

Magazine

# I Am The Bread of Life

Kevin Maxey

While attending college in Alabama I worked the night shift stocking shelves in a local grocery store. Anytime there was the slightest hint of snow in the forecast large crowds would rush to the grocery store and stock up on essential food items. In spite of the massive selection of food in the store, the bread aisle was always the first to be emptied.

People of every generation recognize that bread is essential for life. This was true especially in Jesus' day. After miraculously feeding bread to the 5,000, Jesus spoke of a superior bread that man must feed on, when he declared, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). As man depends upon physical bread for physical life, so must man depend upon spiritual bread, Jesus, for spiritual life.

## Meaning of the Word "Bread" in Scripture

"Bread played a large part in the vocabulary and in the life of the ancient Hebrews" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*). The English word "bread" is found over 360 times in the KJV. "Frequency of mention is just one indication that bread (not vegetables and certainly not meat) was the basic food of most people (except nomads and the wealthy) in Bible times" (*Holman Bible Dictionary*). The word "bread" is used in at least three different ways in the Scriptures:

**1. Literally, as a term for baked grain of ground wheat (Gen. 30:14) or barley (John 6:9, 13).** "The meal

or flour was mixed with water, salt, sometimes leaven or yeast, sometimes olive oil, and rarely with other cereals and vegetables (Ezek. 4:9) and then was kneaded (Exod. 12:34)" (*Holman Bible Dictionary*). Abraham fed his heavenly visitors saying, "I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts" (Gen. 18:5). Lot did likewise, "He prepared a feast for them, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate" (Gen. 19:3).

**2. Universally, as a generic term for food.** God told Adam, "In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread" (Gen. 3:19). Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).

**3. Figuratively, as a term for something of which people "partake."** The Bible speaks of a "bread of adversity" (Isa. 30:20); "bread of sorrows" (Ps. 127:2); "bread of wickedness" (Prov. 4:17); "bread of affliction" (1 Kings 22:27); "bread of tears" (Ps. 80:5); "bread of idleness" (Prov. 31:27); "bread of deceit" (Prov. 20:17); and Jesus describes himself as the ultimate "bread of life" (John 6:35).

## God Provides His People With Bread

God frequently used bread as a sign to prove that he will faithfully provide for his people. God rained down bread from heaven, enabling his people to survive on manna for forty years in the wilderness (Exod. 16:4f; Num. 11:6f; Ps. 78:24). During a devastating three and a half year drought,

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I Am The Light of the World

Bobby L. Graham

As deity incarnate, Jesus came from heaven as the image of the invisible God, the effulgence of divine glory, and the very image of God's substance (Matt. 1:23; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3 in ASV). To help humans understand his nature, role, and purpose in this world, so they might discern their need for him and the offer that he brought to the world, Jesus sometimes employed metaphors to depict himself (bread; light; door, shepherd; resurrection and life; way, truth and life; and vine). John includes all of the "I am" claims of Jesus; his record focuses more on the King than the kingdom and more than do the other gospel writers. In the fall of A.D. 29, during the what is commonly called the Later Judean Ministry, Jesus staked his claim to be both the one possessing light in his own person and the one bearing light to the world (John 8:12). Other passages in John dealing with Jesus as light appear in 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 9:5; and 12:46.

Is Every Person Naturally Enlightened?

Some, including the Quakers, have claimed John 1:9 as the support for their idea about natural, inner light being given to each one. From John 1:9 we see that he "lights every man coming into the world." From this statement of our text, we readily learn that the light in him brings life to a world dead in sin. "He that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness but shall have the light of life." The world is dead, needing the life that his light can bring; on the other hand, he enlightens each one. How are to understand this apparent discrepancy? The explanation lies in our understanding that Jesus does not enlighten anyone against his will, but each one must desire the light and come to the light (John 3:19-21). Unlike the light of the sun, which shines upon all, the light of Jesus Christ benefits only those who choose to walk in it. Men can love darkness rather than light, because of the evil deeds in their lives. In John 12:46 we learn how one comes into this light. "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth in me may not abide in the darkness." Because belief is not the natural endowment of each person, but the product of the divine word (Mark 16:15; Acts 15:7), it must follow that in choosing to believe on Christ one decides to leave darkness behind and to heed the enlightenment of truth.

Relevant Achievements of Light

It is helpful to learn that the light which Jesus brought to the world served much needed purposes. In the various passages of John's account on the subject of light, these accomplishments are noted:

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# I Am The Door

Bobby Witherington

**Then Jesus said to them again, Most assuredly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved; and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly (John 10:7-10).**

In these verses we are introduced to another of the “I Am” statements of Jesus. By the expression, “I Am,” we call to mind the discussion Jesus had with the Christ-rejecting Pharisees as is recorded in John 8:13-59. These leaders among the Jews claimed to be “Abraham’s descendants,” having never been “in bondage to anyone” (v. 33). However, Jesus informed them that if they really were Abraham’s children they “would do the works of Abraham” (v. 39). In reality, while they boasted of being “Abraham’s descendants,” their spiritual “father” was “the devil” (John 8:44)! Tragically, theirs was a case of mistaken spiritual identity! However, they continued to interrogate Jesus whom they accused of having “a demon” (John 8:48). But Jesus proceeded to assert his own authority and even promised, saying, “If anyone keeps *my* word he shall never see death” (John 8:51). At this point the Jewish leaders asked Jesus, “Are you greater than our father Abraham, who is dead?” (John 8:53). Jesus, of course, knew that he was the particular “seed” of Abraham Whom God had in mind when the promise was made (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16; Matt. 1:1), and he was aware of Abraham’s faith in God’s promise. Hence, he said to the Pharisees, “Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad” (v. 56). By this point in their discussion, the Jewish leaders were really perplexed; therefore they said to Jesus, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have *You* seen Abraham” (v. 57)? To their amazement, Jesus replied, saying, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, “I AM” (John 8:58)!

This “I AM” statement of Jesus reminds us of Exodus the third chapter. According to the contents thereof, God had instructed Moses to deliver the Israelites out of the land of Egypt, so Moses inquired as to what answer he would give when the Israelites would ask him concerning the “name” of the one who sent him. And God replied, saying, “you shall say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you” (Exod. 3:14). In this statement the eternality of God is necessarily inferred. God has never been, and will never be, a “has been” God; yea, he is “from everlasting to everlasting” (Ps. 90:2)! And in his discussion with the Pharisees in John, chapter 8, Jesus used the same expression to refer to himself! In essence, he affirmed his own deity and divinity. Of course, if Jesus were simply a mere man, an “ordinary guy, as some have mistakenly affirmed, such a statement would have been blas-

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phemous in nature. Hence, the Jews, who so regarded him, “took up stones to throw at Him” (John 8:59).

However, concerning himself, Jesus said more than just “I AM.” To the contrary, he affixed the “I AM” statement with other affirmations which would have been ludicrous for anyone other than a divine being to make. Accordingly, he said, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35, 48); “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12; 9:5); “I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7); “I am the door” (John 10:9); “I am the good shepherd” (John 10:11, 14); “I am the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25); “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), and “I am the true vine” (John 15:1, 5). Properly understood, each of these “I AM” statements constitutes a “sermon within itself.” In this article, we shall henceforth focus our attention upon one of these statements; namely, “I am the Door” (John 10:9).

To be better able to appreciate this “I Am” saying, it is appropriate to consider some background material. In John 9 we read of Jesus, on the Sabbath, healing a man of blindness; yea, a man who had been “blind from birth.” The Pharisees inquired as to what had happened, and the man whom Jesus had healed, replied, saying, “A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed, and I received sight” (9:11). Gradually, as the chapter unfolds, the formerly blind man went from calling Jesus “a man,” to calling him “a prophet,” to the point of confessing his faith that Jesus is “the Son of God!” Of course, the Pharisees had already decreed that anyone who confessed that Jesus “was Christ” would “be put out of the synagogue” (John 9:22). As the chapter concluded, Jesus, in essence, accused them of being “blind” (vv. 40, 41); yea, they were “blind leaders of the blind!” (cf. Matt. 15:14). Contextually, these were the people to whom Jesus spoke at the conclusion of chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 10.

Hence, contextually speaking, in John 10 wherein Jesus spoke of “the sheepfold” (v. 1), “the shepherd of the sheep” (v. 2), called himself “the door of the sheep” (v. 7), and referred to himself as “the good shepherd” (v. 11), he was speaking to some self-righteous, self-centered, “blind” religious leaders who regarded *themselves* as the means of entrance into God’s blessings, and as being shepherds of God’s people! This illustrates the fact that the most deceived of all people are some who purport to be *religious* leaders! We now (finally!) return to our topic, it being:

### “I Am The Door”

Please note that Jesus said, “I am *the* door of the sheep” (v. 7), and “I am *the* door” (v. 9). If Jesus is “the door,” then no one else qualifies for that role—not Mohammed, or the Pope, or Ellen G. White, or Mary Baker Eddy, or Joseph Smith, or any other religious leader, regardless of how “great” he (or she!) might claim to be.

In John 10:1-6 Jesus used the illustration of the shepherd and the sheep, a most common scene among people of that culture. Yet “they did not understand the things which He spoke to them” (v. 6). Indeed, they fit the description of John 9:39, which speaks of people who claimed to be able to “see,” but who, because of their prejudice, were “made blind”! Sadly, they have many, many counterparts today!

In our opening text, John 10:7-10, Jesus spoke to these people “again,” and gave an allegorical reply to the conduct of the “blind” Pharisees who had rejected him. Herein he emphasized the relationship between the door and the sheepfold, referring to himself as “*the door*.”

With great boldness, Jesus said, “All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them” (John 10:8). By this statement, Jesus did not refer to the inspired prophets of the Old Testament. To the contrary, he often quoted from them, thereby inferring his belief in their inspiration. Rather he referred to the many *pretenders* who claimed to be shepherds, but who for their own benefit led the people astray. We read of such despicable characters in such passages as Jeremiah 23:1-4; Ezekiel 34:1-10, and Zechariah 11:4-17. Such “shepherds” as herein described fed and clothed themselves, but not the flock; neither did they strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, or bring back what had wandered away (Ezek. 34:3, 4).

However, in delightful contrast, Jesus identified himself as being “*the door*”; yea, “*the door of the sheep*” (John 10:7, 9). Hence, through Christ, “*the door*,” one can enter into “the sheepfold” (v. 1), which is “the flock” of God, or “the church of God which he purchased with his Own blood” (Acts 20:28).

A “door” is a very simple metaphor. It presumes a “within” and a “without” relationship. Those who enter through “the door” (Christ) enjoy a relationship not afforded those on the outside. Christ is “*the door*” to God; he is “*the door*” to spiritual freedom; he is “*the door*” to forgiveness. It is “through Him” that both Jews and Gentiles have “access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). Indeed, he is “the way, the truth, and the life,” and no one “comes to the Father,” except by him (John 14:6). As Peter so eloquently said, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

If Christ is “*the door*,” then all must recognize and respect his authority (cf. Matt. 28:18; Col. 3:17); all must obey him to be saved (Heb. 5:8, 9), and all must possess genuine faith in his fitness and his resources as the spiritual provider of the soul. Through Jesus, “*the door*,” we can “have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). Any religious leader who does not “enter the sheepfold by *the door* . . .

# I Am The Good Shepherd

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

The prophet Isaiah, in what is obviously a Messianic prophecy, described the Messiah: “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young” (Isa. 40:11). Jesus of Nazareth twice declares himself to be the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14). It is this writer’s conviction that Jesus, by making this declaration, affirms himself to be the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy.

In the first ten verses of John 10, Jesus refers to himself as the door of the sheepfold through whom the shepherds and sheep must enter to have access to the sheepfold. The sheepfold of that day was a fortified enclosure with a guarded door used by several shepherds to house their sheep at night. In the mornings the shepherds would come into the fold to lead their sheep out to the pasture lands. The only legitimate way that one could enter the fold was through the door. Those who entered any other way were “thieves and robbers.” Each shepherd’s sheep would hear his voice and would follow him.

Jesus seems to be making the point here that most of the leaders (shepherds) of Israel at that time were not real shepherds of the people but thieves and robbers—leaders without the welfare of the people at heart, but their own selfish interest. If they had been true shepherds they would have recognized him as the Messiah and would have gone through him into the fold, because he is “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). True sheep would hear those shepherds’ voices and follow them because they came to them through Christ.

In verse 11, Jesus shifts the figure from his being the door of the fold to his being the shepherd of the sheep. He calls himself the “Good Shepherd” in contrast to hirelings or hired shepherds. As a shepherd who owned the sheep, he would naturally care more for the sheep than a hired shepherd. Again he is likely comparing himself to the corrupt religious leaders of his day. Those leaders, like hirelings, were more interested in their own profit and welfare than they were in the welfare of the people. This is evident from the information given in the New Testament about the Jewish hierarchy (cf. Matt. 23).

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is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1), who comes “to steal, and to kill, and to destroy” (John 10:10). Only Jesus, who is “*the door*,” is able to provide that abundant life. Jesus is a *strong* door; hence, we must not resist him. Jesus is the *only* door; hence, we must not obey any message except his saving gospel; we must not be members of any church except his church. He is an *open* door, ever ready to receive all who come to God through him.

## Conclusion

Jesus is “*the door*” to “the sheepfold” (John 10:1, 7, 9) which is his church (Acts 20:28). Apart from “the shepherd,” and outside “the sheepfold,” sheep were exposed to the elements, and often fell prey to robbers, wolves, and other beasts of prey. They had *no* security! By the same

token, those who refuse to come to God through “*the door*” and who thus remain outside of Christ’s church, the spiritual sheepfold, have no spiritual security. In essence, they are like lost sheep without a shepherd. To enter “the sheepfold” through “*the door*” one must believe (John 8:24), repent of sins (Luke 13:3, 5); confess faith in Christ (Matt. 10:32; Acts 8:37), and be baptized “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27) “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Upon so doing, one enters Christ, “*the door*,” and his “one body,” the church (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22, 23), which is his “sheepfold.” Herein one is able to “find pasture” (John 10:9), peace and security, and enjoy that abundant life. Sinner friend, “*the door*” is still open for you. Enter today!

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### The Good Shepherd Cares

As the Good Shepherd, Jesus cares enough to see that his sheep are properly fed. “He makes (them) to lie down in green pastures” (Ps. 23:2). But his care extends far beyond just seeing that they have green grass to eat, he guards his sheep with his very life (John 10:11). Unlike the hireling (v. 12), he does not leave the sheep to fend for themselves when the wolf comes. He stays and protects the sheep even to the point of laying down his life for them.

Jesus makes clear that his laying down his life for his sheep was a willing sacrifice. He said, “No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down myself” (v. 18a). When Peter tried to prevent his arrest with the sword, he declared, “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels” (Matt. 26:53)? Jesus went to the cross of his own free will in obedience to the commandment received of his Father (v. 18c). He truly learned “obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9). Because of this he was loved of His Father (v. 17) and ought to be loved by everyone of us—even enough to lay down our lives for him (Luke 14:26).

Not only did Jesus have the power to lay down his life, he also had the power to take it up again (v. 18b). Daniel King points out, in his excellent commentary on John, “The Lord also places before us in this passage the detail that he has the power not only to surrender his life, but also to take it again. Usually New Testament Scripture underscores the power and volition of the Father in raising the Son (Acts 2:32; Rom. 6:4; 1 Pet. 1:21, etc). Here he takes up his life again at the Father’s command. His own volition enters into the process, according to this explanation at the Lord’s own mouth” (*Truth Commentaries: The Gospel of John* 208).

Without the power to take his life up again in the resurrection, his sacrifice for his sheep would have been incomplete. It is the raised Shepherd that went as our high priest with his own blood, shed when he laid down his life for his sheep, into the holy place (Heb. 9:12). He remains there at the right hand of God continuing to care for his sheep “ever living to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

### The Good Shepherd Knows

Because he owns, loves, and cares for his sheep, the Good Shepherd knows his sheep. To a hireling each sheep

is likely just a statistic, but to a good shepherd each has a name and is called by it (v. 3). In the days when most rural families raised and slaughtered their own animals for food the children of one family adopted a little pig and gave it a name. By the winter at “hog killing time” this little pig had grown to the point that it had to become meat for the family table. The father noticed that the children were not eating any of the meat and asked why because they had always loved pork before. One of the children said, “But, this pig had a name!” That made a big difference. To the Good

Shepherd we are not just sheep, we are sheep with names. He knows each of us well enough to call us by name. He loves and cares for each of us individually and personally. Rather than just looking at and caring for the flock as a whole, he looks at and cares for each one of

the flock with personal attention. It is great to know that “God so loved *the world*” enough to give his Son for it (John 3:16). It is also great to know that he “purchased *the church* with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). But it is even greater to know that God loved *me* enough to give his Son and that he purchased *me* with his blood. As one of his sheep, I am not lost in the crowd, I have his personal attention and care—enough that if I go astray that he will “leave the ninety-nine” in a secure place and come to find me. This is why there is rejoicing in heaven over *one* sinner repenting (Luke 15:3-10). God’s knowledge and care for us is personal.

In times of difficulty when the world seems to be crumbling around us and people’s faith is being overthrown it is a comfort to know that “nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, *The Lord knoweth them that are his*. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19). When we are tempted and tried it is wonderful to have one who knows us better than we know ourselves and is able to understand and supply our needs: “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16). One “who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). The Good Shepherd knows the abilities and limitations of his sheep and deals with them accordingly.

### The Sheep Know His Voice

Jesus declares that he knows his sheep and they know him (v. 14). They follow him because they know his voice (v. 4). They do not know the voice of strangers (v.5). This is what sets them apart as being *his* sheep—they know *his* voice. One of characteristics of the new covenant is that “all shall know (the Lord), from the least of them to the greatest of them” (Jer. 3:34; Heb. 8:11). One cannot become and remain one of the Good Shepherd’s sheep without knowing and listening to him. The attitude must be “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth” (1 Sam. 3:9). One must do all in the name (by the authority) of the Lord (Col. 3:17).

### One Fold and One Shepherd

Jesus declares that his sheep “shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (v. 16). The Lord never intended that his people should be divided into many folds (churches). “There is one body” (Eph. 4:4). He went to the cross that he might reconcile us unto God in one body (Eph. 2:16). The body is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). Had he wanted two bodies surely he would have made one for the Jews and another for the Gentiles. It was God’s eternal plan to bring all together in one fold. When people hear the voice of Jesus they will be together in one fold. It is when they come under the influence of the “hireling” that the wolf comes and scatters them (v. 12).

### The Sheep Not of This Fold

Who are the other sheep “not of this fold” (v. 16)? In spite of what Mormons and others speculate, Jesus is obviously speaking of the Gentiles. At the time that he spoke his “fold” was made up of Jews. It remained so during his personal ministry and through the early days of the church—until Cornelius’ household, the first Gentile converts, were brought into the fold by hearing the voice of Jesus as preached by Peter (Acts 10). Paul, the apostle, spent most of his life bringing the “other sheep” into the fold as the apostle unto the Gentiles (cf. Rom. 11:13).

### The Chief Shepherd

Not only is Jesus the *Good* Shepherd, he is the *Chief*

Shepherd. Elders in local congregations are God’s shepherds or pastors with the responsibility to “shepherd the flock” among them (1 Pet. 5:2, NKJV). The flock (church) must submit to and obey them because they watch for their souls (Heb. 13:17) and will give account to the Chief Shepherd. In performing their roles as under shepherds, they must do it as humble servants and keep in mind that they are accountable to the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4) who himself is “meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:28). They will have to answer to him.

Elders need to keep in mind that they are *under* shepherds and not behave like they are *chief* shepherds. There is only one “presiding elder”—Jesus Christ. Unlike the Chief Shepherd, their judgment is not infallible. They are subject to mistakes. Peter, who was an elder as well as an apostle, is a prime example of this (Gal. 2:11). The sheep are under obligation to follow them only as they follow Christ. While those that rule *well* are worthy of “double honor,” and we are to honor and obey them, it is not a sin to question their actions and judgment when we believe them to be wrong, or even to rebuke them if they sin (1 Tim. 5:17-20). They are not “lords over God’s heritage” nor should they act like it (1 Pet. 5:3; cf. Matt. 20:25-28). Jesus is King, Lord, and Shepherd. No mere man is capable of wearing all three of those hats. Elders must remember that they have been honored only by being appointed shepherds (and under shepherds at that) and not anointed King or Lord. As shepherds, they are to lead and not bully the sheep because both they and the sheep must give account to the Good/Chief Shepherd.

The voice of the Good Shepherd is heard today through the gospel, and it still rings loud and clear: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:28). We need to heed his voice.

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# I Am The Way, The Truth, and The Life

## John 14:6

Irvin Himmell

**Jesus offers to mankind a higher life than physical; he offers spiritual life, even eternal life. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). One cannot have this life if he refuses to come to the Savior.**

Many thoughts, some deeply disturbing, flooded the minds of the disciples on the night of their Master’s betrayal. They ate the passover in a large upper room in Jerusalem (Matt. 26:17-20; Mark 14:12-17). Jesus surprised them by taking a basin of water and washing their feet (John 13:2-17). It was not until later that they fully understood why this was done. He startled them by announcing that “one of you shall betray me” (John 13:21-30). Judas was identified as the traitor. Repeatedly, Jesus had forewarned that he would be killed in Jerusalem (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; Luke 18:31-34). Then he talked about leaving them, adding, “Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards” (John 13:33, 36). Furthermore, he informed them that Peter would deny him three times before the crowing of the cock (John 13:38).

Mention of their Master’s death filled their minds with dread. How could he reign as the Messiah if he was put to death? Talk of his going away distressed them. It seemed incredible that they would be offended because of him or that Peter would deny him three times. The disciples were perplexed and disquieted.

Jesus consoled them by saying, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.” Their trust in God and in Jesus the Son of God was assurance that the divine plan would work for their good. All

who follow Jesus must learn to walk by faith (2 Cor. 5:7).

“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.” Although the Father’s house includes many mansions (dwelling places or abiding places), Jesus was going to prepare (make ready) a place for his disciples. The separation resulting from his going away would not be permanent.

“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” It was by means of his death, resurrection, and ascension that he went back to the Father. At his second coming those who are in Christ, both the resurrected dead and the living, will be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, “and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

“And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.” As often as Jesus had spoken of these matters the disciples should have known where he was going and the way or path. But, “Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?” These first five verses of John 14 give the backdrop for our Lord’s bold, profound, and forceful proclamation, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”



### Jesus Is The Way

It is Jesus Christ who gives us access to the Father in heaven. He taught, “. . . If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). “Whither I go, ye cannot come,” said Jesus to those who would die in their sins (John 8:21). Justification is by faith, giving us “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom. 5:1-2). Through Christ, both Jews and Gentiles “have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

It is Jesus who provides salvation for the lost. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). To despise Jesus is to despise the Father who sent him (Luke 10:16).

It is Jesus who is our mediator with the Father. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, Who gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Tim. 2:5-6). That same Jesus is our “advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1). He “ever liveth to make intercession” for us (Heb. 7:25). He is “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession” (Heb. 3:1). It is through him that we are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:18-19).

Jesus Christ has an exclusive place in the plan of redemption. The Pope of Rome is not the way. Mohammed is not the way. Guatama Buddha is not the way. Mani is not the way. The Dalai Lama is not the way. Baha’u’llah is not the way. Emanuel Swedenborg is not the way. Anyone who desires to come to the Father must come through Jesus Christ. He is “the way”; all other ways are false. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12).

### Jesus Is The Truth

The book of John opens with this

informative declaration: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.” John explains in the same chapter that “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (1:14). Christ is the Word which dwelt in the flesh. He is Deity appearing in a visible and tangible form. He is Emmanuel, “God with us” (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). In him is the fulness of divine grace and truth. In him “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9).

John points out that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). What the law made known was true, but the types and shadows of the law gave no more than a faint outline. “No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18). Because of his unique relationship with the Father, Jesus could make known, declare, reveal, or explain the Father to mankind. The revelation of God in Christ is truth in contrast to Old Testament teaching, not because the Old Testament system was false, but it was only a shadow and incomplete in comparison with the fulness of New Testament teaching.

The truth is “summed up and impersonated” in Christ (Thayer). “All truth centers in him, and radiates from him” (Whiteside). If he were not the fulness and embodiment of truth, he could not be the way to the Father. Jesus taught that “the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). Jesus spoke the truth. He came into the world to bear witness to the truth (John 18:37). More than that, he *is* the truth.

### Jesus Is The Life

The desire for eternal life has chal-

lenged men through the ages. Is there life beyond this temporal realm? If so, how is that life obtained?

Returning to the prologue of the book of John, it is stated in verse 4, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” In the Word which dwelt in the flesh, Jesus Christ, is life that enlightens. This is explained in John 5:26: “For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” Jesus said in John 10:10, “. . . I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

Jesus offers to mankind a higher life than physical; he offers spiritual life, even eternal life. “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). One cannot have this life if he refuses to come to the Savior. Carefully consider what Christ said in John 5:39-40: “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.”

To Martha, Jesus said, “I am the resurrection, and the life” (John 11:25). He called her dead brother Lazarus from the grave to demonstrate that he had power over life and over death. His own resurrection from the dead is the crowning proof of his having life in himself (John 10:18).

Paul reminded Timothy that Christ abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Tim. 1:10). In Christ there is freedom from sin, and those who become servants to God have their fruit unto holiness, “and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22). The next verse says, “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Jesus is the life. What a marvelous revelation! John wrote, “And this is the record, that God hath given to

# I Am the True Vine

Jim McDonald

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:10). These two verses are part of a long section in which Jesus likens himself to a “true vine.”

**Jesus is the True Vine.** Jesus warned there would be many who would come, claiming they were coming in his name. There would be many during the siege of Jerusalem who would claim to be Christ, but they were not. Today there are false Christs and prophets who claim to offer life but their offer is a bogus one. Other plants or vines may grow but Christ is alone the True One. He warns that every plant which his father did not plant will be rooted up and in his parable of the wheat and tares, the tares are representatives of strange plants; planted by the evil one which at the end of the world will be burned by the Father (Matt. 13:24-30). Let all who are disposed to follow someone other than the True Vine take heed.

Many speculations abound as to what suggested this figure to him (as though he needed something to suggest such a figure!). Some suppose that there was a golden vine with grapes on doors to the Temple. Other postulate other scenes which suggest the figure. None really knows. Nor is it certain when the discourse was given, whether while they were at supper; or on the way to the garden, but from the closing verse of the previous chapter it appears the discourse was given after Jesus and his disciples departed from the upper room where Jesus had kept the Passover with his disciples and instituted the memorial he wished us to keep in his memory. That passage reads: “Arise, let us go hence” (John 14:31). We do know that from 14:12-chapter seventeen, sublime thoughts on a variety of subjects were given the night Judas betrayed our Lord.

The gospel of John is filled with different figures of Jesus in his relationships to humanity. He is the living bread, the good shepherd, the door, the way, truth and life, the resurrection and life, the door to the sheepfold as well as

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us eternal life, and this life is in the Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:11-12). “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20).

Since Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one can come to the Father but by him, we must believe and obey him to reach the destination of being with the Father. The words of Jesus are “the words of life” (John 6:68). To enter into Christ and to put on Christ, one must be baptized (Gal. 3:26-27). To be in Christ is to be a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). God provides all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Through Christ we are given

“exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Pet. 1:4). One of those promises is eternal life (1 John 2:25).

Without the Way, there is no going; without the Truth, there is no knowing; without the Life, there is no living . . . I am the Way inviolable, the Truth infallible, the Life unending (Thomas a' Kempis).

The words of John 14:6 are clear, forceful, meaningful, and unmistakable. They offer comfort, hope, and assurance. At the same time, they restrict and warn. What does Jesus tell us about himself? He is the way, the truth, and the life. Do we really need Jesus? No man cometh unto the Father but by him.

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others. There is something unique about each of these figures. Figures abound which describe the Christian (member, disciple, priest, sheep, citizen, living stone). The church (a body, kingdom, vineyard, bride, temple). Elders (overseers, shepherds), and Christ (king, head, husband, shepherd, foundation). In John 15 Jesus likens himself unto a flourishing vine from which branches grow and bear fruit.

### **Ye Are The Branches**

In this figure of the vine and branches, the like nature of the branches to the vine is obvious. Branches take on the nature of the vine. This likeness is not always evident in other figures. For instance, the figure of Jesus as a good shepherd shows no such kinship. Obviously, the shepherd is different from his sheep. The figure of a Shepherd is designed to show the Father's care, provisions, and oversight for his sheep, not the nature of the sheep. In the figure of the living bread, Jesus shows we must "eat" Christ if we would have life in ourselves. When he speaks of himself as the Resurrection and the Life, he extends hope for us beyond mortality. But in the vine and branches it is evident that, amid several lessons for us, the branch shares the nature of the vine. James asks, "Can a fig tree . . . yield olives, or a vine figs?" *They cannot*. A vine produces grapes because its branches are grape branches. A fig tree produces figs because the branches are fig branches. An olive tree bears olives because its branches are olive branches. We are not divine but we do have an eternal part in us for we were created in God's image (Gen. 1:27). True, Paul states that the Gentiles were from a wild olive tree and "grafted" into the tame tree; and their being grafted in and bearing fruit was that which was "contrary to nature" (Rom. 11:24). Still, Paul observes that "some of the branches were broken off and thou being a wild olive branch was grafted in among them that didst become partakers with them of the root and of the fatness of the olive tree" (Rom. 11:18). The branches manifest the nature of the vine; branches in Christ manifest his nature. We may be "grafted in," but Peter assures us that through God's precious and exceeding great promises we may become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). God's promise is that at the resurrection our corrupted body will be raised an incorruptible one (1 Cor. 15:53). We do not know what we shall be like yet we are assured that "if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2).

A branch depends on the vine for its life. When a branch is cut off from the vine, it withers because its transfusion to life is severed. We are repeatedly told that life is in the Son. "In him was life and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Our spiritual life comes from the son, who through his word, has begotten us (1 Pet. 1:23). We have no hope of life if we are separated from the vine. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. Apart from me ye can do nothing" (John 15: 4, 5).

### **My Father is the Husbandman**

The husbandman is the caretaker of the vineyard. In Christ's figure, the Father is the husbandman (John 15:1). The husbandman cares for the vines, seeking to make the vineyard as fruitful as possible. God seeks to bring out our best, and he desires that the branch bear the best fruit. Thus he prunes the branches.

A productive branch must be pruned. Jesus said, "Every branch that beareth fruit he cleanseth (purgeth) it that it may bear more fruit" (John 15:2). Pruning the fruit tree may seem wasteful and unreasonable, yet the husbandman knows that the fruit spared from the knife will develop and grow into a larger, more tasty fruit than had pruning not occurred. Branches in Christ must be pruned for the same reason. Disease and decay must be cut away, otherwise the fruit will be affected. And Christians must learn that intemperance, immorality, and lack of self-control of our minds or tongues must be pruned so that the fruit the Christian bears will not be blighted.

God prunes the branches through his word. God's word is light, seed, bread, and a sword (Ps. 119:105; Luke 8:11; Matt. 4:4; Heb. 4:12). It is designed to comfort, edify, and convert (1 Thess. 4:18; Acts 28:32; Ps. 19:7). In the same way, God's word is his pruning agent. "Already ye are clean by the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). The Psalmist asked, "Wherein shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto to thy word" (Ps. 119:9). Earlier in the night he was betrayed, Jesus had washed the disciples' feet (John 13:4-11). Peter protested when he saw what Jesus intended to do, saying, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus said in turn, "If I wash not thee, thou hast no part with me." Then Peter said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Jesus said, "He that is bathed needed not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit. And ye are clean, but not all." The one who was not clean was Judas. He was not clean because the word had not had free course in him. His old desires, his covetousness still was with him. Rather than following God's word, he was doing exactly opposite to it. A true disciples abides in Christ's word (John 8:31). Thus Jesus urges: "Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:8).

God's word prunes off the old man. Selfishness, pride, covetousness, falsehood, and sexual immoralities are all laid aside because following God's word causes us to cast off sinful deeds from our lives. In their stead we will supply "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22f).

### **Abide in Me, and I in You**

One word appears repeatedly in this section in John. The words "vine," "branch," "fruit" are each found several times. But the word "abide" is found ten times; almost as

**Continued on p. 686**





many times as the combined number of times the words “vine,” “branch,” and “fruit” appear. We are commanded to abide in Christ (vv. 4, 9). We can choose whether we will, or will not, abide in Christ. The results from abiding in him are stated. If we abide in him, we will be fruitful, bear much fruit, and “whatsoever we ask will be given to us” (John 15:4, 5, 7). And, how does one “abide in Christ,” “abide in his love”? Jesus leaves no doubt how such is done. We abide in Christ and his love when we abide in his word (John 15:7, 10). Faithfulness to Christ demands faithfulness to his word. There are dire consequences if we choose not to abide in Christ and God’s warnings are clear. “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch and is withered and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned” (John 15:6). Some branches are unproductive. When branches are such, it is the fault of the branch, not of the vine. Other branches are bearing fruit and the sap and energy are available to all. The fact that a branch does not bear fruit does not mean it is not a branch; it is. It was in the vine. The teaching is clear: men can be lost who once had been saved.

### **Herein Is My Father Glorified—That Ye Bear Much Fruit**

God is glorified when we bear much fruit (John 15:8). A majestic building honors the architect. A beautiful picture honors its painter. An humble, generous, loving, caring Christian honors God. Like clay is molded and shaped by the potter, so the fruitful, faithful Christian is the handiwork of God. Truly “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God afore prepared that we

should walk in them” (Eph. 2:14). Jesus has taught us, “Even so let your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works may glorify your father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16). Peter urged us, “I beseech you as pilgrims and sojourners that ye abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul. Having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles that wherein they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Pet. 2:11-12). Paul rebuked the Jews because, while they claimed to be God’s chosen ones, their wicked and ungodly lives put God to shame. “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, even as it is written” (Rom. 2:24). There is no higher glory that can come to God than by Christians living as Paul directed: “Do all things without murmurings and questionings; that ye may become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of Life” (Phil. 2:14-16). As one has somewhere said, “The sharper the contrast, the clearer the image!”

The lessons from the figure of Christ as the True Vine are many. We share his nature. We must abide in him to live. We must be pruned that our fruit will be abundant. If we do not bear fruit, God will sever us from Christ and ultimately destroy us. We glorify God by bearing much fruit.

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# I Am The Son of God

John 10:36

Don Wright

Do you know Jesus? The importance of such knowledge cannot be overstated. Jesus himself pointed to the importance of knowing him by equating such knowledge with eternal life. He said, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

A part of knowing Jesus is to understand who he is. The "I am" statements of Jesus help us with this. From the statement "I am the Bread of life," we learn that Jesus is the sustainer of our spiritual life and the provider of all the nourishment that we need. From the statement "I am the Light of the world" we learn that Jesus can help us see the difference between right and wrong and truth and error. Without Christ darkness prevails, but with him we can see clearly the path that leads to the Father. From the statement "I am the true Vine," we learn that spiritual life apart from Christ is impossible. These are just a few of the "I Am" statements of Jesus, but all of them help us to get to know him a little better.

In one of the most significant "I am" statements of Christ, Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. In John 10:36 Jesus said, "Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"

## The Proof Of Our Lord's Statement

This is one of many passages where Christ affirmed that he is God's Son. He did this mostly by referring to God as his Father and to himself as the Son. In fact, it was his frequent allusion to God as his Father that raised the ire of the Jews and led to their accusation of blasphemy (John 5:18; 10:25-36). It should be noted also that when others referred to Jesus as the Son of God, he never objected or attempted to correct them because they spoke the truth when they did so (Matt. 14:32-33; John 1:45-50).

But can we be sure that Jesus is truly the Son of God? There are those who would deny such a claim. Certainly

many Jews in Jesus' day, and even now, would deny this to be true. Muslims are another group which would deny that Jesus is the only and unique Son of God, accepting only that he was called God's Son metaphorically. Furthermore, there are many groups such as the Jehovah Witnesses which might claim Jesus is the Son of God with lip service, but who in reality deny it by rejecting his deity, affirming instead that Jesus is a created being. Notwithstanding these denials, the answer to the above question is an emphatic yes. Jesus is without question God's only begotten Son and the proof can be seen by two immutable facts.

**1. The miracles of Christ.** When the Jews refused to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, Jesus told them, "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in Him" (John 10:37-38). The miracles of Christ bore witness to the fact that he was sent from the Father (John 5:36) for they were accomplished by the finger (power) of God (Luke 11:20). But if Jesus was not what he claimed to be, that is, the Son of God, then he was nothing more than an imposter and a liar. Surely the Father would not contribute to his lies with miraculous confirmations. Nicodemus suggested as much when he said to our Lord, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). How true Nicodemus was. In the sermon of Acts 2, Peter connected the miracles of Christ with the approval of God (Acts 2:22). The miracles of Christ were undeniable. He showed power over every realm. He had power over nature (Matt. 8:26). He had power over the demonic world (Matt. 8:16). He had power over the material realm (Matt. 14:15-21). He had power over disease and sickness of every kind (Matt. 4:23; 9:35). He even had power over death (John 11:20-45). All of this was demonstrated by his works and prove that he is the Son of God.

**2. The resurrection of Christ.** The second undeniable evidence proving that Jesus is the Son of God is his

resurrection from the dead. In the first chapter of Romans, Paul teaches us that Jesus “was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4).

But can we be sure that Jesus was indeed raised from the dead? That’s a good question. Again the answer is an emphatic yes! We know that Jesus was resurrected because he died before a nation of eyewitnesses and was placed in a tomb, and later that same tomb was found empty (Matt. 28:1-6). If Jesus was not raised from the dead, how does one explain the empty tomb? Of course men have attempted to explain away the empty tomb in various ways. Some have said that Jesus did not really die on the cross but that he merely lost consciousness. The problem with that hypothesis is that it ignores the fact that when Joseph of Arimathaea came to Pilate and asked if he could take the body of Christ away, Pilate did not agree until he was sure that Jesus had truly died (Mark 15:42-46). This explains why the soldiers who came to hasten the death of those on the cross did not break the legs of Jesus as they did the other two who were crucified with him. Jesus was already dead by the time they arrived (John 19:32-33). No, Jesus did not merely pass out. The evidence shows that he truly died; thus, the empty tomb still points to a resurrection.

There have been other attempts to explain away the empty tomb. Some have suggested that he did indeed die but that someone stole his body to make it look like he had been raised. But when asked who would have stolen the body of Christ, a sufficient answer cannot be given. His disciples could not have done it, even if they wanted to. The Jewish leaders would not have stolen his body because that would have made it look like he had been raised just like he foretold and their case against Jesus would have been lost. The only ones left would have been the Romans and they had nothing to gain from stealing the body of Christ and truth be told, had no real interest in the dispute over his identity. Thus, the suggestion that the body of Christ was stolen has no merit. Yet, there is still the fact of an empty tomb. How is it explained? The angel of the Lord said it best when he spoke to them who came to see the Lord’s sepulcher. “He is not here: for he is risen, as he said” (Matt. 28:6).

Yes, Jesus has indeed been resurrected from the dead by the power of God (Eph. 1:19-20), and it proves forever that his claim of being the Son of God is true. Accepting this truth is necessary in order for one to become a Christian (Acts 8:36-37).

### **The Implication of Our Lord’s Statement**

With the matter of Jesus being the Son of God settled, what does that truth imply? If Jesus is the Son of God, and it is beyond reasonable disputation, then he is a divine

being. He could not be the Son of God without being the same kind of being as God. I am a human being. When I tell you that I have a son, you don’t have to wonder if he is a cat, dog, rock, or something else. You know he is human because I am human. Likewise, since the Father is God, Jesus must be God as well. They share the same nature. From that standpoint the Father and Son are equal. This is why every time Jesus claimed that God was his Father, the Jews wanted to stone him. They knew that it was, at least indirectly, an assertion of equality with the Father. In John 5:18 we find the Jews wanting to kill Jesus, not simply because he broke the Sabbath, but as the record tells us, he “said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.” The absence of a denial of this by Jesus speaks volumes. Who would doubt that, if the Jews were accusing Jesus falsely, he would have in some way corrected them? The truth, however, is that they were right in their conclusion. And the fact is, every time Jesus claimed to be the Son of God or claimed that God was his Father, it pointed to the equality between them. Jesus is God and the New Testament is full of passages that affirm it. There are passages that plainly call Jesus God (Matt. 1:23; John 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:8). There are passages where the term Lord (Jehovah) is applied to Jesus. Consider these combinations of passages: Isaiah 40:3 with Matthew 3:3; Joel 2:32 with Romans 10:13; Isaiah 8:13-14 with 1 Peter 2:8. Finally, there are passages showing that it is acceptable to worship Jesus. He was worshiped by his disciples after he walked on water (Matt. 14:33). Furthermore, angels of God were commanded to worship Jesus (Heb. 1:6). Since the Bible teaches that only God is to be worshiped, Jesus must be God. When we confess our belief that Jesus is the Son of God, we are at the same time confessing our acceptance of his Deity. To deny his Deity is to deny that he is truly the Son of God.

### **The Effect of Our Lord’s Statement**

What effect should the statement of our Lord have on our daily living? First, it should increase our love and respect for him. Since Jesus is God, we know that like the Father he is without beginning and without end. Many passages refer to the fact that Jesus existed before his incarnation (John 1:1, 15; 8:54-58). Think of the glory, honor, and respect Jesus enjoyed in heaven as a member of the Godhead. Yet he was willing to give that up and to be made in the likeness of men just so we could be redeemed by his sacrificial blood (Phil. 2:5-8). Doesn’t that cause the love that you have for Jesus in your heart to swell? It should! Jesus was willing to give up heaven so that we could gain heaven. Read and appreciate the significance of 2 Corinthians 8:9.

The statement of our Lord should also lead us to a more complete obedience. Hearing Jesus say, “I am the Son of God” should cause us to bow in humble adoration at the very sound of his voice, for when Jesus gives us a command, it is a command from Deity. When we take the words



# I Am King of the Jews

## John 19:21

John Humphries

At the crucifixion of Jesus, Pilate wrote a title “Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews” (John 19:19). This offended the Jews, and they wanted Pilate to reword the title to say that this was what Jesus had said: the implication being that this was only an empty claim (v. 21). Their continuing unbelief was, indeed, foul and obstinate. Pilate, however, refused the demands of the chief priests and, thus, the title remained (v. 22).

The text does not discuss any motives that Pilate may have had in posting the title above the head of Jesus. But, nevertheless, Pilate was proclaiming what was the reality concerning Jesus, whether or not he intended to do so. Jesus, most assuredly, is the king of the Jews!

When Jesus came before Pilate, they discussed the issue of Jesus being the king of the Jews (John 18:33-38).

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of Christ lightly, it points to a lack of understanding of who he really is. John tells us that if we claim to know Christ and yet refuse to keep his commandments, we are liars (1 John 2:1-4). Remember what was pointed out in the beginning of this study? To know Jesus is to have eternal life (John 17:3). Why? It is because to know Jesus is to keep his commandments. To understand his true nature as God and that he is the one for whom and by whom all things were created (Col. 1:16), is to understand how important it is to do what he says to do. Whenever I see someone who is a member of the body of Christ living a wishy-washy, indecisive, sometimes on, sometimes off sort of life, I know that I am seeing one who hasn't fully grasped the statement of my Lord when he simply said, “I am the Son of God.” For if we understand the significance and implications of his statement, we will do all we can to live according to his divine will.

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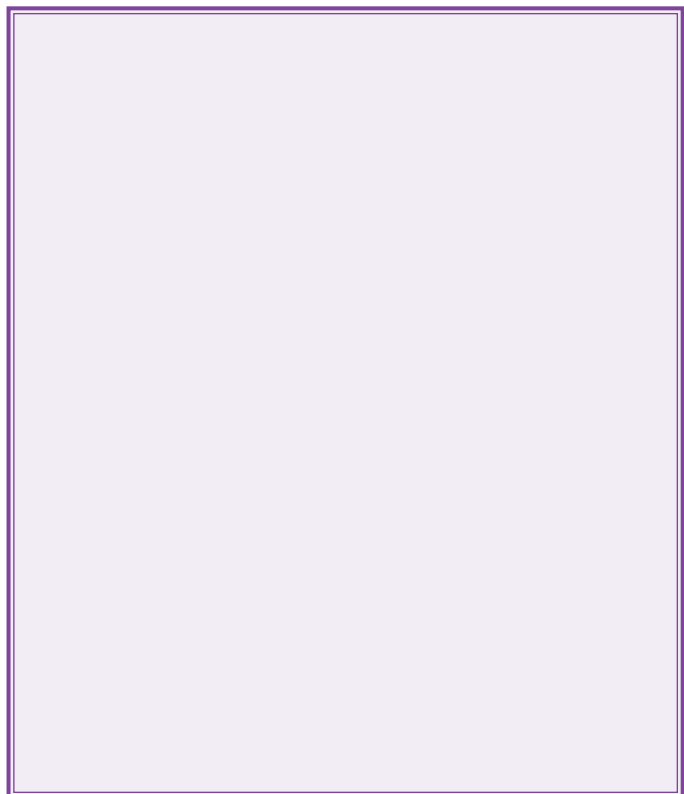
Before Pilate, Jesus acknowledged and confessed that he was the king of the Jews (John 18:37; 1 Tim. 6:13-16). But, no doubt, Pilate was swimming in strange and deep waters (as far as his spiritual understanding was concerned) when he was discussing with Jesus the idea of being the king of Israel. He certainly had no clear concept as to what the prophets foretold concerning the Messiah king who would sit on “the throne of his father David” (Luke 1:32; Hos. 3:5; Ps. 132:11). To Pilate, and many others like him, Jesus' claim to be king (especially in the light of his arrest and imminent execution) was only nonsense and foolishness (cf. 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:8; Acts 26:24). Pilate had no idea just who it was that stood before him on that fateful occasion (John 19:10-11). There was obviously no clear understanding that the Messiah would also be the suffering servant, before being raised up to sit on the right hand of God, having “all authority in heaven and in earth” (Ps. 22:1, 27-28; Isa. 53:4, 12; Ps. 2:1-3, 6-12; Matt. 28:18; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:29-36). Before the crown, Jesus would have to endure the cross (Heb. 12:1-3)!

The Jews were not much better off than Pilate, as far as understanding this truth concerning their Messiah king and the spiritual nature of his kingdom (Acts 3:17; 13:27; Matt. 11:25; Luke 19:14). The Jewish leadership was also more concerned about political freedom than they were the spiritual freedom that Jesus offered them (John 1:11; 6:15; 8:30-36; 11:45-48; 18:36). Jesus simply did not fit into their materialistic view or mold of what the Messiah king would be (cf. John 19:14-15). They wanted freedom from Rome; but, instead, Jesus offered them spiritual freedom from sin through the cross. Only a remnant of the Jews would understand and accept Jesus as their Messiah king (Rom. 9:27; 10:21; 11:5, 7; Luke 12:32). The majority of the Jews remained in spiritual blindness (John 9:40-41; Matt. 15:14; 23:24, 26) and they would ultimately be “cast out” and lost in eternity (Matt. 8:11-12).

Of course, there were other clashes with the Jewish leadership that led to his rejection. Jesus forcefully condemned

their transgression of God's commandments by their human traditions and commandments (Matt. 15:3, 9). Jesus also constantly condemned their hypocrisy in no uncertain terms (Matt. 15:7-8; 23:13ff.). The Lord certainly did not make friends with the leaders in Israel when he drove the money changers out of the temple (Matt. 21:12-13). This not only hurt their pocketbooks, but it also challenged their authority (Matt. 21:23). The Jewish leaders were very upset over the fact that Jesus, obviously, condemned them in his teaching (Matt. 21:45-46). When they confronted him publicly in debate and tried to humiliate and silence him by carnal tactics, he turned the tables on them time and time again (Matt. 22:15, 46). Other examples of friction between the Lord and the Jews could be given, but these will suffice to show that they were not about to recognize Jesus as their Messiah. They wanted a king (John 6:15), but not the kind of king that Jesus was (cf. 1 Sam. 8:5, 7; Luke 19:14).

On the other hand, the gospel of John offers examples of "honest and good hearts" (Luke 8:15) acknowledging Jesus as the "king of the Jews." One of these was Nathanael who was brought to Jesus by Philip (John 1:45). When Nathanael was given the invitation by Philip, he objected at first because of doubts concerning the possibility of the Messiah coming out of Nazareth (v. 46; cf. John 7:41-42, 52; also see Matt. 2:1, 5-6; Mic. 5:2). However, when Jesus proved to Nathanael that he had the supernatural ability to know things not possible for him to know as only a man, he acknowledged Jesus as "the Son of God . . . the King of Israel" (vv. 48-49).



There were also unnamed people who were convinced that Jesus was the Messiah because of the many signs that he did indicating divine approval of his claims for authority and being the "Son of man" (John 5:26-27; 7:31). The phrase "Son of man" was clearly a messianic one that was used by Daniel (7:13-14) to describe the coronation of the Messiah at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19; Acts 1:9; 2:32-33, 36).

Other messianic prophecies were fulfilled in the actions of Jesus. A good example of messianic prophecy fulfillment is when he made his entrance into Jerusalem shortly before his crucifixion (John 12:12-16). The text (v. 16) indicates that even though the disciples did not fully understand the nature of Christ's kingdom, they did believe in him as king (cf. John 16:12-13; Acts 1:6; Matt. 20:21).

Certainly the devil challenged the Son of man time and time again, but without success (John 14:30; Heb. 4:14-16). Satan used the direct approach to ensnare Jesus (Luke 4:1-13), and then, indirectly, made the attempt through others (Matt. 16:21-23). He constantly failed, however, to entrap Jesus in sin (John 8:46). Now, in the very shadow of the cross, Satan is making the attempt through Judas (John 13:2, 27) and also through the Jews and Romans who brutalized, tortured, and executed the Lord on the cross (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:13-15; Gen. 3:15).

But of course, Jesus is king over more than just the Jews. He is Lord over all and has authority over all (John 17:1-2; Acts 10:36; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 1:5; 17:14; 19:15-16). Pilate, like wicked Caiaphas (John 12:47-52), may have said and written (John 19:14, 19-22) far more truth than he fully understood (also cf. Num. 24:17).

In connection with this thought, Luke (23:38) also tells us that Pilate wrote the superscription in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. As we compare the accounts in the Gospels, we think that the full statement may have been: *This is Jesus of Nazareth, the king of the Jews*. There may have been slight differences in the wording of the superscription as it appeared in these three different languages. There is, therefore, the suggestion that this superscription, being written in these key languages, announced to the world in that day that Jesus is "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36; Rom. 9:24) as well as being the king of Israel. Indeed, as suggested already, Pilate may have written far more truth than he really understood, or even intended, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is, indeed, "Lord of lords and King of kings!"

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# I Am The Alpha and Omega

Keith Greer

As punishment for preaching about faith in Jesus Christ, the apostle John was exiled to the isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). During John's exile, the Lord Jesus Christ revealed himself to him. In the Bible book that contains that Revelation, John described the Christ who "loved us and washed us from our own sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5). Jesus told John that he is coming with clouds and that every eye will behold him. Then he made the affirmative statement, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8). What exactly does the phrase "*the Alpha and Omega*" reveal to us about Christ?

Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Jesus was making a powerful statement of fact concerning his eternal nature and his Deity. Earlier, as he talked with the Pharisees during his earthly ministry, Jesus made a similar declaration. He said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM" (John 8:58). The Jews who heard him accused Jesus of claiming to be equal with God, and they took up stones, intending to kill him. Yet, when the apostle John began his gospel concerning Christ, he wrote: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:1-3). Following are some facts to consider about the "beginning and ending" nature of Jesus Christ:

**He was with God in the beginning.** "Then God said, let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth *and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth*" (Gen. 1:26).

**All things were made for him and by him.** "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him" (Col. 1:15, 16).

**He was not a created being.** "Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). Some religions, such as the Jehovah Witnesses, teach that Jesus was a created being. Jesus became flesh to enable him to live life as men live it; to be tested, tried, and tempted; yet, to live without sin (Heb. 4:15). He was both God and man. We have difficulty grasping this concept, but the Scriptures make abundantly clear that he was both.

**He was the key to man's sin problem.** When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they set in motion the need for a Savior. Fellowship between God and man was broken because of sin. God knew that man would need something to enable restoration of that fellowship. Jesus Christ was to be the means through which man's fellowship with God could again be a reality. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel" (Gen. 3:15).

**He fulfilled the prophecies.** The Scriptures contain more than 300 prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ. Let's look at a few of them:

- He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:18-25).
- He would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2; Matt. 2:1).
- His lineage would be through Abraham and David (Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Sam. 7:12-14; Matt. 1:1).
- He would establish his kingdom in the days of the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:44, 45; Acts 2:41-47).

All during Jewish history, the prophets looked ahead and foretold about the One who would be the centerpiece of God's plan.

**He is the revealed mystery of godliness.** "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God

was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory” (1 Tim. 3:16). The points listed show the development of God’s Son as he began, fulfilled, and completed his mission here on earth. He said, “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do” (John 17:4).

**He is the fullness of the Godhead.** “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power” (Col. 2:8-10). Through Christ Jesus, man becomes complete. Jesus was the one Deity whom man was permitted to see. “Jesus said to him, Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, Show us the Father?” (John 14:9).

**He was the payment for the world’s sins.** “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). God stepped in and did for man what man could not do for himself. Someone had to balance the scales and pay the ransom price. Christ paid our bill. “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:8, 9).

**He is head of the church—his kingdom.** “And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:19-23) The kingdom was part of God’s eternal plan. The kingdom of heaven has only one head—Christ (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18).

**He was declared to be God’s Son with power.** “And declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4). The Scriptures contain many examples that demonstrate the truthfulness of Christ’s deity. But the culmination of all proofs is his resurrection from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion (Matt. 28:1-6). Christ’s resurrection was unlike any other resurrection. He rose, never to die again!

**He will call us from the grave.** “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28, 29). When the last enemy—death—is destroyed, it will be Christ who calls us to come forth from our graves. Finally and forever, all of God’s enemies will have been subdued (1 Cor. 15:24-26). We expect this to happen because Christ overcame death *and* Hades, giving us assurance that we also will (Rev. 1:18).

**He will judge all men.** “For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). “Because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:31).

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

When death has been forever defeated, men will give accounts of their lives. The Lord himself will judge us. He was present at the beginning; he will be present at the end.

When we study the pages of God’s sacred word, we observe overwhelming evidence of Christ’s existence during all three time dispensations (periods). God had an eternal purpose.

And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:9-11).

In the beginning, this plan was hidden from man’s full view. But as the pages of history of God’s people unfold, they afford glimpses of how God will bring his plan to fruition by sending his Son to this sinful world. To me, the presence of Christ on every page of the sacred record is the greatest masterpiece of writing. Through his work—the inspiration of the Bible—the Holy Spirit told the complete story of Christ.

Surely, it is crystal clear that Christ has been present since time began, and he will be with us throughout eternity—when it begins on Judgment Day. The common thread woven throughout the pages of the sacred Scriptures is the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God. The Bible breaks down into three simple statements: He is *Coming*—He is *Here*—He will *Return*.

# I Am He Who Searches the Heart

Harold Fite

Jesus writes to the angel of the church in Thyatira, exposing the wickedness of Jezebel and her sinful teaching. He pronounces condemnation upon those who condone and participate in her spiritual fornication: “I will kill her children with death; and all of the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto each one of you according to your works” (Rev. 2:23).

Before commenting on the Lord’s ability to “search the hearts,” we must determine what it is that he searches. Many are confused as to the meaning of the word “heart.” Under her column in *Parade Magazine*, Marilyn writes: “Religions cannot be proved intellectually. They come from the heart.” Marilyn confuses “heart” and “mind.” If religion is from the “heart,” where does it come from? How did it get there?

In denominational vacation Bible school, little four-year-old Mary insisted on placing her hand on the top of her head while the group said the pledge to the American flag. When her teacher asked her why she did this, she replied: “Well, that’s where my heart is. Mother always puts her hand on the top of my head and says Bless your little heart, Mary.” Mary was closer to the truth than Marilyn!

The heart is the mind—the intellect. One “thinks in his heart,” “understands with the heart,” “reasons in his heart,” and with the heart man “believes” (Prov. 23:7; Matt. 13:15; Mark 2:7; Rom. 10:10). When Jesus said, “Blessed are

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On three other occasions in the book of Revelation, the apostle John referred to Christ’s “Alpha-and-Omega” character (Rev. 1:11; 21:6; 22:13). The book begins with that affirmation, and it ends in the same manner. Truly, we are blessed and better because Christ has always been with us. There’s no doubt that all things begin and end with our Savior—Jesus the Christ.

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the pure in heart,” he had in mind, the mind—clear in understanding; unmixed, without alloy. When David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God,” he was praying for a clean, pure mind. Ezra “prepared his heart,” that is, he prepared his mind (Ezra 7:10). This is the heart that the Lord searches.

Christ knows the condition of the heart as Nathanael approached him, Jesus said, “Behold an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile” (John 1:48). The searcher of hearts could see that Nathanael was void of deceit and hypocrisy. The Lord determined this when he saw him under the fig tree. In commenting on this passage, Albert Barnes remarked, “How happy would it be if he, who knows the hearts of all as he did that of Nathanael, could bear the same testimony of all who profess the religion of the gospel.”

While Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover, many believed on his name because of the signs which he did. “But Jesus did not trust himself unto them, for that he knew all men” (John 2:24). He needed no testimony from others, for he himself knew what was in man” (v. 25). This Scripture does not say what he saw in the hearts of the multitude that caused him to withhold his trust. Perhaps he saw a superficial faith based strictly on miracles; an unstable people with a tendency toward fickleness. Knowing their hearts kept him from trusting them.

**Christ knows the thoughts of the heart.** Jesus entered the synagogue on a Sabbath and taught. There was a man there who had a withered hand. The Scribes and Pharisees watched Jesus closely, whether he would heal this man on the Sabbath. They sought opportunity to accuse him. “But he knew their thoughts” (Luke 6:8), and challenged them by restoring the hand.

When Jesus healed a man possessed with a demon, blind and dumb, all were amazed, but the Pharisees attributed his power to Beelzebub, the prince of demons. Jesus, “knowing their thoughts,” replied, “If Satan casteth out Satan, he is divided against himself; how then shall his kingdom stand?” (Matt. 12:22-32). Jesus knows the thoughts of the heart.

**Christ knows the motivation of the heart.** Jesus looks deeper than just the thoughts of the heart. He has the ability to determine its motivation. After eating the food Christ had supplied them, the multitude followed him to Capernaum. Jesus said to them, “You seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled” (John 6:26). If we had seen the multitude following Jesus, we probably would have thought, “My, how they love the Lord; what great interest they have in his teaching.” But he, the searcher of hearts, gave us an accurate assessment of their motivation, because he searches hearts. Their motivation was materialistic. They followed him for the “loaves and fishes.”

Christ knows the reasoning of the heart: When Jesus entered Capernaum, after some days, he healed a man sick of the palsy. He said to the man, “Son, thy sins are forgiven.” Certain of the scribes reasoned in their hearts that Jesus blasphemed.

And straightway Jesus, perceiving in His spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, saith unto them, why reason ye these things in your hearts? (Mark 2:8).

Christ was unique. He was never deceived; never believed a lie; he was never wrong in his assessment of others. He was, and is, the one and only bonafide “mind reader” for the ages. His eyes were as a flame of fire (Rev. 1:18), penetrating the very thoughts and intents of the heart. What was the key to his power? He was from above (John 8:23).

Only God can search the hearts: “I the Lord searcheth the heart” (Jer. 17:10). He understands all the imaginations

of the heart (1 Chron. 28:9). God knows the secrets of the heart (Ps. 44:21), and knows our contemplations (Ps. 139:2). “All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13).

By exercising this powerful ability, Christ proved himself God. “The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory as the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In him dwelled “the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). The family of Deity was bound in a bodily form. Jesus could say to Phillip, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). As God in the flesh, he had power to “search the hearts.” This ability cannot be attributed to an ordinary man. “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him” (1 Cor. 2:11). We, as ordinary men, cannot know the thoughts of others. The only way we can know what another person is thinking, is for that person to articulate his thoughts to us. Should I say to another, with sarcasm, “I know what you are thinking,” or to impugn the motive of an action, I take upon myself a prerogative for which I am not qualified. Should I assume the position of reading minds, I am thinking of myself more highly than I ought to think, and my action is grossly unfair to the one whom I judge. Not so the Lord: “for he himself knew what was in man.”

The fact that the Lord searches *our* hearts, should get our attention.

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(This special issue will conclude in the next issue of *Truth Magazine*.)



## “The Bread of Life” continued from front page

God miraculously provided daily bread for Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:8-24). From a boy’s supply of five loaves, Jesus produced enough bread to feed 5,000 hungry men and still have twelve baskets to spare (John 6:1-14).

In addition to the above miracles, the Scriptures contain numerous references to God providing his children with daily bread. As David both experienced and witnessed numerous hardships in life, he confidently learned that Jehovah will always provide bread for his people. “I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread” (Ps. 37:25). Jesus assures us that God will answer our prayers for “daily bread” (Matt. 6:11). Our heavenly Father will generously provide for us better than an earthly father would instinctively provide for his son who asks for bread (Matt. 7:7-11). There is no need for worry among the children of God (Matt. 6:25f; Phil. 4:6-7). Seek first the kingdom and God will provide (Matt. 6:33).

### Jesus Miraculously Fed Bread to the 5,000

After partaking of the miraculous provision of bread, the 5,000 impressed Jews were ready to immediately make Jesus their physical king (John 6:15). This miracle reminded them of the great prophets Moses and Elijah, and convinced them that Jesus was “truly the Prophet who is to come into this world” (John 6:14; cf. Deut. 18:15f). Not desiring to be an earthly king, Jesus escaped from their presence, only to be found by them again on the next day (John 6:15-25). Jesus, knowing their hearts, rebuked them saying, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man will give you” (John 6:26-27). While their minds were obsessed with feeding on physical bread Jesus took the opportunity to teach them of a more important spiritual bread, himself, being “the bread of life” (John 6:35).

## The Bread of Jesus is Better Than the Bread of the World

While we have already established that physical bread is extremely important, Jesus used this occasion to explain that there is a spiritual bread that is even more important.

Take note of the contrast Jesus makes between these two types of bread (see chart at bottom of page).

## The Bread of Jesus is Better Than the Bread of Moses

This miracle of Jesus providing bread reminded the Jews of how their great prophet of old, Moses, provided their fathers bread in the wilderness (cf. John 6:14; Deut. 18:15-22). They asked Jesus, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat” (John 6:30-31; cf. Exod. 16:4).

Jesus established that his bread is even superior to the bread of Moses. “Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:32-33). He continued, “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die” (John 6:49-50). All those who ate of the bread of Moses were dead. The bread of Moses gave temporal physical life, but the bread of Jesus is superior because it gives eternal spiritual life. Consider the following similarities and differences between the bread of Moses and the bread of Jesus (see chart on next page).

### Application

Because Jesus is a bread that is superior to the bread of the world and even superior to the bread of Moses, he then invites all to partake of him. “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give

Bread of Jesus	Verse	Bread of the World
Bread that is spiritual	John 6:27	Bread that is physical
Bread that endures	John 6:27	Bread that perishes
Bread of God	John 6:33	Bread of Satan
True bread	John 6:32	False bread
Bread from heaven	John 6:33, 58	Bread from the world
Bread of life	John 6:34, 58	Bread of death
Bread that satisfies	John 6:35	Bread that will not satisfy
Bread that offends the world	John 6:61	Bread that does not offend the world
Bread that the minority partakes of	John 6:66	Bread that the majority partakes of

Bread of Moses	Bread of Jesus
Lost in the wilderness	Lost in the world
Headed to earthly promised land	Headed to heavenly promised land
Bread from heaven	Bread from heaven
Physical bread being manna	Spiritual bread being Christ
Gave physical life	Gives spiritual life
Sustained physical life	Sustains spiritual life
Gift from God	Gift from God
Miraculous	Miraculous
Temporary	Eternal

is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (John 6:51). Learn the following lessons from the fact that Jesus is the bread of life.

### 1. Stop laboring only for the “bread” of the world.

Jesus rebuked the multitude because they were obsessed with gaining inferior bread. They were blind to the superior bread of life. The Jews wanted a physical kingdom, a prosperous society, immediate physical reward, and they thought Jesus would give them this “physical bread.” Jesus commanded them, “Do not labor for the food which perishes” (John 6:27). Don’t foolishly spend all your time focused on attaining an inferior bread that won’t last! This bread of the world (be it literal bread, or figurative bread) will never give you lasting satisfaction. It will perish and it cannot give you eternal life. Focus on the bread that will endure forever.

Obviously, you need “physical bread” for survival, but you need “spiritual bread” even more. Be honest. Which is a higher priority in your week—pursuing physical bread or spiritual bread? Are you spending all your time laboring for the bread of the world? Is your desire for worldly bread so great that you are a workaholic (Prov. 23:4-5)? Do you spend so much time working for physical bread that you neglect your relationships with your spouse, children, and brethren? Do you chase after worldly bread so intensely that you never take time to truly pursue spiritual bread? Does your pursuit of worldly bread keep you from finding the time to worship, study, and pray as you should? “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life” (John 6:27; Matt. 16:26).

Are you laboring for the figurative bread of the world? Does your daily diet consist of the “bread of wickedness” (Prov. 4:17), the “bread of idleness” (Prov. 31:27), and the “bread of deceit” (Prov. 20:17)? Are you feeding on the bread of pride, anger, and lust? Don’t feed on the sinful “bread” of the world. It will never satisfy. Just as Satan tempted Eve to partake of the forbidden fruit, he is prepar-

ing his bread of sin (Gen. 3:1-8; 1 Pet. 5:8). His bread might smell good and provide pleasure for a season (Heb. 11:25), but it is false bread that will surely bring forth death (Jas. 1:15). Maybe as a Christian you are still trying to feed on the bread of the world. You cannot partake of the devil’s table and the Lord’s table at the same time (1 Cor. 10:21; Matt. 6:24; Josh. 24:15). Reject the bread of Satan and feed on the bread of Christ.

**2. You must feed on Christ, the only true bread.** Jesus explained that he is the bread upon which we must feed. “For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world . . . I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger” (John 6:33-34). Jesus continued, “He who feeds on Me shall live because of Me” (John 6:57). Jesus was not advocating literal cannibalism here. He was giving an extremely visual image of our need for him. Think of physical bread for a moment. You need it for survival. It gives life. It sustains life. It is pleasing to eat. You eat it regularly. Jesus affirmed that we need to view him in the same light. Jesus is our bread from heaven and we need him for survival. As our bread, he gives us not just physical life but eternal life. Partaking of Jesus, our spiritual bread, will provide far more satisfaction than partaking of physical bread can offer. “How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Pss. 119:103; 19:10; 1 Pet. 2:2-3). As we eat of physical bread frequently and on a daily basis, so must we constantly feed on Christ and his word (Matt. 5:6). How is your spiritual diet? If you ate physically as often as you ate spiritually, would you starve to death? If you only “feed on Christ” once a week, you are spiritually starving, malnourished, and dangerously susceptible to spiritual disease. Feed on Christ and find joy, purpose, and true life.

**3. The bread of Christ is superior to the bread of the social gospel.** Modern religious groups need to heed Jesus’ rebuke of the Jews when he says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled” (John 6:26). Jesus’ intent was not to bribe his listeners with earthly rewards in order to convert them, as so many religious groups do today. His purpose in miraculously feeding the 5,000 was not a some carnal and manipulative “bait and switch” tactic, but a sign that confirmed him as the Son of God. He also rebuked the crowd for only being interested in following him for physical reward. His rebuke is so strong that “many of His disciples went back and followed Him no more” (John 6:66). When the multitudes left, Jesus did not say, “Well the gospel alone won’t convert people today, so we need to keep offering worldly physical rewards to get the multitudes to come back.” Jesus did not cheapen the gospel, for it truly is the power of God to salvation (Rom. 1:16). The gospel message, not loaves of bread, converts souls. May the “social gospel” advocates of our day learn this important lesson.



## “Light of the World” continued from page 2

1. It enables people to depart the darkness of sin (8:12).
2. It helps them to walk in the light and to enjoy life (8:12).
3. It reproves (exposes) the evil deeds of the darkness (3:20).
4. It makes manifest works that are wrought in God (3:21).
5. It survives in the darkness (not overcome by it) (1:5).

### Light Only in Jesus Christ

What a record of achievement belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Light does not exist alone, but in his person and in his word. Without him there is no light available, and apart from him no one is ever enlightened. The enlightenment sought by many through the diverse paths of world religions is found in Jesus only, as indicated by the definite article in John 8:12 (“the light”). Some claiming to believe in Jesus have begun to leave doubts about their certainty of eternal life only in him, but where else would they find the light? Billy Graham has seemed to hedge along this line in some recent interviews. Leroy Garrett has said that the same light that Jesus brought to the world is available to people apart from Christ. The light of Jesus Christ is not some “partial light” involving only the love of one’s fellowman and the ethical treatment of people. It is the light that enables one to follow Christ (John 8:12). Following Christ is not taking a few of his steps, particularly those of one’s own choosing, but omitting the rest of them. Is it not remarkable how people redefine biblical teaching and, in effect, destroy the biblical standard and ignore biblical authority? When all is said and done, many would even eliminate the concept of Jesus as Savior in their insistence that salvation is available apart from him, in spite of the teaching of passages like Acts 4:10-12 and John 14:6. In the latter of these passages, Jesus surely spoke exclusively of himself as the only way, the only truth, and the only life, for no comes to the Father except by him. If he is the only way, then there is no going to God except by him. If he is the only truth, then there is no knowing of God except by him. If he is the only life, then there is no living except by him. That, my friend, is what the Bible teaches; and we must believe it

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### Conclusion

Is Jesus your bread of life? Feed your soul with him today. Obey the gospel, stop feeding on the world’s bread and find eternal life. “As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (John 6:57).

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and him to be saved, to be enlightened, and to be live with him in heaven. We can believe it or disbelieve it, but we do so to our own eternal security or everlasting peril. To believe otherwise is to deny the New Testament, to make the death and resurrection of Jesus non-essential and wasteful, and to destroy the very foundation of all morality.

### Considering the Context

John 8 discloses the following information about Jesus’ claim to be the light of the world in verse 12:

1. Though he did not depend on his own testimony, Jesus was eminently qualified to give it, “for I know whence I came and whither I go” (8:14).

2. It was a supported (attested) claim, because the Father bore witness to it (8:18). We see in John 1:7-8 that John the Baptist also bore witness to him as the light.

In John 8:21-29 we gather additional information about Jesus as light, enhancing his role as our light:

1. Again the qualification of Jesus as light stands out, for he came into this world from heaven (8:23-24).

2. The critical relationship of his qualification to those hearing him appears in his conditioning their salvation from sin upon their belief in him as divine (8:24).

In the next paragraph (8:31-59), Jesus further elaborates on their willingness to walk in his light in terms of discipleship.

1. He based true discipleship on abiding in his words (8:32), showing then that the benefits of being his disciples included knowing the truth and spiritual freedom. Belief, which John credited to them in verse 31, was the beginning of discipleship, but spending time in the schoolroom of Christ is the extension of that belief that brings one to Christ.

2. In their arrogance, they refused to become his disciples, claiming they were already free as descendants of Abraham (8:33).

3. Jesus then described their true state as bondservants of sin, refusing the word of Jesus and acting as Satan’s offspring rather than Abraham’s seed (8:34-44). They could, however, be genuinely free in the Son of God (8:36).

### The Cycle of Light

#### Light’s Source:

1. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all (1 John 1:5).
2. In the divine plan of the ages, Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12).

3. From no other source can one gain light!

**Light's Transmitter:** The word of the Lord is light to benighted humanity (Ps. 119:105). The transmission of the divine light of God to individuals walking in darkness occurs only through the word of God, not through some spiritual enlightenment provided by the Spirit.

**Light's Reflectors:** Christians are the light of the world (Matt. 5:14-16). Many in the world are dependent on seeing light in the lives of children of God, for they do not read their Bibles. What do they see in our examples?

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## Preacher Needed

**Bastrop, Texas:** The Lost Pines church in Bastrop is searching for a faithful gospel preacher. There are thirty members with some young adults and some older members. The congregation has been there for about five years. They currently rent a building for worship. Bastrop is a growing city 30 miles east of Austin on a major highway that runs to Houston. Currently three men share the preaching and teaching of Bible classes. They will be able to supply most of the support needed. If interested, contact Felix Harvell at 512-303-2752 or harvell68@hotmail.com.

## Quips & Quotes

### Dutch May Expand Euthanasia Policy to Infants

“Amsterdam, Netherlands — The Dutch government intends to expand its current euthanasia policy, setting guidelines for when doctors may end the lives of terminally ill newborns with the parents’ consent.

“A letter outlining the new directives will be submitted to parliament for discussion by mid-October, but the new policy will not require a vote or change of law, a Dutch Health Ministry spokeswoman said Thursday.

“The change in Dutch policy is especially significant because it will provide the model for how the country treats other cases in which patients are unable to say whether they want to live or die, such as those involving the mentally retarded or elderly people with dementia.

“In 2001, the Netherlands became the first nation to legalize euthanasia for adults under some conditions . . .

“In the United States, Oregon is alone in allowing physician-assisted suicide. The U.S. Supreme Court is to hear arguments against the law on Wednesday” (*The Indianapolis Star* [September 30, 2005], A8).

### W. Va. Group Urges Split From American Baptist Churches

“Clarksburg, W. Va. — A group of 65 West Virginia churches is calling for a split from the American Baptist Churches USA over concerns about its stance on homosexuality.

“The group called West Virginia Baptists for Biblical Truth plans to call for the withdrawal from the national organization at next month’s annual meeting because, they say, ‘the ordination of practicing homosexuals and the affirmation of the homosexual lifestyle by some ABC-USA churches is contrary to biblical teaching.’

“There are 465 Baptist churches in West Virginia, according to the group.

“‘It is time to stand on God’s word and break fellowship with those who condone flagrant sin in the church,’ Jay Wolfe, chairman of the West Virginia Baptist for Biblical truth, said in a release” (*Sunday-News-Register* [September 25, 2005], A3).

### Compromise Settles Nothing

“Leaders of the 4.9-million-member Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) came to Orlando in August for their biennial Churchwide Assembly determined not to let differences on homosexuality divide them, as they have other mainline Protestant denominations.

“‘I do not believe for us as Lutherans, human-sexuality is a church-defining or church-dividing issue,’ ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson said, ‘We can live with some ambiguity about these questions.’

“When the Lutherans left town after one week, the cracks were still visible, but the glue held. There was little talk of splits. Still, some conservatives worry the denomination has now given implicit support to same-sex unions” (*Christianity Today* [October 2005], 24).

### Judge to Diocese: Hands Off

“St. James Church of Newport Beach, California, was among several conservative congregations that left the Episcopal Church (USA) after the 2003 consecration of a bishop who was an openly practicing homosexual, as well as disputes over the divinity of Christ and the authority of Scripture.

“The doctrinal issue was the ‘last straw,’ Praveen Bunyan, rector of St. James, told CT. ‘A significant number of leaders have denied the lordship of Christ, and that comes from their low, low view of Scripture.’

“Now, in a decision that conservatives hope will have national implications, the Orange County Superior Court

has told St. James it can not only secede, but also keep its property, too.

“Episcopal Church law usually places congregational properties in trust with the diocese and the national church. Courts in California, however, have followed ‘neutral principles of law.’ If names of congregation members are on church property deeds and the articles of incorporation, and the name of the diocese is not, the congregation’s demands hold more sway” (*Christianity Today* [October 2005], 25).

### Raiders of the Lost Pool

“Israel — The Pool of Siloam, considered a metaphor in John’s Gospel by some New Testament scholars, was in fact a huge basin at the lowest point in the city of Jerusalem. Recent excavations have uncovered two corners and one side of the pool that stretched for half the length of a football field.

“It’s very exciting,’ James Charlesworth, a professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary, told CT. ‘It’s very important for the study of the New Testament.’

“Some Johannine experts have suggested the story in John 9 of the blind man whom Jesus healed and told to wash in the Pool of Siloam wasn’t much more than a metaphor.

“‘To dismiss John as not historically important is absurd,’ Charlesworth said. ‘Now it becomes clear that the Gospel of John does have reliable historical information. We have found there is such a pool, precisely as John describes it.’

“Tradition has always located the Pool of Siloam near the end of Hezekiah’s water tunnel, which dates to the eighth century B.C. The pool under excavation is just a few yards from a much smaller Byzantine-era pool that visitors to the area had been calling the Pool of Siloam” (*Christianity Today* [October 2005], 26).

### Priest Shortage, Divorce To Be Addressed At Synod

“Vatican City — Bishops from around the world begin tackling major issues facing the Roman Catholic Church today, including whether Holy Communion should be given to Catholic Politicians who back abortion rights and to divorced people who remarry without getting an annulment.

“The priest shortage, and whether celibacy contributes to it, as well as dwindling Mass attendance also are expected to be discussed at the three-week-Synod of Bishops, during which bishops will offer recommendations to Pope Benedict XVI on running the church” (*The Indianapolis Star* [October 2, 2005], A11).

### Films Ignoring Downside of Drugs, Sex, Study Says

“London — Hollywood might be bad for your health, according to a new study, which concludes blockbuster movies paint a consequence-free view of sex and drugs.

“Dr. Hasantha Gunasekera, the study’s lead author from the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney, said the findings are troubling, ‘given the HIV and illicit drug pandemics in developing and industrialized countries.’

“The Australian researchers studied a list of the 200 biggest box-office successes, as ranked by the Internet Movie Database. They excluded animated features, films rated G and PG, and movies released or set before the start of the AIDS pandemic in 1983.

“Of the 87 remaining movies in the study published Monday in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 28 contained sex scenes.

“. . . The authors concluded: ‘The motion picture industry should be encouraged to depict safer sex practices and the real consequences of unprotected sex and illicit drug use’ (*The Indianapolis Star* [October 4, 2005], B3).





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