

**DISCOVER THE
REAL JESUS**

OUR

LORD and SAVIOUR

By John Hutchinson

Discover The Real Jesus

Our Lord and Saviour

Who is Jesus Christ? Why is he misunderstood and misrepresented?

Of himself, Jesus said, *'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'* John 8:32.

Why are there misunderstandings? The answer is simply that many try to fit Jesus into a logical formula. If we hear what Jesus says and believe the Bible, we will recognise the truth.

Jesus is no ordinary person. To know him is to know the reason why we exist. The truth of Jesus is living truth — liberating truth. He said, **'I am the Truth.'** John 14:6.

To help you appreciate the real Jesus we will look at some misrepresentations and show their obvious flaws so that you can read the Bible unencumbered by preconceptions of men, and discover for yourself, **Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.**

Wrong Views of Jesus

Docetism

Early in the Christian story ideas circulated that Jesus wasn't real — although seen and heard he was intangible — ghost like. Jesus had to fit other conclusions about God and nature in which God was believed to be perfectly good, but the material universe inherently evil. How could a good God make things evil and how could Jesus be part of it?

To answer questions like this Gnostic sects borrowed ideas from the Greek philosopher Plato, who wrote of demi-gods (demiurge) or sub-creators who made material things — hence God didn't make things evil — others did!

They detached Jesus from matter by referring to him in immaterial terms . . . as apparition. He wasn't human. He simply *appeared* to be. The teaching was labeled 'Docetism' which means 'to seem'. 1 John 1:1 and John 1:14 are among the many texts that teach that Jesus was as human as we are.

Note: Teaching persists that attributes creation to *'a god' or 'gods,'* and that post resurrection appearances of Jesus were docetic. (See comments on the resurrection).

An Angel?

Some align Jesus with angels. The Bible however, contrasts Jesus ‘the Son’ to every angelic order. See Hebrews 1:5-8:

‘For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?’

And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.’ Heb 1:8. (See also Hebrews 1:9-10).

Michael the Archangel

John Thomas (and others since), have taught that Jesus was Michael, the chief of angels . . . sometimes called ‘The Angel of the Lord.’ (*Jude 9, Zechariah 3:1-3*).

In Revelation chapter 12, Michael and Christ are clearly distinguished. See verses 7 and 10. Also Hebrews 2:5-8 disassociates Jesus from every angelic order.

It is ‘The Lord Himself’ who will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. *1 Thes. 4:16*.

‘When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.’ Matt 25:31.

Created

About 318 AD, Arius of Alexandria, taught that Christ was a being created by the will and power of God. He had a beginning and was a creature in that the Father created him. The Arians said that God created him first because the created order could not bear the immediate hand of God. Christ became God’s workman in the work of creation.

**The Bible teaches
that God created
alone**

The Bible teaches that God created unassisted: *‘The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork’ psalm 19:1. (See also Rev. 4:11). To ascribe the magnificence of creation to another, or others, is to take from God’s glory. Those who deny God’s power and deity in the things that are made, are without excuse (Romans 1:18-24).*

‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.’

Gen. 1:1. *‘Hath not one God created us?’ Malachi 2:10. ‘I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.’ Isaiah 44:24.*

An Empowered man

During the latter part of the second century, Theodotus of Byzantium spoke of Christ as a man empowered by God, one in whom God was manifest by his power-force. Jesus did not derive any personality from this spirit force. Some taught that the dynamic power descended on Christ at his baptism. One wonders, according to this view, how Jesus differed from men like John the Baptist who was filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb!

The Bible shows Jesus in power and weakness:—

- ◆ As an infant, dependent on human parents,
- ◆ In adulthood, one who hungered, grew tired and needed assistance to carry his cross upon which he was nailed as a helpless victim. Yet he stopped a raging storm, turned water into wine and raised the dead.

Jesus renounced power and glory — *‘Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.’ Phil 2:6-8.*

Fragmented

Some ideas of Jesus resemble a child’s mobile . . . detached phases of being. One view is that Jesus was non-existent until God created him as Michael the archangel. Michael ceased being for 30 years while Christ was human. At death Jesus was annihilated and then re-created as the archangel.

Others disconnect the earthly life from his pre-human existence and annihilate him at death.

‘Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. ‘Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.’ (Hebrews 13:7,8).

‘a’ god

Advocates of this view mistranslate John 1:1. Instead of reading, *‘In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God,’* they translate, *‘The Word was ‘a god.’* If Jesus was ‘a god’, that makes two gods — a great God and a lesser one. The Bible says that **there is but one God**. *‘Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.’* Isaiah 44:6.

If Jesus was ‘a god’, that makes two gods!

‘Is there a God beside me? yea, there is no God; I know not any.’ Isaiah 44:8. *‘For I am the LORD thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour . . . before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.’* Isaiah 43:3,10. Those who translate John 1:1 as ‘a god’ are inconsistent. John 1:6 has the same Greek construction and it is translated ‘God.’

‘God-manifestation?’ This is a mysterious concept. **What is a ‘God-manifestation?’**

J Ullman writes: ‘The term ‘God-manifestation’, defines the fact that God has manifested Himself in various ways throughout history.’ Speaking of God he says: ‘HE HAS BEEN (and is) manifest in his angels and in His Son . . . He WILL BE manifested in a glorified multitude of the redeemed in the future.’ (‘The first Principles’ page 9).

Ullman however, conceals most of the picture and the artist who was John Thomas. Thomas postulated permanent ‘God manifestations.’ He says, ‘And He is the springhead of many streams or rivers of spirit, which assume “organic forms,” according to the will of the Yahweh-Spirit Power . . . while the forms are from a beginning, each one is a God.’ *Phanerosis p.62* Speculations like this resemble Hinduism and its ‘God Pantheon.’

They (the scriptures) teach . . . that these created deities have all been originally subject to evil even as we; and that they have become Immortal Gods after the moral and physical type exhibited in the biography of Jesus of Nazareth’ (*Phanerosis p. 84*).

‘All those Mighty Ones of whom you have heard, who were engaged in forming the heavens and the earth’ (*Phanerosis p. 66*).

Thomas saw this as universal phenomena. He writes, ‘Our mundane system is but the pattern of things in other worlds, which may ere this have attained to that perfection which awaits the earth; and probably an illustration of what may even now obtain in other planets where the inhabitants have not yet progressed beyond the animal and probationary era of their history . . . BEHOLD THEN THE CONSUMMATION! Mortal and corruptible beings like ourselves become Elohim, (gods) mighty in strength, and framers of new worlds, of which the planet we inhabit, even in its present state, is a grand and glorious specimen’ (*Elpis Israel page 187*). Note the distinct similarity with Mormonism.

In the speculation of Thomas’ men become gods and God becomes gods in them. **Jesus became one of the god myriad.**

The term, ‘God-manifestation,’ is nowhere found in the Bible. The Bible teaches that Jesus was God and he was manifest in a human body — he was not a ‘God manifestation’. (See 1 Timothy 3:16, 1 John 1:2)

Jesus is not one of myriads of ‘gods’. Writing of Jesus, Thomas says: ‘But the Eternal Power . . . turned the body into Spirit, and made it “one in nature” with Himself — the Spirit-Son of the Eternal Spirit, equal in power and glory — GOD.’ (*Phanerosis 93*). Of his followers he writes, ‘. . . who all become “like him” in body, as they have been in faith and practice — Spirit, because born of the Spirit, and therefore God, because “Spirit is God”. Hence he refers to ‘**a world of gods**’. (Mormonism!) (*Phanerosis 94*)

Multitudinous

An extravagant claim about Jesus is that he was an accumulative. I once read a book called the ‘*Apocalypse Epitomised*’, by H.P. Mansfield. In it an expression recurred that was new to me — ‘The Multitudinous Christ.’ Later, I read ‘*Phanerosis*’, by John Thomas, and was astonished to find Jesus represented as an aggregate. It said: ‘Jesus is the type or pattern in whom is illustrated the plural manifestation of divine multitudinous unity . . . one in many and many in ONE’. (page 85) ‘But as he is not only a single individual, but also one containing many — a manifold man’. (page 131)

The Bible infers no such thing. Jesus is ‘**the only Son of God.**’ John 3:16, 18, also 1:18. ‘*There is but one Lord Jesus Christ*’ 1 Cor. 8:6; Ephesians 4:5 ‘*One Shepherd*’ John 10:16 ‘*The Holy One*’ Psalm 16:10.

Discovering Jesus

He connects eternity to time

The story of time features Jesus as the pivotal person. He connects eternity to time and time to eternity. He said, *I am --- the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*’ Rev. 22:13. **We know**

him as he is made known. He said, ‘*No man knoweth the Son, but the Father.*’ Matthew 11:27, cf. 16:16-17.

In humble awe then, we approach ‘*the mystery of God, and of the father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*’ Colossians 2:2-3, cf. 4:3.

The purpose of Jesus

To understand Jesus we must understand his mission. Why was he born in a stable, employed as a carpenter, crucified on a cross and raised from the dead? The mission of Jesus is stated in

1 Timothy 1:15: *'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'* The statement reflects Jesus' own words: ***'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.'*** John 3:17. See also Mark 10:45, 2:17, John 10:10.

Jesus came to save us and, through that, showed us the loving nature of God. To know Jesus is to know God . . . and salvation from sin. The reason why you're alive is to know your Creator — your God. How vital then, for you to know the real Jesus.

His conception

A young virgin was made aware of the unique role that she would play in the life of Jesus. The angelic informant said: *'The Holy Spirit 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 1:35.

Interestingly and significantly, Jesus was never called the son of Mary. He never called Mary 'Mother' — rather, 'Woman.' (John 2:4, 19:26). He was aware of divine paternity and purpose. (Luke 2:49-51). He would be called **'the Son of God.'**

Thoughtful people ask, 'Why was Jesus conceived in the womb of a virgin?' He was conceived in this way to re-establish pure human nature. The first man, Adam, who was created directly by God, was a perfect man and became imperfect. Jesus was conceived in holy perfection and maintained it.

**Thieves
cannot
condemn
stealing**

Why should the nature of Jesus be perfect? . . . it was essential to his work of salvation.

We consider an important statement: *'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.'* Romans 8:3. God didn't send His own Son 'in sinful human flesh' — but in its 'likeness'.

How is sin condemned? Thieves cannot condemn stealing. An adulterer cannot condemn adultery. Just one sinful thought will condemn us (Matthew 5:27-8). If sin was in the mind of Jesus he would have been condemned by it. Jesus, pure in nature and character, condemned sin by his sin-free life in which he suffered and died for our sins. (1 Corinthians 15:3).

A wonderful title ascribed to Jesus was *'The Lamb of God.'* John 1:29. It reminds us of the Passover lamb which had to be without defect (Exodus 12:5). Peter wrote: *'Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.'* 1 Peter 1:18-19. When Pilate said of him, 'Behold the man', he identified the truest man — a perfect man.

The Birth

A census brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem where the only vacant room was a cattle shed. In it Mary gave birth and placed her infant in the straw of a manger.

We marvel at God's timing. How significant are the words: *'And so it was, that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.'* Luke 2:6-7. But we see more than a babe in makeshift conditions. The humble scene reveals the awesome condescension of God.

Angels and Shepherds

Who would have known about the birth if it were not for the visit of angels? *'Fear not',* said the angel to startled shepherds, *'For I bring good tidings of great joy which shall be for you and all mankind; for unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.'*

- *'For unto you.'* The birth of Jesus is very personal. He's God's gift to 'you' and 'all mankind.'
- *'A Saviour.'* He came to save his people from their sins. 1 Tim. 1:15, He came to save you and me.
- *'Messiah.'* The babe in the hay would fulfil all anticipation and promise. The Messiah had come, cf. John 1:41, 4:25-26.
- *'The Lord.'* At his birth the heavenly visitor declared him to be *'Lord.'* 'Lord' is the highest title of Deity.

A grand choir appeared . . . *'a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace goodwill toward men.'*

'And let all the angels of God worship him.' Heb 1:6.

The Word

The birth of Jesus was very significant. In it *'The Word was made flesh.'* John 1:14 — God manifest in human life. **Jesus was 'The Word.'**

John's gospel opens with awesome concepts: *'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.'* Read carefully John 1:1-18. Words express thoughts. Words communicate. God communicates. *'God who at sundry times spoke through the prophets has in these last days spoken to us in a son.'* Heb 1:1. In Genesis 1, we meet the "word", *'And God said.'* When God said, *'Let there be light,'* — *'there was light!'*

Omnipotent

'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.' Heb 11:3.

The Word defined and explained

'And the Word was God.' John 1:1 The Word who was 'with God' . . . 'was God.' **That is definition** — the Bible's definition. What God was, the Word was.

'In the beginning.' The gospel opens in the words of Gen 1:1. The **Word** was prior to the beginning. It 'was'. He had no beginning which is reinforced in verse 2: *'The same was in the beginning with God.'* The **Word** is eternal! *'With God,'* —in closest relationship — perfect unity of nature and purpose.

The Word — the Creator

'All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.' John 1:3. The statement is inclusive and exclusive. It includes all that was made and excludes all that isn't, even the Word himself who is increate (not made) for God is eternal.

Christ is the Creator:

'For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.' Col 1:16,17.

'Through whom he made the worlds.' (aeons) *'And Thou Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth.'* Hebrews 1:3, 10. (Greek = Ghay – solid earth).

'He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.' John 1:10.

These texts reinforce the statement: *'The Word was God.'* Creating from nothing is exclusive to God. *'For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.'* Heb. 3:4. (See also Rev. 4:11 and Gen. 1:1).

Acknowledge Jesus as Creator and you're on a sure foundation.

Pre-existence

If Jesus, the Word, created all things, then he existed before all things. He referred to existence *'before the world was,'* (John 17:5), and said in words unmistakable: *'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. (Figure of speech). Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needeth not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.'* John 16: 28-9.

' . . . out of thee shall he come . . . whose goings forth hath been from of old, from everlasting.' Micah 5:2.

'Into the World'

Christ Jesus came *'into the world'* to save sinners. *'For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.'*

Of John the Baptist we read, *'There was a man sent from God whose name was John,'* (John 1:4) Jesus was not merely 'sent' but sent *'into the world.'* (John 10:36) implying from a realm beyond. Belief in the eternal pre-human existence of Jesus is essential to your salvation. See John 8:23-24.

**not a man who
'became' God**

God becomes Man

Jesus was not a man who 'became' God. He was God become man. *'The Word was made flesh.'* John 1:14. *'But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.'* Heb 2:9.

Authentic Christianity features God becoming man in the person of Jesus Christ. *'The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.'* 1 Cor. 15:47.

Unlike Adam who wanted to be God, Christ who was God and claimed equality with God, entered our scene as man. *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. Heb 10:5.* (See also John 1:14 and 1 John 1:1-2).

Tempted

The one conceived in pure human nature was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he spent forty lonely days to be tempted by the devil. Weakened by hunger he underwent a triple enticement. The thrust being, *'If thou art the Son of God . . .'* (Luke 4:1-14). Jesus resisted. So much was at stake, but triumphantly Hebrews 4:15 says, *'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'*

Miracles — *'No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.'* John 3:2. Like the inquisitive Nicodemus many have been intrigued by the miracles of Jesus — most of which benefited others in need. He refused to employ supernatural means to make things better for himself or to satisfy Herod who sought an audience with him *'because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him.'* Luke 23:8.

The miraculous works revealed his unique relationship to the Father. He said: *' . . . though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me and I in him.'* John 10:38.

Earlier Jesus appealed to his works as greater witness than that of John the Baptist *' . . . the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.'* John 5:36. *'And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there.'* John 10:41-42.

In John's gospel the miracles are called signs because of their significance. The eyes of a blind man were opened by the one who said, *'I am the light of the world.'* (John 9:8-9). He who fed five thousand from a simple lunch said, *'I am the bread of life.'* See John chapter 6.

Forgiver of sins — When a paralytic was lowered from a roof to the feet of Jesus he said, *' . . . Son thy sins be forgiven thee.'* Mark 2:5. The scribes reasoned among themselves: *'Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?'* Jesus then commanded the sick man to take up his bed and walk, for the express reason *' . . . that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins . . .'* Mark 2:10.

We can forgive those who wrong us. Jesus forgave those who sinned against God, which is significant indeed, for only God can do that.

Revealer of God — Prophets received messages and some saw visions - but only Jesus could reveal the invisible God. Father and Son are known to each other and the Father is known only through the Son. (See Matthew 11:27). The purpose of our existence is to know God -- not merely knowing about God but knowing him personally through Jesus. Jesus said, *'And this is life eternal that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'* John 17:3.

'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.' 1 John 5:20.

**Have you discovered your purpose? Do you know God?
Do you know Jesus Christ whom he has sent?**

The Attitudes of Jesus

In the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ (Matthew 5:1-12), Jesus listed the ultimate attitudes. One that seems to speak for them all is *‘Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.’* (verse 8). The attitudes of Jesus are truly ‘beautiful’ . . . as was the life that emulated them. He said, *‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart...’* Matthew 11:29.

Consider his attitude to . . .

Children

‘And when they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such (for to such ASV) is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms and put his hands upon them, and blessed them’. Mark 10: 13-15.

Jesus ‘was much displeased.’ The Saviour loved children and rebuked those who would exclude them. He said: *‘For of such is the kingdom of God.’* He also said that without child-like faith, none will enter the kingdom of God. In Mark 10:24 he addressed his disciples as ‘Children.’ However, the ones whom he took into his arms and assured of the kingdom were ‘little children.’

Women

Some treat women badly. Jesus respected women and won their respect which is beautifully illustrated in John chapter 4 where the woman exclaimed, *‘How is it that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?’* (verse 9). A Samaritan woman was amazed that a Jewish man should ask a favour of her. The disciples *‘marveled that he talked with the woman,’* (verse 27).

A weeping sinful woman washed his feet with her tears and dried them with her hair in the presence of a Pharisee. (See Luke 7:36-50). Mary and Martha were special friends of Jesus. The sight of them weeping over the death of their brother caused the Son of God, himself, to weep. (John 11:33-37). When Jesus suffered on the cross we read, *‘And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him.’* Matthew 27:55. Women were first to the tomb to discover the resurrection. (Matthew 28:1-10).

Sinners — *‘A friend of publicans and sinners.’* Matthew 11:19.

Jesus was a friend to those who failed and fell. He accepted the rejected and forgave the repentant. What more appropriate title for the Son of God than *‘The friend of sinners.’* Can the same be said of his followers?

To the taxation thief he said, *‘. . . For today I must abide at thy house.’* Luke 19:5. To a woman about to be stoned for adultery he said, *‘. . . Neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more.’* John 8:11.

In crucifixion he was able to comfort the dying thief as he hung from a cross. *‘Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,’* he cried. *‘Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.’* Luke 23:42-43.

We can now feel the pulse of Christ’s mission; *‘This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all ac-*

ception, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners . . . ’ 1 Tim 1:15.

The State — *‘Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar? . . .’* Matthew 22:17.

Jesus drew attention to the figure of Caesar on a coin and silenced his opponents with these words: *‘Render therefore unto Caesar the things, which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.’* Matthew 22:21.

Submission to the State was important for the King of Kings.

His birth was inconvenienced by a census. He upheld the law and when falsely charged, the Roman procurator said, *‘I am innocent of the blood of this just person . . .’* Matthew 27:24. Following the example of Jesus the apostle Paul charged all Christians to honour state authorities and warned of serious consequences to those who think otherwise (Romans 13).

The apostle Peter wrote: *‘Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors . . . honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.’* 1 Peter 2:13-17.

**‘Evil
triumphs
when
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nothing’**

True Christians gladly sing the national anthem, honour the flag and register for census and voting if that is what government requires. Citizens of democracies have voting privileges. We should prayerfully mark the ballot papers to support policies that are just and fair.

The Bible says: *‘Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.’* Should a political party advocate pornography, prostitution and homosexuality, and declare itself against family values, then Christians should vote against it. As someone rightly observed, ‘Evil triumphs when good people do nothing’. The Bible says: *‘Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.’* James 4:17.

Should Christians involve themselves in politics? Yes, if that’s where God directs them. Thousands of wretched slaves were delivered from intolerable conditions through the tireless efforts of a committed Christian politician . . . William Wilberforce.

The Earl of Shaftesbury laboured for fifty years to free children from the horrors of 14-hour-day forced labour, and the repugnant practice of using young boys to clean factory chimneys, and when they became stuck, lighting fires under them. Shaftesbury was committed to the Bible and constantly looked to the second coming of Christ. Yet, the love of Christ drove him into politics to alleviate the cries of little children choking in the foul air of the coalmines, and to provide education, both secular and spiritual for the desperately poor masses.

Paul charged Titus with these words; *‘Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to do every good work.’* Titus 3:1. Believers are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) but during their brief sojourn here, they are ‘Romans’ (Acts 22:25-29) or British, or Australian or whatever the case may be. Jesus recognized this.

Wealth — *‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests: but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.’* Luke 9:58

Real estate and shares wouldn’t interest the Son of God. He lived simply and warned of the perils of riches. He said to one who disputed a will, *‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.’* (Luke 12:15)

'Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven,' he urged. To the rich young ruler he said, *'Sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven . . .'* Mark 10:21. The apostle Paul said likewise, *'Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.'* Col 3:2.

He who owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10) . . . and by whom and for whom all things were created (Col. 1:16), and the appointed heir of all things (Heb. 1:2), was born in a stable, laid in a manger and lived with little more than the necessities of life and was buried in a borrowed tomb — an amazing paradox — owning nothing yet possessing all things.

The suffering of Jesus

' . . . The Son of Man must suffer many things . . .' Mark 8:31.

The Bible holds a steady beam on the crucifixion as it expounds the work of Jesus. God became man to die for us. That is why the sufferings of Christ express God's love for man. It was the self-giving of God. His sufferings were predetermined, predicted and enigmatic to both prophet and angel (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Why Crucifixion?

Why should the Son of God suffer? If he must die, why the extended agony? At his arrest Jesus rebuked Peter for pulling his sword on a soldier and said, *' . . . For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'* Jesus came to die on a cross - not to be struck down by the sword. He said *'But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?'* Matt. 26:52,54.

We must appreciate the cross. The apostle Paul said, *'But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...'* Gal. 6:14.

Voluntary sacrifice

' . . . It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement . . .' Heb 9:27.

For Jesus, death was his choice. He gave himself for you and me. This was beautifully illustrated when Jesus was transfigured in glory (Mark 9:2-8) — a glory representing that previously experienced with the Father (John 17:5). It is significant that Jesus taught his disciples about his impending death just after the transfiguration (Mark 9:30-32). Perhaps that's the reason why they *'understood it not'*. The transfiguration revealed to them how Jesus could at any moment return to his former glory. His teaching then about his death becomes something truly wonderful. It was voluntary in the fullest sense of the word. He who didn't have to die, **died for us**. The prophet Daniel said, *'And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself . . .'* Dan 9:26.

Interrogation

Jesus faced his Jewish enemies and said something that authenticated him more than all miracles. The High Priest had said: *'I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.'* Matthew 26:63. (He had previously requested the disciples to *'tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ'*). Matthew 16:20.

To the High Priest He answered, *' . . . Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto thee, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'* Matthew 26:64.

The Judge

The issue of Jesus and the Jews embarrassed the Roman governor. His wife sent a message, urging him to have nothing to do with *'that righteous man.'* He wanted to release Jesus but was morally weak. It was Passover . . . the time that a single prisoner could be released and Pilate saw a solution. He made an offer — Jesus or Barabbas — a murderer or an innocent man?

The choice was theirs — a good man or a bad man? They chose the bad man. ***'Release unto us Barabbas,'*** they shouted. What an indictment on the Jews. What a dilemma for Pontius Pilate. A bad man was free — a good man died.

Did they tell Barabbas? Did he hear that Jesus was crucified instead of him?

I remember hearing about the release of Barabbas as a young person. A vital truth blazed in my mind — I'm the bad person and I'm free because Jesus was crucified instead of me.

What a strange tradition . . . releasing one criminal per year. Well and good for that one but what about the others? The death of Jesus unlocked the prison doors for all believers.

The Scourge

'Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.' Matt 27:26. William Barclay described Roman scourging as 'a terrible torture'. 'The victim was stripped; his hands were tied behind him, and he was secured to a post with his back bent double, and conveniently exposed to the lash. The lash itself was a leather thong, studded at intervals with sharpened pieces of bone and pellets of lead. Such scourging always preceded crucifixion and it reduced the naked body to strips of raw flesh, and inflamed the bleeding weals. Men died under it, and men lost their reason under it, and few remained conscious.' Such was the suffering of Jesus.

Mocked

The soldiers stripped him and dressed him in a purple robe and went to the trouble of plaiting a crown of thorns to put on his head, and in his right hand they placed a reed. *'And they bowed the knee before him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!'* The time, however, will arrive when every knee shall bow before Jesus and *'every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.'* Phil 2:10-11. God is not mocked!

Crucified

Jesus had said: *' . . . When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he.'* John 8:28. What character shone forth from Jesus in the process of crucifixion. The Jewish author, Klausner wrote: 'Crucifixion is the most terrible and cruel death which man has ever devised for taking vengeance on his fellow men.'

This was the death to which Jesus submitted . . . the death by which he saved mankind. Instead of the common curses and shrieks of victims of crucifixion, Jesus, under extreme pain, responded quietly and appropriately, which caused a centurion to exclaim, *'Truly this was the Son of God.'* Matthew 27:54.

The Taunts

'If thou be the Son of God' — the words he encountered in the temptation are now thrown like dust in his face. *'If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.'* (Divine love is stronger than nails).

'He saved others; himself he cannot save.' Matthew 27:42.

Unwittingly, their words identified the gospel . . . the utter necessity of Christ's death . . . and it's victory — **'He saved others.'**

The cries from the cross

' . . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do . . .' Luke 23:34.

If Jesus, in such unjust agony can forgive those who flogged and impaled him, then all who claim to follow him should find forgiveness an easy thing.

Forgiveness was central to the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples (Matthew 6:12) – even making it contingent on their willingness to forgive others.

'They know not what they do.' Paul mentioned to the Corinthians that if the princes of this world had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory (1 Cor. 2:8).

This raises the question: Who was to blame for the crucifixion? Some blame the Jews.

However, after healing the lame man, Peter said to his Jewish audience, *'And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.'* Acts 3:17-18.

The truth is that sinners crucified Jesus. Christ died for our sins. We are to blame. *'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him . . .'* Isaiah 53:10.

'My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

How could God forsake his well beloved Son, in whom he was 'well pleased?' Yet he cries as one abandoned. Was this the point where the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all? (Isaiah 53:6) Indeed, the apostle Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:21: *'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin . . .'* The words 'to be' are not in the original. Literally it reads: *'For he hath made him sin for us.'* The cry, *'My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me,'* reflects that awful moment when Jesus bore our sins (1 Peter 2:24).

'It is finished.' John 19:30. In John 17:4 Jesus said: *' . . . I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.'* The words, *'It is finished,'* are translated from a single Greek word, 'tetelestai,' This word is an exclamation of triumph. Jesus had victoriously accomplished all that he came to do. Atonement was complete.

'Into thy hands I commend my spirit.' Luke 23:46. The Greek word for 'spirit' is the same as used for 'wind,' 'breath,' etc. However, Jesus most certainly didn't mean that he was committing his 'breath' to the Father. 'God is Spirit..' (John 4:24). God is not wind or breath. Later, as stones were about to strike the martyr, Stephen, he said, *'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God . . . and they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'* Acts 7:56; 7:59.

He who from the cross committed his own spirit to the Father now stood at the Father's right hand to receive the spirit of the first martyr.

Why do the scriptures stress the sufferings of Jesus? When the risen Lord met the two on the Emmaus Road he said, *'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?'* Luke 24:25-26.

Then to the eleven he said, *' . . . all things must be fulfilled which, were written in the law of*

Moses, and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ, to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day. And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ Luke 24:44-47. ‘And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.’ (Acts 17:2-3).

We return to the words: ‘. . . **The Son of Man must suffer many things** . . .’ Mark 8:31.

But why suffering? Why did Jesus refuse the vinegar and gall . . . the only thing that might dull the agony? His awful sufferings say that sin is serious. If God let Jesus endure all that he did, then be certain that sin is totally offensive to a holy God. The expression ‘must suffer’ is mainly used by Jesus. He didn’t say, ‘The Son of man ‘will suffer’, true as that may be, the word is ‘must.’ The Greek stresses necessity. One can die without suffering and Jesus said ‘*The Son of man must suffer.*’ Jesus suffered and died. Atonement required more than death and more than suffering. It required suffering and death.

Jesus expressed the necessity and the efficacy of the crucifixion in John 3:14. The background of which is Numbers 21:6-9, where we read of a snake plague. Moses was directed to make a bronze replica of a snake, fasten it to a pole and hold aloft for all to see. The snakes on the ground were aggressive and venomous. The one on the pole was passive and poisonless. Victims who merely looked at the snake on the pole were instantly healed. The elevated snake illustrated Jesus, the innocent and passive sufferer on the cross.

Expiation. Have you paid fines for speeding? Who would obey the law if there were no fines? The Bible says, ‘*For the wages of sin is death . . .*’ Yet the same verse states, ‘. . . *but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*’ (Romans 6:23). How can there be penalty and gift together? Because the suffering and death of Jesus was the expiation for our sins. Believers are now free from penalty.

Christ suffered for us because he loved us. In the sufferings of Jesus, both physical and spiritual, he suffered for us. In this context ‘for us’ means ‘on behalf of’ or ‘instead of.’ ‘*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God . . .*’ 1 Peter 3:18. ‘*And after threescore and two weeks shall messiah be cut off, but not for himself...*’ Dan 9:26. **Christ died for you and for me.**

The sufferings of Jesus show how great is his love. The apostle Paul said, ‘*I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*’ Gal 2:20

What kind of love dies for enemies?

We steer wide of the notion that Jesus suffered merely to show us how much he loved. However, it was through immeasurable love that he ‘endured the cross.’ We reflect in humble awe. Jesus said, ‘*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*’ John 15:13.

What kind of love dies for enemies? Read Romans 5:5-8.

The sufferings and death of Jesus redeemed us. The word redeem means ‘to buy back’. Through his sufferings Jesus purchased the release of sinners. His death is sometimes described as a ransom. Only the Son of God could ransom mankind from the stronghold of sin.

The death of Jesus destroyed the devil. It impacted on the invisible forces of evil. Prior to the crucifixion Jesus said: *'Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.'* John 12:31.

Paul wrote: *'And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.'* Col 2:15. *'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.'* Gen. 3:15.

In Hebrews we read *'Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'* Heb 2:14-15. The Greek word for destroy here is 'katargeo' which means to make inactive — not 'apollumi' which means to destroy utterly. As far as 'the power of death' is concerned the devil has been rendered 'inactive'.

Preaching the Cross

'For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.' 1 Cor 1:18. For Paul, the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus was paramount (1 Cor 15:3). He said, *'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.'* 1 Cor 1:23.

Christ Crucified' is the message that saves. It is *'the power of God.'*

When sinners repent and believe in their hearts that Christ died for them, the power of the cross saves them.

Saved from condemnation. *'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.'* Romans 8:32-34.

Believers can confidently say, *'Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.'* Romans 5:1.

His blood makes us clean from all sin. *'... Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.'* Rev 1:5.

'But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.' 1 John 1:7. *'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.'* Ephesians 1:7.

Is anything more wonderful than a life made clean — 'justified' before God? As you read the Bible, note the many benefits that are ours through the sufferings of Jesus. (See 1 Cor. 8:9).

The preaching of Christ crucified is so vital that the apostle Paul gravely warned about any distortion. He said: *'But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed'* Galatians 1:8.

That gospel is **'the grace of Christ.'** (Verse 6).

'Jesus Christ and him crucified' is **criteria.** To the wayward Corinthians Paul wrote, *'For I*

determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.’ 1 Cor. 2:2. If you’re uncertain about a religion, see if the theme is ‘*Jesus Christ and him crucified*’? If not, beware!

Exclusive glory

Of all the things that Jesus said and did, the apostle Paul gloried in one thing. He said: ‘*But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.*’ Gal. 6:14.

What is your glory?

‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain.’ **Christ crucified is the theme of heaven:** ‘*And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands:*

Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever. And the four beasts said Amen . . .’ Rev. 5:11-14.

Will eternity be long enough?

‘**The ages to come.**’ Will eternity be long enough to comprehend the wonder of Jesus? Writing to the Ephesians Paul said, ‘*But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved:) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.*’ Eph 2:4-7.

Raised from Death

The resurrection authenticated Jesus in every way. ‘*For I delivered unto you as of first of all (as of first importance – RSV) that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.*’ 1 Corinthians 15:3-5. He was ‘*declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead.*’ Roman 1:4.

Raised bodily

The bodily resurrection of Jesus was substantiated by strong evidence. Jesus said some amazing words in John 2:19-22, ‘*Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.*’ The Jews thought that he meant their temple of stone, but verse 21 says, ‘*He spake of the temple of his body.*’ The body that rose was the one that was crucified and laid in the tomb of the benevolent Joseph of Arimathaea.

Once when the startled disciples thought that they had seen a spirit, the risen Lord said: ‘*Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*’ Luke 24:39.

To the doubting disciple Jesus said, ‘*. . . Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands: and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Tho-*

mas answered and said unto him, 'My Lord and My God.' John 20:27-8.

'If Christ be not raised — our faith is vain. More than that we are then found to be false witnesses about God.' (1 Cor. 15:14-15).

Implications of the Resurrection

He lives — The risen Christ said; *'I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.'* Rev 1:18. Jesus assured his disciples with these words: *' . . . Because I live, ye shall live also.'* John 14:19.

We know him — The apostle Paul said: *'That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection . . .'* Phil 3:10. Hebrews 13:20 expresses it well: *'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep . . .'*

In his ministry to the disciples Jesus said, *'I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.'* John 10:14. We can have immediate fellowship with our risen and living Lord through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

The risen Christ will judge the world — The resurrection has implications for everyone.

. . . God ' . . . now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' Acts 17:30–31.

Paul was forthright in declaring judgement to come. When brought before Felix who gave him the opportunity to speak, we read: *' . . . he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgement to come, Felix trembled and answered, Go thy way for this time . . .'* Acts 24:25.

In 1 Thessalonians 1:10, Paul refers to the resurrection of Jesus *' . . . which delivered us from the wrath to come.'* The resurrection which saves from wrath also assures of wrath – the wrath of God. *' . . . it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.'* Hebrews 9:27.

Jesus now

Jesus was raised to life, after which he met with disciples and friends. He now occupies the seat of highest power — ***'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.'*** Eph. 1:21.

Just prior to his ascension Jesus said, *'...All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.'* Matthew 28:18. That's a lot of power! Power and authority now belongs to Jesus (1 Cor. 1:24). *'Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.'* 1 Peter 3:22.

The Mediator

'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.' 1 Timothy 2:5. Jesus is our 'go-between.' For us, he is the *'man Christ Jesus.'* A mediator is one who represents both parties to bring peace. Interestingly, Jesus is still *'the man Christ Jesus.'* At the ascension two men in white said something significant: *' . . . Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.'* Acts 1:11.

'This same Jesus.' The same Jesus who asked his disciples to handle him after his resurrection is the one at the Father's right hand and the one who will return. In Hebrews 13:7-8, the

believers were exhorted to follow the faith of their leaders, *'considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.'*

Jesus has not dispensed with his humanity. At the transfiguration he revealed his glory . . . in the presence of the Father he reveals his humanity. He is the same forever — *'the man Christ Jesus.'* Yet, in the man, Christ Jesus, *' . . . dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.'* Colossians 2:9.

The Intercessor

'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.' Heb 7:25. The risen exalted Jesus is actively representing his followers in heaven. To intercede means to plead for them. The result of that is *'he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.'* Heb 7:25

' . . . We have an advocate with the father, Jesus Christ the righteous.' 1 John 2:1. The forerunner — one who goes before. Jesus entered heaven as our 'forerunner' (Heb 6:20).

At the tomb on resurrection morning the white clad messenger said: *' . . . Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth: which was crucified: He is risen; he is not here . . . but go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall you see him, as he said unto you.'* (Mark 16:6-7). What joy for the believers to see the risen Christ! *' . . . Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.'* John 20:20. What greater joy it will be for believers to meet their risen and exalted Lord!

'Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.' Jude 24.

The Return of Jesus

Let's not restrict what an omnipotent God can do

History will climax with the sudden, visible, personal return of the Lord Jesus. *'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.'* Rev 1:7.

Will it be possible for all to see his return? If billions can watch world events via television relayed by satellites, let's not restrict what an omnipotent God can do. Let's believe when the Bible says, *'Every eye shall see him.'*

'Coming with clouds.' A cloud overshadowed Jesus at the transfiguration. He went up in a cloud at his ascension with the assurance that he would return in like manner (with clouds). In the O.T. God went before in a pillar of cloud (Exodus 13:21). When the Ark of the Covenant entered the holy place a cloud filled the house of the Lord . . . symbolic of the glory of the Lord. 1 Kings 8:10-11.

Resurrection and Rapture

The return of Jesus Christ has special significance for believers both dead and alive. The dead will rise to life and those alive will join them as they are caught up to meet their returning Lord in the air. *'For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the*

Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

What anticipation for believers! **Resurrection, Rapture, and eternity with the Lord!**

1 Corinthians 15 is the great resurrection chapter of the Bible. Read it and embrace these words: *'For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. . . then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.'* 1 Cor. 15:21, 23, 51, 52, 54.

Christ, in His omnipotent power, at his Second Coming, will abolish man's last enemy, **death** – instantly – *'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.'* *'For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.* Phil 3:20-21.

'King of Kings and Lord of Lords'

'And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.' Rev 19:16. This title belongs to God (1 Tim 6:14). Jesus at his return, will reveal *'the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords.'*

Discovering That Jesus is God.

Jesus never said, 'I am God'. We may well ask why — if he was God in the flesh? Similarly, he was reluctant to say, 'I am the Christ'. See John 10:24-25. When John the Baptist inquired from prison, 'Are you the Coming One, or shall we look for someone else?' Jesus replied, *'Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.'* Matt. 11:4-5.

The intriguing thing about Jesus is that he must be discovered. The evidence is there — blind seeing, deaf hearing and dead people raised. We discover his Messiah-ship and Deity in the things that he said and did. When Jesus forgave the sins of a paralysed man the religious said, *'This man speaks blasphemy for who can forgive sins but God alone?'* Mark 2:1-22. Jesus amazed everyone by causing the man to walk again and said — *' . . . that ye may know the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins.'*

Only God can forgive sins. Jesus forgave sins. Jesus is God.

Sceptical Thomas discovered the reality of Jesus when he saw nail-pierced hands and a spear gashed side. He exclaimed, *'My Lord! and my God!'* What happened? Did Jesus rebuke Thomas for blasphemy? No, he blessed him. *'Blessed are you Thomas for you have seen and believed — how blessed are those who believe without seeing.'* John 20:28-9.

The Gospel of John begins with, 'The Word was God,' and climaxes with the exclamation of doubting Thomas. **'My Lord! and My God!'**

Have you discovered the real Jesus,
can you acknowledge him as Thomas did?
'My Lord! and My God!'

The Names of Jesus

'For the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.' Acts 8:12

In the Bible a name says it all - particularly in the case of Jesus. The name, Jesus, is above every name - not because of the name itself but because of the person who owned it for others, too, were called Jesus. Jesus fulfilled the name. (it means 'Yahweh will save'). He was so named because *'He shall save his people from their sins.'* Matthew 1:21. *'There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.'* Acts 4:12.

'To them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them who believe in his name.' John 1:12. *'Wherefore God also 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.'* Phil 2:9-11.

Other Names

'And his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Isaiah 9:6.

'Wonderful.' Everything about Jesus inspired wonder and awe. Most wonderful, of course, that a child be named *'The Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.'*

'Counselor.' Good counsel makes a difference as Moses discovered when his father-in-law, Jethro, advised him to delegate responsibilities.

'Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors, there is safety.' Prov 11:14. If the counsel of men is so vital, how much more then the counsel of God. The apostle Paul said, *'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! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor?'* Romans 11:33-34.

'Mighty God.' A name used exclusively for Yahweh, which designates him as 'Victorious Warrior.' The name applied to Jesus identifies his Deity.

'Everlasting Father.' Of Jesus the prophet Micah said, *'But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, 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.'* Mic. 5:2. **'Everlasting Father,' implies 'Everlasting Son.'**

'The Prince of peace' — At his birth the angels sang, *'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'* Luke 2:14 (Better translated: '— and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests.' NIV).

Jesus said: *'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you . . .'* John 14:27.

'Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Romans 5:1.

There is no greater peace as the apostle Paul said, *'And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.'* Phil 4:7.

'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.' Romans 14:17. *'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing . . .'* Rom. 15:13.

‘Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.’ (Literally ‘The God with us’. In the Greek, “With us the God” [Ho Theos] — note the definite article) Matthew 1:23.

Interestingly, the name Emmanuel doesn’t mean ‘God with him.’ God has been ‘with’ his prophets and leaders . . . i.e. *‘As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.’* Joshua 1:5. Emmanuel means ‘God with us’. Jesus is ‘God with us.’

Alpha and Omega — The book of Revelation begins and ends by ascribing this name to Jesus. Note the way it is introduced in Chapter 1:8 *‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.’*

Alpha and Omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus is the beginning and the end. *‘The First and the Last.’* Rev. 1:17. *‘Which is and which was and which is to come.’* The God which ‘is’, is the God which ‘was’. The God which ‘is’, is the God which ‘will be’ — *eternal and unchanging* -- inclusive in that unique name *‘I AM.’* Exodus 3:14. **What God is He has always been and always will be.** Likewise: *‘Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.’* Hebrews 13:8 (read verse 7).

Honour His name. Live by that name and worship the precious name of Jesus —as the angels do! Heb. 1:6.

The Son of God *‘Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.’* Luke 1:35. Many misunderstand this common title of Jesus and assume that by virtue of his birth to Mary and begetting by the Holy Spirit, that makes him the Son of God. Interestingly, Jesus addressed Mary as ‘Woman’ — rather than ‘Mother.’ John 2:4, 19:26. Hebrews 7:3 says, *‘Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God . . . ’*

‘I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.’ Psalm 2:7. The New Testament identifies *‘This day’* with the resurrection. Acts 13:32-33. *‘Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.’* Rom 1: 3-4.

At his baptism a voice from heaven declared, *‘. . . Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.’* Luke 3:22. ‘Son of God,’ speaks to us of the eternal and unique relationship of Jesus to the Father. He is ‘The Son of God’ —‘the only begotten Son.’ Jesus said, *‘I and my Father are one.’* John 10:30.

God gives believers ‘the power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name,’ Jesus, however, did not ‘become’ the Son of God – he has always been ‘the Son’, and requires us to believe in ‘the name of the only begotten Son of God.’ (John 3:18).

Jesus, himself, said, *‘And no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son.’* Matthew 11:27.

The Fathers love for Jesus.

As Son, Jesus is the object of the Father’s affection. He said, *‘The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.’* John 3:35. **The Father loves those who love the Son.** Jesus said, *‘. . . and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.’* John 14:21. *‘He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.’* John 3:36.

Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

We have seen something of the unique relationship between Father and Son. What about the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit conceived Jesus. Hear again the angel's words to Mary: '*. . . The Holy Spirit 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 1:35.

Not only was Mary overshadowed by 'the power of the Highest' but also by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit conceived '*that holy thing.*'

The baptism — A remarkable thing occurred as John was baptizing in the Jordan. Jesus requested baptism. John demurred but Jesus insisted. As Jesus emerged from the water, we read: '*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 3:16-17.

Here is a beautiful association: The Lord Jesus, water from the Jordan dripping from his body, looking into heaven. The Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove – symbolic of purity, peace, softness and gentleness, followed by the voice of the Father in heaven saying: '*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*' Father, Son and Holy Spirit at the baptism.

Jesus later commanded his followers to baptize in '*The name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.*'

'*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power.*' Not only was Jesus anointed with power but also with the Holy Spirit. The kings of Israel were anointed to their office with oil. In Isaiah we read: '*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek . . .*' (61:1).

The temptation — '*Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.*' Matthew 4:1-11. He who taught us to pray, '*. . . and lead us not into temptation . . .*' was led by the Spirit into the wilderness where his divine sonship was challenged by the devil. — '*If thou be the Son of God . . .*' Works of power — The Holy Spirit authenticated the ministry of Jesus and the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, '*But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.*' Matthew 12:28.

Jesus tells about the Holy Spirit

what God is ... Spirit is

In John 4:24 he said, '*God is Spirit.*' The Holy Spirit is not an impersonal force for what God is . . . Spirit is.'

Men must be born of the Spirit. '*. . . Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*' John 3:5-7.

Jesus was referring to the same truth when he said to the woman at the well. '*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*' John 4:14.

Likewise at the conclusion of the Jewish feast Jesus stood and cried saying, '*. . . If any man*

thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.) John 7:37-9.

In John 14:26 Jesus referred to *'The Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit.'* The Greek word is Parakletos, which means 'One called alongside to assist.' In John 14:16-19, we read of the special ministry of the Holy Spirit. He would come after Jesus had ascended to the Father and assist the memory of the disciples. Perhaps this explains the wonderful way they were able to write the gospels. The Holy Spirit would testify of Christ and convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ?

At his final meeting with his disciples Jesus commanded them to remain in Jerusalem and wait for *'the promise of the Father, which saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptised with water; but ye shall be baptised with the Holy Spirit not many days hence.'* Acts 1:4-5. His final assurance to his disciples was, *'But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.'* Acts 1:8.

Jesus had said, *'I and the Father are one.'* Whilst he didn't use those words in regard to the Holy Spirit the gospel records reveal the same relationship – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in perfect union and Jesus left a grave warning to any who would deprecate the Holy Spirit: *'Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.'* Matthew 12:31-32.

Should we worship Jesus?

In the Bible worship is strictly reserved for God as indicated by the following texts. *'... Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.'* Matthew 4:10.

'I am the LORD: [YHWH] that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.' Isa 42:8.

The angel rebuked the worship offered by the apostle John. *'... See thou do it not ... worship God.'* Rev. 22:9. Compare Acts 10:25-26. Worship is for God alone — Exodus 20:1-5. Jesus however, received worship as 'Lord' and 'God.' The Magi worshipped him Matt. 2:11. The disciples worshipped him Matt. 28:17, John 20:28. All the angels are commanded to worship him (Heb. 1:6). Angels, beasts, elders and every creature worship him (Rev 5:11-14). The countless crowd of redeemed people surround the throne and worship God — And The Lamb — (Rev 7:9).

'Wherefore God also 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.' Phil 2:9-11.

Worship Jesus. His name is above every name. (Eph. 1:21). *He is God.* (John 1:1, 14). *'That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ...'* John 5:23.

Jesus is Lord

'And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Phil 2:11. 'Jesus Christ is Lord,' confessed the early Christians. 1 Cor. 12:3.

The sublime title 'Lord' (Adonai) became God's name in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament in place of YHWH.

God the Father is glorified when we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord. There is no higher title — no worthier affirmation. *And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.* Rev 19:16. Compare 1 Tim. 6:14-16.

Knowing Jesus Personally

I trust that what is written will help us appreciate the 'Real Jesus.' We need to know Jesus, trust and honour Him as our Lord, Saviour and friend. Paul said, *'...I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . .'* Phil. 3:8.

**worth more than all
the earth's treasures**

Knowing the Lord Jesus Christ personally is life's greatest fulfilment and joy – worth more than all the earth's treasures. Let me encourage you, if at this point of time you are not a believer, to seriously consider who Jesus is. Repent of your sin, commit to him your life and you will be able to say, *'...I know whom I have believed...'* 2 Tim. 1:12.

Finally: the words of Peter: *'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever, Amen.'* 2 Peter 3:18.

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About the author John Hutchinson was born at Inman Valley in South Australia. In his youth he encountered the powerful influences of various religious sects. His research and understanding has helped some who have been hurt and others who have been confused by oppressive religion.

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