Christ Is All

By Rich Carmicheal

God's Word clearly warns us to be on our guard against false teaching in these last days. For example, the Apostle Paul writes that *"the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons"* (1 Tim. 4:1) and that *"…evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived"* (2 Tim. 3:13-15). The Apostle John exhorts us to *"not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (1 John 4:1). The Apostle Peter likewise admonishes, *"You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness"* (2 Pet. 3:17).

While we must be alert for any distortion of truth, we need to especially beware of any false doctrine regarding the Person and work of Christ. Since He is the centerpiece of God's eternal plan and purpose (Eph. 3:11), He is the target of all sorts of distortion and deception. Some of the truths about Him that are under attack include His virgin birth, His deity, His unique position as the Son of God, His claim to be the only means of salvation and His promise to return.

While we can expect false teaching about the Person and work of Christ to continue and intensify in the days ahead, the attack against Him has been longstanding. The Apostle Paul, for example, expresses his concern in a letter to the Corinthians that their minds might be led away from devotion to Christ by deceitful workers who were preaching *"another Jesus"* (2 Cor. 11:3-4). The Apostle Peter warns of false teachers *"who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them…"* (2 Pet. 2:1), and also warns of mockers in the last days who will question the promise of Christ's Second Coming (2 Pet. 3:3-4). The Apostle John likewise writes of the reality of deceivers and admonishes readers to *"Watch yourselves…"* (2 John 1:7-8). He in particular warns of the spirit of the antichrist and those who do not acknowledge Jesus as coming in the flesh (1 John 4:3; 2 John 1:7), and who deny that Jesus is the Christ (1 John 2:22) and do not abide in His teaching (2 John 1:9).

In the same vein, Jude notes the reality of false teachers who creep in unnoticed and who *"deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ"* (Jude 1:4). He stresses the need for believers to *"contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints"* (v. 3). And this is the challenge before us today as we face the reality of persons within the church who are distorting and denying foundational truths about Christ. We must remain true to what Scripture teaches and to the truths that the church through the ages has faithfully handed down to us regarding Christ.

Christ Is All!

Although many religions and individuals view Jesus in favorable light as a good teacher, a good prophet and a good person, they do not acknowledge Him as the One who transcends all

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others, the One whose name is above every other name, the One to be followed at all costs. The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that *"Christ is all"* (Col. 3:11). He is *"the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end"* (Rev. 22:13). He is the One whom God raised from the dead and seated *"at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come"* (Eph. 1:20-21). All authority on earth and in heaven is His (Matt. 28:18), and all things are in subjection to Him (Eph. 1:22). He alone is Lord, and by Him *"are all things, and we exist through Him"* (1 Cor. 8:6). He is the heir of all things, the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of God's nature, and He *"upholds all things by the word of His power"* (Heb. 1:2-3). *"For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together"* (Col. 1:16-17).

He is the Word of God, and God's greatest messenger and message to the world (John 1:1; Heb. 1:2). Of first importance is that He *"died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures"* (1 Cor. 15:3-4). He is the Holy One of God and He has the words of eternal life (John 6:68-69). He is the Bread of Life (John 6:35), the source of Living Water (John 4:14), the source of every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3), and in Him *"are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col. 2:3).

He Is the Son of God

Scripture is filled with witnesses to the truth that Jesus is the unique Son of God, including the testimony of Jesus Himself (Mark 14:61-62) and the testimony of the Father who declared at Jesus' baptism and Transfiguration, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"* (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Jesus was with God in the beginning (John 1:1), came down from heaven (John 6:38) and took on flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). Regarding the Incarnation, many professing Christian leaders deny the virgin birth of Christ. However, the Scriptures make it very clear that He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:23).

The fact that Jesus is the Son of God has profound implications, including implications regarding His deity. For example, the Jewish leaders knew that in calling God His own Father and saying, *"I and the Father are one"* (John 10:30), Jesus was *"making Himself equal to God"* (John 5:18; 10:33). And indeed the Scriptures affirm the deity of Christ, including passages such as: *"…And the Word was God"* (John 1:1); *"Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am'"* (John 8:58); *"'…And they shall call His name Immanuel,' which when translated means, 'God with us'"* (Matt. 1:23); *"Thomas answered and said to Him, 'My Lord and my God!'"* (John 20:28); *"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form"* (Col. 2:9); *"But of the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever…'"* (Heb. 1:8). A mark of false teaching is a rejection or distortion of the divinity of Christ.

He Is the Only Way to Salvation

One of the greatest deceptions today is that Jesus is not the only way to God, but just one of

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many ways. This error is based on a rejection of Scripture which emphatically teaches that eternal life comes only through the Son of God: *"He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life"* (1 John 5:11-12). Jesus Himself declares, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me"* (John 14:6). There is salvation in no one else! (Acts 4:12).

The false teaching that asserts there are ways to God other than through Jesus is also based in an apparent lack of understanding of the holiness of God, the seriousness of sin and the means of atonement. God is absolutely holy and man's sin separates him from God (Isa. 59:2) and ultimately leads to death (Rom. 6:23). Since God is just, He cannot simply overlook sin. However, He has provided a way – a most costly way – for sin to be atoned for and forgiven, and that is through the shedding of blood and the sacrifice of innocent life. Only the blood (and the life) of the Son of God, the precious Lamb of God, has the infinite merit and sufficiency to atone for man's sin.

Many people wrongly believe that they can be saved by their own righteousness and good works. But no matter how good people may be, they can never be good enough to save themselves in the light of an absolutely holy God. Their sin must be dealt with in order for them to be forgiven and to receive the gift of salvation and eternal life. And this is possible only through Jesus Christ, the Son of God. *"…God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:9-10). Jesus is the only mediator between God and men (1 Tim. 2:5) and there is no way to God except through His blood.

He Is Coming Again

Despite the false teaching today by those who downplay or deny that Jesus is coming again, He will return with great power and glory (Mark 13:26; Luke 9:26). *"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him…"* (Rev. 1:7). He *"shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus…"* (2 Thes. 1:7-8).

The Day is coming when all will *"appear before the judgment seat of Christ"* (2 Cor. 5:10), and anyone who has rejected Him and not received His teaching will be judged by His Word (John 12:48). Those of us who know Him as Lord look forward to *"the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus"* (Titus 2:13; Heb. 9:28), the One who rescues us from the wrath to come (1 Thes. 1:10). He will be glorified in His saints on that Day, and will be marveled at among all who have believed (2 Thes. 1:10).

Keep Your Focus on Christ

Although there is much false teaching in the world and in the church today regarding Christ, He *"is the same yesterday, and today, and forever"* (Heb. 13:8), and is everything that the Scriptures testify concerning Him. He is the divine Son of God, the only way of salvation, and He is coming again as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:11-16). Beware of anyone or any teaching that in any way diminishes His Person and work.

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