

# **The Uniqueness of Christ and His Ministry**

**An overview as set out in the  
Scriptures of Truth – The Bible**

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## ***Abbreviations and Terms used within the Booklet:***

**Advent** – A term used to describe Christ’s coming to the earth in Person, as a Man.

**Christ** – A title signifying, the holy anointed One, God’s chosen Messiah and universal King.

**Deity** – A term used to embrace all the unique personalities and attributes of God.

**Gospel(s)** – Matthew, Mark, Luke or John’s account of Christ’s life, death and resurrection.

**OT** – Old Testament (Written before Christ’s birth, i.e. Genesis to Malachi)

**NT** – New Testament (Written after Christ’s birth, i.e. Matthew to Revelation)

**Scripture(s)** – The book(s) of the Bible, usually referring to the OT writings.

**Scriptural References** – John 14:1-6,15 (Book = John; Chapter = 14; Verse(s) = 1-6,15 etc.)

**Sin** – Conduct, thoughts or motives that cause individuals to fall short of attaining God’s Holy (perfect) requirements. All sin is serious; also called iniquity or wickedness.

**“All quotations are taken from the King James ‘Authorised’ Bible which is an accurate translation from faithful Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek texts, the languages originally employed by the Holy Spirit to convey God’s truth to mankind.”**

# Introduction

**“Then He said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:25-27)**

**“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39)**

The Sections within this booklet have been written to set before the reader a concise overview of the Person of Jesus Christ. Each Section has been written with supporting quotations from the Bible such as above, to substantiate the aspect of His Person or the official Ministry being presented. Additional footnote references are also supplied for the reader to further look up for themselves, where space limits their inclusion.

The Sections take a journey beginning with OT prophecies written centuries before His birth which foretold of His coming, through the stages of that birth, ministry, death and resurrection and beyond into yet future glorious days when God’s ultimate purpose will have their fulfilment in Christ. We too can be part of that ‘Eternal Day’ when righteousness reigns, if we come to appreciate the Person of Christ for ourselves and wholeheartedly receive Him as our Lord and Saviour during the short duration of our life on earth.

However, to confide in Him for our souls salvation and eternal welfare, we need to be persuaded that He is who He claimed to be. The Bible alone provides the assurance we need. While it was written by selected God-fearing men over 16 centuries, a remarkable feat in itself, the Holy Spirit of God guided their minds through their diverse and oftentimes adverse circumstances to give us a most remarkable Book which accurately portrays those essential truths and unique features that He evidenced, which make Him a truly distinct Man among mankind. Those truths such as His eternal Divine glories and substitutionary sufferings for mankind are woven like gold and silver threads across the whole tapestry of the Scriptures, as He Himself emphasised in the two quotations, above from the Gospels.

Yet alongside those genuinely seeking to sow the good wheat of God’s Word, there are many others actively sowing tares, as the enemy of souls seeks to deviate us from those essential truths that the Bible declares, knowing that if he can keep us deluded until our death, then his goal is accomplished. There is also much that appears Christian, but is not Christian. While tares look similar to wheat at initial growth, the differences soon become apparent as that growth proceeds; the Bible alone is able to expose and correct such error. There are also many reasons why individuals stumble over the truths concerning the Person of Christ presented in this booklet: the love of sin, unbelief, the inability to rationalise the Godhead within our finite minds, prejudice and religious upbringing being a few of them.

It is our sincere prayer that whether the reader considers the contents of this booklet with a sensible mindset and a true heart’s desire to know the truth, or with an alternative motive, ultimately they will come to appreciate something of the worth of Christ and their own personal need of Him and be set free from the blindness that holds the whole world. Pray to God as the Psalmist, **“Open Thou mine eyes”** (Psalm 119:18), and read the Bible for yourself.

# ***The Promise of His Coming***

**T**he Old Testament writings contain numerous promises respecting the raising up of a unique individual who would bring into effect a global rule of righteousness, peace and equity that the world has never yet experienced. It is far from mankind to achieve such a state and would require Divine intervention to stop men in their mad downward course and to bring them to a true knowledge and vibrant relationship on a personal level, of the One true, living and eternal God. The promises make plain that such an accomplishment is singularly the work of the promised Messiah and give significant detail as to the manner of His birth and life, His teachings and work, His sufferings and exaltation in triumph as the victor over man's enemies, setting a seal on the eternal purposes of God. He alone could and has dealt with the plague of sin and vanquished the fear of death for those who would recognise and confess Him, making possible an eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace where there will be no more sin, pain, sorrow or death and where God will rule supreme.

A vast subject is before us but following are some of those promises relevant to His advents into this world, (i) at His lowly visitation 2000 years ago to deal with the matter of sin, and (ii) of His yet future coming in majesty and glory to bring into effect His reign of righteousness and peace. These subjects are expanded upon in the following Sections.

## ***Promised to be of a Woman's Seed***

**“And 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” (Genesis 3:15)**

**A**t the dawn of time, following mankind's fall into sin through the murderous deception of Satan, the father of lies and enemy of all, God gave assurance of a future Man to be conceived and born from a woman's womb, who would ultimately bruise (crush) Satan's head making him powerless to resist the purposes of God in restoring man to fellowship with God. Christ entered the world as a Man in order to suffer and die for our sins and be raised again, that He might become the head of a new race of redeemed souls<sup>1</sup> and that we might become sons and daughters of the God Who faithfully brings His promises to pass.

## ***Promised to be of Abraham's Seed***

**“Now the LORD had said unto Abram ... in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”  
“And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant ... as for Ishmael, I have heard thee: Behold, I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful ...  
But my covenant will I stablish with Isaac” (Genesis 12:1,3; 17:19-21)**

**A**braham had eight known sons but only Isaac was a “son of promise”, his “only begotten son”,<sup>2</sup> conceived in unique circumstances. It was through Isaac and Jacob and his sons that a distinct family was born through whom God would bless all families of the world through His uniquely born “Son of Promise”, His eternal “Only Begotten Son”, the Lord Jesus Christ of whom Isaac was a foreshadowing. Isaac's life was spared when Abraham was told to offer him up on Moriah's altar,<sup>3</sup> but God's Son was not, when He offered Himself for our sins on the cross. Ishmael, although blessed by God, became a mocker of Isaac.<sup>4</sup>

## ***Promised to be of a Virgin's Seed***

**“Therefore the LORD Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14)**

**“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6)**

**S**arah was not a virgin but remained barren until she produced a child for Abraham from His seed after God's intervention in their old age, following years of fruitless trying. Their faith in God's promise was rewarded. Mary remained a virgin until after her firstborn Son, Jesus, was born. He had NO earthly father; He pre-existed prior to His unique conception in Mary's womb by the Holy Spirit as foretold by the prophet Isaiah (750 BC). Hence **'a Child born'**, but **'a Son given'**. Notice how carefully the Holy Scriptures record such detail.

## ***Promised to be of David's Seed***

**“... Say unto My servant David ... when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build an house for My name, and I will stablish the throne of His kingdom for ever” (2Samuel 7:8,12-13)**

**D**avid was God's choice as king in 1010 BC. For 450 years, God's presence with David's nation had been through a special piece of furniture called the “Ark of God”. David had sought a permanent resting place for the Ark which currently resided in a tent. His desires were good but God revealed more profound promises to him, that from David's seed, One would be born who, beyond building a physical house, a temple for the Ark as Solomon his immediate son was charged to do,<sup>5</sup> would build an eternal household wherein God would dwell among His redeemed people in an future day. This Son would indeed be “King of kings” and reign in righteousness as no other kings before Him had ever ruled.

## ***Promised Blessings for His Seed***

**“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given Me” (Isaiah 8:18, Hebrews 2:13)**

**“Behold, the Day of the LORD cometh ... For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle ... and fight against those nations ... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be One LORD, and His Name One ... Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited” (Zechariah 14:1-11)**

**D**uring His first advent, Christ remained celibate; He did not descend to father physical children but to deal with sin, laying the basis for His second, yet future advent. His TRUE seed are begotten through spiritual rebirth and will reign with Him in a future glorious day with Jerusalem as His Capital administrative city. All worship to the true God will be centred here and all false religions of whatever form will be abolished. All earth dwellers will confess HIM as the sovereign righteous LORD in that Day and will willingly flow to this city to give Him homage. This future kingdom on earth will progress into His eternal Kingdom. However between both His advents, Christ is currently actively building ‘His Church’, called ‘the Bride’,<sup>6</sup> who will share His glory and company for evermore in a very unique sense.

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<sup>1</sup>Corinthians 15:45; <sup>2</sup>Hebrews 11:17; <sup>3</sup>Genesis Ch. 22; <sup>4</sup>Genesis 21:9; <sup>5</sup>1Chronicles 22:6-16; <sup>6</sup>Revelation 21:9

# His Birth and Early Years

## His Conception in a Virgin's Womb

**“The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary ... Thou shalt conceive ... and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS ... How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? ... The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:26-35)**

**B**eing a young betrothed virgin awaiting her marriage to Joseph, understandably lowly Mary queried how she would conceive. She was advised this would occur and be preserved through the mysterious silent activity of the Person of the Holy Spirit during her nine months pregnancy as the child formed in her womb. He would be born holy, without sin. He was not sent as a ‘higher order spirit being’ or created in her womb by an angel’s touch and instantly born. This was God’s means of entering Himself into our world as a man in the Person of His eternal Son to fulfil the great work of salvation as JESUS “the Saviour”.

## Bethlehem – His Place of Birth

**“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). “I bring you good tidings ... For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10-11)**

**G**od used a census ordered by Rome’s first emperor<sup>1</sup> to migrate Joseph from Nazareth to lowly Bethlehem to ensure Christ’s birth was in the “City of David”. His physical links to David’s throne was via Mary; His legal right was via Joseph. His birth was humble, outside and at night with no room in the local inn. He was wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger. In such a manner did God’s Son, the glorious Creator, who was worshipped by angels, descend from the eternal realms to enter into our world which He had made.

Yet while the city was sleeping, alert and watchful shepherds being notified of His birth by angelic beings, made haste to give this freshly born babe their homage. How fitting that such men were informed and not the proud rulers in Jerusalem who would manifest their hatred towards Him in later days as many continue to do! Christ would describe Himself as the “Good Shepherd”,<sup>2</sup> always keenly watchful, Who would die for His ‘sheep’ to save them from their fierce enemies. Later, wise men from the East brought gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh which speak so well of His Deity, perfections and sufferings at Golgotha.

## His Dependency on God

**“But Thou art He that took Me out of the womb: Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother’s breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother’s belly” (Psalm 22:9-10)**

**T**he quotation from the above Psalm primarily linked with His sufferings and resurrection, emphasises His dependent spirit upon ‘God’, manifested throughout His life and how provision was made for Him in every phase of His life, although at the cross it would seem

to be wanting for a season! He would never act of His own accord and this is traceable throughout His wonderful life. Such an attitude does NOT prove that He Himself could not have been God as is also similarly argued respecting His prayer life. As a perfect sinless Man, He evidenced no anxiety as to where His next meal would come from, even if it meant hunger for a while. As a dependent Man, His God would supply His every need as and when necessary. In the wilderness, as we shall consider, He would not turn stones into bread to satisfy the insinuations of Satan but would wait for God's provision to satisfy His hunger.

Within Mary's womb He would draw sustenance from her blood as His body wondrously formed. After His birth, He would suck milk from her "breasts of consolation" until He was weaned onto solids. As siblings were born, half brothers and sisters begotten through Joseph and Mary's physical union following His own birth, we can be sure He would not have striven with them for His mothers attention through His rights as the firstborn son.

He was brought up in Nazareth, worked as a lowly carpenter to meet the family needs after Joseph's apparently early death. Later in His public ministry while meeting the vast needs of others, He graciously let them supply His needs in reciprocation of their appreciation for Him and the loving acts of healing and deliverance that they had experienced from Him. At His death, He was given an undefiled virgin tomb in a garden; pious men bought new fine linen and spices to wrap up His disfigured body in preparation for the resurrection morning. From the womb to His death unto resurrection, His trust was explicitly in God at ALL times.

### ***His Early Years – Evidence of His Spiritual Aspirations***

**"That it might be fulfilled ... He shall be called a Nazarene"** (Matthew 2:23)

**"Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover ... wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business? ... And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man"** (Luke 2:41,49,52)

**A**lthough born in Bethlehem and exiled in Egypt until the death of monstrous king Herod, He was brought up in 'despised' Nazareth as spoken by OT prophecies and epitomised by a follower's question when introduced to Christ, ***"Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?"***.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, YES when God is involved! He was not moulded or characterised by the environment in which He lived as we are; His physical, moral and spiritual growth was perfect at each stage as He matured into adulthood, bringing pleasure to God and men.

He did not just accept the 'religion' of the day although a regular Sabbath day attendee at the local synagogue. He knew the deadness of His neighbours hearts and cold formality of their spiritual adherence towards God and the law as later evidenced on His return there.<sup>4</sup> His desires were wholly Godward, seeking God's glory, honour and pleasure, day and night.

At the age of 12, after an annual visit for the Jewish Passover at Jerusalem, as His group returned north, He had remained behind and was found three day's later in the Temple hearing and asking questions to the learned men, astounding them with His ***"answers and at His understanding"***.<sup>5</sup> When Mary sought to rebuke Him, He mildly rebuked her and set matters in order emphasising that His primary responsibility in life was not to be about Joseph's but His Heavenly Fathers business. Yet He remained subject to His 'Parents'.

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 2:1-3; <sup>2</sup>John 10:11; <sup>3</sup>John 1:46; <sup>4</sup>Luke 4:16-32; <sup>5</sup>Luke 2:47

# His Baptism and Wilderness Testings

## John the Baptist's Witness of Him

**“The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God ... And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isaiah 40:3-5; Matthew 3:3)**

John said, **“He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30)**

John was raised up by God to prepare the nation of Israel to receive their Messiah. 400 years had passed since God's last prophetic utterance during which period, Rome had brought Israel under its control in 63 BC, setting the scene. He was a forerunner whose unique ministry was foretold in the OT writings. Born six months before Christ to Zacharias and Elizabeth in their old age, their only recorded meeting prior to John's baptism of Jesus 30 years later was while both were in their mothers wombs. Mary had visited Elizabeth after Gabriel's announcement to her, causing John to 'leap' for joy in Elizabeth's womb.<sup>1</sup> A remarkable incident indeed, 'an unborn prophet saluting an unborn King'! This would be the summary of John's ministry during his short public life: to rejoice in Christ and to point the multitudes to Him as the Messiah, Who would shortly follow him onto the public scene.

John's preaching was sharp and focused on calling the people to repentance, to a change of heart respecting their dullness in the ways of God, causing individuals to be baptised (immersed) in the waters of Jordan as an outward confession of their sin. He dressed simply, ate plain food and did not seek the praise of men. He performed no miracles. People came to him from all directions to listen or to criticise because of his revealing their hypocrisy. An exposure of Herod's sin would soon bring about his 'early' death by Herod's sword.<sup>2</sup>

John's ministry was fully Christ centred, to reveal the ways and glory of the LORD, to exhort the people, Jews and Gentiles, to believe on Christ when He appeared. John was content to disappear from focus when He did. His greatest cry concerning Him was exclaimed one day on the bank of the river Jordan; seeing Jesus walking toward him he cried, **“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”**.<sup>3</sup> Let John's testimony speak to you.

## His Baptism by John in Jordan

**“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. ... And, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:13-17)**

John's baptism of Jesus was unique compared to all others he had baptised. He considered that Jesus should have baptised him as he felt his unworthiness in the presence of this sinless Man. Jesus had no sins to confess or repent of, noted by the fact that He went up immediately out of the water, unlike the multitudes who halted to make confession of theirs. He was baptised to “fulfil all righteousness”, to ensure the ministry was not hindered as the righteous workings of God were being outworked. Christ identified Himself with the people He had come to save, but was never a partaker of their sins or of any sin.

His holiness is testified of in a twofold way: (i) In the descent and resting of the Holy Spirit

in a dove form upon Him showing the Spirit's acceptance of Him, a Man who would be directed and empowered by this same Holy Spirit in the months ahead. The dove, a clean bird, abhors uncleanness. (ii) The voice of God the Father's public testimony borne to His beloved and unique Son, in His confession of the pleasure He found in Him. This would be relative to the previous 30 years of His 'unseen' life and His movement now into the public scene via His baptism as He moved forward in the purposes of God to complete the work of redemption. Many trials would be endured in the next 42 months, but then triumph!

Never before or since, has Heaven bestowed such approval upon a man. This Man is far superior to Noah, Abraham, Moses and all other renowned men who, though great in some aspect, even in God's esteem, have all abysmally failed at times. All three 'Persons' of the Godhead are united, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in this great work of salvation that the Son came to achieve for mankind, even for you and me, who have sinned against the Godhead.

### ***His Period of Wilderness Testing by Satan***

***"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered" (Luke 4:1-13)***

**P**rior to the commencement of His public work, He spent 40 days in the wilderness under the Holy Spirit's guidance. This was a prolonged period of testing from Satan, the adversary, of which three are recorded. He addressed each by accurate and authoritative quotations from the OT writings to silence the devil. His responses were instant. The subtle suggestions never appealed to His holy mind or heart. His purity, trust in God and adherence to the accomplishment of the work He came to undertake, could not be compromised.

**Trial 1 – To turn stones into bread to feed His hunger.** His hunger was real! He would later feed masses with a few loaves and fishes, but not Himself. His confidence was in God to provide. Food for His soul from Scripture was of more importance than bread for His belly, ***"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God"***.<sup>4</sup> He was later fed by angels.

**Trial 2 – To worship the devil in order to rule the world.** He instantly reminded the devil, ***"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve"***.<sup>5</sup> The devil should have worshipped Him. The Lord did not seek the world's vain glory that fleshly men desire. He will rule the world in righteousness, but the basis must first be established at the cross.

**Trial 3 – To cast Himself off a pinnacle of the temple to invoke God's protection.** His response, ***"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God"***.<sup>6</sup> He would trust and glorify God by His powerful healing work moved by His compassionate heart, but He would never tempt God.

**A**s the adversary, Satan is very satisfied when anyone maligns or argues against the plain and obvious teachings of the Bible – he has them trapped! He however is very disturbed and vengeful when Scripture truth is plainly stated, believed and practised – he is defeated! The Lord Jesus Christ has left us with a powerful mandate and example on how to handle the wiles of the devil in this present wilderness world. We all need to be extremely cautious and vigilant against engaging in Satan's subtle work, as we will end up with him in Hell if we do. Rather, we should believe and practice revealed Biblical truth and be eternally blessed.

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 1:41; <sup>2</sup>Mark 6:14-29; <sup>3</sup>John 1:29; <sup>4</sup>v4; Deut. 8:3; <sup>5</sup>v8; Deut. 6:13; 10:20; <sup>6</sup>v12; Deut. 6:16; Psalm 91:11-12

# ***His Public Ministry – His Teaching***

**“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the LORD hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD” (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:18-19)**

Jesus taught, **“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh ...” (Matthew 12:34)**

His adversaries confessed, **“Never man spake like this Man” (John 7:46)**

It was during a return visit to the synagogue at Nazareth that He opened a scroll of Isaiah to read the short passage as above, hence indicating that it was He Himself to Whom the prophet was referring. These words sum up the ministry that He came to fulfil.

He came to represent God; He came to speak for God; He came to reveal God in a way that no other being could, whether they be angel, prophet or scribe. He spoke out of the purity, singularity and fullness of His heart, drawing from the deep veins of divine truth and wisdom as He revealed insight into the character and purposes of God and the Godhead, not made known before to mankind. He foretold His sufferings, death and resurrection.

There was simplicity yet profoundness, humility yet authority, comfort yet conviction for His hearers in His teaching as He addressed mankind’s deeper spiritual needs emphasising the importance of the eternal, over the natural existence.<sup>1</sup> He approved the accuracy of OT writings with references made from Eden’s Garden through to Malachi. He rejoiced in the evidence of faith in God and Himself, yet warned of the solemn consequences of practised sin and formal cold hypocritical adherence to the Mosaic law. He came to effect the transition from acceptance with God through law keeping, to acceptance with God by grace. He spoke of the blessings of eternal salvation, yet warned of the judgments of Hell fire.

## ***His Sermon on the Mount***

**“And He opened His mouth, and taught them saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit ... that mourn ... the meek ... they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness ... the merciful ... the pure in heart ... for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven ... But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matthew Ch’s 5-7)**

The Gospel account by Matthew emphasises the Kingship of Christ; the manifesto of His future glorious kingdom is detailed within this ‘Sermon’ and His expectation of His subjects. How different are its contents to those of the earth’s rulers. Men deride the thought of the meek inheriting the earth, yet they fail to grasp Who this King is. It addresses our inward condition, not our outward form; it impresses upon us the urgency of seeking a right standing with God, to live for Him and not for men’s praise; it encourages implicit trust in God, renouncing of hypocritical behaviour, and exposes the true from the false. It emphasises His authority and the preservation of those who embrace His teaching; His disciples will be as unmovable as a house built upon a solid rock, although pounded by a horrific storm. Many atrocities have been undertaken in His Name over the centuries but this sermon condemns them all: ‘Love, not hate; bless, not curse; do good and pray’.

## ***His Parables***

**“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (Psalm 78:2-3; Matthew 13:35)**

**A**s prophesied in the OT, He often taught with the aid of parables, illustrations based on common life experiences with deep spiritual truth interwoven within. Such illustrations came for example from eating and drinking, shepherding, ploughing, sowing and harvesting, trees, baking and needlework, warfare, fishing and the weather. While many who heard Him remained ignorant of their often solemn meaning, there are deep spiritual lessons to be drawn from them, which should deeply impress us, emphasising again the distinctiveness of the deep and previous unheard of truths that came from His unique lips.

## ***His Discourses***

**“And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me. If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but He that seeketh His glory that sent Him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in Him” (John 7:15-18)**

**T**he Jews recognised He had received no instruction from the Rabbinical schools and were perplexed to the origin of His teaching. He emphasised in His reply that the content of His teaching would confirm if it was sourced in God. Few Rabbi's from these schools were truly in touch with God or teaching His commandments; they would have accepted Him and His teaching otherwise, but their spiritual condition fuelled their prejudice against Him. The NT gives several accounts of Him stating that His teaching and work was in complete harmony with the Father, had His approval and that He was not acting independently of Him, ***“I and My Father are One”***.<sup>2</sup> Some of His most sublime statements respecting His eternal relationships and existence were drawn from Him when under the severest of opposition. Yet in calm repose and with Divine authority, He declared such truths for the eternal welfare of His hearers, and for ourselves if we would only have an ear to hear.

## ***The Upper Room Ministry***<sup>3</sup>

**O**n the eve of His death, He instructed His faithful disciples in preparation for His departure and their future work. He also promised, following His ascension, to send ***“Another Comforter”***, One like Himself, who would assist them in their future testimony for Him.<sup>3</sup> This is a clear reference to the Holy Spirit who came on the ‘Day of Pentecost’.<sup>4</sup>

It can be appreciated by an honest contemplation of His words, the manner and attitude with which He spoke, the diverse circumstances in which they were spoken, whether to multitudes or individuals, to the high or low, enemy or friend, that His speech was always impartial, without prejudice, guile or arrogance. His communications were wholesome, appropriate, gracious, perceptive and yet penetrating. Parents calmly brought their children to Him for His blessing,<sup>5</sup> yet Pilate the Roman judge would fear in His presence.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Matthew 16:24-27; <sup>2</sup>John 5:17-31; 8:25-29; 10:30; <sup>3</sup>John Ch's 14-16; <sup>4</sup>Acts 1:8; 2:1; <sup>5</sup>Luke 18:15-17; <sup>6</sup>John 19:8-12

# ***His Public Ministry – His Miracles***

**“And the power of the Lord was present to heal them” (Luke 8:17)**

**G**od displayed His power in the OT period to deliver His people from peril and danger, to preserve them in trials or to chastise them for their waywardness. Individuals like Moses and Elijah were raised at critical times in Israel’s history, men through whom He would manifest His power, men who also had a heart for the spiritual welfare of His people.

Christ’s unique ministry was also marked by the miraculous, sometimes expressed through His disciples who He invested with His own inherent power. This continued for a while after His ascension, to confirm their witness was truly of God. A reading of the Gospel accounts prove that His miracles were not performed for self-promotion but for God’s glory, to authenticate His message of repentance and His approval by God. He exhorted men to recognise His works as the starting point to convince them of His rightful claims to deity.

He healed multitudes, not only isolated cases; all were treated as individuals through eyes of compassion and tenderness. He had an ear for all who would call upon Him in faith. His enemies would criticise Him at times as His miracles exposed their impious attitude. The four Gospels, record His power being used to satisfy the needs of others, not His own.

## ***His Power over Creation***

**“And there arose a great storm ... Master, carest Thou not that we perish? And He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, ‘Peace, be still’ ... and there was a great calm. And He said unto them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that ye have no faith? ... ‘What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?’” (Mark 4:35-41)**

**O**n occasions we read of Him exhibiting control over His own creation. He once stilled the tempestuous waves of Lake Galilee, dissipating the energy and momentum of the water and wind with a few words to bring about a great calm. He was not afraid of the storm but His disciples were! They learnt a valuable lesson of His care for them that day. Some time later, He would defy gravity by walking on the same waters, compelling His disciples to acknowledge Him as the **“Son of God”**.<sup>1</sup> Just prior His sufferings, He calmly rode into Jerusalem on an untamed colt, at which time He would also curse a fig tree for its bareness from which it quickly shrivelled and died.<sup>2</sup> This was one of His few miracles of judgment which emphasised the bareness of the nation of Israel towards God. A solemn lesson indeed.

## ***His Power over Disease and Sickness***

**“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. And His fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto Him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy: and He healed them” (Matthew 4:23-24)**

**H**e impartially healed numerous distressing physical conditions to all who ventured by faith upon Him. Jews, Samaritans and Syrians, who historically were enemies of the Jews, were all blessed; Roman centurions, rulers of synagogues; fathers and mothers with

their children were not turned away. At times they said He was beside Himself as He attended the needs of the people late into the evening, entering compassionately into their plight as prophesied, **“Himself took our infirmities, and healed our sicknesses”**.<sup>3</sup> He would touch the unclean lepers and dried or putrefying tissue become as the soft flesh of children, withered hands became strong and straight, eyes blinded from birth received light and vision, dumb lips and deaf ears resonated again with sound, the paralysed could leap for joy, distorted bodies made upright and embarrassing issues of blood stanchd.

Nobody required convalescence or rehabilitation; harsh treatments or procedures as prescribed by current medical practices to aid recovery or provide relief were unnecessary. All were healed instantly excepting a few cases for specific reasons. Here was seen the touch of the Creator’s hand Who formed the universe with His fingers and made man from the clay of the ground. Here is our Great Physician, Who came not primarily to cure men’s bodies from their ailments, for all must needs die eventually, but to save our perishing souls. The cities which saw His greatest works would receive His greater condemnation because they refused His message of repentance and acceptance of Him as their Saviour.<sup>4</sup>

### ***His Power over Demons***

**“If I with the finger of God cast out devils (demons), no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you”** (Luke 11:20)

**D**emons are fallen spirits who sided with Satan at his foolish uprising against God. While prolific in numbers during the Lord’s sojourn on earth they were no match for Him, but were bound to submit to the authority of His spoken word. If He said go, they went. He always refused worship from demons. One notable man, Legion, was tormented and infested with more than 2000 of these cruel, callous spirits but he was soon delivered and restored to his right mind at the command of Christ.<sup>5</sup> His enemies accused Him of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the chief demon, but He exposed such reasoning by replying, **“If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand?”**<sup>6</sup> Christ’s ultimate crushing of the fallen spirit world was accomplished by His own death, **“That through death He might destroy (make powerless) him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”**.<sup>7</sup>

### ***His Power over Death***

**“... Now when He came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow ... Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak”** (Luke 7:11-18)

**W**e know of three occasions when the Lord exercised His great power over the ‘king of terrors’ – death; He raised a young man, a little girl,<sup>8</sup> and an older man, Lazarus, who had been dead four days.<sup>9</sup> He no doubt, raised others. These would all die again but He met the need of the hour and gave back a livelihood to a widow woman, an only daughter to a distraught father and mother and a brother to two heartbroken sisters. The Lord would Himself die but on the third day raise Himself in resurrection power becoming the firstfruits of a great harvest of souls who He will raise unto life who believe in His sacrifice for them.

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 14:22-33; <sup>2</sup>Matthew 21:1-11,17-20; <sup>3</sup>Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17; <sup>4</sup>Luke 10:11-16, <sup>5</sup>Mark 5:5-20;

<sup>6</sup>Luke 11:18; <sup>7</sup>Hebrews 2:14; <sup>8</sup>Luke 8:49-56; <sup>9</sup>John 11:1-46

# His Betrayal and Trials

**“And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them. Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of Man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, And shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify Him: and the third day He shall rise again” (Matthew 20:17-19)**

**“To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice” (John 18:37)**

**W**hen standing before Pilate at His trial, the Lord Jesus testified to the fact that He came into the world to bear witness unto the truth. He was ‘on trial’ because there were those among the Jews who were not prepared to submit to that truth.

From the outset of His public ministry it was inevitable that He would encounter intensifying resistance particularly from the Jewish leaders and teachers who observed their man-made doctrines and hypocrisies being exposed. Rather than humble themselves and admit their waywardness they would seek His death to maintain their status in society. This was more important to them than the honour of God which marked the life of Christ. For sure, anyone who exalted themselves claiming an equality with God, should be appropriately judged per the OT Law. But with the Lord, there was ample evidence to authenticate His claims, through John the Baptist’s witness, by His own miracles and the OT Scriptures that detailed the life and ministry of the promised Messiah to which He was conforming, as already noted.

The prospect of a suffering Messiah was resisted in the Jewish mind, even by His own disciples as He foretold the circumstances of His death. However all was in perfect timing and premature attempts by the Jews to ‘destroy’ Him were futile. They had sought to cast Him off a hill at Nazareth, His hometown,<sup>1</sup> and several times at Jerusalem they attempted to stone Him to death.<sup>2</sup> But while such acts evidenced their unjust hatred for Him, this was not the manner in which He would die, for as God’s ultimate Passover Lamb, it was written that, **“a bone of Him shall not be broken”**.<sup>3</sup> The Lord Himself was always in full control.

## His Betrayal

**“Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me ... The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:21-25)**

**T**he Lord had spent a night in prayer prior to the selection of Judas as one of the twelve close disciples. He knew of Judas’ covetous heart and of his future treachery of Him for thirty pieces of silver with a hypocritical kiss. Yet, the OT had prophesied of such an event and He would not shrink from it although it deeply troubled His heart.<sup>4</sup> Judas had been so near, heard the Lord’s teaching, seen His miracles, and been given power to perform similar works, yet was bound by the idol of money. He had been entrusted with their moneybag to which he helped himself. He never acknowledged Jesus as Lord. He was the only disciple that Jesus ‘lost’ because he was not a true follower; He was called the Son of Perdition (destruction), lost in Hell for ever. He only showed remorse over His action. While it was Divine purpose that the Lord should be betrayed, it was Judas’ choice to carry it through!

## ***His Trials and Mocking***

**“They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek” (Micah 5:1)**

**“An when they had bound Him, they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the governor ... Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified. Then the soldiers ... stripped Him, and put on Him a scarlet robe. And when they had plaited a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand: and they bowed the knee before Him, and mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon Him, and took the reed, and smote Him on the head ... and led Him away to crucify Him” (Matthew 27:2,26-31)**

God’s judgments are righteous, without partiality and poured out after much warning when sin is involved. But how very different the judgments of men can be! At the trials of Christ were witnessed the greatest travesties of justice ever experienced since the world began. Before His arrest, in the garden of Gethsemane with troubled soul, He had prayed to God the Father, **“not what I will, but what Thou wilt”**,<sup>5</sup> as He submitted to the will of God for Him. He would say to those who came to arrest Him at night with swords, **“this is your hour, and the power of darkness”**,<sup>6</sup> as He allowed men under Satan’s cruel stimulus to express their hatred towards Him. It was now, that His disciples forsook Him and fled.

He was subjected to six hasty, mock trials, briefly described below with the main points:

- **Two before High Priests** – They questioned the Lord on His doctrine, sought false witness against Him, smote Him and spoke blasphemously against Him. He acknowledges His equality with God which stimulated their death cries. Peter denied Him three times.
- **Before the Jewish Council** – Early the next morning, they agreed on His death and sought Rome’s intervention thus fulfilling the Lord’s words that He would die by crucifixion.
- **His first appearance before Pilate** – The Jews sought Pilate’s rash condemnation. They make many false accusations but Jesus remains silent. Pilate marvels. This was unprecedented for a man facing a cruel death not to defend himself. Pilate recognising their envy, proclaimed Jesus without fault or worthy of death and determines His release
- **Before Herod the king** – Pilate sends Jesus to Herod, who hoped to witness a miracle for self gratification. The Lord remains silent after intense questioning. The chief priests vehemently accuse Him. Herod and his men of war set Christ at nought, as worthless.<sup>7</sup>
- **His second appearance before Pilate** – Pilate scourges Him, and presents Him to the people, perhaps hoping for pity. The Jews cry out craving for His death, desiring Barabbas, a murderer, to be released in place of their Messiah. Pilate yields to their charges of treason against Caesar if he does not comply. He washes his hands, releases Barabbas and delivers Jesus to the band of soldiers for their abusive mistreatment prior His death.

What meekness and dignity is displayed by Christ in these cruel mocking’s. The soldiers as representatives of Rome, the ruling power of the day, bowed the knee in mockery to Him who will one day rule the world as “King of kings”.<sup>8</sup> What great guilt rests on the Jews who delivered Him up to Pilate. What love Christ shows for our souls as He goes to the cross!

<sup>1</sup>Luke 4:28-30; <sup>2</sup>John 8:59; 10:31; <sup>3</sup>Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20; John 19:36; <sup>4</sup>Psalms 41:9; 55:12-14; John 13:21;

<sup>5</sup>Mark 14:36; <sup>6</sup>Luke 22:53; <sup>7</sup>Luke 23:8-11; <sup>8</sup>Revelation 19:16

# His Crucifixion and Death

**“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; ... Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin ... He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:10-11)**

Christ’s death on a ‘cross’ heralds the climax of time; whether the cross was of ‘Tee’ form is irrelevant. God’s eternal purpose depended on the Sacrifice that His Son offered for sin on the cross. He was foreordained as this sacrificial Lamb before the world was created.<sup>1</sup> He Who is our Creator was predetermined to be our Redeemer, our Saviour. The greatest victory ever achieved over mankind’s greatest enemies was accomplished on a tree outside the walls of Jerusalem in a scene of apparent weakness, and yet of mighty strength.

## The Certainty of His Crucifixion

**“They pierced My hands and My feet ... they look and stare upon Me” (Psalm 22:16-17)**

The cross reveals the greatness of God’s love towards mankind and the depths of man’s depravity and hatred towards God. There are those who question the facts concerning His crucifixion, (i) that it actually occurred, (ii) that it was a tragedy, (iii) that it accomplished nothing or remains inadequate to deal with personal sin. The following should be considered:

- **The Gospel Records** – were written from eyewitness accounts, by observers of His death and resurrection, witnesses who remained resolute despite suffering for their testimony.
- **The Book of Acts** – testifies to the message that Christ’s followers preached based around His death and resurrection as the basis for the forgiveness of sins. It empowered them.
- **The NT Epistles** – further explain the meaning of Christ’s death, relative to God and man.
- **The OT Prophecies** – contain many insights of His sufferings. Psalm 22 (1000 BC) and Isaiah 53 (710 BC) give graphic details of the crucifixion that were fulfilled in the minutest detail.
- **The OT Sacrifices** – make clear that approach to God during this period was only possible through animal sacrifices due to man’s sinful state and God’s holy character. Israel’s sacrificial system pointed forwards to Christ’s ultimate sacrifice for sin on the cross.
- **The OT Allegories** – give us illustrations of Christ’s sufferings and death (i.e. Abraham, a father, offering up Isaac, his son, at Moriah;<sup>2</sup> Isaac was spared, God’s Son was not).

It is emphasised again that Christ died **VOLUNTARILY**; He was NOT a victim of overpowering circumstances; Luke records that, **“He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem”**.<sup>3</sup> While it was occasioned through Jewish hatred and cruel Roman soldiers as foretold, even at the close He would bow His head and dismiss His own spirit as He died, knowing that His sufferings had been accepted by God. There was no need to break His legs to hasten death.

His death was obviously **VIOLENT**; the sufferings of His body, soul and spirit were immense, yet He exemplified His own teaching when He prayed from the cross, **“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”**.<sup>4</sup> The verbal mocking’s from the Jews, bypassers, the soldiers and the malefactors crucified alongside Him was cruel. They scorned His trust in God, derided His Kingship, spurned His claims to deity and yet, **“As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth”** in anger at them.<sup>5</sup> In incredible tenderness, looking at His mother, He arranged her care to a disciple’s home. Such were His thoughts.

## The Necessity of His Death

**“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”** (Psalm 22:1; Mark 15:34)

**“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...”** (1Corinthians 15:3)

The Lord’s death was also **VICARIOUS**; He was suffering on account of others. Substitution did occur at Golgotha. While He had earlier been exchanged with Barabbas who escaped death, more notably, He died as a prospective substitute for ourselves that we might escape the ‘second death’, from Hell itself, a place of perpetual darkness and solitude and torment.

The cross was not a torture stake. While His physical sufferings were immense, three hours of impenetrable darkness descended over the whole land from midday following which was heard that woeful cry, **“My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken ME?”**. This was no mere eclipse of the sun as God withheld men’s vision as Christ’s soul was made **“an offering for sin”**.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere it is written that God **“hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”**.<sup>6</sup> To elaborate, Christ Who was sinless and hated unrighteousness, Who was without sin, Who committed no sin, experienced in those hours of darkness the full hatred and wrath of God against SIN when He suffered, that God might give us a righteous standing before Himself as a consequence.

Do we appreciate the seriousness of our SIN? We are all born with this malady passed down from Adam; it soon shows in our behaviour. The Lord Himself had taught, **“For from within, out of the heart (souls) of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evils come from within, and defile the man”**.<sup>7</sup> Sin is serious as we are all guilty of violating God’s laws and standards as His accountable creatures. We may claim that we had no choice, but we have all wilfully and purposely practiced it and are therefore inexcusable. Yet further, are we prepared to forsake our sinful conduct and receive God’s forgiveness? This is the real test of our earnestness and sincerity.

It is written of Abraham, he **“believed God, and it was counted (reckoned) unto him for righteousness”**.<sup>8</sup> We need Christ as our substitute as without Him we CANNOT be saved. NOT Christ and our efforts or works; we CANNOT merit God’s favour or placate His wrath.

## The Repentant Malefactor (Criminal)

**“Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily (truly) I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise”** (Luke 23:42-43)

His death is **VICTORIOUS** for those who receive Him. He has provided a way for **God** to forgive us without compromising His righteousness; He has satisfied the demands of God’s **law** which can only condemn us; He has stripped **Satan** of his power to retain us; He can take the fear of **death** and the **grave** from us. He can deliver us from **Hell’s** torments.

One of the mocking malefactors learned to fear God that day and trembled for His sins. The punishment of men is incomparable to Hell’s pain! In a moment of time, He grasped great truths which the Jews had repelled as he observed Christ’s conduct. He was convicted of his need and Christ’s identity and ability to save him. He cried for mercy, and found it!

<sup>1</sup>Peter 1:18-20; <sup>2</sup>Genesis Ch. 22; <sup>3</sup>Luke 9:51; <sup>4</sup>Luke 23:34; <sup>5</sup>Isaiah 53:7,10; <sup>6</sup>2Corinthians 5:21; <sup>7</sup>Mark 7:20-23;

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3

# ***His Burial and Bodily Resurrection***

## ***His Burial in a New Sepulchre (Tomb)***

**“And he made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death” (Isaiah 53:9)**

**“When even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph ... And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed” (Matthew 27:57-61)**

**T**he bodies of Roman criminals were usually thrown into a common grave. But God who assisted the deliverance of the holy and sinless babe from a virgin’s womb, likewise took care of the now marred and lacerated body with provision of a virgin tomb. Pilate, after confirming the death with the officiating Roman centurion, released the body to two men, Joseph and Nicodemus, who carefully wound it in new linen cloth with spices and laid it in an undefiled garden tomb close to the scene of the crucifixion. The body was torn and abused but remained holy. These courageous men now took their public stance with Christ; both had close officiating ties with the Jewish council that condemned Jesus although neither had conceded to its evil conduct. While a ‘poor’ Joseph cared for the Lord during His youth, a ‘rich’ Joseph provided care at His death as the prophet Isaiah had foretold.

But others also had an interest in Christ’s body. The unscrupulous Jewish leaders on their Sabbath Day of ‘rest’, busied themselves to approach Pilate to request he secure the tomb for three days with a Roman seal on the great entrance stone and a garrison of soldiers on watch to safeguard against His disciples removing the body at night and falsely claiming He had risen from the dead. They approached Pilate respectfully, unlike the previous day as they sought Christ’s death; they referred to Jesus as a deceiver as they recalled His words, **“After three days I will rise again”**.<sup>1</sup> It is inconceivable that His fearful and disillusioned disciples would scheme such a notion! But unbelieving hearts will stop at nothing and now these Jews considered they could relax, believing that the sepulchre was impregnable!

## ***His Glorious Bodily Resurrection***

**“In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn ... there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it ... And for fear of him the keepers (soldiers) did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered ... Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said” (Matt. 28:1-6)**

**“Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4)**

**T**he resurrection of Jesus Christ out from the dead has changed the world’s course. This act was a display of God’s mighty power as evidenced throughout Christ’s life and was vindication and demonstrable proof of the fact that Christ was Who He claimed to be for God would not raise an imposter! And while the soldiers were later bribed to claim the body was stolen while they slept, an offence meriting death, the angel showed contempt to Rome’s seal as he sat on the stone, to allow seeking woman in and not to let Christ out.

His post resurrection appearances, which are many and not straightforward to map, were only to close associates, specifically to His followers but never to the unbelieving world. Their last sight of Christ was of His lifeless body on the cross. He first appeared to Mary Magdalene, from whom He had delivered seven demons, then to other women, then to the close disciples, and also singularly to Peter for restoration following his blatant denial of the Lord. His final glorious appearance was to that zealous yet misguided pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, on the Damascus Road. The Lord had a higher calling for Saul (Paul) to pursue.

The forty days prior His ascension to the throne of God, from where He had descended, was taken to prepare His disciples for their future testimony and work for Him. A momentous work was about to begin. His resurrection is significant and has consequences, both for Himself and the world as a whole. Some of the important aspects are summarised below:

- His was a literal resurrection of His body, not just of spirit! He invited His disciples to touch and handle Him, not possible with a spirit. Thomas refused to believe in His literal bodily resurrection until he had felt the nail prints and thrust his hand into the wound made by a soldier's spear. He only had to see the Lord to exclaim, ***"My Lord and my God"***.<sup>2</sup>
- It authenticates the claims of Christ to His identity, the eternal Son of God.
- The Father, Son and Holy Spirit were each involved in this activity showing Divine unity.<sup>3</sup>
- It confirms God's acceptance of Christ's sacrifice made on the cross to deal with sin, ***"Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification"***.<sup>4</sup>
- It was the first-fruits, the guarantee of a great harvest of souls to follow, who will be raised unto life. He had taught, ***"Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit"***.<sup>5</sup> He was that 'Corn of Wheat'.
- There are many eyewitness accounts referred to in the NT, ***"then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord", "He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once"***.<sup>6</sup>
- The disciples were emboldened by it as they bore a powerful testimony to His resurrection as they preached the Gospel despite being beaten and even put to death by the same men who sought the Lord's life. There is no other possible explanation for their courage!
- The certain expectation of His believing followers is that their bodies will one day be ***"fashioned like unto His glorious body"*** and ***"when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is"***.<sup>7</sup> The natural will be fitted for the spiritual realm.
- It establishes the fact that this glorious resurrected Man will one day judge the world in righteousness; He will raise all from the dead. Pilate and Herod will stand before Him to answer for their actions; so will all who refuse to receive Him now as Lord and Saviour.<sup>8</sup>

The bodily resurrection of Christ from the dead is a glorious and thrilling theme but also a sobering truth. Evidence of its reality abounds both historically and by the consequential blessings that have flowed from God. As Christ, from the womb could rest in hope on His mother's breasts, so likewise as He faced death and the tomb could say, ***"My flesh also shall rest in hope"***.<sup>9</sup> Unlike our mortal bodies at death, His saw no corruption, but like Him and in the certainty of His resurrection we too can go to the grave resting in hope, if we are His.

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 27:62-66; <sup>2</sup>John 20:24-29; <sup>3</sup>Acts 13:30; John 10:17-18; Romans 8:11; <sup>4</sup>Romans 4:25; <sup>5</sup>John 12:24;

<sup>6</sup>John 20:20; 1Corinthians 15:6; <sup>7</sup>Philippians 3:21; 1John 3:2; <sup>8</sup>John 5:23-31; Acts 17:31; <sup>9</sup>Psalms 16:9

# His Ascension and Priestly Ministry

**“God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels ... But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool”** (Hebrews 1:1-3; 10:12-13)

Following the death and resurrection of Christ from the dead with His work now accomplished on earth, a new day dawned in the dealings of God with mankind. His 2000 year association and interaction with the tribes of Israel through a system of Law and Sacrificial Ceremonies would be suspended; God has demonstrated that a system of ‘Law’ was incapable to deal adequately with man’s sin. However, the new work, the ‘building of the Church’ which is established by the principle of Grace on Christ’s sacrifice alone, could! This work, commenced through the humble followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, has brought blessing to multitudes across the globe from all nations. This work which continues unto this present day, has met fierce satanic opposition and been harassed by false doctrines and institutionalism introduced by men to impede the working of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord had instructed His close disciples on the eve of His death, that it was expedient for Him to **“go away”** that He might send **“Another Comforter”** of the same character as Himself, to be with them and to support them in this work. This ‘Comforter’, the **“Spirit of Truth”**, although not visible like Himself, would nevertheless empower them and bring to their memory the truths He had taught them. This ‘Comforter’, the Holy Spirit in Person, would **“reprove the world of Sin and of righteousness and of judgment”**.<sup>1</sup>

## His Ascent back to Heaven

**“And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into Heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy”** (Luke 24:49-52)

The Lord ascended to Heaven from the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, forty days after His resurrection. His close disciples who saw Him ascend and disappear, as they continued looking into the blank skies, were advised by Angelic beings who appeared to them, that He would so come again in similar manner. They subsequently returned to Jerusalem to wait for the sending of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup> His future visible return to the earth in great power and glory will likewise be to this same Mount, not to die but to rule, when He will subdue under His feet all those that still oppose the true and living God.<sup>3</sup>

We learn from the Bible that He returned in glory to sit on the right hand of the throne of God, from where He had originally descended, His work now completed. It was with delight and satisfaction that God the Father honoured His Son. That delight expressed vocally on the banks of the Jordan River has now been expressed in the exaltation of the Son Who

dealt prudently with the business entrusted to Him. Wicked man hanged Him a tree of shame; God has seated Him on a throne of authority. Men wreathed His brow with thorns; God has coronated Him with a crown of glory and honour. God has ***“set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come”***.<sup>4</sup> He is now set far above all ruling powers and forms of government, whether of spiritual rank or upon earth, during this current time period and in the future Eternal Age.

In the days of His flesh, He quoted from Psalms, ***“The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner”***.<sup>5</sup> The lowly, humble Man Who ignorant and proud men despised, God has promoted Him to be Chief. His Name which is blasphemed by both religious and irreligious men, Jew and Gentile, often in contempt, God will yet cause all to confess and to bow their knees to, for God, ***“hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name which is above every name: That at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”***.<sup>6</sup>

Could God have made more clear and emphatic the satisfaction and pleasure accrued to Him by His Son’s work on the cross than by both raising and exalting Him in glory? Let these truths lay hold of our hearts to compel us to repent and to confess and receive Him in love for His great sacrifice on the cross for us rather than be constrained in a future day to bow with those who refused Him during their temporary life on earth. Surely, He is worthy!

### ***His Current High Priestly Ministry***

***“Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted”*** (Hebrews 2:17-18)

***“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”*** (Hebrews 4:16)

**H**is throne of authority is also a ‘Throne of Grace’ for His people now to solicit His support and strength for each step of their journey home. The function of a priest in OT days was to act on behalf of the people before God, particularly in making restitution for sins committed. Being of the same nature, these sons of Aaron could appreciate the failure and weakness of the people, and could meaningfully sympathise, even empathise with them.

That ‘carnal’ OT ministration has finished; in the church age, the exercises are spiritual, by faith. There is no need or gain now for such a priesthood, mitres or vestments, incense or candles, elaborate structures or decor, institutions, choirs or suchlike which only infatuate men. Our Bibles, the Holy Spirit and the Great High Priestly ministry of Christ are sufficient. He now sits in heaven where His believing people can approach by prayer to obtain help without mediation of others. The omniscient Lord, Head of the Church, the Good Shepherd, from Pentecost until now, knows His sheep individually by name, their circumstances and their trials.<sup>7</sup> He has been here, has suffered and can empathise and guide as none other.

<sup>1</sup>John Ch’s 14-16; <sup>2</sup>Acts 1:10-12; <sup>3</sup>Zechariah 14:4; <sup>4</sup>Ephesians 1:20-21; <sup>5</sup>Psalms 118:22; Luke 20:17-18;

<sup>6</sup>Philippians 2:9-11; <sup>7</sup>Colossians 1:18; John 10:27

# His Church and His Eternal Kingdom

His disciples asked Him, saying, “Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8)

Following His resurrection, the Lord’s disciples had expected Him to overthrow the then ruling Roman Empire and to restore Israel as the ruling power on the earth. Their hopes were correctly based on many OT Scriptures promising a regathering of the scattered tribes of Israel under one King, the supreme Son of David, their Messiah Who had now established the basis for that kingdom through His death and resurrection.

But their timing was wrong! The Lord had another work to undertake, not revealed within the OT writings, that would precede the recovery of Israel as a nation, but to which He made reference during His short time with them, namely, the building of ‘His Church’.

## The Building of His Church

“I will build My Church; and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18)

“And when the Day of Pentecost was fully come ... they were all filled with the Holy Ghost ... And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:1,4,47)

The church was commenced on the Day of Pentecost following the promised Holy Spirit’s descent upon the waiting disciples in Jerusalem. Peter preached, whereupon 3000 more souls repented and believed on the Lord Jesus and joined the ranks of the disciples, many of whom were guilty of crying for the death of Christ. Such is God’s willingness to forgive! These first believers were characterised by their steadfast continuation **“in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”**,<sup>1</sup> as revealed to them by the Lord and detailed in the NT epistles, which remains the expected norm until this present day. The NT book of Acts details the progression of the Gospel message across Turkey and into Europe, albeit under much opposition, whereupon many representative companies (churches) of believers were founded in many cities through the working of the Holy Spirit. With little space, the following pertinent points should be considered:

- The Church is a distinct work comprised of both Jews and Gentiles from every kindred, tongue, people and nation and NOT an extension or replacement of the nation of Israel.
- It comprises all true believers (Christians) from Pentecost until the Rapture, when Christ will summon His Church’s members to Himself, including the deceased by resurrection.
- Being a member of ‘a church’ by baptism, confirmation etc. does NOT make us a member of Christ’s true Church. We need a spiritual rebirth.<sup>2</sup> Rites are not effectual for salvation.
- The word ‘church’ (ekklesia) refers to a ‘called out company’ of people, not to a physical building. It is a spiritual entity, each local company recognising Christ as its Head, having no earthly headquarters or hierarchy, nor driven by lust for carnal wealth and power.
- Much undertaken in the name of ‘the Church’ is not of Christ. Wars and crusades have been fought under Satan’s banner by men who have never worn Christ’s mantle of love.

## **The Dark Days of Retribution**

**“The Day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape”** (1Thessalonians 5:2-3)

**“... For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ... whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming”** (2Thessalonians 2:3,8)

Following the translation of all the genuine Christians from the earth and prior to the establishment of Christ’s glorious reign on earth, a period of intense trouble will occur. This is particularly referred to by the Lord in His **“Olivet Discourse”** just prior to His death,<sup>3</sup> especially in relation to the Jewish people, ‘the time of Jacob’s trouble’; more detail is given in the Bible’s book of ‘Revelation’, on the global effects. Foreshadowings are perhaps being felt of these terrible days on earth where the main features are summarised as below:

- A distinctly vile man will arise, ‘the man of sin, the antichrist’; he will oppose all that is of God, seeking to unite the world around himself. The world is crying out for such an individual.
- A unified Babylonish world religion will be introduced as an ‘apostate church’, to seduce many into false worship centred in Jerusalem; many who refuse to conform, will die.
- By God’s grace, the everlasting gospel will still be preached; many will believe but suffer martyrdom, including a Jewish remnant as they await for deliverance from Heaven.
- God pours out judgments of unprecedented magnitude on mankind as they continue to rebel against Him. The world’s armies gather around Jerusalem for a final confrontation.
- As Jerusalem and the Jewish remnant face eradication, Christ, the Lord, appears as their redeemer to destroy the antichrist and the armies. Christ then establishes His Kingdom.

## **His Glorious Millennial Reign and Eternal Kingdom**

**“For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea”** (Habakkuk 2:14)

**“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years ... And I saw a new heaven and a new earth”** (Rev. 20:6; 21:1)

Christ’s glorious Millennial reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, will be in stark contrast to that which He overthrows at His glorious reappearing, unlike His first lowly advent. Israel’s cleansed tribes will be restored to Him. Jerusalem will again vibrate with praise and worship to the true and living God; representatives of the nations will desirously ascend there. Satan will be bound, sin swiftly addressed and death delayed as the King of Peace rules; wild beasts will be tame, the ground will flourish as He reigns with fairness and equity. After Satan’s release and a final rebellion, he is cast alive into the Lake of Fire with all whose names are not found in the Book of Life. This is the second death. A new heaven and earth will be created where there is no death, sin, pain, sorrow or tears and the redeemed shall dwell eternally with God and Christ. The eternal purpose has finally been brought to fruition!

<sup>1</sup>Acts 2:42; <sup>2</sup>John 3:1-21; <sup>3</sup>Matthew Ch’s 24-25; Mark Ch. 13; Luke Ch. 21

# His Deity and Manhood

**“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (John 1:18)**

**“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name” (John 20:30-31)**

**“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! (Romans 11:33)**

The Bible presents matter that is beyond the computation of man’s finite mind; the infinitudes of the workings and character of God fall within this realm. Those who claim they can fathom God are usually those who resist the profound revelation of God to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If it is objected that ‘1+1+1=3’ proving that Christians uphold three God’s which amounts to polytheism, it is pointed out that in some branches of mathematics and electronics, ‘1+1+1=1’; this is the logic of the Bible! Remove One Person of the Godhead and you do not have God. While the word ‘Trinity’ or ‘Tri-unity’ is not found within its pages, the expressed truth certainly is, albeit somewhat veiled as a bud in the OT, yet unfolded to full majestic bloom in the NT. Hence, the Jesus of the NT is the LORD, the covenant keeping God (Jehovah) of the OT. This is the truth at which the Jews stumbled. In the Bible we find many direct statements which unanimously declare that Jesus is God, possessing all the essential characteristics of One Who is eternal, immutable, omniscient, omnipotent and omnipresent as manifest in His Person during His days on earth.<sup>1</sup> His many titles such as, **“I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last”**,<sup>2</sup> further declare that, (i) He was the One Who came to reveal God; it takes deity to fully reveal deity, (ii) everything has its origin and destiny in Him and, (iii) that no ‘other god’ existed before or will after Him. These with many other titles describe something of His majestic Person, work and offices which could not be ascribed to mere angelic beings no matter how mighty they are. Lucifer may be the greatest of them and in his desire to be like God, he fell.<sup>3</sup> Some further objections are addressed below to the which if we are willing to submit, should create in us a spirit of worship and adoration of the great things God has done.

## How could God have a Son?

**“Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten thee” (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5)**

**“In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him” (1John 4:9)**

The concept of ‘sonship’ within the Bible does not always refer to the son of a father, conceived and born through a woman such as God purposed from the marriage union. This usual meaning is contrary to the concept of Christ’s Sonship as taught in the Bible. The Holy Ghost quietly and mysteriously brought about the conception within Mary as the Son entered her womb. The Sonship of Christ portrays some important truths to us:

- Christ was God’s only begotten Son before He entered into our world. It was an eternal relationship. He was sent into the world already being a Son. Sonship speaks of character.

- It emphasises that the eternal Son is of the same eternal ‘substance’ as God the Father.
- It emphasises the bond and love of a ‘Father-Son’ relationship which we can relate to.
- It emphasises the Son’s obedience as sent by the Father to accomplish salvation’s work.
- It emphasises the greatness of God’s love for sinful man; No ‘higher order creature’ could save man by dying for him. Angels certainly marvel at God’s grace towards man.<sup>4</sup> It required an infinite Sacrifice. God could give no greater; He **“spared not His Own Son”**.<sup>5</sup>
- It enables God’s public identification with Him; an association never ascribed to angels.

### **How could God be Reduced into a Man?**

**“But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?”** (1Kings 8:27)

**“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh ... believed on in the world, received up into glory”** (1Timothy 3:16)

The unsurpassing glory and omnipresence of God was confessed by Solomon, at the dedication of the first temple in Jerusalem (960 BC). God had previously resided in a tent as Israel moved from Egypt to Canaan and had earlier appeared to Abraham and others later as an Angel of the LORD.<sup>6</sup> From OT examples therefore, while incomprehensible to our minds, should it surprise us that the One called Jesus, Who dwelt with man for 33 years and expressed godliness of life in its fullness, was none less than **“God manifest in the flesh”**? Elsewhere it is written of Him, Who **“being in the form of God ... made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant”**.<sup>7</sup> The Son Who possessed all the essential qualities of God took upon Himself all the essential qualities of a bondservant as a sinless Man on earth. While as a Man, His physical location at a given time was restrained, His true powers and glories as God the Son could not be, as the Gospels reveal.

### **How could God have Died?**

**“Abraham said, My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering”** (Gen. 22:8)

**“... God was in (within) Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself”** (2Corinthians 5:19)

It is unthinkable to consider that the eternal God, the giver and sustainer of life, a self-existent Spirit Being Who depends on no other for His subsistence, could die! To those who query the scope of God’s ability, we can be absolutely certain that God cannot *lie* and God cannot *die*.<sup>8</sup> Yet we have sought to show that He Who died on the cross was God!

When Abraham’s devotion to God was tested in the offering up of Isaac his son, in response to a question Isaac asked concerning the lack of a lamb for sacrifice, his father had replied, **“God will provide Himself a lamb”**. God has clearly shown in the Bible that sin cannot be forgiven without death, a sacrifice. His anger against sin cannot be pacified without the shedding of blood. Innocent animals, although being far inferior to mankind, were offered for this requirement before Christ was born. Yet a superior sacrifice of infinite value was sought to deal the final blow to sin and for that purpose God Himself as the Son was born a Man in order to die as a man upon the cross, although still eternally existing as God!

<sup>1</sup>Psalm 45:6-7; <sup>2</sup>Isaiah 9:6; <sup>3</sup>Matthew 1:23; <sup>4</sup>John 1:1; <sup>5</sup>Romans 9:5; <sup>6</sup>Titus 2:13; <sup>7</sup>1John 5:20; <sup>8</sup>Revelation 22:13;

<sup>9</sup>Isaiah 14:12-15; <sup>10</sup>1Peter 1:12-13; <sup>11</sup>Romans 8:32; <sup>12</sup>Genesis Ch. 18; <sup>13</sup>Philippians 2:6-8; <sup>14</sup>Numbers 23:19; <sup>15</sup>Titus 1:2

# His “I Am” Statements

John’s Gospel account takes on a different tone to the other inspired three as, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he puts much emphasis on the Sonship of Christ supported by specific miracles (signs) and discourses with the Jews not recorded elsewhere. He also records specific “**I Am**” statements that Jesus spoke, each of which contain a wealth of depth and truth, clearly distinguishing Him from all other individuals who have made great claims about themselves, and the supposed divine revelations they have received, drawing significant followings over the centuries after themselves and their unbiblical teachings.

These and similar statements He made are profound and can only be upheld and realised if, (i) He is the eternal Son of God and, (ii) His sufferings on the cross were effectual in satisfying God’s demands against sin, which lays the basis for their utterance. They were spoken at opportune moments in calmness and dignity, not in conceit or delusion, some to the masses in public or to individuals in private, to exhort or challenge the hearers and ourselves. They declare Him as the sole giver of eternal life and the provider of spiritual satisfaction for mankind, necessitating that the teachings of others before or after Him who make such claims, must be false because ‘His’ and ‘their’ statements cannot stand together.

A summary of these statements follows with a brief overview of their content. Those who take Him at His word will not be disappointed. Read the full accounts for richer blessing.

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“And Jesus said unto them, **I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst**” (John 6:35)

He had fed 5000+ people the previous day. Some had come seeking another free meal. God had miraculously provided water and manna for the Jews as they left Egypt (1450 BC) which they mention.<sup>1</sup> The people who ate that manna died. He presents Himself as the True Manna that came down from Heaven to give us eternal life and therefore we need not perish eternally for lack of life. For physical life we need bread and water; for living the spiritual life we need Christ Who can supply and satisfy every spiritual need and desire.

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the Light of the World: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life**” (John 8:12)

God also provided Divine light to guide the Israelites in the wilderness darkness.<sup>2</sup> A woman had been brought to Christ, caught committing adultery. She had been walking in darkness as mankind generally, and sinned. Men love darkness because their deeds are evil and will not come to the light. Those who embrace Christ and His teaching will discover Him to be a Light to guide in this wilderness world, around the pitfalls and dangers, making their life profitable and for God’s pleasure, unlike the masses of the world who refuse Him.

“Verily, Verily, I say unto you, **I am the Door of the sheep ... By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture ... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly**” (John 10:7-9)

Christ is the door into the sheepfold for His true sheep. They have complete repose in Him which false shepherds, prophets and teachers cannot provide. He alone can save and provide verdant pastureland for the spiritual growth and sustenance of His sheep, not

through feeding on the thistles of this world. Unlike thieves, He came compassionately and in grace that His sheep might enter into the fullness of spiritual life, under His care.

**“I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep ... My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish”** (John 10:11,27-28)

Likewise, as the essentially Good Shepherd, He shows the extent He would go to ensure the eternal welfare of His sheep in His sufferings by dying for them. In the OT, David risked his life on two occasions to deliver lambs from the mouth of a lion and a bear.<sup>3</sup> Christ went much further to save His sheep from the jaws of death and the devil. His sheep trust explicitly in Him for their eternal welfare and security; none of them will perish in Hell.

**“Jesus saith unto her, I am the Resurrection, and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou this? ... I believe that Thou art ... the Son of God”** (John 11:25-27)

In a scene of death, He unfolds this glorious truth to a distraught and grieving sister, that He has power over death to raise and to restore life. It is a tender scene wherein Jesus grieved and wept over the effects of sin. He proved His authority over death by raising the deceased man to life. One day He will raise all the deceased in resurrection power either for blessing if we are His or for judgment otherwise.<sup>4</sup> It is vital that we also believe on Him.

**“Thomas saith unto Him, Lord ... how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto Him, I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me”** (John 14:5-6)

On the eve of His death, He had informed His disciples that He was going to leave them. In answering Thomas' query, He assuredly affirms that, (i) He is the only Way to the Father, through Himself alone, (ii) that spiritual Truth is personified in Himself, He could not speak or live otherwise, and (iii) that He is the Source of eternal Life. He is the means of Going, Knowing and Living in eternal realities. Such affirmation was given on the grounds of His death and resurrection, which have truly vindicated His statements made here.

**“I am the True Vine, and My Father is the husbandman ... He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing”** (John 15:1,5)

Subsequently, He spoke of Himself as the True Vine, the Source of all true spiritual life, joy and fruitfulness. Nothing can be achieved for God unless vitality is drawn from this Vine, showing the necessity of abiding in Christ, of being linked with Him firstly through the New Birth, and then drawing our daily sustenance from Him, by our submission to Him. Good works cannot save us, but they should characterise those who are His. He was the perfect example, as an abundantly fruitful Man as He kept His Fathers commandments.

**“Jesus saith unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I Am”** (John 8:58)

Closing a long discourse with the Jews during which He had exposed their true condition as being of **“your father the devil”**, He proclaimed the above as a final word to them. **‘I AM’** is a title used by God in His appearance to Moses at the ‘burning bush’,<sup>5</sup> it refers to His self-existence and self-sustenance. The Jews, recognising Jesus' claim to deity, in unbelief sought to stone Him. Many today, blinded by similar unbelief, insist they acted appropriately.

<sup>1</sup>Exodus 16:11-36; <sup>2</sup>Exodus 13:21-22; <sup>3</sup>1Samuel 17:32-37; <sup>4</sup>John 5:25-29; <sup>5</sup>Exodus 3:13-14

# His Family Relationships

**“There came then His brethren and His mother, and, standing without, sent unto Him, calling Him. ... And He answered them (the multitude), saying, Who is My mother, or My brethren? And He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother” (Mark 3:31-35)**

**G**od is the God of families. He so arranged this at the dawn of time when He gave Adam, the first man a wife, as a companion and helper, formed from flesh and bone taken from Adam’s breast. In a powerful way, God demonstrated His intent for the indissolubility, oneness and affection of the marriage bond wherein children would be born and raised.

God’s Son came into the world through the experience of family life, and a poor family at that, living in despised Nazareth, hence ‘Jesus of Nazareth’. Joseph and Mary had children of their own, four sons and at least two daughters, whom He grew up with.<sup>1</sup> He worked as a carpenter earning a living to seemingly support the family after the early death of Joseph. He would guide them in the affairs of life being the firstborn and responsible Son, with a spirit of wisdom and spirituality unknown by others.<sup>2</sup> It is evident that He had His mother’s full trust as she observed and learned of Him, borne out as His public ministry commenced. There was no miraculous supply of need during these first thirty years of His life.

Yet, it becomes obvious as we consider the life and teaching of the Lord, that He had another family of much closer ties that weighed more heavily on His heart than the earthly family He grew up with. This is a spiritual family for whom He would suffer and die for such that each member might become children, even sons and daughters of the living God. Once we account for this, then the criticisms and accusations aimed at the Lord respective of His attitude toward His earthly family members and family life in general, some of which are considered hereafter, can be shown to have no foundation and readily dismissed.

## **Interactions with His Mother**

**“And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto Him, they have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever He saith unto you, do it” (John 2:3-5)**

**“When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple standing by, whom He loved, He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! ... Behold thy mother!” (John 19:26-27)**

**T**he address to His mother as ‘Woman’ when she approached Him to relieve a crisis at a marriage should not be taken as being harsh. It is used elsewhere in the Gospels.<sup>3</sup> His mother was obviously not offended and her confidence remained firm that He would do something; such was her insight and faith in Him. He was commencing a new phase in His ministry, deeper than the physical she knew, to bring herself, her nation and the world into a right spiritual relationship with God; this would be accomplished per God’s timing.

Further, during His last moments prior to His death on the cross, He had taken care of His mother’s future physical welfare using the same form of address. This shows His tenderness of concern for her and yet also an indication of another step of change in their relationship following His resurrection, as further indicated to Mary Magdalene after this event.<sup>4</sup>

## Interactions with His Brethren

**“His brethren therefore said unto Him ... If Thou do these things, shew Thyself to the world. For neither did His brethren believe in Him” (John 7:3-5)**

During His earthly life until His death His Own half-brothers, privileged to have observed Him during their upbringing, exhibited an attitude of unbelief towards Him, remaining in ignorance as to the true nature and source of His ministry. On one occasion they goaded Him to attend a feast at Jerusalem where they thought He should be exalted, to get a ‘name’ as others. But this was not the Father’s time or way for Him to set up His future Kingdom. He would not be moved by fleshly wisdom or by exhortations from His half-brothers; even they were of a different stock than Himself. How forbearing He must have been in the family home. Following His resurrection and a Divine awakening, they did come to believe.<sup>5</sup> Nobody is born into the family of God from their mothers womb. We all need a New Birth!

## Earthly versus Heavenly Priorities

**“If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:26-27)**

**“We love Him, because He first loved us” (1John 4:19)**

The Lord had taught in ‘His Sermon on the Mount’ to **“Love your enemies...”**.<sup>6</sup> In the later NT epistles inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, husbands are exhorted to **“love their wives”**,<sup>7</sup> to fulfil that responsibility of mutual care for the well-being and protection of their wives through denial of themselves, even as Christ had so loved and died for His Church. Likewise wives are also exhorted to **“love their husbands”**,<sup>8</sup> to show that affection and submissive support as their helpers. Many other NT passages could be referred to which express the quality of love that followers of Christ should exhibit towards others.

Are we then to suppose that Christ’s demands upon His followers who would be attentive to His service, is that they **“hate”**, show animosity and even hurt those closest to them? These are the demands that some insists He imposes, causing such critics to vehemently denounce Him for such teaching! But surely to the reasonably minded and in light of other teaching, it can be judged that this must be a *relative* rather than an *absolute* ‘hatred’, a prioritisation of ‘one’ towards ‘another’ that at times make such demands that it appears as if all earthy ties have been severed in order to fulfil the service of Christ. Many have willingly followed this path of self-denial across the centuries in full support of their loved ones in pursuit of Christ’s interests. Many others however have counted the cost too dear!<sup>9</sup> If some find this strange, consider another constraining impulse that motivates His believing followers: the fact that He died for them on the cross to save them from eternal torments in Hell. Such an act of love ignites a reciprocating love within the hearts of His redeemed which only they can know, as written, **“The love of Christ constrains us”**.<sup>10</sup> Families on earth are important and in accordance with God’s order but there is another family of heavenly origin and birth that Christ delights in whose members are devoted to doing the will of God.

<sup>1</sup>Mark 6:3; <sup>2</sup>Luke 2:40,52; <sup>3</sup>Luke 7:36-50; John 4:21; 8:10; <sup>4</sup>John 20:17; <sup>5</sup>Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:19;

<sup>6</sup>Matthew 5:44; <sup>7</sup>Ephesians 5:25-33; Colossians 3:19; <sup>8</sup>Titus 2:4; <sup>9</sup>2Timothy 4:10; <sup>10</sup>2Corinthians 5:14

# Will YOU Believe?

**“These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His Name” (John 20:31)**

**“If any man (person) be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Corinthians 5:17)**

**Christ could exhort His disciples: “In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33)**

The preceding Sections of this booklet have sought to impress upon the reader some of those essential truths concerning the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Eternal Son of God as presented to us in a progressive manner throughout the Bible. This has been achieved by references to the OT writings which foretold of the means of His birth, the manner of His life and death, resurrection and exaltation followed by the record in which these prophecies were remarkably fulfilled in the NT writings. This in itself gives the confirmation that prophecies yet to be fulfilled either from the OT or the NT writers, some foretold by Christ Himself, will most assuredly come to pass and that this present period between His two main advents does have serious implications for each one of us.

It is hoped that you do recognise and accept that the detail presented in the Bible concerning ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ is factually accurate and does indeed mark Him out as the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God as foretold in the OT. Also, that you have been persuaded of the truth of these facts and that as a consequence, it remains impossible for you to continue in life with a passive and impartial frame of mind concerning Him.

One day we will all have a personal audience with the Lord Jesus Christ, as He Himself declared, **“The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the SON”**.<sup>1</sup> Purgatory, reincarnation and annihilation are not teachings of the Bible. While we cannot avoid a meeting with the SON to answer for our life lived on earth, the circumstances of that occasion will depend on our response to Him **NOW**. For those who accept and believe in Him and His offering for sin on the cross for themselves, it will be a review for reward on how they have served Him consequential to their conversion experience. For those who refuse Him it will be to hear of their fate in the Lake of Fire as a fit judgment for their sin and rebellion, a dreadful place of darkness and isolation and torment, severe but righteous.

**B**ut be assured that this is not God’s desire for anyone;<sup>2</sup> Christ commissioned His early disciples to take His great message of salvation into all the world so that peoples of all nations and tongues could hear, repent, believe on Him and be saved.<sup>3</sup> This is the **ONE** life giving message that alone can change an individual’s standing before God and make them a new creature in Christ; Satan the enemy, knows it and will use all means to deter you from repenting: fear of rejection by family or friends, fear of persecution, loss of work and standing in society, or sinful practices to forsake etc. Do not let him prevail; this world is passing away, its glories which Christ Himself refused are vain. It may mean loss down here but will mean everything in that future glorious eternal day to be with Christ in a sphere without sin or death or separation. Accept Him as your Lord and Saviour and become a Child of God,<sup>4</sup> and pass from spiritual darkness into a realm of light and life and love.

## ***Baptism of Confession***

**“Then they that gladly received His word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41)**

Following conversion, baptism is the first step in the pathway of obedience to Christ for a child of God. The following should be noted respecting this ordinance:

- Baptism is NOT a necessity for salvation as some teach. It is concerned with making a public confession of one’s faith in Christ and can lead to rejection by family.<sup>5</sup>
- It is an identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection and involves total immersion in water signifying the death and burial of the previous life of sin, and being raised to live a new life of righteousness through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.
- It is practiced in the Name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit,<sup>3</sup> in recognition of the equality and unity of the ‘Persons’ of the Godhead involved in the great work of salvation.
- Infant sprinkling or ‘confirmation’ is anti-scriptural and used by the devil to delude many.

## ***Breaking of Bread and Fellowship***

**“And they (those who believed) continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42)**

Following baptism is the need to be associated with a local company of Christians who faithfully seek to practice the teachings of the NT doctrines. It is through such companies that God is pleased to be associated and the Name of the Lord Jesus is glorified. To note:

- Such association is no trivial social intercourse, being an integral part of life and requires commitment and sacrifice to continue steadfastly. A reverential fear of God will prevail.
- All doctrine given for life and church order in the NT will be fully embraced requiring Bible study and full adherence without partiality to those things taught and believed. This is true fellowship with God and fellow believers which accepts responsibility for the support and wellbeing of the company both in spirit and in body. Such adherence is rare today.
- ‘Breaking of Bread’ is the weekly practice of breaking bread and drinking from the cup, representing the Lord’s body and blood, in remembrance of Him which He commanded as a testimony to His vicarious death and glorious resurrection, ‘until He come’.<sup>6</sup>
- Prayer is the Christians ‘vital breath’ and while we can pray to God individually and secretly, combined times of prayer are important for soliciting God’s help and power for witness.

## ***Boldness in Testimony***

**“And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word...” (Acts 4:29)**

Bearing testimony for the Lord Who saved us should be our desire towards family, work colleagues and those around us and abroad perishing in their sins. The early apostles, in the face of provocation, sought God’s help to proclaim this message with courage and clearness, with confidence and authority as heralds of the truth. Likewise with God’s help, you too can be His witness and support and pray for those who do likewise across the globe.

<sup>1</sup>John 5:22; <sup>2</sup>2Peter 3:9; <sup>3</sup>Matthew 28:19-20; <sup>4</sup>Romans 8:14-16; <sup>5</sup>Luke 12:49-53; <sup>6</sup>1Corinthians 11:23-32

**T**his publication has been written with the express purpose of setting out in a concise format some of the essential truths that are presented within the Bible concerning the Person and Work of Jesus, the Christ, the Sovereign Lord, the Son of God.

It is vital that we have right thoughts of Christ as our eternal welfare and destiny rests upon our association with Him, a reality that the adversary of our souls, the devil, is well acquainted with. Having not succeeded in preventing Christ's birth over 2000 years ago, or deviating Him in His purpose and having been defeated at the cross and by His resurrection, this spiritual enemy has for centuries sought to discredit the glorious Person of Christ and the great Work that He accomplished by His entry into our world as a Perfect Man. The devil remains relentlessly in his attempts to deceive mankind of those truths that the Bible singularly gives us in its unique presentation of Christ.

God in His wisdom, foreseeing such attacks would be forthcoming, has ensured that the New Testament writings in particular present a solid defence and supply ample evidences to substantiate the claims of Christ's deity, His omnipotence, His infallibility and the sufficiency of His sufferings, death and bodily resurrection as being the basis for our acceptance with God if we by repentance and personal faith, confide in Him for our eternal salvation. And yet, in presenting such evidences, significant extracts are taken from the Old Testament to prove that, not only are both sections of the Bible complimentary to each other, but that the essential doctrines and truths about the Person and Work of Christ of the "true" Christian faith of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, remain no different to that upheld and preached by first century Christians, having their foundations laid within the Holy Spirit inspired writings of the Old Testament.

While 'the Church' that Christ is currently building is unique to this present period, the basis of eternal blessings which God desires for mankind remain the same for those who lived before Christ's birth or live after the Church is complete and raptured. All such blessings rest foursquare upon Christ's perfect life, His substitutionary sacrifice and resurrection from the dead and an individual's acceptance of Him and His work for themselves, and is not just a particular interpretative stance upheld by Christians.

The hope is that this booklet will enlighten you to essential truths about Christ and **YOUR** own personal need of Him: ***"O taste and see that the LORD is Good"*** (Psalm 34:8).

Contact details for further enquiries: