

J E S U S C H R I S T

Saviour for all Seasons, Man for all Millennia

THE LORD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

He was not simply a religious leader long ago. Since He is the self-revelation of God, He existed before Bethlehem. When He was born on earth He had already existed from all eternity. In fact, through Him everything was created. Indeed, everything still depends on Him. The Bible teaches that He is the second person in the Godhead: God the Father is the architect of creation; God the Son - Jesus Christ - is the builder; God the Holy Spirit supplies the power. The Lord Jesus is the main theme of the Bible. This single observation unlocks its true meaning and makes total sense of what might otherwise remain mysterious. The Old Testament prophets foretold His coming. Angels proclaimed His birth. Apostles declared His glory and mercy to a lost world.

THE UNIQUE SON OF GOD

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a very special sense. While Christians are described as children of God, they are children by grace and adoption. Christ is the Son by nature. As children reveal something of their parents, Christ reveals the nature and character of God the Father in a unique way. He is the 'true offspring' of the eternal God. Thus He is 'God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not created, being of one nature with the Father, by whom all things were made' (*The Nicene Creed*). The divine nature is therefore truly expressed in the personality of Jesus Christ. In Him we see God the Father from whom His divine nature was directly derived. Of course, this 'family' picture language has limits: the virgin Mary was not Christ's mother in the sense that God the Father was His Father. She was merely the vehicle of Christ's human nature. Whereas the Nicene Creed rightly teaches that He 'was incarnate *by* the Holy Spirit *of* the virgin Mary', recent 'ecumenically correct' amendments propose to change this to 'incarnate *of* the Holy Spirit *and* the Virgin Mary'. This upgrades the role of Mary to an equality with the Holy Spirit implying a form of 'cohabitation'. Such ideas distort the New Testament teaching. While Mary is justly called 'Blessed', Christ through the Holy Spirit actually created His mother in order that she might miraculously convey Him to mankind as 'God-made-man'. Her role, while necessary for the incarnation, was essentially one of subordination. Thus our attention is to be fixed on Him not her.

BORN TO DIE FOR OUR SINS

Christ came to save us. He brought resources we do not possess. Through violating God's holy law we are guilty, hell-deserving sinners. Spiritually corrupted and impotent, we are helpless to repay the debt we owe to God. Not willing that we should perish, God the Father sent Christ as man to pay in our name and nature all that we owe. Sin deserves death and damnation. It is an offence to the holiness and purity of our Creator. On the cross, Christ suffered the wrath of God in our place. As the God-man, His agonizing death satisfied the righteous demands of God the Father. Those who repent and trust in Christ are justified - acquitted, pardoned and accepted as children of God. They are also renewed in their natures by the Holy Spirit's indwelling

and sanctifying power. Having conquered sin by His death, Christ conquered death by His resurrection. Believers in Christ are saved eternally from sin, death and condemnation.

THE ONLY SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD

As the Father's love-gift to an undeserving world, no one else can do what only Christ has done. All other religious leaders were only human. They too were sinners. They are also dead. It is multi-faith madness to suggest otherwise. Christ lives to seek and save the lost. We all need Him. The Church proclaims Him to the whole world. He who wept over Jerusalem still looks with love and mercy on a ruined world. He alone has the infinite capacity and almighty grace to save us. All other religions are people reaching up to God. In Christ, God is reaching down to us. Christ has no substitutes. He requires no assistance. While the Church honours Mary, the ancient Prophets and the Apostles, Christ alone is the mediator through whom we pray and worship. Others cannot help us. Christ is all we need. He calls all people in every age and nation to come to Him. In Jesus, a restless world finds rest, a guilty world finds pardon, a dying world finds life and a ruined world finds redemption.

THE CHURCH'S LIVING HEAD

After His glorious resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven. As Head of the redeemed community, He pours out the Holy Spirit upon us. He personally saves, guides, directs, keeps, strengthens and perfects His Church. In His physical absence from the world, the Holy Spirit acts invisibly on His behalf. Christ has not delegated His headship to any other person whether King, Queen, Pope or Archbishop. Christ the King and Saviour, having established the Church through the ministry of the Apostles, now governs and guides us through Ministers of the Word and Elders. These are the New Testament 'bishops' or 'overseers' appointed by Christ our Head and chief Shepherd. In every age, the perpetuation of true faith is guaranteed not by some mechanical apostolic and episcopal succession but by the ministry of faithful preachers of the Gospel. Their mandate is to teach only the inspired, authoritative and all-sufficient Word of God, the Bible. However sound and eloquent they might be, the words of men are to be constantly tested by the Scriptures. By the ministry of word and sacrament, the Lord Jesus makes His holy, loving and gracious presence known in our hearts. The water of baptism is but a symbol of the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. The water itself does not convey the grace of God. Since Christ's glorious body remains in heaven, the bread and wine of the Holy Supper are symbols of that spiritual nourishment guaranteed by Christ's spiritual presence in the hearts of His people.

THE COMING JUDGE OF ALL

The world has not seen the last of Jesus Christ. He will return to judge the world. Precisely when is known only to the Father. As the humbled Son, Christ came first in weakness to save. He returns with power and glory to judge. Those who reject Him will be damned eternally in hell. Those who acknowledge, trust, love and serve Him will be happy forever in heaven. They are God's chosen children in whom He delights. Let us be sure to listen to Christ's gracious call while time permits. May we acknowledge Him, trust only in Him, supremely love and serve Him all our days. Thus we shall rejoice throughout the remainder of our earthly life and pilgrimage until we come at last to that everlasting rest to which Jesus calls us in the Gospel. Amen!