

“What Think Ye of Christ?”

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“What think ye of Christ?” ([Matt. 22:42](#).) That question is as penetrating today as when Jesus used it to confound the Pharisees almost two thousand years ago. Like a sword, sharp and powerful, it uncovers what is hidden, divides truth from error, and goes to the heart of religious belief.

Here are some answers being given today.

Some praise Jesus Christ as the greatest teacher who ever lived, but deny that he is Messiah, Savior, or Redeemer. Some prominent theologians teach that our secularized world needs “a new concept of God,” stripped of the supernatural. They believe that not even a suffering God can help to solve the pain and tragedy of modern man. (See John A. Hardon, *Christianity in the Twentieth Century*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1971, pp. 356, 359.)

A bishop in one Christian denomination has declared that “Jesus was in every sense a human being, just as we are.” (“One Clergyman’s Views on the ‘Death of God,’” *U.S. News & World Report*, 18 Apr. 1966, p. 57).

Under the influence of such teachings, the religion of many is like the creed of the humanists, who declare that “no deity will save us; we must save ourselves.” (*The Encyclopedia of American Religions: Religious Creeds*, 1st ed., ed. J. Gordon Melton, Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1973, p. 641).

Another church that claims roots in “Christianity” maintains that Jesus’ crucifixion was not the fulfillment of his mission, but evidence of its failure. They teach that he did not cleanse men of original sin, but that another messiah must come to complete our salvation and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. (Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, *Outline of the Principle, Level 4*, 1980, pp. 79–83, 238–39, 247–48, 252, 298–99.)

Many years ago a young Latter-day Saint enrolled in a midwestern university and applied for a scholarship only available to Christians. Both the applicant and the university officials were unsure whether a Mormon was eligible. After consulting a panel of theologians, they concluded that this Mormon was a Christian.

When I first heard of that event over thirty years ago, I was shocked that anyone, especially a member of our church, would entertain any doubt that we are Christians. I have come to a better understanding of that confusion. I think we sometimes thoughtlessly give others cause to wonder. How does this happen?

For many years I was a teacher of law. A frequent teaching method in that discipline is to concentrate classroom

instruction on the difficult questions—the obscure and debatable matters that lie at the fringes of learning. Some law teachers believe that the simple general rules that answer most legal questions are so obvious that students can learn them by independent study. As a result, these teachers devote little time to teaching the basics.

I believe some of us sometimes do the same thing in gospel teaching. We neglect to teach and testify to some simple, basic truths of paramount importance. This omission permits some members and nonmembers to get wrong ideas about our faith and belief.

What do members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints think of Christ?

Jesus Christ is the Only Begotten Son of God the Eternal Father. He is our Creator. He is our Teacher. He is our Savior. His atonement paid for the sin of Adam and won victory over death, assuring resurrection and immortality for all men.

He is all of these, but he is more. Jesus Christ is the Savior, whose atoning sacrifice opens the door for us to be cleansed of our personal sins so that we can be readmitted to the presence of God. He is our Redeemer.

The Messiah's atoning sacrifice is the central message of the prophets of all ages. It was prefigured by the animal sacrifices prescribed by the law of Moses, whose whole meaning, one prophet explained, "point[ed] to that great and last sacrifice [of] ... the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal." ([Alma 34:14](#).) The Atonement was promised and predicted by the Old Testament prophets. Isaiah declared:

"He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: ... and with his stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

"He was ... brought as a lamb to the slaughter. ...

"He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. ...

"He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." ([Isa. 53:5–8, 12](#).)

At the beginning of the Savior's ministry, John the Baptist exclaimed, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." ([John 1:29](#).)

At the end of his ministry, as Jesus blessed the cup and gave it to his disciples, he said, "For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." ([Matt. 26:28](#).) As Latter-day Saints partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we drink water in remembrance of his blood, which was shed for us. (See [D&C 20:79](#).)

The writers of the New Testament teach that our Savior's suffering and his blood atoned for our sins.

The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that the first principle of the gospel he preached to them was "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures." ([1 Cor. 15:3](#).) And to the Colossians he wrote, "We have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." ([Col. 1:14](#); see also [Heb. 2:17](#); [Heb. 10:10](#).)

Peter described how Christ "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed." ([1 Pet. 2:24](#).)

John wrote that "the blood of Jesus Christ ... cleanseth us from all sin." ([1 Jn. 1:7](#); see also [1 Jn. 2:2](#); [1 Jn. 3:5](#); [1 Jn. 4:10](#).)

We revere the Bible. And so we and our fellow believers in Christ sing these words from that inspiring hymn "How Great Thou Art":

*And when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin.
(Hymns, 1985, no. 86.)*

Although the Bible's explanation of atonement for individual sins should be unmistakable, that doctrine has been misunderstood by many who have only the Bible to explain it.

Modern prophets declare that the Book of Mormon contains the fulness of the everlasting gospel in greater clarity than any other scripture. (See [D&C 20:8–9](#); [D&C 27:5](#).) In a day when many are challenging the divinity of Jesus

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