

What You Should Know About

Jesus Christ

by J. W. Jepson, D.Min.

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Chapter 1

THE MOST IMPORTANT MATTER

Suppose someone asked you, "What's the most important issue facing the world?" What would you answer? Peace? Hunger? AIDS? Justice? Freedom?

Certainly all of these and some others are issues of global importance. But none is the most important. Another matter far outweighs them all. At the same time it is vitally relevant to each one of them.

This one crucial issue confronts every one of us. It touches the core of our being. It determines the outcome of life itself. It is of primary importance to all else. Practically all of the human problems of the world can be traced back ultimately to ignorance or misunderstanding of this one supreme priority. On the other hand, it is the ultimate answer to all "people problems," personal and global.

What is this most important issue? It is *Jesus Christ*.

Now, some will dismiss the idea—and Jesus Christ—regarding it as simplistic and irrelevant. But others, who have considered the matter properly (or will do so seriously), will agree that the fundamental consideration is indeed Jesus Christ.

Why is Jesus Christ the most important consideration in life?

Because He is the Son of God (Matthew 16:16);

Because all things were created by Him and by Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:16, 17);

Because He is the only Savior (Acts 4:12);

Because the person who has Jesus Christ has life, but the person who does not have Jesus Christ does not have life (1 John 5:12).

Whether one believes it or not, it is so. What is affirmed in Scripture is confirmed in real life. So then, reason demands that we give urgent, honest, thorough attention to Jesus Christ.

The Bible urges believers, "Therefore, holy brothers, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess" (Hebrews 3:1 NIV).

That is exactly what we are going to do.

Chapter 2

THE SON OF GOD

We must understand clearly from the very outset that the Person we are considering is no mere mortal. He is the Son of God—"God the Son." He is not all there is to God; yet the fullness of God dwells and is revealed in Him (Colossians 2:9).

Jesus Christ is the Second Person in the eternal Godhead—the Trinity. The Jesus of history is the Christ of faith. This is the explicit and express declaration of the Father. At Jesus' baptism God announced dramatically from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17 KJV).

Later, Jesus took three of His disciples to a mountain, where He was transfigured before them. A bright cloud overshadowed them. From the cloud they heard again the voice of God the Father repeating the same declaration (Matthew 17:5).

Many years later the apostle John, who had been an eye and ear witness of this dramatic event, wrote, "This is the witness of God, which He has testified of His Son" (1 John 5:9). He goes on to say that if we do not believe the record that God gave of His Son, we make Him a liar.

Jesus Himself was very clear and emphatic about His deity. "If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). The word "he" was supplied by the translators. Jesus referred back to Exodus 3:15, where God appeared to Moses and announced Himself as "I AM." So Jesus was saying that if we do not believe that He is fully God, we will die in our sins.

So that no one would mistake His claim, He stated again, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM" (verse 58).

Jesus taught that He is One with the Father, not only in purpose but also in essence. He declared, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30). "The Father is in me, and I in Him" (verse 38). To His disciples He said, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves" (John 14:10, 11).

Now, who would dare make such a claim as this? Someone who is only an outstanding religious teacher, a good man but a mere mortal? Of course not. He would be either a mad egomaniac or an arch deceiver.

One cannot avoid the issue by asserting that Jesus did not say these things. That is only an evasion, an affront to the historical record, inadmissible on sound literary and historical principles. We must accept or reject the record, but we must not pick and choose among its components according to one's own subjective and speculative criteria. That will not stand up under careful, objective research.

Only God Himself can legitimately make the claims that credible eyewitnesses verify

that Jesus made. So then, if Jesus of Nazareth was insane, dismiss Him. If He was a hoax, denounce Him. But if He is God, as He claimed to be and as His resurrection proves Him to be, WORSHIP HIM!

Even demons recognized Christ's deity. As Jesus drove them out, many of them cried, "You are the Son of God!" (Matthew 8:29; Mark 3:11; Luke 4:41).

The prophet declared, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government will be upon His shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Peter confessed, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:16, 17).

The historical record consistently and repeatedly affirms that Jesus is God. John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

"Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen" (Romans 9:5).

"In Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

Jesus Christ, being God, purchased the Church with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Jesus Christ is God, who "was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

In Titus 2:13 it is written that believers are "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Because the definite article (the) applies to both "great God" and "Savior," both terms refer to Jesus Christ.

In the first three verses of Hebrews, chapter one, we read: "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

Because Jesus Christ is fully God, He is much higher than the angels. And so Hebrews 1:6 commands, "let all the angels of God worship Him."

All true believers have always acknowledged Jesus Christ as God and therefore have worshiped Him.

The wise men announced: "We have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:2). "And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him" (Verse 11).

As soon as Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, "then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Truly You are the Son of God'" (Matthew 14:33).

When "doubting" Thomas met the risen Jesus face-to-face, he exclaimed in reverent worship, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). The literal translation is "The Lord of me and the God of me."

On the morning of Christ's resurrection, an angel commanded the astonished women who had come to the tomb to go and announce the good news to His disciples. "And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, 'Rejoice!' [*Chairete* (Kai'rete)—Greetings, Hail]. And they came and held Him by the feet and worshiped Him" (Matthew 28:9).

Later, our risen Lord led His disciples out to Bethany, blessed them, and then ascended into Heaven. "And they worshiped Him" (Luke 24:50 - 52).

In Revelation 5:8 -10 the curtains of the future are parted and we see 24 elders, representing the true believers of all ages, falling down before Jesus in consummate worship for all eternity. They said, "You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth."

The Divine Qualities Of Jesus Christ.

Because Jesus Christ is fully God, He possesses totally all the qualities of God.

Jesus Christ is eternal. As the Second Person in the Holy Trinity, He has no beginning nor ending. Before coming to earth as a man, He existed forever with the Father. His "goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). In His high-priestly prayer to the Father, Jesus prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). Furthermore, Colossians 1:17 declares, "And He is before all things and in Him all things consist." Also, in verse 13 of the last chapter of the Bible, the Lord Jesus speaks from Heaven, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last." Yes, Jesus Christ is alive forevermore!

Jesus Christ is immutable. That is, He is changeless. Quoting Psalm 102, the inspired author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes concerning Jesus, "You are the same, and Your years will not fail" (Hebrews 1:12). Also, Hebrews 13:8 states emphatically, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Jesus Christ is omnipotent. That is, He is all-powerful. One of His names is "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6), a name of the LORD—Jehovah (Jeremiah 32:18). Jesus Christ is "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). Because the last book in the Bible is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ: (Revelation 1:1), Jesus Christ Himself is the One who declares from heaven: "I am ... the Almighty" (verse 8).

Jesus Christ is omniscient. That is, He is all-knowing and all-wise. "Jesus did not

commit Himself to them, because He knew all men" (John 2:24). Peter acknowledged, "Lord, You know all things" (John 21:17). Nothing takes our Lord by surprise. He knows and foreknows all things. He foretold His death and resurrection (Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; 22:37; John 18:4). He knew who would betray Him (John 6:64; 13:11). He knew that He would return to the Father (John 7:33; 13:1; 14:28; 16:5, 10, 28). He knows that He will come again (John 14:3), although while He was on earth He did not know the day and hour (Mark 13:32) because He had set aside temporarily the full functions of deity when He took upon Himself our humanity. That self-imposed restriction is now completely removed. Now in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3).

Jesus Christ is omnipresent. That is, He is everywhere present at once. He is not limited by space, distance, and location. He assures us, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). Also, just before His ascension to the Father, He assured His disciples (and all believers), "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Because He is omnipresent, Jesus is positionally in His glorified body at the right hand of the Father as our reigning High Priest, and at the same time by His Spirit living in and among us.

Jesus Christ is Lord. The angels announced to the shepherds, "For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

John the Baptist considered himself unworthy even to carry Jesus' shoes (Matthew 3:11). He also spoke of Christ's lordship when he said, "He who comes from heaven is above all" (John 3:31).

Jesus Himself affirmed His lordship. He said to His disciples, "You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am" (John 13:13). He declared Himself to be Lord of the sabbath (Luke 6:5).

In his sermon on the Day of Pentecost, Peter announced, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this same Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). "He is Lord of all" (Acts 10:36).

Paul takes up the same theme: "For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Romans 14:9).

The Holy Spirit always affirms the lordship of Jesus. "No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). Every spiritual utterance and every theology that is of God will confess the full deity and lordship of Jesus Christ. Any so-called "revelation" that downgrades and diminishes Jesus Christ is false and is to be rejected totally, even if it claims to have been given by an angel from heaven.

"But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8, 9).

Some day every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10, 11). Some will do so in faith and love;

others will do so in fear and shame. Which will it be for you? Romans 10:9 says,

"If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

This means more than merely saying it with your lips. It says "believe in your heart." Genuine confession of faith is the sincere and truthful declaration that a person has personally submitted his or her heart in faith to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Accept Him as Lord; confess Him as Lord; obey Him as Lord!

Chapter 3

THE SON OF MAN

The Bible clearly teaches the full deity of Jesus Christ. It also clearly teaches His full humanity. In Jesus of Nazareth, God became fully human while remaining fully God. God came in the flesh. This is called the incarnation. This act of God is a marvelous, divine mystery. The Second Person of the eternal Godhead lay as a tiny human baby in a manger, His divinely conceived humanity the product of the virgin's womb. Immanuel—God with us! Tremendous!

This does not mean that Jesus was half-god/half-man. Such a being would be nothing more than the fantasies of Greek mythology. Jesus Christ is at once both fully God and fully man. This joining of both the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ is called the hypostatic union of God and man. Jesus Christ is at once and in the same both the Son of God and the Son of Man.

His human origin was in the womb of Mary; His divine nature came from Heaven, where He exists eternally with the Father.

"He who comes from Heaven is above all," said John the Baptizer in reference to Christ (John 3:31). Jesus Himself stated categorically, "I have come down from Heaven" (John 6:38); "I am from above" (John 8:23); "I proceeded forth and came from God" (vs. 42). The inspired apostle writes, "The second Man is the Lord from Heaven" (1 Corinthians 15:47).

An error regarding either the deity or the humanity of Jesus, or both, is a common feature of cults. In fact, it can be said truthfully that the cults themselves are an attack on the real Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many of the definitive teachings in the Scriptures concerning Jesus Christ were given by the Holy Spirit during a time when the philosophical ideas of Gnosticism threatened to subvert the truth concerning Christ and thus destroy the gospel itself. Both Paul and John wrote in this historical milieu. So the precious truths concerning Christ that flowed from the pens of the inspired apostles were directed first against this incipient Gnosticism.

One of the major attacks of this philosophical thought system was on the true humanity of Jesus. Matter was looked upon as evil, leading some to deny that Jesus had a real physical body. But if Jesus did not have a real physical body, He did not really suffer and die in the flesh and rise again bodily. Thus we would have no Savior.

The same error survives today in the many mystical and metaphysical cults that deny the deity and/or humanity of Jesus Christ. Usually they can be detected by their "buzz words," for example: "religious science," "science of mind," "divine science." Stay away from them.

The Scriptures meet these errors straight on. Jesus Christ came in the flesh. This is the Bible's clear message.

"And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

"Forasmuch then as the children [believers] are partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14).

"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God (1 John 4:2, 3).

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John 7).

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. This fact is firmly established.

But suppose that you were a resident of Nazareth in Galilee long ago. You knew the little boy in the carpenter's shop. He looked very much like any other lad in town. Each Sabbath he was in the synagogue with his family. He seemed so completely human. Of course, he did seem to be precocious. And he was very serious-minded for his age. In time he grew up to be one of the town bachelors.

Suddenly one day he up and moved to Capernaum, a town on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The next thing you hear, this home-town boy is going around saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" He is teaching, and people are following him. You hear strange reports of miracles. Then you begin to hear the startling claims that he is making for himself: "Lord." "Master." "Son of God." His followers call him the Messiah, the one foretold through the centuries by the prophets, and he acknowledges the claim.

So, what do you think? Jesus of Nazareth. Your neighbor. The man down the street. Is He the Messiah? The Son of God? The Savior?

He demands that you believe on him. He says that you will appear before him at the judgment. He says that your eternal destiny depends on what you do with him and his word.

Just who is this man? What right does he have to make such shocking claims? Does he fulfill the ancient prophecies? If he is truly the promised Messiah, he must—he *will*—fulfill every one of them exactly. Does this Jesus of Nazareth do so? Let's see.

The Scriptures record that the Messiah will come from the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:10). Jesus is of the tribe of Judah.

Isaiah prophesied that He will be of the lineage of David (Isaiah 9:7; 11:1-5). Jesus was from the lineage of David (compare Matthew, Chapter 1, and Luke, Chapter 3).

Micah predicted that He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). Jesus was.

Now we are beginning to narrow it down.

In Daniel 9:24-27 we find an amazing prophecy. The first part of verse 25 reads: "From the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem to Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks." It is generally recognized that "weeks" here means weeks (sevens) of years.

Here is a definite prediction that there would be 483 years from the decree "to restore and build Jerusalem" to the Messiah. Let's see what happened. Circa 457 B.C. the Persian king Artaxerxes Longimanus issued a decree to Ezra the priest and scribe to lead a volunteer group of Jewish exiles to return to Jerusalem to re-establish the house of God and the laws of God (Ezra, Chapter 7). Later the royal decree was expanded and reaffirmed to Nehemiah, to go to Jerusalem and carry on the work of restoration. Add 483 years, and we arrive at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, circa A.D. 26!

There is more. Hosea 11:1 says that God's Son would be in Egypt. Joseph and Mary took Jesus there as a very young child (Matthew 2:14, 15).

Jeremiah 31:15 records the prediction of the massacre of the innocents. It happened in connection with the birth of Jesus (Matthew 2:16-18).

Isaiah 9:1 and 2 predicted the Galilean ministry of the coming Messiah. Matthew 4:12-16 reports how Jesus fulfilled this prophecy.

Zechariah 9:9 predicted the triumphal entry. Matthew 21:1-9 records its fulfillment. So, who is that riding on that colt? Jesus of Nazareth!

We come now to the crucifixion of Jesus. Let us see how many ancient prophecies were fulfilled on that one day.

He was betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9 — Mark 14:10).

He was sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12, 13 — Matthew 26:15).

The money was used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:13 — Matthew 26:6, 7).

Isaiah said that He will be silent before His accusers; that He will suffer for our sins; that He will be numbered with the transgressors; that He will intercede for the transgressors; and that He will be buried with the rich (Isaiah, Chapter 53). All these things happened to Jesus.

Psalm 22 predicted that He will cry, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" It says also that He will be mocked; that others will gamble for His clothes; and that His hands, feet, and side will be pierced. It all happened to Jesus the day of His crucifixion.

Isaiah 50:6 and 52:14 declare that He will be abused, disfigured, and spit on. It all happened that day to Jesus.

His relatives will stand far off on that fateful day (Psalm 38:11). They did (Luke 23:49).

None of His bones will be broken (Psalm 34:20). That was true of Jesus (John 19:33-36).

The mathematical odds are astronomical and therefore prohibitive that all of these things would happen to one person merely by chance.

In addition, we face the prophecies concerning the coming Messiah that involve natural impossibilities. For example, Isaiah 7:14 says that "God With Us" will be born of a virgin. Jesus was. Psalm 16:10 says that His soul will not be left in *Sheol* and that His flesh will not experience corruption. That is what happened to Jesus.

Psalm 16:10 also predicted His bodily resurrection. To this Jesus added His own predictions (Matthew 16:21; 20:19; 26:32; Mark 9:9; John 2:19; 10:17, 18). On the third day Jesus fulfilled all of these by rising bodily from the dead, a fact attested to by so many primary witnesses as to be established beyond any reasonable doubt by any objective criteria.

Also, His ascension is foretold in Psalm 68:18. After His resurrection, Jesus fulfilled this also (Luke 24:50, 51). He is now seated on the right hand of God the Father.

To what conclusion does all of this overwhelming evidence drive us? **Jesus Of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God, God in the flesh.**

Yes, there is a Man in the glory, the Man Christ Jesus!

Chapter 4

THE FULLNESS OF HIS NAME

Who is this divine Person, Son of God and Son of Man? Joseph was directed by the angel to call His name JESUS—Jehovah Savior—"for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

JESUS—the lovely, heaven-spoken name! How beautiful. What music to the humble soul. What sublime majesty. All Heaven bows to that name, and all earth shall do the same.

The fullness of His name is of such magnitude that much more than one English word of five letters is required to express it. For this reason many names, titles, and designations are ascribed to Him in the Scriptures. Each one reveals something about who He is and what He does. Each one focuses on a quality of His character, something inherent in His Person and/or position, a provision of His redemptive work, or a relationship to His Church and/or to the individual believer. In this verbal revelation of God in Jesus, human language is exhausted. Words are employed to their limit in expressing the fullness that is in Him.

As we explore the names, titles, and designations of our Lord in the inspired, written word, we must keep in mind that we are engaged in far more than a mere exercise in words. We are learning more of Him. We are coming into a fuller knowledge of Him. Our pursuit is for the full fellowship of all that He is. We want to know more about Him so that we can know Him better, grow in Him, and experience His fullness.

Unless we have this soul-thirst for Christ, our consideration of Him will be little or nothing more than a sterile academic inquiry. That is utterly unworthy of Him. He is the fullness of God revealed and made available to us. He is life itself. Let our quest for Him be a quest for life itself all of its dimensions and in its fullest measure.

Who is this Jesus? What are His life-giving and life-sustaining relationships to us?

He is God. He is "Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6). Referring to Jesus, the voice in the wilderness cried, "Prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3). "LORD" in this passage is "Yahweh" (Jehovah), the covenant name of God Almighty. This was fulfilled when John the Baptist came as the forerunner of Jesus.

"And the Word was God" is the witness of John 1:1. Thomas hailed Him as "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). He is "the eternally blessed God" (Romans 9:5), "Our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13), "The true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20).

He is the Alpha and the Omega; the Beginning and the End; the First and the Last (Revelation 1:17; 22:12, 13). He is the Ancient of Days (Daniel 7:9, 22); the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15); I AM (John 8:24, 58); Jehovah-tsidkenu—the Lord our Righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:15, 16). He is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24); Immanuel—

God with us (Isaiah 7:14; 8:8; Matthew 1:23). He is Lord of all (Acts 10:36).

Jesus Christ is the Creator. "All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). There is "one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through Him we live" (1 Corinthians 8:6). Ephesians 3:9 declares that God created all things by Jesus Christ. By Him God made the worlds (Hebrews 1:1, 2). Jesus is called Everlasting Father, that is, the Progenitor (Forefather) of the ages (Isaiah 9:6). He is the Beginning (Source) of the creation of God (Revelation 3:14). He is "the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15-17), by Whom the Father created all things. "Firstborn" signifies unique relationship with the Father, not derivation. All creation comes through Jesus Christ. He is the One through Whom God the Father mediated the act of creation.

Jesus Christ is the Word. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). He is the Word of Life (1 John 1:1), the living Word of God (Revelation 19:13).

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. "Son" means relationship, not origin. The Second Person in the Holy Trinity is not a derived being. The Father did not "generate" Him. He is eternally co-existent with the Father. Their relationship is essential and eternal. The relationship of Father and Son was a part of the eternal purpose of God. The Father's statement, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You" (Psalm 2:7), was spoken proleptically. The Father/Son relationship was fully actualized—made real in action and fact—in time and space history in the incarnation of The Second Person in the Holy Trinity in the womb of the virgin Mary for the purpose of accomplishing God's eternal purpose and plan of redemption. The angel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 2:35). He was and is eternally designated "The Son of God." (See Appendix B).

The confession of Peter is still God's "open secret" concerning Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). The statement of God, "Out of Egypt I called My son" (Hosea 11:1) was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth (Matthew 2:15).

Jesus is the Son of the Blessed (Mark 14:61); the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:32). Jesus is the "only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14), the "only begotten Son" (John 3:16). "Only begotten" (*monogenes*) does not mean origin but uniqueness. Jesus is the only-one-of-a-kind Son. He is the holy child (Acts 4:27), the Beloved Son (Matthew 3:17). As such, He is the Heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2).

Jesus is the Image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:5), "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3). In modern language it could be said that Jesus is the living photograph of God.

As we have seen, Jesus is the Son of Man (Matthew 8:20; Mark 8:38; Luke 18:8; John 1:51; Acts 7:56). He is called The Man (Acts 17:31; 1 Timothy 2:5). He is the Last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45), the Second Man (vs. 47). He has brought about the new humanity. He is the Seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15), the Seed of Abraham (Galatians 3:16). He is the Son of David (Matthew 1:1; 20:30), the Root and Offspring

of Jesse, David's father (Isaiah 11:1, 10; Revelation 22:16), the heavenly "David" (Jeremiah 30:9; Hosea 3:5).

Who is Jesus? He is the Christ of God (Luke 9:20), the Anointed (Psalm 2:2), the Messiah (Daniel 9:25, 26; John 1:41; 4:25, 26); the Chosen of God (Luke 23:35), the Elect of God (Isaiah 42:1). He is the righteous Branch (Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12), the Nazarene (Matthew 2:23).

Jesus is God's righteous Servant, prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 42:1; 53:11; Matthew 12:17-19).

He is the Consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25). He is the Covenant to the people and a Light of the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6). He is the Messenger of the covenant (Malachi 3:1).

He is the Prophet foretold to Moses. God said to Moses, "I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren..." (Deuteronomy 18:18). Peter declared that this Prophet is none other than Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22-26).

Jesus is the Light of the world. "That was the true Light which gives light to every man who comes into the world" (John 1:9). He announced, "I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the Light of life" (John 8:12). And Revelation 21:23 records, "The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light." He is the Bright and Morning Star (Numbers 24:17; 2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 2:28; 22:16). He is the Dayspring (that is, the sunrise, the eastern dawning (Luke 1:78). He is the Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2).

Jesus is the Holy One (Isaiah 41:14; Mark 1:24; Acts 3:14). He is the Just One (Acts 7:52).

He is the only Savior (Luke 2:11; Acts 4:12; 5:31). He is the Lamb of God (John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:9; Revelation 5:6). He is our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), an offering and a sacrifice (Ephesians 5:2). He is the Man of Sorrows (Isaiah 53:3). He is a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:6). He is our Propitiation, that is, the One who gained the favor of God toward us by satisfying on our behalf the moral requirements for reconciliation with God (Romans 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Therefore He is our Redeemer (Job 19:25; Isaiah 59:20), and the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9).

Jesus is the Firstbegotten from the dead (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:5), the Firstfruits of them who slept (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23), the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25).

He is the Surety (Guarantee) of the better covenant (Hebrews 7:22). He is the testator Who now lives to administer His own will (Hebrews 9:16, 17).

He is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Hebrews 3:1), the Author and Finisher of our faith (12:2), the Forerunner into the holiest of all (6:20). He is the ladder to Heaven (John 1:51), the Way (14:6), the Door (10:7).

Jesus is our living and eternal High Priest, faithfully interceding on our behalf before the Father (Hebrews 2:7; 3:1; 4:14, 15; 5:5; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 9:11; 10:21), a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, and the only Priest of the Melchizedek priesthood. He is the Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle (Hebrews 8:2), our only Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 8:6; 9:15; 12:24), our Advocate before God the Father, our Attorney in Heaven (1 John 2:1, 2).

Jesus is the Baptizer in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11). He is our great Physician (Matthew 9:12).

Jesus is the King (Psalm 2:6; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9 and Matthew 21:5; Matthew 25:34; Revelation 17:14; 19:16). He is the King of Israel (John 1:49), the King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2 and John 19:19). He is the Prince of the kings of the earth (Revelation 1:5), the Prince of life (Acts 3:15), the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6).

He is "Shiloh," peaceful and righteous Messiah of the tribe of Judah, the rightful ruler (Genesis 49:10; Ezekiel 21:27)

He is the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), our Horn of salvation (Luke 1:69), the Leader and Commander of the people (Isaiah 55:4), the Governor (Matthew 2:6) and Ruler in Israel (Micah 5:2). He is Master and Teacher (John 3:2; 13:13), Scepter (Numbers 24:17), the Lion of Judah (Revelation 5:5).

Jesus is the Cornerstone (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6). He is the Stone (Genesis 49:24 and Isaiah 28:16), a sure foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), the solid Rock (Isaiah 8:14; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8), either on Whom we build or over Whom we stumble, either on Whom we fall or Who will fall on us (Matthew 21:44; Luke 20:18).

Who is Jesus? He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls (1 Peter 2:25; Zechariah 13:7), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Great Shepherd (Hebrews 13:20), the Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

Jesus is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; 5:23; Colossians 1:8; 2:19).

He is the Bread of Life (John 6:35) and the Water of Life. He is the True Vine (John 15:1); a Comforter (Helper) (John 14:16); Wonderful, Counselor (Isaiah 9:6); a Refuge (Isaiah 32:2); our Deliverer (Romans 11:26), The Life (John 14:6), the Refiner and Purifier (Malachi 3:3).

He is the Lily of the valleys and the Rose of Sharon (Song of Solomon 2:1). He is our Bridegroom (Matthew 9:15; 25:1, 6; John 3:29; Revelation 21:2). He is the Pearl of Great Price (Matthew 13:46). He is our Hope (1 Timothy 1:1), the Hope of Israel (Acts 28:20), and the Hope of Glory (Colossians 1:27).

He is the Reaper of the harvest of the earth (Revelation 14:15), the righteous Judge (Isaiah 2:4; Acts 10:42; James 5:9).

Who is Jesus? He is the Desire of All Nations (Haggai 2:7). He is our "wisdom from God—and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). He

is altogether lovely, our beloved and friend (Song of Solomon 5:16). He is KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS (Revelation 19:16)!

Chapter 5

"LEARN FROM ME"*

In Romans 8:29 the Bible announces God's grand design of the ages for believers. It is "to be conformed to the image of His Son."

Jesus said, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me" (Matthew 11:29). Jesus is the perfect image of the perfect character of God. All virtues display their perfection in Him. So then, if we are to be conformed to His image, if we are to grow and mature in virtue, if the moral character of God is to be developed in us, we must learn from Jesus—learn *from* Him and learn *Him*. Jesus Christ is both the teacher and the curriculum. So, to learn *from* Him, we must focus our mind *on* Him.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 we read, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord."

It has been well said that as believers look into the word of God, the Spirit of God changes us into the image of the Son of God.

So, what do we learn from Jesus? What are the qualities of His character that we learn from Him and about Him as we learn Him Himself? Let us look intently at them.

SINLESS.

Jesus of Nazareth never committed a sin. He is holy. His obedience to the Father is perfect. He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). The apostle Peter, who was with Jesus almost constantly for three years, testified that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53:9—He "committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth" (1 Peter 2:22).

Jesus always obeyed the Father (John 14:31; Romans 5:19; Hebrews 5:8), even to death on the cross (Philippians 2:8).

Romans 8:3 says that Jesus "condemned sin in the flesh." The phrase, "in the flesh," does not refer to "sin," but to "condemned." Jesus condemned sin, and the condemnation of sin took place in the flesh of Jesus. That is, in the flesh as a human being, Jesus "was in all points tempted as we are"; yet He fully overcame temptation and thus exposed sin as totally inexcusable. He did so as the Son of Man, relying on the same divine resources that are available to everyone by God's grace through faith. Sin is not unavoidable; it is not necessary. It is voluntary and therefore inexcusable. No one can plead inability as an excuse. Man's failure to overcome sin is the direct result of his voluntary surrender to temptation. Jesus never surrendered to temptation; neither may we. "My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

* For an expanded exploration, see [Learning In The School Of Christ](#), by J. W. Jepson

We are to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin (Romans 6:11). Jesus said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love" (John 15:10).

Jesus became our perfect Sacrifice for sin. "He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5). He could bear our sins because He had no sins of His own. The Father "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus Christ "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Hebrews 9:14). We are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19).

Christ's perfect obedience has resulted in His exaltation. "You have loved righteousness, and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions" (Hebrews 1:9, quoting Psalm 45:6, 7). We note that these words were spoken by God the Father to the Son as God also.

Our High Priest is "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:26).

We, too, are required to be holy, to share His victory over sin. We do this, not by our own self-effort but by faith. "For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God" (1 John 5:4, 5). Faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

LOVING.

Jesus revealed the character of God. God's character is summed up in one word—LOVE. The qualities of Christ's character are the qualities of God's love. God's love is fully revealed in Him.

Jesus displayed the compassion of God. Compassion is love's commitment to relieve and heal the hurts of the suffering and the miserable. It is usually accompanied by feelings of pity, but it is more than mere feelings. It is an intelligent commitment of the will.

"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them because they were weary [harassed] and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

"And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick" (Matthew 14:14).

He said to His disciples, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they have now continued with Me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I do not want to send them away hungry, lest they faint in the way" (Matthew 15:32).

One day Jesus was approached by a leper, who begged Him to heal him. "And Jesus, moved with compassion, put out His hand and touched him, and said to him, 'I am willing; be cleansed'" (Mark 1:41).

When two blind men at Jericho cried out to Jesus for healing mercy, the Master "had compassion and touched their eyes. And immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him" (Matthew 20:34).

Near the city of Nain, Jesus met a funeral procession. A young man was being carried out, the only son of his widowed mother. Her tears of grief were flowing. "When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep" (Luke 7:13). Then He raised her son to life and restored him to her.

Yes, our Lord's compassion is more than a feeling. It is a genuine commitment of love that produces action as well as feeling.

One time a rich young ruler came to Jesus with an urgent question about eternal life. "Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him" (Mark 10:21). Jesus loved him enough to tell him the truth, even though the young man would reject it and walk away sad.

At the tomb of Lazarus, "Jesus wept. Then the Jews said, 'See how He loved him!'" (John 11:35, 36).

The tenderness of our Lord's love was openly displayed in His actions toward children. One of the sweetest prophecies concerning Christ is recorded in Isaiah 40:11—"He will feed His flock like a shepherd: He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young."

Often Jesus took the little children up in His arms and blessed them. He loved them; and they loved Him, too. And that same relationship continues today between the trusting child and its Savior.

Our relationship with children is one way to tell whether or not we are becoming like Christ. If children do not like to be around us, we need to get alone with Jesus!

Christ's love toward us is a redeeming love. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end" (John 13:1). "To the end" means to the fullest extent, the highest degree. As one could put it, He loved them "*to the max.*"

Paul wrote to the Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ, it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Galatians 2:20). Christ's redeeming love toward him was the dynamic behind Paul's Christ-centered and Christ-energized life.

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us" (1 John 3:16). Jesus laid down His life for us. This is how we came to know love. It is how we know what love really is. The cross is the true definition, the true standard, of love.

How immeasurably great is that love! It is all-sufficient, all-conquering, all-prevailing. Its triumph is proclaimed from the pages of Holy Scripture.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, 'For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.' [Psalm 44:22]. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 8:35-39).

Christ's love for us is the basis for His "new command." "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). "As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; continue in My love" (John 15:9). Verse 12 says, "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

To love one another as Christ loves us means to treat one another only as Christ would treat us. It means to love one another with the same devotion, the same commitment, that motivated Him to go to the cross for us. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11).

HUMBLE

Our Lord was "lowly in heart" (Matthew 11:29).

God appeals to us by His own moral qualities. And one of His moral qualities is humility. Psalm 113:6 says that God humbles Himself to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth.

How beautiful! And how entirely above the attributes of the imaginary "gods" that mortals create in their own image! What finite mind would possibly construct a deity whose qualities would include perfect humility, meekness, and condescension? Such is too high, too incomprehensible for the ego-centric mind. Man has always built his deities out of attributes that are contrary to the self-revealed qualities of the only true and living God.

God is perfectly humble, meek, and condescending, just as He is perfect in every moral quality, and His perfect humility, meekness, and condescension were revealed in Jesus Christ. We learn from Him by what He said. We learn from Him also by what He did.

Condescension is the willingness of one who is higher in being, position, and authority to reach down to the level of those who are lower for the purpose of securing their good. Therefore, because God is infinitely high in His being, position, and authority, for Him to save us was an expression of infinite condescension on His part.

Think of how absolute was His condescension in Jesus Christ! He was born in a lowly stable; He had not where to lay His head; He ate with publicans and sinners; He

reached to the outcasts of society with His redeeming grace; He rode into Jerusalem on a donkey's colt; He took a slave's position and washed His disciples' feet. Finally, He suffered the horrible abuse and humiliation of crucifixion so that He might save us. This is condescension beyond human comprehension!

Humility is not self-hate or self-rejection. It is the self-forgetfulness that love produces. True condescension is self-abandon in the cause of rescuing the lost and lifting the fallen.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Christ's humility is demonstrated in His meekness. Meekness is not weakness. Meekness has been defined as "strength under discipline." It is seen in forbearance under provocations.

Now, who has suffered more provocations than God has? Who is higher in being, position, and authority? To disregard Him, to withhold what is due Him, to insult Him, to abuse His name, is an offense and a provocation immeasurably greater than could possibly be committed against any earthly sovereign. And yet He blesses those who abuse Him. He causes His sun to shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. How awesome is the forbearance of God under the massive abuse and provocation that He suffers from sinners!

And where do we see it displayed most fully? In our Lord Jesus Christ!

"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Even at His arrest, He said to impulsive Peter, "Put your sword in its place" (Matthew 26:52). Peter testified: "Who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

In Philippians 2:5 - 11, God admonishes us through the apostle Paul, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God [equality with God something to be grasped and held on to], but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on the earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Paul wrote, "I, Paul, myself am pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:1).

Remember, God appeals to us by His own moral qualities, personally revealed in Jesus Christ. Let us learn from Him.

WISE

We also learn wisdom from Jesus Christ. Knowledge is having the facts; understanding is knowing what the facts mean; wisdom is knowing what to do with the facts. Wisdom is knowing what to do with knowledge in the light of what is truly valuable, truly important.

Certainly we see this priceless virtue perfected in Jesus Christ. Even as a child, He "grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him" (Luke 2:40). At the age of twelve He astonished all who heard Him conversing with the teachers of the law. So, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men" (verse 52).

During His earthly ministry as an adult, He came into His own country and taught the people in the local synagogue. "They were astonished and said, 'Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works?'" (Matthew 13:54).

We know. It was from the Father.

All children and young people should follow the example of Jesus by eagerly pursuing true wisdom as early in life as possible. Yes, every child is entitled to a normal childhood, one free from the cares and pressures of the adult world. It is equally true that every child and young person should develop the habit of sound, sensible thinking—and the sooner the better. Instead of focusing on trivia, nonsense, and unwholesome fads, every young person should determine as early in life as possible to get a firm grasp on the things that are truly valuable and important, to understand them thoroughly, and to conduct his or her life accordingly. Even young heads on young shoulders can pursue wisdom. As children and teenagers, it is important to "incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding" (Proverbs 2:2).

To discover the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, dig into the Bible. One good place is the book of Proverbs, the "get smart" book.

Also, wisdom is embodied and personified in our Lord Jesus Christ, because in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Colossians 2:3). Receive Christ. Study Christ. Learn from Christ. Live Christ.

"We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumblingblock and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:23, 24).

Verse thirty also declares, "But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

Every foolish thing that we do, we do because we fail to come to the Bible and take a good look at Jesus Christ, our wisdom. Likewise, whenever we come to the Bible, learn of Him, and proceed accordingly, we act wisely.

Every choice contrary to Jesus Christ is contrary to wisdom. The choice that conforms to Christ conforms to wisdom. To choose wisely and to live wisely, we must bring all our values, attitudes, and behavior into conformity with Him. He is our wisdom.

FAITHFUL

Faithfulness is another virtue that we see perfected in our Lord Jesus Christ. He is "the faithful witness" (Revelation 1:5). He "was faithful to Him Who appointed Him" (Hebrews 3:2).

His faithfulness as our High Priest is the basis of our confidence, our assurance of forgiveness when we repent and place our confidence in Him for mercy.

"For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest" (Hebrews 2:17 NIV).

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

If we are ever tempted to say, "Why should God forgive me again, after I have failed Him so many times?" we must remember the answer: He is faithful. One of His names is Faithful.

On the island of Patmos the apostle John saw a glorious revelation of the future return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is how he describes the beginning of the vision: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True" (Revelation 19:11).

His faithfulness to us is the dynamic, the motivating force, behind our faithfulness to Him. Even if we do not believe, He is faithful. He cannot—He will not—deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). Here again, God in Christ appeals to us by His own moral qualities. He is faithful to His purpose establish faithfulness in us.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24).

"But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one" (2 Thessalonians 3:3).

"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering; for He who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23).

PRAYERFUL

Jesus maintained a perfect relationship with God the Father. Our Lord nourished this close communion by prayer. His prayer life is the model for all believers.

When the demands on His time, attention, and energies were the heaviest, He

prayed more, not less. Mark 1:35 records what must have been a frequent item on our Lord's schedule. "Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed into a solitary place; and there He prayed."

Sometimes, when facing particularly demanding challenges (such as choosing the apostles), He spent whole nights in prayer. So we read in Luke 6:12. "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

On another occasion, "He made His disciples get into the boat and go to the other side to Bethsaida, while He sent the multitude away. And when He had sent them away, He departed into the mountain to pray. Now when evening came, the boat was in the middle of the sea; and He was alone on the land. Then He saw them straining at rowing, for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them, walking on the sea, and would have passed them by" (Mark 6:45-48).

The "fourth watch of the night" was between 3:00 am. and 6:00 am. Most likely, the night had been spent in prayer.

In the seventeenth chapter of John, the Holy Spirit draws back the curtain and permits us to enter the holy place of Jesus' prayer life, there to listen in reverence to our Lord's magnificent high-priestly prayer on our behalf. The profound depth of that sublime prayer never loses its power to awe, encourage, and inspire us.

The intensity of Christ's prayer life is revealed at Gethsemane. Again, the Holy Spirit allows us to witness a scene most sacred. Beneath the olive trees our Lord prayed with such utmost intensity of soul that "His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44). Such was the agony of His soul.

The writer of the Epistle To The Hebrews testified to the intensity of Christ's intercessory praying. "During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the One who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission" (Hebrews 5:7 NIV).

So He taught us to keep spiritually awake and prayerful. "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke 21:36).

He gave us a pattern of priorities in what is commonly called "The Lord's Prayer." It is recorded in Matthew 6:19-36 and Luke 11:2-4.

If the Lord Jesus Christ, the very Son of God, need to pray, certainly we do!

ZEALOUS

There was nothing bland and colorless about Jesus. He had a dynamic personality. We need to dismiss the notion that He was a passive, unemotional person. Our Lord had tremendous drive. But His was not merely a passing surface enthusiasm. He was moved by deep, constant imperatives. His love mobilized His full energies.

Jesus certainly was not lazy. His world-redeeming love fired Him with holy zeal.

"I must preach the gospel to other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).

"I must work the works of Him Who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day" (Matthew 16:21).

I must. I must. I MUST! These are the driving imperatives of divine love.

On one occasion Jesus told His disciples, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:50).

His yearning to accomplish our redemption was so intense it was like an inner pain that would not go away until the completion of His sufferings on the cross.

Jesus Christ was never indifferent. Twice the outrage that was going on in His Father's house moved Him to take strong action. After He cleaned up the temple the first time, "His disciples remembered that it was written, 'The zeal of Your house has eaten me up'" (John 2:17; from Psalm 69:9).

John 11:33 and 38 record that at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus "groaned." That word is too mild. The original Greek word here (*embrimaoma*) was used to describe the snorting of a horse. Here it was employed to describe our Lord's deep indignation at death.

"Take that stone away from there!"

"Lazarus! Out, here!"

The divine authority of Jesus Christ was exercised with driving zeal.

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

In Acts 10:38 Peter declared that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.").

Jesus put everything into the kingdom of God, and He calls for the same kind of commitment from us.

When Jesus chose His disciples, He did not go where lazy loafers gathered to waste their time in idle talk. Instead, He called people like hard-working fishermen along the Sea of Galilee. Jesus chose busy people and fired them with white-hot zeal for the kingdom!

Oh, yes, He had to get some of them under control. There was impetuous Peter, and also the "sons of thunder." At times they argued about who would be the first in the kingdom. Yes, they were a lively bunch. But one thing for sure—there were no dead-beats among them!

We see the same spirit in the apostle Paul. He wrote in his Epistle to the Romans, "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11 NIV). And Paul lived what he taught.

How can anyone who claims to have the love of God not be filled with the holy zeal of Christ? We are workers together with God, pursuing the same goals by the same means. Let Zion awake and throw off her slumber, lest she hear the indictment handed down against the Laodicean church: "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth" (Revelation 3:15, 16).

JOYFUL

Jesus is called the Man of Sorrows. And so He was. But we must dismiss the notion that Jesus had a sad and somber attitude. The assertion that Jesus never smiled has no basis in the Gospels.

Jesus was serious. At the same time, He was full of joy. Little children loved to be around Him. That in itself is clear evidence that Jesus had a pleasant, magnetic personality. Little children are not attracted to a "sourpuss."

Jesus spoke of His joy. He said, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11). If Jesus had not been a joyful person, those words would have meant nothing to the disciples.

He mentions His joy in His high-priestly prayer to the Father, just before His crucifixion. "These things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13).

Jesus looked beyond the agony of Calvary to the joy that awaited Him. We read in Hebrews 12:2, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Jesus had deep inner joy. He lived a joyful life. He brought us joy—great joy- full joy—abundant joy! We find joy in Him, and we learn joy from Him. Certainly, "the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Romans 14:17).

Our Lord invites us: "Learn from Me."

Chapter 6

THE DIVINE MISSION OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ came to planet Earth on a unique mission, a divine mission. That mission was no after-thought, no stop-gap "Plan B" to be activated only if some "Plan A" failed. The mission of Jesus Christ was God's "Plan A." It is God's master purpose from all eternity to all eternity.

Jesus Christ came to redeem us. He fulfilled that mission on the cross and at His resurrection.

The broader definition of His earthly mission includes also the full scope of His earthly ministry. That earthly ministry laid the foundation for His great redemptive act, and it established a revelatory context for that redemptive act so that we would understand its full nature.

We can think of the earthly ministry of Jesus as a tripod. At the top is His redemptive act. The three "legs" of the tripod are named in Matthew 4:23—"Now Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people."

Teaching, preaching, healing—those were the main features of our Lord's ministry while He was here in the flesh.

We read in Mark 6:34, "And Jesus, when He came out, saw a great multitude and was moved with compassion for them, because they were like sheep not having a shepherd; so He began to teach them many things." Matthew 7:29 says, "He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Jesus delivered to us the words of the Father. What are written in the gospels are not the philosophy and opinions of a radical rabbi from Galilee. They are the words of God spoken to us by His Son.

Jesus Himself made that very clear. "He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him" (John 8:26). "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a commandment, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak" (John 12:49, 50). "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:10). "The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's, Who sent Me" (John 14:24).

In His great high-priestly prayer, Jesus reported to the Father, "I have given to them the words which You have given Me" (John 17:8).

Jesus Christ is the Truth, and everywhere He went He spoke the truth. What He taught are God's instructions to us for right living. If we listen and obey, we will build our lives and our eternal future on the solid rock; if we disregard them, we build on shifting

sand (Matthew 7:24-27).

Success or failure in life depends on what we do with the words of Jesus.

Jesus was the Master Preacher as well as the Master Teacher. He proclaimed the truth in preaching and explained the truth in teaching. In teaching He spread the truth out before us; in preaching He "honed" it to a fine point and drove it "home" in penetrating power.

At the very start of His earthly ministry, "Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17).

In teaching, there is a body of truth to be deposited. In preaching there is a message to be delivered with an urgency to proclaim it.

We sense that urgency in our Lord Jesus Christ. "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent" (Luke 4:43).

Another part of Jesus' mission was to fulfill the law of Moses. He said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). That is why believers are no longer under the Mosaic jurisprudence.

Jesus came also to heal and to bless. Early in His ministry, Jesus stood up in His home synagogue at Nazareth and read these words from the prophecy of Isaiah "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the LORD" (Luke 4:18, 19, from Isaiah 61:1-3).

What a mission! What an anointing! Jesus came to make people completely whole—spirit, soul, and body—by the power of God! He was—and still is—the perfect revelation of Him Who is "the LORD who heals you" (Exodus 15:26).

One cannot read the gospels and be unaware of the healing ministry of Jesus. It is an essential component of the gospel narrative.

Peter said to Cornelius and his household, "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ—He is Lord of all—that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him" (Acts 10:36 - 38).

Everywhere He went, Jesus destroyed the works of Satan, the results of sin, and the ravages of sickness and disease. He cleansed the lepers; opened the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, and the mouths of the mute. The crippled walked and the maimed were made whole. Infections died and fevers broke. Demons fled. The dead were raised to life again.

Jesus hated death, and He delighted in breaking up funerals. Even at His arrest,

the Master took time to restore the severed ear of Malchus. His word brought life. His touch brought healing and blessing. His presence brought joy and happiness. So it continues to be today!

Above all this, His main mission was to save us from our sins. The angel said to Joseph, "You shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Jesus Himself made His mission crystal clear. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:17). "I came not to judge the world but to save the world" (John 12:47).

Jesus encompassed it all when He said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

That abundant, full, happy, satisfying life that you have been longing for is yours right now in Jesus Christ. Come to Him. Surrender to Him. Trust Him.

The apostle Paul, a man who at one time had been a self-righteous but miserable, guilt-ridden sinner, wrote out of the fullness of his heart, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief" (1 Timothy 1:15).

Another apostle wrote, "And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him there is no sin" (1 John 3:5). "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (verse 8). "And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world" (1 John 4:14).

Although Jesus made it clear that He did not come into the world to condemn the world, but to save it (because it was condemned already), He did come to call people to a decision. That decision would separate people into two basic kinds: those who accept Him, and those who reject Him.

Jesus and His gospel create an issue, a crisis. No one can be neutral about Jesus Christ. Personal response to Jesus Christ divides humanity into two camps. What we do with Him determines our destiny. The choices bring opposite results. Receiving Him means light, peace, and life. Rejecting Him means darkness, strife, and death.

Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind" (John 9:39).

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34).

"I am come to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" (Luke 12:49).

It has been said that if half of the people in the world were genuinely converted to Jesus Christ, the other half would get fighting mad. That is true. It happens in families. Many a spouse has raved, "If you don't give up that blankety-blank religion, I'm going to leave you!"

Yes, often there is a price to pay to follow Jesus Christ, at times a severe price including life itself. Nevertheless, it is well worth it—*He* is worth it, and far more.

Also, Jesus Christ came to be King. "Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are you a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a King. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice'" (John 18:37).

Instead of crowning Him, they crucified Him. But He is still King, and someday all will acknowledge Him to be Who He really is. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10, 11).

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Chapter 7

"IT IS FINISHED!"

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ have been likened to a north pole and a south pole, creating an axis around which all redemptive truth revolves.

In 1 Corinthians 15:3, 4 Paul defines the gospel. "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures."

The fact of sin needs no proof. Why attempt to prove the obvious? A drowning man needs no proof of the existence of water. He is surrounded by it, and it is fast choking the life out of him. So it is with sin. It is everywhere, and billions of people are drowning in it.

If a person sins only three sins a day (and some people sin three sins in less than three minutes!), at the end of fifty years of sinning there would be against that person's record in the court of Heaven no fewer than 54,786 sins!

Let us suppose that each person on earth who is morally responsible were assigned a page. Suppose that on that page were recorded that person's sins for one day. To record the sins of the world for one single day would require a library shelf over one hundred miles long!

Now, that is counting only individual acts of sin, without taking into account the real essence of sin—the continuous, on-going, uninterrupted, twenty-four-hours-a-day posture of the will in its commitment to self-gratification and its resistance to God and rejection of Jesus Christ. This sinful, self-willed set of the heart breeds the outward acts of sin that swarm throughout human society like a plague of killer bees.

Who can truthfully say that he or she has never sinned? Who can stand before a holy God and demand His favor on the ground of justice? Who can claim a right standing before Him on the basis of his or her own merits?

None! All have sinned (Romans 3:23), and this fact alone completely cuts the ground from under all self-righteousness.

We have all sinned, and the soul that sins shall die (Ezekiel 18:4). The broken law demands the penalty. Now, nothing is nearly as destructive as sin. The universe must be protected against it at all costs. The moral law, supported by the most horrific penalty possible, stands as the universal bulwark against sin.

Yes, God has a world of guilty sinners on His hands; and as the moral Governor of the universe, it is His obligation to uphold moral law and moral order. *That* means the execution of the penalty on those who have broken the moral law.

No, God is not looking forward to judgment day with any delight. The judgment of the world is a heart-breaking job that God has to do because it *has* to be done and He

alone is qualified to do it.

Also, the Lord is "not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God wants to forgive, not to punish.

But how can God exercise mercy safely? The exercise of mercy—forgiving sin—is the most dangerous thing that God could do. It means setting aside the penalty for someone who has broken the moral law. The most horrific penalty possible has not prevented people from sinning; and now should God remove even that deterrent? How can He do so for even one person without acting in reckless disregard for the very moral order on which the well-being of the entire universe depends?

How valuable are the vital interests that the moral law protects? Look at the penalty.

How serious is the Lawgiver in His commitment to protect those vital interests through the administration of moral law? Look at the penalty.

How great is the guilt incurred by the violation of the great moral law? Look at the penalty.

How do these principles apply to sin and to how the moral government of God deals with sin? LOOK AT THE PENALTY!

It must be clear by now that if God is going to forgive sin—that is, if He is going to remove the penalty for someone who has sinned—something must be put in the place of the penalty that will do what the penalty is intended to do, with at least as much effectiveness as the penalty itself. It must carry the same message as the penalty—yes, an even stronger message than the penalty. It must say to all that mercy is not to be misunderstood as laxity.

It must have the power to deter sin at least as effectively as the penalty it replaces.

The only answer is a qualified substitute. Someone who is innocent must die in the place of the guilty, satisfying public justice and demonstrating to all (especially to the contrite offender) that in the exercise of mercy the integrity of moral law is in no way being compromised. Mercy is free, but it is not cheap. It cost the innocent substitute everything.

Now, how valuable are the vital interests that the moral law protects? Look at the substitute.

How serious is the Lawgiver in His commitment to protect the vital interests of the universe by upholding the integrity of moral law? Look at the suffering substitute.

How great is the guilt of sin? Look at the suffering substitute.

How great is the commitment of the Lawgiver to provide a way to forgive sin without lessening respect for moral law, without violating His holiness and otherwise doing

immeasurable harm? How great is His love and mercy? LOOK AT THE SUFFERING SUBSTITUTE!

If the repentant offender ever thought that his or her sins were not so serious after all, that God is less than sincere in His pronouncements against evil, that the magnitude of God's mercy means that He is not very concerned about sin, all he or she has to do is to look at the suffering, dying substitute for a correct view of the matter. He looks and sees his substitute bearing his guilt and dying in agony and blood, and immediately he realizes (or should realize): "*that* suffering and death is because of *my* sins; it cost the substitute everything so I could be forgiven."

The blood sacrifice keeps all human pride and flippancy out of the great act of mercy.

The only way that sinful man can be reconciled to a holy God is by a blood sacrifice. The innocent must die in the place of the guilty. God kept this fact before ancient Israel by building into the Mosaic Law an elaborate system of required animal sacrifices. There were morning sacrifices and evening sacrifices, sin offerings, burnt offerings, peace offerings. God was being very clear that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Hebrews 9:22).

But why is the blood of the innocent sacrifice so essential? We find the answer in Leviticus 17:11. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul."

Yet, we also read, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4).

What! All those animal sacrifices on Israel's altars never took away one sin?

That is correct. They were only a temporary covering for sin, pointing forward to the one great Sacrifice that would totally and permanently remove sin.

But why were those animal sacrifices not sufficient?

The answer is quite simple: the sufferings and death of animals are not an effective preventive of sin; therefore they cannot ultimately substitute for the penalty. Animal sacrifices do not convey the real guilt of sin and the seriousness of the penalty, much less what an effective substitute must demonstrate. In other words, seeing a lamb or a bullock suffering, bleeding and dying for our sins does not awaken in us the realization of the seriousness and guilt of sin, the necessity of repentance, and the greatness of the love and mercy of God. It does not break our hearts, turn us against sin, and bring us to God.

Also, it does not satisfy the just demands of the broken moral law. Such sufferings and sacrifices are not sufficient to prevent mercy from being perceived as only a wink at sin.

Animals are on a level far below human beings. They are not moral agents. But we are. We sinned. We went against our intelligence. We violated reason. We knowingly placed petty self-gratification above the interests of God and of others. We are responsible and accountable. Our conscience sternly condemns us.

We were created in the image of God, and we abused those God-given moral powers and natural abilities. We are answerable to God Himself, and no brute beast can answer for us.

Who, then, can make the required sacrifice? Who can be our Substitute? Who can take our place, suffer and die under our sins, and satisfy the demands of the broken moral law? Who can make a substitutionary sacrifice of such magnitude and influence that, once it is clearly perceived and understood, will do what even the penalty itself has not done?

Shall a mere mortal do it? No, because "all have sinned" (Romans 3:23). We can die for our own sins, but our sins have disqualified us from dying for another.

Shall an angel come from heaven and become the sacrifice? No, because not even the sufferings and death of an angel (were that even possible) would have sufficient influence to be an effective preventive of sin and to satisfy the demands of the broken moral law. Besides, man has sinned, and man is accountable. Man must bear the penalty. No angel can substitute for all mankind before the moral law that mankind has broken, and before the sovereign God whose moral obligation it is to uphold moral law and order.

Who, then, can take our place and redeem us from our sin and its terrible consequences?

It would have to be someone who is innocent himself.

It would have to be someone who would do it solely out of supreme love, because he certainly would not owe it to us.

It would have to be someone of highest status, position, and importance, because his sufferings and death would have to have utmost and universal influence. When people understood what he had done for them, it would have to affect them powerfully enough and deeply enough to turn their hearts to God and to cause them to hate sin and forsake it.

But who? There is only One—*God Himself!*

But how can God do that? After all, God is God and not man. How can He substitute for us?

But Who is this leaving the throne of eternal majesty, laying aside His divine prerogatives, taking on Himself full humanity, entering and developing in the womb of a virgin named Mary, and then as a new-born baby lying in a manger, as the universe watched in utmost wonder?

It is God Almighty in the Second Person of His eternal Trinity, incarnate in Jesus! God became man to redeem man!

John the Baptist proclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

This grand announcement must have startled John's Jewish listeners. After all, wasn't God's lamb the one that God through Moses commanded them to sacrifice? And what is this about taking away sin? Did not the sacrifices only cover sin, requiring the sacrifices to be repeated? And what is this about taking away the sin of the *world*? Wasn't God's provision of an atonement for Israel only?

This was an astounding declaration indeed!

The scene changes. We come now to Calvary. The sight shocks us. Jesus is hanging on a Roman cross, nailed there at the insistence of the religious establishment and the emotional mob.

We stare at the blood that flows from His wounds and stains the rough-hewn wood. Remembering what God had said in Leviticus 17:11, the truth hits us like a sledge hammer—that is the life of the Son of God being poured out for our sins, *my* sins!

With one last heave of His holy soul, He cries out, "It is finished!" He dies under the weight of our sins. He bridges the unbridgeable chasm between God and man, and brings us together!

It is the spectacle of the ages: the great, offended Lawgiver once and for all upholding the honor and integrity of the moral law by personally suffering under its penalty on behalf of us, who have violated it!

In the death of Jesus Christ on the cross God is showing us several things. First, He shows us how precious we are. That is, He defined our value. That does not mean our moral worth, because we lost that due to our sins. It means our value as persons created in His own image and capable of endless joy or misery. This value is intrinsic; it does not depend on our moral character.

As human beings we are equally valuable in ourselves, whether sinners or saints. We are not "junk." We are highly valuable in God's sight. Christ died for us—that says it.

Also, in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross God shows us how much He loves us. He loves us totally. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

In the death of Jesus Christ on the cross God shows us the seriousness and the wickedness of our sins. It demonstrates how much we hurt Him by our pride, rebellion, and blasphemy; by the way we have ignored, rejected, and abused Him in our cruel selfishness. It shows us the guilt of the way we have treated others in our selfishness.

In the death of Jesus Christ on the cross we also see God's determination to provide the only way to make it morally possible for Him to forgive us and still uphold the integrity of the universal moral law, that we violated. We see God's determination to forgive us only on conditions that would satisfy the demands of the moral law and effectively break the power of sin in our hearts and lives.

If the sight of Almighty God, the lawful Sovereign of the universe, our Creator and Judge, taking on Himself full humanity and dying on an old rugged cross in agony and blood, under the weight of our sins, along with the realization that it was our own personal wicked disobedience that nailed Him there—if that does not make us hate sin and forsake it forever—if that does not break our hearts, cause us to turn to him, receive His gift of salvation and love and obey Him fully and forever—*then nothing will!*

Take your pet sins and the temptations that appeal to you the strongest, and place them alongside the bleeding, dying Savior. Now do you see them in all their ugly reality? How wicked, how detestable, how repulsive they are! Temptations lose their appeal in the presence of nail-scarred hands.

How can we even think of holding onto or going back to the sins that nailed the Son of God to the cross? Real Christians would rather die than hurt Jesus!

Isaac Watts expressed it so powerfully in a hymn:

"When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

"Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast save in the death of Christ my God;
all the vain things that charm me most I sacrifice them to His blood.

"See, from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down;
did e'er such love and sorrow meet, or thorns compose so rich a crown?

"Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."

Listen now to the declarations of holy Scripture:

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18).

Christ "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age" (Galatians 1:4).

Christ "gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify to Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Titus 2:14).

"Now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Hebrews 9:26).

"He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him

who died for them and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

When we take the communion (Eucharist), we are showing the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The unbelieving world asks us, "Why do you love Jesus? Why do you live differently from most people? Why do you love to pray, read your Bible, and go to church? When we hold up the elements that represent His broken body and shed blood, we are saying, "*Here is my answer! He died for me; I'll live for Him!*"

Paul declared, "God forbid that I should glory, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

Judas Iscariot betrayed his Lord for a paltry 30 pieces of silver. When the enormity of what he had done finally hit him, he cried out, "I have sinned by betraying the innocent blood!" (Matthew 27:4). His despair drove him to suicide.

People who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:28, 29).

Judas Iscariot did not need to hang himself. Jesus would have forgiven and restored him if he had run to the Savior. He will forgive you, too, if you will come to Him with all your heart and trust His blood to wash away all your sins.

Let us go once more to Calvary. You are standing at the foot of the cross. Jesus is dying. The weight of your sins is pressing down upon Him. His life blood is flowing out of Him and staining the cross and the ground below.

Suddenly, the Savior looks up. His eyes meet yours. With tender love He speaks. He calls you by name. He says, "I'm doing all this for you— *because I love you.*"

Can you—*could you*—turn around, walk away, and go on living the kind of life and doing the things that nailed Him there? Not if there is an ounce of human decency in you.

Instead, everything in you moves you to fall on your knees and cry out, "My Jesus, I did not know You love me this much! I love You! I give myself to You! I'm through with sin! Forgive me! I believe You! I trust You as my Savior! I will love You and live for You forever and ever!

Do it *now*.

Chapter 8

HE IS ALIVE!

If Jesus of Nazareth had remained in the tomb, His death on the cross would have accomplished nothing. He would not be who He claimed to be. For that reason His death would have been the ordinary death of a mere mortal. There would be no Christianity. Jesus would have lived, died, and been forgotten. And we would have no savior.

If Jesus did not rise from the dead as He said He would, nothing He said should be taken seriously. But if He did rise as He said He would, He is who He claimed to be; therefore, everything He said is the truth and must be taken most seriously.

Jesus did not stay dead. He arose on the third day, proving that He is who He claimed to be and that He accomplished what He said He was going to the cross to accomplish. Yes, we have a risen Savior!

Faith is honest. By its very nature it is willing to know and acknowledge the truth. Unbelief is biased. It starts with a conclusion. It asserts that the resurrection did not happen because it could not happen. The conclusion is assumed without regard to evidence.

But intellectual honesty will not ignore evidence. Honest inquiry goes for the facts. It does not ask, "*Could* it have happened?" but, "*Did* it happen?" This takes the subject out of the philosophy department and puts it where it belongs—in the history department.

Paul testifies, "I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also" (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE CENTRAL HISTORICAL FACT OF CHRISTIANITY.

The Christian faith is not merely another world religion developed by human imagination and tradition. On the contrary, it rests on and is the result of God's great redemptive act in Jesus Christ in time-space human history. As was said earlier, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the "north and south poles" of the gospel, forming the axis around which all saving truth revolves.

The story is told of a man who said to a friend, "I think I'll start a new religion." The friend replied, "First, get yourself crucified. Then rise again from the dead, and you'll have it made."

Jesus clearly predicted both His death and His resurrection." Here are His statements:

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life" (Matthew 16:21 NIV).

"After I have been raised, I will go before you into Galilee" (Matthew 26:32).

"I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from my Father" (John 10:17, 18 NIV. Also Matthew 20:19; Mark 9:9; John 2:19).

These statements were fulfilled literally and bodily. The facts are recorded in all four accounts of the gospel.

"Oh," someone says, "that's just a Bible story. That's no proof it really happened."

Please keep in mind that the Biblical records are primary sources. They are eyewitness accounts. Even apart from divine inspiration and that they are recorded in the Bible, they must be given the same weight as any other historical documentation. The rules of scientific historical methodology that are applied to other historical sources apply equally to these.

These primary documents were preceded by a precise oral and written declaration of the facts and their significance. The events were narrated by people who were personal participants in the events themselves. They were living guardians of the message, and any deviation from the facts would have been immediately corrected. The early Church never would have accepted the gospel record had it deviated in any way from the well-known facts.

Luke, a careful historian, prefaced his account of the gospel with this statement: "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4 NIV).

Later, Luke began his Acts Of The Apostles by this definite declaration: "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:1-3 NIV).

Both the oral and written narrative and the primary documents that permanently recorded it were publicly preached and published during the lifetime of many

eyewitnesses to the events themselves. The disciples were well aware of the hostility that existed toward the gospel. Had there been even one inaccuracy or inconsistency, the enemies of Christ would have pounced on it and fully exploited it. The Gospels and the oral and written testimony that preceded them had to conform faithfully to the facts.

If the events did not take place exactly as reported, many people were still alive who had the opportunity and also the motive to dispute and refute the claims. The fact that they did not do so speaks for itself.

On the Day of Pentecost Peter proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus to thousands of Jews right there in Jerusalem. The tomb stood empty for all to see. The fact was not in question, only the reason. The only "refutation" was the feeble fiction that the disciples stole the body while the guards slept.

Unbelief has consistently demonstrated its inherent bias. It seeks to obscure what it denies. It will believe anything, no matter how unreasonable, in order to avoid the truth. This is clearly seen in the hypotheses that have been advanced to explain away the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

First is the theft hypothesis. This is as old as the soldiers' paid "testimony" that the disciples stole the body while they, the guards, slept (Matthew 28:11-15). This is nonsense. Roman soldiers did not sleep on guard duty. Even if they had, how could they know and testify about what happened while they were asleep? Besides, huddled in fear, the disciples hardly had the resolve to pull off such a daring caper.

Modern "explanations" also collapse under their own dead weight. The "swoon hypothesis," that a weakened, yet alive, Jesus revived in the cool air of the tomb, got out of his grave wrappings, pushed the huge stone aside, and slipped unnoticed by the guards, does not merit a refutation. Its sheer impossibility is obvious.

The hypothesis that Mary Magdalene and all the others were confused and went to the wrong tomb is ludicrous. As soon as the disciples proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus, the authorities would have pointed out the correct tomb and had a big laugh. No, the disciples were not ignorant. This was a private tomb in a garden area. Joseph of Arimathea knew where it was. After all, it belonged to him (Matthew 27:57-61).

The hallucination hypothesis asserts that the disciples were in a state of mind that made them susceptible to hallucination. Their intense desire for a resurrection self-induced the "appearances" of Jesus.

This one assumes too much. For one thing, the disciples were definitely *not* in an auto-suggestive frame of mind. They were hard-headed men who had forsaken all to follow Jesus. Now, so far as they were concerned, it was all over. They were disillusioned and certainly not in a believing mood. They refused to believe the early reports of the women.

No, the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus Christ were not subjective impressions. They were events seen and shared objectively by numbers of people in various settings over a period of forty days. Only the objective reality of His presence overcame their strong reluctance to believe.

No event of ancient history stands on more solid evidence than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Here are the facts. Jesus actually died and was buried. Afterward, everything humanly possible was done to prevent anything that would even appear to be a "resurrection." A huge stone was placed over the opening of the tomb and sealed by Roman authority. Guards were stationed.

Then suddenly Jesus was seen alive, first by individuals, then by groups. The disciples conversed with Him, ate with Him, touched Him. On one occasion He was seen by over five hundred people at once, the majority of whom were still alive some twenty-five years later (1 Corinthians 15:6).

John wrote (John 20:3-8) that he and Peter went to the empty tomb and saw the grave wrappings wound together like an empty cocoon. The resurrected Jesus had slipped out of them, leaving them undisturbed. Had the body of Jesus been removed physically, the grave wrappings would have given evidence of it. Powdered spices would have been scattered all over the floor, with telltale footprints in the powder. Peter and John saw nothing like that. They studied the scene carefully and everything they saw had only one logical explanation—the miraculous, bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

It is noteworthy that the apostles did not try to prove that the tomb was empty. They did not need to. The fact was public knowledge. That is why the religious rulers bribed the soldiers. They could not deny the obvious.

So then, who moved the stone?

Also, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only logical explanation for the profound change in the disciples. From self-centered position seekers whose hopes had been shattered, they became bold witnesses of what they had seen and heard, proclaiming it against all opposition and at the cost of everything including their very lives. Had the resurrection of Jesus been merely a story they concocted, they never would have given their lives to it and for it.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only logical explanation for the existence of the Church and the persistence and expansion of Christianity. Trace back the history of the Church step by step; the path leads directly to the empty tomb.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the only logical explanation for the power of the gospel to transform lives. A dead Jesus could not do what He has done and is doing today in the hearts and lives of those who believe and follow Him.

The evidence is both compelling and conclusive. Jesus Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification (Romans 4:25). We have a living Savior and Lord. That is the good news!

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IS THE CENTRAL LIVING FACT OF CHRISTIANITY.

Paul the apostle expressed his deep, persistent yearning to know Christ "and the

power of His resurrection" (Philippians 3:10).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the divine declaration that He is the Son of God. He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Romans 1:4). It was Heaven's exoneration of Him, clearing Him of any implied guilt of wrongdoing for having been "executed" on a cross. It fully validated His claims.

His resurrection completed the act of redemption by providing full justification. As we noted in Romans 4:25, Jesus "was raised again because of our justification."

Jesus Christ rose from the dead to establish the firm hope, the certainty, of the believer's future resurrection. He assures us, "because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is proof positive of a coming judgment. Before a very critical audience in Athens, Paul did not deal with philosophical speculations but with the fact of human sinfulness before the true and living God. He drove the issue home by declaring, "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all, by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30, 31).

Jesus rose from the dead to be the living Lord of all, and of all of life.

His resurrection means that we are lost if we ignore or reject Him. He declared, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

There is no other way. If we reject Him, we remain under the power of sin and death. Rejecting Jesus Christ is the ultimate suicide.

Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (NIV).

There is only one reasonable course: do what Thomas did. When he met the risen Christ, he confessed, "My Lord and my God."

Chapter 9

CHRIST'S ASCENSION AND EXALTATION

What a glorious 40 days! Alive forevermore, Jesus was with them again—appearing suddenly, eating with them, allowing some to touch Him (Luke 24:39) but forbidding others to do so (John 20:17), talking with them, teaching them.

How the disciples would have desired to keep Him with them here on earth.

But Jesus had foretold them that He was going to go back to the Father.

"Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go to Him Who sent Me" (John 7:33).

"I go to the Father" (John 14:28). See also John 16:5-16, 26.

As He faced the ordeal of the cross, Jesus knew that His earthly ministry was over. He prayed to the Father, "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You" (John 17:11). Calvary lay just ahead, but He was looking through that—through even His resurrection—to His return to the Father.

Here is the eye-witness account:

"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

"He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven" (Luke 24:50, 51).

"After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven'" (Acts 1:9-11 NIV).

Jesus Christ ascended to the Father for some very specific and vital reasons.

One reason was to restore Paradise to Heaven and give gifts to believers. Ephesians 4:8-10 informs us, "Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.' (Now this, 'He ascended'—what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)"

Please notice that Jesus ascended to the Father "that He might fill all things." He did not go into exile and sit down on a throne of inactivity. He took His rightful place upon the highest throne of authority—the throne of power and action! Just before His ascension He said to His disciples, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and

on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18 - 20).

Jesus Christ has full authority to exercise all the power of deity.

Jesus Christ has the authority to forgive sins (Matthew 9:6). He has authority over demons (Mark 1:27). He has authority over the elements; He stilled the wind and calmed the waves (Luke 8:25). He exercised the authority to lay down His life and to take it again (John 10:18). He has authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him (John 17:2). Bring every need, every burden, every problem to Him in full confidence. He will not fail you.

Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven to send the Holy Spirit. He had told His disciples, "I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7).

Jesus ascended to the Father so that the Holy Spirit would come and take His place as the Person in the Trinity who is in charge "on location" here on earth. In this way Jesus would be closer to the disciples (and us) by His Spirit than He could be had He remained bodily here on earth, even in His glorified state.

When the Holy Spirit descended on the Day of Pentecost, Peter announced to the amazed multitude, "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and received from the Father the promised of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33).

The descent of the Holy Spirit was the divine announcement that Jesus Christ had arrived into Heaven, that His sacrifice on the cross was fully accepted and honored, that His high-priestly ministry was now inaugurated, and that His reign with all authority in heaven and on earth was now in full force.

He ascended to the highest throne of the universe, where He rules and reigns now and forevermore!

During His trial Jesus gave the religious rulers fair warning: "Hereafter the Son of man will sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:69).

Later, Peter boldly declared to the same council, "Him God exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

Paul wrote that because Jesus obeyed the will of the Father, even to the death on the cross, "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

As was previously stated, Christ ascended into heaven also to enter into His office

as our great High Priest. This is one of the facts featured in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

"Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Hebrews 4:14).

"We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Hebrews 8:1).

"For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Hebrews 9:24).

We must not overlook another reason for His ascension, one that Jesus had previously announced to His disciples. He ascended to prepare a place for all who believe on Him to eternal life. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions [dwellings]; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3).

The fact that the living Christ now rules and reigns at the right hand of the Father has profound and far-reaching meaning for all believers. Remember that a living, vital relationship with Jesus Christ places the born-again believer into full personal fellowship and unity with Him in all that He is and all that He has accomplished for us.

His cross becomes our cross. As He died *for* sin, by that same death we died *to* sin as we read in Romans 6:1, 2—"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"

His resurrection becomes our resurrection. As He rose to a glorified and immortal life, by His resurrection we rise out of death in sin to a new, justified life of power and purity. When He returns, even our bodies will be resurrected to immortal life.

His ascension becomes our ascension. As He took His place at the right hand of the Father, we also are blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:4-6).

Right now in this present life Christians have "heavenly life for earthly living;" and at Christ's coming we shall be "caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

No wonder Paul prayed that God would grant us "a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." He wrote, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness

of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Ephesians 1:17-23 NASB).

The divine power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead and placed Him at the right hand of God the Father is now fully operating on our behalf!

This establishes our goals and our values as we move victoriously in Christ through this earthly life. It is not "pie in the sky when you die." It is "grace for the race that you face."

"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:1, 2).

By so doing, we live life on the highest level. We view our present human state from the eternal vantage point. We see our present circumstances within the broad vista of God's grand design of the ages. So we live above the circumstances, not under them. Our heavenly view keeps our values correct and our priorities straight.

Chapter 10

CHRIST'S GREATNESS AND GLORY

Like a brilliant diamond encased in clay, the eternal glory of our Lord Jesus Christ was hidden from view by His humanity. Nevertheless, His greatness and glory were still His by right of His eternal deity as the Second Person in the Trinity.

When Christ emptied Himself to become the perfect sacrifice for our sins, He left the throne of glory, but He did not abdicate it. He merely held His position and powers of deity in abeyance.

Even while here on earth, Jesus affirmed His surpassing greatness. He declared, "In this place is one greater than the temple" (Matthew 12:6); "A greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31).

Jesus Christ has "more glory than Moses" (Hebrews 3:3).

One day Jesus took Peter, James, and John to the top of a mountain and gave them a glimpse of His eternal glory. "His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (Matthew 17:2). Mark puts it this way: "His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them" (Mark 9:3).

Peter never forgot that glorious sight. Toward the end of his life and ministry he wrote, "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'. And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Peter 1:16-18).

Many years later John also wrote: "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Peter and John were not second-hand witnesses of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Right at the end of His earthly ministry, just before His crucifixion, our Lord prayed to the Father, "Glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5).

Headstrong and venting his hatred toward Jesus Christ and His followers, Saul of Tarsus was headed toward Damascus to do all he could to stop "the followers of the way." Suddenly he crashed headlong into a revelation of the glory of the risen Savior, and it knocked him to the ground. Here is the account from Acts 9:4 and 5:

"Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

"Who are You, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

It was the same Jesus. Saul had heard about Him, but now he had an encounter with Him that transformed him completely and forever.

So this persecutor-turned-apostle wrote later, "Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer" (2 Corinthians 5:16).

Let us turn again to the apostle John. Remember, he was one of the privileged three who got a preview of Christ's glory. Many years later, now an old man banished to the island of Patmos for the sake of Christ, he had a Sunday he would never forget. He wrote down his experience so we would not forget it, either.

"Then I turned to see the voice that spoke with me. And having turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the seven lampstands One like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the feet and girded about the chest with a golden band. His head and His hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength. And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead (Revelation 1:12-17).

It was the same Jesus. Only now He is seen in glory, not on the top of a hill in Palestine but in heaven itself!

His glory is soon to be revealed "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

When he was an old man, exiled to the island of Patmos for the faith, John the apostle was given a spectacular vision of things to come. That vision included a dramatic preview of the glorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is how he described it in the Spirit.

"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word Of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:11-16).

The eternal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ is total, complete, full, all-encompassing.

"And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the

body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things he may have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell" (Colossians 1:17-19).

"For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:9, 10).

If we believe in Him, receive Him, and stay vitally bonded to Him, we become the living recipients of His fullness and enjoy the all-sufficient grace that He has to bestow on us. So John wrote, "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16).

As we read earlier, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write about the fullness of Christ believers have in our unity with Him. The Ephesian epistle exults in its dynamic.

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Ephesians 1:17-23 NIV).

Paul prayed also: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

"He who descended also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things. And He Himself gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some, evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:10-13).

Because all believers are united with Christ and all fullness dwells in Him, *He is our everything*.

"But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Romans 10:4).

Christ's name embodies Who He is and what He does. It expresses the fullness of His person and work.

"Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations" (Luke 24:47).

When we pray in His name, we are invoking the highest authority in heaven and on earth. This is the assurance Jesus Himself gave us.

"Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13).

"You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you" (John 15:16).

In that very confidence Peter said to the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk" (Acts 4:6). When the people crowded around to see the miracle, Peter informed them that the authority and power that performed it was none other than the name of Jesus Christ. "And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong" (verse 16).

When the apostles were arrested and brought before the religious council, Peter boldly repeated the announcement: "Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole" (Acts 4:10).

Jesus Christ is totally and completely victorious, having conquered even death itself. He is our all-conquering, all-vanquishing, all-victorious Lord. He encouraged His disciples, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

In Christ we not only *shall* overcome; we *have* overcome and therefore *do* overcome moment by moment in our daily lives. According to Galatians 2:20, the risen, glorified, all-powerful, totally victorious Overcomer lives in us as born-again believers. He *is* our victory!

The glorious triumph and heavenly reign of Jesus Christ was declared to Him by God the Father and was recorded by the psalmist in Psalm 110:1 "Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool."

The apostle Paul elaborated on Christ's triumph in the inspired words of 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign,

till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death."

In verses 27 and 28 we are told that God has put all things under the feet of Christ, except of course the Father Himself. In fact, at the end of this age, when all things are brought under subjection to Jesus Christ and Jesus has turned the kingdom over to the Father, Jesus Himself also shall be placed in subjection to the Father (who put all things under Jesus), "that God may be all in all."

This does not mean that the Son is not equal to the Father as deity. It does not mean that Jesus will cease to reign. The throne is one (Revelation 3:21). The kingdom is one (Revelation 11:15). Also, the term, "all in all," is applied also to Jesus (Colossians 3:11).

This passage teaches that when Christ's present rule will have accomplished the goal of putting down "all rule and all authority and power," Jesus will present the victorious kingdom to the Father and then rule with the Father in a subordinate role.

Some passages of Scripture emphasize the essential unity and equality of the Persons of the adorable Godhead. Others teach that in the sustaining of relationships and in the allocation of administrative roles, some members of the Trinity occupy positions and exercise functions that are subordinate to the greater whole. This is a well-known principle of government and holds true even when all participants are equals. Essential equality and functional subordination—both truths are taught in Scripture and must be recognized if we are to have a proper understanding of the nature and relationships of the Holy Trinity. (See Appendix B, The Fatherhood Of God To The Son).

Later, Jesus Christ Himself spoke from heaven: "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne" (Revelation 3:21).

In Revelation 5:5 one of the "four and twenty" elders comforted the weeping apostle: "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals."

Although Jesus Christ is reigning at the right hand of God the Father, this world seems to be out of control. Evil is universal, and seems to be triumphing. But we must keep in mind that this is a time of probation. It is the day of salvation. At His appointed time God will intervene, put a stop to rebellion, remove sin from orderly society, and set up His kingdom under Christ. The final outcome will not be determined by any superpower or any combination of earthly powers. God Himself has the final say. The Sovereign God is not at the mercy of puny man. He will not take what man has built and make it right. He will displace man's system entirely and replace it with His own.

In the scene recorded in Revelation 17 we see the hostile world power mobilized against the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Of course, the outcome of this final confrontation is never in doubt. "These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (verse 14).

Yes, the total victory of Jesus Christ will be established on earth. There will be righteousness and peace. Sin will not win; it has already lost. It is only a matter of time until all of its selfish activities will cease and their effects will be erased.

"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this" (Isaiah 9:7).

The time of His coming is unknown to man; so it is vitally important that we remain constantly ready. Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36). "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Luke 12:40).

Jesus Christ is precious above all else and worthy of total love, obedience, and adoration. In Psalm 45:2 God the Father speaks to Christ, "You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured into Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever."

The apostle Peter affirms, "To you who believe, He is precious" (1 Peter 2:7).

Jesus Christ is worth everything. The vital personal question is: How much is He worth to you? If we are going to spend eternity with Jesus Christ, we must determine right now that He is worth more than anything and anybody else. If you allow anything to become more important to you than Jesus Christ, Satan has it "in stock," and he knows just when to offer it to you.

Jesus declared, "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

If you do not know Jesus Christ in a personal relationship as your Savior and Lord, come to Him now. Open your heart to Him. Receive Him. Trust Him. Love and obey Him, forever and ever.

He is worthy!

"Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, 'Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!' And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, 'Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever!'" (Revelation 5:11-13).

AMEN AND AMEN!

Appendix A

The Post-Resurrection Appearance Of Jesus In Galilee

The early post-resurrection appearances of Jesus took place in and around Jerusalem. That was where He was crucified and that was where He arose from the dead. These early appearances to His disciples were personal, intimate, and dramatic. No reasonable person could or would deny them. They were conclusive and decisive for their faith. All of their doubts were gone—*anceled*.

But what about Jesus' disciples in Galilee? Most of His ministry had been in Galilee. Thousands of Galileans heard Him, witnessed His miracles, believed on Him and followed Him.

The events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion were very public at a time when Jews from everywhere were in Jerusalem for the Passover. News of His crucifixion must have reached Galilee. What a profound effect that must have had on His disciples there: disappointment, dashed hopes, unanswered questions.

Did at least a few Galileans remain in and around Jerusalem to hear the reports of Jesus' resurrection? If so, did they carry these reports back and share them on their return? We do not know.

Whatever the case, Jesus had many disciples in Galilee and it was imperative that He show Himself alive to them.

He had already planned for this. During the Last Supper He said to His disciples, "After I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee" (Matthew 26:32).

Then, at the empty tomb the angel directed the women, "Go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you" (Matthew 28:7; also Mark 16:7).

Immediately the women ran to tell His disciples. On the way Jesus Himself met them, greeted them, and repeated the command: "Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me" (Matthew 28:10).

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them" (Matthew 28:16).

They knew that this trip was not for their benefit. They did not need this additional appearance of Jesus to convince them of His resurrection. That was already settled back in Jerusalem. This was for the benefit of Christ's Galilean disciples.

Now, this was not an easy journey. Galilee was over seventy miles straight north. It would take a little time to prepare. They would be on the road at least two and perhaps three days. When they did arrive in Galilee, they would have to spread the news. "Jesus is going to appear at a specific time at a specific place on a specific mountain.

Tell everybody. Be there."

Who came? We find the answer in Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth. After mentioning Jesus' appearance to Peter and the disciples, Paul stated: "After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Out of all the Galileans who had followed Jesus, five hundred-plus heard the news and were willing and able to gather at the appointed time and place.

"And when they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted" (Matthew 28:17).

Who doubted? Certainly not the eleven disciples. Even "doubting" Thomas would never doubt again after putting his fingers into the now-healed but still open nail holes in Jesus' hands and shoving his hand into the hole in Jesus' side. The few doubters were among the Galileans.

But why would even *they* doubt? First, the group was worshiping Jesus at some distance, and the people at the outer edges would have had the most difficult view. Also, ophthalmology and optometry were unheard of. Cataract surgery and corrective eye-glasses would be many centuries in the future.

Then something happened that most people overlook. "Then Jesus came and spoke to them" (Matthew 28:18).

"Then Jesus came..." Jesus came "up close and personal." What a dramatic, electrifying moment it must have been as they watched Him approaching! No doubt eyes opened wider, hearts beat faster, and here and there subdued gasps could be heard in the awed silence.

What would be their natural response to Jesus' presence? In a moment like that people would naturally tend to get as close to Him as possible. Those in the outer edges would press forward. Five hundred people could stand comfortably in an area sixty feet wide and forty feet deep, or even less. No one would be more than thirty or forty feet away.

It was in that moment and to those disciples that Jesus gave the Great Commission that we read in Matthew 28:18 - 20: "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

As did the eleven disciples, those five hundred-plus Galileans also had the proof, the message, and the divine commission to go and make disciples.

Not counting divine revelation, how did the apostle Paul know that over two hundred and fifty of these Galileans were still alive about twenty-five years later?

They were a unique group—"The Five Hundred." They were known and recognized

in the early Church. As long as they lived they carried a special status. They must have been on some kind of formal or informal "roster." When one of them died, the fact was noted. That is a most reasonable explanation for the fact that Paul knew them, knew that some had died and that the majority were still alive when he wrote First Corinthians.

Fast forward to the Day Of Pentecost. Who were the one hundred and twenty in the upper room, tarrying for and receiving the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? The people on the outside knew. They said, "Look are not all these who speak Galileans?" (Acts 2:7).

Why were these Galileans in Jerusalem? For one thing, it was an annual feast of the Jews. That would be an occasion for them to be there. But why were these particular Galileans in the upper room? They were part of the "Five Hundred" (perhaps plus other Galileans who by now had become believers). They had seen and heard Jesus on the mountain in Galilee. They had personally been given the Great Commission. The disciples must have told them of the Lord's command to tarry in Jerusalem until they are "endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49; also Acts 1:4 - 8), and they wanted to be there when it happened.

They knew that they must have the power of the Holy Spirit to carry out the Great Commission. So must all believers.

Appendix B

The Open Wounds Of Jesus Christ

The apostle John records that on Sunday evening, one week after His resurrection, Jesus appeared again to His disciples. This time Thomas was present. Even though the doors were shut, Jesus came suddenly and stood among them.

"Peace be to you," He greeted them.

Then the Lord addressed Thomas directly and personally. "Reach your finger here and look at My hands; and reach your hand here and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27).

Thomas had refused to believe the eye-witness testimony of those who had seen Jesus after His resurrection, insisting that he would not believe unless he personally saw the print of the nails in Jesus' hands and pushed his hand into His side.

The other disciples saw Jesus' hands and side the previous Sunday (verse 20). Now Jesus gave Thomas his opportunity to see and feel the evidence for himself. The effect on Thomas was immediate and dramatic. "My Lord and my God!" he addressed Jesus (verse 28). The nominative case is used here for the vocative (direct address), not uncommon in Koine Greek.

Our attention is focused here on the fact that, even though our Lord Jesus Christ was risen from the dead with a glorified body, *the wounds in His hands and side were still open.*

Why?

At His resurrection, Jesus' body was completely transformed forever to its glorified state—whole, flawless, transcendent, immortal. Why then the open wounds? Why were they not removed in the transformation and glorification of His resurrection?

There can be only one plausible answer. *Those open wounds will forever stand as a graphic reminder of everything the cross stands for, every truth that is embodied in it, and every lesson we learn or should learn from it.*

The vicarious death of Jesus Christ on the cross is the only way, morally and governmentally, that God can be just in forgiving and justifying us. Jesus Christ died for us so that God "might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

In the open wounds of our Lord Jesus Christ we will forever have before us the visible reminder of how much God loves us, the value He places on us, how precious we are to Him, how much it cost God to save us and the ultimate sacrifice that He willingly made.

Those open wounds will never let us forget the horrible destructiveness of sin, its

total wickedness, its full guilt. As the cross is the only effective cure and preventive for sin now, so in those open wounds that once-for-all sacrifice of our Savior will sustain our eternal abhorrence of sin and prevent anyone from ever being tempted by it even in the slightest.

Seeing those open wounds in our Lord's glorified body will continuously renew our love for Him; our devotion to Him; our willing obedience; our gratitude to the Father for sending the Son and to the Son for His willingness to fulfill the will of the Father for our eternal salvation.

Appendix C

The Fatherhood Of God To The Son

The Scriptures clearly teach that the Persons in the Holy Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal. The Scriptures also teach that Jesus Christ is uniquely the Son of God. The question then that gave rise to the Christological issue in the post-apostolic Church is this: How can the Second Person in the Trinity be co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and yet be His Son?

This early controversy took place primarily within the contemporary and prevalent Greek mind-set. That mind-set formed the philosophical milieu that generated and contextualized the Christological controversy itself. In the process it produced the poisonous fruit of Arianism.

The Christological issue was formally settled at the Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325). The decision was affirmed at the Council of Constantinople (A.D. 381). The Nicene Creed became and continues to be the definitive creedal statement of orthodox Christology.

This also established and gave creedal authority to the doctrine known as "The Eternal Generation Of The Son." Origen (ca. A.D. 185 - 254) was among the first to advance the idea of the eternal generation of the Son. Others followed.

The Eternal Generation of the Son is the doctrine that the Father by an act out of the necessity of His nature eternally generates the person but not the essence of the Son by communicating to the Son the whole and indivisible substance of the Deity. The doctrine has been stated, restated and refined in great depth and elaborate detail. It is firmly established in Catholic and Reformed theology. The Westminster Confession states that "the Son is eternally begotten of the Father" (WCF II:3).

The Nicene Creed itself contains elements of the doctrine, for example in the words "very God *of very God*" (emphasis added). Without the italicized words, it would read simply "very God."

Not all evangelicals accept the doctrine of The Eternal Generation Of The Son. No *undisputed* proof-text for the doctrine exists in the Scriptures. However it is refined and stated, the doctrine tends toward the very error it is intended to prevent. Intricate and abstruse terminology notwithstanding, one can hardly (if at all) escape the doctrine's implication that the deity of the Second Person in the Trinity is a *derived* deity.

One wonders whether or not the Christological controversy would have arisen at all were it not for the existence and influence of the prevailing Greek philosophical milieu that surrounded the post-apostolic Church.

Regarding the Fatherhood of God to the Son, let us consider the following:

(1) The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are co-equal and co-eternal as to their essence, deity and personhood. The Father is primary in position as the sovereign initiating authority and head. The Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate to the Father *in position and function*. "Father" and "Son" are terms of relationship; relationship is a function of personhood; personhood is a quality of essence (being). The Father is not the source of the essence (being) of the Son; therefore He is not the source of the personhood of the Son. The Father is the source of the *sending* of the Son.

(2) The Second Person in the Deity was and is eternally willed by the Father with the concurrent (united) will of the whole Deity to be the Son. *Yeshua* (Jesus)—Jehovah (Yahweh)-Savior—is His eternal name. This eternal status and designated relationship to the Father was prophesied in Psalm 2:7. "I will declare the decree: The LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son. Today I have begotten You'." "Today" is a prolepsis (an anticipated future act stated as already existing). It refers to the day when the Second Person in the Trinity would become in time and space history the Son of God by the Incarnation, as He was eternally designated. "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20). We find another prolepsis in Revelation 13:8, where Jesus is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." This is the natural reading. The alternative reading actually presupposes this because no one's name can be "written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world," as stated in Revelation 17:8, unless the proleptic sacrifice of the Lamb had made it possible. Revelation 13:8 makes Revelation 17:8 possible.

"For to which of the angels did God ever say, 'You are my Son, today I have become your Father [begotten you]'? Or again, 'I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son'? And again, when God brings his firstborn into the world, he says, 'Let all God's angels worship him'" (Hebrews 1:5, 6 NIV). This states that the Second Person in the eternal Trinity would become in *fact* as well as in *designation* the Son of God in Jesus, the Christ, both Son of God and Son of Man in the hypostatic union of the Incarnation. Notice the future tense of the emphasized words of the ancient prophecies: "I *will be* to Him a Father." "He *shall be* to Me a Son." "The day" arrived when the hypostatic union of God and man was accomplished by the Father with the Holy Spirit in the miraculous conception of Jesus Christ in the womb of the virgin Mary (Luke 1:30 - 35). Please ponder the words of this profound announcement, especially verse 35: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore [*for that reason*], also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God." Jesus is called the Son of God because of the Incarnation. Nine months later God brought the firstborn [*prototokos*] into the world (*oikoumene*) in a manger in Bethlehem; it was then that "a multitude of the heavenly host" broke into praise (Luke 2:1 - 14).

At Jesus' baptism, "suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Later, on the Mount Of Transfiguration, a cloud overshadowed them and a voice came out of the cloud: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35). Later, Peter wrote, "For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased'" (2 Peter 1:17).

(3) The Second Person in the Trinity will always be the only begotten (*monogenes*) and firstborn (*prototokos*) Son of God in *fact* as well as in designation, fully God and fully man (Son of God/Son of Man). Jesus Christ will forever be united with our redeemed humanity, our Brother. There is a *Man* in the glory—"the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

God will *not* "open the Trinity and let us in." God did *not* "become man that we might become God," another notion that emerged out of the ancient Greek mind-set. God will always be God; we will always be humanity—redeemed.

(4) The Second Person in the eternal Trinity is and always has been fully God and the *Logos* (Word) of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3). See also 1 John 1:1, 2; Revelation 19:13. He is the verbal expression of God. God spoke the worlds into existence through Him—the *Logos*, the Word. When the *Logos* became flesh as the incarnated Son of the Father (John 1:14), He—the living Word—became the spoken Word of God to us. "God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." (Hebrews 1:1, 2)

(5) The diversity in unity of the persons in the Trinity is a divine mystery, known only to God and revealed by God to man only to the extent that God has willed to reveal it. Even before the Second Person became the Son of God in fact as well as in eternal designation, the Father loved Him with the absolute love that exists eternally within the Deity. Jesus acknowledged this when He prayed to the Father, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Jesus said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10:30). "The Father is in Me, and I in Him" (John 10:38).

The Father was the source of Jesus' teachings. He said to the puzzled Jews, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me" (John 7:16). He said on another occasion, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as the Father taught Me, I do these things" (John 8:28). The Father anointed Him with the Holy Spirit for His works as well as His teaching. "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38). The Father is the ultimate source of our salvation. Paul wrote, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

The Second Person in the Trinity had an eternal glory with God the Father. He laid this aside when He became the Son in the Incarnation (Philippians 2:7). Just before His crucifixion He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5). He requested that upon the completion of His earthly mission the Father would restore to Him His pre-incarnate glory.

"Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father" (Romans 6:4). "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name" (Philippians 2:9). "When He had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). He is "in the bosom of [in intimate union

with] the Father" (John 1:18), receiving from the Father all the fullness of God and filling us with that fullness by His Spirit (Ephesians 3:19; 5:18). He is "at the right hand of the Father," making intercession for us (Romans 8:34). When He returns, He will come "in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26; also Matthew 16:27; Mark 8:38).

(6) As fully God, the Second Person in the Trinity is co-equal with the Father in eternal *essence*. As the incarnate Son of God He is subordinate to the Father in *position* (as is also the Holy Spirit). This distinction must be kept in mind; otherwise, people mistake Jesus' statements about Himself and His relationship to the Father as the Son. Jesus said, "The Father is greater than I" (John 10:29;14:28). Notice, He did *not* say, "The Father is *better* than I." The Son is not a lesser deity. He is not inferior in being (essence).

"In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:8 - 10). The Son never disobeyed the Father. He did always the things that please the Father (John 8:29); yet, as the Son made flesh, He Himself went through the experience of human temptation and suffering. He learned first hand from *our* standpoint what it is and how to handle it in obedience to the Father. He can sympathize with our weaknesses because He "was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15). This perfected (fully qualified) Him to be our "merciful and faithful High Priest" to God (Hebrews 2:17).

Paul wrote, "The head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3). "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Corinthians 3:23). God is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:31; 1 Peter 1:3), "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory" (Ephesians 1:17). On the cross Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46, from Psalm 22:1). God the Father addressed the Son as God and at the same time referred to Himself as the God of the Son. Quoting verses six and seven of Psalm 45, the author of The Epistle to the Hebrews quoted God as saying to the Son, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions" (Hebrews 1:9). Jesus said to the disciples, "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me" (Luke 22:29). When the end comes, Jesus Christ will deliver the kingdom "to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24). "Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (verse 28).

After His resurrection Jesus said to Mary Magdalene, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God" (John 20:17). As the Son, Jesus Christ forever honors the higher position of the Father. Even from heaven He said, "He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name" (Revelation 3:12).

Jesus Reveals The Father.

To know God, we must confine ourselves to His self-revelation; otherwise, we drift into speculation and error. God has chosen to reveal Himself in and by His Son. Jesus made this very clear in His statement: "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and he to whom the Son wills to reveal Him" (Matthew 11:27). He said, "I do know Him and keep His word" (John 8:55). John wrote, "No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him (John 1:18). "And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5:20). Only the Son can reveal the Father because only the Son truly and fully knows the Father.

Later, in Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus said to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:13 - 17). Also, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would testify of Him (John 15:26).

So then, by the Holy Spirit *the Father reveals the Son so that the Son will reveal the Father*. Jesus said that the Father has hidden these things from the wise and prudent and has revealed them to babes. So it seemed good in the Father's sight (Matthew 11:25, 26).

Because no one can *know* the Father except the person to whom the Son reveals Him, it follows logically that no one can *come* to the Father except through the Son. Jesus made this also very clear in His statement: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus Christ is the only way to know God and the only way to come to God. There is no other way. This is the exclusiveness of the gospel. It offends human pride and evokes its hostility. Nevertheless, it is the truth. The gospel is the only answer to man's sin and guilt. Believe or perish.

Some things the Son did not revealed to us. In the Olivet Discourse Jesus said to the disciples, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:31, 32). After His resurrection, He said to the disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:7).

Jesus showed us the Father by: (1) who He was (and is); (2) what He said; (3) what He did.

(1) Who He was (and is).

As a twelve year old child, Jesus knew who He was and who His real Father was. He said, "I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2:49).

On one occasion Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also" (John 8:19).

Just before His crucifixion, Jesus was addressing His disciples. When He said to them, "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him," Philip interrupted Him: "Lord, show us the Father and it is sufficient for us." Jesus replied, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves" (John 14:7 - 11).

Earlier, we looked at Hebrews 1:1, 2. As we go into verse 3 we read that the Son is the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person. "Express image" means "exact representation," or as we might say, the "living picture" of God.

(2) What He said.

Jesus said, "I speak what I have seen with My Father" (John 8:38). To His disciples He said, "All things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

Jesus said much *to* the Father and *about* the Father. As we examine His words, we learn more about the Father. In doing so we keep in mind that even though we learn much *about* the Father through Jesus' words, we can truly *know* the Father only through a personal relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus never addressed God as "our Father." He taught us to do so, but He never included Himself in that collective prayer. In speaking to others about the Father, Jesus used the plural, "your Father." Yet, at least on one occasion, in the Sermon On The Mount, Jesus used the singular. "Your [singular, Thy (KJV)] Father who sees in secret" (Matthew 6:4, 6, 18).

Sometimes He said "the Father." He spoke to the Father as *His* Father. He addressed God "Father" in prayer. In speaking of the Father, Jesus usually said "*my* Father."

The classic example of Jesus' prayers to the Father is His high-priestly prayer just before His crucifixion, recorded in John 17. He prayed that the Father would keep us through His name (verses 11 - 16); sanctify us by the truth (verses 17 - 19); perfectly unite us together in Him and the Father by the *delegated* (not pre-incarnate) glory that the Father gave to Him and He in turn delegated to us, so that the world will know that the Father sent the Son and that He loves us just as He loves Jesus (verses 20 - 23); and bring us "home" to Jesus at last so we can behold His eternal pre-incarnate glory (verse 24). He concluded His prayer, "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (verse 26).

Jesus gave us a true picture of the Father in what He taught and what He did. Jesus did not express the grace and compassion of the Father to the exclusion of the justice of the Father. In the Sermon On The Mount He said, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14, 15). Later, in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, where the king forgave the servant's multi-million dollar debt but the servant would not forgive the few dollars that *his* fellow-servant owed *him*, the king reinstated the first servant's life-devastating debt. Jesus concluded: "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses" (Matthew 18:23 - 35). Sobering words.

Jesus said, "The Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:22, 23). "For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted to the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (verses 26, 27).

Paul made clear that God will judge the world by Jesus Christ (Acts 17:31). Therefore, everyone will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10, 11).

Jesus told us many things about the Father. He said to the disciples, "The Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God" (John 16:27). He said "your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him," and that He knows *before* we ask Him (Matthew 6:8, 32; Luke 12:30). "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matthew 7:11; Luke 11:13).

Jesus assured us that the Father sees the sparrow when it falls and knows the number of hairs on our head (Matthew 10:29 - 31). He knows more about you than you know about yourself. That is how closely, personally and tenderly He watches over you.

Jesus assured us, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of my Father's hand. I and My Father are one" (John 10:27 - 30).

Jesus concluded The Parable of the Lost Sheep by saying, "Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14. Also Luke 15:4 - 7).

In the Parable Of The Lost Son Jesus showed us clearly the depth of the yearning heart of the Father over every wayward soul (Luke 15:11 - 32).

In His last instructions to His disciples before He was crucified, Jesus told them that in the gospel age after His resurrection, ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit, He would tell them plainly about The Father (John 16:25). This He did by the Spirit to the apostles and other New Testament writers.

(3). What He did.

Jesus said to the Jews, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). "Most assuredly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son does also in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will" (Verses 19 - 21). Later He said to them, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father" (John 10:32).

Peter declared: "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10:38).

What did Jesus do?

He healed the dying son of a desperate nobleman.

He spoke healing for a dying servant of a centurion at Capernaum.

He expelled demons by His spoken command and restored their victims to health, sanity and society.

He destroyed the infection in Peter's mother-in-law that had laid her low with a fever.

He cleansed lepers.

He gave sight to the blind.

He healed the lame, the maimed, the paralyzed.

He restored the severed ear of Malchus.

He went throughout Galilee healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.

He raised a widow's son from the dead at Nain and turned the funeral into a celebration.

He reconstituted the decaying body of Lazarus and restored him to life with a single command: "Lazarus, come out!"

He raised Jairus's young daughter from the dead. On the way, he felt power flow out of him and heal a hemorrhaging woman when she touched the hem of His garment.

He stilled the storm on the Sea Of Galilee.

He filled the disciples' net with fish.

He fed thousands with a few loaves and a few little fish.

He forgave the woman who had been caught in adultery.

He took the children up in His arms and blessed them.

He laid down His life for us and took it up again. This command He received from His Father.

He is highly exalted at the right hand of the Father as our Great High priest.

He is coming again in power at the command of the Father.

These are the works of the Father, done by the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit. *These are the works of God.*