

Make Way for the King John 1:49-51

John chapter 1, and our text for this evening is the last three verses of John chapter 1, verses 49, 50, and 51. Please join me in prayer before we have that reading. Father in heaven, we pray now that you would indeed bless your word to us. Please give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand and to obey. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

We'll start reading at verse 43, to pick up the context, but as I said, we're looking tonight at verse 49, 50, and 51. So just skip back to verse 43: "⁴³The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.'⁴⁴ Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'⁴⁶ Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'⁴⁷ Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, 'Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!' ⁴⁸ Nathanael said to him, 'How do you know me?' Jesus answered him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.'⁴⁹ Nathanael answered him, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!'⁵⁰ Jesus answered him, 'Because I said to you, "I saw you under the fig tree," do you believe? You will see greater things than these.'⁵¹ And he said to him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.'" Amen.

So if you were at all wondering last Sunday evening why I cut off the sermon text in mid-conversation between Jesus and Nathanael, it's because the last three verses of chapter 1, or what we call chapter 1 of the gospel of John, actually finish out John's introduction of Jesus. Just simply look at the titles that are given in those verses. "You are the Son of God!" "You are the King of Israel!" And then look at the reply that Jesus makes: "You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." Four Old Testament references, all of which imply something special about Jesus. They imply and they carry the weight of divinity. They say that Jesus is the fulfillment of the will of God.

This is actually the end of John's introduction. The prologue, or what we call the prologue, verses 1 to 18, tell us all about the Word, and the Word became flesh. And they tell us that the Word was light, and that the light was of the life of men. And they tell us that no one had known God, other than through the Son. But this is actually the end of John's introduction. Everything else we read in the gospel of John is meant to be interpreted from what John has told us in what we call John chapter 1. We're to understand that the person who does the things that Jesus does is doing them because He's the fulfillment of the promises of God, because He's the one who rightfully carries all of the titles that He has been given.

So that's why last week we stopped halfway through a conversation, because I just wanted to spend this week looking particularly at the names and the titles that have been given, and try and get some depth of understanding from that basis, before we move on into what you might call "narrative," just general narrative in a way. Mind you, it's broken up with pieces and chunks of teaching, but from here we go into John's narrative of where Jesus went and what Jesus did.

“Nathanael answered him,” verse 49, “‘‘Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’’” It’s interesting, isn’t it. Some people in Scripture see God working before them. They see God’s miracles and it’s like water off a duck’s back. You know, the pitcher pitches, and they don’t even see the ball coming, and it’s gone straight past them. They’ve got no idea. They see nothing, they understand nothing. Something happened—“Whoop-ee-doo.”

It’s been that way all through Scripture. God led His people out of Egypt into the wilderness. There were miraculous happenings all the way—ten plagues visited upon Pharaoh. And those ten plagues were all about de-godifying Pharaoh. Pharaoh was supposed to be a god, and he was supposed to have authority over all the things that Moses tore down. He was supposedly to have authority and power over the river and the wildlife that lived in the river. And Moses destroyed Pharaoh’s supposed divinity.

And yet, we get out into the wilderness, Moses goes up to the mountain into the presence of God, and what do the people want? A golden calf. They want a god they can see. I mean, they’ve seen the power and the works of God the Almighty, they’ve seen that the true and loving God has redeemed them out of Egypt, and they want an idol. They want a worthless thing, rubbish and nonsense. God works before their very eyes, and they see nothing and appreciate nothing.

But Nathanael gets one answer from Jesus. Jesus says to him, “‘‘When you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’’” Now as I mentioned last week, and I’ll mention it again this week, many speculate as to what that was all about. What, indeed, did Nathanael understand about Jesus saying, “‘‘I saw you under the fig tree’’”? Had he had some special kind of prayer, some special kind of worship, some special time of revelation or enlightenment, had he come to an understanding of the Scriptures? We can only speculate, we don’t know. But Jesus knew. Jesus understood that Nathanael had been under the fig tree, and Jesus spoke to Nathanael of it, and that was all Nathanael needed to hear.

You see, that’s a heart being called by God. That’s someone receiving the effectual call of God. That’s someone whom God is reaching out to with irresistible grace, to use some theological terms. That’s someone who, seeing the power and exercise of God and the work of God’s Spirit before their eyes through the person of Jesus, is converted. He’s converted on the spot—a heart open and ready to receive revelation. “‘‘You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’’”

Well how much doctrine can we imagine that Nathanael knew? How much of what we would call New Testament doctrine, or New Covenant doctrine, can we imagine Nathanael understood? It’s hard to know. Well, he certainly could not recite the Nicene Creed, and I’m sure he couldn’t recite the Chalcedonian Creed. I’m sure he couldn’t give you a reasoned argument about the true nature of Christ. I’m sure of all those things. But he knew some things, and he knew them well, and he spoke truly. “‘‘You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!’’”

And that should immediately have us thinking of things from the Scripture. We’ve already Psalm 2, but let’s turn to Psalm 2. This is God’s reply to those who scheme and plot against the will of God, those who will not submit to God’s will. Starting at verse 5, it says:

“⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ ‘As for me, I have set my King on my holy hill.’

“⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.’

“¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth. ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. ¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.”

That’s what Nathanael’s referring to. Nathanael’s referring to David’s psalm, King David’s psalm that speaks of one who is coming, one who is a king that has been set upon Zion, God’s holy hill, a king who will rule over all other kings. “You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.”

But we need to ask a question. What does he mean when he says that He’s “the King of Israel”? What sort of weight is simply carried by the phrase “the King of Israel”? Because you could possibly imagine in Psalm 2 that the King of Israel is not necessarily a divine person. You have to imagine it, because it’s not there in the text. We’re actually commanded to serve this Son who is the King—“Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son.” That’s worship. We’re commanded to worship.

But let’s go back and look a little deeper in Scripture as to who would be the King of Israel. Turn to First Samuel chapter 8. Where we are in First Samuel in this chapter is the situation where the people of Israel have demanded for themselves a king, like all the nations around them. And the prophet Samuel is very annoyed; he’s actually quite angry about this, because he realizes that what they’re doing, first, is they’re rejecting his leadership as a prophet; and second, they’re trying to imitate the world.

Let’s just read First Samuel 8, verse 7: “And the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.’” Whose kingship had the people rejected? The kingship of God. The kingship of who? Yahweh. “They have not rejected you.” Who said this to Samuel? The Lord.

“Yahweh said to Samuel, ‘Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them.’” Yahweh is the King. He’s the King of Israel, and any who serve as king are clearly and obviously under Him. The Lord Himself is their King.

Turn to Psalm 24, which we read earlier this evening. “¹ The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, ² for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. ³ Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?”

Let's just stop and sort of consider what we're reading: "The earth is the Lord's." The psalmist is proclaiming that God owns all—all of creation. God is the owner, the possessor of all. *He* has founded it. He's the creator. He is the owner and the possessor of all, for He is the creator of all. And then we get some questions. Who can approach this God? Who can live in His presence?

Verse 3: "Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?" Now just stop and think back to Psalm 2. Where was that Son to be established? Where was the King to be established? On the mountain, the holy hill. "Who shall stand in his holy place?"⁴ He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.⁵ He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation.⁶ Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob."

Now let's just stop and think about this. Who can claim that they ever had clean hands and a pure heart? Who can claim that they've never lifted up their soul to that which is false? Who can claim it? What man ever born, what woman ever born—who can claim these things? There's only one person. We know who that person is—it's Jesus. Jesus is the only sinless one, the only man who is without spot or blemish, the only one who has fully satisfied the demands of God's righteous law. Jesus is the only one.

"⁵ He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation." Now there's a little bit of a twist, or a play there, because here's the thing—How could Jesus receive righteousness from God, when Jesus needed to receive no righteousness, being perfectly righteous? So there's reason to think here that the subject of the questions has actually changed. "He will receive blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation." That word righteousness could also be called vindication—"vindication from the God of his salvation." We who share in the righteousness of Christ are counted as holy, we're seen as having clean hands, a purified heart. We are, therefore, coming into the presence of God.

But let's read further on. Verse 7: "Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in."⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!⁹ Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.¹⁰ Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!"

Who's entering into this place? Who's entering into this place in the presence of God? Who's entering, or ascending the hill of the Lord, His holy hill? Who's standing in his holy place? Well it seems it's the Lord Himself. Now how can that be? Well we've talked about this before, haven't we? There is only one God, but more than one person is called God in Scripture. There is Yahweh, God the Father, as we know Him. There is Yahweh, God the Son, as we know Him, more than one person being God. So God comes to God. The picture is that God is entering into the presence of God—two persons being that one God.

"⁷ Lift up your heads, O gates!" Now how could a gate lift up its head? It's poetry. "Be lifted up, O ancient doors." Now it's almost set up to be sung antiphonally—certain people sing one line, and other people sing back to them—question and reply, question and reply. And imagine

someone sings, “Who is the King of glory?” And then the chorus line sings out loud, “The Lord, strong and mighty, the Lord, mighty in battle! “Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.” And then the person who’s singing the questioning line sings back to them, “Who is this King of glory?” And the chorus shouts it out at the top of their lungs, “The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!”

These are the things that are behind Nathanael’s confession. “You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel.” As I said, these things carry divinity. These things carry evidence that Jesus is the eternally begotten Son of God—God the Son.

Let’s keep reading in John chapter 1. Verse 50: “Jesus answered him, ‘Because I said to you, ‘I saw you under the fig tree,’ do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’” He’s saying, “Nathanael, that’s good. You’ve been called. You’ve received my word of seeing you under the fig tree, and you’ve been called into the kingdom. And you’re going to see more.”

It’s almost as though He’s saying to Nathanael, “You’re at the start, my friend. You’re the baby who’s taken the first baby step. Well, by the time you’ve spent some time with me, you’re going to be running. You’re going to see so much, you’re going to have your mind and your heart opened so much to God, you’ll barely believe that you were who you were. You’re going to grow so great in your faith. You’re going to see greater things than me simply knowing that you spent time under a fig tree.”

He’s going to see water made into wine. He’s going to see storms stilled. He’s going to see Jesus walking on water. He’s going to see healings. He’s going to see Jesus die. He’s going to see Jesus resurrected. He’s going to see Jesus ascend on the clouds, to His place in heaven. He’s going to see greater things than these, but all of those greater things he will understand, because he is called; because God has given him a heart to see.

Now, he doesn’t understand because he’s smarter than the average Joe, and he doesn’t understand because he’s memorized more Scripture than the average Joe. It’s good to memorize Scripture, but that’s not why he understands. He understands because God has granted him understanding, because he’s been given life and light. He’s been given the means to interpret the things that happen before him.

Verse 51: “And [Jesus] said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you.’” “Truly, truly,” literally, Jesus has said, “Amen, amen.” Now we think of “amen” as the way you finish a prayer, but it carries the idea of, “May it be, may it be,” or, “It will be, it will be,” or, “I agree, I agree.” When Jesus says, “Amen, amen,” He’s putting a lot of emphasis on the things that He’s about to say. When He says, “Truly, truly,” in my version, or however your version may have translated it, “Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.”

There’s two Old Testament references there. The angels of God ascending and descending—turn to Genesis chapter 28, verse 10. We’re now in the life of Jacob, journeying away from Esau who had set out to kill Jacob, and he was sent by his parents to go away to his mother’s household for safety’s sake, and also in the hope of finding a wife. Genesis 28, verse 10:

“¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. ¹¹ And he came to a certain place and stayed there that night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place to sleep. ¹² And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it! ¹³ And behold, the LORD stood above it and said, ‘I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. The land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring. ¹⁴ Your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south, and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed. ¹⁵ Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land. For I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.’ ¹⁶ Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, ‘Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.’ ¹⁷ And he was afraid and said, ‘How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’”

“The Lord is in this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” Now what has Jesus said of Himself? He has said that “you will see the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.” What has He just said to Nathanael? You know, you read the text, you look back at the references, and you try and understand what the Lord is saying from what He’s referring to. Jesus is saying, “Where I am, that’s the house of God. Where I am, that’s where the Lord is.”

And just as Jacob received the promises by being in the presence of God, by being in the very house of God, and there abiding—just as Jacob had a vision when he saw angels ascending and descending who were serving God in bringing about God’s purposes in the world—well now, Nathanael. Remember Jesus called Nathanael “the Israelite in whom there is no deceit”—and, you know, “the son of Jacob, in whom there is no Jacob”? In other words, He’s saying he’s a faithful Jew. He’s actually a truly believing Jew.

“Now, Nathanael, you are in the presence of God. You are in the same place that Jacob was, because this is me. I’m here. You’re in the same place Jacob was, because you are now in my presence. And you, when you understand, will see the angels ascending and descending.” Now we’re not to ask whether or not Nathanael ever had a literal vision of angels coming and going. He may never have had.

What Jesus is getting at is the understanding that Jesus is the incarnate God of Jacob. He’s the one whom Jacob worshipped at that time. He’s the one in whose presence Jacob received the promises. And Jesus is saying to Nathanael, “You now stand in the line of the blessing of Israel, your father. The covenant promises are coming to you.

Now we can see He was speaking personally to Nathanael, but He was also speaking to all who come into His presence in faith, all who are called—the called who understand the works of Jesus. And it’s only the called, it’s only the awakened, the enlightened, who are going to understand and appreciate the miracles that Jesus does. They’re the only ones who can properly interpret His works.

“The angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man”—and then we come to that phrase, “the Son of Man.” What’s that mean. What’s that all about? Well, if you turn to certain commentators who don’t necessarily believe in Scripture, and don’t necessarily believe in the concept of mankind needing salvation, they’ll tell you that this was Jesus just claiming to be a man. He’s just claiming to be a person. He’s identifying with everyone around Him. They’ll tell you, literally, the words say “a son of Adam,” just as we all are sons of Adam. But no, that’s not what Jesus is saying.

Turn to Daniel chapter 7. There we’re going to look at verses 9 to 14: “⁹ ‘As I looked, thrones were placed, and the Ancient of Days took his seat; his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames; its wheels were burning fire. ¹⁰ A stream of fire issued and came out from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.’

“¹¹ ‘I looked then because of the sound of the great words that the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.’

“¹³ ‘I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴ And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.’”

And so Jesus is calling Himself the Son of Man, spoken of by the prophet Daniel. And look at what we know about the Son of Man. We know that He comes into the presence of the Ancient of Days, and that He is given a dominion which is the very same dominion that Ancient of Days Himself exercises. “The Ancient of Days,” looking back up at verse 9, “took his seat; his clothing was white as snow; his throne was fiery flames.”

But there’s something you need to notice: “As I looked, thrones”—plural, not one throne, but “*thrones* were placed.” Why would there be more than one throne? Because there’s more than one to be seated upon a throne. One comes into the presence of the Ancient of Days, and He comes into the presence of the Ancient of Days, after what? Verse 11: “The beast was killed, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. ¹² As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.”

This one who comes, this Son of Man, is coming as a conquering king. He’s gone to war, He’s won the war, He’s returning to the throne room, to the place where He will be enthroned. What was one of the things Jesus prayed in John chapter 17, which we call “the high priestly prayer”? “Father, restore to me the glory that I had with you before I came to this place. Restore to me the glory that I had with you.”

Jesus is here portrayed in Daniel’s vision as a conquering king who’s marched out into the earth and brought his enemies into subjection. He’s subjected them. He’s brought them to heel. He’s

crushed the head of the serpent, to use the Genesis chapter 3 picture. He's returning to heaven as a conquering king, there to be enthroned at the right hand of the Father. This is Daniel's picture before us. He's given a kingdom, an everlasting dominion, one that will not pass away, one that will not be destroyed.

You see the association back into Psalm 2—the king set upon Zion's hill, who'll rule the nations with a rod of iron and dash them into pieces like potters' vessels; the king whom all people must come to and kiss and worship with trembling. “Kiss the Son, lest he destroy you in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. And this is Daniel's picture of exactly the same thing—the Son returning to reign in the presence of God the Father.

Turn if you will to the gospel of Matthew, chapter 26. Now this is Jesus testifying before Caiaphas the High Priest. We'll start reading at verse 63, “Jesus remained silent.” They'd been questioning Him, and Jesus has given no answer. “⁶³ But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, ‘I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.’ ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, ‘You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.’”

What has Jesus just said to the High Priest? He's just said to him, “I'm the Son of Man,” from Daniel chapter 7. And in Daniel chapter 7, I didn't really point it out, but it tells us that this one like a Son of Man comes riding on clouds. Now if you do a Bible study search using some software or something, and you research out the idea of who comes riding on clouds in the Old Testament, in the prophets and in the Psalms, who comes riding on the clouds? There's only one person who comes riding on the clouds. It's always Yahweh. It's always God. It's always the covenant God. He's the one who comes riding on the clouds.

Jesus has said to the High Priest, “I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Look at the High Priest's reaction, because it's important. He tells us what Jesus was saying, if we read it carefully: “⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, ‘He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy.’”

What did he mean when he said “blasphemy”? You see, Jesus has claimed to be God, which is either true or it's not true. And if it were not true, well then yes, it was blasphemy. Jesus claims to be divine, and if He were not divine, that's blasphemy. We know that it's true, but the High Priest would never accept this, because the High Priest was protecting his own petty little kingdom, his own little arrangement with Rome, his own money-making scheme in the temple. But Jesus spoke the truth. “You will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

Everything about John chapter 1 is telling us about Jesus. Everything about John chapter 1 is building up for us a picture of who this person is. All of the titles that Jesus is given in John chapter 1 are for us to understand and interpret the rest of John's gospel by. Indeed, I believe we should be using them to interpret the rest of everything that John writes, including his epistles and Revelation.

To me, there's always a question you ask when you're reading Revelation, and you read the descriptions of God, and the descriptions of Jesus, and the descriptions of the Angel of the Lord. And the question you always need to be asking, that always occurs to me, is, Well is this a description of Jesus, or is this a description of Yahweh? And the answer is, Yes. It's both. There's a reason why John has set the book of Revelation up like that. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ.

However you want to interpret the book of Revelation, don't forget this: It's about Jesus. More than anything else, the book of Revelation is about Jesus. It's the revelation of Jesus Christ. John says, "Blessed is the one who hears and understands these words." That means, Blessed is the one who can read the book of Revelation and from it, know Jesus better. However you want to interpret it, if it does not bring you to know Jesus better, I can say that therefore, it's being misinterpreted. That's what it's about—it's about the revealing of Jesus Christ.

Let's turn back to the beginning of the gospel of John and look at the titles. Once again, let's refresh all these things in our mind. The very first thing we're told is that Jesus is "the Word." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." The second title He's given is "God." "And the Word was God." Verse 4, He's life. "In him was life." And the other part of verse 4: "Life was light." He's the Word, He's God, He's life, He's the light. Jesus is "The true light, which gives light to everyone." He's the "only begotten Son of the Father."

Down at verse 14: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father"—one of a kind. That word there that's translated in the ESV as "only" is "the one of a kind." I think the New King James says, "only begotten." That's exactly the same word, just being translated with a slightly different nuance. It's the same thing—one of a kind. There's no other like this one. The only one. The eternally begotten one. There is no one else who's like Him. He's called "the Lord."

The preaching of John the Baptist, verse 23: "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said." He's called a Man. He's called the Lamb of God. He's called the Son of God. He's called Rabbi. He's called Teacher. He's called Messiah. He's called Christ. He's called the King of Israel. And He's called the Son of Man. All of these things are given to us in John chapter 1. He's called the prophet sent by Moses, or the prophet whom Moses spoke of.

In all ways, and in all things, we are to look to Christ. This emphasis that John is putting upon the person of Christ is either madness or it's the truth. There's no middle ground here. The idea Jesus was a good man, a nice man, a great teacher, he taught the people things they'd never known—well, look—He was truly a man, He's a great teacher, He taught people things that they'd never known. But that's not enough. That means nothing.

We're being taught here that Jesus is God, the eternal Son of God, and the only means by which we can know God. The only way to know God is to know Christ. The only way to come into the presence of God is to come into the presence of God through the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You can't say that the Bible tells you that Jesus was a good man, because good men don't say things about themselves that aren't true. And Jesus said that He's the Son of Man. And He said that He's the presence of God. And He said that Nathanael was correct in calling Him the Son of God and the true King of Israel. Now either He was telling the truth, or He was telling lies. And if He was telling lies, He was not a good man. Good men don't claim to be God. Good men don't claim to be the presence of God amongst humanity.

The world is filled at this moment with hundreds of men who claim to be the reincarnation of Jesus. If ever you look it up on the Internet, you'll see that there are hundreds of them, and they're all fools, and they're all very ordinary foolish looking men. And the people who follow them are fools. They're not good men. They're not good people. They're evil liars, they're deceivers, and they're pretenders.

Well if Jesus was not God the Son of God, the eternally begotten Son, the Word of God, the Word who is God; if Jesus was not the long-awaited Son of Man, the King of Israel; if Jesus was not all these things, He's not a good man. He's a sinner and a liar. He's as wicked as the Devil himself, because that's the Devil's desire—to set himself up as God. That's what the Devil's trying to do. He's trying to draw the worship that should be given only to God to himself. He's the evil one. You're not given that option.

C.S. Lewis famously reduced it to the three choices: Jesus is either a madman, the Devil, or who He said He was. Because, as Lewis said, only a madman would claim to be God, or only a liar would claim to be God. But no good man would claim to be God; therefore, He must be who He says He was.

It's kind of hilarious. There is no other person in the world whom you could hear say the things that Jesus said, and take them seriously. You just could not accept it if you heard it come from a normal man. When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; when Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life"; when Jesus said, "I am the true vine"; when Jesus said, "Before Abraham was, I am."—Who could you accept that from? If I said it? I hope you'd giggle, and then I hope you'd push me out the door and tell me to go away. I hope you'd laugh your head off. How could some man like me say it? How could someone who sweats like I sweat, how could someone who was born the way I was born, how could someone who's going to die the way I die claim that he is the Son of God? What testimony is there that supports him? What evidence is there that supports this foolish claim?

And you all look at me, and you know me well, and you know, "This guy's far from perfect." I could stand here and say I wish that there was nothing of which you could accuse me, but you all know that I'm not perfect. Remember Jesus asked the question, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" You all know that I can't ask the question. And all of you, the longer you've known me, the deeper the conviction, the longer the list. And which of you could stand and say, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" We've only got to spend five minutes together, and the game's over.

Charles Spurgeon once met a woman who was a believer in what was called at that time "the holiness teaching." And what she believed was that she could reach the stage of perfection, of perfection in this life where she had completely lost all sinfulness and all desire to sin; she

claimed she was utterly sanctified, no longer sinned, no longer had any desire to sin. Now if you don't know it, C.H. Spurgeon, by the time he got to the age of 45, was probably fatter than me. He was a big heavy guy. And he says, "So I stepped on her toe, and I found out that she was not without sin." It was that simple. He stepped on her foot and he found out that this one who claims to be sinless perfection walking upon the earth was not quite so sinless. She had a mouth and she had a tongue, and all the words that came from that mouth and all the words that were voiced by that tongue were not actually holy and graceful.

Who would you believe if they made the claims that Jesus made? Now there are obviously people in the world who are prepared to believe anything. They're in darkness. All of these people that I looked up on the Internet who claimed to be the Messiah, they had followers. In some cases, they had thousands of followers. But those thousands of followers were deceived and deceiving, and they were following a devil. They didn't want the true light. They didn't want true holiness. They had no desire for true redemption. Whatever they were looking for, I can tell you for a fact, they weren't looking for the living God. They were looking for a god of their own invention. They were looking for a golden calf. And these deceivers, these liars come along, and they claim that they're the reincarnation of Jesus Christ, and fools follow them. It happens. These things happen.

But the people who are given the light and the power of the Holy Spirit, the people to whom life is granted, they come to Jesus, they interpret His deeds and His actions correctly. They see the works of God and are humbled.

The great supposed "miracle ministries" that have supposedly happened, even if they were true, they've never set the world on fire. Why? Well just because a miracle happened doesn't mean that the person who sees it interprets it correctly. It takes more than just a miracle, it takes more than a healing or an exorcism, it takes more than a resurrection to bring somebody into the kingdom of God. A person must have light from God, they must have life from the Holy Spirit, for that which they have seen to be able to actually testify truth to them. If a miracle happened here before our very eyes, in the presence of a hardened atheist, you know they wouldn't believe it. Whatever happens, they won't believe. They're suppressing the truth. They're refusing to accept the truth. If they saw a resurrection, they would not believe it.

What was the parable or tale that Jesus told about the rich man who went to hell? He called to Abraham, the head of the Old Testament Jewish nation, "I need to go back and warn my brothers." "No, you can't go back and warn your brothers." "Well can you send them someone to warn them?" "No, they won't listen even if I did send them someone to warn them." And in the end, he was told that even if someone were to be raised from the dead, they would not listen, they would not take warning. A miracle means nothing to a person, apart from the Holy Spirit. It means nothing to them. They don't see it. They don't understand it. They can't interpret it.

The words of Jesus mean nothing to anyone, apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Son of God, Jesus the great I AM, Jesus the one who has come to save—I ask again, Why did God send forth this one? Why did God send His Son? We know from John chapter 3 that "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son." But why? Because there was no one else who could do the works God required. God required a perfect satisfying life, and only this

one, only the Lord Jesus Christ, only the eternally begotten Son incarnate can do the things that God requires.

As I've said, everything else we're going to read in the gospel of John is to be interpreted from the foundation of John chapter 1: The water into wine; the healing of blind men; the teaching for Nicodemus. All of these things are to be interpreted in the light of God revealing Himself through the one whom He sent, His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. We are here this evening because we have been called to worship at the feet of Jesus. We can't understand or interpret anything unless we ourselves are disciples living in His presence; unless we ourselves are following Him; unless we ourselves are understanding the words of Scripture.

My friends, great things are revealed in the gospel of John. Great things. It's one of the most wonderful and glorious parts of Scripture, the whole gospel of John—revealing to us God's love for us; revealing to us the goodness and the glory and the holiness of Jesus Christ; revealing to us all that God has done for us in and through the person of Jesus Christ. And what was John's desire? What was John's purpose? What was his reason for doing this? "That you may see and believe that Jesus is the Christ."

We're to end up where Thomas ended up. Remember the story of doubting Thomas? "My Lord and my God." My Lord and my God. If we have received from God that which was intended through the writings of the Apostle John by the time we've gotten through the end of this gospel, we'll be in that same place—worshipping Jesus, and saying, "My Lord and my God." We'll close in prayer.

Father in heaven, thank you for your word, thank you for the Scriptures, thank you for sending forth the Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Father, we pray that you would help us to worship you in Spirit and in truth, and to love you as we should. In Jesus' name. Amen.