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## **COMPLETE IN CHRIST**

by William B. Hallman

Colossians 2:8-10 – "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of The Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and power."

THE GREATEST DISCOVERY that any human being can make is the discovery of the ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF CHRIST, and the utter worthlessness of man without Him. Christ is all, and in Him we have all. Without Him we are nothing, absolutely nothing. It makes no difference how many times we multiply ciphers: they will be devoid of all magnitude or quality until we place some digit before them. But, once a digit is placed before them, they take on meaning, value, significance.

"CHRIST IS ALL" is the covering principle of this Book of Colossians. Look at the following verses: "*That in all things He might have the preeminence*" (1:18); "*In Him should all fulness dwell*" (1:19); "*In Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*" (2:3); "*In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" (2:9); "*In Him, which is the Head of all principality and power*" (2:10); "*Christ is all and in all*" (3:11).

I am sure we all can sing with Charles Wesley, "Thou, O Christ, art all I want, more than all in Thee I find."

Browning wrote, "I say, the acknowledgement of God in Christ, accepted by that reason, solves for thee all questions in the earth and out of it, and has so far advanced thee to be wise." And it was Bishop Moule who said, "No surer test according to Scripture can be applied to anything claiming to be Christian teaching. Where does it put Jesus Christ? What does it make of Jesus Christ? Is He something in it, or is He all?"

This Epistle of Colossians is a positive presentation of the antidote to every form of heresy. Epaphras had come to Paul at Rome with the news that a real danger of false teaching had beset the church at Colosse. This new heresy called Gnosticism was a combination of Judaic Ritualism and Oriental Mysticism (see 2:16-18). These Colossians were asked to accept something in addition to Christ. They taught that Christ was not sufficient, not unique. They taught an additional philosophy (v. 8), an additional astrology (v. 8 – "elements of the world" having to do with stars and planets), an additional circumcision (v. 11), additional ascetic rules and regulations (vss. 16, 20-23), and additional worship of angels (v. 18).

When anyone says that we are to be saved or kept by the Law, they have never understood the phrase, "COMPLETE IN HIM." "*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth*" (Rom. 10:4). When anyone suggests that we can add to our salvation by doing something, they have never understood the phrase, "COMPLETE IN CHRIST." "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God*" (Eph. 2:8). When anyone suggests that water baptism in any form is necessary for salvation, or as a testimony to one's faith or the door to the church, they do not understand the phrase,

"COMPLETE IN HIM." "*For we are Buried with Him in baptism*" (Col. 2:12). When we are told that we must keep the Sabbath, we know men do not understand the COMPLETENESS we have in Christ. "*The Sabbath days which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*" (Col. 2:16-17).

The word translated "*fulness*" in 2:9 is in the Greek the word *pleroma*, and the word "*complete*" in 2:10 is the word *pepleromenoi*. This latter is a perfect passive participle of the word *pleroo*. The word means to "make full, to fill up, to fill to the full, to diffuse throughout, complete, nothing wanting." So the great word in this Epistle, both with reference to Christ, is this word *pleroma* or *pleroo*. This fulness is worked into the very structure and language of the Epistle. (See 1:9; 1:19; 1:24; 1:25; 2:2; 2:9, 2:10; 4:12; 4:17.)

Not only in Colossians, but in the whole Bible we have tributes to Jesus Christ. He is seen in every promise, parable, prophecy, type, poem, narrative, allegory, and symbol. He is likened to the sun, the stars, the shepherd, the lamb, the lion, the door, the cornerstone, the foundation, the bread, and the wine. Everything about Him is superlative. He is the "*Lord of Lords,*" "*the King of Kings,*" "*the fairest among ten thousand.*"

Nothing can go beyond completeness. You can add nothing to it. You might as well try to purge a sunbeam, or purify the whiteness of the newly fallen snow as to add to that which is already perfect. And it is not only true that "*all fulness dwells in Him,*" but also that we are "COMPLETE IN HIM."

One day Michelangelo went into the studio of the young painter Raphael, and, finding him gone, left without leaving his name. But before he went, he took a piece of chalk and wrote on the canvas of the poor and meager design of Raphael a bold and sweeping line with the word "*amplius*" (wider). When Raphael returned and saw this, he knew immediately who had been there and done this. He thus changed his style. So our Lord points to His fulness and our narrowness and emptiness, and challenges us to partake of *His fulness – His pleroma*.

It is the privilege of every person to recognize their completeness in Christ. This can be done first,

## BY RECOGNIZING CHRIST'S FULNESS

"*For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily*" (2:9)

Alford paraphrases this verse, "For in Him all the complete perfection essential to the Godhead abides corporeally, substantially, and really, and not in the manner of shadows."

CHRIST'S FULNESS is resident in His Person ("*in Him*" – *en auto*). This phrase is given the emphatic position in the verse, and draws our attention first to the One Who has the FULNESS. The Holy Spirit wants us to see Him, even before we see HIS FULNESS. This is important.

We must also recognize the Permanence of this FULNESS in the word "*dwelleth*" – *katoikei*. This word means "to settle down, to be at home." Deity is at home in Christ, and dwells so in a permanent way.

There is also the Plentitude of this FULNESS as seen in the words, "*all the fulness of the Godhead*" – *pan to pleroma tes Theotetos*. To make this matter exceedingly clear, the Apostle use the word "pan" (all), emphasizing that the FULNESS is complete. There is no portion of the plentitude that is not present. Paul is pointing out further by the use of the word *Theotetos* (Godhead) that not mere quality of God resides in Christ, as seen in Romans 1:20 by the use of the word *Theiotes*, but the absolute essence of God dwells in Christ. CHRIST IS NOT MERELY LIKE GOD, THAT IS DIVINE, BUT HE IS THEOS – GOD. This was Paul's declaration against the Gnostics before Athanasius had to oppose Arius (who said that the Son is not of the same substance as the Father, but was created as an agent for creating the world).

IN THIS FULNESS OF CHRIST we also recognize the place in the word "bodily" – *somatikos*. This is an adverb modifying the verb "dwell," pointing to the manner. It means "bodily," or "in bodily manifestation." This does not mean a mystical dwelling, nor a mere spiritual dwelling, nor a limited bodily dwelling. It does mean an eternal bodily dwelling. There can be only one tenable explanation, and that is that Christ was and is God. All the fulness dwelt in Him before the incarnation, during the incarnation, and continues so permanently. Since "in Christ" the plentitude dwells

permanently, and bodily, there is the manifestation that gives the lie to all forms of Gnosticism, which perverts the truth about the person of Christ.

If the foregoing exposition is true, and it is, then certain things follow in logical sequence.

CHRIST IS HEAD OF ALL CREATION. "*For by Him were all things created, ... all things were created by Him, and for Him*" (Col. 1:16-17). In creation, Christ is preeminent. Every form and kind of matter, simple and complex, were created by Him. The atom and the star, the sun and the cloud, every grade of life from the worm to the angel, every order of intellect and being around and above us, the splendors of Heaven and the nearer phenomena of the earth are the product of the first-born of all creation. Three prepositions are used in relation to Christ as Creator – *en, dia, and eis*, - "*in Him,*" "*through Him,*" and "*for Him.*" Christ is the source, the means and the end of all creation. He is also the conserver of all – "*by Him all things consist*" (Col. 1:17). He impresses upon creation its unity and solidarity, making it a cosmos instead of a chaos. He feeds the sun with fuel and the sparrow with corn. He guides the planets in their courses, and keeps the heart beating in man. He cares for the tiniest insect that makes the coral and the mightiest leviathan which plows the deep. He guides the seraph and the cherub in their inter-spacial missions. The helm of the universe is in His hands that were nailed to Calvary for you and me. Everywhere we behold His footprints; out of every storm and solitude we hear His voice across the darkness saying, "*It is I, be not afraid.*"

CHRIST IS ALSO THE HEAD OF ALL REDEMPTION. "*And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself*" (Col. 1:20). He is both the "*Author and Finisher*" of our faith, the "*Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and End*" of our redemption. When He cried, "*It is finished,*" it was finished. Nothing was left undone, and nothing need be added. In the incarnation He became both God and man; in the crucifixion He became our means of peace and provision for every spiritual blessing; in the resurrection He became our power over death, the grave, and Lake of Fire; in His ascension and seating at God's right hand, He became our guarantee of all

future glory with Him. Nothing has been left undone for our future glorification with Him "*in the Heavens*."

CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH, HIS BODY. "*And He is the Head of the body, the church*" (Col. 1:18). The head is the glory of the body. There the chief beauty of manhood dwells. Christ is fairer than all. We are circumcised with Him, baptized with Him, risen with Him, ascended with Him, and seated with Him in glory. What a complete identification! It is the head which unifies the body, coordinates all its movements, regulates all its actions. From the head comes the mandate which lifts the hand and moves the foot.

CHRIST IS AGAIN THE HEAD OF OUR HOPE.  
"*When*

*Christ Who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory*" (Col. 3:4). Christ takes care of all our sorrows, sufferings, trials and tribulations. Matthew Arnold shows the failure of the Greeks' religion to take into account the sorrows of life. It was only a fair- weather religion.

Twenty miners were once buried in a coal pit in Wales, standing in water to the waist, until but five remained. Yet they were singing, "In the deep and mighty waters there is none to hold my head, but my only Saviour Jesus, Who was offered in my stead." The South Sea Islanders have a palm tree that they use for bread, drink, clothing, shelter, light, material for books, cordage for boats, and for needles. So our Lord Jesus Christ is all and in all. We are God's heavenly people; our citizenship is in Heaven, and from thence we look for our Saviour. "*Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2:13).

THE "FULNESS" OF CHRIST is but half of the story. The apostle hastens on to show the other side. So we must also,

RECOGNIZE THE CHRISTIAN'S FULNESS.

"*Ye are complete in Him*" (2:10). Note our present possession in the words "ye are." This word in the Greek holds the emphatic position. "*Beloved, now are we the sons of*

God" (I John 3:2). Note also our present position "*in Him*." Again the Greek gives this an emphatic location. "*In Him*" is the richest little phrase in all of Paul's Epistles. This is the sphere of the believer's life. It is a sphere, not a mere circle. We are "in Him," surrounded above, beneath, beside, and all around. So nothing can come from without to harm us, and with Him within we should be "*more than conquerors*." "*In Him*" we have all that He has, and He is our fulness, our complement, our completeness. So also our past perfection as believers. The word is *pepleromenoi*, and means "COMPLETE, FILLED FULL, PERFECTED." This is a perfect, passive participle, so it represents a past perfect work. Demosthenes used the word here translated "complete" in describing a ship fully manned. Truly our ship is fully manned, from prow to stern, by her Captain Who steers the vessel, stills the storm, guides through rocks and reefs, feeds the crew, fills every need, and brings the vessel to its desired haven.

If we are "COMPLETE IN HIM," and we are "*by grace through faith*," then it follows what Paul sets forth in this Epistle.

WE ARE COMPLETE WITHOUT PHILOSOPHY, "*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments (elements) of the world, and not after Christ*" (2:8). We need no sophisms of this world to prop our faith. There is nothing new in philosophy except old error. One day three friend philosophers came to Job to comfort him and to set him straight as to his thinking. These three represent the reasonings of the best of men. Eliphaz reasons on human experience (4:8; 5:3; 15:17): "*Even as I have seen*," "*I have seen*," "*I have seen*." It is what he had seen, heard, and felt. Bildad comes with human tradition (8:8,10): "*For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age*," "*search of the fathers*." Zophar reasons on human merit (11:13-14): "*If thou prepare thine heart*." This is the gospel of humanism. Six thousand years of human gropings after wisdom have not given men the true knowledge of God, nor His ways with men. Man's reason is inadequate to understand either the will or way of God. If man by his own reason could find God, and His way of redemption, then there would be no need of a revelation. Like little David we are content with the sling and the stones. As for the armor of philosophy, we leave that to proud Goliath to wear. "*Spoil you*," says Paul. The word is *sulagogen*,

and means "to carry off as a captive, a slave, as booty." It is used of kidnapping and plundering a house, also seducing a maiden.

WE ARE ALSO "COMPLETE IN HIM" WITHOUT CEREMONIES. *"Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days" (2:14, 16-17).*

All these ceremonies had their day. They belong to the time of shadows; we now have the Substance, Christ. "Finished are the types and shadows of the ceremonial law." Circumcision, sacrifices, Passover, water baptisms, temple services, priestly functions, etc., are but "beggerly elements" of a past age, encumbrances no longer needed. Who looks for the moon as long as the sun is shining? We are in the day of the Substance, not in the night of the shadows. But man is so prone to be religious, and to add something to Christ. He must "touch," and "taste," and "handle" something.

Again, WE ARE "COMPLETE IN HIM" WITHOUT ANY HUMAN MERIT. *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).* All our righteousnesses are but filthy rags. If we were "dead in sins," and we were, how could a dead man do anything? He cannot see, hear, touch, smell, speak, or walk. So how utterly foolish it is like Zophar to talk about preparing one's heart to appease God or to merit His favor.

Therefore, if "IN HIM" there dwells all *"the fulness of the Godhead bodily,"* and we are "COMPLETE IN HIM," let us live as those who know this fulness! The Pauline doctrine of Christ is His absolute *"fulness,"* His *pleroma*. And the doctrine of *"ye are complete in Him."* Christ should therefore command all our worship, our admiration, our love. There is at our disposal the infinite merit of His righteousness; the infinite efficacy in His blood; and the infinite power of His resurrection and glorification.

The celebrated artist Danneker was asked by Napoleon to paint Venus for the Louvre, and declined. An enormous sum was offered him, but still he declined. The little emperor angrily



demanded the reason. "I have just painted Christ," was the answer, "and I can never lower my brush to paint such an inferior subject as Venus."

Let us therefore sing:

Now blest in heavenly places

In Christ at God's right hand;

And filled with all His fulness

Complete in Him to stand.

Sing to the praise and glory

Of Him Who thus hath shown

Such gracious love and mercy,

To call us for His own.

\* \* \* \* \*

"...our *physical* death is *passive*: He died *actively*. Our *spiritual* death, by contrast, is *active*, for we deliberately choose to be and want to be the kind of people we are. His *spiritual* death, on the other hand, was *passive*; for 'God laid upon Him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. 53:6), and, though He willingly accepted the burden, He nevertheless cried out in agony against it when the judgment fell (Matt. 27:46); for it meant spiritual separation from His Father in heaven, and such a 'darkness' that even the sun hid its face."

Arthur Custance, *The Seed of The Woman*, p. 162, Doorway Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

THE JESUS MYTH

by Lyman Wendt

In the Authorized Version (AV) of the Bible, II Corinthians 5:14 states, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead."

In this very familiar portion of Scripture, the above statement is compatible and in order for God's people in this dispensation of Grace. Expanding for a moment on this immediate context (verses 8 through 14), it is difficult to break the wonderful continuity of thought: "For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead...." This means, of course, that in the dispensation of Grace, we understand that when Christ died, we were identified with Him, i.e., we are also dead in Christ. "...And that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." So now also we who have died in Christ are also alive in Christ, and that ought to be the attitude of the believer. We are not living for ourselves now, but unto Him. Here, no doubt, is the reason that this is the commission for today in the light of this wonderful truth of Grace as seen demonstrated here.

"Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh." At one time there was a distinction of men. In fact, even God's religious system which He gave to Israel made the Jew the distinctive people, distinct and apart from the Gentile, but not any longer. We don't know men after the flesh any longer. There is now no such thing as Jews and Gentiles, bond or free, male or female. Having died in Christ, we are all raised to the highest possible position. "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." In other words, even our Lord Jesus Himself is no longer to be recognized as The Jesus of the Gospels, which is the only Jesus that tens of thousands of people know -- only The Jesus who walked here on earth and, in the opinion of many people, established an example that we are supposed to follow. That is all the religion that many people have today. But, "We don't know Him that way any longer," the Apostle Paul says. Not just The Jesus in the flesh. We are to know Someone else. \*

"Therefore if any man be in Christ (that is, this new Christ, this risen Christ, this exalted Christ), he is a new creature (or new creation), old things are passed away; behold, all things are

become new." That is, we are through with legalism, i.e., the Law. We are now under Grace, and Grace is sovereign. All things therefore are new.

"And all things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation." Our message is not that God hates people! Some poor folks today are not under the sound of the Gospel, as they are afraid that they have been propagandized with the idea that God has a quarrel with/against them. Such is not the case! What a wonderful message to be proclaimed: that God has made provision so that nothing stands between Him and mankind. He does not hate them! He loves them, He is at peace with them, and provision has been made for His receiving them.

"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the Word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye (let yourself be) reconciled to God. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (Shortly it will be apparent why the entirety [vss. 8-21] of this context as it relates to vs. 16 has been quoted.) "Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know Him no more."

Not too long ago the following statement was made: "The only religion many people have is Christmas." Perhaps the significance of that statement is not understood. However, a little consideration will reveal its bearing on this study, for, in reality, to most of the world The Jesus Christ of Christmas is only a baby in a manger! There are literally tens of thousands of people who know no Jesus except a little baby who was born many years ago; and they hear about Him and sing about Him once a year. That's the religion they have! Succinctly, the birth of this baby Jesus whom two-thirds of Christendom celebrates is a myth. Obviously, this statement will not be shared by many "of the cloth" or those who occupy the pew. In the remainder of this text, it will be shown that this statement is true and that the Jesus of Christendom is a myth.

Three years ago, a professor from the University of California, Riverside, seeing the church ad ("The Jesus Myth") in the local

newspaper, expressed his amazement that anyone today could doubt the actuality of the historical Jesus. He, of course, misunderstood the ad, and perhaps some of those who read the following will also misunderstand. For those of you who read this manuscript, please don't question the actuality of The Lord Jesus, as it will be (hopefully) a very strong apologetic not only for His historic reality, but for His present existence as a real Person.

At this point, consider the following declaration. As you will eventually see, it is in actuality the conclusion of this entire message put as an opening statement: According to Hebrews 10:5, our Lord Jesus Christ, in addressing The Father, said, "A body hast Thou prepared Me." (You will note that the word "prepared" is in the margin. Another rendering might be "fitted Me," which is quite interesting and significant.) The Lord Jesus said, "A body Thou fitted Me" (or "prepared Me"). It is quite evident by the frantic activities of the Christmas season that many people believe there was a baby named Jesus born bodily.

The religious world, however, does not agree on the circumstances of His birth, on WHO was being born, i.e., that He was born of a virgin. But that He was born, a baby named Jesus, is quite generally admitted. Many people go a little further and admit the bodily death of this One who was born, but here again there are differences of opinion as to WHO was dying, and HOW He died, and WHY He died, and what was accomplished when He died. The Word of God is not indecisive in this matter, for it states in I Peter 2:24, "Who His own self bore our sins in His own body on the tree." If the Word of God has credence, see WHY He died, WHO He was as He died, and what He accomplished by His death.

In fact, here on the death of The Lord Jesus Christ is where the Roman Catholic Church puts its great emphasis. That is the reason the Roman Catholic faith is a very somber and joyless religion, because there is no assurance connected with it. They have no joy in His death and its implications. No life out of death. No hope. No promise. You can't be sure, under that system, that you are positively going to heaven. In fact, you are positively sure that you are not going directly to heaven. Consequently, it is not a religion filled with joyfulness.

In Latin American countries, the body of our Lord is paraded through the streets with the whole religious emphasis, as you are no doubt aware, on the second point previously mentioned, that Christ died. And they are correct. He did die and, even in a false system, faith in the right object saves. Trusting in the work of Calvary, a person is saved, no matter what his religion.

There are some who go a bit further in this matter and recognize that, not only was The Lord Jesus born bodily and crucified bodily, but The Lord Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the grave. Now you can begin to understand why there is a vastly fewer number who believe in the bodily resurrection than those who believe in His birth and His death, because it immediately reveals the uniqueness of The One who was able to rise from the dead.

Once His resurrection has been acknowledged, He has assumed the power of omnipotence (all powerful). Omnipotence -- only God Himself rises up from the dead. Concomitantly, acknowledgment of the bodily resurrection of The Lord Jesus Christ indicates that His victory over death guarantees there is no spiritual death for any believer who is "in Him" at His appearance (Col. 3:4), nor should the believer taste death after His appearance.

Another proof text to the believer's identification in His resurrection is found in I Corinthians 15 (as well as other texts). At this point, however, the vast masses of humanity are divided. There have always been a relatively few who will accept the last two statements (relating to His crucifixion and resurrection).

The Lord Jesus Christ was not only born bodily and died bodily and raised bodily, but He ascended bodily. Consequently, in I Timothy 2:5 the Scriptures reveal that, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and man, The Man Christ Jesus." The Lord Jesus Christ now lives at the right hand of The Father and is there, bodily present. He saves those who believe in Him.

By His wonderful work of advocacy, which is the work of a legal representative, He keeps us saved even while we are sinning. He works as our "intercessor," for "He ever liveth to make intercession for us," and guarantees us strength and power in things that we do not realize are sins. Wonderful, wonderful truth, Christian friend! The theology books are strangely lacking in

information concerning the fact that Jesus Christ is now bodily doing a work in the presence of The Father.

Finally, God's plan of salvation makes it absolutely imperative and The Word of God positively declares "that this same Jesus will return to the earth bodily." First, He will translate and give glorified bodies to His people, and then He will reign in righteousness as King of Israel and Lord of all the earth.

Most will wonder, What is so remarkable or unusual about this statement in the former paragraph? Nothing, to those who have a keen understanding of The Scriptures. However, it would be unthinkable and virtually impossible to have made this same statement to at least half of the churches in this city. The vast masses of professing Christian people do not believe in the bodily ascension and present bodily work and actual bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many who read this article take these things for granted, but if others have been raised under some of the religious systems found in our world, or in one of the numerous cults that are ever present, then they would have been taught to reject the work(s) done by The Lord Jesus as stated above (except, perhaps, that Jesus was born bodily and, since nearly everyone believes that everybody dies, that Jesus also died).

At this point, the reader may begin to realize what is meant by the "Jesus Myth." Briefly stated, it is this: THE JESUS OF CHRISTMAS, THE JESUS OF THE CULTS, THE JESUS OF THIS WORLD'S GREAT RELIGIONS (including Protestantism and Romanism) IS NOT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST OF THE BIBLE AT ALL. He is a myth! Hopefully, a few striking illustrations will be convincing. At the same time, these illustrations may show an individual his or her need of accepting The Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour.

The object of this message is to expose all to the "teaching of Christendom." Let us tear off the false robes of "Christendom" (including the "Protestant religion") and expose it for what it is. In addition, the RELIGIONS of this world need to be unmasked. For, in reality, Satan's realm is found here. In a former publication ("The Satan Myth"), it was shown that Satan's captives were to be found in religions. Satan's masterpiece is "religion." Not the saloon, the dance hall, nor the red light district -- it is in religion.

Succinctly, this is where Satan's subjects are to be found and, therefore, religion in all of its subtleties needs to be exposed for what it is.

Salvation is to know and accept by faith the perfect and finished work of The Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary as is found in the Bible. Those who would promote an "otherwise" salvation are promulgating the "Jesus Myth." These statements are not made in a tone of bitterness or anger. Nor are they made with the idea of belittling another person's religious group. They are made because they are matters of such vital importance that they must be said with conviction! To "water down" these statements of conviction would impinge upon spiritual matters which bear upon a person's eternal state (i.e., issues of life and death, heaven and hell). Therefore, it is imperative that attention to truth and error in these matters must be addressed. In the following paragraphs, consider the following.

Protestantism. Is the Jesus of Protestantism a myth? Following are quotations from leaders found in several of the Protestant organizations. One of the leaders in the Presbyterian denomination (who, incidentally, was formerly the President of the National Council of Churches) states, "The Virgin Birth is absolutely unimportant." This statement was made by a man who was a Presbyterian minister. He later became an outstanding Baptist leader in the world. (At one time he was the spokesman for the Federal Council of Churches.)

In his book, *The Modern Use of the Bible* (page 269), he says, "Jesus is an extraordinarily good man. In fact, his goodness was about the only thing with which to make his impression on the world." On another page he says, "Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary." Outstanding Protestant leaders such as Harry Emerson Fosdick and E. Stanley Jones hold to these beliefs. And, by sacred Biblical definition, their Jesus is a myth. They may think that Jesus' goodness is the only thing that He had to make an impression on the world, but, thank God, The Word of God declares WHO He is and WHAT He has done! And the "Jesus" that they are presenting -- the "Jesus of Protestantism" -- is a myth. Thank God!

A former Protestant missionary and an outstanding leading Methodist of today echoes nearly the same words as those individuals in the former paragraph and those of a well-known Japanese Christian worker who has gone up and down our country. Here are some statements attributed to them: "Jesus came to show men how to live." Another said, "Jesus came to show men how to die." Both comments are, of course, false. Thank God! Their Jesus is a Myth! Perhaps if they had said, "Jesus did not come to show men how to die, but to die for men," they would have been closer to the truth.

In addition to the many statements made by the current leadership of the large Protestant denominations, the matter of "ritualism" as practiced by these same organizations is obscuring the historical Lord Jesus Christ of The Bible.

Also, there is the use of names, or the improper use of names in referring to our Lord -- the irreverence in speaking to Him, addressing Him as "Jesus," which we do so often, thoughtlessly. It is as rude to call Him "Jesus" as it would be to walk up to the Queen of England and call her Elizabeth, or to our President and call him by his first name. In government circles you say, "Mr. President." Locally, the mayor is addressed as "Honorable Mayor."

Yet "Jesus" is the title which The Word of God plainly declares is the name of His humiliation and humanity. He is The LORD JESUS CHRIST -- The Christ of The Bible.

In Protestantism there seems to be the idea that "Jesus" is ready to show favor to a certain favored class -- that God will demonstrate His love and grace to people who are good and who behave themselves. (As the writer of this article, that was my impression until I was 25 years old.) Their "Jesus" is one who will be kind and gracious to people who behave themselves and quit their sinning. Thank God that this "Jesus" is a Myth, and our Lord Jesus Christ stands graciously ready to receive the basest and lowest of sinners. In fact, that is the only kind of people He savcs - - lost sinners.

Even more pronounced is the "Jesus Myth" as seen in Romanism. To many Roman Catholics, The Lord Jesus Christ is a piece of



bread! Yes, that is correct. On page eleven of a Roman Catholic publication, an article titled "The Mass" (it was published to be presented to a non-Catholic audience and has the "blessing" of the Roman Catholic Church in it), states, "His words, 'This is My body,' cause the substance of bread to become His body. His words, 'This is my blood,' cause the wine to become His blood. The act by which the change is made is called consecration. The word 'mass' is the same sacrifice as Calvary."

That "Jesus" is not The Lord Jesus Christ of The Bible. He is not a piece of bread. It may be said that they really don't believe that. In reality, they do! An illustration is in order. When a schoolboy says in an examination that he believes "seven plus seven equals fourteen" and then later says that he believes "seven plus seven equals fifteen," his incorrect answer nullifies his right answer. Experience and logic would indicate that he is not basing his answer on an intelligent foundation. So it is that when Roman Catholics affirm something which is an untruth, it nullifies the reality of the truth that they claim to believe. It should be obvious to the believer that it is imperative there be intelligence in faith rather than superstition.

To many Roman Catholics, The Lord Jesus Christ is only "a baby." An explanation is in order. Two letters were recently written to a personal friend who has trusted in The Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour -- one from a Roman Catholic priest, one from a Catholic nun. A statement from the priest reads, "On Christmas day, Jesus is coming for the resurrection and for the ruin of many. I wonder whether He is coming for your resurrection or for your ruin. It's up to you now." This is followed by, "I want to wish you a Merry Christmas, although in my heart I feel that you can't have one because the baby Jesus will not be welcoming you back into the fold."

Adding to the priest's comments, the nun writes, "I pray, Catherine, that the infant Lord Jesus at this Christmas season will extend His tiny hands welcoming you back into His fold." Do the Catholics believe this? If these statements are not true, what do they mean? And how might this Catholic "doctrine/teaching" influence Protestantism?

A personal friend who attends a Baptist Church in a suburban city in Los Angeles recently attended this church (Riverside Bible Church) and provided this author with his Christmas church bulletin. In this bulletin was found the pastor's greeting to his people: "What gift are you going to give the Christ Child this year?" In the following paragraph it states, "Just as the wise men came from the east with their precious gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, so we too will fall down before the cradle and adore Him." What is this person saying?

Is it not apparent that the influence of this belief is indeed present on our Christmas cards? It is not the intention of this author to get you to be too "Christmas card conscious." In looking through the seasonal cards received by me this year, out of a stack of 50, I found only one having a picture of a little baby Jesus. Perhaps this congregation is also getting conscious of this same issue because of something that has been said from this pulpit, or because God is giving you a little spiritual discernment. Thanks be to God that "He grew up" – He is not a baby! The Jesus of "Protestantism" and of "Romanism" is in most cases a myth. And thank God that this Jesus is a myth!

This influence has even interjected itself into our hymns (please do not become too conscious of hymnology, either). Consider, for example, the fourth verse of "O, Little Town of Bethlehem": "Oh, Holy Child of Bethlehem, descend on us we pray. Cast out our sin and enter in. Be born in us today." What should the response of the Believer be to these lyrics? (Again, there should not be an over-reaction to these words.)

On the other hand, what chance does the poor, confused sinner have when such phrases as these are heard? The plea is for intelligence in the Christian faith. Even God's people add to the confusion. The Jesus of Christendom is a Myth! One of the missions of the Believer is to let people know that He is not a baby! He is the living, Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

What of the Jesus as found in the Book of Mormon? He is a myth! The Jesus of Jehovah's Witnesses is not The Lord Jesus Christ of The Bible! Reader, the Jesus of Christendom is a myth!

What of the man on the streets? To some, Jesus is a little baby and, as previously stated above, "The only religion that some people have is at Christmas" (just a little baby whom they hear of and sing about once a year). To others, He is a "good man." Some say that He is a man who set an example as to how we are to live. Ladies and gentlemen, their Jesus is a myth, and not The Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible.

Others say that He is a man who came to show people "how they ought to die." That's a myth! That is not The Lord Jesus Christ of The Bible! What is He to the media? A glance at an intelligent(?) newspaper announcement reveals utter confusion when it concerns our Lord Jesus Christ. Never in (our) newspapers can there be found a reference to the living Jesus Christ. There are articles about world leaders – page after page. Why? Because the Jesus of Christendom is a myth. References to His atoning sacrifice in the media cannot be found. Reason: To them He is just a mythical person. He doesn't exist – He isn't a reality. May God help us to see the emptiness and the error of "religion."

These comments are made not in the spirit of being pious, but in sincerity before God. Perhaps an unsaved person reading this article might see the error of "religion" as to the Person and work of our blessed Lord, and recognize the futility and emptiness of "religion" as seen in Christendom. And, with this information, perhaps he or she will accept what the Scriptures declare about The Lord Jesus Christ – Who He is and What He did and Where He is now and What He is doing and What He is going to do.

John 20:31 clearly reveals that the purpose of The Word of God is to direct sinners as to how to be saved. He further tells us there plainly that it is by "believing" – not by doing, not by understanding, but by trusting in the living Lord Jesus Christ. In John 10:10, He said, "I am come that they may have life." I John 5:11,12 states, "He that hath The Son hath life, and he that hath not The Son hath not life."

Eternal life does not depend on your attitude toward men (this is the message of the world's religions and modernism [liberalism]). What of salvation's being dependent on one's attitude toward his/her fellowman? The Word of God indicates otherwise. The Word clearly declares that eternal salvation depends on a

person's relationship to The Lord Jesus Christ. Not to a Bethlehem Babe – not even the Christ on a crucifix – but The RISEN, ASCENDED, GLORIFIED, COMING LORD.

You who read these few paragraphs, do you know Him? Is that The Jesus Christ that you know? Have you trusted that One? Are you longing and waiting for Him, or do you worship or recognize only a Jesus myth? It is the desire of this author that God, The Holy Spirit, might grant you the spiritual discernment concerning the subtleties of the world's religions as they relate to the Jesus who is a myth. That Jesus does not exist!

I would encourage you that you, by faith, would lift your heart and eyes, and see that One Who is exalted and glorified, and Who is worthy of all trust, praise, and adoration, instead of calling attention to the little baby Jesus. As the words of that great hymn declare, "ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME. LET ANGELS PROSTRATE FALL. Bring forth the royal diadem and crown HIM LORD OF ALL."

\* Editors note: For an excellent exegetical examination of this same passage, please see three articles written by Mr. Daniel Anderson:

1. "The End of Israel According to Flesh," *This I Believe*, No. 26, August 1992. O-2611 Winans St., Grand Rapids, MI 49504-9526.
2. CHRIST AND ISRAEL, A Sequel to, "The End of Israel According to Flesh," *This I Believe*, No. 27, August 1993.
3. "Be Reconciled To God, A Perspective on Biblical Evangelism," an article published by The Open Bible Trust, Fordland Mount, Upper Basildon, Reading, RG8 8LU, UK.

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"The incarnation brought to view man as God planned him to be. Adam was created for that kind of manhood. And this potential, which in the first Adam was lost, was fully realized in the last Adam. He not only made that manhood a reality, but by his sacrifice of it, made our recovery of true manhood possible. This

is the 'apprehension' Paul was striving to achieve (Phil. 3:12). It is this 'image of the Son' to which the Christian is to be conformed (Rom. 8:29)."

Arthur Custance, *The Seed of The Woman*, p. 337, Doorway Publications, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.

## ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE

By Russ Schaefer

Eph. 1:3...blessed with all spiritual blessings in the supra-heavens, in Christ.

Eph. 1:4...chosen for Himself before the conceiving of the universe-system, made irreproachable and holy, in love, in His sight.

Eph. 1:5...according to His firm purpose, designated Son Heirs, for/to Himself.

Eph. 1:6...to praise the glory inherent in His grace, He engraces us in the One Always Beloved.

Eph. 1:7...in Christ, full deliverance from guilt and blame-worthiness is a present possession. Transgressions of the

Divine will are negated by His full release [forgiveness] given as a gift, according to THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE.

Eph. 1:9...the Father's Sacred Secret, the original purpose in/of creation, is revealed.

Eph. 1:10...in order to implement a Dispensation super-abounding in opportunities to summarize the totality of heaven and earth in Christ.

Eph. 1:11...in Christ, made the Father's allotment, delineated [as such] according to a specific purpose toward which goal He moves all things.

Eph. 1:12...that we should exist for the Praise of His Glory, implementing the primordial hope [as embodied and projected in Christ].

Eph. 1:13...sealed into Christ as to bear His Imprint, the spirit of which was a pledge of things to come.

Eph. 1:14...an earnest-token of all that has been given as joint-heirs with Christ. This, in its full possession, is to be ever to the Praise Of His Glory.

Eph. 1:22...for the Ecclesia, His Body, Christ is the definitive and comprehensive Summation.

Eph. 1:23...for Christ, His Body--Ecclesia--is the "complementing" prerequisite to fill all things with/for Himself.

Eph. 2:5...made jointly alive in union with Christ, saved from death's domain by/for His grace.

Eph. 2:6...jointly roused with Christ and jointly seated with Him in the supra-heavenlies in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 2:7...in the on-coming ages, God will demonstrate the hyperbolic wealth of His Grace exhibited in His continuing kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 2:8...by/for grace having been saved through THE

FAITH [of Christ, Gal. 2:20], not yours, it is God's Gift – oblation.

Eph. 2:10...made His achievement, created in Christ Jesus unto an avocation prepared of God in which to live, walk and work.

Eph. 2:13...nearer to God we cannot be, as dear to God as God's Son, as near as He.

Eph. 2:14...Israel's wall of covenant/contract privileged exclusiveness has been completely abolished.

Eph. 2:15...Judaism's precepts and decrees [the essence of covenants] have been abrogated by the New Humanity created in

Christ Jesus. Jew, Greek, Barbarian, Scythian are all one in Christ [cf. all and in all Christ is, Col. 3:11].

Eph. 2:19...no more strangers to God, but made Joint-Citizens of the Holiest of all [cf. Col. 1:12] and of the Planetary Fatherhood Family of God.

Eph. 3:2...God's Governmental Rule of Grace over His Creation-Household [cf. Heb. 3:4] is directed to all without exception or distinction.

Eph. 3:3...a segment of the Great Sacred Secret of Eph. 1:9,10 is revealed and implemented.

Eph. 3:6...that all ethnic identities are subservient to the Joint-Heirship with Christ, and the Joint-Promissory Hope with Christ.

Eph. 3:8...the trackless Riches of Christ [embodied in the Secret Dispensation, and hitherto hid in God from all ages] is now to be made known [cf. vs. 9].

Eph. 3:11...the purpose of the ages from the dawn of creation was in accord with a predetermined course laid out in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 3:12...in Christ Jesus and by His faith we have been given boldness of access to God's Awesome Presence.

Eph. 3:19...given the privilege to know and be filled with the knowledge-excelling love of Christ, this same love that saturates the Being of God, for wherein Christ dwells the fullness dwells.

Eph. 4:1...called to Paul's side [A.V., beseech] to share with him in living out a Christ-centered life in full harmony with God's special calling.

Eph. 4:3...making haste to safeguard the Sacred Treasure wrought by His Spirit.

Eph. 4:4...ONE BODY, The Ecclesia, The Body of Christ. A joint-body with Christ and jointly-enthroned with Him in all the rights of

God, within the Headship of Christ all are One, all are equal in Him, and He is throughout the whole.

Eph. 4:4...ONE SPIRIT, in ONE spirit, access to the Father, [Eph. 2:18] sealed [sealed = election] unto a time of full release from corruptibility and death unto the rights of God in Him Who is hid in God, and jointly manifested with Christ in and with glory; a realization and manifestation of our redemption [Eph. 4:30, Col. 3:3,4].

Eph. 4:4...ONE HOPE, a hope of such magnitude that it must be both our vocation and destination. Called to make known the Trackless Riches of Christ [Eph. 3:8]; with its Sacred Secret [vs. 9], with its vast governmental grace for all [vs. 2], with our manifestation with Christ however, whenever, or whensoever He is manifested in and with His Shekinah glory [Col. 3:4]. Of the multitude of hopes in Scripture, only one comprehends and exceeds all other hopes, that declarative summation of all things in heaven and earth in Christ [Eph. 1:10]. "That He might fill all things" is given as a reason for Christ's ascending far above all the heavens [Eph. 4:10]. "Getting to know the love of Christ" [Eph. 3:19] is to be filled with all the fullness of God. This is one of the goals toward which all creation moves in God's plan of things.

Eph. 4:4...ONE LORD. [Gr., Kyrios] The immutable,

ineffable NAME of the Old Testament "Jehovah." The LXX [Greek O.T.] uses Kyrios about 7,000 times to translate the Jehovah title. The ONE who always WAS, IS and IS TO BE. This is Christ Jesus our Lord. He will ever be all that He needs to be to us and to His creation.

Eph. 4:5...ONE FAITH. "...the unity of THE FAITH" [4:13].

This Body of Truth is epitomized in Ephesians and Colossians. It contemplates all arriving at a full knowledge of the Son of God, all made a complete new humanity, all arriving at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Its undergirding is the Dispensation or Ruling Principle of pure grace [Eph. 3:2] and a revealing of a hitherto secret economy hid in God, hid from all



ages of time, and hid from all generations of men [Eph. 3:9, Col. 1:26]. The formerly hidden riches of Christ are now revealed.

Eph. 4:5...ONE BAPTISM. One crucial event had yet to be

fulfilled ere His return to the Father. Vurkul's version of Luke 12:50 depicts it graphically: "I have an overwhelming Baptism to undergo and how strained I feel until it is finished." The companion text, Mark 10:33-39, identifies this with Christ's crucifixion and ensuing death. The Romans 6:3 text is plain: "...baptized into Christ Jesus...baptized into His Death." Only God can place a person into Christ Jesus, into His death. It is a literal Christ and His literal death-baptism into which we have been united. This is not a symbolical baptism in which one person places another in water; rather, Christ in His Death-Baptism is the Element, God is the Baptizer, and our union with Christ is the Result. In Romans 6:4, another factor of this baptismal element is disclosed, i.e., "...jointly entombed with Him by baptism into death...." Christ was entombed above-ground in a sepulchre, and God has identified us with Him there. Fittingly, Romans 6:4 declares that Christ was aroused from death's domain by the glory of the Father. Or, as Col. 2:12 beautifully expresses it, "co-entombed in THE BAPTISM, in WHOM also ye were co-roused through THE FAITH OF THE OPERATION OF GOD Who roused Him from among the dead." The phrase, "...the Faith of the Operation of God," is speaking of faith as a principle, a body of truth, and the "operation of God" is the enabling energy of God. Because God was satisfied with Christ's perfect person and the completeness of His work, He would seat Him in His full rights in the supra-heavenlies, and "in Christ" we are jointly-seated as well. Thus, Christ's Death-Baptism is once for all, and it stands as a perfect monument to the riches of the glory of God's wondrous grace

Eph. 4:6...ONE GOD and FATHER of ALL -- the most sublime text in all of Scripture. To the Athenians of the Areopagus in Acts 17:19-29, Paul pointed out that all

were the offspring of God, and that in Him all live, move, and have their being. Of these pagans, Paul said that God could be sought after and found, and that He was not far from every one of us. Paul wrote that it is the Father of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named [Eph. 3:15]. The O.T. limited this to a special Jewish relationship even in their exile [Isa. 63:16, Mal. 2:10]. As "God," an absolute sovereignty, is implied, this is balanced with God as "Father." As "God" there is power and transcendence; as "Father" there is out-reaching love. The disciples were to mimic the Father in "loving their enemies" [Matt 5:44], as He caused the sun to shine on the evil and the good, on the just and the unjust [5:45]. The "Father" attended to even the needs of the birds [Matt. 6:26]. God is special in His Fatherhood to those loving and serving Him, whoever they are, and He is also universal in His gracious love to all because He made all for Himself, because they are capable of entering into a sonship relationship corresponding to this "Fatherhood." Beyschlag, *New Testament Theology*, aptly states, "Fatherhood is love, original and underived, anticipating and undeserved, forgiving and educating, communicating and drawing to His heart." Whatever man might be, still God always remains what He must be. It is on man's side that the relationship has been impaired, and God has done all that needs to be done to repair this breach. The universality and speciality of this Fatherhood is seen in the concluding words of Eph. 4:6: "OF ALL, OVER ALL, THROUGH ALL, and IN ALL." Here is a tentative outreach by God to draw all men unto Himself by what He is, and herein is the reason He seeks to draw all within the embrace of His love. God has "messed" the meaning, purpose, and goal of His motives and actions in creation and redemption in the manifest person and work of the "Son of His Love," Christ Jesus, the Lord.

THIS IS TRULY ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE

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"If we would see ourselves as God sees us – in all the perfections of the Beloved in Whom we have been engraced so fully and loved so deeply – we would reflect more of what we have been made to be 'in Christ.'"

Keith McDonald