Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Miraculous Jesus
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
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Look this morning at the Word of God. I want us to consider the miraculous Jesus. Last week we looked at the mysterious Jesus, the Jesus of the Old Testament prophets. Now we look at the miraculous Jesus of the New Testament. We wanted to get sort of a double view, a two-fold perspective. Much as we read earlier in the reading from Hebrews 1 where we find that God spoke in time passed through the prophets, that's the Old Testament, and now He has spoken through His Son and the record of that is in the New Testament.

The New Testament presents the miraculous Jesus. Everything about him is miraculous. Everything about him is wondrous. Everything about him is humanly inexplicable. Everything about him is supernatural and divine. And it's important that we understand that so that we may know who this Jesus Christ really is. I saw an ad recently that pointed out the attitude at least of some people at the Christmas season. In very, very large type on this printed ad it said "Jesus Christ, What Do You Think This is, Your Birthday?" Jesus Christ, what do you think this is, your birthday? A mocking statement, as if Jesus Christ was anybody to be concerned about. And I suppose we are somewhat shocked by that and yet we expect certain things from a Christ-less, secular world.

Much more severe than that was an article I read. It's dated UPI/London. It says this: "Seven prominent British protestant theologians have challenged the divinity of Jesus Christ saying he never claimed to be the Son of God, but was promoted to that status by pagan and other influences on early Christians. The theologians Tuesday launched their jointly-written book entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate,* which they said was an attempt to present a view now held by all theologians. Not all, in spite of what they say. By the way, that's a ploy. That's a journalistic ploy to make unwitting people think that everybody agrees when in fact they don't, and it's just as dishonest as their book is.

They said belief in the incarnation of Christ arose in the early church through a fusion of existing pagan and Jewish traditions of the coming of an angel in disguise. One of the writers says there is actually nothing new about the central themes of this book. The history of Christianity includes various theological developments. The development is continuing that the historical Jesus did not present himself as God incarnate is accepted by all theologians. Christian laymen today are just not fully aware of this. "Jesus, the actual, real man, did not present himself as God incarnate," they told a news conference. One writer said, "I think Jesus probably was the most wonderful human being who ever lived and was open to God. When I try to form a picture in my mind of this Jesus and of his teachings with the help of 100 years of scholarship available to us, I feel that Jesus wasn't a

Christian."

So the secular world mocks Jesus. What do you think this is, your birthday? And the religious world says he isn't even a Christian, let alone the divine incarnate God. Although the world gets a little bit sentimental about babies and mangers and it's very hard not to be somewhat sentimental about the beauty of that scene and the little animals and the lovely cards and the family and the warmth that this time of year tends to bring. The reality is that the world is still very antagonistic to Jesus Christ and there needs to be a reaffirmation of who this Jesus Christ is. And so with that in mind we want to look to the New Testament, and I don't really intend to give you my own thinking. I just want to show you some things in the Word of God. I want the testimony to come from God Himself.

I don't expect to say anything very profound; in fact quite the contrary. I will recite to you very simple realities concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, simple only in terms of their presentation, profound in terms of their implication and reality. But the old story still needs to be reiterated because there's a world out there that doesn't really understand who Christ is. The reason they don't understand is because they are willfully ignorant, they choose their own sin and their own self will over and against God's plan.

Now when you come to the New Testament there is one dominant theme that marks the life of Jesus Christ, that it is the miraculous. He is ever and always the miraculous Jesus. He is marked out as being divine, as being deity, as being God in human flesh, by signs and wonders, by performing that which is humanly, naturally impossible and inexplicable. And so as we look at Jesus Christ we must see God because there is no other way to explain him than that he is God. His life is so obviously divine that no human mind could ever have even conceived of such a person, could ever have even created such a person or would have ever done that, because why would men invent a man who condemns them all to eternal Hell if they don't believe in him? And how would men know how to present perfection who are so imperfect?

No human pen could have ever come up with the words that he said, the life that he lived. And as Philip Schaff, the great historian said, "The life of Jesus Christ is the holy of holies in the history of the world. He must be from God. There is no other explanation." Even the critics and skeptics are struck in awe in regard to Jesus Christ. H.G. Wells, the writer, thought of most of all as a futurist but actually an occultist and maybe even a medium, and one who was involved in satanic enterprises, H.G. Wells, in May of 1935 wrote this in the *Reader's Digest*: "When I was asked which single individual has left the most permanent impression on the world, the manner of the question almost carried the implication that it was Jesus of Nazareth and I agreed."

Schaff, that great historian of Christianity I mentioned a moment ago, says this: "The Jesus of Nazareth without money and arms conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed and Napoleon. Without science and learning he has shed more light on things human and divine than all

philosophers and scholars combined. Without the eloquence of schools he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator and poet. Without writing a single line he has set more pens in motion and furnished themes for more sermons and orations, more discussions, learned volumes, works of art and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."

As you look at the miraculous life of Jesus Christ you see verification that he is God in human flesh no matter what seven British protestant theologians say. Everything about him is miraculous and miracles speak of God. You see, miracles have always been given to authenticate divine revelation. When God spoke in the Old Testament, the written Word, he authenticated with miracles. When He speaks in the New Testament, the living Word again, He authenticates with miracles. And where you have miracles you have the mark of divine intervention, and the fact that the Bible is literally filled with miracles is the testimony that it is the revelation of God Himself.

And we shouldn't be shocked by miracles. If there is a God then He can intervene in this world whenever He wants. And the fact that He does ought to comfort us, not cause us to be skeptical. You might imagine it this way. If you had a large layout of electric trains on a great big board in a room and you have these various tracks and engines and everything was preset, and the train is rounding the tracks and it was controlled by a series of transformers; you just put the switch here and there. You could decide the speed by moving a little dial back and forth. And you can see that God basically has done the same in human history. There is a layout. There is movement this way and that way according to the track. Everything moves along in accordance with the way it's laid out, as God, as it were, moves the divine transformer. But like the man with the little system, every once in awhile he wants to change something so he just reaches down and picks up the engine.

Now if you happen to be a little tiny person riding around in that train you might be somewhat baffled by what had just happened, but from our viewpoint it's very simple to understand. He picks up the engine, moves it over here, attaches different cars to it, works out a different configuration, moves the track and we don't panic at that. If there is somebody bigger than the system he can intervene in the system any time he wants. And God has done the same thing. God has set things in the track. He's set them in motion. They're guided by His divine transformer of holding all things by the word of His power, but every once in awhile He just reaches down and does something that is totally incomprehensible and inexplicable from our viewpoint. And when that happens we know there is a God, just like when it would happen on a little train system. Anybody riding in a car would know there was somebody up there bigger than the system. And so we allow God to intervene.

And when God reveals Himself he must reveal Himself in a way that you know He's God and not a man, and so He has to do things that are supernatural. And when you look at the life of Jesus Christ, if there's any one thing you know for sure, you know that he's God because he does what no man could ever do and he says what no man could ever say. And there is no other explanation than that

Jesus is God. And to say that he didn't claim that is the height of idiocy because that is precisely what he claimed. Look at John chapter 5 and we'll start at that point. And we're just going to look at several passages and refresh our minds in the wonder of the miraculous Jesus.

In John 5 in verse 18, we read this: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him." The Jews wanted to kill Jesus and here it tells you why. Because he not only had broken the Sabbath – here was the worst thing – "but said also that God was his Father making himself equal with God." Jesus was making himself equal with God. They knew it, they understood it, and they resented it. There may be some skeptics and some critics today who don't know what Jesus was saying, but the Jews then sure knew. They knew exactly what he was saying. He was making himself equal with God and in doing that he was either God or he was the ultimate blasphemer. He was either Christ or he was antichrist and there's nothing in between. Verse 23, he went further than just saying he was equal with God. He demanded equal worship.

It says that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. "He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father who has sent him." He demands equal honor, equal adoration, equal homage, equal worship with God the Father. It says you can't separate the two. If you worship the one you must worship the other. If you worship the other you must worship the one. And so he demands to be known as equal with the father, equal in nature, and equal in worship. How so? What evidence do we have that he is equal to God, that he is God in human flesh? Verse 32 of the same chapter, he says "There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." And then he discusses John the Baptist who was also a witness but not the supreme witness.

Then in verse 36 he goes back to that supreme witness that he mentioned in verse – or in verse 36 he goes back to what he mentioned in verse 32, "But I have greater witness than that of John." What is it? "For the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do bear witness of me that the Father has sent me." In other words the miraculous life of Jesus was testimony to his divine nature. I mean if he just did what normal people do there would be no reason for us to assume that he was divine. No reason at all. And so he did what people cannot do. He did the miraculous, the supernatural, the divine so there would be no question about his origin. And his miraculous works tell us exactly who he is.

Look again at the tenth chapter of John's gospel, and this is a particular emphasis in John. That is the deity of Jesus Christ to which he returns time and again. But again we find the Jews in verse 24 confronting Jesus Christ. And they said, "How long dost thou make us to doubt?" How long are you going to be revealing yourself in ways that are not clear to us? "If you be the Christ, tell us plainly." Give us a very plain word so that we'll understand without any question who you are. And he answered in verse 25, and here's the plainest statement he could make: "I told you and you believed not. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness." If you want a clear testimony look at

my life. Look at my life. Look at my works. How else can you explain me but that I am divine?

Nicodemus came to Jesus by night and he said we know you're a teacher come from God because no man can do the miracles you do except God be with him. Nicodemus could understand what they couldn't understand. Tell us plainly. Here it is, as plain as you'll ever get it. Look at the miracles of my life and then you decide. And the miracles in the New Testament are literally limitless. Vast. And they are verified again and again and again by masses of people who are recorded for all of human history. They are verifiable miracles and they are the clear word about who Jesus is.

In John 14:11, "Believe me," he says, "that I am in the Father and the Father in me." And if you can't just believe it because I say it, then believe me for the very works' sake. Believe me for what you see. In Luke 7, John the Baptist sent a messenger to Jesus. He said to the messenger, you ask Jesus if he is the one that we believe he is. Is he the Messiah? And Jesus said to the messenger after he'd asked the question, you go back and you tell John this. Tell him that the lame walk and the blind see and the deaf hear and the dead are raised from the grave. And you tell him those things and he'll know. Tell him of the miracles. Tell him of the miracles. There is no greater testimony to Jesus Christ than the Father's power poured through the Son. And that is the testimony of Jesus himself.

Now let's turn to the Word of God and look at the miraculous Jesus and just look at several elements of the miraculous life of our Lord. First his miraculous birth in Matthew chapter 1, and we're just going to touch these themes. Matthew chapter 1, his miraculous birth, verse 18. "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was in this way. When as his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph" – that was a, really a pre-conjugal engagement period, a betrothal where they had not yet come together in a sexual union. They were betrothed. "Before they came together" – before they entered into a sexual relationship – "She was found with child of the Holy Spirit." Now that's never happened before or since. The Holy Spirit planted the seed in her without a man as an instrument.

Well Joseph, her husband, was a just man, a righteous man. He was not willing to make her a public example. He could have dragged her out in front of the whole community and stoned her in front of everybody for being an adulteress, but he really didn't want to do that. He was a righteous man. He wanted to do what was right, but he didn't want to do what was possibly the most devastating option that he had. So he decided to divorce her. The law provided that in case of adultery that divorce could occur. So verse 20 says he began to think on these things. After all here was this woman he imagined to be so pure and so spotless and a virgin of the very highest rank. He had known her long enough to know the quality of her life and now she appears pregnant and he knows it wasn't him. He assumes that it must be somebody else. He is shattered and shocked and struck down. He doesn't know what to do except to divorce her.

As he ponders this in verse 20 an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and says, "Joseph, thou son of David, don't be afraid to take unto thee Mary thy wife for that which is conceived in her is

of the Holy Spirit." There wasn't any other man. The Holy Spirit did this. "And she shall bring forth a son and thou shall cal his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." Jesus meaning Savior. "Now all of this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord to the prophets saying behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife and knew her not" – that is had no conjugal relationship with her – "till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name Jesus." That is a miraculous birth, a birth without a human father.

You say wasn't that added later on by some pagan myths that found their way into Christianity? No, not at all. You can go back to some documents that have been found as early as 70 A.D. and you will find in a listing of genealogies the name Jesus who is said to be the bastard son of a married woman. So even then they knew that Joseph was not his father but they assumed the worst and they assumed he was an illegitimate son. You can go back to the old legend Panthera, the supposed Roman legionnaire who was to have impregnated Mary and what all that tells you is there was no human explanation in terms of Joseph and Mary to explain that she was pregnant with a child and the world wanted to think the worst and comes up with an adulterous Mary to solve the problem. What it does tell us that in truth there was a virgin birth that couldn't be explained by the facts of human nature.

You see when John 6:38 says that Jesus said, "I have come down from Heaven not to do mine own will but the will of Him that sent me," he was saying something very profound. Jesus did not begin to exist when he was born in Bethlehem. He was sent from God into that human form. He already existed and he came into that human body and when the time was done he went back to the Father from whom he had originally come. But he preexisted and all the Holy Spirit did was plant the seed in Mary to give the physical form which could be occupied by the second member of the Trinity who had always existed from all eternity. That's why in John 1 it says of him, "All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made." He was the very creator of God Himself. He preexisted his own incarnation. That's why it says in verse 10, "He was in the world and the world was made by him and the world knew him not."

That's why it says in John 1:14, "The Word was made flesh." The Word always was, it just became flesh and dwelled among us. And we beheld his glory and we saw that it was the glory as of the only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth. It was deity in human flesh. Jesus carried this to the point where the Jews literally became panicky. In John 8 verse 56 he is talking about Abraham and he says, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day and he saw it and was glad." And the Jews said, "You are not 50 years old and have you seen Abraham?" And he says, "Before Abraham was I am." You know what their reaction was? They grabbed stones to stone him to death and he escaped from them.

In the 16th chapter of John's gospel, in verse 28, "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world again. I leave the world and go to the Father." In other words he preexisted. He came from the Father into the world. He'll leave the world and go back to the Father. In John 17:5 he prayed, "Father, restore me to the glory that I had with thee before the world began" because I finished the work you gave me here to do. Jesus Christ always existed in deity, face-to-face with the Father. In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God and the Word was with God. *Pros ton theon*, face-to-face, an equal relationship in the Trinity and he came into the world in incarnation. That's why in 1 John 4 verses 2 and 3 it says, "If you are true to the gospel and if you are genuinely representative of God, you will confess that Jesus is God come in human flesh." Anything less than that and you are the spirit of antichrist. And so a miraculous birth is the beginning of the miraculous Jesus as far as his earthly existence is concerned.

It says in Hebrews 10:5, "God hath prepared a body for me." So that the man Jesus was God dwelling in human form. God made that embryo apart from Joseph and Mary, placed it in Mary's womb for care prior to birth. When that child was born into that body was placed the very God of eternity. Sure it's a biological impossibility, but that doesn't shock us does it? If there is a God He can intervene in natural progress and do whatever he wants. No, the virgin birth was not invented by somebody. The virgin birth is the only way to explain Jesus Christ. That's what the Bible says. There's no other explanation. There's more to that. What about his sinless life? That's a second element of his miraculous person.

Look at Hebrews chapter 4, and it follows as a corollary to the first. If he was born conceived by the Hoy Spirit, we would expect him to be different than everybody else and that, in fact, is the case. In Hebrews 4:15 it says, "We do not have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities." In other words we're not going to somebody who doesn't understand us. "But he was at all points tempted like as we are yet without sin." He is sinless. No sin in him. None at all. In chapter 7 verse 26 of Hebrews, similarly it says he is a high priest who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens. He doesn't need to offer up sacrifice for his own sin. You see, he's sinless and that is the second element in his miraculous person.

First Peter 2, and here comes the testimony of two people who lived with him for three years. Peter says in 1 Peter 2 verse 21, "For here unto we are called because Christ also suffered for us leaving us an example that you should follow his steps" – listen – "who did know sin." That's Peter. Peter was with him for three years closely attached. Intimately involved with him and he said he never did a sin. Never. John, the beloved, who leaned on his breast, some feel the very closest to the hart of Jesus during his life on earth, 1 John 3:5 John says, "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins and in him is no sin." And that's the testimony of John who knew him so well and of Peter who knew him well. There was no sin in him. Even Judas who would have delighted to have found some reason to justify the betrayal that he did couldn't find it. He couldn't find anything to pacify his own

pain, to sooth his own guilt, to alleviate the tremendous pain of what he had done.

And trying to get rid of the money and wash the blood off his hands he cries, “I have sinned and I have betrayed innocent blood.” Believe me, if he could have found some way out of that guilt trip he would have found it. Paul says, “He who knew no sin became sin for us.” In John 8:46 Jesus said, “Which of you convicteth me of sin? Speak.” Silence. Even at his trial they couldn’t come up with anything. In vain do we look through the biography of Jesus Christ for one single stain or the slightest shadow on his utterly pure moral character? Even Pilate, who would have given anything to have found just one accusation to be legitimate in the conviction of Jesus Christ to alleviate his own guilt, who would have gladly found just one thing wrong, had to say to the crowd, “I find no fault in this man.” Nobody ever did. The Romans couldn’t. The Jews couldn’t. The disciples couldn’t. History couldn’t. Nobody could because there wasn’t any.

And it wasn’t only the absence of sin it was the presence of ultimate utter righteousness and holiness. Jesus never could have written Psalm 51. He never could have written Psalm 32. He never could have written Romans chapter 7. Jesus never confessed his sin. He never needed to confess his sin. There was never any sin to confess. He never needed grace. He never needed mercy. So you begin with a miraculous birth and then you have a miraculously sinless life. How can you explain that? You can’t explain it humanly. It’s inexplicable.

There’s a third factor. His miraculous words. His miraculous words. Luke 4:32 says they were continually amazed at his teaching. John 7:46 the temple police came back after they’d been sent to get Jesus. They came back and they said this. They were dumbfounded. They said never, never did a man speak the way this man speaks. When he gave the sermon on the mount at the end of Matthew 7 it says they were literally shocked because he spoke as one having authority not as the scribes and the Pharisees. When he was 12 years old, in Luke 2:46-47, he went into the temple and the leaders of Israel talking to a 12-year-old kid were absolutely dumbfounded at his questions and his answers the text says. Nobody ever spoke like he spoke. Nobody ever talked like he talked. Nobody ever knew the wisdom that he knew. By common consent of history, Jesus Christ is the greatest teacher who ever lived. Even the people that rejected him cannot deny the incredible power and wisdom of his teaching.

The gospels without question are the greatest literature ever written. They’re read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more languages, represented in more art, set to more music than any other thing ever said or ever written and probably every other thing combined. Their greatness lies in the pure, lucid spirituality in dealing clearly, definitively and authoritatively with the greatest problems that throb in the human heart. You see Jesus went to the real questions. Who is God? Does He love me? Does He care about me? What should I do to please Him? How does He look at me? What about my sin? How can I be forgiven? Where will I go when I die? How am I to live in this world? How am I to treat others? All of those profound questions Jesus answered.

Sholem Asch, who is a Jew writes, “Jesus Christ is the outstanding personality of all time. No other teacher, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist or Mohammedan is still a teacher who’s teaching is such a guidepost for the world we live in. Other teachers may have something basic for an Oriental, an Arab or an Occidental, but every act and word of Jesus has value for all of us. He became the light of the world. Why shouldn’t I, as a Jew, be proud of that?” Miraculous teaching. Nicodemus had it right. He was the number one teacher in Israel. Perhaps he came to Jesus and said we know you are a teacher come from God. There was no other way to explain what he said. The Pharisees and the scribes had spent their whole lives trying to learn the wisdom of the law went away from conversations with Jesus literally paralyzed in a stupor having been dumbfounded by his answers. He taught about God and he knew about God. He taught about angels. He taught about Heaven. He taught about earth. He taught about Hell. He taught about sin. He taught about holiness. He taught about the past and interpreted it. He taught about the present and he taught about the future and predicted it. And nobody ever asked him a question he couldn’t answer and nobody ever posed a problem he couldn’t solve. He astounded people. He confounded people. There was no explanation for his words but that he is God.

Then there’s another element to the miraculous Jesus, his supernatural works. And we saw that a little bit initially as we started this morning, but there’s no way to explain the works that Jesus did except that he is God in human flesh. There’s just no way. “No man,” said Nicodemus, “could do the things, the miracles, that you do except God be with him.” It’s obvious. Over and over again the eyewitnesses who saw him could only conclude one thing, that he does things supernaturally. Sometimes they wanted to ascribe it to Satan but that was impossible because his works were always morally pure and must have been from God. In Matthew 4:24 it says “His fame went throughout all Syria. They brought in the sick people who were taken with diverse diseases and torments and those who were possessed with demons and those who were epileptics and those who had palsy and he healed them all.” He healed them all. As we’ve been learning in the gospel of Matthew he banished disease from Palestine for the years of his ministry. It was an incredible display of divine power from one end of that nation to the other. How are you going to explain that? He healed everybody and he healed them instantly and he healed them totally.

And it wasn’t just for the sake of healing it was for the sake of authenticating his messiahship, authenticating his deity. That’s why he did it. In John 2:23 when he was in Jerusalem with the Passover and the feast day many believed in his name when they saw the miracles which he did and that was the whole point. He didn’t just heal people so they could be well, he healed them so they would believe that he was God in human flesh. He didn’t just raise the dead so they could be alive; he raised the deal so people would see that this was God in action. He never did miracles to satisfy curiosity. In fact, when people came for those reasons he simply said, “I’ll give you no sign.” His miracles showed that he had to come from God. This about how he controlled nature. He turned water into wine in John 2. He stilled the storm in Matthew 8. He was able to control fish in Luke 5 and

John 21. He could multiply food in John 6. He walked on water in Matthew 14. He took money from the mouth of a fish, placed there so he could have enough money for his taxes for he and Peter in Matthew 17. And the fig tree dried up when he cursed it in Matthew 21.

Look at the control he had over disease. Just some samples: he healed a leper in Luke 5, he healed a paralytic in Mark 2, he healed Peter's wife's mother of a fever in Mark 1, he healed the nobleman's son in John 4, he healed a withered hand in Mark 3, deaf and dumb in Mark 7, blindness in John 9, 10 lepers in Luke 17, Malchus' ear restored in Luke 22, cured another disease called dropsy in Luke 14, and those are only samples. Now how do you explain that? No modern-day so-called healer, be he charismatic or psychic or any other kind can stack himself up against the Lord Jesus Christ. He confronted death and overpowered it. Jairus' daughter was dead. He raised her from the dead. The widow's son was dead. He raised him from the dead, Luke 7. Lazarus was dead, John 11, he raised him from the dead. Then when he died he himself was raised. How can you explain that? You say it isn't true. Don't say that. The testimony of the Scripture is that it is true and the Scripture masses together historic evidence and eye witnesses for all of these things that are beyond refute.

Interesting is the testimony of Julian the Apostate. Kind of an interesting title isn't it? Julian the Apostate was a Roman Emperor from about 361 to 363 and he was a hater of Christians and a hater of Christ. This is what he wrote. I think this is really interesting. "Jesus has now been celebrated about 300 years, having done nothing in his lifetime worthy of fame, unless anyone thinks it is a very great work to heal lame and blind people and exorcise demoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany." I like that. Unless you think that's a big deal. He didn't do anything. It's interesting that even a skeptic like Julian the Apostate couldn't deny the fact that he did that. Sure he did. His miraculous works are one of the best-attested truths of all of human history. The New Testament is a complete account, not only by Matthew but by Mark, not only by Mark but by Luke, not only by Luke but by John, and then not only by them but by Peter and Paul. It's all here.

There's another element of his miraculous life and that's his miraculous influence. The only way you can explain the influence of Jesus Christ is that he must have been more than a man. His influence is really reduced to one simple statement marvelously in Acts 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other," on other words he can do something nobody else can do in the whole history of the world, "for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be" – what – "saved." Of all the people who have ever lived in the history of the world or ever will live, only one of them has had the influence he's had and that is to save men from their sin, from Hell, from death, from Satan. He's the only one. Nobody ever like him; utterly unique, the only Savior. Renan - even the French atheist Renan said, "Whatever may be the surprises of the future one thing is sure, Jesus will never be surpassed." Napoleon said, "I know men and I tell you, Jesus Christ is no mere man. Between Him and every other man in the world there is no possible term of comparison." Jesus saved men from their sins and he's still doing it. And when he's done it, it's never been undone.

Do you know that there's no such thing as an ex-Christian? Never one. Nobody ever wants out once they're in. There are people today whose lives are being transformed by the power and influence of Jesus Christ for time and eternity. Nobody who ever lived has that kind of impact. People today are rushing into the arms of Jesus Christ to receive the gift of salvation. Jesus gave certain men such an impact as to be unequalled by far in the entire annals of the human race and after two thousand years his impact is still going on; his influence is still going on. And daily there are people who have tremendous revolutionary experiences which they associate with Jesus Christ. The personality of the person of Christ is without parallel, without comparison, unique and incomparable. He is the supreme master of everything, the master of hungry crowds and angry Pharisees, the master of clever theologians and bitter sinners, the master of stupid disciples and Roman governors. He is the master of his own self. He struggles in the midnight of Olive, fighting sweat and blood and tears and comes forth victorious in complete dedication to God. In the terrible agony of the cross he is master. Everything around him is in fury. Even the elements are in chaos and he is calm, master of his own will, his own tongue, his own heart. He pauses in the midst of all of the chaos of the sin-bearing act on the cross to forgive the penitent thief. He opens the doors of paradise to that thief. He comforts his own mother. He takes care of his beloved disciple John.

And in the midst of the shock of the loss of blood and the terrible thirst that he endured he calmly fulfills the last prophecy, says “I thirst,” knows it’s done and offers his spirit to God. And in doing that he purchased salvation for all who come to him. He influenced the world like no human being who ever lived and he influenced the world more than all who ever lived combined could have influenced it. Think of what he did. He said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life and no man comes to the Father but by me.” He said, “The Son of Man has power on Earth to forgive sins.” He said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father who is in Heaven.” He said, “All things are delivered unto me of my Father and no man knows the Son but the Father. Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.” He said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die, believest thou this.” He said, “Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” He said, “I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.” He said, “The Son of Man is come to give his life a ransom for many.” He said, “Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst.” He said, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” He said, “Heaven and Earth shall pass away but my Word shall never pass away.” He said, “Before Abraham was I am.” He said, “Upon this rock I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.” He said, “I am the door. I am the shepherd. I and the Father are one. I am the Bread of Life," and on and on and on. You see uniquely, in every one of those statements, he claimed to be something no one else in the whole world could ever be, the Savior. His influence is astounding and miraculous.

Finally, the last element of his influence is his miraculous power over death. In Hebrews chapter 2, in verse 14, it says, “Jesus took upon himself human flesh that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death” – that is the Devil – “and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” It says he took on human form in order to conquer death and he did that. He controlled his death. He said, “Nobody takes my life from me” – in John 10 – “I lay it down of myself.” And he did. He died on schedule. He controlled his own burial even though his body was dead. He controlled every facet of his burial. He made sure they didn’t bury him after sundown or it would have eliminated the three day/three nights. He made sure everything was done on schedule. He made sure he came out of the grave on time. Even when his body was in the grave he was down with his spirit proclaiming victory over the fallen demons bound in the pit. Jesus controlled every element of his dying, every element of his burial, every element of his time in the grave and his resurrection as well. He had power over death. He conquered death.

He said, “As Jonah was in the belly of the great fish three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the earth.” He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I’ll” – what – “I’ll raise it up.” He did and the empty tomb is evidence and the appearance to over 500 eyewitnesses is evidence. And the disciples, filled with power, were going out to preach the resurrected Jesus Christ who before had been sniveling cowards crouched in a corner afraid is evidence. The birth of the church is evidence. How are you going to explain this individual? Born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, said things so profound they never could have come from a human mind, did things that couldn’t be done in the natural, conquered death, and influences the world continuously. You can’t explain him on a human level. That’s impossible.

Think of it this way. If God became a man what would happen? What would happen if God became a man? Well first of all, if God became a man we would expect Him to have a miraculous birth wouldn’t we? I mean if God became a man it would be a spectacular entry. Jesus did. If Got became a man we would expect Him to be different than all of us, to be holy. Jesus was. If God became a man, we would anticipate His words to be the most divine, the clearest, the most powerful, the most authoritative, the truest and the purest words ever uttered. And Jesus’ words were. If God became a man, we would expect Him to manifest supernatural power. Jesus did. If God became a man, we would expect Him to have a universal and permanent impact on the world. Jesus did. And if God became a man, we would expect Him to be able to conquer death. Jesus did.

You know something? If God became a man He would be Jesus and He was; and He was. And that’s the whole meaning of Christmas. That’s the whole thing and that’s the whole point of the New Testament. I’m going to bring it to a conclusion by having you look at John 20, two verses, 30 and 31. I believe they sum up the significance of the revelation of Jesus Christ. “And many other signs” – John 20 verse 30 – “many other signs truly did Jesus, in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book.” They’re not written. By the way if you look at chapter 21 verse 25 you’ll find that

the books of the world couldn't contain them all, so we don't have the full record. But verse 31 says, "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," – why – "that in believing you might have life through his name." What kind of life? Spiritual life, eternal life, abundant life, real life. You see it's exactly what Paul says, "God was, in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself." God came into the world as Jesus Christ to redeem us and as we look at his life we are to believe that he is the Son of God, and in believing we have life through His name.

"God was in Christ" – 2 Corinthians 5:19 says, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself." And then he says, "And has committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation. And now then we are ambassadors for Christ." The message is simple. God came into the world in the form of Jesus Christ. If you believe, you have eternal life. If you believe and receive in the Savior, you have eternal life. For those of us who do that and are reconciled to God, He gives to us the ministry of reconciliation and sends us back out as ambassadors to represent Him. So there's a message there for all of us. If you've never given your life to Jesus Christ, that's his message to you. That's his gift to you. If you've given your life to Christ do you know that you also are now called to be a minister of reconciliation, to go out as an ambassador for Jesus Christ and call others into the Kingdom? To tell others to be reconciled to God?

There's no way to explain Jesus Christ other than as God in human flesh. And if you refuse to do that it is because you love your sin and you choose your darkness rather than light. That's what Jesus said. And he said so pensively, "You will not come to me that you might have life." He put the burden on the people. Your response to Jesus Christ is just that, your response. As the Spirit of God prompts your heart may you respond in faith, and if you have may you take your responsibility to go out and preach the message of reconciliation to the world. Let's bow in prayer.

Gracious Father, we again have been reminded of the simple yet profound story of Jesus Christ. This is the truth, the truth verified not only by history, verified also by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, for as the Spirit who convicts us concerning Jesus Christ, concerning the Word of God. And so we ask, Father, that you would send the Spirit to every heart and life which has refused Jesus Christ entrance, which has not believed in the fullness of saving faith, that the Spirit of God might bring that true faith, convicting of sin, turning the heart toward Christ. We pray, Father, to that end for every life. We pray also for those who know you that they would, in gratitude for the reconciliation they have received, carry the word of reconciliation to the world around us."

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