

heaven (*Acts 1:11*), and is coming again (*1 Thess 4:16*). There are three words that depict the whole story of the biblical and historical Christ: the *cradle*, the *cross*, and the *crown*. The one who was born of a virgin and died on the cross is now raised in power and glory on a throne. Christ is no longer a babe in his mother's arms nor is he still hanging on a cross or crucifix, and he is surely not still in the grave. He is exalted as Lord of lords and sits on a throne at the Father's right hand.

The *Bible* is the interpretation of these facts about this Person. Why was Christ born of a virgin? Why did he suffer such a death? Why is his resurrection essential? These are the kinds of questions that must be answered before the gospel of Jesus Christ has any meaning and significance.

Did you ever try to summarize the essential message of the whole Bible in a few sentences? The theme would go something like this: "Behold, Someone is coming!" The whole Old Testament is the story about the coming Messiah. Then the four gospels proclaim: "Behold, Someone is here!" And finally Acts through Revelation says: "Behold, Someone is coming again!" The Bible, from its beginning to its end, is a story about the Lord Jesus Christ. The message of the gospel is nothing less than a clear and precise interpretation of this story.

CHRISTIANITY IS AN EXPERIENCE

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake" (*1 Thess 1:4-5*). Here Paul first reminds us that truth always comes in *words*. The gospel does not come in dreams, visions, or ceremonies. It comes to us in words. However, in order for the words of the gospel to effect the saving of our soul, those words must be accompanied by the power and demonstration of the Spirit. The carnal mind can just as easily hear and mentally believe the facts set forth in the gospel as it can believe that Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean in 1492; but only the Holy Spirit can make the inward man experience the spiritual power of the gospel facts.

The biblical facts are essential, but by themselves they are not enough. If Christianity is a Person, then becoming a Christian is receiving that *Person* in an act of living faith. We do not receive facts in order to get saved; we receive a *Person* and enter into a vital relationship. The facts give us the necessary information about the Person and how and why we must come to him, but coming to Christ is not just an act of the mind believing some facts. In coming to Christ, we give our whole being to Christ as our Lord and Savior.

When someone gets married, they gladly receive a *person*, not a set of facts. The preacher does not say, "Do you receive this fact as certainly true?" No, he says, "Will you receive this *person* to be your wedded mate?" The same thing happens when a person is married to Christ, united by faith. We receive him as a *person* just as truly as he receives us as a *person*. It is much more than a mental transaction involving simply our brains. God did not say, "You admit these facts are true and you will be saved." No, my friend, he said, "You repent from your rebellion and receive my Son and you will be saved." This is done by believing in (literally *believing into*) Christ. There is a great difference between mental assent to facts and receiving Christ in true faith.

When we receive Christ, we receive everything that God has to give, and when we miss Christ, we miss everything there is that is worth having. The Scriptures always put forgiveness, and every other blessing, *in Christ himself*. Our experiencing any of those blessings is only possible as we are literally united to Christ in a living union. Notice how John emphasizes that we receive a *person*: "But as many as received *him*, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (*John 1:12*). The Holy Spirit indeed uses facts, but he uses the facts to draw us to a living Person and not to the impersonal facts as an end in themselves. "All that the Father giveth me shall *come to me*; and him that *cometh to me* I will in no wise cast out" (*John 6:37*). "*Come unto me...* and I will give you rest" (*Matt 11:28*).

The error to be avoided is confusing the mere knowledge of facts, even though the facts may be biblical, with the reality of experiencing the power of the truth explained in the facts. This was the tragic mistake made by the Jews (*Rom 2:17-27*). They were convinced the Bible was the very Word of God and therefore assumed that they had obeyed its message simply by acknowledging its truthfulness. Some of you who are reading this tract, I'm sure, can explain the way of salvation, but have never personally and knowingly gone to Christ with empty hands and pleaded his mercy alone to save your soul. If this is true of you, then you will perish with the gospel in your mind and in your mouth without its power being in your affections and will.

The promises of God, or the gospel facts, are like sign posts on the highway. You do not sit on top of a sign and expect the sign to take you to your destination. Instead, by faith in the message on the sign post, you follow its direction and move toward where it points. Just so, God's promises point us to Christ and assure us that we will be received and forgiven if we go to him in true repentance and faith. However, merely believing that Christ will receive all who come to him, and actually going to him, are

two different things; yet both are essential to salvation. "This is the record [facts], that God hath given us eternal life [experience], and this life is *in his Son*. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (*1 John 5:11-12*).

CHRIST MUST BE RECEIVED AS HE IS PRESENTED IN THE BIBLE

Did you know that the Bible speaks of "another gospel" (*Gal 1:6-9*), "another Jesus" (*2 Cor 11:4*), and "false Christs" (*Mark 13:22*)? You may sincerely trust a false Jesus and be lost, and believe me, there are a lot of phony Christs being peddled today. Many people are preaching a Jesus that bears no authentic resemblance to the Jesus of the New Testament.

Some men preach a false healing message in the name of Jesus and make millions of dollars off the miseries of their fellow human beings. Some cruel tyrants claim to have been duly authorized by Christ to run God's church. They control the consciences of insecure and timid people and destroy many lives. Super church builders in the "nickels and noses" business use a utilitarian Jesus and manipulate people by the thousands. We must be sure that we understand exactly who Jesus is and what he is like before we dare speak in his name.

People are usually surprised to find out that the Bible nowhere talks about "accepting Jesus as your Savior." Christ is not offered to us in the Bible as only a Savior. He is offered to us as **the Lord** who is, by virtue of his finished work, a sufficient Savior.

Christ fulfills the office of Prophet, Priest, and King. When we receive him, we receive him as our Prophet to teach us the truth, as our Priest to take away our guilt, and as our King to rule over us. When we receive Christ as our Savior, we also receive him as our Lord. It's just as biblical to say, "I trusted Christ as my Prophet, Priest, and King," as it is to say, "I trusted Christ as my Savior."

There are two things set forth in Scripture as Siamese twins. *First*, the apostles never present the Saviorhood of Christ apart from his Lordship; or, stated another way, they never offer Christ's saving benefits apart from his Person as Lord. *Second*, the same apostles never appeal to a sinner's will through his emotions to choose, without first instructing that sinner's intellect with truth; or, stated another way, they insisted that every part of man's being: his mind, his heart, and his will, had to be affected by the power of the gospel before there was true conversion. The mind must be illuminated by the truth and the Spirit; the heart, or affections, must be penetrated by the truth and the Spirit; and the will must be liberated by the truth and the Spirit.

Our whole person, consisting of mind, heart and will (*Rom 6:17*), receives a whole Christ as Prophet, Priest, and King. Imagine someone saying, "I like and respect Christ's teaching and will gladly submit to it, but I do not believe in that blood atonement business." We would say, "Sir, if you will not have Christ as your Priest to take away your guilt by his shed blood, then you cannot have him as your Teacher." Someone else may say, "I love the truth that my sins were punished on the cross, but I do not believe that Jesus was right on his view of women." Again, we would say, "Sir, if you reject Christ as your Prophet and Teacher, then you cannot have the benefits of his Priestly work of atonement." Still another person says, "I will trust Christ's blood of atonement and I will accept every single doctrine that he teaches, however, I will not submit the total control of my life, goals, and money into his hands." Again, we must say, "Sir, God will not save you on such grounds."

Imagine you are at a wedding and the preacher says to the prospective bride, "Will you take this man to be your lawfully wedded husband?" She thinks for a moment, and says, "I will be glad to wear his name and will accept and use his credit cards, but I have no intention of washing his clothes, sleeping with him, and bearing his children." Could the preacher say, "That's fine, I will still pronounce you man and wife"? Such would be a mockery of everything that marriage stands for! The same is true of conversion. Taking Christ's benefits (*as Savior*) while refusing his person (*as Lord*) would mock every purpose of God in our salvation. God will not wed his Son in a saving union to a person who has no intention of loving and serving Christ as Lord. I am fully aware that many preachers today teach that you can "trust Christ as your Savior and refuse him as your Lord," but that is blatant heresy. Multitudes are being deceived today by the "Carnal Christian" doctrine!

The apostles emphasized the Lordship of Christ and grounded their statements in the fact that God raised his Son from the dead and seated him at his own right hand with all power and authority. Both the truth of the resurrection and the ascension are prominent in all apostolic preaching in the book of Acts. It's because Christ sits on the throne that men are commanded to bow before him.

Notice carefully the following four truths that run all the way through the NT Scriptures. These sample texts demonstrate how the apostles preached Christ and his saving work: **(1)** Christ was announced at his birth as **Lord**: "For unto you is born... a Savior, which is Christ the **Lord**" (*Luke 2:11*). **(2)** Christ was preached by the apostles to both the Jews and the Gentiles as **Lord**: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as **Lord**..." (*Rom 10:9*); "Believe on the **Lord** Jesus Christ" (*Acts 16:31*); "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that

same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both *Lord* and Christ” (*Acts 2:36*). **(3)** Christ was received in saving faith at conversion as **Lord**: “As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the *Lord*, so walk ye in him” (*Col 2:6*). **(4)** All creation will someday bow and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is **Lord**: “And every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (*Phil 2:11*).

God’s controversy with men and women today is over the sin of rebellion to the rightful claims of Christ as **Lord**. The gospel of the apostles demands that man must repent from that rebellion if there is to be true forgiveness. The problem is not merely that sinners refuse to believe that certain things are true, but rather, it is their refusal to bow their heart and life to the Lord that those truths set forth. It’s not a question of merely believing that Jesus was born of a virgin or that he was true Deity made flesh. Nearly the whole world gladly professes that those things are true every year at Christmas time. It’s not just a willingness to verbally confess that Christ has truly risen from the dead. Most people joyfully acknowledge that at Easter time. It’s obvious that most of these people do not believe these truths in their affections and will (*Rom 10:9-10*). They ardently confess they believe the facts, but they also vehemently reject Christ himself. Romans 8:7 is still the mark of every unbeliever no matter how religious he may be: “The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

God commands sinners to submit in repentance and faith to the authority of his Son. Read the second Psalm and the second chapter of Acts. The matter boils down to the claims of Christ’s Lordship. If you, my dear reader, are not saved by the grace of God, the problem is not in your brain or mind, but in your heart and will. It is true that you must understand with your mind the historical facts about Jesus Christ and his death on the cross for our sins. However, salvation only comes when you, as a whole person, submit yourself and all that you are to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Has this transaction taken place between you and the Lord Jesus Christ? If not, bow to him right now and receive him into your heart and life in true repentance and faith.

The Bible exhorts you to come to Christ, but not before it clearly tells you who he is and where you might find him. Christ is not up front at the altar; nor is he in the communion cup or baptism. He will not be found as the logical conclusion to a series of questions; nor will you find him as the result of an intellectual decision made by your will. Christ is the Lord of Glory, and as such, he is seated on a throne in heaven at the right hand of God the Father. Coming to Christ is bowing to him on his throne as both Lord and Savior in repentance and faith. It is to gladly

submit to his rightful claims of Lordship over you and receive his gracious benefits promised to you as you trust him. In order to have a well grounded assurance of salvation, we must be sure that the true Christ of Scripture is in us and that we are in him. When we look into the Bible, we see Christ on the throne with all power and authority. We then look into our personal experience and see if that same Christ is on the throne of our hearts.

In closing, let’s clear up a popular misconception. Christ is every man’s **Lord** right now. We do not make Christ Lord by trusting him as our personal Lord. We merely acknowledge, gratefully and willingly, what is already true as we submit to him as the Lord.

Christ is not in the sinner’s hand to do with as the sinner chooses. The reverse is true. God put his Son in our hands one time and we unitedly cried out, “Crucify him.” God then highly exalted Christ and has put *us* in *his* hands. Every sinner, without exception, is in the hands of Christ to be disposed of as Christ, the Lord and Judge, decides.

I know that what I have just said is not taught in most evangelical churches today. Today men are told that they are king and captain of their own soul. The sinner is his own lord and his “free will” is totally in charge. Poor Jesus can do nothing but plead with the sinner to give him a chance. If the sinner will just take the first step, then Jesus will be able to help. In other cases, Jesus is pictured as freely giving forgiveness, and then pleading for the right to be the Christian’s Lord. What a corruption of the gospel is this *easy believism* of our generation!

Let us suppose that the would-be bride that we talked about earlier said, “I do,” instead of “I’ll take his credit cards.” The wedding is over, and all of the vows have been taken, and the last person has gone through the receiving line at the rear of the church. The bride turns to the man she just received as her husband, and says, “Jim, this has been one of the most wonderful and exciting days of my life. Phone me some day next week and maybe we can have lunch together.” I am sure that not a single person can imagine that such a thing could be possible. It’s just as impossible, if we are honest with the writings of the apostles, to think that a sinner can truly receive Christ and then part company with him and go in a different direction until next Sunday morning! Never! The bride and groom now begin a joint life that is shared in all things, so we take Christ into every room of our house and every aspect of our life at our conversion.

That’s the gospel. That’s the true Christian Faith. That’s the Christ of the Bible. Have you personally received the Lord Jesus Christ as the gift of God?■

—Adapted from the writings of John Reisinger

COME JUST AS YOU ARE

Cast yourself at once, in the simplest faith, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved. All of your preparation for eternity is entirely out of yourself, and in the Lord Jesus. Washed in his blood, and clothed upon with his righteousness, you may appear before God divinely, fully, freely, and forever accepted. The salvation of the chief of sinners is all prepared, finished, and complete in Christ (*Eph 1:6; Col 2:10*).

Your eye of faith must be directed entirely out of and from yourself to Jesus. Beware of looking for any preparation to meet God in yourself. It is all in Christ. God does not accept you on the basis of a broken heart, or a clean heart, or a praying heart, or a believing heart. He accepts you wholly and entirely on the ground of the perfect atonement of his blessed Son. Cast yourself, in childlike faith, upon that atonement—“Christ dying for the ungodly” (*Rom 5:6*)—and you are saved!

Justification is a poor, law-condemned, self-condemned, self-destroyed sinner, wrapping himself by faith in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is “unto all, and upon all them that believe” (*Rom 3:22*). He, then, is justified, and prepared to die and meet God, and he only, who casts from him the garment of his own righteousness, and runs into this blessed “City of Refuge”—the Lord Jesus—and hides himself there from the “avenger of blood” (*Joshua 20*), exclaiming, in the language of triumphant faith: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (*Rom 8:1*).

Look to Jesus, then, for a contrite heart; look to Jesus for a clean heart; look to Jesus for a believing heart; look to Jesus for a loving heart; and Jesus will give you all.

One faith’s touch of Christ, and one divine touch from Christ, will save the vilest sinner. Oh, the dimmest, most distant glance of faith, turning its languid eye upon Christ, will heal and save the soul. “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (*Isaiah 45:22*). God is prepared to accept you in his blessed Son, and for his sake he will cast all your sins behind his back, and take you to glory when you die (*Isaiah 38:17*)—“I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more” (*Heb 8:12*).

Never was Christ known to reject a poor sinner that came to him empty and with “nothing to pay” (*Luke 7:42*). “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (*Matt 11:28*). God will glorify his free grace in your salvation, and will therefore save you—**just as you are**—“without money and without price” (*Isaiah 55:1*). Paul responded immediately to the anxious jailor who asked what he must do to be saved—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (*Acts 16:31*).

No matter what you have been, or what you are, plunge into “the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness” (*Zech 13:1*), and you shall be clean, “washed whiter than snow” (*Psalms 51:7; Isaiah 1:18*). “The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin” (*1 John 1:7*).■

WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN FAITH?

CHRISTIANITY IS A PERSON

Christianity is **not a set of rules**. It has some very important rules, but Christianity is neither preaching nor obeying rules. There is a very simple but effective way of testing every preacher we hear. The false preacher is always reminding us of what we must do. His message is constantly focused on man’s efforts and is always “*do*” centered. The true preacher keeps reminding us of what Christ has done for us, and his message is focused on Christ and is “*done*” centered. One threatens with law and the other appeals by the cross.

Christianity is **not a series of ceremonies**. It has ceremonies such as baptism and communion, but the essence of the Christian faith is not in the ceremonies and symbols. You may be baptized and take communion every day, and still be as lost as the worst pagan in the world.

Christianity is **not a certain feeling** that we get that enables us to smile and be at peace with ourselves and our fellow man. If we truly receive the forgiveness of sins through faith in the gospel, we will surely feel differently; but the Christian faith is not a feeling, it’s a Person.

Christianity is **not joining a group**. You may even join the right group, but that will not make you a Christian. Becoming a Christian is far more than joining a church or any other organization.

Christianity is **not a cause**. Many people in our day are trying to make a revolutionary cause to be synonymous with the Christian faith. God is said to “be on the side of the poor,” so every movement or cause that is aimed at helping the poor becomes the gospel. The cause may be on the left or the right and may involve the correction of a grave injustice against our fellow man. However, no matter how just the cause, it cannot be equated with the gospel or Christianity.

Christianity is nothing more or less than **Christ Himself!** And understanding the Christian faith begins with the *biblical facts* about Christ. The Christ who is Christianity is the Christ of “biblical” and “historical” facts. The Christ who is Christianity was born of a virgin (*Matt 1:18-25*), lived a sinless life (*1 Peter 2:22*), was crucified for sinners (*Rom 5:8*), rose again from the dead (*Luke 24:5-6*), ascended into