

Matthew 16:14–15

WHO IS **JESUS?**

Who Is Jesus?



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P R O D U C T I O N S

Who Is Jesus?

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Contributors: Pastor Jun Divierte, Pastor Archie Lim, Pastor Elijah Minguez,
Pastor James Pedida, Pastor Andrei Tupas

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Email: productions@everynation.org.ph

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INTRODUCTION

Who is Jesus?

The answer to this question seems to be as many as there are individuals. Jesus Himself asked His disciples who they think He is. In Matthew 16, Jesus and His disciples were talking about who people think the Son of God is, and as expected, they gave different answers: *“Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”* Then, Jesus directed the question to the disciples themselves. *He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”* (Matthew 16:14–15).

If you were asked that question, what would your answer be?

From the handful of disciples Jesus had when He started His ministry, there are now billions of people around the world who believe in Him. Many individuals believe in Jesus due to personal experiences and encounters that have shaped their faith. These experiences may include answered prayers, peace and comfort in difficult times, or encounters with the divine, which have given them a profound sense of connection and assurance. But beyond these experiences, do people really know who He is?

Understanding the identity and significance of Jesus Christ holds immense importance not just for individuals, but for society at large. History tells us that Jesus’ teachings inspire personal transformation and guide individuals in the way they live. Those who really know Him understand that His message of love, compassion, and forgiveness fosters a culture of empathy and kindness, promoting a more harmonious and just society. But more than these, knowing Jesus offers the hope of eternal salvation.

When Jesus asked the disciples who they think He is, Peter replied, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Jesus is the Divine Savior-King that God promised to send to the world; He is the answer to man’s greatest need. His significance in our lives should compel us to want to know Him more and to proclaim who

He is to the world. Everyone from every tribe and every nation needs to know who Jesus is.

This material aims to help us see Jesus through the eyes of five individuals who walked closely with Him—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. May this be more than enough to start us off in the life-long journey of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) and in teaching others to follow Him.

Other materials available for Victory groups, which can provide a foundational understanding on who Jesus is and what He is doing in and through us, include:

- *Kingdom & Discipleship*
- *God & Government*
- *Who Is God?*

1 Jesus: Everlasting King

WARM-UP

- Tell us about your favorite story or book. Why do you love it so much?
- When you meet someone for the first time, how do you usually get to know them? What do you ask them about?
- What would you want to be your legacy? Why?

WORD ¹⁸*And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

We begin our journey of knowing Jesus deeper with a former corrupt publican’s account of Him. If this surprises you, we can be sure it would have surprised Matthew, too. Matthew was a Jewish tax collector. In their time, tax collection always involved corruption. He surely wouldn’t have imagined that one day, he would be writing one of the books in God’s holy word—in fact, one of the more detailed accounts of Jesus’ life and ministry.

As Matthew was perhaps carefully counting and discreetly recording stolen shekels in his tax booth, Jesus came and called out to him, seemingly out of nowhere, *“Follow me!”* When Matthew heard this, everything suddenly changed (Matthew 9:9). He left the wooden booth, the parchment records, the leather bags, and all that they contained. He left his corruption. What did Matthew see in Jesus that would make him leave his lucrative position that easily? Considering how Matthew began and ended his account of Jesus, it is easy to see that alongside other equally important truths, he saw this: Jesus is King. Utterly convinced, he did not

think twice: *“And leaving everything, he rose and followed him”* (Luke 5:28). For who else is most worthy to be followed but the King of everything? In what seems like God’s redemption of his eye for detail, Matthew begins his Gospel with a highly detailed genealogy, essentially a declaration of Jesus’ right to the throne (Matthew 1). He then beautifully ends the account with an equally detailed narration of Jesus finally taking His rightful place on the throne (Matthew 21–28). Here are three important things Matthew shares with us about Jesus’ kingship.

1 | Jesus is King over everyone and everything.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” **MATTHEW 28:18**

When we meet new people, getting to know their surnames and middle names gives us a glimpse into their family tree. To introduce who Jesus is, Matthew does something similar. He begins with an overview: *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham* (Matthew 1:1). After saying that Jesus came from both the family of King David and Abraham, Matthew fills in the details in-between, tracing the royal bloodline, one ancestor after another. This serves as a pronouncement of Jesus as the King which the people of God had long been waiting for. He is the King from the line of David who will reign forever (2 Samuel 7:12–13) and the offspring from the line of Abraham whose greatness will bless the nations (Genesis 12:1–3; 17:4–7).

Jesus has always been sovereign over everyone and everything, even prior to His coming on earth. However, by becoming Abraham and David’s descendant, and living the life we should have lived, dying the death we should have died, and rising back to life, Jesus was exalted as King, not just over Israel or over the nations, but even over heaven and earth. By His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus triumphed over the “kings” of this broken world ever since the Fall at Eden: Satan, sin, and death. With this truth

in mind, Matthew ends his account with a declaration of kingship by Jesus Himself after His resurrection: *“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”* (Matthew 28:18). How does this truth encourage you in the midst of everything you are facing?

2 | Jesus as King commands us to go and lead others to Him.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit . . .” **MATTHEW 28:19**

As King over heaven and earth, Jesus is also King over our hearts and lives. It is only fitting that we obey what He commands. Right after the announcement of His Kingship over all, Jesus commanded that we let everyone know about Him and invite them into His eternal kingdom. This is the very kingdom of the one true God, the God who eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Those who embrace Jesus as Lord and Savior and long to be part of His eternal kingdom can publicly announce their faith in God and allegiance to Him through the waters of baptism, which is done *in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*. Recall how you were invited to know Jesus and submit to His Lordship. What about the gospel presentation helped you believe in and put your full trust in Jesus?

Jesus the King goes with us as we lead others to Him.

“ . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MATTHEW 28:20

As King, Jesus is not like earthly royalties who tend to be out of reach, issuing commands from the comforts of their thrones. Whatever King Jesus has commanded, He Himself has done in the best way possible. We see this in Matthew’s account of His life and work here on earth. But more than that, whatever King Jesus commanded, He Himself enables us to do. Shortly after His ascension to His rightful place in heaven, He sent His Spirit (Acts 1–2) to fill and dwell in us, empowering us for the mission of leading people into His kingdom through His word. He does not just send us out—He sends us out and goes with us every step of the way, *always, to the end of the age*. Knowing that God is with us wherever we go helps us confidently preach the gospel to others and walk with them. When was the last time you boldly shared your testimony to someone?

APPLICATION

- Why is it important for us to recognize Jesus as King, and not just as our Savior? How will this change the way you relate with Him?
- Are there aspects of your life that are not surrendered to the kingship of Jesus? Are there commands of Jesus that you find hard to obey? What are some things you can do to recognize Jesus as King over your life?
- Who among your family and friends is God leading you to preach the gospel to? Think of a strategy that can help you talk to this person about Jesus.

PRAYER

- Thank Jesus for saving us and being the King over our lives. Pray that you would grow in your understanding of His kingship over all. Thank Him for being with you always.
- Pray for the grace to surrender fully to the kingship of Jesus in obedience to His commands. Pray that you would grow in confidence, knowing that you belong to Him.
- Ask God to give you the boldness to approach someone and share Jesus to him or her. Pray for the right words to say and for God to give you insight into the person's life.

2 Jesus: Suffering Servant

WARM-UP

- Describe your leadership style. Why do you lead in this manner?
- Who is your role model? What about this person do you admire?
- Have you recently seen someone make a sacrifice for the ones they love? Can you tell us about it? How did this make you feel?

WORD *⁴²And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

MARK 10:42-45

History is filled with rulers who exercised their reign in tyranny—kings who lorded their power over their subjects. They reigned over people, misusing and abusing the authority given to them for their own selfish, destructive ends. However, Jesus came to earth demonstrating the exact and unexpected opposite. Even though He is King over everything and everyone, He exercised His reign by serving people in truth and in love. From our King Jesus' servanthood, we see two important things.

1 | Jesus saved us by serving us and suffered doing so.

. . . the Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. MARK 8:31

“ . . . the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” MARK 10:45

When a ruler has to protect his nation from conquerors, he does so with armies, armories, and weapons. Blood is spilled and countless lives are sacrificed. But when Jesus came to rescue us from our spiritual captivity, He came with words and works of truth and love instead. However, there was also blood shed from the one life that was sacrificed: His own.

At this point of time in the Gospel of Mark (chapters 8–10), Jesus had already been serving people since He began His ministry, feeding them, healing them, praying for them, teaching them, and preaching to them. But those were just in preparation for the ultimate act of service He was about to do on the cross of Calvary—giving His life *as a ransom* for us, suffering the punishment and death we deserve for our sins, in our place. Three days later, He rose back to life, confirming—among other things—that He is God and that His death was indeed for our sins, since He had no sin of His own to be punished for. Recall your life before knowing Christ. How has it changed since you came to know of Jesus’ sacrifice for you?

We follow Him by serving others and may suffer doing so.

*And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." **MARK 8:34***

*⁴³"But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all." **MARK 10:43-44***

To follow Jesus means we are to walk in His ways. Because He leads us through acts of service, we are to lead others to Him by serving them as well. We do this by both practicing good deeds and preaching the good news. However, as we demonstrate with works and declare with words who Jesus is, this fallen world may not respond the way we want them to. There will be opposition and persecution because the devil, our Lord's enemy, will not easily let go of those he holds captive. This is why following Jesus also means that we, too, may suffer like He did. Though suffering is inevitable, it is all worth it. He is all worth it. There is no one else worth serving and suffering for but the One who served us and suffered for us in love.

However, it does not end there. We do not just suffer with Jesus, but we too shall rejoice with Him. The Bible says that if we follow Jesus in His suffering, we too shall follow Him in the glory that is to come. In the long run, the way of the cross is the way to the crowns He has in store for those who remain steadfast in Him. As Romans 8:17-18 comfortingly proclaims, *. . . we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.* Knowing that we too will share in the future glory of Christ,

how does this help you overcome the challenges you may face in telling others about Him now?

APPLICATION

- Read and meditate on Hebrews 12:1–2 this week. Reflect on how Jesus' life, suffering, and resurrection can help you as you follow Jesus. What are some practical steps you can take in light of this passage?
- Are there things that hinder you from preaching the gospel? What obstacles do you encounter in being a witness to others, and how do you think you can overcome these?
- Identify people in your life you can encourage to preach the gospel and tell others about Jesus. Write some tips about sharing your testimony and preaching the gospel.

PRAYER

- Say a prayer of gratitude for the sacrifice Jesus the King made to save you from the penalty of your sins. Pray for a growing appreciation of what He has done for you every day.
- Ask God for strength, wisdom, and grace to endure the challenges you face in sharing Him to others. Pray that you will draw confidence from Him, knowing that He is with you and is pleased with you as His child.
- Pray for the people you are planning to minister and preach the gospel to this week. Ask God to open their hearts and minds to His word and presence in their lives.

3 Jesus: Son of Man

WARM-UP

- Share about something you are looking forward to.
- What does an ideal world look like for you? What are its key characteristics?
- What characteristics do you think you got from your parent/s? Tell us about how you are alike and some instances that show this.

WORD ²³Jesus . . . ³¹the son of David . . . ³⁴the son of Abraham . . .
³⁸the son of Adam . . . **LUKE 3:23, 31, 34, 38**

In Hebrew genealogies, being called a son of someone means being a descendant. Before proceeding to write about Jesus' ministry in his gospel account, the traveling physician Luke inserts such a genealogy of Jesus that is as extensive as Matthew's records. Luke traces Jesus' human roots all the way back to Adam, the first man. He does this as a declaration that Jesus came to minister not just to one particular group, but to the whole of mankind, including those often overlooked in society.

Of all four gospel writers, Luke was the only non-Jew. He was also the only one who wrote about Jesus' ministry far beyond the Jews, all the way to the ends of the earth, through His body, the Church. We see this in the book of Acts. This is the message Luke wanted to highlight throughout his two books: Jesus came as the Son of Man to save humanity and to minister to its deepest needs.

1 | Jesus is the promised King from the line of David.

²³Jesus . . . ³¹the son of David . . . **LUKE 3:23, 31**

Across the globe and throughout history, mankind has long been in search of a king who can rule mightily, morally, and

mercifully. Jesus, the King coming from the line of King David, is the Bible's answer to that search.

Mankind has had rulers who ruled mightily but not mercifully. They also had rulers who ruled morally but not mightily. The list continues, with no one else perfectly fitting the bill. If we did have rulers who we think ruled perfectly, it was impossible to have them rule forever because of the human lifespan. Having them rule for long is also impractical because power can eventually corrupt. Searching for a perfect human king is futile and hopeless.

Thankfully, God sent His Son. All the attributes we want in a king—and more—are in Jesus. Being the Son of God, He alone reigns consistently and eternally. What kind of kingdom does Jesus have? How different is it from the kingdoms of this world?

2 | Jesus is the promised offspring from the line of Abraham.

²³Jesus . . . ³⁴the son of Abraham . . . **LUKE 3:23, 34**

Mankind has long been in search of “the good life.” The world says that the good life can be found in having the right career, enjoying the right connections, building your dream house, marrying your dream spouse, having much of this and that, and much more. However, God's word redirects us to the truth that the good life (or blessedness) can be found only in Jesus.

In the Old Testament, God promised overflowing blessedness to Abraham through one of his descendants that blesses

not just him or his family, but even *all the nations of the earth* (Genesis 22:16–18). Fast forward to the New Testament, we discover that this world-blessing descendant of Abraham is actually Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:34)! With this, we discover that in Jesus Christ, we receive the same overflowing blessedness promised to Abraham (Galatians 3:29). In the same way, the blessing is not just for ourselves, but we can even be a blessing to others. The good life then, as defined by Scripture, is found only in a relationship with Jesus. How have you experienced a glimpse of this good, blessed life so far?

3 | Jesus is the promised seed from the line of Adam.

²³Jesus . . . ³⁸the son of Adam . . . **LUKE 3:23, 38**

Mankind has been longing for a savior, someone who will deliver us from this fallen, broken world. Some of us are fond of superheroes, from ancient mythologies to comics to blockbuster movies. We want a taste of hope in the midst of our depravity and limitations.

At the core of it all is sin and death, which we have brought upon ourselves at the Fall (Genesis 3). From generation to generation, humanity has long been waiting for the coming of the one who will undo sin and death. In the garden of Eden, the Lord gave a glimmer of hope, a promise of a Savior who would be a descendant of Adam. This Savior would crush the head of the serpent who tempted Adam and Eve. However, the serpent would poison Him, biting His heel (Genesis 3:15).

So God's people waited for the One who will finally defeat sin and death. Maybe they thought it could have been Abel, the

righteous one among the first two siblings, but unfortunately he was killed by the unrighteous sibling. Maybe Noah, but he too, like Adam, fell for a fruit, not forbidden, but fermented, enough to knock him silly and lead him and his family to sin. Maybe Abraham, but he too, like Adam, failed to protect his wife—not once, but twice. Perhaps David, *a man after God's own heart*, but he committed adultery and murder. Or Solomon, but he turned out adulterous, like his father, and also idolatrous, like his countless wives and concubines. Many more sons of man came, but not one of them was the promised Savior who could triumph over sin.

Jesus is the Son of Man who lived the perfect life we ought to live, suffered the torturous death we ought to suffer for our sins, and was raised back to life to bring us back to life—to save us from our demise. He was bitten by the serpent's fangs, so to speak, but only so that He would crush the serpent's head. With this final stomp, straight up from the bloody cross down to the empty tomb, sin and death—which have plagued humanity for so many generations—have finally been subdued by the Son of Man, the Second Adam. Through faith in Him, we are restored to a right relationship with God and can look forward to eternal life in His presence. How does this truth change the way you look at life and your future?

APPLICATION

- Why is it important to recognize Jesus as King and not just as our Savior? What effect would the truth that Jesus is a perfect, merciful, and just King have on our relationship with Him?
- Read and reflect on Ephesians 1:3–4. What does it mean for us to receive every spiritual blessing in Christ? How do you think this should affect the way we live?
- Why is it important to know that Jesus is the only one who could save us from our sins? What should our posture be in light of this?

PRAYER

- Thank God for sending Jesus, our promised King and Savior and the one who enables us to receive every blessing.
- Pray for God to restore the joy of your salvation and that you would grow in your knowledge and understanding of it as you seek and follow Him. Ask Him to give you opportunities to share what He has done in your life with others.
- Pray Matthew 6:9–10, for God’s kingdom to come here on earth as it is in heaven. Pray that as you recognize and experience His kingship, others will be able to experience His power and authority in their lives as well.

4 Jesus: Son of God

WARM-UP

- In an ideal world, what kind of life would you want to live?
- Do you know someone you were intimidated by at first? How did you build a friendship with him or her?
- Can you tell us about your relationship with your parents? Would you say you are close to them? Why or why not?

WORD *¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. . . . ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. JOHN 1:1-3, 14*

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." JOHN 3:16

John 3:16 is one of the more widely known Bible verses, and this is probably why Jesus is most commonly known as Son of God, more than His other titles and offices. But what does being the Son of God mean? This week, let us dive deeper into this title by looking at the beginning of the Gospel of John.

1 As the Son of God, Jesus was the Word of God by which all things were created.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. JOHN 1:1-3

¹"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³And God said, 'Let there be . . .'" **GENESIS 1:1-3**

Genesis 1 narrates God at the beginning of everything. By the Spirit of God, everything was created through the word of God. In introducing Jesus as the Son of God, John expands and expounds on the same truth—the Word of God is actually a person who eternally exists. It was through this person that God created all things. The apostle John later reveals that this is Jesus (John 1:17, 29, 36). Jesus the Son of God, who also is God, is the Word that brought everything into existence. Paul also speaks of Jesus Christ as the one by whom all things are made (Colossians 1:15–17). What does he imply about Jesus' power and authority?

2

As the Son of God, Jesus made the heavenly Father near and known.

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth . . . ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. **JOHN 1:14, 18**

Sin separated all of humanity from God and made it impossible for us to draw near to, see, and know Him. In the Old Testament, the best pictures God's people had of Him were but shadows and silhouettes. For thousands of years, it was that way: an indefinite, obscure view of the Almighty whom people needed the most.

Eventually, Jesus, the Son of God, came. Being Himself God, Jesus was able to reveal through His words, works, and whole being, who God the Father really is. In Jesus, the unseen Father, became visible. In Jesus, the infinite took on flesh and became human for us to know Him and enjoy Him in the most intimate way which, in the Old Testament, was unimaginable. It is through Jesus, the Son of God, that we can draw near to the heavenly Father and get to know Him more intimately. Jesus is the *only* way to the Father; no one can come to the Father *except* through the Son (John 14:6).

Throughout history, people have tried to earn the right to go to God and be His people on their own efforts and yet have failed. How about you? How have you tried to earn your holiness, your salvation, and access to God?

3 | As the Son of God, Jesus gives life to those who believe in Him.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. JOHN 1:4

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."

JOHN 3:16

Through the Son and by the Spirit, the Father was the author and origin of all life in the beginning. But during the Fall, we were separated from God. In a sense, we were unplugged from the very cause and source of our existence, and were considered dead in our sin.

Thankfully, this is why, through the same Son and by the same Spirit, the Father intervened in human history to

restore life to humankind. Through Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, God breathes life back into us, forever reconnecting us to the very cause and source of our existence. And this is called *eternal life*.

Later on in the Gospel of John, Jesus Himself defined the purpose of this eternal life: to know and enjoy God more and more, forever (John 17:3). Many times in Scripture, the eternal life Jesus promised does not just refer to a future eternity with God; but also to the quality of life now that comes from God. It is also a present reality as we increasingly know and experience God. We receive this by believing in Jesus, His Son. In Christ Jesus, the Son of God, the unseen became visible, the unreachable became near so the eternal can be enjoyable. What an incomparable gift! What does John 10:10 say about the kind of life He is offering?

APPLICATION

- Because of Jesus, we have full access to the Father. How would you describe your relationship with God? What are some steps you can take this week to maximize this access that you have to Him and grow in your relationship with Him?
- In what areas of your life are you trusting and seeking God? How does knowing that life comes from Jesus help you be in faith and at peace in these areas?
- Knowing that we now have eternal life in Christ, how will the way you live change? What does it mean to live in light of eternity?

PRAYER

- Say a prayer of gratitude for the eternal life we have in Christ. Thank Him that we now have access to the Father and are able to grow in intimacy with Him.
- Pray that you would not miss out on seeking and knowing God every day. Pray that your faith in Him and love for His word would increase, so that you can grow in knowing Him.
- Intercede for the people who have yet to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Pray for God to use you to lead others so they can have the opportunity to receive the eternal life Jesus offers.

5 Jesus: Head of the Church

WARM-UP

- Do you find it easy to follow rules? Why or why not?
- Name a team or group from a movie or story. What makes them a good team?
- Think of a leader that you've had. What qualities do you think made him/her effective as a leader?

WORD *And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.* **COLOSSIANS 1:18**

For four weeks already, we have seen who Jesus is according to the four gospel accounts. This week and the next, let's look at two significant ways He is described in the epistles of Paul. Formerly a hell-bent persecutor of Christians, Paul—also called Saul—learned who Christ is the hard way. On the way to persecute more of Christ's followers, Paul was blinded by a light shining from heaven and brought to the ground by Christ's overwhelming glory. Acts 9:4–5 paints us a picture: *And falling to the ground, he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? And he said, "Who are you, Lord?"* to which the voice responded, *"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting."* At that moment, Paul must have wondered, *Why would Jesus say He is the one I am persecuting, when it is His believers whom I am after?*

The answer is clearly because Jesus is the "head" of the "body" of believers—and so, what the body suffers, the head suffers too! Paul's first encounter with Jesus was hinting about the truth that Jesus is the head of the very people he was persecuting. It is then no surprise that in his letter to the Colossians (as well as his other epistles), Paul exalts Christ as the one and only head of the Church. What are the blessings of having Christ as our head? Colossians 1:18 gives us a two-fold answer.

1 | Jesus, as the head of the body of believers, brings unity and harmony.

And he is the head of the body, the church . . . **COLOSSIANS 1:18**

As our head, Jesus supplies unity for our diversity and harmony in the face of our differences. Even as His believers, we come from different backgrounds, possess different personalities, and have different preferences in life. On top of that, when the Holy Spirit filled us and dwelt in us, we were also endowed with different gifts which we can use to perform different functions for the strengthening and growth of the whole Church (1 Corinthians 12).

In short, we differ so much from each other in the same way a human body's parts differ from each other, in form and function, in placement and position. However, as real and various these differences may be, we actually find our beginning and foundation in one place—we all have Jesus, who is our head. With that, we get to move toward the same goal of following Him and making Him known, as we are enabled by one and the same Holy Spirit, who is the very Spirit of Christ our head (Romans 8:9). How are we to walk with one another despite our differences (Ephesians 4:2–3)?

Jesus, as the head of the body of believers, serves as their ultimate source of direction and guidance.

... He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. **COLOSSIANS 1:18**

As our head, Jesus supplies for us not only unity and harmony, but also guidance and direction. The head is where the command and control center of the entire human body is found. For example, walking begins with the brain issuing a general direction for the whole body (that is, to move forward). At the same time, the brain also gives specific directives for each body part (that is, the hands swinging for balance, the knees bending and extending, and the feet landing). In Christ, we are tremendously blessed with the same, both general direction and specific directives. With the radiance of the written word, Jesus provides both a lamp to our feet, guidance for our immediate present, and a light to our path, guidance for the entire way forward (Psalm 119:105).

This way forward could not be more illuminated. He has walked it Himself. He got baptized, so we too can experience it. He was tempted by the evil one, so we too must expect to encounter temptation. He said 'No!' to those temptations by the power of the word, so we too must say 'No!' to temptations by the same power. He ministered to people, so we too must minister to others. He was persecuted as He ministered to people, so we too will encounter persecution as we minister to others. He loved His enemies, so we must love ours, too. And so on.

Because He is our preeminent head, we are to follow His every step, even to death and beyond—to resurrection and ascension. He is *the firstborn from the dead* for exactly that reason. When He was raised from the dead, He was but the first among many who are yet to follow in the same path, from grave to glory. By the power of His Spirit, everyone who believes in Him and follows after Him shall be resurrected

and shall ascend as He did too. What does John 14:15 say about following Jesus' commands?

APPLICATION

- Reflect on your recent challenges and experiences. Ask God to show you how He was present in those situations, sympathizing with you and holding you through it. Pray for your faith and trust in Him to grow.
- Who are you walking in community with? How are you similar to them? In what ways are you different? How do you work together despite this? How can your relationship with them grow as you walk together in Christ?
- Are there commands in the Bible that you find hard to follow? What encouragement does Philippians 4:13–14 have for you? How can you apply this in your life?

PRAYER

- Thank God for adopting you into His family and for giving you renewed purpose in a community.
- Ask God to give you grace and strength as you follow Him and obey His commands, even the ones you have a hard time obeying. Pray that you will not stray from His word or His presence.
- Pray for your church and the whole body of Christ. May the unity and love we have in Christ encourage others to pursue Him and be included in His family as well.

6 Jesus: Judge of the Living and the Dead

WARM-UP

- Recall a time when you heard of someone's first impression of you. How did this perception change over time?
- Are you the type of person who freely gives people second chances? Why or why not?
- If you could bring someone back to life, who would it be and why?

WORD ¹... *Jesus . . . is to judge the living and the dead* . . . ⁸*Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.* **2 TIMOTHY 4:1, 8**

As we conclude this series about knowing Jesus, it is fitting that we also get to know the very important role He will play in the last days (according to another of Paul's epistles): our Judge. In the government, a judge is someone appointed to make decisions and rulings on cases through their interpretation of the law. In a competition, a judge gives decisions that will determine the winner and makes sure that rules are followed. More commonly, someone who gives their assessment on any given matter can also be called a judge. Interestingly, as we look at Scripture, we see these three definitions also at work in one way or another as Jesus exercises His role as Judge. Today, let us have a glimpse of who Jesus is as a judge and how He judges.

1 | Jesus as Judge will judge the living and the dead.

. . . Jesus . . . is to judge the living and the dead . . . **2 TIMOTHY 4:1**

As the judge, Jesus will return and enact two specific kinds of judgment on two groups of people: Those still living at the

time of His return, and those already dead but will have been brought back to life (exactly for the purpose of receiving His judgment). The first kind of judgment on both *the living and the dead* is to determine whether we are saved or not. Salvation, according to Paul, is not by good works, but by God's grace (2 Timothy 1:9). The means to receive this grace is faith in Christ as Savior (Ephesians 2:8)—that is, believing and trusting in Christ and what He has done. None of us are and will ever be good enough to earn salvation (Romans 3:10–12), which is why it is such a relief that the first kind of judgment will not come with the question, “Have you been good enough?” but perhaps with the question, “Have you believed in who Jesus says He is and put your trust in what He has done on the cross for your salvation?”

This judgment dictates which eternal destination each one will be headed for. Those who put their faith in Christ and His finished work at the cross shall live forever, enjoying God in eternal happiness. Those who *turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths* shall forever be condemned by their own unbelief (2 Timothy 4:3–4; Mark 16:16; John 3:17–18; John 12:48).

Jesus' return as Judge is bad news for those who have not received Him as Savior. But for those who have received Him, the notion of Him coming back as Judge in the future is good news—and they shall be counted among those *who have loved His appearing*, expectant and excited for His return (2 Timothy 4:8).

Think about the first time you heard the gospel. Did you find it easy to believe? Why or why not?

2 | Jesus as Judge will judge righteously and fairly.

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing. **2 TIMOTHY 4:8**

Jesus' second kind of judgment on both the *living* and the *dead* when He returns is to determine what degree of reward the saved shall enjoy and what degree of punishment the unsaved shall suffer.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:10–15 that believers shall be judged and rewarded according to how excellently they have built their lives and ministry upon Jesus Christ, our foundation. It is the kind of judgment that may come with questions such as:

- *“How much of the word have you put into practice?”*
- *“Have you thought, spoken, and acted according to God’s word throughout your life?”*
- *“How well have you lived the new life God has given you in Christ?”*
- *“Have you made Him known to others by declaring and demonstrating His word?”*

Make no mistake, the quality of our lives and the quantity of our works absolutely have no bearing on whether we will be saved or not. However, they do have a bearing on what eternal rewards we shall enjoy from the Lord when He returns. As for Paul, he ended his second letter to Timothy confident of one day enjoying *the crown of righteousness* as a reward for having *fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith*.

However, as much as there will be different kinds of rewards for believers, there will also be varying degrees

of punishment for the unsaved, those who condemn themselves by their own unbelief.

Jesus Himself taught the disciples that He will one day come and *repay each person* (both living and dead, both saved and not saved) *according to what he has done* (Matthew 16:27). Therefore, in all of these judgments Jesus as our Judge will perform when He returns, He shall be perfectly righteous and fair (Romans 2:2), for He is the very essence of God's perfect righteousness Himself (Romans 3:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30). How can we live the way Jesus did and practice what His word says until the day He comes (John 14:15–17)?

APPLICATION

- How does knowing Jesus as the Judge affect the way you live? How does it affect your relationship with God? How can Hebrews 4:14–16 help us?
- Are there things in the Bible you struggle believing in? Ask the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to God's truth, and to help you grow in your faith.
- Identify at least one person this week to whom you can share your testimony and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Pray for God to open this person's heart and to give you the right words to say.

PRAYER

- Thank God that even though Jesus Christ will one day be our Judge, He is also the loving Lord and Savior in whom we can believe and trust our entire lives upon. Pray for a thriving relationship with Him.
- Ask God to help you obey and live out His word. Pray for the endurance and grace to be more like Christ.
- Pray for boldness and compassion as you preach the word to others. Even as you preach with urgency and purpose, may the love and grace of Christ flow through you.

¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." **MATTHEW 28:18-20**

Who is Jesus?

The knowledge of who Jesus is should compel us to want to know Him more and to proclaim who He is to the world. Everyone from every tribe and every nation needs to know who Jesus is.

This material aims to help us see Jesus through the eyes of five individuals who walked closely with Him—Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Paul. May this be more than enough to start us off in the life-long journey of growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18) and in teaching others to follow Him.

TOPICS

- Jesus: Everlasting King
- Jesus: Suffering Servant
- Jesus: Son of Man
- Jesus: Son of God
- Jesus: Head of the Church
- Jesus: Judge of the Living and the Dead



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