



*Rejoicing in Christ*

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## Reveling in Jesus

Jesus Christ, God's perfect Son, is the Beloved of the Father, the Song of the angels, the Logic of creation, the great Mystery of godliness, the bottomless Spring of life, comfort and joy. We were made to find our satisfaction, our heart's rest, in him. Quite simply, this book will be about enjoying him, reveling in his all-sufficiency for us, and considering all that he is: how he reveals such an unexpectedly kind God, how he makes, defines—how he *is*—the good news, and how he not only gives shape to but *is himself* the shape of the Christian life.

Once upon a time a book like this would have been utterly run-of-the-mill. Among the old Puritans, for example, you can scarcely find a writer who did not write—or a preacher who did not preach—something called *The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, *Christ Set Forth*, *The Glory of Christ* or the like. Yet today, what sells? What puts the smile on the bookseller's face? The book that is about the reader. People want to read about themselves. There's nothing necessarily wrong in that, of course; but that is not primarily what life is about. "For to me, to live is Christ," said the apostle Paul. "What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil 1:21; 3:8). Startling words, all too easily dismissed as religious overexcitement. But Paul was not raving; he was speaking plainly the deepest wisdom: that life is found in Jesus Christ, the author and source of it, and if we know him rightly, we will find nothing so desirable, so delightful, as him.

It's not just our self-focus, though; we naturally gravitate, it seems, toward *anything* but Jesus—and Christians almost as much as anyone—whether it's "the Christian worldview," "grace," "the Bible" or "the gospel," as if they were things *in themselves* that could save us. Even "the cross" can get abstracted from Jesus, as if the wood had some power of its own. Other things, wonderful things, vital concepts, beautiful discoveries so easily edge *Jesus* aside. Precious theological concepts meant to describe *him* and *his* work get treated as things in their own right. He becomes just another brick in the wall. But the center, the cornerstone, the jewel in the crown of Christianity is not an idea, a system or a thing; it is not even "the gospel" as such. It is Jesus Christ.

He is not a mere topic, a subject we can pick out from a menu of options. Without him, our gospel or our system—however coherent, "grace-filled" or "Bible-based"—simply is not Christian. It will only be Christian to the extent that it is about *him*, and then what we make of him will govern what we mean by the word *gospel*. I'm going to dare to say, in fact, that most of our Christian problems and errors of thought come about precisely through forgetting or marginalizing Christ. That is, that despite all our apparent Christianness, we fail to build our lives and thoughts upon the Rock. . . .

This book, then, aims for something deeper than a new technique or a call to action: to consider Christ, that he might become more central for you, that you might know him better,

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# BOOK EXCERPT

**Michael Reeves** (PhD, King's College) is an author, theologian, historian and professor who teaches at Wales Evangelical School of Theology (WEST) and is the director of Union, a WEST initiative that puts the theological academy back in the local church context. He previously served as theological adviser for the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship in the United Kingdom where he oversaw the Theology Network, a theological resources website. He was also associate minister at All Souls Church, Langham Place. Reeves is the author of books such as *Delighting in the Trinity*, *The Unquenchable Flame*, *Discovering the Heart of the Reformation* and *The Good God*. He has also written numerous articles for publications including *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, *Themelios*, *Desiring God*, *Credo* and *Reformation 21*. He and his wife Bethan have two daughters.

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treasure him more and enter into his joy. That, happily, is just how we will most honor the Father: by sharing his own everlasting delight in his Son (Jn 5:23). It is also the secret of how to become like the Lord of love (2 Cor 3:18). And as we consider him, we will look at how he is our life: our righteousness, our holiness, our hope. . . .

I can't put it any better than the Scottish preacher Robert Murray M'Cheyne, who wrote to a friend with this advice:

Learn much of the Lord Jesus. For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ. He is altogether lovely. Such infinite majesty, and yet such meekness and grace, and all for sinners, even the chief. Live much in the smiles of God. Bask in His beams. Feel His all-seeing eye settled on you in love, and repose in His almighty arms. . . . Let your soul be filled with a heart-ravishing sense of the sweetness and excellency of Christ and all that is in Him.

Yes! That's what we're about now.

—Taken from the introduction

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