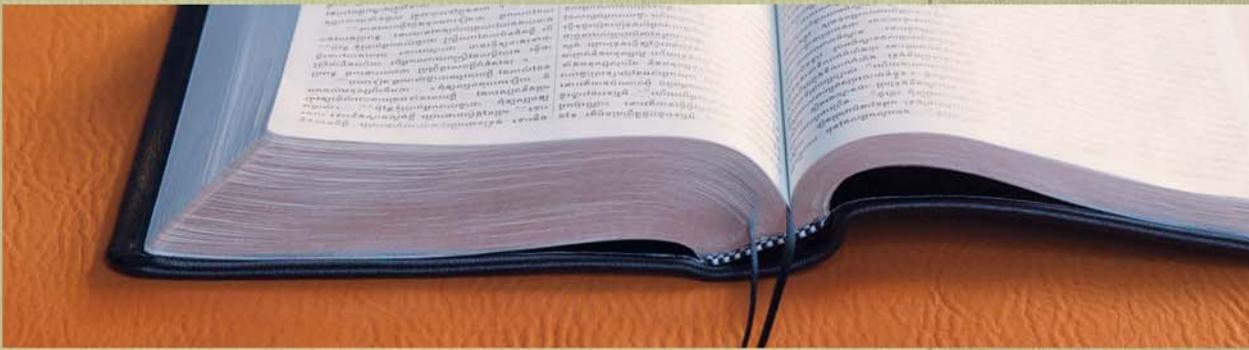


The Bible



WHAT IS ITS MESSAGE?

The Bible

WHAT IS ITS MESSAGE?

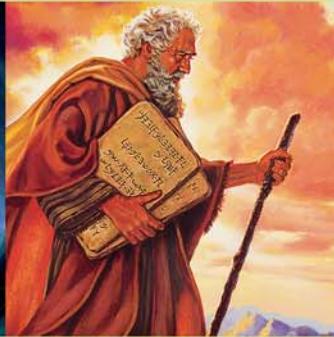


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Why Examine the Bible?



Are you familiar with the Bible? This unique work is by far the most widely distributed book in history. People of all cultures have found its message to be a source of comfort and hope and its advice to be practical for daily living. Yet, many today know little about the Bible. Whether you are religious or not, perhaps you are curious about it. This brochure is designed to give you an overview of the Bible.

BEFORE you pick up a Bible and start reading, it is helpful to know a few things about how this book is arranged. Also known as the Holy Scriptures, the Bible is actually a collection of 66 books, or sections, beginning with Genesis and ending with Revelation, or Apocalypse.

Who is the Bible's author? That is an intriguing question. The fact is, the Scriptures were penned by some 40 men over a span of about 1,600 years. Remarkably, those men did not claim to be the authors of the Bible. One of the penmen wrote: "All Scripture is inspired of God." (2 Timothy 3:16) Another of the writers said: "The spirit of Jehovah it was that spoke by me, and his word was upon my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2) The writers thus claimed that Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe, is the Bible's Author. God, the writers reveal, wants to be close to humans.

There is something else that is essential to understanding the Bible. The Scriptures have one overall theme: the vindication of God's right to rule humankind by means of his heavenly Kingdom. On the pages that follow, you will see how this theme is a common thread running from Genesis to Revelation.

With the foregoing in mind, consider now the message found in the world's most popular book, the Bible.

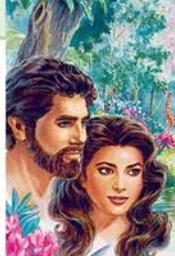
HELPFUL FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

- It was written over a period of 1,610 years, from 1513 B.C.E. to 98 C.E.*
- The first 39 books—written mostly in Hebrew, with some parts in Aramaic—are known as the Hebrew Scriptures, or "Old Testament."
- The last 27 books—written in Greek—are known as the Christian Greek Scriptures, or "New Testament."
- The Bible is divided into chapters and verses. For example, Matthew 6:9, 10 refers to the 6th chapter of the book of Matthew, verses 9 and 10.

* There are various ways of expressing dates. In this brochure, C.E. denotes "Common Era" and B.C.E. means "Before the Common Era." You will see this illustrated in the time line that runs along the bottom of the pages.

• Genesis

Exodus
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Deuteronomy
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2 Chronicles
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1 Corinthians
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2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation



1 The Creator Gives Man a Paradise

God creates the physical universe and life on earth; he creates a perfect man and woman, settles them in a beautiful garden, and gives them commands to obey

THEY have been called the most famous opening words ever written. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1) With that simple, majestic sentence, the Bible introduces us to the Person who is the central figure throughout the Holy Scriptures—the almighty God, Jehovah. The Bible’s first verse reveals that God is the Creator of the vast physical universe, including the planet we live on. The verses that follow explain that in a series of long periods, figuratively called days, God went on to prepare our earthly home, bringing into existence all the wonders of our natural world.

The greatest of God’s earthly creations was man. Here was a creature made in the image of God—able to reflect Jehovah’s own personal qualities, such as his love and wisdom. God made man out of the dust of the earth. God named him Adam, then placed him in a paradise—the garden of Eden. God himself planted that garden, filling it with beautiful, fruitful trees.

God saw the need for man to have a mate. Using one of Adam’s ribs, God made a woman and brought her to the man as his wife, later named Eve. Elated, Adam burst into poetry, saying: “This is at last bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” God explained: “That is why a man will leave his father and his mother and he must stick to his wife and they must become one flesh.”—Genesis 2:22-24; 3:20.

God gave Adam and Eve two commands. First, he directed them to cultivate and care for their earthly home and

eventually fill it with their offspring. Second, he told them not to eat the fruit of just one tree in all that vast garden, “the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.” (Genesis 2:17) If they disobeyed, they would die. With those commands, God gave the man and the woman a way to show that they accepted him as their Ruler. Their obedience would also show their love and gratitude. They had every reason to accept his kindly rule. There was no flaw in those perfect humans. The Bible tells us: “God saw everything he had made and, look! it was very good.”—Genesis 1:31.

—Based on Genesis chapters 1 and 2.

- How does the Bible describe the creation of humans and their earthly home?
- What kind of life did God make possible for man and woman?
- What commands did God give the first human pair?

THE DIVINE NAME

The Holy Scriptures refer to God by various titles, such as Creator and Almighty God. Some titles stress God’s attributes, such as his holiness, his power, his justice, his wisdom, and his love. However, God also gave himself a unique personal name—*Jehovah*. In the Bible as written in its original languages, this divine name appeared about 7,000 times, first at Genesis 2:4. The name Jehovah means “He Causes to Become.” That is comforting to know, for it means that God can carry out any purpose that he has in mind and can fulfill any promise that he makes.



2 Paradise Lost

A rebel angel influences the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, to reject God’s rulership. As a result, sin and death enter the world

LONG before creating humans, God created many invisible spirit creatures—angels. In Eden, a rebellious angel, who came to be known as Satan the Devil, slyly endeavored to tempt Eve into eating the fruit of the one tree that God had ruled out.

Using a serpent, or snake, as a mouthpiece, Satan implied that God was withholding something desirable from the woman and her husband. The angel told Eve that she and her husband would *not* die if they ate the forbidden fruit. Satan thus accused God of lying to His human children. The Deceiver presented disobedience to God as an appealing course that would lead to enlightenment and freedom. But this was all a lie—in fact, the first lie ever spoken on earth. The real point at issue involved God’s sovereignty, or supreme rulership—whether God has the right to rule and whether he exercises it in a righteous way and in the best interests of his subjects.

Eve believed Satan’s lie. She began to desire the fruit, and then she actually ate some of it. Later she gave some to her

IMPERFECTION AND DEATH

God created Adam and Eve perfect, with the prospect of living forever in Paradise. When they rebelled against God, they sinned. Adam and Eve thereby lost perfection and severed their relationship with the Source of life, Jehovah. From then on, they and all their imperfect descendants could not avoid sin and ultimately death.

—Romans 5:12.

husband, and he also ate it. Thus they became sinners. That seemingly simple act was actually an expression of rebellion. By deliberately choosing to disobey God’s command, Adam and Eve rejected the rule of the Creator who had given them everything, including perfect life.

God called the rebels to account for their actions. He foretold the coming of the promised Seed, or Deliverer, who would destroy Satan, the one represented by the serpent. God deferred the execution of the death sentence upon Adam and Eve for a time, thereby showing mercy to their unborn offspring. Those children would have a basis for hope because the

One whom God would send would undo the tragic consequences set in motion by the rebellion in Eden. Just how God’s purpose concerning this future Savior would be fulfilled—and who the sent-forth One would be—was gradually revealed as Bible writing progressed.

God drove Adam and Eve out of Paradise. Sweat and toil would be required to eke out a living from the soil outside the garden of Eden. Eve then became pregnant and gave birth to Cain, the first child of Adam and Eve. The couple had other sons and daughters, including Abel and Seth, the forefather of Noah.

—Based on Genesis chapters 3 to 5; Revelation 12:9.

- What was the first lie, and who told it?
- How did Adam and Eve lose Paradise?
- When calling the rebels to account for their actions, what basis for hope did God provide?

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- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea

The seed “will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel.”—Genesis 3:15

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- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts
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- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
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- 2 Timothy
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- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation

• Genesis

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Habakkuk
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Colossians
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2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy



3 Mankind Survives the Flood

God destroys a wicked world but preserves Noah and his family

AS MANKIND multiplied, sin and wickedness spread rapidly in the earth. A lone prophet named Enoch warned that God would one day destroy the ungodly. Still, evil prevailed and even worsened. Some angels rebelled against Jehovah by leaving their assigned places in heaven, assuming human form on earth, and greedily taking women as wives. Those unnatural unions produced hybrid offspring—giant bullies called Nephilim who intensified the world’s violence and bloodshed. God was deeply hurt to see his earthly creation being ruined.

After Enoch’s death, one man stood out in that wicked world. His name was Noah. He and his family tried to do what was right in God’s eyes. When God decided to destroy the wicked people of that world, he wanted to protect Noah and earth’s animal creation. So God told him to build an ark—a huge rectangular vessel. In it, Noah and his family would be preserved alive, along with numerous animal species, through a coming global flood. Noah obeyed God. During the decades that Noah spent building that ark, he was also “a preacher of righteousness.” (2 Peter 2:5) He warned people about the coming Flood, but they ignored him. The time came for Noah and

his family to enter the ark with the animals. God shut the door of the ark behind them. The rain fell.

The rain came down in torrents for 40 days and 40 nights until the whole earth was submerged. The wicked were gone. Months later, as the waters receded, the ark came to rest on a mountain. By the time the ark’s passengers could emerge safely, they had spent a full year aboard. In thanksgiving, Noah presented an offering to Jehovah. God responded by assuring Noah and his family that He would never again bring a flood to wipe out all life on the surface of the earth. Jehovah provided the rainbow as a visible guarantee, a reminder of this comforting promise.

After the Flood, God also gave mankind some new commands. He granted them permission to eat the meat of animals. However, he prohibited the eating of blood. He also commanded Noah’s descendants to spread abroad in the earth, but some of them disobeyed. People united under a leader named Nimrod and began to build a great tower in the city of Babel, later called Babylon. Their aim was to defy God’s command about spreading throughout the earth. But God thwarted the rebels by confusing their one language and causing them to speak in various tongues. Unable to communicate, they abandoned the project and scattered.

—Based on Genesis chapters 6 to 11; Jude 14, 15.

- How did wickedness spread in the earth?
- How did Noah prove that he was a faithful man?
- What prohibition did God place on mankind after the Flood?

WALKING WITH GOD

Most of the offspring of Adam and Eve rejected Jehovah’s rulership. However, there were exceptions, starting with their faithful son Abel. Later, both Enoch and Noah are said to have walked with God, meaning that they followed a course pleasing to Jehovah. (Genesis 5:22; 6:9) Much of the Bible record focuses on men and women who likewise chose God as their Ruler.



4 God Makes a Covenant With Abraham

Abraham obeys God in faith, and Jehovah promises to bless him and to multiply his descendants

SOME 350 years had passed since the Flood of Noah’s day. The patriarch Abraham was living in the flourishing city of Ur in what is today called Iraq. Abraham was a man of outstanding faith. But now his faith was put to the test.

Jehovah told Abraham to leave the country of his birth and move to a foreign land, which turned out to be Canaan. Abraham obeyed without hesitation. He took along his household, including his wife, Sarah, and his nephew Lot, and after the long trip became a tent dweller in Canaan. In a covenant that He made with Abraham, Jehovah promised that He would make a great nation out of him, that all the families of the earth would be blessed by means of him, and that his offspring would possess the land of Canaan.

Abraham and Lot prospered, accumulating huge flocks of sheep and herds of cattle. Unselfishly, Abraham let Lot select whatever territory he wished. Lot chose the fertile district of the Jordan River and settled near the city of Sodom. The men of Sodom, however, were immoral—gross sinners against Jehovah.

Jehovah God later reassured Abraham that his offspring would become as numerous as the stars of heaven. Abraham put faith in that promise. Yet, Abraham’s beloved wife, Sarah, remained childless. Then, when Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was approaching 90, God told Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son. True to God’s word, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. Abraham had other children, but it would be through Isaac that the Deliverer promised in Eden would come.

Meanwhile, Lot and his family were living in Sodom, but righteous Lot did not become like the city’s immoral inhabitants. When Jehovah determined to execute judgment upon Sodom, he sent angels ahead to warn Lot of the impending destruction. The angels urged Lot and his family to flee Sodom and not to look back. God then made it rain fire and sulfur on Sodom and the nearby wicked city Gomorrah, destroying all their inhabitants. Lot and his two daughters escaped. But Lot’s wife looked back, perhaps with longing for the things she had left behind. For this disobedience, she paid with her life.

—Based on Genesis 11:10–19:38.

- Why did Abraham move to Canaan?
- What covenant did Jehovah make with Abraham?
- Why did Jehovah destroy Sodom and Gomorrah?

A GOD OF COVENANTS

In Bible times, a covenant was a contract or formal agreement. By means of a series of covenants, which amounted to solemn promises, Jehovah gradually revealed how his purpose concerning the Deliverer promised in Eden would be fulfilled. The covenant made with Abraham indicated that the promised One would come through Abraham’s line of descent. Later covenants would shed more light on the identity of that One.

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- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation

• Genesis

Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Joshua
Judges
Ruth

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Jude

Revelation



5 God Blesses Abraham and His Family

Abraham's descendants prosper. God protects Joseph in Egypt

JEHOVAH knew that the One dear-
est to him would have to suffer and
die someday. The prophecy recorded at
Genesis 3:15 hinted at that truth. Could
God convey to mankind just how dearly
that death would cost him? The Bible
supplies a living illustration. God asked
Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son
Isaac.

Abraham had great faith. Remember,
God had promised him that the foretold
Deliverer, or Seed, would descend from
Isaac. Trusting that God would resurrect
Isaac if need be, Abraham was obedient-
ly going to sacrifice his own son. But an
angel from God stopped Abraham just in
time. Praising Abraham for his willing-
ness to offer up what was most precious
to him, God repeated His promises to
the faithful patriarch.

Later, Isaac had two sons, Esau and
Jacob. Unlike Esau, Jacob appreciated
spiritual things and was rewarded. God
changed Jacob's name to Israel, and Is-
rael's 12 sons became the heads of the
tribes of Israel. But how did that family
turn into a great nation?

A chain of events was set in motion
when most of those sons got jealous of
their younger brother Joseph. They sold
him as a slave, and he was taken off to
Egypt. But God blessed that faithful and
brave young man. Despite terrible hard-
ships, Joseph eventually was singled out
by Pharaoh, the Egyptian ruler, and giv-
en great authority. That was timely, for a
famine caused Jacob to send some of his
sons to Egypt to buy foodstuffs—and Jo-
seph, it turned out, was in charge of all
the food! After a dramatic reunion with

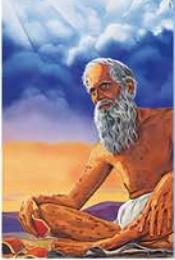
his repentant brothers, Joseph forgave
them and arranged for the whole fami-
ly to move to Egypt. They were given
prime land, where they could continue
to grow and prosper. Joseph understood
that God had arranged matters in that
way in order to fulfill His promises.

Aged Jacob lived out his days in Egypt,
surrounded by his growing family. On
his deathbed, he foretold that the prom-
ised Seed, or Deliverer, would be a pow-
erful Ruler who would be born in the
family line of his son Judah. Before his
own death years later, Joseph prophesied
that one day God would take Jacob's
family out of Egypt.

—Based on Genesis chapters 20 to 50; Hebrews
11:17-22.

- What did God tell Abraham to do, and what did He thereby convey to mankind?
- How did Joseph come to be in Egypt, and what was the outcome?
- What did Jacob prophesy before he died?





6 Job Keeps His Integrity

Satan challenges Job's integrity before God, but Job remains faithful to Jehovah

WOULD any human remain faithful to God if tested to the limit and if obedience seemed to bring no material benefits? That question was raised—and answered—in connection with a man named Job.

While the Israelites were still in Egypt, Job, a relative of Abraham, was living in what is now Arabia. Meanwhile, the angels in heaven gathered before God, and rebellious Satan was among them. Before the heavenly assembly, Jehovah expressed his confidence in his loyal servant Job. In fact, Jehovah said that no other human had integrity like that of Job. But Satan asserted that Job served God only because God had blessed and protected him. Satan claimed that if Job were stripped of everything he had, he would curse God.

God permitted Satan to deprive Job first of his wealth and children and then of his health. Unaware of Satan's role in all of this, Job could not understand why God allowed him to experience these trials. Still, Job never turned against God.

Three false friends came to Job. In a series of speeches that fill many pages of the book of Job, the men wrongly tried to convince Job that God was punishing him for hidden sins. They even claimed that God neither finds pleasure in his servants nor puts trust in them. Job rejected their faulty reasoning. With confidence, Job declared that he would maintain his integrity down to death!

But Job made the mistake of becoming overly concerned with justifying himself. A younger man named Elihu,

who had been listening to the entire debate, spoke up. Elihu reproved Job for failing to appreciate that the vindication of Jehovah God's sovereignty is far more important than the vindication of any human. Elihu also strongly rebuked Job's false friends.

Jehovah God then spoke to Job, correcting his thinking. Pointing to many marvels of creation, Jehovah gave Job a lesson in man's littleness compared to God's greatness. Job humbly accepted the correction from God. Jehovah, being "very tender in affection and merciful," restored Job's health, gave him double his previous wealth, and blessed him with ten children. (James 5:11) By keeping integrity to Jehovah while under severe trial, Job successfully answered Satan's challenge that humans will not remain faithful to God if put to the test.

—Based on the book of Job.

- What challenge did Satan raise with regard to Job?
- What was accomplished by Job's keeping his integrity to Jehovah?

THE VITAL ISSUES

By asserting that Job—the most blameless and God-fearing man then on earth—served Jehovah God for selfish reasons only, Satan implied that the same was true of all intelligent creatures. Satan thus raised the question of man's integrity to Jehovah. This is part of the overall issue that Satan raised in Eden, namely, the rightfulness and righteousness of Jehovah's sovereignty. The book of Job shows that God's creatures can contribute to the vindication of Jehovah's sovereignty by maintaining their integrity to Him.

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- Ephesians
- Philippians
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- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy



7 God Delivers the Sons of Israel

Jehovah plagues Egypt, and Moses leads the sons of Israel out of that land. God gives Israel the Law through Moses

FOR many years, the sons of Israel lived in Egypt, prospering and multiplying. However, a new Pharaoh rose up. This ruler did not know Joseph. A vicious tyrant who feared the Israelites' growing numbers, he turned them into slaves and ordered that all their newborn males be drowned in the Nile River. But one brave mother protected her infant son, hiding him in a basket among the reeds. Pharaoh's daughter discovered the baby, named him Moses, and raised him among Egyptian royalty.

When Moses was 40 years old, he got into trouble defending an Israelite slave from an Egyptian taskmaster. Moses fled to a faraway land, where he lived in exile. When Moses was 80, Jehovah sent him back to Egypt to appear before Pharaoh and demand the release of God's people.

Pharaoh flatly refused. So God struck Egypt with ten plagues. Each time that Moses appeared before Pharaoh to offer him an opportunity to avert the next plague, Pharaoh proved defiant, holding Moses and his God, Jehovah, in contempt. Finally, the tenth plague brought death to all the firstborn in the land—except in families who obeyed Jehovah by marking their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb. God's angel of de-

struction passed over those households. The Israelites thereafter commemorated this marvelous rescue by means of an annual celebration called the Passover.

Having lost his own firstborn son, Pharaoh ordered Moses and all the Israelites to leave Egypt. They immediately organized the Exodus. But Pharaoh changed his mind. He chased after them with many warriors and chariots. The Israelites appeared to be trapped at the shore of the Red Sea. Jehovah parted the Red Sea, allowing the Israelites to pass through on a dry seabed, between walls of water! When the Egyptians rushed in behind them, God let the waters come crashing down, drowning Pharaoh and his army.

Later, as the Israelites camped by Mount Sinai, Jehovah made a covenant with them. Using Moses as mediator, God gave Israel laws to provide guidance and protection in virtually every aspect of life. As long as Israel faithfully accepted God's rule, Jehovah would be with them and would make that nation a blessing to others.

However, most of the Israelites showed a disappointing lack of faith in God. Jehovah therefore made that generation wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Then, Moses commissioned the upright man Joshua to succeed him. Finally, Israel was poised to enter the land that God had promised to Abraham.

—Based on *Exodus*; *Leviticus*; *Numbers*; *Deuteronomy*; *Psalms* 136:10-15; *Acts* 7:17-36.

- How did Moses come to be used by God to deliver Israel?
- What was the basis for the Passover celebration?
- How did Jehovah free the Israelites from slavery in Egypt?

THE GREATEST LAW

The Ten Commandments, recorded at Exodus 20:1-17, may be the best-known of the approximately 600 laws given through Moses. However, when Jesus Christ was asked which of God's laws is the greatest of all, he selected this one: "You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind and with your whole strength."—Mark 12:28-30; Deuteronomy 6:5.



8 The People of Israel Enter Canaan

Joshua leads Israel in conquering Canaan. Jehovah empowers the judges to deliver his people from oppression

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Joshua ●
- Judges ●
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah

CENTURIES before Israel entered Canaan, Jehovah promised that land to Abraham’s descendants. Now under Joshua’s leadership, the Israelites were about to take possession of the Promised Land.

God had judged the Canaanites worthy of destruction. They had saturated the land with extremely degrading sexual practices as well as with wanton bloodshed. Therefore, the Canaanite cities conquered by the Israelites were to be completely destroyed.

Before entering the land, however, Joshua sent out two spies, who stayed in the city of Jericho with a woman named Rahab. She received the spies into her home and protected them even though she knew that they were Israelites. Rahab had faith in the God of the Israelites, having heard about Jehovah’s saving acts in behalf of his people. She made the spies swear to her that she and her household would be spared.

Later, when the Israelites entered Canaan and came against Jericho, Jehovah miraculously caused the collapse of Jericho’s walls. Joshua’s troops dashed in and destroyed the city, but they spared Rahab and her family. Then, in a swift six-year campaign, Joshua conquered large sections of the Promised Land. Afterward, the land was distributed to the tribes of Israel.

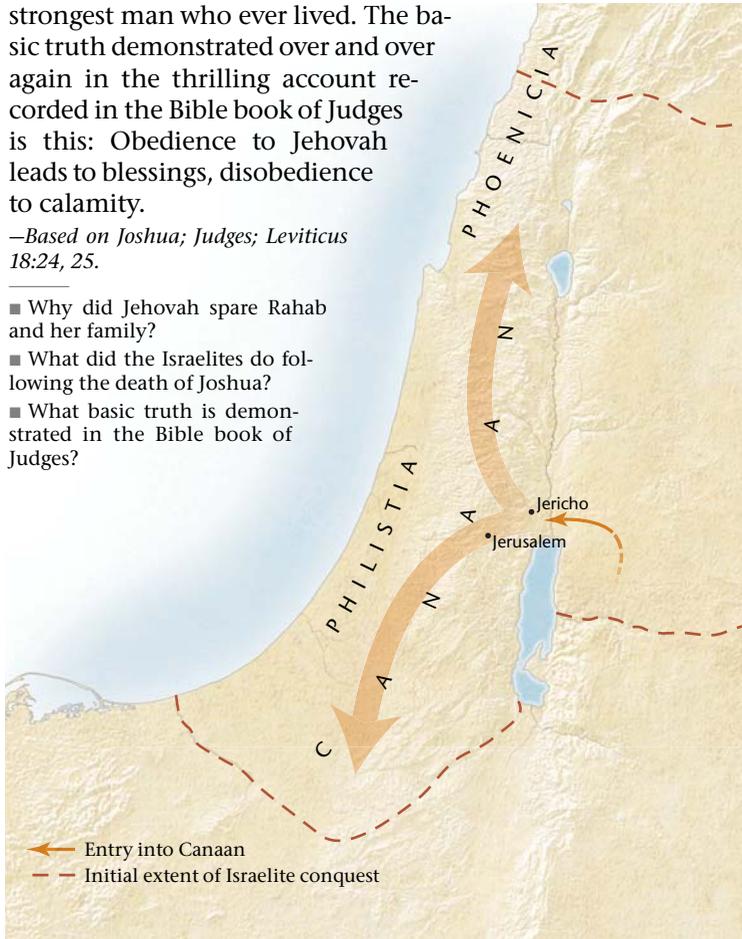
Near the end of his long career, Joshua called the people together. He reviewed with them Jehovah’s dealings with their forefathers and appealed to them to serve Jehovah. After Joshua and his close associates died, however, the Is-

raelites left Jehovah to serve false gods. For some 300 years, the nation did not consistently obey Jehovah’s laws. During that time, Jehovah allowed Israel’s enemies, such as the Philistines, to oppress them. But when the Israelites called to Jehovah for aid, he raised up judges—12 in all—to save them.

The period of the Judges recounted in the book of Judges began with Othniel and ended with Samson, physically the strongest man who ever lived. The basic truth demonstrated over and over again in the thrilling account recorded in the Bible book of Judges is this: Obedience to Jehovah leads to blessings, disobedience to calamity.

—Based on *Joshua; Judges; Leviticus 18:24, 25.*

- Why did Jehovah spare Rahab and her family?
- What did the Israelites do following the death of Joshua?
- What basic truth is demonstrated in the Bible book of Judges?





9 The Israelites Ask for a King

Israel's first king, Saul, proves disobedient. He is succeeded by David, with whom God makes a covenant for an everlasting kingdom

- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
 - 1 Kings
 - 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
 - 2 Chronicles
 - Ezra
 - Nehemiah
 - Esther
 - Job
 - Psalms
 - Proverbs
 - Ecclesiastes
 - Song of Solomon
 - Isaiah
 - Jeremiah

“I shall certainly establish the throne of his kingdom firmly to time indefinite.”

—2 Samuel 7:13

- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts
- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation

AFTER the days of Samson, Samuel served as prophet and judge in Israel. The Israelites kept telling him that they wanted to be like other nations and have a human king over them. Although this request was an affront to Jehovah, he directed Samuel to comply. God selected a humble man named Saul to be king. In time, though, King Saul turned haughty and disobedient. Jehovah rejected him as king and told Samuel to appoint another—a young man named David. It would be years, though, before David would become king.

Likely when still in his teens, David visited his brothers who were serving in Saul's army. The whole army was terrified of one enemy warrior, a giant named Goliath, who kept taunting them and their God. Indignant, David accepted the giant's challenge to meet in combat. Armed with only a sling and a few stones, the young man went out to meet his opponent, who was over nine feet tall. When Goliath mocked him, David replied that he was better armed than the giant, for David fought in the name of Jehovah God! David felled Goliath with a single stone and then beheaded him with the giant's own sword. The Philistine army fled in terror.

At first, Saul was impressed with David's courage and placed the young man over his army. But David's successes made Saul bitterly jealous. David had

to flee for his life and live as a fugitive for years. Still, David remained loyal to the king who was trying to kill him, reasoning that King Saul had been appointed by Jehovah God. Finally, Saul died in battle. Before long, David became king, as Jehovah had promised.

As king, David dearly wished to build a temple to Jehovah. However, Jehovah told David that one of his descendants would do so. That turned out to be David's son Solomon. God rewarded David, though, by making a thrilling covenant with him: His family line would produce a kingly dynasty unlike any other. Ultimately, it would produce the Deliverer, or Seed, promised in Eden. That one would be the Messiah, meaning “Anointed One,” appointed by God. Jehovah promised that the Messiah would be the Ruler of a government, or Kingdom, that would last forever.

Deeply grateful, David gathered vast quantities of building materials and precious metals for the temple project. He also composed many inspired psalms. Near the end of his life, David acknowledged: “The spirit of Jehovah it was that spoke by me, and his word was upon my tongue.”—2 Samuel 23:2.

—Based on 1 and 2 Samuel; 1 Chronicles; Isaiah 9:7; Matthew 21:9; Luke 1:32; John 7:42.

- Why did Jehovah replace King Saul with David?
- What qualities did David display even before becoming king?
- Who is the promised Seed, or Deliverer, foretold to come through David's line?



10 Solomon Rules Wisely

Jehovah gives King Solomon a heart of wisdom; during Solomon's reign, the Israelites enjoy unsurpassed peace and prosperity

WHAT would life be like if an entire nation and its ruler followed Jehovah as their Sovereign and obeyed His laws? The answer was demonstrated during the 40-year-reign of King Solomon.

Before David died, he appointed his son Solomon as his successor. In a dream, God invited Solomon to make a request. Solomon asked for wisdom and knowledge to judge the people fairly and wisely. Jehovah was pleased and gave Solomon a wise and understanding heart. Jehovah also promised him riches, glory, and long life if he remained obedient.

Solomon became famous for his wise judgments. In one case, two women argued over a baby boy, each claiming to be the mother. Solomon ordered that the baby be cut in two and that half be given to each woman. The first woman agreed, but the real mother at once pleaded that the child be given to the other woman. Solomon now saw clearly that the compassionate woman was the mother and gave the boy to her. Soon all Israel heard about this judicial decision, and the people recognized that the wisdom of God was within Solomon.

One of Solomon's grandest achievements was the construction of Jehovah's temple—a magnificent structure in Jerusalem that would serve as a center of worship in Israel. At the temple's inauguration, Solomon prayed: "Look! The heavens, yes, the heaven of the heavens, themselves cannot contain you; how much less, then, this house that I have built!"—1 Kings 8:27.

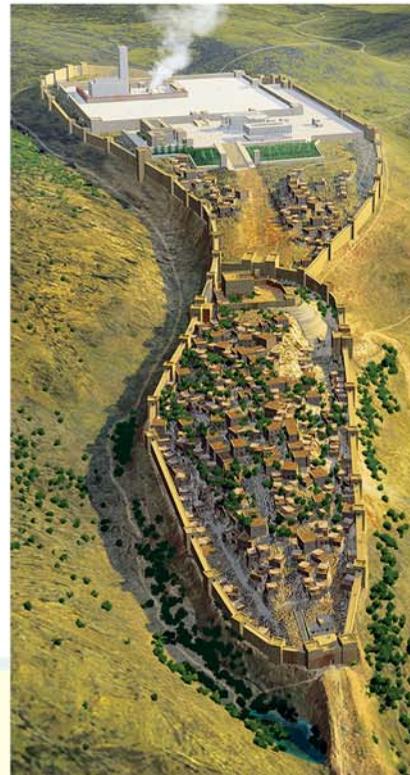
Solomon's reputation spread to other lands, even as far as Sheba, in Arabia. The queen of Sheba traveled to see Solomon's glory and riches and to test the depth of his wisdom. The queen was so impressed with Solomon's wisdom and the prosperity of Israel that she praised Jehovah for putting such a wise king on the throne. Indeed, with Jehovah's blessing, Solomon's rule was the most prosperous and peaceful in the history of ancient Israel.

Sadly, Solomon failed to continue acting in harmony with Jehovah's wisdom. Ignoring God's command, he married hundreds of women, including many who worshipped foreign gods. Gradually his wives inclined his heart away from Jehovah to the worship of idols. Jehovah told Solomon that part of the kingdom would be ripped away from him. Only a portion would remain with his family, God said, for the sake of Solomon's father, David. Despite Solomon's defection, Jehovah remained loyal to his Kingdom covenant with David.

—Based on 1 Kings chapters 1 to 11; 2 Chronicles chapters 1 to 9; Deuteronomy 17:17.

- What did God do in response to Solomon's request?
- How did Solomon demonstrate his wisdom?
- How did Solomon stray from Jehovah's ways, and with what result?

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings** ●
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles** ●
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah



1070 God makes Kingdom promise to David

circa 1020 Song of Solomon completed

Solomon becomes king **1037**

1027 Temple in Jerusalem completed

1000 B.C.E.

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Job

• **Psalms**

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

• **Song of Solomon**

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

Matthew

Mark

Luke

John

Acts

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

Philemon

Hebrews

James

1 Peter

2 Peter

1 John

2 John

3 John

Jude

Revelation



11 Inspired Songs That Comfort and Teach

David and others compose songs for use in worship. The book of Psalms preserves the lyrics of 150 of them

THE largest book in the Bible is a compilation of sacred songs. The entire book was about 1,000 years in the making. The book of Psalms contains some of the most profound and moving expressions of faith ever put in writing. A wide array of human emotion is represented here, from joy, praise, and thanksgiving to grief, sorrow, and repentance. It is clear that the psalmists had a trusting, intimate relationship with God. Consider some of the themes developed in these lyrical works.

Jehovah is the rightful Sovereign, worthy of worship and praise. “You, whose name is Jehovah, you alone are the Most High over all the earth,” we read at Psalm 83:18. Several psalms praise Jehovah for his works of creation, such as the starry heavens, the wonders of life on earth, and the marvels of the human body. (Psalms 8, 19, 139, 148) Others glorify Jehovah as the God who acts to save and protect those loyal to

THE SONG OF SONGS

In the Song of Solomon, the king reveals that even fabulous wealth did not guarantee that he could always get what he wanted in matters of love. He chronicles his attempt to win the heart of a beautiful young virgin who was already in love with a shepherd boy. This inspired song shows that when people feel a strong physical attraction, they need not act in an undignified way. The young couple display admirable self-control, chasteness, and loyalty.

him. (Psalms 18, 97, 138) Still others exalt him as the God of justice, who brings relief to the oppressed and punishment to the wicked.—Psalms 11, 68, 146.

Jehovah brings help and comfort to those who love him. Perhaps the most famous psalm is the 23rd, in which David describes Jehovah as a loving Shepherd, who guides, protects, and cares for his sheep. Psalm 65:2 reminds God’s worshippers that Jehovah is the “Hearer of prayer.” Many who have fallen into serious wrongdoing have found great comfort in Psalms 39 and 51, where David puts his repentance over grave errors into heartfelt words and expresses his faith in Jehovah’s forgiveness. Psalm 55:22 contains an exhortation to trust in Jehovah and to put all personal burdens on Him.

Jehovah will change the world through the Kingdom of the Messiah. A number of passages in the Psalms clearly apply to the Messiah, the foretold King. Psalm 2 prophesies that this Ruler will destroy the wicked nations, who oppose him. Psalm 72 reveals that this King will end hunger, injustice, and oppression. According to Psalm 46:9, through the Messiah’s Kingdom, God will end warfare and even destroy all weapons of war. In Psalm 37, we read that the wicked will be done away with, whereas righteous people will live on earth forever, enjoying global peace and harmony.

—Based on the book of Psalms.

- How do the Psalms support the rightfulness of Jehovah’s rulership?
- Which psalms show how God helps and comforts those who love him?
- According to the book of Psalms, how will Jehovah change the world?



12 Divine Wisdom for Life

The book of Proverbs is a compilation of inspired counsel—mostly by Solomon—that provides guidance for daily life

IS Jehovah a wise Ruler? One decisive way to answer that question is to consider the counsel he gives. Does it work? Does applying it make life better and more meaningful? Wise King Solomon wrote hundreds of proverbs. These touch on virtually every aspect of life. Consider some examples.

Trusting in God. Trust is key to a good relationship with Jehovah. Solomon wrote: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways take notice of him, and he himself will make your paths straight.” (Proverbs 3:5, 6) Trusting in God by seeking his guidance and obeying him brings profound meaning to life. Such a course enables a human to make God’s heart rejoice and gives Jehovah a reply to the issues raised by His adversary, Satan.—Proverbs 27:11.

Dealing wisely with others. God’s counsel for husbands, wives, and children is more timely today than ever. “Rejoice with the wife of your youth,” God advises the husband, directing that he remain faithful to his wife. (Proverbs 5:18-20) Married women find in the book of Proverbs a glowing description of a capable wife who wins the admiration of her husband and children. (Proverbs, chapter 31) And children find direction to obey their parents. (Proverbs 6:20) This book also shows that friendships are vital, as isolation breeds selfishness. (Proverbs 18:1) Friends can influence us for good or for bad, so we need to choose them wisely.—Proverbs 13:20; 17:17.

Dealing wisely with oneself. The book of Proverbs contains priceless

counsel on avoiding alcohol abuse, cultivating healthful emotions and combating destructive ones, and being an industrious worker. (Proverbs 6:6; 14:30; 20:1) It warns that trusting in human judgment apart from the counsel of God leads to disaster. (Proverbs 14:12) It urges us to protect the inner self, the heart, against corrupting influences, reminding us that “out of [the heart] are the sources of life.”—Proverbs 4:23.

Millions of people the world over have found that living by such counsel makes for a better life. As a result, they have ample reason to accept Jehovah as their Ruler.

—Based on the book of Proverbs.

■ What can we learn from studying the book of Proverbs?

■ What guidance does Proverbs provide about trusting in God and dealing wisely with others and with oneself?

ECCLESIASTES

Where can satisfaction and meaning in life be found? Solomon was in a unique position to seek the answer. With immense wealth, wisdom, and authority, he was able to investigate whether these could bring him genuine fulfillment. He pursued the pleasures of material things, married many beautiful women, and enjoyed the best in recreation. He undertook great building projects. He explored the wisdom of learned writings. What did he find? “Everything is vanity.” However, he came to this profound realization: “The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man.”—Ecclesiastes 12:8, 13.

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs •**
- Ecclesiastes •**
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
- Matthew
- Mark

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth

1 Samuel
2 Samuel

• 1 Kings

• 2 Kings

1 Chronicles

• 2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

• **Jonah**

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi



13 Good Kings and Bad Kings

Israel is divided. Over time, many kings rule over the Israelites, and most of them are unfaithful. Jerusalem is destroyed by the Babylonians

JUST as Jehovah had foretold, Israel was divided after Solomon defected from pure worship. His son and successor, Rehoboam, was harsh. In response, ten of Israel's tribes revolted and formed the northern kingdom of Israel. Two tribes remained loyal to the king on David's throne in Jerusalem, forming the southern kingdom of Judah.

Both kingdoms had a tumultuous history, largely on account of faithless and disobedient kings. Israel fared even worse than Judah, for its kings promoted false worship from the start. Despite the powerful works of such prophets as Elijah and Elisha—both of whom even resurrected the dead—Israel kept reverting to a wicked course. Finally, God allowed the northern kingdom to be destroyed by Assyria.

Judah lasted a little more than a centu-

ry longer than Israel, but it too faced divine punishment. Only a few Judean kings responded to the warnings of God's prophets and tried to lead the nation back to Jehovah. King Josiah, for example, began to cleanse Judah of false worship and restored Jehovah's temple. When an original copy of God's Law given through Moses was found, Josiah was deeply moved and therefore intensified his campaign of reform.

Sadly, though, Josiah's successors did not follow that king's good example. Jehovah thus allowed the nation of Babylon to conquer Judah, destroying Jerusalem and its temple. The survivors were taken into exile in Babylon. God foretold that the exile would last 70 years. Judah lay desolate for all that time—until, as promised, the nation was allowed to return to its own soil.

However, no more kings in David's line would rule until the reign of the promised Deliverer, the foretold Messiah. Most of the kings who had sat on David's throne in Jerusalem proved that imperfect humans are not qualified to rule. Only the Messiah would be truly qualified. Jehovah thus said to the last of those Davidic kings: "Lift off the crown. . . . It will certainly become no one's until he comes who has the legal right, and I must give it to him."—Ezekiel 21:26, 27.

—Based on 1 and 2 Kings; 2 Chronicles chapters 10 to 36; Jeremiah 25:8-11.

■ How did Israel come to be divided, and how did the two resulting kingdoms fare?

■ What happened to the line of kings in David's family, and why?

■ What does Jonah's story teach us about Jehovah? (See box.)

JONAH

During the time of the divided kingdom, God assigned Jonah to go and preach a warning message to the people in the violent, faraway city of Nineveh. Instead, Jonah boarded a ship headed the other way. That led to a miracle—God caused a huge fish to swallow Jonah. Inside the fish, Jonah prayed to Jehovah, who then caused the fish to vomit him out onto dry land. Jonah then carried out his assignment.

After God taught Jonah that lesson in obedience, a second problem surfaced: Jonah preached to the Ninevites, but he was highly displeased when God showed them mercy by compassionately holding back punishment because they repented. Read this fascinating book to see how God used a second miracle to teach Jonah to be more compassionate.



14 God Speaks Through His Prophets

Prophets are appointed by Jehovah to deliver messages regarding judgment, pure worship, and the Messianic hope

DURING the period of the kings of Israel and Judah, a special group of men came to the fore—the prophets. These were men of extraordinary faith and courage who delivered God’s pronouncements. Consider four important themes developed by God’s prophets.

1. The destruction of Jerusalem.

Long in advance, God’s prophets—Isaiah and Jeremiah in particular—began warning that Jerusalem would be destroyed and abandoned. In vivid terms, they revealed why the city had incurred God’s anger. Her claim to represent Jehovah was belied by false religious practices, corruption, and violence.—2 Kings 21:10-15; Isaiah 3:1-8, 16-26; Jeremiah 2:1-3:13.

2. The restoration of pure worship.

After 70 years in exile, God’s people would be freed from Babylon. They would return to their desolate homeland and rebuild the temple of Jehovah in Jerusalem. (Jeremiah 46:27; Amos 9:13-15) About 200 years in advance, Isaiah foretold the name of the conqueror—Cyrus—who would defeat Babylon and allow God’s people to restore pure wor-

ship. Isaiah even detailed Cyrus’ unique battle strategy.—Isaiah 44:24-45:3.

3. The Messiah’s arrival and his experiences. The Messiah would be born in the town of Bethlehem. (Micah 5:2) He would be humble, presenting himself in Jerusalem, riding upon an ass. (Zechariah 9:9) Though gentle and kind, he would be unpopular, and many would reject him. (Isaiah 42:1-3; 53:1, 3) He would experience a cruel death. Would his life then be over for all time? No, for his sacrifice was to make possible the forgiveness of sins for many. (Isaiah 53:4, 5, 9-12) Only his resurrection could accomplish that.

4. The reign of the Messiah over the earth. Imperfect humans are really unable to govern themselves peacefully, but the Messianic King would be called Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Jeremiah 10:23) Under his rule, all humans would be at peace with one another and even with all the animal creation. (Isaiah 11:3-7) Sickness would vanish. (Isaiah 33:24) Even death would be swallowed up forever. (Isaiah 25:8) During the Messiah’s reign, people who had died would be resurrected to life on earth.—Daniel 12:13.

—Based on the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Amos, Micah, and Zechariah.

- What kind of messages did God’s prophets deliver?
- How did the prophets foretell the destruction of Jerusalem and its restoration?
- What did Jehovah’s prophets say about the Messiah and the things he would experience?
- How did the prophets describe the Messiah’s rule over the earth?

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
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- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
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- Obadiah ●
- Jonah ●
- Micah ●
- Nahum ●
- Habakkuk ●
- Zephaniah ●
- Haggai ●
- Zechariah ●
- Malachi ●
- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts
- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation



539 Babylon falls to the conqueror Cyrus

537 Jewish exiles return to Jerusalem

Jerusalem’s walls rebuilt; 69 weeks of years begin 455 B.C.E.

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth

1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles

• Ezra
• Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel

• Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi
Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation



15 A Prophet in Exile Receives Glimpses of the Future

Daniel prophesies about God’s Kingdom and the coming of the Messiah. Babylon falls

DANIEL, a youth of remarkable integrity, was taken into exile in Babylon before Jerusalem was destroyed. He and some other Jews—exiles from the vanquished kingdom of Judah—were granted a measure of freedom by their captors. During his long life in Babylon, Daniel was greatly blessed by God, even escaping death in a lions’ pit and receiving visions that allowed him to peer far into the future. Daniel’s most important prophecies focused on the Messiah and His rule.

Daniel learns when the Messiah would arrive. Daniel was told when God’s people could expect the arrival of “Messiah the Leader”—69 weeks of years after the command to restore and rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. A normal week consists of seven days; a week of years consists of seven years. That command was issued long after Daniel’s time, that is, in 455 B.C.E. Starting then, the 69 “weeks” ran for 483 years, ending in the year 29 C.E. In the following part of this publication, we will see what happened in that year. Daniel also foresaw that the Messiah would be “cut off,” or executed, for the atonement of sin.—Daniel 9:24-26.

The Messiah would become King in heaven. In a rare vision of heaven itself, Daniel saw the Messiah, referred to as “someone like a son of man,” approach the throne of Jehovah himself. Jehovah conferred upon him “rulership and dignity and kingdom.” That Kingdom would last forever. Daniel learned another thrilling detail about the Messianic Kingdom—the King would share his

rulership with others, a group referred to as “the holy ones of the Supreme One.”—Daniel 7:13, 14, 27.

The Kingdom will destroy the governments of this world. God granted Daniel the ability to interpret a dream that baffled Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. The king had seen a giant image with a head of gold, breasts and arms of silver, belly and thighs of copper, legs of iron, and feet of iron mixed with clay. A stone cut from a mountain struck the fragile feet and crushed the image to powder. Daniel explained that the parts of the image represented a long succession of world powers, starting with Babylon as the head of gold. Daniel foresaw that in the time of the final ruling power of this wicked world, God’s Kingdom would act. It would crush all the governments of this world. Then it would rule forever.—Daniel, chapter 2.

As a very old man, Daniel lived to see the fall of Babylon. King Cyrus overthrew the city just as the prophets had foretold. Not long afterward, the Jews were at last freed from their exile—right on time, after the foretold 70-year desolation of their homeland. Under the guidance of faithful governors, priests, and prophets, the Jews eventually rebuilt Jerusalem and restored the temple of Jehovah. What would happen, though, after the 483 years ran their course?

—Based on the book of Daniel.

- What did Daniel learn about the Messiah and God’s Kingdom?
- How would God’s Kingdom affect the governments of this world?



16 The Messiah Arrives

Jehovah identifies Jesus of Nazareth as the long-promised Messiah

WOULD Jehovah help people to identify the promised Messiah? Yes. Consider what God did. It was some four centuries after the Hebrew Scriptures were completed. In a city called Nazareth, in the northern region of Galilee, a young woman named Mary received a most surprising visit. An angel named Gabriel appeared to her and told her that God was going to use his active force, his holy spirit, to cause her to give birth to a son, though she was a virgin. This son was to become the long-promised King, the one who would rule forever! This child would be God’s own Son, whose life God would transfer from the heavens to the womb of Mary.

Mary humbly accepted that awesome assignment. Her fiancé, a carpenter named Joseph, married her after God sent an angel to assure him of the cause of Mary’s pregnancy. What, though, about the prophecy saying that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem? (Micah 5:2) That small town was some 90 miles away!

A Roman ruler decreed that a census be taken. People were required to register at their town of origin. It appears that both Joseph and Mary had roots in Bethlehem, so Joseph took his pregnant wife there. (Luke 2:3) Mary gave birth in a humble stable, laying the baby in a manger. God then sent a multitude of angels to tell a group of shepherds on a hillside that the child just born was the promised Messiah, or Christ.

Later, others too would testify that Jesus was the promised Messiah. The prophet Isaiah had foretold that a man would arise to prepare the way for the

Messiah’s vital work. (Isaiah 40:3) That forerunner was John the Baptist. When he saw the man Jesus, he cried: “See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!” Some of John’s disciples immediately followed Jesus. One of them said: “We have found the Messiah.” —John 1:29, 36, 41.

There was further testimony. When John baptized Jesus, Jehovah himself spoke from heaven. By means of holy spirit, he appointed Jesus as the Messiah and said: “This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.” (Matthew 3:16, 17) The long-promised Messiah had arrived!

When did this happen? In the year 29 C.E., just when the 483 years foretold by Daniel finished running their course. Yes, that is part of the overwhelming evidence that Jesus is the Messiah, or Christ. What message, though, would he proclaim during his time on the earth?

—Based on Matthew chapters 1 to 3; Mark chapter 1; Luke chapter 2; John chapter 1.

- How did Jehovah use angels to identify Jesus as the Messiah?
- How did God use John the Baptist to point to Jesus as the Messiah?
- How did Jehovah himself identify his Son as the Messiah?

GOD’S SON IN WHAT SENSE?

Jehovah is the Father of Jesus—but not in the same way that men are fathers. Jesus was not conceived by a woman—he was created by God. In fact, he was the first person that Jehovah created. (Colossians 1:15-17) Since Jehovah gave life to Jesus by creating him, He can be called Jesus’ Father. After creating this spirit Son, Jehovah used him as “a master worker” to bring all other things into existence, including the physical universe.—Proverbs 8:30.

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
- Matthew ●**
- Mark ●**
- Luke ●**
- John ●**
- Acts
- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians

Birth of Jesus circa 2 B.C.E.

1 B.C.E. | 1 C.E.

note:

No zero year

29 C.E.

Jesus is baptized

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms



17 Jesus Teaches About God’s Kingdom

Jesus teaches his disciples many things, yet focuses on a single theme—God’s Kingdom

“He went . . . from village to village, preaching and declaring the good news of the kingdom of God.”—*Luke 8:1*

Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi
● **Matthew**
● **Mark**
● **Luke**
● **John**
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

WHAT was Jesus’ mission on earth? He himself said: “I must declare the good news of the kingdom of God, because for this I was sent forth.” (Luke 4:43) Consider four things that Jesus taught about that Kingdom, the central theme of his preaching.

1. Jesus was designated King. Jesus directly said that he was the foretold Messiah. (John 4:25, 26) He also showed that he was the King that the prophet Daniel had seen in vision. Jesus told his apostles that he would one day sit on a “glorious throne” and that they too would sit on thrones. (Matthew 19:28) He referred to this group of rulers as his “little flock,” and he also noted that he had “other sheep,” who were not a part of that group.—*Luke 12:32; John 10:16.*

2. God’s Kingdom would promote true justice. Jesus indicated that the Kingdom would do away with the greatest injustice by sanctifying, or making holy, the name of Jehovah God and clearing it of all the reproach that Satan has heaped upon it since the rebellion in Eden. (Matthew 6:9, 10) Jesus also demonstrated impartiality daily by teaching men and women, rich and poor, without distinction. Though his mission was primarily to teach the Israelites, he also reached out to help Samaritans and Gentiles, or non-Jews. Unlike the religious leaders of his day, he showed no trace of bias or favoritism.

3. God’s Kingdom would be no part of this world. Jesus lived during a time of great upheaval. His homeland was under the domination of a foreign power. Yet, when people tried to get him involved in the political affairs of the day, he withdrew. (John 6:14, 15) He told one politician: “My kingdom is no part of this world.” (John 18:36) To his followers, he said: “You are no part of the world.” (John 15:19) He would not allow them to use weapons of war, even to defend him personally.—*Matthew 26:51, 52.*

4. Christ’s rule would be based on love. Jesus promised to refresh people, to ease their burdens. (Matthew 11:28-30) He lived up to his word. He gave loving, practical counsel on coping with anxiety, improving relationships, combating materialism, and finding happiness. (Matthew, chapters 5-7) Because he showed love, people from all walks of life found him approachable. Even the most downtrodden flocked to him, confident that he would treat them with kindness and dignity. What a Ruler Jesus will be!

There was another very powerful way in which Jesus taught about God’s Kingdom. He performed many miracles. Why did he do so? Let us see.

—*Based on the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.*

- How did Jesus teach that he was the Messianic King?
- In what ways did Jesus show that he would rule justly?
- How did Jesus make it clear that his Kingdom would be no part of this world?
- How did Jesus show that his rule would be based on love?



18 Jesus Performs Miracles

Jesus through his miracles demonstrates how he will use his power as King

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth

GOD empowered Jesus to do things that other humans could not do. Jesus performed a great many miracles—often in front of crowds of eyewitnesses. Those miracles demonstrated that Jesus has power over enemies and obstacles that imperfect humans have never been able to combat with lasting success. Consider some examples.

Hunger. Jesus' first miracle involved turning water into fine wine. On two other occasions, he fed hungry crowds of thousands with just a few loaves and fishes. In both cases, there was more than enough food for everyone.

Sickness. Jesus cured people having "every sort of disease and every sort of infirmity." (Matthew 4:23) Blindness, deafness, leprosy, and epilepsy were cured under his healing touch. He cured the lame, the crippled, and the maimed as well. There was no form of illness that proved insurmountable to him.

Dangerous weather. When Jesus and his disciples were sailing across the Sea of Galilee, a violent windstorm broke out. The disciples were terrified. Jesus simply looked at the storm and said: "Hush! Be quiet!" At that, a great calm set in. (Mark 4:37-39) On another occasion, he walked on the water during a frightening storm.—Matthew 14:24-33.

Wicked spirits. Wicked spirits are far stronger than humans. Many people have proved powerless to break the grip of these vicious enemies of God. Yet, again and again, when Jesus ordered them out, he broke the spirits' hold on their victims. He did not fear those spir-

its. On the contrary, they knew his authority and feared him.

Death. Aptly termed "the last enemy," death is a foe that no human can defeat. (1 Corinthians 15:26) Yet, Jesus resurrected the dead, restoring a young man to his widowed mother and a young girl to her grieving parents. In a most remarkable instance, Jesus resurrected his dear friend Lazarus in front of a crowd of mourners, although the man had been dead nearly four days! Even Jesus' most determined enemies acknowledged that he had performed this miracle.—John 11:38-48; 12:9-11.

Why did Jesus perform all those miracles? After all, did not death eventually claim all those whom he helped? Yes, but Jesus' miracles did lasting good. They proved that all the thrilling prophecies about the rule of the Messianic King had a basis in fact. There is no need to doubt that God's appointed King can eradicate hunger, sickness, dangerous weather, wicked spirits, or death itself. He has already demonstrated that God has put all such power in his hands.

—Based on the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

- How did Jesus demonstrate his power over hunger? sickness? dangerous weather? wicked spirits? death?
- What do Jesus' miracles indicate about his future rule over the earth?



Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi
Matthew ●
Mark ●
Luke ●
John ●
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation



19 Jesus Gives a Far-Reaching Prophecy

Jesus outlines features that will mark his presence in kingly power and the conclusion of this system of things

ON THE Mount of Olives, with a splendid view of Jerusalem and its temple below, four of Jesus' apostles asked him privately about some of his remarks. Jesus had just said that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed. And on an earlier occasion, he had told them about "the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 13:40, 49) Now the apostles asked: "What will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things?"—Matthew 24:3.

In his answer, Jesus told what would occur before Jerusalem's destruction. But his words were more far-reaching than that. His prophecy would later have a larger fulfillment worldwide. Jesus prophesied about a combination of events and world conditions that would form a sign. That sign would show those on earth that Jesus' presence as King in heaven had begun. In other words, the sign would indicate that Jehovah God had made Jesus the King of the

long-promised Messianic Kingdom. The sign would mean that the Kingdom was about to remove wickedness and bring true peace to mankind. The things Jesus foretold would thus mark the last days of the old system of things—the religious, political, and social systems that now exist—and the beginning of a new one.

Explaining what would happen on earth during his presence as King in heaven, Jesus said that there would be international wars, food shortages, great earthquakes, and widespread disease. Lawlessness would increase. Jesus' genuine disciples would preach the good news of God's Kingdom in all the earth. All these things would culminate in "great tribulation" such as had never occurred before.—Matthew 24:21.

How would Jesus' followers know when that tribulation is near? "Learn from the fig tree," said Jesus. (Matthew 24:32) The appearance of fig leaves on the branches is a noticeable sign that summer is near. Likewise, the occurrence within one time period of all the things Jesus foretold would be a recognizable sign that the end is near. No one but the Father would know the exact day and hour when the great tribulation would begin. Therefore, Jesus urged his disciples: "Keep awake, for you do not know when the appointed time is."—Mark 13:33.

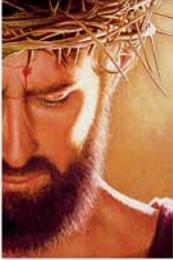
—Based on Matthew chapters 24 and 25; Mark chapter 13; Luke chapter 21.

- What did Jesus' apostles want to know more about?
- What is the meaning of the sign that Jesus gave, and what were to be features of this sign?
- What counsel did Jesus give his disciples?

THE SIGN OF CHRIST'S PRESENCE

Jesus foretold that there would be a sign to show that the time is near for God to destroy the present corrupt system of things. Beginning with World War I, mankind has witnessed what Jesus prophesied. Religious, political, and social developments worldwide are leading quickly and inescapably to the end of this system of things. Jesus taught his followers that to survive, they must "keep awake" and act decisively to put themselves on God's side of the issue of sovereignty.*—Luke 21:36; Matthew 24:3-14.

* For a further discussion of Jesus' prophecy, see pages 86-95 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses.



20 Jesus Christ Is Put to Death

Jesus institutes a new observance; he is betrayed and impaled

AFTER three and a half years of preaching and teaching, Jesus knew that his time on earth was drawing to an end. The Jewish religious leaders were conspiring to kill him, but they feared an uproar among the people, who held him to be a prophet. Meanwhile, Satan influenced one of Jesus' 12 apostles—Judas Iscariot—to turn traitor. The religious leaders offered Judas 30 silver coins to betray Jesus.

On his final night, Jesus gathered with his apostles to observe the Passover. After dismissing Judas, he instituted a new observance, the Lord's Evening Meal. He took a loaf of bread, offered a prayer, and passed the bread to the remaining 11 apostles. "This means my body which is to be given in your behalf," he said. "Keep doing this in remembrance of me." He did the same with a cup of wine, saying: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood."—Luke 22:19, 20.

Jesus had much to say to his apostles that night. He gave them a new commandment—that they show unselfish love to one another. He said: "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves." (John 13:34, 35) He urged them not to let their hearts be troubled by the tragic events that were about to unfold. Jesus prayed earnestly in their behalf. They sang praises together and went out into the night.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus knelt and poured out his heart in prayer. Soon, an armed mob of soldiers, priests, and others arrived to arrest him.

Judas approached and singled Jesus out by giving him a kiss. As the soldiers bound Jesus, the apostles fled.

Standing before the Jewish high court, Jesus identified himself as the Son of God. The court considered him guilty of blasphemy and liable to death. Jesus was then taken to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate. Although he found Jesus innocent of any crime, he turned Jesus over to the mob clamoring for his death.

Jesus was led to Golgotha, where Roman soldiers nailed him to a stake. Broad daylight miraculously turned to darkness. Later that afternoon, Jesus died, and a great earthquake occurred. His body was laid in a tomb cut into the rock. The next day, priests sealed the tomb and posted a guard at its entrance. Was Jesus to remain in that tomb? No. The greatest of all miracles was about to occur.

—Based on Matthew chapters 26 and 27; Mark chapters 14 and 15; Luke chapters 22 and 23; John chapters 12 to 19.

- What new observance did Jesus institute?
- What were the circumstances that led up to the death of Jesus?

JESUS' VITAL ROLE

The death of Jesus played a key role in the outworking of Jehovah's purpose. Because Jesus was conceived by means of God's holy spirit, he was born perfect, not subject to inherited death. Yet, he gave his life so that mankind could have the opportunity to live forever and enjoy the kind of life that disobedient Adam lost for his descendants.*—Matthew 20:28; Luke 1:34, 35; John 3:16, 36; 2 Peter 3:13.

* For a discussion of the sacrificial value of Jesus' death, see pages 47-56 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
- Matthew ●**
- Mark ●**
- Luke ●**
- John ●**
- Acts
- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy

Joshua
Judges
Ruth

1 Samuel

2 Samuel

1 Kings

2 Kings

1 Chronicles

2 Chronicles

Ezra

Nehemiah

Esther

Job

Psalms

Proverbs

Ecclesiastes

Song of Solomon

Isaiah

Jeremiah

Lamentations

Ezekiel

Daniel

Hosea

Joel

Amos

Obadiah

Jonah

Micah

Nahum

Habakkuk

Zephaniah

Haggai

Zechariah

Malachi

• **Matthew**

• **Mark**

• **Luke**

• **John**

Acts

Romans

1 Corinthians

2 Corinthians

Galatians

Ephesians

Philippians

Colossians

1 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians

1 Timothy



21 Jesus Is Alive!

Jesus appears to his followers to instruct and encourage them

ON THE third day after Jesus' death, certain women who were his disciples discovered that the stone blocking the entrance to the tomb had been rolled away. Furthermore, the tomb was empty!

Two angels appeared. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene," one said. "He was raised up." (Mark 16:6) Without delay, the women ran to tell the apostles. On the way, they met Jesus. "Have no fear!" he said. "Go, report to my brothers, that they may go off into Galilee; and there they will see me."—Matthew 28:10.

Later that day, two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. A stranger joined them and asked what they were talking about. He was, in fact, the resurrected Jesus, who appeared in a form they did not recognize at first. With sad faces they replied that they had been speaking about Jesus. The stranger began to explain things pertaining to the Messiah in all the Scriptures. Indeed, Jesus had fulfilled Messianic prophecies down to the finest detail.* When the disciples realized that the stranger was Je-

* For examples of Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Jesus, see pages 17-19 of this brochure as well as pages 199-201 of the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?*

sus, who had been resurrected as a spirit, he disappeared.

The two disciples immediately returned to Jerusalem. There they found the apostles gathered behind locked doors. While the two related their experience, Jesus appeared. His astonished followers could hardly believe it! "Why is it doubts come up in your hearts?" Jesus asked. "It is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from among the dead on the third day."—Luke 24:38, 46.

For 40 days after his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples on different occasions. In one case, he appeared to more than 500! Likely on this occasion, he gave them this weighty assignment: "Go . . . and make disciples of people of all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things."—Matthew 28:19, 20.

At his last meeting with his 11 faithful apostles, Jesus promised: "You will receive power when the holy spirit arrives upon you, and you will be witnesses of me . . . to the most distant part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) Then Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud blocked their view of him as he ascended to heaven.

—Based on Matthew chapter 28; Mark chapter 16; Luke chapter 24; John chapters 20 and 21; 1 Corinthians 15:5, 6.

- How did Jesus' disciples find out that God had resurrected him?
- What did Jesus explain to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus?
- What instructions did Jesus give his disciples before he ascended to heaven?

THE HOLY SPIRIT

God's holy spirit is the most powerful force in the universe. Jehovah God used his spirit, or active force, to create the heavens and the earth and to guide the writing of the Bible. This spirit was the force behind all the miracles we have read about thus far, including the greatest one of all—the resurrection of Jesus Christ to life as a mighty spirit.—Genesis 1:2; 2 Samuel 23:2; Acts 10:38; 1 Peter 3:18.

36 Cornelius becomes a Christian

**Nisan 30,
33 C.E.**

Sivan 6, 33 Pentecost; outpouring of holy spirit (Sivan corresponds to part of May and part of June)



22 The Apostles Preach Fearlessly

The Christian congregation grows rapidly despite persecution

TEN days after Jesus ascended to heaven, about 120 of his disciples gathered in a house in Jerusalem at the time of the Jewish Festival of Pentecost, 33 C.E. Suddenly, a noise like that of a rushing breeze filled the house. The disciples miraculously began speaking in languages that they did not know. What could explain these strange events? God had given holy spirit to the disciples.

Outside, there was a crowd because visitors had come from many lands for the festival. They were astounded to hear their own languages being spoken fluently by Jesus' disciples. Explaining what had happened, Peter referred to the prophet Joel's prophecy that God would "pour out" his spirit, which would impart miraculous gifts to those receiving it. (Joel 2:28, 29) This powerful evidence of holy spirit made it clear that an important change had occurred: God's favor had shifted from Israel to the newly formed Christian congregation. Those who wanted to serve God acceptably now had to become followers of Christ.

Meanwhile, opposition grew, and enemies threw the disciples into prison. But during the night, Jehovah's angel opened the prison doors and told the disciples to continue preaching. At daybreak, they did just that. They entered the temple and began to teach the good news about Jesus. Their religious opposers were furious and ordered them to stop preaching. Undaunted, the apostles replied: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:28, 29.

Persecution escalated. Certain Jews accused the disciple Stephen of blasphemy and stoned him to death. A young man—Saul of Tarsus—looked on, approving of the murder. He then went to Damascus to arrest anyone who followed Christ. As Saul traveled on the road, a light from heaven flashed around him and a voice said: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Blinded by the light, Saul asked: "Who are you?" The voice answered: "I am Jesus."—Acts 9:3-5.

Three days later, Jesus sent a disciple named Ananias to restore Saul's sight. Saul was baptized and began preaching boldly about Jesus. Saul came to be known as the apostle Paul and became a zealous member of the Christian congregation.

Jesus' disciples had been declaring the good news of the Kingdom of God to Jews and Samaritans only. An angel now appeared to Cornelius, a God-fearing Roman army officer, telling him to send for the apostle Peter. Accompanied by others, Peter preached to Cornelius and his household. While Peter was speaking, holy spirit came upon those Gentile believers, and the apostle directed that they be baptized in the name of Jesus. The way to everlasting life was now open to people of all nations. The congregation was poised to spread the good news far and wide.

—Based on Acts 1:1-11:21.

- What happened during the Festival of Pentecost?
- How did enemies react to the preaching by Jesus' disciples?
- How was the way to everlasting life opened to people of all nations?

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel
- Hosea
- Joel
- Amos
- Obadiah
- Jonah
- Micah
- Nahum
- Habakkuk
- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts •**
- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon
Isaiah
Jeremiah
Lamentations
Ezekiel
Daniel
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi
Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
• Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy



23 The Good News Spreads

Paul makes preaching tours by land and by sea

FOLLOWING his conversion, Paul eagerly declared the good news about God’s Kingdom—only now the onetime opposer himself often faced bitter opposition. This tireless apostle made several preaching tours, traveling far and wide to spread the good news about the Kingdom that will fulfill God’s original purpose for humankind.

In Lystra, during his first preaching tour, Paul healed a man lame from birth. The crowds began crying out that Paul and his traveling companion Barnabas were gods. The two men could scarcely restrain the people from offering sacrifices to them. Influenced by Paul’s enemies, however, these same crowds later stoned Paul and left him for dead. Paul survived the attack and in time returned to that city to strengthen the disciples with encouraging words.

Some Jewish Christians argued that non-Jewish believers had to adhere to portions of the Law of Moses. Paul took the question to the apostles and older men in Jerusalem. After careful consideration of the Scriptures and with the guidance of God’s holy spirit, those men wrote to the congregations and admonished them to abstain from idolatry, from eating blood and unbled meat, and from fornication. Such commands were “necessary things,” but heeding these did *not*

require following the Mosaic Law.—Acts 15:28, 29.

On his second preaching journey, Paul visited Beroea, now in modern-day Greece. Jews living there received the word eagerly, examining the Scriptures daily to verify his teaching. Once again, opposition forced him to move on, this time to Athens. Before a learned group of Athenians, Paul gave a powerful speech that is a model of tact, discernment, and eloquence.

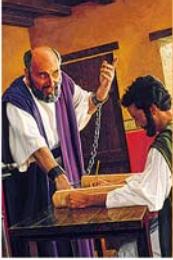
After a third preaching trip, Paul went to Jerusalem. When he visited the temple there, certain Jews started a riot, wanting to kill him. Roman soldiers intervened and interrogated Paul. As a Roman citizen, he later made his defense before Roman Governor Felix. The Jews could present no evidence for the charges they brought against Paul. To prevent Festus, another Roman governor, from handing him over to the Jews, Paul said: “I appeal to Caesar!” Festus replied: “To Caesar you shall go.”—Acts 25:11, 12.

Paul was then taken by boat to Italy to stand trial. Shipwrecked on that voyage, he had to winter on the island of Malta. When he finally arrived in Rome, he stayed for two years in a rented house. Even though he was under soldier guard, the ever zealous apostle continued to preach about the Kingdom of God to all who visited him.

—Based on Acts 11:22-28:31.

- What happened after Paul healed a lame man in Lystra?
- How was the question regarding following the Mosaic Law resolved?
- How did Paul end up in Rome, and what did he do while there?





24 Paul Writes to the Congregations

Paul's letters strengthen the Christian organization

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth

THE newly established Christian congregation would have an important role in the fulfillment of Jehovah's purpose. But the first-century Christians quickly came under attack. Would they keep their integrity to God in the face of persecution from without and other more subtle dangers from within? The Christian Greek Scriptures contain 21 letters that offered needed counsel and encouragement.

Fourteen of the letters—from Romans to Hebrews—were penned by the apostle Paul. These letters are named after those to whom they are addressed—whether an individual or the members of a particular congregation. Consider some of the subjects covered in Paul's letters.

Admonition on morals and conduct. Those who practice fornication, adultery, and other gross sins “will not inherit God's kingdom.” (Galatians 5: 19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11) Worshipers of God must be united regardless of nationality. (Romans 2:11; Ephesians 4:1-6) They should cheerfully give of themselves to help fellow believers in need. (2 Corinthians 9:7) “Pray incessantly,” Paul says. Indeed, worshippers are encouraged to pour out their hearts to Jehovah in prayer. (1 Thessalonians 5: 17; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Philippians 4: 6, 7) For prayers to be heard by God,

they must be offered in faith.—Hebrews 11:6.

What will help families to thrive? Husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. Wives should have deep respect for their husbands. Children should obey their parents, for this is pleasing to God. Parents need to guide and train their children lovingly, using godly principles.—Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Colossians 3:18-21.

Light shed on God's purpose. Many aspects of the Mosaic Law served to safeguard and guide the Israelites until the arrival of Christ. (Galatians 3: 24) Christians, however, do not need to observe that Law in order to worship God. In writing to the Hebrews—Christians of Jewish background—Paul shed much light on the meaning of the Law and on how God's purpose is fulfilled in Christ. Paul explained that various



- Zephaniah
- Haggai
- Zechariah
- Malachi
- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts
- Romans ●
- 1 Corinthians ●
- 2 Corinthians ●
- Galatians ●
- Ephesians ●
- Philippians ●
- Colossians ●
- 1 Thessalonians ●
- 2 Thessalonians ●
- 1 Timothy ●
- 2 Timothy ●
- Titus ●
- Philemon ●
- Hebrews ●
- James
- 1 Peter
- 2 Peter
- 1 John
- 2 John
- 3 John
- Jude
- Revelation

WHO IS THE PROMISED SEED?

After Adam and Eve sinned, God used symbolic language when he said to the serpent: “I shall put enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed. He will bruise you in the head and you will bruise him in the heel.” (Genesis 3:15) The Scriptures identify the Devil as “the original serpent.” (Revelation 12:9) The identity of God’s promised Seed, or Deliverer, was a secret that over the centuries was revealed progressively in the Bible.

Some 2,000 years after Adam and Eve sinned, Jehovah indicated that the promised Seed would come through Abraham’s lineage. (Genesis 22:17, 18) Centuries later, the apostle Paul revealed that the primary part of the Seed is the Messiah, Jesus Christ. (Galatians 3:16) In harmony with Genesis

3:15, Jesus was figuratively bruised “in the heel” when he was put to death. However, God resurrected Jesus, who was “made alive in the spirit.”—1 Peter 3:18.

God also purposed that 144,000 humans would become a secondary part of the seed. (Galatians 3:29; Revelation 14:1) They are resurrected to spirit life as joint heirs with Christ in the heavenly Kingdom.—Romans 8:16, 17.

As a mighty King in heaven, Jesus will soon do away with the Devil and his seed—the wicked humans and demons who follow Satan. (John 8:44; Ephesians 6:12) The rule of Jesus will bring peace and joy to all obedient mankind. He will thus eventually bruise the serpent “in the head,” crushing him out of existence.—Hebrews 2:14.

Joel
Amos
Obadiah
Jonah
Micah
Nahum
Habakkuk
Zephaniah
Haggai
Zechariah
Malachi
Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
● Romans
● 1 Corinthians
● 2 Corinthians
● Galatians
● Ephesians
● Philippians
● Colossians
● 1 Thessalonians
● 2 Thessalonians
● 1 Timothy
● 2 Timothy
● Titus
● Philemon
● Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude
Revelation

arrangements under that Law had prophetic value. For example, the sacrificing of animals foreshadowed Jesus’ sacrificial death, which would accomplish true forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 10:1-4) By means of the death of Jesus, God canceled that Law covenant, for it was no longer needed.—Colossians 2:13-17; Hebrews 8:13.

Direction on proper congregation organization. Men willing to handle responsibilities in the congregation must have high moral standards and meet spiritual qualifications. (1 Timothy 3:1-10, 12, 13; Titus 1:5-9) Worshipers of Jehovah God should regularly gather with fellow believers to encourage one another. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) Meetings for worship should be upbuilding and instructive. —1 Corinthians 14:26, 31.

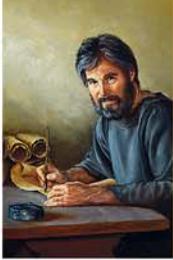
By the time Paul wrote the second of his two letters to Timothy, the apostle was back in Rome; he was imprisoned, awaiting judgment. Only a courageous

few risked visiting him. Paul knew that his time was short. “I have fought the fine fight,” he said. “I have run the course to the finish, I have observed the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:7) Likely Paul suffered martyrdom shortly thereafter. But the apostle’s letters guide true worshippers of God to this day.

—Based on Romans; 1 and 2 Corinthians; Galatians; Ephesians; Philippians; Colossians; 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Titus; Philemon; Hebrews.

- Paul’s letters contain what admonition on morals and conduct?
- How did Paul shed light on the fulfillment of God’s purpose in Christ?
- What direction did Paul provide on proper congregation organization?





25 Counsel on Faith, Conduct, and Love

James, Peter, John, and Jude write letters to encourage fellow believers

JAMES and Jude were half brothers of Jesus. Peter and John were among Jesus' 12 apostles. Those four men wrote a total of seven letters that are found in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Each of the letters bears the name of its writer. The inspired admonition found in these letters was intended to help Christians maintain integrity to Jehovah and keep God's Kingdom in view.

Manifest faith. Merely professing to have faith is not enough. True faith leads to action. "Indeed," writes James, "faith without works is dead." (James 2:26) Acting in faith when facing trials builds endurance. To succeed, a Christian needs to ask God for wisdom, convinced that God will give it to him. Endurance leads to God's approval. (James 1:2-6, 12) If in faith a worshipper maintains integrity, Jehovah God will respond. "Draw close to God," James says, "and he will draw close to you."—James 4:8.

A Christian's faith must be strong enough to help him resist temptations and immoral influences. A prevailing bad moral environment compelled Jude to urge his fellow believers to "put up a hard fight for the faith."—Jude 3.

Maintain clean conduct. Jehovah expects his worshippers to be holy, that is, clean in all respects. Peter writes: "Become holy yourselves in all your conduct, because it is written: 'You must be holy, because I [Jehovah] am holy.'" (1 Peter 1:15, 16) Christians have an example worth imitating. "Christ suffered for you," says Peter, "leaving you a model for you to follow his steps closely." (1 Peter 2:21) Although Christians

may suffer because they hold to God's standards, they preserve "a good conscience." (1 Peter 3:16, 17) Peter urges Christians to abound in holy conduct and deeds that reflect godly devotion while awaiting God's day of judgment and the promised new world in which "righteousness is to dwell."—2 Peter 3:11-13.

Demonstrate love. "God is love," writes John. The apostle points out that God demonstrated his great love by sending forth Jesus as a "sacrifice for our sins." How should Christians respond? John explains: "Beloved ones, if this is how God loved us, then we are ourselves under obligation to love one another." (1 John 4:8-11) One way to show such love is by being hospitable to fellow believers.—3 John 5-8.

How, though, can worshippers of Jehovah demonstrate their love for him? John answers: "This is what the love of God means, that we observe his commandments; and yet his commandments are not burdensome." (1 John 5:3; 2 John 6) Those who thus obey God are assured that they will continue to be loved by God "with everlasting life in view."—Jude 21.

—Based on James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude.

- How can a Christian manifest faith?
- What kind of conduct does God expect of his worshippers?
- How does a person demonstrate that he truly loves God?

- Genesis
- Exodus
- Leviticus
- Numbers
- Deuteronomy
- Joshua
- Judges
- Ruth
- 1 Samuel
- 2 Samuel
- 1 Kings
- 2 Kings
- 1 Chronicles
- 2 Chronicles
- Ezra
- Nehemiah
- Esther
- Job
- Psalms
- Proverbs
- Ecclesiastes
- Song of Solomon
- Isaiah
- Jeremiah
- Lamentations
- Ezekiel
- Daniel

"Draw close to God, and he will draw close to you."

—James 4:8

- Zechariah
- Malachi
- Matthew
- Mark
- Luke
- John
- Acts
- Romans
- 1 Corinthians
- 2 Corinthians
- Galatians
- Ephesians
- Philippians
- Colossians
- 1 Thessalonians
- 2 Thessalonians
- 1 Timothy
- 2 Timothy
- Titus
- Philemon
- Hebrews
- James ●
- 1 Peter ●
- 2 Peter ●
- 1 John ●
- 2 John ●
- 3 John ●
- Jude ●
- Revelation

Genesis
Exodus
Leviticus
Numbers
Deuteronomy
Joshua
Judges
Ruth
1 Samuel
2 Samuel
1 Kings
2 Kings
1 Chronicles
2 Chronicles
Ezra
Nehemiah
Esther
Job
Psalms
Proverbs
Ecclesiastes
Song of Solomon



26 Paradise Regained!

By means of the Kingdom under Christ, Jehovah sanctifies His name, vindicates His sovereignty, and eliminates all evil

THE last book of the Bible, called Revelation or Apocalypse, provides all mankind with hope. Recorded by the apostle John, the book contains visions that climax in the fulfillment of Jehovah's purpose.

In the first vision, the resurrected Jesus commends and corrects a number of congregations. The next vision takes us

breaks out, and Satan and his wicked angels are cast down to the earth. "Woe for the earth," says a loud voice. The Devil has great anger, knowing he has a short period of time.—Revelation 12:12.

John sees Jesus in heaven represented as a lamb, and with him 144,000 who are chosen from among mankind. These ones "will rule as kings with" Jesus. Revelation thus reveals that the secondary members of the seed will total 144,000 in number.—Revelation 14:1; 20:6.

The rulers of the earth gather to Armageddon, "the war of the great day of God the Almighty." They wage war with the one seated on the white horse—Jesus, who leads heavenly armies. All the rulers of this world are destroyed. Satan is bound, and Jesus and the 144,000 reign over the earth for "a thousand years." At the end of the thousand years, Satan is destroyed.—Revelation 16:14; 20:4.

What will the Millennial Reign of Christ and his corulers mean for obedient humans? John writes: "[Jehovah] 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 21:4) The earth becomes a paradise!

The book of Revelation thus completes the Bible's message. By means of the Messianic Kingdom, Jehovah's name is sanctified and his sovereignty completely vindicated for all eternity!

—Based on the book of Revelation.

- What is the meaning of the symbolic horsemen?
- What dramatic things take place as God's purpose moves forward?
- What is Armageddon, and what is its outcome?

"BABYLON THE GREAT"

In the book of Revelation, all false religions—that is, religions that stand in opposition to the true God—are collectively identified as "the great harlot." She is called "Babylon the Great," and she sells, or prostitutes, herself to the world's political powers. At Jehovah God's appointed time, says Revelation, these powers will turn on this harlot and destroy her.—Revelation 17:1-5, 16, 17.

before God's heavenly throne, where spirit creatures are offering him praise.

As God's purpose moves forward, the Lamb, Jesus Christ, receives a scroll with seven seals. With the opening of the first four seals, symbolic horsemen charge onto the world scene. The first is Jesus on a white horse and crowned as King. Next come riders on different-colored horses, prophetically representing war, famine, and pestilence—all of which take place during the last days of this system of things. The opening of the seventh seal leads to the blowing of seven symbolic trumpets, denoting proclamations of God's judgments. These lead to seven symbolic plagues, or expressions of God's anger.

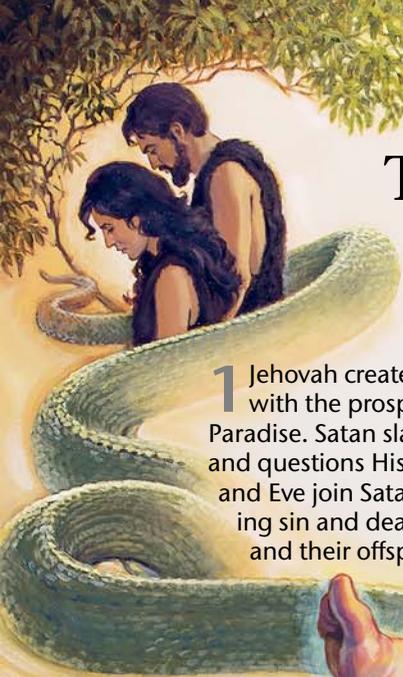
God's Kingdom, depicted as a newborn male child, is established in heaven. War

Matthew
Mark
Luke
John
Acts
Romans
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Galatians
Ephesians
Philippians
Colossians
1 Thessalonians
2 Thessalonians
1 Timothy
2 Timothy
Titus
Philemon
Hebrews
James
1 Peter
2 Peter
1 John
2 John
3 John
Jude

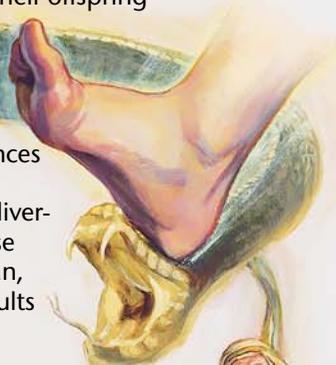
● Revelation

The Bible's Message

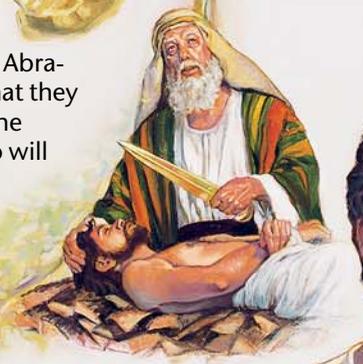
AN OVERVIEW



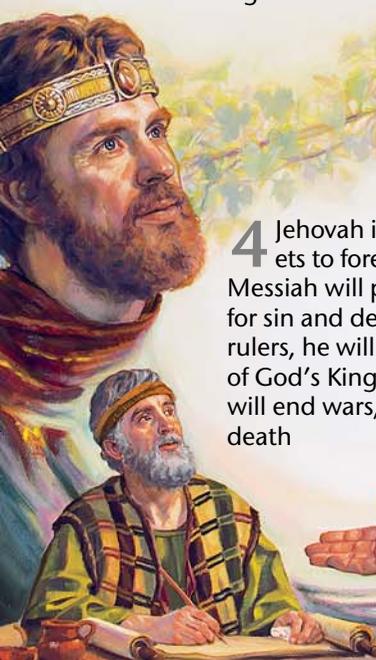
1 Jehovah creates Adam and Eve with the prospect of eternal life in Paradise. Satan slanders God's name and questions His right to rule. Adam and Eve join Satan in rebellion, bringing sin and death upon themselves and their offspring



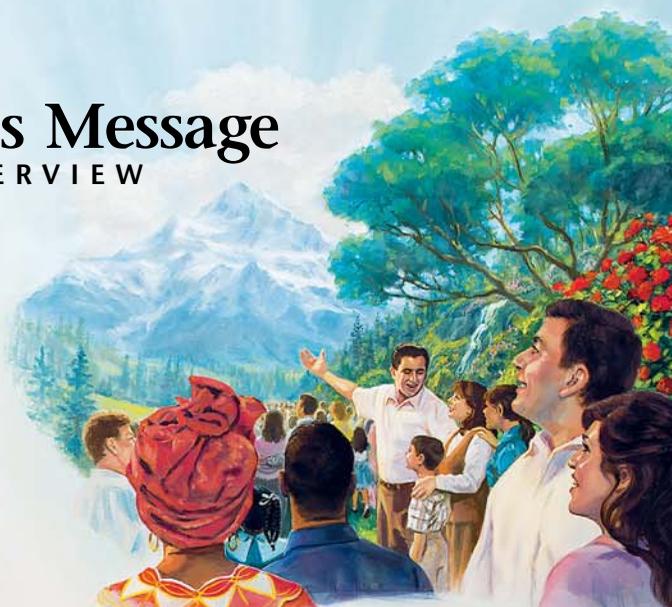
2 Jehovah sentences the rebels and promises that a Deliverer, or Seed, will arise who will crush Satan, undoing all the results of rebellion and sin



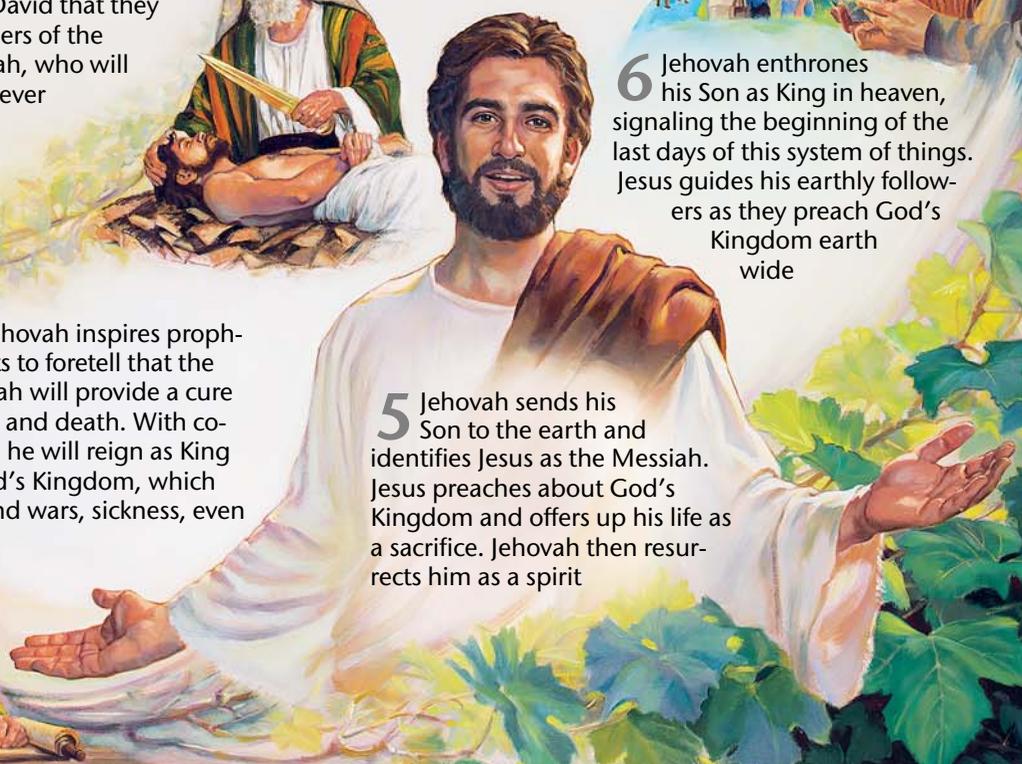
3 Jehovah promises Abraham and David that they will be forefathers of the Seed, or Messiah, who will rule as King forever



4 Jehovah inspires prophets to foretell that the Messiah will provide a cure for sin and death. With co-rulers, he will reign as King of God's Kingdom, which will end wars, sickness, even death



7 Jehovah directs his Son to bring Kingdom rule to the earth. The Kingdom crushes all wicked governments, establishes Paradise, and brings faithful humans to perfection. Jehovah's right to rule is vindicated, and his name is sanctified forever



6 Jehovah enthrones his Son as King in heaven, signaling the beginning of the last days of this system of things. Jesus guides his earthly followers as they preach God's Kingdom earth wide

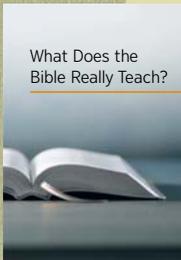
5 Jehovah sends his Son to the earth and identifies Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus preaches about God's Kingdom and offers up his life as a sacrifice. Jehovah then resurrects him as a spirit

WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

This brochure presents a brief, fast-moving summary of the message found in the Bible. However, this summary is not intended to explain in detail what the Bible teaches on every subject.

For example, perhaps you are curious about the Bible's answers to such questions as these: Does God really care about me as an individual? What happens to us when we die? How can I find happiness in life?

The answers to these and other intriguing questions can be found in the book *What Does the Bible Really Teach?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses. This book is designed for a topical study of the Bible. Such a study method draws together the Bible verses that bear on a particular topic.



Read or download this publication and/or request a free home Bible study at www.jw.org.

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