

# THE LAST WORD



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## Their Roads Just Stop

Irian Jaya is—quite literally—earth's uttermost part. Lying six degrees south of the equator in the South Pacific, it makes up the western half of the island of New Guinea. Even the Indonesian travel brochure stuck in the seat pocket of the Garuda Airlines described it as "primitive" with "extreme heat in the snake-infested jungles."

It took a full week of travel for me to get there from my comfortable home in Florida. I went because I was summoned—by God and by the Indonesian branch of Wycliffe Bible Translators. I was to speak three times a day for eight days at the annual Bible conference for the 120 missionaries who had come together at the jungle camp from all over Indonesia.

Kipling once wrote of a place where the roads run out and stop. That literally happens at Jaya Pura, the provincial capital. From there it is still 120 miles over the top of the jungle to the little mission base of Danau Bira. It is accessible only by helicopter or small plane piloted by a jungle pilot.

The ministry was intense. These young couples did not leave America to rear their children in the midst of a place like this on a lark. They had no time for game-playing. They are literally offering their lives to get a job done—translating the Word of God into the language of tribal people—many of whom had never seen a white face before. When I arrived with my message about the power of the Holy Spirit, they drank it in thirstily. There was no time to debate silly theological issues. The time was too critical.

These are mostly young people—under 35. Tough and dedicated, they are nevertheless subject to great discouragement. And they are constantly under the attack of Satan—whose power is stronger in the Indonesian jungles than anyplace I have ever encountered him.

My last afternoon in Irian Jaya we had flown in from the jungle to spend the night at Sentani, on the coast where Gen. Douglas MacArthur had launched his assault against the Japanese to re-claim the Philippines. The missionary we were staying with told us, matter-of-factly, of the witch doctor in his tribal allocation who had the power to call a certain killer crocodile out of the jungle river and dispatch him into a local village to seek out and eat the child of someone who had been cursed by another villager.

I'm not accustomed to encounters with this kind of demon power. Back home I'm around folks who are casting out demons of nail-biting and, on rare occasions, a "denominational" spirit.

The entire scene was unreal. It was like a visit into hell with a group of Christians determined to pluck men and women from the burning. Just being in their presence made me want to take off my

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shoes. And I would have done it had I not been afraid to step on a death adder along the jungle trail—as often happens to the Indians.

There are between 200 and 300 separate Indian tribes in Irian Jaya alone. All practice demon worship. One afternoon I sat with a group of Bauzi Indians at a great feast. They had slaughtered three pigs, buried them in a pit with hot stones and jungle vegetables, and called their friends to join them. I watched as the women, with babies sucking at one breast and a puppy at the other, tore open the pit with their strong feet so the men could serve the food. There was singing and dancing—but it was without joy. The anthropologists complain that the missionaries are ruining the Indians' "pristine" existence. But there is nothing pristine about being under the control of Satan.

One of these atheistic anthropologists, a government official told me, who had been such a staunch opponent of the missionaries, fled in terror when the word came that an Indian had put a curse on her and there was a possibility the crocodile was coming for her that night.

No one in the jungle doubts the necessity of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Except fools and pharisees.

All this is still very fresh on my mind as I start thinking about buying Christmas gifts for my family and friends. How, I am asking myself, can I in good conscience spend my money on gadgets when I remember the jungle pilot who looked at my ragged old jogging shoes so longingly. To buy a pair like them in Indonesia—in his size—would cost \$75. I gave him mine even though they were a half size too small.

So, what do I do for Christmas, when all I can do is remember those young couples out there in the jungles rearing their children among the death adders and cobras, doing daily battle against the powers of darkness...for the sake of Jesus.

Who says there are no heroes left? The question is—will I honor them, or will I continue on as usual—spending my money on myself? ↵