

## These Things I Believe (Part I) (Dr. Charles Malik)

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**I am a Christian. I believe in God, the Creator from nothing of heaven and earth and of everything visible and invisible. This Creator-God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who is also identically the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a man, born in Bethlehem of Judea, born of a virgin whose name was Mary, a virgin who did not know a man. This man's name was Jesus. He lived for about thirty years in a little town in Galilee, called Nazareth, with his mother and a man called Joseph who was espoused to his mother and who remained faithful to both of them, though Mary remained ever-virgin. He was a carpenter.**



Then, at about the age of thirty, this Jesus of Nazareth, began to gather around him disciples. He taught them many things about themselves, about God, and above all about Himself. He also moved about with his disciples in those idyllic Galilean villages only about a hundred miles south of where I was born, villages not much different from the villages that I know perfectly to my own region. He moved about

teaching, preaching, provoking, challenging and doing many miracles. By miracles I mean such things as causing a man who was born blind to see exactly as you and I do, and raising the dead.....yes, the dead!!

He said wonderful things—things pure, powerful, deeply moving, and immediately convincing. And the strange fact about many of the things he said is that they convince you only because he said them. But the totality of what he said is such that there is nothing, nothing like it in any literature. There may be approximations to it, distant rumblings of it, as in some places in the Old Testament, or in some of the teachings of Zoroaster or the Buddha, or in some of the sayings of the Muslim Sufis who came a thousand years after him, or even in some things that Socrates or Plato and the Stoics said; but when you come to what he said, you find here's the thing, here's the original, here's what everybody else before him and after him was straining after and did not quite attain, so that all these others were imitations of him, intimations of him, reflections, more or less impure, of him, fallings away from him, yearnings for him. So what he said was uniquely wonderful. But what he did was also uniquely wonderful.

He chose fishermen, very simple, as his disciples, and he loved them to the end. He performed many miracles to which I have referred. But above all, he willingly and knowingly accepted death on the cross outside the wall of Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate. And nobody crucified him, nobody crucified him there except my fears and compromises and calculations and bigotries and sins—fears and compromises and sins that existed identically and in abundance in the hearts of those who cried «Crucify Him, crucify him,» to that I am in no wise better than they, so that if I chanced to be among them I would almost certainly have joined their chorus.

It was inveterate sin, then, sin which abounds in my heart, including my lust and my forgetfulness of God, that killed Jesus of Nazareth on the cross outside the wall of Jerusalem under Pontius Pilate. And if my heart is slightly better, and to the extent that it is better, it is so because he washed away sin on the cross through his blood, and because he arose from the dead on the third day. Lo, I meant to kill him, but I did not succeed; lo, he triumphed over my evil design; lo, he liveth now and sitteth gloriously on the right hand of God. I am cleansed from my sin, then, because he did not die, although I meant him to; or rather, because he actually and completely died exactly as I meant him to, but through the power of God he actually and completely rose from the dead on the third day; and because before his absolutely humiliating defeat of my intention—although for three days I thought I had triumphed—I am shattered, I bow my head in shame, I beg his forgiveness, and-this is what overpowers me—he forgives me. I say to him after his

resurrection: «Thou hast triumphed, I will not do it again; I will not hate thee again; I will not scheme against thee again; I will not love my pleasures and my self-will over thy will; I know better.» Do I really know better? Ah, that is the question? And if I do not know better, if I deny him again, he is faithful; he cannot deny himself. He keeps on forgiving me despite my sins, because that is his nature, and because he needs me no more after his triumph. And that is why, with Peter, I weep bitterly, and that is why I love him all the more.

I beg you not to be offended by the language I am using, language that is quite honorable and has been used for centuries. I am sure that you are above making fun of me when I speak of Jesus Christ sitting now at the right hand of God the Father. I am not speaking of this three-dimensional space where you speak of right and left, and above and belows, and in front and behind.. Ah, «sitteth at the right hand of God» is a wonderful phrase that has meaning only in the order of love and suffering and death. He who has loved much, and has suffered much, and daily faces his death, and has known Jesus Christ, understands perfectly what its meant by Jesus Christ rising from the dead on the third day and sitting right now at the right hand of God the Father. Whatever is the «ontological place» of God the Creator, Jesus Christ is exactly there; Jesus Christ is exactly the same mode of being as God the Creator. That is why we also use the phrase «God the Father.» Never was this wonderful phrase, «sitteth at the right hand of God,» meant except in this ontological sense, which arises wholly in the order of suffering, love, and death. I know this is how you take it, and this is how you will take everything else I shall say that might otherwise appear scandalous. In the perfect transparency of the Holy Spirt, who is the Spirit of Truth , everything is perfectly clear; and when we are together attuned in him, there can be no possibility of misunderstanding.

His words were wonderful; his acts, including his resurrection, were wonderful; but he himself is far more wonderful. He makes astounding claims about himself, claims that no German lighter criticism can possibly completely void or explain away; claims that I believe to be wholly true.

«You heard that it was said by them of old time....but I say unto you...»

«The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins.»

«....my Father, which is in heaven.»

«He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.»

«In this place is one greater than the temple.»

«For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.»

«Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.»

«Take eat, this is my body.»

«I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us whether you be the Christ, the Son of God.»

«All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.»

«All things are delivered to me by my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.»

«Had ye believed in Moses, ye would have believed in me for he wrote of me.»

«I am the bread of life.»

«I am the light of the world.»

«I am the door.»

«I am the good shepherd.»

«I am the true vine.»

«Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.»

«The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.»

«I am from above, I am not of this world.»

«I proceedeth forth and came from God.»

«I and my Father are one.»

«Ye believe in God, believe also in me.»

«All things that the Father hath are mine.»