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PREFACE

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. John 1:14, 17

Christianity is Christ! It is not a system of philosophy or a collection of timeless eternal truths. Rather, it is the story of how God Himself invaded this fallen world two thousand years ago in the glorious Person of Jesus Christ. The eternal “Word” who “was God”¹ “became flesh, and dwelt among us”—speaking words that had never before been spoken² and doing deeds that had never before been done.³ In the presence of His unique divine glory—“glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth”—the apostles fell prostrate in awe and wonder. They then went forth proclaiming, not their own philosophies, but the glories of the One whom they had *seen and heard*: “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”⁴

With the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, such a light of revelation shone among men that all former revelations now seem dark by comparison. He is the “Sunrise from on high” who has “visited” us.⁵ He is the “true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.”⁶ He is God’s final word to mankind,⁷ “the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature.”⁸ He is “the image of the invisible God”⁹; to see Him is to see the Father.¹⁰ In Him “all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form.”¹¹

¹ John 1:1 ² John 7:46 ³ John 9:32; 15:24 ⁴ 1 John 1:1-3 ⁵ Luke 1:78

⁶ John 1:9 ⁷ Hebrews 1:1-2 ⁸ Hebrews 1:3 ⁹ Colossians 1:15 ¹⁰ John 14:9

¹¹ Colossians 2:9

In Him are hidden “all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”¹ He is the goal toward which all history moves.²

It is in the context of this all-surpassing glory of Christ that John wrote the words quoted above: “*The Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.*” John does not mean that there was no grace or truth in the Law of Moses; indeed, there was. But in comparison with the absolute divine “fulness”³ of grace and truth found in Jesus Christ, the grace and truth of the Old Covenant pale to insignificance. In the words of Paul, “For indeed what *had* glory, in this case has *no* glory on account of the glory that surpasses it.”⁴ Moses is to Christ as a candle is to the sun. It is this reality that we must ever bear in mind if we are to rightly understand the “law of Christ.”

Like Christianity itself, the law of Christ is *Christ*. It is not a system of rules for men to follow. It is not the setting forth of a code of wise behavior as in Confucianism or the teaching of a “Noble Eight-Fold Path” as in Buddhism. Rather, it is Christ Himself, in all the wonder of His perfect divine humanity, calling His disciples to *follow Him*⁵ and empowering them to do so by *His own resurrection life* “working within” them.⁶ The high calling of every Christian is nothing less than to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ”!⁷

This book, then, is an attempt to capture something of the unspeakable privilege of knowing and following Christ Jesus our Lord, while the very “life of Jesus” is being “manifested in our mortal flesh.”⁸ Its chapters explore what the Bible means when it describes Christians as those who “serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter,”⁹ and they seek to set forth the tremendous liberties and great responsibilities given to us as mature sons of God.

What it means to “love as Christ loved” is an ocean with depths that no Christian will ever fathom during this lifetime. This book can only attempt to provide a basic understanding of what the law of Christ is and to point believers to Christ’s resurrection

¹ Colossians 2:3 ² Ephesians 1:9-10; Colossians 1:15-18 ³ John 1:14, 16

⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:10 [Italics added for emphasis, here and throughout the book.] ⁵ Matthew 9:9 ⁶ Ephesians 3:20; see also Ephesians 1:19-20;

Philippians 3:10. ⁷ Romans 13:14 ⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:11 ⁹ Romans 7:6

life, which alone can empower them to “fulfill” it. Those who adhere closely to certain forms of either “Covenant Theology” or “Dispensationalism” or “New Covenant Theology” may find some aspects of the book to be disappointing. Nevertheless, it is hoped that all true believers will hear in its pages the voice of their Shepherd calling them to follow Him more closely.

To aid readers in understanding the flow of thought, the book has been divided into three sections: Part One deals with the unfolding of redemptive history from creation to the coming of Christ, Part Two with the meaning of the Christian’s freedom from the Law, and Part Three with the law of Christ itself. Throughout this book, many important Scriptures have been assigned to footnotes, and these are placed at the bottom of each page for easy reference. Several controversial issues are also considered in appendices, so as not to obscure unnecessarily the book’s central theme. Some will strongly disagree with the positions I have taken in this book. If you are among those, I can only plead with you *to study these appendices carefully with an open mind* before discounting the book entirely. In the end, it is the Bible itself that must govern our theology, not the creeds and confessions of men, however worthy and revered they may be.

As I have approached this subject, I have been aware again and again of my unworthiness to deal with such a topic. How can we even speak of “loving as Christ loved” without hanging our heads in shame at the selfishness and coldness we still so often find within ourselves? In light of this, one cannot help but echo the words of Paul: “Who is adequate for these things?”¹ How thankful we can be that though we are *not* “adequate in ourselves to consider *anything* as coming from ourselves,” yet “our adequacy *is* from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life!”²

*Lord, it is my chief complaint
That my love is weak and faint;
Yet I love Thee, and adore;
O for grace to love Thee more!*

William Cowper

¹2 Corinthians 2:16 ²2 Corinthians 3:5-6