

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM



What Does the
Bible Say About

Life and Death?



WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Is death part of God's will for us? The Bible says: "[God] will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more."—Revelation 21:4. This issue of *The Watchtower* examines what the Bible says about life and death.

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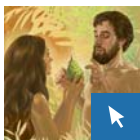
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Why Do People Die?

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > BIBLE QUESTIONS ANSWERED)

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Vol. 138, No. 10 2017

ENGLISH

Produced Each Issue: 61,651,000
Available in 302 LANGUAGES

This publication is not for sale. It is provided as part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

To make a donation, please visit www.jw.org.

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the modern-language *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

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.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) Issue 10 July 2017 is published monthly with an additional issue published in January, March, May, July, September, and November by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.; L. Weaver, Jr., President; G. F. Simonis, Secretary-Treasurer; 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299, and by Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Canada, PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to Watchtower, 1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY 12589-3299. © 2017 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. Printed in Canada.

COVER SUBJECT

A Puzzling Question

VIEWS about life and death are many and varied. Some feel that after death they will live on, perhaps in another form or in another place. Others feel that they will be reborn to live another existence. Still others think that death simply ends it all.

You may have your own belief on the subject, depending on your upbringing or cultural background. Since opinions as to what happens at death differ so widely, is there someone or somewhere we can turn to for reliable and truthful answers to this puzzling question?

For centuries, religious leaders have taught the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul. Followers of nearly all major religions—Christians, Hindus, Jews, Muslims, and others—believe in the existence of an immortal soul, which is said to survive the death of the body and live on in the spirit realm. Buddhists, on the other hand, believe that by way of countless rebirths, the force, or mental energy, within a person can reach a blissful state called Nirvana.

On account of such teachings, the majority of people around the world have come to believe that death opens the door to life in another world. To many, death is therefore an important step in the cycle of life, and dying appears to them to be part of God's will. But what does the Bible say about the matter? Please read the following article. The answer may surprise you.



Followers of nearly all major religions believe that the human soul is immortal



What the Bible Says About Life and Death



Reading the creation account in the Bible book of Genesis, we learn that the first man, Adam, was told by God: “From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad, you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will certainly die.” (Genesis 2:16, 17) That statement clearly and simply shows that if Adam had obeyed God’s command, he would not have died but would have continued living in the garden of Eden.

Sadly, rather than choosing to obey and live forever, Adam chose to ignore God’s command, and he ate the forbidden fruit when his wife, Eve, gave it to him. (Genesis 3:1-6) The consequences of that act of disobedience are still with us today. The apostle Paul explained it this way: “Through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because they had all sinned.” (Romans 5:12) That “one man” was, of course, Adam. But what was the sin, and why did it lead to death?

What Adam did—willfully disobeying or breaking God’s law—is sin. (1 John 3:4) And the penalty for sin is death, as God told Adam. As long as Adam—and his future offspring—remained obedient to God’s command, they would have no sin and would never have to taste death. God did not create humans to die but to live—even forever.

Can Humans Live Forever?

A few years ago, researchers reported the discovery of some underwater plants that they believe have been alive for thousands of years—perhaps the longest of any living thing on earth. The plants are of the species *Posidonia oceanica*, a type of seagrass that covers huge swaths of the Mediterranean seabed between Spain and Cyprus.

If plants can live to that amazing age, what about humans? Some scientists who study aging are optimistic about the prospect of an extended life span. For example, a book on the subject is said to delve into “the multitude of cutting-edge scientific developments” in that field. Whether scientific developments will have any real impact on the human life span remains to be seen.

True prospects for living forever, though, do not hinge on modern science. The Bible points to our Creator, Jehovah God, and says: “With you is the source of life.” (Psalm 36:9) To him, Jesus Christ said in prayer: “This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) Indeed, our efforts to know and please Jehovah God and his Son, Jesus Christ, will be rewarded with everlasting blessings.



Biosphoto/Biosphoto/Superstock

Researchers believe that some plants of this species of seagrass have lived for thousands of years

There is no disputing that death has “spread to all men,” as the Bible stated. But does some part of us live on after we die? Many would say yes, that a part of us—something called the soul—is immortal. This, however, would amount to saying that God lied to Adam. How so? Because if a part of us moves on to live in some other realm after we die, then death would not be the penalty for sin, as God stated. The Bible says: “It is impossible for God to lie.” (Hebrews 6:18) In reality, it was Satan who lied when he told Eve: “You certainly will not die.”—Genesis 3:4.

That raises the question, If the teaching of the immortality of the soul is based on a lie, then what really happens at death?

THE BIBLE SETS THINGS STRAIGHT

The Genesis account of creation says: “Jehovah God went on to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living person.” The expression “a living person” is translated from the Hebrew word *ne’phesh*,* which literally means “a breathing creature.”—Genesis 2:7, footnote.

The Bible thus makes clear that humans are not created as individuals *with* a soul that is immortal. Rather, each individual *is* “a living person.” That is why, search as you may, you will not find any Bible text that uses the expression “immortal soul.”

Since the Bible does not say that humans possess what some call an immortal soul, why do so many religions teach the contrary? The answer takes us all the way back to ancient Egypt.

* Some Bible translations, such as the *King James Version* and the Catholic *Douay Version*, render *ne’phesh* by the words “living soul,” whereas many modern translations render it “living creature,” *The New English Bible*; “living being,” *New International Version* and *The Jerusalem Bible*; or simply “began to live,” *Today’s English Version*.



WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

Simply put, the Bible says that the dead are in the grave, awaiting the resurrection. (John 5:28, 29) They are not suffering or in any kind of pain, for “the dead know nothing at all.” (Ecclesiastes 9:5) In his teachings, Jesus likened death to a deep sleep. (John 11:11-14) Thus, we have no need to fear those who have fallen asleep in death or to appease them by making offerings to them. They can neither help nor harm us, because “there is no work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the Grave.” (Ecclesiastes 9:10) By means of the resurrection, however, God will do away with death forever.—1 Corinthians 15:26, 55; Revelation 21:4.

A PAGAN TEACHING FLOURISHES

Herodotus, a Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.E., said that the Egyptians were “the first of mankind who have defended the immortality of the soul.” Another ancient culture, the Babylonians, also toyed with the idea of the immortal soul. By the time Alexander the Great

You will not find any Bible text that uses the expression “immortal soul”

conquered the Middle East in 332 B.C.E., Greek philosophers had popularized the teaching, and it soon spread throughout the Greek Empire.

In the first century C.E., two prominent Jewish sects, the Essenes and the Pharisees, taught that the soul survives the body at death. *The Jewish Encyclopedia* says: “The belief in the immortality of the soul came to the Jews from contact with Greek thought and chiefly through the philosophy of Plato.” Likewise, first-century Jewish historian Josephus attributed the teaching, not to the Holy Scriptures, but to “the belief of the sons of Greece,” which he viewed as a collection of tales by their mythologists.

As the influence of Greek culture continued to expand, professed Christians adopted this pagan teaching as well. According to historian Jona Lendering, “Plato’s hypothesis that our soul was once in a better place and now lives in a fallen world made it easy to combine platonic philosophy and Christianity.” Thus, the pagan doctrine of the immortal soul was absorbed into the “Christian” church and became a fundamental part of its beliefs.

Why You Can Trust What the Bible Says

We can have full confidence that what the Bible says is worthy of our trust. Why? Consider the following:

“THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE”

In the first century, the apostle Paul sounded this warning: “The inspired word clearly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired statements and teachings of demons.” (1 Timothy 4:1) How true those words proved to be! The doctrine of the immortal soul is but one example of “teachings of demons.” It is not supported by the Bible, and it has its roots in ancient pagan religions and philosophies.

Happily for us, Jesus said: “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32) By gaining an accurate knowledge of Bible truth, we are set free from the God-dishonoring teachings and practices promoted by so many of the world’s religions. Moreover, the truth in God’s Word sets us free from the shackles of the traditions and superstitions associated with death.—See the box “Where Are the Dead?”

Our Creator did not intend for humans to live just 70 or 80 years on earth and then move on to spend an eternity in another realm. His original purpose was for his human creation to live forever right here on earth as his obedient children. This grand purpose is an expression of God’s love for humankind, and it will not be thwarted. (Malachi 3:6) Reassuringly, the inspired psalmist declared: “The righteous will possess the earth, and they will live forever on it.”—Psalm 37:29. ■



Unique Authorship: The Bible is composed of 66 books written by some 40 writers over a period of 16 centuries, from 1513 B.C.E. to about 98 C.E. Still, its content is harmonious and coherent throughout. This proves that its real Author is the almighty God. He revealed the information to the men who penned it.



Historical Accuracy: Events recorded in the Bible are in full harmony with proven historical facts. The book *A Lawyer Examines the Bible* remarks: “While romances, legends and false testimony are careful to place the events related in some distant place and some indefinite time, . . . the Bible narratives give us the date and place of the things related with the utmost precision.”



Scientific Accuracy: The Bible is not a science textbook, but when it touches on scientific matters, it reflects an accuracy far ahead of its time. For example, in chapters 13 and 14 of the book of Leviticus, detailed laws on hygiene and quarantine were given to the Israelites, long before people knew anything about germs and contagion. The Bible also speaks of the earth as being round and suspended in space, facts that were not fully understood by science until centuries later.—Job 26:7; Isaiah 40:22.

These are just a few examples to substantiate the Bible’s claim of authenticity when it says: “All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial for teaching, for reproving, for setting things straight.”—2 Timothy 3:16.



For more information on what the Bible says about life and death, see chapter 6 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is also available at www.jw.org, or you can scan this code.



Early and open
communication is vital

WHEN A LOVED ONE IS TERMINALLY ILL

DOREEN was shocked when her husband, Wesley, only 54 years of age, was diagnosed with an acutely aggressive brain tumor.* Doctors gave him only a few months to live. “I couldn’t believe what I was hearing,” she recalls. “I was totally numb for weeks. It felt as if it were happening to someone else, not to us. I was not prepared.”

Sadly, Doreen’s reaction is not uncommon. A terminal disease can afflict anyone at any time. Commendably, many willingly take on the task of caring for a loved one who is diagnosed with a terminal illness. Yet, caregiving is a formidable challenge. What can family members do to comfort and care for their terminally ill loved one? How can caregivers cope with the range of emotions they may experience throughout the course of the illness? As death approaches, what can be expected? First, though, let us consider why caring for the terminally ill is a unique challenge today.

* Names have been changed.

A MODERN DILEMMA

Medical science has changed the nature of dying. A century or so ago, even in more developed lands, the average life span was much shorter. People died quickly from infectious diseases or accidents. Access to hospitals was limited, and most people were cared for by their families and died at home.

Today, medical advances have enabled physicians to fight illness aggressively in order to prolong life. Diseases that would have ended a person’s life quickly in times past may now stretch out over many years. However, this extended life may not represent a cure. Patients often have severe infirmities that render them incapable of caring for themselves. Caring for such individuals has become much more complicated and demanding.

Consequently, more and more, death has moved from the home to the hospital. Most peo-

ple today are unfamiliar with the dying process, and few have ever actually witnessed someone dying. Fear of the unknown, then, may hinder or even paralyze a person's efforts to care for an ill family member. What can help?

PLAN IN ADVANCE

As illustrated in the case of Doreen, many people feel devastated when a loved one is diagnosed with a fatal illness. Amid intense anxiety, fear, and grief, what can help you to prepare for the road ahead? A faithful servant of God prayed: "Teach us how to count our days so that we may acquire a heart of wisdom." (Psalm 90:12) Yes, pray earnestly for Jehovah God to show you how to 'count your days' wisely so that you can use the remaining days with your loved one in the best possible way.

This takes good planning. If your loved one is still able to communicate and is willing to address the matter, it may be wise to ask him who should make decisions for him when he is no longer able to do so. Frank discussion about whether he wishes to be resuscitated, hospitalized, or submitted to certain treatments can minimize misunderstandings and feelings of guilt on the part of family members who are forced to make decisions for an incapacitated patient. Early and open communication allows the family to focus on providing care during the illness. "Plans fail when there is no consultation," says the Bible.—Proverbs 15:22.

HOW TO ASSIST

Usually, the caretaker's primary role is to provide comfort. A dying person needs to be reassured that he is loved and not alone. How can this be done? Read or sing to the patient, choosing literature and songs that are upbuilding and en-

THE FINAL WEEKS OF LIFE

It is common for a patient to exhibit some or all of the following symptoms during the final weeks of life*:

- ▶ *Little interest in eating and drinking.* Swabbing glycerin on the mouth and lips and placing a moist washcloth on the forehead may keep the patient comfortable.
- ▶ *Desire to be alone or with very few people.* Keep the environment quiet and calm.
- ▶ *Increased amount of time sleeping.*
- ▶ *Restlessness.* Rather than restraining restless motions, speak calmly and reassuringly with the person.
- ▶ *Disorientation.* Identify yourself by name, and listen with respect even if the person seems confused.
- ▶ *Incontinence.* Keep the patient and his bed clean to the extent possible.
- ▶ *Breathing changes.* A moaning sound while exhaling may merely be air passing over relaxed vocal chords.
- ▶ *Congestion.* Raising the head with pillows may help to prevent the patient from gagging.
- ▶ *Skin color changes.* These are often due to the body's directing blood to the core to support vital organs.

* Source: The Metropolitan Hospice of Greater New York

joyable to him. Many people are comforted when a family member holds their hand and speaks softly to them.

It is often helpful to identify any visitors. One report states: "Hearing is said to be the last of the five senses to be lost. Hearing may still remain very acute although the [patients] may seem asleep so do not say anything in their presence you would not say to them when awake."

If possible, pray together. The Bible relates that on one occasion, the apostle Paul and

his companions were under extreme pressure and were very uncertain even of their lives. What assistance did they seek? Paul entreated his friends: “You also can help us by your supplication for us.” (2 Corinthians 1:8-11) A heartfelt prayer during extreme stress and serious illness is invaluable.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE REALITY

The very notion of a loved one dying is often distressing. No wonder, for death is *unnatural*. We were not designed to accept death as a normal part of life. (Romans 5:12) God’s Word thus calls death an “enemy.” (1 Corinthians 15:26) So a reluctance to think about the death of a loved one is understandable, even normal.



We can learn not to turn anyone’s help away

Nevertheless, anticipating what may occur can help family members to ease their fears and focus on making things as comfortable as possible. Some of the events that may take place are listed in the box “The Final Weeks of Life.” Of course, not all these conditions occur in every patient, nor do they necessarily occur in the same order. Still, most patients experience at least some of these changes.

After the death of a loved one, it may be wise to contact a close friend who has previously agreed to help. Caregivers and family may need to be assured that their dear one’s trial is over and that he is no longer suffering. The Creator of humankind lovingly assures us that “the dead know nothing at all.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5.

THE ULTIMATE CAREGIVER

Relying upon God is essential—not only during the terminal illness of a family member but also during the grief that comes following death. He may assist you through the helpful words and deeds of others. “I learned not to turn anyone’s help away,” says Doreen. “In fact, the volume of help we received overwhelmed us. My husband and I unequivocally knew this was Jehovah saying, ‘I’m right here with you to help you through this.’ I will never forget it.”

Yes, Jehovah God is the ultimate Caregiver. As our Maker, he understands our pain and sorrow. He is able and eager to provide the necessary help and encouragement so that we can cope. Better yet, he has promised that he will soon eradicate death once and for all and resurrect the billions of humans who are in his memory. (John 5:28, 29; Revelation 21:3, 4) Then, all can echo the words of the apostle Paul: “Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting?”—1 Corinthians 15:55. ■

Elias Hutter

and His Remarkable Hebrew Bibles

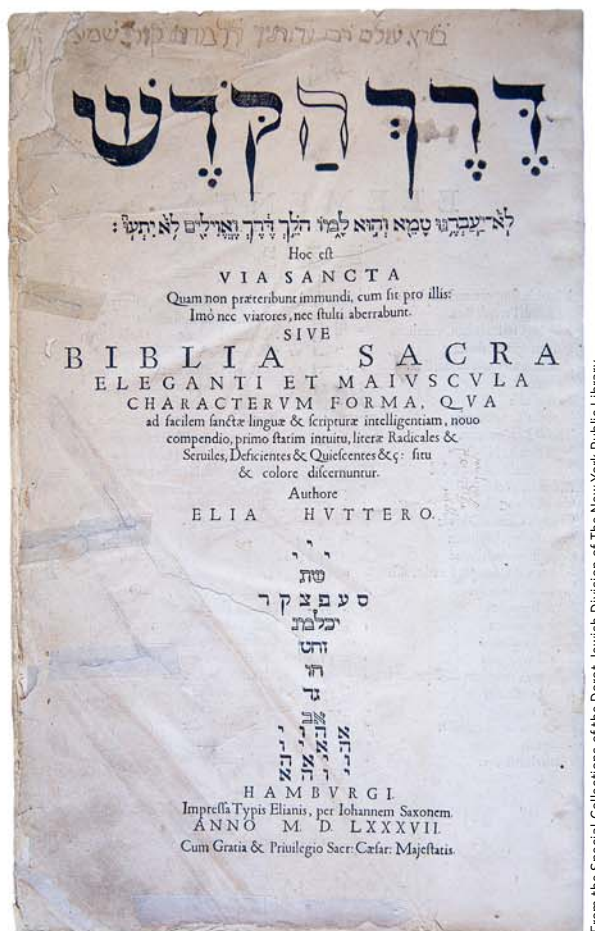
CAN you read Biblical Hebrew? Probably not. Perhaps you have never even seen a Hebrew Bible. However, you may well deepen your appreciation for your personal copy of the Holy Scriptures by learning something about the 16th-century scholar Elias Hutter and the two Hebrew Bible editions that he published.

Elias Hutter was born in 1553 in Görlitz, a small town close to Germany's present-day border with Poland and the Czech Republic. Hutter studied Oriental languages at the Lutheran University in Jena. When he was barely 24 years old, he was appointed professor of Hebrew in Leipzig. As an educational reformer, he later founded a school in Nuremberg where students could learn Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German within four years. That was then impossible at any other school or university.

“THE SPLENDOR OF THIS EDITION”

In 1587, Hutter produced a Hebrew edition of what is commonly called the Old Testament. This edition was entitled *Derekh ha-Kodesh*, taken from Isaiah 35:8 and meaning “The Way of Holiness.” The beautiful typeface elicited the comment that “every thing bespeaks the splendor of this edition.” But what made this Bible especially valuable was the way students could use it as an effective tool for learning Hebrew.

To understand why Hutter's Hebrew Bible was so helpful, consider two challenges that a learner faced when trying to read the Bible in Hebrew. First, it is in a different and unfamiliar alphabet,



Title page of Hutter's Hebrew Bible of 1587

and second, the attached prefixes and suffixes make the root words hard to recognize. For example, consider the Hebrew word נֶפֶשׁ (transliterated *ne'phesh*), meaning “soul.” At Ezekiel 18:4, it is preceded by the prefix הַ (ha), meaning “the,” thus forming the compound word הַנֶּפֶשׁ (*han-ne'phesh*), or “the soul.” To the untrained eye, הַנֶּפֶשׁ (*han-ne'phesh*) could appear to be a totally different word from נֶפֶשׁ (*ne'phesh*).

To help his students, Hutter used an ingenious printing technique—a typeface with Hebrew letters in both solid and outline form. He printed the root of each word in solid letters. For the prefixes and suffixes, he used outline (hollow) letters. This simple device made it easier for



lation, the search would have been in vain.* So he decided to translate the New Testament from Greek into Hebrew himself. Laying all other undertakings aside, Hutter finished the whole translation project in just one year!

How good was Hutter's Hebrew translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures? Noted 19th-century Hebrew scholar Franz Delitzsch wrote: "His Hebrew translation reveals a grasp of the language rare among Christians and it is still worth consulting, for in instance after instance he has been most fortunate in striking on precisely the right expression."

A LASTING INFLUENCE

Hutter did not become rich from his translation work; evidently his editions did not sell well. Nevertheless, his work has had an important and lasting influence. For example, his Hebrew New Testament was revised and reprinted in 1661 by William Robertson and again in 1798 by Richard Caddick. In translating from the original Greek, Hutter appropriately rendered the titles *Ky'ri-os* (Lord) and *The-os* (God) as "Jehovah" (יהוה, JHVH) where the text is a quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures or where he felt it referred to Jehovah. This is of interest because although many translations of the New Testament do not use God's personal name, Hutter's translation does and thus adds evidence in favor of restoring God's name in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The next time you see God's name, Jehovah, in the Christian Greek Scriptures or look at a footnote in the *Reference Bible*, remember the work of Elias Hutter and his remarkable Hebrew Bibles. ■

* Evidently, scholars had previously produced Hebrew translations of the New Testament. One such was Simon Atoumanos, a Byzantine monk, in about 1360. Another was Oswald Schreckenfuchs, a German scholar, in about 1565. These translations were never published and are now lost.

students to identify the root of a Hebrew word, helping them in the process of learning the language. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References* uses a similar practical approach in its footnotes.* The transliterated root is in bold type, and the prefixes and suffixes are in regular type. The highlighted portions of the illustrations show the typeface used in Hutter's Hebrew Bible at Ezekiel 18:4 and that used by the *Reference Bible* in its footnote to the same verse.

A HEBREW EDITION OF THE "NEW TESTAMENT"

Hutter also printed what is commonly called the New Testament, with the text in 12 languages. This edition was published in Nuremberg in 1599 and is often referred to as the Nuremberg Polyglot. Hutter wanted to include a Hebrew-language translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures. But he said that even if he "had been willing to pay a fortune" for such a Hebrew trans-

* See the second footnote to Ezekiel 18:4 and Appendix 3B in the *Reference Bible*.



The Tetragrammaton, the sacred name of God, *Jehovah*, in Hebrew letters, read from right to left

A Powerful Reassurance From Hebrew's **Smallest** Letter

Can we really be confident that all of God's promises will come true? Jesus was convinced of it, and his teaching built faith in his listeners. Consider the illustration he gave in his Sermon on the Mount, as recorded at Matthew 5:18: "Truly I say to you that sooner would heaven and earth pass away than for one smallest letter or one stroke of a letter to pass away from the Law until all things take place."

The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet is י (yod), which is the first letter of the Tetragrammaton, the sacred name of God, Jehovah.* In addition to the actual words and letters of God's Law, the scribes and Pharisees viewed each "stroke of a letter" as highly significant.

Jesus was saying that it was more likely that heaven and earth would pass away than that the smallest detail of the Law would go unfulfilled.

* The smallest letter of the Greek alphabet is *iota* and is evidently similar to the Hebrew י (yod). As the Law of Moses was originally written and passed down in Hebrew, Jesus was likely referring to the Hebrew letter.

Yet the Scriptures assure us that the literal heavens and earth will remain forever. (Psalm 78:69) So this striking statement indicated that not even the smallest detail of the Law would go unfulfilled.

Does Jehovah God care about small details? Yes, indeed. Consider this: The ancient Israelites were told that they must not break any bone of the Passover lamb. (Exodus 12:46) A small detail, perhaps. Did they understand why they should not break any of the bones? Probably not. Jehovah God knew, though, that this detail was prophetic of the fact that the Messiah would not have any of his bones broken when put to death on the torture stake.—Psalm 34:20; John 19:31-33, 36.

What do Jesus' words teach us? We too can be totally confident that all of Jehovah God's promises will come true, down to every last detail. What a powerful reassurance from Hebrew's smallest letter! ■

PARADISE ON EARTH

Fantasy or Reality?

Paradise! Colorful travel brochures make tempting offers for us to fly away to some distant “paradise” to relax and forget all our worries and troubles. But as we know all too well, when we return home, the realities of life remain much the same as they were when we left them.

Nonetheless, the fascination with paradise is powerful. We cannot help but wonder: ‘Is “paradise” nothing more than a pleasant fantasy? If so, why the fascination? And can it ever be a reality?’

PARADISE TRADITION

Over the centuries, people have been intrigued by the idea of paradise. For many, their interest was prompted by the mention in the Bible of “a garden in Eden, toward the east.” What made that garden so attractive? The account tells us: “Jehovah God made to grow out of the ground every tree that was pleasing to look at and good for food.” That garden was a pleasing and good place. Most captivating of all, there was “also the tree of life in the middle of the garden.”—Genesis 2:8, 9.

In addition, the Genesis account mentions four rivers flowing out of the garden. Two of those rivers are still known to us today—the Tigris (or, Hiddekel) and the Euphrates. (Genesis 2:10-14; footnote) These two rivers flow into the Persian Gulf through what is now Iraq, formerly part of ancient Persia.

Understandably, earthly paradise is very much a part of Persia’s cultural heritage. A 16th-century Persian carpet, in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in Pennsylvania, U.S.A., shows a walled garden with trees and flowers woven into its design. The Persian word for “walled garden” also means “paradise,” and the scene on the carpet mirrors

the Bible’s description of the beautiful and luxuriant garden of Eden.

In fact, stories of paradise are retold in many languages and cultures around the world. As the human family migrated to different parts of the earth, they carried with them versions of the original account, which, over centuries of time, became blended with beliefs and legends that developed locally. Even today, people almost instinctively describe places of great natural beauty as paradise.

THE SEARCH FOR PARADISE

Some explorers claimed to have located the lost paradise. For example, Charles Gordon, a British army general, on visiting the Seychelles in 1881, was so impressed by the luxuriant beauty of the Vallée de Mai—now a World Heritage site—that he declared it to be the garden of Eden. In the 15th century, Italian navigator Christopher Columbus wondered if he was close to rediscovering the Edenic garden when he landed on the island of Hispaniola, now the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Mapping Paradise, a modern history book, contains details of more than 190 ancient maps, many showing Adam and Eve in Eden. Among them is an unusual map from a 13th-century copy of the Beatus of Liébana manuscript. At its top is a small rectangle with paradise in the center. From there flow four rivers, labeled “Tigris,” “Eufrates,” “Pison,” and “Geon,” each to one of its four corners, supposedly representing the spread of Christianity to the four corners of the earth. Such depictions show that although the location of the original Paradise was unknown, memories of it evidently remained as attractive as ever.



Praslin, Seychelles, where in 1881
General Gordon found his garden of Eden

John Milton, a 17th-century English poet, is known for his poem *Paradise Lost*, based on the Genesis account of Adam's sin and expulsion from Eden. In it he highlighted the promised restoration of everlasting life on earth for humans, declaring: "For then the earth shall all be paradise." Subsequently, Milton wrote a sequel entitled *Paradise Regained*.

A CHANGE OF FOCUS

Clearly, the concept of a lost earthly paradise is a golden thread running through human history. So why is it now ignored? Basically because, as *Mapping Paradise* observes, "theologians have . . . turned their back firmly on the issue of the location of paradise."

Most churchgoers are taught that their ultimate destiny is *heaven*, not life in an *earthly* paradise. Yet the Bible says at Psalm 37:29: "The righteous will possess *the earth*, and they will live forever on it." Since our world today is hardly a paradise, what hope is there that this promise will ever be fulfilled?*

THE REALITY OF AN EARTH-WIDE PARADISE

Jehovah God, who created the original Para-

* It is also interesting that the Koran, in verse 105 of sura 21, *Al-Anbiya'* [The Prophets], declares: "The righteous among My servants shall inherit the earth."

dise, has promised to restore what was lost. How? Recall that Jesus taught us to pray: "Let your Kingdom come. Let your will take place, as in heaven, also on earth." (Matthew 6:10) That Kingdom is a world government in the hands of Jesus Christ that will replace all human rule. (Daniel 2:44) Under the rule of that Kingdom, God's will regarding a paradise earth will "take place."

Earlier, the prophet Isaiah was inspired to describe conditions in the promised Paradise, where all the tension and conflict plaguing mankind today will be gone. (Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:5-7; 65:21-23) We urge you to take a few minutes and read those scriptures in your own Bible. Doing so will reassure you of what God has in store for obedient mankind. Those then living will enjoy a paradise as well as God's favor, both of which Adam lost. —Revelation 21:3.

Why can we be sure that the hope of Paradise on earth is not fantasy but reality? Because the Bible tells us: "As for the heavens, they belong to Jehovah, but the earth he has given to the sons of men." The hope of Paradise on earth is one that "God, who cannot lie, promised long ago." (Psalm 115:16; Titus 1:2) What a wonderful prospect the Bible offers—Paradise forever! ■

Can the Bible help you to deal with anxiety?

What would you say?

► Yes ► No ► Maybe

What the Bible says

“Throw all your anxiety on [God], because he cares for you.” (1 Peter 5:7) The Bible gives the assurance that God can help you to gain relief from your anxieties.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- By prayer, you can gain “the peace of God,” which alleviates anxiety.—Philippians 4:6, 7.
- Additionally, reading God’s Word can help you to cope with stress.—Matthew 11:28-30.

Will anxiety ever be eliminated?

Some people believe . . .

that anxiety and stress are part of the human condition, while others believe that anxiety can only be relieved in an afterlife.

What do you think?

What the Bible says

God will remove causes of anxiety. “Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.”—Revelation 21:4.

What else can we learn from the Bible?

- Under God’s Kingdom, people will live in peace and tranquillity.—Isaiah 32:18.
- Undue anxiety and stress will be forgotten.—Isaiah 65:17.



Under God’s Kingdom, people “will find exquisite delight in the abundance of peace.”—Psalm 37:11



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