

**Luke 19:10 (1984 NIV)**  
***Christ Has Come! So What?***

**Introduction**

Most people in the world know that Christmas is the time when Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. But what the world often does not clearly know is this: “What is the significance of the birth of Jesus Christ to the world?” As we approach another Christmas season, it is timely for Christians like us to refresh our own understanding of the birth of Jesus Christ so that we can provide the world with not just a good answer, but God’s answer to this important question.

Many man-given answers have been offered to this question:

- Jesus Christ came to give us an example of God’s love.
- Jesus Christ came as the greatest teacher of all time.
- Jesus Christ came to establish a new religion.
- Jesus Christ came as a reformist rabbi who wanted to start a movement to purify Israel.

Against all these answers, we have the clear words of our Lord Himself in a familiar verse in the Gospel of Luke. It is utterly reliable for it was spoken by Jesus Christ and recorded in Luke 19:10—“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

A couple of probing questions can help us better understand this one-sentence statement.

**I. What do we have in this statement?**

First of all, we have here a profound fact—“The Son of Man came.”

Jesus Christ has come to earth—the infinite has become finite; the eternal has invaded time. Theologians call Jesus Christ the Incarnation—i.e. “God in human flesh”. The Bible calls Him Immanuel—i.e. “God with us”.

The birth of Jesus Christ differs from every other birth in that He voluntarily came in obedience to the will of God the Father. That could not be said of you or me. I was conceived and born here in Singapore by the choices made by my parents. But Jesus Christ came according to the plan of God. The Bible says, “When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son” (Gal. 4:4). Every detail was minutely planned in the courts of heaven. Nothing happened by chance. He came from light into darkness. He came from the light of divine glory into the darkness of human sin. But still He chose to come!

The term “Son of Man” emphasizes the humanity of Jesus Christ. He entered the human race in the form of a baby. The Bible says in John 1:14—“And the Word (Jesus Christ) became flesh (human) and tabernacled (lived) among us.”

At the heart of our faith is this certain truth—God has come down to us in the person of Jesus Christ. Now we know what God is like for the Son of Man has made Him known to us.

The Son of Man (i.e. Jesus Christ) came from heaven to earth—that’s the profound fact in the Christmas event.

Second, we have here a predestined mission—“The Son of Man came to seek and to save.”

What is Jesus Christ like? For those of you who are familiar with parables in the Bible, Jesus Christ is like the woman who lost a coin and searched her house until she found it. He is like the man who lost one sheep and went out into the wilderness to find it. He is like the compassionate father who welcomed his prodigal son home when he repented of his waywardness.

Yes, Jesus Christ came looking for sinners. He came seeking those caught in adultery, blind beggars, lepers, and wild men living in the tombs. He even came seeking self-righteous people like the Pharisees who thought they didn’t need Him. He came seeking fishermen, politicians, radicals, physicians, tax collectors, rich men at the top of the heap, and poor folks no one would want to touch. He sought the prostitutes and drunkards. And when He was dying, He came seeking a thief hanging on a cross beside Him. Yes, Jesus Christ came as the seeking Saviour.

“The Son of Man came to seek and to save”—that’s the divine mission in the Christmas event; a mission that’s predestined in heaven, and not an after-thought on earth.

Third, we have here a perfect description of humanity—“... what was lost.”

We talk of being separated from God, of being confused about our purpose in life, and about needing a new beginning. All of that is true, but it is hard to improve on that one simple word in the Bible—“lost”. Humanity is lost without God. What does it mean to be lost?

*The Straits Times* on 18 Oct 2013 ran this letter written by a parent on its FORUM Page:

I took my younger son to a toy shop in United Square on Sunday. He was playing with some toys while I spoke to a saleswoman. When I turned around, my son was nowhere to be seen.

I searched frantically around the mall for 20 minutes, crying and shouting my son's name. Then I received a call from The Learning Lab, a tuition centre.

A passer-by had found my son and taken him to the centre which found my contact number as my elder son is a student there.

I am deeply grateful to everyone who helped me, especially the woman who found my son.

This rather mundane story tells of one miserable truth about humanity—we all by nature go our own way.

No one has to teach us to run away from God. We were born running! We all want to do our own thing! We all go our own way!

We don't even know we are lost until someone comes from heaven to seek us out. This then is the important truth for us to consider—if Jesus Christ did not come to us, we would never come to Him. Left to his human nature, no man truly "seeks" the Lord (Rom. 3:11).

Harry Ironside was a Canadian-American Bible teacher, preacher, theologian, pastor, and author in his time.

He liked to tell the story of a newly-converted man who gave his testimony at a Wednesday night meeting. The new convert gave great glory to God for his salvation. After the meeting, an older and supposedly wiser Christian took the young man aside and said, "That was an excellent testimony, but you left out one thing."

"What was that?"

"You left out your part in salvation."

The new convert thought for a moment and then replied, "My part in salvation was to run from God as fast as I could. And the Lord's part was to run after me, find me, and save me."

That is indeed the testimony of every child of God. We were lost until Jesus Christ found us.

Sometimes we encourage sinners to “come to Christ” and that is entirely biblical. But if Jesus Christ did not first come to us, we would never come to Him at all.

That’s what it means to be truly lost—lost without God; lost without hope; lost and trapped forever in sin. Lost in sin—that is the perfect description of humanity according to the Perfect God Himself.

What then is our hope if we are so hopelessly lost? We find the answer in the words of Jesus Christ today—“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

He did not come as a tourist, or as an educator, or as an itinerant philosopher. Jesus Christ came as a Saviour seeking to save the lost.

There is a second probing question that can help us better understand why Jesus Christ came.

## **II. What does the coming of Jesus Christ mean to us personally?**

What are the implications of the coming of Jesus Christ to us personally? I like to lay out three for our consideration today.

First of all, since Jesus Christ has come, receiving or rejecting Him becomes a personal responsibility.

Sometimes we say, “Ignorance of the law is no excuse.” But if a man deliberately breaks the law, we tend to treat him more harshly than the man who unknowingly breaks the law. So it is with God. If Jesus Christ has come, then our responsibility is increased. Jesus Christ said, “To whom much is given, from him much will be required” (Luke 12:48).

If Jesus Christ has not come down to earth, it does not mean we would all not be judged as sinners. In fact, if Jesus Christ has not come down to earth, we would all be hopelessly and helplessly condemned by our own sin. We often argue with that because our starting point with ourselves is this—“For all of us are good though we fall short of the perfection of God.” But God’s starting point with humanity as He looks at us is this—“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). So if God has done nothing at all, we will all be condemned by and in our own sinfulness.

But we praise God that this is not the situation. Jesus Christ has come down from heaven to earth and made God known to us. He left heaven to make His home among us, to reveal God to us, and to show us the true nature of the Heavenly Father.

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In Jesus Christ we see ...

- God's love.
- God's mercy.
- God's kindness.
- God's justice.
- God's holiness.

Jesus Christ came to us full of grace and truth. But what did men do to Him?

They heard His words, saw His miracles, considered His offer, but then they put Him to death. They crucified the Divine Saviour who came to them in human flesh!

Today, many among us know about Jesus Christ in that we've heard His story over and over again. What will happen to us if we know about Jesus Christ and still reject Him?

The Bible's answer is this—"Condemned already!"—that's the state of the whole human race apart from Jesus Christ.

This is the frightening fact. The same Gospel that saves a man if he receives Jesus Christ also condemns him if he rejects Jesus Christ.

Second, since Jesus Christ has come, the sinner is without excuse.

If you were to reject Jesus Christ, what sufficient reason would you have for saying "no" to Him? The Bible in John 3:16 says—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

This wonderful truth is followed by a solemn warning just two verses down in John 3:18—"Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

What a sinner needs first to get right with God is not to become a good person, but to believe in the Person of Jesus Christ.

For Christians like us who belong to the Protestant tradition, one of our heroes of faith must be Martin Luther, Father of the Reformation in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. Indeed, Luther was a great man of faith, and a faithful servant of God who contributed tremendously and significantly to the Church of Jesus Christ in his time.

In his early years, Luther was sympathetic towards the Jews. In his 1523 essay “That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew”, Luther condemned the inhuman treatment of the Jews in Europe and urged Christians to treat them kindly. Luther’s fervent desire was that Jews would hear the Gospel proclaimed clearly and be moved to convert to Christianity.

He wrote this about the Jews, “... We must receive them cordially, and permit them to trade and work with us, that they may have occasion and opportunity to associate with us, hear our Christian teaching, and witness our Christian life. If some of them should prove stiff-necked, what of it? After all, we ourselves are not all good Christians either.”<sup>1</sup>

However, Luther’s attitude towards the Jews changed radically in his later life. In fact, he began to denounce the Jews and urged for their harsh persecution. In a later writing “On the Jews and Their Lies”, he deplores Christendom’s failure to expel them out of Europe. With regard to how to deal with the Jews, He wrote:

“First, set fire to their synagogues or schools and to bury and cover with dirt whatever will not burn ...

Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed ...

Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings ... be taken from them ...

Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb ...

Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews ...

Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them ...

Seventh, I commend putting a flail, an axe, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hands of young, strong Jews and Jewesses and letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow ...”<sup>2</sup>

One powerful leader in the early 1900s was deeply influenced by this hostile attitude of Luther towards the Jews. It led him to act brutally,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin\\_Luther\\_and\\_antisemitism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martin_Luther_and_antisemitism)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/Luther\\_on\\_Jews.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/anti-semitism/Luther_on_Jews.html)

cruelly and inhumanely against the Jewish people in Europe. His name was Adolph Hitler.

A Christian blogger wrote this about Luther:

“When I was young I studied history at school, and learned about Martin Luther and the reformation ... In my memory one Sunday a year was Martin Luther Sunday. I thought of him as a hero.

I was as an adult when I was doing some study on the persecution of the Jews in Europe that I ran across some of Luther’s writing about Jews. I could not believe the venom, the hatred, the cruelty ...

Could this be the same man I had looked up to in my youth? How do we feel about our heroes? Are they people of their times? Do they have human frailties? Blind spots? Do we expect too much of them? Just because they are outstanding in some aspect of their lives, talents, or accomplishments should we expect everything about them to be above reproach? How do we react when we find that they are just like us? Have you ever experienced a hero falling from grace?”<sup>3</sup>

The best answers to this barrage of questions are found in the Bible. There we discover that with the exception of Jesus Christ, every hero of faith in the Bible had his times of failure as well.

- Noah got drunk.
- Abraham lied about his wife.
- Moses murdered a man.
- Samson lusted after women.
- David had an affair.
- Solomon allowed his foreign wives to lead him into idolatry.
- Elijah got scared and hid in a cave.
- Jonah refused to obey.
- Peter denied the Lord.
- Paul persecuted Christians.

The list could go on and on. In the same way, all human heroes of yesterday, today, and even in the coming days had or will have their areas of weakness.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.wondercafe.ca/discussion/religion-and-faith/heros-faith-feet-clay>

My intention is not to talk bad about the spiritual giants/heroes of the Christian faith, or to give you examples and excuses to go and sin likewise. But my point is this: The best among us are still imperfect people in need of God's grace.

Here is the bottom line—no part of your life is exempt from the effects of sin. As someone has said, “If sin were blue, we would be blue all over.” Part would be dark blue, part would be sky blue, part would be light blue, part would be navy blue, but every part would be blue in one shade or another.

Thus, what sinners need is forgiveness, not mere lectures on morality. They need a new life, not merely a new leaf. They need salvation, not merely behavioural modification.

What a sinner needs, Jesus Christ came to provide. When God gave His only Son to us, He gave NOT the very best one He had, but the only Perfect One He had.

But that means I am without excuse. Nothing will do but Jesus Christ only. As the old hymn says:

What can wash away my sin?  
Nothing but the Blood of Jesus.  
What can make me whole again?  
Nothing but the Blood of Jesus.

Third, since Jesus Christ has come, the worst can be saved.

Going to church in and of itself is not enough to keep us from sin. We never know what sin we might commit one day no matter how long we have been in church.

But the joyful news that we want to proclaim aloud today is that Jesus Christ came to save sinners. As Corrie Ten Boom (a Dutch woman who was tortured by the Germans in WW II for hiding Jews) once said, “There is no pit so deep that the love of God is not deeper still.”

While it's true that long-held patterns of behaviour may not change overnight, and while we all need time for spiritual growth, it's also true that your sins can be forgiven immediately. You may have come to church without Jesus Christ, but you don't have to leave here without Him. You may have come guilty, but you can go home forgiven. You may have come dirty, but you can go home clean. That's the true power of the Gospel.

God has more grace in His heart than you have sin in your life. Jesus Christ is a better Saviour than you are a sinner. The Gospel song “To God Be the Glory” contains this encouraging line:

The vilest offender who truly believes,  
That moment from Jesus a pardon receives.

If we understand our sin as an offense against the Almighty God, then we are all equally qualified as “the vilest offender”. When we believe in Jesus Christ, that very moment our sins are pardoned. Often times it’s hard to believe that.

I have had thoughts that I would rather die than have them spoken out loud. There are deeds I have done that I would never mention in public. But I am not alone in that. Who among us would dare to say, “Play back the script of my life UNEDITED; there are no skeletons in my cupboard?”

But I have Good News that does not originate with me—i.e. Jesus Christ came to seek and to save what was lost! He said so Himself. If that is true, then the worst among us can be saved. And these include you and me. We all struggle under varying measures of sin and guilt in our lives:

- Responsibilities left undone.
- Careless, cutting words we wish we could take back.
- Deliberate greed.
- Foolish choices made in haste.
- Shameful thoughts buried in the mind.
- Disgraceful acts that dishonour our own character.

But it is the Good News of the Gospel that no matter how bad your sins may be, you can be saved right now when Jesus Christ enters the picture.

## **Conclusion**

If you qualify as lost, then you are an excellent candidate for salvation. If you are a sinner, then know that Jesus Christ came seeking you. When you come to Jesus, you will find that He has already come for you.

If you have heard many times the Christmas story of God’s love in Jesus Christ, but have not once made a decision to come to Him, won’t you decide to come to Jesus Christ today?

If you have already received Jesus Christ at one time in your life, won’t you also come to Him today? You come not to receive salvation again. But you come to recommit your life afresh to Him:

- Recommit to live to please Him and to seek Him to enable you do so.

- Recommit to share the Gospel with people who need His salvation. Remember, the Gospel is only Good News when it is not too late for people to hear and respond. What you hear from the Lord through me today, share it with the lost while time is still with them and with you.

Let me close with the lyrics of this hymn written by Fanny Crosby:

Jesus is calling the weary to rest—  
Calling today, calling today,  
Bring Him your burden and you shall be blest;  
He will not turn you away.  
Jesus is waiting, oh, come to Him now—  
Waiting today, waiting today,  
Come with your sins, at His feet lowly bow;  
Come, and no longer delay.

Yes, Jesus Christ has come for you so that you can go to Him. Won't you come to Him today?