

Who is Jesus? We ought to know. We hear his name constantly. When people are angry, we hear them use it habitually as they curse and swear. Mystics intone it reverently as if it had some magical power. Televangelists exhort us to "*believe in Jesus*". But who is Jesus and what does it mean to "*believe in Jesus*"? And what does it mean when someone says "*Jesus Christ*"? Who is this man by whom our very calendar is dated (B.C. means before Christ and A.D. is Latin for Anno Domino, the year of our Lord)? If our reaction to these questions is to consist of more than ignorance and mere superstition we need solid answers.

It is relatively easy to identify the historical Jesus generally known as Jesus of Nazareth. Nazareth was the town in Galilee where he lived and grew up. He was the son of Mary and Joseph, was born in Bethlehem, died at age 33 at Jerusalem by crucifixion, and spent the prior 3 years as an itinerant preacher. That much is conceded by all but it still doesn't identify the real Jesus.

To do that we need to study the Bible. As Jesus himself said of the scriptures, "*these are they which testify of Me*" (John 5:39). Let us start with the name Jesus Christ. Jesus means Savior. As the angel told Joseph, "*...and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins*" (Matthew 1:21). Christ means the "anointed One". It is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word Messiah. The Old Testament consistently prophesied of this coming Messiah, who would come to deliver mankind. He would save men from their sins, lift the curse that men had struggled against ever since that day that God had cursed the earth because of Adam's sin, establish a new eternal kingdom, and bring in everlasting righteousness. So, this name identifies Jesus of Nazareth as being the Christ, the promised Messiah. It is of this promised Messiah that Isaiah speaks, "*For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever*" (Isaiah 9:6-7). Isaiah makes another amazing prophecy. The divine Messianic King who is to rule forevermore will die for the sins of his people. "*He is despised and rejected by men, A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded*

*for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by 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 53:3-6).*

But while it was the glory of the Old Testament to tell of the coming of the Messiah, it is the glory of the New Testament to reveal Him. In the New Testament Jesus of Nazareth is identified as the Messiah, the Christ, and his great work of redemption is set forth as the hope of mankind. The very first verse of the New Testament identifies Jesus as the Messiah, the promised Messianic Son of Abraham who would be a blessing to all mankind, the promised Son of David who would rule forevermore, declaring "*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*" (Matthew 1:1). When Andrew heard John the Baptist point out Jesus as "*the Lamb of God*", the promised Messiah who would die for the sins of his people, Andrew rushed off and found his brother Peter saying, "*We have found the Messiah, (which is translated, the Christ)*" (John 1:36-41). When Christ asked his Apostles who they thought he was Peter answered, "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16), identifying him not only as the Messiah but also acknowledging his divinity. Luke records Jesus quoting a Messianic prophecy from Isaiah in the synagogue of Nazareth as he identifies himself as the Christ, the anointed one, "*The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed*" (Luke 4:18). Matthew records the fulfilling of Isaiah's Messianic prophecy, "*Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,*" which is translated, "*God with us*" (Matthew 1:23). And the Apostle Paul proclaimed this Messiah all over the Mediterranean world, "*Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ"* (Acts 17:2-3).

Time and space fail us to record all the marvelous things that the scriptures reveal about Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. As the Apostle John himself put it, "*And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*" (John 21:25). But we invite you to join with us in searching the scriptures of which he himself said, "*these are they which testify of Me*" (John 5:39). We invite you to learn more about that

Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, who is the Savior of the world and the Hope of mankind. We invite you to worship Him with us and find in him salvation from sin and death and hell, and an everlasting inheritance in his eternal and righteous kingdom. We invite you to believe in that Jesus, as foretold by all the prophets and proclaimed by all the Apostles.