

## **Christ: The Divine Solution to the Human Problem**

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**ABSTRACT:** In His plan which God put together from all eternity, He prepared everything that was necessary for the rehabilitation of mankind who had fallen into sin. The central point of this divine plan was the sacrifice of atonement for sin through His only Son through whom He would secure the redemption of man. Through His life and work Christ fulfilled the greatest mission ever while offering at the same time a worthy model to be followed in every Christian missionary activity. By carefully reading through the Holy Scriptures as well as other Christian authors, it can be affirmed without reservation the fact that Christ was, is and remains the unique solution for the human problem.

**KEY WORDS:** Christ, divine solution, teaching, human problem, influence.

**I**n the course of time, people have distinguished themselves by the response they have given to the question: "Who is Jesus?" The majority of people accept the existence of Jesus, the fact that He lived and taught others as no one else. The person of the Lord Jesus Christ however represents more than just an historical reality. Christ was, is and remains the divine solution for the human problem, a fact that is also evident from the first book of the Bible (Gen. 3:15). Because His teaching was radical, it also stirred up much opposition. However, as remarks Sterie Diamandi:

Whenever He speaks to the crowd announcing and explaining the Kingdom of God, the listeners sense the shiver of eternity,

a sublime religious enthusiasm, the splendor of moral beauty and the impetuous tumult of aspiration for perfection. The words of Jesus are like lightning which fills the night. In a flash across the darkness tearing it apart, it sees the high peaks which pierce the heavens and the heights by which the soul is laid bare with contemplation of the most wonderful views that the universe and life can offer.<sup>1</sup>

The person and work of Jesus have generated and continue to generate a multitude of opinions which were intended to clarify but which instead have created a certain amount of confusion. This has been pointed out by Robert Bowman and J. Ed. Komoszewski in their book, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, as follows:

The different interpretations which have been given to Jesus are loaded with prejudice. He is a powerful figure who people desire to have on their side—and who are ready to recreate according to their own image in order to assure His help . . . I have a sense—in which I am not able to escape—that I have taken Jesus' question "Who do you think I am?" and have changed it to "Who do you want Me to be?"<sup>2</sup>

What is surprising when we read about the work of Jesus, is the reaction of the teachers and religious leaders concerning Him. The question that constantly comes out of the mouths of the religious authorities as well as the crowds who have gathered to listen to Him is: "Who is this man?"<sup>3</sup> Even the disciples, after seeing His authority over nature unleashed asked themselves: "Who is this man?" (Mark 4:35–41)

Everyone was in agreement that Jesus was a special person. For some, it meant that He represented a great hope while for others He was a great threat. Toward the end of His work on earth, the questions surrounding the identity of Jesus reached a culmination which is evident for example, in Matt. 16:13–16. Here Jesus asks "Who do the people say that the Son of Man is? . . . but who do you say that I am?" (NASB). "*You are the Christ*" recognizes his royalty, the fact that He is the Anointed of God. "*You are the Son of the living God*" understands His divinity, that He is worthy of receiving worship.

In contrast with the religious community of the day who prided themselves in their self righteousness, Jesus deliberately identified Himself with those for whom He came to suffer. In spite of all of this, He was met with indifference or unbelief by the multitudes, with hostility shown by the circles of influence and with fierce responses. Instead of generating praise and unconditional allegiance, His miracles and divine teaching became occasions for scandal and division. In spite of all these things, it is surprising for some how Jesus could say: *“Heaven and earth shall pass away but My words shall not pass away”* (Matt. 24:35)

If we did not have at hand the perspective of time and the convincing reality of the works, it would certainly be true that we would be tempted to conclude that the content of words such as these could be the fruit of a sick mind which suffers from delirious megalomania. The unfolding of these events however has given evidence of the complete solidity of Jesus sayings. In the course of time, year after year, century after century, the words uttered by Jesus have been precisely fulfilled. Time has consumed innumerable nations and fortresses, kingdoms and institutions, glories and civilisations which seemed imovable forever; His words however have remained eternal and fertile. The teeth of the ages, instead of grinding His words down, has polished them, solidified and smoothed them giving them indestructable strength and dazzling brilliance. From the beginning, Jesus through His utterances could have sounded like a lunatic who suffered from grandious deliriousness but with time and fulfillment proved that He is divinity incarnate; this is so because only a God could speak this way without contradicting Himself, undergirding His unequalled glory in the eyes of posterity instead of being overcome by ridicule or compromising Himself beyond repair. And behold how these sayings of His which could seem like those of a lunatic come to prove exactly His divinity.<sup>4</sup>

Jesus therefore came to fulfill what no one else was able to do. In this context, the road to the cross was nothing less than an exact fulfillment of the divine plan. All at once with the incarnation of Jesus, the Kingdom of God ceased being strictly geographic and became

established in the hearts of those who believe and were ready to follow Jesus. Speaking about the goal of Jesus' first coming to earth, Charles R. Swindoll writes:

Jesus clearly understood his purpose for coming to the world and never allowed popularity, success, opposition, threats or even misunderstanding around Him to distract Him. He remained focused on His mission although never without caring for the people around Him. He strove to present the truth in the simplest way. Time after time He called people to embrace the truth. But He never allowed the failures of others to knock Him off of his course.<sup>5</sup>

The historian Kenneth Scott Latourette writes: *"With the passing of the ages, more and more proof has come together regarding the fact that according to the effect that He has had in history, Jesus lived the most influential life among those who have ever lived on this planet and this effect appears to be growing."*<sup>6</sup> For his part, Ernest Renan makes the following affirmation regarding Jesus: *"Jesus was the greatest religious genius who ever lived. His beauty is eternal and his dominion will have no end. Jesus is unique in every sense and nothing can be equal to Him. All of history is inconceivable without Christ."*<sup>7</sup>

The affirmations that Christ made about Himself identifies Him as being more than just a simple teacher or even a prophet. He openly made the claim to be God, the only way to the Father, the only one who could forgive sin as well as the only Mediator of salvation. For many, these affirmations seemed to be blasphemous to God and because of this were not inclined to accept them. F.J.A. Hort writes: *"His words were in a sense an expression of Himself, in such a way that they would make no sense if they were seen as abstract affirmations of a divine oracle or just coming from a prophet. Remove Him from being the main subject (or the ultimate subject) of each affirmation and all of these collapse into nonsense."*<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette on the other hand points out the following about Jesus claims:

It is not just the teachings of Jesus that make him so remarkable, although these would be sufficient to give Him this distinction. It is the combination of the teaching and the Man himself.

These two factors cannot be separated. . . . It must be evident to any attentive reader of the Gospels that Jesus considered His message and Himself to be inseparable. He was a great teacher but He was more than that. His teachings about the Kingdom of God, human behavior and the nature of God were important. But these were not capable of being separated from His person, without being—from His perspective—completely vitiated.<sup>9</sup>

Resuming the affirmations regarding Jesus, as well as emphasizing His work, the Apostle John writes: *“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”* (John 20:31) NIV. With certainty the life, work and teaching of Jesus were found to be in major conflict with the messianic speculations of the Jews in that day.

Being instructed from childhood that when the Messiah comes He will be a political leader who will bring liberty to the people by restoring Israel to its once held greatness, their hope began to be rekindled with the coming of Jesus on the scene. The expectation of an liberator was without doubt intensified by the events which took place at that time. This was especially true when Jewish freedom was being stomped out by the repressive measures of the increasingly numerous Romans. In this context, a suffering Messiah was a completely foreign concept to the Jews. As Millard Burrows comments however: “Jesus was so different than what the Jews expected in the Son of David that even His disciples encountered difficulties in associating the person of Jesus with their own ideas about the Messiah.”<sup>10</sup>

This was one of the reasons that the apostles abandoned Him when He was arrested. Their minds were so deeply steeped in the idea of a conquering Messiah who’s role was to defeat their enemies that when they saw Jesus beaten and bloody after being tortured—a helpless prisoner in Pilate’s hands—and when they saw how He was treated by the Roman soldiers and held by the cross to die as an ordinary criminal, all of their Messianic hopes regarding Jesus were shattered.<sup>11</sup>

With all of this, in a very short time after Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection and in spite of their initial doubts and disappointments, the disciples boldly proclaimed Jesus as Lord and Savior. What exactly brought about such a change? With certainty, the fact that: *"After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God"* (Acts 1:3) NIV was the major factor. Meeting with the risen Christ convinced His followers that He was truly the Messiah, the divine solution for the human problem. This caused them to testify to this fact not only through their powerful messages and transformed lives but even through their deaths.

Christ was, is and shall remain therefore the most influential person in history, the divine solution for the human problem.<sup>12</sup> Now more than ever is the need for a clear understanding of the Person and work of our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus may be defined by supernatural works, wisdom and astonishing sayings, immeasurable love, perfect life, supreme sacrifice—all offering a unique hope.

Unfortunately the sacrifice of Jesus Christ together with all of its implications continues to be largely associated with a nice myth, an unrighteous act, an abstract and mystical reality without having any resonance to the level of mind or heart. For those who condemned Him, the death of Christ was seen as a necessity. This was so because to them He was considered a heretic, blasphemer, possessed, both dangerous for different religious groups as well as the Roman rule. Also for those nearer to Christ, He was considered a victim of a mockery of due process and of clerical conspiracy. For others however, Christ was a martyr who sacrificed himself as a inspiring example. Still for everyone Christ was and remains the divine solution for the human problem.

The teaching of Christ portrays itself as having an unnatural ethic and in so doing seems to be sentenced to never bear fruit. To everyone's surprise however, the teachings of Christ have overcome and are spreading more and more. Drawing from His teaching it can be said that: To the man who desires pleasure Jesus recommends curbing his appetite; to the one enslaved to material goods He speaks

of the uselessness of earthly treasures; to those who are controlled by the instinct to dominate, the Savior shows them the greatness of humility; to the man given to react under instinctive impulses in order to take the law into his own hands by paying evil with the same, Christ speaks to him about Christian love which is manifested in a concrete way and not simply theoretically.

Reading through this article, you might get the impression that you find yourself in the midst of a few moral ideas which are in flagrant contradiction with the laws of human nature. But on the other hand:

If Jesus was only an expression of a moment in history, states Sterie Diamandi, two things would have been necessary to have happened: 1. In the passing of time, there would have had to appear a number of heroes just like Jesus because to various degrees there was an urgently felt need for saviors. 2. With Jesus being the expression of but a moment of history it would have been logical for Him to disappear all at once with the need that He created, limited in His influence by space and time.<sup>13</sup>

In the case of Jesus Christ however, the exact opposite happened. In the course of history Jesus' was and remains a unique advent. Concerning this matter, Ernest Renan says: *"Without Him all of history is without meaning. Whatever the unexpected phenomenon of the future might be, Jesus will never be surpassed. Every age will proclaim that among the sons of men none has come along who is greater than Jesus."*<sup>14</sup> With respect to Jesus, Straus point out that:

In no way and in no time will it be possible for someone to rise up above Him and it is not even possible for us to imagine anyone who could be His equal. The passing of time can never cause Jesus to become outdated because He is always alive and present, His influence not being dependent upon time and space. His image constantly serves mankind as a guide for life like the North Star which acts as a point of orientation. That is why He is more than necessary for mankind, He is indispensable.<sup>15</sup>

Seeing how all of this comes together, it can be affirmed with all confidence that whatever man may do without in this world, one thing he cannot do without is Jesus Christ. Without Him mankind would regress two thousand years. The twenty centuries which have passed since His incarnation have done nothing but further his greatness and brilliance. Instead of supressing His authority or diminishing his influence, the passing of time has done nothing but add more to His importance. The vast horizon that history offers, unfurls Jesus matchless moral greatness as dominating all the sunbathed pinnacles in the regions of mankind's spirituality.<sup>16</sup> Christ was, is and remains therefore the divine solution for the human problem.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sterie Diamandi, *Fiul lui Dumnezeu—Fiul Omului \*\* Activitatea și învățătura*, (tr. *The Son of God—The Son of Man \*\* Activity and Teaching*), („Cartea Românească”, Bucharest, 1943), 260–261.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Bowman & J.Ed. Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in His Place*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 17.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 5:17–21, 7:36–49, 9:7–9, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Sterie Diamandi, *Fiul lui Dumnezeu—Fiul Omului \*\* Activitatea și învățătura* (tr. *The Son of God—The Son of Man \*\* Activity and Teaching*), (Editura „Cartea Românească”, București, 1943), 258.

<sup>5</sup> Charles R. Swindoll, *Cel mai mare om din istorie, Isus* (tr. *Jesus, the Greatest Man in History*), (Societatea Biblică din România, Oradea, 2011), 156.

<sup>6</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette in Josh McDowell, *Mai mult decât un simplu tâmplar*, 5.

<sup>7</sup> Ernest Renan in Josh McDowell, *Mai mult decât un simplu tâmplar* (tr. *More than a Carpenter*), 5

<sup>8</sup> F.J.A. Hort, *Way, Truth and the Life*, (New York, MacMillan and Co., 1894), 207.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, (New York, Harper and Row, 1953), 44

<sup>10</sup> Millard Burrows, *More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Londra, Secker & Warburg, 1958), 68.

<sup>11</sup> George Eldon Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), 38.

<sup>12</sup> Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, “Iată Omul—Iisus Hristos !” *Argeșul Ortodox*, Curtea de Argeș, XI, 563 (2012), 5.



<sup>13</sup> Sterie Diamandi, *Fiul lui Dumnezeu—Fiul Omului \*\* Activitatea și învățătura*, (Editura „Cartea Românească”, București, 1943), 253–254.

<sup>14</sup> Ernest Renan, în Sterie Diamandi, *Fiul lui Dumnezeu—Fiul Omului \*\* Activitatea și învățătura*, 254.

<sup>15</sup> Sterie Diamandi, *Fiul lui Dumnezeu—Fiul Omului \*\* Activitatea și învățătura*, 254.

<sup>16</sup> Sterie Diamandi, *Fiul lui Dumnezeu—Fiul Omului \*\* Patimile, Moartea, Învierea*, (Editura „Cartea Românească”, București, 1943), 416.

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