

J E S U S



How well do you know Jesus?

Scripture:

Isaiah 55

6. Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;
7. let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
8. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
9. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

John 1

1. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2. He was in the beginning with God.
3. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being
4. in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.
5. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.
6. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him.
8. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.
9. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.
10. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him.
11. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him.
12. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,
13. who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.
14. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.
15. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me." ')
16. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.
17. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
18. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.



JESUS

The last time I was with you preaching, I asked if you loved me. Do you love me?

Today I'm going to ask a more intimate question: How well do you know Jesus? We worship Him, pray to Him and through Him. How well do you know Him?

He was that Person who lived so long ago, not only teaching love, but living love. He had a perfect body, without sin, and yet He was crucified on a criminal's cross. He went through all kinds of pain, mentally and physically, for you and me. When He died on that cross, He offered His body as a sacrifice for the sin of the whole world, and we believe that the Heavenly Father accepted that.

That's not the only reason that Jesus is unique. He was not only all man, He was all God. He healed the sick, the blind man, the leper, and even brought a man back from death. He claimed to be the Son of God, and for that He was crucified. Yes, this man was all man but was also all God. Boy, that's tough to believe.

It's tough to accept in this sophisticated, technological world a man and a God. That sounds like a myth out of mythology, but it was fact, and it takes a leap of faith to believe it.

It was hard for us to believe, but think of the apostles. How difficult it must have been for them to look at this man that they ate with and walked with and listened to, and believe that this was also God. They believed it after He died, and they had seen the cross and experienced the resurrection. So they all wrote little histories or biographies of Jesus called Gospels.

It wasn't long in the church that people began to wonder: Did this man really live? So the church adopted the Apostles' Creed which apparently had been around for many, many years.

A couple of centuries later, people were beginning to doubt His divinity, and so the church at Nicea wrote another creed, talking about His divinity.

Then, several hundred years later, the church decided we needed a New Testament,

and so they gathered some of the Gospels together, works of Paul and other disciples, and they called it the New Testament and the Bible was formed.

But, you know, every Gospel tells the story in a different way, because every experience with Jesus is different. If we each wrote our Gospel, it would be a hundred different Gospels. But running through them all are certain threads.

I. JESUS IS THE WORD OF GOD OR FROM GOD.

Jesus Himself said it. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but to save it." That is God's Word to us through His Son: "I love the world and send my Son to save it." AND HE DID.

**Who is this world that God loves?
It is you and me, it's every Christian,
it's every Jew, it's every Buddhist,
it's every Muslim, it's every believer,
and it's every atheist.
Yes, it's true what we sing
in the nursery schools:
God love us all
and gave his Son to save us all.**

It reminds me of when I was a kid. There was a neighbor down the street who was a real sweet guy. He and his daughter lived together. He used to take me fishing. He was a wonderful person. But one day, I knocked a baseball through his picture window. I ran home; I hid. I knew he was going to tell my parents about it or he was going to send the police after me. For days, I was scared; I couldn't think of him as a sweetheart any more. He was an ogre, he was after me.

Then one day I had to walk by his house. As I walked by his gate, I hoped he wasn't around. But he popped up; he had been sweeping his sidewalk. He came over to me and he said, "Hey kid, how do you feel since you broke my window? I saw you do it. But I

know your dad is a preacher and they don't make any money." (They didn't in those days.) "I don't know how you would pay for it, but I have the money, and the window is all fixed. Please be careful." He came and put his arm around me and he said, "I know how you must feel. I forgive you. I'll take care of it. But you know it would be nice if you could keep my porch clean all summer."

Well, you can believe I cleaned that porch. It was spic and span.

But isn't that a little bit like what God has done for us, and forgiven us? How do I know? It came from the Word of God Himself, for Jesus is the Word of God.

II. JESUS IS THE WINDOW TO GOD

I believe I've asked a thousand people during my ministry to describe God for me. Only maybe six or seven have said, "Sure. God looks like Jesus Christ. He said, 'If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.'"

But the more than nine-hundred and ninety others were like the little girl who was drawing. Her mother asked, "Honey, what are you doing?" "The child said, "I'm drawing a picture." Her mother asked, "Of what?" The little girl answered, "Of God." "Honey, nobody knows what God looks like." The little girl told her mother, "Well everybody will know when I finish my drawing."

Man has been like that ever since the beginning. He has drawn his own picture of God, and he made clay images or golden images or mental images, forming what he knew God would look like, forming God in man's image. God must have grown tired of all these misrepresentations, so God said, "I'll come to earth myself," and God, the unknowable, put on His human face and came to us in Jesus. So if you want to know what God is like, look to Jesus. If you want to know what God would do, look to Jesus. If you have trouble making decisions, ask Jesus and you'll get it straight from God Himself.

Or as Robert Johnson says in his book *The Meaning of Christ*, "Jesus is the window to God." I wonder if the reverse is also true. Every

time that God looks at me, He doesn't see me, He sees Jesus.

The Hebrews had a word for sacrifice called KOPHER. In English, it simply means "cover." So that when God looked down, He saw the sacrifice and He didn't see the evil person behind it.

I wonder when God looks at me that He doesn't see me as I am. He sees me as Jesus Christ, covering up my sin by His death on the cross. If Jesus is the window to God, is He also God's window to me and you?

III. THE WAY OF GOD

I used to think of the Beatitudes as a new Ten Commandments, and if you followed all the things that you read in the Beatitudes, you would make your way to God. But, you know, I don't make my way to God. I get to God by God's grace and by His Son's death on the cross. So what are the Beatitudes?

J. B. Philips brought light into my life when he said that the Beatitudes had been wrongly interpreted. From the Aramaic it isn't "blessed are those." May I read the way J. B. Philips translates the Beatitudes:

"How happy are the humble-minded, for the Kingdom of God is already theirs."

"How happy are those who know what sorrow means, for they will be given courage and comfort."

"Happy are those who claim nothing, for the whole earth will belong to them."

"Happy are those who hunger and thirst for goodness, for they will be fully satisfied."

"Happy are the merciful, for mercy will be shown to them."

"Happy are the utterly sincere, for they will see God."

"Happy are those who suffer persecution for the cause of goodness, for the Kingdom of God is theirs already."

"Happy are those who make peace, for they will be known as the children of God."

How well do you know Jesus? How much have you walked the Way of Jesus? For you know as you walk that Way, you are a light to the world. When you walk that Way, you give zest to the world. As you walk that Way that you have learned through the Word of God, you are writing your own Gospel – a Gospel for your children to see or your neighbor to see, for the world to see. This is the blessing of the Christian life. Live your Gospel so that someone else may be moved by it as you have been moved by the Gospel of others.



Let us pray: O God, how grateful we are for those who wrote their experiences with Jesus. And we know that each of us is writing our experience. It is evident by our life. Let us live it so joyously that we really will give light to the world. Let us live it so fervently that others will want the faith that is ours. We pray in Jesus' name, who taught us to pray ... (The Lord's Prayer).

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