

*We Beheld His Glory:
The Claims of Jesus*



12 Daily Readings from Gospel of John

J.C. Ryle

Adapted by Ron Jones

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J.C. Ryle Bio

J.C. (John Charles) Ryle was born on May 10, 1816 in Cheshire, England. He grew up in a nominally Christian home. His parents were members of the Church of England, but were never committed to it or to Christ. However, God began to work in J.C.'s heart when he was a young man. He became seriously ill with a chest infection and was confined to rest. During this time, he began to read the Scriptures seriously and to pray and eventually came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Reflecting on his salvation, J.C. commented later, "Nothing to this day appeared to me so clear and distinct as my own sinfulness, Christ's preciousness, the value of the Bible, the absolute necessity of coming out of the world, [and] the need of being born again."

He was ordained as a pastor and preacher in the Church of England in December 1841 at the age of 25 years old. He served as pastor in four congregations during his ministry. He became well-known as a strong and Biblically sound teacher of the Scriptures. He preached many sermons and wrote many tracts (small booklets on various Bible topics) addressing contemporary issues of his day that he felt Christians needed to understand. He wrote several books, the most famous being the "Expository Thoughts on the Gospels." The "Expository Thoughts" is a book which gives a passage by passage explanation of the four gospels balancing solid scholarship with practical exhortation. Ryle lived to be 84 years old and died on June 10, 1900 in Chidwall, England.

J.C. Ryle was a man who loved Christ and loved his Word. He was a careful scholar who had a desire that Christians understand the practical applications of the Gospels based up a clear understanding of what the writers meant when they wrote them.

Preface

If you tell someone that you are a Christian and being a Christian is having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, they might say “So, what is so great about Jesus?” The greatness of a relationship with Jesus Christ is the greatness of Jesus Christ himself. The quality of a relationship is based on the quality of the person you have a relationship with. Jesus Christ did not claim to be a gentle itinerant preacher who went around teaching people that they should love their neighbor and do good to others. He claimed to be the Son of God. This claim displayed his divine glory because it was true.

He was the second person of the Triune God sent by the Father to redeem a people for himself by his death on the cross for their sins. This is what Jesus claimed about himself and what his apostles claimed about him. When Jesus made that claim he separated himself from every good religious or moral leader who ever lived. None of them ever claimed to be God, come in the flesh. This glorious acclamation elevated Jesus above anyone and everyone.

This eBook is the first in a two-part series of daily readings from the Gospels. In this first eBook, you will behold how the Gospels reveal the glory of Christ by what Jesus claimed about himself. In the second eBook, entitled, “We Beheld His Glory: The Miracles of Jesus,” John the apostle reveals how Jesus proved his claims to be God and revealed his divine glory by his miracles.

These two eBooks have been adapted from JC Ryle’s Expository Thoughts on the Gospel of John. I have designed this daily reading schedule to help you as a believer focus on Jesus your Savior and grow in your relationship with him. I have adapted his writing by updating some of his wording for contemporary readers. I have also added my own exposition from the text in places where Ryle may not have given as full an explanation of Christ as it was my purpose to do in this eBook. Through these Bible passages you will come to know Jesus in a deeper way.

My hope is that JC Ryle would have been blessed by how I have taken his work and adapted it for Christians living today. I do know that he, like I, am always encouraged when the Word of God is carefully explained and the Lord of our lives is glorified through that exposition. May the Lord encourage you through his Word in this eBook.

Ron Jones

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Day 1 Jesus: The Divine Eternal Word

John 1:1-5

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 was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John begins his Gospel with a magnificent statement concerning the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is, beyond all question the one whom John refers to when he speaks of "the Word." John calls Jesus "the Word of God," to share with us that he was the "Word of the Lord" that appeared and spoke in the Old Testament. He was the one who revealed the Father to the prophets in the past and had now come in the flesh to reveal him to the world. Christ did not come just to die, but also to reveal the true nature of the Triune God.

First, we learn that our Lord Jesus Christ is eternal. John tells us that "in the beginning was the Word." He did not begin to exist when the heavens and the earth were made. Much less did he begin to exist when the Gospel was brought into the world. He had glory with the Father "before the world was." (John 17:5) He was existing when matter was first created, and before time began. He was "before all things." (Colossians 1:17). He was from all eternity.

Second, we learn that our Lord Jesus Christ is a person distinct from God the Father, and yet one with him. John tells us that "the Word was with God and the Word was God." The Father and the Word, though two persons, are joined by an indescribable union. As God the Father was from all eternity, so also was the Word, even God the Son, their glory equal, their majesty co-eternal, and yet their Godhead one. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God; he is not merely a created angel, or a lesser god inferior to God the Father. Our triune God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, is above human understanding! Blessed is he who can receive it as a little child, without attempting to explain it.

Third, we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things. John tells us that "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." So far from being a creature of God, as some have falsely asserted, he is the being who made the worlds and all that they contain. "He commanded and they were created." (Psalm 148:5)

Last, we learn that the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of all spiritual life and light. John tells us, that "in him was life, and the life was the light of men." He alone is the eternal fountain from which the sons of men have ever received life. Any spiritual life and light Adam and Eve possessed before the fall was from Christ. Any deliverance from sin and spiritual death a child of Adam has ever enjoyed since the fall, any light of conscience or understanding someone one has obtained, all has flowed from Christ.

The vast majority of mankind in every age have refused to know him, have forgotten the fall, and their own need of a Savior. The light has been constantly shining "in darkness." Satan and his followers have tried to extinguish the light of God's truth of eternal life in Christ, but "the darkness has not overcome it." It still shines to this day and will forever. This light is from

Jesus Christ. If any men and women out of the countless millions of mankind have ever had spiritual life and light, they have owed all to Christ.

We must always remember what kind of Redeemer Jesus is who brought his light and salvation to mankind. He is the Eternal God, the Creator of all things, one with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit who became man and died on the cross for us so that we might be with him forever. There is nothing he cannot do. There is nothing he cannot accomplish in your life. Trust him with all your heart!

Day 2 Jesus: The Word Become Flesh

John 1:14

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

In this passage John reveals to us that our divine Savior took human nature upon him. He became a man like us in all things except for sin. Like us, he was born of a woman, though born in a miraculous manner. Like us, he grew from an infant to a teenager and from a teenager to an adult, both in wisdom and in stature. (Luke 2:5) Like us, he hungered, thirsted, ate, drank, slept, was wearied, felt pain, wept, rejoiced, marveled, and was moved to anger and compassion.

Having become flesh, and taken a body, he prayed, read the Scriptures, was tempted, and submitted his human will to the will of God the Father. And finally, in the same body, he suffered and shed his blood, died, and was buried. His human body was then transformed into a glorified one as he rose from the dead; he ascended up into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father as the God-man forever.

This union of two natures in Christ's one Person is doubtless one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith. It needs to be carefully stated. It is just one of those great truths which are not meant to be curiously analyzed, but to be reverently believed. The Son of God who is one substance with the Father took man's nature in the womb of the virgin Mary so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and the manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, so that there is one Christ, truly God and truly man.

We must never forget that though our Lord was God and man at the same time, the divine and human natures in him were never mingled. One nature did not swallow up the other. The two natures remained perfect and distinct. The deity of Christ was never for a moment laid aside, although his glory was veiled.

He did lay aside his use of his divine attributes for his own benefit and submitted his use of his divine attributes to the Father's will while on earth. The manhood of Christ, during his lifetime was never for a moment unlike our own, though by union with the Godhead, greatly dignified. Though perfect God, Christ has always been perfect man from the first moment of his incarnation.

This constant and undivided union of two perfect natures in Christ's person is exactly what gives infinite value to his sacrifice. The sacrifice for sin needed to be as the perfect substitute for human beings so the Son of God became a human being. It had to be an eternal sacrifice and it was because Jesus Christ was God.

This constant and undivided union of two perfect natures in Christ's person is exactly what gives infinite value to his mediation, and qualifies him to be the very mediator that sinners need. Our mediator is one who can sympathize with us, because he is truly man. And yet, at the same time, he is one who can intercede with the Father for us because he is truly God.

It is the same union which gives infinite value to his righteousness when imputed to believers. It is the righteousness of one who was God as well as man. It is the same union which gives infinite value to his resurrection. When he rose again, he rose as the head of the body of believers by his power as God. Let these things sink deeply into our hearts.

Although Jesus was fully human, he did not have a sin nature and he did not sin. His human nature was like Adam and Eve's human nature before the Fall. He lived in perfect obedience to the Father so he might be the perfect substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. John tells us, "You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin." (1 John 3:5) Peter writes, "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth." (1 Peter 2:22)

The incarnation and what it means to us is what being a Christian is all about. It should stir within us feelings of deep gratitude and thankfulness. It is full of abounding comfort for all who know Jesus Christ by faith and believe in him.

Did the Word become flesh? Then he is one who can be touched by his people's weaknesses because he has suffered himself, being tempted. Jesus faced temptations from Satan and the world just as we do. Although, he did not have sinful desires that arise within him as we do because of our corrupted fleshly nature (Galatians 5:16-17), his temptations were real just as the temptation by Satan of Adam and Eve was real. This means he can sympathize with us, because he is man, and yet, he can strengthen and encourage us because he is God. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin."

Did the Word become flesh? Then he can supply us with a perfect pattern and example for our daily life. Had he walked among us as an angel or a spirit, we could never have copied him. But having dwelt among us as a man, we know that the true standard of holiness is to "walk in the same way in which he walked." (1 John 2:6) He is a perfect pattern because he is God. But he is also a perfect pattern for us because he is man.

In the family of God, Jesus is like our big brother who helps us understand how to live a godly life as a human being. By his Spirit, he teaches us to turn from temptation, to trust God in difficult times, and to follow him in all we do through following the Scriptures. God knew we needed Jesus or we would be overwhelmed by God's absolute holiness and our deep unworthiness as sinful human beings. Jesus gives us his righteousness and puts his Spirit in us at salvation. As Paul proclaims, "Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1)

Day 3 Jesus: God at the Father's Side

John 1:16-18

For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

The passage before us contains three great declarations about our Lord Jesus Christ. Each of the three is among the foundation truths of Christianity. We are taught, firstly, that it is Christ alone who supplies all the spiritual needs of all believers. It is written that “from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

In John 1:14, John wrote, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” When the Son of God became a man, John, the writer of this gospel, and the other apostles beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only Son of God. They saw his glory as he displayed his divine attributes to them throughout his ministry. But John focuses on two of those attributes in this chapter, grace and truth. God is a God who is gracious and truthful in all that he is and does. The Son of God was full of God's grace and truth because he was God become a man. John continues that thought in this verse and focuses on the incredible grace Jesus Christ brings into our lives as believers. He says, “for from his fullness.” That “fullness” is the infinite amount of love, grace, mercy, peace, righteousness, justice and the like in Jesus Christ as God. Out of that limitless supply of grace, Christ pours it upon us.

Believers are constantly receiving grace upon grace. Like a waterfall that is pouring out huge amounts of water, there is a limitless outflow of Christ's gracious favor upon us. He is graciously working in our lives to bless us, showering upon us his blessings. We often do not see it because it is subtle as he works providentially in our lives and world, but it is there nonetheless. Another way of saying it is in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

We are taught, secondly, the vast superiority of Christ to Moses, and of the Gospel to the Law. It is written that “the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” Moses was used by God as a servant, to convey the moral, ceremonial, and civil law that would govern the nation of Israel. As a servant, he was faithful to him who appointed him, but he was only a servant. The moral law, which he brought down from Mount Sinai, was holy, and just, and good. But it could not justify. It was not given for that purpose. It pronounced a curse against any imperfect obedience. The ceremonial law, which he was commanded to impose on Israel, was full of deep meaning and typical instruction about the messiah and his ministry. Its ordinances and ceremonies made it an excellent schoolmaster to guide men toward seeing their need for Christ and understanding Christ's mission to take away the sins of the world, foreshadowed by the Passover lamb. (Galatians 3:24) But the ceremonial law was only a schoolmaster. It could not make him who kept it perfect in righteousness.

Christ, on the other hand, came into the world with the keys of God's treasury of grace and truth entirely in his hands. (Hebrews 3:6) Grace came by him, when he made fully known and accomplished God's gracious plan of salvation by his death for sin and opened the fountain of mercy to all the world if they would accept it by faith. Truth came by him, when he fulfilled in his own person the types of the Old Testament, and revealed himself as the true sacrifice and the true priest. No doubt there was much grace and truth under the Law of Moses, but the whole of God's grace, and the whole truth about redemption, were never known until Jesus came into the world, and died for sinners.

We are taught, thirdly, that it is Christ alone who has revealed God the Father to man because he himself is God. It is written that "No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known." The eye of mortal man has never seen God the Father. No man could bear the sight. Yet John says, all that human beings are capable of knowing about God the Father is fully revealed to us by God the Son. He, who is God, the second person of the Triune God, has been pleased to take our nature upon him, and to exhibit to us in the form of a human being, all that our minds can comprehend of the Father's nature and attributes. In Christ's words, deeds, life, and death, we learn as much concerning God the Father as our finite minds can at present bear.

His perfect wisdom, his almighty power, his unspeakable love to sinners, his incomparable holiness, his hatred of sin, could never be represented to our eyes more clearly than we see them in Christ's life and death. In truth, "the Word became flesh." (John 1:14) when the Word took upon himself a body. "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." (Hebrews 1:3) "For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily." (Colossians 2:9) He says of himself, "I and my Father are one." (John 10:30) "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14:9) These are deep and mysterious truths.

And now, after reading this passage, can we ever give too much honor to Christ? Can we ever think too highly of him? Let us eliminate the unworthy thought from our minds forever. Let us learn to exalt him more in our hearts, and to rest more confidently the whole weight of our souls and spirits in his hands. No one ever errs on the side of giving too much honor to God the Son. Christ is the meeting-point between the Triune God and the sinner's soul. "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." (John 5:23)

Day 4

Jesus: The Lamb of God

John 1:29-34

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.' I myself did not know him, but for this purpose I came baptizing with water, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John bore witness: "I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."

God the Father sent a prophet to prepare Israel for the coming of the messiah, Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was the first prophet in Israel in four hundred years. His ministry was to give an objective prophetic identification of Jesus as the messiah who came to redeem people and call Israel to repentance so that they might accept the messiah as Lord and Savior by faith in Jesus.

Let us notice, firstly, in this passage, the unique title which John the Baptist gives to Christ. He calls him "the Lamb of God." This description would have been greatly significant to the people of Israel based on the revelation of God in the Old Testament. It meant that Christ was the great sacrifice for sin. He was the true Lamb which was symbolized every morning and evening in the sacrifice in the temple. He was the messiah, the "Lamb" of which Isaiah had prophesied, who would be "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent." (Isaiah 53:7)

He was the true Lamb of which the Passover lamb in Egypt had been a vivid type. As Paul proclaims in 1 Corinthians 5:7, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." As God had provided the Israelites in Egypt the Passover lamb to sacrifice so that the wrath of God would pass over the Israelites and they would not experience his punishment upon them, so too, God has provided the sacrifice of Jesus Christ so that those who accept him would have the wrath of God pass over them and they would not experience the God's punishment in all eternity. The Passover lamb provided a beautiful picture of the sacrifice of Christ on the cross which took away the sin of the world!

Let us notice, secondly, in this passage, the peculiar work which John the Baptist describes Christ as doing. He says that "he takes away the sin of the world." Christ is a Savior. He did not come on earth to be a conqueror, or a philosopher, or a mere teacher of morality. He came to save sinners. He came to do that which humans could never do for themselves, to do that which money and learning can never obtain, to do that which is essential to real happiness, he came to "take away sin."

Christ is a complete Savior. He did not merely make vague proclamations of pardon, mercy, and forgiveness. He took our sins upon himself, and carried them away. He allowed them to be laid upon himself and "bore our sins in his body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24) The Lamb of God has taken them completely away once a person turns to Christ for salvation.

Let us notice, thirdly, in this passage, the unique ministry which John the Baptist attributes to Christ. He speaks of him as he “who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” The baptism here spoken of is not the baptism of water. It does not consist either of dipping or sprinkling. It is not a baptism which any man can give. It is a baptism which the great head of the Church keeps exclusively in his own hands. Jesus baptizes each person who accepts him as Savior with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. The Spirit enters the believer uniting him or her spiritually to Christ and giving him or her eternal life. This is the baptism of the Spirit. It happens at salvation to every believer who trusts Christ. It is how God saves us. It is the new birth. It is “the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” (Titus 3:5)

Let us notice, lastly, in this passage John’s great proclamation of the true identity of Jesus. He proclaims to all, “This is the Son of God.” This is Jesus’ title of deity. He is the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity. This establishes by the witness of a prophet that Jesus is God. In fact, John tells us that he knew Jesus’ true identity because God the Father himself revealed it to him. John “bore witness: ‘I saw the Spirit descend from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’”

It was crucial in God’s plan for his Son to be objectively identified by a prophet of Israel so his people would know that this Jesus was God’s Son, the messiah. His identification by a prophet and his miracles and resurrection from the dead authenticated Jesus as the Son of God and not just a wise man or good moral teacher.

We need to hold this message of the true identity of Jesus in our hearts and minds. Many people who are blinded by Satan will come along and attack us for our faith in Jesus Christ. They will try to mock us and censor us. They will want to stop any recognition of Jesus because as the Son of God who became a man, he holds them accountable for their sin. He has standards of morality they refuse to follow. Stand firm in your faith. Hold fast to this testimony in the Scriptures that proved Jesus was who he claimed to be. He was authenticated by the prophet John. He performed miracles no human being had ever performed. He rose from the dead which no human being can ever do. It is this Jesus who sacrificed himself to pay for our sins. And it is this Jesus who will bring us to his eternal kingdom to live with him forever!

Day 5 Jesus: The Prophesied Messiah

John 1:43-51

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"

Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

The latter part of John chapter 1 records the testimony of John the Baptist to the true identity of Jesus and the calling of Jesus' earliest disciples, John, Andrew, Peter, Phillip, and Nathanael (also called Bartholomew). In this passage, Jesus finds Phillip and calls him to follow. Phillip immediately goes and tells Nathanael who comes to Jesus. As we shall see Nathanael is the earliest person besides John the Baptist to declare that Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus accepted their testimonies to his true identity.

Let us observe, firstly, in these verses, how much of Christ there is in the Old Testament Scriptures. We read that when Philip described Christ to Nathanael, he says, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote." Christ is the center of the revelation of the Old Testament. To him the earliest promises pointed in the days of Adam, and Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. To him every sacrifice pointed in the ceremonial worship appointed at Mount Sinai. Of him every high priest was a type, and every part of the tabernacle was a shadow, and every judge and deliverer of Israel was a figure. He was the prophet like Moses, whom the Lord God promised to send, and the King of the house of David, who came to be David's Lord as well as son.

He was the Son of the virgin, and the Lamb, foretold by Isaiah, the righteous Branch mentioned by Jeremiah, the true Shepherd, foreseen by Ezekiel, the Messenger of the Covenant, promised by Malachi, and the Messiah, who, according to Daniel, was to be cut off, though not for himself. The further we read in the volume of the Old Testament, the clearer we find the testimony about Christ. The light which the inspired writers enjoyed in ancient days was, at best, but dim, compared to that of the Gospel. But the coming Person they all saw afar off, and on whom they all fixed their eyes, was one and the same. The Spirit, which was in them, testified of Christ. (1 Peter 1:11)

Do we find it hard to see at first Christ in the Old Testament? Let us study the Old Testament with our eyes opened to see him. Christ is there. May we never rest until we can

subscribe to our Lord's words about the Old Testament Scriptures, "They are they which testify of me." (John 5:39)

Let us observe, secondly, in these verses, the good advice which Philip gave to Nathanael. The mind of Nathanael was full of doubts about the Savior, of whom Philip told Him. "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" he said. And what did Philip reply? It was "Come and see."

Wiser counsel than this it would be impossible to conceive! People do not come to Christ by carefully reasoned arguments although that can help people understand the Gospel if they have questions or objections. They come to Christ by hearing about Christ and observing who he was and what he did in the Gospels. The four Gospels of the NT are the eye-witness accounts of Matthew, John, Peter (through Mark his close associate who wrote down his words) and Paul and the apostles (through Luke who wrote down their words. There is no closer testimony than from those who knew Jesus and spent every day with him during his ministry.

Let us never be afraid to invite people to "come and see" Jesus by reading the Gospels for themselves. Let us never be afraid of challenging people to see what his disciples who were eyewitnesses of his words and miracles said about Jesus rather than just listen to what others who were not there say about him. Let us invite people not to make judgments about Jesus until they have carefully investigated him and his ministry for themselves. That's what Philip invited Nathaniel to do.

Let us observe, thirdly, in these verses, Nathanael's declaration of the true identity of Jesus. As soon as Jesus told him that he had seen him under the fig tree, Nathanael knew who Jesus really was. He knew no mere human being could know that fact when he wasn't present with him. He declared immediately that Jesus was "the Son of God, the King of Israel." And Jesus did not rebuke him. Nathanael had declared the truth about him. Jesus commended him for his spiritual perception of his true identity by saying that he would see far more than just this one act of divine knowledge on Christ's part and would be amazed by it.

Let us observe, fourthly, the high character which Jesus gives of Nathanael. He calls him "an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit." Nathanael, there can be no doubt, was a true Old Testament believer awaiting the messiah with an honest heart. Like Simeon and Anna, and other pious Jews, he was living by faith in God's revelation of the Old Testament and waiting prayerfully for the promised Redeemer, when our Lord's ministry began. He was a truth-seeker and was not interested in the lies of the Pharisees and Sadducees and all the fashionable religion of the day. That is why he immediately accepted Jesus as the messiah, the Son of God, when he encountered him.

Let us pray that we may be of the same spirit as Nathanael. An honest, unprejudiced mind, a child-like willingness to follow the truth, wherever the truth may lead us, a simple, hearty desire to be guided, taught, and led by the Spirit through the Word of God. Let us hold fast to our messiah, Jesus, who is the Son of God!

Day 6

Jesus: The Son of God the Father

John 5:16-23

And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.

Jesus is in Jerusalem with his disciples. It was the Sabbath day. Jesus encountered a physically disabled man who was unable to walk and healed him telling him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." Later, when the Pharisees found out they confronted Jesus for healing this man and telling him to carry his mat (both wrongly considered forbidden acts on the Sabbath according to the Pharisees). In this passage John the apostle records Jesus' response to the Pharisees by revealing to them the divine nature of these miracles done by the one who created the Sabbath in the first place. He reveals his divine unity as the Son of God with God the Father and his authority as the Son of God to work miraculously in the lives of people on the very day that honors him.

Jesus asserts, in the first place, his divine nature as the Son of God and his divine unity with God the Father. "My Father," he says, "is working until now and I am working." It is as though he said, "Though my Father rested on the seventh day from his work of creation, he has never rested for a moment from his providential governing of the world, and from his merciful work of supplying the daily needs of all his creatures. Were he to rest from such work, the whole frame of nature would stand still. And I also work works of mercy on the Sabbath day. I do not break the fourth commandment when I heal the sick, any more than my Father breaks it when he causes the sun to rise and the grass to grow on the Sabbath."

The Jews, we are told, sought to kill Jesus because he said "that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." Our Lord, in reply, on this special occasion, enters very fully into the question of his own divine nature. The Jewish leaders recognized rightly that Jesus was calling himself the Son of God. They also recognized that a son partakes of the same nature as his father, therefore Jesus was calling himself divine, making himself equal with God. This is exactly what Jesus was claiming about himself. Of course, we know from other statements from Jesus and his apostles, that God is a Triune being and Jesus was claiming to be the second person of the Trinity.

In order for them to understand that his healing on the Sabbath was completely in line with the will of God the Father, Jesus declares, "The Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing." Jesus is describing the divine unity between the Father and the Son as God. In the plan of redemption, the Son follows the Father's will and works in unison with him so that the Son is always doing the will of his Father. The implication is that when the Son heals on the Sabbath, he is following the Father's will. In fact, he is the Lord of the Sabbath." (Matthew 12:8)

He asserts, in the next place, his own divine power to give life. He tells us, "the Son gives life to whom he will." Life, both physical and spiritual, is the highest and greatest gift that can be bestowed. It is precisely that thing that man, with all his cleverness, can neither give to the work of his hands, nor restore when taken away. But life, we are told, is in the hands of the Lord Jesus, to bestow and give at his discretion. Dead bodies and dead souls are both alike under his dominion. He has the keys of death. In him is life. He is the life. (John 1:4; Revelation 1:18)

He asserts, in the last place, his own authority to judge the world. "The Father," we are told, "has committed all judgment to the Son." All power and authority over the world are committed to Christ's hands. He is the King and the Judge of mankind. Before him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that he is Lord. (Philippians 2:9-11) He that was once despised and rejected by man, condemned and crucified as a criminal, shall one day hold a great judgment, and judge all the world.

And now let us think whether it is possible to honor Christ too much in our lives. If we have ever thought so, let us cast aside the thought forever. Both in his own nature as God and in his office as commissioned mediator, he is worthy of all honor. He who is one with the Father, the Giver of life, the King of kings, the coming Judge, can never be too exalted. "Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." No human being can approach God without the Lord Jesus Christ. Honoring him by faith and repentance is the only way humans can worship God. Many people claim that they love God, but have no interest in Jesus. This is a false claim and shows those people do not know the Scriptures and have not embraced God as the Scriptures reveal they must, through Jesus Christ, his Son. Loving God means embracing how God defines loving him. Those who choose to attempt to love God their way not God's way have denied the very God they say they love.

Take time and ask yourself if you have come to God through Jesus Christ and are honoring Christ as the Son of God, God come in the flesh, above all in your life. If you are, keep growing in your knowledge of Christ through his Word. If you have not come to God through Christ, you can right now by turning to Jesus in repentance of sin and submission of heart and by faith asking him to save you. It is that simple! It is a free gift to all who will ask. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

Day 7 Jesus: The Messiah Confirmed

John 5:30-39

"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me. If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true. You sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. Not that the testimony that I receive is from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was a burning and shining lamp, and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John.

For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness about me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me."

Jesus is in Jerusalem with his disciples. He has been confronted by the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath and for "calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus responded by revealing his divine unity as the Son of God with God the Father and his authority as the Son of God to work miraculously in the lives of people even on the Sabbath. He then continued his response by revealing his role in God's redemption plan as both Savior and Judge of all human beings. Here, he gives four proofs that he is indeed the promised Messiah. Four different witnesses are brought forward. Four kinds of evidence are offered, his Father in heaven, John the Baptist, the miraculous works he had done, and the Scriptures. Each and all of these are named by our Lord, as testifying that he was the Christ, the Son of God. Only hard hearts could have been unmoved from such testimony. But it only proves the truth of the saying that unbelief does not arise so much from lack of evidence, as from a refusal to believe.

Let us observe first the importance Christ puts on the testimony of John the Baptist. Notice how He speaks of John the Baptist, "he has borne witness to the truth," and "he was a burning and a shining lamp." It had been prophesied in the OT that a prophet would arise and proclaim the arrival of the messiah. He would be the forerunner of the messiah, to be a prophet who would give the Jews supernatural revelation and objective testimony to the true identity of Jesus of Nazareth. And John had fulfilled his mission. He had identified Jesus as the Son of God (John 1:34).

Let us observe secondly the importance Christ puts upon miracles, as an evidence of his being the Messiah. He says, "The works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me." In the days when our Lord was upon earth, his miracles produced a huge effect on the minds of men. Jesus had just healed a man who could not walk. "And great crowds came to him, bringing with them the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute, and many others, and they put them at his feet, and he

healed them.” (Matthew 15:30) These supernatural displays of divine power demonstrated to all that Jesus was the Son of God. There were so many, and they were so public and so incapable of being explained away, that our Lord's enemies could only say that they were done by Satan. That they were done, they could not deny. “What are we to do?” they said. “For this man performs many signs.” (John 11:47) The miracles of Jesus which people try to deny now, no one denied two thousand years ago.

Let us observe thirdly the importance Christ puts upon the direct testimony of the Father. Ultimately, God the Father is the one revealing who Jesus is. Jesus refers here to the Father's direct testimony at Jesus' baptism. The Father had declared to Jesus “You are my beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased.” But God the Father did not allow the people to hear his voice or see his form because of their unbelief. Jesus told them, “His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen, and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe the one whom he has sent.”

Let us observe, lastly, in these verses, the importance Christ puts upon the Scriptures. He refers to them in concluding his list of evidences, as the great witnesses to his true identity. Jesus proclaimed, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.” The “Scriptures” of which our Lord speaks are, of course, the books of the Old Testament. And his words show the important truth which too many tend to overlook, that all of the Bible is meant to teach us about Christ. Christ is not merely in the Gospels and Epistles. Christ is to be found directly and indirectly in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets. In the promises to Adam, Abraham, Moses, and David, in the types and symbols of the ceremonial law, in the predictions of Isaiah and the other prophets, Jesus, the Messiah, is everywhere to be found in the Old Testament.

All four witnesses testify that Jesus was the Son of God. To talk of lacking evidence is ridiculous. God the Father has made it clear to all who want to receive his testimony exactly who Jesus is. If a person wants to find out whether Jesus is the Son of God, he or she simply needs to read the Gospels with an open mind seeking the truth! People do not reject Christ because there is a lack of evidence. People reject Christ because they refuse to submit their lives to him.

Day 8 Jesus: The Messiah Prophesied

John 5:40-47

Yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life. I do not receive glory from people. But I know that you do not have the love of God within you. I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me. If another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father. There is one who accuses you: Moses, on whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?"

As we saw last time, Jesus is in Jerusalem with his disciples. He has been confronted by the Pharisees for healing on the Sabbath and for "calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God. Jesus responded by revealing his divine unity as the Son of God with God the Father and his authority as the Son of God to work miraculously in the lives of people even on the Sabbath. He then continued his response by revealing his role in God's redemption plan as both Savior and Judge of all human beings. Then, he gave four proofs that he is indeed the promised Messiah. Here, he continues by convicting them of their hypocrisy in saying they believe in the truthful of Moses and his writings, yet they will not believe in him, the very one Moses wrote about in the OT.

Let us mark, firstly, in this passage, the reason why many souls are lost. The Lord Jesus says to the unbelieving Jews, "You refuse to come to me that you may have life." These words explain very clearly why people end up in hell. It is lack of will to come to Christ for salvation that shut people out of heaven. It is man's own unwillingness to come to Christ, to believe in him, repent of their sin, and submit to his righteous way of life. The Lord shows the motivation of the Pharisees in rejecting Christ. He says to the Jews, "How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?" He meant that they were not honest in their spirituality. With all their apparent desire to hear and learn, they cared more in reality for pleasing people than God. In this state of mind, they were never likely to believe.

To become a Christian and follow Christ, we have to turn away from the world and the values and desires of unbelievers. Every day we will be living our lives in contradiction to what is pleasing to them. Our words and actions may be full of love, but because we stand against the sins of unbelievers, they will always be in opposition to us. Our Lord Jesus said, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." (John 15:18) We will always be perceived by unbelievers as "intolerant" and "contentious" because we don't condone sin.

Let us mark, thirdly, in this passage, the manner in which Christ speaks of Moses. He says to the Jews, "For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me." These words demand our special attention in the present time. Our Lord says clearly and distinctly that Moses existed and that Moses was the author of the first five books of the Old Testament as the rest of the Old Testament declares.

There are many today many who say that Moses did not write the Pentateuch. Can we suppose for a moment that our Lord was only accommodating himself to the prejudices and traditions of his Jewish hearers, and that he spoke of Moses as a writer, though he knew in his heart that Moses never wrote at all? Such an idea would imply that our Lord did not always speak the truth. Can we suppose for a moment that our Lord who is the Son of God and called himself, "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) could speak a falsehood of any kind? Such an idea is ridiculous blasphemy. Jesus over and over confirmed the truthfulness of the existence and history of Adam and Eve and all their descendants including Moses exactly as written in the Old Testament.

Let us beware of handling the Old Testament irreverently and allowing our minds to doubt the truth of any part of it, because of alleged difficulties. The simple fact that the writers of the New Testament continually refer to the Old Testament and speak even of the most miraculous events recorded in it as undoubtedly true, should silence our doubts. Is it at all likely, probable, or credible, that we at the present time are better informed about Moses than Jesus and his apostles? God forbid that we should think so! Then let us stand fast, and not doubt that every word in the Old Testament, as well as in the New, was given by inspiration of God and is inerrant in all they affirm.

Lastly, where do the writings of Moses speak of the messiah? Where do they show the person, mission and work of God's divine redeemer, Jesus Christ? In the book of Genesis, Jesus was prophesied to be the "seed" (descendant) of the woman, who would conquer the serpent, Satan (Genesis 3:15). He was the predicted to be the descendant of Abraham who would bring blessing to the whole world (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 1:1). He was foreshadowed in the sacrifice of Abraham's son, Isaac (Genesis 22; Hebrews 11:19).

In the book of Exodus, he was foreshadowed in the Passover Lamb which was the sacrifice made to save the Hebrews from death (Exodus 12, John 1:29, 36; 1 Corinthians 5:7). In Leviticus, he was foreshadowed in the high priest who made sacrifices for the sins of his people (Leviticus 1-7; Hebrews 4:14-16). In the book of Numbers, he was predicted to be the star that shall come from Jacob and the scepter that shall rise out of Israel (Numbers 24:17). In Deuteronomy, he was predicted to be the future Prophet who was like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-19, John 6:14). In pre-incarnate appearances, Jesus was the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:2-4), to Hagar in the wilderness (Genesis 16:7), and to Abraham in the mountains of Moriah (Genesis 22:17). Jesus was the predicted messiah of the first five books of Moses and in the rest of the Old Testament.

Let us hold fast to our faith in Jesus Christ and the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scripture which reveals him. The winds and waves of theological confusion may press against us originating from those in the academic realm who call themselves Christian scholars but who do not believe in the full inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture as the Bible teaches. All of the Bible is true. Not part of the Bible, not most of the Bible, but all of the Bible from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 is true. When we hold fast to Jesus, we hold fast to what he said about the Scriptures. In John 17:17 Jesus said, "Your Word is truth." He used the singular "Word" to show that the sixty-six books of the Bible form one "Word of God" and that Word is truth. Loving Jesus involves loving him as he is revealed in the Scriptures. Read the Scriptures each day that you might grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

Day 9
Jesus: The "I AM" of Exodus 3

John 8:52-59

"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.'

But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Jesus is again in Jerusalem preaching and teaching. We should observe, firstly, what glorious encouragement our Lord holds out to his believing people. We read that he said, "If anyone keeps my word, he will never see death." Of course, these words do not mean that true Christians shall never physically die, but the words do mean, that they shall not taste of spiritual death. When we accepted Jesus Christ, we received eternal life as the Holy Spirit came to live within us in the future. Our physical bodies will one day die, but our souls and spirits will go immediately into the presence of Christ in heaven at death.

In 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, Paul says, "So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord." At death, Christians do not go into a deep sleep as some have wrongly taught, but rather our souls and spirits go into the presence of Christ to await the resurrection of our bodies in the last days. What a glorious moment that will be. That is the theological meaning of "he will never see death."

This blessed promise belongs to the true believer, the one who keeps or obeys Christ's teachings. That expression, it is clear, can never be applicable to the mere outward professing person who calls himself or herself a Christian, but neither knows nor cares anything about our Lord Jesus. It belongs to those who receive into their hearts, and obey in their lives, the message which the Lord Jesus brought from heaven. It belongs, in short, to those who are Christians, not in name and form only, but in deed and in truth.

We should observe, secondly, in this passage, the knowledge of Christ Abraham possessed. We read that our Lord said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad." When our Lord used these remarkable words, Abraham had been dead and buried at least 1850 years! And yet he is said to have seen our Lord's day! How

astounding that sounds! Yet it was quite true. Not only did Abraham “see” our Lord and talk to him when the Son of God appeared to him on the night before Sodom was destroyed in Genesis 18, but by faith he looked forward to the day of our Lord's incarnation yet to come, and “was glad.” Abraham knew the promise by God of a redeemer in Genesis 3:15. He knew the promise of God that his descendant, the messiah, would be that redeemer and bless all the families of the earth with salvation in him if they turned to him in faith. And as he saw it, he rejoiced.

The plain truth is, that it is too easy to forget that there never was but one way of salvation, one Savior, and one hope for sinners, and that Abraham and all the Old Testaments saints looked to the same Christ that we look to ourselves. The Old Testament is not contrary to the New, for both in the Old and New Testament eternal life is offered through Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and man. Those OT believers looked for God's promises in a person, the messiah. The Mosaic Law was not given to save, but to govern Israel and point out their need of a Savior. (Galatians 3:19-22)

We should observe, thirdly, in this prophecy, how distinctly our Lord declares his own pre-existence and eternal nature. We read that he said to the Jews, “Before Abraham was, I AM.” This expression by Jesus “I AM” comes from Exodus 3:14. The Angel/Messenger of the Lord (3:2) appears in the burning bush and is called “Lord” and “God” (3:4). When Moses asked the Lord what he should say if the Hebrew people asked him about who sent him to lead the people out of Egypt. God told Moses, “I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” In these words (I AM), Jesus, who was called the Angel/Messenger of the Lord in the OT is declaring that he is the God who exists always.

This is what makes him the highest supreme being in the universe. He is the only being that has always existed with no beginning. In Isaiah 44:6-7, the Lord God declares about himself, “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god. Who is like me? Let him proclaim it.” Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who is Yahweh, and with those few words in John 8:58, he declares that he is the eternal God who is always in the present. He existed long before he came into the world, before the days of Abraham, before man was created. He is declaring that he is above time and exists in eternity. The Jewish leaders knew exactly what he was declaring about himself and “they picked up stones to throw at him.” Stoning was the penalty for blasphemy. But Jesus supernaturally “hid himself and went out of the temple.”

Deep as these words are, they are full of practical comfort. They show us the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that great foundation, on which sinners are invited to rest their souls. He to whom the Gospel bids us come with our sins, and believe for forgiveness and peace, is no mere human. He is nothing less than God himself. Then let us begin coming to him with confidence. Let us continue leaning on him without fear. The Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, and our eternal life is secure in him.

Day 10 Jesus: One with God the Father

John 10:22-30

At that time the Feast of Dedication took place at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the colonnade of Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me, but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will 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 the Father's hand. I and the Father are one."

John records that Jesus is in Jerusalem at the Feast of the Dedication with his disciples. Jesus has been using veiled language to proclaim that he is the messiah, the Son of God. Had he made a public declaration by saying "I am the messiah, the Son of God." They would have arrested him on the spot. Speaking in veiled language kept Jesus on God the Father's timetable to the cross. Their request for a plain declaration of his true identity was not from genuine sincerity, but from an evil motivation to destroy him. Jesus answers them which brings us to the first point.

We should notice, first, what Jesus says about the truthfulness of his proclamation and the unbelief of the Jewish leaders. He is the Son of God ("My Father") and the divine miracles he has been doing testified to his divine Sonship. But the Jewish leaders would not believe that Jesus was the messiah promised by the Father. Then Jesus explained why these people would not believe; it was because they were "not among my sheep."

In John 6:44, Jesus declared, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." Those who come to genuine faith in Christ and become part of his sheep are those whom the Father has drawn to Jesus by opening their spiritually blind eyes so they can see the light of Jesus and accept him as Savior and Lord. The Jewish leaders were still blind in their sin and refused to accept Jesus for who he was. The sovereign giver of eternal life is God. We share with people the good news of salvation, but it is God who must remove the veil of blindness so they might see the light of the glory of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

We should notice, second, the name which Christ gives to true Christians. He uses a figurative expression which, like all his language, is full of deep meaning. He calls them, "my sheep." The word "sheep," no doubt, points to something in the character and ways of true Christians. It would be easy to show that weakness and helplessness are points of resemblance between the sheep and the believer. The leading idea in our Lord's mind was the entire dependence of the sheep upon its Shepherd.

Just as sheep hear the voice of their own shepherd, and follow him, so do believers follow Christ. By faith they listen to his call. By faith they submit themselves to his guidance. By faith

they lean on him, and commit their souls to displaying his righteousness in their daily lives. The expression, "my sheep," points to the close connection that exists between Christ and believers. They are his by gift from the Father, his by purchase, his by calling and choice, and his by their own consent and heart-submission. In the highest sense they belong to Christ and just as a man feels a special interest in that which he has bought at a great price and made his own, so does the Lord Jesus feel a deep interest in and love for his people.

We should notice, third, in this passage, the vast privileges which the Lord Jesus Christ bestows on true Christians. He uses words about them of unique richness and strength. "I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." A stronger form of speech perhaps can hardly be found in the whole range of the Bible. Christ gives his people eternal life. He bestows on them freely an inheritance in heaven, pardoning their many sins, and clothing them with a perfect righteousness.

Christ declares that his people shall never perish. Weak as they are, they shall all be saved. Not one of them shall be lost and cast away, not one of them shall miss heaven. If they err, they shall be brought back; if they fall, they shall be raised. The enemies of their souls may be strong and mighty, but their Savior is mightier; and none shall snatch them out of their Savior's hands. His hand is a metaphor of his divine protective power over us who are his people. Jesus has said it, and he will make it good, "My sheep will never perish." This is the foundation of our eternal security in Christ!

Paul declared the same incredible truth from the perspective of God's love for us, his sheep. Romans 8:38-39 says, "For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." No one, not even ourselves, can cause a separation between God's love for us in Christ. Once we are united to Christ, we can never be separated from him. "Once saved, always saved" is an expression of joy for every believer who can wake up every morning and know for absolutely certain that he or she is still in Christ and still in the loving family of God.

We should notice last the incredible declaration Christ makes of the unity he has with God the Father. In order to explain how it is that the Father should take as much interest in the sheep as the Son, our Lord here declares, in the plainest and most explicit terms, that deep truth of the essential unity between himself and his Father. His statement "I and my Father are one" uses the simple words of human language to express the deepest and profoundest truth, the divine Trinitarian unity of the Father and Son. It does not refer to the "oneness" that can exist between human beings, but the "oneness" of the divine being. It does not mean that his Father and he were one person, but "I and my Father, though two distinct persons, are one in essence and nature." Hence, in the matter of securing the safety of my sheep, what I do, my Father does likewise. I do not act independently of him.

This glorious promise of eternal security should fill our hearts with a deep gratefulness for God's mercy and love expressed in our salvation that is absolutely secure in Christ, not in ourselves. This should give us a sense of joy in our identity in Christ and a desire to follow him and live out his righteousness in our lives even in the midst of a world desperately seeking to influence us to abandon our godly ways.

Day 11

Jesus: The Image of God the Father

John 14:6-11

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves."

Jesus is in Jerusalem at his last supper before his death. He has begun preparing his disciples for his death, resurrection and ascension to heaven where he will no longer be with them in his physical presence. In John 13, Jesus teaches his disciples how to display his love to the world by loving one another. In John 14-17, Jesus gives the "Upper Room Discourse." This is his final teaching to his disciples before his death. He begins with a promise to come again and bring his disciples to heaven, his Father's house.

Jesus, then focuses on his true identity and his role in salvation. We should mark, firstly, in these verses, what glorious names the Lord Jesus gives himself as he proclaims that he is the way to heaven. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Christ is the way to heaven and peace with God. He is not only the guide, and teacher, and lawgiver, like Moses, but he is the door, the ladder, and the road, through whom we must draw near to God. Through his death we may draw near with boldness, and have access with confidence into God's presence.

Christ is the truth. He not only proclaims the truth about God, but, as God, he is the very center of truth as all of reality is the result of God and his creative activities. There have been and will be many proclaiming that they have the truth about God and salvation, but they do not. Only Jesus Christ and his followers have that truth.

Christ is the life, the sinner's title to eternal life and pardon, the believer's root of spiritual life and holiness, the surety of the Christian's resurrection life. He that believes on Christ has eternal life. Jesus is the only one who has ever been born who is able to save human beings and give them life eternal. Let us grasp and hold fast to these precious truths.

We should mark, secondly, in these verses, how clearly the Lord states that he is the only way of salvation. He shuts out all ways of salvation humans propose but himself. "No one," he declares, "No one comes to the Father except through me."

It makes no difference whether a person is clever, learned, highly gifted, amiable, charitable, kind-hearted, and zealous about some sort of religion or even doing good deeds for others. All this will not save his soul if he does not draw near to God by Christ's atonement and embrace by faith God's own Son as his Mediator and Savior. God is so holy that all men are guilty and debtors in his sight. Sin is so sinful that no mortal human being can make satisfaction

for it. There must be a mediator, a ransom-payer, a redeemer, between ourselves and God, or else we can never be saved.

There is only one door, one bridge, one ladder, between earth and heaven, the crucified Son of God. Whoever will enter in by that door may be saved, but to him who refuses to use that door the Bible holds out, no hope at all. Many people assume that it doesn't matter what they believe about Jesus. As long as they "believe in God and love him" they will go to heaven. But Jesus did not teach that belief.

Jesus taught that anyone that does not honor the Son cannot honor the Father who sent him. Jesus said, "For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:22-24)

Let us beware of supposing that sincerity will take a person to heaven, though he or she cares nothing about Christ. The idea is a deadly and ruinous error. Sincerity cannot die on a cross for our sins. Sincerity cannot pay the penalty that we deserve for our sins. Only Christ can whom we embrace by faith. It is not true that every man will be saved by his own religion, no matter what he believes, so long as he is diligent and sincere. It is not true that all religions point equally to God and therefore lead to him. Only Jesus in the Bible has revealed the true Triune God, Father, Son, and Spirit. All others are false gods and, therefore, can do nothing for people.

We should mark, lastly, in these verses, how close is the union of God the Father and God the Son. Four times in this passage Jesus declares this mighty truth in words that cannot be mistaken. "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also." "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." "I am in the Father and the Father is in me." "The Father who dwells in me does his works."

These statements are Jesus' description of the unity of the Father and the Son in the Trinity. He declares that the Father is God and the Son is God; they are one in essence though two distinct persons. Let us take comfort in the truth, that Christ is truly God, equal with the Father in all things, and one with him. Together with the Holy Spirit, Jesus proclaimed that they have one name, one essence. This is why he told his disciples to baptize believers "in the name [singular] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28:19)

Jesus told his disciples that his unity with the Father as God can be clearly seen in his miracles. "Believe on account of the works themselves" Jesus proclaimed. They demonstrate who he is. Many people throughout the ages have claimed to be able to heal, but nobody changed water into wine, walked on water, stilled a storm, raised a man from the dead, and raised himself from the dead. Only God can do these things. Only Jesus did these incredible supernatural works.

When his disciples beheld Jesus, listened to his words, interacted with him, saw his miracles, experienced his love, grace, and mercy, they saw the attributes of God the Father displayed in Jesus because he was of one nature with the Father. Thus, when they had seen Jesus, they had seen the Father. And we receive the privilege of seeing the Father in Jesus even today through the Scriptures as we read the Gospels and trust Christ who dwells within us by faith. This is the Jesus whom we love and serve!

Day 12

Jesus: The Lord God of the Universe

John 20:24-29

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

This passage that is now before us contains one of the clearest statements in the Gospels to the true identity of Jesus our Lord. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, John the Baptist declared that Jesus was the Son of God. (John 1:34) Jesus himself proclaimed that he was the Son of God in many passages we have seen. Jesus has also talked about his unity with God the Father. As we have seen, Jesus declared his Trinitarian unity with God the Father, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me" (John 14:11) and "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

Notice, first, in this passage, the full meaning of the title "Son of God" and the words of Jesus concerning his unity with the Father is revealed. Being the "Son of God" did not mean that Jesus was a second subordinate God, or a man that had been exalted to Godhood as the cults believe. When Thomas declared, "My Lord and My God" he was declaring that Jesus was God, the same being as God the Father. When we harmonize that with John the Apostle's words about the Son of God in John 1:1 and 1:14 where he wrote, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."

We see that the Word of God, the Son of God, is God, yet he is with God. The Holy Spirit is also called the "Spirit of God" (Romans 8:14) and the "Spirit of Jesus," (Acts 16:7) yet speaks and acts as a different person from the Father and the Son. (Matthew 3:16). Since Jesus proclaimed that there was only one God in Mark 12:29, we know he was not referring to more than one God. Harmonizing these gives us the doctrine of the Trinity. As we have already seen Jesus clearly mentions in Matthew 28:19 that they have one name, one essence. This is why he told his disciples to baptize believers "in the name [singular] of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

God is not like us. God is this incredible infinite triune being that we could never analyze and understand with our limited human brains. The pride of humans makes us think that we can understand anything given time and effort, but the reality is we understand very little of the universe God has created and his nature and being. We can only understand what God has revealed to us. We must always remember that God is far above us and humbly come before him and trust his revelation as he has given us.

Notice secondly, how this great statement about Jesus came from the mouth of Jesus' most skeptical disciple. How kind and merciful Christ is to the doubts of his disciples who have believed fully in him, but at times doubt what he is doing in their lives. It is hard to imagine anything more tiresome and provoking for Jesus than the conduct of Thomas, when even the testimony of ten faithful brethren had no effect on him, and he doggedly declared that unless he saw with his own eyes and touched with my own hands, he would not believe." But it is impossible to imagine anything more patient and compassionate, than our Lord's treatment of this weak disciple. He does not reject him or dismiss him. He comes again at the end of a week, and apparently for the special benefit of Thomas. He deals with him according to his weakness, like a gentle father dealing with his wayward child, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." If nothing but the most basic material evidence could satisfy him, even that evidence was supplied. Surely this was a love that surpasses knowledge, and a patience that surpasses understanding.

A passage of Scripture like this, we need not doubt, was written for the special comfort of all true believers. The Holy Spirit knew well that believers can doubt at times so he has taken care to supply abundant evidence that Jesus is rich in patience as well as compassion, and that he bears with the weaknesses of all God's people. When we doubt, we can go to the Lord and ask him to strengthen our faith and he will do it.

We should observe lastly, in these verses, how Christ was addressed by Thomas as "God," and how he responded to him. The noble exclamation which burst from the lips of Thomas, when convinced that his Lord had risen from the dead, "My Lord and my God," admits of only one meaning. It was a distinct testimony to our blessed Lord's deity. It was a clear, unmistakable declaration that Thomas believed Jesus to be not only man, but God. The Jewish people recited Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one." It was a confession that the Lord God of the OT was their God and that he was the one and only God, no other existed. This was the center of their faith. Thomas declared, as a Jewish Christian, that the risen Jesus was his Lord and God. Here Thomas showed he understood that God was a Trinity, three persons in one God.

Jesus did not rebuke Thomas for such a lofty claim. Instead, he said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." Thomas gave the proper response of a human being who is in the presence of the resurrected and glorified Jesus, but our Lord says that those who blessed are those who have not seen me in my presence on earth, but believe that I am Lord and God. He is talking about every believer that believes the testimony of the apostles to the true identity of Jesus Christ through his resurrection from the dead as they proclaimed it verbally and through the four gospels of the New Testament. Most people that have ever trusted Christ did so through the testimony of the apostles in the gospels proclaimed by Christ's followers through the last 2100 years. Jesus says they are blessed because they did not need to be in Christ's presence on earth to believe in him and they received eternal life with him forever.

Let us settle it firmly in our minds that the deity of Christ is one of the great foundation truths of Christianity. Let us bless God that the deity of our Lord is taught everywhere in the Scriptures, and stands on evidence that can never be overthrown. Jesus can save us because he is God. Jesus will save us because he is God. All that Jesus has promised us in the future in

resurrected glorified bodies will come true because he is God. The message of the resurrection is a message of a great hope in a great God!

An Invitation from Jesus

Maybe you have been reading this book and have been encouraged as you have seen the glory of Jesus Christ in his claims to be the Son of God, but there is a doubt in your mind whether you truly are a Christian, a child of God. You want to experience all of the blessings that the Lord offers, but you are not sure that you are experiencing them. Maybe you have even gone to church your whole life, but never made a personal commitment to Jesus or you are not sure you have. I invite you to read this chapter and make sure of your salvation by turning to Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

Maybe you know that you are not a Christian and have thought about Jesus, but have never really done anything about it. You have never made a personal commitment to him. In this chapter, I would like to share with you what the Gospels say about how you can come to know the Good Shepherd, Jesus, and become a child of God.

Jesus came to give people the opportunity to enter into a personal relationship with him. Jesus said that he was the good shepherd who cared deeply about his sheep, so much so that he was willing to lay down his life for them. When Jesus laid down his life at the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of people, he gave them the opportunity to come to him and receive forgiveness and become a part of his spiritual flock. Jesus said,

"I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep...For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. (John 10:14-15, 17)

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand." (John 10:27-28)

Jesus invited people to come to him for salvation

Jesus knew that the trials and tribulations of life bring spiritual weariness and burden to the hearts of people. He invited people to come to him for spiritual rest and peace. Jesus said,

"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

To come to Jesus involves trusting in Jesus

Jesus said that people "come" to him by believing in him, that is, by trusting that he is the Son of God who died on the cross for the sins of people, and that he will give them eternal life if they trust in Him. Jesus said,

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not

condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. (John 3:16-18)

To come to Jesus involves turning away from sin

Jesus was very specific about the issue of sin in people's lives. Sin is turning away from following God's moral standards. Jesus offered forgiveness for sins if people would turn to him and accept his payment on the cross. Jesus preached a simple message of "repentance," which means "turn away from sin and turn to God."

"From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

Jesus said that if people did not turn to him and believe in him, they would die in their sins. Dying in their sins meant divine judgment. Divine judgment meant punishment forever away from the presence of God. Jesus said,

"For unless you believe that I am he [the Son of God], you will die in your sins." (John 8:24)

And Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day. For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. (John 12:44-49)

Trusting in God is not enough, you must trust in Jesus

Many people assume that it doesn't matter what they believe about Jesus. As long as they "believe in God and love him" they will go to heaven. But Jesus did not teach that belief. Jesus taught that God the Father desired that he, God the Son, also be honored and glorified. Anyone that does not honor the Son cannot honor the Father who sent him. Jesus said,

"For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." (John 5:22-24)

Jesus clearly said that he was the only way to salvation and receiving eternal life. There are no other ways to heaven or living with God forever.

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. (John 14:6)

To come to Jesus involves asking him to save you

The Gospels record that the people that came to Jesus all did the same thing. They believed that he was who he claimed to be; they turned from their sins; they trusted him to save them; and they asked him to save them.

An example of this is the last person Jesus saved before he died. He was a criminal on a cross hanging next to Jesus. He had sinned against God and man and had received the just penalty of his crimes. Yet God in his mercy gave him the opportunity while facing death to hang on a cross next to God's own Son. This man realized who Jesus was and humbled himself before the Son of God. He turned from his sin, trusted Jesus, and asked Jesus to save him. Jesus responded to the man's faith as he always did, promising him that he would receive eternal life with the Son of God forever. This is what Luke records,

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. (Luke 23:32-33)

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:39-43)

Will you come to Jesus and receive eternal life?

The words of Jesus that you have just read are not only for those who lived at the time of Jesus, but also for you. Jesus is speaking these words to you and inviting you to come to him for salvation and to receive from him eternal life. He desires that you come into his kingdom.

How do you do it? By coming to him in prayer and asking him to save you. You must turn from your sin and acknowledge to God that you are a sinner and no longer want to live according to your own will but you want to follow Jesus' will. You must believe that Jesus is exactly who he claimed to be, the Son of God, God become a man, and that he died on the cross for your sins.

Ask the Lord Jesus to save you from the penalty of your sin and accept his payment for your sins on the cross. Ask him to be your Savior. Trust him to save you; trust that he will save you if you turn from your sin and ask him. If you are not sure what words to use to speak to Jesus, below is a prayer that you could use. It is not the words; it is the desire of your heart.

"Lord Jesus, I admit to you that I am a sinner and have sinned against you. I turn from my sinful way of life. Please be my Savior. I accept your payment on the cross for my sins. I trust

that you are the Son of God and will save me now that I am asking you. Thank you, Lord. Amen.”

If you are not sure that in the past you have asked Jesus to be your Savior, you can ask him today. In fact, you may have gone to church most of your life, and yet have never turned to Jesus and asked him to save you, you can make that commitment right now. Turn from your sin and ask him. Once you have asked him, trust that Jesus has fulfilled his word and is now your Savior.

You may not “feel” like a change has taken place in your life, but it has. You must believe by faith that Jesus is now your shepherd and you have eternal life in him. May the Lord bless you as you enjoy a personal relationship with Jesus Christ!