

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

### **Who Is This Jesus?**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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Well, the question is, who is this Jesus Christ? He is, history will record, the most captivating, the most influential person who ever lived, the most studied, the most examined, the most written about, sung about, discussed person ever. And even after two thousand years of interest in Jesus Christ, there is no waning in the curiosity of people about Him. There is, however, confusion and a lot of deception and doubt.

Now confusion or deception or doubt about Jesus might be just a slight inconvenience to human curiosity. It just might leave a little gap in our understanding of important people in history except for one very important matter. Jesus claimed that the whole human race is dead in sin and headed for eternal hell and He is the only Savior, the only Savior. He is the only one who can produce forgiveness, who can bring true peace, joy in this life, eternal blessing in the life to come. He is the only one who can take you to heaven. That takes this individual out of the realm of curiosity and puts Him in the critical category...critical in the sense that it's absolutely essential to deal with His claims. These are astonishing claims that He made and they demand an honest look at Him because He says our eternal souls are at stake. Where you spend forever is at issue here and you will live somewhere forever, either in heaven or hell. He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to God but by Me," that is either the illusion of a madman, the powerful deception of a clever liar, or the truth and no other options exist. And when our influential media and our elite educators search for the true Jesus, as they often do, and it shows up in books and it shows up on television, inevitably they fail to find Him and the Jesus they come up with, the Jesus of Newsweek and the Jesus of Time magazine and the Jesus of all of the popular television media, the Jesus is some Jesus of their own invention or the invention of men or even worse, the invention of demons.

And the reason they can look and never find the real Jesus is they never look in the place where He's revealed. They fail to look at the Bible and take the Bible as absolutely, unequivocally true. But it is. The Bible is true. There are many ways that you can validate its truthfulness. You could look at experience and you could see that when people do what God tells them to do in the Scripture, when they embrace Christ, when they come to Him for forgiveness of sin, when He promises peace and joy and blessing and hope and answered prayer, etc., you can look at the lives of people who have done that and their experience will verify the truthfulness of Scripture. Experience is one way to validate the Bible. Oh it's not the best way, but it is one way and the experiences are legitimate and real.

Or you could look at science and you could look at the Scripture and view it from a scientific viewpoint and you would find that it's absolutely accurate scientifically, even though it was written long before most of the modern scientific discoveries. The Bible teaches clear in the Old Testament that the earth is a sphere, that it's suspended in space, that it rotates on its axis, that long before men had come to the conclusion that the earth was standing in a static state and was a flat disc.

And you find strange things in other secular...in other, I should say, religious books, like the earth is on the back of elephants who produce earthquakes when they move. Or it's on a layer of butter and honey and other things mixed together. The Bible doesn't say foolish things like that. The Bible even talks about the complete circuit of the sun that drags our solar system from one end of heaven to the other. The Bible describes the hydrological cycle, how that water evaporates out of the oceans, carried over the land, comes down in rain, goes into the rivers back to the sea and the cycle goes on and on and on and the water supply is never diminished.

The Bible is an amazing book scientifically and it will stand the test of scientific scrutiny. Its account of creation is the only one that makes real sense. Or you could look at miracles. Here is a book that gives you the record of miracles. And we would expect if God wrote a book it would contain miracles because God is outside His creation, God is the Creator of His creation and therefore God can act upon it in a supernatural way even as He did initially any time He wants. I guess in a sense you could look at the world like somebody who likes little railroad trains. You hook them up, you put them on the track, you turn on the little transformer and you watch them go. But every once in a while you reach down to pick up the engine and put it over here. You can invade the world of your own creation and so can God and that's a miracle. And if the Bible were written by God, you would expect it to be miraculous and yet the curiosity of curiosities is that there are all kinds of people who want to approach the Bible and do everything they can to divest it of its miracles.

So you could look at it scientifically. You could look at it experientially. You could look at it miraculously. And you could look at the Bible prophetically and you would find that the Bible makes predictions that come true to the very letter, hundreds of them. And I'm not talking about things that are going to come in the future, I'm talking about things that have already happened. There are at least a hundred prophecies concerning Jesus that are already fulfilled in His life. There are prophecies that, you know, on men and nations, events, clearly revealed in Scripture.

But I think the greatest proof of the supernatural character of the Bible is Christ Himself. It would be impossible for a person no matter how brilliant and wise, no matter how educated, or even a group of persons, some kind of a committee, to invent Jesus Christ. Impossible. Impossible to put together all of those elements of the Old Testament that picture Him, that predict Him in detail that He would be born of a virgin, that He would be born in Bethlehem, that He would come out of Egypt as His family

had tried to escape and successfully did so from the murderous intent of Herod and when he slaughtered all the babies, all the baby boys. There are so many details no committee could have ever known.

But beyond that, when you see Jesus and He appears in the gospels, and you look at His life, there is no possibility that men could come up with such a person. When he spoke, people said, "We never heard anybody speak like this." What He did nobody ever expected Him to do, no other person had ever done it. There is no human explanation for Jesus, He is not a character of human invention. The best of men's attempts to invent super heroes don't even come close. And the Bible presents Jesus in unambiguous and unmistakable terms and the only way you can go look for Jesus and not find Him is if you don't believe what the Bible says. And if you take it upon yourself not to believe what the Bible says, you have...you have ordained for yourself a pretty significant position in the world, you are a greater authority than Scripture. It always kind of makes me chuckle, and I guess it's part of human nature, but it always makes me chuckle when somebody says, "I don't believe the Bible is true." Really! All these thousands of years, all these millions of people, all these lives, all these prophecies, all these miracles, the glory and the wonder, the staggering reality of Jesus Christ, what He did, who He was, what He said, how He acted, all of that which has been affirmed by millions of people and you're not telling us it's all bogus. By what means did you rise to such a position where you could make yourself the final word on the veracity of Scripture? That's a monumental step to take and the only thing that I could imagine is that you've studied it carefully from front to back, analyzed it thoroughly all the way through and come to this conclusion.

Inevitably if I say that to somebody, they...oh well....so I back off a little...have you ever read it? Well, mumble....mumble. Well, it's a good starting point. If you're going to stand as the authority on the veracity of Scripture, maybe reading it would be a start. And then having read it you could do what those Bereans did in the book of Acts, they searched the Scripture to find out what was true. Or do what Jesus said, He said, "Search the Scriptures, they are they that speak of Me." Look, the Lord's not afraid for you to read the Bible. If you do it with an open heart and an open mind, you're going to find the truth there because it's the purpose of the Bible to reveal the truth.

Now if we want to know about Jesus Christ, we go to the Scripture and particularly to the gospels...Matthew, Mark, Luke and John...four accounts of His life that record for us His birth and life and death and resurrection and ascension into heaven and even anticipate His return. Four different looks at Christ beautifully harmonious and, you know, there's so much material, you know, Matthew's long, and Mark is fairly long, and Luke is very long, and John is fairly long, a lot of material on Christ. And if I'm going to kind of give you a portrait of Christ, where in the world am I going to go? I just want to go to two verses. In John 8, John was one of Jesus' apostles, one of His disciples, and John records this amazing history of Jesus and he tells us why he wrote it. He says, "These have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and believing you may have life

in His name." John says I'm writing this so you can know that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God, and believing have life in His name. Jubilant sang, "I'm a true believer," and he is...and he is. What does that mean? What does he believe? He believes that Jesus is the Christ, God's anointed King and Messiah. He is the Son of God and that by believing you have life in His name. That's why John wrote this. He wrote this as a record about Jesus. If you want to know the truth about Jesus, read the record, it's written so that you may know. God isn't hiding anything. There isn't any secret knowledge. This is about revelation, not hidden knowledge.

But I just want to take you to two verses, John 8. And Jesus was in constant dialogue, of course, with the Jewish leaders because He was a Jew. And He came into the world born into a Jewish family, raised in Israel to very devout Jewish parents. But He was always in conflict with the religious leaders because they believed you could know God through your own works, through your own self effort, your own religious achievement. And they believed that their own self-righteousness achieved for them a right standing with God and Jesus continually attacked that and said to them, "You're not righteous before God, you're sinful before God, you need to acknowledge your sin. You may be religious but you're still sinful. You still need to repent of your sin and embrace Me as your Savior." They didn't want to do that so there was conflict.

The conflict, I think, is at its high point at the end of chapter 8. They're having a little bit of a conversation about Abraham because Abraham is their father. You know, all the Jews came out of the loins of Abraham, the great Abraham. They all go back to him. And, of course, Abraham lived long before Jesus. I mean, Jesus is two thousand years after Abraham. And in verse 58 Jesus says to these Jews, listen to this, "Truly, truly I say to you, before Abraham came into being," that's the Greek verb there, "Before Abraham came into being, I am." That is a staggering statement. I mean, you could not have said anything more disturbing to those Jews than that. "Before Abraham came into existence, I am." He doesn't say, "I was." He says, "I am." That designates a mode of existence that has no beginning and it has no end and it has no transitions. There was a historical event, Abraham came into being. Before that, I am. By saying that Jesus attributed to Himself eternal existence in the absolute divine sense, and the Jews got it. Look at verse 59, "They picked up stones to throw at Him." That was their reaction. Why? They were stoning Him because of what? Blasphemy.

Now there was one thing the Jews understood. God was God and there's no other God. I mean, that's built into the fabric of Judaism. The Lord is one. The Lord is one. There is only one God. And for Jesus to come along and claim to be God by saying that He before Abraham was in existence is stepping over the line into blasphemy. With the "I am" there is no before and with the "I am" there is no after. Psalm 90 verse 2 uses the same language, "Before the mountains were formed, before the earth was created and the world even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God." The Jews understood that God is eternal...no beginning, no ending. Massive incomprehensible idea, but true, and no man can say, "I am," in the sense that he is eternal without causing people to think he is God.

Jesus made a lot of claims, a lot. None was more elevated than this, none was more solid than this. This statement, "I am," harbors within it the most authentic, the most audacious, the most profound claim that Jesus ever made and they only had one choice...He was claiming to be the God who is the Creator, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the eternal God Himself and for that madness, for that insanity, for that blasphemy, stoning was required. By the way, they were in the temple area and it was still under construction so there were plenty of stones handy. You know, there are...there are cults that are confused about whether Jesus claimed to be God. There are people who say, "Well, He never claimed to be God." Oh yes He did. People today might not get it, the Jews got it, it was very clear what He was saying. And there never would have been a cross if they had had their way. They would have crushed Him under the stones right on that spot. But verse 59 says, "He hid Himself and went out of the temple."

He had to do that a few times. Once in His own home town in Nazareth they tried to throw Him off a cliff and He disappeared the same way. They had no doubt what He was claiming. They knew exactly what He was claiming. To say "I am," they were very familiar with that because "I am" is the Old Testament name for God, *Yahweh*. And it goes back to Exodus and the third chapter of Exodus and verse 13, Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel and I'll say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.'" Now Moses has a job of going to Israel representing God. And now they're going to say to me, he says, "What's his name? What God? What's His name? What do I say? And God said to Moses, 'I am who I am.' And He said, 'Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I am has sent Me to you. I am. Yahweh, the eternal one.'"

Now a closer look at this name "I am" reveals not only the obvious idea of being eternal, but there's even more there. There is the idea of being present. Verse 11, "Who am I," Moses says to God, "that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt? You're going to tell me I'm going to go in there and rescue the people of Israel that have been in captivity for 400 years and let the Pharaoh let go of them all and march them out to the promised land? Who am I that I can do that?" In verse 12 God says, "Certainly I will be with you." "I am" not only expresses eternity, but it expresses constant presence...I am. And then down in verse 17 it even adds another element, "So I said I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to the land of the Canaanite." "I am" is the eternal one. "I am" is the ever-present help. "I am" is the deliverer. "I am" is the Savior.

This term, I am, Yahweh, is used 68 hundred times in the Old Testament to identify God. Jesus knew exactly what He was saying when He called Himself "I am" and so did the Jews. It is the name by which God represents Himself as eternal, as permanently present, as acting on behalf of His people to rescue them, to deliver them. In the sixth chapter of Exodus, this name is again enhanced. God spoke to Moses, verse 2, and said, "I am the Lord and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name Lord, *Yahweh*, I am, I did not make Myself known to them."

That's such an interesting statement. He says I am the Lord, I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, as El Shaddai, but not as I am. What does He mean by that? God did reveal Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as the eternal God. He revealed Himself to them as the supernatural sovereign God over nature and history, people and events. He did show Himself as El Shaddai, the Almighty One, and He did use the name "I am" about a hundred times in Genesis. But Abraham, Isaac and Jacob never really knew Him in the fullness of His "I am." They knew He was eternal. They knew He was ever-present. But the one thing they really didn't know which is the ultimate aspect of "I am" is they didn't know Him as a deliverer. It wasn't until He brought Israel out of Egypt after the patriarchal period, verse 6, Exodus 6, "Say to the sons of Israel, 'I am the Lord, I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments, then I will take you for My people and I will be your God and you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'" Verse 8, "You will know that I am the Lord." You'll know Me in the fulness of My "I am" when I have delivered you from Egypt. "I am" is not just the eternal God, "I am" is not just the ever-present help. "I am" is the Savior, Deliverer, Redeemer. That is the nature of His ever-present help. They had early experienced Him as *El Shaddai*. Only out of Egypt did they experience Him as the "I am" who delivers His people.

Now with that in mind, you can go back to John 8. The Jews understood all of that. They understood that "I am" was the eternal God. That "I am" was the ever-present help. That "I am" is the great sovereign supernatural deliverer, that He brought salvation, that He identified a people, that He established a relationship with that people. It is as if to say, "I am eternal, and I am present for the purpose of saving you. I am near in order to save you." Along comes Jesus and says, "All that you know about God as the I am is true of Me. I am the eternal transcendent God. I am the ever-present help who has come to rescue His people from the bondage of sin and to bring them into an eternal relationship with God in which they will enjoy the unimaginable bliss and blessings prepared for them in a place called heaven. To understand this is to understand the I am. He cannot fully be understood apart from His redemptive purpose, to rescue people from sin and death and hell and make them His own and take them to heaven. I am is an awesome name, embracing all of this. And the Jews understood it that this is God the eternal One, this is God the ever-present help, this is God the Redeemer, the Savior. And when Jesus said, "Before Abraham came into existence, I am," He could only be understood one way, only one way. And either He was to be worshiped, or stoned and there was no middle ground. Don't come to Jesus with some patronizing nonsense that He's a good man, a nice man, a wise man, a loving man, a peacemaking man. He never gave you that option. Either fall at His feet, or call Him a blasphemer.

And He didn't stop with this. In the sixth chapter, He unfolded some of the realities of what it meant to be "I am." In John 6 He said, "I am the bread of life. I am the source of spiritual life." In John 8 He said, "I am the light of the world who leads the darkened soul into the divine light of truth and salvation." In the tenth chapter He said, "I am the door of the sheep, I am the way into God's

presence." In the same chapter He said, "I am the Good Shepherd." In the eleventh chapter He said, "I am the resurrection and the life." And then as I noted, in the fourteenth chapter of John He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." Chapter 15 He said, "I am the true vine, the only source of productive life." Over and over He said, "I am...I am...I am...I am." Every time He said it He guaranteed His crucifixion. He wasn't just an irritation to them, He was a blasphemer. You either fall at His feet and acknowledge Him as God, or you see Him as a blasphemer. That's a sad choice that the Jewish people made then, and most people in the world continue to make. If you don't embrace Him as your Lord and Savior, then please acknowledge Him as a blasphemer. There's nothing in the middle.

But the truth of the matter is, He is who He claimed to be. And He proved it. If He was God, He would demonstrate power over the things that only God has power over. Let's think about some of those for a minute. Look at the second chapter of Mark's gospel. Mark, another of the gospel writers, tells a really amazing story in the second chapter. This is history. Let me read you the first four verses.

When Jesus had come back to Capernaum where He, of course, spent a lot of time ministering, a little town at the north tip of the Sea of Galilee, it was heard that He was at home. That was sort of the base of His operations when He was in Galilee. And many were gathered together. Typically, always drew a crowd. And there was no longer room even near the door, the place was jammed. You couldn't even get in. And He was speaking the Word to them. And they came bringing Him a paralytic carried by four men and being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him. And when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying.

Houses were made out of mud, some combination of mud and sticks and things. And they had some kind of a roof on top of that, so they took the roof out and they dug through in order to drop their friend down in front of Jesus. That's pretty good indication of their faith, wouldn't you say? You get the idea they believed Jesus could do something to help this man? You have to dig a pretty big hole in a roof to let a man through. You have to get over the compunctions that restrain you. This isn't your house and you don't even know who these people are or worse yet you do know who they are. You also know you're going to be no small disruption as you dismantle the ceiling above everyone. You have to calculate where Jesus is so you can lower the man in front of Him. This is a strong faith. This is insistent, persistent and this is inventive creative stuff, folks. They knew that He healed people. And he healed people with little faith. He healed people with no faith. But here are some folks who had pretty strong faith. They just lower the man. And they didn't have to say anything, verse 5 says, "Jesus seeing their faith..." Of course, the demonstration of their faith is obvious. Can you imagine, Jesus is teaching and all of a sudden it's like rats running around in the attic up there. And then the dirt starts crumbling and falling. And Jesus does an amazing thing. Seeing their faith, He says to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven."

Whoa! This is stepping over the line again. "Who do You think You are, God?" Well verse 6 says, "The scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, 'What...why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who can forgive sins but God alone?'" I mean, Jesus just kept treading on their theological sensibilities. Nobody said anything about sin. This was a man who was paralyzed but everybody understood the curse in the world, everybody understood that the world is the way it is and sickness is here because of sin. Oh it doesn't mean that everybody is sick because they commit a sin and it's a direct relationship to that, but sin exists because sin exists. It's a fallen world. And I'm sure this man knew well his own sin. And like a lot of people who got into the presence of Jesus, I'm sure he was probably shaking. And Jesus just dismissed his sins, just forgave them.

Well on the basis of what? On the basis of the man's faith. How did He know he had faith? Because He knows everything and He knew he had faith in Him not just as a healer but as a Savior. And He dismissed his sins. "Your sins are forgiven."

The Bible says when Jesus forgives your sin, it's removed as far as the east is from the west. That's infinity. It's buried in the depths of the deepest sea. It's blotted out. It's forgotten by the memory of God. And they had good theology. They said, "Whoa, only God can forgive sins." That's what Jesus did because that's who He was. They knew exactly what He was claiming. And either He is God, or He is a blasphemer.

Again, they had the right theology about God but made the wrong decision about Jesus. When He said He was the I am, they had the right theology about I am, but they made the wrong choice about Jesus. Here they had the right theology about who can forgive sin, but the wrong choice about Jesus. He was sovereign over sin.

Let me take you to another passage, Luke 4. If Jesus is God, He not only has power over sin, He not only is eternally existent, the ever-present help, and sovereign supernatural deliverer of His people, but if indeed He is God, He has power over demons. The Bible tells us that demons exist, and, of course, we know they do. They manifest themselves occasionally in very visible and manifest ways in human life. Most of the time they operate in a clandestine fashion. But the world has been exposed to Satan and his demons and if in fact Jesus is God, and not just a man, He will exercise power over them. Luke 4, He came to Capernaum, verse 31, again He came back to where He was located, as kind of a central point in His Galilean ministry. And was teaching them. And as always, they were amazed at His teaching. Amazed at what He said because no one could speak as God could speak and no one had the knowledge that God has, the wisdom that God has, the ability to express truth. It was always astonishing and with authority.



There was a man in the synagogue possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon. And the demon screams out of the man. Listen to what the demon says, most amazing...now this is fascinating, this is a demon in this man. The demon in verse 34 says, "Ha, what do we have to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us?" Listen to this, "I know who You are, the Holy One of God." Peter Jennings might not know...they knew. The Mormons might not know, the Jehovah's Witnesses might not know, a lot of people might not know...they knew. Your Aunt Alice may not know and your Uncle Fred may not know, but demons know. They knew who was the sovereign over them. And the question the demon...the demon came...he blows his cover. I think up to now this is a synagogue guy, right? He goes to the synagogue, nobody believes...this is not a demon-possessed guy, he's not out in the, you know, caves and the tombs cutting himself like the demoniac you meet in another place in the Bible. This is a guy in a gray flannel suit, this is a synagogue guy. He sits there and demonic activity in his life is clandestine, it's covered up. But when the demon is confronted by Jesus in Jesus' amazing teaching, the demon goes into a panic, blows his cover and screams through the voice of the man. And he says, "Is this the time You're going to destroy us?" Here is a demon who knows that Jesus has ultimate power over them and that they are headed for destruction and he's afraid that that is to happen then. "I know who You are, the Holy One of God." No question on his mind. He knew. This is the Holy One, equal to God, the very Son of God. And Jesus rebuked him saying, "Be quiet, come out of him. The demon threw him down and came out of him without doing any harm."

You know, there are probably people sitting in the synagogue listening to Jesus and He would be reading the Scripture and then speaking with authority, and some of them would be sitting there saying, "Ah, I don't know if I agree with His interpretation. I don't know if I agree with the way He's explaining that." So he just took the opportunity to display His supernatural authority. Now that would reduce anybody's credibility in questioning His interpretation, wouldn't it? The demons knew who He was, the Holy One of God.

By the way, that title, "The Holy One of God," is a title for the "I am" used thirty times by Isaiah to describe the I am, the Holy One who is God, the Holy One who is God. The demons know He is the I am and that powerful...that powerful demon is sent out of that man, a damning captor whose power must be broken if the I am is to save. And, of course, amazement came on everybody in verse 36 and they said, "What is this? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out." Matthew 9:33, Matthew's comment on this incident, "Nothing like this was ever done in Israel." No. The I am, the eternal one, the ever-present help, the Redeemer of His people can accomplish salvation because He can forgive sin and because He can overpower the demonic world. And that includes Satan. He overpowered Satan in His temptation when Satan took Him to the wilderness after fasting for 40 days and tried to lead Him into temptation, He overpowered him every time. Jesus could sense toward the end of His life Satan moving in for the kill. And Jesus said in Luke 22, said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and the elders who had come against Him, He said, "Have come with swords and clubs like you were capturing a robber? While I was with you every day in the temple you didn't lay hands on Me. Why you coming like this?" And then he added this,

"But this hour and the power of darkness are yours." This was Satan's hour. But when Satan came, he had nothing on Jesus, there was no way he could inflict the slightest wound on the sinless one. And so, Jesus said I will go to the cross and render powerless the devil through the cross. If He is to save, He has to be powerful. He has to be the I am who can overcome sin, demons and Satan.

Turn to the eleventh chapter of John. Here is another indication of Jesus great power. His power over death, His power over death. He said, you remember, "Destroy this body and in three days I'll raise it up." And they were just absolutely stunned and thought He must have been talking about the temple and He was going to destroy it. He was talking of the temple of His body. But He said, "If you destroy My life, I'll take it back." This claim also was over the top. He said, "I lay My life down that I may take it again. No man takes My life from Me," He said in John 10, "I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again." And then in John 11, it all summed up in verse 25, "I am the resurrection and the life, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, and every one who lives and believes in Me shall never die." I'll give you eternal life. Oh, you'll pass through physical death into eternal life. Then to prove it, verse 38, He went over to the tomb of Lazarus, verse 39, He said, "Roll the stone away." Lazarus had been dead for days now, four days and his sister was really worried, she said, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench." The old English version said, "He stinketh." Four days, no embalming, the Jews never did any embalming. Jesus said, "Didn't I say to you, if you believe you'll see the glory of God?" They removed the stone, Jesus raised His voice, He said...looking to heaven, "I thank You, Father, that You heard Me. I know You hear Me always because of the people standing around I said it that they may believe that You sent Me." And He having said these things cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out." He who died, came out bound hand and foot with wrappings. His face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Untie him, let him go." He had to tell them that because they were frozen when this wrapped corpse walked out. "Lazarus, come forth." Somebody said, "It's a good thing He said Lazarus, if He had just said come forth, every grave on the planet would have yielded up its possession." That's how much power He had. So He qualified it, only Lazarus, just you. You say that's a stretch. No, John 5 says, "One day He'll raise every person from the dead. Some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation. But He will raise all who have ever lived and died."

He is the I am. He is the source of life. He is life itself. I am the life. If Jesus were God we would expect Him to have power over sin. We would expect Him to have power over demons. We would expect Him to have power over Satan. We would expect Him to have power over death. And He does.

He also exhibited power in His words. And if you study the words of Jesus, as I have for many, many years, studying them intimately, intensely down to the finest points, you just find yourself constantly amazed at what He said. And the record is accurate. And I'm like the people in the Bible who are

continually amazed at His teaching. I'm no different than they are. I can say with the people in John 7:46, "Never did anybody speak like this man." It was Jesus who said, "Believe Me for My words." I mean, what He taught is absolutely staggering. The gospels are the greatest literature ever written, read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more languages than anything, set to more music than any other thing that's been said or written. The words of Jesus are the most pervasive words on the planet and have been since He uttered them. And their greatness lies in their pure lucid reality. He deals clearly, definitively, authoritatively, insightfully with the greatest wisdom, with problems that are riddles to us. His words are always profound and accurate. His sermons, His parables, His commandments are an inexhaustible mine of knowledge and truth. Nicodemus had it right, you know, the Jewish man who said, "He's a teacher from God."

He taught about God. He taught about angels. He taught about men. He taught about earth. He taught about heaven. He taught about hell. He taught about the past, the present, the future. And no one ever posed a question that He couldn't answer, and answer in a confounding and profound and yet eminently practical way. He never faced a problem He couldn't resolve. He astounded everybody. He confounded everybody. No teacher even close.

And you could look at His power exhibited in His miracles. That would be another way to see who He is. He said, "Believe Me, if you don't believe Me for the words, for My works." And the biblical record is really astonishing. He controlled nature with no fanfare, with nothing said He turned H<sub>2</sub>O into wine. He stopped a storm dead in its tracks. He controlled fish in the Sea of Galilee, sent them where He wanted them to go. He multiplied food to feed twenty to twenty-five thousand people and He did it a couple of times. He walked on water. When it came time to pay His temple tax, took a fish out of the sea and took the tax money out of its mouth. He cursed a fig tree and it dried up on the spot. He spoke to disease and it disappeared. He healed a leper. He healed a paralytic. He healed a woman with a fever. He healed a nobleman's son with a critical illness. He healed a withered hand. He gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb. He healed ten lepers at once. He gave an ear back to Malchus when Peter had whacked it off. He healed a woman with severe bleeding. His works are just staggering.

For all intents and purposes, He banished illness from Israel during the time of His ministry. He healed Jairus' daughter. He healed the widow's son, He raised him from the dead. And He raised Lazarus who had been dead for four days. All these miracles had many witnesses and the Jews never denied any of them, never. They never denied any of His miracles, they were undeniable. Let the records stand. There never has been anybody like Him, no one. No one even close, He is the master of everything. He's the master of hungry crowds. He's the master of the sick. He's the master of the sinful. He's the master of demons and Satan. He's the master of nature. He's the master of angry Pharisees. He's the master of clever theologians whom He confounds. He's the master of a Roman governor. He's the master of a puppet king. He's the master of Himself, struggles in the

midnight of His passion in the Mount of Olives, fighting sweat, blood and tears and comes forth triumphant and victorious in dedication to His Father's will. In the terrible agony of the cross He is the master of everything. All around Him there is fury. All around Him there is chaos. He is calm. He has the mastery of His own heart and mind and tongue and will. Even there at the cross He pauses to forgive a penitent thief and opens the doors of paradise for him that day. No one ever lived like Him. And what He said lays claims on every life. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." The Son of Man, He said, has power to forgive sins. Whoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father who is in heaven. He said, "Whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." He said, "I am the light of the world. I am the bread of life. I am the resurrection and the life."

These are the claims that Jesus made. And as I said, they are not ambiguous. Let me sum it up this way. If God became a man, we would expect Him to have a miraculous entrance into this world, wouldn't we? And He did, born of a virgin. If God became a man we would expect Him to be sinless and live a holy life, and He did. Pilate couldn't find a fault in Him. Satan couldn't find a fault in Him because He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. He was without sin. If God became a man we would expect that His words would be the clearest, truest, purest, most authoritative ever spoken, and they were. If God became a man we would expect Him to manifest supernatural power, and He did. If God became a man we would expect Him to have a universal and permanent influence on the world and He does. If God became a man we would expect Him to accomplish His purpose, and He has. So He's God. And the only other alternative, as I've said, is that He is a blasphemer and should be stoned. That's the sad decision that was made and is still being made by many people who continue to put Him to an open shame, as the writer of Hebrews says.

So you can do one of the two. You can stone Him as a blasphemer, or you can embrace Him as God. And they all said to Him, at the end of His life, "Are You the Son of God then?" He said, "Yes, I am." And they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? We heard it ourselves from His own mouth. And they set out to execute Him."

Why? Cause He said He was the Son of God, making Himself equal with God. Because He said He is the I am. Instead of knowing and believing it was true, when they heard it again at His trial, they led Him immediately to Pilate to be executed by the Romans. And every man and every woman stands at that crossroad. Who is Jesus Christ? Blasphemer? Or God? Only two options. Make the wrong one, eternal hell waits. Make the right one, eternal heaven waits. Forgiveness of sin available through His death on the cross. Eternal life available through His resurrection. The choice you make about Jesus Christ is the only choice...the only choice that matters forever. Let's have a word of prayer as we close.

Father, we come to You now thankful for the revelation of Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We thank You for the Scripture, for the Bible. We thank You that it has stood the test of time, that it is the anvil

that has worn out many hammers, that its truth though endlessly assaulted has been untouched. We thank You that it reveals Jesus Christ as the Savior, the I am, the eternal one, the ever-present help who delivers His people from their sins and brings them into the glory of a covenant relationship which results in eternal life in heaven. Lord, I just pray that any person here tonight who has been asking the question might find that their heart now embraces the right answer. Father, we do pray that You will work in hearts tonight and to the glory of Christ some would come to trust in Him.

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