

The Uniqueness of Christ

A dramatic and challenging half-month presentation on the centrality of the Saviour

Day one

The Uniqueness of Christ

A unique Saviour is not popular in today's world.

We call it the post-truth generation where all views and beliefs are equally acceptable.

Somebody may say, 'When all's said and done, doesn't everyone worship the same God?' Well, I can't speak for others, but unless they worship the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, everyone does not.

'But all religions are basically the same, aren't they? Good works and all that sort of thing.' That sounds plausible enough, but in fact all religions are not the same. One major faith declares that God hates sinners. The Bible says God loves them. Some others promote ancestral worship or idolatry or self-affliction or redemption through self-effort or through good deeds. Christian faith is different from all of these.

'What about atheists?' Even atheism is a kind of religion. And they certainly don't accept Jesus.

'Nowadays, shouldn't we be tolerant of other beliefs?' Of course we should. In a true democracy, freedom of worship is a basic right, as long as it doesn't mean breaking the law. Everyone *has* this right but that does not mean everyone *is* right.

Followers of Jesus today are in a position identical to that of the early church. They also lived in a society where people worshiped many gods. So what did they do? It would have been easy to soften their emphasis on Christ's uniqueness. Why invite opposition and persecution? But they did not hold back. They simply and boldly preached Christ.

At the Global Consultation on World Evangelisation a few years ago, a statement was issued which said among other things:

'(We) must uphold the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and the necessity of faith in Him as Lord and Saviour. This is especially imperative in the light of the increasing pluralistic environment, the resurgence of non-Christian religions hostile to the advance of the gospel, the erosion of historic Christianity in the West, and the increasing prevalence of secularism almost everywhere.'

Over the next few days we will consider how Jesus our Lord is utterly and absolutely unique in—

- his Person
- his preaching
- his power
- his prophesying
- his purpose
- his presence
- his Passion
- his prophetic proclamation

culminating in a stirring panorama of how he is presented in every book of the Bible as divinely and uniquely the only true God. Don't miss a single day!

What next?

If someone were to ask you in what ways Jesus is unique, how would you answer? Try to set down at least three major responses.

Read John chapter one

Day two

1/ Unique in his Person: His Humanity (1)

Jesus Christ is unique in his person. No other prophet, priest or god compares with him. This uniqueness is found in the fact that he was both God and man, fully divine and fully human.

This is clearly stated in two great early Christian hymns, which tell us plainly that in Jesus, God took human form and actually became human flesh (Phil 2:7-8; 1 Tim 3:16).

An ancient creed named Docetism (from the Greek word *dokein*, to seem) suggested that because human flesh was sinful, God could not possibly embrace it. Therefore, Jesus only *seemed* to be human. He was like a phantom, God in fancy-dress as it were. As we shall see, if Jesus was not *truly* human, then the whole gospel message is false.

Certainly, he displayed many human qualities: hunger, thirst, tiredness, sorrow and so on. He wept and ached and cried out to God (Heb 5:7-8). He showed two convincingly human attributes. First, limited knowledge (Mark 9:21; 13:32). As a human, he could not know everything, including the future. Second, he was subject to death (Mark 15:37). God cannot die.

Probably, as a child, like any other little one, he fell over as he learned to walk, banged his head or his elbow on things, cried when he was hurt, needed to be taught how to dress himself, tie his sandals, use a spoon and so on.

He worked as a carpenter, where presumably he often suffered bruises and cuts. If he hadn't, surely this would have attracted attention. But there is no record of it. Quite the contrary: the Bible says he learned obedience through the things he suffered (Heb 5:8).

We know he could suffer pain because he did so on the Cross. Was it any different when he was just a kid? It is hard for us to imagine how he could be like this, but if not, he was not a real human.

The Bible says, he was tempted and tested in every way—which means emotionally, physically, sexually, mentally—just like us, but amazingly, he never once yielded (Heb 4:15).

And as we shall see, were it not so, he would have been disqualified as our Saviour. It was in his humanity that his mercy and faithfulness showed most clearly (Heb 2:17).

What next?

When you are tempted to sin, how can Heb 4:15 encourage you? Name at least two ways.

Read Heb 2:5-18; 4:14-16.

Day three

1/Unique in his Person: His Humanity (2)

It is commonly argued that Jesus had the power to work miracles because he was God. Actually, this is not the case. The Bible teaches that he performed signs and wonders in his humanity.

The apostle John says that Jesus became flesh when he dwelt among us (John 1:14). To do this, he had to put off his divine attributes. An obvious one is omnipresence. Humans cannot be omnipresent. We are confined to one place at a time. Another is omniscience. Humans don't know everything.

Paul reminds us that Jesus let go of his equality with God and 'emptied himself' to be born as a human (Phil 2:6). Theologians call this his *kenosis* (from the Greek verb 'to empty').. Charles Wesley put it best when he wrote that Christ 'Emptied himself of all but love.'

Now how all this could be is impossible to explain. How could someone be truly God and yet truly man? There is no equivalent anywhere and never has been. But somehow, God managed to accomplish it. And as we shall see, it had to be done to secure our salvation.

So how did Jesus perform miracles? He worked them by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is why there is no record of him doing any miracles before the Holy Spirit fell on him at the River Jordan (Matt 3:13-16).

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah foretold this (Is 61:1-3). Jesus affirmed it at the beginning of his ministry when, quoting Isaiah, he read, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me' (Luke 4:18-19).

The apostle Peter confirmed it. 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power,' he declared, 'He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him' (Act 10:38).

And the writer to the Hebrews said the same thing (Heb 2:4).

All this is further proof of Christ's humanity. Without the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, he could do no signs—which again makes him just like us.

In simple terms, Jesus settled himself completely into our environment and our predicament in order to rescue us from it. As the Bible puts it, he became poor so that we might become rich (2 Cor 8:9).

What next?

If Jesus needed to be anointed by the Holy Spirit to fulfil his mission, what does this mean for you and me? See Luke 24:49; Act 1:5-8

Read Luke 4:14-21; Act 10:34-43; Phil 2:5-11.

Day four

1/Unique in his Person: His Deity (1)

Jesus frequently made statements that only God has the right to make.

Often he used the expression 'I am' to reinforce the concept of his deity. In Greek the normal way of saying this was just one word (*eimi*). However, there was also an emphatic way (*ego eimi*) that more or less means, 'I, even I, am.' By using this term, Jesus was making it clear that there was no doubt about what he meant.

Furthermore, the phrase 'I am' was identical to part of the Name God gave to Moses: 'I am who I am' (Ex 3:14). It is possible that the name Yahweh was derived from this, a name so sacred that Jewish people will never utter it aloud even today.

More than this, Jesus made a number of statements beginning with 'I am' that no ordinary person would even consider.. The greatest was, 'I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (John 14:6). Imagine a local builder in your community one day taking to social media make such a claim. You would naturally assume he was deranged or deluded. You would certainly not believe him. You would not believe him even if he was a lawyer or a professor or a billionaire or even a rock star.

Seven times Jesus made such extraordinary claims. Here they are—

- I am the bread of life (John 6:35)
- I am the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5)
- I am the door of the sheep (John 10:7, 9)
- I am the good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14)
- I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)
- I am the way the truth and the life (John 14:6)
- I am the true vine (John 15:1)

In all of these, Jesus is claiming to be able to meet any and every human need. Astonishing!

Finally, Jesus shocked his Jewish compatriots by saying, 'Before Abraham was born, I am' (John 8:58). Bad grammar but explosive theology. And again, 'If you do not believe that I am, you will indeed die in your sins (John 8:23-24). See also John 10:36; 18:6, 8.

There is no escaping the universal nature of these assertions. To implement them, you must have attributes such as omnipotence, omnipresence, omniscience and immortality. In other words, you must be God.

Jesus made many other similar statements. All authority in heaven and earth, he said, belonged to him (Matt 20:18). What a claim! Not to mention statements like, 'I will draw all people to me' (John 12:32). See also John 10:8; 19:11; Mark 2:20.

In a broadcast talk given in London in 1943, the great twentieth century apologist C. S. Lewis said,

'A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God.'

What next?

If Jesus really is Lord, what are the implications for us? Consider the 'I ams' of Jesus and jot down alongside each one what your response should be.

Read John 8:48-59

Day five

1/Unique in his Person: His Deity (2)

It is a matter for some wonder that the followers of Jesus so readily recognised his deity. After three years together, you would think they would have got to know one another pretty well. After the first shine had worn off, they would have begun to discover small faults and failings that always emerge after time.

But while they were quick to find grounds for complaint with each other (e.g. Matt 20:24), they found no fault with Jesus. Which is interesting given that the Bible does not seem to have any scruples about recording people's failings. The weaknesses and sins of Cain, Abraham, Moses, Saul, David, Peter, Paul, Mark, Barnabas and many others are all recorded for posterity. But not one sin or trespass is attributed to Jesus.

Moreover, the disciples actually claimed openly that he was divine.

When Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples, Thomas recognised him as Lord and God (John 20:28).

Paul states plainly that although Jesus descended from David 'in the flesh', by his resurrection he was shown to be the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom 1:3-4). He goes on to say that he was God over all (Rom 9:5), that salvation is secured by faith in Jesus and the confession that Jesus is Lord (Rom 10:9), and that at the end of age, he will return as the Lord from heaven (1 Thess 4:16).

Perhaps his greatest tribute is found in his letter to the Philippians, where the apostle writes that one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Phil 2:11).

Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Son of the Living God (Matt 16:16) and declared that there is no other name under heaven whereby we must be saved (Act 4:12). John describes Jesus as the divine Word—the Expression of God—by whom all things were created (John 1:1-40) and calls him the 'true God' (1 John 5:20).

In the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament, commonly referred to by the letters LXX) the word *kurios* ('Lord') appears over 6000 times *for God*. In the Greek New Testament, it is used over 700 times *for Jesus*. This is either bold blasphemy or a clear declaration that Jesus is God.

Was Jesus liar, lunatic or Lord? To the apostles the answer was obvious.

What Next?

Wow! What a Saviour we have! Spend some time worshiping him now. Use one or two songs like Jack Hayford's 'Majesty' or Keith Getty's 'In Christ Alone'.

Read Matt 16:13-20.

Day six

2/Unique in his Preaching

Jesus was unique in his preaching and teaching.

This was acclaimed early in his public ministry. People were well used to rabbis quoting from the Law, the Prophets and the Writings, the three sections of the Hebrew Old Testament. And they knew that there had been a time when prophets frequently declared, 'Thus says the Lord!' But no one spoke on their own authority. Until Jesus.

What he did was unbelievable. Knowing full well how the religious leaders would respond, he began much of his teaching with statements like, 'You heard such and such said in times past, but I say...'

Try to imagine your pastor doing that today. He stands up in the Sunday morning service and declares, 'Paul once said thus and thus but I say...' Or even worse—which is the equivalent of what the Lord did—'Jesus once said but I say...'

In the Sermon on the Mount, there are many examples. 'You have been told you should not commit murder, but I say, don't even be angry. It amounts to the same thing' (Matt 5:22) and, 'Moses told you not to commit adultery, but I say don't even think about it.' (Matt 5:28).

And so he went on, even replacing a great Mosaic command—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Lev 24:17-20)—by telling people to suffer injustice without fighting back (Matt 5:38-42). Unheard of!

Sometimes his preaching and teaching simply endorsed an Old Testament precept (Prov 25:6-7; Luke 14:10), but frequently he took things much further.

The outstanding example was his teaching on love: 'A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another' (John 13:34). This was revolutionary. No one in the ancient world held to such a philosophy. But it was in this way that people would recognise his disciples (John 13:35).

And so it was in the early years of the Christian era. The great North African Latin scholar Tertullian, records how Romans used to say with amazement, 'Look how these Christians love one another!'. In fact, some of the persecution directed towards those pioneer believers in Jesus was that they must have been engaged in sexual immorality because no one could love each other as they did without there being some skulduggery somewhere.

It was no wonder that at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, people were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law (Matt 7:28-29). And even soldiers, used to obeying authority, said in wonder, 'No one ever spoke like this man!' (John 7:46).

What next?

Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matt chapters 5, 6 and 7). Choose one passage that really speaks significantly to you today.

Day seven

3/Unique in his Power (1)

That Jesus worked signs and wonders does not in itself prove that he was the Son of God although if he had not been able to do so, it would clearly prove that he wasn't.

He demonstrated both unique power and unique authority. As we have seen, he did this as a human being anointed by the Holy Spirit and *power*, but uniquely anointed because the Spirit was given to him without measure (John 3:34). He had no need of regular infillings as we do (Act 4:8; 7:65; Eph 5:18). Further, this was coupled with his divine *authority* as God manifest in the flesh. He was both Son of Man and Son of God. To take just the gospel of Matthew, we see this unique power-and-authority in at least seven areas—

- *over sickness and disease* (Matt 8:1-17). It took a Roman centurion to recognise this. He clearly saw Jesus' healing ministry as a mark of his divine authority.
- *over nature* (Matt 8:23-27). People were amazed that even the winds and waves obeyed Jesus. What kind of man is this?' they asked.
- *over demons* (Matt 8:28-34; 12:27-28). Even a host of evil spirits cowed before him. He was infinitely stronger than the strong. This was proof that the kingdom of God had come.
- *over sin* (Matt 9:1-8). By healing a disabled man, Jesus showed that he had the right to forgive sins, which amounted to a claim to be equal with God. Anyone can forgive sins perpetrated against themselves, but only God can forgive sins committed against others. Even the Pharisees understood this.
- *over tradition* (Matt 9:9-17). Long-standing traditions were dissolved by the authority of Jesus.
- *over death* (Matt 9:18-26; John 11:1-44). Jesus overcame humankind's ultimate enemy. His enemies were afraid that this would cause everyone to believe in him (John 11:48). He simply said, 'I am the resurrection and the life'.
- *over the universe* (Matt 28:18-20). This is perhaps the most extraordinary statement that Jesus ever made: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.' No honest human being would presume to say such a thing. Humanity cannot reach such heights. We are forced to return again to the only options: liar, lunatic or Lord. There is no trace or hint of Jesus ever demonstrating mendacity or insanity. So we are left only with deity. There is no other choice.

What next?

On a scale of one (not at all) to five (completely) to what extent do you think it is possible for us continue the ministry of Jesus? Consider Matt 28:18-20; Mark 16:20; Luke 10:18-19; 24:49; Act 1:8. Give reasons for your choice.

Day eight

3/Unique in his Power (2)

Jesus was unique in his power over death—especially his own! His resurrection was totally unlike any other.

The Bible records several instances of people being brought back to life. A Shunammite boy (2 Kings 4:18-37). Dorcas (Acts 9:36-43). Jairus's daughter (Mark 5:21-43). Lazarus (John 11:1-44). To name just a few.

There are also documented cases of people returning to life in our day—especially in a missionary context.

But the resurrection of Jesus was different. It was unique in two distinct ways. First, in every other case, resurrection was only temporary: ultimately, they all died again. Jesus remains alive forever.

Second, in every other case, people were brought back to life through the agency of someone else. A prophet, a disciple, a missionary—even, in modern times, a physician.

But the resurrection of Jesus was different. He himself returned from death, without the intervention or mediation of anyone else. His resurrection was unique. He conquered death through the power of his own endless and indestructible life (Heb 7:16).

It had to be so. Because they were mortal, Old Testament priests were prevented by death from continuing to offer sacrifices. But Jesus, having made one, eternal perfect sacrifice for sin, could not remain imprisoned by death. He is our everlasting ever-living high priest.

Years ago, a journalist named Frank Morison set out to prove the resurrection of Jesus to be a myth. He finished up being convinced of the opposite! In 1930, he published a book entitled *Who Moved the Stone?* This really says it all. Who *did* move the stone? Not a 'crucified criminal' (if that's what Jesus was): he would have been too emaciated. Not the disciples: they were too scared. Not the women: the stone was too heavy. Not the soldiers: they were paid to lie about it. Not the Pharisees: it was the last thing they wanted.

Today, if you go to Israel you will not find any trace of his body. At the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, a sign at the entrance says. 'He is not here for he is risen' (Mark 16:6).

Jesus was unique in his power over death. And he still is.

What next?

Paul says that if Christ was not raised, our faith is futile (1 Cor 15:14). This being so, what benefits/blessings would we have lost? Make a list of at least five things.

Read Matt 28:18-20; Rom 6:1-11; Gal 2:20; Col 3:1-4; Heb 4:14-16. 7:24-25.

Day nine

4/Unique in his prophesying

Jesus is not often thought of as a prophet, although he most certainly was.

Moses foretold that one day God would send a prophet greater than he (Deut 18:15-22) who would have several distinguishing features—

- He would be of Hebrew origin
- God would put words in his mouth
- He would speak what God commanded
- His words would be true

All these were fulfilled through Jesus.

If we take the term ‘prophet’ in its broader sense of someone who speaks God’s Word, then this is what Jesus claimed to be. His words were the Father’s words (John 8:47; 14:24; 17:8), spoken by the power of the Holy Spirit (John 3:34). They were both spirit and life (John 6:63).

In fact, he said, heaven and earth would pass away, but his words would never pass away (Matt 24:35; Mark 13:31). Moreover, if we are ashamed of his words this day, he will be ashamed of us on ‘that day’ (Mark 8:38; 13:32; Luke 9:26;).

People everywhere acknowledged that there was a divine quality about the utterances of Jesus. No demonised person could speak as he spoke (John 10:21). Jesus’ disciples were amazed at his words (Mark 10:24) and people generally marvelled at them (Luke 4:22).

In the more narrow sense of foretelling the future, Jesus prophesied his own death and resurrection (Matt 17:22-23; Mark 8:31; 9:31). His disciples had trouble believing it, but as the whole world now knows, his predictions proved to be true.

He spoke extensively of Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (Luke 21:20-24) and specifically described the huge stones of the temple being thrown down (Matt 24:2; Luke 21:6), which seemed an impossibility, so immense were they.

But within a few years of his death, people could verify these events—they all happened just as he said. This is the test of a true prophet (Deut 18:22).

Of course, his foretelling of his second coming in the clouds in power and great glory (Matt 24:27-31; Mark 13:24-27; Luke 21:21-27) has not yet been fulfilled, but there is no reason to believe it will not be. In fact, on the basis of his other prophecies, there is every reason to believe they will be.

Jesus was unique in his prophesying. We do well to heed his words and to be prepared. Such warnings encourage both *hope* and *holiness* (1 John 2:28). John puts it succinctly: ‘Everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself’ (1 John 3:3).

And as the Reformers used to teach, we *work* as if he will not return for ages and we *live* as if he will come before we finish reading this page.

What next?

If Jesus were to return right now, would you shout with joy or shrink with shame?

Read 1 John 2:28-3:10.

Day ten

5/Unique in his Purpose

There have been all manner of theories about why Jesus lived, taught, performed acts of power, died at the hands of the Romans or why he came to this world at all, for that matter. Here are seven reasons, most of which he himself gave.

- *to save sinners* (Matt 9:13). He fearlessly declared that he did not appear for the righteous. They either don't need salvation or don't think they do. Either way the outcome is the same. Only when we confess our need, can we, as sinners, be saved (1 Tim 1:13).
- *to serve* (Matt 20:28). In spite of his universal authority, Jesus came with the mellow heart of a servant.
- *to give his life as a ransom* (Matt 20:28). Earthly leaders often expect their people to die for them: Jesus expected to die for his people. Imagine you have been captured and imprisoned and your country wants to arrange a prisoner exchange. What if they offered a cat in exchange for you? Or twenty captives for you? Or a million dollars? Which one would indicate your true worth and value? Which one would best show how much your people loved you? Now ask these same questions about what Jesus did for you.
- *to seek and save the lost* (Luke 19:10). Even those of small value in human terms, like a lost coin or a lost lamb (Luke 15:1-10).
- *to give abundant life* (John 10:10). Unlike those who come to make our lives more miserable, Jesus came to make them more satisfying.
- *to bear witness to the truth* (John 18:37). Jesus said this to the Roman governor. He stood for truth in the face of falsehood and deceit.
- *to destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8). Much of the evil in the world has satanic power behind it. Jesus came to destroy this.

To go back to the third purpose, this was only possible because he was both man and God. Only a human being has the *right* to represent another human being. Only God has the *power* to do so. In the unique God-man Jesus Christ, the great Rescue was possible.

One of the greatest examples of sacrificial ransom is the story of Father Maximilian Kolbe. In 1941, he offered to die an excruciating death in Auschwitz concentration camp in the place of Francis Gajowniczek, a father with young children. Pope Paul VI called Kolbe the most glittering figure to emerge from the darkness of Nazism. This is the kind of thing Jesus did for us.

What next?

Re-read the seven purposes listed above and specifically thank Jesus aloud for how each one has affected your life. (Vocalising is a biblical practice that reinforces the impact of what you are thinking and saying. Psalm 34:1-2; 89:1; Heb 13:15).

Read Matt 20:20-28; Luke 19:1-10.

Day eleven

6/Unique in his Presence

Greek mythology has numerous tales of gods visiting the earth and interacting with humanity. But there are huge differences. Sometimes the gods argue with one another about what should be done. They can be jealous or vindictive. On occasion, they set things in motion that they can neither control nor stop. Individual gods have their personal favourites. And the never become truly human.

The story of Jesus is very different.

First, Jesus was God with us when on earth. He was truly human and yet truly God. People say, 'Oh there's never been anyone else like that.' Yes, that is true.

Or they say, 'How can someone be both human and divine? It's impossible.' Yes, usually it is.

But John writes, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1:14).

Second, Christ is with us now by His Holy Spirit. He promised not to leave us alone but to send us another Helper or Counsellor to be with us forever (John 14:16). The word 'another' here in Greek means 'another of the same kind', not another of a different kind. So the Holy Spirit is among us to make the presence of Jesus uniquely real to us (John 16:14).

Wherever we are, and whatever our circumstances, through the Holy Spirit Jesus is with us. We have no need of statue or temple or painting or prayer book or confessional or altar or music or church, helpful as some of these might be, because his presence does not depend on these things. In contrast to mute idols, the Holy Spirit speaks, directs, aids and strengthens us directly (1 Cor 12:2).

Third, Jesus will be visibly and powerfully present at his coming again.

The word 'presence' (Greek, *parousia*) is used in Scripture to describe his second coming (1 Cor 15:22-23; 1 Thess 5:23), when he will reappear in power and glory on earth to establish his kingdom forever.

What a great day that will be! The skies will split with his splendour. There will be thunderous shouting from the heavens, the earth-shattering voice of an archangel and the spine-tingling trumpet call of God, as Jesus comes in the clouds of glory, accompanied by countless myriads of angels. Terror will grip the hearts of the ungodly and joy and celebration will rise among the saints.

Past, present and future—Jesus is unique in his presence!

What next?

Jesus promised to be with us forever (Matt 28:20; Heb 13:5-6). On a scale of one (non-existent) to five (continuous), how would you describe your awareness of his presence with you? What do you need to do to experience his presence all the time?

Read Psalm 23.

Day Twelve

7/Unique in his Passion

Nowadays, 'passion' is a word commonly used of enthusiasm or romantic love. Originally the word had to do with suffering. In Christian tradition, it has been used to describe the suffering of Christ, particularly at Gethsemane and Calvary.

Jesus's Passion was unique.

It was not only that he died for us. Thousands of people over the years have sacrificed their lives for others. It was *why* he suffered that was different. He suffered to take our sins upon himself.

How do we know this?

First, the Old Testament sacrificial system made it clear. For hundreds of years, thousands of animals were slain in Israel, everyone of them a symbol of the forthcoming universal sacrifice of Jesus. Especially on the Day of Atonement when offerings were specifically made to deal with the sins of the people (Lev 16:1-34).

Second, Old Testament prophets foretold it. Isaiah spoke of One who would bear our iniquities and sins, by the giving of his own life (Is chapter 53). David, Jeremiah, Micah, Zechariah and other prophets made similar declarations (e.g. Psalm 22:1-8; Zech 12:10).

Third, Jesus himself warned his disciples that he would be crucified and that he would give his life as a ransom (Matt 20:17-19, 28).

Fourth, the apostles proclaimed clearly that through the Cross, all who believed would be saved (see Acts 10:37-43; Rom 5:6-11; 1 Cor 15:3).

There are two further critical reasons why we believe Jesus's death was unique. The primary one is the Resurrection. It was this that set his death apart and proved the validity of his sacrifice (Rom 1:4; 1 Cor 15:4). Many have given their lives for others but none has risen from the dead!

Finally, it is the Holy Spirit who convinces us that Jesus died for us and for our sins. This is not something that can be proven by argument or scientific experiment. Jesus told us that the Holy Spirit would convince us and lead us into all truth (John 14:26; 15:26). Further, the apostles affirm that it is by the revelation of the Holy Spirit that we believe (1 Cor 2:7-16); Eph 1:17-19).

The Spirit convinces and witnesses to us that Christ both died for us and lives for us. Such conviction lies well beyond philosophy or rationalism or science. It can't be analysed. But you can't write it off just for that reason. Human experience has its own validity. And personal experience of Christ is life-changing. There have been millions of Christians who bear witness to this.

What can compare with the joy of knowing that our sins are forgiven? That we are deeply loved? That we serve a living Saviour? That we have an eternal hope?

Jesus was truly unique in his Passion!

What Next?

On a scale of 1 (Poor) to 10 (Wonderful), rate your experiential knowledge of Christ. How real is he to you? How well do you know him? Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit and to lift your personal knowledge of Christ to a new level.

Read Phil 3:1-11.

Day thirteen

8/Unique in his Panoramic Prophetic Proclamation

We often think of Jesus as only appearing in the New Testament, especially the gospels or the apostolic letters. But his person is actually embedded in every book of the Bible. Sometimes directly, sometimes through parable, sometimes through the sacrificial system, sometimes through prophecy or poetry.

After he rose from the dead, Jesus showed two disciples 'in all the Scriptures' that it was necessary for him to suffer crucifixion and then to enter his glory (Luke 24:26). Obviously, he was referring to the Old Testament.

For example, in the very beginning, there is a promise that a descendant of Eve would bruise the serpent's head (Gen 3:15). This promise is defined more clearly when God tells Abraham that a descendant of his will bring blessings to all nations (Gen 12:2; 17:19).

From Exodus to Deuteronomy, the whole sacrificial system tells us again and again that one day there would be a perfect sacrifice for sin and that a prophet greater than Moses would appear (Deut 18:15).

In the Psalms, Jesus is presented as the suffering Saviour who dies for us (Psalm 22), as the King of Glory coming into his holy temple (Psalm 24:7) and as an eternal priest and king (Psalm 110).

In Isaiah, there are astonishing prophecies of a Saviour whose name would be Immanuel—God with us—who would be the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace (Is7:14; 9:6). In other words, he would be both God and man. Moreover, he would also take away our sins by bearing them himself and suffering in our place (Is 53).

Then, at the end of the Bible, in Revelation, Jesus is clearly identified as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is seen in astonishing images as holy, righteous and victorious. He is the Lamb who suffers and the Lion who reigns.

The hosts of heaven and earth sing till the earth resounds with the majesty of it:

Worthy are you... for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth... Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing! To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honour and glory and might forever and ever! (Rev 5:9-13).

Let's join in the song!

What next?

As you pray today, why not ask God to fill your heart with a fresh revelation of Jesus? See Eph1:15-23.

If you haven't come across them yet, for more on the uniqueness of Christ follow the You Version Bible Plans entitled *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ, See the Invisible: Do the Impossible and Amazing Grace*. You can also find the written panorama of Christ in All the Scriptures on my website www.barrychant.com.