





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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#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If someone asked you what heaven is like, how would you answer?

We can learn from Jesus because he said: "I am from the realms above." John 8:23.

This issue of The Watchtower discusses what Jesus and his Father have revealed about heaven.

### Enlightening Visions of the Spirit Realm

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Did God Create the Devil?

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# SPIRIT REALM

Have you ever wondered about the spirit realm and those who live there? If so, you are not alone. For millenniums, people have speculated on that subject. Some believe that the spirit world is inhabited by ancestors who must be honored. Others envision a place of blissful tranquillity called heaven, populated by angels and good people who have died. Still others see the spirit world as a home for hundreds of millions of deities.

Many people argue that we cannot know anything about the spirit realm because no eyewitness has come from there to tell us about it. That line of reasoning, however, is incorrect. Jesus Christ existed in heaven, in the spirit realm, before he came to the earth. He said so quite openly to the religious leaders in the first century: "I have come down from heaven to do, not my own will, but the will of him who sent me." So Jesus was sharing firsthand information when he told his apostles: "In the house of my Father are many dwelling places."—John 6:38; 14:2.

Jesus' Father, of course, is God, whose name is Jehovah, and Jehovah's "house" is in the heavens. (Psalm 83:18) Thus, no one could describe the invisible world better than Jehovah God and Jesus Christ could. They have revealed much information about the spirit realm by means of spectacular visions that they gave to faithful ones.

The following article discusses portions of the Bible that describe what men saw in a number of visions. As you consider these visions, remember that the spirit realm is not *material*, with things that we can touch or see. Thus, rather than choosing to explain matters to us in spiritual terms, which would be incomprehensible to us, God fashioned the visions to depict spiritual realities in terms that we can comprehend. The visions will help you to understand those who inhabit the spirit realm's "many dwelling places."

## VISIONS OF THOSE IN THE INVISIBLE

## **HEAVENS**

The Bible presents a number of fascinating visions that permit us to peer, as it were, into the invisible heavenly realm. We invite you to take a careful look at them. Although not everything described in the visions is to be taken literally, the visions can help you not only to visualize those who dwell in the spirit realm but also to understand how they can affect you.

#### JEHOVAH IS THE SUPREME ONE

"A throne was in its position in heaven, and someone was seated on the throne. And the One seated had the appearance of a jasper stone and a sardius stone, and all around the throne was a rainbow like an emerald in appearance."—Revelation 4:2, 3.

"There was a brilliance all around him like that of a rainbow in a cloud on a rainy day. That was how the surrounding brilliant light appeared. It was like the appearance of the glory of Jehovah."—Ezekiel 1:27, 28.

These visions, given to the apostle John and the prophet Ezekiel, depict the splendor of the Most High God, Jehovah, with things we can readily envision—dazzling gemstones, a rainbow, and the majesty of a throne. They tell us that Jehovah's presence is one of awe-inspiring beauty, pleasantness, and serenity.

These depictions of God harmonize with the words of the psalmist who wrote: "Jehovah is great and most worthy of praise. He is more awe-

inspiring than all other gods. All the gods of the peoples are worthless gods, but Jehovah is the one who made the heavens. In his presence are majesty and splendor; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary."—Psalm 96:4-6.

Though Jehovah is the Supreme One, he invites us to approach him in prayer and assures us that he listens to us. (Psalm 65:2) God loves and cares for us so much that the apostle John could truthfully write: "God is love."—1 John 4:8.

#### **JESUS IS WITH GOD**

"[The Christian disciple Stephen], being full of holy spirit, gazed into heaven and caught sight of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand, and he said: 'Look! I see the heavens opened up and the Son of man standing at God's right hand.'"—Acts 7:55, 56.

Shortly before Stephen had this vision, Jesus was put to death at the instigation of the very ones whom Stephen was addressing—the Jewish leaders. The vision confirmed that Jesus was alive and



that he had been resurrected and honored. About this, the apostle Paul wrote: "[Jehovah] raised [Jesus] up from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above every government and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named, not only in this system of things but also in that to come." —Ephesians 1:20, 21.

In addition to describing his lofty position, the Scriptures show that Jesus, like Jehovah, cares deeply for humans. During his ministry on earth, Jesus healed the sick, cured the infirm, and raised the dead. By his sacrificial death, he demonstrated his deep love for God and for mankind. (Ephesians 2:4, 5) Standing at God's right hand, Jesus will soon exercise his authority and bring great blessings to obedient humans everywhere.

#### ANGELS MINISTER TO GOD

"I [the prophet Daniel] kept watching until thrones were set in place and the Ancient of Days [Jehovah] sat down.... A thousand thousands kept ministering to him, and

## ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him."—Daniel 7:9, 10.

In this vision of heaven, Daniel saw not just one angel but multitudes. What an aweinspiring vision that must have been! Angels are glorious spirit persons, intelligent and powerful. Their ranks include seraphs and cherubs. The Bible mentions angels more than 250 times.

Angels are not former humans who had lived on earth. God created angels long before man's appearance. At the founding of the earth, the angels were on hand to observe and to shout in applause.

—Job 38:4-7.

One way faithful angels minister to God is by being involved in the most important work being done on earth today—the proclamation of the good news of God's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) Their involvement in this work was revealed in a vision to the apostle John, who wrote: "I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people." (Revelation 14:6) Though angels do

not speak to people today as they did on occasion in times past, they do help guide those preaching the good news to honesthearted ones.

#### SATAN MISLEADS MILLIONS

"War broke out in heaven: Michael [Jesus Christ] and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him."—Revelation 12:7-9.

Heaven has not always been peaceful. At the very dawn of human history, one of the angels, consumed by a desire to be worshipped, rebelled against Jehovah, becoming Satan, meaning "Resister." Other angels later joined in the rebellion and became known as demons. Thoroughly evil, they bitterly oppose Jehovah and have led most humans on a course contrary to Jehovah's loving direction.

Satan and his demons are depraved and cruel. They are enemies of mankind and have contributed to much of the suffering on earth. For example, Satan killed the livestock and the servants of the faithful man Job. Next, he killed all ten of Job's children by causing "a great wind" to crush the house they were in. After that, Satan struck Job with "painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head."—Job 1:7-19; 2:7.

Soon, though, Satan will be done away with. Since being hurled to the vicinity of the earth, he knows that "he has a short period of time." (Revelation 12:12) Satan is doomed, and that certainly is good news!

#### THOSE WHO COME FROM THE EARTH

"You [Jesus] bought people for God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and you made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth."—Revelation 5:9, 10.

Just as Jesus was resurrected from earth to life in heaven, others will be too. Jesus said to his faithful apostles: "I am going my way to prepare a place for you. Also, . . . I will come again and will receive you home to myself, so that where I am you also may be."—John 14:2, 3.

Those who go to heaven go there for a purpose.

#### YOU NEED NOT FEAR THE DEMONS

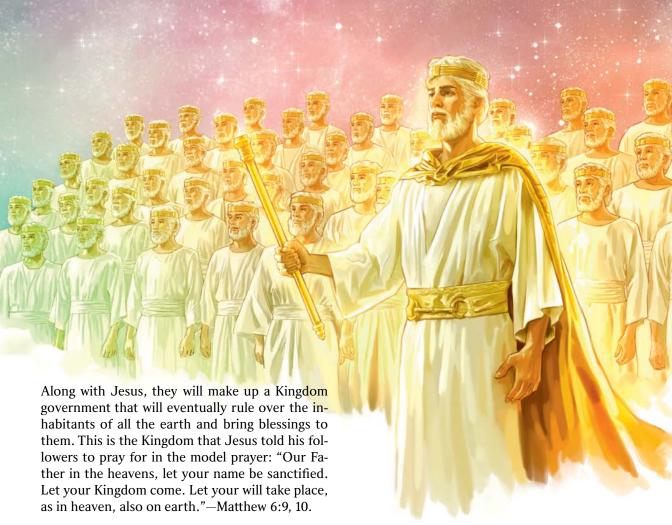
Like prisoners in chains, millions of people are shackled by superstition and the dread of evil spirits. They look to charms, amulets, and magic potions to protect themselves. There is no need for you to do so. The Bible gives this comforting assurance: "The eyes of Jehovah are roving about through all the earth to show his strength in behalf of those whose heart is complete toward

him." (2 Chronicles 16:9) The true God, Jehovah, who is far more powerful than Satan, will protect you if you trust in Him.

To gain Jehovah's protection, you need to learn what is pleasing to him and then do it. For example, in the first century, Christians in the city of Ephesus collected all their books on magic and burned them. (Acts 19:19, 20) Similarly, to have God's protection, you must

dispose of charms, amulets, fetishes, magic books, "protective" strings, and anything else connected with demonistic practices.

The Bible says: "Subject yourselves to God; but oppose the Devil, and he will flee from you." (James 4:7) If you subject yourself to Jehovah by obeying and serving him, you can be sure that Satan and the demons can have no hold on you.



#### WHAT THOSE IN HEAVEN WILL DO

"I [the apostle John] heard a loud voice from the throne say: 'Look! The tent of God is with mankind, . . . and he 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.'"—Revelation 21:3, 4.

This prophetic vision points to the time when God's Kingdom, made up of Jesus and those res-

urrected from the earth, will bring an end to Satan's rule and make the earth a paradise. Things that have caused so much pain and sorrow to humankind will be no more. Even death will pass away.

What, though, of the billions who have died and will not be resurrected to heaven? At a future time, they will be restored to life with the prospect of living forever in that Paradise on earth.—Luke 23:43. ■

These visions assure us that Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, as well as the faithful angels and those who have been bought from the earth, all deeply care about us and seek our welfare. To learn more about what they will do, we invite you to contact Jehovah's Witnesses or go to our website, www.jw.org, and download the book What Does the Bible Really Teach?



OVER 3,000 years ago, the ancient patriarch Job realized that the birds of the heavens have much to tell us about the handiwork of God. But their characteristic behavior also makes them ideal subjects for illustrations and metaphors. In the Bible, many of the references to the birds of the heavens teach us important lessons about life and our relationship with God. Let us look at a few examples.

#### WHERE THE SWALLOWS NEST

Inhabitants of Jerusalem were familiar with swallows, which customarily build their nests under the eaves of buildings. Some made their nests in Solomon's temple. Likely, swallows that nested in the temple area each year found it a place of safety, where they could rear their young undisturbed.

The composer of Psalm 84—one of the sons of Korah, who served at the temple for one week every six months—noticed those nests in the temple area. Longing to be like the swallow that had a permanent home in Jehovah's house, he exclaimed: "How lovely your grand tabernacle is, O Jehovah of armies! My whole being yearns, yes, I am faint with longing, for the courtyards of Jehovah... Even the bird finds a home there

and the swallow a nest for herself, where she cares for her young near your grand altar, O Jehovah of armies, my King and my God!" (Psalm 84:1-3) Do we, along with our young ones, show a similar longing and appreciation for regularly being with the congregation of God's people? —Psalm 26:8, 12.

#### THE STORK KNOWS ITS TIME

"The stork in the sky knows its seasons," wrote the prophet Jeremiah. He was doubtless well aware of the migration of storks through the Promised Land. In the spring, over 300,000 white storks have been counted migrating from Africa to Northern Europe by way of the Jordan Valley. Their internal clock triggers the urge to return to their summer breeding grounds. Like other migratory birds, they "keep to the time of their return."—Jeremiah 8:7.

"The true wonder of migration is that it is instinctive," says *Collins Atlas of Bird Migration*. Jehovah God gave migratory birds instinctive wisdom regarding the seasons, but he gave man the ability to discern the times and the seasons. (Luke 12:54-56) Unlike the instinctive wisdom of the stork, knowledge of God is the key to man's discerning the significance of the events of







the time we live in. The Israelites of Jeremiah's day were oblivious to such signs. God explained the underlying problem, stating: "They have rejected the word of Jehovah, and what wisdom do they have?"—Jeremiah 8:9.

Today we have ample evidence that we are living in what the Bible calls "the last days." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Will you imitate the stork and take notice of 'the season'?

#### THE EAGLE LOOKS FAR INTO THE DISTANCE

The eagle is mentioned many times in the Bible, and its striking silhouette is a familiar feature of the Promised Land. From its nest high up on a cliff, the eagle "searches for food; its eyes look far into the distance." (Job 39:27-29) Its sight is so powerful that the eagle can reportedly spot a rabbit half a mile (1 km) away.

Just as the eagle can "look far into the distance," Jehovah is able to look far into the future. Thus, Jehovah God declared: "From the beginning I foretell the outcome, and from long ago the things that have not yet been done." (Isaiah 46:10) By heeding Jehovah's counsel, we can benefit from his matchless wisdom and foresight.—Isaiah 48:17, 18.

The Bible also compares those who trust in God to eagles: "Those hoping in Jehovah will re-

gain power. They will soar on wings like eagles." (Isaiah 40:31) An eagle soars by using thermals, or columns of rising warm air. Once the eagle locates a thermal, it spreads out its wings and circles around within the column of air, rising higher and higher. The eagle does not depend on its own strength to soar and glide long distances. Likewise, those who trust in Jehovah can look to him as the one who promises them "the power beyond what is normal."—2 Corinthians 4:7, 8.

#### "THE WAY A HEN GATHERS HER CHICKS"

Shortly before his death, Jesus paused to look at the Jewish capital city. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the killer of the prophets and stoner of those sent to her," he sighed. "How often I wanted to gather your children together the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings! But you did not want it."—Matthew 23:37.

One of the strongest instincts among birds is their desire to protect their young. Birds that nest on the ground, such as domestic hens, must keep a sharp lookout for danger. If the hen spots a hawk circling overhead, she emits a loud warning call, at which the chicks quickly run to safety beneath her wings. There the fledgling chicks can also find shelter from the hot sun and heavy rain. Jesus likewise wanted to offer the inhabitants of Jerusalem spiritual shelter and protection. Today, Jesus invites us to come to him for refreshment and protection from the burdens and anxieties of our daily life.—Matthew 11:28, 29.

Truly, there is much that we can learn from these winged creatures. As you observe their behavior, try to recall the Scriptural metaphors that speak of them. May the swallow help you to appreciate Jehovah's house of worship. May you look to God for hope that can enable you to soar like an eagle. May you come to Jesus for spiritual truth that safeguards you the way a mother hen does her chicks. And may the stork remind you to stay alert to the significance of world events that mark our time.  $\blacksquare$ 



## Lefèvre d'Étaples

## HE WANTED THE COMMON PEOPLE TO KNOW GOD'S WORD

ON A Sunday morning in the early 1520's, the inhabitants of Meaux, a small town near Paris, could not believe what they heard in church. They had listened to the reading of the Gospels in their mother tongue—in French instead of Latin!

The Bible translator who was behind this initiative, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples (Latin, Jacobus Faber Stapulensis), later wrote to a close friend: "You can scarcely imagine with what ardor God is moving the minds of the simple [people] in some places to embrace his Word."

At that time, the Catholic Church and the theologians in Paris opposed the use of translations of the Bible in common languages. So, what moved Lefèvre to translate the Bible into French? And how did he manage to help the common people to understand God's Word?

#### SEEKING THE TRUE MEANING OF THE SCRIPTURES

Before becoming a Bible translator, Lefèvre had dedicated himself to restoring the original meaning of classical works of philosophy and theology. He noted that ancient texts had often been corrupted by centuries of misleading renderings and errors. In his search for the true meaning of ancient writings, he started studying closely the standard Bible of the Catholic Church, the Latin *Vulgate*.

His earnest study of the Scriptures led him to the conclusion that "study of divine truth alone promises . . . the highest happiness." Therefore, Lefèvre turned away from studying philosophy and devoted all his energy to translating the Bible.

In 1509, Lefèvre published a comparative study of five different Latin versions of the Psalms,\* including his own correction of the *Vulgate*. Unlike theologians of his time, he endeavored to find the "natural sense" of Bible passages. His method of interpreting the Scriptures had a strong influence on other Bible scholars and reformers.—See the box "How Martin Luther Was Influenced by Lefèvre."

Born a Catholic, Lefèvre was convinced that a renewal of the church could be possible only if the Scriptures were properly taught to ordinary people. But how would the common people benefit from the Scriptures at a time when those sacred writings were mostly in Latin?

#### A BIBLE TRANSLATION ACCESSIBLE TO ALL

Lefèvre's deep love for God's Word made him determined to make it accessible to the greatest number of people. To achieve that goal, in June 1523, he published a French translation of the Gospels in two pocket-size volumes. This small format—which cost half the price of a standard edition—made it easier for people with little means to obtain a copy of the Bible.

<sup>\*</sup> The Fivefold Psalter gave five versions of the Psalms in separate columns and included a table of titles applying to God, including the Tetragrammaton, the four Hebrew letters representing God's name.

The response of the common people was immediate and enthusiastic. Both men and women were so eager to read Jesus' words in their mother tongue that the first 1,200 copies printed were out of stock after just a few months.

#### A COURAGEOUS STAND FOR THE BIBLE

In the introduction to the Gospels, Lefèvre explained that he had translated them into French so that "the simple members" of the church "can be as certain of evangelical truth as those who have it in Latin." But why was Lefèvre so eager to help the common people to get back to what the Bible teaches?

Lefèvre was well-aware that human teachings and philosophy had corrupted the Catholic Church. (Mark 7:7; Colossians 2:8) And he was convinced that the time had arrived for the Gos-

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9	יחות ה	IEHVAH	Dominus	κύριοσ
10	שובי	SADAI	Oipotens	παρτολύραμος
31	אלים	ELOHA	Deus	GEÓG
12	צור	SVR	Deus	θεόσ
tal	YET	ABIR	Deus	9190

▲ Table of titles applying to God in the Psalms, as found in the Fivefold Psalter, 1513 Edition

> The introduction to the Gospels confirmed Lefèvre's desire to make the Bible accessible to all in their mother tongue >

pels to be "purely proclaimed throughout the world, so that people may no longer be led astray by alien doctrines of men."

Lefèvre also endeavored to expose the faulty arguments of those who opposed the translation of the Bible into French. He denounced their hypocrisy, saying: "How will they teach [the people] to observe all that Jesus Christ commanded, if they are quite unwilling that the simple folk should see and read the Gospel of God in their own language?"-Romans 10:14.

### Epistre exhortatoire.

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Not surprisingly, theologians at the University of Paris—the Sorbonne—soon attempted to silence Lefèvre. In August 1523, they objected to vernacular translations of and commentaries on the Bible, considering them "harmful to the Church." Had it not been for the intervention of French King Francis I, Lefèvre would have been condemned as a heretic.

## THE "SILENT" TRANSLATOR COMPLETED HIS WORK

Lefèvre did not allow heated debates on his works to distract him from translating the Bible. In 1524, after completing his translation of the Greek Scriptures (the so-called New Testament), he released a French version of the Psalms so that believers might pray "with greater devotion and deeper feeling."

Theologians at the Sorbonne lost no time in going through Lefèvre's works with a fine-tooth comb. They soon ordered that his translation of the Greek Scriptures be burned publicly, and they denounced some other writings as "favoring the heresy of Luther." When the theologians summoned him to justify his views, Lefèvre decided to remain "silent" and fled to Strasbourg. There, he discreetly continued translating the

Bible. Even though some considered his stance to be lacking courage, he believed that it was the best way to respond to those who had no appreciation for the precious "pearls" of Bible truth.

—Matthew 7:6.

Almost one year after his flight, King Francis I appointed Lefèvre tutor of his four-year-old son, Charles. This assignment gave Lefèvre plenty of time to finish his translation of the Bible. In 1530, his translation of the complete Bible was printed outside France, in Antwerp, with the approval of Emperor Charles V.\*

#### **GREAT HOPES, LAST REGRETS**

Throughout his life, Lefèvre hoped that the church would abandon human traditions and return to the pure knowledge of the Scriptures. He strongly believed in "the right, indeed, the duty, of every Christian to read and learn the Bible personally." That is why he worked so hard to make the Bible accessible to all. Although his desire to see the church reform itself failed to materialize, Lefèvre's legacy is undisputed—he helped the common people to know God's Word. ■



#### How Martin Luther Was Influenced by Lefèvre

Martin Luther was still an obscure monk when he carefully studied Lefèvre's works. The young Luther noted that Lefèvre expounded Biblical passages in a clear and simple way, without resorting to fancy allegories as did the scholars of his time. Lefèvre's method of interpretation exerted a strong influence on Luther as well as on Bible translator William Tyndale and Reformer John Calvin. Although Lefèvre remained a Catholic until his death, his works marked a turning point in Bible translation and paved the way to the Reformation.

<sup>\*</sup> Five years later, in 1535, French translator Olivétan released his version of the Bible based on the original languages. He relied heavily on Lefèvre's works when translating the Greek Scriptures.

## **Embracing Bible Truth Without Hands** and Arms

#### AS TOLD BY BERNHARD MERTEN

When people feel insecure, they like to hold on to something. I cannot do that, because I have neither hands nor arms. I was seven years old when my arms had to be amputated to save my life.



My mother was 17 when I was born in 1960. My father left us before my birth. Mother and I lived with my grandparents in Burg, a small town in the former German Democratic Republic, or East Germany. Many people were atheists, and my family also held that view. God did not mean anything to us.

As I grew up, I enjoyed Grandfather's attention. He got me involved in many projects, such as sending me up trees to saw off branches. As a child, I loved those adventures. My life was carefree and happy.

#### AN ACCIDENT CHANGES MY LIFE

Something dreadful happened one day when I was seven. I had just started my second year at school. On my way home, I climbed an electricity pylon. When I was 25 feet (8 m) above the ground, I was struck unconscious by a powerful electric arc flash. When I woke up in the hospital. I could not feel my arms. They had been severely burned, and the injuries were so horrific that both arms had to be amputated to prevent blood poi-

soning. As you can imagine, my mother and my grandparents were devastated. Being a child, however, I did not fully understand how the loss of my arms would eventually affect my life.

After my hospital stay, I went back to school. Children poked fun at me, pushed me around, and threw things at me because I could not defend myself. I felt really hurt by their cruel and patronizing remarks. Finally, I was sent to the Birkenwerder School for the Disabled, which was like a boarding school for physically disabled children. Since the school was far away from home, my mother and grandparents could not afford to visit me. I saw them only during vacation. For the next ten years, I grew up without my mother and grandparents.

#### **GROWING UP WITHOUT** HANDS AND ARMS

I learned to perform many tasks anew by using my feet. Can you imagine what it is like to eat with a fork or a spoon held with your toes? Somehow I managed to develop that skill. I also learned to



Bringing good news to others makes me happy

brush my teeth and comb my hair using my feet. I even started to gesture with my feet as I talked to people. Yes, my feet became my hands.

Growing into my teens, I loved to read science fiction. Sometimes I imagined having high-tech arms that would allow me to do everything. At age 14, I began to smoke. I felt that it gave me self-confidence and made me feel that I was like everyone else. It was as if I were saying: 'Yes, I can do that too. Smokers are grown-ups—with or without arms.'

I kept myself busy and got involved in social activities. I became a member of the Free German Youth, a State-sponsored socialist youth organization, and served as secretary, a responsible position among local members. I also joined a singing club, did poetry sessions, and participated in sports for the disabled. After an apprenticeship, I started to work in a company in our town. As I grew up, I wore my prosthesis more and more because I wanted to be a complete man.

#### **EMBRACING BIBLE TRUTH**

One day while I was waiting for the train to go to work, a man approached me. He asked me if I could imagine that God could let me have my two arms back again. I was puzzled. Of course I wanted my arms back, but to me that sounded farfetched and impossible! As an atheist, I was convinced that God did not exist. From that moment on, I found a way to avoid that man.

Some time later, a work colleague invited me to visit her family. During coffee, her parents began to talk about God—Jehovah God. For the first time, I heard that God has a name. (Psalm 83:18) However, inwardly I objected: 'There cannot be a God, no matter what his name is. I will prove these people wrong.' Confident of my views, I agreed to Bible discussions. To my surprise, however, I was unable to prove that God does not exist.

My atheist mind-set was gradually falling apart as we examined Bible prophecies. Many divine predictions have come true, although written hundreds or even thousands of years in advance. During one Bible discussion, we compared current world conditions with prophecies found in Matthew chapter 24, Luke chapter 21, and 2 Timothy chapter 3. Just as a combination of symptoms can help a doctor reach the correct diagnosis of a patient's illness, the combination of events mentioned in those prophecies helped me to see that we are living in what the Bible calls "the last days."\* I was awestruck. Those prophecies were being fulfilled in front of my eyes.

I was convinced that what I was learning was the truth. I began to pray to Jehovah God and gave up smoking—although I had been a heavy smoker for more than a decade. I continued to

<sup>\*</sup> For a detailed discussion of the sign of the last days, see chapter 9, "Are We Living in the 'Last Days'?" in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach*? published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org.

study the Bible for about a year. On April 27, 1986, I was baptized secretly in a bathtub, since at the time the Witnesses were under ban in East Germany.

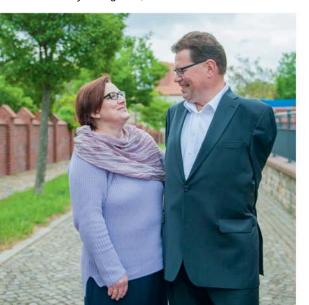
#### **GIVING TO OTHERS**

Because of the ban, we met in small groups in private homes and I knew only a few fellow believers. Unexpectedly, I was allowed by the State authorities to travel to West Germany, where the Witnesses were not banned. For the first time in my life, I was able to attend Bible conventions and see thousands of my brothers and sisters. That was a unique experience.

After the Berlin Wall came down, the ban on Jehovah's Witnesses was lifted. Finally, we could worship Jehovah God in freedom. I wanted to increase my share in the preaching work. However, I dreaded contact with strangers. I felt inferior because of my disability and my spending most of my childhood in a home for the disabled. But in 1992, I tried preaching for 60 hours in one month. I did well and experienced much joy. So I decided to do that every month and managed to continue for about three years.

I keep in mind the words in the Bible: "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" (2 Corinthians 11:29)

With my loving wife, Elke



In spite of my disabilities, I still have a mind and a voice. So I try my best to help others. Having no arms, I can fully empathize with those who have limitations. I know what it feels like to want to do something desperately that you just cannot do. I try to encourage those who feel that way. Giving to others in such a way makes me happy.

#### JEHOVAH HELPS ME EVERY DAY

I have to admit, though, that at times I am a bit down. I simply want to be a complete man. I can perform many everyday tasks myself, but they take a lot more time, effort, and energy than they normally would. My motto for each day is: "For all things I have the strength through the one who gives me power." (Philippians 4:13) Each day, Jehovah gives me the power I need to get "normal" things done. I have learned that Jehovah has not given up on me. That is why I never want to give up on him.

Jehovah has blessed me with a family—the very thing I missed in my childhood and youth. I have a wonderful wife, Elke, who is loving and compassionate. In addition, millions of Jehovah's Witnesses have become my spiritual brothers and sisters—a global family.

I also feel comforted by God's promise of Paradise, in which he will make "all things new," including my arms. (Revelation 21:5) I understand this promise better when I contemplate what Jesus did while he was on earth. In an instant, he healed crippled limbs and even restored a man's ear that had been cut off. (Matthew 12:13; Luke 22:50, 51) Jehovah's promises and Jesus' miracles have convinced me that soon I will be a complete man again.

The greatest blessing, however, is having come to know Jehovah God. He has become my father and my friend, my comforter and my strength. I feel the same way King David did, who wrote: "Jehovah is my strength . . . I have received his help, and my heart rejoices." (Psalm 28:7) This wonderful truth I want to hold on to all my life. I embrace it even without hands and arms.

#### Does God answer all prayers?

### WOULD YOU SAY THAT HE ANSWERS THE PRAYERS OF . . .

- Everyone
- Some people
- No one

#### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

"Jehovah is near to all . . . who call on him in truth."—Psalm 145:18.

#### WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- God ignores the prayers of those who rebel against him. (Isaiah 1:15) However, they can "set matters straight" with him by changing their ways.—Isaiah 1:18.
- For God to answer a prayer, it must be in harmony with his requirements as found in the Bible.
   —1 John 5:14.

## Do we have to pray in a special position?

**SOME PEOPLE BELIEVE** that they must always kneel, bow their head, or place their hands together when praying. What do you think?

#### WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

God has accepted prayers from those who "sat down" or "stood up" or those who were "lying prostrate" or "kneeling down." (1 Chronicles 17:16; 2 Chronicles 30:27; Ezra 10:1; Acts 9:40) He does not require a specific bodily position when we pray.

#### WHAT ELSE CAN WE LEARN FROM THE BIBLE?

- God listens to those who are humble.
   —Psalm 138:6.
- You can pray in any language, or even silently.
   2 Chronicles 6:32, 33: Nehemiah 2:1-6.



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

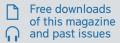
For more information, see chapter 17 of this book, published by Jehovah's Witnesses

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