

# Is Satan Real?



Vol. 135, No. 21

Semimonthly ENGLISH

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.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study?

Visit www.jw.org or send your request to one of the addresses below.

For the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: Jehovah's Witnesses 25 Columbia Heights Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483

For CANADA: Jehovah's Witnesses PO Box 4100 Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4

For a complete list of worldwide addresses, see www.jw.org/en/contact.

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

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semimonthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON LTG 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2014 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

Printing Each Issue: 45,944,000 IN 220 LANGUAGES NOVEMBER 1, 2014

#### **COVER SUBJECT**

#### Is Satan Real? PAGES 3-7

Does Satan Exist? 3
Is Satan Just a Symbol of Evil? 4
Should We Fear Satan? 6

#### ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

A Conversation With a Neighbor

-When Did God's Kingdom Begin Ruling?-Part 2 8

Imitate Their Faith

-"How Could I Commit This Great Badness?" 12

Bible Questions Answered 16





#### OTHER BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED —Did God Create the Devil?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

DOWNLOAD THIS MAGAZINE IN VARIOUS FORMATS ONLINE





A sculpture in Madrid, Spain, depicting Satan as a corrupt, fallen angel

# Does Satan Exist?

"I grew up in El Salvador. When I was disobedient, my mother would say, 'The Devil is coming to get you!' And I would reply, 'Let him come!' I believed in God, but not in Satan."—ROGELIO.

Do you agree with young Rogelio? Which of the following opinions seems reasonable to you?

- Satan is not real; he is just a symbolic representation of evil.
- Satan exists, but he has little interest in humans.
- Satan is a powerful spirit creature who exerts great influence on mankind.

Each of those views has its supporters, perhaps millions of them. But does it really matter which view is accurate? Well, if Satan does not exist, those who accept him as real are misled. If Satan exists but is not interested in humans, many are cautious or even fearful without reason. However, if Satan is a deceptive manipulator, then he is more dangerous than most people imagine.

Let us examine how the Holy Scriptures answer these questions: What or who is Satan—a symbol of evil or a spirit person? If he is a person, is Satan a danger to you? If so, how can you protect yourself?



It is fairly easy to assert that the Satan we read about in the Bible is merely a symbol of all that is evil. But is that really what the Bible teaches? If so, why does the Bible describe Satan as speaking with Jesus Christ and with Almighty God himself? Consider two instances of such conversations.

#### WHEN SATAN SPOKE WITH JESUS

When Jesus began his ministry, the Devil tried to entice him with three temptations. First, Satan endeavored to pressure Jesus to use his God-given powers in a selfish way to satisfy his own hunger. Then, the Devil dared Jesus to risk his life foolishly and draw attention to himself. Finally, Satan offered Jesus rulership over all the kingdoms of the world in return for one small act of worship. Jesus rebuffed all three clever attacks, each time quoting the Scriptures.—Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13.

To whom was Jesus talking? To an evil quality within himself? According to the Scriptures, Jesus "has been tested in all respects as we have, but without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) The Bible also says: "He committed no sin, nor was deception found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22) Jesus re-

mained perfect, holding to a course of integrity. He never let any evil quality develop within himself. Clearly, Jesus was not talking to some evil part of himself; he was talking to a real person.

The same conversation reveals further evidence that Satan is a real person.

- Recall that the Devil offered Jesus worldwide rulership in return for an act of worship. (Matthew 4:8, 9) This offer would have been meaningless if Satan were not real. Furthermore, Jesus did not question Satan's claim to such impressive authority.
- After Jesus rejected the temptations, the Devil "departed from him until another convenient time." (Luke 4:13) Does Satan in this case seem like a quality of evil or, rather, a persistent, determined adversary?
- Notice that "angels came and began to minister" to Jesus. (Matthew 4:11) Were those angels actual spirit persons, providing encouragement and practical assistance to Jesus? Clearly so. Why, then, should we assume that Satan was something other than an actual spirit being?

#### WHEN SATAN SPOKE WITH GOD

Our second instance involves the account of the God-fearing man Job. That record recounts two conversations between the Devil and God. In both cases, God praised Job for his integrity. Satan asserted that Job served God only for selfish reasons, insinuating that God was buying Job's loyalty. In effect, the Devil claimed to know Job better than God did. Jehovah allowed Satan to rob Job of his possessions, his children, and even his health.\* In time, it became obvious that Jehovah was right about Job, and Satan was proved a liar. God blessed Job for his integrity.—Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7.

In those conversations between God and Satan, was Jehovah speaking to an evil quality within himself? The Bible says: "The way of the true God is perfect." (2 Samuel 22:31) God's Word also says: "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah God, the Almighty." (Revelation 4:8) Holy means pure, sacred, set apart from sin. Jehovah is perfect and flawless. He simply cannot have any evil characteristics.

Still, some might argue that even Job was not an actual person, so the whole conversation was allegorical. But does that argument make sense? Other Bible texts indicate that Job was a real person. For example, at James 5:7-11, we find that Job is used as an example to motivate Christians to endure hard times and as a comforting reminder that Jehovah rewards such endurance. What force would that example have if Job were not a real person and the attacks from Satan, only fictitious? Furthermore, at Ezekiel 14:14, 20, Job is included with Noah and Daniel in the list of three righteous men. Like Noah and Daniel, Job was an actual person, a man of great faith. If Job was real, must not his attacker, the source of his persecution, have been real as well?

Clearly, the Bible presents Satan as a real spirit person. You might wonder, though, 'Does he

present any danger to me and my family today in this modern world?'

#### WHAT ABOUT OUR TIME?

Imagine that a group of criminals suddenly flooded into your city. Obviously, personal safety and neighborhood morals would decline. Now consider a similar scenario: Satan and his demons—real spirit beings who, like Satan, rebelled against God—are suddenly confined to the earth. What would result? Well, think about what *you* see on the news locally and internationally.

- Do you see an increase in senseless, violent acts, regardless of worldwide attempts to stop them?
- Do you see an increase in entertainment featuring spiritism, in spite of the concern of many parents?
- Do you see the environment being relentlessly destroyed, despite well-meaning efforts to save it?
- Does it seem that something is seriously wrong with society—that some force is pushing mankind toward disaster?

Please note who the Bible says is behind the present trouble: "Down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him. . . . 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." (Revelation 12:9, 12) After considering the evidence, many people have concluded that Satan is a dangerous spirit person, one who is actively influencing the world around us.

You might wonder how you can find protection. That is a valid concern. The next article will offer some practical help.

<sup>\*</sup> Jehovah is the name of God as revealed in the Bible.

### Should We Fear Satan?

It is very hard to detect. Colorless and odorless, it may catch its victims unawares. Perhaps over half of all deaths by poisoning worldwide may be traced to this single culprit: carbon monoxide. However, there is no need to panic. There are ways to detect that gas and to protect yourself. Many people wisely install warning monitors and then carefully heed any alarms.

Like carbon monoxide, Satan is invisible, very hard for humans to detect, and extremely dangerous. But God has not left us without help. You need not fear Satan if you take advantage of the following gifts God offers.

The power of choice. James 4:7 tells us: "Oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you." Although Satan is powerful, he cannot force you to do things that you do not want to do. You have a choice. First Peter 5:9 says: "Take your stand against him [the Devil], firm in the faith." Remember, Satan left after Jesus firmly rejected the three temptations. (Matthew 4:11) You can likewise choose to resist Satan's efforts.

Divine friendship. James 4:8 encourages us to "draw close to God." Jehovah personally invites you to cultivate a close friendship with him. How can you do that? The best way to start is to learn more about him from the Bible. (John 17:3) What you learn about Jehovah will move you to love him, and that love will, in turn, motivate you to do his will. (1 John 5:3) As you draw closer to your heavenly Father, how will he respond? James continues: "[God] will draw close to you."

**The promise of protection**. Proverbs 18:10 reads: "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it



Carbon monoxide is invisible and dangerous
—as is Satan

the righteous one runs and receives protection." Of course, that does not mean that God's personal name is some kind of good-luck charm. Rather, it means that those who truly revere God's name can call on him for protection at any time.

A practical example. Acts 19:19 tells us something enlightening about newly converted Christians in Ephesus: "Quite a number of those who practiced magical arts brought their books together and burned them up before everybody.

"Knowledge from the Scriptures convinced me that the Devil exists. That same knowledge now protects me from falling victim to his influence"

And they calculated their value and found them worth 50,000 pieces of silver."\* Those Christians destroyed any objects associated with spiritism, regardless of monetary value. That example can do us a lot of good today. This world is steeped in the occult and spiritism. Even spiritistic items and practices that seem innocent may invite demonic influence. It is vital to keep such things out of your life, at any cost.—Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

Rogelio, mentioned in the opening article of this series, did not believe in the Devil during his first 50 years. But then he reconsidered his views. Why? "For the first time in my life, I obtained a Bible," recalls Rogelio. "Knowledge from the Scriptures convinced me that the Devil exists. That same knowledge now protects me from falling victim to his influence."

Would you like to see the day when Satan no longer exists? You can. The Scriptures foretell a future time when the Devil, who misleads so many, will be "hurled into the lake of fire and sulfur." (Revelation 20:10) Of course, physical fire and sulfur cannot harm an invisible spirit creature. Therefore, the lake of fire must represent eternal destruction. Satan will be gone forever. What a joyful time that will be for lovers of God!

In the meantime, keep learning all you can about Jehovah and his ways. # Imagine being alive when it can, at last, truthfully be said, "Satan does *not* exist!" ■

<sup>&</sup>quot;For more information about Satan and spiritism, see chapter 10 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* Ask any of Jehovah's Witnesses for a copy, or read it online at www.jw.org.



<sup>\*</sup> If the silver piece in question was the Roman denarius, the sum would have equaled the combined daily wage of 50,000 average workers—a substantial amount!

## When Did God's Kingdom Begin Ruling?

#### -PART 2

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



#### NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM—A BRIEF REVIEW

Cameron: It's good to see you again, Jon. I always enjoy our weekly Bible study sessions.\* How have you been?

Jon: I've been fine, thanks.

Cameron: I'm glad you're doing well. The last time I was here, we talked about why Jehovah's Witnesses say that God's Kingdom began ruling in 1914.\* As we discussed, we find a key piece of evidence in a prophecy in chapter 4 of the Bible book of Daniel. Do you recall what is recorded there?

Jon: It was King Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a big tree.

Cameron: Yes, exactly. In his dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw an immense tree that reached clear to heaven. He heard a messenger of God command that the tree be cut down, but its stump and roots were to be left in the ground. After a period of "seven times," the tree would grow again. △ We also discussed why the prophecy has two fulfillments. Do you remember what the initial fulfillment was?

\* By means of their free Bible study program, Jehovah's Witnesses often have systematic discussions about the Bible with their neighbors.

"See the article "A Conversation With a Neighbor—When Did God's Kingdom Begin Ruling?—Part 1" in the October 1, 2014, issue of this magazine.

Jon: It was something that happened to Nebuchadnezzar himself, right? He lost his sanity for seven years.

Cameron: Precisely. Nebuchadnezzar temporarily lost his sanity, so his rulership was interrupted. But in the larger fulfillment of the prophecy, God's rulership would in a way be interrupted for a period of seven times. As we saw, the seven times began when Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. From then on, there were no more kings on earth who represented Jehovah God in ruling his people. However, at the end of the seven times, God would appoint a new Ruler over his people—someone in heaven. In other words, the end of the seven times would mark the start of the rulership of God's heavenly Kingdom. Now, we already discussed when the seven times started. So if we can determine how long they lasted, then we will know when God's Kingdom began ruling. Are you with me so

**Jon:** Yes, this review has helped me to refresh my memory.

Cameron: Great. Let's dig in, then, and consider the length of the seven times. I've just finished reading up on this subject to remind myself of the key points. I'll try to explain them as well as I can.

Jon: OK.

<sup>△</sup> See Daniel 4:23-25.

#### SEVEN TIMES END—THE LAST DAYS BEGIN

Cameron: In the prophecy's initial fulfillment involving Nebuchadnezzar, the seven times were evidently seven literal years. But in the larger fulfillment involving God's Kingdom, the seven times must be much longer than seven literal years.

Jon: Why do you say that?

Cameron: For one thing, recall that the seven times began when Jerusalem was destroyed in 607 B.C.E. If we start counting from that year, seven literal years would take us to the year 600 B.C.E. But nothing significant happened in that year with regard to God's rulership. Besides, as we considered before, centuries later when Jesus was here on earth, he indicated that the seven times had not yet ended.

Jon: Oh, yes. I remember that now.

Cameron: So, rather than being literal years, the seven times must involve a longer period of time.

Jon: How long?

Cameron: The Bible book of Revelation, which is closely connected with the book of Daniel, helps us to determine exactly how long the seven times are. It identifies a period of three and a half times as amounting to 1,260 days.\* Thus, seven times—twice the amount of three and a half times—would equal 2,520 days. Are you still with me?

Jon: Yes, I follow you. But I don't see how this shows that God's Kingdom began ruling in 1914.

Cameron: OK, let's see if we can make the connection. Sometimes in Bible prophecy, a day symbolizes a year.\* If we apply the rule of a day for a year, the seven times would amount to 2,520 *years*. Counting forward from 607 B.C.E., 2,520 years takes us to the year 1914.^ That's how we

arrive at 1914 as the year that the seven times ended, the start of Jesus' rule as King of God's Kingdom. And significantly, since 1914, major world events have happened—events that the Bible foretold for the last days.

**Ion:** What sort of events?

Cameron: Consider what Jesus said, as recorded here at Matthew 24:7. Concerning the time when he would start ruling in heaven, Jesus said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another." Notice that Jesus foretold food shortages and earthquakes during that time period. Our world

Concerning the time when he would start ruling in heaven, Jesus said: "Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be food shortages and earthquakes in one place after another"

has certainly seen a lot of that kind of trouble in the past century, hasn't it?

Jon: True.

Cameron: In this verse, Jesus also foretold warfare during his presence as King of God's Kingdom. And the Bible book of Revelation foretold not just local warfare but wars that would affect the whole earth during the time of the end.\* Do you recall when the first world war broke out?

Jon: That was in 1914, the same year that you're saying Jesus began ruling! I never connected that before.

Cameron: When we put all these pieces

<sup>\*</sup> See Revelation 12:6, 14; footnote.

<sup>#</sup> See Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6.

<sup>△</sup> See the chart "Nebuchadnezzar's Tree Dream."

<sup>\*</sup> See Revelation 6:4.

together—the prophecy about the seven times as well as other Bible prophecies concerning the time of the end—it really makes sense. Jehovah's Witnesses are convinced that Jesus began ruling as King of God's Kingdom in 1914 and that the last days began in that same year.\*

**Jon:** I'm still trying to wrap my mind around all of this.

Cameron: That's perfectly understandable. As I mentioned before, it took me a while to grasp it fully too. But at the very least, I hope our discussion has helped you to see that even though the year 1914 isn't specifically mentioned in the Bible, Jehovah's Witnesses *do* base their beliefs about that year on the Scriptures.

Jon: Yes, I've always been impressed with this about you—no matter what you say, you back it up with a scripture. It's never just your opinion. I

guess I'm wondering, though, why this is so complicated. Why didn't God just tell us in the Bible that 1914 would be the year that Jesus would begin ruling in heaven?

Cameron: That's an excellent question, Jon. In fact, there are many things that are not explicitly spelled out in the Scriptures. So why did God have the Bible written in a way that would require effort for people to understand? Maybe we can talk about that on another visit.

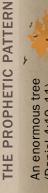
**Jon:** I would like that. ■

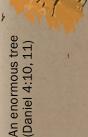
Do you have a particular Bible subject that you have wondered about? Are you curious about any of the beliefs or religious practices of Jehovah's Witnesses? If so, do not hesitate to ask one of Jehovah's Witnesses. He or she will be pleased to discuss such matters with you.



<sup>\*</sup> See chapter 9 of the book What Does the Bible Really Teach? published by Jehovah's Witnesses. Also available at www.jw.org.

# **NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S TREE DREAM** HOW IT RELATES TO GOD'S KINGDOM





"Chop down the tree" (Daniel 4:14)

will be yours again "Your kingdom

pass" (Daniel 4:16)

"Let seven times

(Daniel 4:26)



Rulership restored

Interval

Rulership interrupted

## Rulership

# INITIAL FULFILLMENT

Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon



LARGER FULFILLMENT

represent God's rulership Israelite kings who

Sometime after 606 B.C.E., sanity and is unable to rule Nebuchadnezzar loses his



years iteral

sanity and begins ruling again Nebuchadnezzar regains his



2,520 years

Jerusalem is destroyed,

interrupting that line of

sraelite kings

heaven as King of God's Jesus begins ruling in

> C.E. B.C.E.

1,913 3/4 years 606 1/4 years

times of the nations until the appointed "Jerusalem will be trampled on ... are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24)

Kingdom 1914 C.E. October



## "How Could I Commit This Great Badness?"

OSEPH breathed in the thick, warm air, noticing the scent of lotus blossoms and other water plants. He was being led by a caravan of traders now traversing the lowlands of the vast Nile delta. Picture a line of men leading their camels along a watercourse toward yet another Egyptian town, occasionally startling a wading heron or an ibis into flight. Joseph thought again of his home in the windswept highlands of Hebron, hundreds of miles away; he was in a different world now.

Imagine monkeys chattering and screeching from the tops of date palms and fig trees. To Joseph, the speech of the people they passed seemed hardly more intelligible. Perhaps he tried to pick up any words or phrases that he could. He might as well learn. As far as he knew, he would never see his home again.

Joseph was scarcely more than a boy—17 or 18 years old—yet he faced challenges that would daunt many grown men. His own brothers, consumed with jealousy because Joseph was their father's favorite, had come close to murdering him. Instead, they had sold him to these traders. (Genesis 37:2, 5, 18-28) Now, after journeying for weeks, the traders were likely growing more and more lighthearted as they neared the great metropolis where they intended to reap profits by selling Joseph as well as their precious wares. How did Joseph keep despair from taking root in his heart and crushing his spirit? And how can we today keep life's challenges and set-

backs from destroying our faith? We have much to learn from Joseph.

#### "JEHOVAH WAS WITH JOSEPH"

"Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and an Egyptian named Potiphar, a court official of Pharaoh and chief of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there." (Genesis 39:1) In those few words, the Bible account helps us to imagine the humiliation of a young man as he was sold once again. He was mere property! We may think of Joseph following his new master, an Egyptian court official, through bustling city streets crowded with bazaars as they head toward Joseph's new home.

Home! It was a far cry from anything Joseph had ever called home. He had grown up in a nomadic family who dwelled in tents as they moved frequently and tended their flocks of sheep. Here, such wealthy Egyptians as Potiphar lived in elegant, brightly painted houses. Archaeologists report that the ancient Egyptians were fond of lush, walled gardens with shade trees and quiet pools for growing papyrus, lotus, and other water plants. Some houses sat secluded within gardens, with porches for enjoying the breeze, high windows for ventilation, and many rooms, including a large dining room and quarters for servants.

Was Joseph overly impressed with such opulence? It seems unlikely. More than anything, he probably felt keenly how alone he was. The Egyptians were foreign to him in language, dress, and

grooming—and even more so in religion. They worshipped a dizzying array of gods, practiced occult and magical arts, and held a morbid fascination with death and the afterlife. One thing, though, kept Joseph from being crushed by loneliness. The Bible account tells us: "Jehovah was with Joseph." (Genesis 39:2) Joseph surely poured out his heart to his God. The Bible says that "Jehovah is near to all those calling on him." (Psalm 145:18) How else did Joseph draw near to his God?

The young man refused to give in to despair, and he set about doing his work as well as he could. He thus gave Jehovah much to bless, and Joseph soon gained the favor of his new master. Potiphar saw that his young servant was being blessed by Jehovah, the God of Joseph's people, and such blessings no doubt brought more prosperity to the Egyptian's house. Joseph gradually rose in his master's esteem until Potiphar entrusted everything into the hands of this capable young man.—Genesis 39:3-6.

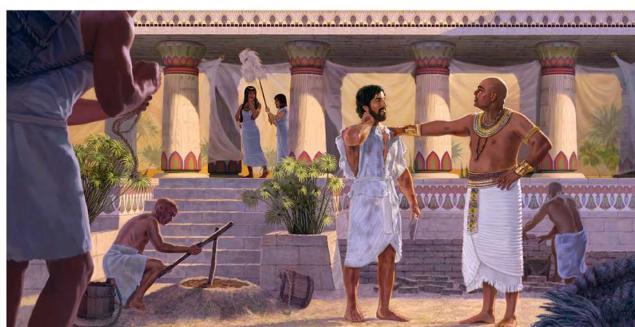
Joseph set a vital example for young people who serve God today. For instance, when they are in school, they may at times find themselves in an environment that feels strange and foreign, a world fascinated with the occult and bound up with a grim and hopeless outlook on life. If you are in that situation, remember that Jehovah has not changed. (James 1:17) He still proves to be with all those who stay loyal to him and who seek to work hard in a way that pleases him. He blesses them richly, and he will do the same for you.

In the meantime, the account tells us, Joseph was maturing. The youth became a man, and a "well-built and handsome" one at that. Those words suggest that danger was looming, for the gift of physical beauty often brings unwanted and inappropriate attention.

#### "HE NEVER CONSENTED"

Joseph valued loyalty; Potiphar's wife, though, did not. We read: "The wife of his master began to cast her eyes on Joseph and say: 'Lie down with me.'" (Genesis 39:7) Was Joseph tempted to give in to this pagan woman's bold advances? The Bible gives us no reason to assume that Joseph was immune to the desires and drives common to young men or that this woman, the pampered wife of a wealthy and influential court official, was physically undesirable. Would Joseph rationalize that his master would never know? Would he be tempted by the thought of the material advantages that such a liaison might offer?

Potiphar's wife took note of loyal young Joseph



In truth, we cannot know all that passed through Joseph's mind. But we have a clear indication of what was in his heart. It shines through in his answer: "Here my master does not know what is with me in the house, and he has entrusted everything he has into my care. There is no one greater in this house than I am, and he has not withheld from me anything at all except you, because you are his wife. So how could I commit this great badness and actually sin against God?" (Genesis 39:8, 9) Picture the young man speaking those words with earnest intensity. It hurt him even to contemplate the deed she wanted him to commit. Why?

As Joseph said, his master trusted him. Potiphar had put his whole household in Joseph's hands, holding back nothing but his wife. How could Joseph betray that trust? He abhorred the thought. But there was a deeper revulsion: the thought of actually sinning against his God, Jehovah. Joseph had learned much from his parents about God's view of marriage and fidelity. Jehovah performed the first marriage and made his feelings clear. Man and wife were to stick together, becoming "one flesh." (Genesis 2:24) Those who attempted to violate that bond risked incurring God's wrath. For example, the men who came close to violating the wife of Abraham, who was Joseph's great-grandmother, and the wife of Isaac, Joseph's grandmother, came perilously close to disaster. (Genesis 20:1-3; 26:7-11) Joseph had learned that lesson well, and he intended to live by it.

Potiphar's wife did not like what she heard. Why, just imagine this lowly slave turning her down, actually referring to her offer as "great badness"! Nonetheless, she persisted. Perhaps her vanity and pride were stung, making her determined to turn Joseph's no into a yes. She thus showed a spirit like that of Satan, who tempted Jesus. Satan's attempt failed too, and instead of giving up, Satan just waited for "another convenient time." (Luke 4:13) Faithful people thus need to be determined and steadfast. That was how Joseph handled himself. Though this situa-

tion went on "day after day," he would not budge. We read: "He *never* consented." (Genesis 39:10) Potiphar's wife, however, was a determined seductress.

She picked a moment when the servants were all out of the house. She knew that Joseph would have to come inside in order to do his work. When he did, she sprung her trap. Grabbing hold of his garment, she made her plea one last time: "Lie down with me!" Joseph acted quickly. Wrenching away from her grasp, he pulled back—but she held fast to his garment. He twisted free, leaving it behind in her hands. And then he fled!—Genesis 39:11, 12.

We might be reminded of the apostle Paul's inspired counsel: "Flee from sexual immorality!" (1 Corinthians 6:18) What an example Joseph set for all true Christians! Life may force us into proximity with those who have no regard for God's moral laws, but that does not mean that we have to give in to wrong influences. Whatever the cost, we must flee.

In Joseph's case, the cost was high. Potiphar's wife wanted revenge. She immediately began screaming, summoning the other servants into the house. She claimed that Joseph had attempted to rape her and had then run off when she screamed. She kept the incriminating garment and waited for her husband's return. When Potiphar came home, she presented the same lie, implying that it was all her husband's fault for bringing this foreigner into their home. Potiphar's reaction? We read: "His anger blazed"! He turned Joseph over to the prison to have him incarcerated.—Genesis 39:13-20.

#### "WITH FETTERS THEY BOUND HIS FEET"

We know little of what Egyptian prisons were like in those days. Archaeologists have found the ruins of such places—great fortresslike structures with cells and dungeons. Joseph later described the place with a word that literally means "the pit," which suggests a lightless and hopeless place. (Genesis 40:15, footnote) In the book of Psalms, we learn that Joseph was subjected to further torment: "With fetters they bound his



Joseph worked hard in prison, and Jehovah blessed him

feet; his neck was put in irons." (Psalm 105:17, 18) The Egyptians sometimes put prisoners in restraints that pinioned their arms behind them at the elbows; others bore iron collars clasped at their necks. How Joseph must have suffered to be so mistreated—when he had done nothing to deserve it!

What is more, this was no brief setback. The account says that Joseph "remained there in the prison." He spent years in that terrible place!\* And Joseph did not know if he would ever be released. As those first shocking days dragged into weeks, then months, how did he keep from falling into hopelessness and despair?

The account gives us this reassuring answer: "Jehovah continued with Joseph and kept showing loyal love to him." (Genesis 39:21) No prison walls, no fetters, no lightless dungeons can keep Jehovah's loyal love from reaching his servants. (Romans 8:38, 39) We may well imagine Joseph pouring out his agony to his dear heavenly Father in prayer and then receiving the kind of peace and calm that only "the God of all comfort" can provide. (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4; Philippians 4:6, 7)

What else did Jehovah do for Joseph? We read that he kept granting Joseph "favor in the eyes of the chief officer of the prison."

The prisoners were evidently given work to do, and Joseph again gave Jehovah something to bless. He worked hard, doing his best at whatever task was assigned him and leaving the rest to Jehovah. With Jehovah's blessing, Joseph gained trust and respect, just as he had in Potiphar's household. We read: "So the chief officer of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners in the prison, and everything that they were doing there, he was the one having it done. The chief officer of the prison was looking after absolutely nothing that was in Joseph's care, for Jehovah was with Joseph and Jehovah made whatever he did successful." (Genesis 39:22, 23) What a comfort for Joseph to know that Jehovah was caring for him!

We may come upon some devastating twists and turns in life, even some cruel injustices, but we can learn from the faith of Joseph. If we keep close to Jehovah in prayer, stay loyal to his commands, and work hard at doing what is right in his eyes, we will give him something to bless. In Joseph's case, Jehovah had even greater blessings in store, as we shall see in future articles in this series.

<sup>\*</sup> The Bible indicates that Joseph was about 17 or 18 years old when he entered Potiphar's house and that he remained there long enough to grow into young manhood—perhaps a few years. He was 30 when he was released from prison.—Genesis 37:2; 39:6; 41:46.

### Did Jesus really resurrect people?

The Bible clearly says that Jesus raised dead people to life. Those accounts are not mythical; they are set in real places at specific times. For example, during the summer of the year 31 C.E., a large crowd traveled with Jesus from Capernaum to Nain. On arriving, they encountered another crowd. You can trust the account of the resurrection that happened next because it is recorded in God's Word, the Bible, and because it took place before all those witnesses.—Read Luke 7:11-15.

Jesus also resurrected his friend Lazarus, who had been dead for four days. You can believe the report of what Jesus did that day because it too was observed by many witnesses.—Read John 11:39-45.

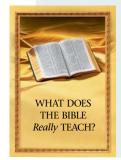
## Why did Jesus resurrect people?

Jesus resurrected people because he was moved by compassion. He also did so to show that his Father, the Creator of life, had given him power over death.—Read John 5:21, 28, 29.

The resurrections that Jesus performed give us confidence in his promises about the future. He will resurrect a great many people, including unrighteous people who knew nothing about the true God. They will be given an opportunity to know and love Jehovah God.—**Read Acts 24:15.** 



Jesus resurrected Lazarus, who had been dead for four days



For more information, see chapter 7 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses

Also available at www.jw.org

READ ANSWERS TO MORE BIBLE QUESTIONS ONLINE







Visit **www.jw.org**, or scan code

