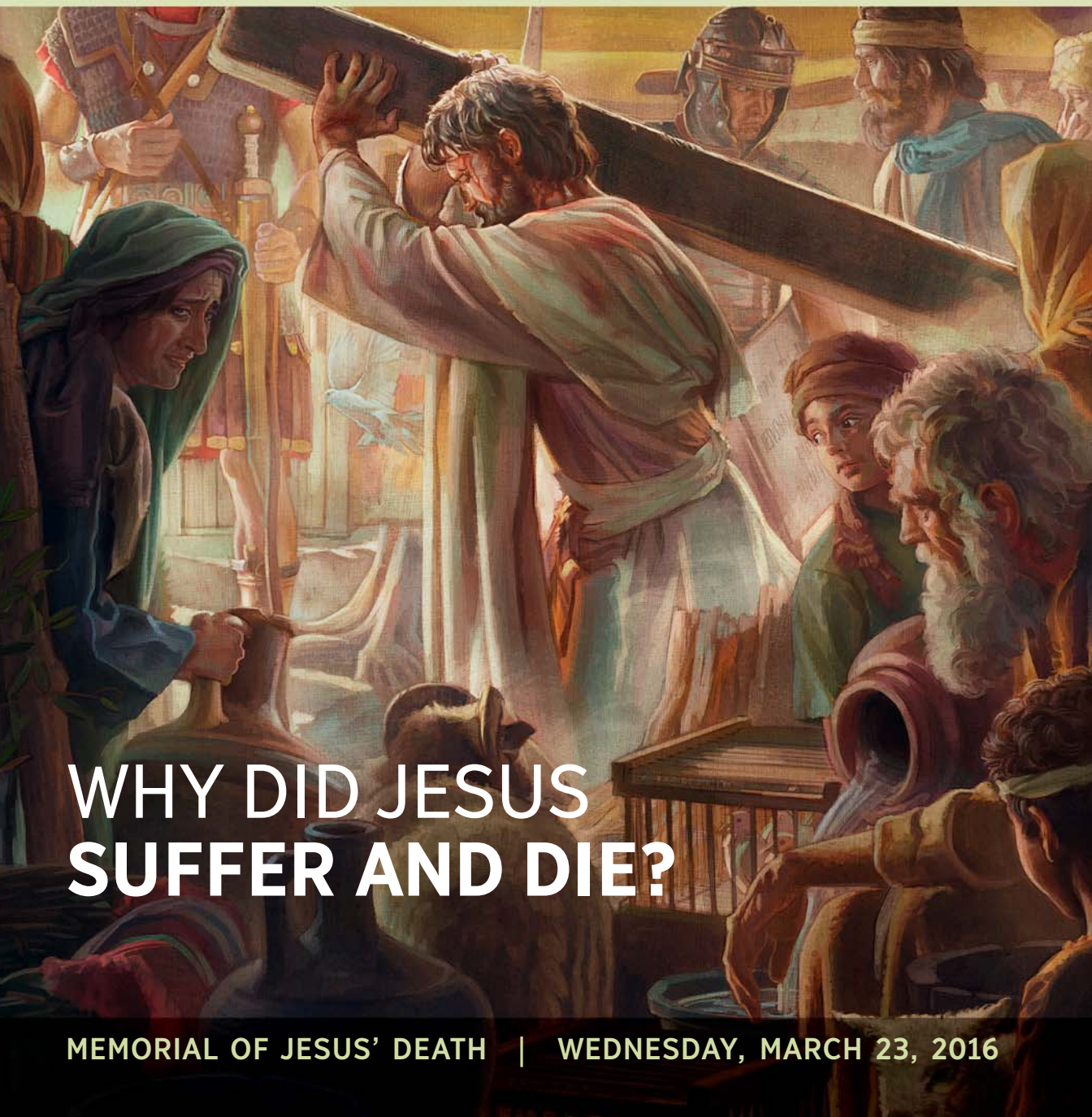


THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



**WHY DID JESUS
SUFFER AND DIE?**

MEMORIAL OF JESUS' DEATH | WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23, 2016

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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PO Box 4100
Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Can you really benefit from the very well-known statement: **“God loved the world so much that he gave his only-begotten Son”?** —John 3:16.

This issue of *The Watchtower* explains how Jesus' suffering and death can benefit you.

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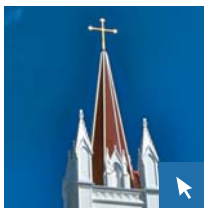
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DID IT REALLY HAPPEN?

In the spring of 33 C.E., Jesus the Nazarene was executed. He had been falsely charged with sedition, savagely beaten, and nailed to a stake. He died in excruciating pain. But God raised him back to life, and 40 days later, Jesus ascended to heaven.

This extraordinary account comes to us from the four Gospels of the Christian Greek Scriptures, commonly called the New Testament. Did those things really happen? That is a pertinent and serious question. If they did not, Christian faith is valueless and the hope of eternal life in Paradise is nothing more than a wishful dream. (1 Corinthians 15:14) On the other hand, if those events really did happen, then there is a bright future for mankind, one in which you can share. So, are the Gospel accounts fact or fiction?

WHAT THE FACTS SHOW

Unlike fanciful legends, the Gospel writings reflect painstaking accuracy and attention to detail. For example, they abound with names of real places, many of which can be visited today. They tell about real people, whose existence has been corroborated by secular historians.—Luke 3:1, 2, 23.

Jesus himself is mentioned by secular writers of the first and second centuries.* His manner of

* Tacitus, born about 55 C.E., wrote that “Christus, from whom the name [Christians] had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus.” Jesus is also referred to by Suetonius (first century); Jewish historian Josephus (first century); and Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia (early second century).

Why Is There Not More Secular Support?

Given the profound influence that Jesus had on the world, should we expect more in the way of contemporary non-Biblical corroboration? Not necessarily. For one thing, the Gospels were written almost 2,000 years ago. Few other writings of that time have survived. (1 Peter 1:24, 25) Then, too, it is unlikely that Jesus’ many opposers would write anything that would lend credibility to the reports about him.

Regarding Jesus’ resurrection, Peter, one of his apostles, explained: “God raised this one up on the third day and allowed him to become manifest, *not to all the people, but to witnesses appointed beforehand by God, to us*, who ate and drank with him after his rising from the dead.” (Acts 10:40, 41) Why not to all the people? Matthew’s Gospel tells us that when the religious enemies heard reports of Jesus’ resurrection, they schemed to suppress them.—Matthew 28:11-15.

Does this mean that Jesus wanted his resurrection to be kept secret? No, for Peter went on to say: “He ordered us to preach to the people and to give a thorough witness that this is the one decreed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.” True Christians have done and are doing just that.—Acts 10:42.

death, as described in the Gospels, agrees with Roman executorial methods of the time. Moreover, events are related in a factual and candid manner—even portraying some of Jesus’ disciples unfavorably. (Matthew 26:56; Luke 22:24-26; John 18:10, 11) All these factors strongly indicate that the Gospel writers were honest and accurate in what they wrote about Jesus.

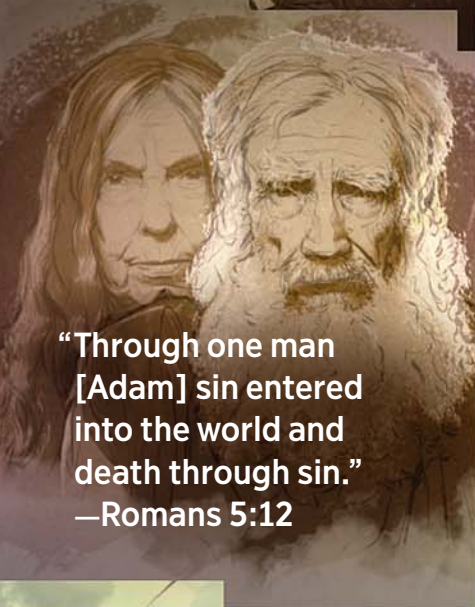
WHAT ABOUT JESUS’ RESURRECTION?

While it is generally accepted that Jesus lived and died, some would question his resurrection. Even his apostles did not believe the initial report of his having returned to life. (Luke 24:11) All doubt was removed, however, when they and other disciples *saw* the resurrected Jesus on separate occasions. In fact, in one case, there were more than 500 eyewitnesses present.—1 Corinthians 15:6.

At the risk of being arrested and killed, the disciples courageously proclaimed Jesus’ resurrection to all—even to the very ones who had executed him. (Acts 4:1-3, 10, 19, 20; 5:27-32) Would so many disciples have been so bold if they were not absolutely sure that Jesus had really been resurrected? In fact, the reality of the resurrection of Jesus is the driving force behind the impact that Christianity has had on the world both then and now.

The Gospel accounts of Jesus’ death and resurrection bear all the necessary marks of an authentic historical record. Carefully reading them will convince you that these events really happened. Your conviction can be further strengthened when you understand *why* they took place. The next article will explain.

WHY DID JESUS SUFFER AND DIE?



**“Through one man
[Adam] sin entered
into the world and
death through sin.”
—Romans 5:12**



What would you say if you were asked, “Do you want to live forever?” Most people would probably say that they want to but that they feel it is unrealistic to consider it. Death is a normal part of life, they say, the natural outcome of our existence.

Suppose, though, that the question were turned around and you were asked, “Are you ready to die?” Under normal circumstances, most people would answer no. The point? In spite of the trials and hardships we face, our normal and natural desire is to live. The Bible shows that God created humans with the desire and the will to live. In fact, it says that “he has even put eternity in their heart.”—Ecclesiastes 3:11.

The reality, though, is that humans do not live forever. So, what went wrong? Furthermore, has God done anything to remedy the situation? The Bible’s answers are heartening, and they have a direct bearing on why Jesus suffered and died.

WHAT WENT WRONG

The first three chapters of the Bible book of Genesis tell us that God set before the first human couple, Adam and Eve, the prospect of unending life and told them what they would have to do to gain it. Then the account describes how they failed to obey God and lost that prospect. The story is told simply—so simply that some are quick to dismiss it as folklore. But Genesis, like the Gospels, gives every indication of being a factual, historical record.*

What has been the result of Adam’s failure to obey? The Bible answers this way: “Through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) By disobeying God, Adam sinned. He thus lost the prospect of endless life and eventually died. Being his descendants, we have inherited his sinful condition. As a result, we are subject to sickness, old age, and death. This explanation of why we die is in harmony with what we know today about heredity.

* See “The Historical Character of Genesis,” in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 1, page 922, published by Jehovah’s Witnesses.

[illegible]

WHAT GOD HAS DONE

“The wages sin pays is death,” says the Bible at Romans 6:23. This means that death is the consequence of sin. Adam sinned, so he died. Likewise, we sin and are therefore subject to sin’s wages, death. But we were born in this sinful condition through no fault of our own. So God lovingly sent his Son, Jesus, to accept ‘the wages of sin’ for us. How does this work?

many will be made righteous.” (Romans 5:19) Jesus was that “one person.” He left heaven, became a perfect man*, and died in our behalf. As a result, it is possible for us to have a righteous standing with God and gain the prospect of endless life.

WHY JESUS SUFFERED AND DIED

Why, though, was it necessary for Jesus to die to accomplish this? Could not Almighty God have simply issued a decree that Adam's descendants be allowed to live forever? He certainly had the authority to do so. But that would have disregarded his stated law that the wages of sin is death. That law is no petty rule that can be dismissed or changed for convenience. It is fundamental to true justice.—Psalm 37:28.

Had God set justice aside in this instance, people might have wondered whether he would do so in other matters as well. For example, would he be

* God's transfer of his Son's life from heaven to the womb of Mary caused conception, and God's holy spirit shielded Jesus from inheriting imperfection from Mary.—Luke 1:31, 35.



“Keep Doing This”

On the night before he surrendered his life, Jesus gathered with his faithful apostles and instituted the Memorial of his death. He said to them: “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19) In obedience to that command, Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide gather annually on the anniversary of Jesus’ death. Last year, 19,862,783 attended this event.

This year, the Memorial of Jesus’ death falls on **Wednesday, March 23**, after sundown. You and your family and friends are warmly invited to attend and listen to a Bible-based talk. It will explain why Jesus’ death was significant and how it can benefit you personally. Attendance is free; no collections will be taken. Please ask Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area for the time and location. Or you may consult our website, www.jw.org.

fair in determining who among Adam’s offspring qualify for eternal life? Could he be trusted to keep his promises? God’s adherence to justice in working out our salvation is assurance to us that he will always do what is right.

By Jesus’ sacrificial death, God opened the way to endless life in Paradise on earth. Note Jesus’ words as recorded at John 3:16: “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.” Jesus’ death is thus an expression not only of God’s unfailing justice but, more specially, of his great love for humans.

However, why did Jesus have to suffer and die in the painful way that was described in the Gospels? By subjecting himself to the extreme test and remaining faithful, Jesus refuted once and for all the Devil’s claim that humans would not remain loyal to God when under trial. (Job 2:4, 5) That claim might have seemed valid after Satan induced perfect Adam to sin. But Jesus—who

was Adam’s perfect equivalent—remained obedient despite severe suffering. (1 Corinthians 15: 45) He thus proved that Adam too could have obeyed God if he had chosen to do so. By enduring under trial, Jesus left us a model to follow. (1 Peter 2:21) God rewarded his Son’s perfect obedience, granting Jesus immortal life in heaven.

HOW YOU CAN BENEFIT

Jesus’ death really occurred. The way to unending life is open. Do you want to live forever? Jesus indicated what we need to do when he said: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.”—John 17:3.

The publishers of this magazine invite you to learn more about Jehovah, the true God, and about his Son, Jesus Christ. Jehovah’s Witnesses in your community will be happy to assist you. You can also receive helpful information by visiting our website, www.jw.org. ■



Should Christians Worship at Shrines?

EVERY year, more than six million people travel to an isolated cedar forest on the Shima Peninsula in Japan. They come to the Grand Shrine of Ise, where the Shinto sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, has been worshipped for some two thousand years. The worshippers first purify themselves by washing their hands and mouth. Then, standing before the shrine's *haiden* (worship hall), they follow a ritual in which they bow, clap, and pray to the goddess.* Shinto allows its adherents to practice other faiths, and some Buddhists, professed Christians, and others see no conflict in performing the Shinto rituals at this shrine.

Many of the world's major religions have shrines,[#] and countless millions of people visit them. In professed Christian lands, there are numerous churches and shrines dedicated to Jesus, Mary, and the saints. Others like them are established in locations where Biblical events or "miracles" of more recent times are said to have taken place or where religious relics are kept. Many people go to the shrines because they believe that their prayers are more likely to be heard if offered in a sacred place. For others, reaching a shrine is the culmination of a long pilgrimage they

have made to demonstrate their religious devotion.

Are prayers and petitions more likely to be heard and answered if they are offered at a shrine? Will God be pleased by the devotion of those who make pilgrimages to shrines? More to the point, should Christians worship at shrines? The answers to these questions will not only tell us how we should view worshipping at shrines but also help us to understand the kind of worship that truly pleases God.

WORSHIP "WITH SPIRIT AND TRUTH"

A conversation that Jesus had with a Samaritan woman reveals God's view of worship at sacred places or shrines. Jesus was traveling through Samaria and stopped to rest at a well near the city of Sychar. He struck up a conversation with a woman who came to draw water from the well. As they talked, the woman pointed out a major religious difference between the Jews and the Samaritans. "Our forefathers worshipped on this mountain," she said, "but you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where people must worship."—John 4: 5-9, 20.

The mountain that the woman referred to was Mount Gerizim, located about 30 miles (50 km) north of Jerusalem. There the Samaritans once

* Rituals may differ at various Shinto shrines.

[#] See the box "What Is a Shrine?"

◀ Visitors at the Grand Shrine
of Ise, Japan, and the Grotto
of Massabielle, Lourdes, France

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had a temple where they celebrated festivals such as the Passover. However, instead of focusing on this controversial difference between them, Jesus said to the woman: “Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.” (John 4:21) What an astounding comment, especially coming from a Jew! Why would the worship at God’s temple in Jerusalem cease?

Jesus continued: “The hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father with spirit and truth, for indeed, the Father is looking for ones like these to worship him.” (John 4:23) For centuries, the Jews viewed the magnificent temple in Jerusalem as the center of their worship. They journeyed there three times a year to make sacrifices to their God, Jehovah. (Exodus 23:14-17) But Jesus said that all of this would be changed and that “true worshippers” would worship “with spirit and truth.”

The Jewish temple was a tangible structure at a specific geographic location. But spirit and truth are not material, nor are they limited to any physical place. Thus, Jesus was explaining that true Christian worship would not be centered in or dependent on any material structure or physical location, whether Mount Gerizim, the temple in Jerusalem, or any other sacred place.

In his conversation with the Samaritan woman, Jesus also mentioned that “the hour” for this change in God’s worship was “coming.” When would that be? The hour came when Jesus, by his sacrificial death, ended the Jewish system of worship based on the Law of Moses. (Romans 10:4) Yet, Jesus also said: “The hour . . . is now.” Why? Because as the Messiah, he was already gathering disciples who would obey the command he stated next: “God is a Spirit, and those worshipping him must worship with spirit and truth.” (John 4:24) What, then, does it mean to worship with spirit and truth?

What did Jesus mean when
he said that we must worship
“with spirit and truth”?



When Jesus mentioned worshipping with spirit, he was not speaking of a particularly spirited, animated, or enthusiastic form of worship. Rather, he was talking about being guided by God’s holy spirit, which among other things guides our understanding of the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 2:9-12) And the truth Jesus referred to is an accurate knowledge of Bible teachings. Therefore, rather

What Is a Shrine?

Originally the word “shrine” represented a case that held sacred relics. The meaning has since broadened; it now refers to a place considered sacred, religiously or otherwise. Religious shrines are dedicated to the worship of a deity or the veneration of a “holy” person. They often house images and relics that are believed to be associated with miracles, visions, or apparitions from the spirit realm. Today a shrine may be a temple, a church, or a niche where a person worships. Some set up a shrine in their home. Home shrines, in both Oriental and Western lands, are small altars where people pray, meditate, or make offerings.

Not all shrines are intended to be places for religious worship. For example, worldwide, families and friends of victims of fatal automobile accidents commonly make ‘roadside shrines’ in remembrance of their loved ones. Other shrines are more secular in nature and commemorate famous battles or those who died in war or in some other tragedy. Although such shrines give people an opportunity to meditate and mourn, they often reflect the religious beliefs and practices of those who set them up.

than being rendered at any special place, our worship will be acceptable to God if it conforms to what the Bible teaches and is guided by the holy spirit.

THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SHRINES

How, then, should Christians view pilgrimages to and worship at shrines? Taking into account Jesus’ command that true worshippers worship God with spirit and truth, it is clear that worship rendered at any shrine or sacred place has no special value to our heavenly Father. Additionally, the Bible tells us how God views the veneration of idols in worship. It says: “Flee from idolatry” and “guard yourselves from idols.” (1 Corinthians 10: 14; 1 John 5:21) Therefore, a true Christian would not worship at any place that is viewed as holy in itself or one that encourages idolatry. Thus, on account of the very nature of shrines, true Christians refrain from worshipping at them.

This, however, does not mean that God’s Word forbids having a preferred location for prayer, study, or meditation. A meeting place that is orderly and dignified is conducive to learning and discussing spiritual things. Neither is it wrong to make a memorial, such as a tombstone, for a deceased person. This may simply be an expression of remembrance or affection for the deceased. However, considering such a location as a holy place or venerating images or relics there would be completely contrary to Jesus’ words.

Therefore, you do not need to go to a shrine in hopes that God is more likely to hear your prayer there. Nor will God be pleased with you or give you special blessings for making a pilgrimage to a shrine. The Bible tells us that Jehovah God, the “Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in handmade temples.” But this does not make God distant from us. We can pray to him and be heard anywhere because “he is not far off from each one of us.”—Acts 17:24-27. ■





Heeding Advance Warning Can Save Your Life!

© Dermot Tatlow/Panos Pictures

ON December 26, 2004, a 9.1-magnitude earthquake jolted Simeulue, an island off the northwest coast of Sumatra, Indonesia. All eyes on the shore looked out to sea. The tide was receding beyond normal. Instantly, everyone started running for the hills, shouting, “*Smong! Smong!*” the local word for tsunami. Within 30 minutes, powerful waves came crashing onto the coast, destroying most of the homes and villages.

Simeulue Island was the first location to be hit by that devastating tsunami. Yet, of the 78,000 residents, only 7 died. Why comparatively so few? A saying among the islanders is: ‘If a strong tremor occurs and the sea withdraws, run to the hills, for the sea will soon rush ashore.’ From past experience, the people of Simeulue had learned to recognize an approaching tsunami by the change in the sea. Heeding the advance warning saved their lives.

The Bible speaks of an approaching disaster, a “great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world’s beginning until now, no, nor will occur again.” (Matthew 24:21) But this is not the end of planet Earth by irresponsible human activities or some catastrophic natural event—for it is God’s purpose that the earth remain forever. (Ecclesiastes 1:4) Rather, the coming tribulation is an

* This 2004 tsunami claimed the lives of over 220,000 people—one of the most destructive tsunamis in recorded history.

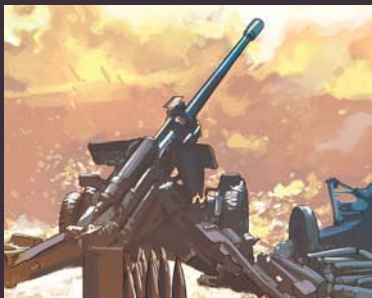
act of God to “bring to ruin those ruining the earth.” It will be the end of all wickedness and suffering. (Revelation 11:18; Proverbs 2:22) What a blessing that will be!

Furthermore, unlike tsunamis, earthquakes, or volcanic eruptions, the coming destruction will not result in the death of innocent people. “God is love,” says the Bible, and God, whose name is Jehovah, promises that “the righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.” (1 John 4:8; Psalm 37:29) How, though, can you survive the great tribulation and enjoy the promised blessings? The key is: Heed the advance warning!

BE ALERT TO THE CHANGING TIDE

We cannot determine the specific date of the end of all wickedness and suffering, for Jesus said: “Concerning that day and hour nobody knows, neither the angels of the heavens nor the Son, but only the Father.” Nonetheless, Jesus encouraged us to “keep on the watch.” (Matthew 24:36; 25:13) For what? The Bible gives us a description of world conditions that would exist *before* God brings the end. Just as the sudden shifting of the tide alerted the residents of Simeulue to an approaching tsunami, the dramatic shifting of the tide of world events would signal to us that the end is near. The accompanying box highlights some of the dramatic changes the Bible speaks of.

DRAMATIC WORLD EVENTS SIGNALING THAT THE END IS NEAR



GLOBAL WAR AND ESCALATING CHAOS

“You are going to hear of wars and reports of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for these things must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom . . . All these things are a beginning of pangs of distress.”—**Matthew 24: 6-8.**



DISEASE AND HUNGER WORLDWIDE

“In one place after another food shortages and pestilences.”
—**Luke 21:11.**



WIDESPREAD LAWLESSNESS AND RELIGIOUS CONFUSION

“Many false prophets will arise and mislead many; and because of the increasing of lawlessness, the love of the greater number will grow cold.”—**Matthew 24:11, 12.**

Granted, taken individually, some of the events or conditions listed in the box have occurred in the past to some extent. But Jesus said that upon seeing “*all these things*,” we would know that the end is close at hand. (Matthew 24:33) Ask yourself, ‘When in history have all the things described (1) taken place on a global scale, (2) occurred at the same time, and (3) progressed to an unprecedented extent?’ Clearly, we are living in such a time.

AN EXPRESSION OF GOD’S LOVE

“Early warning systems . . . do save lives,” said one former U.S. president. Following the 2004 tsunami, a warning system was installed in the affected region in an effort to prevent similar loss of life from occurring in the future. Similarly, God has made provision for advance warning to be giv-

en before the end comes. The Bible foretold: “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.**

Last year alone, Jehovah’s Witnesses spent well over 1.9 billion hours preaching the good news in 240 lands and in more than 700 languages. This modern-day development offers strong proof that the end is near. Moved by love for their neighbor, Jehovah’s Witnesses spare no effort as they warn others of God’s day of judgment that is fast approaching. (Matthew 22:39) The fact that you can benefit from this information is evidence of Jehovah’s love for you. Remember, “[God] does not desire anyone to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.” (2 Peter 3:9) Will you respond to God’s love and heed the advance warning?



MORAL AND SOCIAL BREAKDOWN ON AN UNPRECEDENTED SCALE

“In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, . . . 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.”—2 Timothy 3:1-4.



GOOD NEWS OF GOD’S KINGDOM PREACHED WORLDWIDE

“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.



CRITICS DENY THAT THE END IS NEAR

“In the last days ridiculers will come with their ridicule, . . . saying: ‘Where is this promised presence of his? Why, from the day our forefathers fell asleep in death, all things are continuing exactly as they were from creation’s beginning.’”—2 Peter 3:3, 4.

FLEE TO SAFETY!

Recall that the residents of Simeulue’s coastal villages fled to higher ground for safety the moment they saw the tide receding; they did not wait until it returned. Their decisive action meant their survival. To survive the coming tribulation, you too need to flee to higher ground, so to speak, before it is too late. How? The prophet Isaiah was inspired to write about a stirring invitation that is being extended during “the final part of the days,” the time in which we now live. It says: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah . . . He will instruct us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.”—Isaiah 2:2, 3.

Going to the top of a mountain affords you an elevated view and a place of safety. In a similar way, getting to know God’s ways through the pag-

es of the Bible is helping millions of people worldwide today to make beneficial changes in their lives. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17) By so doing, they begin to “walk in [God’s] paths” and enjoy his favor and protective care.

Will you respond to that invitation and avail yourself of God’s loving protection in these critical days? We urge you to examine carefully the Scriptural evidence of the “last days” presented in the box accompanying this article. Jehovah’s Witnesses in your area would be happy to provide any assistance you may need to get a clear understanding of the scriptures provided as well as how to apply them. Or you may find answers to your questions by visiting our website, www.jw.org. Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED. ■

CHAPTERS AND VERSES

WHO PUT THEM IN THE BIBLE?

IMAGINE that you are a Christian living in the first century. Your congregation has just received a letter from the apostle Paul. As you listen to it being read, you notice that Paul often quotes from “the holy writings,” that is, the Hebrew Scriptures. (2 Timothy 3:15) ‘I would really like to see the text he is quoting from,’ you say to yourself. But that would not have been easy. Why not?

NO CHAPTERS OR VERSES

Consider what the manuscripts of “the holy writings” that were available in Paul’s day looked like. One is shown here—a portion of the book of Isaiah from the Dead Sea Scrolls. What do you see? Solid blocks of text! No punctuation. And none of the numbered chapters and verses that we use today.

Bible writers did not divide their message into chapters or verses. They just wrote down the whole message God gave them so that the readers could also get the whole message, not just tiny parts of it. Is that not what you want when you get an important letter from someone you love? You read the whole letter, not just bits and pieces of it.

The lack of chapters or verses, however, did pose a problem. Paul could only identify his quotations with such words as “just as it is written” or “just as Isaiah foretold.” (Romans 3:10; 9:29) And it would have been difficult to find those quotations unless you were very familiar with all “the holy writings.”

Furthermore, those “holy writings” were not one simple message from God. By the end of the first century C.E., they consisted of a collection of 66 separate books! That is why most Bible readers today are glad to have numbered chapters and verses that help them find specific information, such as the many quotations in Paul’s letters.

‘So,’ you might ask, ‘who put those chapter and verse numbers in the Bible?’

WHO ADDED THE CHAPTERS?

English cleric Stephen Langton, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury, is credited with adding the chapter divisions to the Bible. He did this early in the 13th century C.E., when he was a teacher at the University of Paris in France.

Before Langton’s day, scholars had experimented with different ways of dividing the Bible into smaller sections or chapters, mainly, it seems, for reference purposes. You can imagine how much easier it would have been for them to find a passage if they had to search through only one chapter rather than a whole book, such as the book of Isaiah with its 66 chapters.

All of that, however, created a problem. The scholars produced many different and incompatible systems. In one of them, Mark’s Gospel was divided into almost 50 chapters, not the 16 we have now. In Paris in Langton’s day, there were students from many countries, and they brought with them



Bibles from their native lands. However, lecturers and students could not share references. Why? Because the chapter divisions in their manuscripts simply did not match.

So Langton developed new chapter divisions. His system “caught the imagination of readers and scribes,” states *The Book—A History of the Bible*, and it “spread rapidly across Europe.” He gave us the chapter numbering we find in most Bibles today.

WHO ADDED THE VERSES?

Some 300 years later, in the middle of the 16th century, renowned French printer-scholar Robert Estienne made things even easier. His aim was to popularize Bible study. He realized how valuable it would be to have a uniform system of both numbered chapters *and* numbered verses.

Estienne did not come up with the idea of dividing the Bible text into verses. Others had done that already. Centuries earlier, Jewish copyists, for example, had divided the whole Hebrew Bible, or the part of the Bible commonly called the Old Testament, into verses but not into chapters. Again, as with the development of chapters, there was no uniform system.

Estienne divided the Christian Greek Scriptures, or what is called the New Testament, into a new set of numbered verses and combined them

with those already in the Hebrew Bible. In 1553, he published the first complete Bible (an edition in French) with basically the same chapters and verses that most Bibles use today. Some people were critical and said that the verses broke the Bible text into fragments, making it appear as a series of separate and detached statements. But his system was quickly adopted by other printers.

A BOON FOR BIBLE STUDENTS

It seems to be such a simple idea—numbered chapters and verses. This gives each verse in the Bible a unique “address”—like a postal code. True, the chapter and verse divisions are not inspired by God, and they do at times break up the Bible text in strange places. But they make it easier for us to pinpoint quotes and to highlight or share individual verses that may have special meaning for us—just as we highlight expressions or phrases that we specially want to remember in a document or a book.

Convenient though the chapter-and-verse divisions are, always keep in mind the importance of getting the big picture—understanding the whole message God gave. Cultivate the habit of reading the context rather than just isolated verses. Doing so will help you to become more and more familiar with all “the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation.”—2 Timothy 3:15. ■

How Chapters and Verses Are Designated

A chapter-and-verse reference lets you know where to find any passage of scripture. In this magazine, the reference “Isaiah 40:13,” for example, identifies the following:

- (a) the book, Isaiah
- (b) the chapter, 40
- (c) the verse, 13

There, we find Isaiah’s words: “Who has taken the measurements of the spirit of Jehovah, and who can instruct him as his adviser?” Paul’s use of these words can now be found easily at Romans 11:34 and 1 Corinthians 2:16.

a ISAIAH

- b 40 “Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God.
2 “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, And proclaim to her that her compulsory service has been fulfilled, That her guilt has been paid off.”
- c 13 Who has taken the measurements of the spirit of Jehovah, And who can instruct him as his adviser?
14 With whom did he consult to gain . . .



Who or what is the Devil?

WOULD YOU SAY that the Devil is . . .

- A spirit person?
- A symbol of the evil inside a person?
- A product of human imagination?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

The Devil conversed with and “tempted” Jesus. (Matthew 4:1-4) So the Devil is not imaginary, nor is he just a symbol of evil. He is a wicked spirit person.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- The Devil was originally a holy angel, but “he did not stand fast in the truth.” (John 8:44) He became a liar and rebelled against God.
- Other angels joined Satan’s rebellion. —Revelation 12:9.
- The Devil blinds many people to his existence. —2 Corinthians 4:4.

Can the Devil control people?

SOME PEOPLE SAY that control by the Devil is a hoax, while others dread being possessed by evil spirits. What do you think?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

“The whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19) The Devil exerts great influence over mankind, but he does not control every human.

WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- The Devil uses deception to increase his influence.—2 Corinthians 11:14.
- Wicked spirits can in some cases take control of people.—Matthew 12:22.
- With God’s help, you can successfully “oppose the Devil.”—James 4:7.



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

For more information,
see chapter 10 of this book,
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