

A leaflet written by a Christian graduate with the help of some friends . . . which asks the questions "Who is Jesus Christ?" and "Why did he allow Himself to be killed as He was?" and seeks to find the answers in the Bible.

Investigating Christian Belief

4. CHRIST

"God was in

Christ

reconciling the world to Himself."

"I am the light of the world;
he who follows Me will not
walk in darkness, but will have
the light of life."

Jesus Christ¹

Who or what is Jesus Christ — a great man, a prophet, a political idealist,
a myth, or is He the Son of God and saviour of the world?

The teaching and claims of Jesus Christ

If you are not familiar with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, you might
want to start this study with some background reading:

- Mark 1:14—3:19 Tells of the beginning of Jesus' ministry.
- Luke 10:25—12:31 Gives a good sample of His teaching.

(an overall picture is best obtained by reading Mark's Gospel, which takes
about one hour)

1

What did Jesus Christ claim about Himself?

- Mark 14:61, 62
- John 8:56—58
- John 10:30—33
- John 14:6

"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God; or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

C.S. Lewis²

2

What did Jesus claim to do for others?

- Luke 7:48–49
- John 8:31–32, 36
- John 10:27–28

3

To what did Jesus point as evidence for His claims?
John 10:37–38

What were some of His works?

- Matthew 14:19–21
- Mark 4:39–41
- Luke 7:20–23
- John 11:43–44

4 What was the opinion of those who knew Jesus best as to His character?

- John 1:14
- 1 Peter 2:22

"The essence of love is self-sacrifice. The worst of men is adorned by an occasional flash of such nobility, but the life of Jesus irradiated it with a never-fading incandescent glow. Jesus was sinless because He was selfless. Such selflessness is love. And God is love."

John Stott³

- What was the only fault His enemies could find in Him?
Mark 14:55–64 and John 19:4–7

"We are faced then with a frightening alternative. This man we are talking about either was (and is) just what He said or else a lunatic or something worse. Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend; and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God. God has landed on this enemy occupied world in human form."

C.S. Lewis⁴

The death of Christ

Once we begin to accept the claims of Christ, the greatest difficulty that confronts us is His death. Why did He allow it to happen? What does it mean?

5 What did Jesus tell His disciples several months before His death?

- Mark 9:30–32
- John 10:17–18
- Matthew 20:28

Read Mark 15:1–39 for an account of Jesus Christ's death.

If you have an Old Testament you may also like to read Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53, which speak prophetically of the death of Christ, the Messiah, hundreds of years before the event.

6

Read and consider 1 Peter 3:18. According to the Apostle Peter:

- For what did Christ die?
- For whom did Christ die?
- What was the purpose of His death?

God is a just and holy God and He will not simply overlook sin or treat it as other than it is. In God's eyes, sin is a capital offence!

"Behold, all souls are mine" says God, "the soul that sins shall die."
see Ezekiel 18:4

(If you are not convinced of the awfulness of sin and the reality of its long-term consequences, you could look at the study on MAN in this series.)

The sin and guilt offerings of the Old Testament were a pointer to Jesus Christ's death on the cross. They were a constant reminder to the Jewish people of the terrible consequences of sin. In order to obtain forgiveness for sin, a Jew laid his hands on the head of an unblemished animal, confessing his sin, thus identifying his sin with the animal. He then killed the animal and gave the blood to the priest. The pouring out or sprinkling of the blood covered the sin, the innocent animal having died in place of the guilty sinner.

7 What then is the significance of John the Baptist's description of Jesus in John 1:29?

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Isaiah 53:5–6

8 What did Jesus do to take away sin?

- Isaiah 53:5–6 (see above)
- 1 Peter 2:24
- Matthew 26:28

9 Is there any other way to forgiveness? Hebrews 9:22

In giving Himself to die for our sin on the cross of Calvary, God has dealt with sin in a way that shows for all time that He hates sin but loves the sinner.

He died that we might be forgiven,
He died to make us good,
That we might go at last to heaven,
Saved by His precious blood.

There was no other good enough
To pay the price of sin.
He only could unlock the gate
Of heaven, and let us in.

Mrs. C.F. Alexander⁵

Jesus Christ is alive today

*Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.* ⁶

10 Compare Acts 2:22–24 (the first Christian sermon) and 1 Corinthians 15:3–4. What is the main theme of the Christian message?

(For further details of Jesus Christ's resurrection, see Luke 24:1–53 or the study on TRUTH in this series.)

11 Since Jesus Christ has risen from the dead, what is He now able to do?

- Matthew 28:20
- Hebrews 7:25
- Revelation 1:18

The founders of all man made religions are dead or will die, but the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ, is alive today and forever.

12 What did Jesus say will one day happen? Matthew 16:27 and 24:30

- When will this happen? Matthew 24:36
- What are we exhorted to do? Matthew 24:44

Whether we are still alive-when Jesus Christ returns or whether we die before then, we are surely wise to be ready.

Compare John 8:24 with Acts 10:43.

- Does everyone benefit from what Christ has done?
- How can we be sure of benefitting?
- What is true for those who trust in Christ?
- What is true for those who don't?

"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

The Apostle Peter⁷

FURTHER READING

The Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

Basic Christianity, John R.W. Stott.

Miracles, C.S. Lewis.

Study on SALVATION in this series.

REFERENCES Used by permission.

1 John 8:12

2 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pg. 52, Collins.

3 John R.W. Stott, *Basic Christianity*, pg. 44, IVP

4 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pg. 53, Collins.

5 Mrs. C.F. Alexander, from the hymn "There is a Green Hill Far Away", No. 163, Anglican Hymn Book.

6 Series 3, Communion Service, Church of England.

7 Acts 4:12.

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