

BASIC BIBLE KNOWLEDGE

5. JESUS CHRIST: HIS LIFE AND DEATH

Unlike the religions of the world, Christianity is founded, not on some system or ideology or code of ethics, but on a Person, Jesus Christ. Jesus is unique in His birth, His life, His teaching, His works and His death. None of the founders of the world's religions bears a record like HIS. Indeed, if we were to consider all the greatest, mightiest, wisest men who ever lived, **not one** has a record even remotely resembling that of Christ's.

HE STANDS ALONE IN ALL HISTORY – **UNIQUE, INCOMPARABLE, DIVINE.**

Jesus Christ is the foundation on which Christianity is built. He is the **ROCK** without which there would be no superstructure. Let us consider His life and works as recorded in the Bible.

HIS LIFE AND WORKS

1. **HIS BIRTH** by the Virgin Mary was in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14) which is being interpreted is, **GOD WITH US** (Matthew 1:23). His was a **supernatural** birth, not by the will of man, but by the power of God (Luke 1:35).
2. **HIS KNOWLEDGE** startled those who heard Him. At the age of twelve, He communed with the doctors in the Temple and “all that heard Him were **astonished** at His understanding and answers” (Luke 2:47). His most famous Sermon on the Mount left His hearers baffled and amazed. It is recorded that “the people were **astonished** at His doctrine: For He taught them as one having **authority**, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28,29).

The uniqueness of His knowledge and spiritual wisdom must be set against the fact that Jesus had grown up in a humble carpenter's shop. As far as we can tell, He never attended any school of higher learning. We conclude, therefore, that His source of knowledge came directly from **GOD the FATHER.**

3. **HIS TEACHINGS AND CLAIMS** – Jesus' teachings and claims are altogether **self-centered**, quite unlike those of any other teacher. The World's great religious masters pointed men to someone or something higher. Jesus drew men to Himself. His statements clearly attest to this:

“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John 6:35).

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live” (John 11:25).

“I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5).

Men of the world would say of these claims: “They are fantastic! How can they be?” Our Lord’s own words give the answer. “... with men it is impossible, **but not with God**” (Mark 10:27).

The above quotations are only a sampling of many other similar statements made by Jesus Christ. They are words which can only be uttered by divine authority, which authority Jesus is, as we shall shortly see.

4. **HIS DEITY – IS JESUS GOD?** - In our previous lesson on God, we learnt that GOD revealed Himself to men in His Son Jesus Christ, that second person of the TRIUNE GOD. **If this Jesus of Nazareth**, the Son of Man is also Son of God, then He must show clear and convincing evidence of the latter. And if such evidence is made available, then in all intellectual honesty, we must acknowledge that **CHRIST IS GOD**.

The sincere seeker of the truth who reads through the Gospels with an open mind cannot fail to see that JESUS CHRIST was GOD for three main reasons:

- a. His WORDS
- b. His WORKS
- c. His RESURRECTION

- a. HIS WORDS

A man’s speech gives an insight into his personality and character. The words uttered by Jesus and recorded in the Gospel accounts are of the **greatest significance**. They reveal to us **HIS heart and mind**. Read and ponder over these statements:

- (1) “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7). With these words Jesus rebuked Satan who tried to tempt Him.
- (2) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58). To the disputing Jews, our Lord’s words asserted His deity and exposed their unbelief. Jesus made it clear that He is the **eternal and pre-existent ONE, the God of Abraham**.
- (3) “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30). “... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?” (John 14:9,10). In this discourse with the disciples, Jesus left no doubt in their minds as to who **HE was: the GOD they worshipped**.

These quotations and many other similar passages make it abundantly clear how we are to regard the MAN JESUS. **To know Him is to know God; to see Him is to see God; to believe Him is to believe God.**

Some may object and argue that these are sweeping statements and wild claims. Such an objection would be valid if JESUS did not substantiate His WORDS by His **WORKS**. For if He had nothing to prove His deity, then truly those were but only empty words.

Let us now briefly consider His WORKS and how they bear the stamp of deity.

b. HIS WORKS

If Jesus was GOD, as He claimed, then His **WORKS** must be **SUPERNATURAL AND SUPERHUMAN**. They must belong to another realm, the spiritual and divine, something beyond human means and understanding.

We have already mentioned His teachings. All who heard Him were amazed. His teachings were not of this world: no ordinary mortal could have said the things He said. GOD alone could have conceived those thoughts and uttered those words.

By His miracles Jesus demonstrated His power as **Lord of life and Master of the physical world**. Should it surprise anyone, then, that JESUS **changed water into wine** (John 2:1-11), **fed the 5,000** (Matthew 14:17-21) or **walked on the Galilean Sea** (Matthew 9:27; 20:30), the **lame walked** (Matthew 11:5, 15:31; Luke 7:22), **lepers were cleansed** (Luke 17:12), and the **dead came to life** (John 11; Mark 5:22-43)? **The winds and sea obeyed Him** (Luke 8:25) and **evil spirits also** (Mark 1:27).

Men demand to see “signs” and “wonders”, or they will not believe. But when they see them, they remain in their unbelief, because their hearts are hardened. So our Lord pleads with those who are looking for the Saviour: “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or **else believe me for the very works’ sake**” (John 14:11). If a man will not be convinced by the WORKS of Jesus, then nothing else will change his mind.

c. HIS RESURRECTION

Of all the recorded miracles and signs in the Gospels, the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest. Never before nor after has there been any event like it. For a man to claim that he would lay down his life for others is not easy, and yet, it happens, though rarely. But for another to make that claim and also announce that he would **rise again** from the dead sets Him **apart** from human kind.

Of His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus said “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17,18).

The resurrection of Jesus, then, sets Him apart as the unique SON OF GOD, GOD in the FLESH, come to earth as SON of MAN to redeem fallen MAN back to GOD.

IF CHRIST IS GOD, must not all men acknowledge HIM and WORSHIP HIM?

HIS DEATH

No treatment of the life and work of CHRIST is complete without an account of HIS DEATH. The one purpose of His coming to earth was to save fallen Man and redeem the lost Creation. “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

So as the hour of His death drew near, His soul went through deep travail. “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12:27).

The death of Jesus is central to the Gospel message. It is the **heart of GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION for FALLEN MAN.**

GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

In our chapter on SIN we noted that with the fall of Adam, the entire human race fell under the cause of death. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

With Adam’s sin, a deep gulf and barrier came between man and GOD. Man’s original fellowship with GOD was broken. He became estranged, separated, at enmity with GOD, doomed and lost. But man as GOD’s best creation, made in His image and after His likeness, and GOD could not allow Satan to rob mankind from Him. The Holy Scriptures reveal that **GOD foreknew all things including Adam’s disobedience. God is never caught unawares: with Him there are no surprises.**

So GOD has a PLAN OF SALVATION even before the Creation. It was all carefully thought out, how Satan’s evil plot could be nullified, by the **sacrificial death of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God**, “without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world ...” (1 Peter 1:19,20).

This PLAN was **announced soon after the fall**, even while Adam and Eve were still in the Garden. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). Christ, the coming “seed of woman” **would bruise Satan’s head: He would crush and vanquish the enemy of our souls.**

That **GOD’S PLAN required JESUS to give up His life** as the price for sin was clear. Throughout the **Old Testament** we see this one theme expressed over and over again in the **animal sacrifice for sin** required by God. The sacrifice of the **Passover Lamb** at the beginning of the Exodus when God saved His people out of slavery in Egypt was a beautiful portrayal of the **sacrifice of Jesus, our Passover**, to save mankind from the deadly enslavement of sin.

The **Old Testament Prophets** looked forward to God's salvation. The best account of this is found in **Isaiah 53** which speaks of Jesus' coming as a suffering servant and God's sacrificial Lamb, "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: ... it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin" (vv 4, 5, 10).

GOD'S PLAN IN ACTION

When Jesus began His ministry, **John the Baptist** announced His appearance thus: "**Behold the Lamb of God**, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

Our **Lord Himself** was never in any doubt about His mission on earth as **God's sacrificial Lamb**. Time and again He reminded His disciples of His coming death "how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21).

As the **day of His offering approached**, "**He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem**" (Luke 9:51). **No one compels Him to give up His life**. "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. **This commandment have I received of my Father**" (John 10:18).

At the **Last Supper**, our Lord instituted that **Sacrament** of the broken body and the shed blood, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). In the **agony of Gethsemane**, Jesus prayed and yielded Himself in submission to the Father's will, to **drink the bitter cup of the death of the cross**.

GOD'S LOVE MANIFEST IN THE CROSS

While it was **CHRIST who suffered** on the cross as our sin bearer, nevertheless **GOD the Father was no less involved** in this great redemptive act. How it can be is very much a mystery, but Scripture says that **GOD was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself** (2 Corinthians 5:19). Further, "GOD commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

On the cross, then, we see **GOD'S justice and mercy and love met in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ**.

THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS

Christ's **death** on the cross is the very **heart** of the Gospel. There the **spotless Lamb of God gave His life a ransom for many** (Mark 10:45). There Christ "suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). "Who His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Christ's obedience to the Father's will won Him a **mighty victory over sin and death**. "And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:8). "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, **so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous**" (Romans 5:19).

By His death on the cross, Christ removed the barrier separating man from GOD. At that moment He cried "**It is finished!**" and the **veil of the Temple was rent into two, opening the way into God's holy Presence for all who turn to Him**. **Christ has opened the way to Heaven to all believers**.

THE BLESSINGS OF THE CROSS

To all who believe, there is "life for a look". A look of faith at the Crucified One gives **life**.

We are **justified** by His blood and saved from wrath (Romans 5:9).

We are **reconciled** to God by His death (Romans 5:10).

Once we were aliens, strangers, far from God. Now, by the blood of Christ we are **made nigh**, and become **citizens** and **members** of the household of God (Ephesians 2:12-19).

Once we were **enemies**, now we are **reconciled** (Colossians 1:21).

THE POWER OF THE CROSS

When Jesus ascended to heaven, He left behind the Apostles to continue the work, to teach all nations and to make more disciples. The message which they were to bear unto the uttermost parts of the earth was "Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). The preaching of the cross and Christ crucified is "the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Alas, and did my Saviour bleed?
And did my Sovereign die?
Would He devote that sacred head
For such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I have done,
He groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity! Grace unknown!
And love beyond degree!

Isaac Watts

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE QUIZ

No. 5 JESUS CHRIST: LIFE AND DEATH

Fill in the blanks:

1. Immanuel means GOD _ _ _ _ us.
2. CHRIST's teachings drew men to _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.
3. CHRIST backed His words by His _ _ _ _ _.
4. The Son of Man was also the Son of _ _ _ _.
5. To believe in the Son is to believe in the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _.

Underline the correct answer.

6. Jesus manifested His divine power in
(a) miracles (b) songs (c) hunger.
7. If men will not believe in the might works of Jesus
(a) they are of high IQ
(b) they have eternal life
(c) they will not be convinced by other arguments.
8. By His death on the cross Jesus
(a) received a fair punishment
(b) paid the penalty for our sins
(c) made sin less serious.
9. Apart from Christ's death
(a) we have other ways to God
(b) we must work for our salvation
(c) there is no other way to have peace with God.
10. Christ died as
(a) a martyr (b) criminal
(c) the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world