The ultimate display of ant altruism is found in Malaysia. Here resides a rare breed of carpenter ant that has been given a rather gruesome namethe Malaysian exploding ant (Camponotus saundersi). This tiny creature can actually explode itself outside the nest to protect the colony from enemies. These "kamikaze" ants have large poison glands that run the whole length of their body. When the nest is threatened, soldier ants violently contract their abdominal musclesthus rupturing their skin (exoskeleton)—and spray a sticky, corrosive poison in all directions. We might see this ant as a "type of Christ"—one willing to "go outside the camp" (Hebrews 13:8) to give up their life so that others might live (Mark 10:45).

## DIGGING DEEPER

• The Bible (Proverbs 6:6 ESV) refers to an ant as "her" or "she." That's because ant

> Let us, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore. **HEBREWS 13:13**

colonies are made up almost entirely of females. Theirs is a society of "sisters."

· Compared to you, an ant's strength is small (Proverbs 30:25), but some ants can lift 100 times their own weight. That's like a 120-pound (54 kg) woman lifting six tons!

· Ants are the greatest predators on Earth. They eat more meat than all lions, tigers, bears, and wolves combined.

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ature

"Go to the ant . . . consider her

ways, and be wise"

PROVERBS 6:6

elieve it or not, the tiny ant is one of the most altruistic creatures fashioned by Christ Jesus. As an ant ages, she willingly changes jobs in order to best serve her colony. Older ants volunteer to perform some of the riskier chores—such as colony defense, foraging outside the safety of the nest, and removal of germ-laden trash. In addition, diseased and dying ants voluntarily leave the nest to prevent exposing their sisters to danger. Would we do the same if we were in an ant's "shoes"?

Ant defending

her helpless sister

Altruism (ALL - tru - izm) comes from the French word, altruisme, which means "other." It describes those who are more devoted to the welfare of others than themselves (see Philippians 2:3-4). Whether or not ants are aware of the self-sacrificing behaviors that Christ liberally gives them, only He knows. Obviously it is important to God, which speaks volumes about His character!

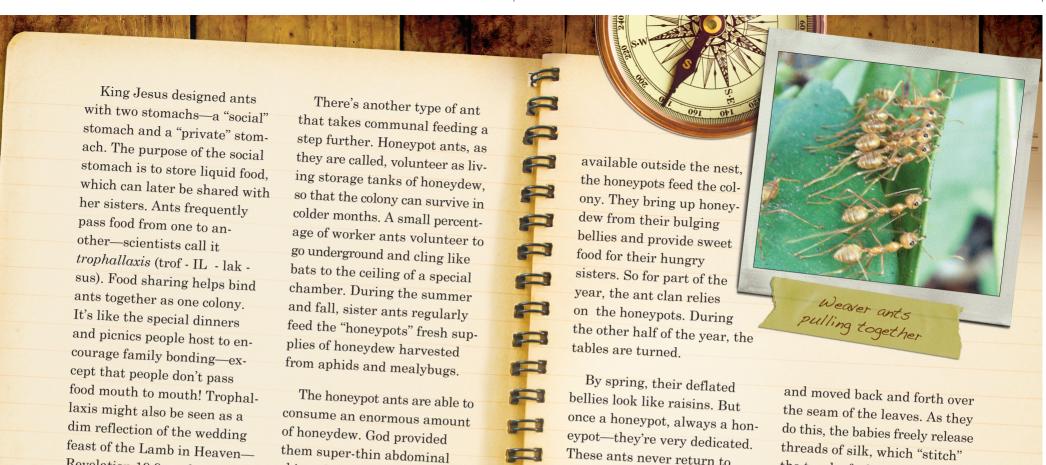
continued ...

Revelation 19:9 —when the

with all His people.

Honeypot ants

glory of Christ will be shared



-

Throughout the colder months when honeydew isn't

skin, which stretches as their

bellies swell with honeydew.

to move, making them fully

dependent upon their sisters

for survival.

When bloated, they are unable

eypot—they're very dedicated. These ants never return to normal life nor see the light of day. They do, however, spend several years in faithful serv-

Another example of altruism can be observed in weaver ants (Oecophylla sp.) of Southeast Asia. These insects build homes by sewing together leaves. Baby ants (larvae) are taken from their nest, held in the

ice to their community.

mandibles of worker ants,

do this, the babies freely release threads of silk, which "stitch" the two leaf edges together.

The downside to this type of nest building is that if a baby ant sacrifices herself for the good of the colony, she then doesn't have enough silk to spin her own cocoon, and thus mature into an adult. She remains a larva all her life. But Jesus, our Creator, secretly directs the adult weaver ants to care for these babies the rest of their lives. What a good God they serve (Psalm 145:9)!

continued ...