

III. CHRIST AND REDEMPTION

1. We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, one with the Father from all eternity (John 1:1,2). In the course of time, he took a true and complete, yet sinless, human nature to himself (Galatians 4:4) when he was conceived as a holy child in the virgin Mary through a miracle of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35). God's angel testified, "What is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 1:20). Jesus Christ is unique, for in him the true God and a true human nature are inseparably united in one person, the holy God-man. He is called Immanuel, which means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).
2. We believe that Jesus at all times possessed the fullness of the Deity with all divine power, wisdom, and glory (Colossians 2:9). His divinity was evident when he performed miracles (John 2:11). But while he lived on earth, he took on the form of a servant, humbling himself by laying aside the continuous and full display and use of his divine characteristics. During this time he lived as a man among mankind, endured suffering, and humbled himself to the shameful death on the cross (Philippians 2:7,8). We believe that Christ descended into hell to proclaim his victory over Satan (1 Peter 3:18,19). We believe that he rose again from the grave with a glorified body, ascended, and is exalted on high to rule with power over the world, with grace in his church, and with glory in eternity (Philippians 2:9-11).
3. We believe that Jesus Christ, the God-man, was sent by the Father to redeem all people, that is, to buy them back from the guilt and punishment of sin. Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17) so that on the basis of his perfect obedience all people would be declared holy (Romans 5:18,19). He came to bear "the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6), ransoming all people by his sacrifice for sin on the altar of the cross (Matthew 20:28). We believe that he is the God-appointed substitute for all people. His righteousness, or perfect obedience, is accepted by the Father as our righteousness, his death for sin as our death for sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). We believe that his resurrection gives full assurance that God has accepted the payment he made for all (Romans 4:25).
4. We believe that God reconciled "the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them" (2 Corinthians 5:19). We believe that Jesus is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The mercy and grace of God are all-embracing; the reconciliation through Christ is universal; the forgiveness of sins has been gained as an accomplished fact for all people. Because of the substitutionary work of Christ, God has justified all people, that is, God has declared them to be not guilty. This forms the firm, objective basis for the sinner's assurance of salvation.
5. We reject any teaching that in any way limits Christ's work of atonement. We reject any teaching that says Christ paid the penalty only for the sins of some people. We reject any teaching that says Christ made only a partial payment for sins.
6. We reject the views that consider the Gospel accounts to be pious fiction developed by early Christians to express their ideas about Jesus Christ rather than a true account of what actually happened in history. We reject all attempts to make the historical accuracy of events in Christ's life--such as his virgin birth, his miracles, or his bodily resurrection--appear unimportant or even doubtful. We reject the attempts to stress a "present encounter with the living Christ" in such a way that Jesus' redemptive work recorded in Scripture loses its importance.

This is what Scripture teaches about Christ and redemption. This we believe, teach and confess.