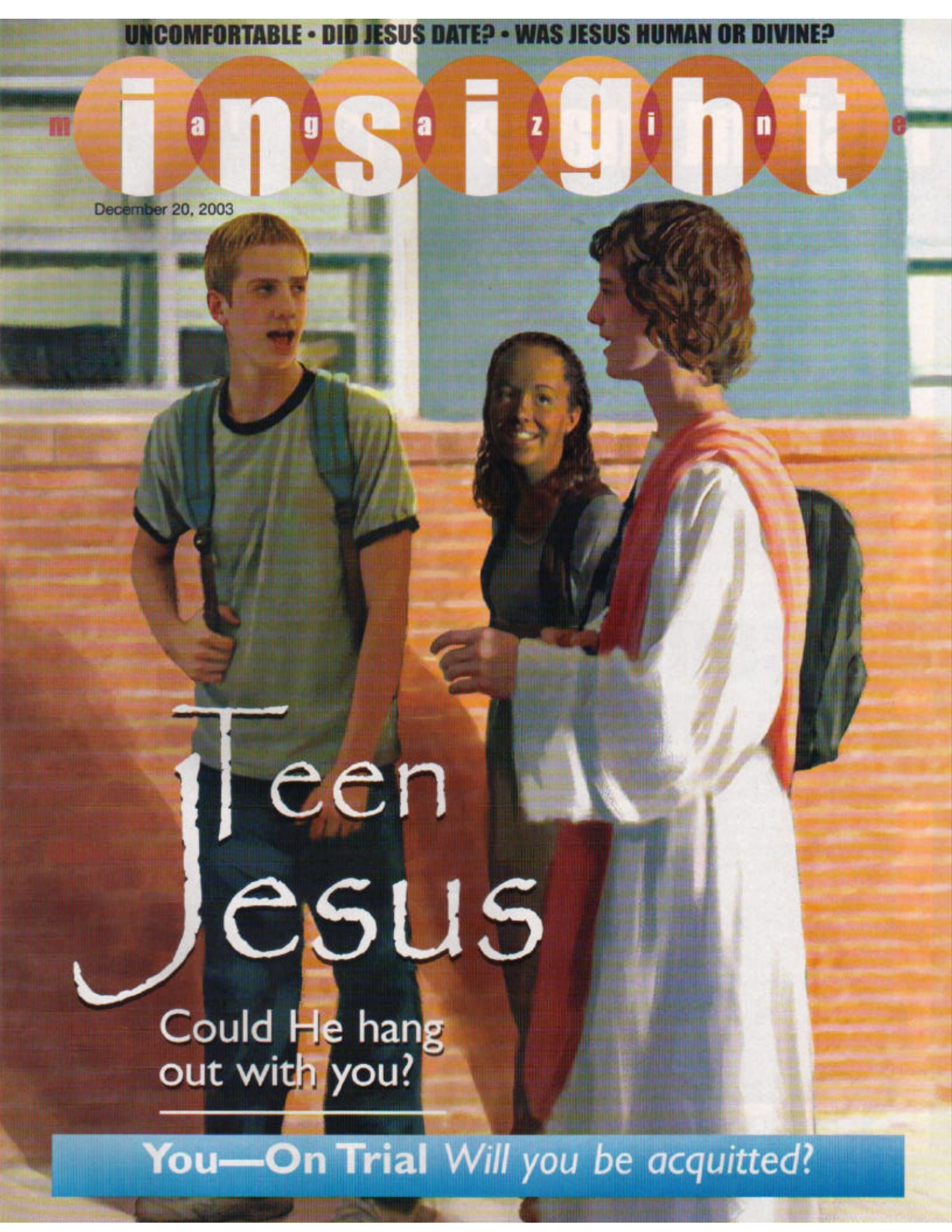


UNCOMFORTABLE • DID JESUS DATE? • WAS JESUS HUMAN OR DIVINE?

m i n s i g h t e

December 20, 2003



Teen
Jesus

Could He hang
out with you?

You—On Trial *Will you be acquitted?*

A woman with dark curly hair, wearing an orange jumpsuit, stands in a courtroom. The word "SINNER" is printed in yellow on the chest of her jumpsuit. She has her hands cuffed in front of her. In the foreground, a wooden gavel rests on a surface. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Radical Freedom

PART THREE

BY L. DAVID HARRIS

You— On Trial

You're guilty, and you're on trial—in heaven. If you're wondering if you have any hope of being acquitted, you'd better read this.

O rder in the court! All rise!" We're in NBC's *Law and Order* courtroom, and you are on trial. Everyone's in place—including the tough assistant district attorney Jack McCoy, along with his partners from the D.A.'s office, detectives Green and Briscoe, and their boss, Lieutenant Anita Van Buren. If all of these folks are here at the same time, you know you're in big trouble.

Because you're broke, you sit with your "bum" public defender instead of a paid attorney who'd have your best interest at heart. You are nervous. If convicted, you face the death penalty.

After McCoy's opening arguments, the jury appears to have already made up their minds against you. Their facial expressions leave little room for optimism. After all, you know you're guilty as charged, and so do they.

What are your odds of acquittal? Not good.

Bringing you up to speed

Last week we discussed how Jesus forgives us and gives us the power to be victorious over sin. Now our focus shifts to the heavenly judgment hall, where your eternal destiny is determined.

What's your crime? Sin. Your punishment? Eternal death by the Book. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

OK, you're guilty. But since you've accepted God's free gift of salvation, is your situation really as hopeless as it appears?

First, let's identify the heavenly courtroom players. You, a sinner, have been accused by Satan. But how did you become a criminal sinner in the first place?

History supplies the answer. "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: 'Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and

night, has been hurled down'" (Revelation 12:7-10).

You'll be glad to know who your defense attorney is. The apostle John explains, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:1, 2).

So who's the judge? The apostle John answers that question, too. "The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22). So Jesus is also your judge.

Now your odds for acquittal aren't as bad as you may have thought, are they? Your accuser has already been "hurled down"—defeated. And your defense attorney and judge are the same person—your friend—someone who's already "done your time." Your acquittal is certain!

Heaven's court in action

Zechariah 3:1-5 paints a courtroom scene in which Satan is accusing a guy named Joshua. Jesus steps in and defends Joshua, handing him clean clothes (representing Jesus' free righteousness) to replace Joshua's filthy clothes (representing Joshua's self-righteousness). And voilà, he's acquitted.

Like Joshua, since Jesus took your punishment and has given you a clean record, heaven's verdict is that you're acquitted—as innocent as if you'd never sinned.

So now that you've been acquitted, does it matter what you do? Will you automatically remain acquitted—will you be saved no matter what?

Let's play on Zechariah's clothing illustration. If you'd just been given a brand-new full-length Sean John leather coat or a Donna Karan chinchilla fur, would you pick the rainiest day to go outside and wallow in the sloppiest mud puddle? I don't think so.

When you accept and receive the gift of Christ's righteousness, it empowers you to stay far away from the mud puddles of sin, just like Jesus did when He lived here on earth.

There's no way around it. At some point you're case is going to come up in heaven. Ecclesiastes 12 says that your every deed will be brought into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it's good or bad (verse 14). So what are you going to do? stand by and let Satan accuse you? Or are you going to take Jesus up on His offer to defend and acquit you?

I hope you choose to take Jesus up on His offer. It just wouldn't make sense not to. **1**

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Would you wear a Sean John leather coat in the rain?

ORIGINAL UNEDITED VERSION

Complete & Free Pt. 3

The Acquittal

Order in the Court! All rise! The honorable Judge Noname presiding. We are in a courtroom scene on the set of NBC's Law and Order. Each of the participants are in place including the tough Executive Assistant Attorney, Jack McCoy along with his partners from the D.A.'s office. Also in the courtroom are Detectives Green and Briscoe with Lt. Anita Van Buren. You know that if all of these folks are there at the same time, this case must be serious. Obviously the judge is there, but this judge seems to be biased. You are the one accused and because you have no money, you are stuck with a "bum" public defender instead of a paid attorney who would have your best interest at heart. The case seems hopeless because you are on trial for a crime which if convicted you face the death penalty. We don't even need to discuss the jury who after McKoy's opening arguments already seemed swayed against you. Their facial expressions leave little room for optimism. What is going on? If that is not enough, the victim's family, media, and even your own conscience side with the D.A. to prosecute you which incidentally feels like they are persecuting you after all, you know and they know that you are guilty as charged. What are the odds of you being acquitted? All eyes are on you and the outcome seems certain.

In the last article we discussed how Jesus gives us forgiveness and the power to be victorious over sin in real life situations. In this article we shift our focus to the heavenly judgement hall where eternal destinies are determined.

Bringing You up to Speed

The courtroom introduction above leaves you on the edge of your seat doesn't it? What's going to happen to the defendant (accused)? We will now shift our attention to the way court was held in the ancient Jewish economy. In the courtroom scene would be present the accused, accuser, judge and advocate. These four were the only major players. This is the way the heavenly pre-second coming judgement is structured. In this case the accused has actually committed the crime worthy of eternal death. What was the crime? The Bible says, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," Romans 3:23. Further, the Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 6:23. The crime is sin, punishable by eternal death. Since when we receive the gift of salvation, we become God's children, we know that something wonderful must be about to happen in this case though on the one hand it seems hopeless.

On Your Side

Let's identify the courtroom players more closely shall we? We have already said that we sinners are the accused and we are guilty. The accuser is Satan. "And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down--that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down." Revelation 12:7-10.

Who is the advocate or defense attorney? "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." I John 2:1,2. Jesus Christ the Righteous One is our defense attorney. An interesting question to ask following this description of our advocate is who is the judge? The text we just read said that Jesus is our advocate with the Father, which suggests that the Father is our judge and in a way He is, however an incredible shift of responsibility occurs here. "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him." John 5:21-23. Jesus is also our judge.

How does it feel to know that the accuser is "hurled down" meaning defeated, the defense attorney is your friend and the judge is your friend? Does the case still seem hopeless knowing that you are guilty as charged? Check this out. I neglected to mention that when it comes to the judgement, if there is any hope of acquittal, somebody has to be punished in order for justice to be served. Well, we have already read in I John 2:1,2 that Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. This means that Jesus volunteered to take our punishment on the cross, which was equal to eternal death. Knowing that Jesus is our advocate, judge and the one who paid the eternal death penalty for us, how does the trial make you feel now? Are you hopeless with all odds against you or hopeful because you are friends with the only one who can acquit you?

In your spare time read Zechariah 3:1-5. These verses paint a living color portrait of all that we have said. They portray an image of the accused receiving clean garments representing the free righteousness of Christ in place of the filthy garments representing self-righteousness. Since Jesus never sinned and we are seen wearing Jesus like a garment, heaven's verdict is that we are innocent. In heaven's eyes we never sinned.

One critical question must be answered in closing, with all this talk about free salvation and righteousness, does that mean that it doesn't matter what we do and we will still be saved? I will answer this with a question. If you were wearing a brand new full length Sean John leather coat or Donna Karan Chinchilla fur, would you pick the rainiest day to go outside and find the sloppiest puddle to wallow in? I don't think so. When a person receives the gift of Christ's righteousness, they are empowered to stay far away from the mud puddles of sin just like Jesus did.

My friends, I have chosen personally to receive the free gift of salvation. I think it would be a good idea if you did the same, besides, it would not make sense not to. Remember, God loves you.

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