

JESUS IS MY SALVATION MESSAGE SERIES

JOHN PART-37

“JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD”

This morning our Jesus Christ we are studying in the Gospel by John is the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

The greatest struggle of the early church occurred in the 4th Century when most of the church was under the false teaching of one of the ablest speakers and thinkers of the day – Arius. For a few years it seemed that his false doctrine would pollute the entire church. It was called Arianism and held that Jesus was merely a created being and not God. In our times the JW's hold Arianism as their doctrine. Out of that dark hour when 93% of all the bishops (pastors of major churches) agreed with Arianism's false doctrine, one man stood up all alone. His name Athanasius. His statement "Athanasius contra mundum" or Athanasius against the whole world! He led the church council at Nicea (modern Istanbul) in a Bible Study in the year 325 AD that ended with them turning away from the Arian false teaching and affirming the Nicene Creed.

The Nicene Creed (#717 in Hymn Book)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God; begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Who, for us men for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sits on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

Listen to the events. According to the great historian, Gibbon (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*), the early church was struggling against the heresy taught by Arius; Arius denied the deity of Jesus Christ. The Arian party became very strong, and at times even had the ear of the emperor, Constantine. The emperor called the Council of Nicea, hoping to settle this division of the Church.

When Arianism dominated the church, Trinitarians were persecuted by the state, and the Nicene Creed officially repudiated. Athanasius stood firm against this heresy, literally against the world (*contra mundum*), vigorously contending for the faith, though he suffered slander and endured five exiles. Above all Athanasius was a biblical, not a speculative thinker.

When the Council began, those who held to the Biblical doctrine of Christ found an unlikely champion in Athanasius, the young servant of the Bishop of Alexandria. Strong in the Scriptures, this scholar held tenaciously to the Truth, and confounded the stratagems of the Arians. At times, the whole Council seemed about to concede on this important doctrine, and at one point an Arian spokesman called derisively, "Athanasius, don't you know that the whole world is against you?" Athanasius calmly replied, "If the whole world is against Athanasius, then it's Athanasius against the World!" His meaning, of course, was that it didn't matter what people thought, the truth was still the truth. The Council eventually affirmed the Biblical doctrine of Christ's personality, that He was both Man and God in one Person. That affirmation is known today as the Nicene Creed. Athanasius eventually succeeded his bishop, Alexander, to himself become the Bishop of Alexandria. The politically powerful Arians managed to regain the favor of the emperor, and persuaded him to appoint an Arian as the bishop instead of Athanasius.

While almost the whole world went chasing after the Arian heresy, Athanasius stood like a rock for the truth of Scripture and Nicene orthodoxy. For his troubles he was banished no less than five times. Of the 46 years of his ministry as bishop of Alexandria, he spent 20 years in exile. In 346 he was recalled from his 2nd exile, but again his labors in his congregation were interrupted. After ten years, a new emperor attempted to accommodate the Arians, and the enemies of Athanasius saw another opportunity to get rid of their opponent. In 356, while Athanasius was conducting a service with his congregation, 5,000 armed soldiers stormed the church building. Calmly, he began reading Psalm 136 and asked his congregation to respond. It was a moving moment. When he read: "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good," his congregation responded: "For his mercy endureth forever." This time he went into the desert to spend time with the monks who had retired from the church to find God in their own peculiar ways. The time in the desert was spent in writing, and the content of his writings was the defense of the great truth that Christ is fully God and that the Arians were idolaters who worshiped strange gods, no different from the heathen.

Again he was recalled to his flock (362), but was almost immediately driven away by those who were stung by his attacks against them. As he left his weeping congregation, he comforted them with the words: "Be of good cheer; it is only a cloud, which will soon pass on." He escaped hired assassins on an imperial ship on the Nile and found refuge once again in the desert.

Once more he was able to return. Once more he was driven from his flock, this last time to find refuge for four months in the tomb of his father. By this time he was an aged man and longed to spend the last years of his life with his beloved sheep. The Lord granted this prayer, and he was able to return and spend the few remaining years of his pilgrimage with those whom he had so long and faithfully served.

JOHN EXPLAINS JESUS BY THE SEVEN TITLES IN CHAPTER ONE

In a gospel written to the whole world, John presents us with the Divine Jesus. He is the Son of God - his Divinity -- the Divine nature of God is very clearly seen. We have already seen John's incredible introduction of Jesus as the Word, the Dwelling Presence and the Glory of God. John reveals Jesus as God's unique ("only begotten," KJV) Son, and refers to God as His Father more than any other book of the Bible. The Old Testament refers to God as Father only 12 times, John 120 times! But

there is one major theme that runs throughout John's Gospel: Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and if you commit yourself to Him, He will give you eternal life (John 20:31). In this first chapter, John recorded¹ seven names and titles of Jesus that identify Him as eternal God.

1. **Jesus is The Word (John 1:1–3, 14):** Much as our words reveal to others our hearts and minds, so Jesus Christ is God's "Word" to reveal His heart and mind to us.
 - JESUS IS THE ETERNAL WORD (**vv. 1–2**). He existed in the beginning, not because He had a beginning as a creature, but because He is eternal. He *is* God and He was *with* God. "Before Abraham was, I am" (John 8:58).
 - JESUS IS THE INCARNATE WORD (**v. 14**). He was not a phantom or a spirit when He ministered on earth, nor was His body a mere illusion.
 - JESUS IS THE REVEALING WORD: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). "The Word of God" is one² of the familiar names of our Lord in Scripture (John 1:1–14). Just as we reveal our minds and hearts to others by our words, so the Father reveals Himself to us through His Son, the incarnate Word (Rev. 14:7–11).
 - JESUS IS THE COMPLETING WORD: A word is composed of letters, and Jesus Christ is "Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1:11), the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. A word is made up of letters, and Jesus Christ is "Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 21:6; 22:13). He is the "divine alphabet" of God's revelation to us.
 - JESUS IS THE FINAL WORD: According to Hebrews 1:1–3, Jesus Christ is God's *last* Word to mankind, for He is the climax of divine revelation. John affirmed Jesus as the "Word" which existed with and as God from eternity. Jesus is the One through whom God expressed Himself. As the Word, Jesus is the creative power that brought the universe into existence, and the prophetic power that reveals and controls the future. Through faith we can have fellowship with the eternal Word of God. See John 1:1–14; 1 John 1:1–2.3

John takes up this figure and proceeds to tell us seven things about the divine Word.

- "*In the beginning was the Word*" (1:1). Christ is the ETERNAL Word. The Word's *eternity*. He had no beginning of his own; when other things began, he—*was*.
- "*And the Word was with God*" (1:1). Christ is the PERSONAL Word. Here is the Word's *personality*. The power that fulfills God's purposes is the power of a distinct personal being, one who stands in an eternal relation to God of active fellowship (this is what the phrase means).
- "*And the Word was God*" (1:1). Christ is the DIVINE Word. Here is the Word's *deity*. Though personally distinct from the Father, he is not a creature; he is divine in himself, as the Father is. The mystery with which this verse confronts us is thus the mystery of personal distinctions within the unity of the Godhead.
- "*Through him all things were made*" (1:3). Christ is the UNIVERSE CREATING Word. Here is the Word *creating*. He was the Father's agent in every act of making that the Father has ever performed. All that was made was made through him. (Here, incidentally, is further proof that he, the Maker, does not belong to the class of things made, any more than the Father does.)
- "*In him was life*" (1:4). Christ is the LIFE GIVING WORD. Here is the Word *animating*. There is no physical life in the realm of created things except in and through him. Here is the Bible answer to the problem of the origin and continuance of life, in all its forms: life is given and maintained by the Word. Created things do not have life in themselves, but life in the Word, the second person of the Godhead.

¹ Drawn from comments written by Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

² Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

³ Richards, Lawrence O., *The Teacher's Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1987.

- “And that life was *the light of men*” (1:4). Christ is the LIGHT GIVING Word. Here is the Word *revealing*. In giving life, he gives light too; that is to say, all people receive intimations of God from the very fact of being alive in God’s world, and this, no less than the fact that they are alive, is due to the work of the Word.
 - “The Word *became flesh*” (1:14). Christ is the INCARNATING Word. Here is the Word *incarnate*. The baby in the manger at Bethlehem was none other than the eternal Word of God.⁴
2. **Jesus is The Light (John 1:4–13):** *Life* is a key theme in John’s Gospel; it is used thirty-six times. What are the essentials for human life? There are at least four:
- light (if the sun went out, everything would die), air, water, and food.
 - Jesus is all of these!
 - (i) He is the **Light of life and the Light of the world** (John 8:12). He is the “**Sun of righteousness**” (Mal. 4:2).
 - (ii) By His Holy Spirit, He gives us the “**breath of life**” (John 3:8; 20:22), as well as
 - (iii) the **Water of life** (John 4:10, 13–14; 7:37–39).
 - (iv) Finally, Jesus is the **Living Bread of Life** that came down from heaven (John 6:35ff). He not only has life and gives life, but He *is* life (John 14:6).

John is inspired to use the word “*light*” in the Gospel no fewer⁵ than twenty-one times. He records that Jesus is the *light* of men; the function of John the Baptist was to point men to that *light* which was in Christ. Twice Jesus calls himself the *light* of the world (8:12; 9:5). This *light* can be in men (11:10), so that they can become children of the *light* (12:36), “I have come,” said Jesus, “as light into the world” (12:46). Let us see if we can understand something of this idea of the *light* which Jesus brings into the world. Three things stand out.

- (1) **CHRIST IS OUR LIGHT THAT BRINGS PEACE.** The *light* Jesus brings is the *light* which puts chaos to flight. In the creation story God moved upon the dark, formless world and said: “Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). The new-created light of God routed the empty chaos into which it came. So Jesus is *the light which shines in the darkness* (1:5). He is the one person who can save life from becoming a chaos. Left to ourselves we are at the mercy of our passions and our fears. When Jesus dawns upon life, light comes. One of the oldest fears in the world is the fear of the dark. With Jesus the night is light about us as the day.
- (2) **CHRIST IS OUR LIGHT THAT REVEALS.** The *light* which Jesus brings is a revealing *light*. It is the condemnation of men that they loved the darkness rather than the *light*; and they did so because their deeds were evil; and they hated the *light* lest their deeds should be exposed (3:19, 20). The *light* which Jesus brings is something which shows things as they are. It strips away the disguises and the concealments; it shows things in all their nakedness; it shows them in their true character and their true values. We never see ourselves until we see ourselves through the eyes of Jesus. We never see what our lives are like until we see them in the light of Jesus. Jesus often drives us to God by revealing us to ourselves.
- (3) **CHRIST IS OUR LIGHT THAT GUIDES.** The *light* which Jesus brings is a guiding *light*. If a man does not possess that *light* he walks in darkness and does not know where he is going (12:36). When a man receives that *light* and believes in it, he walks no more in darkness (12:46). One of the features of the gospel stories which no one can miss is the

4 J. I. Packer, *Knowing God—20th Anniversary Edition*, (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press) 1993.

⁵ Barclay, William, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of John - Volume 1 Chapters 1-7 (Revised Edition)*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press) 2000, c1975.

number of people who came running to Jesus asking: "What am I to do?" When Jesus comes into life the time of guessing and of groping is ended, the time of doubt and uncertainty and vacillation is gone. The path that was dark becomes light; the decision that was wrapped in a night of uncertainty is illumined. Without Jesus we are like men groping on an unknown road in a black-out. With him the way is clear.

- (4) **CHRIST'S LIGHT OVERCOMES THE DARKNESS.** JOHN 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not put it out. HERE we meet another of John's key-words—*darkness* (*skotos, skotia*). This word occurs seven times in the gospel. To John there was a *darkness* in the world that was as real as the *light*. The *darkness* is hostile to the *light*. The light shines in the *darkness*, but, however hard the *darkness* tries, it cannot extinguish it. Sinning man loves the *darkness* and hates the light, because the light shows up too many things. So John is saying: "Into this world there comes Jesus, the light of the world; there is a darkness which would seek to eliminate him, to banish him from life, to extinguish him. But there is a power in Jesus that is undefeatable. The darkness can hate him, but it can never get rid of him." As has been truly said: "Not all the darkness in the world can extinguish the littlest flame." The unconquerable light will in the end defeat the hostile dark. John is saying: "Choose your side in the eternal conflict and choose aright."
- (5) **CHRIST'S LIGHT REVEALS THOSE WHO HATE HIS TRUTH.** The *darkness* stands for the natural sphere of all those who hate the good. It is men whose deeds are evil who fear the light (3:19, 20). The man who has something to hide loves the dark; but it is impossible to hide anything from God. His searchlight sweeps the shadows and illuminates the skulking evils of the world. There are certain passages where the *darkness* seems to stand for *ignorance*, especially for that wilful ignorance which refuses the light of Jesus Christ. Jesus says: "I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness" (8:12). He says to his disciples that the light will be with them only for so short a time; let them walk in it; if they do not, the darkness comes and a man who walks in darkness does not know where he is going (12:35). He says that he came with his light that men should not abide in darkness (12:46). Without Jesus Christ a man cannot find or see the way. He is like a blindfolded man or even a blind man. Without Jesus Christ life goes lost. It was Goethe who cried out for: "Light, more light!" It was one of the old Scots leaders who said to his friends towards the end: "Light the candle that I may see to die." Jesus is the light which shows a man the road, and which lights the road at every step of the way.
- (6) **CHRIST'S LIGHT IS REJECTED BY THOSE WHO ARE APART FROM HIM.** John uses this word darkness symbolically. He uses it at times to mean more than merely the dark of an earthly night. He tells of Jesus walking on the water. He tells how the disciples had embarked on their boat and were crossing the lake without Jesus; and then he says, "And it was now dark, and Jesus had not yet come to them" (6:17). Without the presence of Jesus there was nothing but the threatening dark. He tells the story of the Last Supper. He tells how Judas received the sop and then went out to do his terrible work and arrange for the betrayal of Jesus; and he says with a kind of terrible symbolism: "So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night" (13:30). Judas was going out into the night of a life which had betrayed Christ. To John the Christless life was life in the dark. The darkness stands for life without Christ, and especially for that which has turned its back on Christ.

3. **Jesus is the Son of God (John 1:15–28, 49):** At least nine times in John's Gospel, Jesus is called "the Son of God" (John 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7; 20:31). You will recall that John had as his purpose in writing to convince us that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:31). Here in verse 15 we meet John the Baptist, who is one of the most important persons in the New Testament. He is mentioned at least eighty-nine times. John had the special

privilege of introducing Jesus to the nation of Israel. He also had the difficult task of preparing the nation to receive their Messiah. He called them to repent of their sins and to prove that repentance by being baptized and then living changed lives. John summarized what John the Baptist had to say about Jesus Christ (John 1:15–18).

- JESUS CHRIST IS ETERNAL (John 1:15). John the Baptist was actually born six months before Jesus (Luke 1:36); so in this statement he is referring to our Lord's preexistence, not His birth date. Jesus existed before John the Baptist was ever conceived.
- JESUS CHRIST IS THE FULLNESS OF GRACE AND TRUTH (John 1:16–17).
- JESUS CHRIST REVEALS GOD TO US (John 1:18). The word *Son* is used for the first time in John's Gospel as a title for Jesus Christ (John 1:18). The phrase "only-begotten" means "unique, the only one of its kind." It does not suggest that there was a time when the Son was not, and then the Father brought Him into being. Jesus Christ is eternal God; He has always existed.
- JESUS CHRIST IS GOD
 1. John the Baptist is one of seven persons named in the Gospel of John who gave witness that Jesus is God. The others are
 2. Nathanael (John 1:49),
 3. Peter (John 6:69),
 4. the blind man who was healed (John 9:35–38),
 5. Martha (John 11:27),
 6. Thomas (John 20:28), and
 7. Our Lord Himself (John 5:25; 10:36). These were seven clear witnesses.

When Jesus claimed to be the Son of God He was claiming equality with God. Jesus clearly claimed to be the Son of God (John 10:36), and as such He has the prerogatives of deity:

- He is equal with the Father (John 5:18);
- He has life within Himself (John 5:26);
- He has the power to raise the dead (John 5:25);
- He gives life (John 5:21);
- He sets men free from slavery to sin (John 8:36);
- He receives honor equal with the Father (John 5:23);
- He is the object of faith (John 6:40);
- He is the object of prayer (John 14:13,14);
- He has the power to answer prayer (John 14:13).
- Jesus indicated that His relationship to the Father was entirely unique. He always referred to God as "My Father," never "our Father" (cf. John 20:17).