



Lesson Three

What about Jesus?



In the previous lessons, we have attempted to encourage you to pursue this course in a thoughtful way, to give you some of the many “pointers” to God, and to help you perceive God as one having personality. So far we have spoken of Jesus Christ only briefly. But in this lesson we will attempt to examine in more detail the Man and His claims. We will present what we have chosen to accept as sufficient evidence to believe that He was who He said He was and that those claims are relevant to our situation here and now.

The Christian perspective on life is positive. It is “Yes,” it is purposeful. As Christians, we feel that we have found the answer to life's meaning through Jesus Christ, by accepting the fact that He is who He said He was. It is like stepping out of a cave into a brilliant sun—suddenly there is light. The rootless, vague, uneasy feelings diminish. Christians try to communicate this wonderful discovery to others in terms that will make people want to have an “I-You” encounter with Jesus Christ.^a

In December 1971, at eighty-seven years of age, the world-renowned author-evangelist Dr. E. Stanley Jones suffered a paralyzing stroke. For five hours he lay totally helpless. His daughter was called to his bedside. When she arrived, he recognized her and indicated that he wanted to say something important.

“Daughter,” he said, in a feeble, almost inaudible voice, “I cannot die now. I have to live to complete another book—The Divine Yes” (Jones, p 7).^b With great hardship and difficulty the manuscript was finished, but only with the aid of a cassette tape recorder because he could not see or write well enough. The book was published in the spring of 1974, two years after his death.

The title for the book came from the words of the apostle Paul when he said: “The divine ‘yes’ has at last sounded in him

(Christ), for in him is the ‘yes’ that affirms all the promises of God” (2 Corinthians 1:19-20, Moffat's translation).

Dr. Jones, after a full life of service as a Christian minister, most of it in India, and after experiencing a paralyzing illness, could still write with firm conviction these words:

At last, then, at long last the Divine Yes has sounded through Him. Jesus is the Yes. . . that there is a God, a Father lying behind this universe caring for all creation; that this Father is manifested in the face of Jesus Christ and life can be utterly changed; that our emptiness can become fullness as every recess of our inner and outer lives is invaded by the Holy Spirit (Jones, p. 21).

LESSON OUTLINE

- The Divinity of Jesus
- The Resurrection of Jesus
- The Purpose of Jesus
- More on Discipleship
- A Challenge

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

1. What is the significance of man's plea for God to “stretch His hand” toward us and to “speak to us?”
2. What do historians do with the “Christ myth?”
3. Is it enough to agree that Jesus was a moralist?
4. How does Jesus compare with the founders of the other three major world religions?
5. Have you met persons who have experienced the same change in their lives as the disciple Peter did?
6. What does discipleship mean for the Christian?
7. Are you personally challenged by the person of Jesus Christ?

WORD STUDY

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| axiomatic | — Having to do with a proposition regarded as a self-evident truth. |
| encounter | — To come upon face to face; to meet. |
| eschatological | — Relating to the end of the world or to events associated with it in religious expectation. |
| gospel | — The good news concerning Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Capitalized, one of the first four books of the New Testament telling of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. |
| incarnate | — In flesh, with bodily form and substance; relating to the unity of divinity with humanity in Jesus Christ. |
| Messiah | — The expected king and deliverer of the Jews; a professed or accepted leader of some hope or cause. |

LESSON DEVELOPMENT

“I want God to stretch His hand toward me, to uncover His face, to speak to me!” This is the plea of one of the characters in Ingmar Bergman's *Seventh Seal*.

Literature has many such eloquent expressions of man's desperation and his feeling of being alone in the universe. Perhaps one of the most poignant examples comes from the potent pen of Shakespeare, when he puts these words into the mouth of Macbeth upon hearing of the death of his wife:

.....Out, out brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing (*Macbeth*, Act V, Scene V).

It is to address ourselves to this very feeling of man's despair that this course was written.

In lesson one we attempted to build a case strong enough for you to give yourself to an honest study of this material. In the second lesson the purpose was to show the many pointers to God and to establish that God can best be expressed as *He*, rather than *It*. We must now consider the Person of Christ.

God, in fact, *has* revealed Himself. Man is *not* alone in the universe. Not only has God spoken to us in nature, but He has also stretched His hand toward us through His Son, Jesus Christ. “He (Christ) reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power” (Hebrews 1:3). The phrase “the very stamp of his nature” is a translation of the Greek word for *character*. The ancient Greeks used this word to describe the etching on the face of a coin, seal, or stamp. Thus, the biblical writer, in using this expression, is saying that Christ *is the exact representation* of God's nature. He was with us in time and space and is a part of human history. It is of utmost importance, therefore, to consider the Person of Jesus Christ carefully and thoughtfully.

THE DIVINITY OF JESUS

Orthodox Christian teaching maintains that Jesus Christ is divine, was virgin born, performed supernatural acts, died on the cross for the salvation of all men, completed the redemptive plan in His resurrection from the dead and ascension to the Father, and now reigns as Lord of Lords and King of Kings. What a claim! Not only the church but Jesus Himself makes these claims.

Now consider for a moment. These are fantastic claims. We are reduced to four possible responses to these amazing assertions: Jesus was *legendary*, a *liar*, a *lunatic*, or *Lord*.

Was He Legendary?

The theory that Jesus and His ministry are legends is the most serious objection to the divinity of Christ, but it is held by few people. It has several groups of followers, but is primarily expressed in two ways. Some make a categorical statement: "Historians today have fairly well dismissed Jesus as being historical" (McDowell, p. 83).^c

Others, such as Avrum Stroll, professor of philosophy, University of California, however, are more subtle. He alleged: "A Jesus probably did exist but so many legends have grown about him that it is impossible for scholars to find out anything about the real man" (Montgomery, 1969, p. 37).

In this statement the followers of Jesus are being accused of giving the world a false portrait of Him. The accusation is made to sound reasonable because the people of first century Palestine were looking for a "Messiah" or deliverer who had been promised by their prophets throughout their history. The disciples of Jesus are supposed to have introduced later claims of deity for Him. Professor John W. Montgomery points out several reasons why this idea is not acceptable (Montgomery, 1965, pp. 66-72).

First, there was a great difference between the idea that most Jews had of the Messiah and the messianic picture that Jesus

painted of Himself. He was just not the type they expected and would have been a poor candidate from their point of view.

Second, the apostles and followers of Jesus were men of high ethical standards. Their training would render them incapable psychologically, religiously, and ethically of trying to make Him a deity. For example, the name of God was so revered that the Jews would not even pronounce it, let alone ascribe it to an ordinary person. Knowing their deep, centuries-old traditions along this line it is difficult to believe that they would have fabricated such a tale.

Third, the historical evidence for the resurrection could not have been an invention of fanatic followers in an attempt to elevate Jesus to deity. The life of Jesus was recorded within a very few years of His death. Not enough time had elapsed for myth or legend to spring up in the early records. At least two of the books about His life were eyewitness accounts (those by Matthew and John). The other writers certainly had access to eyewitness accounts and other primary sources.

The fact is, the disciples of Jesus are pictured in the New Testament documents as men difficult to convince, open to doubt. They were certainly not the sort of men to conceive the sort of legends about Jesus that could convince much of the world for almost two thousand years that Jesus is divine. No, although this is a serious charge, it must be dismissed as inadequate and impossible.

The belief that there was no historical Jesus Christ simply ignores the abundance of evidence relating to His existence. F. F. Bruce, Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, England, expresses the weakness of such an approach when he says,

Some writers may toy with the fancy of a Christ-myth, but they do not do so on the grounds of historical evidence. The historicity of Christ is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is not historians who propagate the Christ-myth theories (Bruce, p. 119).

Was He a Liar?

Did Jesus deliberately deceive the people? This accusation does not seem reasonable to most people. Even those who do not believe Him to be deity, usually *still* believe Him to have been a good man. They admire Him as a man of high ethical and moral standards, a great teacher, an important moral philosopher and a great example to follow.

Thomas Paine (1737-1809), a Briton turned American, vigorously attacked Christianity in his book *The Age of Reason*. Yet this strong opponent of Christianity said of Jesus,

Nothing that is here said can apply even with the most distant disrespect to the real character of Jesus Christ. He was a virtuous and an amiable man. The morality that he preached and practiced was of the most benevolent kind; and though similar systems of morality have been preached by Confucius, and by some of the Greek philosophers, many years before . . . and by many good men in all ages, it has not been exceeded by any (Foerstes, pp. 200-201).

Jesus was the greatest moralist the world has ever seen. Could He at the same time be devious, a charlatan? Would a “good” man intentionally deceive the masses by claiming to be *God in the flesh*, if in fact He was not? He vehemently declared to His generation that the devil is a liar and father of liars, and those who lie are the children of the devil (see John 8:44). He Himself claimed to be the Son of God. If the claim He made to deity is to be rejected, His whole life, ministry, teaching, and reputation have much less meaning for us today.

But His life, ministry, teaching, and reputation *all solidly supported His claim to deity*. He said of Himself,

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves (John 14:10-11).

Jesus did not have the reputation of being a liar. The charge cannot be sustained. Sound ethical philosophy would not support it.

Was Jesus a Lunatic?

The only way a person might accept Jesus as the greatest moralist but *not* as the divine Son of God would be to believe that He was mentally unbalanced, or perhaps self-deceived. This does not appear to be a very reasonable conclusion, for it is not likely that a mentally unbalanced person would achieve the distinction of being rated among the greatest men who ever lived.

Yet there are some great people who have chosen to believe it. One such person was Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), the famous humanitarian doctor and philosopher. In his book *Quest for the Historical Jesus* he took the position that Jesus had an honest misunderstanding of His nature. He felt it was necessary, then, to vindicate Jesus from the charge of psychiatric illness. His medical dissertation of 1913, presented to the University of Strasbourg, was entitled *Psychiatric Study of Jesus*. He attempted to show that the human Jesus "could be sane and yet think of himself as the eschatological Son of Man who would come again at the end of the age, with the heavenly host to judge the world" (Montgomery, 1965, pp. 63-64).

The work by Dr. Schweitzer was an honest, human attempt to explain Jesus within the historical context of things. However, the fact that his explanation is insufficient is evidenced by the lack of scholars and other people who follow or accept his thesis about Jesus.

We simply cannot avoid the conclusion that Jesus *was* insane if He thought of Himself as the incarnate Son of God and yet was not. But in view of the soundness of Jesus' teachings, we simply cannot accept that He was mentally deranged. In fact the opposite is true. Psychiatrist J. T. Fisher has made the following graphic assertions concerning Jesus,

If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental

hygiene—if you were to combine them and refine and cleave out the excess verbiage . . . and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge, concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison. For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in its hand the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here . . . rests the blueprint for successful human life, with optimism, mental health and contentment (Fisher p. 273, and quoted by Montgomery, 1965, p. 65).

Is Jesus Truly Lord?

If Jesus cannot be charged with being a myth dreamed up by overenthusiastic followers, or a liar, or mentally unbalanced, then there is only one alternative left. He must have been who He said He was—the Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man.

When Jesus was in the upper room with His disciples He told them many things. One thing He said to them was, “You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am” (John 13:13). We now have the responsibility to grapple with Christ's claims, their perplexities and difficulties. But ultimately the question before us can be simply stated: *Is Jesus Christ Lord or not?* A person must be totally convinced of this fact both intellectually and emotionally before realizing the full impact of Jesus Christ in his personal life.

As long as Jesus remains just an intellectual curiosity outside ourselves, there is no personal contact with the living God. The ultimate step is to accept Him as *your* Lord, to know Him personally and experientially.

We have tried to show here that the evidence for Jesus Christ is intellectually sound. The record in the four Gospels reveals His perfection, His sinless nature, and His humility. Further evidence comes from the historical impact throughout the centuries of His timeless message with the divine stamp or authority and miracles. Wherever Christianity has gone, it has

taken with it an enhanced respect for the individual and a feeling of responsibility for service to God and others.

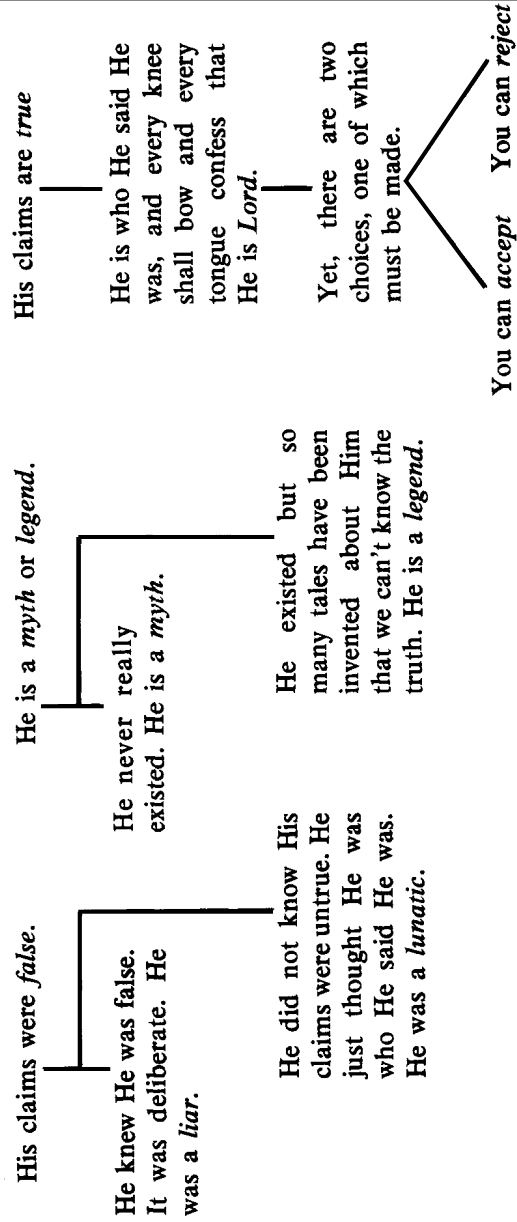
In the entire Western World, every time a calendar is viewed, every time a date is announced, every time a coin is struck, there is a testimony to the One who is pivotal to all history. We count the years as before Christ (B.C.) or as in the year of our Lord (Latin, *anno domini*, A.D.). His birth is heralded by atheist and agnostic, believer and unbeliever, in just this fashion alone (Menzies, p. 88).

The evidences from history, ethics, psychology and experience are clearly in favor of Jesus as Lord. Some people may refuse the evidence because of the demands involved. But there must be moral honesty in deciding for yourself who Jesus was and is.

The following chart summarizes this section and pictures graphically the various alternatives regarding Jesus' identity.^d Consider it carefully. Can you accept that His claims were true? If so, you still have the most important choice to make.

JESUS CLAIMS DEITY

Three possibilities



THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

All but four of the major religions of the world have their beginnings in philosophical propositions. These four are based on the influence of a personality, a founder. They are Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity. *Abraham*, the father of Judaism, died about 1900 B.C. The original account of the death of *Buddha* recorded in the *Mahaparinibbana Sutta* states that when he died it was “with that utter passing away in which nothing whatever remains behind.” *Mohammed*, the founder of Islam, died in A.D. 632 at the age of sixty-one. His tomb is visited regularly by faithful pilgrims. Within the orthodox teaching of Judaism, Buddhism, and Islam there is no textual claim for the *bodily* resurrection of its founder (McDowell, pp. 185-187). In Christianity there is!

Christ is unique in this respect, for He taught not only that He would die on the cross, but that He would be raised to life again after three days. This all happened just as He had predicted. Those trustworthy men who recorded Jesus' life were eyewitnesses, along with many others, to the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His resurrection is *the* miracle of the New Testament. It is also the most significant miracle for all humanity for all time.

There have been elaborate attempts to disprove and discredit this unusual fact of history. Some have said that Jesus never really died but simply fainted from the pain and the torture. Another idea, as old as the resurrection itself, says that the body of Jesus was stolen from the tomb by His friends and followers (Matthew 28:13). Others teach that enemies of Jesus stole His body. A more sophisticated approach says that the tomb was not really empty, but that the followers of Jesus received a supernatural vision of Christ and the resurrection was simply the awareness of the Spirit of Christ lingering with them. In other words, it was not really a bodily resurrection, but a spiritual one.

A fourth theory says the followers of Jesus were so grief-stricken and their desire to see Jesus alive was so intense that they experienced hallucinations or were victims of optical illusions. Others have said that the body of Jesus was never in

the tomb, that the corpse was never properly buried but tossed into a pit with the bodies of the criminals executed with Jesus. Some believe that the disciples and loyal followers simply went to the wrong tomb.

All of these notions to explain away the resurrection must be rejected. Why? For at least four major reasons.

First, these theories project a wide range of explanations which are mutually exclusive and incongruous with the recorded story.

Second, there are no reasonable grounds to accuse the followers of Jesus of being either liars, thieves, mentally unbalanced, or stupid.

Third, the resurrection of Jesus is attested to in the New Testament by over 500 people who saw Him in several post-resurrection appearances. The apostle Paul records: "Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep (died)" (1 Corinthians 15:6).^e

Fourth, Christians say they have truth, light, life, and power. It is illogical to charge that these same people would try to advance upon the world a grand hoax such as the resurrection of Jesus if in fact it did not actually happen. Moreover, many of the eyewitnesses let themselves be put to death rather than deny the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead. They would not have given their lives to defend what they knew to be a deception. The resurrection did occur. It is not a hoax, but true.

Just a word about another of the very interesting evidences of the deity of Jesus Christ as well as of the facts surrounding His death. One means God used in the Old Testament to educate people to His ways was through *prophets* who were given messages from God to the people. These messages included scores of prophecies given, down through the centuries, by one or another of God's spokesmen concerning the promised Messiah or Deliverer who would come. All of the predictions about His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection were perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

So much more could be said on the resurrection. Perhaps you can study it further by reading some of the sources listed at the end of this chapter. Let me summarize this important section in the words of a New Testament scholar, Dr. Bernard Ramm,

The Christian accepts the resurrection of Jesus Christ as a historical fact. He finds it conceivable because of his Christian theism; its rationale is found in his Christian theology; and its historicity is proved by an unbroken, extensive testimony from the Old Testament predictions through the pages of the New Testament record, and into Church history in the writings of the Fathers and in the earliest creeds (Ramm, p. 193).

THE PURPOSE OF JESUS

If Jesus Christ is the Son of God and if He died on the cross and rose from the dead, what is the *real* purpose and meaning behind it? Well, at the very heart of Christianity is a personal, individual encounter with Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the clearest way to understand the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world is to look at one of the classic forms of encounter between Jesus and another person. Consider the slow transformation of the character of one of the very first followers of Jesus—Simon, a Galilean fisherman.

Simon was a professional fisherman, tanned from toil in the sun, with the smell of the outdoors upon him. He was quick, hotheaded, and impulsive. Simon's brother, Andrew, introduced him to Jesus. As they met, Jesus said to him, "You are Simon, John's son—but you shall be called Peter 'the rock'" (John 1:42, *The Living Bible*). Jesus knew immediately the transformation which would come to Simon and indicated so by changing his name to Peter, meaning rock. Jesus knew the transformation that would take place, changing Simon from the excitable and impulsive person that he was to Peter, who would become "solid as a rock."

This is the way Jesus sees every person. He sees and knows their weaknesses; and He plans, when they turn to Him, to make

them strong, whole, healthy personalities. It is the way He sees me, and it is the way He sees you.

You may say, “But I have not accepted Jesus. How can He know me?” Well, let me tell you that your innermost thoughts are as an open book to Him. There may be secrets hidden from all the rest of the world, but there are none hidden from Him. Jesus knows me and He knows you. Jesus follows the course of every person who is born—hoping, trying at some point, to get his attention. The fact that you have come this far in the study has not been accidental! Follow Peter's experience with Jesus.

How did the changes in Peter's life come about? There were basically three steps involved.

First, there was an act of the will on the part of Peter. He made a conscious self-surrender to Christ. There were times later when he made mistakes. He was not perfected all at once. There were occasions when he spoke out of turn, acted too quickly, made rash promises; yet he had made a commitment to Christ and he *continued* to follow, believe, and trust Jesus. Slowly he began to understand, to change, as Christ's influence became stronger in his life.

Second, Peter realized that he must intellectually accept Christ without hesitation or reservation. He first yielded his will (heart) and his emotions (feelings) to Jesus. But Peter realized too that he must do the same thing with his intellect and reason. He did not stop thinking nor did he commit “intellectual suicide.” But he did determine to trust Christ in spite of unanswered questions, personal perplexities, or seemingly logical objections. This is what Jesus called *faith*. He taught that if one could only have faith to believe, even without seeing Jesus, then assurance, insight and understanding would follow (John 20:29).

Third, Peter gave Jesus full and unquestioning obedience for the rest of his life. This is the ultimate test of commitment. It is the willingness to follow Christ without knowing the exact course of the journey, without expecting it to be always easy.

This is what Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) would call *discipleship* (Bonhoeffer, p. 36). He was a young but highly esteemed German theologian whose writings have been translated into many languages.

The Jesus-encounter is costly. It means subjecting your own will to the will of God. Peter may have begun to follow Jesus without realizing the full implications of what he was doing. As the problems he faced grew greater, he found his faith had also grown. He also found that in spite of difficulties, life was better when he turned it over to Christ.

This is the purpose of Jesus' coming: that sons of men might become sons of God, by the Son of God becoming the Son of Man. God wanted *sons* to share in His life and activity forever, and this is the way He has chosen to accomplish His purpose. All people, just like Peter, can be transformed under the strong yet tender influence of Jesus Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:17).

MORE ON DISCIPLESHIP

The objective of this lesson is not simply to lead you to nod your head in assent to the fact that there was a historical Jesus who still is what He claimed to be. Intellectual assent is not enough. For you to believe in Jesus as you would in Caesar or Plato falls far short of our goal.

Caesar and Plato are dead. This is why to be passionately “for” them or “against” them is never a question. But Jesus Christ is *alive*. “There are still people who love Him and hate Him. There is a passion for the love of Christ and a passion for His destruction. The fury of so many against Him is a proof that He is not dead” (Bowie, p. 8).^f This is the reason that once Jesus is fully understood, an indifferent attitude toward Him is impossible.

We must bow to His authority and accept His teaching. We must allow our opinions to be molded by His opinions, our views to be conditioned by His views. And this includes His uncomfortable and unfashionable teaching (Stott, p. 210).

When we are called to follow Jesus Christ, it is a call to an exclusive attachment to Him. Discipleship thus means adherence to Christ. Christianity is not simply knowing a great deal of religious information, but knowing and giving allegiance to Jesus as Lord.

Do you find it hard to believe in Jesus? Perhaps it is because you are resisting surrender to Him. Do not be like every mountain brook that follows the course of least resistance. Bonhoeffer was hanged because his Christian commitment conflicted with the regime. He speaks of “cheap grace” and “costly grace.” “Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate” (Bonhoeffer, p. 36).

Christ speaks of self-denial, reconciliation with our fellow man, service to others, getting intensely involved in life and the struggle for good against evil, and yes, even suffering if need be. Discipleship means allegiance to the triumphant Christ, whatever the cost, but not as a hermit detached from society. It means taking a stand for truth in the noise and stench of the market place.

What value would you place on cheap grace, shallow experience, haphazard worship, and on disciples who are less than loyal? There have been far too many of these kinds of Christians. This is one reason why Christianity is not taken seriously. Unfortunately, some who claim to be Christians do not take it seriously enough themselves. The call of Christ is to full discipleship—the will, the intellect, and the emotions deliberately and knowingly given to Jesus Christ, Lord of All.

A CHALLENGE

C.S. Lewis sets forth a very clear challenge which summarizes this lesson well:

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 the level of 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 patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (Lewis, p. 56).

Too many people are ready to dismiss Christianity with one wave of the hand for no other reason than that they are unwilling to face up to the challenge of Jesus Christ. As you here and now are confronted with the person of Christ, do not be afraid of the moral implications of accepting Him into your life. Do not turn away into the night of despair, rejecting Him, until you have thoroughly examined and considered the evidence. This is what many people are either too afraid or too lazy to do. There is an escapist's fear of facing up to the challenge of Christian standards of behavior and Christian discipleship. It appears easier, more comfortable, to run away.

Jesus Christ came to bring reconciliation between man and God. It is in that spirit of reconciliation that Jesus has invited all people everywhere, regardless of race, color, background, past behavior, current problems—*all* are invited to come to Him.

So, why do people want to relegate Jesus to an unopened book and bypass Him as if He had nothing significant to offer? Whatever the reason may be, please do not do that yourself. Rather, look deep into yourself and pray this prayer as you take another important step towards Him:

Father, do not let me be content
to regard Jesus
as only a great teacher.
Let Him never be less to me
than my best friend,
my eternal savior,
my unfailing strength,
my undying hope

And let what Jesus means to me
always show through (Gesch, p. 60).

^aAs explained in a footnote in the last lesson, I am using Martin Buber's expression "I-You" to refer to a person's encounter with the God-Man, Jesus Christ. In this context it is strictly a Christian expression.

^bSome of the material came from the flyleaf of the book. The introduction to this great man's spiritual "last will and testament" was written by his daughter, Eunice Jones Matthews.

^c This statement was made by a Marxist who was running for political office in the state of New York, USA.

^dThis chart has been adapted and expanded from one in McDowell, p. 108.

^e Note that Paul is inviting investigation by emphasizing that these eyewitnesses were still available for questioning. As Paul said when making his defense before a Roman court: "This was not done in a corner" (Acts 26:26).

^fBowie is quoting from Giovanni Papini's *Life of Christ*, 1923, p. 6. Papini (1881-1956), Italian philosopher, historian, and critic, was an opponent of Christianity. In 1920 he was converted to Roman Catholicism and is now best known for his famous book *Storia di Cristo* (Life of Christ), written in 1921.

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FURTHER STUDY SUGGESTIONS

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York, New York, USA: The MacMillan Company, 1961.

This whole book is worth reading. It has influenced many lives for Jesus Christ.

Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York, New York, USA: The MacMillan Company. 1965.

My recommendation is that every person should take the time to read this splendid book by this great British literary critic, writer, and Christian.

McDowell, Josh, ed. *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*. San Bernadino, California, USA: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1972.

This volume is full of quotes, facts, and information concerning Christianity. Chapters 5-10 contain a discussion of Jesus Christ.

Morison, Frank. *Who Moved the Stone?* London, England: Faber and Faber Limited. 1969.

An excellent study on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Ramm, Bernard. *Protestant Christian Evidences*. Chicago, Illinois, USA: Moody Press, 1953.

Chapters 6 and 7 discuss Jesus and the resurrection. This book is very valuable for personal study.

Stott, John R. W. *Christ the Controversialist*. London, England: Tyndale Press, 1970.

A good general work of value to the serious student of Christianity.

PERSONAL STUDY

1 Read Philippians 2:5-11 in the New Testament. What does this text tell you about a God “with skin on”?

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2 Evaluate, according to your own opinion, the four possibilities as to the claims of Jesus. (Write a sentence about each.)

Legend.....

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Liar

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Lunatic

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Lord.....

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3 Read the resurrection story (Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-41; John 20). From the accounts in Matthew and Luke, trace the reactions of two classes of people in these accounts: disciples (believers) and others (non-believers).

Disciples:.....

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Others:

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4 The distinctive nature of Christianity as compared to other major world religions is that Christ was resurrected and is alive. What implications does this have for you with regard to a personal relationship with Him?

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5 It was pointed out that the Old Testament contains information about Jesus hundreds of years before His birth in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7). Read the following Old Testament texts and see if you can identify the specific item of information the text gives about Jesus.

Isaiah 7:14

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Micah 5:2.....

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Zechariah 11:12-13.....

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Isaiah 53:9

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6 What are your feelings about the change which came about in Simon's life and the challenge of full discipleship?

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PERSONAL STUDY RESPONSES GUIDELINES

- 1 God took on human form and became a man. He came as an obedient servant, who was willing to obey even to the point of death. His duties of a servant are now over, and one day everyone will recognize the Lordship of the Man-God.
- 2 Your answer. My position is clear from the text.

3 Believers	Women— perplexed (Luke 24:4) Disciples— frightened (Luke 24:5) fear and great joy (Matt. 28:8) understanding (Luke 24:8) worship (Matt. 28:9) Disciples— unbelief (Luke 24:13) confusion and sadness (Emmaus) (Luke 24:13-24) belief and joy (Emmaus) (Luke 24:31-35) startled, frightened, and questioning (Luke 24:37-38) too good to be true (disbelieved for joy) (Luke 24:41) worship and doubt (Matt. 28:17) understanding (Luke 24:45) joy and worship (Luke 24:52-53)
Non-believers	Guards—fear and trembling (Matt. 28:4) Guards and chief priests— made up story to explain the problem of a missing body (Matt. 28:11-15)

- 4 One can only relate to something that *IS*. If Jesus is alive, then a relationship is possible. Thus, only if the resurrection is a fact can a personal relationship be established.

- 5** Isaiah 7:14 — A young woman (virgin) shall bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel (God is with us). Jesus (the Messiah) would be betrayed for thirty shekels (Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6)
- Micah 5:2 — Bethlehem will be the birthplace of the Messiah
- Zechariah 11:12-13 — Jesus (the Messiah) would be betrayed for thirty shekels (Matt. 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:3-6)
- Isaiah 53:9 — He would be buried in the grave of a rich man (Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:43-46; Luke 23:50-53; John 19:38-41)
- 6** Your answer. You might look at the gradual and continuing change in attitude and behavior which are exhibited in Simon's life.

SELF CHECK REVIEW

1 In what ways has God responded to the despairing pleas of mankind? Circle the letter of the correct responses.

- a) He has left man to a meaningless life.
- b) He has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ.
- c) His nature is revealed in Nature, and that is sufficient.
- d) He has entered time and space and human history.
- e) He has shown that man is alone in the universe.

Thought provoker: What does this show about the character of God?

What does this show about the nature of life?

2 Match the following arguments about the legendary Jesus with the responses made by the Christian. Write the number for the appropriate responses in the blanks provided.

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| a | The disciples deliberately falsified the story. | 1) These men were doubters, hard to convince. |
| b | The disciples fooled themselves. | 2) Insufficient time and abundance of eyewitnesses argue against this. |
| c | The disciples were desperately looking for a Messiah. | 3) Calling someone "God" was against Jewish tradition. |
| d | The disciples fanatically invented the resurrection. | 4) The disciples were ethically incapable of fabricating a legend. |
| e | The disciples ascribed deity to Jesus in order to be more important. | 5) Jesus was unlike the deliverer of Jewish thought. |

Thought provoker: Is there sufficient evidence for you to believe that Jesus was historical?

3 Which ones of the following arguments answer the idea that Jesus deliberately deceived the people? Circle the letter of the appropriate arguments.

- a) He claimed to be God in the flesh.
- b) He is universally admired as a virtuous man.
- c) Lying would be inconsistent with His character.
- d) He opposed the devil as a liar.
- e) He appealed to God's authority and the works God did through Him.

Thought provoker: Do you agree with opponents of Christianity that Jesus was a good man and a great moral teacher?

4 The resurrection of its founder sets Christianity apart from other religions. Which of the following are reasonable evidences for the resurrection? Circle the letter of the evidences you choose.

- a) The tomb the disciples went to was empty; they never found Jesus' body.
- b) The death and resurrection correspond to detailed prophecies.
- c) The disciples desired the resurrection so much that they believed it.
- d) The disciples died rather than deny the resurrection.
- e) Five hundred eyewitnesses could testify to it.

Thought provoker: If there was this kind of evidence for another historical event, would you believe it?

5 Some of these statements regarding Simon Peter's encounter with Jesus are true; some are false. Please distinguish between them by writing T (true) or F (false) in the blank in front of each statement.

- **a** He was suddenly perfect.
- **b** He accepted Jesus without reservation.
- **c** He believed in cheap grace.
- **d** His commitment was an act of the will.
- **e** He was never excitable and impulsive afterwards.
- **f** He was turned into a rock.
- **g** His life exemplifies discipleship.
- **h** He committed intellectual suicide.
- **i** He trusted Christ even when he didn't understand everything.
- **j** He continued to give Jesus unquestioning obedience.

Thought provoker: Jesus chose Peter for his potential, not his past performance. Do you judge yourself and others this way?

6 Complete the following statements which add up to something of a definition of *Christian discipleship*. Write your answer, taken from the Lesson Development, in the blank provided.

- a** Being passionately for.....
- b** Accepting His.....and
- c** An exclusive to Jesus.
- d** More than knowing a great deal of
- e** Knowing Jesus as
- f** Getting intensely..... in life
- g** with our fellow man
- h** Standing for.....in everyday life.

Thought provoker: Is there anything in your life which resembles this kind of commitment? What similarities and what differences are there in its demands?

SELF-CHECK REVIEW ANSWERS

1 b) and d)

2 a 4)

b 2)

c 5)

d 1)

e 3)

3 b) c), and e)

4 b) d), and e)

5 a F

b T

c F

d T

e F

f F

g T

h F

i T

j T

6 a Jesus

b authority/teaching

c attachment

d religious information

e Lord

f involved

g reconciliation

h truth