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# THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



IS THE END  
NEAR?

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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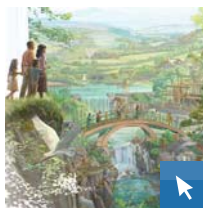
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## “THE END” WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

When you hear the words “The end is near!” what comes to mind? Do you think of a wild-eyed preacher thundering from the pulpit and gesturing dramatically, Bible in hand? Or do you picture a bearded old man standing on a street corner, wearing a long robe tied at the waist with a rope, holding a sign bearing a doomsday message? Imagining such scenes may make some people feel concerned, while others may feel skeptical or even amused.

The Bible does state: “The end will come.” (Matthew 24:14) The same event is also called “the great day of God” and “Armageddon.” (Revelation 16:14, 16) True, there is much religious confusion on the subject and strange, gloomy notions abound. Nonetheless, the Bible itself is quite clear about the end—revealing what it is and what it is not. God’s Word also helps us to see clearly whether the end is near. Best of all, it teaches us how to survive! First, though, let us clear up some misconceptions and establish a definition. What does “the end” really mean according to the Bible?

## WHAT THE END IS NOT

### 1. THE END IS NOT AN EPIC, FLAMING DESTRUCTION OF THE EARTH.

The Bible states: “[God] has established the earth on its foundations; it will not be moved from its place forever and ever.” (Psalm 104:5) That scripture and others assure us that God will neither destroy the earth nor allow it to be destroyed—ever!—Ecclesiastes 1:4; Isaiah 45:18.

### 2. THE END IS NOT A RANDOM, UNSCHEDULED EVENT.

The Bible reveals that the end *is* scheduled—God has set a specific time for it. We read: “Concerning that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father. Keep looking, keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is.” (Mark 13:32, 33) Clearly, God (“the Father”) has scheduled the exact “appointed time” when he will initiate the end.

### 3. THE END IS NOT TRIGGERED BY HUMANS OR BY DEBRIS HURLING THROUGH SPACE.

What will bring about the end? Revelation 19:11 says: “I saw heaven opened, and look! a white horse. And the one seated on it is called Faithful and True.” Verse 19 continues: “And I saw the wild beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the one seated on the horse and against his army.” (Revelation 19:11-21) Though much of the language here is symbolic, we can readily discern this much: God will send an army of angelic creatures to exterminate his enemies.

## WHAT THE END IS

### 1. THE END OF FAILING HUMAN GOVERNMENTS.

The Bible explains: “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom [government] that will never be destroyed. And this kingdom will not be passed

The Bible’s message about the end is good news rather than bad



on to any other people. It will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, and it alone will stand forever.” (Daniel 2:44) As was stated earlier, in point 3, there will be an extermination of “the kings of the earth and their armies,” who will have “gathered together to wage war against the one seated on the horse and against his army.”—Revelation 19:19.

## **2. THE END OF WAR, VIOLENCE, AND INJUSTICE.**

“[God] is bringing an end to wars throughout the earth.” (Psalm 46:9) “Only the upright will reside in the earth, and the blameless will remain in it. As for the wicked, they will be cut off from the earth, and the treacherous will be torn away from it.” (Proverbs 2:21, 22) “Look! I am making all things new.”—Revelation 21:4, 5.

## **3. THE END OF RELIGIONS THAT HAVE FAILED GOD AND HUMANS.**

“The prophets prophesy lies, and the priests dominate by their own authority. . . . But what will you do when the end comes?” (Jeremiah 5:31) “Many will say to me in that day: ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and expel demons in your name, and perform many powerful works in your name?’ And then I will declare to them: ‘I never knew you! Get away from me, you workers of lawlessness!’”—Matthew 7:21-23.

## **4. THE END OF PEOPLE WHO PERPETUATE AND SUPPORT THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS.**

Jesus Christ said: “Now this is the basis for judgment: that the light has come into the world, but men have loved the darkness rather than the light, for their works were wicked.” (John 3:19) The Bible describes an earlier worldwide destruction during the time of the faithful man Noah. “The world of that time suffered destruction when it was flooded with water. But by the same word the heavens and the earth that now exist are reserved for fire and are being kept until the day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly people.”—2 Peter 3:5-7.

Note that the upcoming “day of judgment and of destruction” is compared with the destruction of “the world” of Noah’s time. What world was destroyed? Our planet survived; it was “the ungodly people”—God’s enemies—who “suffered destruction.” During God’s upcoming “day of judgment,” those who choose to be God’s enemies will likewise be destroyed. But God’s friends will be preserved, as were Noah and his family.—Matthew 24:37-42.

Imagine how splendid this earth will be after God eliminates all wicked influences! Clearly, the Bible’s message about the end is good news rather than bad. Still, you may wonder: ‘Does the Bible tell us when the end will come? Could it be near? How can I survive it?’

**AFTER THE END** What will it be like after the end? Many scriptures describe that wonderful time. For example: “‘[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.’ And the One seated on the throne said: ‘Look! I am making all things new.’” (Revelation 21:4, 5) The end does not have to mean the end of your life. God wants us to survive, and he tells us how.



# IS THE END NEAR?

Will God let humans continue to dominate one another and threaten the future of mankind? No, as we have seen, he will step in and bring an end to centuries of misery and oppression. The Creator of humans and the earth wants you to know that his time to take action is approaching. How does he reveal that vital knowledge?

Consider this illustration: When you travel by car, you might first consult online sources, maps, and written directions. Then, as you see signs and landmarks that match what the directions say, you gain confidence that you are nearing your destination. In a similar way, God has given us his Word, which describes striking global trends. As we see those landmark events unfolding, we become convinced that we are in the time period leading up to the end.

The Bible explains that world history would reach a unique, pivotal time period that would culminate in the end. That time would see a combination of worldwide events and circumstances that differs from anything in mankind's history. Consider some of the features mentioned in God's Word.

**1. WORLDWIDE UPEHAVALS** A prophecy recorded in Matthew chapter 24 lists events on the earth that would make up a composite sign. That sign would mark "the conclusion of the system of things" and lead to the time when "the end will come." (Verses 3, 14) These features include major wars, food shortages, earthquakes in one place after another, an increase of lawlessness, a lack of love, and sly efforts by religious leaders to mislead people. (Verses 6-26) Of course, to some extent, such events have been taking place for centuries. However, as the end approaches, they would all occur in the same troubled era. They

would also accompany the next three warning signals.

**2. THE ATTITUDES OF PEOPLE** The Bible says that "the last days"—the time period leading to the end—would be marked by a major deterioration of peoples' attitudes. We read: "Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God." (2 Timothy 3:1-4) True, disrespect for fellow humans is not new, but only in "the last days" would that spirit reach such extremes that the era could rightly be described as "critical times hard to deal with." Have you noticed this ugly downward trend in people's attitudes?

**3. THE EARTH IS BEING RUINED** The Bible states that God will "bring to ruin those ruining the earth." (Revelation 11:18) In what ways would people be ruining the earth? The time period when Noah lived was described in a similar way: "The earth had become ruined in the sight of the true God, and the earth was filled with violence. Yes, God looked upon the earth, and it was ruined." So God said of that corrupt society: "I am bringing them to ruin." (Genesis 6:11-13) Have you noticed the mounting evidence that the earth is becoming filled with violence? Additionally, humans have arrived at a unique point in history: They have the potential literally to ruin the earth by wiping out all human life on it. They have the weaponry in their hands. And the earth is being ruined in another way. The systems that support life on earth—the air we breathe, the animal

## God's Kingdom is being proclaimed worldwide in hundreds of languages

and plant ecosystems, the oceans—are steadily being degraded because of human mismanagement.

Ask yourself, 'Just over a century ago, did mankind even have the power of complete self-destruction?' But now humans are exerting that power by amassing advanced weaponry and by devastating the environment. The rapid developments in technology seem to be outpacing man's ability to understand or control the consequences. However, earth's destiny is not for man to decide or control. Before all life on this earth is eradicated, God will step in to destroy those destroying the earth. That is his promise!

**4. A GLOBAL PREACHING WORK** Another part of the sign of the end foretold that an unprecedented work would be under way: "This good news of the Kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come." (Matthew 24:14) This preaching campaign would differ significantly from most religious proselytizing carried out over the centuries. During the last days, a specific message would be emphasized, "this good news of the Kingdom." Do you know of any religious group that highlights that particular message? And even if some seem to be preaching such a message, are they a local group, or have they spread this good news to "all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations"?



The Web site [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org) focuses on "this good news of the Kingdom." The site features literature explaining that message in over 700 languages. Do you know of any other initiative that emphasizes the Kingdom good news to such a global extent? Long before the Internet was available, Jehovah's Witnesses had gained a reputation for their efforts to spread the good news about God's Kingdom. Since 1939, the cover of each issue of *The Watchtower* magazine has displayed the words "Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom." A book on religions commented that the preaching work of Jehovah's Witnesses has been "almost unparalleled in its intensity and scope." This witnessing emphasizes the good news that very soon "the end will come" through the action of God's Kingdom.

### A PIVOTAL POINT IN WORLD HISTORY

Have you noticed that all four of the Bible's warning signals described in this article have been evident during your lifetime? For over one hundred years, this magazine has been providing its readers with information about world

**DOOMSDAY PROPHETS?** Jehovah's Witnesses are not doomsday prophets. They have been sharing a positive message about the future for over one hundred years. For example, their 1958 convention talk, "God's Kingdom Rules—Is the World's End Near?" explained that "God's kingdom comes, not to destroy this earth, but to destroy Satan's world. God's kingdom comes, not to burn up this earth, but to bring to pass God's will here on earth as well as in heaven. For that reason the earth is worth preserving as God's creation; and God will preserve it for all eternity."

events to help them personally verify that we are nearing the end. Of course, some skeptics disagree, asserting that facts and statistics are subjective and can be manipulated. They also claim that since worldwide communication continues to increase, world conditions only appear to be worsening. Nonetheless, there is ever-increasing evidence that we are at the conclusion of a unique period in the history of humanity.

Some experts feel that we are approaching major changes to this earth. For example, in 2014, the Science and Security Board of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* warned the United

Nations Security Council about major threats to the existence of mankind. Those scientists testified: "A careful review of these threats leads us to conclude that the risk of civilization-threatening technological catastrophe remains high." Many people are increasingly convinced that we have reached a pivotal point in world history. The publishers of this magazine and many of its readers have no doubt that this unique period really is the last days and that the end is near. But rather than dreading the future, you can be happy about the outcome. Why is that so? Because you can survive the end!

## MANY WILL SURVIVE THE END YOU CAN TOO

The Bible informs us that the end will involve destruction: "There will be great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning until now . . . In fact, unless those days were cut short, no flesh would be saved." (Matthew 24:21, 22) But God promises us that many humans will survive: "The world is passing away . . . , but the one who does the will of God remains forever." —1 John 2:17.

If you want to survive the passing of this world and 'remain forever,' what should you do? Should you start stockpiling supplies or making other physical preparations? No. The Bible strongly urges us to set different priorities. We read: "Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, consider what sort of people you ought to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly

devotion, as you await and keep close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." (2 Peter 3:10-12) The context shows that "all these things" that are to be dissolved include the ruling elements of this corrupt world and all those who choose such rulership rather than God's. Clearly, if we were to stockpile material goods, that would not save us from such a destruction.

Really, our survival involves being devoted to Jehovah God and learning about the kind of conduct and deeds that please him. (Zephaniah 2:3) Rather than following the majority today and ignoring the clear signals that we are living in such important times, we need to "keep close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah." Jehovah's Witnesses can show you from the Bible how you can be a survivor of this upcoming day. ■







ASSYRIAN KING SARGON II,  
MENTIONED AT ISAIAH 20:1

Photograph taken by courtesy  
of the British Museum



A GLAZED-BRICK FRIEZE  
FROM ANCIENT BABYLON

Courtesy of Archaeological Museum of Istanbul

## Does archaeology support the Bible record?

An article published in *Biblical Archaeology Review* stated that the existence of “at least 50” individuals mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures can now be confirmed by the findings of archaeologists. Among these are 14 kings of Judah and Israel, including such well-known figures as David and Hezekiah, and the lesser-known Menahem and Pekah. The list also includes 5 Pharaohs and 19 kings of Assyria, Babylonia, Moab, Persia, and Syria. Monarchs are not the only ones to appear in both the Biblical and archaeological record, however. So do lesser figures, such as high priests, a scribe, and other officials.

For all those individuals, there is “a substantial amount of scholarly agreement” for a firm identification, states the article. Of course, the Christian Greek Scriptures refer to many other historical figures, and there is archaeological evidence to support a number of them as well—such as Herod, Pontius Pilate, Tiberius, Caiaphas, and Sergius Paulus. ■

## When did lions disappear from Bible lands?

Although there are no lions in the wild in the Holy Land today, some 150 Scriptural references to this animal show that it was familiar to Bible writers. Most of those references are figurative; yet, some record actual encounters with lions. Samson, David, and Benaiah, for example, are credited with killing lions. (Judges 14:5, 6; 1 Samuel 17:34, 35; 2 Samuel 23:20) Other individuals were slain by lions.—1 Kings 13:24; 2 Kings 17:25.

In ancient times, the Asiatic lion (*Panthera leo persica*) ranged from Asia Minor and Greece to Palestine, Syria, Mesopotamia, and northwest India. Feared and respected, the animal often appeared in ancient Near Eastern art. Outstanding glazed-brick depictions of lions decorated ancient Babylon’s Processional Way.

Crusaders reportedly hunted lions in Palestine toward the end of the 12th century C.E. Lions seem to have become extinct in the area shortly after 1300. However, their presence was still reported in Mesopotamia and Syria until the 19th century and in Iran and Iraq as late as the first part of the 20th century. ■



AS TOLD BY  
NORMAND PELLETIER

YEAR BORN

1954

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

CANADA

HISTORY

DEFRAUDER,  
GAMBLER



## I learned that Jehovah is merciful and forgiving

**MY PAST:** I grew up in a depressed area in the city of Montreal. When I was six months old, my father died, which left my mother with all the household responsibilities. I was the youngest in a family of eight children.

As I grew up, my everyday life revolved around drugs, gambling, violence, and association with criminals. At the age of ten, I began running errands for prostitutes and loan sharks. I lied often and took pleasure in manipulating people in any fraudulent way I could. It was like a drug for me.

By the time I was 14, I excelled in devising ways to trick people. For example, I would buy large quantities of gold-plated watches, bracelets, and rings, mark them as 14-carat gold with an engraver's stamp, and then sell them on the street and in the parking lots of shopping centers. I was fascinated with making easy money. One time, I made \$10,000 in a single day!

After I was expelled from reform school at age 15, I had nowhere to live. I slept on the streets, in parks, or in the homes of casual friends who took me in.

Because of my fraudulent activities, I was often questioned by the police. Since I was not selling stolen goods, I was never sent to jail. However, I did pay many hefty fines for fraud, false representation, and selling without a permit. Fearing no one, I even collected money for loan sharks. That was dangerous, and at times I carried a gun. On some occasions I worked with organized crime.

**HOW THE BIBLE CHANGED MY LIFE:** I first came in contact with the Bible when I was just 17. I was living with my girlfriend when she began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses. However, I objected to the Bible's

moral restrictions, so I left her and went to live with another woman, whom I was dating.

The turning point came when my second girlfriend too started to study with the Witnesses! She made changes in her life, and I was impressed that she was becoming milder and more patient. I accepted an invitation to a meeting at the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses. I was welcomed by people who were decent and kind. What a contrast to the world I knew! I had never felt wanted by my family; I felt deprived of affection and tenderness throughout my childhood. The warmth I experienced among Jehovah's Witnesses was exactly what I craved. When the Witnesses offered to study the Bible with me, I gladly accepted.

What I was learning from the Bible probably saved my life. I had been planning a robbery with two partners in order to get free of my gambling debts, which amounted to more than \$50,000. But how glad I am that I backed out! My former partners went ahead with the robbery. One of them was arrested, and the other was killed.

As I continued to study the Bible, I came to see just how many changes I needed to make. For example, I learned what the Bible says at 1 Corinthians 6:10: "Thieves, greedy people, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners will not inherit God's Kingdom." When I read that verse, the gravity of my situation brought me to tears. I realized that I needed to transform my life completely. (Romans 12:2) I was violent and aggressive, and my whole life was built on lies.

However, I also learned from studying the Bible that Jehovah is merciful and forgiving. (Isaiah 1:18) I prayed intensely, begging Jehovah to help me break free from my former lifestyle. With his help, I was able gradually to make over my personality. A key step came when my girlfriend and I legalized our marriage.

I was 24 years old and married with three children. Now I had to find a legitimate line of work. Yet I had little education and no references. Again, I fervently prayed to Jehovah. Then I went



## I am alive today because of applying Bible principles

to look for a job. I told potential employers that I wanted to change my life and do an honest day's work. At times, I explained that I was studying the Bible and that my desire was to become a better citizen. Many potential employers refused to hire me. Finally, after I openly disclosed my troubled past during yet another interview, the interviewer said: "I don't really know why, but something tells me that I should hire you." I believe that this was the answer to my prayers. In time, both my wife and I were baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses.

**HOW I HAVE BENEFITED:** I am alive today because of applying Bible principles and living a Christian way of life. I have a fine family of my own. Convinced that Jehovah has forgiven me, I enjoy a clean conscience.

For the past 14 years, I have served in the full-time ministry, helping others to learn what the Bible teaches, and recently, my wife has joined me in the full-time ministry. Over the past 30 years, I have had the joy of helping 22 of my coworkers to begin worshipping Jehovah. I still go to shopping centers—but not to defraud people as I once did. Now when I go there I often share my faith with others. I want to give them something: the hope of living in a future new world that will be free of defrauders.—Psalm 37:10, 11. ■





## “Am I in the Place of God?”

**J**OSEPH stood in his garden as dusk fell. Perhaps his gaze took in date palms and other fruit trees, pools with water plants, and just beyond the wall, a glimpse of Pharaoh’s palace. Imagine that stray snatches of sound drifted to Joseph from his own house; his son Manasseh was making his baby brother, Ephraim, giggle. Joseph could picture the scene inside, his wife laughing gently at the boys’ antics. He smiled. He knew that he was a blessed man.

Joseph had given his firstborn the name Manasseh because it referred to forgetfulness. (Genesis 41:51) God’s blessings in recent years had surely soothed the pain of Joseph’s memories of his home, his brothers, and his father. His older brothers’ hatred for him had changed his life. They had assaulted him, contemplated killing him, and then sold him as a slave to traveling merchants. Since then, his life had taken one tumultuous turn after another. For about a dozen years, he had endured slavery and then imprisonment—for a time in iron fetters. But now, here he was—the second ruler to Pharaoh in the mighty nation of Egypt!\*

For several years, Joseph had seen events unfolding just as Jehovah had foretold. Egypt was well into the prophesied seven years of plentiful harvests, and Joseph had overseen the storing of

the nation’s surplus grain. During that time, he had fathered two boys by his wife, Asenath. Still, his mind often turned to his family hundreds of miles away—especially his younger brother, Benjamin, and their dear father, Jacob. Joseph may have wondered if they were well and safe. Perhaps he wondered, too, if his older brothers had changed their violent ways or if he could ever heal the breach that had torn his family apart.

If the peace of your family has ever been disrupted by jealousy, betrayal, or hatred, you may have something in common with Joseph. What can we learn from Joseph’s faith as he took care of his family?

### “GO TO JOSEPH”

The days were busy for Joseph, and the years fled by. Just as Jehovah foretold in the dream he sent to Pharaoh, the seventh year of bumper crops was followed by a drastic change. The crops failed! Soon famine loomed over all the neighboring lands. As the Bible notes, though, “in all the land of Egypt there was bread.” (Genesis 41:54) No doubt, Joseph’s inspired prediction and his example of good organization were benefiting the Egyptian people.

The Egyptians may have felt indebted to Joseph and praised his skill as an organizer. Still, Joseph would not have wanted credit to go anywhere but to his God, Jehovah. If we use any gifts we may have in humble service to our God, he

\* See the “Imitate Their Faith” articles in the August 1, 2014; November 1, 2014; and February 1, 2015, issues of *The Watchtower*.

may put them to use in ways that exceed anything we could ever imagine.

In time, though, the Egyptians too felt the bite of the famine. When they cried out to Pharaoh for aid, he simply directed them: “Go to Joseph, and do whatever he tells you.” So Joseph began to open up the granaries where the surplus grain was stored, and the people could buy what they needed.—Genesis 41:55, 56.

In the surrounding lands, however, people were not so fortunate. Hundreds of miles away in Canaan, Joseph’s family was suffering. Aged Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, so he told his sons to go down there to buy foodstuffs.—Genesis 42:1, 2.

Jacob sent ten sons but not the youngest, Benjamin. Jacob remembered only too well the time when he sent his beloved Joseph alone to vis-

Because he remained humble, Joseph remained useful to Jehovah



it his older brothers. That was the last Jacob had seen of the boy. The older sons had brought home Joseph’s elegant coat—a mark of his father’s love and regard—all torn and bloodied. They led the heartbroken old man to believe that Joseph had been eaten by wild beasts.—Genesis 37:31-35.

#### **“JOSEPH IMMEDIATELY REMEMBERED”**

After a long journey, the sons of Jacob reached Egypt. When they inquired about purchasing grain, they were directed to a high government official named Zaphenath-paneah. (Genesis 41:45) Did they know when they saw him that he was Joseph? Not at all. They saw only a high-ranking Egyptian ruler, one whose help they needed. To show deference, they did what was natural: They “bowed low to him with their faces to the ground.”—Genesis 42:5, 6.

What about Joseph? He recognized his brothers right away! What is more, when he saw them there bowing before him, his thoughts flew back to his boyhood. The account tells us that “Joseph immediately remembered the dreams” that Jehovah had given him when he was but a boy, dreams foretelling a time when his brothers would be bowing low before him—exactly as they now were! (Genesis 37:2, 5-9; 42:7, 9) What would Joseph do? Embrace them? Take revenge?

Joseph knew that he must not act on his impulses, whatever they might be. Jehovah was clearly guiding this remarkable turn of events. His purpose was involved. He had promised to turn Jacob’s offspring into a mighty nation. (Genesis 35:11, 12) If Joseph’s brothers were still violent, selfish, unscrupulous men, the long-term effects could be disastrous! Besides, were Joseph to act impulsively, he might upset some delicate balance back at home, perhaps even endangering his father and Benjamin. Were they even alive? Joseph decided to keep his identity concealed so that he could test out his brothers and see what kind of men they had become.

Then he might know what Jehovah wanted him to do.

You are not likely ever to find yourself in that unusual position. However, strife and division within the family are common in today's world. When we face such challenges, we may tend simply to follow our heart and act on our imperfect impulses. It is much wiser to imitate Joseph and try to discern how God wants us to handle matters. (Proverbs 14:12) Remember, as important as it is to make peace with family members, peace with Jehovah and his Son is even more vital.—Matthew 10:37.

### **“YOU WILL BE TESTED”**

Joseph launched into a series of tests designed to reveal who his brothers were at heart. He started by speaking to them harshly, through an interpreter, accusing them of being foreign spies. To defend themselves, they told him about their family—including the key fact that they had a younger brother still at home. Joseph tried to hide his excitement. Was his little brother really alive? Now Joseph knew how to proceed. He said: “By this you will be tested,” and then he told them that he must see this youngest brother. In time, he agreed to let them return home to fetch the youngest if one of them would agree to remain behind as a hostage.—Genesis 42:9-20.

As the brothers talked matters over, unaware that Joseph could understand them, they reproached themselves for the terrible sin they had committed 20 years earlier. “We are surely being punished on account of our brother,” they said, “because we saw his distress when he begged us to show compassion, but we did not listen. That is why this distress has come upon us.” Joseph understood what they were saying, and he had to turn aside so that they could not see his tears. (Genesis 42:21-24) He knew, though, that real repentance involves far more than a mere feeling of regret over the consequences of a wicked deed. So he proceeded with his test.

He sent them home and kept Simeon as a prisoner. He also had money concealed in the bags of food that they took home. The brothers journeyed home and, with difficulty, persuaded Jacob to let them take his beloved Benjamin with them to Egypt. When they arrived in Egypt, they openly told Joseph's steward of the money they had found in their bags, offering to repay the full amount. That offer was admirable, but Joseph needed to see more of their true nature. He provided them with a feast, barely concealing how moved he was upon seeing Benjamin. Then he sent them on their way homeward, again laden with food, but this time a silver cup was hidden in Benjamin's bag.—Genesis 42:26-44:2.

Joseph then sprang his trap. He had his brothers pursued, arrested, and accused of stealing the cup. When it was found in Benjamin's bag, all of them were brought back to Joseph. Now Joseph had a chance to learn what kind of men his brothers were. Judah acted as their spokesman. He pleaded for mercy, even offering that all 11 of them become slaves in Egypt. Joseph countered that Benjamin alone must remain in Egypt as a slave but that all the rest of them must leave.—Genesis 44:2-17.

Judah was moved to respond with an impassioned speech. “He is the only remaining son of his mother, and his father loves him,” Judah said. Those words must have touched Joseph, for he was the older son of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, who had died while giving birth to Benjamin. Joseph, like his father, evidently cherished memories of Rachel. Perhaps that connection made Benjamin even dearer to Joseph.—Genesis 35:18-20; 44:20.

Judah went on to implore Joseph not to enslave Benjamin. He even offered to become a slave in Benjamin's place. Then he concluded with this heartrending plea: “How can I return to my father without the boy along with me? I could not bear looking on when this calamity





Joseph saw that his brothers regretted what they had done to him

befalls my father!" (Genesis 44:18-34) Here, now, was evidence of a changed man. Not only did he show a repentant spirit but he even showed an admirable degree of empathy, selflessness, and compassion.

Joseph could bear no more. He had to release the emotion that was pent up within him. Dismissing all his servants, he wept so loudly that the sound carried to Pharaoh's palace. Then he revealed himself at last: "I am Joseph your brother." He embraced his stunned brothers and kindly extended forgiveness for all that they had done to him. (Genesis 45:1-15) He thus reflected the disposition of Jehovah, who forgives generously. (Psalm 86:5) Do we do likewise?

#### **"YOU ARE STILL ALIVE!"**

When Pharaoh heard the whole story behind the commotion in Joseph's house, he invited Joseph to move his aged father to Egypt, along with the whole family. It was not too long, then, before Joseph was finally reunited with his beloved father. Jacob wept and said: "Now I am ready to die; I have seen your face and know that you are still alive."—Genesis 45:16-28; 46:29, 30.

In fact, Jacob lived on for another 17 years in Egypt. He lived long enough to pronounce pro-

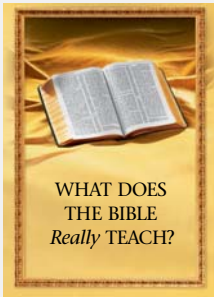
phetic blessings on his 12 sons. To Joseph, his 11th son, he gave the double portion usually due the firstborn. Two of Israel's tribes would come from him. And what of Judah, the fourth son, who excelled his brothers when he showed such a repentant spirit? He received a great blessing: The Messiah would come from his family line!—Genesis, chapters 48, 49.

When Jacob died at 147 years of age, Joseph's brothers feared that their powerful sibling might now seek revenge. But Joseph responded with a loving reassurance. He had long maintained that since Jehovah was behind the family's move to Egypt, his brothers should stop feeling bad about what happened. Now he added this remarkable question: "Am I in the place of God?" (Genesis 15:13; 45:7, 8; 50:15-21) Joseph saw Jehovah as the perfect Judge. Who was Joseph, then, to punish those whom Jehovah had forgiven?—Hebrews 10:30.

Do you ever find it a challenge to forgive? It can be especially hard when someone has done us deliberate harm. But if we forgive from the heart those who are truly repentant, we will help to heal many a wound—including our own. And we will imitate the faith of Joseph and the example of his merciful Father, Jehovah. ■



WHY WILL JUDGMENT DAY  
BE A HAPPY TIME?



For more information, see page 213 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses

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For more information, see page 2

## What is Judgment Day?

In Bible times, God used judges to save his people from injustice. (Judges 2:18) The Bible describes the future Judgment Day as a happy time when Jehovah, the Judge of all the earth, will save mankind from injustice.—**Read Psalm 96:12, 13; Isaiah 26:9.**

God has appointed Jesus to grant justice to both the living and the dead. (Acts 10:42; 17:31) Many people have died without knowing God. During Judgment Day, Jesus will bring such people back to life so that they might know and love the true God.—**Read Acts 24:15.**

## Why will Judgment Day last a thousand years?

The dead will be raised during the thousand years. (Revelation 20:4, 12) They will need time to learn God's ways and obey him. Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible shows that people will be judged on the basis of what they do *after* their resurrection.—**Read Romans 6:7.**

The Bible also describes a day of judgment that will occur suddenly before the thousand years begin. That day is also called the end, as discussed in the cover articles of this issue. In that day, God will remove all ungodly, wicked people. (2 Peter 3:7) Therefore, we should take care to prove our love for God.—**Read 2 Peter 3:9, 13.**

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