

Part Eleven

JESUS TEACHES CONCERNING HIS IDENTITY

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JESUS' CLAIMS AND CREDENTIALS (John 5)

Jesus' teaching is not what made His person important; but His person makes His teaching important. The appeal of Christianity is the appeal of Christ. The power of Christianity is the power of Christ. The authority of Christianity is the authority of Christ. Christianity is Christ. The crucial question is "Who is Jesus of Nazareth?"

Careful study shows that Matthew, Mark, and Luke as well as John describe a Jesus of divine claims and supernatural deeds. We must make a decision concerning the divine claims of Jesus. He was crooked, crazy, or Christ. Because of the reliable historical records in our New Testament testifying to undeniable facts concerning Jesus we can come to put our trust in Him. We can accept the supernatural deeds which Jesus performed as credentials authenticating His claims. It is because we believe in Jesus as deity that we accept the infallibility of the Bible. The faith that saves you is not faith in the infallibility of the Bible, but faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior. He guarantees the truth and authority of both Old and New Testaments. Saving faith is a trust in the person of Jesus and a willing surrender to His authoritative control over you. We can not prove by reason or science everything Jesus said is true. But we can on reasonable, historical evidence come to a firm faith that Jesus is the Son of God and trust Him without reservation. We preach not a philosophy of what ought to be; not a theory of what may be; but we preach Christ and what He is.

During Jesus' first year of ministry He began to teach concerning His identity and work miracles as an evidence of His divine nature. A paralyzed man was brought to Him, and Jesus said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). Some thought He blasphemed, because they knew that only God could forgive sins. But Jesus healed the paralytic to show "that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins" (Mark 2:10).

When He had continued in Galilee for about four months, it was Passover time again; and Jesus went to Jerusalem. The text in John

5:1 does not name the feast but if the four months till harvest of John 4:35 be taken literally then Tabernacles (in October) and Dedication (December) would not be the feast of John 5:1. It was probably the Passover feast.

Authority Demonstrated

By a pool in Jerusalem, Jesus found many people waiting to be healed by getting into the water after it was disturbed. The pool is still there, and a syphon in the underground water stream that feeds it causes the water to rush into it at intervals. The people superstitiously believed that an angel stirred the water and that it would heal the first one to get into it after each disturbance. Evidence from early manuscripts of the book of John show that John 5:4 is missing from all the earliest and best Greek manuscripts. Apparently it was added to the text centuries later by a scribe as an explanation of the people's attitude, but it should not be considered a scriptural statement that the water was moved by an angel.

One helpless man who had been lame for thirty-eight years was singled out by Jesus and healed there on the Sabbath day. Apparently, Jesus' purpose was to precipitate the discussion which followed; for He avoided healing others of the multitude of sick and disabled people who were in the place. Jesus hunted up the man healed, because he was being persecuted for carrying his bed on the Sabbath. At least, on that occasion, Jesus did not want to be known as a healer to the crowd of sick persons, but sought to make Himself known to the healed man and to admonish him to "sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee" (John 5:14).

In this miracle Jesus demonstrated His authority over nature by healing a man who had been lame thirty-eight years. By doing this miracle and commanding the man to carry his bed on the Sabbath, He implied authority over the Sabbath, at least the authority to interpret and apply the law differently from the way the Jews did. Jesus apparently violated their ideas of the Sabbath in order to set forth His claims of deity and to get them seriously considered and widely published.

Authority Disputed

Here in John 5, in harmony with John's usual meaning, "the Jews" refers to those who were opposed to Jesus, the religious leaders who were the chief representatives of the traditional Jewish attitudes (John 1:19; 7:1; 9:22). The scribes and Pharisees had multiplied rules for Sabbath keeping until they were ridiculous and impossible

to keep. They placed much emphasis upon enforcing Sabbath observance. It appears that Jesus purposely did this miracle on the Sabbath in order to challenge their additions to the word of God.

These Jews informed the healed man that it was illegal to carry his bed or mat. Carrying any burden was considered work that was forbidden on the Sabbath (Jer. 17:21-27; Neh. 13:19). But for one who had been lame so long to carry his light mat home was not the same as carrying burdens to market for ordinary business. The man responded that the one who healed him told him to carry his bed. After Jesus had exhibited the power to heal him, the man had not questioned His authority to command him to take up his bed. He made the best defense he could. They demanded to know who told him this. But he honestly did not know. It was not wrong for them to seek the one who commanded the act; but they showed not the slightest regard for the great miracle or for the man's release from affliction.

Later after the healed man had spoken with Jesus in the temple he went to the Jews and told them it was Jesus who had healed him. He probably thought it was his duty to tell them, since his own actions depended upon Jesus' command. Notice that he told them that Jesus healed, emphasizing the miracle that they ignored. It is likely that Jesus wanted him to tell the Jews.

They were persecuting Jesus because He did this on the Sabbath day (John 5:16). The Greek verb indicates continued action: they kept up their continual hostile activity against Jesus. This stream of opposition against Jesus went on for two years and ended in the crucifixion. Stoning was the punishment for Sabbath-breaking (Ex. 35:2; Num. 15:32-36). But the Jews were not permitted by the Romans to carry out the death sentence (John 18:31), although it seems that they were sometimes willing to do it against the rule of the Romans. They often threatened to stone Jesus (John 8:59; 10:31; 11:8), and they did stone Stephen (Acts 7:58, 59).

Jesus boldly claimed, "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John 5:17). Jesus' defense was that He was doing God's work all the time. Our Lord's words here are rather mysterious. What work is God doing? He keeps the universe in order. He provides for men salvation, divine providence, and answers to prayer. Idleness is not holiness. Idleness was not the true essence even of the Sabbath. But the main point is that Jesus did what He did by the authority of God. His defense angered the Jews and they "sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the sabbath, but

also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). They became more determined to put Him to death. They saw in His words another crime worthy of death, blasphemy. The statement of Jesus was not blasphemy, but it would have been if He had not been the Son of God, actually doing God's work in all that He did. Jesus was, and always had been, equal with God (Phil. 2:6; John 1:1-14). But the Jews did not know that, and they would not accept His testimony about it.

His demonstration of His authority in the healing was condemned by the Jews because they would not acknowledge any authority different from their own in matters of the law and of God. They completely disregarded the divine power manifested and sought to kill Jesus as a sinner without considering the possibility that He might have authority to do as He did.

Authority Defended

Jesus' defense was a bold claim that He acted always with the full authority of God. He affirmed the full agreement and sweet fellowship between the Father and Son because of intimate friendship and fondness of each for the other. He left nothing to be guessed at but explicitly enlarged upon the claim that all the works of God were His and all the honor that was due to God belonged to Him. The Son could give life (physically—Luke 7:12-15; 8:49-55; John 11:39-44 and spiritually—Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13) and execute judgment concerning the eternal destinies of all men (John 5:21-22, 27). Since Jesus is equal with God and is creator and judge of all men, He certainly should be honored and revered in every way, as God is. "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father that sent Him" (John 5:23). One cannot be morally good and deny the authority and truth of Jesus' words. No man who rejects Christ can be acceptable to God. Christians should refuse to participate in any worship which refuses to honor Jesus. In His defense Jesus declared His equality with God and His authority to raise the dead and to judge man's destinies (John 5:17-29).

Jesus went on to cite witnesses that would establish His claims: John the Baptist, His own miracles, the Father Himself, and the Scriptures (John 5:31-39). Jesus charged that the Jews did not believe Him because they did not have the love of God in them, because they sought honor from men but not the honor of God, and because they did not believe Moses (John 5:42-47).

The real issue in this controversy between Jesus and the Jews was

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not how the Sabbath should be kept, but who Jesus was. Christ was the issue, and He is the issue today whenever men dispute His teachings. When His authority is fully accepted, most questions about the will of God are easily settled. Settling the issue of Christ's authority is no mere academic question. It is a matter of basic importance and intensely practical.

In this controversy someone was seriously wrong. In order to learn the lesson intended in John's record, it is necessary to see clearly who was right. If Jesus is not God in the flesh, then the Jews were right in condemning Him. He cannot be merely a man and be a good and wise man. But if He had all the authority He claimed, then the Jews made the mistake of their lives; and all who ignore Jesus are making themselves enemies of God.

For Further Study:

Butler, Paul. *The Gospel of John*, Vol. 1. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1961. Pp. 171-220. Good comment; useful outline; special studies relating to Jesus' claims.

Geldenhuys, Norval. *Supreme Authority*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1953. Pp. 13-43. Discusses the authority of Christ as proclaimed in the New Testament and recognized in the early church as it relates to the authority of the Bible.

Morris, Leon. *The Lord From Heaven*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1958. Pp. 9-43. Discusses the claims of Jesus as presented in the Gospels.

Stott, John. *Basic Christianity*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971. Forceful exposition of the direct and indirect divine claims Jesus made.

Wenham, John. *Christ and the Bible*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972. Pp. 43-83. Discusses the authority of Jesus as a teacher and answers objections to His divine claims.

JESUS, THE BREAD OF LIFE (John 6).

A whole year elapsed between the healing of the lame man (John 5) and the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6). John says, "the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh" (John 6:4). This would be two years after the first cleansing of the temple and one year before the crucifixion. John's account shows that he certainly is not ignorant of the passage of time. He is not unaware of the large gaps in his account of Jesus' doings. He speaks of the many, many events which are not written (John 20:30; 21:25). He makes the notes of time that give us the understanding we have of the chronology of Jesus' ministry (John 2:1, 12, 13, 23; 4:3, 35; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 10:22, 40; 12:1). In the first five chapters John tells mostly of Jesus' ministry in Judea, but in the sixth he tells of Jesus in Galilee in a situation that presupposes extensive campaigning and great success in impressing the multitudes. He shows his knowledge of the intervening year of Galilean ministry by telling the result of it in the great crowd of followers so enthusiastic about Jesus that they would not let Him go away from them, even in a boat.

Year of Activity

Matthew, Mark, and Luke inform us of the many incidents of this year of Galilean ministry. Controversies over His activities on the Sabbath continued. But the common people heard Him gladly and gathered in great crowds from far and near to follow Him. From among many disciples Jesus chose twelve to be apostles (ones sent out to do His work, Luke 6:12-16). He preached the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7; Luke 6), the great sermon in parables (Matt. 13), and many other sermons. He worked many miracles, including stilling the tempest (Luke 8:22-25) and raising at least two from the dead (Matt. 9:24, 25; Luke 7:11-17). He forgave sins, gave hope to sinners, and led many to repentance. He taught many times about the coming kingdom.

The crowds became so great and pressing and Jesus' life so busy, that His family thought He had gone beyond the limits of reason, and they sought to take Him home for rest. But they could not get to Him. The Pharisees became desperate in their desire to destroy His influence, and they charged that He was doing His work by the power of the devil.

In His travels in Galilee Jesus saw the multitudes in need of guidance and care, like sheep without a shepherd. Three or more general tours of Galilee by Jesus are indicated in the accounts of His ministry there (Matt. 4:23-25; Luke 4:44; 8:1-3; Matt. 9:35—11:1). He told the apostles to pray for laborers; then He sent them forth two by two to work miracles and to preach repentance and announce that the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 10). Six pairs of apostles and Jesus went about through all the cities and villages of Galilee. In an area as small as Galilee (not more than thirty miles square) these miracle-workers proclaiming the coming kingdom would naturally cause extraordinary feelings and expectations.

The interest of the people in Jesus and in the kingdom reached its peak at this time. It was really a state of excitement when Jesus and the twelve came together again at Capernaum that thousands of men, women, and children neglected daily duties and ignored personal discomforts to follow the wonderful Teacher and Healer. Their excitement was probably heightened by the news that John the baptizing prophet had been beheaded by Herod. So it was that when Jesus and the twelve went away across the sea in a boat, the multitudes went around by land to be with Him on the other side. Having spent the day with Him, they were in need of food; and He fed them miraculously. John records this incident and the sermon on the bread of life which brings to a climax Jesus' Galilean ministry.

Turning-point

This incident was a turning-point in His ministry. Its importance seems to be emphasized by the fact that all four Gospel accounts record it (Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-34; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14). This is true of surprisingly few incidents.

Many interesting points worth pondering are found in the accounts of the feeding of the five-thousand—Jesus' purpose in leaving Capernaum (probably to give rest and private teaching to the twelve); the mind of the crowd, their expectations and purposes; Jesus' compassion shown in not fully eluding them, but giving them of His time, patient teaching, and healing power; His merciful consideration for their physical needs; His ability to supply; His use of all that men had to offer, multiplying it to fill the need; the abundance of the Lord's supply; His economy with the remains, "that nothing be lost"; the intentions of the crowd to make Him king "by force"; their confidence in His value and power to serve their purposes, but their unwillingness to trust Him to lead them according to His purposes.

Despite the interest we find in all these and other points, still it is well that we understand the importance of Jesus' sermon on the next day. Jesus used this occasion and setting to teach one of His greatest lessons, a "hard saying" that caused many hundreds of people to turn away and follow Him no more. A knowledge of the "feeding" and the circumstances that led up to it help us to understand the Lord's sermon; but if we have a clear conception of the setting, let us hasten on to the study of the sermon itself.

After the feeding of the 5,000 and refusing their bid to make Him king, Jesus sent away the multitude and the disciples (Matt. 14:22, 23), and went up into a mountain to pray. After about eight hours the disciples were struggling against a contrary wind when Jesus came unto them walking on the water in the stormy night (John 6:18).

"Meat Which Endureth"

When it was day and Jesus and the disciples were again at Capernaum, the people were seeking Jesus again. They wondered how or when He had come over from the place of the feeding, because they knew He had no other boat in which to come and that they had watched for Him on the land. Who would think of walking on the water for a few miles in the stormy night? Jesus did not answer the question about how He had come across the lake, but rather began to rebuke their materialistic motives and to teach them about better food than the loaves and fishes—"meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (John 6:27). In the old English "meat" meant any food. Jesus did not mean that it was wrong to work that we may eat; but He said, "stop spending all your efforts for food that perishes; instead, work that you may receive from God everlasting life."

A rather long and lively discussion followed in which Jesus made increasingly clear that we must live by partaking of His life as the only source of life, while the Jews became more and more skeptical and unreceptive toward His teaching. Jesus said they should work for the food that endures. He as the Son of Man bearing God's official authorization is the only one capable of giving eternal life.

Falsely assuming that certain works that God required were the entire means of obtaining life, they asked, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" Jesus says, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent? (John 6:28, 29). Believing God is the one work that any man owes to God. Believing is not merely consenting to an idea to the extent of not arguing against it; but believing is accepting something as true and acting

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upon it with complete confidence. Believing on Christ is not a single act of the mind, but it is a continuous state of trusting His truthfulness, authority, and power so that we follow and obey Him regardless of the cost or the consequences. The only works that save are the works of faith; and the only faith that saves is the faith that works (James 2:14-26).

The people had seen the great miracle of the feeding of the five thousand men besides women and children from five small loaves and two small fishes. Most of the crowd, at least, had seen many other miracles done by Jesus (John 6:2). Now they ask, "What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? Our fathers did eat manna in the desert" (John 6:30, 31). They refused to see the miracles that Christ had worked as reason for accepting and following whatever He taught. His miracles aroused in them desires for materialistic blessings to be divinely supplied, but they did not cause them to surrender their wills and opinions for His divine plans. Refusing to acknowledge His power and authority they suggest that Jesus feed them all continuously somewhat as Israel was fed manna in the wilderness.

Jesus said, "The bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world. They said therefore unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:33-35). In their state of poor understanding and unbelief, it was probably a disappointment to them to hear His answer. They had asked something from Him, and He gave only Himself. They asked something more, and He offered only what they already had, if they would receive it. The great gift was already had, if they only knew it. He had satisfied their physical hunger once, and they wanted Him to do so again. But if they really believed in Him and came to Him by faith, they would be satisfied completely and permanently with spiritual sustenance.

Jesus reminded them that seeing is not believing when they were unwilling to believe because their hearts were set on something else. They had seen Jesus' miracles, but many refused to believe in spite of the testimony of their own eyes. Jesus stressed both God's side and man's side in our salvation, "All that which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). No one is worthy to stand before God as acceptable to Him in human merit; but God has chosen to save those who are receptive to His grace. Christ will receive all who really come

to Him; but this does not say that none of them can go away again. This should not be taken to contradict Matthew 7:21-23; 22:11-14; I Corinthians 9:27; 10:12; Revelation 3:16; John 15:2 or other passages that warn of falling from Christ. It was God's will that Jesus should save all whom His grace could reach—all who believe and follow Him. Jesus is ready, willing, and able to do this; but He cannot help a person who will not believe and come to Him.

The people refused to believe that He came down from heaven, saying they knew His parents. He went on with His teaching, explaining that He was living bread, and would give His flesh that men might eat and never die. But they rejected such statements contemptuously. If they had searched His words for meaning, with due respect for them, they might have understood more, although the sayings were very strange to them.

The Only Source of Life

Jesus declared, "It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (John 6:63). Many refused to believe Him and forsook Him and followed Him no more. Jesus turned to the twelve and said, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (John 6:66-67, New American Standard Bible). His words were strange and their meaning hard for the twelve also, but they recognized His extraordinary claims and powers, received the promises to those who believe Him, and waited for more light and further explanation.

In Jesus' teaching, the main point was this: that He was divine and had the power of life, to give to any and all who would receive it eternal life, and that life can not be had by men apart from Him and His gift of His body as a sacrifice to and for them. The apostles thought they did not understand, but they did believe that He was divine and had the power of life eternal, and that there was no other source of life. In fact, they got the point of the lesson pretty well.

Didn't Jesus foreknow that this sermon would discourage and disperse a great crowd of very enthusiastic and promising followers? Was He guilty of putting a stumblingblock in their way? This was a lesson of fundamental importance. They could not go on with their wrong purposes—trying to turn His ministry to serve their plans. If He could not get them to forsake their fleshly ambitions and seek first for everlasting life by the way of faith and submission to the

Savior, then they were not His followers at all, and they would not do themselves any good by being in His crowd.

Do we believe Him? Are we willing to receive this "hard saying"? Can we see by the eye of faith the conception that Jesus had of one important thing to work for in life? Just look at the difference between the crowd at a church dinner and the crowd at a prayer meeting! Just look about at the people you see every day and count how many are really working consciously and earnestly for the necessities of everlasting life in heaven more than they are for the food of this perishing flesh! Most of us have no higher ambitions than to satisfy the flesh and maintain it a few months here upon this earth. Are we able to take the Lord at His word and work not for a living, but for an everlasting life?

Christ is our life (Col. 3:4; John 14:6; 11:25). God has given to us eternal life, and that life is in His Son; he that has the Son has the life, and he that has not the Son has not life (I John 5:11, 12).

At His temptation, when Jesus was almost starved to death, He quoted, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Jesus understood perfectly what are the real necessities of life. He gave the multitudes physical bread to show His interest in their welfare and to furnish a basis for faith in His words when He would offer them something more important than bread.

Jesus is the only Savior from guilt and death. He is also the essence of the new life into which we enter when our sins are forgiven. We are baptized, not only to receive forgiveness through His sacrifice, but we are baptized into Him, being made alive by His Spirit within us. Without a vital relationship with Him, we would become dead in new trespasses and sins, even though the old ones were blotted out. We need not only to be released from condemnation, but also to be filled with the Spirit of Christ, the life of Christ in us (Rom. 8:1-13; Gal. 2:20; 5:13-25).

He will raise us up at the last day. The bread that Jesus offered was not to provide physical sustenance in this life, for He emphasized the life after the resurrection. It is only in the future life that we really never hunger or thirst. Still in this present world Jesus satisfies men's deepest needs and longings if they come to feed on Him, not merely on things that He supplies.

Meeting the Test of Faith

The miracles in the presence of all the multitude furnished a *basis*

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for faith in the divine power and personal reliability of Jesus. The sermon, with its strange sound and spiritual emphasis, refusing more physical aid but offering Himself as everything men need, supplied a test of their faith. The crowd failed the test of faith. They murmured against His words and turned away disappointed. They showed that they did not trust His words when they could not understand them and agree with them. They would not give up their hopes and ideas to take the spiritual realities He offered. The apostles did not understand Jesus' saying, but they met and passed the test of faith. What faith the disciples had! "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6:68). We need such faith in Him.

For Further Study:

Barclay, William. *Jesus As They Saw Him*. New York, Evanston, London: Harper & Row, 1962. Pp. 258-262. Background information on the Bread of Life title.

Bruce, A. B. *The Training of the Twelve*, 3rd ed. New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, n.d. Pp. 120-154. Helpful interpretation and application of John 6.

Butler, Paul. *The Gospel of John*, Vol. I. Joplin: College Press, 1961. Pp. 221-262. Exposition of John 6.

Foster, R. C. *Studies in the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968. Pp. 149-183. Discusses the events and teaching in John 6.

JESUS, THE CHRIST (Matt. 16:16)

Jesus is more than John the Baptist. He is more than one of the prophets. He is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. This identity was never questioned in the early church.

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:13-16).

I. What does Messiah mean?

A. Messiah means the anointed (Messiah is the Hebrew or Aramaic. Christ is the Greek translation).

1. The ceremony of anointing kings. Saul—(I Sam. 9:16; 10:1); David—(I Sam. 16:13); Solomon—(I Kings 1:39); Jehu—(I Kings 19:16); Hazael—(I Kings 19:15); Jehu—(II Kings 9:2, 3, 6); Joash—(II Kings 11:12); Jehoahaz—(II Kings 23:30).
2. The ceremony of anointing priests. (Lev. 8:12, 30; 4:3, 16; Exod. 29:7, 21; 30:30).
3. Instruction to Elijah to anoint Elisha as a prophet and Jehu and Hazael as kings (I Kings 19:15, 16).

B. What conceptions of the Messiah were presented in the Old Testament?

1. Conception of powers conferred by the anointing. David received the Spirit of the Lord (I Sam. 16:13). Especially responsibility and dignity were conferred, with a high degree of assurance that God would enable them to perform according to His will all their official duties. The anointed one becomes an agent of God, an implement to carry out the divine will (e.g., Jehu, II Kings 9:1-10).
2. Holy anointing oil, a special compound (Exod. 30:22-33). Even objects were anointed to sanctify them: altar of sacrifice (Exod. 29:36); tabernacle, ark of testimony (Exod. 30:26); table and its vessels, candlestick and its vessels

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- (Exod. 30:27); altar of burnt offering, the laver and its foot (Exod. 30:28).
3. The special majesty of God's anointed to come (Heb. 1:9; Ps. 45:6-8). "God has anointed me to minister" (Isa. 61:1-3; Luke 4:17-21).
 4. Appointed priest with an oath, after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:10; 2:17; 7:15-17, 21, 28).
 5. The stone which the builders rejected, made the keystone, or chief cornerstone (Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; I Pet. 2:7).
 6. David's Son to reign forever (Ps. 132:10-12; Jer. 33:15-17).
 7. A prophet and law-giver like Moses (Deut. 18:15-19).
 8. The picture in Isaiah. Judge among the nations, rebuke many people (2:4); born of a virgin, God with us (7:14); a light in Galilee (9:1, 2); of the increase of his government and of peace no end, upon the throne of David to establish it with justice forever (9:6, 7); a branch out of the roots of Jesse (David's father, 11:1); the Spirit of the Lord upon Him, of wisdom, might, knowledge and godly fear, to judge righteously, and to rule effectively the whole earth with the strength of His words, the rod of His mouth and the breath of His lips (11:2-5); a root of Jesse, a sign for the nations, unto Him shall the Gentiles seek (11:10); "Great is the Holy one of Israel in the midst of thee" (12:6); victory over death, over tears of bereavement (25:8); in Zion a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation, cf. I Peter 2:6, 7; (28:16); God's Servant, with God's Spirit upon Him, to bring forth justice to the Gentiles. The manner and success of His ministry, cf. Matthew 12:18-21, for a covenant of the people and a light to the Gentiles (42:1-9); Christ sent to the Gentiles, and the greatness of His deliverance by His reign, "salvation unto the end of the earth" (49:1-23); God's Servant exalted, greatly marred, startling many nations (52:13-15); the suffering Servant in His atoning death and ultimate triumph, cf. Acts 8:32-35; 55:3-5. An everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David; the commander and leader of the peoples; nations shall run into Israel for the Holy One of Israel (53:1-12); The Judge who was men's Savior, afflicted in all their affliction, the Angel of the presence who saved them and redeemed them; but when they rebelled He turned to be their adversary (63:1-10).
 9. The dynasty of David would be restored in the person of the

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Messiah (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 33:15). The Messiah was to be the Son of David and king, ruling in power and righteousness. The Messiah was to be deliverer of Israel and restorer of national prominence.

10. Summary: Jesus' messiahship expresses:

- a. His relation to God who sent Him and whom He served.
- b. His relation to the Old Testament as revelation and preparation of His coming.
- c. His relation to the people whom He led, taught and delivered.

II. What conceptions of the Messiah existed among the Jews of the 1st century? (See Luke 2:29-32; Matt. 2:1-5; John 12:34; 4:25; 7:27, 31, 42; Luke 24:21, 26-46).

The Jews of the first century expected the Messiah to be a supernatural figure, restoring Israel miraculously. He would be preceded by a messenger of God (Elijah) who would purify Israel (Mal. 3:1-3; 4:5; Matt. 17:10-13). He would restore the nation and rule with military power. They certainly did not expect Him to be a wandering prophet. Peter's perception of Jesus as the Messiah is remarkable. It was not a product of the ideas of his generation but was given by revelation of God (Matt. 16:17).

III. How did the apostles understand this title?

The Messiah was definitely a real man, sent from God, with divine qualities and powers (Acts 2:22; 10:38), the prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15-18 (Acts 3:22; 7:37); superior to death (Acts 2:24); exalted to the right hand of God (Acts 2:33). He was more than a prophet. At least twelve times in Acts, Jesus is identified as the Messiah without any political implications (Acts 5:42, the constant emphasis of the apostles); (Acts 9:22, Paul at Damascus). He is called the Servant (may also be translated *child*) of the Lord (Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30). It was fitting and necessary for Him to suffer (Luke 24:46-48; Acts 17:3; 8:26-40; I Pet. 2:21-25; 3:15—4:1). He is called Lord more than any other title in Acts (2:36; 7:59; 3:15; 4:12). He is described as a glorious and triumphant figure, coming again on the clouds with power and glory (I Thess. 4:16; Phil. 1:10; 3:20, 21). Jesus is Lord (Rom. 10:9; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11). Yet He was really man, sharing human experience (John 1:14, 18; Phil. 2:5-8), born of the seed of David (Rom. 1:3). His teachings establish a norm for all the church (Acts 20:35;

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I Cor. 7:10, 11). He was the object of intense personal devotion (Phil. 1:21, 23; II Cor. 5:6-10; Phil. 3:8-14; Gal. 2:20; 6:14). As redeemer and savior of those who believe, He is the hope of all men (II Cor. 5:14-19; I Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:24; 3:18; Heb. 13:12). Other apostolic descriptions include: existing in the form of God and equal with God, creator of all things (Phil. 2:6; Col. 1:15-18; 2:9, 10; II Cor. 8:9; Gal. 4:4; John 17:5); exalted to the highest place of rule and of judgment (Eph. 1:20-23; 4:10; Heb. 8:1); the supreme messenger of God (Heb. 1:1-4; 2:1-4); the great deliverer (Heb. 2:9, 15, 18; 4:1-16); the one great High Priest (Heb. 7:1-28); mediator of the new and better covenant (Heb. 8:6; 9:15; 12:24).

IV. Did Jesus actually claim to be "the Christ"? Yes, in these ways:

1. His heavenly origin (John 8:23).
2. His relation to God (John 14:9; Matt. 11:27; John 10:14-18; 17:3-5).
3. Divine prerogatives (Matt. 28:18; Mark 2:10; John 5:28, 22; 15:26; 16:7).
4. Oneness with the Father (John 10:30; 14:23).
5. The Way to God (John 14:6; Matt. 10:32, 33).
6. Sinlessness (John 8:46).
7. Lordship over the spirit world (Matt. 13:41; 16:27; Luke 11:20).
8. His redemptive gift of Himself for others (Mark 10:45).
9. The demand that His followers sacrifice for Him (Matt. 10:18, 37, 39, 40).
10. Offering eternal life as His own gift (John 10:28, 29; 6:40, 51, 54).
11. He offers rest to the soul (Matt. 11:28, 29).
12. Called for faith in Himself (John 6:29; 14:1; 8:24).
13. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem as King, like Solomon (Matt. 21:4, 5; Mark 11:9, 10; Luke 19:37-40; John 12:13, 19).

How Did God Reveal the Messiahship of Jesus to Peter?

1. Testimony of John the Baptist. John the Baptist identified Jesus as the lamb of God, the Son of God, the one baptizing in the Holy Spirit and in fire, the one bringing in the Kingdom of God and ruling over it (Matt. 3; John 1; 3).
2. Teaching and claims of Jesus
 - a. Lesson at Nazareth, (Luke 4).

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- b. Samaritan woman (John 4).
 - c. Sermon on the mount (Matt. 5-7).
 - d. Sermon in John 5.
 - e. Sermon on the Bread of Life (John 6).
 - f. Teaching about the kingdom of God (John 3).
3. Prophecies fulfilled.
4. Miracles of Jesus
- Healing of the paralytic and claimed to forgive sins (Mark 2).
 - Casting out demons (who testified that He was the Holy One of God).
 - Calming the sea.
 - Raising the dead.
 - Giving miracle-working power to the twelve.
 - Knowing the thoughts and hearts of men.
 - Feeding the multitudes.
 - Walking on the water.
5. Jesus' plans and promises.
- His purposes and motives, thoughts and attitudes.
 - a. His God-consciousness.
 - b. His clear and confident view of the future constantly dominant.
 - c. His understanding of human needs and compassion to all.
6. One of the earliest and most significant evidences was the impact of His character upon the disciples. The greatness, wholeness, purity and power of His personality testified to His Messiahship.

The Chief Evidences of the Christ How the Messiahship of Jesus is Made Clear To Us

1. His claims:
- A. To be a special representative of God—the supreme prophet.
 - B. To be the fulfillment of many prophecies of the Old Testament.
 - C. To bring the Kingdom of God and to rule over the domain of God.
2. The Old Testament Scriptures.
3. The testimonies of the apostles.
4. To Him God bore witness.
- A. By John the Baptist (John 1:29-34).
 - B. By His special audible voice.
 - 1. at Jesus' baptism (Matt. 3; Mark 1; Luke 3).
 - 2. at the transfiguration (Matt. 17; Mark 9; Luke 9).
 - 3. at the last public teaching before the cross (John 12).
 - C. By wonders, signs, and mighty works (Acts 2:22).

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D. By His resurrection (Rom. 1:4; I Cor. 15:3-12).

For Further Study:

- Barclay, William. *Jesus As They Saw Him*. New York: Evanston, London: Harper & Row, 1962. Pp. 93-159. Extensive study of the Old Testament, intertestament and New Testament material about the Messiah and His Kingdom.
- Crichton, James. "Messiah," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. by James Orr, Vol. IV. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1939. Pp. 2039-2044. Also treats views of the Messiah in the Old Testament, intertestament literature, and the New Testament.
- Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 3rd ed. 2 Vols. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, reprint of 1886 ed. Vol. I, pp. 160-179; Vol. II, pp. 72-88. Background information on Jewish ideas of the Messiah and exposition of Matthew 16:13-20.
- Foster, R. C. *Studies in the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968. Pp. 699-727. Discusses the various interpretations of Matthew 16:13-20.
- Jocz, J. "Messiah," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney, Vol. IV. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975. Pp. 198-207. Summary of the various views in Biblical and non-Biblical writings.

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (John 7-9)

Jesus preached on the bread of life after feeding the five thousand in Galilee at Passover time. Six months later at the feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem Jesus taught that He was the Light of the World.

During the six months between the two events, Jesus avoided Galilee and all the places where He was well-known. He took the apostles away from the politically minded Galileans into Gentile territory around Tyre and Sidon for private teaching and rest. He healed the daughter of one Gentile woman who made a persistent plea in great faith. Then Jesus and His disciples went to the area east of the Sea of Galilee and ministered among the people enough to stir up a crowd that followed Him unto the third day without food. Again He multiplied food miraculously to feed a multitude, this time four thousand men (Matt. 15:21-39). Even in strange places and in Gentile territory "He could not be hid" (Mark 7:24). The remarks of His brothers (John 7:3, 4) indicate that they considered Him to be strangely avoiding manifesting Himself to the people.

He went up the Jordan valley to Caesarea Philippi. Here Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). Then Jesus began to tell them plainly that He must die. A week later Jesus took Peter, James, and John up on a high mountain, probably Mount Hermon, and was seen by them in a blaze of divine glory talking with Moses and Elijah about His coming death at Jerusalem. From these and other events recorded of this six month period it appears that Jesus was concentrating on training the twelve to prepare them to accept His death and to bear their responsibilities as apostles.

When the feast of Tabernacles began in Jerusalem the people were filled with suppressed excitement. They dared not speak openly of Jesus for fear of the Jews, but they could not forget Him. They were divided in their opinion of Him, whether He were good or bad, from God or not; but they were all generally interested in whether He would dare to come and preach publicly at this feast. For more than a year and a half there had been spasmodic attempts to destroy Him. The rulers were known to be bitterly opposed to Him.

Into this atmosphere Jesus and His disciples came to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles, but they avoided the crowds going to it and arrived late. In the midst of the feast of eight days Jesus began

suddenly and dramatically to teach in the temple. He made startling claims to absolute supremacy in their lives. With a calm and deliberate boldness He challenged their desire to kill Him (John 7:16-19). They could not defend their hostility and only falsely denied it. He kept on presenting Himself and His words as sent forth from heaven, to bring light and life to men. Instead of heeding the moral force of His words and acknowledging the divine testimony of His miracles, the Jews determined to resist Him and their own conscience. Hence they sought any little thing about which to quibble and to object. Still, many were amazed at His understanding and His prophetic utterances, and some believed on Him.

Day after day Jesus faced bitter opposition. The religious leaders sent soldiers to arrest Him, but they returned with empty hands to the chief priests and Pharisees with no other explanation for their failure than simply to say, "Never man so spoke" (John 7:46). In the midst of the scornful invective which the Pharisees poured upon the officers, Nicodemus injected the suggestion that a man was not condemned by the law until he had been heard and tried. Their answers to Him, as well as to the officers, reveal the unreasonable hatred and the groundless scorn which their hypocritical hearts held toward Jesus and anybody that was even partly fair toward Him.

In chapters seven, eight, and nine of John's gospel we can study the kind of teaching that Jesus did in the face of such unbelief and opposition, when He knew that His time to teach on earth in person was growing very short. Jesus' wonderful claims convinced some, amazed others, and angered many. Though Jesus spoke very convincingly and answered His adversaries very skillfully, they were completely unwilling to reconsider their false judgment of Him. Jesus's claims to divine authority and unique importance certainly demanded attention—either worshipful acceptance or firm resistance.

Jesus Taught About Himself

"We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord; and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (II Cor. 4:5); but Christ had to preach Himself! It is the person of Jesus that makes His teaching important, not primarily His teaching that makes His person important; He is the personal and perfect expression of God's being, God's revelation, God's truth, and God's righteousness. In Him we find wisdom, redemption, righteousness and eternal life. "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). To reveal truth and love, holiness and redeeming grace, God manifested His Son. And Jesus

had no greater lesson to teach than this: that men should believe on Him whom God sent into the world for the enlightenment and salvation of the world.

How could men ever accept and grasp the lessons of spiritual truth and righteousness, if they would not accept or could not recognize the source from which, or of whom, alone those lessons could ever be learned? In the first place, obviously, it was more necessary for men to accept Him than it was for them to accept His teaching; for to reject Him was to reject the greater part of His teaching and to turn away from the only light to be had. Any moral and practical teachings of Jesus which can be followed by men without faith and reverence toward Him personally are not able to redeem and to regenerate men in themselves, and as far as they are practiced must be motivated by something in the natural heart, which, whatever it is, will be far less effective than the motive power furnished by Christ in the hearts of those who truly believe Him. But, of course, one cannot accept Him and continue to reject or ignore His teaching.

Jesus Taught That He Was Sent From God

It was not Himself alone that He was exalting, apart from God; but it was the will and purpose of God that He served as the messenger of God. Once before (John 5:31) Jesus had said that if He bore testimony of Himself (alone and apart from God) His witness would not be true. Indeed it wouldn't. He must bear witness of God's will, judgments and grace; He must declare the Father's purposes and participation in all His deeds in order to tell the truth. Now the Jews tried to misapply His words and turn them against Him (John 8:13). Jesus' words were not false just because they concerned Himself, because He did faithfully proclaim Himself as God's messenger. He made all His deeds God's deeds. He came not in His own name, but in the name of God. Yet they rejected Him. Others who came in their own names were received. Such is the perversity of those who hate to surrender to the sovereignty of God (Cf. John 5:43, 44).

His coming from God made His words dependable and made them binding, obligatory upon all men. The gospel of Christ has its promises that cannot fail or disappoint one who believes the whole and follows it; but it also has its commandments which no man can disobey without rebelling against God. We may trust Jesus. We must hearken to Him. We can not "take it or leave it" with impunity. God says, "This is my Son; hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5). Jesus truly says, "He that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me" (Matt. 10:40); "He

that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me" (John 5:24); and "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father which hath sent him" (John 5:23). No man can reject the Son of God and have reverence for God or serve God. "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29).

*Jesus Taught That He Is Sufficient For The
Needs Of All Men*

He offers light, life, and liberty unto all (John 6:47-51; 8:51; 8:12; 8:31, 32). He has promised to satisfy spiritual hunger and thirst, to give rest to the soul, to dispel its darkness, to set us free indeed, and to give us life for ever and ever. His claims are indeed great—too great to be ignored or to be deceitful. They manifestly are supernatural and require a supreme supernatural character to carry them out. He either is all and more than all else to us, or He is the most false and the most preposterous liar that ever was.

Nevertheless, He does not fail. He makes good His word. He raises the dead with a word, and gives sight to the man that was born blind. Therefore we should trust Him, although we can not see or understand all about Him and the means and ways by which He can satisfy every human need. Still He very plainly shows Himself to be from God and in possession of the power of God over life and death, and over the physical and moral universe.

Christ gives a new vision to see life in the view of all eternity, not merely the earthbound present. To us who were dead in trespasses and sins He gives a new life, making us dead to sin and alive unto God for evermore. He sets us free from the chains of guilt that bound us to the penalties of our old sins, and from the bonds of habit, lust and weakness that made us slaves of sin continually. Whereas in our natural mind of unbelief we feared the binding restraints of God's will and called ourselves free in doing our own will, we actually find that when we walk by faith in Christ we are truly free to fulfill our true destiny and our highest ambitions as children of God and heirs of the eternal realms of righteousness. We actually find burdens lifted and bonds broken. All these things are ours in Christ if we trust and obey Him, if we abide in His words and walk in the light that He gives to the way of life.

If we try to walk without Him and grope along in our own way we shall stumble in the darkness. We have not life in ourselves (John 6:53). We shall die in our sins (John 8:24). We can not come unto the Father except by Him (John 14:6). As light is necessary to the

eyes, Christ is necessary to the character and immortal soul.

Jesus Taught His Authority By Demonstration

Jesus healed another well-known beggar on the Sabbath, this time a man born blind; He sent Him to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam. When the man came back seeing, the Pharisees asked him how he received his sight. They wished to deny the miracle, and so they made a thorough investigation of it. They even called the blind man's parents to determine whether it was he that was born blind. The parents would not say how he was healed because they knew that anybody who said anything favorable about Jesus would be persecuted (John 9:1-23).

The Jewish officials were concerned about the man's opinion of Jesus. They reasoned that Jesus broke the Sabbath; therefore, He was a sinner and could not be used by God for such a miracle. They had to admit that the miracle happened; but they wanted the former blind man to think that Jesus' actions and commands had nothing to do with it. They insisted that he could thank God for his sight and reject Jesus. The healed man responded, "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). This man recognized the power of a fact. He would not deny facts on the basis of doubtful judgments of men. The Pharisees set their judgment and pride of authority against facts.

The leaders questioned him again on how he could see. They had investigated all this before. They seem to be baffled by the man's clear thinking and courageous testimony. They apparently were trying to appear interested in getting the facts while really seeking to catch some inconsistency in his testimony. He was somewhat disgusted with the Pharisees for not accepting the force of the evidence presented. Because of their stubborn opposition to Jesus he knew very well that they were not seeking to be his disciples. He seems to be sarcastic, taunting their confusion in his question, "Would ye also become his disciples?" (John 9:27).

The Jews abused the man with scornful language insisting that they followed Moses who spoke with the authority of God, but in slurring reference to Jesus, said they did not know by whose authority He came and spoke. The man responded by pointing out how unreasonable it was for them to know the fact of the miracle and not see the evidence of Jesus' authority as one coming from God. He insisted that only God could do what Jesus did. His reasoning was clear and unanswerable: Jesus should be regarded as pleasing to

God and representing God simply because He was doing such works of divine power. The Pharisees were defeated in argument; they could not answer the facts and clear reasoning of the healed man. So they resorted to abuse and made a personal attack upon him as one born under a curse. For such a man to offer them instruction hurt their pride; and for him to foil them so completely was insufferable. They drove him out of their presence and probably excommunicated him (John 9:28-34).¹

Some people charge that the ancients believed events to be miraculous which a scientific age would explain by natural law and that they accepted reports of miracles without requiring real evidence. The healing of the man born blind was investigated by the group of intelligent and educated men who were determined to disprove it; but they could not. They established the identity of the man who was healed and the fact that he had been born blind. They could easily perceive that now he could see. They could not shake his testimony about the way he was healed when he obeyed Jesus. What more could a modern scientific commission do to test the reality of the miracle?

The fact of the miracle is a clear demonstration that Jesus spoke and acted with the authority of God. We do well to accept Him as the source of light, and to rely on anything that He says. A clearer vision of His will will be ours.

Follow The Light

Light enables us to see and know. The most important light is that which enables us to know God. In the Bible the word light is used to signify the revelation of God, with the wise manner of life and the true hope that it brings. By contrast, darkness signifies ignorance of God, especially as shown in sin and its consequences. Jesus is the source and the means of all spiritual knowledge. Man by human wisdom does not know God (I Cor. 1:21; 2:7-9). The only adequate revelation of God is in Christ.

As Jesus enabled the man born blind to see, so also He enables everyone of us who believes and obeys Him to see spiritually. But too many of us are like the Pharisees; we think we already have understanding without divine light. We are tragically ignorant of our

¹ The statement "God heareth not sinners" (John 9:31) was the opinion of the man formerly blind. It is well supported in the sense that he meant it (Ps. 66:18; Prov. 15:29; Isa. 1:15; Micah 3:4 and others). But this verse should not be misapplied as proof that God refuses to hear the prayers of all non-Christians.

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ignorance. We may have much information on many subjects and still be like some people whom Paul described as ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as the Pharisees did not realize how blind they were, so many scholars of today do not realize how blind they are to real truth. We will either follow Jesus Christ or remain in the dark! Those who admit human blindness and let God reveal himself to them get the true light of life. But those who suppose that they see without God become ever more blind and enveloped in spiritual darkness from which there is no recovery. Thank God that He has "called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Pet. 2:9).

For Further Study:

- Barclay, William. *Jesus As They Saw Him*. New York: Evanston, London: Harper & Row, 1962. Pp. 262-268. Studies the Old and New Testament usage of referring to God in the imagery of light. Extra-Biblical literature is cited as referring to God as light as well.
- Butler, Paul. *The Gospel of John*, Vol. II. Joplin: College Press, 1965. Pp. 13-104. Exposition. Study Questions. Expository Outlines.
- Edersheim, Alfred. *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Vol. II. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., n.d. Pp. 148-187. Helpful information on the Jewish background for the Feast of Tabernacles and the events in John 7-9.

JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD (John 10)

Having come to Jerusalem for the feast of Tabernacles, six months before His crucifixion, Jesus remained in the parts of Judea, apparently until the feast of Dedication, which was about three months later (John 10:22). We should like to know more about His activities during those trying days. Only the accounts in John 7-10 and in Luke 10:1—13:21 tell us of His works and teachings in that period. These chapters are almost entirely records of sermons. They do not satisfy our curiosity concerning where Jesus was spending His time, or what great miracles He worked, or how He met or avoided the attempts of the hostile Jews to kill Him. But the things that are important are recorded for us. The important thing is that we realize who He is and what He means to the lives of all men, including our own.

Jesus simply and significantly declared "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11). He is teaching about Himself. The background of all that He says is the unqualified claim that He is the only hope of mankind, that He is the Lord of all and necessary to all. This portion of His teaching implies the assumption of complete and unrivaled authority; yet it emphasizes not that men must serve Him, but that men must be served by Him. It tells in striking manner of the great and sacrificial things He is to do for His people, as the shepherd laying down His life for the sheep. This was the utterance of the Lord from heaven, Master of all, but who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). The paradox of it, and the strangeness of it to proud, self-sufficient, and unbelieving ears caused many to call Him mad, and to say that He had a demon (John 10:20).

"Earnestly, tenderly Jesus was pleading" for men to trust Him and receive the benefits of His leading and His care, His power to redeem and to give life abundantly. With what longing and sorrow He must have been filled, as He, who came from heaven to seek and save the lost, looked out upon the afflicted and perishing souls of men and offered His power and wisdom and gentle love to help them, but they would not believe and heed His call! This was one of the frequent times that He would have gathered the children of Jerusalem unto Him as a hen gathers her chickens under her wing, but

they would not (Matt. 23:37). We are reminded of the pleadings of Jehovah toward Israel in the Book of Isaiah: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. 1:3; see Isa. 1; 52; 53; 54; and 55).

"All We Like Sheep Have Gone Astray"

Turning to our own ways we wander in the paths of death and destruction. Like sheep without a shepherd, we lose our way and can not find the way to return to safety. We are filled with fear and confusion. We follow the "herd" even though it be over a precipice. We fall victim to ravenous beasts of prey. We can not preserve our own lives. Oh, if we would only realize how foolish, vulnerable, and helpless man is in the realm of spiritual life, in the face of fierce powers of wickedness in high places! If we would only see and acknowledge how badly we need a shepherd! If we would only recognize the shepherd's voice and follow Him that we might learn how much better things He has for us!

We can't see over the hills and into the fold. We won't learn to escape or overpower the violently destructive powers of sin. All the "lessons" of history do not make us wise unto life and righteousness. The hope of this whole race of men is not education, but faith; not training in self-sufficiency to meet the dangers and fulfill the needs of life, but trust in the shepherd to heed His voice and follow Him who supplies every need and protects all His own. Man is spiritually blind until He has Christ for light. He is lost in the wilderness until Christ is the Way in which he walks. He has no hiding place of security until He finds the door of the sheepfold, which is Christ Jesus. He is a wounded and dying sheep until Christ the great shepherd finds him and restores life and strength.

"One Door, and Only One"

The two comparisons which Jesus made of Himself, the door and the shepherd, both teach the necessity of Christ for every man. He is the door of access to the Father (Eph. 2:18). He is the door of heaven itself (John 14:2), the way, the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6). The door and the way are open to all. Whosoever will may come. But there is no other way. Whoever climbs up another way is a thief and a robber. There is one mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5). There is no other name wherein we must be saved (Acts 4:12). It is a narrow door admitting only those who follow closely the way of faith. He

is the open door to safety, satisfaction, and sustenance; yet men refuse to enter in, but they batter at the walls to make "another way." Oh, the perversity of unbelief!

Christ is the only entrance requirement. "By me if any man enter in," whether he has been Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, learned or ignorant, good or bad, He can come in through Jesus Christ, by coming into Christ.

The Shepherd and the Sheep

"1. He goes before them. Like an Oriental shepherd, Christ does not drive His flock from Him; He draws them to Him. This He has done in the whole tenor of His human life—in His circumstances, His character, His toils, His sufferings and death, His glory.

"2. He calls them by name. This implies individual knowledge of all the sheep, whom He not merely marks, but actually names. Thus He denotes His property in them, His interest in their welfare.

"3. He leads them out into green pastures, and calls them to follow Him thither. His command takes the form of invitation. The attraction of His love induces His sheep to follow Him. He conducts them to the pastures where He feeds them, to the fold where He protects them.

"4. They hear and know His voice. Christ's tones, when He speaks to His own, are gentle and kind; His language is compassionate and encouraging. His voice is, therefore especially suited to the timid, the feeble, the helpless. To all such it is sweet, cheering, and comforting. The people of Christ are deaf to other voices, but are attentive to His. Its charm is felt, its authority is recognized. They have heard it before; they know it and love it; they distinguish it from every other. Gratefully and gladly do they hear the voice of the beloved.

"5. They obey and follow Him. The voice is enough. The true sheep do not wait for the crook, the staff; they are obedient to the shepherd's word of gentle authority. It is enough for them that the way in which they are led is His way. 'He that followeth me,' says Christ, 'shall not walk in darkness.' There is no questioning, no hesitation, no delay; the sheep follow whither the shepherd leads. Thus they have rest and peace. They fear no danger and no foe while their pastor watches over them and defends them. They need not ask why such a path is marked out for them, for they have perfect confidence in their divine leader. They need not ask whither they are going, for they are satisfied if they are in the pasture and the fold

of Him who is the shepherd and bishop of their souls."¹

In the midst of this world of many voices and conflicting calls, with confusing and frightening sounds abounding, it is necessary to know the shepherd's voice. To examine all things for ourselves and to determine the true origin and motive and degree of liability of every voice would be a prodigious task—much more than we could ever do. It is a wonderful relief, comfort, and security to know the voice of the divine shepherd. To know Him is eternal life (John 17:3), whether we know much else or not. When we have determined that He is the shepherd from God and that He has spoken a clear direction to us, then it is not necessary for us to hear and analyze the other voices. If Jesus said it, I believe it, and that settles it. Jesus knew what He was talking about. No one ever revealed the nature and works of God as He did. All the lines of rational and supernatural evidence unite to mark Him as God's appointed prophet and redeemer of man. To be our everlasting guide, God raised Him from the dead.

Laying Down His Life For The Sheep

The works of Christ convince us, but the love of Christ constrains us. He gave His infinitely valuable and flawless life for our cursed and corrupted lives, because He loved us. He is not a hired time-server, but the sheep are His own and dear to His heart. "Greater love hath no man that this" (John 15:13). Surely such a demonstration of unlimited love and devotion of Himself to us should make us trust Him as a true shepherd and follow with joyful confidence wherever He leads, doing whatever He commands. Having such a shepherd, why should we follow any other voices?

It is a marvelous thing that He has the power to lay down His life for us and to take it up again to go on before us, ever living to be our shepherd and intercessor. His resurrection proves that His death was not a defeat or a failure, but a voluntary offering of Himself. He who encountered death and came off victor surely will not be overpowered and robbed of His flock by another adversary—"Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (John 10:28).

¹ J. R. Thomson, *The Pulpit Commentary: Gospel of John*, Vol. II. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1962 reprint), p. 58.

JESUS TEACHES CONCERNING HIS IDENTITY

For Further Study:

- Barclay, William. *Jesus As They Saw Him*. New York, Evanston, London: Harper & Row, 1962. Pp. 187-200, 269-272. Information on Jesus as the Good Shepherd and as the Door.
- Butler, Paul. *The Gospel of John*, Vol. II. Joplin: College Press, 1965. Pp. 105-135. Basic and practical exposition.
- Morris, Leon. *New International Commentary: the Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971. Pp. 498-523.

THE LORD OF LIFE AND DEATH (John 11)

Jesus boldly declared, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). Jesus claimed to be the author of life, the conqueror of death and the restorer to new life. He not only claimed this but He demonstrated it as well.

The Lord In Action

Jesus had been teaching in the region across the Jordan River when He received news that His friend Lazarus of Bethany was sick. Jesus delayed two days; then He informed the disciples of Lazarus' death and His plan to go to Bethany (John 11:1-16).

Martha first met Jesus expressing anguish that Jesus had not been there so He could have prevented Lazarus' death. Her words do not blame Jesus, but express her faith in Him. She expressed her complete confidence in Him and His power, "I know whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee" (John 11:22).

Jesus promised Martha, "Thy brother shall rise again" (John 11:23). She said she knew he would rise in the general resurrection. She knew this from the Old Testament. As a disciple of Jesus she had heard His teaching on the resurrection (John 5:28, 29; 6:39, 40, 44, 54).

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). He does not merely teach the resurrection and promise life; He *is* both. All who are in Christ are abiding in life. Resurrection and life were not only future; they were present in person in Him. Martha was not only to trust in a future event, vague and remote to her; but she was to trust fully in the living person Jesus whom she knew and loved. Jesus had, then and there, all the power that produces resurrection and life. "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live" (John 11:25). To the believer in Christ, physical death is not the end of life. It is the entrance into a greater and better life (Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5:1-4; 4:17; Col. 3:4; Rev. 7:14-17; Rom. 8:18-23). Even the dissolution of the body will not be death to them. They will never be separated from God, or from conscious enjoyment of Him or from doing His will. Jesus asked Martha if she believed this. She responded, "Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ,

the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world" (John 11:27). The Greek expression means, "I have come to a settled conviction."

Martha called Mary. Many mourners went out with Mary. And Jesus went with them to the tomb. Jesus shed tears of sympathy. As Jesus started toward the tomb, common-sense Martha spoke up, "Lord, by this time the body decayeth; for he hath been dead four days" (John 11:39). Jesus reminded her that He told her if she believed she would see the glory of God. The Lord then gave thanks to God for hearing Him. He did this in order to glorify God in the minds of the onlookers. Jesus came not in His own name, but to do God's will and to reveal God to men. He wanted to make sure that men saw that this miracle was from God (John 11:40-42).

"Jesus spoke with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). Sound does not raise the dead. But the loud voice made everyone in the crowd cease wailing and give heed and see that the dead responded to Jesus' call. This event shows that the departed one was able to hear and respond immediately. The one who had died came out of the tomb. The entire body was wrapped around with linen cloths. Perfumes and spices were usually placed in the layers of the wrappings. Jesus asked that they "Loose him and let him go" (John 11:44). Lazarus needed some help, since he could not use his hands to uncover his face or loosen the windings. The people needed to face the fact that he was actually alive. It was a dramatic moment, but Jesus was matter-of-fact about it.

What Lazarus could tell us! Some may wish that Lazarus had written a description of his experience to give us interesting and valuable information about death and what follows it. Yet the one who wishes for a message from Lazarus is not much interested in what Jesus reveals about death and the life to come. This somehow seems characteristic of the attitudes of unbelief. Man prefers to glory in knowing all the answers as a matter of human knowledge that he can use or ignore as he chooses; but he does not care to trust the Lord who really knows and tells us what to do.

The experience of Lazarus does tell us that Jesus is the Lord of life! His voice raises the dead! To know Christ is better than to know the secrets of the universe. It is to Christ and His Word that we must turn if we want answers to our questions about life and death.

Jesus, the Author of Life

John tells us that He who became Jesus in the flesh is also He who made all things and "in Him was life" (John 1:3, 4, 14, 17).

Paul says, He is "Lord of lords; who only hath immortality" (I Tim. 6:15, 16). He is one with the Father, "who giveth life to all things" (I Tim. 6:13; Acts 17:25, 28).

We do not know what life is, but we see it work and know that we have it. We do not know how He had life in Himself, or how He made us to live; but we see Him able to give life on earth before the eyes of men. In our helplessness and our inability to comprehend life, we are the more assured that He who has the power of life and death is indeed our superior, our Master, and our greatest benefactor.

What more tremendous claim could Jesus make than that which He made in the discussion with the Jews after He healed the lame man on the Sabbath, when He said, "Even so the Son giveth life to whom He will" (John 5:21)? In what greater way could He assume equality with God? Yet He made good His words by the act of raising the dead and giving them life at least three times.

It is an even greater thing, to those who can see it, that He gives to men who trust and obey Him spiritual life after the divine nature—life of the Spirit, which is so much more significant and glorious than the mere animal life of the body. He is indeed the bread of God "which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:33).

Christ, the Conqueror of Death

All the conquerors of the world have had to surrender to death. All the mighty lords of earth have been subject to death and had no control over it. But Jesus conquered death, and death is ever subject to His command. He called back the dead when and where He pleased. He took our death upon Himself and came forth victor over the grave. He will completely destroy death at last (II Tim. 1:10).

The Son of God came in the flesh to take our death upon Himself and to overcome the powers of death. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14, 15).

He defied death to hold Him: "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:17, 28). He also said, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall

live" (John 5:25). And the brief record tells of three times that He entered death's domain and rescued victims: Jairus' daughter (Matt. 9:25), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14, 15), and Lazarus of Bethany (John 11:43, 44). Then He submitted to the stroke of death Himself for our sins (I Cor. 15:3). But "it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Acts 2:24). He demonstrated His power over death by His own resurrection (Acts 1:3; Rom. 1:4; 6:9). He is alive for evermore and has the keys of death and of Hades (the name the Greeks used for the entire realm of the dead) (Rev. 1:18). He will call all men from the grave unto life eternal and blessedness, or unto judgment and punishment (John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:12, 13). All that die through Adam shall be raised from the dead through Christ (I Cor. 15:22). Then He will completely destroy death at last (I Cor. 15:25, 26; Rev. 20:14; 21:4).

Nothing short of this tremendous consummation of His rule over life and death can fulfill Jesus' claims and the prophecy of Isaiah "He will swallow up death in victory" (Isa. 25:8). We have full assurance that such an end shall be reached because He has fulfilled in His miracles and in His own resurrection so large a portion of His claims and the prophecies such as Psalms 16:10.

Jesus, The Restorer of Life, Health, and Wholeness

Whether we are in danger of immediate death, or living a helpless and unsatisfactory life, or are already dead, Jesus can restore life and give us wholeness.

The sins of men have corrupted and disrupted their lives. Both directly and indirectly sin causes weakness, pain, and death. Christ by His miracles showed that He could overcome the effects of sin and make men new. But He was not content to restore physical health and leave men in sin. In each case He used the physical demonstrations to give men faith in Him and to draw them to Him that they may have life eternal. With each miracle of healing the body He sought to heal the soul, to give new life of faith and vital relationship with God, the source of life.

He came to give "life . . . abundantly" (John 10:10). That abundant life, He said, does not consist in the abundance of things which a man possesses (Luke 12:15). The life from God, to be found in Christ, is not life that can be supplied by any of the kings, wise men, or politicians of the earth; it comes from neither financiers nor physicians, psychologists, nor sociologists. "She [or he] that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth" (I Tim. 5:6). Men who are dead

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in sin do not know life such as Jesus gives. He "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (II Tim. 1:10). He is the life (John 11:25; 14:6). Except we believe Him we shall die in our sins (John 8:24). Except we eat His flesh and drink His blood we have not life in ourselves (John 6:53). He is the bread of life and the water of life.

Such statements as these may be hard to comprehend, but they should at least make it plain to us that all who trust and follow and feed on Jesus have something important and enduring and wonderful in store for them—something which can be had in no other way than by having Jesus come into their lives to renew them and to perpetuate them.

Jesus had sympathy for our physical needs, but He did not come to satisfy all our physical wants. On the contrary, He came to beget in us the life of the Spirit by which we put to death the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13; cf. 8:4-12; Gal. 5:16-25). He used His ministry of miracles to show two things: (1) That He is Lord of life and death with power to do whatever He promises; and (2) that He had deep compassion and loving mercy for us in our distresses. He needed to win both our minds and our hearts to trust and to love Him so that we could come to Him and receive life that is life indeed.

"And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (I John 5:11, 12).

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (I Pet. 1:3, 4).

To know Christ in actual experience as the Lord of one's life is eternal life (John 17:3), for He himself is the life (John 14:6; I John 5:11, 12). Without Him there is neither resurrection nor life. Life is not a chemical process that can be generated according to a formula. Life is a gift from God through Jesus Christ; it originates in Christ. Let us not forget this when we listen to the arrogant and ignorant men who talk presumptuously as if all life were the product of accident and evolution in a material realm.

The way of life is not merely a moral process or a reward for quality of character. It is union with Jesus Christ, who is our life (John 3:36; 6:53; 8:24). Character and good conduct cannot raise a man from the dead; they cannot be good enough to claim the right

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to be raised up by God. Christ came from God that all who will may have life in Him. He can and will raise up those who accept Him as their life. Because of what He is, those who by faith are in Him shall live and never die. Believe in Christ, the Lord of your life. Be baptized into Him, being buried into His death and made alive in Him (Rom. 6:1-11). Let Christ live in you as one who has died unto sin and is alive unto God forevermore.

For Further Study:

- Barclay, William. *Jesus As They Saw Him*. New York, Evanston and London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1962. Pp. 284-291. Biblical use of terms resurrection and life.
- Butler, Paul. *The Gospel of John*, Vol. II. Joplin: College Press, 1965. Pp. 136-163. Expository comment and outlines.
- Foster, R. C. *Studies in the Life of Christ*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968. Pp. 968-985. Expository comment on John 11:1-54.
- Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary: the Gospel According to John*, Vol. II. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954. Pp. 135-182. Detailed exposition.
- Morris, Leon. *New International Commentary: The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971. General comment as well as attention to technical issues.