

Is Jesus God?

AN ARTICLE REPRINT SERIES

MILLIONS DO NOT KNOW WHAT CHRIST REALLY WAS!

Shocking though it is, millions of sincere believers are deceived by a diabolical deception. Was Christ human, or divine? Read the truth about this vital subject that has puzzled millions. See page 1.

IS JESUS GOD?

What is the real answer? Is Jesus God? Is He the same as Jehovah? Is there more than one God? Here you will find God's answer—from His own Word—as revealed in your Bible. See page 5.

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Millions do not Know What Christ Really Was!

Shocking though it is, Millions of sincere believers are deceived by a diabolical deception. ANTICHRIST IS HERE ALREADY! Perhaps YOU have been misled! Was Christ human, or Divine? Read the TRUTH about this vital subject that has puzzled millions. Your very SALVATION depends upon it!

by Herbert W. Armstrong

REAL "Utopia" is just around the corner. God is soon going to intervene in world affairs and SAVE this world from itself.

Prophecy foretells it. World events show it is coming. Many of YOU will see it with your own eyes.

While most people seem to want to scoff at the idea that their Creator has *power to intervene in human affairs*, nevertheless God's prophetic messages continue to be fulfilled. Now we are swiftly reaching the point where the world's only hope will be the intervention of God to REDEEM misguided humanity from the horrible result of their *wrong ways*.

God alone has power to SAVE man from the inevitable result of *competition, greed, selfishness*, and resulting world war. God alone has made it possible for man to be saved from the results of SIN. "For God so LOVED the world, that he GAVE his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Do we realize what a *tremendous* sacrifice had to be made to redeem us from sin and give us eternal life?

God so LOVED this world that He gave His own Son to save it! *God is love!*

Collectively, man is about to reach the end of his rope. He will finally come to realize God's great LOVE when he is *supernaturally saved* from world suicide. And *individually*, we need to really understand just HOW God has made it possible for us to be spared from the penalty of our *wrong ways*.

Unusual Problem. The problem of just *how* God ordained that the penalty of human sin be paid is one that has puzzled theologians for generations. In fact, it was the basis for many of the early heresies after the time of the apostles.

This subject requires clear thinking and a willingness to be corrected and reproved by the Word of God—our only infallible source of information. We must be careful to consider ALL the scriptures on this subject, and realize that one scripture cannot be used to contradict another—for God does not contradict Himself, and as Jesus said, "*The scripture cannot be broken*" (John 10:35).

First of all, we need to understand that the reward of *sin*, the penalty for going the *wrong way*, is DEATH. God's inspired Word says: "For the wages of sin is *death*; but the gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

When Jesus took our sins He paid the penalty we have incurred—not eternal life in hell-fire, but DEATH. "Christ *died* for our sins according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3).

But if Jesus were only *human* His life would pay the death penalty for only ONE other person. No one *human* being could save mankind. The full penalty for everyone's sins *must be paid!*

Yet *God alone could not* of Himself pay the penalty for man's sins. The penalty is the forfeiting of *human* life—not animal or any other kind of life. And God, as the *source*

of all life and the One who has life within himself, and is a *spirit* being, *cannot die* (John 5:26; II Cor. 4:18).

Therefore it was absolutely necessary that there be One who was *both human and divine*.

Christ Was Divine. In order to pay the penalty for your sins and mine, it was necessary that Christ be *Divine*—that His life be worth all our *human* lives put together.

Man *does not* have life inherent within himself. He has only a chemical existence which soon ends. As God told Adam after his sin: "For *dust* thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). Then God drove man out of the garden of Eden, "*lest* he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and *live for ever*" (verses 22-24). So we see that Adam had *no eternal life whatsoever* inherent within himself—and God did not permit him to attain it at that time.

The New Testament also shows clearly that man has no eternal life inherent within himself. One example is this inspired statement of John: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that *no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*" (I John 3:15).

God alone has and can give *eternal life*. "For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have *life in himself*" (John 5:26). Again we read of Christ: "*In him was LIFE*; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Jesus told

Martha, "I am the *resurrection*, and the *life*: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). Paul described Christ as the One "Who *only* hath *immortality*, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto" (I Tim. 6:16).

If Christ were only human, He could have saved but *one* other human, and given *eternal* life to *none*. To do this required *God*—the life and power of the *Creator*.

Christ Is Creator. In John 1:1-2, we read that Christ—the *Word* or Spokesman—was *with* God the Father in the beginning. "*All things were made by him* (Christ)" (verse 3). Paul wrote of Christ: "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth" (Col. 1:16). Christ is also proved to be the One who did the creating in Hebrews 1:8-10. Christ, the *Word*, the *Divine Spokesman*, "spake and it was done."

Therefore Christ's life is the life of the *Creator* God. Paul called Him "God our Saviour" (Tit. 1:3). Yes, in the person of Christ, the very *Creator* became our *Saviour*!

Christ is our *Maker* and a member of the Godhead. Therefore, His life which He *gave* for us is of *greater value* than the total of *all* human beings.

In Hebrews 7:1-4, we find a description of the One who was "made like unto the Son of God" and now "abideth a priest continually" (verse 3). The entire book of Hebrews reveals the present office of Christ as our High Priest. This description can fit none other than the One who came in the flesh as Jesus the Christ.

He is described as being, "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life" (verse 3). Hence, we see that He was not the "Son" of God until He was born of the virgin Mary.

Then Christ, the One through whom the Father had created the heavens and the earth, was translated into flesh and born of a human virgin. Matthew writes that Mary "was found with child of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 1:18).

An angel spoke to Joseph telling him the child was conceived of the Holy Spirit and commanding him:

"Thou shalt call his name *Jesus* [meaning *Saviour*]: for he shall *save* his people from their sins" (verse 21).

The narrative continues: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name *Emmanuel*, which being interpreted is, *God with us*" (verses 22-23).

Here we see that even Jesus Christ's name revealed Him both as *Saviour*, and *God with us*—a *divine* being *with us*, in the *flesh*—to *save* us from our sins.

Only His life—that of the *Creator*—could pay the full penalty of *sin* for all mankind.

Jesus Was Also Human. In order to pay the penalty of human sin, it was not enough that Jesus was *Divine*. He must also have been *human*.

The *Bible* definition of sin is this: "*Sin is the transgression of the law*" (I John 3:4). God's spiritual law was given to *man*—not the plants, nor the animals, nor the angels. The Ten Commandments govern the relationship between men, and between man and God. The transgression of this law constitutes *sin*. And, as we have seen, the wages, or reward, of sin is *death* (Rom. 6:23). God exacts the forfeiture of *human* life as the penalty for sin.

"For it is not possible that *the blood of bulls and of goats* should take away sin." (Heb. 10:4). It required *HUMAN BLOOD*!

Christ, then, *must* have been *human* in order to pay this penalty.

Paul explains in I Cor. 15:21-22: "For since by *man* [Adam] came *death*, by *man* [Christ] came also the *resurrection* of the dead. For as in Adam all *die*, even so in Christ shall all be made *alive*." Since eternal *LIFE* is made possible only by *MAN'S* resurrection—and the resurrection to eternal life is made possible for all men *only by the resurrection of the ONE MAN—CHRIST*—and since He was resurrected *from the dead*—therefore the *DEATH* of the *ONE MAN*, Jesus Christ, was necessary to pay *MAN'S* penalty.

Adam, the father of the human race, introduced *sin* into the world. And all of us have succumbed to it. It

is the *human* race that is under the death penalty for sin—and that penalty *must be paid*—*BY HUMAN LIFE*!

So since only *God* has power to save and give life—and since only *man* can pay the penalty of sin—the *only possible way* to save mankind was for *Yahveh*—the "Lord" or "Eternal" of the Old Testament, the One who executed the creation for God the Father—to come *in the flesh* as a *HUMAN—GOD* become *MAN*—and *die* for the sins of the world.

Only thus could the penalty of *all human sin* be paid by *one man* as *Saviour* of the world. *That* life was the life of our *MAKER* become *HUMAN*, for the very purpose of death—a life greater than the sum-total of all human lives! *MARVELOUS MYSTERY! Jesus Had HUMAN Nature.* God came *in the flesh* as Jesus Christ, lived *without sin*, and thus was able to *die* and pay the full penalty of sin in our stead.

The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made *under the law*. To *REDEEM* them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons [sonship]" (Gal. 4:4-5).

Christ was made of a woman—born of the virgin Mary. He was made "under the law"—His very purpose in coming in the human flesh was to take our sins upon Himself, which would put Him "under the law"—under its *penalty, death*. He did this to *redeem all humanity* which is "under the law"—under the *penalty* of *DEATH*. Jesus was *GOD made mortal human flesh*, "for the suffering of death" (Heb. 2:9)—*FOR THAT VERY PURPOSE*!

So Jesus took *human* nature upon Himself and was made subject to *death* in order to be our Saviour. "He also himself likewise (as the children are partakers of *flesh and blood*) took part of the *same*"—took on *HUMAN NATURE*—became flesh and blood—"that through *death* he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).

As is fully explained in our free booklet *The Resurrection Was Not on Sunday*, Jesus was really *DEAD* during the three days and nights His body was in the grave. He who had

been one of the personalities in God—was *changed* into flesh so *He could DIE* for our sins.

Paul explains that Christ: “Being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be EQUAL with God: *But made himself of no reputation*”—EMPTIED Himself of His divine *glory* and *power*—“and took upon him the *form* of a servant, and was *made in the LIKENESS of men* . . . and became obedient unto DEATH” (Phil. 2:6-8).

When Christ was in the human flesh, He said: “*I can of mine own self do NOTHING*: as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because *I seek not mine own will*, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). Jesus had *emptied* Himself of His divine *glory* and *power*. He plainly said he could of Himself—in His own *human* strength—do NOTHING.

In John 14:12, Jesus said: “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and *greater works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.” Here we see that any outside *help* and *power* that Jesus had—coming from God the Father—we may also have, and may accomplish *greater* works through the power of the Holy Spirit which He went to heaven to send.

In living a *perfect life*, in doing great *miracles*, Jesus did NOT have any special help from God the Father that we cannot also have.

Christ, one of the beings in the Godhead, had now been *changed* into flesh—still having the *personality* and *will* to do right which distinguished Him as an entity—yet now had become *human*, having HUMAN NATURE with all of its *desires*, *weakness*, and *lusts*—and subject to *death* just like any other human.

This is a truth about which *millions* are DECEIVED!

Doctrine of Anti-Christ. The Satan-inspired doctrine that Jesus was *not* human and that He did *not* inherit the sinful nature of Adam, that He did *not* have the normal human passions and weaknesses against which all of us have to struggle—in a word, that Jesus did *not* really come “in the flesh” as a normal human being—*this is the doctrine of the Anti-Christ*. Notice Romans 8:3: “God sending His own Son in the likeness of *sinful flesh*.”

“Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come *in the flesh* is NOT of God: and *this is that spirit of anti-christ*, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and *even NOW already is it in the world*” (I John 4:3).

Millions are being taught, in one form or another, this deception of Satan the Devil! Some believe that Jesus had a “special” kind of blood in His veins—not containing *human nature* with all its weaknesses. Then there is the belief that *denies* the fact that Jesus inherited *human nature* from His mother, Mary. This theory thwarts the meaning of the many scriptures showing that Christ Jesus came as the son of *man*—inheriting His *hu-man* nature from a normal, human mother.

Yes, as the scriptures clearly state, this Satan-inspired doctrine of Anti-Christ is “*even NOW*” in the world—and some honest and sincere people are being deceived by it.

Doctrine Explained. Now, *listen!* The underlying PURPOSE of Satan—the *Adversary*—in formulating the doctrine of Anti-Christ is this: *It is an attempt to deny the fact that a normal man—with HUMAN NATURE—could, with the help of God’s Holy Spirit which is now accessible to every man* (Acts 10:34-45), *live in perfect obedience to the LAW OF GOD as Jesus Christ did*. Again notice WHY Christ came in the likeness of *sinful flesh*: “. . . and for sin, condemned sin and the flesh”—WHY?—“*That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled IN US*, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:3-4).

The idea Satan is trying to put across is that it is *impossible* for man to keep the spiritual law of God, and so Jesus came as our Saviour—not “in the flesh” with normal human nature—but through some “special process” so that He could keep the law of God *in our stead!* And therefore we don’t have to keep the Spiritual Law. What Christ did *in our stead* was to *die* for us! But His *obedience* was our EXAMPLE!

Those who believe this doctrine seem to *forget* that Jesus obeyed God in *every* way, “leaving us an EXAMPLE, that ye should follow his steps” (I Peter 2:21-22), that Jesus taught, “*if thou wilt enter into life, keep the*

commandments” (Matt. 19:17), and that He said of *all mankind*: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word of God*” (Luke 4:4). We are not only to keep the letter of the law, but to follow it as it is magnified throughout the Bible in “every word of God.”

As Jesus explained throughout Matthew 5, we are to DO *and* TEACH even the *least* of the commandments (verse 19), and should go far beyond the scribes and Pharisees by obeying even the *spirit*, and *intent*, of God’s great *law of love* as summed up in the ten commandments.

Satan the Devil, through His *false ministers* who appear as “ministers of righteousness” (II Cor. 11:13-15), is trying to *deceive* the world into believing in a FALSE CHRIST—a Christ who *did away* with the Father’s spiritual *law* and made it possible for us to inherit eternal life without having to build, with the help of God’s Spirit, the kind of holy, righteous CHARACTER which would enable us to *obey* God’s eternal spiritual LAW both now and forever.

Truth Made Clear. Now that we understand the real *motive* behind the doctrine of the Anti-Christ, let us consider a few final scriptures which will clear up the *truth* of this matter once and for all time.

In James 1:13-14, we read: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for GOD CANNOT BE TEMPTED WITH EVIL, neither tempteth he any man: *But every man is tempted*, when he is drawn away of *his own lust*, and enticed.”

How *plain!* How abundantly *clear!* Not having *human nature* with its *passions* and *lusts*, GOD CANNOT be tempted with evil. And on the contrary, *every* man is tempted of his own *lust*—because every man *does* have human nature.

Now turn to Hebrews 2:17-18. Here God shows that Christ is *qualified* to be a *merciful* and *faithful* high priest—“*For in that he himself hath suffered being TEMPTED*, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”

Again, in Hebrews 4:15 we read: “For we have not an *high priest* which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but WAS IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED *like as we are, yet without sin.*”

Could *anything* be more CLEAR?

God CANNOT be tempted. Yet Christ Jesus WAS tempted in *all points* like we are. He was HUMAN. He was tempted through the *lusts* of His HUMAN NATURE. He said: "I can of mine own self do NOTHING" (John

"A thorough understanding of the Bible is better than a college education."

—Theodore Roosevelt

That's a powerful statement, coming from a man of Theodore Roosevelt's stature. And he is by no means alone in this sentiment. Many great leaders have shared Roosevelt's high esteem for a knowledge of the Bible—Newton, Jefferson, Franklin, Lincoln, to name a few. Of course, no one is suggesting that you forget about a college education. The point is that numerous men of great ability and eminence have found the Bible to be of immense educational value. Yet most of us haven't bothered to read the book that is the basis of much of our Judeo-Christian heritage. Why not take a few minutes a day to find out about the most important book ever written? Our free Bible Correspondence Course, opens the door to a whole new realm of discovery. Why not enroll today? Just write to the address of our office nearest you. Who knows? You might be in for a few surprises.

5:30). In the days of fleshly weakness, He cried out to God who was able to save Him from *death* (Heb. 5:7).

In spite of having *human nature* just as we do, with all of its passions and weaknesses, of being "tempted in *all points* like as we are," He was "yet WITHOUT SIN."

He willingly suffered every human trial, privation, and persecution, "leaving us an EXAMPLE, that ye should follow his steps: Who DID NO SIN, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:21-22).

Jesus Kept Commandments. Though having *human nature*, Jesus *did not sin!* And what is the *Bible* definition—*God's* definition—of *sin*? "Sin is the transgression of THE LAW" (I John 3:4).

Then Jesus, though having *human nature obeyed God's LAW*. He said, "I have kept my Father's commandments" (John 15:10). He instructed: "If thou wilt enter into life, *keep the COMMANDMENTS*" (Matt. 19:17).

So it is not only *possible*—but *obligatory*—that we obey God's spiritual law, the *Ten Commandments*, as they are magnified throughout the Bible. Keeping them in the spirit does NOT mean "spiritualizing" them away, but really *obeying them as Jesus set us the example*, thru the power of God's Holy Spirit, which He gives to them that OBEY Him! (Acts 5:32).

By cleverly twisting, distorting, and misapplying scattered scriptures, Satan—operating through his *false ministers* preaching the doctrine of Anti-Christ—has been able to *deceive* nearly all of professing Christianity on this subject.

Peter knew that men would especially try to twist and pervert the writings of Paul in regard to the law of God. He was inspired to write that Paul's epistles contained "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable *wrest, as they do also the other scriptures*, unto their own *destruction*" (II Peter 3:16).

God does *not* contradict himself, and literally hundreds of plain, clear scriptures teach us to OBEY the commandments of God, the holy, spiritual LAW of God. And your Bible clearly reveals that Jesus—born into the *human flesh* and having *human*

nature even as you and I—*kept His Father's commandments* and set us a *perfect example*.

Exercising Character. The *only difference* between Jesus and any other human is that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Therefore He obeyed God's laws *from birth*—and never had to go through the process of *repenting* of going the wrong way, of *unlearning* wrong ideas and habits, and of gradually learning to *exercise His will to do right* continually.

He, who had been God, was now changed *into human flesh* with all its weaknesses and lusts. Nevertheless, He retained in His personality the *determination*, the *WILL to obey God always*.

The *temptation* to do wrong, the *idea of sinning* entered Jesus' mind. Yes, it DID occur to Him to disobey God. He WAS tempted in *all points* like we are!

But from birth, Jesus would always *reject* these wrong ideas, these temptations. He said, "Get behind me, Satan!" He WILLED to do right. He went to God the Father for POWER to do always right. And, praying for the strength He needed through the Holy Spirit, *He always did right*.

But it WASN'T *easy!* Jesus had exactly the same day-to-day battle with sin that we do.

Jesus needed outside help sorely. And He knew where to get that help. "And in the morning, rising up a *great while before day*, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there PRAYED" (Mark 1:35). When He needed strength to go through the terrible ordeal of the crucifixion, "being in an agony he *prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground*" (Luke 22:44).

Perhaps now we can better understand Paul's inspired statement in Romans 8:3: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, *God sending his own Son in the likeness of SINFUL flesh*, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Yes, Jesus had *sinful flesh—human nature*. But by exercising the WILL to always obey God, and by receiving the extra help He needed to *master His fleshly desires*, Jesus *repudiated* the sway of sin in the human flesh and showed that the

law of God *could be kept*.

Right here let us understand the scriptures which show that Jesus was *worshipped* while He was yet in the human flesh. In Matthew 2:11, 8:2 and seven other places in the gospels, we find accounts of how men *worshipped* Jesus.

Yet we know that the Bible forbids us to worship another man.

To understand this, we must realize that in Jesus, "God was manifest *in the flesh*" (I Tim. 3:16). Men were permitted to *worship* Jesus because He was the *personality* and *perfect will* of one who was God—and He exercised the *character* of God. They were not worshipping Jesus as just another *man*, but as the holy, righteous, perfect *character of God* manifested in the flesh. He was GOD—in the human flesh!

God's Great Purpose. And so by exercising the WILL to obey God, Jesus "condemned sin in the flesh" for what *purpose*?

Here is the real ANSWER to why God had to come in the *human flesh*! Here is the real PURPOSE for the *great SACRIFICE* Christ made in *emptying* Himself of His divine glory and power, and coming to *strive* with sin in the flesh and finally DIE the ignominious death of the cross!

The answer is given in the very next verse of Romans 8. Christ came to condemn sin in the flesh—"That the *righteousness of the LAW might be fulfilled in us*, who walk NOT after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (verse 4).

Christ came *in the flesh* to set us a *perfect example*, then to DIE in payment for our sins and make it possible

for us to be reconciled to a holy, righteous God and receive of His Spirit—His very *life* and *character* implanted within us.

Then He was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven, having now qualified through *human experience* to be our merciful and faithful high priest—now to *guide* us and *strengthen* us through the Holy Spirit so that we, too, can learn to OBEY God's laws perfectly, can WILL to do right *always*, can develop the holy, spiritual CHARACTER of God—and finally be found worthy to inherit *eternal life* as the *born sons of Almighty God*.

How *great* is God's love in coming into the human flesh to *save* us and make us His own! How *wonderful* is His plan when we really *understand* it! □

IS JESUS GOD?

What is the REAL ANSWER? Is Jesus God? Is He the same as Jehovah? Is there more than one God? Here you will find GOD'S answer—from His own Word—as revealed in YOUR BIBLE.

by Herbert W. Armstrong

STARTLING as it may seem, there is great *confusion* today among religious leaders concerning the true nature and office of Jesus Christ—the Saviour of the world. You need not be in doubt! The Bible was divinely inspired to impart TRUTH to those who seek it with *honest* hearts and minds. But even this all-important subject has become jumbled in today's troubled and chaotic world.

Is Jesus God? Jesus Christ came to pay the penalty for sin in our stead. He gave of *Himself*, that we might be reconciled to God. *How was this made possible?*

First, if Jesus had been *only* human, His death could have paid the penalty for but *one* other human who had incurred that penalty by transgression of God's spiritual Law

(Rom. 6:23). Since God the Father created all things *by* Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:9), and since *all* things, including man, were made *by* Jesus Christ, He is our Maker and therefore God, and His life which He gave was of *greater value* than the sum total of all human beings. For we read, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the *Word was God*. The same was in the beginning with God. *All things were made by him*; and without him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:1-3). "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (verse 14—RSV). Also, "He was in the world, and the world *was made through him*, yet the world knew him not" (verse 10—RSV).

Compare these scriptures with I Corinthians 8:6 and Colossians 1:12-19.

Life alone can *beget* life. This is the absolute law of biogenesis. Since Eternal life is the GIFT of God (John 3:16), only a GOD *possessing* immortality could give it. If Jesus were only human, *we could not receive eternal life through Him* and He could not be our Saviour. Man *does not* have eternal life inherent in himself. But, as God "the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." And, "God *hath given* to us eternal life, and this life is *in his Son*. He that hath the Son hath life; and *he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*" (John 5:26 and I John 5:11-12).

He Was Also Human. On the other hand, Jesus was also human. Since it

is *human* life which has transgressed God's Law, the Law claims *human* life as its penalty. Contrary to popular present-day teaching, the Word of God states that the wages—the penalty—of sin, is DEATH—not eternal life in a so-called “hell fire” (Rom. 6:23). When we sin, we break God's perfect spiritual law, “for sin is the transgression of the law” (I John 3:4). The penalty for this sin is *death*. The penalty *must be paid*. God the Father will not compromise. It must be paid *by man*. Therefore, Jesus, who is and was God, who has always existed (John 1:1, 2), was actually *made flesh* (verse 14). He, who was God, actually *became* human flesh because I John 4:2, 3—RSV—states, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ *has come in the flesh* is of God, and every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God.” He was conceived in and born of the human virgin, Mary. “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18, RSV). He was made not only flesh, but *human* flesh and blood. Notice Hebrews 2:14: “Since then the children are sharers in *blood and flesh*, himself also in like manner partook of the same” (Ivan Panin translation).

Jesus called Himself the Son of MAN repeatedly, and also the Son of God. Matthew wrote, “Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do men say that the Son of man is?’ And they said, ‘Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ He said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered him, ‘Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven’” (Matt. 16:13-17, RSV).

Jesus, in nature, is equal with God—“Jesus: who, existing in God's form, counted not the *being on an equality with God* ought to be grasped at, but emptied himself . . . being made in likeness of men” (Phil. 2:6, Panin translation).

He is *called* God in Titus 2:10, 13. Therefore He *is* God. The Bible contains so much on these points that the above is a mere fragment of the evidence.

Yes, Jesus is also “Jehovah,” although this word is a *mistranslation* used in the American Standard Version. The original name, in the Hebrew, contained the consonants “YHVH.” In writing in Hebrew, vowels were omitted, supplied only in speaking. Thus the precise pronunciation of the name is not definitely known, but today it is commonly assumed to be *Yahveh*, or *Yahweh*. The *meaning*, in English, is “THE ETERNAL,” or “THE EVER-LIVING,” or the “SELF-EXISTENT.” It is commonly supposed that *Yahveh*, or, as commonly called, “Jehovah,” or, as in the Authorized Version, “The LORD,” of the Old Testament was God the FATHER of Jesus Christ. *This is a flagrant error!*

Yahveh was the God of Israel, the only One of the Godhead known to ancient Israel. When He came in human flesh they did not recognize Him. “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not” (John 1:10-11, Authorized Version). Neither did they know God the Father (Matt. 11:27 and Luke 10:22, Panin). “No one knoweth . . . who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to REVEAL him.”

In Genesis 1, the Hebrew name translated “God” is *Elohim*. This is a uniplural name, such as “church,” or “family.” A church or a family consists of more than one person, yet is *one* church, or *one* family. In this same sense *Elohim*—the God kingdom—includes both God the Father and *Yahveh*, who was the *Logos* or the WORD of God, and also their Spirit emanating from them, the Holy Spirit, the LIFE, CHARACTER, and POWER of God. Jesus, in praying for the welfare of the Church, prayed that its many members might “be ONE as we are one” (John 17:11, 21, Moffatt). The Church is ONE body, yet composed of many members (I Cor. 12:12). A husband and wife are ONE FLESH, yet two persons.

The word “God” has two meanings—the God kingdom or the family of God, AND the *persons* composing that kingdom or family. Christ and

the Father are ONE God, *not two* Gods—one *Elohim*. That is why *Elohim* said, “Let us make man in OUR image” (Gen. 1:26).

Yahveh was the “WORD” or Spokesman of the Godhead—its second member. As soon as God began to SPEAK to man, it was always *Yahveh* who spoke (translated “LORD” in the Authorized, and “Jehovah” in the American Standard Version. See Gen. 2:16, 18 and Exodus 20:2). Almost always it is *Yahveh* in the original Hebrew—the “WORD” who was made flesh. The proof of this is a long study, involving hundreds of passages.

As a fragment of the evidence, compare Isaiah 8:13-14 with I Peter 2:7-8. Isaiah said, “The LORD of hosts” (YHVH) shall be “a stone of stumbling and . . . a rock of offence.” Peter said, in *quoting* this text in reference to *Christ*, He is “a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.” Jesus is the LORD—the Eternal of the Old Testament.

Now compare Isaiah 40:3 with Matthew 3:3 and Mark 1:3. John prepared the way before *Yahveh* (Isaiah 40:3) who was CHRIST (Mark 1:14-15).

In Revelation 1:17, RSV, We read, “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. But he laid his right hand upon me, saying, ‘Fear not, I am the first and the last.’” And in verse 8, “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” Again Revelation 22:13, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” Study also Revelation 22:16 for proof it was *Jesus* speaking. Jesus Christ calls Himself the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last. Now compare these texts with Isaiah 44:6: “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: ‘I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.’”

Now turn to Isaiah 48:11-12. “For my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another. ‘Hearken to me, O Jacob, and Israel, whom I called! I am He, I am the first, and I am the last.’” Verses 17-18 show it was *Yahveh* speaking. And also in Isaiah 41:4, “Who has performed and

done this, calling the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am He." All of these scriptures show that *Yahveh* is the First and Last. Christ is the *Yahveh* of the Old Testament.

Christ Is the ROCK—The God of the Old Testament. In I Corinthians 10:4, the "Rock" of the Old Testament is called Christ. "For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was *Christ*" (verse 4). II Samuel 22:2-3: "He said, 'The LORD [*Yahveh*] is my *rock*, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my *rock*, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence.'" See also verse 32.

In Psalm 18:1-2, AV, *this same "ROCK" is Yahveh.* When Moses was talking to *Yahveh*, and asked Him His name (Ex. 3:4-5, 13), He answered that His name was "I AM" (verses 6, 14) and *Yahveh*—the Eternal One (verse 15). See also Ex. 6:2-3. In John 18:5-8, as soon as Jesus identified Himself to the mob led by Judas as "I AM" (the "he" in italics is added without inspiration, and was not in the original), they went back-

ward and fell to the ground. Again in John 8:56-58, Jesus called Himself: "I AM." For we read, "Jesus said to them 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, *I am*'" (verse 58, RSV).

The person of the Godhead who is our REDEEMER is Jesus Christ. John 4:42 contains this: "They said to the woman, 'It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that *this is indeed the SAVIOR of the world.*'" "But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a *Savior*, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). Read also Titus 2:10-14, Luke 1:68-69.

That Jesus, the Savior, is *Yahveh*, see Isaiah 49:7 and 60:16, where He—*Yahveh*—is also "the mighty One of Jacob"—to be of Jacob means a son, or descendant of Jacob—the Mighty One of all Jacob's children. Also in Isaiah 48:17, *Yahveh* is called the Redeemer, and the Holy One of Israel—the One of Israel who is Holy! The same is expressed in Isaiah 43:14, "Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. . . ." Also note the next verse (15), *Yahveh* is Israel's Holy One, Creator of Israel, Israel's King. Now notice in Acts 3:14-15 that the Christ who was denied was the same "HOLY ONE"—*Yahveh!* "But ye denied the Holy and Righteous One . . . the Prince of life" (Panin). See also Acts 2:27 and Mark 1:24.

Christ Was David's Shepherd. Who was David's *shepherd*? (Psalm 23:1.)

In John 10:11, Jesus said *He* was the Shepherd. Open your Bibles also to Hebrews 13:20: "Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great *shepherd* of the sheep. . . ." Compare this text with I Peter 2:24-25, which says, "For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the *Shepherd* and Guardian of your souls." We also read, "Tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock. And when the chief *Shepherd* is manifested you will obtain the unfading crown of glory" (I Peter 5:2-4).

It is JESUS CHRIST who is coming

again in person as KING of kings to rule, and to RESTORE. In Revelation 19:13 John writes, "He is clad in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is *The Word of God.*" "From his mouth issues a sharp sword with which to smite the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty" (verse 15). And again in Revelation 17:14 John writes, "They will make war on the *Lamb*, and the Lamb [*Christ*] will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful." The Great Shepherd who is coming to RULE as King over all kings is *Yahveh*. "And ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Eternal"—*Yahveh* or Christ! (See Ezek. 34:11, 30-31.)

Now notice Isaiah 2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-4. "And it shall come to pass . . . that the mountain [Kingdom] of *Yahveh's* house shall be established in the top of the mountains [kingdoms]"—ruling the world. "And he [*Yahveh—Christ*] shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people," and then they shall have PEACE.

In almost every Old Testament passage, the LORD *Yahveh*—the Eternal—is Jesus Christ. Clearly, Jesus is the God of the Old Testament. □

WHERE WILL YOU BE IN THE NEXT LIFE?

Yes, there is life after death. But it's not at all like the "heaven" and "hell" concepts commonly believed. If you'd like to have a better understanding of what the Bible says about the next life, why not request two free booklets *What Will You Be Doing in the Next Life?* and *Just What Do You Mean . . . Salvation?* To obtain your copies, use the literature request card in this issue.

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ONE MAN'S BLOOD

THE PUMPS and pipes of our human anatomy all send the same life-giving substance coursing through our fleshly bodies.

In the English language, we call this precious fluid "blood"—the most critical ingredient of all of our human life-support systems. "... The *life* of the flesh is in the blood ..." (Lev. 17:11). Flesh and bone cannot live without that *one blood* that winds and meanders its way from head to toe in every living human being.

The Apostle Paul was lecturing an august gathering of egotistical philosophers about some of their mistaken ideas and illogical beliefs concerning the Godhead. In the course of this small "plenary session," Paul uttered one of the most profound truths that God has ever revealed to man: "And [God] hath made of *one blood all nations of men* for to dwell on all the face of the earth ..." (Acts 17:26).

Regardless of race or nationality, we are all *blood brothers*. The prophet Malachi reminds us of our common blood line: "Have we not all *one father* [Adam]? hath not one God created us?" (Mal. 2:10).

All humanity has sprung forth from the first man Adam (I Cor. 15:45) and his wife Eve—the mother of all living (Gen. 3:20). And, in that physical sense, we are all the offspring of God (Acts 17:28).

But our common blood bond is not our only shared similarity. All men everywhere—regardless of race or religion—are afflicted by a terminal spiritual disease, commonly termed "sin."

Sin has been our common lot since the Garden of Eden. For nearly 6,000 years we have suffered spiritually from an ongoing crisis of the blood.

Sin *reigned* from Adam to Moses. And up to his time, Solomon knew not a single person had been an exception to the rule. "For there is *not* a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccl. 7:20). That's Old Testament theology!

Unhappily, centuries later conditions had not changed. Paul of Tarsus

wrote in his epistle to the Christians residing at Rome: "For *all* have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). That's New Testament theology!

This wisdom-filled apostle also forecast the spiritual poverty that would characterize our age. He wrote to the young evangelist Timothy: "This know also, that *in the last days* perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection [*unnatural affection* abounds], trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof ..." (II Tim. 3:1-5).

This is an uncannily accurate description of our chaotic, sin-filled age. Rampant sin is once again filling the earth just as it did before Noah's Flood. The so-called good in human nature has failed once again—in spite of unprecedented materialistic knowledge—to triumph over sin. Instead, evil men and seducers have, as Paul wrote, grown *worse and worse*, deceiving and being deceived (verse 13).

Individually, some of us have, for one reason or another, fared better than others. But *not* a single person has been able to avoid sin *en toto*.

We all have been stained with *blood-guiltiness*: "guilt resulting from the shedding of blood ..." (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*, primary definition).

True, most have not committed murder in the literal, physical sense, but we have all harbored the *spirit* of murder (Matt. 5:21-22; I John 3:15).

In Psalm 51 David cried out for God to deliver him from *blood guiltiness* (verse 14). He had indirectly slain Uriah with the sword of the Ammonites in order to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba.

In a similar manner, we are *all*, each of us, indirectly guilty of shed-

ding the blood of Christ. In his powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter said: "Therefore let *all* the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, *whom ye have crucified* [Roman soldiers did the dirty work], both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

A little later in yet another powerful sermon, Peter continued with the same theme: "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you; And killed the Prince of life [Jesus Christ], whom God hath raised from the dead..." (Acts 3:14-15).

If you have sinned (and you have), you have earned yourself a horrible death in a lake of fire from which there is never any resurrection (Rom. 6:23). Your sins—and your sins alone—made Christ's death *an absolute necessity!* And since He died in your place—in your stead—you (indirectly) murdered Him!

Jesus Christ of Nazareth allowed His life's blood to be poured out in order to "bare the sin of many," and to make "intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). By His death, He paid the highest price in all of history. The member of the Godhead who created Adam (John 1:1-3) willingly and voluntarily gave up the very life worth more than the sum total of *all the creation*, including every human being who has ever or will ever live on this good earth.

Christ died a horrible death for each of us *individually*, as well as collectively, for all mankind. If you have really repented of your sins, been baptized and God has begotten you with His Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), you are bought and paid for. Paul reminded the Corinthian Christians: "Know ye not that ... ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price" (I Cor. 6:19-20).

Peter eloquently stated the very same thing with a different choice of words: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold [some even today still seem to think that money is going to save them from a coming ca-

lamiy), from your *vain conversation* [conduct riddled with sin] received by tradition from your fathers; But with *the precious blood of Christ*, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (IPet. 1:18-19).

All humanity has been estranged from God the Father by sin. We would be editorially derelict not to mention Isaiah's description of this spiritual divorce from God.

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But *your iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled *with blood* [don't forget that hate is the spirit of murder—I John 3:15], and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness" (Isa. 59:1-3).

Sin had erected an impenetrable stone wall between God and His human children by creation. God cried out through Isaiah: "... I have nourished and brought up children, and they have *rebelled* against me" (Isa. 1:2).

Only the price of blood could pay for this human rebellion.

"... Almost all things are by the law *purged with blood*; and without shedding of blood is no remission [of sins]," wrote the Apostle Paul (Heb. 9:22).

But all the king's cattle and all the king's goats could not remove the ultimate death penalty for spiritual sin (Rom. 6:23). "For it is *not* possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins," continues Paul (Heb. 10:4). The blood of animals—*not* made in God's very own image—could not make the smallest dent in the iron curtain separating God and man.

But Jesus Christ did the impossible! With his last breath He broke the barrier forever! "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost [breath]. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom..." (Matt. 27:50-51).

Notice Hebrews 9:12: "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, *but by his own blood* he [Christ] entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption* for us."

And Romans 5:8-10: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us*. Much more then, being now *justified* [from past sins] *by his blood*, we shall be saved from wrath [death—Rom. 6:23] through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were *reconciled to God* by the death of his Son, much more, being [already] reconciled, we shall be saved by his life [as our merciful and compassionate High Priest—book of Hebrews]."

Continue in verse 17: "For if by *one man's* [Adam's] offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life *by one, Jesus Christ*."

So by *one man's blood*—Jesus Christ (actually God in the flesh)—many have been, are being, and will be *reconciled* to God the Father.

Christ Himself said: "And *I*, if I be lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men* [mankind] unto me." John wrote that Jesus said this "signifying what death he should die" (John 12:32, 33).

Paul wrote (after the fact) that Jesus "had *by himself* purged our sins..." (Heb. 1:3).

Jesus came to reconcile us to God, to save us from utter destruction: "For God so loved the [whole] world, that he gave his *only begotten Son*, that whosoever believeth *in him* should *not* perish, but have everlasting [eternal] life" (John 3:16).

Do you want to avert perishing? Do you want your sins forgiven?

Now those are silly questions.

Of course you do!

But it's not that simple—and yet it is.

There are requirements! The overall basic precondition is that you will have to enter into a covenant, a binding agreement, with God. It's described in Hebrews 10:16-18: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them [through the Holy Spirit]; And [as a result of entering this new covenant with God] their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these [sins] is, there is no more offering for sin."

Other scriptures (Acts 2:38; 3:19;

5:32, etc.) show that repentance, obedience, faith and water baptism are part of the terms of the agreement you must perform. Then God guarantees His Holy Spirit as a free gift, which is absolutely essential for the covenant to be operative.

But never forget that the covenant is only made possible by one man's blood. Paul called it: "... the blood of the covenant" (Heb. 10:29; 13:20).

So in order to even start the salvation process, you must have faith in Christ's blood—His atoning sacrifice to blot out your past sins.

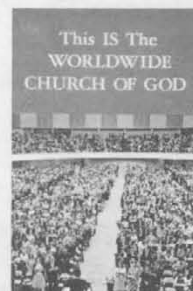
Paul put it this way: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith in his blood*,

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to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. 3:24-25).

And so we must believe in Christ's sacrifice as an historical event that applies to the repentant sinner, now, at this present time—in order to make a permanent compact with God.

God earnestly desires for us to enter into this covenant with Him.

In Hebrews 10:19-22, Paul emphasizes the confidence we should have toward God: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest *by the blood of Jesus* . . . Let us draw near [to God] with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled [*by Christ's blood*] from *an evil conscience*, and our bodies washed with pure water."

However, it's pretty hard to have the boldness and confidence we should all possess toward God *if* we are saddled with guilt-ridden consciences. (Usually a conscience problem is caused by a sin problem.)

"Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it

were with a cart rope," lamented the prophet Isaiah (Isa. 5:18).

Many of you are walking around weighted down and heavy laden with sin. You can't seem to get rid of that nagging *guilty conscience!*

Before his spectacular conversion, Paul (then Saul of Tarsus) had just such a conscience problem. The very first words Christ spoke to Paul were: ". . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks [go against your conscience]" (Acts 9:5).

With a great deal of help from God (which you will also need), Paul did something about his guilty conscience. He repented of his many sins! He came under the cleansing effect of Christ's blood. "How much more shall *the blood* of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, *purge your conscience* from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14.)

But notice that God used a *human* instrument on earth named Ananias to help Paul: "And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that ap-

peared unto thee in the way as thou camest [toward Damascus], hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized [in water]" (Acts 9:17-18).

God is no different today! He still uses human instruments in His spiritual service to man. They are His servants—ministers sent by Jesus Christ to preach the gospel and to feed God's flock.

God's true ministers are warm, friendly and balanced. Like the Head of God's Church, Jesus Christ, they display forgiveness, compassion and mercy. They do not condone sin; but they won't condemn the sinner either. A true minister of God will show you how to turn from your sins. He will show you the way out of sin.

The Worldwide Church of God has many such ministers around the world. Although God does use these human ministers to serve and to help those whom He is calling, it is to Him you are coming through *the blood of one man*—Jesus of Nazareth. □

Did Christ Have Brothers and Sisters?

What is meant in the Holy Scripture by "his brethren" and "his sisters"? Was Mary the mother of other sons and also daughters?

NOT long ago we received a letter from a sincere inquirer requesting biblical proof on whether Christ really had brothers and sisters. "Please do not send me the views of this or that theologian; I would like definite and conclusive proof from God's Word—the Bible," he said.

Let us, then, go through this matter

in a detailed study, noticing exactly what the Bible does say about this common theological question.

The Word "Till" or "Until." In Matthew 1:25 we read that although Joseph was living with Mary, he "knew her not [that is, he did not have intercourse] till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS."

Some commentators have felt that the word "till" does not necessarily indicate that Joseph began to have intercourse afterwards. But the fact is, whenever Matthew uses the word "till," he uses it literally to indicate the end of what is being talked about.

For example, Joseph and Mary were in Egypt "until the death of

Herod" (Matt. 2:15). The word "until" shows that they were not there after the death of Herod—they were commanded to leave Egypt "when Herod was dead" (verses 19-20).

A similar example is found in Matthew 5:26: "... Thou shalt by no means come out thence, *till* thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." This means that when the uttermost farthing has been paid, it will be possible for one to come out. Thus the word "till" has a specific meaning to Matthew.

Matthew, in saying that Joseph did not know Mary "*till* she had brought forth," indicates that after that great event she was his wife and they began to have normal intercourse.

After all, one would correctly gather that *that* was the reason why the angel appeared to Joseph saying: "fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife" (Matt. 1:20).

Therefore, even from the first chapter of the New Testament, the concept of Mary's perpetual virginity is on shaky ground.

The "Figurative" Theory. The same Gospel of Matthew gives us also one very important description of Christ by compatriots who knew Him and His whole family. "Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and *his brethren*, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And *his sisters*, are they not all with us?" (Matt. 13:55-56.)

This is the scripture that is often interpreted by some churches as referring to "brethren" and "sisters" in a figurative sense.

But are these words used figuratively? Examine the passage again.

Is there any reason to suppose that in mentioning His father, mother, brothers and sisters, these people meant His *real* father (not realizing or believing Christ was conceived of God) and *real* mother but not His real brothers and sisters? Is there any reason why the disbelieving Jews would recognize and refer to these individuals as Christ's "brothers" in a figurative sense?

The argument against a literal interpretation is not valid. The "brothers" and "sisters" must have been as real as "carpenter's son" and "mother"!

We must remember that Christ in this instance was preaching *in His*

home town (Matt. 13:54). People knew His mother and all His relatives.

These fellow citizens listed four brothers and "all" His sisters—implying that Christ had at least three sisters, otherwise they would probably have said "both."

Christ's family, therefore, consisted of four brothers and at least three sisters, who with Mary, Joseph and Christ made a total of at least ten, a good-sized family—not unusual in those days.

The "Cousin" Theory. One of the theories believed by a large number of people is the "cousin" theory. According to this theory, Mary was a perpetual virgin and the "brothers" and "sisters" mentioned in the New Testament must have been nothing other than "cousins"!

This view rests on the hypothesis that in Greek "brother" (*adelphos*) can also mean "cousin." But one can imagine what confusion would result if such a common and frequent word did really have two meanings. "Cousin" in Greek is *exadelphos*, and the word means "from brothers"; thus the people involved are cousins if they come from parents who are brothers. The Greek language, therefore, has a common and usable word for "cousin." But let us ask what Matthew himself meant by "brothers."

In Matthew 1:2 we read that "Jacob begat Judas and his brethren." Does this mean that Jacob begat Judas and his cousins? Of course not!

In Matthew 4:21 we are told of "two brethren . . . in a ship with Zebedee their father." Matthew makes it clear that these "brothers" are from the same father and/or mother!

But suppose that "brother" could mean "cousin"—a far-out supposition—then what would "father" mean? Was Zebedee the "father" of two "cousins"? Was he the "grandfather"? And, if "brother" means "cousin" and "father" means possibly "grandfather," what does "mother" mean?

It is clear from this that if the logic of this theory were correct, Christ had "brothers" who were *not* brothers, "sisters" who were not real sisters, a "mother" who was not a real

mother, and so on—throwing the whole of the New Testament into meaningless confusion.

The answer is that Christ had "brothers" and "sisters"—and the words mean exactly what they say.

The "Only Child" Theory. We have already mentioned that many commentators believe that the word "till" in Matthew 1:25 does not necessarily mean the end of something talked about. Many commentators also believe that the word "firstborn" in the same verse does not necessarily mean that others followed afterwards.

We shall see from Scripture that the second supposition is just as wrong as the first.

First, there is a great difference between a "firstborn" and an "only begotten" child. The distinction is *always* clear in the New Testament. Matthew uses the word "firstborn" (*prototokon*). So does Luke: "And she brought forth her firstborn [*prototokon*] son . . ." (Luke 2:7). But soon afterwards Luke uses a different word (*monogenes*) for an *only* child: "... Behold, there was a dead man carried out, the *only* [*monogenes*] son of his mother . . ." (Luke 7:12; 8:42; 9:38; etc.).

We see, therefore, that the New Testament authors knew the difference between a "firstborn" and an "only begotten" child!

Christ was the firstborn of Mary but the only begotten (*monogenes*) son of God (John 3:16).

The Disciple Theory. What about the "brethren" being Christ's disciples?

The answer is easy and straightforward. The Apostle John wrote: "After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his *mother*, and his *brethren*, and his *disciples*" (John 2:12).

Thus, without the help of any more scriptures, we can see that the Apostle John was familiar enough with the situation to know that His brethren were not His disciples—otherwise He would not have said "his brethren, and his disciples."

If one could insist that, in this sentence, "brethren" and "disciples" are the same people, one could also conclude, by the same logic, that "he and his mother" were the same person. The idea is completely nonsensical.

Look further into the "disciple" theory. In Matthew 12:46-49 we are

told that the disciples were *inside* the house while His brethren were *outside*. His brethren came with His mother, and *one of the multitude* spoke to Christ telling Him that His *mother* and His *brethren* had come to speak with Him. An outsider would not have used such terminology had he not seen His *real* mother and *real* brethren.

That the “brethren” were different from the “disciples” is also evident from John 7:3-10: “His *brethren* therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, *that thy disciples also* may see the works that thou doest.”

One could also read Acts 1:13-14, where the *disciples were praying with Christ's brethren*.

Thus one more human theory tumbles in the face of scriptural evidence.

But let us ask once more: Did Christ have brothers and sisters? The answer from God's inspired Word has to be an emphatic and resounding “yes”! They were brothers and sisters from the same *mother*—Mary. □

What Was It Like To Be the Brother of Jesus?

PURE SPECULATION? No! There is a Biblical account of a man who actually *was* Christ's brother. His life story is full of lessons for us.

James—the author of the book of James—is very distinctly called “the Lord's brother” (Gal. 1:19). His mother was Mary. Let's briefly examine his story and see for ourselves what it was like to be the brother of Jesus.

When the brothers of Jesus are listed, James' name appears first, which may well indicate that he was the eldest of Jesus' younger brothers (Matt. 13:55).

After Jesus was born, both His mother Mary and His stepfather Joseph knew that God would be well pleased for them to have children of their own. Soon the expansion of their family was under way. In time James was born.

Living Faith. James grew up in the town of Nazareth and had continuous and profound contact with Jesus until Jesus was thirty years of age. He saw Jesus in every conceivable situation. James was able to observe from childhood the epitome of the Christian way of life! And so after his conversion later, James would *know*—perhaps better than *any* human alive then—what it meant to be a *real* Christian!

Perhaps when Jesus and James were young children, they wandered together in the green countryside and explored the rocky ledges in the cliffs around Nazareth. On occasions they would walk together along the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret to watch the fishermen haul their nets to shore. They sat at a common table for family meals and rehashed the day's events in dinner conversation. As they grew older, perhaps they talked over the problems, aspirations, frustrations and desires of youth as they went to sleep. They sat next to each other in the synagogue on Sabbath and traveled together along the road with their parents to Jerusalem to keep the annual feasts. After a hard day's work in their father's construction business, they perhaps “talked shop” as they scrubbed off the grime and sweat.

James probably had many discussions with his older brother, who displayed unusual wisdom at a very early age (Luke 2:40). Although James could not have realized it at the time, he was having set for him the perfect example of obedience to God, *living* faith—honoring one's parents, for example (Luke 2:51). Later, this constant, lifelong example would act as a guide to James in ministering to Christ's Body—the Church.

James found Jesus easy to get

along with—even when Jesus was going through His teen-age years and then His early twenties. They must have shared many enjoyable moments (Luke 2:52).

Familiarity. Yet, of course, James must have sometimes gotten quite angry with his brother, and thought Jesus was dead wrong. Even though Jesus was living perfectly, James didn't realize it; and at times he must have thought that his brother's actions “didn't make sense.” He was to learn differently later.

Jesus was an important example in another way. Indications are that Jesus became the head of the family while still a teenager—as we don't read of His stepfather Joseph after the family's journey to Jerusalem when Jesus was twelve years old (Luke 2:41-51). If so, Jesus set an important example for James as the family leader. And He also set the example of hard work and right management of the heavy and technically proficient construction business the family was noted for. (The Greek word *tekton*, translated “carpenter,” be taken in the broad sense as “builder of houses”—that is, both woodworker and stoneworker.)

Yet there was the element of familiarity that is always present when two people spend a great deal of time together. A prophet is without honor

in his own country—or his own family. James respected and deeply admired his brother in many areas, but for a long time Jesus was always simply “Jesus” to James, and never “the Christ.” Which, of course, was quite natural.

Then when Jesus became thirty, family events took a new turn. James became a little bit concerned when his older brother and leader of the family went wandering off in the wilderness away from home—for a forty-day fast preparatory to starting His ministry. Jesus surely left someone in charge of the family—perhaps James himself. But however Jesus prepared for and explained His departure, it must have seemed a little odd to James at the time.

Strange Brother. Then Jesus reappeared at a wedding in Cana with some friends (disciples) whom James probably also knew. James was relieved to see his brother again—and was filled with many questions. What happened when Christ turned the water into the finest quality wine? Perhaps it did not even register in James’ mind. He may have heard about or even seen what happened, but after all, how could Jesus—his own brother—do something like that?

After the wedding, James went to Capernaum with Jesus and His new disciples. Mary herself also went on the trip (John 2:12). This gave James the opportunity to talk with the men who would now be his older brother’s constant companions—and who believed on Jesus enough to follow Him in His work (John 2:11).

Jesus would not be spending many more days at home. Because from here on, He was going to devote full time to proclaiming the message of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 4:17). He was making many statements that must have troubled James. Some teachings like “the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath” eventually caused a group of Jesus’ former friends to attempt to cart Him off out of the public eye—as they thought He had gone berserk (Mark 3:21). Perhaps even James was among this group.

As late as the autumn preceding Christ’s death, James still did not believe that his brother was who He claimed to be. John 7:2-9 gives the

account in which James and the rest of Jesus’ brothers somewhat skeptically asked Jesus: If you want to convince people of your power, why don’t you go down to Jerusalem at Feast time, where there’ll be hundreds of thousands of people to see you? If you are really doing these miracles, let the whole world see!

Jesus answered His brothers eyeball-to-eyeball in no uncertain terms. I’m headed on a collision course with this world, but the time for me to be put to death is not here yet. That reply must have really set James thinking.

James’ attitude of unbelief was not going to last much longer. After Christ’s death, James experienced something that he would never forget—something that would act as a driving force for the remainder of his life.

Convinced at Last. James must have had his brother’s murder constantly dominating his thoughts and must have been considering the strange stories about the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ death. So it was quite a moving experience for James to see his supposedly dead brother suddenly appear and then say words to this effect: James, remember all those things that I told you about myself, about the fact that I am the Christ? James, my brother, they were all true, and now you’re seeing firsthand evidence of them (I Cor. 15:7).

James was absolutely convinced! What else could he have been? He now searched out Jesus’ disciples, the very men that he had previously shaken his head over (Acts 1:13-14). From this point on, James was in on the “grass roots” foundation of the Church of God, receiving the outpouring of God’s Spirit on Pentecost in 31 A.D.

Now the constant contact that James had had with Jesus could be valuably used by God. True, he hadn’t spent a great deal of time with Jesus during His three-and-a-half-year ministry, but think of all the years—the tens of thousands of hours—he had spent with Jesus when he was so young and so impressionable. Even Peter and John and the other apostles, though many had been childhood friends, hadn’t had so much contact with Jesus at such an

early age and for such a long time.

Many times in a true Christian’s life when there is a decision to be made, he will ask himself: Let’s see, how would Christ do it? In many cases in James’ life—after his conversion—all he had to do was to think back and say: Let’s see, how did my brother do it?

James now grew powerfully under the direction of God’s Spirit. And a very few years later he is shown as an apostle in the Church of God (Gal. 1:19). Here Paul refers to James as an apostle.

James’ powerful writing style is preserved for all time in the epistle of James. The heavy influence of Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount” is obvious in this epistle—no “epistle of straw” as some call it, but an epistle of LIVING FAITH! It was probably written shortly before James’ death, James dying in martyrdom, according to tradition.

So James, the man who wanted nothing to do with his brother’s message in the beginning, died for that same message at the end—and will forever, from the time of his resurrection, remain as a *real* brother of Christ, in the fullest sense of that word, in God’s Family. □

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