Who Is Jesus to You?

There are several questions every person ought to ask themselves.

1. Who is Jesus to you?
2. Why must we obey Him? What part do His teachings play in my life?
3. What should my obedience to the Lord Jesus look like?
4. What happens if we do not obey Him?
5. What part does the Lord Jesus' sacrifice on the cross play?

1. Who is the Lord Jesus to me?

We are two thousand years removed from the time the Lord Jesus walked the earth. Because of this distance, His message seems less and less relevant and is heard less and less. For many of us, the Gospel of Christ has shrunk to a few words about His birth (Christmas) and His sacrifice (Easter).

Today a great many of us give the Lord Jesus nothing more than lip service, without understanding what He truly wants from us. We do not realise that He promised to be present in every moment of our lives. ("And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." Matthew 28:20)

This happens because we have studied very little of the teaching He brought us from God. ("For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak." John 12:49)

Most of us, it is fair to say, do not know the plan of salvation from studying the words the Lord Jesus spoke. If we visit many of the places where the Gospel is preached, and then look in Holy Scripture at what the Lord Jesus taught, we will easily see that not all of His teachings are being preached. This happens because many of the Lord's teachings are rejected today.

For example, if a church accepts military service, which includes swearing an oath, or goes to court over a building, land or rights, it will never be able to preach what the Lord preached. ("And him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not to take thy coat also." Luke 6:29; "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all." Matthew 5:33, 34)

Yet the Lord Jesus warns us that we risk going astray if we do not know the Scriptures. ("Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures." Matthew 22:29)

So we would do well to ask ourselves: Do we understand who the Lord Jesus really is? Do we understand why He came to earth, and do we know how we should relate to Him? (Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." John 14:6)

Holy Scripture tells us that God appointed the Lord Jesus to be our Teacher, whom we must obey, and our salvation depends on it. ("And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." Matthew 17:5; "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." Deuteronomy 18:18)

God told us to obey the One He sent, but this truth is watered down a great deal today. Scripture says that if we do not obey Him we will perish, yet people still do not understand why we must obey or how we are to obey. ("And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." Acts 3:23; "He that cometh from heaven is above all." John 3:31)

So when we want to look into the matter of our salvation, it is vitally important to study what the One who is above all has said, because He has the words of eternal life, the words of our salvation. ("Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life." John 6:68)

He is the embodiment of the Word of God that came down from heaven. ("And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14) Everything the Lord Jesus said is what God told Him. He said nothing of His own accord. ("For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak." John 12:49, 50)

He came so that whoever receives and believes this Word that came from God may have eternal life and not come into judgment. ("Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation*; but is passed from death unto life." John 5:24; "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Mark 16:15, 16)

2. Why must we obey Him? What part do His teachings play in my life?

God created the universe and set all things in perfect order, each governed by its own laws. One of these is the law of gravity. Because of it, the earth does not stray from its orbit to the right or to the left, and the sun likewise keeps its course among the stars. All things were made by the Word of God and follow His perfect laws. ("By the word of the LORD were the heavens made." Psalm 33:6)

The same holds true for mankind. The laws of God by which we must live are perfect, and they lead us to the final goal: becoming like God. Our only option is to accept the obedience God requires, and that obedience will ensure our success. Any departure from these perfect laws will make us miss the mark. ("Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward." Hebrews 2:2)

The model of obedience. The Lord Jesus came into our world to show us by His own example how this can be done. The Father sent Him to be our model. He is a model in everything: in love, in longsuffering, in gentleness, in humility… and above all, a model of obedience. He was obedient in all things, even unto death. ("He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:8)

The Lord Jesus gave up His own will. He denied Himself and took the form of a servant. ("I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me." John 5:30; "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Philippians 2:7)

When we are called to salvation, the Lord Jesus asks us to follow His example and deny ourselves as He did. ("If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke 9:23)

By the way He lived His life on earth, He shows us the road, the way that leads to perfection. ("Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Hebrews 5:8, 9)

We must understand that our character can only be perfected if we fully obey the laws of the Kingdom, which are flawless and perfect, just as the Lord Jesus lived. ("Become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Romans 6:22; "But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant." Philippians 2:7)

3. What should my obedience to the Lord Jesus look like?

The only people found worthy to dwell forever in the land above will be those who reach this place of full, unshakeable obedience. This is the obedience that marked the Lord Jesus, and it is the very opposite of Adam's disobedience. We cannot spend our whole lives in constant disobedience, falling again and again, and still believe that in the end, by pleading for mercy, we will be welcomed into God's paradise.

Let us be careful: God's goodness does not encourage disobedience. ("For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft." 1 Samuel 15:23) We must let God shape us while there is still grace and forgiveness, so that He can remove from our lives everything that is not according to His will. On "that day" there will be no more grace, and the smallest disobedience will be grounds for being shut out. Disobedience shut out Lucifer, then the angels who did not keep their first estate, then Adam…

The Lord wants to work with every person who lets Him shape them, as He worked with Noah and with Abraham, and to bring them to the point where it can be said that they are worthy to inherit the Kingdom of God. ("Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6; "Till we all come… unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13)

For God to have the assurance that we are worthy of the heavenly Kingdom, on the day our faith is tested we too must hear what Abraham heard: "For now I know that thou fearest God…" (Genesis 22:12)

4. What happens if we do not obey Him?

Do not deceive yourself into thinking there is still grace and forgiveness after death. When the time of grace comes to an end for you, if you are found in unbelief and disobedience, you will be driven out just like the first Adam. ("And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief." Hebrews 3:18, 19; "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? … Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers." 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10)

5. What part does Christ's sacrifice play?

We see a great deal of confusion today about the role of Christ's sacrifice. Some believe it is enough simply to believe in His sacrifice. In their view, all salvation requires is to accept what the Lord Jesus did on the cross as Saviour.

Others rely on their good works and expect to be saved on that basis.

In the first case, people hold that they can do nothing at all for their salvation except rely on the Lord's sacrifice. They give no weight to the Word of Christ or to the sanctifying work of the Spirit. In other words, the teachings of the Lord Jesus and the work of the Spirit are not seen as necessary for the salvation of the soul. In this way the Lord's teaching is pushed into second place and treated as optional. Discipleship becomes optional too, no longer part of the process of salvation.

In the second case, the emphasis falls on works alone. The forgiveness of sins won by Christ's cross is neglected, and so is the work of the Spirit. ("Going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Romans 10:3)

To avoid falling into either extreme, it is crucial to know *the role of the sacrifice on the cross!* We need to know what place it holds in the plan of salvation.

We believe it is perfectly clear to everyone that sinful man could not pay the price of redemption with his *good* works. (Ephesians 2:9)

Someone without sin had to die for this, and that someone was the Lord Jesus. ("Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Hebrews 7:26)

Scripture tells us the Son of God agreed to die on the cross for several reasons: so that we could be set free from the devil's dominion, washed from our sins, reconciled to God and redeemed, and so that the New Covenant could be made and we could be transferred into His Kingdom. ("To give his life a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28)

The work of the cross is God's gift to every person who enters into covenant with the Lord, repents of their evil deeds, denies themselves and trusts in Him. *The sacrifice on the cross* makes forgiveness of sins and redemption possible. ("Who… hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Colossians 1:13, 14)

The cross does this so that we can be placed in a new state, where He can work with us through the Holy Spirit to restore us. ("Through sanctification of the Spirit." 1 Peter 1:2; "Are changed into the same image… even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18) The cross makes it possible to begin our discipleship and to enter His school.

As we are being changed into His image, the sins we commit unintentionally are cleansed by the blood of Christ. ("But if we walk in the light… we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us…" 1 John 1:7)

The cross will be of no use to us if, on this new road, we sin knowingly. ("For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins… Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Hebrews 10:26, 29)

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