

WHY DID JESUS COME?

The immediate answer to this question is that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners', 1 Tim. 1:15. That is why he came.

But you would not think so when you look at all the customs, traditions, organisations and societies that have been brought in in his name, which together supposedly constitute reasons for his coming. But the above declaration – in the fulness of what it means – actually informs us of the only reason for his coming; all others which are perceived to be reasons being false.

Why Jesus didn't come

If we look first at some of the main reasons people think that Jesus came and show that they do not find their origins in scripture – in the doctrine of the gospel, then we can come to the simple and wonderful reason *for* his coming: seeing it in all its glory, devoid of all this other clutter. It is always the desire of the children of God to know the truth, be set free by it, and thereafter to dwell in the simplicity – the singleness – which is in Christ.

A New Religion

First of all, Jesus didn't come to start a new religion. So often nowadays Jesus Christ is portrayed as just one among many who have appeared down through history to head a new 'faith' – as if 'God manifest in the flesh' was like other men. But this is not so. As Jesus' coming was ordained from everlasting, according to the eternal purpose of God, then in one sense his coming was a fulfilment rather than a beginning: as it is written, 'but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself', Heb. 9:26; indeed, 'It is finished.'

The Lord Jesus was the promised and longed for Messiah of Israel – of spiritual Israel: the Israel of God. The saints of God who lived and walked by faith before his coming looked for and expected the Redeemer to appear. If you read Hebrews 11 you will read of their combined expectation, all of which pertained to the coming of Christ, the accomplishing of his work for his people, and to the 'all things new' which he would bring in: they 'looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God... they saw the

promises far off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them... they sought a country, that is, an heavenly... they saw him who was invisible... they kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood... they sought a better resurrection’.

Perhaps Simeon – who had waited so long for this ‘consolation of Israel’ – summed up all the expectation of the faithful up to his day when, by revelation, he took the child Jesus up into his arms and, blessing God, said, ‘Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel’, Luke 2:25-32. This language of the faithful far transcends the hope that just another religion would be established. These spiritual people already had religion under the law (and legalism remains the cornerstone of all ‘religion’) – outward ceremonies, performances and services, which they perceived were not the substance but only the type or foreshadow of what it really meant to be occupied in the worship of Jehovah. So while they practised their religion ‘in this mountain or at Jerusalem’, John 4:21, they saw beyond it – and hoped for something more real, more spiritual to appear; which of course is what did appear when the Lord Jesus came declaring his words – his gospel and doctrine – to be ‘spirit and life... the flesh profiteth nothing’, John 6:63.

Nevertheless the fact remains that the saints before Christ’s coming all walked by faith – despite the law – and they ‘died in faith’. But the same is true of the saints under the new covenant: it remains as true now as it was in Abraham’s day that ‘the just shall live by faith’. They looked forward to the promise of his coming, we look back to it; but we all are one in him: ‘And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect’, Heb. 11:39,40.

So to say that Jesus came to form a new religion called Christianity is wrong. The fact that a religion called Christianity *has* appeared in his name is not surprising in the light of Jesus’ teaching; for his saying that ‘many who call him Lord will not enter the kingdom of heaven’ is proof enough that his name would be used by multitudes who did not actually know him, Matt. 7:21-23. It is also a sure sign that what Christ *did* come to accomplish – the work of the cross, and thereafter to build – his church, would be so hated by the enemy that he would seek to pervert that work and that church by

introducing false doctrine associated with it; therefore causing great deception among the people who would adhere to this new religion which Jesus didn't originate.

And so it has come to pass. Many do call Jesus Lord whose only perception of him is of one who formed a new religion and who, they think, brought in a whole new set of beliefs, rules, ceremonies and customs. Somewhere in the midst of all this fog they may have some concept of sins being forgiven but that is not the sole purpose for his coming in their understanding.

Furthermore, and obviously, Christ didn't come to make people religious. That is, he didn't come to put in place a whole new set of outward performances which made the people who practised them think they were religious, or make those who observed them think the same. The truth is that 'religion' only exists in performances – works: so when someone said upon the death of a woman that 'she lived her religion', well, obviously! that's what religion is: it cannot be anything other than 'lived'. All religious people 'live' their religion because religion is 'a way of life'; witness the Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, etc. So 'Christian' works can be performed, and the 'Christian' religion lived, by people with an unregenerate heart: hence Matt. 7:21-23.

But Jesus didn't come to make people religious; he came to put faith into the hearts of his people; and although that faith produces good works – those works which God has before ordained that they should walk in them – yet these are not primarily, or even, outward religious actions. People can cross themselves when praying; close their eyes and bow their heads, or kneel; they can read the scriptures regularly; go to church or chapel with their Bibles tucked under their arms; wear their Sunday best; keep Sunday special – or 'holy' – and live 'good' lives all as part of a religious 'lifestyle' without ever having been born again of the Spirit of God; without ever hearing the gospel of his grace; or without ever having the desire or need to do so; and yet others say of them, 'Look! They're good religious people.'

Just consider the 'religion' of Saul of Tarsus – a religion practised in the name of Jehovah. There was never a more pious man on the face of the earth: he was zealous toward God, exceedingly zealous regarding the traditions of his fathers, blameless – for all to see – as touching the righteousness which is in the law – O how Saul loved the law! – and lived a

most profitable existence both in honour and peace of conscience because of his religion, Phil. 3:4-6. But for all that, when God's Christ came and started building his church, Saul was the mightiest, most zealous, committed opponent of this work of God: indeed, he sought *abundant ways* to oppose and destroy it, as he said: 'I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do *many things* contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth', Acts 26:9. Yes, this persecution of the followers of 'this way' was probably – in his mind – the greatest evidence that his religion was everything to him; after all it seems that he was the sole perpetrator of it, cp. Acts 9:26-31. But he was totally blind in his religion, and blindness remains today the foremost characteristic of those who *will* attach so much importance to its performance.

Churches

Following on from this is the fact that Jesus didn't come to build 'churches' and everything associated with them. All that he came to do has spiritual not carnal fruit: his church being a body of people indwelt of the Spirit and not an edifice built of stone. Once call a building a church and you have lost the fundamental definition of what Christ's church is. The Lord's redeemed people don't 'go to church', they *are* the church. God dwells in his people – in their hearts – not in buildings; and *wherever* but two or three of them are gathered together in his name *there* he is in the midst of them.

Amongst many who call themselves Christians there is this belief that they can only really meet with God if they go to a sanctified building: a 'place of worship'; such is the 'religion' of Christianity. But regardless of how much these buildings are adorned – or not adorned, Jesus' teaching regarding such places is 'neither... nor yet', see again John 4:20,21. As far as God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost is concerned such places are *irrelevant*. As one who has been called out of 'chapel religion' in the last five years or so I had occasion a while ago to go to a chapel for a funeral, and sitting there this was the word which struck me so forcibly and, I must say, unexpectedly: Irrelevant. The whole gathering seemed to be totally irrelevant as far as, first, the deceased was concerned – obviously; certainly irrelevant as far as 'truth' was concerned, and therefore as far as the church of Jesus Christ was concerned.

As the Lord Jesus didn't come to perpetuate the old 'forms of godliness' – where God ordained outward places into which he would come and meet his people at certain times – then to think today that the Almighty is bound to service times is to miss completely the spiritual nature of Christ's church. So,

all that pertains to religious buildings and ceremonies is just the religion of men and not of God – though it all be done in the name of Christ. Therefore it matters not what names are given to churches, fellowships, meetings or denominations; all is irrelevant as far as the Saviour is concerned.

I have this picture in my mind of the Lord in heaven patiently continuing the work of calling his people by his grace: of convicting them of sin; of drawing them to the Saviour; of applying the finished work of the Son to them; and of setting them at liberty in the truth of the gospel: a work which he will continue to do until the last one is called. Meanwhile, out of his sight – so to speak – are all these other people scurrying around practising their Christian religion: going to church; having meetings; singing hymns or psalms – or ‘worship songs’; praising and worshipping their Jesus; doing good works – because they are Christians; organising special services; prayer meetings; missions; conventions; evangelistic campaigns – to get the ‘unsaved’ into their churches, and whatever else they think Christians ought to be doing. But on the day of judgment the Lord will turn to their desperate pleadings that all these things were done in his name with those chilling words, ‘I never knew you’, Matt. 7:21-23.

This is why I say that it is all irrelevant: irrelevant to Christ, for he didn’t come to initiate these things: not in the way they understand them anyway. Yes, in the doctrine of Christ there are words used like church, fellowship, worship, etc., but ‘the religion of Christianity’ has subtly changed the meaning and application of these words from what the Lord and his apostles meant when they used them. Please do meditate on those words of the Lord Jesus to the woman at the well in John chapter 4: they really do constitute the death-knell to places, times and formalised religion. [For a discussion on the error of ‘denominationalism’ please see my ‘*Contentions*’, especially chapters 1 and 2.]

Christians

In the light of this we can say, then, that the Lord didn’t come specifically to make people ‘Christians’. Sometimes in preaching you will hear things like, ‘How does one become a Christian?’ or, ‘What makes a man a Christian?’ and then the preacher will go on to describe the process one has to go through to be able to arrive at calling himself ‘a Christian’. But it is true to say that, in the light of all the exhortations in scripture to those who profess to be the people of God to examine themselves, to give diligence, and to take heed

unto themselves lest they be deceived or in presumption, there must be many 'Christians' who are not actually saved. And isn't this really the fruit of following religion: that one can be taken up with forms and beliefs and works and ceremonies while remaining unregenerate, lost and dead? Of course. So, reader; are you just 'a Christian', or are you saved? For you must remember that the Son of man came to seek and *to save* that which was lost.

Now it may be surprising for us to discover that the word Christian is barely used at all in the scriptures – three times in fact; and only once is it clear that it was used by a child of God – Peter uses it in 1 Peter 4:16. The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch, Acts 11:26, but we are not told by whom. It could be that they were designated thus by their detractors; after all even in this verse Luke has already referred to the people of God as 'the church' and as 'disciples' – very common scriptural descriptions. That these people were called Christians by those who didn't belong to their company is evident from the only other mention of the word: Acts 26:28; where godless Agrippa said to Paul, 'Almost' – lit. 'in such a short time!?' – 'thou persuadest me to be a Christian': What! one of those of that sect everywhere spoken against? In the light of these two references, then, it is likely that Peter used the word in the same vein, as if he was writing, 'If any man suffer as 'a Christian' – as they call us', see 1 Peter 4:12-19.

In comparison to these three references the people of God in the New Testament are referred to or addressed as 'saints' over fifty times, as 'disciples' over twenty times; as 'the church' more than sixty times; as 'brethren' well over one hundred times; and as 'children' around thirty times. So why such common use of the word Christian today? Because it is self-designated 'Christians' who practice their religion of 'Christianity' – that religion generally understood to have been, though not actually, initiated by Jesus Christ. So as the Lord Jesus didn't come to set up this religion, nor to call his people Christians, then perhaps it is no surprise to find that neither he nor the apostles made a habit of using this word: surely Peter's passing use of it is not enough to establish its widespread use, with all that it apparently represents. Therefore I suggest that the religion of Christianity today can be seen as being similar to what Judaism was at the time of Christ: 'nothing but leaves only'; and look how the Lord Jesus dealt with that tree, Matt. 21:17-20.

No. Jesus didn't come to form a new religion; build churches; make people Christians: he came to save his people from their sins; and anything which detracts from that fundamental truth is a cunningly devised fable.

The Birth of Christ

One such fable, and something else not 'of the faith', is the idea of celebrating the Saviour's birth. I include this point here as I am writing this on December 24th, the day before 'Christianity' celebrates Christmas. This is the name which apostate Christianity had, by about the Fifth Century, given to an already well established pagan festival called Saturnalia which had to do with sun-worship. That festival was marked by festivities, indulgence, excessive eating and drinking, exchanging of gifts, and a general casting off of restraint. Sound familiar? We often hear said, 'People have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas', but the fact is that, because it is a pagan festival and has nothing to do with Christ, people *haven't* forgotten the true meaning at all! Eat, drink, and be merry; indulge, party and 'celebrate' *are* the true meaning. The world, in forgetting Christ, has in fact *regained* the true meaning of this ancient festival. Again, the professing church today bemoans the removal of Christ's name from this time of year: witness Xmas, Winterval, etc.; but as Christ was never in Christmas then remove his name from it by all means. In fact, I call it Paganalia!

Nevertheless the religion which Christ never brought in has added his name to this festival and does something he never commanded his disciples to do – remember his birth, and remember it on a certain day. But in the apostles' doctrine the only remembrance commanded in the new covenant was 'this do in remembrance of me': 'as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.' Apart from that no other like remembrance is commanded. The apostle Paul despaired at the early disciples' continuing to observe 'days, and months, and times, and years', as though they meant anything to God or added to the faith, see Gal. 4:10 and context. In fact he called these days, etc. 'the elements of the world' – i.e. worldliness – and 'weak and beggarly [that which pertains to (spiritual) poverty] elements', both of which caused bondage. Does the reader caught up in this time of year feel the bondage that comes with it – bondage to all the traditions associated with this day? Numerous times, when my wife and I have told people that we don't celebrate Christmas, we've had the reply, 'Oh, I wish we didn't!' Don't then.

Please remember, 'Christianity' initiated this day, not Christ. Yes, the birth of the Lord Jesus was an historic event: Christ Jesus did come into the world; he was born of a virgin; but in the doctrine of the gospel it is the deep mystery of the *Incarnation* which is highlighted: the coming into the world of the Son of God: 'Great is the mystery of godliness, *God* was manifest in the flesh', 1 Tim. 3:16. He who was from everlasting in his divine nature, the Lord from heaven, became a man. 'I came down from heaven', he said; 'I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world'; 'I am come a light into the world.' The early disciples 'continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship' – something almost completely lost now in 'Christianity' – and that doctrine is unequivocal regarding the incarnation: 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh'; 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'; 'A body hast thou prepared me; Lo, I come to do thy will, O God', etc. And having come, he gave his life a ransom for many; he came for the suffering of death; to die the just for the unjust to bring them to God; to save his people from their sins; and to cause them to become a spiritual people devoid of carnality and carnal thinking. This is the doctrine of Christ's coming; that a certain Person came into time from eternity to do a saving work for his people.

To focus then on a day of time, a place on earth, or to concentrate over much on 'the beginning' of Jesus' life as a man, is to detract from the incarnation, and can subtly lead to a carnalization of the Person of the Saviour – which is exactly what the world and worldly Christianity has done, forming the idol which Paul calls 'another Jesus'. Those who love to imagine a sweet little babe lying in a manger – 'no crying he makes'! aah! – and hold on to and caricaturise their 'gentle Jesus' as being not much more than 'meek and mild', are going to have a great shock when they face 'the wrath of the Lamb', Rev. 6:12-17.

Therefore if you read the New Testament from the Book of Acts onwards you will not read of Bethlehem, shepherds, stars, wise men, or even of Joseph and Mary – save in Acts 1:14. Even in his earthly ministry when the Lord Jesus had apparent opportunity to point to his birth at Bethlehem, and, if he so desired, to command a remembrance of it, he didn't; see John 7:25-27,40-43. Again, all we can say regarding these celebrations is that to God, and according to the doctrine of Christ, they are irrelevant. Mark the day if you must, but you have no sanction from the Lord for doing so, neither in this can you claim to be obeying or walking in the truth. In fact you are closer to

practising the religion of Christianity than knowing the mind of the Spirit, or the fulness of the reason for Christ's coming.

All this applies also to that other pagan festival in the spring-time, called Easter – a word derived directly from the name of the pagan god Ashtaroth, see Judges 2:13, 1 Samuel 12:10, etc. But the people of God were not given a special season in which to remember Christ's death and resurrection – least of all as it relates to the positions of sun and moon in the spring sky: it's all just paganism! As before stated they were to remember his death in the taking of the elements of his broken body and shed blood; but even then no day – or, for that matter, time, place or regularity – was given regarding its observance. Again, it is above all the *doctrine* of his death and resurrection – in all the fulness of what they mean – which was important to the apostles; to introduce 'days' for these things just diminishes and undermines them, and again tends to promote a carnal understanding of them. And as we know carnality is the antithesis of everything Christ came to reveal.

Christian Nations

Next we can say that Christ did not come to create Christian nations. This has been a major misapprehension regarding Christ's coming. The teachings of the Lord Jesus – and especially parts of the Sermon on the Mount – have been used to underpin this belief that Jesus came to teach us how to influence society and generally make the world a better place. But the Sermon was addressed to his disciples mostly regarding their relationship to one another, and in their testimony before the world. But phrases like 'ye are the light of the world' have been used to justify Christians' involvement in politics, in the local community, and work for the betterment of society. But the very words themselves, properly understood in the context of the whole of the doctrine of the gospel, convey another meaning altogether.

In Matthew 5:14 Jesus is making a statement of fact regarding his people as they are found 'in him'. In Christ God's people 'are' the light of the world. In them dwells 'the light of life'; and what does a light do but shine. Light 'is', and when it shines it radiates its presence for all around to see. Light doesn't have to 'do' anything as such; it doesn't set out to work or labour; it just shines. So the disciples of Christ are to be what they are in him: they are to shine. And they will shine if they are walking in the faith, doing the will of the Father, and loving one another: for 'by this shall all men know that ye are my

disciples...': light: '...that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous... light'.

Therefore first and foremost it is not a case of doing but of being. Of course arising from that, their being the light of the world will involve them doing certain things; but these are not carnal things – like going out of their way to show the world what good Christians they are – but spiritual. As they walk by faith, and in the faith of the Son of God, they will have a mind, a temperament and a conversation in this world which is marked by humility, soberness, and gravity – and what a light in the dark place of this world such a character is. Light also is pure, it is in its nature unspotted: as it must be if it is to shine out. Thus the children of God: indwelt of the Spirit, walking by faith, and not fulfilling the lusts of the flesh and of the mind.

Again, a light 'cannot be hid': it *must* shine forth. Therefore the people of God are not 'secret believers', ashamed of their Lord and the salvation he has freely given them; but they radiate in their living testimony that they are indeed the children of the King. And this witness is manifested by their living a life in the love of the truth, where self is denied, the cross is taken up daily, and by their not being conformed to this world: that is, to the way of the world. No, the way they think, reason, and relate to the course of this world is diametrically opposed to that of the world itself. But of course this will be increasingly costly, as it will separate them from not only the world itself, but from 'Christianity' as well; for the world and manmade religion loves darkness, and will not come to the light for the simple reason that they are both offended by the light *because it reveals what they are*, cp. John 16:1-11.

Now this is a walk, a 'work', that 'Christianity' does not desire to undertake. No, it just wants to show 'love' and be nice to people, not offend or 'judge', but be and do 'good'. But Christ says to his people that they shine, and Paul writes that they shine as lights in the world 'in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation', Phil. 2:15. Now, do you think that is easy? Is it a nice 'Christian' thing to do? No. To walk in the truth, to speak of what you know to be true – having received it by revelation and the teaching of the Father – is to 'shine'; and if you shine like that in the midst of 'Christianity' you will soon see that that religion is not one indwelt of the Spirit of truth, and therefore not one which has been brought into being by Jesus Christ the Son of God.

And it is the same if you are ‘the salt of the earth’, Matt. 5:13. Do you want to be known as the salt of the earth? All right, just go and rub the salt of the truth of the doctrine of Christ into the open wound of fallen Christianity and see what reaction you get.

In the light of this let us now address the false understanding that nations – our nation – should be a place in which the teachings of Christ – Christianity – Christian principles and laws should be introduced and practised to make it a better place: as if this is what Jesus came to call his people to do.

This phrase ‘our nation’ is a common term used among Christians when referring to the physical country in which they live; and is used especially by Christian media and organisations set up to monitor the laws and morality of parliament and nation. But the phrase is wholly inappropriate, and indeed, inaccurate, when used to refer to the Spirit-born, Spirit-taught, and Spirit-led children of God. The country in which we live is not ‘our’ nation as far as God sees it, it is a country in ‘the world’, and is part of that whole system which ‘lieth in wickedness’ and which spiritually we are called out of.

The only exhortations in the New Testament regarding the relationship of the children of God to the nation in which they physically live are to keep its laws – so long as they don’t contradict the laws of God; pay their taxes; and be subject to and pray for those whom God in his sovereignty has raised up to be in authority over them at any given time. They are, as we have seen, to shine as lights in a dark place, thinking, reasoning, living and acting differently than those around them, as those called out. But throwing up hands, shaking heads, moaning, and seeking to change or influence the affairs of the nation by, say, political involvement: either by writing letters to Members of Parliament, signing petitions, or by joining demonstrations or marches, is wholly outside the calling of the child of God.

What else do we expect from this present evil world, but than to see it act, legislate and govern in a godless way – and especially in these last days? And where is the calling of the church to try and change it? The world is the world. In principle, in character, the world is no different today than it has ever been – it is still fallen, still governed by the prince of the power of the air, still anti-Christian in nature, and the wrath of God still abideth on it. As we are drawing nearer to the end of the world it is true that the level of

wickedness seems to be increasing; although it is, in fact, just less restrained, cp. Rev. 20:7-9.

There is a verse of scripture which you will sometimes hear Christians use to encourage us to be concerned for the state of 'our nation'; but it is misapplied because when read in its context means something different: 'they that cry and sigh for the abominations done in the midst', or, '...in the land.' This is taken from Ezekiel 9:4, and refers specifically and only to the abominations done in Jerusalem. This, under the old covenant, meant the professed people of God, not the heathen nations round about them; and in the new covenant age it can only refer to the abominations committed in the outward professing churches in Christendom, and not to any nation in particular.

Consider Joshua for a moment. When the LORD commanded him to arise and enter into the promised land did He command him to hold the Ten Commandments up before the inhabitants of the land and say, 'So long as you pass legislation to keep and obey these laws we will spare you'? No, He didn't. Joshua was to go in and destroy them all. These people were godless heathen and the LORD was casting them out from before the children of Israel; just read Joshua 10.

There will always be godlessness in the world, in the nations: we can expect nothing different; but those things which cause the cries and sighs of God's own people are the turnings away from the truth of the doctrine of the gospel of Christ readily manifest among those professing godliness – in the church – and this quote from Ezekiel can only be used in that context. 'Pray for the peace of Jerusalem' is another verse often misused by carnal Christians who like to apply it to present-day Israel after the flesh, when it really only applies to the church of Jesus Christ, Psalm 122, Gal. 4:19-31. [Please see my 'Letters', No. 18, elsewhere on this site.]

So all this 'our nation' language used by Christians is just so carnal. Can the reader think of anyone in the early church – as recorded in scripture – who was called to do anything more than 'render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's'? Matt. 17:24-27; 22:15-22. It seems to go against the whole spirit of our calling to be those who lobby, campaign, or even partake in the worldly system by voting. To those who foster the cherished idea of 'our nation' being 'set free' from further political integration into Europe: can't you see that the world is inexorably coming together as a 'global village',

being formed into a 'new world order', eventually to come under the authority of a one world government, totally in line with the teaching of scripture? And is not all this the will of God? Who with a sound mind – in the body of Christ – could ever think that the coming into power of the likes of UKIP is going to be the answer to all their prayers. Carnal, carnal, carnal.

The course of this world is moving on as it is ordained to, and it will continue for as long as it takes God the Holy Spirit to send the gospel to all those ordained to hear it and be called out by it – and then the end will come. And is it not the calling of every child of God to do all they can to propagate the gospel to that end, to look for that day, and live for it? No amount of good moral legislating will make an earthly nation a 'better' place in the eyes of God. I believe that, deep down, the motivation of those Christians who try to make their nation more outwardly 'godly' by encouraging their parliamentarians to pass Christian-friendly laws, is the desire to escape persecution: to continue to live freely so that they can practice their 'religion' without being troubled.

But not so the true children of God. No, brethren and sisters in Christ, this is not the way our mind thinks; for we are citizens of another country, of an heavenly, by union with Christ in his death, resurrection, ascension, present enthronement in glory, and indwelling of his Spirit. We are members of 'the kingdom of heaven', not of an earthly, and we seek first and foremost, and exclusively, 'the kingdom of God and his righteousness', trusting our heavenly Father to provide our daily needs, with daily strength to live in this present evil world; seeking, again, those things which are above, not the things that are of this decaying world. We are strangers and pilgrims on the earth: passers through, not settlers; we are in the world but not of it; we endeavour to live peaceably with all men, always being ready to give an answer to them that ask us for a reason of the hope that is in us, with our conversation being in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ: for we love his appearing.

If we would be the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty then we must 'come out from among them and be separate', and not involve ourselves in their worldly system. We are to pray only. Not pray and vote. God raises up whom he will, and our disobedient partaking in this political 'way of the world' won't make a scrap of difference. Anyone with eyes to see knows that democracy is a lie anyway. No. Just pray. Watch and pray. The coming

tribulation cannot be avoided, and is not to be reversed; and as it builds – amidst all the catastrophic things that are about to appear upon the earth – then the only calling of the children of God will be to ‘look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh’, Luke 21:28.

‘...to make us good’?

As Christ didn’t come to make Christian nations – ‘good’ nations – then in the same way he didn’t come to make people ‘good’. This is more or less what we have already stated in sections above. But this specific point needs to be emphasised. When I was at school we used to sing a hymn called ‘There is a green hill far away’; and in that hymn it said that Christ died that we might be forgiven, ‘he died to make us good’. Now it may be that the hymnwriter had the glorious doctrine of justification by Christ’s blood alone in his mind when he wrote that line – although the rest of the hymn is pretty much devoid of the truth of the gospel; but I cannot believe that most who sing those words think the same. No, they generally think that Christians are ‘good’ people: ‘he was a good man: always doing good’.

But Christ didn’t come to ‘make us good’ people; that is, he didn’t come to enable us to turn over a new leaf so that we can be better people than we were before: no; he came to save us out of a state of absolute corruption, rebellion and godlessness – despite our ‘religion’. Good? There is none righteous, no, not one. And after you are called; when you have been saved, and washed, and sanctified, and justified in your own experience by the application of the cleansing blood of Christ to your conscience; still, even then, in and of yourselves, you are not ‘good’ people; for you are still in the flesh; still liable to turn to law and to works to please God; still plagued by pride, self-righteousness, and a natural unwillingness to walk according to Christ’s commandments, or in the way of the cross. Why else do you think you need to be ‘kept’ and ‘delivered’? 1 Peter 1:5, Matt. 6:13.

Do you think that now you are in Christ you are somehow able, in and of yourselves, to keep yourselves from evil and do good things above and beyond – in addition to – what Christ wrought upon the cross for your full and free salvation? If you can then Christ’s salvation was neither full nor free. ‘Lord, help me to be good’; ‘Every day and in every way, I’m getting a little bit better’, are the sentiments of those who are ignorant of Christ’s salvation.

Well, these are some of the most common misunderstandings regarding Christ's coming, and are some of the ways that what he did come to accomplish have been misrepresented and perverted. And this is to say nothing of all the societies, organisation, charities, missions, etc. that have arisen in Christ's name. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying don't do good to others, to relieve your fellow men; if you have a heart for the poor of this world – 'for ye have the poor with you always' – then give them of your time or money, but don't think that because you do these things 'as a Christian' you will automatically win the Lord's favour or praise. As I've written in the article 'The Goats', Matthew 25:34-40 refers to relieving the spiritually hungry, etc., something which carnal Christianity fails to do completely.

Why Jesus *did* come

But now let us turn without further delay to discover why Jesus did come: and may the light of the glorious gospel shine into our hearts.

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; that is what Paul declared: and he should know, for he was the chief of sinners. Just think, reader: Christ Jesus came into the world to save even the chief of sinners! But this is a verse so regularly quoted that it has lost just about all it's wonder. Sometimes you will hear a preacher say, 'Well, friends, this is one statement of the apostle's that I respectfully have to disagree with...' and then he will 'humbly' imply that *he* is in fact the chief of sinners. But he is a liar. I've never met a man who said such a thing betray in his daily walk that he ever really did think himself the chief of sinners: it is just so much religious pride to say so. And anyway, Paul's statement was a literal fact: 'Why persecutest thou *me*?' said the Lord of glory from heaven to the worst sinner who ever walked the face of the earth. Yes, Christ showed mercy upon the chief of sinners to make him the greatest of saints – despite the fact that he actually, and honestly, *did* think himself 'less than the least', Eph. 3:7,8; to preach more fully and authentically, from the deepest experience, the gospel of the grace of God in Christ, and thereby to lay the foundation – by his doctrine – of the church of Jesus Christ. None but the chief of sinners saved with such an almighty salvation could have fulfilled such a calling, but Paul did, for what he said about his sinnership was true.

Also, Paul being the chief of sinners – and saved from his sin – remains the greatest encouragement to all sinners who come to Christ seeking mercy, for

if the chief found mercy – and he wasn't even seeking for it when he was called – then will not they, though they plead long and hard for it? They certainly will! Christ turned none away who came in their lost state, and who looked to him alone to be all their salvation. Well, it's why he came: to save sinners!

If you retain one scrap of self-worth, though you be religious, though you be 'a Christian'; then Christ didn't come to save you. Why, you don't even *need* saving, do you. If you can once look upon another human being and in your heart of hearts can say, 'Well, at least I'm not like him!' then Christ didn't come to save *you*, though you sit in chapel every week, or stand in a pulpit, you self-righteous hypocrite. Sinners. It's sinners that Christ came to save.

What then is the language – what are the inmost thoughts – of true sinners? When you perceive the Lord to be near it's, 'Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord'; for you know that it is your very nature which is corrupt, filthy, black: 'I am black!' Why should the pure eyes of the holy God look upon you in any degree of favour? Why should he? He needn't at all. He should consume you in his just wrath; he should take the breath of life from you in an instant and cast you into everlasting torments where you deserve to be. And you *know* it is true; you can say the amen to it, not just before others, but in your own closet before the Lord.

And this is only your nature we're talking about; even before we get to the things you do – your sins. When Adam disobeyed God *sin* was brought into the world and consequently death by sin – for the wages of *sin*, not sins, is death; and it is that sinful nature which was passed on to you causing you then to commit sins. So sinners are first and foremost those who are in sin, before they even begin to commit sins. But Christ Jesus came into the world to save those who are sinners by nature – by birth. So it is said, 'he was made *sin* for us, who knew no sin'; 'he hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself'; 'God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh'; 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world'. These verses are not referring to sins, but to sin. The Arminian's 'testimony' is that 'Jesus died for my sins upon the cross and now I'm saved', because all they see is the 'bad things' they have done; but they know nothing of sin, of their nature; so even according to their own confession their sin remains.

But sin has to be put away, and Christ has put it away. But he has also borne away the *sins* of his people: 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their *sins*'; 'this is the blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'; 'Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee'; 'who can forgive sins but God only?'; 'the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins'; 'when he had by himself purged our sins'; 'so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many'; 'and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.' This is sins that Christ is putting away, not sin.

Oh, reader; sin *and* sins are your trouble; but Christ has put it all away for his people. There is a wonderful fullness to Jesus' words, 'It is finished.' The whole work is done. The very sin – the actual nature – of his people has been put away by his broken body and death upon the cross; and the sins of his people – all and every sin – have been borne away by his blood – by the shedding of his blood upon the cross. These things don't remain to be done if and when we will believe it; they were done and completed *when he did it!* The preaching of the gospel of Christ has been ordained of Christ to declare this finished work, so that when the people of God hear it in their felt need of this salvation, the Spirit there and then applies Christ's salvation to them giving them faith to see and believe that it was all done for them; therefore they are made recipients of this wonderful salvation wrought upon the cross two thousand years ago, and they can see that *then* they were saved, and not when they decided to do God the honour of 'making a commitment'.

Real sinners don't make commitments; they don't ask Jesus into their hearts; real sinners plead for mercy from the Person against whom they have sinned; against whom they have offended; as he, nevertheless, is perceived to be the only Person they know who can save them. And he will save them if he's taught them what they are; and that they cannot save themselves; and that merely uttering 'the sinner's prayer' in the presumption that that wide gate of entrance into the kingdom will fool the Almighty into saving you? No, God won't save deliberate perverters of the gospel of his Son to allow entrance any other way than by a desperate striving to enter in at the – one and only – strait gate, Luke 13:24. No. Christ and his blood is the only way of salvation; sinners know it to be true, and they won't rest in their striving until they are washed, cleansed, forgiven and accepted only by and in the blood of the Lamb.

This is why Jesus came: to seek and to save that which was lost. And he will – he has! – saved all his people; they will all be brought to a knowledge of this salvation before they leave this world; and as we have before said, when the last one has been called; when the last soul for whom Christ died has been brought to the knowledge that his sins are forgiven, and that his sin is covered, then the end of the world will come, for there will be no more reason for the world and time to continue; for Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, finish time, judge the wicked, create new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, and usher in the eternal state: a blessed state for his saved people; a wretched state for the rebels.

You see, Christ's blood was not shed in vain; his body was not broken for nothing; it is accomplished. Christ did finish the work which the Father gave him to do; his people will dwell on the new earth for ever to be with their Lord, and they will for ever sing his praises as the Lamb that was slain: 'Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'

Therefore...

There is one last truth to declare regarding why Jesus didn't come. As he came to save his people from their sins then he didn't come to keep them in sin: so they cannot now continue to be called 'sinners'. As a sinner is one who is 'in sin' then none of those who are now 'in Christ' can keep their former title. The body of Christ cannot be said to be made up of sinners but of saints. In him they are now holy, sanctified, purified; so as far as God sees them they are no longer fallen, and no longer in sin. There may be some who like to designate themselves still as sinners – to emphasis the fact that they think themselves so small, but their feigned humility goes against the doctrine of the gospel. Christ's salvation of his people is total; it is transforming to the very depths of one's being. Christ was made sin for his people that they might be made 'the righteousness of God in him'. Is a person who is counted as 'the righteousness of God' still a sinner? No. 'Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...', 1 Peter 1:22; do sinners have pure souls? Certainly not. A sinner is a servant of sin; but now it is said that 'ye *were* the servants of sin' – past tense; then no longer sinners, Romans 6.

There will be no sinners in glory: how can there be imperfection in the presence of God? No. Sinners seek salvation, and find it in Christ's blood.

Thereafter as washed, cleansed, justified and sanctified they are no longer sinners – as far as Christ's doctrine is concerned – they are saints. And it is the saints' comfort never to forget it: praise be unto the Saviour!