

MARCH 1, 2015

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Jesus Saves
FROM WHAT?



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 other-
wise 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 L7G 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. © 2015 Watch
Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania.
Printed in Canada.

COVER SUBJECT

Jesus Saves—From What? PAGES 3-7

Why We Need to Be Saved 3

Jesus' Death and Resurrection
—What They Can Mean for You 4

Jesus' Death Commemorated—When and Where? 7

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

Our Readers Ask . . .

Is Easter Really a Christian Celebration? 8

Life Story

Jairo's Eyes—His Way to Serve God 9

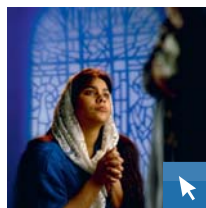
Did You Know? 12

Gifts Fit for a King 13

Bible Questions Answered 16



READ MORE ONLINE



OTHER BIBLE QUESTIONS
ANSWERED

**Should We Worship
Images?**

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS >
BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

DOWNLOAD
THIS MAGAZINE
IN VARIOUS
FORMATS ONLINE



Why We Need to Be Saved

“Man, born of woman, is short-lived and filled with trouble. He comes up like a blossom and then withers away; he flees like a shadow and disappears.”—Job 14:1, 2.

From earliest times, people have dreamed about how wonderful it would be to live youthful, healthy lives forever. Sadly, though, the cold reality is this: We are mortal. The above words of Job, spoken more than three thousand years ago, still hold true today.

The desire to live endlessly is strong, and it is universal. The Bible tells us that God has put in our hearts a longing for eternity as well as a desire to comprehend it. (Ecclesiastes 3:11) That being so, does it seem reasonable to you that a loving God would put a desire in us that is impossible to achieve? If your answer is no, you are right. God’s Word calls death an enemy and promises that it “is to be brought to nothing.”—1 Corinthians 15:26.

There is no doubt that death is an enemy. No sound person would welcome it. When danger approaches, we dodge, hide, or flee. When we get sick, we seek ways to get well. We do everything we can to avoid things that could cause us to die.

Is there any reason to believe that this age-old

enemy will be brought to nothing? Yes, there is. Jehovah God, the Creator, did not make humans to live just a few years and then to die. Human death was not part of his original purpose. He intended for humans to live forever on the earth, and what he purposes, he accomplishes.—Isaiah 55:11.

How, then, will death be brought to an end? Throughout history, men have struggled to solve the problem of death, but with no success. In modern times, the quest continues. Scientists have developed vaccines and medications that have subdued some diseases. They have peered into the genetic structure of living things. In many places, people, on average, live longer today than they did a century ago. Yet, death is far from vanquished. As the Bible says, “all are returning to the dust.”—Ecclesiastes 3:20.

The good news is that we do not have to rely on human ingenuity to solve this long-standing problem. Jehovah God has already arranged for us to be saved or rescued from death, and the central figure in that arrangement is Jesus Christ.

JESUS' DEATH AND RESURRECTION

What They Can Mean for You

“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will get saved.”—Acts 16:31.

Those memorable words were spoken by the apostle Paul and Silas to a jailer in the Macedonian city of Philippi. What do those words mean? In order to understand how belief in Jesus is linked to salvation from death, we must first learn why we die. Consider what the Bible teaches.



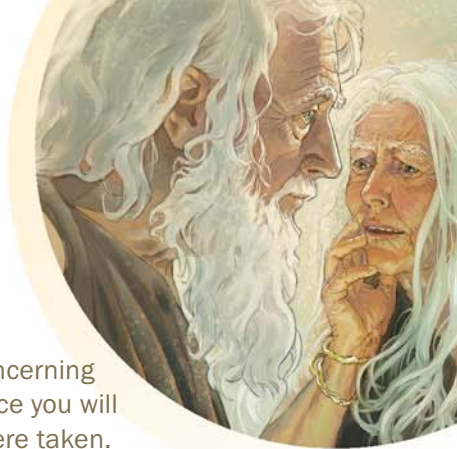
Humans were not meant to die

“Jehovah God took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden to cultivate it and to take care of it. Jehovah God also gave this command to the man: ‘From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will certainly die.’”—Genesis 2:15-17.

God placed the first man, Adam, in the garden of Eden, an earthly paradise filled with abundant wildlife and beautiful vegetation. There were fruit-bearing trees from which Adam could freely eat. However, Jehovah God clearly told Adam not to eat from one specific tree, warning Adam that if he did, he would die.

Did Adam understand that prohibition? He knew what death was; he had seen animals die. If Adam were created to die eventually, God’s warning would have had little meaning. Instead, Adam realized that if he obeyed God and did not eat from that tree, he would live on endlessly—he would not die.

Some believe that the tree symbolized sexual relations, but that could not be. After all, Jehovah wanted Adam and his wife, Eve, to “be fruitful and become many” and to “fill the earth and subdue it.” (Genesis 1:28) The prohibition applied to a real tree. Jehovah called it “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad” because it represented his right to determine what was good or bad for humans. By not eating the fruit of that tree, Adam would have shown not just his obedience but also his appreciation for the One who created him and who had blessed him so richly.



Adam died because he disobeyed God

“To Adam [God] said: ‘Because you . . . ate from the tree concerning which I gave you this command, . . . in the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are and to dust you will return.’”—Genesis 3:17, 19.

Adam ate from the tree that was forbidden to him. That act of disobedience was not to be taken lightly. It was rebellion, a flagrant disregard for all the good that Jehovah had done for him. By eating that fruit, Adam rejected Jehovah, choosing a course of independence, which would have catastrophic consequences.

Just as Jehovah foretold, Adam eventually died. God had formed Adam “out of dust from the ground” and had told him that he would “return to the ground.” Adam did not live on in another form or in another realm. At death, he became as lifeless as the dust from which he had been formed.—Genesis 2:7; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10.

We die because we come from Adam

“Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.”—Romans 5:12.

Adam’s disobedience—or sin—had far-reaching consequences. By sinning, Adam lost for himself, not just an ordinary life of 70 or 80 years, but life with the prospect of living forever. Moreover, when Adam sinned, he lost perfection and could only pass on imperfection to all his progeny.

We are all descendants of Adam. From

him, through no choice of our own, we have inherited an imperfect body that is prone to sin and eventual death. Paul well described our plight. He wrote: “I am fleshly, sold under sin. Miserable man that I am! Who will rescue me from the body undergoing this death?” Paul then answers his own question: “Thanks to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” —Romans 7:14, 24, 25.



Jesus gave his life so that we might live forever

“The Father has sent his Son as Savior of the world.”—1 John 4:14.

Jehovah God arranged a means for overcoming the effects of sin and freeing us from the penalty of eternal death. How? He sent his beloved Son from heaven to be born as a perfect human like Adam. But, unlike Adam, Jesus “committed no sin.” (1 Peter 2:22) Because he was perfect, he did not come under the penalty of death and he could have lived forever as a perfect human.

Instead, however, Jehovah allowed Jesus to be killed by his enemies. Three days later, Jehovah brought him back to life as a spirit so that he could in time return to heaven. There, Jesus presented to God the value of his perfect human life to redeem what Adam had lost for himself and his offspring. Jehovah accepted that sacrifice, making it possi-

ble for those who exercise faith in Jesus to receive everlasting life.—Romans 3:23, 24; 1 John 2:2.

Jesus thus bought back what Adam had forfeited. He suffered death for us so that we could live forever. The Bible says: “Jesus . . . suffered death, so that by God’s undeserved kindness he might taste death for everyone.”—Hebrews 2:9.

This provision reveals much about Jehovah. His high standard of justice made it impossible for imperfect humans to redeem themselves. However, his love and mercy moved him to meet his own requirements at an enormous cost to himself—the giving of his own Son to provide the redemption price.—Romans 5:6-8.



Jesus was resurrected from the dead, and others will be too

“Christ has been raised up from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep in death. For since death came through a man, resurrection of the dead also comes 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.

There is no doubt that Jesus lived and died, but what evidence is there that he was raised from the dead? Among the strongest evidence is the fact that the resurrected Jesus appeared to many people on different occasions and at different places. Once, he appeared to more than 500 people. The apostle Paul wrote of that in his letter to the Corinthians, noting that some of those witnesses were still alive, implying that

they could testify to what they had seen and heard.—1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

Significantly, when Paul wrote that Christ was “the firstfruits” of those raised up, he was indicating that others too would later be resurrected. Jesus himself said that the time would come when “all those in the memorial tombs” would “come out.”—John 5:28, 29.



To live forever, we must exercise faith in Jesus

“God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son, so that everyone exercising faith in him might not be destroyed but have everlasting life.”
—John 3:16.

The first pages of the Bible tell of the time when death came to be and Paradise was lost. The final pages tell of the time when death will be brought to nothing and God will restore Paradise to the earth. People will then be able to live happy, productive lives forever. Revelation 21:4 says: “Death will be no more.” To underscore the reliability of that promise, verse 5 states: “These words are faithful and true.” What Jehovah promises, he is fully able to do.

Do you believe that “these words are faithful and true”? Then, learn more about Jesus Christ, and exercise faith in him. If you do, you will gain Jehovah’s approval. Not only will you experience his rich blessing now but you will gain the hope of life eternal in the earthly Paradise, where “death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”

Jesus’ Death Commemorated WHEN AND WHERE?

On the night before he died, Jesus instructed his disciples to commemorate the sacrifice that he was about to make. He told them: “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.”—Luke 22:19.

This year, the Memorial of Jesus’ death falls on **Friday, April 3**, after sundown. Jehovah’s Witnesses invite you and your family to attend and to listen to a talk that will explain why Jesus’ death is so important and how it can benefit you.



For the time and place of this event, please check with Jehovah’s Witnesses in your community or check for details at www.jw.org. ■

Is Easter really a Christian celebration?

Easter is described in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* as the “principal festival of the Christian church that celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.” However, is it a Christian celebration?

To establish the authenticity of an artifact, attention to detail is critical. Similarly, for us to see whether Easter is a Christian celebration, it is essential that we take a look at the details related to Easter.

First of all, Jesus asked his followers to commemorate, not his resurrection, but his *death*. The apostle Paul called this occasion “the Lord’s Evening Meal.”—1 Corinthians 11:20; Luke 22:19, 20.

Additionally, many of the Easter traditions “have little to do” with Jesus’ resurrection, states the *Britannica*, “but derive from folk customs.” For instance, regarding the popular Easter symbols the egg and the rabbit, *The Encyclopedia of Religion* says: “The egg symbolizes new life breaking through the apparent death (hardness) of the eggshell.” It adds: “The rab-



bit was known as an extraordinarily fertile creature, and hence it symbolized the coming of spring.”

Philippe Walter, a professor of medieval literature, explains how such customs became part of the Easter celebration. He wrote that “in the process of the Christianization of pagan religions,” it was easy to associate the pagan festival that celebrated “the passage from the death of winter to the life of springtime” with Jesus’ resurrection. Walter adds that it was a key step in introduc-

ing “Christian commemorations” to the pagan calendar, thus smoothing the way to mass conversion.

This process of “Christianization” did not occur while the apostles were still alive, because they acted as a “restraint” against paganism. (2 Thessalonians 2:7) The apostle Paul warned that after his “going away,” men would “rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.” (Acts 20:29, 30) And late in the first century, the apostle John wrote that some men were already misleading Christians. (1 John 2:18, 26) The way was open for the eventual adoption of pagan customs.

Some may feel, however, that allowing some of the Easter customs was not wrong—that it gave “pagans” a better understanding of the meaning of Jesus’ resurrection. Paul, however, would never have agreed. Although exposed to many pagan

“Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers.”—2 Corinthians 6:14

customs while traveling through the Roman Empire, he never adopted any of them to give people a better understanding of Jesus. On the contrary, he warned the Christians: “Do not become unevenly yoked with unbelievers. For what fellowship do righteousness and lawlessness have? Or what sharing does light have with darkness? ‘Therefore, get out from among them, and separate yourselves,’ says Jehovah, ‘and quit touching the unclean thing.’”—2 Corinthians 6:14, 17.

What is the result of our brief examination of the details? It has clearly revealed that Easter is not a Christian celebration. ■

Jairo's Eyes

His Way to Serve God

AS TOLD BY HIS BROTHER
SAMUEL RUIZ-LEÓN ARROYO



Can you imagine having no control of your body except for your eyes? My brother Jairo is in such a predicament. Yet, he enjoys a meaningful life. Before I explain why he has found his life to be worth living, let me tell you his story.

Jairo was born with a type of cerebral palsy called spastic quadriplegia.* As a result, he has no control over most of his body. His brain cannot send clear signals to his muscles, so his limbs twist, or writhe, uncontrollably. Sometimes, Jairo's unpredictable jerking movements even cause him to hurt himself. People nearby may also get hurt if they are not alert. Sadly, his arms and legs must often be tied to his wheelchair to prevent such accidents.

PAINFUL PATH TO ADULthood

Jairo's physical growth has been very painful. When he was three months old, he started to have seizures that left him unconscious. All too often, Mum would hold him tightly and rush him to the hospital, convinced that he was dead.

Because of all the tightening and contracting, in time Jairo's bones became deformed. At the age of 16, he dislocated his pelvis and required major surgery to his thigh, hip, and pelvis. I still

* Cerebral palsy (CP) is a general term used to describe brain damage that affects mobility. It can also lead to seizures, eating disorders, and speech impairment. Spastic quadriplegia is the most severe type of CP; it can result in the stiffness of all four limbs and a floppy neck.

remember Jairo crying out in pain every night during his recovery.

Jairo's severe disability makes him totally reliant on others to carry out daily functions, such as eating, getting dressed, and getting to bed. Mum and Dad usually perform these tasks. Though Jairo needs constant help, our parents always remind him that his life depends not only on humans but also on God.

A WAY OF COMMUNICATION OPENS

Our parents are Jehovah's Witnesses, and they have been reading Bible stories to Jairo ever since he was a baby. They always knew that life is more meaningful when one has a relationship with God. Jairo was trapped in a frail body that jerked continually, but he could have a bright, solid hope for the future. However, they often wondered if Jairo could grasp Bible knowledge.

One day, when Jairo was a child, Dad asked him, "Jairo, can you please talk to me?" Then he added, "If you really love me, you will!" As Dad begged him to say at least one word, tears welled up in Jairo's eyes. Though he tried to express his feelings with words, he could only mutter

guttural sounds. Father felt bad for having made Jairo cry. But that reaction showed that Jairo understood what Father had said. The problem was that he could not speak.

Before long, our parents noticed that Jairo at times moved his eyes rapidly in an apparent attempt to convey his thoughts and feelings. It was frustrating for Jairo that he could not always make himself understood. But when my parents learned to decipher his eye signals and get him what he needed, Jairo's face would beam with a broad grin. It was his way of saying thank you.

A speech therapist suggested that for better communication, we should raise both hands in the air when asking him a yes-or-no question. The right hand means yes, the left hand no. Thus, he could express his wishes by fixing his eyes on the proper hand.

A MILESTONE IN JAIRO'S LIFE

Three times a year, Jehovah's Witnesses hold assemblies and conventions, where Bible talks are presented to large audiences. Jairo always got excited during the talk that was addressed to baptism candidates. One day, when Jairo was 16,

Father asked him, "Jairo, do you want to get baptized?" At once, his decisive look at Dad's right hand revealed his desire to take that step. Then Dad added, "Have you promised God in prayer to serve him forever?" Once again, Jairo gazed straight at Dad's right hand. It was clear that Jairo had already dedicated his life to Jehovah.

After several Bible discussions, it was also clear that Jairo understood the significance of Christian baptism. So, in 2004, he answered the most important question he was ever asked, "Have you dedicated yourself to God to do his will?" Jairo answered this question by raising his eyes upward. It was his prearranged way of saying yes. Thus, at age 17, he got baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

EYES FOCUSED ON THE THINGS OF GOD

In 2011, a new way to communicate opened up for Jairo—an eye-controlled computer. This device tracks the movements of his iris so that he can activate icons on the screen. Blinking or staring at an icon is like clicking a mouse on a computer. A board consisting of pictograms was created to help Jairo communicate. When he

What Jairo's Associates Say

Rosa, who is 63, observes: "Jairo radiates joy. And his intense longing to serve Jehovah is contagious."

Antonio, who is 32, notes: "I am moved every time I see Jairo expressing his faith."

Andrés, who is 67, says: "It seems that Jairo gets the sense of some Bible teachings better than I do."



Jairo uses his eye-controlled computer and its electronic voice to comment at meetings and to share his beliefs with others

blinks at one of them, the built-in software converts a written message into an electronic voice.

As Jairo's understanding of the Bible increased, so did his desire to help others spiritually. During our weekly family Bible study, he often looks back and forth between me and his computer. This is his way of reminding me that I should write down comments that he can offer during question-and-answer sessions at meetings of our Christian congregation.

At the meeting, he patiently navigates through the screen to click on the appropriate icon, and then his electronic voice is heard by everyone. He smiles broadly every time he encourages the members of the congregation in this way. Alex, one of Jairo's young friends, observes, "It always impresses me when I hear Jairo's comments on a Bible subject."

Jairo also uses his eyes to tell others about his beliefs. One way he does this is by clicking a pictogram that portrays a garden where animals and people of all races live in peaceful conditions. When he activates this, his computer voice proclaims, "The hope of the Bible is that the earth will be a paradise where there will be no more sick-

ness and death, Revelation 21:4." If the listener shows interest, another click causes his computer to say, "Would you like to study the Bible with me?" Surprisingly, our grandfather accepted this invitation. It is thrilling to see Jairo, assisted by a fellow Witness, slowly teaching Grandpa the Bible! Happily, Grandpa got baptized at the regional convention in Madrid in August 2014.

Jairo's devotion to God does not go unnoticed by the teachers at his school. Rosario, one of his speech therapists, once confessed: "If I ever thought about joining a religion, I would become one of Jehovah's Witnesses. I have seen how Jairo's faith has given him a real purpose in life, despite his difficult situation."

Jairo's eyes always light up when I read him the Bible's promise: "The lame will leap like the deer, and the tongue of the speechless will shout for joy." (Isaiah 35:6) Although he does get discouraged at times, he is generally in good spirits. This is possible only because his life revolves around God and around his Christian friends. His cheerful outlook and strong faith are a testimony that serving Jehovah makes a challenging life worth living. ■





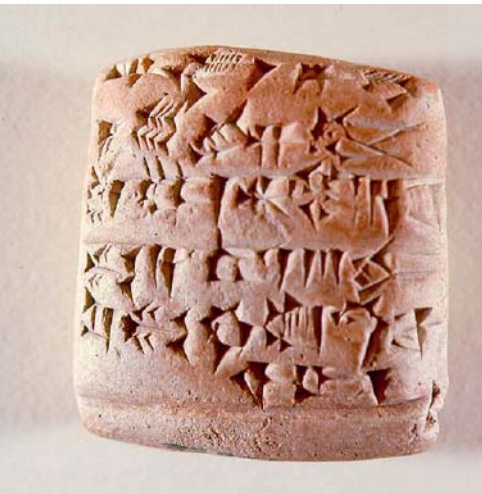
PAUL DECLARED:
"I APPEAL TO CAESAR!"

How was Roman citizenship an advantage for the apostle Paul?

Roman citizenship entitled a person to certain rights and privileges wherever he went in the empire. A Roman citizen was subject to Roman law, not the laws of provincial cities. When accused, he could agree to be tried according to local law, yet he still retained the right to be heard by a Roman tribunal. In the case of a capital sentence, he had the right to appeal to the emperor.

On the basis of such rights, Cicero, a Roman statesman of the first century B.C.E., stated: "It is a crime to bind a Roman citizen; to scourge him is a wickedness; to put him to death is almost parricide," that is, killing one's own parent or close relative.

The apostle Paul preached extensively throughout the Roman Empire. He made use of his rights as a Roman citizen on three recorded occasions: (1) He informed the Philippian magistrates that they had infringed upon his rights by beating him. (2) He revealed his status to avoid a scourging in Jerusalem. (3) He appealed his case to Caesar, the emperor in Rome, so that it would be heard directly by him.—Acts 16:37-39; 22:25-28; 25:10-12. ■



A CUNEIFORM CONTRACT FOR
THE PURCHASE OF SHEEP AND
GOATS, ABOUT 2050 B.C.E.

Yale Babylonian Collection

How were shepherds paid in Bible times?

The patriarch Jacob shepherded the flocks of his uncle Laban for 20 years. Jacob worked the first 14 years for the hand of Laban's two daughters, and for the remaining 6 years, he was paid in livestock. (Genesis 30:25-33) "Shepherding agreements such as those between Laban and Jacob," says the magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review*, "would have been very familiar to the ancient writers and readers of the Biblical text."

Ancient contracts unearthed at Nuzi, Larsa, and other sites in modern Iraq illustrate such agreements. A typical contract ran from one annual shearing to the next. Shepherds accepted the responsibility of caring for a specified number of animals listed according to their age and sex. A year later, the owner received a stipulated minimum of wool, dairy products, young stock, and so on. Anything produced in excess went to the shepherd.

Increase in flock size depended on the number of ewes entrusted to a shepherd. One hundred ewes were generally expected to produce 80 live lambs. The shepherd had to make good any shortfall, or loss. Thus he had great incentive to take good care of the animals entrusted to him. ■

Gifts Fit for a King

“Astrologers from the East . . . opened their treasures and presented him with gifts—gold and frankincense and myrrh.”
—Matthew 2:1, 11.

WHAT would you choose as a present for a very important person? In Bible times some spices were as precious as gold—so valuable that they constituted gifts fit for a king.* That is why two of the gift items that the astrologers offered to the “king of the Jews” were aromatic spices.—Matthew 2:1, 2, 11.

The Bible also relates that when the queen of Sheba visited Solomon, “she gave the king 120 talents of gold and a great quantity of balsam oil and precious stones. Never again was such balsam oil brought in as what the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.”# (2 Chronicles 9:9) Kings also sent Solomon balsam oil as a gesture of their goodwill.—2 Chronicles 9:23, 24.

Why were such spices and related products so valuable and expensive in Bible times? Because they played many important roles, as when they were used in beauty care, religious services, and burial of the dead. (See the box “Uses of Aromatic Spices in Bible Times.”) Apart from the high demand for them, spices were expensive because of transportation and marketing costs.

* In the Bible, the original-language words translated “spice” or “spices” refer mainly to aromatic, or fragrant, plant products and not to food seasonings.

“Balsam oil” refers to aromatic oils or resins obtained from trees and shrubs.



Aromatic spices were widely used in Bible times.
Clockwise from top: cumin, turmeric, saffron, paprika

CROSSING THE ARABIAN DESERT

In Bible times, some spice plants grew in the Jordan Valley. Other spices, however, had to be imported. A variety of spice products are mentioned in the Bible. Among the more familiar are saffron, aloe, balsam, cinnamon, frankincense, and myrrh. Besides these, there were the common food condiments such as cumin, mint, and dill.

Where did the exotic spices come from? Aloes, cassia, and cinnamon were found in what is today China, India, and Sri Lanka. Spices such as myrrh and frankincense came from trees and bushes that grew in desert areas stretching from southern Arabia to Somalia in Africa. And nard, or spikenard, was an exclusive Indian product from the Himalayas.

To reach Israel, many spices had to be transported across Arabia. Partly as a result of this, during the second and first millennia B.C.E., Arabia became “the great monopolistic carrier of goods between East and West,” explains *The Book of Spices*. Ancient towns, fortresses, and caravan stops found in the Negev of southern Israel mark the routes of spice traders. These settlements also “reflect the hugely profitable trade . . . from south Arabia to

“Small in bulk, high in price, and in a steady demand, spices were especially desirable articles of commerce.”

—*The Book of Spices*



CINNAMON

Uses of Aromatic Spices in Bible Times

Anointing oil and sacred incense. Jehovah gave Moses the formulas for the anointing oil, or ointment, and the sacred incense. Both contained four different spices. (Exodus 30:22-25, 34-38) Certain priests specialized in making anointing oil and in supervising the supply of these items.—Numbers 4:16; 1 Chronicles 9:30.

Perfumes and ointments. People who could afford it used fragrant powders for scenting their houses, garments, beds, and bodies. (Esther 2:12; Proverbs 7:17; Song of Solomon 3:6, 7; 4:13, 14) Lazarus' sister Mary poured out very expensive “perfumed oil, genuine **nard**,” on Jesus' hair and feet. The small jar of “genuine nard” cost up to a year's wages.—Mark 14:3-5; John 12:3-5.

Preparation of bodies for burial. Nicodemus supplied “a mixture of myrrh and **aloes**” for making Jesus' body ready for burial. (John 19:39, 40) And some of Jesus' disciples prepared “spices and perfumed oils” and took them to the tomb.—Luke 23:56–24:1.

Seasoning. Israelites likely also used spices or condiments to enrich the flavor of fish and meat dishes. Other spices were used to fortify wine.—Song of Solomon 8:2.



From the book *La Sagrada Biblia*, Volume II, 1890



the Mediterranean,” reports the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO.

Caravans laden with these aromatic spices regularly traveled distances of some 1,100 miles (1,800 km) across Arabia. (Job 6:19) The Bible refers to a caravan of Ishmaelite merchants carrying such spices as “labdanum gum, balsam, and resinous bark” from Gilead to Egypt. (Genesis 37:25) Jacob's sons sold their brother Joseph as a slave to these traders.

“THE BEST-KEPT TRADE SECRET OF ALL TIME”

Arabian merchants controlled most of the spice trade for centuries. They became the exclusive suppliers of spices from Asia, such as cassia and cinnamon. In order to discourage the Mediterranean world from establishing direct commercial links with sources in the East, the Arabians spread fanciful tales about the dangers involved in obtaining spices. The real source of spices was “probably the best-kept trade secret of all time,” according to *The Book of Spices*.

What stories did the Arabians spread? Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.E., described tales of fearsome birds building nests of cinnamon bark on inaccessible cliffs. To obtain this precious spice, he wrote, collectors put large pieces of meat at the foot of the cliff. The birds would greedily carry so much meat to their nests that the nests would crash to the ground. The men could then quickly col-



BALSAM OIL



CUMIN



DILL



CASSIA



SAFFRON



MINT

© Jolanta Dąbrowska/Alamy

Features of the Two Spices Offered to Jesus

Both frankincense, or olibanum, and myrrh came from resinous gum that was obtained by making incisions in the bark of small trees or thorny shrubs.

The **frankincense** tree grew along the southern coast of Arabia, and the myrrh bush thrived in the semidesert countries of present-day Somalia and Yemen. Both spices were highly esteemed for their fragrance. Jehovah himself chose them in connection with his worship—myrrh was a component of the holy anointing oil, and frankincense of the holy incense. (Exodus 30:23-25, 34-37) But they were used differently.

Frankincense, commonly used as incense, had to be burned to release its fragrance. The resin extracted from **myrrh**, on the other hand, was used directly. Myrrh is mentioned three times in accounts about Jesus: as a gift when he was a baby (Matthew 2:11), as an analgesic offered with wine when he was hanging on the stake (Mark 15:23), and as one of the spices used in the preparation of his body for burial (John 19:39).



© Image courtesy Missouri Botanical Garden.
<http://www.botanicus.org>

From the book *La Biblia*, Volume 1, 1907

lect the cinnamon bark and sell it to merchants. Such stories became widespread. Thus, because of the “alleged dangers of harvest, it [cinnamon] was sold at a very high price,” notes *The Book of Spices*.

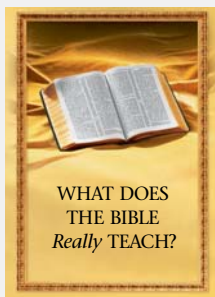
Eventually, the Arabians’ secret was uncovered and their monopoly lost. By the first century B.C.E., Alexandria, in Egypt, became a large port and commercial hub for spices. Once sailors learned how to take advantage of the monsoon winds of the Indian Ocean, Roman ships

sailed from Egyptian ports to India. As a result, luxury spices became much more abundant and prices eased.

Today the value of spices bears no comparison to that of gold. And we would hardly consider spices suitable gifts for a king. Yet, millions of people around the world continue to use them in perfumes and medicines and, of course, to add flavor and zest to their food. Indeed, the alluring aromas of spices make them popular today, just as they were thousands of years ago. ■



WHAT FUTURE DOES JESUS' DEATH
MAKE POSSIBLE?—ISAIAH 25:8; 33:24



For more
information
see chapter 5
of this book,
published by
Jehovah's
Witnesses

Also available
at www.jw.org

Please send me a copy
of *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

LANGUAGE _____

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

For mailing address, see page 2

BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Why should we remember Jesus' death?

Jesus' death was the most important event in history—he died to restore human life to what it should be. Man was not created with a tendency to do bad things, to get sick, or to die. (Genesis 1:31) But sin entered the world through the first man, Adam. Jesus gave his life to save us from sin and death.—**Read Matthew 20:28; Romans 6:23.**

God showed outstanding love by sending his Son to earth to die for us. (1 John 4:9, 10) Jesus told his followers to remember his death by means of a simple ceremony involving bread and wine. Doing so each year is a way of expressing our appreciation for the love shown by God and by Jesus.—**Read Luke 22:19, 20.**

Who should partake of the bread and the wine?

When Jesus first told his disciples to remember his death, he spoke about a covenant, or an agreement. (Matthew 26:26-28) It opened up the prospect for them and a limited number of others to become kings and priests with him in heaven. Although millions commemorate Jesus' death, only those in that covenant partake of the bread and the wine.—**Read Revelation 5:10.**

For nearly 2,000 years, Jehovah has been choosing those who will be kings. (Luke 12:32) They are few in number compared with those who will live forever on earth.—**Read Revelation 7:4, 9, 17.**

READ ANSWERS TO MORE
BIBLE QUESTIONS ONLINE



 Free downloads of
this magazine and
past issues

 Bible available
online in over
100 languages

Visit www.jw.org,
or scan code

