



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #2: "Ten Facts about Jesus"

The Quest of a Jew

Our story is of a young Jewish man named, Samuel Srolovic Jacobson. Samuel did not believe in Jesus because he was taught differently as a child. But he came to believe in the true Messiah because of a study of the very prophecies that we will be studying in today's lesson. We will let him tell it in his own words.

"I was born and reared in an Orthodox Jewish home in Lithuania. All during my childhood I received religious training. In our home we kept all the Biblical and traditional holy days. As far back as my memory goes, I can recall my father taking me to the synagogue. Only kosher foods were served on our table, and we kept the seventh-day Sabbath very strictly.

"Two world wars marked my youth. My family was forced into exile to Russia with only two days to prepare. We traveled for weeks in freight trains under the most trying circumstances. Many Jews perished from cold, hunger, and sickness. Others were hanged for their political views.

"We were told that the Jews were suffering because they did not have a country. Consequently, my greatest desire was to return to the land of my forefathers. Eventually, when the opportunity arose, I sailed for the land of my ancestors, and was later joined there with my family.

"Life in Palestine was rugged. Settlers lost their lives to disease and civil war. In spite of all this; farms, villages, and towns were established. More trouble broke out though, and travel became unsafe, which caused the economy of the industries to suffer, and unemployment among the Jews soared. Eventually I migrated to Southern Rhodesia, in South Africa.

"World War II broke out, and I joined the British Army hoping for active duty. Instead I was kept busy building Air Force training centers. The news of the war that filtered back was horrifying, but more terrible still were the reports of the millions of Jews being destroyed. What a cruel death was theirs! Questions milled around in my mind. Why must the Jews suffer so much? Where is the integrity of civilized people? Where is the God whom we serve? Yes, where is His protecting power?

"Among my fellow workers I frequently heard slurring remarks justifying the cruel actions of the Nazis toward the Jewish people. However, within this group I met one man who manifested a disposition just the opposite of the others. He was refined, and he respected the dignity of man. He treated all men with kindness, and thought of everyone as part of one great brotherhood.

"Jack had a sound philosophy, and to my surprise, he unashamedly called himself a 'Spiritual Jew.' He had no Jewish ancestry, but loved and obeyed the commandments of God. I was amazed at how well versed he was in the Bible and its prophecies and at how He could show that current events were taking place as predicted by the ancient prophets.

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"I learned how meager was my own knowledge of our own prophets, such as the writings of Moses. Although I came from an Orthodox home, my ignorance was not surprising. Jewish tradition teaches that 'A child at five should study the Bible, at ten the Mishna, and at fifteen the Gemara'. No wonder, then, that a Jewish son of today has little possibility of ever knowing the Bible well.

"From my childhood I had daily recited prayers that reminded me of the coming Messiah. This was my life, my hope. My conversations with Jack led me to an intensive study of the Holy Scriptures. The most important were about the Messiah.

"My study led me to the conclusion that:

1. The Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham.
2. He would be born of the tribe of Judah.
3. He would be a descendant of King David.
4. He would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David.

"During my discussions with Jack, I became aware that he believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. This troubled me. How could it be that Jesus was really a fulfillment of the promises made to our forefathers?

"Deeply distressed and concerned, I determined to search out for myself the truth. I compared the Scriptures, passage by passage, praying all the while that the God of my fathers would give me understanding.

"One thing that puzzled me was that Jesus claimed to be a divine being. How could this be reconciled with Deuteronomy 6:4-the prime tenet for my people. I knew it well:

'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord [YHWH] is one ['ECHAD']. I had often repeated this verse to emphasize that we believe in one divine being.

"I was, astonished when Jack explained how 'ECHAD is used in the Scriptures. I discovered it first in the Creation story:

"There was an evening, and there was a morning; one ['ECHAD] day' (Genesis 1:5).

"Here I saw two entities of time that, when joined together, are declared to be 'one' day. Then I read:

'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one ['ECHAD] flesh' (Genesis 2:24).

"Here we see man and wife specifically spoken of as a unity: 'ECHAD.

"As I pondered these scriptures, I could not fail to observe that each was a **composite** unity. I also found that a different Hebrew word could have been used to stress individuality, but Moses did not use it. Could it be that he really was implying a unity of divine beings or persons? I was deeply puzzled.

"As I searched more deeply into other Jewish writings, I found this in the writings of Rabbi Maimonides:

'Hear, O Israel, YHVM, Elohenu, YHWH, is One. These three are one. How can the three names be one? ... Three modes yet form one Unity.'

"Again looking in the Torah I found throughout the Creation account, that the form of God's name being used was **plural**, and that even Solomon actually said, 'Remember now thy **Creators** in the days of thy youth' (Ecclesiastes 12:1). Then I saw that God, in speaking of Himself, often said us- For example: 'Let **us** make man in **our** image' (Genesis 1:26). 'Let **us** go down, and there confound their language' (Genesis 11:7). 'Man is become as one of **us**' (Genesis 3:22).

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"Jack had called Jesus the Son of God, but I wondered whether my Scriptures actually said that God had a Son. Then I read in the Proverbs something that startled me. This is what it says: 'Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth: **what is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?**' (Proverbs 30:4).

"What a flood of light began to shine into my mind as I prayerfully continued reading the sacred Word. My heart was overwhelmed with joy and amazement. "Now I could better understand why the Creator had said, 'Let **us** make man in **our** image, after **our** likeness' (Genesis 1:26).

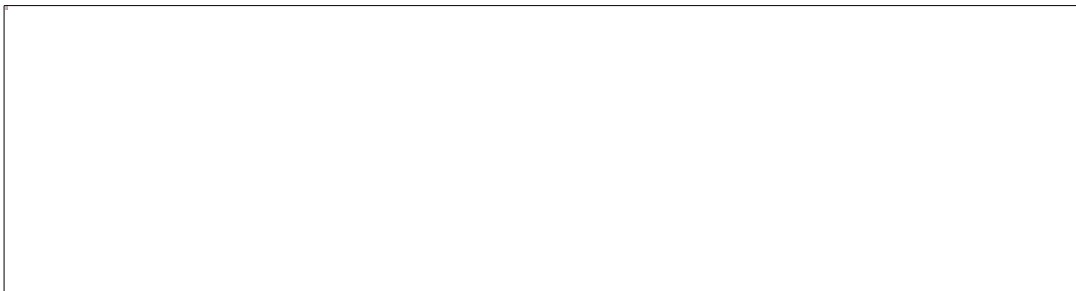
"Other questions came tumbling one after another as my mind opened to these new thoughts. Why did sin enter our world? What was God's solution for it? I began to study again the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The strange prophecy of Genesis 3:15 began tugging at the corners of my mind: 'I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.'

"I couldn't understand it all, yet I saw that a Redeemer would one day destroy the adversary and bring deliverance to mankind. One would be born of 'her seed' that would bring salvation.

"I discovered that there were in the Scriptures a great many prophetic promises regarding Him. Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, each contributed its highlight or shadow, thus disclosing a beautiful portrait of the Messiah, His mission, and work.

"Isaiah told of his miraculous birth, and called Him 'Immanuel, God with us.' Jacob said in Genesis that He would come before the 'scepter [departed] from Judah.' Jeremiah, answered my lingering question about His divinity by saying:

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord [YHWH], that I will raise unto David a righteous sprout, and he shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD [YHWH] OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS'** (Jeremiah 23:5,6).



"The question of when he would come had not yet been fully answered for me. Then one day Jack told me that the Scriptures actually contain a prophecy specifying the exact time when the Messiah could be expected to appear. This claim interested me greatly. I eagerly read the passage in the book of the prophet Daniel to which he referred. Turning to the ninth chapter of Daniel I found a discourse between the angel Gabriel and Daniel. In this prophecy Gabriel announced the time of the coming of the Messiah. 'Seventy weeks are determined unto thy people.... Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah [Anointed One] the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks' (Daniel 9:24,25).

"When I first read it I was a bit confused, but when I understood that a day was a symbol for a year, the words seemed to leap off the page to my eyes. Seventy weeks! Why that would be 490 years, I mused.

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And 69 weeks-Why that would be 483 years. But when did that period of years begin? The answer was quick and sure: 'From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem...' (Verse 25).

... That happened in 457 BC' Jack explained. Quick calculations brought us to the year 27 AD

"'Interesting,' I thought, 'that would have been during Jesus' lifetime, but He certainly wasn't born then, even Christians don't think that.'

"'No', Jack responded, 'but it calls Him the "Anointed" in this verse, and the year AD 27 was the year He was baptized, and the Holy Spirit descended in a special way upon Him.'

"I found this prophecy in Daniel 9 to be packed full of other rich prophecies. In verse 26 it said He would be 'cut off, but not for Himself'. Did Gabriel mean that He would die as the sacrifices died, as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sons of mankind? This, indeed, seemed to be the intent of Daniel's prophecy.

"A dying Messiah was repugnant to me, but as I meditated on this prophecy it began to make sense. Adam and Eve, standing in their shame and sin, were promised a coming Redeemer. Through the centuries patriarchs and prophets had confessed their sins upon the heads of innocent animals, which, as substitutionary sacrifices, were sacrificed in their stead.

"I thought of the prayer we Jews recite before the eve of the Day of Atonement. Swinging a rooster three times around the head, we pray: 'This is my change, this is my compensation, this is my redemption. This rooster is going to be killed and I shall be admitted and allowed a long, happy, and peaceful life.'

"I sadly had to admit that the Messiah had come, but that most of us had not received Him as such.

"More and more I became convinced not only that the Bible was written by divinely inspired Jewish prophets, but also that the New Testament Scriptures were written by divinely inspired Jewish writers about 'the greatest Jew who ever lived.'

"My conviction crystallized that Jesus of Nazareth, a descendant of Abraham and of David, and born of a Jewish virgin named Mary, in the little town of Bethlehem, was the long-hoped-for Messiah of my people.

"I could not suppress the joy that surged within my heart as, in the light of my new understanding, I read the account of His birth in Bethlehem. How precious was the understanding that was now quickening my mind. I felt like a blind man who had suddenly been given sight by some miraculous operation. Israel's book of Holy Writings was becoming a 'lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path' (Psalm 119:105).

"After I allowed Jesus to take control of my life, perilous times came. I could no longer reside in a Jewish home. I moved in with a lovely Christian couple who opened their home to me. My older brother came to see me and pleaded with me to change my faith. Prominent Jewish people came to see me and offered me free board for at least three years if I would forsake my belief in the Messianic faith which had become so very real and precious to me. How could I forsake Him who had done so much for me?

"Through all the years since I have accepted Jesus as the Messiah, joy and peace have come into my heart from knowing that my past sins are forgiven and that I can live a victorious life by His grace, day by day.

"As I look back across the few years of my life, I stand amazed and humbled at the leading of my heavenly Father. Some of my relatives would say, perhaps, that my faith in Jesus is heretical and false,

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but not all. My dear precious stepmother accepted Jesus as her Messiah and as her personal Saviour and was baptized in the river Jordan by a Christian Jewish minister. This brought peace into her soul such as she had never known before. It brought her a deeper meaning and understanding of the Holy Bible.

"As a result of accepting Jesus Messiah, God has opened my understanding to new insights into the teachings of the Torah. I believe all the truths written in the law and the prophets. I did not forsake Judaism. On the contrary, I found that Jesus fulfilled the promises and predictions made regarding the Messiah. He appeared at the right time, at the right place, and did what the prophet said He would do as God's suffering servant. I have left those man-made traditions and laws that are not in harmony with Holy Writ. But the true Judaism, as found in the Holy Scriptures, and the Christianity of the Old and New Testaments, I have come to see, are one faith-not two."

1. Adapted from *The Quest of a Jew*, by Samuel Jacobson.