanish flu had invaded the battlefields of France in June 1918. The virus soon proved how deadly it could be. For example, within a few months, it killed more American soldiers in France than did enemy fire. And the flu quickly spread worldwide as it accompanied the troops who returned to their homelands when the war ended.

The postwar years were also marked by hunger and economic misery. Much of Europe was starv-

ing when the hostilities ended in 1918. By 1923, German currency was practically worthless. Six years later, the whole world economy collapsed. And finally, in 1939, the second world war began—in some ways a continuation of the first global conflict. What was behind this unique string of catastrophes?

THE SIGN OF THE LAST DAYS

Bible prophecy enables us to see what lies behind certain historical events, and this is especially true of World War I. Jesus Christ foretold a time when ‘nation would rise against nation’ and food shortages and pestilences would sweep through the earth. (Matthew 24:3, 7; Luke 21:10, 11) He

War on Earth and War in Heaven

Some 19 centuries before the outbreak of World War I, Satan offered Jesus “all the kingdoms of the world.” (Matthew 4:8, 9) Jesus rejected that temptation, but he later described the Devil as “the ruler of the world.” (John 14:30) Additionally, the apostle John wrote that “the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.”—1 John 5:19.

If Satan the Devil has so much power over the world, would it not be reasonable to conclude that he played at least a part in the first world war and its aftermath? Sure enough, the book of Revelation links Satan to the calamities the earth has suffered since 1914. Here is a brief outline of the events described in Revelation chapter 12:

Verse 7 War breaks out in heaven between Michael (Jesus Christ) and the dragon (Satan).

Verse 9 The Devil, “who is misleading the entire inhabited earth,” is hurled down to the earth.

Verse 12 “Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing that he has a short period of time.”

Bible chronology and world events indicate that this heavenly war occurred after God’s Kingdom was established in the heavens in 1914.* So the same pivotal year saw the outbreak of war on earth and war in heaven.

* See chapter 8 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

told his disciples that such calamities would form a sign of the last days. More details are provided in the book of Revelation, which links woes on the earth to a war in heaven.—See the box “War on Earth and War in Heaven.”

This same Bible book describes four horsemen, sometimes called the four horsemen of the Apocalypse. Three of these horsemen depict the same disasters that Jesus had earlier foretold—war, famine, and pestilence. (See the box “Are the Four Horsemen Really on the Move?”) Clear-

ly, the first world war triggered a time of affliction that has not abated. And the Bible reveals that Satan was the one who, in a sense, pulled the trigger. (1 John 5:19) Will his power ever be checked?

The book of Revelation also reassures us that Satan has only “a short period of time.” (Revelation 12:12) That is why he is full of rage and instigates untold woe here on earth. By the same token, though, the troubles we see prove that Satan’s time is running out.

Are the Four Horsemen Really on the Move?



The white horse, whose rider is a heavenly king. The King, Jesus Christ himself, is the one who rides in the cause of righteousness. (Psalm 45:4) His first task is to rid the heavens of Satan and his demons.—Revelation 6:2; 12:9.



The fiery-colored horse, whose rider has authority “to take peace away from the earth.” (Revelation 6:4) Since 1914, war has constantly plagued mankind. Just 21 years after World War I ended, a second world war broke out, killing far more people. One estimate says that World War II cost some 60 million lives. Since 1945, wars have been more localized but just as brutal. Some historians estimate that well over a hundred million people lost their lives in wars during the 20th century.

Background, fiery horse: From the book *The Photographic History of the Great European War in Gravure* (1916)

BREAKING UP THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL

World War I was indeed a turning point in history. It brought about an age of total war, sparking revolutions and mistrust of human leaders. It also provides vivid proof of Satan's ouster from heaven. (Revelation 12:9) And this unseen ruler of the world reacted like a vicious dictator who knows that his days are numbered. When those days come to an end, the time of troubles sparked by World War I will finally end.

In the light of Bible prophecy, you have reason to trust that Jesus Christ, our heavenly King, will soon "break up the works of the Devil." (1 John 3:8) Many millions already pray for God's Kingdom to come. Do you? Thanks to that Kingdom, faithful people will finally see God's will—not Satan's—being done on earth. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Under God's Kingdom, there will never again be a world war—or any wars at all! (Psalm 46:9) Learn about that Kingdom, and live to see the time when peace will fill the earth!—Isaiah 9:6, 7. ■



The black horse, whose rider has scales in his hand to depict famine. (Revelation 6:5, 6) During the first world war, an Allied blockade caused some 750,000 deaths in Germany as a result of hunger. Over two million Russians starved to death in 1921, and similar tragedies soon unfolded elsewhere. In all, an estimated 70 million people died of famine during the 20th century. Every year, poor nutrition still contributes to the death of over three million children under the age of five.



The pale horse, whose rider brings death by deadly plague. (Revelation 6:8) The first great 20th-century plague was the Spanish flu. Figures vary widely, but one estimate says that the flu killed some 50 million people. "This pandemic was one of the worst disasters in history," notes the book *Man and Microbes*. "Even bubonic plague did not kill so many people so fast." Smallpox, malaria, and tuberculosis are other infectious diseases that caused *hundreds of millions* of deaths during the 20th century.

Background, pale horse: National Museum of Health & Medicine, Armed Forces Institute of Pathology, NCP 1603



AS TOLD BY IVARS VIGULIS

YEAR BORN

1974

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

LATVIA

HISTORY

RISK-TAKING MOTORBIKE
RACER



The promise of a paradise earth changed my life!

MY PAST: I was born in Riga, the capital of Latvia. My sister and I were raised by our mother. Although Mother is a Catholic, we only went to church on the religious holidays. I have always believed in a higher power, but as a youth, I was distracted by many other interests.

As I grew up, my mother noticed that I had a flair for taking things apart and putting them back together again. With so many things in the house that could be taken apart, she was always worried about leaving me home alone. So she gave me a metal construction kit, which I loved to put together and then tear apart. That interest went hand in hand with another passion of mine—motorbiking. My mother enrolled me in a motorbike race called *Zelta Mopēds* (The Golden Moped). I started racing with mopeds and, later, with motorcycles.

I was a quick learner and soon became very successful in this fast and dangerous sport. Three times I won the Latvian championship for several motorcycle-racing classes, and twice I won the Baltic States Championship.

HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE: At the peak of my career, my girlfriend Evija (who later became my wife) came in contact with Jehovah's Witnesses. She had found some of their literature, which contained a coupon for requesting a Bible study. She filled out the coupon and mailed it in. Soon, two Witnesses visited her, and she began to study the Bible with them. That was fine with me, but at the time, I didn't have any great interest in spiritual things.

Later on, the Witnesses invited me to sit in on Evija's Bible study and listen. I accepted the offer, and I liked what I heard. One thing that especially touched my heart was the Bible's promise of a paradise earth. For example, I

was shown the passage at Psalm 37:10, 11, which says: “Just a little while longer, and the wicked will be no more; you will look at where they were, and they will not be there. But the meek will possess the earth, and they will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.” That promise really appealed to me.

My spiritual interest continued to grow. I began to realize how many religious lies there are. In contrast, Bible teachings struck me as being refreshingly logical and clear.

As I continued to study the Bible, I learned how highly Jehovah values life and how precious it is to him. (Psalm 36:9) That had an impact on my racing—I no longer wanted to risk my life. Instead, I wanted to use my life to give glory to Jehovah. Therefore, the fame, the glory, and the

I came to understand that I have a responsibility to the Giver of life

thrill of motorcycle racing were no longer important to me.

In 1996, I attended an international convention of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Tallinn, Estonia, not far away from the motor stadium where I had raced often. At the convention, I saw people from many different countries meeting together in harmony and peace. For example, when one of the Witnesses lost her purse, I assumed that she would never see it again. Before long, though, a Witness found the purse and returned it with nothing missing. I was in a state of shock! I now understood that the Witnesses really live by the high standards of the Bible. Evija and I continued to progress in our studies, and in 1997 we were baptized as Jehovah’s Witnesses.

HOW I HAVE BENEFITED: Some of my friends have died because of their wild, fast lives on motorcycles. From studying the Bible, I came to understand that I have a responsibility to the Giver of life, Jehovah. That understanding has probably saved my life.

For four years, Evija and I had the privilege of serving as full-time ministers at the branch office of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Riga. Now we find joy in raising our daughter, Alise, and helping her grow to love Jehovah. I also have the privilege of spending a day each week at the translation office, repairing cars and other things that are broken. It makes me really happy to put the skills that I learned as a child to good use! Yes, I am still tearing things apart and then putting them back together again.

I highly value the privilege of witnessing about the only true God together with my family, all thanks to what I learned from the Bible. Indeed, the promise of a paradise earth changed my life! ■





ALOES CAME FROM THE
AGARWOOD TREE

What were the aloes that were used in Bible times?

The Bible says that aloes were used to perfume garments and beds. (Psalm 45:8; Proverbs 7:17; Song of Solomon 4:14) The aloes of the Bible likely came from Agarwood (a species of *Aquilaria*). As the wood decays, it secretes fragrant oil and resin. The wood was ground into a powder, which was then sold as “aloes.”

The Bible compares the tents of Israel to “aloes that Jehovah has planted.” (Numbers 24:5, 6) This may refer to the shape of the Agarwood tree, which can reach a height of about 100 feet (30 m) and spreads outward. Although this tree is not found in modern Israel, *A Dictionary of the Bible* states that “there is nothing to forbid the idea that this and other trees not now known in [the region] were cultivated in the then wealthy and populous Jordan Valley.” ■



THIS CLAY SEAL FROM THE
TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM IS ABOUT
2,000 YEARS OLD

LEVINE/SIPA

What offerings were acceptable at the temple in Jerusalem?

God’s Law stated that all the sacrifices offered at the temple were to be of the best quality possible. God would not accept blemished sacrifices. (Exodus 23:19; Leviticus 22:21-24) According to the first-century C.E. Jewish writer Philo, priests at that time scrutinized animals “from head to foot” to ensure that they were sound in all respects and “without spot or defect of any kind.”

Scholar E. P. Sanders states that possibly the temple officials “authorized reliable sellers of sacrificial victims to sell only animals and birds that priests had previously inspected. In this case, the seller would have to give the buyer some kind of chit, indicating that the victim was unblemished.”

In 2011, archaeologists found just such a chit, or token, in the vicinity of the temple—a coin-size clay seal dating from between the first century B.C.E. and 70 C.E. Its two-word Aramaic inscription has been rendered “Pure for God.” It is thought that temple officials would have attached such tokens to products for ritual use or to animals intended for sacrifice. ■

Why does God allow the strong to oppress the weak?

The Bible records some troubling instances of oppression of the weak by the strong. The case of Naboth comes to mind.* Ahab, a king of Israel in the tenth century B.C.E., allowed his wife, Jezebel, to have Naboth and his sons killed so that the king could take the man's vineyard. (1 Kings 21:1-16; 2 Kings 9:26) Why did God allow such a gross abuse of power?

Let us focus on one important reason: *God cannot lie.* (Titus 1:2) What does that have to do with wicked acts of oppression? Well, in the very beginning, God warned mankind that rebellion against him would bring a grim result—death. True to God's word, death has been a part of the human experience ever since the rebellion in the garden of Eden. The first human death, in fact, came about through an act of oppression—when Cain murdered his brother Abel.—Genesis 2:16, 17; 4:8.

Regarding human history since then, God's Word summarizes it this way: "Man has dominated man to his harm." (Ecclesiastes 8:9) Have those words proved true? Jehovah warned the nation of Israel, his people, that they would find their kings oppressive, causing the people to cry out to God. (1 Samuel 8:11-18) Even wise King Solomon taxed his people excessively. (1 Kings 11:43; 12:3, 4) Wicked kings, such as Ahab, were far more tyrannical. Consider: If God had prevented all such acts of domination, would he not, in effect, have turned his own words into a lie?

Remember, too, that Satan claims that people serve God only for selfish reasons. (Job 1:9, 10; 2:4) If God protected all his servants from all forms of domination, would that not tend to substantiate Satan's claims? And if God prevented all forms of oppression for everyone, would he

not be responsible for an even greater falsehood? Under such protection, many might assume that humans can rule themselves successfully without God. But God's Word says the very opposite—that man is completely incapable of governing himself. (Jeremiah 10:23) We need the Kingdom of God to come; only then will injustice end.

Does that mean, then, that God does *nothing* about oppression? No. Consider two things he does: First, he exposes tyranny for what it is. For example, his Word exposes every aspect of Jezebel's plot against Naboth. The Bible further reveals that such evil deeds are promoted by a powerful ruler who wants to hide his identity. (John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 11:14) The Bible exposes him as Satan the Devil. By exposing wickedness

"Man has dominated man to his harm."—Ecclesiastes 8:9

"God . . . cannot lie."—Titus 1:2

and oppression along with their true source, God helps us to keep free of wickedness ourselves. He thus protects our eternal future.

Second, God provides solid hope for an end to oppression. The way he exposed, judged, and punished Ahab and Jezebel—as well as many like them—gives us confidence in his promises to punish all evildoers one day. (Psalm 52:1-5) God also provides reliable hope that he will soon reverse the bad effects of wickedness for those who love him.* Faithful Naboth will thus see a time when he and his sons will live on a paradise earth forever free from injustice.—Psalm 37:34. ■

* See the article "Imitate Their Faith" in this issue.

* See chapter 11 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.

He Endured in the Face of Injustice

ELIJAH walked along the Jordan Valley. He had been journeying for weeks, making his way north from distant Mount Horeb. Now, back in Israel at last, he could see changes in his homeland. The effects of the long drought were starting to fade. The soft autumn rains had begun to fall, and farmers were out plowing their fields. It may have brought a measure of peace to the prophet's heart to see the land healing, but it was the people he cared about most. Spiritually, they were far from well. The plague of Baal worship was still prevalent among them, and Elijah had much work to do.*

Near the town of Abel-meholah, Elijah saw a large-scale farming project under way. There were twenty-four oxen yoked in pairs, and the 12 teams were plowing in tandem, drawing parallel furrows in the damp soil. The man driving the last team was the one Elijah was seeking. It was Elisha, the man Jehovah had selected as Elijah's successor. Elijah had once thought that he was alone in his loyalty to God, so he was no doubt eager to meet this man.—1 Kings 18:22; 19:14-19.

Did Elijah also feel a bit hesitant about delegating some of his responsibilities, sharing his privileges, or someday being replaced? We cannot say; nor can we rule out the possibility that such concerns crossed his mind. He was, after all,

* Jehovah had used a three-and-a-half-year drought to expose the powerlessness of Baal, who was worshipped as a bringer of rain and fertility to the land. (1 Kings, chapter 18) See the "Imitate Their Faith" articles in the January 1 and April 1, 2008, issues of *The Watchtower*.



"a man with feelings like ours." (James 5:17) In any case, the Bible record states: "Elijah went over to him and threw his official garment on him." (1 Kings 19:19) Elijah's official garment—likely of sheepskin or goatskin—was worn as a cloak and signified his special appointment from Jehovah. Throwing it over Elisha's shoulders, then, was a gesture full of meaning. Elijah willingly submitted to Jehovah's command to appoint Elisha as his successor. Elijah trusted his God and obeyed him.

The younger man, for his part, was eager to help the older prophet. Elisha was not to succeed Elijah right away. Rather, for about six years, he humbly accompanied the older prophet and assisted him, later being known as the one "who used to pour out water on the hands of Elijah." (2 Kings 3:11) How comforting for Elijah to have such a capable, helpful attendant! The two men likely became fast friends. Their mutual encouragement surely helped both of them to endure despite seeing the terrible injustices prevalent in the land. In particular, the wickedness of the king, Ahab, was going from bad to worse.

Do you ever face injustice? Most of us do in this corrupt world. Finding a friend who loves God can help you to endure. You can also learn much from Elijah's faith when dealing with injustice.

"GET UP, GO DOWN TO MEET AHAB"

Elijah and Elisha worked hard to build up the people spiritually. Evidently they took the lead in training other prophets, who may have been

organized into schools of some kind. In time, though, Elijah received a new assignment from Jehovah: “Get up, go down to meet Ahab the king of Israel.” (1 Kings 21:18) What had Ahab done?

The king was already an apostate, the worst of Israel’s kings up to that point. He had married Jezebel and had caused Baal worship to flourish in the land, with the king himself taking part. (1 Kings 16:31-33) Baalism included fertility rites, ritual prostitution, and even child sacrifice. Further, Ahab had recently disobeyed a command from Jehovah to execute the wicked Syrian King Ben-hadad. Ahab’s refusal evidently had to do with the prospect of monetary gain. (1 Kings, chapter 20) Now, though, the greed, materialism, and violence of Ahab and Jezebel sank to new depths.

Ahab had a palace in Samaria—and quite a colossal structure it was! He also had a palace in Jezreel, some 23 miles (37 km) away. Adjacent to

this second residence lay a vineyard. Ahab coveted that bit of land, which belonged to a man named Naboth. Ahab summoned him and offered to give him money or to trade for the vineyard. Naboth, though, said: “It is unthinkable, from Jehovah’s standpoint, for me to give you the inheritance of my forefathers.” (1 Kings 21:3) Was Naboth stubborn? Reckless? Many have assumed so. In fact, he was obeying the Law of Jehovah, which did not allow Israelites permanently to sell land that was the hereditary possession of their family. (Leviticus 25:23-28) To Naboth, it was unthinkable to break God’s Law. He was a man of faith and courage, for he surely knew that it was dangerous to stand up to Ahab.

Ahab, of course, thought nothing of Jehovah’s Law. He went home, “sullen and dejected” that he had not got his way. We read: “He lay down on his bed, kept his face turned away, and refused to eat.” (1 Kings 21:4) When Jezebel saw her husband pouting like a petulant child, she swiftly hatched a scheme to get him what he wanted—and also, in the process, to destroy a righteous family.

It is hard to read of her plot without feeling astonished by its wickedness. Queen Jezebel knew that God’s Law required the testimony of two witnesses for a serious charge to be substantiated. (Deuteronomy 19:15) So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name, directing prominent men of Jezreel to find two men willing to launch a false accusation against Naboth—that of blasphemy, which carried the death penalty. Her plan worked only too well. Two “good-for-nothing men” testified falsely against Naboth, and he was stoned to death as a result. Not only that—Naboth’s sons were killed as well!* (1 Kings 21:5-14; Leviticus

* If Jezebel feared that ownership of the vineyard would pass to Naboth’s heirs, she may have felt driven to arrange for the murder of Naboth’s sons. For a discussion of why God allows such acts of oppression, see the article “Our Readers Ask” in this issue.

Elijah humbly appointed Elisha as his successor



24:16; 2 Kings 9:26) Ahab had, in effect, abdicated his headship, allowing his wife to run rampant and destroy those innocent people.

Imagine Elijah's feelings when Jehovah revealed to him what the king and queen had done. It can be very discouraging when wicked people seem to triumph over the innocent. (Psalm 73:3-5, 12, 13) Today, we often see terrible injustices done—sometimes even by powerful men who claim to act as God's representatives. We may find comfort in this account, though. The Bible here reminds us that nothing is hidden from Jehovah. He sees all. (Hebrews 4:13) And what does he do about the wicked acts that he sees?

“SO YOU HAVE FOUND ME, O MY ENEMY!”

Jehovah sent Elijah to Ahab. Pointedly, God said: “There he is in the vineyard of Naboth.” (1 Kings 21:18) When Jezebel told Ahab that the vineyard was now his, he got right up and went to enjoy his new acquisition. It never occurred to him that Jehovah was watching. Imagine his expression as he lingered in that vineyard, his head full of dreams about the wondrous garden he would make of the place. But, suddenly, Elijah

appeared! Ahab's blissful countenance changed, twisted with rage and hatred, as he spat out the words: “So you have found me, O my enemy!” —1 Kings 21:20.

Ahab's words reveal two kinds of folly. First, in saying, “So you have found me” to Elijah, Ahab revealed that he was spiritually blind. Jehovah had already “found” him. He had seen Ahab abuse the gift of free will and enjoy the fruitage of Jezebel's wicked plot. God saw into Ahab's heart, where love for a material possession had eclipsed any sense of mercy, justice, or compassion. Second, in saying to Elijah, “O my enemy!” Ahab revealed his hatred for a man who was a friend of Jehovah God and who could have helped Ahab turn from his disastrous course.

We may learn vital lessons from Ahab's folly. We must ever remember that Jehovah God sees all. As a loving Father, he knows when we stray from the path of what is right, and he is eager to see us change our ways. To help us, he often uses his friends—faithful humans who, like Elijah, bear God's words to their fellow humans. What a mistake it would be to view God's friends as our enemies!—Psalm 141:5.

“So you have found me, O my enemy!”



Picture Elijah answering Ahab: "I have found you." He found Ahab for what he was—a thief, a murderer, and a rebel against Jehovah God. What courage it took for him to stand up to that wicked man! Elijah went on to pronounce God's sentence on Ahab. Jehovah saw the whole picture—wickedness was spreading out from the family of Ahab and infecting the people. So Elijah told Ahab that God had ordained "a clean sweep," the extermination of that entire dynasty. Jezebel too would be brought to justice.—1 Kings 21:20-26.

Elijah did not cynically assume that people simply get away with wicked, unjust conduct. That is an easy assumption to make in today's world. This Bible account reminds us not only that Jehovah God sees what is going on but also that he brings about justice in his due time. His Word assures us that the day is coming when he will put an end to all injustice for all time! (Psalm 37:10, 11) You may wonder, though: 'Do God's judgments involve only punishment? Are they also merciful?'

"HAVE YOU SEEN HOW AHAB HAS HUMBLLED HIMSELF?"

Perhaps Elijah was surprised at Ahab's reaction to the divine judgment. The account reads: "As soon as Ahab heard these words, he ripped his garments apart and put sackcloth on his body; and he went on a fast and kept lying down in sackcloth and walking despondently." (1 Kings 21:27) Was Ahab repenting of his ways?

We can at least say that it was a move in the right direction. Ahab was humbling himself—surely a difficult thing for a proud, arrogant man to do. But was it true repentance? Consider, by comparison, a later king who may have exceeded Ahab in wickedness—Manasseh. When Jehovah punished Manasseh, the man humbled himself, calling out to Jehovah for help. But he went further. He then turned his life course around by getting rid of the idolatrous images that he had set up, making efforts to serve Jehovah, and even encouraging his people to do the same. (2 Chron-

icles 33:1-17) Do we see such actions on Ahab's part? Sadly, no.

Did Jehovah notice that Ahab made that public display of his sadness? Jehovah said to Elijah: "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself on my account? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the calamity during his lifetime. I will bring the calamity upon his house in the days of his son." (1 Kings 21:29) Was Jehovah forgiving Ahab? No, only true repentance would have elicited such divine mercy. (Ezekiel 33:14-16) But since Ahab showed a measure of regret, Jehovah responded with a corresponding measure of mercy. Ahab would be spared the horrific experience of seeing his entire family destroyed.

Still, Jehovah's judgment of the man stood. Jehovah later consulted with his angels about the best way to fool Ahab into joining the battle that would end his life. Soon thereafter, Jehovah's sentence on Ahab was carried out. Wounded in battle, Ahab bled to death in his chariot. The account adds this grim detail: When the royal chariot was washed out, some of the dogs licked up the king's blood. In this public way, Jehovah's words that Elijah delivered to Ahab were fulfilled: "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick up your own blood."—1 Kings 21:19; 22:19-22, 34-38.

For Elijah, Elisha, and all other faithful ones among God's people, Ahab's end provided a reassuring reminder that Jehovah did not forget Naboth's courage and faith. The God of justice never fails to bring punishment for wickedness, whether it is sooner or later; nor does he fail to include mercy in his judgment if there is a basis for doing so. (Numbers 14:18) What a powerful lesson that was for Elijah, who had endured for decades under the rule of that wicked king! Have you been a victim of injustice? Do you long to see God set matters right? You do well to imitate the faith of Elijah. With his faithful companion Elisha, he kept on proclaiming God's messages, enduring in the face of injustice! ■

Is the Bible really God's Word?

You would expect God's Word to be unique, and the Bible is. Billions of copies of it have been printed in hundreds of languages. The wisdom in the Bible has the power to change people for the better.—**Read 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16.**

We know that the Bible is from God because it accurately foretells the future. No man can do that on his own. Consider, for example, the book of Isaiah. A copy of it made over a century *before* Jesus' birth was found in a cave near the Dead Sea. It says that the city of Babylon would become uninhabited. That first came true many years *after* Jesus' earthly ministry.—**Read Isaiah 13:19, 20; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.**

How was the Bible written?

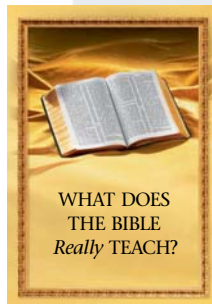
The Bible was written over a period of some 1,600 years. There were about 40 Bible writers, and they followed a single theme without contradicting one another. How was that possible? God guided their writing.—**Read 2 Samuel 23:2.**

Sometimes God spoke to Bible writers by means of angels, visions, or dreams. Usually, God put his idea into the mind of the writer and allowed him to select the words he would use to express God's message.—**Read Revelation 1:1; 21:3-5.**

Shrine of the Book, Photo © The Israel Museum, Jerusalem



The scroll of Isaiah



For more information, see chapter 2 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Available for download at www.jw.org

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