



Spirits of the Dead

Can They Help You
or Harm You?

Do They
Really Exist?

“I grew up in a small village in the northern province,” relates Dauda from Sierra Leone.

“Once, when I was a boy, there was a land dispute between my family and another family. Both claimed the same land. To settle the matter, a medicine man was called in. He gave another man a mirror, then covered him with a white cloth. Soon the man under the cloth began to tremble and sweat. As he looked into the mirror, he exclaimed: ‘I see an old man approaching! He is dressed in white garments. He is tall and old, with gray hair, and he walks with a slight stoop.’

“He was describing Grandfather! He then became hysterical and cried out: ‘If you don’t believe what I am saying, come look for yourselves!’ Of course, none of us had the courage to do that! The medicine man calmed him by sprinkling on him a magical mixture of leaves and water, which he held in a calabash.

“Speaking through the mirror-man, ‘Grandfather’ said the land belonged to our family. He told my grandmother she should work the land without worry. The other family accepted the judgment. The issue was settled.”





Such experiences are common in West Africa. Here, as in other parts of the world, countless millions believe that dead people pass on to the spirit world, where they are able to observe and influence the lives of people on earth. Is this belief true? Are the dead really alive? If not, who are those who claim to be spirits of the dead? Knowing the correct answers to these questions is vitally important. It is a life-and-death matter.

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Spirits of the Dead—Can They Help You or Harm You? Do They Really Exist?
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Spirits Have Not Lived and Died on Earth

Spirits exist! Within the invisible spirit realm, there are both good and bad spirits. Are they persons who have lived and died on earth?

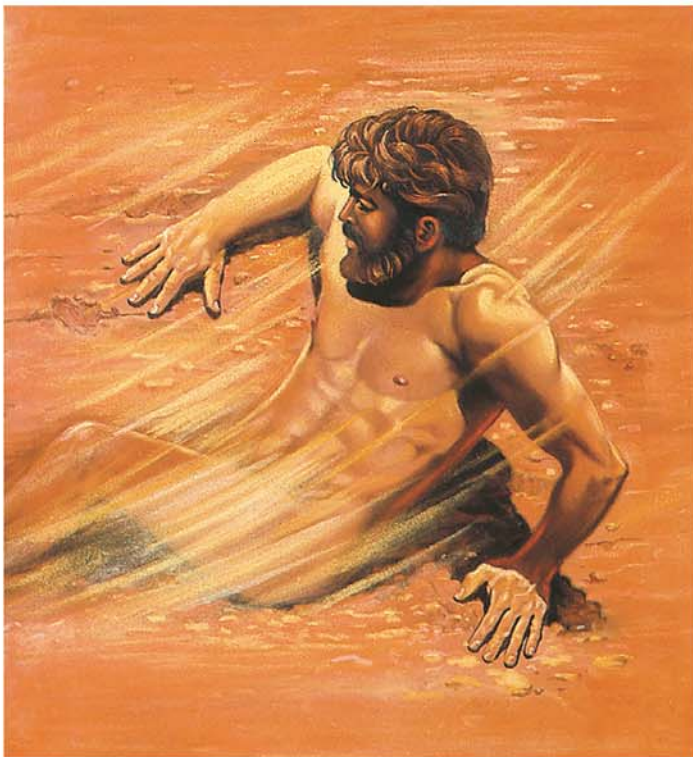
No, they are not. When a person dies, he or she does not pass on to the spirit world, as many people think. How do we know this? Because the Bible says so. The Bible is a book of truth that comes from the only true God, whose name is Jehovah. Jehovah created humans; he well knows what happens to them when they die.—Psalm 83:18; 2 Timothy 3:16.

The Bible says that God formed Adam, the first man, “out of dust from the ground.” (Genesis 2:7) God put him in Paradise, the garden of Eden. If Adam had obeyed Jehovah’s law, he would not have died; he would still be alive on earth today. But when Adam deliberately broke God’s law, God said to him: “You [will] return to the ground, for out of it you were taken. For dust you are

and to dust you will return.”
—Genesis 3:19.

What does this mean? Well, where was Adam before Jehovah created him from the dust? He was nowhere. He was not an unborn spirit in heaven. He did not exist. So when Jehovah said that Adam would “return to the ground,” he meant that Adam would die. He did not cross over to

*Adam came from dust,
returned to dust*



the spirit realm. At death, Adam once again became lifeless, nonexistent. Death is the absence of life.

But what about others who have died? Are they also nonexistent? The Bible answers:

“All [both humans and animals] are going to one place. They have all come to be from the dust, and they are all returning to the dust.”—Ecclesiastes 3:20.

“The dead . . . are conscious of nothing at all.”—Ecclesiastes 9:5.

“Their love and their hate and their jealousy have already perished.”—Ecclesiastes 9:6.

“There is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [the grave], the place to which you are going.”—Ecclesiastes 9:10.

“[Man] goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish.”—Psalm 146:4.



Only the living can do these things



Do you find these scriptures hard to accept? If so, think about this: In many families, the man earns money to support his household. When the man dies, his family usually suffers hardship. Sometimes his wife and children do not even have enough money to buy food. Perhaps the man's enemies will abuse them. Now ask yourself: 'If that man is alive in the spirit world, why does he not continue to provide for his family? Why does he not protect his family from bad people?' It is because the scriptures are correct. That man is lifeless, unable to do anything. —Psalm 115:17.

Does this mean that the dead will never come to life again? No, it does not. We will talk about the resurrection later. But it does mean that dead people do not know what you are doing. They cannot see you, hear you, or talk to you. You need not fear them. They cannot help you, and they cannot harm you.—Ecclesiastes 9:4; Isaiah 26:14.

The dead cannot help the hungry or protect victims of abuse



Millions of Spirit Creatures

The Bible tells us that there are many spirit persons. Jehovah is himself a spirit.—John 4:24; 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18.

At one time Jehovah was alone in the universe. Then he began to create spirit persons called angels. They are more powerful and more in-

telligent than humans. Jehovah created many angels; God's servant Daniel, in a vision, saw a hundred million angels.—Daniel 7:10; Hebrews 1:7.

These angels were created by God even before he made the earth. (Job 38:4-7) None of them are people who once lived and died on earth.

The great Spirit, Jehovah, created millions of spirit persons



Rebellion in the Spirit Realm

All the spirit persons that Jehovah created were good. Then one angel turned bad. He is Satan the Devil. Satan wanted people on earth to worship him instead of Jehovah. This is what happened:

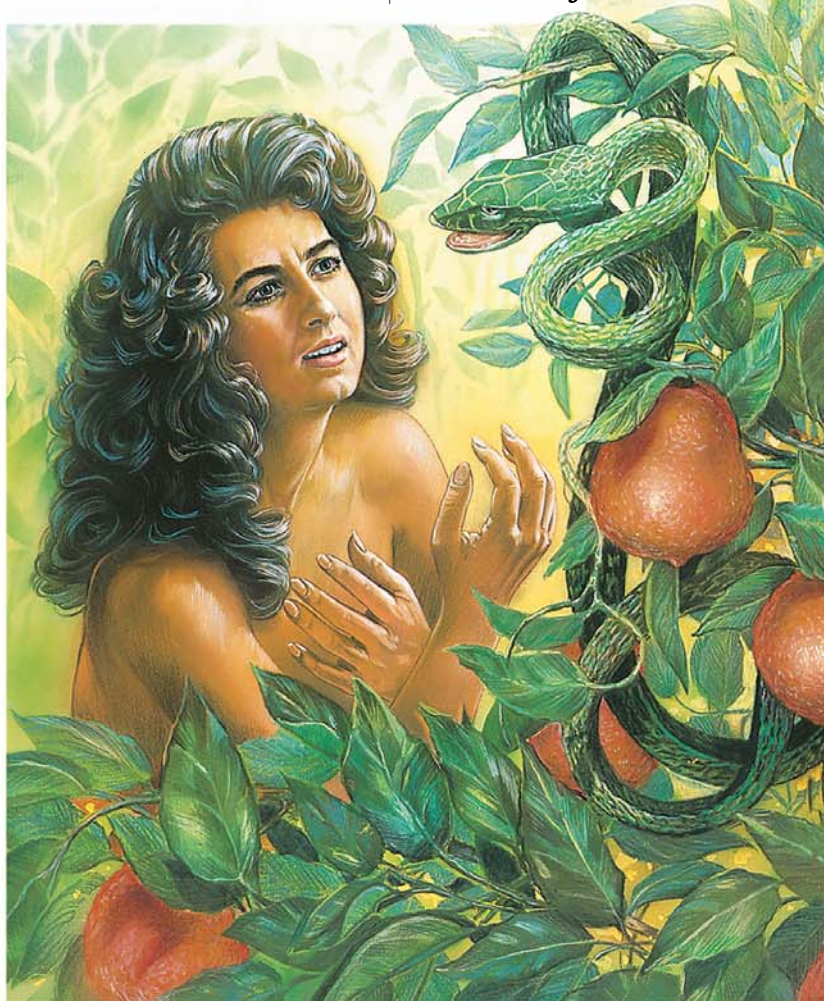
In the garden of Eden, there were many trees that bore delicious fruit. Jehovah told Adam and his wife, Eve, that they could freely eat from them. But there was one tree that God said they should not eat from. He said that if they ate from it, they would positively die. —Genesis 2:9, 16, 17.

One day Eve was by herself when a snake spoke to her. Of course, it was not really the snake that talked; it was Satan the Devil who made it seem as if the snake were talking. Satan told Eve that if she ate from the forbidden fruit, she would be wise like God. He also said that she would *not* die. Both these statements were lies. Nevertheless, Eve believed Satan and ate the fruit. Later, she gave some to Adam, and he ate too. —Genesis 3:1-6.

From this true story, we learn that Satan is a rebel and a liar. He told Eve that if she disobeyed God, she would not die. That was a lie. She did die

and so did Adam. Satan did not die then, although he will eventually because he sinned. Meantime, however, he is alive and continues to mislead mankind. He is still a liar, and he tries to get people to break God's laws. —John 8:44.

When Satan used a serpent to speak to Eve, she joined his rebellion against God



Other Angels Rebel

Later, other angels turned bad. These angels noticed the good-looking women on earth and wanted to have sexual relations with them. So they came to the earth and put on male human bodies. Then they took the women for themselves. This was against God's purpose.—Genesis 6:1, 2; Jude 6.

It also caused much trouble for mankind. The wives of these angels bore children, but they were not normal children. They grew to be violent and cruel giants. Eventually the earth became so filled with violence that Jehovah decided to destroy the wicked people by a great flood. The only humans who survived the Flood were righteous Noah and his family.—Genesis 6:4, 11; 7:23.

The wicked angels, however, returned to the spirit realm; they did not die. But they were punished. They were not allowed back into God's family of righteous angels. Furthermore, Jehovah no longer allowed them to put on human bodies. And eventually they will die in the great judgment.—2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6.

Wicked angels came to the earth to commit immorality with women



Satan Cast Out of Heaven

In the early part of our century, there was a war in heaven. The Bible book of Revelation describes what happened: "And war broke out in heaven: Michael [the resurrected Jesus Christ] and his [good] angels battled with the dragon [Satan], and the dragon and its [bad] angels battled but it did not prevail, neither was a place found for them any longer in heaven. So down the great dragon was hurled, the original serpent, the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth; he was hurled down to the earth, and his [bad] angels were hurled down with him."

What was the result? The account continues: "On this account be glad, you heavens and you who reside in them!" The good angels could be glad because Satan and the bad angels, or spirits, were no longer in heaven. But what about people on earth? The Bible says: "Woe for the earth and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to you, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time."—Revelation 12: 7-9, 12.

Yes, Satan and his wicked companions mislead and cause great woe for people on earth. These wicked angels are called demons. They are enemies of God. All of them are evil.



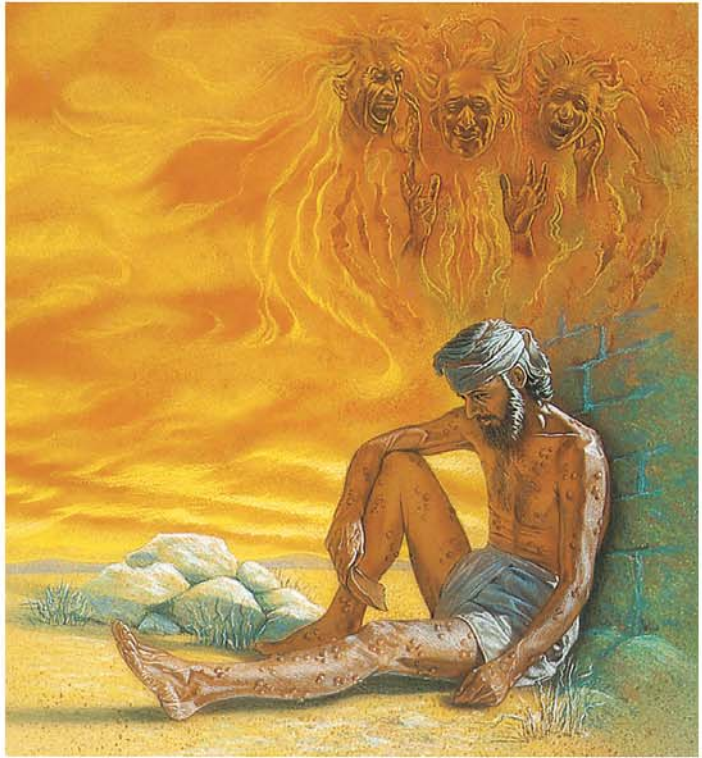
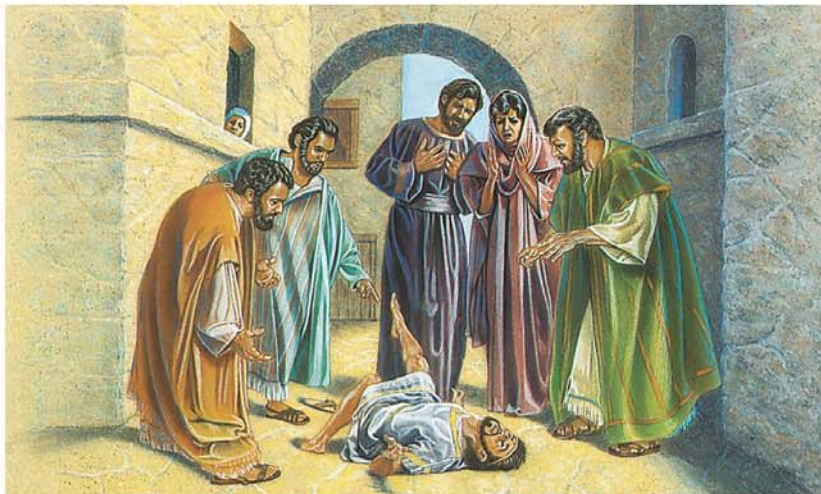
Satan and his bad angels were cast out of heaven

The Demons Are Killers!

Satan and the demons have always been cruel and dangerous. In early times Satan killed the livestock and servants of faithful Job. Then he killed Job's ten children by causing "a great wind" to destroy the house they were in. After that Satan struck Job with "a malignant boil from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head."—Job 1:7-19; 2:7.

In Jesus' day, the demons made some people speechless and blind. (Matthew 9:32, 33; 12:22) They tormented one man and made him slash himself with stones. (Mark 5:5) They also caused a boy to cry out, dashed him to the ground, and "violently convulsed him."—Luke 9:42.

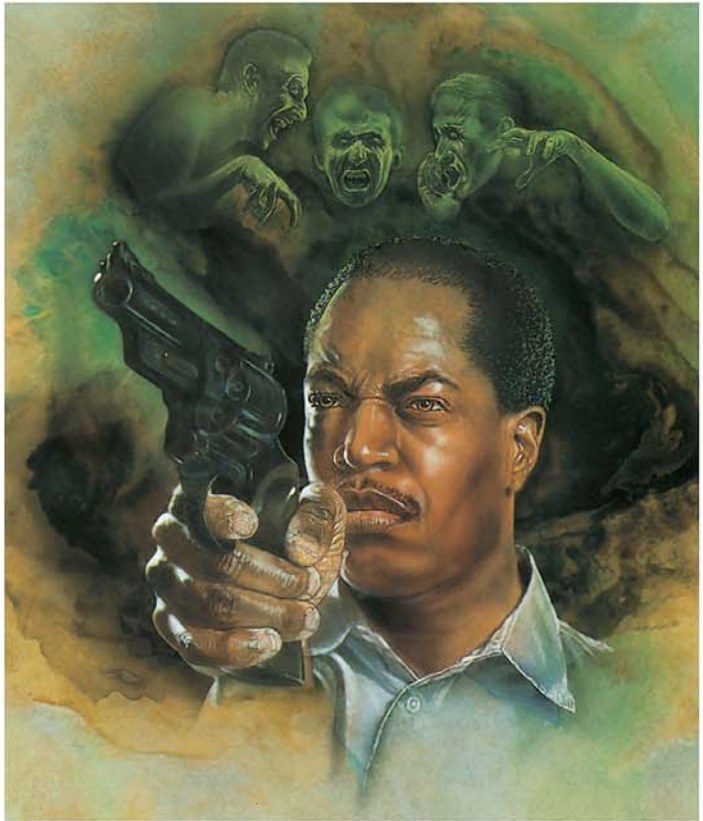
In the past, the demons made some people sick and threw others into convulsions



Today, Satan and the demons are as murderous as ever. In fact, their evil activity has increased since they were thrown out of heaven. Reports from around the world testify to their cruelty. They plague some people with illness. Others they harass at night, depriving them of sleep or giving them terrible dreams. Others they abuse sexually. Still others they drive to insanity, murder, or suicide.

Lintina, who lives in Suriname, relates that a demon, or bad spirit, killed 16 members of her family and tormented her physically and mentally for 18 years. From firsthand experience she states that the demons “enjoy torturing their unwilling victims until death.”

But Jehovah is able to protect his servants from Satan’s attacks.—Proverbs 18:10.



The demons today cause some people to be violent; they harass others at night, giving them terrible dreams

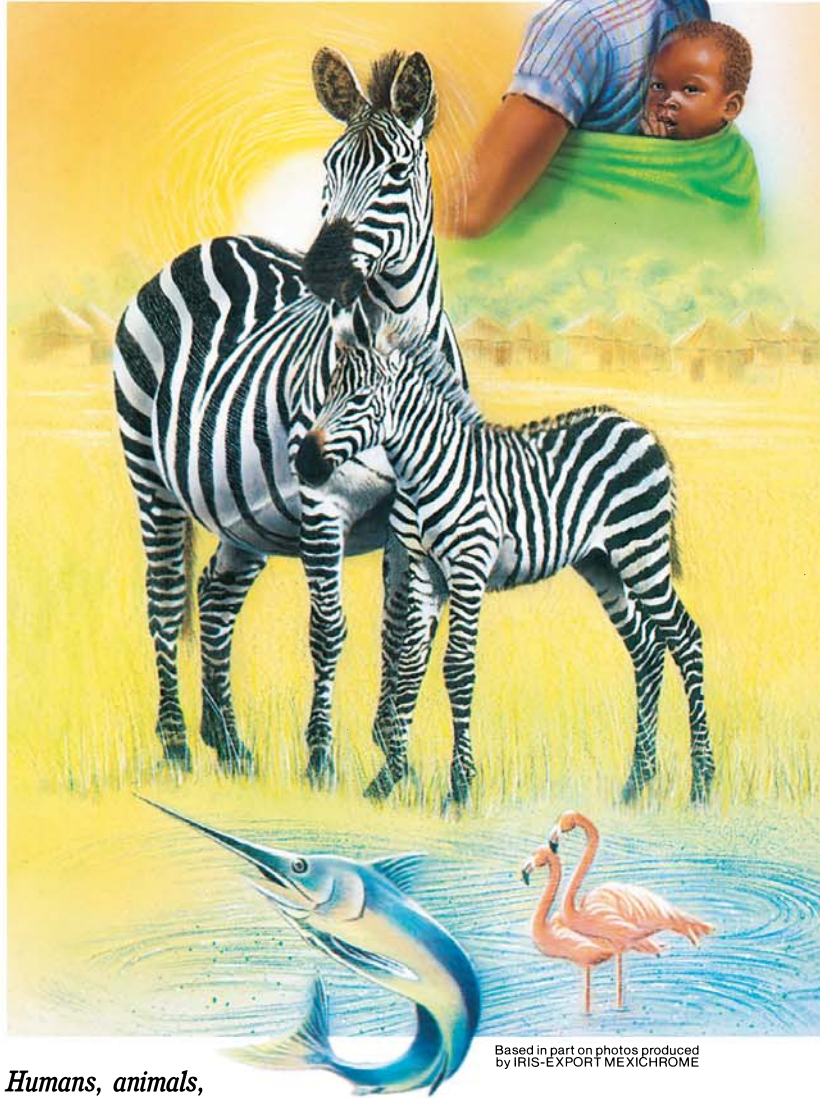
The Demons Falsely Claim the Dead Are Alive

The Bible says that Satan is “misleading the entire inhabited earth.” (Revelation 12:9) Satan and his demons do not want us to believe God’s Word, the Bible. They try to make people believe that the dead are alive somewhere in the spirit realm. Let us see how they do that.

False Religion

Many religions teach that every human has a soul that passes on to the spirit realm after the death of the physical body. They say that the body dies but the soul does not die. Moreover, they assert that the soul cannot die, that it is immortal.

But God’s Word does not teach that. The Bible shows that the soul is the person, not something inside a person. For example, in describing the creation of Adam, the Bible states: “And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man *came to be a living soul*.” (Genesis 2:7) So Adam was not *given* a soul; he *was* a soul.



*Humans, animals,
fish, and birds
—all are souls*

Based in part on photos produced
by IRIS-EXPORT MEXICHROME



Animals also are called souls.—Genesis 1:20, 21, 24, 30.

Since the Bible word “soul” means the person himself, it should not surprise us to learn that souls can and do die. The Scriptures say:

“*The soul* that is sinning—it itself *will die*.”—Ezekiel 18:4.

“And Samson proceeded to say: ‘*Let my soul die* with the Philistines.’”—Judges 16:30.

“Is it lawful on the sabbath to do a good deed or to do a bad deed, to save or *to kill a soul*?”—Mark 3:4.

Other scriptures show that souls can be destroyed (Genesis 17:14), slain by the sword (Joshua 10:37), suffocated (Job 7:15), and drowned (Jonah 2:5). Thus, the soul dies.

If you read the Bible from cover to cover, you will never find the phrase “immortal soul.” The human soul is not a spirit. The teaching of the immortal soul is not a Bible teaching. It is a teaching of Satan and his demons. Jehovah hates all religious lies.—Proverbs 6:16-19; 1 Timothy 4:1, 2.

The Bible shows that the soul is not immortal

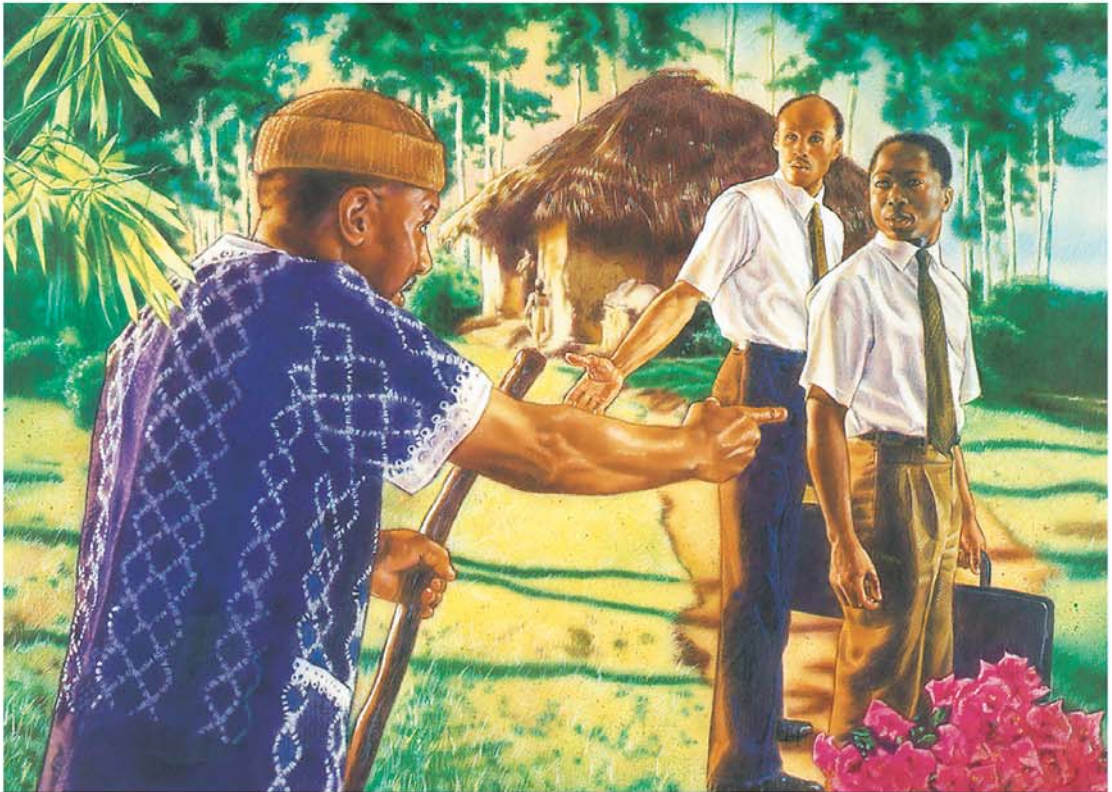
Spirit Mediums

Another way that Satan misleads people is through mediums. A medium is a person who is able to receive messages directly from the spirit world. A great many people, including mediums themselves, believe that these messages come from spirits of the dead. But as we have seen from the Bible, this is impossible.—Ecclesiastes 9: 5, 6, 10.

From whom, then, do these messages come? The demons themselves! The demons are able to observe a person when he is alive; they know how the person talked, what he looked like, what he did, and what he knew. So it is easy for them to imitate people who have died. —1 Samuel 28:3-19.

*The demons actually
pretend to be spirits of
the dead*





False Stories

Another way that Satan promotes the lie about the dead is through false stories. Such stories often turn people aside from Bible truth.—2 Timothy 4:4.

In Africa there are many tales about people who were seen alive after they died. Typically, such sightings are made far away from where the person lived. But ask yourself: 'Does it seem reasonable that if a person had the power to come back from the dead, he would return to a place far away from his family and friends?'

Also, could it not be that the person seen merely resembled the person who had died? For example, two Christian ministers who were preaching in a country area noticed an old man who followed them for some hours. When they questioned him, they learned that the man thought one of the ministers was his brother who had died some years previously. Of course, he was wrong, but he refused to believe he was wrong. Imagine the story the old man later told his friends and neighbors!

Some think they have seen people who have returned from the dead

Visions, Dreams, and Voices

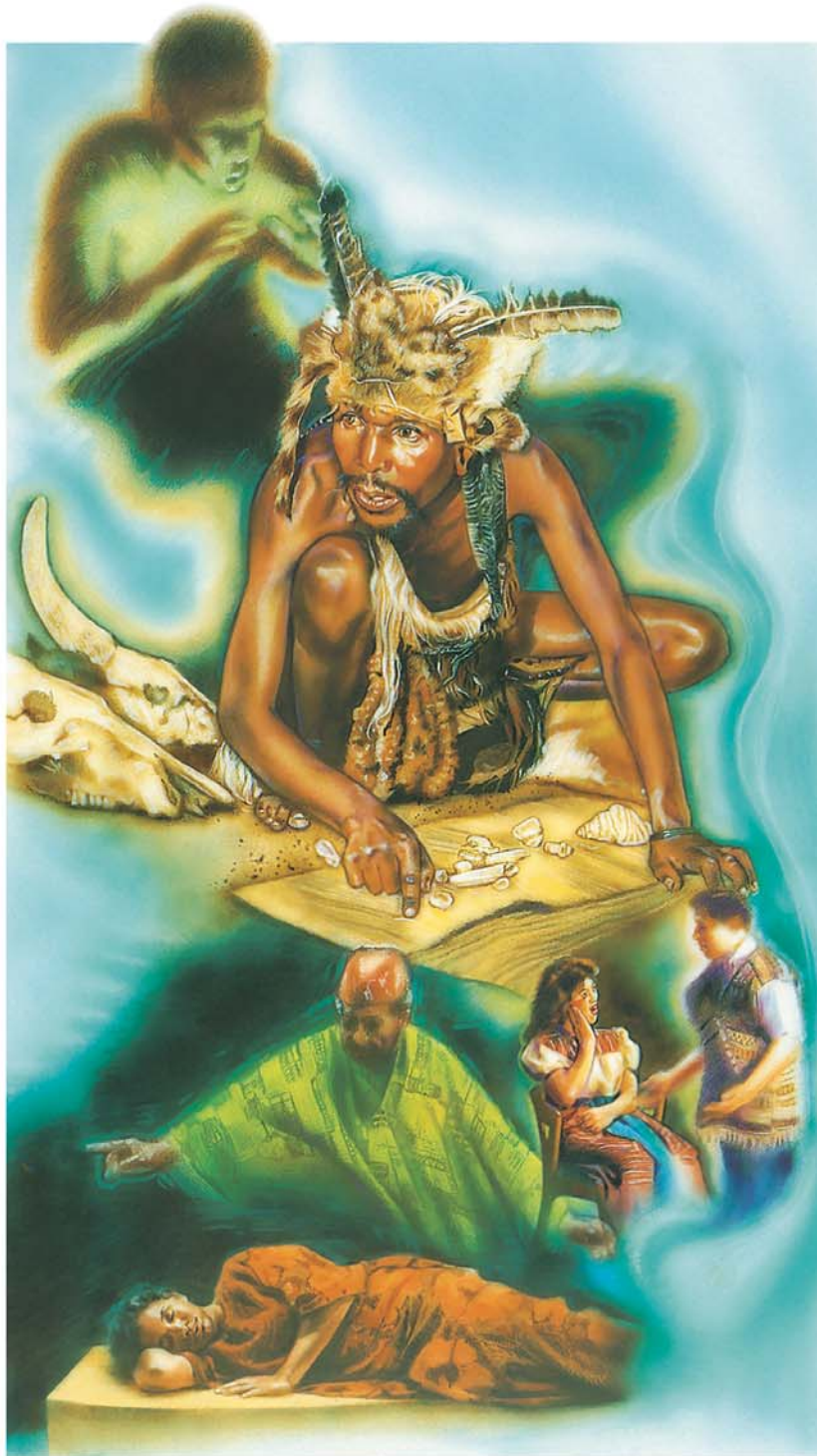
No doubt you know about strange things people have seen, heard, or dreamed. Such supernatural experiences often frighten those having them. Marein, who lived in West Africa, regularly heard the voice of her late grandmother calling her at night. Terrified, Marein would scream, waking up her whole household. Eventually, she lost her sanity.

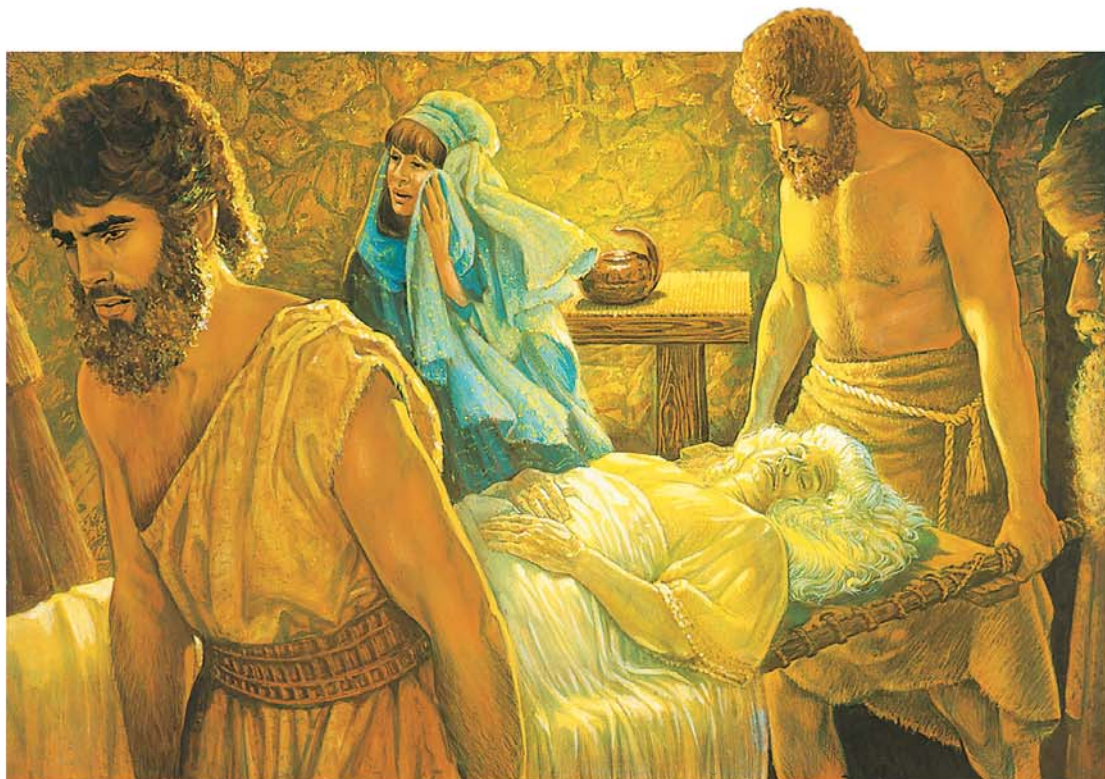
Now, if the dead were really alive, is it reasonable that they would terrify their loved ones? Of course not. The source of such hurtful messages is the demons.

But what about messages that seem to be helpful and comforting? For example, Gbas-say, from Sierra Leone, was sick. She had a dream in which her late father appeared to her. He instructed her to go to a certain tree, take a leaf, mix it with water, and drink it. She was not to talk to anybody before doing so. She did this and got well.

Another woman said that her husband appeared to her one night after he died. She said he looked very nice and wore beautiful clothes.

The demons mislead through dreams, visions, and voices





Such messages and visions seem good and helpful. Are they from God? No, they are not. Jehovah is “the God of truth.” (Psalm 31:5) Never would he agree to tricking or deceiving us. Only the demons do that.

But are there good demons? No. Even though they may seem helpful at times, all of them are bad. When the Devil spoke with Eve, he seemed friendly. (Genesis 3:1) But what resulted to her after she listened to him and did what he said? She died.

You know that it is not uncommon for a bad person to be friendly to those he wants to

deceive and cheat. “White teeth, black heart,” says the African proverb. And God’s Word says: “Satan himself keeps transforming himself into an angel of light.”—2 Corinthians 11:14.

God no longer contacts people on earth by means of dreams, visions, or voices from the spirit world. He guides and instructs them through the Bible, which can make a person “completely equipped for every good work.”—2 Timothy 3:17.

Thus, when Jehovah warns us against the tricks of the Devil, he does so because he loves us. He knows the demons are dangerous enemies.

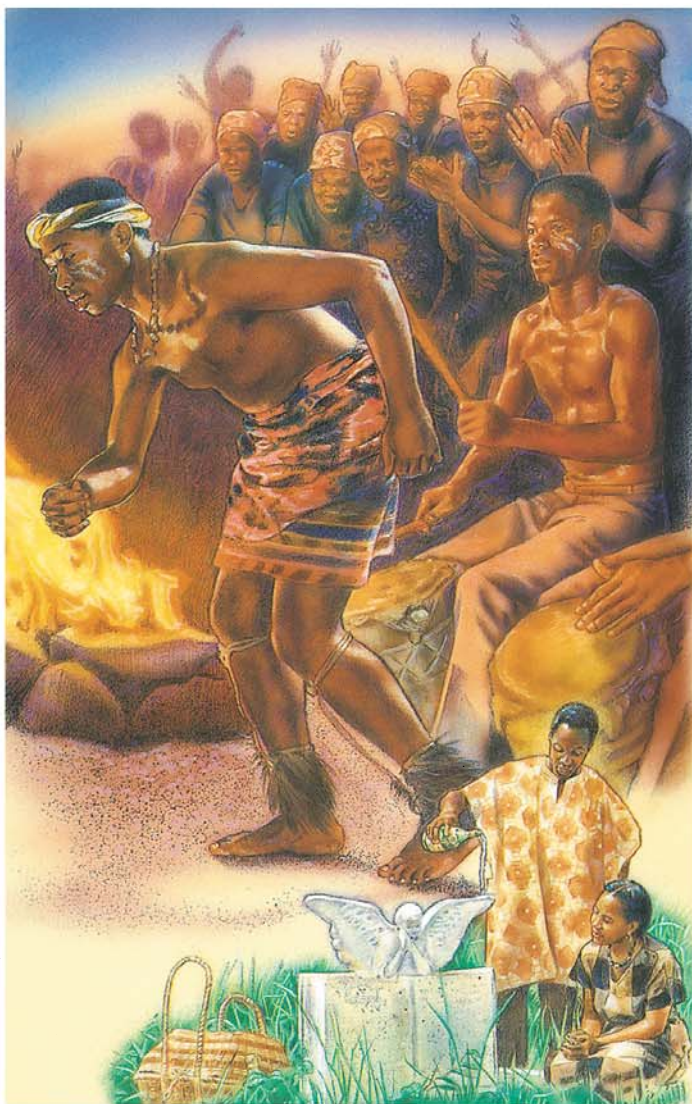
Satan said Eve would not die. Eve believed him, but eventually she died

The Demons Encourage Rebellion Against God

But why do Satan and his demons work so hard to deceive people? Because they want us to join in their rebellion. They want us to worship them. They want us to believe their lies and to practice things that Jehovah does not like. Many of these practices involve customs related to the dead.

The death of a loved one is an emotionally painful experience, and it is normal and proper to express grief. After the death of his friend Lazarus, Jesus “gave way to tears.”
—John 11:35.

There are many customs associated with death, and these vary widely throughout the world. Many do not conflict with Bible principles. Some practices, however, are based on the idea that the dead are alive and are able to see the living. Wakes, unrestrained mourning, and elaborate funeral ceremonies are all rooted in the fear of displeasing spirits of the dead. But since the dead are “conscious of nothing,” those practicing such things are promoting Satan’s falsehood.—Ecclesiastes 9:5.

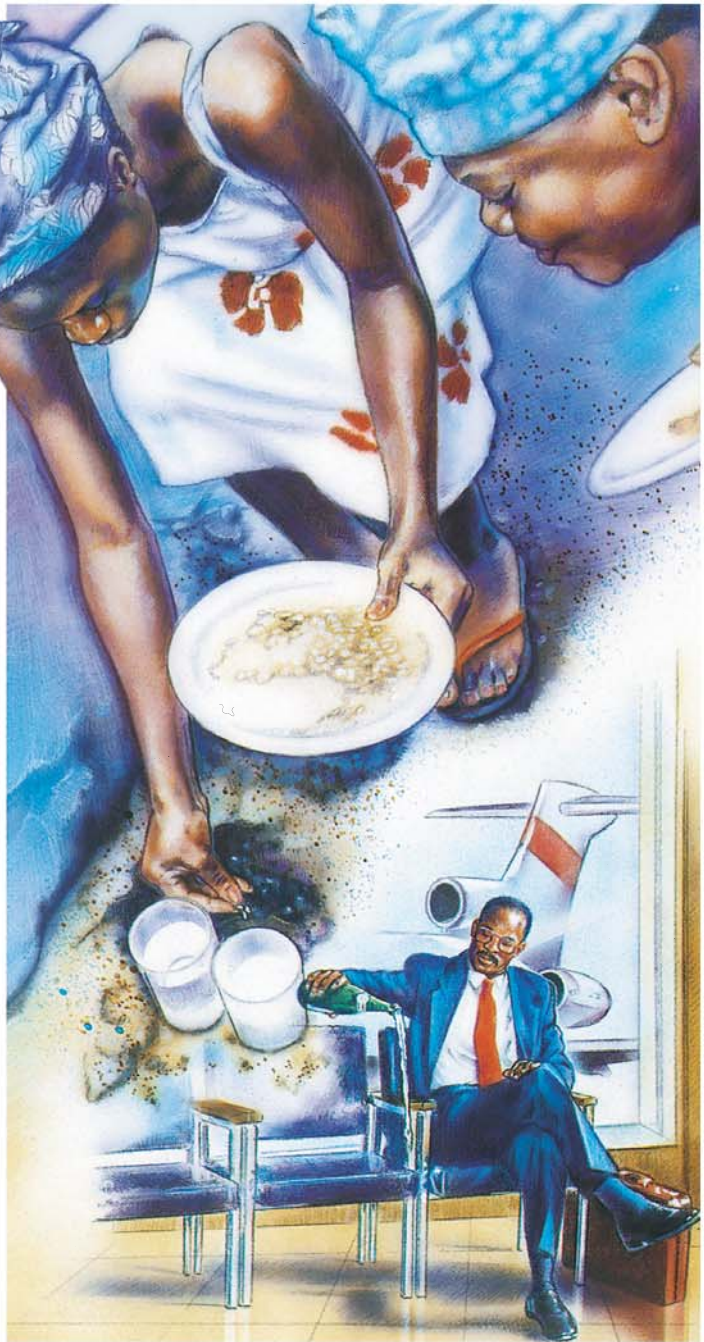


Some customs are based on the lie that the dead are able to see us

Other customs or ceremonies arise from the belief that the dead need help from the living and will harm the living if they are not appeased. In some lands feasting and sacrifices are held either 40 days or one year after a person's death. This is supposed to help the deceased to 'cross over' to the spirit realm. Another common practice is to offer food and drink to the dead.

These things are wrong because they promote Satan's lies about the dead. Would Jehovah approve of our having anything to do with customs based on the teachings of demons? Never! —2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

Servants of the true God do not have any share in practices that support Satan's lies. Instead, they lovingly concentrate on helping the living and comforting them. They know that once a person has passed away, only Jehovah can help that one.—Job 14:14, 15.



Other customs are based on the lie that the dead need our help

Spiritism Condemned by God

Some people get in touch with the demons directly or through a human medium. This is called spiritism. Voodoo, witchcraft, magic, fortune-telling, and inquiring of the dead are all forms of spiritism.

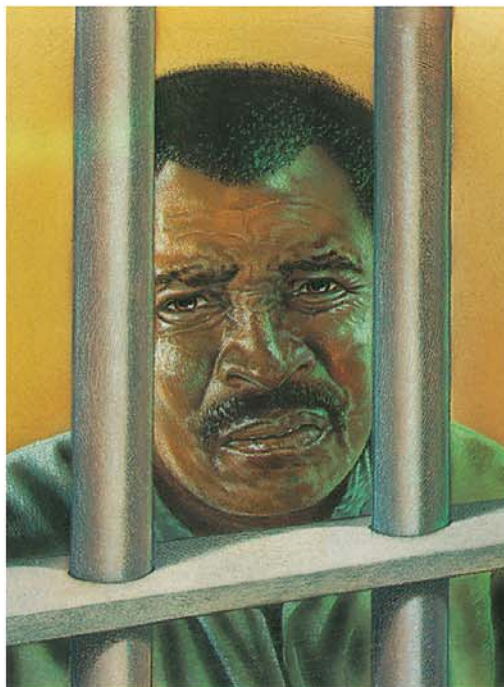
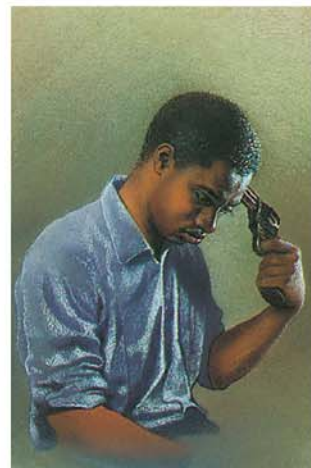
The Bible condemns these things, saying: “There should not be found in you anyone . . . who employs divination, a practitioner of magic or anyone

who looks for omens or a sorcerer, or one who binds others with a spell or anyone who consults a spirit medium or a professional foreteller of events or anyone who inquires of the dead. For everybody doing these things is something detestable to Jehovah.”—Deuteronomy 18:10-12.

Why does Jehovah warn us so strongly against these practices?

God is against these bad things. He requires exclusive devotion to himself.—Exodus 20:5





Those who practice spiritism often fare badly. They can lose their home, their freedom, even their life

For our own welfare, Jehovah warns us against all forms of spiritism. He loves and cares for people, and he knows that those who get involved with demons are bound to suffer.

One such person was Nilda, who was a spirit medium in Brazil. The demons made her life a misery. She relates: "The spirits . . . possessed me, ordering me about. I alternated between states of consciousness and unconsciousness, and

I was interned with psychiatric problems. The demons persecuted me so much that my nerves were affected. I took sedatives and began to drink and smoke constantly. This went on for years."

In time, with the help of Jehovah and his Witnesses on earth, Nilda broke free of demon influence and now lives a rich, wholesome life. She says: "I encourage all never, not for one instant, to become involved with the [wicked] spirits."

Serve Jehovah, Not Satan

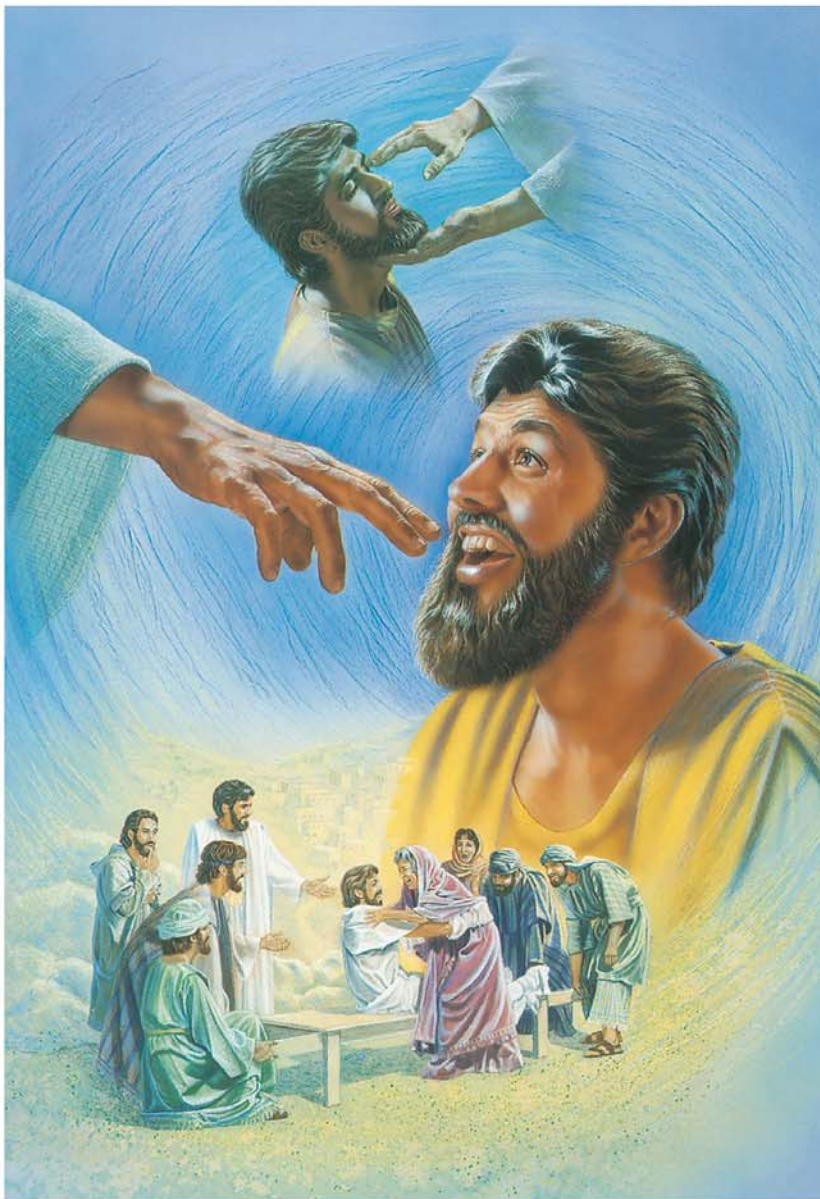
All of us have a choice. Either we serve Jehovah or we serve Satan and his demons. We cannot do both. How wise it is to serve Jehovah!

Jehovah Is Good

As we have seen, the demons enjoy hurting and deceiving people. Jehovah is not like that. He loves mankind as a father loves his children. He is the Giver of “every good gift and every perfect present.” (James 1:17) He holds back nothing good from mankind, even at great cost to himself.—Ephesians 2:4-7.

Think about the things done on earth by Jesus, God’s Son. He made speechless ones speak and gave sight to the blind. He cured lepers and lame people. He expelled demons and cured all kinds of sickness. Jesus, by God’s power, even raised the dead to life.—Matthew 9: 32-35; 15:30, 31; Luke 7: 11-15.

Instead of telling lies to mislead us, God always tells the truth. He never deceives anyone.—Numbers 23:19.



Jesus, God's Son, showed love for people by healing their sicknesses

Avoid Unclean Practices

Just as a spiderweb holds fast a fly, millions of people are held fast by superstition and falsehood. They fear the dead. They fear the demons. They worry about curses, omens, charms, and fetishes. They are bound by beliefs and traditions based on the lies of Satan the Devil. God's servants are ensnared by none of these things.

Jehovah is far more powerful than Satan. If you serve Jehovah, he will protect you from the demons. (James 4:7) Spells will not work on you. For example, in Nigeria, three powerful witch doctors cast spells to kill a Witness of Jehovah who refused to leave town. When the spells failed, one of the

witch doctors became fearful, went to the Witness, and begged for mercy.

If the demons harass you, you can call on Jehovah by name and he will protect you. (Proverbs 18:10) But in order for you to have God's protection, you must completely break free from everything associated with spiritism and demon worship. Worshipers of God in ancient Ephesus did that. They collected all their books on magic and burned them. (Acts 19:19, 20) God's servants today must do the same. Rid yourself of charms, amulets, "protective" strings, fetishes, magic books, and anything else connected with spiritistic practices.

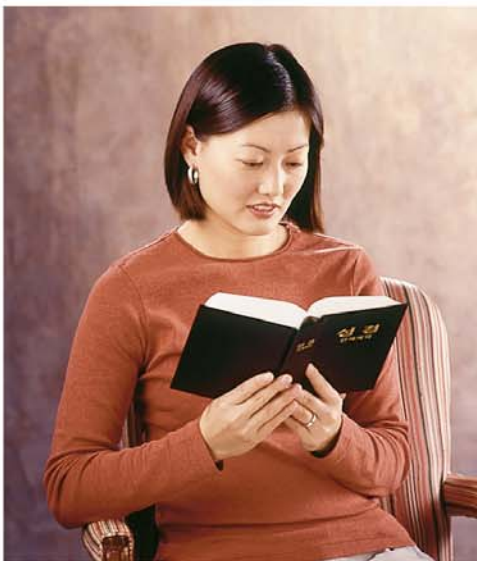
*The Ephesians
burned their
books about
magic*



Practice True Worship

If you want to please God, it is not enough merely to abandon false worship and to stop doing bad things. You must actively practice pure worship. The Bible shows what is required:

Study the Bible.
—John 17:3



Attend Christian meetings.
—Hebrews 10:24, 25

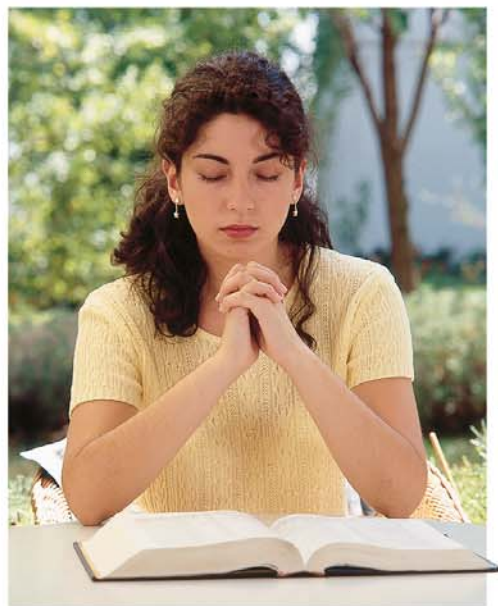




Preach to others.—Matthew 24:14

Be baptized.—Acts 2:41

Pray to Jehovah.—Philippians 4:6, 7



Associate With Jehovah's Witnesses

Satan and the demons have people on earth that teach and practice wrong things. But Jehovah has a people also. They are Jehovah's Witnesses. (Isaiah 43:10) Throughout the earth, there are more than six million Witnesses. All of them try hard to do good things and teach people the truth. In most lands, you can meet them at the Kingdom Hall, where they will warmly welcome you.

Their work is to help others serve God. They will study the Bible with you in your home, helping you learn how to worship Jehovah in the right way. You do not have to pay for this. The Witnesses are happy to teach the truth because they love people and they love Jehovah God.

*Jehovah's Witnesses will help
you serve God*



A Marvelous Future

Satan and his demons will not deceive mankind much longer. Jehovah has already thrown them out of heaven. (Revelation 12:9) In the near future, God will again act against Satan and his demons. In a vision from God, the apostle John said: "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven with the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he seized the dragon, the original serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he hurled him into the abyss and shut it and sealed it over him, that he might not mislead the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended." (Revelation 20:1-3) Later, the Devil and his demons will be destroyed forever.—Revelation 20:10.

Bad people on earth will also be done away with.—Psalm 37:9, 10; Luke 13:5.

*Soon Satan and the demons
will be put out of action*





The Dead Will Live Again!

After Satan and the demons are out of the way, Jehovah will bring many blessings to mankind. You will remember that the dead are lifeless, nonexistent. Jesus compared death to sleep—a deep sleep without dreams. (John 11: 11-14) He did that because he knew the time would come when those asleep in death would be awakened to life. He

said: “The hour is coming in which all those in the memorial tombs will . . . come out.”

—John 5:28, 29; compare Acts 24:15.

They will be brought to life here on earth. Instead of announcements that people have died, joyful reports will tell of those who have been brought back to life! What a joy it will be to welcome loved ones back from the grave!

The dead will come back to life on earth

The Paradise Earth

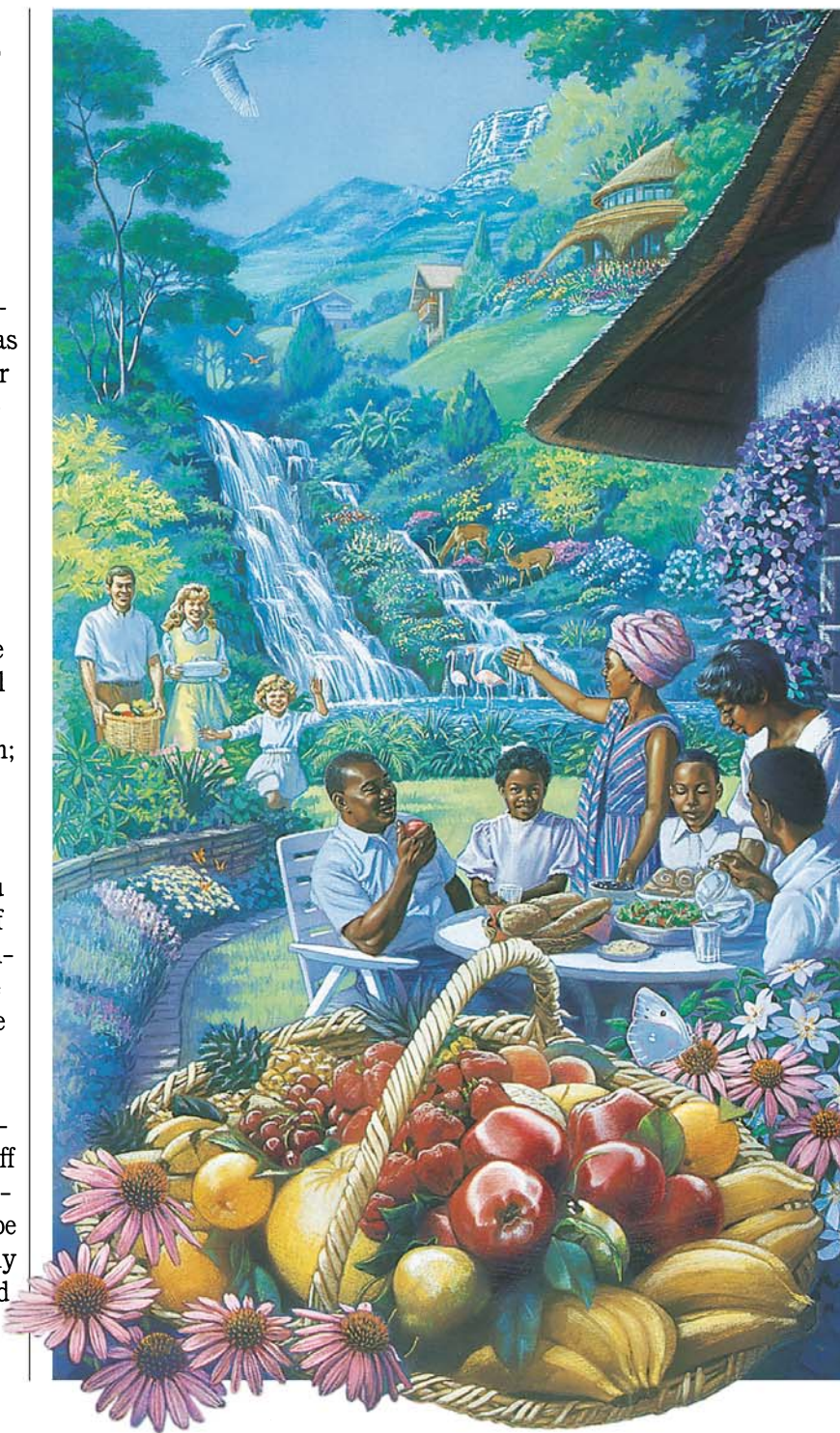
Jehovah will completely undo all the bad that Satan has done. Jehovah has made Jesus the King over all the earth. Under his rulership, the earth will be made into a paradise.—Daniel 7: 13, 14; Luke 23:43.

Jehovah promises these things:

PLENTY OF FOOD: “The earth itself will certainly give its produce; God, our God, will bless us.” “There will come to be plenty of grain on the earth; on the top of the mountains there will be an overflow.” —Psalm 67:6; 72:16.

NO MORE WAR: “Come, you people, behold the activities of Jehovah, how he has set astonishing events on the earth. He is making wars to cease to the extremity of the earth.” —Psalm 46:8, 9.

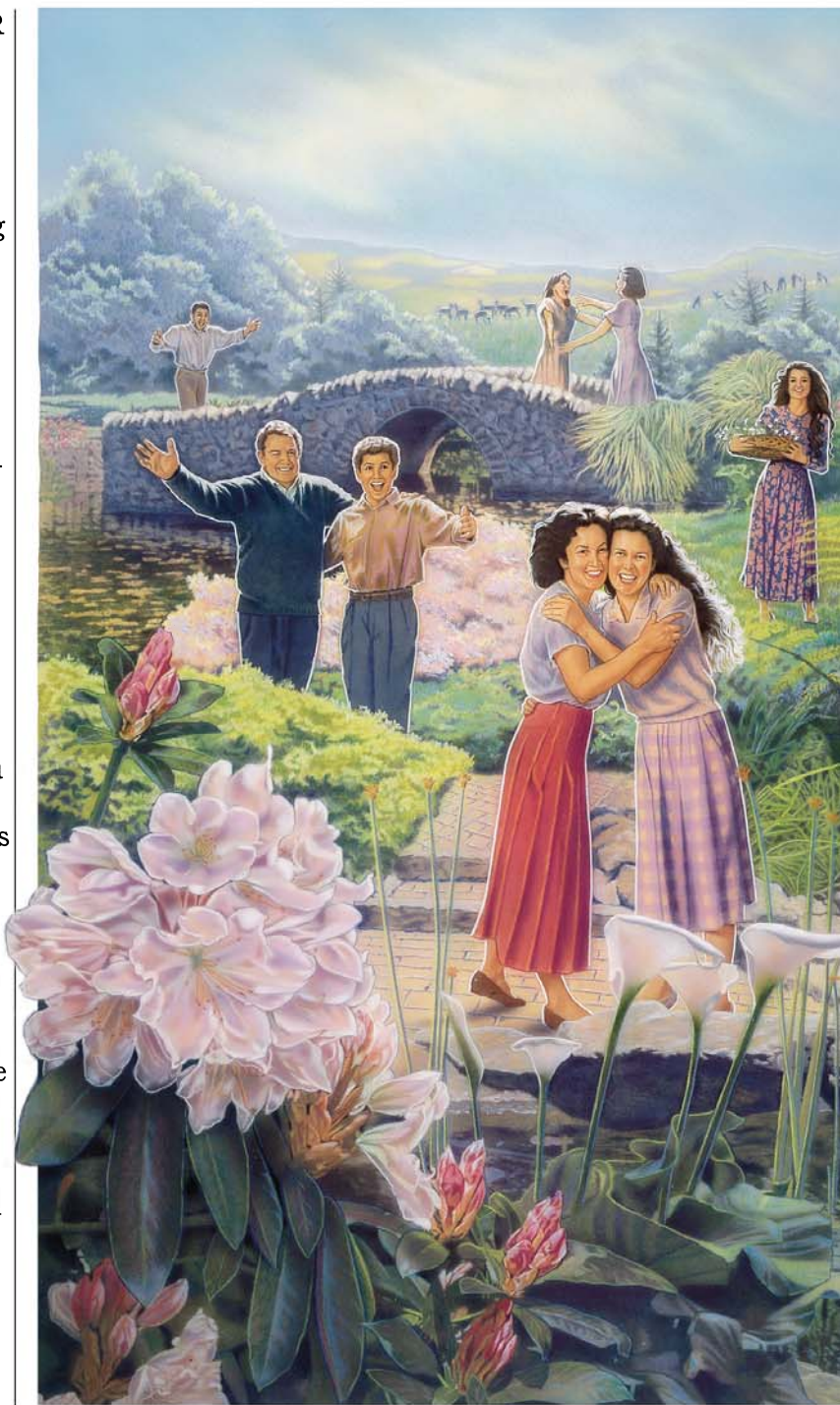
NO BAD PEOPLE: “For evil-doers themselves will be cut off . . . And just a little while longer, and the wicked one will be no more; and you will certainly give attention to his place, and he will not be.”—Psalm 37: 9, 10.



NO SICKNESS, SORROW, OR DEATH: "At that time the eyes of the blind ones will be opened, and the very ears of the deaf ones will be unstopped. At that time the lame one will climb up just as a stag does, and the tongue of the speechless one will cry out in gladness."—Isaiah 35:5, 6.

"And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away."—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Unlike Satan and the demons, Jehovah never lies. Everything he promises must come true. (Luke 1:36, 37) Jehovah loves you and wants you to live in the Paradise that he will make. So contact Jehovah's Witnesses to learn more about the marvelous truths found in God's Word. If you apply the truth in your life, you will be set free from bondage to falsehood, superstition, and ignorance. In time, you will even be released from bondage to sin and death. As Jesus said: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."—John 8:32.



Would you welcome more information?
You may contact Jehovah's Witnesses at **www.jw.org**.

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