
The Uniqueness of 'our Lord'

Erroll Hulse

Who is 'our Lord'?

This reference of course is to Jesus Christ.¹ It is his birth that set our calendar. In that he is unique. In what other ways is he unique? About 60 billion people have been born into the world. Every one of these is unique or different in personality. I will set out and then explain ways in which this person called 'our Lord' is completely different from all others.

1. Jesus was predicted in detail by prophets
2. Jesus was born of a virgin
3. Jesus lived a sinless life
4. Jesus made unique 'I AM' claims
5. Jesus supported his claims with miracles
6. Jesus made a sacrifice of himself that ended all sacrifices
7. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit
8. Jesus has kept his promise to build his church
9. Jesus is the creator of the world
10. Jesus is the judge of all mankind

1. Jesus was predicted in detail by prophets

There is nobody else in world history whose life and work has been predicted in detail over an extensive period of time (about 1,400 years). Behind these predictions is God himself. He created man and woman in his own image and set them apart from the animals. He called a man named Abraham and created the Jewish nation out of him. He called Moses in Sinai and brought him back to Egypt and brought Israel out of Egypt. He made a platform of Mount Sinai and there uttered and inscribed the ten commandments. These commandments are known as God's moral law. They echo in the consciences of all who read or hear them.

God continued to write what we call the Bible story. He established Israel in the land of Canaan. To that nation he sent prophets who described the person

and work of a Messiah which means a promised Saviour. There is progression in the revelation of detail about this person. Indeed there is almost as much detail about this Saviour in the 39 books of the Old Testament as we find in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

From the prophet Isaiah we will focus on two details: the Saviour's birth and his humiliation.

His birth. Jahweh would give a sign. 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel.'² If this were just an ordinary birth it would be no sign at all. The child born was given names which would be totally inappropriate were he not God.

*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*³

His humiliation. In an extended description (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12), the prophet portrays the Messiah as one who will be despised, mutilated, pierced, crushed and finally killed. This is part of that description:

*He was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth,
In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.
Who can speak of his descendants?
for his life was taken from the earth.*

These details were uniquely fulfilled in Jesus.

2. Jesus was born of a virgin

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. The facts of his birth are described in the Gospels, Matthew 1 and Luke 2. The virgin birth of Jesus shows us that his coming was not by human initiative. Mary was informed, not consulted. She was entirely passive. When the time was ripe *God sent his Son*. The virgin birth conveys the fact that Jesus is untouched by that original sin which pervades the whole human race. Jesus is sinless. He was born with a human disposition entirely obedient and loving

toward his Father. Jesus was completely and perfectly human yet did not in his human nature share our fallenness or any taint of our sinfulness and corruption. His birth by God the Holy Spirit, through a virgin, is unique. He did not in any way inherit our sinful propensities to hate God and each other.

3. Jesus lived a sinless life

To live a sinless life is unique. But how do we know that Jesus lived for thirty-three years without any sin? In God's Word we read: *And in him is no sin.*⁴ This was the affirmation of John, one of his closest disciples. He, like Jesus' family and the other disciples, had ample opportunity to observe him. They agreed that he was holy, blameless and pure. These disciples would not have laid their lives on the line for Jesus if his claims were not matched by what they saw and heard.

It is easy to spot the faults and sins of famous leaders. Often their sins are so glaring that it is embarrassing. The true character of any person is laid bare under intense pressure. The apostle Peter described the way Jesus behaved under the most extreme suffering:

*'He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats.'*⁵

There is no parallel to this. The sinlessness of Jesus is unique.

4. Jesus made unique 'I AM' claims

One day when the Pharisees opposed Jesus strongly and boasted of the fact that they were the children of Abraham he said to them, 'Before Abraham was born, I AM!'⁶ That is the same as saying, 'I always have been. I am eternal.' We should note too that the expression I AM is the same as the meaning of the Jewish name for God, Jahweh (Jehovah). It was the same Jesus who confronted Moses in the burning bush and commanded that he go and tell Pharaoh: I AM says, 'Let my people go!' Jesus' words to the Pharisees, 'Before Abraham was born, I AM!' reveal to us that he is God.

In another place he said, 'I am the resurrection and the life.'⁷ That is the same as saying that he can resurrect us out of our graves. That is unique. Only God has such limitless power.

When arrested and brought before the ruling body the high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' To this Jesus replied, 'Yes, it is as you say. ...In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'⁸ This was a quotation from Daniel the prophet, the expression 'Son of Man' meaning the Messiah. The ruling council understood perfectly this claim, and in their hatred began to abuse Jesus physically.

We know that people who are mentally ill can imagine that they are God. But Jesus was not mentally ill as the following observation will show.

5. Jesus supported his claims with miracles

Just a few days before his arrest Jesus had raised a man named Lazarus to life. He had been buried for four days. There were many witnesses to this miracle. Jesus' enemies could not deny the facts. It was an event which, if it took place today, would be covered in detail by the mass media. Those opposed to Jesus could not deny this miracle any more than they could deny his other superlative acts of power. What he did only made them fear that he might use his influence by these supernatural acts to replace them and take leadership of the nation. The miracles performed by Jesus were in a league of their own. They were unique. Where in the pages of history do you find a man multiplying a few loaves and fish to feed five thousand?

When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come?' Jesus replied, 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.'⁹

6. Jesus made a sacrifice of himself that ended all sacrifices

In the sacrifices made by the Jews according to the commands of God we see man's greatest and deepest spiritual need met. What can a man do if he has sinned against God? It is impossible to repay. The sentence is, 'The wicked man will die for his sin!'¹⁰ Atonement is the only solution. This was provided for by way of sacrifice which symbolised very graphically that God himself would provide a sacrifice for man's need. To be sure there were different

kinds of offerings or sacrifices but the central kind was of an animal, often a perfect lamb.

First there was the presentation of the lamb on the altar. Second there was the laying on of the hands of the offerer to signify the transposition of his guilt. Third there was the killing of the lamb by shedding its blood. Fourth there was the burning up of the whole of the lamb by fire.

John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and proclaimed, 'Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'¹¹ Jesus affirmed, 'The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'¹² and the writer of the letter to the Hebrews states that by Jesus' sacrifice of himself on the cross he has made an effective sacrifice which guarantees the salvation of all his people to the end of time.

Within a few years of Jesus' ascension, Jerusalem and its Temple (according to the details he predicted)¹³ were destroyed by Roman armies. The elaborate system of daily, weekly and monthly sacrifices was brought to an end and has never been restored.

Jesus offered up himself and brought an end to all the Jewish sacrifices. This achievement is unique. The apostle Paul explains it like this, 'Live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.'¹⁴

7. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit

Before leaving this world Jesus had promised his disciples that they would not be left like orphans to fend for themselves. The third person of the Trinity would come and live in them forever. He would come to assure them, teach them and guide them.

Jesus was crucified on the Jewish day of Passover which was the first day in the annual celebration known as the feast of weeks. Three days later Jesus rose from the dead and on day forty he ascended into heaven. Ten days later, on the last day of the feast of weeks, called Pentecost, he sent the Holy Spirit who was seen as tongues of fire. The Holy Spirit came as a mighty rushing wind. He gave the gift of languages to the disciples.

Facts about the most important fifty days of human history

1. God pre-planned (predestined) the fifty day time grid in the Jewish calendar.
2. The Passover evening was the time when the lambs were slain. That was the time when our Lord instituted the Last Supper which we know as the communion of bread and wine.
3. The next day, Day 1, he became our Passover lamb as Paul says, 'For Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed' (1 Cor 5:7). Jesus' crucifixion, words and expiry are described in Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23 and John 19.
4. Three days later he rose from the dead. This testimony is described by Matthew (28:1-20), Mark (16:1-8), Luke (24:1-53) and John (20-21:25). The evidence and significance of the resurrection is explained by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15.
5. Day 40. The ascension of Jesus is described by Luke in the first chapter of Acts.
6. Day 50. Acts chapter two describes the Day of Pentecost.

The apostle Peter explained the nature of this extraordinary event: 'Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.'¹⁵

Jesus sent the Holy Spirit. Only God can send God. Jesus is unique.

8. Jesus has kept his promise to build his church

On one occasion Jesus declared, 'I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.'¹⁶ 'The gates of hell' is a phrase describing opposition. In ancient times if an army attacked a city the defenders would hurl missiles on that army and beat them off by giving them a hellish time.

The church of Jesus is the people who trust in him and seek to obey his teaching. His church is not just one more good institution along with benevolent clubs and friendly societies or organisations set up for the relief of the poor or the sick. The church like its builder is unique. It is recognised by its worship of the Trinity, by faithful biblical preaching, by holy living combined with love and compassion. In true churches you will find some weak, some handicapped, some broken-hearted and some reclaimed from a life of despair. She is called the Body of Christ. She is created by God the Holy Spirit and she confesses spiritual union with her head. She entertains

the hope of the new heavens and new earth in which righteousness will reign. No other body is like that.

The cynic has much to criticise. There are instances of division as the hymn writer puts it, 'by schisms rent asunder'. The charge that there are hypocrites will not be too hard to substantiate. Examples can be found of Judas Iscariot all over again. There are examples of the most appalling moral lapses. There is the scandal of the tele-evangelists who we now know were in it for money. There is the shame of church leaders who are mealy-mouthed and hopelessly compromised. When the Church of England bishops met for the great Lambeth Conference it was African bishops who stood up for basic morality. There is the constant embarrassment of leaders who are neck-high in compromising what the Bible says. Then there are scenarios of the superficial, shallow and silly. A recent example is the claim by some to have had their amalgam tooth fillings turned to gold. One girl questioned on a TV programme confessed that she had been to the dentist and he reported that the fillings were *not* gold. To the question, 'So what do you have to say about that now?' she replied that it had been a good experience anyway! The media hardly lacks scope for ridicule.

Where the gospel message has been abandoned or watered down, church congregations shrink and their buildings eventually become offices, flats or warehouses. In view of all this, is not the church of Christ dead? No! Christ is alive. He is building his church in the face of difficulty.

Has Jesus kept that promise to build his church? This twentieth century has seen a massive advance of Christ's church in many countries. For instance it was estimated that in 1900 there were only 200,000 Bible-believing Christians in Latin America. Today the number is about 46 million.¹⁷ In China in 1900 the Christian church was struggling to exist. Opposition by the Communist regime is extreme but has not been able to stop the growth of the church estimated between 50 and 75 million.¹⁸

The world-wide church continues to grow in the most hostile places. In Siberia as in other parts of Russia the economic situation is chaotic yet the church continues to grow. In Sudan persecution is extreme. Churches have been burned down and believers have been crucified. Christians have been captured, abused and sold into slavery.¹⁹ A determined effort is made to exterminate the church in Sudan but still it grows as it does in Ethiopia where membership has increased from a few hundred in 1937 to about 3 million today.²⁰

The church is growing in the jungles of Papua New Guinea and in the slums of Karachi, Pakistan. From Pakistan comes an appeal for help, 'They bulldoze our buildings, they beat us, they rape our daughters, they throw us into prison on false charges, they try to make our children Muslims.'²¹

Paul Marshall in his book *Their Blood Cries Out*²² documents today's anti-Christian persecutions. In more than 60 countries world-wide Christians are harassed, abused, arrested, tortured and executed. It is said that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. That certainly is the story of the 20th century church.

9. Jesus is the creator of the world

Introducing his Gospel John wrote, 'He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him.'²³ Paul describes Jesus as the creator of everything: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers, rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.²⁴ The writer of the letter to the Hebrews spells it out like this: 'In these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.'²⁵

Everything tangible and non-tangible, spiritual and material, angelic and human: everything owes its existence to the Son. This world and solar system with its planets and moons were created. They did not happen by chance. The amazing complexity of creation spells out design. He made it. As creator Jesus is unique.

10. Jesus is the judge of all mankind

The end of the world is described as coming like a flash of lightning from one end of the sky to the other. Every life will be examined before a great white throne. Every conscience will be searched. The records will be opened. Every person will be judged according to the records.²⁶ And who is the judge? It is the same Jesus who bears the messianic title, Son of Man. 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.'²⁷

This is unique. We have tribunals and judges but no one who is qualified to judge the thoughts and motives of all men and women. Who apart from the God-man will justly and infallibly separate the righteous from the wicked?

The most important decision of your life!

Will you be justified and saved on the Great Judgement Day or will you be condemned and lost eternally?

The Scripture declares, 'no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law.'²⁸ That destroys the idea that there will be scales: on one side a plate weighted down by the sins you have committed and on the other side a plate into which the good you have done will be placed. If there is enough good to tip the scale that will be eternal salvation. If bad deeds tip the scale that will be eternal condemnation. This idea is ruled out in the Bible.

Ever since the fall of our first parents the universal human sinful tendency is to look for fig leaves to cover guilty consciences. With the exception of Christianity every religion works on the basis of human merit. But all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.²⁹ I have shown that Jesus is unique. He is unique in this too that he has provided a righteousness for us which saves. This perfect righteousness is acceptable. It consists of the life and death and resurrection of the unique Son of God who in one of the messianic promises is given the title 'the LORD our Righteousness'³⁰

To say, "I don't need him thank you very much but I will trust in my own goodness", is a recipe for disaster, a disaster illustrated in the parable of the Wedding Banquet: 'But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. "Friend he asked, "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless. then the king told his attendants, "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."³¹

There are many who think, I will risk it and just hope that there is no Judgement Day. That too is disastrous. Jesus who said, "heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away,"³² also declared that there will be a great judgement day.

The ten unique features of Jesus that I have described are parts of a unity which makes up a whole and complete salvation for each one of us. You will

search in vain for anything to equal this or for anything which completely answers the desperate spiritual need of a soul. That is why the apostles said of him 'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.'³³ (Acts 4:12).

Your eternity depends on the unique person that has been described. Every other well known person is dead and helpless right now. But he is alive and powerful. Believe in him and trust in him. There can be no more important decision on your life. 'Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'³⁴

References

- ¹ Jesus is his earthly name. Christ is the Greek for Messiah which means 'anointed one'.
- ² Isa 7:14
- ³ Isa 9:6
- ⁴ 1 John 3:5
- ⁵ 1 Peter 2:23
- ⁶ John 8:58
- ⁷ John 11:25
- ⁸ Matt 26:63,64
- ⁹ Luke 7:22
- ¹⁰ Ez 33:8
- ¹¹ John 1:29
- ¹² Matt 20:28
- ¹³ Matt 24:1-35, Luke 21:5-32
- ¹⁴ Eph 5:2
- ¹⁵ Acts 2:33-36
- ¹⁶ Matt 16:18 (KJV)
- ¹⁷ *Operation World*, Patrick Johnston, OM Publishing, 1993, p 65
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, p 164
- ¹⁹ *Ibid*, p 511
- ²⁰ *Ibid*, p 213 ff
- ²¹ *And the Gates of Hell*, An appeal by The Barnabas Fund, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9 5SZ, UK
- ²² *Their Blood Cries Out*, Paul Marshall, Word Publishing, Dallas, Texas, USA, 1997
- ²³ John 1:10
- ²⁴ Col 1:16
- ²⁵ Heb 1:2
- ²⁶ Rev 20:11-15
- ²⁷ Matt 25:31
- ²⁸ Rom 3:20
- ²⁹ Isaiah 64:6
- ³⁰ Jeremiah 23:6.
- ³¹ Matthew 22:1-14
- ³² Matthew 24:35
- ³³ Acts 4:12
- ³⁴ Romans 10:11