

June 1, 1988

The Watchtower

Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom



SHOULD I CHANGE MY RELIGION?



The Watchtower®

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THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as the Sovereign of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as they fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in the now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

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Should I Change My Religion?

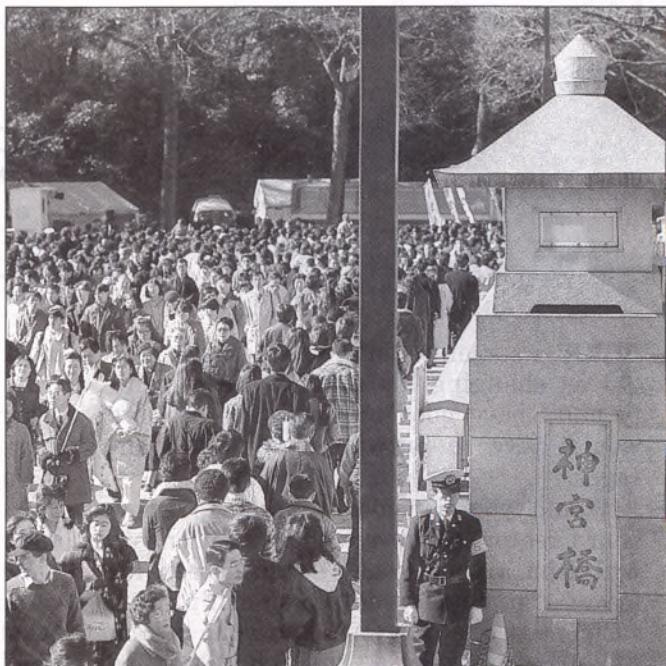
THE pilot had just taken off from Okinawa's Naha Airport with 101 passengers on board. Suddenly he noticed three weather reconnaissance planes headed toward him on a collision course. Acting quickly, the pilot veered sharply to the left, thereby avoiding a midair collision, saving his own life and the lives of his passengers. That account of a near-miss, as reported in a northern Japan newspaper, well illustrates that to save lives a drastic change in course is sometimes necessary.

However, many people feel that changing one's religion is a different matter. Strong fears come into play. There is the fear of starting down an unfamiliar path. Mrs. Tachi, who studied the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, expressed herself this way: "A lot of the people I know have doubts about religion and its emphasis on money. But all we have known and seen from youth on are the religious festivals and customs. We don't think much about the spiritual meaning of the *hoji* [the periodical Buddhist memorial service on behalf of a deceased person]. We think more of the *hoji* as a happy time to be with relatives and neighbors. The thought of

giving all of that up, or worse yet, being ousted by the family frightened me." This feeling about religion is probably shared by people in your locality.

There are other fears too. In many places, people fear some form of divine reprisal if they change their religion. One woman who began to study the Bible in Japan was told by her relatives that she was experiencing health and family problems because she had "neglected her ancestors" and incurred their wrath by studying a "foreign religion."

Another fear that holds people back from changing their religion is the fear of displeasing a mate or parents. In many Eastern countries, where loyalty to parents and family is viewed as especially important, a new wife is commonly expected to support the religious view of the family into which she is marrying. Even



What motivates people to cling to their traditional religious customs?

if the couple are not particularly religious, maintaining a good relationship with the family and keeping the religious status quo are considered extremely important. One young couple discontinued their Bible study after being put under intense pressure at a "family conference." "Basically, we had a fear of man," explains the husband, who later resumed the study. "We felt that we should obey our parents' wishes, and we did not want to hurt them by changing our religion."

This brings to mind another reason why many are afraid to change their religion: the universal dislike of being viewed as different. In the family mentioned above, one of the reasons given by the parents for the young couple to stop their Bible study was that they did not want their children to be viewed as peculiar or to be ostracized from community activities.

Strong fears, therefore, are involved in

the question, Should I change my religion? As a result, many take a philosophical view: It does not really matter what religion one has, does it? Are not all religions simply different paths leading to the top of the same mountain? When it comes to religion, they, like the three proverbial monkeys, see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil.

But some *have* changed their religion. Why? For a number of these, it was merely a matter of joining another religion that promised immediate health or financial benefits, while at the same time maintaining their traditional religious ideas and practices. But for others, there has been a real and complete change. You may be wondering, though, 'Are there really sufficient reasons for me to change *my* religion? Why have some been willing to change? Could a change have a real effect on my life?' We invite you to examine the following article for the answers.

Why Some Have Changed Their Religion

FOR a person to take such a drastic step as changing his religion, he certainly must have good reasons. The benefits would have to outweigh any disadvantages.

Would you consider getting to know your Creator and developing a relationship with him a good reason? It has been for many. To develop a relationship with someone, we must get to know the person well. For example, a small child may be afraid to take hold of a stranger's hand until he gets to know him. So with us, we

must come to know God before we start to trust him. True, most religions have a central figure they worship as God. But is it not also true that for most persons God is vague and distant with no clearly defined personality? So how do we get to know him?

When we look at the things around us, we are awed by what we see. We detect beauty, intelligence, and power. The origin of all of this perplexes many, but there is a book that explains it clearly. It is the Bible. Through its pages, we learn that

these wonders originated with a Creator who has a name and a personality. As we carefully study the Bible, God's personality becomes very clear to us. We see him as a God of love and care. "God is love," says the Bible. (1 John 4:8) We are drawn to this magnificent personality, perfectly balanced in love, wisdom, justice, and power. A close relationship follows.

Misae went through just such an experience of being drawn to Jehovah. She explained: 'As a child, I was taught that many gods existed. There was a god for the water, a god for the trees, and one for the house. Although I doubted their existence, I did believe that there must be one true God. My strict Buddhist-Shinto upbringing caused me to think of God as being fearsome, someone who meted out punishment for misdeeds. Although I had a desire to go to a church and learn about the Christian God, my Buddhist background held me back. Then a lady came to my house and offered to study the Bible with me. Through that study, I learned that God has a name, Jehovah. I was thrilled to know that he is not a fearsome God but a loving one, always watching over us, not to punish, but to help. I wanted to serve that God, and so I changed my religion.' She has been enjoying a satisfying relationship with God for some 29 years.

Relationship That Gives Freedom and Hope

There is a side benefit that many have received through developing a relationship with God. As other relationships begin to take on lesser importance in their lives, many have gained freedom from the enslaving fear of man and oppressive cus-



My strict Buddhist-Shinto upbringing caused me to think of God as being fearsome

toms devoid of real meaning and value. Hence, they have been freed from the burdensome costs of maintaining appearances and traditions, which keep many families in constant debt. "Trembling at men is what lays a snare," warns the Bible, adding the assurance, "He that is trusting in Jehovah will be protected."—Proverbs 29:25.

Another freedom to be gained is the freedom from fear of death. The above-quoted Misae says: "When I was 22, I contracted typhoid fever. As I lay there semi-conscious, I could hear friends and family members talk about me as if they expected me to die. But I feared death. My only thought was that I wanted to live, and fortunately I did get better. Through my later study of the Bible, I was freed from that fear of death. I learned that death is simply nonexistence." The Bible says: "As

for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all." (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) If someone dies, there is the wonderful hope of the resurrection because God keeps the dead alive in his memory.—John 5:28, 29.

Many others who study the Bible have similarly found that the things they have learned have given their life real meaning and hope. This is one reason why the Bible was written, namely, that "we might have hope." (Romans 15:4) Buddhism teaches nothing about a Creator or God. It is said that evil and suffering have always existed and will continue forever through endless cycles of rebirth. Most Western religions teach that the good will go to heaven, an indefinite place, but as for what they will do there, they are not too sure. In contrast with these religious philosophies that give very little hope or meaning to their lives, the Bible teaches that man was made to enjoy life forever on the earth as its caretaker. (Genesis 2:15-17; Isaiah 45:18) We may thus come to realize that life should be spent not just to gather possessions and serve self but to serve God and others in an unselfish way.—Ecclesiastes 12:13; Matthew 22:37-39.

Gaining the Truth and True Friends

Some are compelled to change their religion for other reasons. Among them is a desire to search out religious truth. Of course, many people feel that there is no such thing as absolute truth and, as the Bible says, they 'make no search.'—Psalm 10:4.

But there are those who do make such a search. Sakae, who lives in central Japan, went from one Buddhist sect to another for 25 years to find the truth. She was never satisfied. As she rose to responsible positions in each organization, she always saw things that stumbled her, such as commercialism, immorality, and exploitation. She even traveled to India to search

out the roots of Buddhism in the historic spots where Buddha lived and taught. She was greatly disappointed to find very little interest in Buddhism in that Hindu country. Then in her conversations with Jehovah's Witnesses, she was told that not all religions are from God but are from his enemy, Satan the Devil.—1 Corinthians 10:20.

This shocked Sakae, but it caused her to think and investigate. She read the book *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?** and other Bible publications. She began to see that whereas Buddhism, as practiced in Japan, went through many changes over the years, the Bible has remained unchanged for thousands of years. Eventually her investigation paid off. She found the truth she had been seeking. Her joy was like the joy of the man in Jesus' parable who found a treasure hidden in a field: "For the joy he has he goes and sells what things he has and buys that field."

—Matthew 13:44.

Those who have found religious truth show "fellow feeling" for others who are seeking it. (1 Peter 3:8) In fact, their warmth and genuine love initially attracts many to a study of the Bible. "All will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves," said Jesus. (John 13:35) Where can we find such a loving atmosphere today? Kazuhiko Nagoya, writing in his column for Tokyo's *Daily Yomiuri*, commented on the warm way he was treated when he visited a meeting place of Jehovah's Witnesses. "The way they smiled," said Nagoya, "it looked as though they had recognized me from a previous meeting and were happy to see me again." But this was not the case. "I looked hard at their faces and found that they were total strangers." When two other people also smiled, "I felt very happy,"

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'Cramped is the road leading off into life'

recalls Nagoya. "That is the way those people smile at a stranger, when they spot him at any of their meetings."

Warmth and love do not result from people's knowing one another well because of gathering locally on a regular basis. Rather, these result from a regular study of the Bible and the application of its principles in their lives. Many persons invited to attend the 1985-86 "Integrity Keepers" District Conventions of Jehovah's Witnesses in foreign lands were deeply touched by the love and hospitality shown them by their hosts. One young couple from Japan who attended the convention in the Philippines commented: "When we all joined together for the final song, each singing in his own language, we were deeply moved. We felt for the first time what it means to belong to a truly international brotherhood."

Finally, many will tell you of the great changes they have made in their lives as a result of studying the Bible and applying it. People with personalities formerly as different as sheep are from wolves are now

getting along peaceably in the Christian assembly. (Isaiah 11:6) Some were moody and unfriendly, short-tempered and even fearful. Others had trouble with depression. Still others were introverted and self-centered. Many had bad habits to overcome. But by diligent effort, coupled with the desire to please God, they were able to make drastic changes.

What about you? Do any of the above reasons for making changes appeal to you? If so, we encourage you to make a serious study of the Bible. The Bible shows that all false religions are on a collision course with the God of the Bible. Like the pilot mentioned in the previous article, you may have to take drastic action to save your life and the lives of your loved ones. "Broad and spacious is the road leading off into destruction," said Jesus, "and many are the ones going in through it; whereas narrow is the gate and cramped the road leading off into life." (Matthew 7:13, 14) Yes, if you are walking on that "broad and spacious" road, there is good reason for you to change your religion!

Healing a Man Born Blind

WHEN the Jews try to stone Jesus while he is in the temple, he hides himself and escapes. But he does not leave Jerusalem. Later, on the Sabbath, he and his disciples are walking in the city when they see a man who has been blind from birth. "Rabbi, who sinned," the disciples ask Jesus, "this man or his parents, so that he was born blind?"

Perhaps the disciples believe, as some rabbis do, that a person can sin in his mother's womb. But Jesus answers: "Neither this man sinned nor his parents, but it was in order that the works of God might be made manifest in his case." The man's blindness is not the consequence of a specific error or sin committed by either the man or his parents. The sin of the first man Adam resulted in all humans' being imperfect, and thus subject to defects such as being born blind. This defect in the man now furnishes an opportunity for Jesus to make manifest the works of God.

Jesus stresses an urgency in doing these works. "We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day," he says. "The night is coming when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the world's light." Soon Jesus' death will plunge him into the darkness of the grave where he can no longer do anything. In the meantime, he is a source of enlightenment to the world.

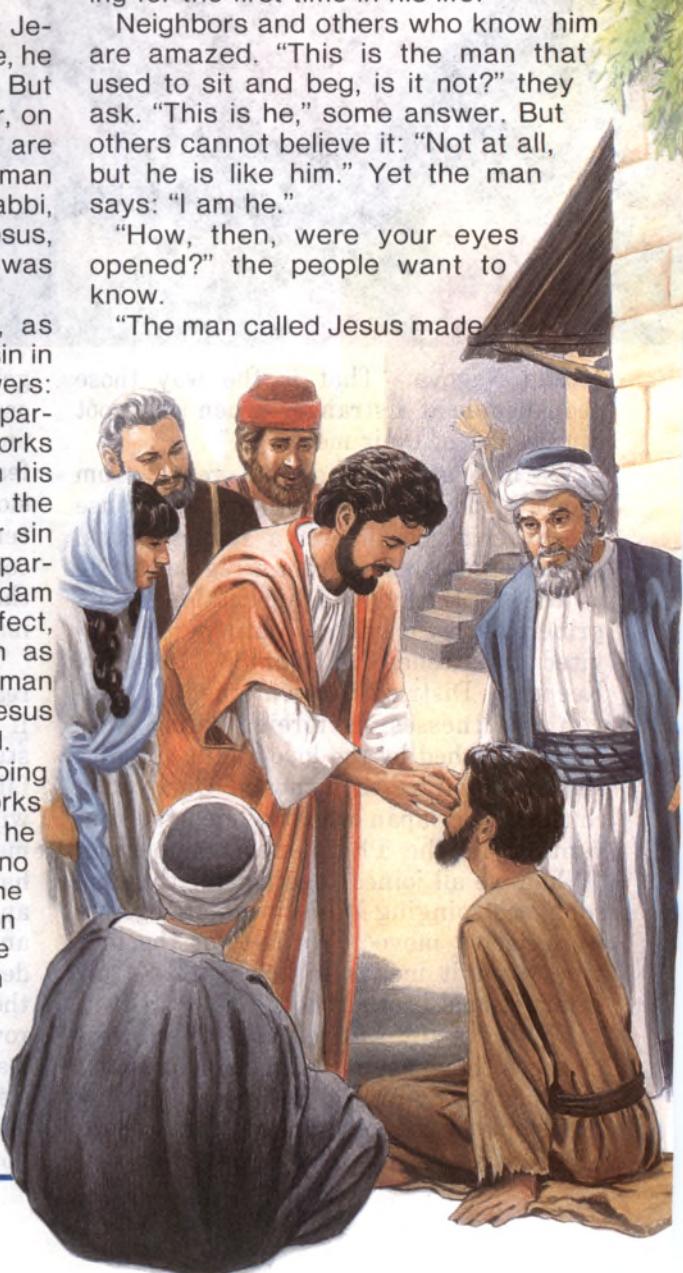
After saying these things, Jesus spits on the ground and with

the saliva makes some clay. He puts this on the blind man's eyes and says: "Go wash in the pool of Siloam." The man obeys. And when he does, he can see! How he rejoices on his return, seeing for the first time in his life!

Neighbors and others who know him are amazed. "This is the man that used to sit and beg, is it not?" they ask. "This is he," some answer. But others cannot believe it: "Not at all, but he is like him." Yet the man says: "I am he."

"How, then, were your eyes opened?" the people want to know.

"The man called Jesus made





a clay and smeared it on my eyes and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' I therefore went and washed and gained sight."

"Where is that man?" they ask.

"I do not know," he answers.

The people now lead the once blind man to their religious leaders, the Pharisees. These also take up asking him how he gained sight. "He put a clay upon my eyes, and I washed and have sight," the man explains.

Surely, the Pharisees should rejoice with the healed beggar! But instead they denounce Jesus. "This is not a man from God," they claim. Why do they say this? "Because he does not observe the Sabbath." And yet other Pharisees wonder: "How can a man that is a

sinner perform signs of that sort?" So there is a division among them.

Hence, they ask the man: "What do you say about him, seeing that he opened your eyes?"

"He is a prophet," he answers.

The Pharisees refuse to believe this. They are convinced that there must be some secret agreement between Jesus and this man to fool the people. So to resolve the matter, they call the beggar's parents in order to question them.

John 8:59; 9:1-18.

- ♦ What was responsible for the man's blindness and what was not?
- ♦ What is the night when no man can work?
- ♦ When the man is healed, what is the reaction of those who know him?
- ♦ How were the Pharisees divided over the man's healing?

Jesus Christ God's Beloved Son

"Also, there was a voice from the heavens that said: 'This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved.'" —MATTHEW 3:17.

JESUS CHRIST was baptized at the age of 30 by being immersed in water. When he came up out of the water, a voice from heaven said: "This is my Son, the beloved, whom I have approved." (Matthew 3:17) That voice was God's voice. On another occasion, in prayer to God, Jesus said: "Father, glorify your name." And when Jesus had said that, God's "voice came out of heaven: 'I both glorified it and will glorify it again.'" —John 12:28.

² From these accounts, even a child can understand that the relationship between almighty God and Jesus Christ was that of a father and his beloved son, two different individuals. Yet, this simple Bible truth is denied by the religions of Christendom. They insist that Jesus Christ is God Almighty himself, the second person of a Trinity, the third person being the holy spirit.

1, 2. (a) What simple truth does the Bible teach regarding almighty God and Jesus Christ? (b) What do the religions of Christendom teach?



³ That teaching has caused great confusion among the people of Christendom's religions, which is one reason why the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* calls the Trinity a mystery. Indeed, it causes confusion even among the clergy, for that encyclopedia also says: "There are few teachers of Trinitarian theology in Roman Catholic seminaries who have not been badgered at one time or another by the question, 'But how does one preach the Trinity?' And if the question is symptomatic of confusion on the part of the students, perhaps it is no less symptomatic of similar confusion on the part of their professors."

⁴ That confusing doctrine is the central belief of Catholic and Protestant religions. *The Catholic Encyclopedia* states: "The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion . . . Thus, in the words of the Athanasian Creed: 'the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.'" Similarly, in a court case involving Jehovah's Witnesses in Greece, the Greek Orthodox Church said: "The funda-

3. How is confusion about the Trinity doctrine shown?
4. What is the official teaching of the churches regarding the Trinity?

mental doctrine of Christianity, in which all Christians confess belief . . . regardless of sect or dogma, is . . . the Trinity, that God is One in three persons." The Greek Orthodox Church also stated: "Christians are those who accept Christ as God." It said that those who do not accept the Trinity are not Christians but heretics.

⁵ However, if this "fundamental" Trinity teaching of Christendom is not true, if it is a lie, then the opposite would be the case. True Christians would reject it. Those who have apostatized from Christianity would cling to it. With what consequences for the latter group? In the last book of the Bible, "a revelation by Jesus Christ, which God gave him," we read concerning those who are disqualified from eternal life in God's Kingdom: "Outside are the dogs and those who practice spiritism and the fornicators and the murderers and the idolaters *and everyone liking and carrying on a lie.*" —Revelation 1:1; 22:15.

⁶ Because of its importance, we should be informed as to where this Trinity concept originated and why it originated. Who is really behind it? What does modern Bible scholarship have to say about it? But before discussing these matters, let us examine further what God's own inspired Word says.—2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Not 'God the Son' but "God's Son"

⁷ Never did Jesus claim to be almighty God himself. Any impartial reading of the Bible without preconceived ideas about the Trinity will verify that. For example, at John 3:16, Jesus said: "For God loved the world so much that he gave his *only-begotten Son.*" Just two verses later, Jesus again said that he was "the only-begotten Son of God." (John 3:18) When the Jews

5, 6. Why is it important to know the truth about this matter?

7. What does an impartial study of the Bible reveal about Jesus?

accused Jesus of blasphemy, he answered: "Do you say to me whom the Father sanctified and dispatched into the world, 'You blaspheme,' because I said, I am God's Son?" (John 10:36) Jesus did not say that he was 'God the Son' but that he was "God's Son."

⁸ When Jesus died, even the Roman soldiers standing by knew that Jesus was not God: "The army officer and those with him watching over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things happening, grew very much afraid, saying: 'Certainly this was God's Son.'" (Matthew 27:54) They did not say, 'this was God' or 'this was God the Son,' because Jesus and his disciples taught that Jesus was the Son of God, not God Almighty in human form.

⁹ God himself testified that Jesus was his beloved Son, as the Bible writer Matthew noted when Jesus was baptized. (Matthew 3:17) Other Bible writers noted the same. Mark wrote: "A voice came out of the heavens: 'You are my Son, the beloved; I have approved you.'" (Mark 1:11) Luke said: "A voice came out of heaven: 'You are my Son, the beloved; I have approved you.'" (Luke 3:22) And John the Baptizer, who baptized Jesus, testified: "I have borne witness that this one [Jesus] is the Son of God." (John 1:34) So God himself, all four Gospel writers, and John the Baptizer clearly state that Jesus was the Son of God. And some time later, at the transfiguration of Jesus, a similar thing happened: "A voice [God's] came out of the cloud, saying: 'This is my Son, the one that has been chosen. Listen to him.'"—Luke 9:35.

¹⁰ In these accounts, was God saying that he was his own son, that he sent himself, and that he approved himself? No, God the

8. What testimony did an army officer and those with him give?

9, 10. What powerful testimony is given in the Gospels about the relationship between God and Jesus?

Father, the Creator, was saying that he had sent his Son Jesus, a separate individual, to do God's work. Hence, throughout the Greek Scriptures the phrase "Son of God" is used to refer to Jesus. But not once do we see the phrase 'God the Son,' for Jesus was not almighty God. He was the Son of God. They are two different persons, and no theological "mystery" can change that truth.

The Father Superior to the Son

¹¹ Jesus knew that he was not equal to his Father but in every way was in a subordinate position. He knew that he was a beloved Son who had deep love for his Father. That is why, time and again, Jesus made statements such as the following: "The Son cannot do a single thing of his own initiative, but only what he beholds the Father doing." (John 5:19) "I have come down from heaven to do, not my will, but the will of him that sent me." (John 6:38) "What I teach is not mine, but belongs to him that sent me." (John 7:16) "I know him [God], because I am a representative from him, and that One sent me forth." (John 7:29) The one who does the sending is the superior. The one who is sent is the lesser, the servant. God is the sender. Jesus is the one who is sent. They are not the same. As Jesus expressed it: "A slave is not greater than his master, nor is one that is sent forth greater than the one that sent him."—John 13:16.

¹² This is also made clear in an illustration Jesus gave. He likened his Father, Jehovah God, to the owner of a vineyard who traveled abroad and left the vineyard in the charge of cultivators—who obviously picture the Jewish clergy. In time, the owner sent a slave to get some of the fruit

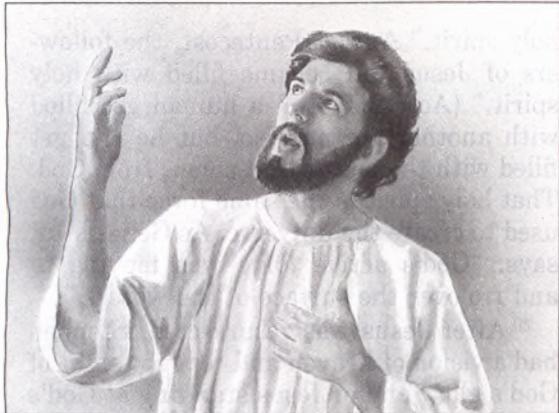
11. How did Jesus show that God was superior to him?
12. What illustration demonstrates Jesus' subordinate position to the Father?

from the vineyard, but the cultivators beat the slave and sent him away empty. Then the owner sent a second slave, and the same thing happened. He sent a third slave, who got the same treatment. Then the owner (God) said: "I will send my son [Jesus] the beloved. Likely they will respect this one." But the corrupt cultivators said: "'This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may become ours.' With that they threw him outside the vineyard and killed him." (Luke 20:9-16) Again, this makes it plain that Jesus is subject to the Father, sent by the Father to do the Father's will.

¹³ Jesus himself said: "The Father is greater than I am." (John 14:28) We should believe Jesus, for he surely knew the truth about his relationship to his Father. The apostle Paul also knew that God was superior to Jesus, and he said: "The Son [Jesus] himself will also subject himself to . . . God." (1 Corinthians 15:28) This is further seen in Paul's statement at 1 Corinthians 11:3: "The head of the Christ is God." Jesus acknowledged that he had a superior God when he said to his disciples: "I am ascending to my Father and your Father and to my God and your God."—John 20:17.

¹⁴ Jesus mentioned God's superiority when the mother of two of the disciples asked that her sons sit one at the right and the other at the left of Jesus when he came into his Kingdom. He answered: "This sitting down at my right hand and at my left is not mine to give." (Matthew 20:23) If Jesus had been almighty God, it would have been his to give. But it was not. It was his Father's to give. Similarly, when relating his prophecy about the end of this system of things, Jesus stated: "Concern-

13. What clear Bible statements show that God was Jesus' superior?
14. What other scriptures show that Jesus was not God Almighty?



Jesus declared: "The Father is greater than I am"

ing that day or the hour nobody knows, neither the angels in heaven nor the Son, but the Father." (Mark 13:32) Had Jesus been God Almighty, he would have known that day and the hour. But he did not know because he was not the All-knowing God. He was God's Son and did not know everything that his Father knew.

¹⁵ When Jesus was about to die, he showed subjection to his Father in praying: "Father, if you wish, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, let, not my will, but yours take place." (Luke 22:42) To whom was Jesus praying? To himself? No, he was praying to his Father in heaven. This is clearly shown by his saying: "Let, not my will, but yours take place." And then, at his death, Jesus cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34) To whom was Jesus crying out? To himself? No, he was crying out to his Father who was in heaven.

¹⁶ After Jesus died, he was in the tomb for about three days. Who resurrected him? Since he was dead, he could not resurrect himself. And if he was not really

15. When Jesus was about to die, how did he show subjection to God?

16. How does the death and resurrection of Jesus show that he could not have been the almighty God himself?

dead, then he could not have paid the ransom for Adam's sin. But he did die, and was nonexistent for about three days. The apostle Peter tells us who resurrected Jesus: "God resurrected him by loosing the pangs of death." (Acts 2:24) The superior, God Almighty, raised the lesser one, his beloved Son, Jesus, from the dead. To illustrate: When Jesus resurrected Lazarus from the dead, who was superior? Jesus was superior, since he could bring Lazarus back from the dead. (John 11:41-44) It was the same when God resurrected Jesus. God was superior, since he could bring Jesus back from the dead.

¹⁷ Jesus could not possibly be God himself, for Jesus was created by God. Note how Benjamin Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott* renders Apocalypse (Revelation) chapter 3, verse 14: "These things says the Amen, the faithful and true witness [Jesus], *the beginning of the creation of God.*" Similarly, Colossians 1:15, 16 says of Jesus: "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; because by means of him all other things were created in the heavens and upon the earth . . . All other things have been created through him and for him." So in heaven almighty God directly created his Son and then "by means of him," or "through him," created other things, much as a skilled workman might have a trained employee do work for him. Those things created "by means of him" did not include Jesus himself, for God had already created him. Thus, he is called the "firstborn," the "only-begotten." When a child is the firstborn, the only-begotten, it never means that the child is the same as the father. It always means that there are two different personalities involved, father and child.

17. What other evidence is there that Jesus was not God?

Holy Spirit—A Person or an Active Force?

¹⁸ What about the supposed third person of the Trinity, the holy spirit, said to be equal in power, substance, and eternity to Father and Son? Nowhere in the Bible is the holy spirit mentioned with God and Christ as being equal to them. For instance, on the occasion of Jesus' baptism, Mark 1:10 shows that the holy spirit came down upon Jesus "like a dove," not in a human form. The holy spirit was not some person coming upon Jesus but was God's active force. That power from God enabled Jesus to heal the sick and resurrect the dead. As Luke 5:17 says in the *Diaglott*: "The Mighty Power of the Lord [God] was on him [Jesus] to cure." Later, at Pentecost, the apostles also were given the power from God to heal the sick and raise the dead. Did that make them part of some "godhead"? No, they were simply given power from God, through Christ, to do what humans ordinarily could not do.

¹⁹ That same active force is mentioned at Ephesians 5:18, where Paul counsels: "Keep getting filled with spirit." Similarly, Acts 7:55 says that Stephen was "full of

18. What does the Bible teach regarding the holy spirit?

19. Why is it not possible for the holy spirit to be the third person of a Trinity?

How Would You Answer?

- What does the Bible teach about God and about Jesus?
- How do the Scriptures show the Father and Son relationship?
- What are some scriptures that show that God is superior to Jesus?
- Why could the holy spirit not be a part of a Trinity?

holy spirit." And at Pentecost, the followers of Jesus "all became filled with holy spirit." (Acts 2:4) Can a human get filled with another person? No, but he can get filled with the power that comes from God. That holy spirit is the same force that God used to create the universe. As Genesis 1:2 says: "God's active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters."

²⁰ After Jesus was resurrected, Stephen had a vision of heaven and "caught sight of God's glory and of Jesus standing at God's right hand." (Acts 7:55) Thus, two separate persons were in evidence in heaven: (1) God and (2) the resurrected Jesus Christ. No holy spirit is mentioned in this vision because it was not any third person of a Trinity. The holy spirit, being God's active force, would proceed from God but not as a separate being. That is why Stephen saw only two persons, not three.

²¹ Regarding the holy spirit, the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* admits: "The O[ld] T[estament] clearly does not envisage God's spirit as a person, neither in the strictly philosophical sense, nor in the Semitic sense. God's spirit is simply God's power. If it is sometimes represented as being distinct from God, it is because the breath of Yahweh acts exteriorly." It also states: "The majority of N[new] T[estament] texts reveal God's spirit as something, not someone; this is especially seen in the parallelism between the spirit and the power of God."

²² In view of all these facts, this "fundamental" Trinity doctrine of Christendom cannot be true. God's own Word refutes that claim. It shows clearly that Jehovah God is the loving Father and that Jesus

20. What vision did Stephen see that further demonstrates that the Trinity is not the truth?

21, 22. (a) What admission does a religious encyclopedia make about the holy spirit? (b) What points will our next article include?

Christ is his beloved Son, a Son who had such love for his Father that he was willing to be obedient to the death. However, some contend that there are scriptures that seem to indicate support for the Trinity, so

in our next article, we will examine some of them. Also, we will discuss why this doctrine has become such an important part of Christendom and where it originated.

Accurate Knowledge of God and His Son Leads to Life

"This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ."—JOHN 17:3.

ACCURATE knowledge of God and his Son, Jesus Christ, is vital for those who want everlasting life. "[God's] will is that all sorts of men should be saved and come to an accurate knowledge of truth." (1 Timothy 2:4) Such knowledge from God's inspired Word, the Bible, will equip us to know who God is and what our obligations are toward him. (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 1 John 2:17) It will also enable us properly to identify Jesus Christ and our relationship to him.—Psalm 2:12; Philippians 2:5-11.

² Without accurate knowledge, we may become ensnared by false teachings promoted by God's opposer, Satan the Devil, who is "a liar and the father of the lie." (John 8:44) Therefore, if a doctrine contradicts God's Word, if it is a lie, then believing it and teaching it discredits Jehovah and brings us into opposition to him. So we need to examine the Scriptures carefully to distinguish truth from falsehood. (Acts 17:11) We do not want to be like those who are "always learning and

yet never able to come to an accurate knowledge of truth."—2 Timothy 3:1, 7.

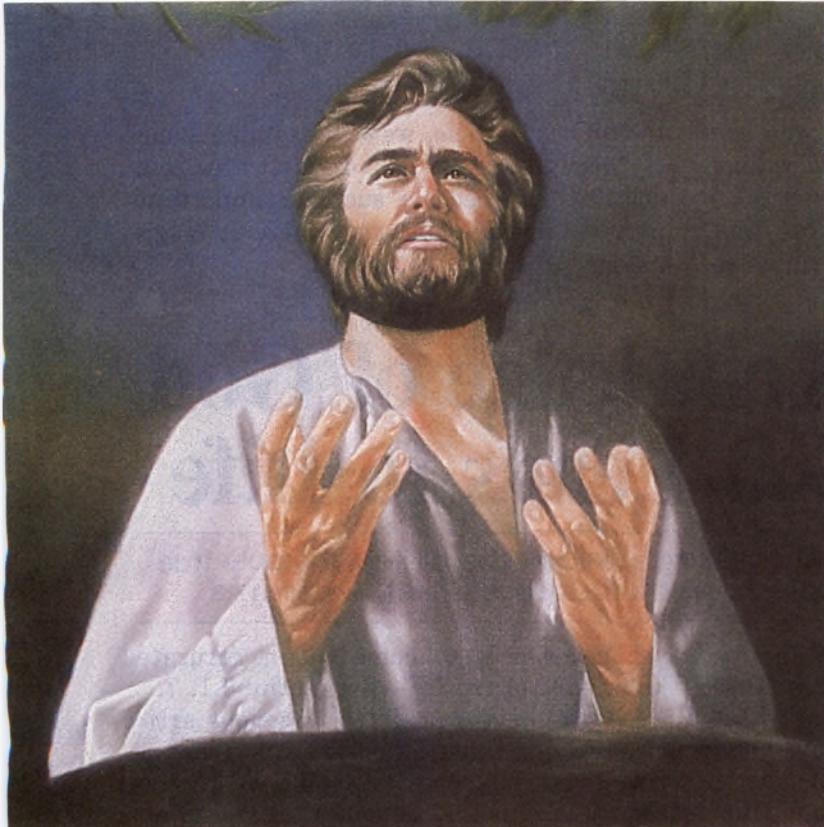
³ As we have seen in the previous article, the doctrine of the Trinity is not a Bible teaching. In God's own Word, he clearly tells us that he is the Creator of all things and that his first creation in heaven was his Son. (Revelation 4:11; Colossians 1:15, 16) God sent his Son to earth as a human to provide the ransom sacrifice, which served as the basis for forgiveness of mankind's sins, and to enlighten sincere persons further about God and his purposes. (Matthew 20:28; John 6:38) Yet, the simple, clear teaching that God and Christ are two separate persons, and that the holy spirit is not a person but is God's active force, has been twisted down through the centuries. Instead, the Trinity teaching has become the fundamental doctrine of Christendom.

"I and the Father Are One"

⁴ The churches often cite John 10:30 to try to support the Trinity, although no

1. Why is accurate knowledge of God and Jesus Christ so important?
2. What may result from a lack of accurate knowledge?

3. What is the Bible's clear teaching about God, Jesus Christ, and the holy spirit?
4. Why is the claim that the churches make about John 10:30 not true?



Jesus prayed for his disciples to be one in thought and purpose as he and his Father were one

mention is made of any third person in that verse. There Jesus said: "I and the Father are one." But did Jesus mean that he was God Almighty himself, just in a different form? No, that could not be since Jesus always said that he was God's Son, inferior to Him and in subjection to Him. What, then, did Jesus mean at John 10:30?

⁵ Jesus meant that he was one in thought and purpose with his Father. This can be seen at John 17:21, 22, where Jesus prayed to God that his disciples "may all be one, just as you, Father, are in union with me and I am in union with you, that they also may be in union with us . . . that they may be one just as we are one." Was

5, 6. (a) In what sense did Jesus mean that he and his Father were one? (b) How is this illustrated in connection with the disciples of Jesus?

Jesus praying that all his disciples would become one person? No, he was praying that they would be in unity, of the same mind and purpose, just as Jesus and God were.

⁶ The same idea is expressed at 1 Corinthians 1:10, where Paul states that Christians 'should all speak in agreement, and that there should not be divisions among them, but that they should be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought.' So when Jesus said that he and his Father were one, he did not mean that they were the same person, just as when he said that his disciples should become one he did not mean that they were the same person.

Who Was "the Word"?

⁷ However, what about John 1:1, which says in the *King James Version*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"? John 1:14 tells us that "the Word became flesh and resided among us." Christendom claims that this "Word" (Greek, *lo'gos*) who came to earth as Jesus Christ was God Almighty himself. Yet, notice that even in the *King James Version* John 1:1 says "the Word was with God." Someone who is with another person is not the same as that other person. So even from this translation, two distinct personalities are shown. Also, no third person of any Trinity is mentioned at all.

7. (a) What does Christendom claim about John 1:1? (b) What is there in John 1:1 that immediately shows that no Trinity is being spoken of?

⁸ As for the *King James Version's* saying in the latter part of John 1:1 that the "Word was God," other translations say something different. Some are as follows:

1808: "and the word was a god." *The New Testament, in an Improved Version, Upon the Basis of Archbishop Newcome's New Translation: With a Corrected Text*, London.

1864: "and a god was the Word." *The Emphatic Diaglott*, by Benjamin Wilson, New York and London.

1935: "and the Word was divine." *The Bible—An American Translation*, by J. M. P. Smith and E. J. Goodspeed, Chicago.

1935: "the Logos was divine." *A New Translation of the Bible*, by James Moffatt, New York.

1975: "and a god (or, of a divine kind) was the Word." *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, by Siegfried Schulz, Göttingen, Germany.

1978: "and godlike sort was the Logos." *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, by Johannes Schneider, Berlin.

1979: "and a god was the Logos." *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, by Jurgen Becker, Würzburg, Germany.

Also, in 1950 the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., rendered the phrase, "and the Word was a god."

⁹ Do such renderings agree with the grammatical construction of John 1:1 in the Greek language? Yes, they do. At John 1:1 there are two occurrences of the Greek noun *theos'* (god). The first occurrence refers to almighty God, with whom the Word was—"and the Word [*lo'gos*] was

8. How do some other translations of the Bible render the latter part of John 1:1?

9. In the Greek text, what precedes the first occurrence of the noun *theos'* (god) at John 1:1, which shows that the reference is to almighty God?

with God [a form of *theos'*.] This first *theos'* is preceded by a form of the Greek definite article *ho*. The noun *theos'* with the definite article *ho* in front of it points to a distinct identity, in this case almighty God—"and the Word was with [the] God."

¹⁰ But in the latter part of John 1:1, such translations as listed in paragraph 8 render the second *theos'* (a predicate noun) as "divine" or "a god" instead of "God." Why? Because the second *theos'* is a singular predicate noun occurring before the verb and without the definite article *ho* in Greek. In this verse, such a sentence construction points to a characteristic or quality of the subject. It highlights the nature of the Word, that he was "divine," "a god," but not the almighty God. This is in harmony with the many scriptures that show that "the Word" was God's spokesman, sent to earth by God. As John 1:18 states: "No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten god [the Son created in heaven by almighty God] who is in the bosom position with the Father is the one that has [come to earth as the man Jesus and] explained him [almighty God]."

¹¹ There are many other Bible verses where those who translate from the Greek into another language insert the article "a" before the predicate noun although there is no article in the Greek text. This insertion of the article in the translation brings out the characteristic or quality of the noun. For example, at Mark 6:49, when the disciples saw Jesus walking on water, the *King James Version* says, "they supposed it had been a spirit" (Greek,

10. Regarding the second occurrence of *theos'* at John 1:1, what does the omission of the article *ho* indicate?

11. What Bible example is there of the translator's inserting the article "a" where there is none in Greek, and why is this done?

phan'ta-sma). The *New World Translation* more correctly renders the phrase, "They thought: 'It is an apparition!'" In the same way, the correct translation of John 1:1 shows that the Word was not "God," but "a god."

¹² Two similar examples are found at John chapter 8, verse 44. There Jesus, speaking of the Devil, says: "That one was a *manslayer* when he began . . . He is a

12. What similar uses of the indefinite article "a" are found at John 8:44?

Historical Development of the Trinity Doctrine

The New Encyclopædia Britannica, 1985, *Micropædia*, Volume 11, page 928, says under the subject of Trinity: "Neither the word Trinity nor the explicit doctrine appears in the New Testament, nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema in the Old Testament: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.' (Deut. 6:4)" This encyclopedia also says: "The doctrine developed gradually over several centuries and through many controversies. . . . The Council of Nicaea in 325 stated the crucial formula for that doctrine in its confession that the Son is 'of the same substance . . . as the Father,' even though it said very little about the Holy Spirit. . . . By the end of the 4th century . . . the doctrine of the Trinity took substantially the form it has maintained ever since."

The New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, Volume 14, page 299, acknowledges: "The formulation 'one God in three Persons' was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. . . . Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective."

Thus, the Trinity doctrine is not Scriptural, but it was officially adopted at the Council of Nicaea in the year 325 C.E. The doctrine incorporated a pagan idea that had originated long before in ancient Babylon and Egypt and was in use in other lands as well. Historian Will Durant observed in *The Story of Civilization: Part III*, page 595: "Christianity did not destroy pa-

ganism; it adopted it. . . . From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity."

In *An Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Vergilius Ferm, 1964, on pages 793 and 794, under the word "triad," are listed the trinities of the Babylonian, Buddhist, Hindu, Norse, Taoist, and other religions, as well as those of Christendom. As an example, it notes that in India, "the great Triad include Brahma, the Creator, Vishnu, the Preserver and Shiva, the Destroyer. These represent the cycle of existence, just as the Babylonian triad of Anu, Enlil and Ea represent the materials of existence, air, water, earth."

London's British Museum contains artifacts that show ancient trinities, such as Egypt's Isis, Harpokratēs, and Nephthys. A publication of the museum's Department of Medieval and Later Antiquities notes the following that was inscribed on ancient jewelry: "Obverse [side], the Egyptian gods Horus-Baït (hawk-headed), Buto-Akori (the snake), and Hathor (frog-headed). Reverse [side], the Greek verse 'One Baït, one Hathor, one Akori; the power of these is one. Hail, father of the world, hail, three-formed god!' The gods are thus identified as three manifestations of one power, probably the sun-god."

History confirms that the Trinity was borrowed from pagans and was in existence centuries before Jesus came to the earth. Long after his death, it was promoted by those who had been influenced by pagan philosophies and who had apostatized from the true worship of God as taught by Jesus and the apostles.

liar and the father of the lie.” Similar to John 1:1, in the original Greek the predicate noun in both these expressions (“manslayer,” “liar”) precedes the verb and has no definite article. In each case, a quality or characteristic of the Devil is being described and in many modern language translations, it is necessary to insert the indefinite article (“a”) in order to convey this. Thus, the *King James Version* renders these expressions, “He was a murderer . . . he is a liar and the father of it.” —See also Mark 11:32; John 4:19; 6:70; 9:17; 10:1, 13, 21; 12:6.

“My Lord and My God”

¹³ Trinitarians also cite John 20:28 to support their claims. There Thomas said to Jesus: “My Lord and my God!” As shown above, there is no objection to Thomas’ referring to Jesus as a god. Such would be in harmony with the fact that Jesus, in his prehuman existence, certainly was a god, that is, a powerful, divine person. And he certainly has been that since his death and resurrection to heavenly life. Jesus even quoted from the Psalms to show that powerful humans were addressed as “gods.” (Psalm 82:1-6; John 10:34, 35) The apostle Paul noted that there were “many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords.’” (1 Corinthians 8:5) Even Satan is called “the god of this system of things.” —2 Corinthians 4:4.

¹⁴ Christ occupies a position far higher than imperfect men, or Satan. If such can be referred to as “gods,” surely Jesus can be, and was, referred to as a god. Because of his unique position in relation to Jehovah, Jesus is “the only-begotten god” (John 1:18), a “Mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6), and “a god” (John 1:1). So there was nothing improper about Thomas’ referring to

13, 14. Why could Thomas call Jesus “my God” without meaning that Jesus was Jehovah?

Jesus in that way. Thomas was saying that Jesus was a god to him, a divine, powerful one. But he was not saying that Jesus was Jehovah, which is why Thomas said, “my” God and not “the” God.

¹⁵ Just three verses later, at John 20:31, the Bible states: “But these have been written down that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ *the Son of God*.” All doubt as to what Thomas may have meant is dispelled here. The Bible writer John clearly says that Jesus is the Son of God, not almighty God himself.

Not Equal to God

¹⁶ Another scripture the churches use is John 5:18. It says that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus because “he was also calling God his own Father, making himself equal to God.” Who was saying that Jesus was making himself equal to God? Not Jesus. He clears this up in the very next verse (19) by stating: “The Son cannot do a single thing of his own initiative, but only what he beholds the Father doing.” So Jesus did not claim that he was almighty God or equal to Him. He was showing the Jews that they were mistaken, that he was not God, but that he was the Son of God, and as God’s spokesman, he could not act on his own initiative. Can we imagine the almighty God of the universe saying that he could do nothing of his own initiative? So the Jews made a charge, and Jesus refuted it.

¹⁷ Thus, from the testimony of God in his own inspired Word, from the

15. How does verse 31 of John chapter 20 clearly identify who Jesus is?

16. What claim did the Jews make, and how did Jesus refute it?

17. (a) What is the clear testimony from God’s own inspired Word about the identity of Jehovah, Jesus Christ, and the holy spirit? (b) What must be done with any scripture that Trinitarians may point to in an effort to try to justify their belief?

testimony of Jesus, and from the testimony of the disciples of Jesus, the overwhelming evidence clearly shows that almighty God and Jesus Christ are two separate personalities, Father and Son. That evidence also clearly shows that the holy spirit is not the third person of any Trinity but God's active force. It is futile to take scriptures out of context or to try twisting them to support the Trinity. Any such scriptures must be harmonized with the rest of the Bible's clear testimony.

Why Did the Trinity Develop?

¹⁸ If you will check page 18, "Historical Development of the Trinity Doctrine," you will note that the Trinity has pagan roots. It is not a Bible teaching, but it was adopted by Christendom in the fourth century. However, long before that, there were trinities in ancient Babylon, Egypt, and other places. Christendom thus incorporated a pagan concept into its teachings. This was instigated by Roman emperor Constantine, who was not interested in the truth about this matter but wanted to solidify his empire made up of pagans and apostate Christians. Far from being a development of a Christian teaching, the Trinity was evidence that Christendom had apostatized from the teachings of Christ and had adopted pagan teachings instead.

¹⁹ Why would such a doctrine develop? Certainly, God's interests are not served by making Him, His Son, and His holy spirit confusing and mysterious. And it does not serve the interests of people to be confused. Instead, the more people become confused about God and his purposes, the better it suits Satan the Devil, God's opposer, the 'god of this world,' who works to 'blind the minds of unbelievers.' (2 Co-

18. From where did the doctrine of the Trinity come?

19. Why did the doctrine of the Trinity develop?

rinthians 4:4) Since such a doctrine makes it appear that only theologians can understand Bible teachings, it also suits the religious leaders of Christendom. This helps them to maintain their hold on the common people.

²⁰ Yet, the truth about this matter is so simple that a child can understand it. A little boy knows that he is not the same as his father but that they are two separate individuals. Similarly, when the Bible says that Jesus Christ is God's Son, that is what it means. That is the simple truth, while the Trinity doctrine is not. It is a lie. So it must originate with "the one called Devil and Satan, who is misleading the entire inhabited earth." (Revelation 12:9) But the simple, refreshing truths about God, his Son, Jesus Christ, and God's powerful holy spirit free people from bondage to false teachings rooted in paganism and authored by Satan. As Jesus said to sincere truth seekers: "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (John 8:32) Taking in accurate knowledge of liberating truths, as well as acting on them, "means everlasting life." —John 17:3.

20. (a) What is the simple truth about the Trinity? (b) What will taking in accurate knowledge of liberating truths mean for us?

How Would You Answer?

- Why is accurate knowledge of God and his Son so important?
- What did Jesus mean when he said, "I and the Father are one"?
- How does John 1:1 distinguish between the Word and God?
- Why could Thomas properly call Jesus "my God"?
- How did the Trinity doctrine originate, and who is its author?

Kingdom Proclaimers Report

Kingdom Truth Blossoms in Sri Lanka

SRI LANKA, meaning "Resplendent Land," is the ancient name restored to this lovely island still known to many by its colonial name, "Ceylon." Because of its location in the Indian Ocean, it is also called the Teardrop of India; but the tears have not all been those of joy as in recent times ethnic violence has erupted, making news headlines worldwide.

Yet, here too Kingdom truth blossoms. Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, and nominal Christian are being taught that only Jehovah's Kingdom by Christ Jesus can bring lasting healing to the ethnic and political wounds dividing the communities. The following experiences show the blossoming of Kingdom truth in this "Resplendent Land."

□ Salimoon was brought up to believe that the Qur'an is God's Word. But he could never fully accept that an all-merciful

God would torture people in a burning hell. One day Jehovah's Witnesses invited him to a meeting. Recognizing the truth at once, he has never looked back, and he now serves happily as an elder in the Christian congregation.

□ Harry, a lifelong Buddhist who had demonstrated his religious faith by walking on burning coals, was unable to follow the principles contained in the Buddhist teaching of an eight-fold path: (1) right understanding; (2) right thought; (3) right speech; (4) right action; (5) right livelihood; (6) right effort; (7) right mindfulness; and (8) right concentration. These should fill every part of a person's life. Although he thought of himself as a good Buddhist, his smoking, drinking, and other improper conduct created problems with his family. Finally, he decided to study the Bible. Yet, no one offered to study with

him. He heard that Jehovah's Witnesses might be willing, so he attended a meeting at the Kingdom Hall, and a study was arranged. One of the Witnesses from a Muslim background helped him learn what the Bible teaches. Now, at last, he has found the strength from Jehovah to follow successfully a path of right principles. He is rejoicing to serve as a ministerial servant and is making plans to enter the pioneer ministry.

So Kingdom truth blossoms in Sri Lanka, and now there are 1,086 Witnesses in this beautiful land. This growth means that larger branch facilities are needed, and a location for this is being sought. The brothers are also building new Kingdom Halls. In Puttalam a congregation made up of ten families decided to build a Kingdom Hall and to build it large enough for circuit assemblies. The hall was finished in time for the circuit assembly, where 107 attended. Now the congregation has nearly doubled, with over 75 attending the meetings held in both Tamil and Sinhalese. And still there is plenty of room for further growth.

Fulfilled Bible prophecy points to the fact that very soon every tear of sadness will be wiped from all eyes as God has promised. Even thoughts of ethnic violence will no longer come up into the heart. (Revelation 21:4; Isaiah 65:17) And in this lovely "teardrop" of an island, tears of joy will be shed as the effects of the peaceful fruitage of God's Kingdom continue to be enjoyed for all eternity.



Gilead's 84th Class Living Up To Expectations!

PROVERBS 10:28 says: "The expectation of the righteous ones is a rejoicing." Such was the case on the morning of March 6, 1988. It was obvious to any observer that expectations were running high among the 4,360 gathered at the Jersey City Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The fact that virtually the entire Brooklyn and Watchtower Farms Bethel family was able to be together in such a lovely setting was in itself a cause for great joy and excitement! However, those present had come in expectation of more than a large-scale family reunion. Foremost in their minds was what they knew would be a landmark event: the graduation of the 84th class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead.

Located now at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York, Gilead was established in 1943 to advance the God-ordained work of 'making disciples.' (Matthew 28:19, 20) After completing a five-month course of Bible education, Gilead graduates are sent, not to lucrative jobs, but into the worldwide field as missionaries. (Matthew 13:38) Understandably, then, anyone having had the privilege of attending Gilead has high expectations.—Compare Luke 12:48.

The graduation program forcefully brought these expectations into clear focus. It opened with a fervent prayer by George Gangas, a member of the Governing Body. C. W. Barber, also of the Governing Body, served as chairman that day. 'We are engaging in the greatest educational campaign in history,' said Barber. Drawing from Isaiah chapter 6, he ex-

plained that we must often preach under hostile conditions. And as in Isaiah's day, only a symbolic "tenth," or "remnant," may respond to our message. (Isaiah 6:13; Romans 9:27) Never, though, should we feel that our preaching efforts are in vain!

These encouraging remarks raised anticipation for what was to follow: a series of short, but powerful, talks directed to the graduates. Calvin Chyke of the Factory Committee began by asking the question, 'Will you prove to be a blessing to others?' They had received many blessings at Gilead. Now they must give blessings, imparting 'spiritual gifts' to others. (Romans 1:11, 12) Even when trialsome situations arise, such as being low on funds, the missionaries must continue to "practice giving" spiritually. (Luke 6:38) Then the words of Psalm 84:6 will be fulfilled upon them: "Even with blessings the instructor enwraps himself."

David Olson of the Service Department Committee next reminded the missionaries of our worldwide brotherhood. For five months they had enjoyed the love and support of fellow classmates—only to be scattered now all over the globe. Olson assured them that they would enjoy the fulfillment of Mark 10:29, 30, which promises them new friends and 'families.'

Daniel Sydlik of the Governing Body stressed the need for graduates to 'Cultivate Great and Grand Expectations.' Jehovah has created us with the capacity for having expectations, hopes, and dreams. Should not, then, missionaries have high expectations for themselves? 'Set a goal, make demands on yourselves!' exhorted Sydlik. 'Master the language of the coun-

try you are assigned to. Keep up with issues of *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in your mother tongue so as to retain your spirituality. When teaching others,' continued Sydlik, 'set high expectations for them too. Let them know that it is expected that they attend meetings and prepare lessons ahead of time.'

Subsequent speakers continued in this vein. Lyman Swingle, also of the Governing Body, reminded the students: 'Jesus Christ is the one sending you out. And he himself was one sent forth into a foreign field here on earth.' Like Jesus, missionaries should take their assignment seriously. However, they must not take *themselves* too seriously. 'Have the ability to laugh at yourselves when you do something foolish,' said Swingle. 'Ecclesiastes 3:4 reminds us that there is "a time to laugh."

The school's two primary instructors now had opportunity to give their students some final admonition. Jack Redford's theme was 'Never Forget Your Mission!' Christendom's clergy has lost its sense of mission, many becoming embroiled in worldly politics. Jesus Christ, however, fulfilled his mission to preach, never getting sidetracked by what Satan's world had to offer. Missionaries must therefore always remember why they have been sent forth—to feed spiritually starving mankind. (Compare Matthew 9:36.) They must therefore avoid such snares as materialism and immorality. By focusing on their preaching mission, they have the prospect of enjoying many fine experiences in the field!

U. V. Glass followed with an illustration involving a glass of water and a string of pearls. In many lands the purity of a glass of water is questionable. Equally dubious might be the genuineness of a string of pearls. 'What of your credibility?' asked Glass. 'A lack of credibility has been called

the "silent destroyer of relationships." How can the graduates establish their credibility? 'Speak truth,' said Glass, 'not coloring or bending it. Integrity is the foundation of credibility.'—Ephesians 4:25.

A highlight of the morning was the concluding talk by the Watch Tower Society's 94-year-old president, F. W. Franz. In a voice still firm and strong, Franz reviewed the history of Gilead. During the second world war, the Governing Body came to discern that 'World War II would not lead to Armageddon. It would terminate and a period of peace would follow.' Gilead was established to take full advantage of this intervening period—and has been going strong ever since! 'We live in the most favorable of times!' exclaimed the Society's president. The audience expressed its appreciation for the admonition by this long-time servant of Jehovah by thunderous applause!

The curtains were now opened, revealing the 24 students of the 84th class of Gilead seated on the platform. Though averaging but 31.6 years of age, they are hardly novice preachers. Why, they average 11.3 years of full-time evangelizing! And quite an international group they are, hailing from the Netherlands, Australia, Finland, Sweden, Germany, and the United States. With the assistance of A. D. Schroeder, who was one of the original Gilead instructors, C. W. Barber handed them their diplomas. The audience was thrilled to learn that the graduates would be sent to nine lands: the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Western Samoa, Taiwan, Tanzania, Papua New Guinea, Bolivia, Guam, and Colombia! Then a fine letter of appreciation was read by one of the students on behalf of the class.

After a brief lunch-break, the audience reconvened for an abbreviated *Watchtower*



84th Graduating Class of the Watchtower Bible School of Gilead

In the list below, rows are numbered from front to back and names are listed from left to right in each row.
(1) Norberg, C.; Holmes, T.; Holland, J.; Vehlen, B.; Rector, D.; Thomas, K. (2) Rajalehto, T.; Rajalehto, T.; Hoefnagels, J.; Moonen, A.; Summers, C.; Wahl, H. (3) Holland, J.; Holmes, F.; Hoefnagels, H.; Koivula, V.; Moonen, M.; Thomas, B. (4) Wahl, M.; Rector, W.; Summers, G.; Keighley, P.; Vehlen, P.; Norberg, O.

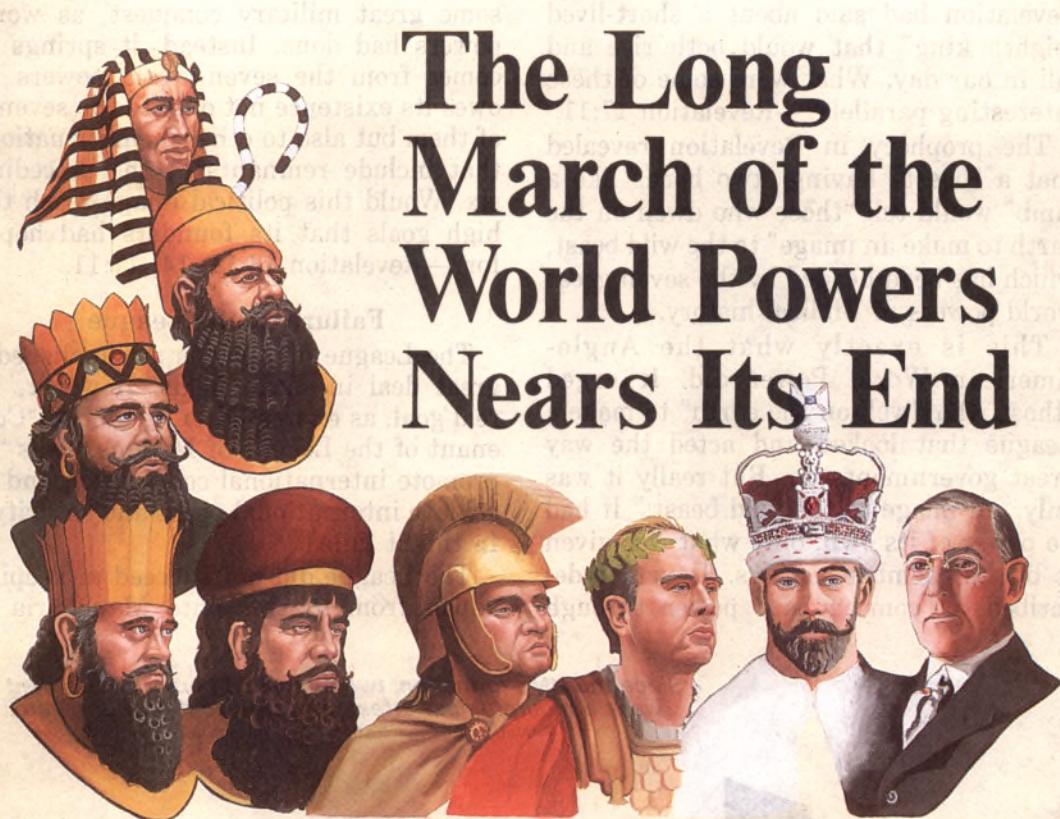
Study, conducted by Robert Wallen of the Bethel Committee. Upon the completion of the study, the lights dimmed. The program chairman urged the audience: 'Relax and enjoy the students' gift to you, the student program of the 84th class, entitled "Glorifying Our Ministry."

Through songs, experiences, and skits, the students now presented an inside look at student and missionary life. It was shown, for example, how New York City's diverse preaching territory is used as a missionary training ground. One humorous skit, based on the real experiences of Gilead students, showed how students learn to give an effective informal witness on the city's subways. Also portrayed in an amusing, but authentic, way were scenes of missionaries making the often awkward adjustments to foreign culture and customs.

One graduating missionary summed up

the program nicely, saying: 'What better way to glorify our ministry than to help others to put their complete reliance on Jehovah's Word?' No doubt all in attendance were moved to consider how they can have a greater personal share in the preaching work. As a finishing touch, students then presented a modern-day drama that stressed the need for us to subject ourselves to God. Another landmark occasion then came to a conclusion with an appreciative prayer by J. E. Barr of the Governing Body.

Unquestionably, the Gilead graduation program lived up to expectations. What, though, of the graduating class itself? We are confident that, like their predecessors, this latest group of missionary graduates will more than live up to what is expected, yes, demanded, of them by Jehovah—that they glorify their ministry in their foreign assignments!



The Long March of the World Powers Nears Its End

The Bible tells of seven great world powers—mighty empires that have succeeded one another down through thousands of years of world history. Previous articles in this series have shown that we are living in the time of the last of them—the Anglo-American World Power of our day.*—Revelation 17:9, 10.

This same Anglo-American World Power is described earlier in the book of Revelation as a beast that has “two horns.” This two-part world power “tells those who dwell on the earth to make an image” to the political beast that represents all seven world powers.—Revelation 13:11, 14.

How were these prophecies fulfilled, and what do they mean to us today? The interesting answer is the subject of the following article.

* These world powers were discussed in former issues of this magazine: (1) Egypt, February 1; (2) Assyria, February 15; (3) Babylon, March 1; (4) Medo-Persia, March 15; (5) Greece, April 15; (6) Rome, May 1; (7) the Anglo-American World Power, May 15.

AS THE four-year horror of World War I drew to a close, American president Woodrow Wilson and British prime minister David Lloyd George proposed a League of Nations. Its goal was to “achieve international peace and security” and thus keep the horror of such a war from ever occurring again.

It is interesting to note who took this initiative. These two leaders were the heads of the two parts of the English-speaking Anglo-American World Power, the seventh of Bible history. This and other facts regarding the international peace and security organization fit, in an amazing way, what the Bible book of

Revelation had said about a short-lived "eighth king" that would both rise and fall in our day. What were some of these interesting parallels?—Revelation 17:11.

The prophecy in Revelation revealed that a "beast" having "two horns like a lamb" would tell "those who dwell on the earth to make an image" to the wild beast, which has been headed by the seven great world powers of Biblical history.

This is exactly what the Anglo-American World Power did. It urged "those who dwell on the earth" to make a League that looked and acted the way great governments do. But really it was only "an image to the wild beast." It had no power of its own, only what was given it by its member nations. It is not described as coming into power through

some great military conquest, as world powers had done. Instead, it springs or comes from the seven world powers. It owes its existence not only to the seventh of them but also to other member nations that include remnants of the preceding six. Would this political image reach the high goals that its founders had hoped for?—Revelation 13:11, 14; 17:11.

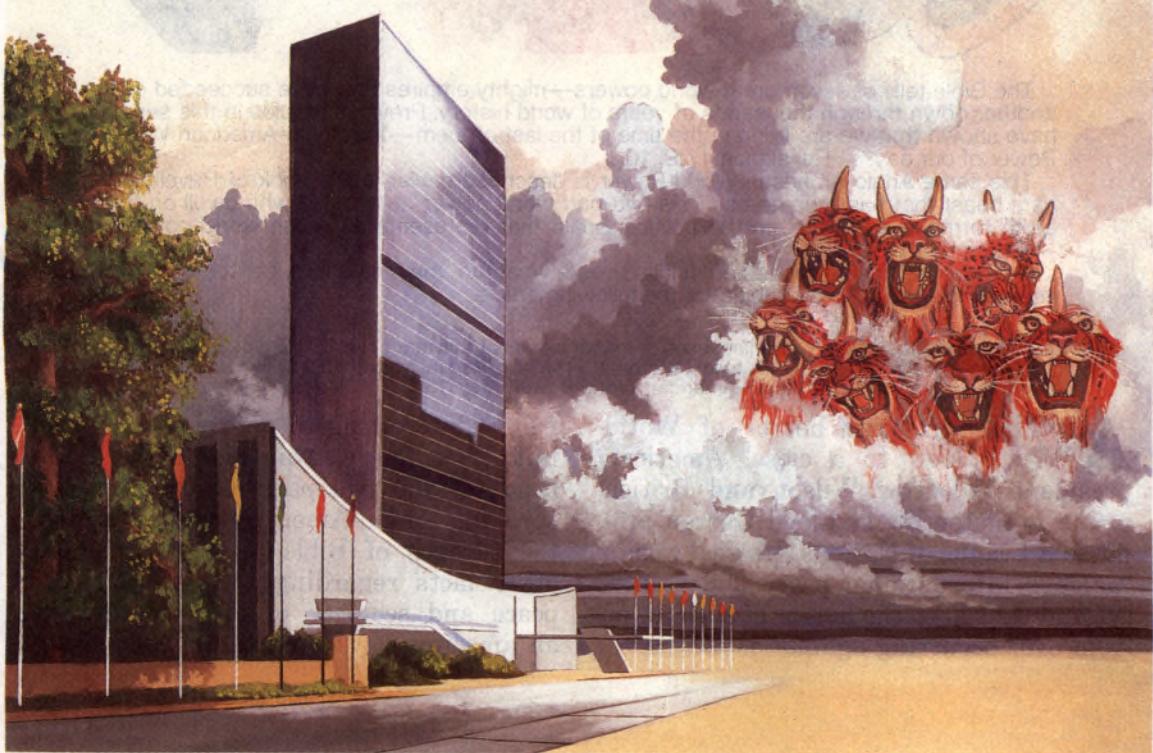
Failure of the League

The League of Nations accomplished a great deal in social fields. However, its real goal, as expressed in its official "Covenant of the League of Nations," was "to promote international cooperation and to achieve international peace and security." In this it failed.

The League did not succeed in keeping Japan from moving into Manchuria in

'Since the UN's formation, twenty million persons have died in wars, a mournful fact attesting to the cost of that failure.'

—*"Nation Against Nation,"* by Thomas M. Franck



1931. It did not keep Bolivia and Paraguay from going to war in 1933. It failed to prevent Mussolini's 1936 conquest of Ethiopia. However, the League's deathblow came on September 1, 1939, with the outbreak of World War II—a convulsion of the kind of mass destruction and misery that the League had been established to prevent. That war's toll? The lives of 16 million soldiers and 39 million civilians, a total of 55 million dead, or almost four times the death toll of World War I!

However, back in 1919, before the League's Covenant had ever gone into effect, Jehovah's Witnesses (then known as Bible Students) declared publicly that the League must fail, for peace could not come through such human efforts. Later, at their 1926 convention in London, England, it was pointed out that according to Revelation 17, the "eighth king" appears as a finale to the line of world powers. As the speaker pointed out, "the Lord foretold its birth, its short existence, and its everlasting end."

It Returns!

Regarding this eighth king, the inspired prophecy said: "The wild beast that you saw was, but is not, and yet is about to ascend out of the abyss, and it is to go off into destruction."—Revelation 17:8.

From the mid-war year of 1942, Jehovah's Witnesses realized that the then dormant peace and security organization would ascend out of its abyss of inactivity. That year the president of the Watch Tower Society told an audience in 52 cities: "Though forty members still profess to adhere to the League, the League is in effect in a state of suspended animation . . . It 'is not.' But would it 'ascend out of the abyss'? Basing his words on this Bible prophecy, he declared: 'The association of worldly nations will rise again.'

As the prophecy had stated, this eighth king "was" from 1920 until 1939. It 'was not' from 1939 until World War II ended in 1945. Then it ascended "out of the abyss," reactivated as the League's successor, the United Nations.

High Hopes Unfulfilled

Delegates from 50 nations signed the United Nations Charter in San Francisco on June 26, 1945. Its preamble began: "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind . . ."

Hopes that were built up for the UN exceeded all reality. Former U.S. secretary of state Cordell Hull said it held the key to "the very survival of our civilization." U.S. president Harry Truman called it a "supreme chance to . . . create an enduring peace under the guidance of God." The UN's Charter was called "possibly the most momentous document ever produced by man" and "a turning point in the history of civilization." Forty years later, Gregory J. Newell of the U.S. Department of State said: "The cause was oversold: disappointment was inevitable."

Like the League, the UN has accomplished a great deal in social fields. But it

In Our Next Issue

■ **World Rulership Changing**

■ **Detest Utterly the World's Disgraceful Course**

■ **Becoming an Ordained Minister
—God's Way!**

The Extent of the War

World War II, which marked the demise of the League of Nations, took an astounding toll of lives. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (1954 edition) illustrated the extent of the death toll by giving the ratio of military deaths during the war to the 1940 population of various countries. Among the figures are these: The United States lost in battle one person in the military for every 500 members of its 1940 population; China, one out of 200; the United Kingdom, one out of 150; France, one out of 200; Japan, one out of 46; Germany, one out of 25; and the U.S.S.R., one out of every 22. When we consider that the civilian casualties often exceeded the military losses, we can readily see how human efforts had indeed failed to bring true peace and security.

has neither guaranteed peace nor stopped war. Former prime minister Harold Macmillan of Britain told the British House of Commons in 1962 that "the whole foundation on which the United Nations was built has been undermined."

Originally many people viewed this organization with almost religious fervor. They believed that this "image" would do what the Bible says only God's Kingdom will do: establish lasting peace, justice, and a truly united world. They strongly disagreed with Bible prophecies that showed that men's efforts could not be the true source of peace. However, as the UN reached the age of 40, historian Thomas M. Franck said that "it is . . . much less effective than we had hoped in 1945." As U.S. Secretary of State George P. Shultz commented: "The birth of the United Nations certainly did not transform the world into a paradise."

The UN has not succeeded because human governments have not eliminated the true obstacles to peace: nationalism, avarice, poverty, racism, despotism, and

the influence of Satan on the world. People cling to these governments, not because the outlook is bright but because they have no better hope.—Revelation 12:12.

The existence of the United Nations, and the effort that so many people have put into it, shows how deeply people of the earth realize the need for a change. That change will come but in a different and more effective way. Which way?

Permanent Rulership

Remember that the Bible says there would be only seven successive "kings," or world powers. No major world power is mentioned after that. The Bible even says that the temporary "eighth king . . . goes off into destruction."—Revelation 17:10, 11.

But the Bible also says that there is a better hope. It promises that something else will bring the peace, justice, and united world that people so desperately seek. It says: "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. . . . It will crush and put an end to all these [failing human] kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite."—Daniel 2:44.

This is the rulership about which Jesus spoke, and for which his followers have prayed when they said: "Let your kingdom come." (Matthew 6:10) This Kingdom is not just some influence for good in the hearts of men. Rather, it is an actual heavenly rulership, a governing of earth from the spirit realm. It will change the way we live on earth.—Revelation 21:1-4.

What the Bible says about that exciting new rulership, how it will operate, and the peace, justice, and united world it will produce will be the subject of the next and final article in this series.

Jesus' Birth—Mere Legend?

THE birth of Christ! It is claimed to be the basis for Christendom's biggest yearly celebration. Ironically, though, many clergymen brush off various aspects of the Gospel accounts of Jesus' birth as mere legend. *The Interpreter's Bible*, for example, says of Matthew's account of the visit of the astrologers, or "wise men": "There is thus no way to ascertain whether it has been embellished, or indeed, whether it 'happened' at all as a matter of literal fact. The value and importance of the narrative do not depend on its accuracy; the story is rather to be thought of as a work of art."

Such critics often argue that the Gospel accounts of Christ's birth are too lacking in detail to be viewed as historical. But in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim rebuts this, saying: "It may safely be asserted, that no Apocryphal or legend-

ary narrative of such a (legendary) event would have been characterised by such scantiness, or rather absence, of details. For, the two essential features, alike of legend and of tradition, are, that they ever seek to surround their heroes with a halo of glory, and that they attempt to supply details, which are otherwise wanting."

Why, though, do the Gospels provide so few details regarding the birth of Jesus? Primarily because his *death*, not his birth, is of major importance. (Matthew 20:28) Edersheim further reminds us: "The Gospels were not intended to furnish a biography of Jesus, nor even the materials for it; but had only this twofold object: that those who read them 'might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God,' and that believing they 'might have life through His Name.'"

Made Wise by "the Laying of a Fine"

PROVERBS 21:11 says: "By the laying of a fine on the ridiculer the inexperienced becomes wise; and by one's giving insight to a wise person he gets knowledge."

An "inexperienced" one often has difficulty appreciating why a certain course of conduct is wrong. In time, though, he may observe a "ridiculer"—one who scoffs at the principles of God's Word—become caught in his wickedness and suffer "distress and hard times." (Proverbs 1:27) Under the Mosaic Law, appropriate 'punishment' (*King James Version*), or more literally "a fine," could have been levied on the wrongdoer.—Compare Exodus 21:22; Deuteronomy 22:19.

The effect on the inexperienced one? Finally seeing the reward of wrongdoing, he could 'become wise' and determine not to follow such a course himself. (Compare Proverbs 19:25.) By way of contrast, "a wise person" already knows from past experience, observation, and knowledge of Bible principles that a certain course of conduct is unwholesome or destructive. He does not always need to observe the ruinous outcome of a certain act to be convinced of its wrongfulness. He can thus gain new 'insights' by mere instruction, rather than by bitter experience.

Questions From Readers

- Do Jesus' words at Matthew 11:24 mean that those whom Jehovah destroyed by fire in Sodom and Gomorrah will be resurrected?

In conscientiously responding to this question over the years, we have discussed Jesus' words at Matthew 10:14, 15; 11:20-24; and Luke 10:13-15. A recent review of this suggests that these verses need not be taken as statements about the future for the people of Sodom/Gomorrah. Before we examine other Bible comments about the people destroyed in those cities, let us consider what Jesus said.

While in Galilee, Jesus "reproach[ed] the cities in which most of his powerful works had taken place, because they did not repent." He named three: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! because if the powerful works had taken place in Tyre and Sidon that took place in you, they would long ago have repented . . . It will be more endurable for Tyre and Sidon on Judgment Day than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you perhaps be exalted to heaven? Down to Hades you will come; because if the powerful works that took place in you had taken place in Sodom, it would have remained until this very day. . . . It will be more endurable for the land of Sodom on Judgment Day than for you." (Matthew 11: 20-24) Jesus made similar statements when sending the 12 disciples out to preach, and later the 70.—Matthew 10:14, 15; Luke 10:13-15.

Prior to 1964, we took these verses to mean that the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum merited eternal destruction. However, *Watchtower* articles in 1964 and 1965 made it clear that all in Hades, or Sheol, (mankind's common grave) will come forth in the resurrection and thereafter

will be 'judged according to their deeds.'—Revelation 20:13.

Those articles also reasoned: Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15 say that Capernaum would not be exalted to heaven but be brought "down to Hades," which, at least, suggests debasement for the people of that city. In the same passage, Jesus mentioned ancient Tyre and Sidon. According to Ezekiel 32:21, 30, people of Sidon, who were condemned by God, went to Sheol. (Isaiah 23: 1-9, 14-18; Ezekiel 27:2-8) Since Jesus paralleled Tyre/Sidon with Sodom, that indicated that the people of Sodom were in Sheol too.

A reexamination of Matthew 11:20-24, though, has brought into question whether Jesus was there discussing eternal judgment and resurrection. His point was how unresponsive the people in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were and how unlikely it was that they would reform even in the Judgment Day. Saying that it would be "more endurable" for Tyre/Sidon and Sodom/Gomorrah "on Judgment Day" was a form of hyperbole (exaggeration to emphasize a point) that Jesus need not have intended to be taken literally, any more than other graphic hyperboles that he used. For example:

"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one particle of a letter of the Law to go unfulfilled." "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away." (Luke 16: 17; 21:33; Matthew 5:18; compare Hebrews 1:10-12.) We know that the literal heavens and earth will never pass away. (Psalm 78: 69; 104:5; Ecclesiastes 1:4) Je-

sus also said: "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:25) Certainly, Jesus did not mean that no rich man could ever become a disciple; some in the first century became anointed Christians. (1 Timothy 6:17-19) Jesus' use of exaggeration was to stress how hard it is for a rich man to put God before material wealth and comforts.—Luke 12: 15-21.

Hence, Jesus' saying that it would be more endurable on Judgment Day for Tyre or Sodom did not necessarily mean that those people will be present on Judgment Day. He could simply have been stressing how unresponsive and culpable were most in Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. We say most because some in Capernaum did accept Christ. (Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38, 39) Yet, basically those cities rejected him. Some of their inhabitants, as with the scribes and the Pharisees, may even have sinned against the holy spirit, for which forgiveness is impossible even in the 'system of things to come.' Such individuals go to Gehenna.—Matthew 12:31, 32; 23:33.

Aside from Jesus' words on the point, Ezekiel 32:21, 30 does tell us that pagan people of ancient Tyre/Sidon are in Sheol; so they are in line for a resurrection. What, then, about the inhabitants of "the land of Sodom on Judgment Day"? The mere fact that Jesus paralleled Sidon with Sodom does not establish the future prospects of those wicked ones whom God destroyed with sulfur and fire. But let us see what else the Bible says on the question.

One of the most pointed comments is in Jude 7. Jude had just

spoken of (1) Israelites destroyed for lack of faith, and (2) angels who sinned and are 'reserved with eternal bonds for the judgment of the great day.' Then Jude wrote: 'So too Sodom and Gomorrah . . . are placed before us as a warning example by undergoing the judicial punishment of everlasting fire.' This text has been applied to the actual cities' being destroyed everlastingly, not the people. However, in view of Jude 5 and 6, likely most people would take verse 7 to mean a judicial punishment of individuals. (Similarly, Matthew 11:20-24 would be understood as criticizing people, not stones or buildings.) In this light, Jude 7 would mean that the wicked people of Sodom/Gomorrah were judged and destroyed everlastingly.*

Looking elsewhere, we find it noteworthy that more than once the Bible links the Flood and Sodom/Gomorrah. In what context?

When asked about "the conclusion of the system of things," Jesus foretold the coming "end" and a "great tribulation such as has not occurred since the world's beginning." (Matthew 24:3, 14, 21) He went on to speak of "the days of Noah" and what "occurred in the days of Lot" as being examples of people who took no note of warning about coming destruc-

* At Ezekiel 16:53-55, "Sodom and her dependent towns" are mentioned, not in connection with the resurrection, but figuratively with regard to Jerusalem and her daughters. (Compare Revelation 11:8.) See also *The Watchtower*, June 1, 1952, page 337.



tion. Jesus added: "The same way it will be on that day when the Son of man is to be revealed." (Luke 17:26-30; compare Matthew 24:36-39.) Was Jesus illustrating just an attitude, or does the context in which he used these examples suggest that eternal judgments were involved?

Later, Peter wrote about God's judgments and His punishing those deserving it. Then Peter used three examples: The angels that sinned, the ancient world of Noah's time, and those destroyed in Sodom/Gomorrah. The latter, Peter said, 'set a pattern for ungodly persons of things to come!' (2 Peter 2:4-9) Thereafter, he compared the destruction that people suffered in the Deluge with the coming "day of judgment and of destruction of the ungodly men." That precedes the promised new heavens and new earth. —2 Peter 3:5-13.

Likewise, at the end of the present wicked system, will those whom God executes have had a final judgment? That is the indication of 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9: "It is righteous on God's part to repay tribulation to those who make tribulation for you, but, to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with

us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his powerful angels in a flaming fire, as he brings vengeance upon those who do not know God and those who do not obey the good news about our Lord Jesus. These very ones will undergo the judicial punishment of everlasting destruction from before the Lord and from the glory of his strength."

There is an interesting similarity in phraseology between this description and what Jude said occurred in the case of Sodom. Furthermore, Matthew 25:31-46 and Revelation 19:11-21 indicate that "the goats" cut off in the coming war of God will experience "everlasting cutting-off" in "the lake of fire," which symbolizes permanent annihilation.*—Revelation 20:10, 14.

Consequently, in addition to what Jude 7 says, the Bible uses Sodom/Gomorrah and the Flood as patterns for the destructive end of the present wicked system. It is apparent, then, that those whom God executed in those past judgments experienced irreversible destruction. Of course, each of us can confirm that by his proving faithful to Jehovah now. In that way we will qualify to be alive in the new world to see whom he resursects and whom he does not. We know that his judgments are perfect. Elihu assured us: "For a fact, God himself does not act wickedly, and the Almighty himself does not pervert judgment." Job 34:10, 12.

* Compare "Questions From Readers" in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1979.



Come and hear the public talk: Justice for All by God's Appointed Judge

Governments have long sought to achieve 'Justice for All,' as did the ancient Greeks whose judges heard crucial law cases on this Areopagus, or Mars' Hill. At this court of justice over 1,900 years ago, a man indicated how true justice for all will be realized. His speech will be examined closely in the principal talk of this summer's "Divine Justice" District Convention of Jehovah's Witnesses.

You can hear this talk at any one of more than a hundred such conventions being held this summer in the United States, the British Isles, and Canada. The convention program also features helpful Bible discussions on practical matters of life, and two instructive Bible dramas.

Contact the local Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses for the location of the convention nearest you, or write the publishers of this magazine. In the United States, the talk will be given on Sunday at 2:00 p.m.

