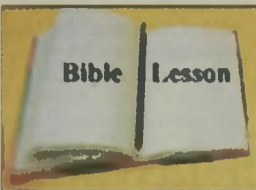


5B

RELIGION

Life 1B



Overcoming uncertainty

John 3:1-3

Jesus' days are busy. So on occasion He looks forward to quiet time (e.g. Luke 4:42). But this particular evening is interrupted by a visitor. In spite of Jesus' weariness, He finds time to teach.

Inquiry (vv. 1,2) There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

The Pharisees consider themselves to be the guardians of God's laws. They have counted more than 600 commands in the Old Testament, which they then interpreted and supplemented. Ultimately, the ended up making their interpretations into a protective hedge around God's laws. Most Pharisees reject Jesus because they believe he broke the law (e.g., Matthew 12:1-14)

Not only is Nicodemus a Pharisee, but he is also a ruler of the Jews. This means that he is part of the Jewish Supreme Court known as the Sanhedrin, which also opposes Jesus.

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.

Many Pharisees believe that Jesus performs miracles by satanic power (e.g. Matthew 12:24). Nicodemus proves that is he is not one of them when he addresses Jesus as Rabbi (teacher).

Nicodemus risks much by holding this opinion in opposition to his fellow Pharisees.

Even so, many today criticize Nicodemus for coming by night. Is Nicodemus using the cover of darkness out of fear of his fellow Pharisees? (See John 9:22). Perhaps Nicodemus purposely hides his beliefs because he thinks that this is the only way to retain his seat on the council.

We should not over look the fact that John uses the word "night" in his Gospel figuratively to include moral and spiritual darkness (see John 7:50-53) and helps Joseph of Arimathea prepare Jesus' body for burial (John 19:38, 39).

Confrontation (v.3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except at man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

Jesus often begins discussions by saying something so bold that he immediately grabs people's attention. Nicodemus wants to learn more from Jesus, but he does not expect him to teach a radical transformation. The implication is that the scholarly and distinguished Nicodemus still lacks this transformation.

Jesus begins with verily, verily. This is the translation of the Greek word amen, which

Please see JOHN 3/8B

Blood directive

Jehovah's Witnesses' controversial ban on transfusion complicated



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Jehovah's Witnesses elders from around the world will recite a new directive on blood transfusions this week. The directive could create confusion about prohibitions of blood components.

By Richard N. Ostling THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK—Jehovah's Witnesses are renowned for teaching that Jesus is not God and that the world as we know it will soon end. But another unusual belief causes even more entanglements—namely, that God forbids blood transfusions even when patients' lives are at stake.

The doctrine's importance will be underscored this week as elders who lead more than 98,000 congregations worldwide recite a new five-page blood directive from headquarters.

The tightly disciplined sect believes the Bible forbids transfusions, though specifics have gradually been eased over the years. Raymond Franz, a defector from the all-powerful Governing Body that sets policies for the faith, thinks leaders hesitate to go further for fear that total elimination of the ban would expose the organization to millions of dollars in legal liability over past medical cases.

The Witnesses have opposed transfusions of whole blood since 1945. A later pronouncement also barred transfusions of blood's "primary components," meaning red cells, white cells, platelets and plasma.

An announcement in 2000 in the official Watchtower magazine, however, said that because of ambiguity in the Bible, individuals are free to decide about therapies using the biological compounds that make up those four blood components, such as gamma globulin and clotting factors that counteract hemophilia.

Next week's directive could create confusion about these compounds, known as blood "fractions." Without noting the 2000 change, the new directive tells parents to consider this: "Can any doctor or hospital give complete assurance that blood or blood fractions will not be used in treatment of a minor?"

Aside from the new directive, a footnote in the Witnesses' standard brochure, "How Can Blood Save Your Life?," mentions the 2000 article on fractions—but then omits its

Please see JEHOVAH'S/7B

Scholar re-examines views on Jews

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Julie Galambush brings a rare background to the often delicate topic of Jewish-Christian relations and her special interest in the first-century split between the two faiths.

She was an American Baptist Churches minister and teacher at the Lutherans' St. Olaf College in Minnesota. Now a convert to Reform Judaism who belongs to a temple in Falls Church, Va., she teaches Bible at the College of William and Mary.

Galambush, naturally, doesn't believe in Jesus' divinity. But her main emphasis is that Christians misunderstand what their scriptural writers originally meant to say about Jews.

She develops that case in "The Reluctant Parting: How the New Testament's Jewish Writers Created a Christian Book" (Harper-SanFrancisco). Her book originated with experimental classes on the New Testament she led at a Maryland synagogue.

The New Testament is

"one of the strangest Jewish books ever written," she writes, and one that "most Jews neither own nor read." Yet they should read it, she believes, because it's vital that Jews understand Christianity. Thus she wrote her book especially for Jewish readers, though it will stir discussion (and dissent) among Christians.

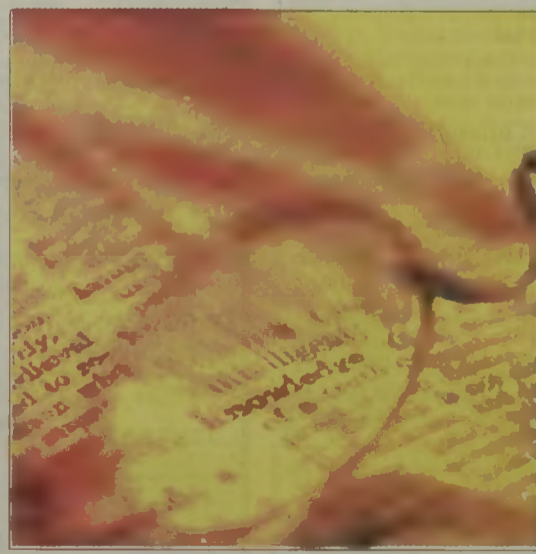
Muslims, too, would benefit greatly from learning New Testament basics, though not from this type of book. The nutshell paradox: The New Testament has many passages that are sharply critical of Jews, yet it was written mostly by Jews and largely for Jewish readers to teach about a Jewish messiah.

Galambush's theme is that modern Christians—and most Christians across the centuries—distort what the critical comments meant because they don't realize that the New Testament was recording an intense debate within the Jewish community.

It was a three-way argument. First, of course, the overwhelming majority of ancient Jews had no interest in Jesus or rejected claims he was Israel's messiah. But the really hot dispute, she says, occurred between the two factions of Jews who followed Jesus. One insisted that all the commandments of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament) applied to Gentiles who joined the Jesus movement. Others like Paul, and eventually Peter, said Gentile converts could ignore some of those requirements, especially circumcision.

The latter, "liberal" faction won out and its New Testament

Please see SCHOLAR/6B



PHOTO/THE STOCK MARKET



Sheard continues the family fervor

Karen Clark Sheard It's Not Over Various producers Word Entertainment



There was a time when the Clark Sisters and mother Mattie Moss were the divas of gospel. The group's fiery vocals sent congregations into a frenzy.

The sisters no longer record as a group but have been releasing solo CDs at what seems to be a fever pitch the last few years.

Karen has been the most prolific, releasing her fourth recently. Like her others, "It's Not Over" shows why she's still one of the best that gospel has to offer.

Sheard's voice is a powerful instrument, one that can be used for traditional, contemporary and jazzy-sounding gospel. She sings the heck out of anything that's placed before her. Her voice is best suited for big, anthem-like songs that swell. There's no shortage on this CD. Sheard rips through such songs with a fervor that her fans have come to expect.

"Oh The Glory of His Presence," "Show Me Your Glory" and the spectacular "Favor" showcase the power of Sheard's voice. It is starting to show some age, but it's still something to behold.

Sheard can't stay away from the contemporary stuff that's alienating her from older gospel fans. "Be Blessed" is very young-sounding, maybe too young.

J. Moss adds "You Showed Me," a breezy, jazzy number that has the trademark Moss harmonies. If Sheard has to go young, this is how she should sound.

The rest of the CD moves effortlessly between traditional and contemporary sounds. It's not Sheard's best, but even at 80 percent, she's better than most.

Ratings

Classic	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Why?	★★
No stars - A mess	★

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for adding announcements to the calendar is noon on Fridays. Fax to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

Ongoing Grace Bible College will host winter classes at Grace Baptist Church located at 1185 Little Rock Road in Newton through March 13. These classes may be taken for credit. For information, contact (828) 464-7055.

Millions More Movement-Charlotte will move to its new location at Little Rock AME Zion Church, 401 N. McDowell St. The group

will meet the second and fourth Monday nights of the month for six months. For information, call (704) 333-1690.

February 2 Mecklenburg Ministries presents "Coffee Conversations, Sex, Relationships and Faith." A group of diverse faiths will discuss topics such as courtship, marriage, intermarriage, premarital sex and divorce, at the Mecklenburg Ministries offices at 601 East Blvd. from 6-7:30 p.m.

For information, call (704) 347-2404 or e-mail meckmin@meckmin.org.

mail meckmin@meckmin.org.

February 4 St. Paul Baptist Church, located at 1401 N. Allen St., will host an AIDS Awareness Gospel Explosion as a benefit for Metrolina AIDS Project, from 6-8 p.m. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door. For more information call (704) 333-1435 ext. 102.

New Bethlehem FBH Church of God, located at 421 E. 18th St., will host its 31st Red and White Love Feast at 4p.m. For more information call (704) 525-6677 or (704) 596-3630.

February 11 The Temple of Deliverance International Fellowship, located at 5521 Cannon Drive, Suite 104 in Monroe, will host a "Singles Gathering" at 2 p.m.

Plaza Baptist Church, 3321 The Plaza, will sponsor a Valentine's Banquet from 6-9 p.m. A catered meal will be provided and the cost is \$25 per couple and \$12.50 per individual. Free childcare will be provided by Plaza Youth. To reserve a table, call the church at (704) 334-

Please see ALL/6B