

The Incomparable Christ

Tiberius Caesar had been leader fifteen years; inheriting from Augustus a seven hundred year domination of the world that was Imperial Rome. During his stepfathers forty-one year rule there was more peace and prosperity in that seething complex of moral, political and social unrest than at any other time in her history. Pontius Pilate was the leader of Judea, the conquest of Palestine six decades in the past, inheriting the volatile, stubborn people who unaccountably clung to their absurd religious dream, thousands of years old, that one day a son of David would rule the world; defying attempts to either merge it with Eastern wealth and luxury, Greek philosophical brilliance, Roman religious tolerance or military law and might alike. Annas and Caiaphas were the head reli-

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gious leaders there, where Torah-bound Pharisees argued bitterly for racial purity and spiritual superiority, wealthy and influential Sadducee plied their one-and-one quarter million dollars annual Temple tax for political power, muttering Zealots stalked the streets with violence and revolt in their hearts and hands in the name of God, and Essene communes dropped out of society to seek spirituality in the monastic retreats and disciplines of asceticism. We are told also the names of other leaders. But the ironic fact remains that the Word of the Lord came to John the Baptist who was leader of nothing and lived in a place where no people lived at all. In just such ways, Heaven draws up its plans of battle.

One strange man in a desert, alone with God, the stars and the sand. No head of state or religion heard the Voice that declared the changing of the world; but all history knew it was about to happen, all humanity had been." waiting for the Advent that would forever divide all human destiny. Yet few even among the eight million Jews of that day knew the significance of the three hundred and thirty-three prophecies of the Promise, the fourteen detailed predictions of the Birth that were to be fulfilled so minutely; on the day, some three decades before when only a few devout shepherds in a field heard a midnight chorus from another world. But the facts are these; all time and history flowed inexorably together to find their first culmination in a tiny bed of straw in an obscure little town called Bethlehem. To a remote corner far from the center of world rule and dignity, to a hungry, hoping humanity like ours, sick of war. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was like this; when His mother was engaged to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Spirit."

No one was ever born like Jesus. He is unprecedented and unparalleled in history; the first and only baby without a human father. "A virgin shall conceive and be with child," said the Scriptures, (Is. 7:17) "and you shall call his name Emmanuel." (God is with us) "The Lord has created a new thing on the earth, a woman shall produce (cause to come about, make) a man." (Jer. 31:22) "For unto us a child is born (humanity) unto us a son is given," (divinity) said Isaiah, "and the government shall be on his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." (9:6) Long, long before, at the dawn of our race, a man stood up without a father or a mother, fresh-created from the hand of this God. They called him the first Adam. Now, in a visit that split history in two around its advent came another whose origin was even more marvelous; not the second, but the Last Adam, the Creator-God Himself entering His own creation.

Buried in a hundred ancient legends of a god-man who would come to bless the world is the reality of the oldest prophecy; the "seed of a woman" would be born in due time. (Gen. 3:15) Biology refers to the seed of men; and Matthew's careful account lists thirty-nine "begets" like this, conspicuously stopping to note, "Joseph, the husband of Mary, OF WHOM WAS BORN Jesus, who is called Christ." (Matt. 1:16) Mary is His mother; Joseph is certainly not His father. An ancient curse on Coniah's descendants (the Josias of Matt. 1:11) forbade any one of them to fill David's throne or covenant (Jer. 22:24-30) and Joseph, godly as he was, could not have fathered the

One of whom Gabriel said to Mary "...the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of his father David; and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever." (Luke 1:30-33) Only one ignorant and two unbelieving groups ever called Him, "the son of Joseph." (John 1:45; Lk. 4:22; Jn. 6:42) Mary knew differently. Luke points out Jesus was, "as it was supposed," Joseph's son, the phrase referring to custom or legal standing, possible only if a stepson was either named by his father (Matt. 1:21) or adopted his stepfathers trade. (Mk. 6:3)

Luke's record details Mary's lineage; she too was in the royal line, and as His real mother bore Him as rightful Ruler of Israel. Joseph's father in Matthew is Jacob; the Heli in Luke 3:23 is Mary's Dad, Joseph's father-in-law. Genetic law states that in every individual we find all the characteristics of the two progenitors from Mary, true humanity, all the way back to Adam; from God, His Father, true Deity, all the way back to eternity. This miracle is a mystery, yet its fact is essential to your salvation; like your heart, which you may have never seen or understood, it is its reality and not your knowledge of it that gives you life. How the limitless love and life of the ruler of universes beyond imagination could have compressed down into a span of little humanity is incomprehensible, but that fact is the central reality of the record: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." (Jn. 1:14)

Wisdom: Incandescent Intelligence

No one ever spoke like Jesus. Peter Abelard said, "I think the purpose and cause of the Incarnation was that God might illuminate the world by His wisdom and excite it to the love of Himself." Pascal commented, "Jesus Christ said great things simply as though He had not thought them great; yet so clearly that we see easily what He thought of them. This clearness, joined to this simplicity, is wonderful." Phillip Schaff said, "This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."

"The people were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes." (Matt. 7:28b-29) "When the disciples heard it, they exceedingly amazed..." (Matt. 19:25) "They were astonished at His doctrine; for His word was with power. (Luke 4:32) "The common people heard Him gladly." (Mk. 12:37) "Never man spoke like this man." (John 7:46) The Sermon On The Mount. The Parables. The "Lord's Prayer." The Great Commandments. The Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, the Good Samaritan. The Pharisee and the Publican. Any of these would do honor to any book in the world, a power and simplicity of the highest genius, without equal or rival. Did early Christians of taste and education compose these and ascribe them to Christ? They could not do it. Then from where came this wisdom, if Christ was merely some peasant carpenter? Listen to His Own words:

"Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words will never pass away." (Luke 21:33) "The words I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life." (John 6:63) "He that hears My word, and believes on Him that sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death unto life." (Jn. 5:24) "If any man will do His will, he shall know the doctrine, whether it be of God or I speak of Myself." (Jn 7:17) "If a man keep My Saying, he shall never see death." (Jn. 8:51) "For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed when He shall come in His own glory and in His Fathers, and of the holy angels." (Luke 9:26)

As Paley points out:

"When He delivered a precept it was seldom He added any proof or argument; still more seldom limitations and distinctions. He produced Himself a messenger from God. He put the truth of what He taught upon authority." (Evidences, pp. 156-157)

“I say unto you, swear not at all; I say unto you, resist not evil; I say unto you, love your enemies.” (Matt. 5:34, 39, 44) “You shall love the Lord your God... and love your neighbor as yourself; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Mk. 12:30-31) “I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6) “I am the light of the world; he that follows Me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life.” (John 8:12) His claims, His words, His warnings are immense, ringing with authority and majesty; never did a man indeed, speak like Jesus did to all audiences curious, hostile or adoring, without apparent deliberation or premeditation, without a moments hesitation or uncertainty. He answers them all, critics, lawyers, debaters, religious specialists, scoffers, (so masterfully and convincingly they are mad with rage and impotence dismissing their carefully planned tricks in seconds. Study the incidents of the woman taken in adultery, (John 8:1-11) the lawyer with his query on eternal life, (Lk. 10:25-37) the chief priests on authority, (Matt. 21,23-46) and the Pharisees’ taxation trap question. (Matt. 22:15-22) Are these answers of a mere man?

“...It is apparent that His influence on the thought of the human race has been immense. It has guided and governed the highest forms of intellectual energy. For more than a thousand years after the meeting of the Council of Nicea early in the fourth century, it is hardly possible to mention the name of a single man of great speculative power in Europe, North Africa or Western Asia who was not a Christian theologian. The great poets, the great painters, the great orators, the great architects also did homage to the supremacy of Christ. It was confessed that He stood alone, and in Him man had found God...

“He has made the loftiest and sublimest conceptions of God, of the Universe, of the dignity and destiny of mankind the common possession, age after age, of uncounted millions who knew nothing of the learning of schools and were familiar with only the rudest forms of secular literature.” (Robert W. Dale, Faith And Physical Science)

Purity: Intolerance For Iniquity

Nobody ever lived like Jesus. “Imagine,” said Catherine Booth, “the very holiest and best who ever trod our earth putting forth such assumptions and how they would sound! Suppose Moses, who talked with God in the burning bush, or Isaiah, or Daniel, the man greatly beloved, or the apostle of the Gentiles who was admitted to the third heaven, or the beloved apostle John, suppose any of these men saying, ‘I am from above, you are from beneath; I am not of this world; If you believe not I am He, you shall die in your sins; I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; Have I been with you so long time and yet you have not known me? He that has seen me has seen the Father.’ His character supported His assumptions. For over 1800 years the best of the human race have accepted these without being shocked by them. If He be not Divine, how comes it to be that the greatest of human intellects, the sincerest of human souls, the most aroused and quickened of human consciences have ventured their all upon this Divine Word and have seen nothing contradictory between His claims and the actual character which He sustained in the world?” (Popular Christianity, p. 27)

Schaff writes that Jesus was zealous but not fanatical, faithful but not obstinate, kind, never weak, tender but not sentimental. He was unworldly but not indifferent but not obstinate, kind, never weak, tender but not sentimental He was unworldly but not Indifferent, unsociable or unduly familiar. He “combined childlike innocence with manly strength, absorbing devotion to God with untiring interest in the welfare of man, tender love to the sinner with uncompromising severity against sin, commanding dignity with winning humility, fearless courage with wise caution, unyielding firmness with sweet gentleness!” (Bernard Ramm, Protestant Christian Evidences, p. 177)

Harry Rimmer pointed out that Jesus was born a Jew, lived a Jewish life under Jewish law in a Jewish land. Yet to the end of His days He offered no sacrifice for sin. No other person who lived in the circle of Moses law could ever say he need offer no sacrifice for sin. He admonished His disciples, “When you pray, say Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors,” but He never prayed for forgiveness. He owed no debts, moral, spiritual or physical. And Jesus taught the necessity of regeneration: the twelve, His mother Mary, all the loyal band of men and women who followed him during His lifetime needed redemption; except Himself. Perfection. There is no

other word which would suit a descriptive statement of the humanity of Christ. We use the word “perfect” with all of its common connotations and in accordance with your understanding of that term. Perfection is so rare that, “No man is perfect,” is accepted today as axiomatic. But Jesus Christ was.

“So conscious was Jesus of His human perfection that when He stood surrounded by His enemies He boldly challenged them to produce proof of any error in belief or conduct of which He had ever been guilty. This is a startling act when we remember that His teachings went contrary to the accepted trend of rabbinical interpretation. Again and again the tyrannical hierarchy of Israel charged Him with violating the law of Moses. On each such occasion He cited the law and showed Himself to be the only one of the group who fully comprehended its intentions and its applications. His life was fully open and nothing He did was in secret.”

“Shrewd doctors of the law studied His every word and deed under the keenest scrutiny that hate could provide, hoping to find legal accusation against Him. No other life that ever lived could have withstood that microscopic examination, but Jesus Christ emerged from the crucible of that survey with reputation untarnished and character unblemished.” (The Magnificence Of Jesus, pp. 137-139)

“Fifteen million minutes of life on this earth, in the midst of a wicked and corrupt generation—every thought, every deed, every purpose, every work, privately and publicly, from the time He opened His baby eyes until He expired on the cross, were all approved of God. Never once did our Lord have to confess any sin, for He had no sin.” (Wilbur Smith, “Have You Considered Him?”)

“The life of Jesus depicts an ideal that has never since been achieved. There have been holy and godly men who have astonished the world with their unselfish plane of sacrificial living, which they have achieved by following the example of Jesus; but none has yet come up to the ideal set by His conduct. Nineteen centuries of more or less constant progress has lifted the levels of living among civilized people... yet after those long years, the life of Christ is still recognized as the perfect moral pattern for all ages and all races.” (The Magnificence Of Jesus, pp. 137-140)

Impeccable Integrity

His friends said He was without sin. “He committed no sin,” Peter said, “neither was guile found on His lips. When He was reviled he did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten; but He trusted to Him who judges justly.” (1 Pet. 2:22-23) “And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins,” records John, “and in Him is no sin.” (1 John 3:5) “He has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin,” says Paul. His enemies had to admit it; Pilate said, “I find no fault in this man... What evil has He done?” (Luke 22 4,22; John 18:38, 19:4, 6) “I am innocent of the blood of this just person.” (Matt 27:24) The thief on the cross said, “This man has done nothing wrong.” (Lk. 23:41) The centurion that crucified Him said, “Certainly this was a righteous man.” (Lk. 23:47) “And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none.” (Mark 14:55) And Jesus Himself said of His Father, “I do always the things that are pleasing to Him.” (John 8:29) And to His critical foes, “Which of you convinces Me of sin?” (John 8:46) Search and look through all the great religion, and religious leaders of the world; none of them could say this, none of them would have dared. But Jesus did. An absolutely holy, perfect and sinless life. He could forgive sins, because He Himself, never sinned, and because He was God in flesh.

Power: Invalidated Impossibilities

“The miracles of Jesus,” writes George MacDonald, “were His Father’s normal works wrought small and swift that we might see them.” Forty-nine miracles surround the Life of Jesus from His birth to His ascension; seven showing His power over demons, (Mk. 1:23-26; 7:24-30, 9:14-26; Matt. 12:22-23, 8:28-34, 9:32-35, 17:14-21); healing many of sickness, including palsy, fever, deafness, blindness, hemorrhage and leprosy (John 4:46-54, Mk. 1:29-31, 40-45, 2:3-12; Jn. 5:1-16, Mk. 3:1-5, Matt. 8:5-13, Mk. 5:25-34, Matt. 9:27-31, Mk. 7:32-37, 8:22-26; John

9; Lk. 13:11-17, 14:1-6, 17:11-19, 18:35-43) He even raised three people from the dead; a widows son, (Luke 7:11-16) Jarius' daughter, (Mk. 5:22-24, 35-43) and Lazarus, who had been dead four days! (John 11) Then He did it Himself, as we shall see later. (Luke 24:1-7)

He wrought miracles both of deliverance, (Luke 4:30, Mk. 4:37-41, Matt. 14:28-31, John 6:17-21, 18:4-6) and judgment. (Matt. 8:30-32; 21:18-21) He supplied food and drink by means of miracle, (John 2:1-11; Lk. 5:1-11; Matt. 14:15-21, 15:32-39, 17:27 (tribute money) John 21:6-14; Jn. 21:9) and miracles surrounded Him through His whole life: at His birth, (Matt. 2:1-9) His baptism, (Matt. 3:16-17) the Transfiguration, (Matt. 17:1-14) prayer, (John 12:28-30) His death, (Matt. 27:45-53) His Resurrection, (Matt. 28:2) and His ascension (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-11) "And many of the people believed on Him, and said, "When Christ comes, will He do more miracles than those which this man has done?""

He did these without show, without ostentation and without fanfare. Many times these are called in the Gospels His "works" an ordinary term that speaks volumes of who He is. He is the God who created nature. Such actions are the natural, necessary outflow of a life that is creative, constructive and compassionate, backed by infinite power and ultimate love. All of Jesus miracles were a mirror of His character, full of love and mercy, upholding His Father's glory and meeting His creation's needs. They are as far removed from the apocryphal tricks of magicians and occult adepts as light is from darkness. "Are you He that should come," asked John the Baptist, "or do we look for another?" "Go," said Jesus, "and show John the things you 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. 11:2-5)

The most ancient apologist of whose works we have a small fragment on record, who lived some seventy years after the Ascension, writing to the emperor Adrian says, "The works of our Savior were always conspicuous, for they were real; both they that were healed, and they that were raised from the dead, were seen, not only when they were healed, or raised, but for a long time afterwards; not only whilst He dwelled on this earth, but also after His departure, and for a good while after it; inasmuch as that some of them have reached to our times." (Eusebius, Histories, Vol. 1, 4.50.3)

Justin Martyr, who followed the previous writer Quadratus by about thirty years says, "Christ healed those who were from birth blind, and deaf and lame causing by His word one to leap, another to hear and a third to see: and having raised the dead, and caused them to live, He by His works, excited attention, and induced the men of that age to know Him, who however, seeing these things done, said that it was a magical appearance, and dared call Him a magician and a deceiver of the people." (Justin, Dialogue p.258)

Even the enemies of Jesus could not deny that He did miracles. When they examined the man that Jesus had healed who had been born blind, there was a division among them. "This man is not of God because He does not keep the Sabbath day," said some. Others said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" (John 9:16) "What do you say of Him that opened your eyes?" they asked the blind man. "Is this your son who was born blind?" they questioned his parents. "How then does he see?" (Jn. 9:19) "Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind," he replied to them. "If this man were not of God he could do nothing." (9:32-33) And Himself to him. (9:35-38) When Lazarus was raised from the dead, the despairing comment of the chief priests and Pharisees was, "What shall we do? For this Man many miracles; if we let Him thus alone, all will believe on Him." (John 11:48)

The life of Jesus is a life filled with miracles. These miracles continue down to the present day because He is, "the same, yesterday, today and forever." (Heb. 13:8)

Life: Immeasurable Influence

If the New Testament is clear on anything it is this; Jesus Christ was truly God as well as truly man. He was not a God, or related to God, or identified with God in some ethical or moral sense. Its records overwhelmingly affirm that the express image (Heb. 1:3) of the invisible God (1 Cor. 11:7, 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) with all the full at-

tributes of Deity resident in Him (Col. 2:9) fully equal to God His Father (Phil. 2:6) is the God-man Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The New Testament declares that Christ created all things, (1 Jn. 1:3,10; Col. 1:16; Eph. 3:9; Heb. 1:2, 4:11) governs the Universe, (Is. 9:6,7; Dan. 7:13-14; Acts 10:36; Ps. 45:65; Rom. 9:5; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Ps. 2:72, Phil. 2:9-11) forgives sin, (John 10:27, 28; Rev. 21:6; 2:7, 17, 28) shall judge world, (Acts 17:31; Matt. 2:5; Jn. 5:22) upholds all things, (Heb. 1:3, Col. 1:16-17) inspired the prophets, (1 Pet. 1:11) and sends out ambassadors for Him (2 Cor. 5:20) He is called King, (John 1:49, Lk. 23:2; Jn. 18:37; 1 Tim. 1:17; 1 Tim. 6:15) the Door, (Jn. 10:7, 9) The Bread of Life, (Jn. 6:35, 48) The Good Shepherd, (Jn. 10:11) The Vine, (Jn. 15:1) The Light of the World, (Jn. 8:12, 9:5) and the Way, the Truth and the Life. (Jn. 14:6) He is called the Altogether Lovely, the Bright and Morning Star, the Chief Cornerstone, the Rose of Sharon, the Great Physician and the Rock of Ages; the Desire of All Nations, the Wisdom and Power of God, the Author and Finisher of Our Faith. He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Lover of the poor, matchless Teacher, healer of the sick, Ideal of ideals, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and above all the savior God of humanity.

ONE SOLITARY LIFE: "Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a woman. He grew up in another village. He worked in a carpenter shop until he was thirty and then for three years he was an itinerant preacher. He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where he was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but himself... While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While he was dying his executors gambled for the only piece of property he had on earth; his coat. When he was dead, he was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

"Nineteen long centuries have come and gone and today he is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that ever were built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned put together, have not affected the life of man upon this life as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

"There are other men who do not come to worship Christ; who simply come to speculate upon Him... the patronage they offer the Son of God! It makes me sad to hear how they damn Him with faint praise. What I dread amongst you is not that you will destroy Christ, but that you will patronize Him. Jesus Christ is nothing to me if He is not the Savior of the world... You will know what Jesus Christ is most and best when you are in greatest need of such service as He can render.

"No man can entertain an opinion of indifference regarding Jesus Christ. If he has considered the subject at all, he must worship Christ or crucify Him. Where there is earnestness in the inquiry and the criticism that earnestness ends in homage or in crucifixion." (Joseph Parker, The Inner Life Of Christ, Vol. 1, p.85)

Death and Resurrection

No one ever DIED like Jesus. Many millions have died, and hundreds of thousands have been executed. Scores of thousands have died the terrible death of a Roman crucifixion before; none of these things make the death of Jesus unique. No one ever died like Jesus, because He died when He did not deserve to die and like no one else in history did not HAVE to die. "Lay down My life," Jesus said, "that I might take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." (John 10:17-18) Jesus would not have died from old age or sickness or weakness like any other human being. He had a perfect body, perfect health and He knew no sin. He died like any sufferer of a crucifixion could have died, but His death was utterly unlike any other, for here was a death for the sins of the whole world.

He told them He would die. They did not believe it then. They had not watched the silent reel of history unravel before their eyes as prophecy was fulfilled hour after hour in those last few terrible days. But one day they would

take the time to see it for themselves. Twenty-nine prophecies of His trial, death and burial over five centuries in the saying, fulfilled literally in His life within twenty-four hours. Betrayed by a friend, (Ps. 41:9, 55:12-14; Matt. 10:14, 26:49-50) sold for thirty pieces of silver, (Zech. 11:2; Matt. 26:15) thrown down in God's house, (Zech. 11:13b; Matt. 27:5a) for a potters field. (Zech. 11:13b; Matt. 27:7) Forsaken by His disciples. (Zech. 13:7; Mk. 14:50; Matt. 26:31) Accused by false witnesses, (Ps. 35:11; Matt. 26:59-61) dumb before His accusers, (Is. 53:7; Matt. 27:12-19) wounded and bruised, (Is. 53:5, Zech. 13:6; Matt. 27:26) hit and spit on, (Is. 50:6, Mic. 5:1; Matt. 26:67; Lk. 22:63) mocked. (Ps. 22:7-8; Matt. 27:31) He falls under His cross. (Ps. 109:24-25; Jn. 19:17, Lk. 23:26) They pierce His hands and feet. (Ps. 22:16; Lk. 23:33) He is crucified with transgressors, (Is. 53:12; Matt. 27:38, Mk. 15:27-28) stared on, (Ps. 22:17; Lk. 23:35) and His clothes are cast for. (Ps. 22:18; Jn. 19:23-24)

It was not Roman nails that killed Christ. It was not the ragged, burning breath forced in through aching lungs; it was not the sheer pulses of pain that shot through His wrists and feet; it was not the raging thirst that took His life. When Pilate checked, he marveled that He was already dead. It was the spear thrust into His dear dead side that told the final truth; Jesus died from a broken heart. In one great hurt, He took on Himself the sin of the whole world; it broke, it utterly shattered His mighty heart. It was sin that killed the Son of God, sin He took on Himself who knew no sin; your sin, my sin that cut off His life and blew Him out like a candle. But He went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him, and His Last, glad cry was not, "I am finished!" but, "It is finished." No one ever died like Jesus because He died for every sinner that has ever lived; holy God and perfect Man, doing what all His calm, courageous life He had come to do.

Dead they said, and thought to themselves, "Now it is over." Cut off in His prime, exiled out like an embarrassing entry in life's ledger, hung up to die, pulled down and buried. But that was not the end. Not at all. There had been those disturbing statements all along, but who could believe things like, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up?" A good guard around the tomb, a very big rock to discourage the casual and some last-minute cleaning up operations around the town; that ought to take care of the legends.

And then, the early morning earthquake; the light, like the sun, three days from the cross, and the terrified rumors that radiated out from an empty grave in the garden. Afraid, none of the disciples dare believe the woman's incoherent story; He was dead, really dead; they saw Him die with their own eyes, and buried, wound in pounds of spices, laid to go old as marble on a slab of a borrowed tomb. But they go, just a few of them half afraid, half hoping for a miracle, and when they see what they see inside the almost empty tomb, they become such soldiers and heroes that die rather than deny, that go gladly to terrible deaths and vicious executions, that lay down their lives likewise in confidence of a reality that has forever delivered them from the fear of death.

"The grave-clothes lay like the shriveled, cracked shell of a cocoon, left behind when the moth has emerged and hoisted her bright sails in the sunshine... or more accurately like a glove from which the hand has been removed, the fingers of which still retain the shape of the hand. In that manner, the grave-clothes were lying, collapsed a little, slightly deflated, because there was between the rolls of bandages a considerable weight of spices, but there lay the linen cloth that had been wound round the body of Christ. It was when they saw that, that the disciples believed." (Peter Marshall, *Mr. Jones Meet The Master*, p. 126)

Jesus said He would be crucified, but on the third day, He would rise from the dead. (Matt. 16 :21, 17:9, 22-23; 20:18; 26:32; Mk. 9:10; Lk. 9:22-27; Jn. 2:18-22) No founder of any world religion would dare make a claim like that. Jesus did. They crucified Him. Three days later, He rose from the dead. There is the crux of Christianity. It is one thing to say you are God; it is another to demonstrate it so absolutely. This is the fact that made heroes out of cowards, that shook Jerusalem, that sent the Gospel burning like light through the world to turn it upside down. Only a crook, a fool, or God would make the kind of claims Jesus did. He did what He said He would, accomplished what He said He could. Whoever Jesus was, He was neither liar or lunatic. Those who have since met Him, alive and well forevermore have called Him simply, "Lord."

Soon Return: Immanent Intervention

Prophecies: of His birth, His life and His death. Consider for instance these fourteen of His birth fulfilled precisely in the Baby Jesus. All of them came true to the letter.

Prophecies: His Birth: The Messiah will be:

1. Seed of a woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4)
2. Born of a virgin (Is 7:14; Matt. 1:18, 24, 25)
3. Son of God (Ps. 2:7, 1 Chr. 17:11-14, 2 Sam 7:12-16; Matt. 3:17, 16:16; 26:63; Mk. 3:11, 9:7; Lk. 9:35; 22:70; Acts 13:30-33; Jn 1:34, 49)
4. Seed of Abraham (Gen. 12:2,3; 22:18; Matt. 1:1, Gal. 3:16)
5. Son of Isaac (Gen. 21:12; Lk. 3:23-24; Matt. 1:2)
6. Son of Jacob (Num. 24:17, Gen. 35:10-12; Lk. 1:33 3:23, 32; Matt. 1:2)
7. Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10, Mic. 5:2; Lk-3:23, 33; Matt. 1:2; Heb. 7:14)
8. From the Family Line of Jesse (Is. 11:1, 10; Lk. 3:23, 32, Matt. 1:6)
9. Of the House of David (Jer. 23:5; 2 Sam. 7:12-16, Ps. 132:1; Matt. 1:1, 9:27, 15:22, 22:41-46; Mk. 9:10; Lk. 18:38, 39)
10. Born at Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1; Jn. 7:42; Lk. 2:4-7)
11. Kings bring him gifts (Ps. 72:10; Is. 60:6; Matt. 2:1, 11)
12. Children killed (Jer. 31:15; Matt. 2:16-18)
13. He shall be called Lord (Ps. 110:1, Jer. 23:6; Lk. 2:1; 20:42-44)
14. He shall be Emmanuel (God with us) (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23; Lk. 7:16) (Josh McDowall, Evidence Demands Verdict)

Consider those of His life and His death; over three hundred evidences that revolve around this one Man whose demands on your life and mine cannot be ignored. All precisely fulfilled. And consider this; for every prophecy of Jesus first coming, there are seven of His second. He is not the Christ of mere history, or even of present experience; He is the Coming King, coming in clouds of power and great glory, the Rightful Owner of your life, at whose Advent all will be called into reckoning, small and great, rich or poor, religious or not. On that day, the professional skeptic will change his theology; the cynic will scream for the rocks to hide his face from Him who sits on the Throne; the scoffer will lose forever his practiced sneer. He is not the Christ of a long-gone past. He is the Present Savior and the worlds future Judge, a future that is fast moving into present reality. Are you ready to meet Him? Have you ditched your small ambitions and insignificant arguments, and gone with tears to His feet to have Him make you new? For above all these things, His name is still Jesus, which means "Savior," and there is still no other name given among men under heaven or on earth whereby we must be saved than: The Incomparable Christ.

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