



Who Jesus really is

by Colin Salter

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Bible quotations from the NIV, (Zondervan: Grand Rapids) 1984 edition, unless stated.
I have taken the liberty of capitalising “He”, “Him”, etc. when referring to God.

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Chapter 1 **Jesus: the Eternal God**

Bible reading from John 16:17 – 17:5.

Christmas 2004 Brenda and I drove down Oxford Street in London, as passengers on the top deck of a red double-deck bus. We were going to the British Museum to see an exhibition of Sudanese ancient history temporarily borrowed from Khartoum's Sudan National Museum. The Christmas decorations were in the big shop windows. The annual Christmas light display had been officially switched on the day before.

The decorations in the shop called Selfridges were entitled, "The Christmas Story" – so I looked for the baby Jesus. As the bus dawdled by window after window in front of the huge store I saw the Muppets, the Polar Express, the Most Beautiful Dog in the World, the Little Left Out Angel, the Snowman, English footballer Michael Owen's interpretation of what Christmas means, It's a Wonderful Life, the Nutcracker, the Toys that Came to Life, and Family Get Togethers. But **there was no Jesus in the Christmas Story** at Selfridges.

House of Fraser was a few shops along the street. They featured "The Christmas Alphabet" in their decorated windows. It was not in alphabetical order. I spotted "P"

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for peace. This was promising I thought! Then I saw “L” for love. My hopes were rising! Next came “J” for joy. I was disappointed again. There was no Jesus in the Christmas Alphabet at the House of Fraser.

I am not writing this to criticise commercial stores today, but I am writing to say:

The real Jesus of the Christian Christmas will be at the centre of every Christian heart and Christian home, especially when Christmas is celebrated.

A real Christian will not be squeezed into the mould of the materialistic world. He or she will be worshipfully taken up by the most stunning miracle this world has ever seen.

Some readers may think that the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest miracle ever. I ask you to think again. Since Jesus Christ is God – then *He has to be alive*, because God is the living God.

The greatest miracle is Christmas: remembering the human birth of Jesus Christ.

The greatest miracle is the Incarnation: “the assuming of a human body by the Son of God”¹. “The act of God the Son whereby He took to Himself a human nature”.²

¹ Collins English Dictionary, (Glasgow, Harper Collins) 1994.

² Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Leicester: IVP) 1994, p.543.

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The greatest miracle is described in John 1:14: “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, full of grace and truth”.³

God’s very self-expression donned our humanity (except for sin)⁴ and so God lived among us on earth in a singular, one-off, glorious, awesome, fantastic, gob-smacking way!

John’s gospel – the fourth in our New Testament – was written quite specifically to show readers (like us) who Jesus is. “Lamb of God”, “Word”, and “I am” are all titles unique to John’s writings. In John’s gospel Jesus is “the Son of God” or sometimes simply “the Son”.

John 20:31 states why John wrote what he did. It says: “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name”.

As an older man he later expanded this to clarify it still more.

“He who has the Son has life: he who does not have the Son of God does not have life”, 1 John 5:12.

So, if you want to have a life this Christmas – make sure all of your activities are centred upon Jesus Christ.

³ Bible verses from New International Version (Zondervan: Grand Rapids) 1973- 1984.

⁴ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.127-129.

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“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men”, John 1:4.

Twenty-first century razzamatazz has not changed this practical truth at all. All Christmas parties need Jesus as one of the invited parties.

Christmas presents need to be given, and received, in Jesus’ presence.

Christmas dinner needs to be eaten with the Bread of Life who came down from heaven (John 6:33-35).

Christmas shopping needs to be done knowingly under the all-seeing eye of Him to whom everyone will give account (Hebrews 4:13).

Seek to gain credit before Him rather than more credit on your card!

Christmas behaviour for the Christian must show the spiritual fruit of “goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22,23).

If you cannot behave like that where you plan to be this Christmas, then you simply should not be there!

I repeat, **the real Jesus of the Christian Christmas will be at the centre of every Christian heart and Christian home**, especially when Christmas is celebrated.

Let’s remind ourselves of *Who this Jesus is*. We will examine some words Jesus spoke on earth:

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“And now, Father, glorify Me in your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began”, John 17:5.

This is fewer than twenty English words, but they pack more than a lifetime of worshipful thoughts.

From them I suggest to you six Christmas dinners (as it were) to chew over, to savour, to enjoy and to benefit from.

Six facts about this Jesus from John 17:5:

1. Jesus was before the beginning. The last phrase of verse 5 is “BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN”.

Humankind has a fascination with the past and the future. Where did we come from? Where are we going to? And why? Scientists research back and speculate. Film makers reach forward and produce fantasy blockbusters!

God the Son (Jesus) said to God the Father, “(I was with You) before the world began”.

“God has no beginning, end, or succession of moments in His own being”.⁵ God is unlimited or infinite in regard to time because He lives in eternity.

⁵ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Leicester: IVP) 1994, p. 168.

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God is the “high and lofty one who lives forever”, “who lives in a high and holy place...”, “... and with the contrite and lowly in spirit”, Isaiah 57:15.
And Jesus was God.

“Contrite” means full of guilt, shame and regret over sin.

“Lowly” means full of humility and meekness.

How unlike so many of us. Yet, this living God the Son, from eternity past until now, will live with you and me. We need to humbly recognise our own sinfulness and continually repent over it. We need to wonder in amazement at Who Jesus is.

No wonder the Psalmist could rejoice in the trials he faced, *when he thought about the Lord*:

“The Lord reigns, He is robed in majesty; (His) throne was established long ago; (He is) from eternity”.
“Mightier than the thunder of the great waters, mightier than the breakers of the sea – the Lord is mighty”, Psalm 93:1,2,4.

I live some 4 miles from the Atlantic Ocean. On stormy days with low pressure especially, the seas are breathtakingly awesome. Jesus is more awesome!

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Take care to understand, *this* Jesus, who has lived for always, from before the beginning, He is present with all Christians at this Christmas time.

2. Jesus was with God before the world began. John 17:5 contains the words of Jesus, “the glory I had WITH YOU before the world began”.

John began his gospel with this truth. He wants all readers at all times and occasions to grasp who Jesus really is.⁶

“In the beginning was the Word, *and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*”, John 1:1 (*italics mine*).

Before Genesis 1:1, the Word, the expression of God, was! He existed. He was eternally with God and indeed He was God.

John’s gospel – John’s Good News – was how people can be new creations in Jesus Christ.⁷ John referred back to the first creation and to Genesis which means “origin” or “beginning”.

At the beginning of everything “the Word” – Jesus, God the Son – was already there! He was God’s Agent of creation.

“All things were made through Him”, John 1:3,4.

⁶ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.95.

⁷ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.114.

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Since “all things” were thus made, then Jesus, God the Son, must either be God or be with God. He is *not* a created person like everybody else.

John’s gospel tells us that Jesus is *both* “God” and “with God” at the same time.

God the Son was with God in intimate relationship. Yet He was also distinguishable from God. Jesus is not all there is of God. Yet the full divinity of all of God also belongs to Him.

Think deeply about Jesus’ mysterious majesty!

Jesus is God’s ultimate self-disclosure. “He was the pre-existent Son of God, sent into the world to become the Jesus of history, so that the glory and grace of God might be uniquely and perfectly disclosed”.⁸

This same Jesus says to you and to me, “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest”, Matthew 11:28.

Jesus is not a hastily put together emergency response to humankind’s disastrous rebellion against God! *From before all time* Jesus was to be in-fleshed to call people back to personally knowing God.

Make sure you know Him well this Christmas time.

⁸ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p. 111.

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3. Jesus was God Himself. John 17:5, “THE GLORY I HAD with You before the world began”.

God is “awesome in glory”, Exodus 15:11. In my view it is a pity the word “awesome” is getting smaller in meaning by too frequent usage.

The dictionary defines “awesome” as “inspiring or displaying overwhelming wonder, admiration, respect or dread”.⁹ People use “awesome” today when they really mean “superstar”. God is much greater than any megastar!

“The glory of the Lord fills the whole earth”, Numbers 14:21.

Men and women are to “ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name”,

1 Chronicles 16:29, and to “declare His glory among the nations”, Psalm 96:3.

Through Isaiah the prophet – the greatest of God’s writing prophets, who revealed God’s awful judgement and God’s greater salvation – we read God saying, “I will *not* give My glory to another”, Isaiah 42:8, and “I will *not* yield My glory to another”, Isaiah 48:11.

⁹ Collins English Dictionary, (Glasgow, Harper Collins) 1994.

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Since God will not share His glory Jesus can only *truthfully* speak about “the glory I had with You before the world began” if He was and is God Himself! He could not be anyone other than God.

Let me insert three words in brackets into John 1:1 to spell out this meaning clearly:

“And (Jesus) the Word, (Who) was with God, (actually) was God”.

In Old Testament times God pitched His tent to live among people. He was the shekinah glory of fire and cloud in the tabernacle and temple.

In Gospel times God pitched His tent to live among people as the man Jesus.

The Old Testament Word of God on two tablets of stone became the New Testament Word of God, with two dusty and sandaled human feet!

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form”, Colossians 2:9.

Christian believers, *this* Christ is our Christ this Christmas. Think on Him constantly. Unbeliever, see Who you’re missing.

4. Jesus was the God who lived among us. John 16:28 is part of the introductory context for John 17:5. In it Jesus says, “I CAME FROM THE FATHER AND ENTERED THE WORLD; now I am leaving the world and going back to My Father”.

Supposing you were going for the first time to visit the city of Sydney in Australia. You were given one choice from three for help on your journey.

Choice one was to fetch books, maps, pictures etc. about Sydney from the library.

The second choice was to have advice from your neighbours who visited Australia for one month, ten years ago. They could tell you what they remember of their experiences.

The third choice is that you can travel to and around Sydney with someone whose home is Sydney. You have already met them where you live. Now you are invited, “Come to me and I will go with you, taking care of everything you need while you journey to and around Sydney”.

Which of the three would you choose?

For a journey to Sydney there may be more than one choice.

For a journey to heaven Jesus is the only choice. Jesus came from heaven, and He will be with me on the

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journey and for every moment when I arrive in heaven too!

Jesus was the God – the Eternal God – Who lived among us. Think seriously about this.

- remaining what He was, He became what He was not
- eternity stepped into time¹⁰
- omniscience went to join woodwork classes
- omnipotence depended on His family for everything
- omnipresence lay contained in a small animal feeding trough
- Alpha and Omega became less than one day old
- the powerful Word could only muster a baby's cry
- the source of all life sucked milk from Mary's human breast
- the provider of everything for everyone had just ten wrinkly, wiggly fingers and thumbs, each less than two centimetres long!
- God's final Word was Jesus!¹¹
- WOW! Do you hear Him?

¹⁰ Michael Card, The Life CD, disc 1 track 6 "The Final Word", Sparrow Corp. 1988.

¹¹ Michael Card, The Life CD, disc 1 track 6 "The Final Word", Sparrow Corp. 1988.

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Jesus said in John 16:28 (the context of John 17:5), “I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to My Father”.

The disciples who heard Jesus replied to Him, “This makes us believe that You came from God”, John 16:30.

Do you believe this too? I pray and trust that you do.

5. Jesus was submissive to the Father. “And now, FATHER, glorify Me IN YOUR PRESENCE”, John 17:5.

God the Son is never less than God, but is “functionally subordinate”¹² to His Father. Jesus gave His Father perfect obedience and lived His earthly life in unqualified dependence on His Father. They had a great relationship. It was as if they were One – and this was because they were One!

John intends the whole of his gospel to be read in the light of the opening verses. The Word, living among us, is God, (John 1:14 and 1:1). “The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God”.¹³ Jesus waited God’s time, God the Father’s appointed moment – for His birth into humanity, and Jesus waited God’s set time for His death on behalf of humanity, and Jesus waited God’s moment for His resurrection to eternal life as the God-man.

¹² D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.95.

¹³ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.117.

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Jesus' attitude was always: "This is God's appointed hour, let Father's will be done". For example, John 17:4, speaking to God the Father He says: "I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do".

Jesus' heart was always in heaven, though His body was on earth. He was not overly interested in the Temple. He was not unduly interested in what some call the "Holy Land". *The entire universe and beyond was all His* – let alone any buildings or tracts of land in this world!

Jesus lived in a different realm. It was not geography He lived for, but spirituality, and He would soon be dying for these spiritual realities too.

Jesus was constrained in a crowd. Jesus was opposed in community. Jesus lived destined for a cross. And God the Son, Jesus, was content with the role His Father had given Him.

I trust we will get beyond the tinsel to the Trinity this Christmas.

Christians must get beyond this world's Christmas magic to the Word's Christmas mystery.

Join with more than your immediate human family by considering: "God eternally exists as three Persons,

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Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and each Person is fully God, and there is one God”.¹⁴

There is a plurality of Persons in God Himself. Jesus can be with God *and* be God. On earth Jesus gave up some status and privilege of heaven, but He never for one moment ceased being God. The miracle of Christmas is that the eternal God became flesh (John 1:14), the fullness of God in a Man.

People who saw Jesus saw the glory of God.
But it was not quite what they had expected!

6. Jesus’ prayer for “glory” is a prayer for the cross.
“AND NOW, FATHER, GLORIFY ME in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began”, John 17:5.

What is this “glory”?

John has grasped this truth and he has built towards it all the while he is writing his gospel.

- “Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified””, John 12:23
- “... it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your Name”, John 12:27,28
- “... the time had come for Him to leave this world”, John 13:1

¹⁴ Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Leicester: IVP) 1994, p.226.

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- And in the immediate context of John 17:5 that we are exploring: “Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify You”, John 17:1.

What is this glory? This prayer of Jesus was answered a few days later. Spikes were hammered through His hands and His feet. A thorn crown was rammed down upon His head.

The entire sin of humankind, which had not contaminated Jesus before, was loaded on to Him as He was dying on a wooden Roman cross.

God was dying as a Man in order to make it possible for any sinful person to reach His own heavenly presence. Glory is God’s word for Calvary.

Jesus said, “I have come to die, and now it is time”.

Jesus was almost universally unrecognised and rejected, (“His own did not receive Him”, John 1:11). Even in our generation on Christmas Days Jesus will not be given a thought by the majority of people.

Yet SOME PEOPLE TODAY ARE BEING GIVEN THE RIGHT TO BECOME CHILDREN OF GOD!

John 1:12,13 “Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent,

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nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God".

Are you born of God? John tells us simply to receive Jesus into our lives.

The opening of ourselves up to Jesus, and to all of His will for us, will genuinely revolutionise every one of us who truly does so.

The real Jesus of the Christian Christmas celebration *will be* at the centre of every born-again Christian's heart during this Christmas season – and at all other times for that matter too!

Make sure the right Jesus is your foundation for life this Christmas.

Make sure the right Jesus is leading your daily life.

And when you are wished by others, "a happy Christmas", reply, "Now why don't we talk for a moment about Who this Baby Jesus really was?"

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Chapter 2 **Jesus – the God who lived among us.**

Bible readings John 1:1-18 and John 20:19-23.

I wonder what you think God is like? Have you ever looked in a dictionary to find the meaning of the word, “God”?

“god”, with a small “g”, is “A supernatural being, who is worshipped as the controller of some part of the universe or some aspect of life in the world, or is the personification of some force”.¹⁵

“God”, with a capital “G”, is “the sole Supreme Being, eternal, spiritual and transcendent, who is the Creator and Ruler of all and is infinite in all His attributes, the object of worship in monotheistic religions”.

“God” is also defined as “an oath or exclamation used to indicate surprise, annoyance, etc. (and in such expressions as “My God”, “God knows” and “God Almighty”)”.

Christians believe Jesus Christ was God in human history living among human beings. “The Word (the expression of God, Who was actually God) became flesh and made His dwelling among us, ...”, John 1:14.

¹⁵ Collins English Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper Collins) 1994. For all definitions on this page.

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John, the author, continues to write a witness testimony: "... We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth", John 1:14.

Matthew and Isaiah describe the son born of a virgin as "Immanuel" meaning "God with us", Matthew 1:23; Isaiah 7:14. "God" being the sole, Supreme Being over all. "Us" being the human race. God came here! He truly did!

His birth was at least three things:

1. **It was supernatural:** there was no human father
2. **It was a sign:** it pointed to something unique happening
3. **It was God the Son, the Son of God, on earth as a Man baby** – in some ways a stranger even to His family and His closest friends.

God called Mary to deliver a baby boy into the world so that one day the people of the world, including Mary herself, would be delivered from sinful rebellion against God by this very same son!

The theological term is "the Incarnation" (with capital "I"), meaning the in-fleshing of God. "God, without

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ceasing to be God, was made Man”.¹⁶ The Bible does not investigate the metaphysical and speculative questions on the mode of the Incarnation – the how? the what? etc. It is content to clearly argue the life-changing evangelical issues of personal salvation through this Jesus.

Read **John remembering Jesus’ words:**

“No-one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, Who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known”, John 1:18.

“If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him”.

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us”.

Jesus answered, “Don’t you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? **Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father.** How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Don’t you believe (*and here is the Incarnation defined*) that **I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me?** The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, **it is the Father living in Me, who is doing His work**”, John 14:7-10.

¹⁶ The Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Leicester: IVP) 1980, p.688-689.

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Notice the three descriptions of the Incarnation and incarnation I have put in bold type above.

Why would God be in-fleshed? Because “... God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”, John 3:16.

Only flesh could save flesh. Man does not have flesh, man is flesh. Sin’s penalty is death. Only flesh can die! A second Adam came from God to remedy the tragic disaster of humanity’s sinful rebellion against God, caused by the first Adam.¹⁷

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, **the man Christ Jesus**, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men ...”, 1 Timothy 2:5-6.

John’s gospel gives us the understanding of the events described in Matthew and in Luke. Why did the angel visit Joseph and Mary?¹⁸ Why all the travelling to enrol for taxation?¹⁹ Why the miraculous conception? Why the virgin birth?²⁰ Why the heavenly crowd of angels

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:21-22; Romans 5:12,15, 19.

¹⁸ Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:26-28.

¹⁹ Luke 2:1-5.

²⁰ Matthew 1:21.

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raising the eyes of common shepherds towards the skies?²¹ Why the shepherds running to see the sign of the baby Lamb of God in a manger?²² Why did Simeon praise God with the baby Jesus in his arms saying to God “... my eyes have seen your salvation”?²³ Why did Anna explain all about the eight day old baby to the Temple crowd?²⁴ Why did the wise men journey with gifts to worship the omniscient child Jesus in His house in Bethlehem?²⁵ Why all this?

The answer is in John 1:14. “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us”. Jesus is the *only* Person who ever came from the Father in this sense. He was gloriously graceful and truthful. He was God Himself. Once and for all God became flesh and blood so as to be able to bleed for humankind.

We will now see five facts about Jesus, all from John’s gospel. We need to learn and to live with these five facts. Just about the first words from Jesus to the assembled disciples after His death, burial and resurrection were John 20:21:

²¹ Luke 2:13-14.

²² Luke 2:15-17.

²³ Luke 2:28-32.

²⁴ Luke 2:36-38.

²⁵ Matthew 2:1-2, 11.

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“Peace be with you” (that’s “salaam allekum” in the Arab world and in Sudan today). “As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you”.

We learn these five facts about Jesus’ incarnation today *because we Christians are sent into the world today to be the living Body of Christ where He has placed us.* We are to live lives that shout the fame of Jesus!

Five facts about Jesus in John: one eleven word sentence that reminds me – and should remind every Christian – of why I live today:

“The Son was sent to show, to save and to send”.

May be you can use the four fingers and one thumb on your right hand to remind you of these five key words?

1. the Son
2. was sent
3. to show
4. to save
5. and to send.

1. **Jesus is the Son.** Jesus frequently called God, “Father”.

At thirteen years old in the Jerusalem temple on pilgrimage with His earthly mother and His apparent human father, Jesus was separated from Mary and Joseph. He remained in the temple while they journeyed home. Perhaps they assumed He was with

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friends elsewhere among the travellers? When He was discovered later He told His anxious guardians, “Didn’t you know I had to be in My Father’s house?”, Luke 2:49.

Years later as an adult Jesus was in the temple courts. He drove out all of the buyers, sellers and money-changers saying:
“How dare you turn My Father’s house into a market?”, John 2:16.

According to John, Jesus is God’s single gene (Greek: monogenes) “only” Son.²⁶ He is the “One and only Son” (NIV), “the only begotten Son” (KJV).

- “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”, John 1:14
- “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only Who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known”, John 1:18.
- “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”, John 3:16.

²⁶ The Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Leicester: IVP) 1980, p.688-689.

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- “Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the Name of God’s One and Only Son”, John 3:18.

As this unique Son, Jesus knew God with Him and He knew God using His human life:

- “If I do judge, My decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father who sent Me”, John 8:16.
- “... (I) speak just what the Father has taught Me. The One who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him”, John 8:28-29.
- “...The miracles I do in My Father’s name speak for Me”, John 10:25.
- “My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand”, John 10:29.
- “I and the Father are One”, John 10:30.
- “In My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you”, John 14:2.
- Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”, John 14:6.
- Jesus answered, “Don’t you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long

time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”, John 14:9.

- “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father living in Me, who is doing His work”, John 14:10.
- “I am the true vine, and My Father is the Gardener”, John 15:1.
- “As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love”, John 15:9.
- “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name”, John 15:16.
- “All that belongs to the Father is Mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is Mine and make it known to you”, John 16:15.
- “I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father”, John 16:28.
- “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for My Father is with Me”, John 16:32.

Jesus always followed His Father’s initiative – never His own. He lived to glorify His Father (John 17:1,4). He did this by doing simply and only His Father’s will (John

4:34; 5:30; 8:28). He came in His Father's name, as His Father's representative (John 5:43). He perfectly showed His Father to all who would see (John 14:7). Jesus never did anything, or went anywhere, He could not be Himself – that is, He could not be the God He really was.

Fact one: Jesus is the Son. And Christians are born again as children of God too. Are you born again? It is a good idea to make these words of the Son of God our motto in life: "... I seek not to please myself but Him who sent me", John 5:30.

2. Jesus was sent by His Father. Forty-two times this phrase or something similar to it occurs in John's gospel – *God the Father sent God the Son for a purpose*. This is the reason "the Word became flesh", John 1:14. In Jesus' own words, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work", John 4:34.

- "He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent Him", John 5:23.
- "Whoever hears My words and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life", John 5:24.
- "I seek not to please Myself, but Him who sent Me", John 5:30.
- "The very work that the Father has given Me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent Me", John 5:36.

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- “The Father who sent Me has Himself testified concerning Me”, John 5:37.
- “The work of God is this: to believe in the One He has sent”, John 6:29.
- “I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me”, John 6:38.
- “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that I shall lose none of all those He has given Me”, John 6:39.
- “No one can come to Me unless the Father Who sent Me draws him”, John 6:44.
- “Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me”, John 6:57.

These are ten of many examples!²⁷

Towards the end of His life Jesus declared: “I have brought You glory on earth (Father) by completing the work You gave Me to do”, John 17:4.

From the cross He cried out in victory: “It is finished”, John 19:30. You can only finish a job when it is clear precisely what you have to do! Jesus the Son was sent.

I have a problem with many “so-called” Christians today who live purposeless lives. They are bored! They

²⁷ See also John 7:33, 8:16, 8:18, 8:26, 8:29, 8:42, 16:5, 17:3, 17:8, 17:21, 17:23, etc.

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say they have no purpose. “What shall I do this evening?” “What can I do with my holiday time?”

Followers of Jesus have the same purpose as Jesus Himself had! Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, Jesus was “sent” (the Greek is usually, though not exclusively, *apostello*). He was sent to save the world – and so are we!

As an older man John wrote: “And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world”, 1 John 4:14.

We cannot die like Jesus did to save the world, but we can live like He did with that one goal in mind. Anything we cannot do while seeking to witness to and win the lost, *we should not be doing*. By their lifestyle disciples of Jesus are different to everybody else. We are sent into the world to be different from the world. “As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you”, John 20:21.

3. Jesus was to show off God in all His greatness.

Around Christmas time plenty of people decorate their homes with fairy lights. There is holly, Father Christmas, bells, signs that shine “Merry Xmas” (I often think that “X” = the unknown factor, as in mathematics!).

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My Christmas 2004 TV Guide had 154 pages in it. On page 15 there was a quarter of a page of programmes generally titled, "The Spirit of Christmas". That pathetic percentage of 0.25% illustrates that my nation – the United Kingdom – has little clue about life as God intends it to be!

Real life is centred on Jesus, it does not relegate Him to a hidden corner! We Christians must remember that society's darkness is our chance to shine brightly. I need to be the best I can be in the place where God has put me – and so do you.

The older John wrote: "God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life", 1 John 5:11-12.

As a young fisherman John saw the glory of God in Jesus from Nazareth. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The Life appeared (*the Incarnation*); we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the Eternal Life which was with the Father and has appeared to us", 1 John 1:1-2, (italics mine).

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John the apostle knew that because Jesus was sent he was sent as well. Consequently he wrote what he knew, so that anyone could read it. Like John we are also sent as Jesus was sent, to show God in all His greatness.

In John 14 Jesus says that God the Father and God the Son are one God, experienced together, both introduced by Jesus. Jesus was total God-ness in one complete and perfect man. Jesus was God as He had never been seen before. Jesus was infinity captured. Jesus was the Almighty constrained. Jesus was omniscience on occasion blissfully ignorant. Jesus was omnipotence significantly dependent on others. Jesus is God full-on. Jesus is God full time. Jesus is fully God.

One of the earliest Christian attempts at explaining this is found in Philippians 2:7-8. God the Son “made Himself nothing”, “emptied Himself”, was “found in appearance as a Man”.

John’s gospel reads: “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”, John 1:14.

If you know Him, does your life advertise God well? Do people want Jesus because of what they see of Him in

you? Are you like Jesus in your character? Is Jesus obvious in everything you do? Are you different to the world around you because you are a disciple of Jesus Christ? “As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you”, John 20:21.

4. **Jesus came to save.** According to John Jesus was light shining in the darkness, (John 1:5, 1:10). Jesus was unrecognised by the gloomy world. His own creation rejected Him – the created and the chosen turned their backs on the One to whom they owed everything, (John 1:10-11).

God’s love was expressed by His huge donation to the world, (John 3:16). God gave Himself in human form – God the Son, given not to bring condemnation and judgement to people, but to save the world through Him, (John 3:17). The word “save” (Greek *sozo*) means to preserve.

- Some people recognised this. The Samaritan townsfolk said, “This Man really is the Saviour of the world”, John 4:42.
- Martha said, “Yes, Lord. I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, Who was to come into the world”, John 11:27.
- The Jerusalem crowd shouted – and some really meant it, “Blessed is He who comes in the Name

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of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!", John 12:13.

- At Jesus' trial Pilate – seeming to recognise Jesus was from out of this world – asked: "Where do You come from?", John 19:9.
- After Jesus' resurrection Thomas said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God", John 20:28.
- And John wrote his gospel "... that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His Name", John 20:31.

Who is Jesus to you? There is only one Link, one Corridor, one Agent between earth and heaven, and He is Jesus! Jesus is God the Son, identified with God as the pre-existent Word, yet distinguishable from God as the son of Mary.²⁸

Christians and others have too small a view of Jesus! What about you?

In John 17:2 Jesus is granted authority over all people so that He may give eternal life to every person His Father has given to Him. Christianity does not depend so much on what you think of Jesus. It depends on *what He thinks of you*. Be aware of any undue emphasis on "me" in salvation. The "Master" is everything.

²⁸ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p. 96.

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When Jesus prayed “Father the time has come. Glorify your Son, that the Son may glorify You”, John 17:1, it was a prayer for the salvation of people through His saving act of substitutionary death.

“The very event by which the Son was being ‘lifted up’ in horrible ignominy and shame (on a cross) was that (one) for which He would be praised around the world (throughout subsequent history) by men and women whose sins He had borne”.²⁹

To glorify can mean “to clothe in splendour”. The self-emptying necessary for His Incarnation is reversed, as Jesus – God the Son – post Calvary – is restored to His pre-world creation glory within the Godhead.

- The Son
- was sent
- to show
- to save, and

5. Jesus came to send His disciples to spread the news of His salvation. Christians know what we have to do with the rest of our lives.

“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you”, John 20:21.

²⁹ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p. 554.

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If you know Jesus, show Jesus everywhere every day.
Since He died for you, live for Him.

The world is in a mess and we Christians have the message it needs.

Like Jesus, we will be rejected by most, but some will receive what we say.

Death is not the end. It is what follows death that is worth living for.

“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us”, John 1:14. And this Word, Jesus, says to you and to me:

“As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you”, John 20:21.

Christian, when you return to work after this year’s Christmas break, and colleagues say to you, “Did you have a good Christmas?”, you could respond:

“Yes. And I resolved this New Year to help Jesus do what He came for. Do you know what that is?”

Not-yet-Christian, why not repent of leaving the Saviour Jesus out of your life and present that life to Him from today on? Repent means to turn away from sin and toward God the Saviour. Confessions of sin to God leads to a cleansed life through Jesus Christ.

God will bring others to faith through disciples of Jesus who are dynamically different from those around

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them. The Son was sent to show, and to save, and to send.

So let's go!

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Chapter 3 **Jesus – the God who died as man.**

Bible reading John 18:28 – 19:16.

In this Bible passage Jesus speaks four times. Each time He speaks to Pilate, the Roman governor, 18:28. Jesus, the God-man, knew exactly what He was doing. He steadily pursued the direction He had set for His life, to die for others. Pilate, representing the man-god Caesar, ducked, dodged and dived as he looked after himself. This whole trial of Jesus before Pilate is recorded more by John than any other gospel writer.

If we remember *why* John wrote his gospel we may also try to see how his purpose is fulfilled in this narrative: “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name”, John 20:31. Here we read of Jesus, the travelling Teacher from Nazareth, standing accused and facing capital punishment. He is apparently in the hands of Pilate, historically known to be the governor of Judea from AD26-37.³⁰

At a much deeper level than could be seen, something of immensely awesome significance was happening. “The Lamb of God” was about to “take away the sin of the world”, John 1:29. “He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who

³⁰ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.590.

received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God”, John 1:11-13. John had written in the opening verses that Jesus came to all people without distinction. But he noted there would be exceptions – people who excluded themselves from what Jesus was doing – people who would not receive Him.³¹

By chapter 18 the climax is near. Linking together the finish and the start of John’s gospel we note that there is:

1. **something to believe:** “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”, John 20:31
2. **someone to receive:** “The Word”, John 1:1; “the true Light”, John 1:9; “God the One and Only”, John 1:18; “Jesus Christ” John 1:17.

Reader, please allow me to ask you important questions at this moment. 1. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Do you believe (trusting yourself to and committing yourself to) Jesus Christ?

2. Have you received Jesus Christ into your life? Have you received (taken into your life to enjoy friendship with, all day every day) Jesus Christ?

³¹ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.151.

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“For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that *whoever believes* in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life”, John 3:16. Many people love the darkness too much to welcome the Light! Lots of people choose not to listen to God’s expressed Word – Who is Jesus! Crowds do not appreciate Jesus Christ as God’s sole Incarnation – uniquely God on earth! But what is important at this moment is, *what do you think?*

Four times Jesus speaks to Pilate in this Bible reading. By setting the conversation in context we will learn something from each one.

The first speech is **John 18:34**. Having heard something of the accusation from the Jewish leadership Pilate asks Jesus a question. “Are you the king of the Jews?” Jesus replies to him, **“Is that your own idea or did others talk to you about me?”** This reply is unique to John’s gospel.³²

Notice that Jesus the prisoner has become Jesus the One who is asking the questions. Jesus is really the judge. Today, *we* consider who Jesus is. One day *He* will consider us, as our Judge!

Pilate’s question, “Are you the king of the Jews?” is impossible to answer without a definition of “king of

³² See Matthew 27:11; Mark 15:2; Luke 23:3 and John 18:36-37.

the Jews". If the governor was fearful of the common understanding for a military rebellion led by a charismatic leader or guerrilla mercenary, then the answer was "No". But in the true understanding of what was really happening beneath the surface of events, then the answer was "Yes". Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, on David's kingly throne. Which did Pilate mean?

And what would you mean? Is your believing in Jesus and your receiving of Jesus based upon your own ideas, or on a revelation of what was genuinely happening, from God Himself? Is your believing and receiving 'surface' or 'spiritual'? Is it visible or actual? Is it 'guess-work' or 'God's work'?

Jesus is God: God is at work in Jesus in a very special way.

The second speech is **John 18:36**. Jesus' words in this passage are: **"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were My servants would fight to prevent My arrest by the Jews. But now My kingdom is from another place"**.

John has already strongly shown that God is at work behind and through all that is happening. For example: "This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death He was going to die would

be fulfilled”, John 18:32. The political situation was going to bring about Jesus’ death, and bring it about by crucifixion – not any other way. This would fulfil Jesus’ own words on several occasions.³³ He had warned that He would be betrayed. The Jewish priests and teachers would condemn Him. He would be turned over to the Gentiles (Roman authorities), who would mock, flog and crucify Him. And on the third day He would rise again. These words of Jesus would be fulfilled.

So uncannily to some extent, Jesus already knew what was going to happen. How did He know? If He was only a man, that is a puzzle. But God knows all things. And the Bible shows us that Jesus is God as a Man!

“My kingdom is not of this world”, John 18:36. The word “kingdom” (Greek: *basileia*) means “rule or reign” much more than “territory”.³⁴ Jesus is concerned with ruling over people, not places. Unlike other kings Jesus rules people without borders. “My kingdom is not of this world.... My kingdom is from another place”, John 18:36.

John has written that Jesus (the Word or expression of God) was living long before everything else. Earlier than the start of everything “In the beginning was the Word”, John 1:1. John has recorded Jesus as saying,

³³ See Matthew 16:21, 17:22, 20:17-19.

³⁴ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.594.

“You (people) are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world”, John 8:23. The reign and the rule of Jesus are resourced from out of this world! They affect this world but they are not attributable to this world. The reign of Jesus offers heaven on earth! It overcomes this world by using other-than-worldly methods. Jesus’ kingdom may not suit mankind’s ideas, but it show us God’s idea! Jesus rules His people wherever they are. Christians can be godly even where it is godless! In spiritual wellies Christians can slosh around in the world’s mud, keeping clear of the mud itself.

From the two sayings of Jesus we have looked at we have learned that we should see below our surface guesswork to God’s real work. Remember, Jesus rules over certain people, not in certain places. His special people influence for Him wherever they are.

The third speech is **John 18:37**. Pilate seizes on Jesus having a kingdom. “You are a king then!” he says. Jesus replies: (I paraphrase verse 37) **“King’ is your word, not Mine, because you don’t understand what I mean by it. We are talking of two different things”**.

In John 18:37 Jesus makes three clear statements:

1. **“For this reason I was born”**. This is the only clear reference to Jesus’ birth in the gospel of John. God was born as a Man.

2. **“For this reason I came into the world”**. Many people leave this earth hoping to go to heaven. Jesus did the reverse! He left heaven and He came to this earth.
3. **“Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me”**.

“For this reason I was born”. John 1:14 says, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”. Jesus was born so that God could become a flesh and blood human being. God put skin on. The Creator Himself became the outstanding special One in His own creation. Jesus stood out from everyone else. This man was stunningly God!

“For this reason I came into the world”. John 17:5 records Jesus as saying: “And now, Father, glorify Me in your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began”. It is as if He says: “I belong where I was; I don’t belong here”. “Before this world was, I was!” “I came here, Pilate, on a mission from My kingdom to the people of your world”.

Why was Jesus born? For God to engage on a saving mission. For people to be able to understand God, and especially enjoy His love for them.

“Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me”. John likes to use the word, “truth”. “(Jesus) Who came from the Father, full of grace *and truth*”, John 1:14. “For the law was given through Moses; grace *and truth* came through Jesus Christ”, John 1:17. “God is Spirit, and His worshippers must worship in spirit *and truth*”, John 4:24. “Jesus answered, “I am the way and *the truth* and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me””, John 14:6.

Many times Jesus began His answers with the phrase, “I tell you *the truth*”.³⁵ He told people, “You will know *the truth*, and *the truth* will set you free”, John 8:32. He said, “But when He, *the Spirit of truth* comes, He will guide you into all *truth*”, John 16:13.

God is truth. God knows the truth. God reveals truth. “The ultimate truth is the self-disclosure of God in His Son, who is the truth”.³⁶ On this axis the whole of life turns. Those who *believe* this truth spoken by Jesus and who *receive* the truth who is Jesus Himself, are born again into Jesus’ kingly reign. They leave the apparent world for the actual world. They exchange life’s reflection for life’s reality. All of this is God’s idea and God’s implementation. It is not man-made!

³⁵ See John 1:51, 3:3, 3:5, 3:11, etc. Twenty-eight times in all.

³⁶ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.595.

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Did Jesus invite Pilate to be converted with His last statement, “Everyone on the side of truth listens to Me”? Whether He did or not Pilate turned his back on Jesus, John 10:38. He did not really want to know. We learn from this that those who don’t want to know are not forced! God is love. *Faith is never forced on to anyone.*

*The fourth saying is **John 19:11**.* Following Pilate’s offer the crowd choose Barabbas to be freed and Jesus to be crucified, John 18:40; 19:6; 19:15. Jesus is flogged to teach Him a lesson, John 19:1. Such terrible flogging would take His strength from Him. He could not even carry His own cross all the way to the execution site.³⁷

Jesus would have been hurt by false homage jeered towards Him. He would have bled from the barbs of the date palm fronds. He was not only rejected, but also ridiculed. The words spoken by the Roman perpetrators of the flogging were terribly true: “Hail, king of the Jews”, John 19:3. In John 1:49 Nathanael whole-heartedly recognised Jesus, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel”. Here the Roman guards cold-heartedly dismiss Him. They pretend to worship One they see merely as a deluded pretender.

³⁷ See Matthew 27:26-31; Mark 15:15-20. Matthew 27:32; Mark 15:21; John 19:17.

In John 19:5 Pilate utters a shattering phrase without at all understanding what he is saying. “Here is the Man”, in Latin “*Ecce Homo*”. Pilate may have thought, “You Jews think this Man is so dangerous you want Him executed. Here He is bloodied, bruised, bowed, and surely beaten. Here is the Man”. In the deeper perspective this Man Jesus was the Word made flesh – real flesh, unmistakably a Human Being. Here is God as Man.

In John 19:7 religion accuses God of blasphemy. God’s Law is used against God! This charge has been slowly surfacing throughout the gospel of John.³⁸ A jittery Pilate questions Jesus again, drawing from Jesus our fourth and final statement in this passage:

“Jesus answered (Pilate), “You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above (where I come from)”, John 19:11. Behind Pilate’s next decision – to send Jesus to die on a cross – Jesus recognises, and remembers, and respects even if He cannot rejoice in it, the hand of God. Unwittingly, Pilate’s choice executes the will of God.

We learn that Jesus did not meet earthly power with power. He met it with proper perspective. It was as if Jesus thought: “This is not what it looks like to you,

³⁸ See John 5:18; John 8:58-59; John 10:33; etc.

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Pilate. God is still sovereign. I know that because I am God, not just the bloodied Man you think I am.”

The phrase said to Pilate: “the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin”, John 19:11, could refer to Judas the betrayer or to Caiaphas the High Priest. To some extent Pilate is cornered by two men who were both calculating in their rejection of Jesus.

So in John 19:13 and 19:16 Pilate judges the One to whom the judgement of the entire world has been entrusted by God Himself.³⁹ Yet we must remember it is never man’s judgement of God that counts, but God’s judgement of man. It is God’s judgement of us that really matters.

Pilate said to the Jews, “Here is your King”, John 19:14. Neither Pilate nor the people recognised the real Jesus. When the chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar”, John 19:15, they did not only reject Jesus. They seemed to rule out any idea of a Messiah, “the betrayal of the nation by its own leadership”.⁴⁰

We must never follow *any* human leadership without questioning. All people can go astray. Only Jesus, the God-man, deserves total obedience.

³⁹ See John 5:22.

⁴⁰ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.606.

So what have we learned from these four sayings of Jesus in our Bible reading?

1. It is God's work and not guess work that shows us Jesus as the God who died for humankind.
2. Jesus rules people – not places, people who can cross over any earthly borders. It is God's way to use people. Weak people often exhibit God's strength.
3. Faith can be found by people, but it can never be forced on people. God lovingly respects all of the people He has made.
4. The way to meet earthly power is not with similar power, but with perspective. Always remember to look for what God is doing behind the things you can see.

Think about Jesus speaking to some Pharisees within everyone's hearing. He talked about the shepherd giving His life in the service of His sheep:

"...I lay down My life only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father" John 10:17-18.

It was as if Jesus was thinking: "No, Pilate, you're not in charge. Not even Emperor Caesar is in charge. High priest Caiaphas was not in charge. Ex-disciple turned traitor Judas was never in charge. The baying mob does

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not rule, however loudly they shout, “Crucify, crucify Him”. No, Pilate. *I lay down My life*”.

Today we may say, “Democracy may choose by a vote, but it is still God’s will that prevails”. Power is from the Sovereign God above. In the crucifixion of Jesus God is ultimately removing the sin of the world. God becoming Himself the sacrificial Substitute to whom the entire Bible message points.⁴¹

Can you believe it? Will you believe it? Do you believe it?

Believe Jesus and receive Jesus into your life right now. Faith is never forced. It is given by God. Accept it. The choice and its consequences are yours.

⁴¹ Including the animal skin in Eden; the Passover in Egypt; the sacrifices for atonement in the Temple; etc.

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Chapter 4 **Jesus the Man who lives as God.**

Bible reading John 20:1-18.

All through his gospel John is seeking to prove that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God”, so that his readers and listeners will believe and become spiritually alive, John 20:31.

John clearly believes in life after death. He believes that this life can be sampled *before* death too! Participation in this life is available through Jesus Christ the Saviour and Lord. Participation will take a person through physical death and on into the next part of life’s journey. It is like an airplane passenger, staying in the same seat, while gliding majestically up through the grey stratocumulus clouds before bursting into clear blue sunshine-filled heavens.

This life beyond life is *the* Christian hope. Life that is more than the one you were born with. Not just life here on earth. Life firing on all cylinders like a smooth running engine, with no misfiring at all. Life as God the Creator intends it to be. This life is the life of Jesus, which Christians share.

Consider what John has written for us:

- “In (Jesus) was Life, and that Life was the Light of men”, John 1:4. Good light brings wonderful colour to our experiences in the world.

- “Yet, to all who received Him, to those who believed in (Jesus’) Name, He gave the right to become children of God”, John 1:12. Children who are at the beginning of new lives!
- God’s children are “born of God”, John 1:13. There is a life added on to this life. An extra life even in this life. Life – as it were – extended upwards into the second floor.
- Jesus said, “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but *the Spirit* gives birth to spirit”, John 3:6. The capital ‘S’ in most Bible translations shows this is the work of God the Holy Spirit in a human life.
- “For God so loved the world that He gave His One and Only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have *eternal life*”, John 3:16. Life never ending. Being forever alive. Continuous non-deadness, in a real sense. Christians living even through their own death! One day I will live on: experiencing my own death, and discovering more beyond it. And as Charles Spurgeon said in August 1885: ‘I shall live when I am dead by the words which I have written’
- Jesus said, (I paraphrase) “I can give you living water”, John 4:10. Anyone who recognises Who Jesus is and who asks for this living water will be given it.
- Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work”, John 4:34. We all

- eat and drink in order to physically live. This extra life we are now looking at has “living water” as it’s source and the food of obedience to God’s will as it’s strength.
- Jesus said, “The Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it”, John 5:21. He continued, “Whoever hears My word and believes on Him who sent Me, has eternal life and will not be condemned. He (or she) has crossed from death to life”, John 5:24. Chocolate Easter eggs are bought, and given, but they can only be eaten after being received! Christian believers have received Jesus. His life is God’s gift. Jesus’ life makes an eternal difference to the recipient’s destination as this present existence ends. Everyone does *not* automatically go to heaven, nor “Rest in Peace”, no matter how often the TV news shows bunches of flowers left at tragedy sites alongside cards with such wishes on!
- Jesus said, “The bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world”, John 6:33. He added, “I am the bread of life”, John 6:35. Thinking about Jesus is our staple diet of spiritual food. Thinking of Jesus is life-giving. True thinking of Jesus is life-sustaining.
- Jesus said, “Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one (human/Christian) who feeds on Me will live because of Me”, John 6:57. Jesus is full of spiritual

- nutrients and vitamins, bringing healthy spiritual life to the Christian who meditates on Jesus' person and work. Jesus is a spiritual health food! In the shops of Cornwall I can choose from a variety of foods for a healthy life. But in regards to spiritual life there is only One option. It is found in Jesus! And only in Jesus!
- Jesus said, "The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life", John 6:63. The expressions of Jesus are life-giving even in a desert climate.
- Jesus said, "... I lay down My life only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord ...", John 10:17-18. Jesus never once surrendered to sin in His entire life on earth. But He did surrender His life *for* sin, once and for all.
- Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. He (or she) who believes in Me will live, though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die", John 11:25-26. This life we are considering is the person of Jesus. Just as Jesus' life came safely through death, so everyone who shares His life will pass safely through death too!
- Jesus said, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified", John 12:23. The word "glorified" is John's code word for the sufferings and death of Jesus from Nazareth. Verse 24 tells us that *THE*

- *Life is going to die!* But death is not the end. Jesus' death will produce much more Life, just as a seed gives up itself to produce a plant with many more life-giving seeds. Verse 25 teaches that people who follow Jesus with this perspective are already living an eternal life. Human life is completed (glorified) by dying properly. Dying properly means following Jesus through physical death to undying Life in the Spirit beyond.
- Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life" John 14:6.
- Jesus said, "I am the true vine", John 15:1. My paraphrase of verse 5 is Jesus continuing, "Remain true to Me and you will have a fruitful life". Every spring season in England beautiful flowers emerge from the ground, or from plants that look almost dead. The Creator's life is in them. There is no secret to successful Christian living except Jesus! And Jesus is no secret! Life can be seen in the right season because it simply breaks out of its cover.
- Jesus said, "Now this is eternal life: that (people) may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent", John 17:3.

And remember why John wrote all these things. "John wrote his gospel account so "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that *by believing YOU may have life in His name*".

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Jesus is the Christian hope! His resurrection is the cause of our rejoicing. Because Jesus lives on *after* His death I can really live *before* mine! Real life is available to all people who will welcome Jesus into every part of their lives.

So, **Who is this life-giving Lord Jesus?**

On Good Friday we remember Jesus is God – the God Who died as a Man.

On Easter day we remember Jesus is Man – the Man Who lives as God.

I suggest **four points to remember about Jesus as the Man who lives as God**, from John 20:1-18.

1. **Jesus the Man who was buried**, John 19:41-42. Mary went to His burial place, verse 1. So did Peter and John, verse 4. They had seen Him die. They had watched from a distance. They noted where His body was put. They went out to that very spot.

Jesus the Man whose body Nicodemus had brought in from Calvary. (Nicodemus seems to have been born again sometime between John 3:1-21 and 19:39-40). The dying Jesus Who bled blood and water, as John himself had seen, John 19:34-35.

Jesus the Man Who was bloodied and beaten before being crucified, John 19:1.

This Man Jesus was buried.

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Jesus the Man Who Philip and the rest of the disciples had difficulty believing was anyone more than a mere man, John 14:8-9.

Jesus the Man Whose own step-brothers did not see as anyone other than “their older brother”, John 7:5.

In John 20:1-18 *this Man Jesus* was recognised as living on after His death.

He was recognised when He pronounced the name “Mary” (Greek: Mariam), John 20:16. The Man she took to be the gardener in the graveyard was really God-in-the-risen-flesh! Jesus lived beyond His physical death. God was living as a Man so that He could die, then live again.

2. Jesus the Man going back to His Father, John 20:17. Jesus said to Mary, “Do not hold on to Me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to My brothers and tell them, “I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God”. The word “return” means “to go back to”. Later on Jesus ascended to His Father in heaven, Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9-10. Here, it is as if He is saying, “I am not yet in the ascended state. I have not yet ascended and remained in the ascended state”.⁴²

⁴² Wayne Grudem, Systematic Theology (Leicester: IVP) 1994, p.593-594.

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“This verse belongs to a handful of the most difficult passages in the New Testament”.⁴³ It *probably* means: “Stop touching Me for I am not yet in the ascended state. You don’t have to hang on to Me as if I am to permanently disappear. This is a time for joy and for sharing the good news I am alive and in the process of ascending to My Father”.⁴⁴

For three and a half years before His crucifixion Jesus was continually with His disciples. After His resurrection He was not continuously with them. His spiritual body was no longer constrained as it had been during His earthly life. His spiritual body was already transformed into its heavenly reality. Eternity took time to complete what was happening. Jesus wanted to help people believe.

Later in John 20:27 Jesus invited Thomas to check that He is the same man, Jesus, by seeing and touching the wounds from the crucifixion process on His body. Thomas was convinced immediately. He spoke in awe and wonder, “My Lord and my God”, John 20:28.

Several times John has reminded us that Jesus came from the Father. Now John writes that *Jesus is going back where He came from*.

⁴³ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.641-642.

⁴⁴ D. A. Carson, The Gospel According to John (Leicester: IVP) 1991, p.644.

- “The Word became flesh and (lived) among us... the One and Only Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”, John 1:14.
- “He who does not honour the Son, does not honour the Father who sent Him”, John 5:23.
- “And the Father who sent Me has Himself testified concerning Me ...”, John 5:36-37.
- “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him ...”, John 6:44.
- “My teaching is not My own. It comes from Him who sent Me. If anyone chooses to do God’s will, he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own”, John 7:16-17.
- “But (Jesus) continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world”, John 8:23. “... He who sent Me is reliable”, John 8:26.
- “I am telling you what I have seen in the Father’s presence, ...” John 8:38.
- “If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I came from God and now am here”, John 8:42.
- (I am the) “One whom the Father set apart as His very Own and sent into the world”, John 10:36.

His claims to have come from the Father resulted in Jesus being in court. Legalistic religion challenged the loving God over blasphemy. “This Man claims to be the Son of God”, (see John 10:33). Jesus was *so much a Man*

His accusers did not recognise Him as anything else. Jesus simply said who He was. He was killed for speaking the truth. The truth was that Jesus was (and is) God.

“I am returning to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God”, John 20:17.

3. Jesus the Man who has brothers and sisters. The man Jesus has blood relatives, but not human blood from the same human father and mother. Jesus had no human father. He was not orphaned. His parents were not divorced. Jesus *never at any time had had* a human father.

The blood that soaked into Calvary’s earth at the place where His cross sank into the ground bought Jesus His family! Blood relatives in a completely new way. Some women and some men. Some old and some young. Some people from every tribe, culture, race, and colour under the sun are altogether in Jesus’ family.

John 20:17, “Tell My brothers” Jesus said to Mary. Not His human brothers – fellow children of Mary – but His disciples, (compare Mark 3:31-35). His born-again family are those who chose to follow Him in life and in death.

Later, these disciples would see Him, John 20:19. In a locked room on the first evening after His resurrection,

the third after His execution. Jesus appeared to join them. Seven days later they saw Him again in the same way and the same place, John 20:26-27. The disciples had breakfast with the risen Jesus on a Galilee beach, John 21:1-14. But to begin with these disciples only had the testimony of another to lead them towards their personal beliefs.

Jesus, the Man they lived with for some three and a half years; Jesus the Man who was buried; Jesus who was going back to His Father – God in heaven; *this Jesus was calling them His brothers!* He was no mere man. He had conquered death. The grave could not keep Him under. He had eternal life. And reader, if you are “born again” (John 3:3-5), if you are “born of God”, (John1:13), you are Jesus’ brother or sister too! If you have “received Him”, (John 1:12), you share eternal life with Him, (1 John 5:11-12).

4. Jesus the Man to believe in. John tells us that Mary believed. She said to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord!”, John 20:18. John tells us that the disciples believed. “The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord”, John 20:20.

Jesus’ first followers

- knew the facts
- they found faith

- and therefore they had a firm future, on a Holy Spirit inspired commission, “Peace be with you! (Arabic: Salaam alekum!) As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you”, John 20:21.

John even tells us that doubting Thomas eventually believed, John 20:24-29. Thomas was blessed when he saw the nail prints in Jesus’ body, but he was not as blessed as he could have been had he simply believed the testimony of the others.

And so John asks the question of us, his readers, centuries later. What about you? It requires a basic and uncomplicated answer. If you believe, you have 100% complete life. If you do not believe, you remain dead before God in your sin. You remain a dead loss, with a dead end. A dead duck who is dead beat! And if you choose to remain so dead, you will *never* know what it is to really live, either before or after your own earthly death.

In his later letters John wrote this. “The Life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the Eternal Life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us”, 1 John 1:2.

This man Jesus “is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world”, 1 John 2:2.

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Jesus has taken the judicial wrath of God against sin, on to Himself. He now clothes those of us exposed by sin and its consequences, with a made-to-measure outfit of His own righteousness. It brilliantly suits us! Our sin is imputed to God the Son Jesus Christ, and His right standing with His Father, God the Father, is imputed to us. God saves us and God sanctifies us. Jesus our Saviour is the Man God Himself became in order to do precisely that.

Now Jesus remains the God-man in heaven. God the Son's divine nature is permanently united with His human nature. Jesus lives forever, not just as the eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity (as before His Incarnation), but also as Jesus – the Man born of Mary, the carpenter Messiah, having crafted the salvation of His people under His Father in heaven's watchful eye!

- The Man Jesus fully met God's requirements to solve the problem of human sin.
- And the Man Jesus fully meets mankind's need of a Saviour!

Jesus, the Man Who now lives again, as the God He has always been!

I urge you to believe now and to have life in hHs name from this day onwards.

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Chapter 5 **Thinking about the Lord Jesus.**

Bible reading Revelation 5:1-14.

Have you ever played that game where one person in the group says a word out loud, and all of the others have to reply quickly with the first associated word that comes into their minds?

For example, I say “black” – you say “white”. I say “life” – you say “death”. I say “river” – you say “Nile” (or “Thames”, depending on where you live!).

What comes into your mind when you hear this word: “Jesus”?

May be you think of the Christmas story: the nativity, the shepherds, the angels, etc. May be Good Friday, Easter, the cross and the resurrection. Perhaps you think first of Jesus’ miracles, His healings, or 5,000 hungry people being fed using almost no resources. It could be you think how He bucked the establishment, going against the traditional teaching of the ruling Scribes and the Pharisees. Or how Jesus recruited a rag tag army of followers largely from among the common people.

What comes first into *your* mind when you think of Jesus?

You may think of the pre-incarnate God the Son, being in heaven’s glory before creation happened. Alternatively, you could spring to mind a theophany

from our Old Testament – where “God cannot resist appearing in history”⁴⁵, like:

- His appearance to call Abraham, Acts 7:2,3; Genesis 11:31-12:4 – whose faith learned to live with uncertainty. Abraham left behind a comfortable familiarity when he was called to a definite uncertainty, and he obeyed.
- His appearance to comfort Hagar, Genesis 16:7 – a lady on the run with a challenging family situation.
- His appearance to Moses, Exodus 3:2-10 – at the burning bush, before Moses’ call to unbelievably tough and demanding service.
- His appearance to Joshua, Joshua 5:13-15 – before the battle of Jericho.
- His appearance to Gideon, Judges 6:11-18 – before the defeat of the Midianites.
- His appearance to Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, and the watching crowd, Daniel 3:16-28 – inside Nebuchadnezzar’s hot and fiery furnace.

What comes into **your** mind when **you** think about Jesus?

I want us to look now at the ultimate reality of Jesus. “Ultimate” means conclusive, highest, most

⁴⁵ Stephen, Jonathan Theophany: Close Encounters with the Son of God (Epsom: Day One Publications) 1998, p.32.

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significant.⁴⁶ These are the greatest and best factual concepts about Jesus that we can ever possibly know.

The last Bible book, Revelation, starts off: “The revelation *of* Jesus Christ” 1:1 in the New International Version. Some translations prefer “the revelation *from* Jesus Christ”, see New Living Translation or J.B. Phillips. Both are correct. “Jesus is both the source and the subject of Revelation”.⁴⁷ The word “revelation” means uncovering – like pulling back the curtains to look through the window as the 6a.m. dawn comes. The Greek gives us the English word “apocalypse” – prophetic disclosure of momentous and shattering importance.

In England packets of cigarettes all carry a government required printed warning: “Smoking can seriously damage your health”. Driving along our motorways we see government signs warning “Tiredness can kill, take a break”. Let me warn you of something. In the book of Revelation we see Jesus in a way that could seriously challenge our spiritual sluggishness! Our lethargy will be lost when we see Jesus in as much of His glory as we can manage.

What comes into your mind when you think of the Lord Jesus?

⁴⁶ Collins *English Dictionary* (Glasgow: Harper Collins) 1995.

⁴⁷ *Handbook to the Bible* (Berkhamsted: Lion Publishing) 1973, p.646.

I understand Revelation 1:1,2 to mean this: **Here is the way Jesus Christ really is, as God the Father first showed Jesus Himself when asking Him to pass it on to all of His servants.** Grasping this will give those servants a sure and certain hope for the future, irrespective of what is going on around them now.

It is an idea to read Revelation skipping over all the detailed imagery and action, and purely extract from it the descriptions it gives of Jesus! That's what we are going to do now. The things we read we can then put into our minds to think about and meditate upon Him. They are biblical thoughts – how we should think correctly about the Lord Jesus. Given time these thoughts will mature our thinking about Him, about Who Jesus is and what He is doing.

I have recently been in correspondence through our local newspaper the Western Morning News and their opinion columns. It has been about the person of Jesus. Someone wrote accusing me of “playing around with the word of God by setting forth Jesus as the deity”. I wrote in my starting letter “the most important questions anyone can answer are: Who was Jesus? Was Jesus actually God become man?”. I stated my own belief that Jesus was and is God. **Now let us see what Revelation puts into our minds as ways to think about Who Jesus really is.** I'm going to share 15 ideas.

1. Jesus is the world super-power, 1:5. “Ruler of the kings of the earth”.⁴⁸ Never mind local, central or world government. Leave aside “power to the people”. Do not worry about the dominance of Khartoum, Cairo, Brussels, Washington or London. The Lord Jesus is the authority, the director, the real one who exercises government over our world and over our ways.

In 6:10,11 Jesus is called “Sovereign Lord, holy and true”. The sovereign is supreme. In the United Kingdom our elected parliament is technically belonging to our monarch. Every session of parliament is introduced by the Queen’s speech. In the speech the Queen says: “My government will ...”

Unlike the UK system of technical and ceremonial niceties, our Lord Jesus is “Lord of lords and King of kings”, 17:14. He reigns supreme. Submit your life to the government of Jesus, so that it shows in your every day life. Honour Him above all else. How do you think of Jesus?

2. Jesus is the great time keeper. Both the martyred and the living saints must learn Jesus is the great time keeper. “He is coming”, 1:7; “How long, O Lord?”, 6:10. We see a long term certainty beyond all temporary unknowns. Our hurry is never shared by our unrushed

⁴⁸ All Bible quotations are from the New International Version, unless stated otherwise.

Master! He is never late. He is never early. He is so absolutely in total control. How do you think of Jesus?

3. Jesus has the real church in His grip, 1:12-20. Verses 12-16 describe a Man of awesome appearance, with piercing eyes, strikingly pure white head and hair, dressed like an impressive person of dignity and influence of His day. He is top class. Jesus Christ the Lord. But, for our encouragement, we must also notice what is firmly held in His right hand. Verse 16 “seven stars”, explained in His own words, verse 20 “the angels or messengers (or representative delegates) of the seven churches”.

Seven means the complete number. The seven cities mentioned stand for the entire Christian Church. Jesus has such a grasp of His Church – and therefore of us for we are the Church – we can know for certain that nothing happening to us escapes His interest. 2:1, “He holds the seven stars in His right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands”. Here we see Jesus, the dynamic Lord, involved in the life and the ministry of His churches. Listen to the repeated phrases of chapters 2 and 3, from the never ending, life-giving stream of His words. Jesus says: “I know”, “I hold”, “I will”, “I tell you”, “I have”, “I will come”. These are often repeated for slow learners like me! Jesus the super power has my life in His timetable and it is all going to schedule. How do you think of Jesus?

4. Jesus speaks true words that cut straight to the point, “ a sharp double-edged sword”, 1:16, 2:12, 2:16. Jesus’ word never fails to cut. It either cuts with the edge of salvation when it is taken on board, or it cuts with the edge of condemnation when it is ignored – filed away and forgotten in the pending tray! The same word always has this double effect. It can prune towards new life and in can excise dead wood for burning at one and the same time. Like a train that leaves the railway station on time: some people catch it while others may not. Different responses to the same train. How do you think of Jesus Christ?

5. Jesus is the starter and finisher of all that is important or significant. “I am the First and the Last”, 1:17; 2:8. The Greek letters “Alpha and Omega” 22:13, come from the beginning and the end of the Greek alphabet. Everything else is in between. Yes, there are many things in life. And we are all busy enough. But there are only a few *vital* things in life – and none more so than placing yourself into whatever it is that Jesus is doing. He is worthwhile. He is momentous. All He does is notable in eternity. Christian, why waste your life doing only what any non-Christian can do?

My son John has just bought his own boat and is learning to sail. Sailors put their sails to catch the wind and then they are excitingly blown along. All true

Christians live in the power and ability of Jesus. How do you think of Jesus right now?

6. Jesus is set apart from everyone else and is Himself the standard and Judge of right and wrong. He is “holy and true”, 3:7; 6:10. He is the “faithful and true witness”, 3:14. Jesus is accurate, specific; He is upright. Jesus can always be relied upon, like explorers trust their compass to point to magnetic north. Jesus is the template for quality control in our own lives. His pattern is our goal. We should conform to His image.

In 3:7-13 no condemnation was spoken of Philadelphia to whom this description “holy and true” was made. Perhaps they had learned that the weaker they were the better Jesus shone through them. They had little strength, but Jesus was everything for them. How strange that we often talk about building “strong” churches! Do we think correctly of Jesus?

7. Jesus is the Lion-hearted innocent Lamb. 5:5,6 “See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, a Lamb”. Jesus is the dominant principle in life. He does not resist when we wrong Him. His regal role is submitted to the way of gentle victory. There is a contradiction in Jesus that is not a denial of Himself but a declaration of who Jesus truly is. “The wrath of the Lamb” 6:16,17. He is a Lamb who can be righteously angry. Are you thinking correctly of Jesus?

8. Jesus was crucified long before Calvary! 5:6,12 “a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain”. 13:8 “slain before the creation of the world”. The English Standard Version and Good News Bible do not agree with this latter translation. The New International Version puts an alternative in the margin. The thought is right either way. Even if the translation is made that peoples’ names “are in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world”, at the very least it means that *the idea of* Jesus’ substitutionary atonement was from before the beginning of time. The human Jesus was as good as dead from the day of His birth. Calvary was always designed by God to be the crossroads of history. This is hot news! There is a cross on history – not just on a currant bun! The death of One sacrificial Lamb opened life with God to the world. All this God planned since for ever back. Do you think enough about the real Jesus? Will you do so from now?

We could say more!

9. Jesus is our guide and keeper. 7:17, “the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd”. He and His way alone meet every need we ever have.

10. Jesus is the winner! 11:15, “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever”. Jesus has punched the air and done His victory triple somersault. The gold medal is around His neck.

11. Jesus is the absolute boss! 12:10, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ". He has authority – the power and the right to judge and to control others.

12. Jesus is the star of glory! In 21:22 John wrote, "I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple". Jesus is the centre of worship. There is no temple in heaven. Why would we need the symbols when the reality is present? The singing, the shouting, the trumpet blasting of heaven – and it is going to be loud (trace the loudness through Revelation: 5:2, 6:1, 7:2, 7:10, 8:13, 10:13, 11:15, 18:2) – will be like a sports crowd or a pop concert audience lauding and applauding. The chant will be "JESUS! JESUS! JESUS!"

Jesus is the star of glory and He is called from His own lips "the bright Morning Star", 22:16. Jesus is far bigger than stars of film screen, sports arena, stage or politics. The world may fear terrorism, nuclear war, ecological meltdown. But the Bible teaches our darkness of a long night is about to end, and a day without shadows or end is about to dawn. How do you think of the brilliant Jesus?

13. Jesus is permanent. 22:16, "The root and offspring of David". Jesus lived long after King David in history

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but He lived well before King David in eternity. David was produced by Him, and centuries later David's descendant produced the baby Jesus! There's nothing and no-one who can be counted upon like Jesus! What do you think of Him?

14. Jesus is making a comeback! 1:1, "What must soon take place". 1:7, "Look He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him". When some people make a comeback in their chosen careers they may not quite reach their former peak. Jesus will exceed His previous life on earth when He returns. Not just a few healings in Palestine, but *no more* sickness or pain! Not comfort for a grieving mother or sisters, but wiping *every single last* tear drop away!

22:7,12,20, "I am coming soon", repeated three times in the last chapter of God's final written word to us. You and I know the conclusion of history! It is told us in Revelation.

Which brings us to the last of my fifteen of Revelation's suggestions for ways to think of Jesus.

15. Jesus is the one who popped the question! Did you know you may be going to a wedding later this year? 19:7,8; 21:2; 21:9, all tell of this wedding of Jesus and His bride. This wedding you are going to is no ordinary one for you. You and I – if we are Christians –

make up the bride! Jesus is the one who popped the question. He has invited us to be with Him. To be close to Him. To be one with Him. He has invited us to be one only with Him and with no-one else. Sadly, modern divorce rates only serve to spoil this picture.

And this wedding is all planned. We do not know the date. But it will be a celebration for all the world. Every nationality will be represented. All the friends of Jesus – from day one to the last Judgement Day – will be at His Father’s home for the fabulous reception. There is no need to worry about the clothing side, feeling out of place etc. We will see Jesus as He is and we will be changed to be like Him!

19:6,7 “Hallelujah! For the Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready”.

So, how do you think about Jesus? What comes into your mind when someone mentions His name? **We sometimes get so discouraged and down, despairing and doubtful – because we are looking at the wrong things, in the wrong direction.**

From Revelation we have noticed:

1. Jesus is the world super power
2. Jesus is the great time keeper

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3. Jesus has the real Church in His grip.
4. Jesus speaks true words that cut straight to the point
5. Jesus is the starter and finisher of all that is significant
6. Jesus is set apart from everyone else and is Himself the standard and Judge of right and wrong
7. Jesus is the innocent Lion-hearted Lamb
8. Jesus was crucified long before Calvary, in the Father's plan
9. Jesus is our guide and keeper
10. Jesus is the winner
11. Jesus is the absolute boss
12. Jesus is the star of glory
13. Jesus is permanent
14. Jesus is making a certain comeback
15. Jesus is the One who popped the question to us: "Will you be in My bride on that day"?

May God help us to think of Jesus as we really should **and** to be ready to be at one with Him on that day.

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Chapter 6 **Jesus – the Lamb on the Throne.**

Bible reading: Revelation 5:1-14.

There is some debate whether Revelation 1:1 entitles this book “the revelation *of* Jesus Christ” or “the revelation *from* Jesus Christ”. Translations vary. I think the meaning is found by taking both together. It is the way our Lord Jesus showed Himself to John. It is **God’s view of Jesus** shared with us via John. Both of these statements make Revelation important, even essential, for us to meditate upon. Perhaps we don’t do it enough?

In chapter 4:1 John sees an open door in heaven. He is invited to come up and to see reality. In effect he is told to look away from his exile on Patmos; to look away from his own bodily weaknesses; to look away from his legitimate concern for all of the churches – whether persecuted by opponents or poisoned by false teachers. (Sometime, we should consider which does more damage: suffering by fire or scarring by false teaching).

We all do well from time to time, to look away from our immediate circumstances – from ourselves and our ministries – and to invest some time deliberately looking to our Lord Jesus himself.

What we are going to think about now happens after two things have already been shared. 4:1, "After this". These two things set our context:

1. **The glory of the Lord**, 1:9-18. Glowing, dazzling, brilliant in appearance, God is speaking to man. Jesus, the reconciling Redeemer has risen from the dead and is seen to be reigning on high.
2. **The state of the churches**, chapters 2 and 3. Fallen from their first love; accommodating false cultic figures and followers; too tolerant and unrepentant; thinking too highly of themselves; relegating Jesus to the outside or the edge of their lives. It is the same now as then. Churches are a mixture of pure and less pure Christianity. The weekly BBC TV Songs of Praise programme and the variety of statements on current issues by different church leaders testify to both the good and the bad.

"After (seeing) this", 4:1, John is given an intensely awesome vision of heaven's throne – thrones to be more exact, twenty five in all.

4:2-8 describe a shining, glistening, radiating, emanating quartz-like person on THE throne – red, yellow, brown, dark green when seen from different angles. The person sits inside a bright luminous green circular rainbow. On twenty-four adjacent thrones (probably representing twelve patriarchs from the Old Testament and twelve apostles from the New

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Testament) are crowned white-robed, holy beings called “elders”, verse 4. These are the ones who govern for THE ONE – who appears to be more than One – THE ONE who reigns from THE THRONE.

There is thunder to be heard, lightning to be seen, blazing lamps, the fire of purification and judgement reflected in a glass-like crystal clear sea – miraculously calm in view of the thunder. This is the stunning presence of God: the holy presence of the central Person in all of history . Immediately around THE ONE, WHO APPEARS MORE THAN ONE, ON THE THRONE are four other-worldly creatures.

John hears a loud chant. It must have been loud to be heard above the thunder! (The word “loud” – Greek megas – or something similar, comes some twenty-five times in Revelation including: 1:10; 5:2; 5:12; 6:1; 6:10; 7:2; 7:10; 8:13; 10:3; 12:10; 14:7; 14:9; 14:15; 14:18; 19:17; 21:3). The chant John hears I paraphrase as:

Holy, pure and set apart, is the ever-able, always, God, 4:8.

This chant of objective statements of Who God is, is genuine worship, verse 10. And it is worship worthy of the Worthy One, which sadly not all “Christian worship” or “church worship” seems to be! Worship must be centred on God, not on me, nor on the leader nor the congregation. God alone is worthy. Verse 10 describes prostrated praise which has two ingredients:

1. **What You, God, have given us we give back to You.** Note the crowns in verse 10.
2. **Everything is from You and for You, God.** We restate Your unchallengeable worthiness, verse 11. God, You have the glory. God, You have the honour. God, You have the power.

True worship centres on God. It is not, “I want, I feel, I think”. It is “God, You are, God You do, God You must have”.

I notice that they are very economical and holistic in heaven because the scroll mentioned in 5:1 has writing on both sides! They don't waste their resources! Interestingly, they don't use computers either! (You can't roll up a computer, and I don't think it refers to the “scroll bar” on one)!

No-one can open the sealed parchment scroll except, verse 5: “The Lion of the tribe of Judah”, Who is, verse 6, the “Lamb, ... slain”.

Let's just let God speak as we survey the references in Revelation to the Lamb. Enjoy communion with Him as we do so. Worship Him. He is fully worth everything we can offer Him ... and so much more besides.

Thinking of Jesus the Lamb:

- 5:6, **“The Lamb” ... sacrificed ...now “standing in the centre of the throne”**. Central to heaven is the crucified and now risen Lord Jesus.
- 5:8, **they “fell down before the Lamb”**. **Jesus is worshipped by earth and heaven’s rulers**. Never mind apparent world powers! This is where reality happens. Let’s join in.
- 5:12, **“Worthy is the Lamb, Who was slain, to receive” the perfect seven plaudits!**
Jesus, receive power. Jesus, receive wealth.
Jesus, receive wisdom. Jesus, receive strength.
Jesus, receive honour. Jesus, receive glory.
Jesus, receive praise.
- 5:13, **“To Him Who sits on the throne and to the Lamb”**. **The Lamb on and by the throne is with God and is God**. He is One, who appears to be more than One. He is forever to be praised. He is completely different to anyone else we know.
- 6:1, **“The Lamb opened the first of the seven seals”**. **In sovereign judgement Jesus acts**, and He continues to do so, 6:3; 6:5; 6:7; 6:9; 6:12; 8:1. Absolute authority is His. We are absolutely accountable to Him. What He releases happens. It is awesome.
- 6:16, **This judgement includes “the wrath of the Lamb!”**. It is an aspect of the purity of God.

It is holy, judicial anger. It is self-controlled Godness (*and that's my made-up word!!*) in dealing with sin.

- 7:9, **A multinational assembly is called to stand “before the throne and in front of the Lamb”**. The participating audience is the biggest ever gathered. Beside this, the Olympics, the United Nations, the G7 or G8, the Organisation of African Unity, all fade into their rightful eternal insignificance.
- 7:10, **Jesus has all rights over salvation**. “Salvation belongs to our God ... and to the Lamb”. One, yet being more than One. He is the owner of salvation. Us being saved or lost is *His* decision.
- 7:14, **People praising Jesus are there, “washed ... in the blood of the Lamb”**. The only way into heaven is through this purifying act. Sometimes on earth visas are denied by governments to those who want to enter a country that is not their own. When it comes to entering heaven, God holds all of the visas and He only grants them on the conditions He has stipulated.
- 7:17, **These folk fear nothing because “the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their Shepherd”**. A shepherd cares for every need his flock may have. Each single sheep gets his

attention. English farmers look after their new lambs especially in late winter, considering the weather for being outside, the possible diseases and predators, the food necessary. They spend their time and energy on this. But God cares so much more for His people.

- **12:11, We are reminded of earth's battles – now ceased – and when people “overcame (Satan and his hosts) by the blood of the Lamb”.** We do not rely on human effort alone. We do not rely on human weapons. Blood is best! And Jesus' blood is far superior to all the rest!
- **13:8, “The book of life belonging to the Lamb”. Jesus owns the book of eternal life.** “The Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world”. Christians – saved ones – are part of God's forever plan. As eternity surrounds time, so God envelopes humankind. Big things are little to Him. And little things are precious to Him. God's plans will come to pass.
- **14:1, “The Lamb, standing on Mount Zion”. Jesus has disciples who follow the Lamb, verse 4. They are the first of many millions.** Our Christian ancestors are already into eternity. Thank God for Christian tradition through which we have the gospel today. It is not found in a museum, but is found in many faithful men and women around the world.

- 14:10, **The Lamb is also a witness of the eternal fury of God.** “In the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb” God’s wrath torments those who have gone with the devil. We must weep over this now for there are no tears in heaven! All people are sinners, but there are saved sinners and lost sinners. Those who remain lost are those who chose to rely on themselves. They are not willing to trust themselves to Jesus the Saviour.
- 15:3, **Seven angels lead a massive choir singing “the song of the Lamb”.** Harp accompaniment is prescribed by the heavenly ethno music logician. Singing stories about Jesus is a great way of reaching lost people today, around Sudan’s and South Sudan’s nomadic campfires and elsewhere.
- 17:14, **Those who “war against the Lamb” are overcome by the Lamb because He is Lord of lords and King of kings”.** Jesus is always able, no matter who or what is against Him. Those on His side enjoy His eternal protection.
- 19:7, **The “wedding of the Lamb” comes. Our Christianity is a love relationship which is building towards its consummation at that time.** In my country many of today’s weddings are devalued as people live together before getting married. It is a strange fact that *we must*

live with our Lord Jesus before this heavenly marriage supper comes!

- 19:9 Is one of seven beatitudes in Revelation, 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7; 22:14. Here it says, “**Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!**”. **Blessed means truly happy.**
- 21:9, “The bride, the wife of the Lamb” is made up of the people of the new Jerusalem.
- 21:14, **There are memories of “the twelve (founding) apostles of the Lamb”**. No later apostles are the same as these. Christianity is built securely on its earliest foundation, the first friends of Jesus.
- 21:22, “**The Lamb**” is the place and the person of worship. There is no temple in heaven. The heavenly reality has replaced earth’s representation.
- 21:23, “**The Lamb is (heaven’s) lamp**” the radiant shining of the glory of God. From the exact representation of God’s being emanates His most glorious glory.
- 21:27, Another reminder that “**only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life**” will be in heaven. Born again Christians and those God gives them by their witness will all be there. It is worth risking our lives here on earth so that more Christian people will be able

to enjoy real life there. No others will ever enter heaven. There is no alternative route.

- 22:1, **The “throne of the Lamb” is the source of the water of life. It is fruitful wherever it flows.** Like the Nile flood plain brings creative life to the desert through which it flows, so Jesus brings life to dry and thirsty souls. Drink of Him, and you’ll never thirst again except for more of Him.
- 22:3, **And in heaven we servants will still “serve” “ the Lamb”.** What we do now we will do for eternity, living in order that Jesus be praised.

I make that twenty-five glimpses of the Lamb we have had from scanning Revelation.

Revelation shows us that what God starts He also finishes. Revelation shows us that God wins! There is a mosque and Islamic school on the airport road in Khartoum, Sudan, which had an English sign up when I lived there. It read this:

“If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him, and in the hereafter he will be in the ranks of those who have lost”.

Bible reading Christians will totally disagree!

Who Jesus really is

Revelation 11:15, “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever”.

Revelation 19:1, “Salvation and glory and power belong to our God”.

And remember where we began our study survey, Revelation 5:6,9. The slain Lamb is worthy – He has bought people for God from every tribe, language, people and nation on earth. And He has made them into both a kingdom and a priesthood.

God has used missionary endeavour. We imperfect people have an imperfect church, but always our perfect God works through it! Ultimately, Jesus has done it all. He is worthy of our worship 24/7, until our last breath on this earth takes us to the fresh air of heaven.

With that pure air we will continue to sing the praises of Jesus: the slain Lamb, now risen, and so, so, so worthy!

I sincerely hope you will be with me there. Personally knowing the Lord Jesus is the solution to everything this world can throw at any human being.

Who Jesus really is

These messages were originally preached between Christmas 2004 and Easter 2005, four at Grace Community church, Morval, Cornwall, U.K. and one each at Scorrier Chapel also in Cornwall, U.K., and the NoSuMu conference in Nairobi, Kenya. They were revised to writing form in the summer of 2007 before being placed along with other freely downloadable teaching materials on the **website**:

www.colinsalter.net.

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