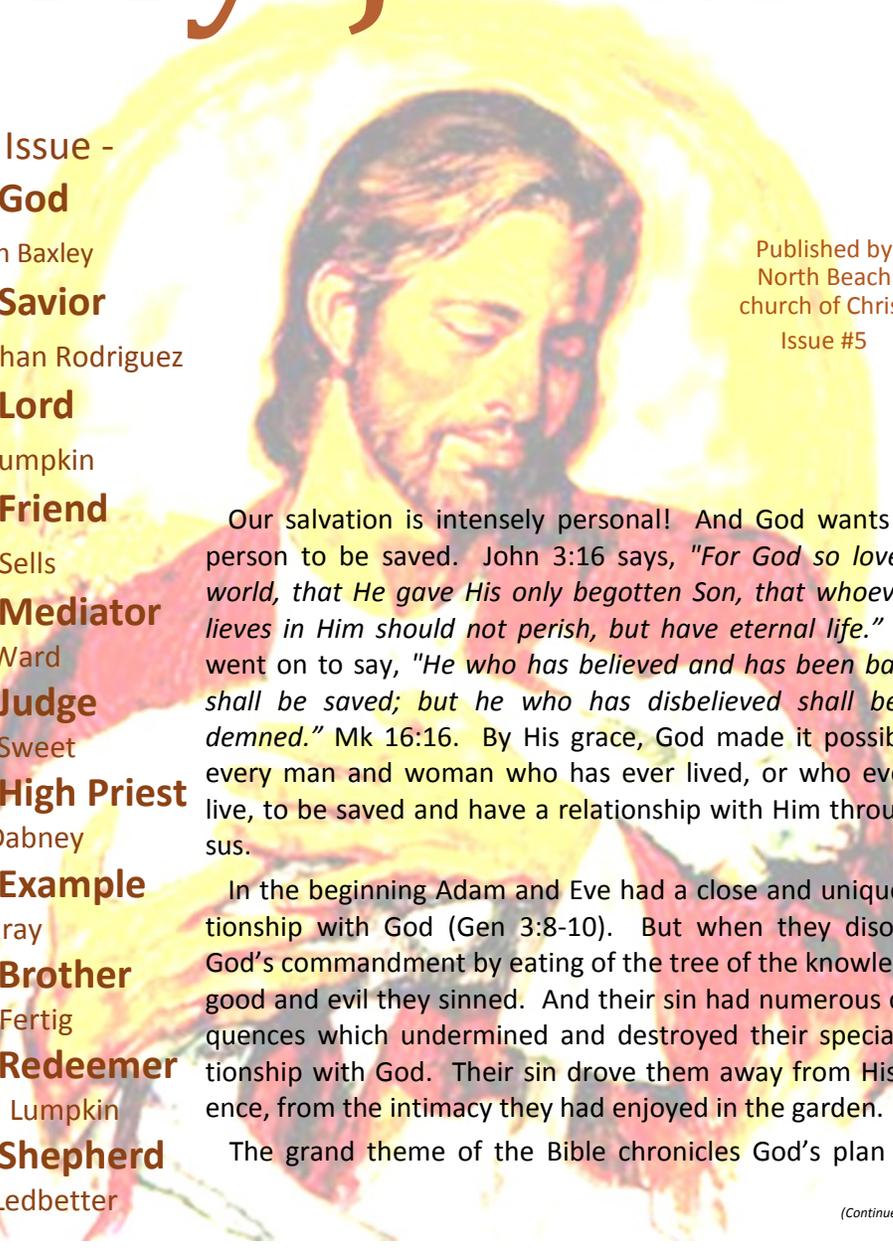


# My Jesus



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Our salvation is intensely personal! And God wants every person to be saved. John 3:16 says, *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."* Jesus went on to say, *"He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned."* Mk 16:16. By His grace, God made it possible for every man and woman who has ever lived, or who ever will live, to be saved and have a relationship with Him through Jesus.

In the beginning Adam and Eve had a close and unique relationship with God (Gen 3:8-10). But when they disobeyed God's commandment by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil they sinned. And their sin had numerous consequences which undermined and destroyed their special relationship with God. Their sin drove them away from His presence, from the intimacy they had enjoyed in the garden.

The grand theme of the Bible chronicles God's plan to re-

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deem mankind and bring him back into an intimate relationship with Him – like Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden. Paul wrote, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.”* Eph 1:3-7. We understand that God planned to save us through the sacrifice of His Son even before He created the heavens and the earth. God created us to walk with Him and, as a demonstration of His love and grace, made this possible through the sacrifice of His own Son. Wow – like Paul said, “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!”

Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit said, *“there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.”* Ac 4:12. Unfortunately we live in an age where this bedrock fact is questioned and challenged. By faith we confidently avow that Jesus saves, not Mohammed, not Buddha, not anyone or anything else. Jesus Himself boldly declared in Jn 4:12, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”* This exclusive statement is

definitely not politically correct in our post modern culture where truth is made out to be a relative commodity. But we believe.

As Christians our relationship to God is through His Son who paid the terrible price for our salvation. We who bear His name have an extraordinary relationship with Him. One with many dimensions which reaches deep into our inner spirits to satisfy our longing for: guidance, hope, comfort, safety, nourishment, access, a sense of belonging, purpose, accountability and salvation. It is in our relationship with Jesus that we find answers to age old philosophical questions such as, where did I come from? Why am I here? And where am I going?

Each of us sustains multiple relationships at the same time. For instance, I am a son and a father and grandfather, a husband, a brother, a friend, an elder, etc. Likewise, Jesus also sustains multiple relationships. In this issue we’ll examine various aspects of our relationship with Jesus. As each writer shares his/her brief thoughts we encourage you to reflect on your relationship with Jesus. Often in our busy lives of taking care of our families, our education, our jobs, etc. we just don’t get around to meditating on just how precious our relationship with Jesus actually is. We know it’s wonderful, but let’s stop to ponder its length, its breath, its height. Such reflection should melt our hearts in humble thanksgiving. If there are aspects of our relationship with Him that need strengthening, let’s do it. If we need to establish a relationship with Him in baptism, let’s take that step.

Phil Lumpkin



## My Jesus – My God

Steven D. Baxley

The identity of Jesus Christ has been a hotly-debated topic in the recent past, with many people being interested in questions concerning who He was. Many books have been published, and have been widely-read and distributed which debate not only this question but also the question of what His life was all about. Was He just a teacher? Was He only a prophet, and nothing more? Was He a rebel against Rome? Unfortunately, many people today, as in the past, deny the fundamental truths concerning Him. Those truths were believed by His followers, and are recorded in the New Testament. One of the most basic facts which the New Testament reveals about Jesus is that He is God.

John, in the introduction to his Gospel, wrote: *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”* (John 1:1). Then in verse 14, John wrote: *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us ...”*. It is clear from what John wrote, that he believed that Jesus (the Word) was present *“in the beginning”*, was WITH God, but also WAS God. This is an important verse for understanding the Godhead. Jesus wasn't just “with” God. He wasn't some kind of angel or created being before the creation of the world, who just

happened to be around God when God started doing His work. Instead, Jesus actually was God in the fullest sense of that statement. He existed throughout all eternity in fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

John's Gospel is not the only place in the New Testament where we can read about Jesus' being God. When the angel announced to Joseph what was happening with his pregnant fiancée Mary, he told him who this special baby was: *“Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel”* (which means, God with us)” (Matt. 1:23). This verse shows that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy found in Isaiah 7:14, and was not simply another prophet or teacher.

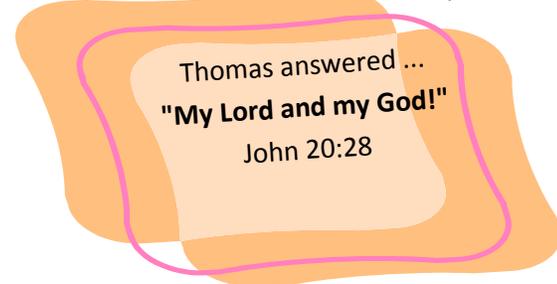
Furthermore, the Book of Revelation makes it clear that Jesus was not merely a mortal man, but is in fact the eternal God. First, notice what God says of Himself in Isa. 44:6: *“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: “I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.”* God, speaking through Isaiah, uses almost identical language to identify himself in 41:4 and 48:12. He is the first and the last, the only true God. He is not created, He wasn't born from some other god, and He certainly doesn't owe His existence to any other cause. In Revelation, John records Jesus' words about Himself: *“Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades”* (Rev. 1:17b-18). We find similar lan-

guage in Rev. 2:8. If we can understand the meaning of this kind of language in Isaiah, how can we not understand what it means in Revelation? Can there be any question about what Jesus thought about His own identity?

One last point: it is God who created the universe, and all that is in it. Isaiah recorded God's own testimony about creation: *"Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: I am the Lord, who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself,"* (Isa. 44:24). Notice that God emphasizes that He did this alone and by Himself. There wasn't anyone there helping Him, and He wasn't using an angel or other agent to do what He wanted. He created by His own power. Interestingly, the New Testament records that Jesus created the universe: *"All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made"* (John 1:3) and *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him"* (Col. 1:16). These verses together further confirm Jesus' identity as God.

God with us! The Word became flesh and dwelt among us! What powerful words from John and Matthew. Jesus came to this earth, lived as a man, felt our pain, our weaknesses, our temptations. He knows what it is like to be human. He knows, *really* knows, what life is *really* like for us. But, at the same time, He was and is God, with all that being God means. He is worthy of our

love, our obedience, and our worship.



### **My Jesus – My Savior**

Jonathan Rodriguez

We have often heard that actions speak louder than words, and through experience we know that it's so. The possessive adjective *My* when preceding Jesus and Savior infers that a close, intimate and loving relationship exists between us and Him, *as it should*. But then, the question arises: Is that really so? Is our relationship with our Lord actually as the statement *My Jesus, My Savior* infers? Are our daily actions, louder than our words?

Our Lord has done His part to be Our Savior. Even before the creation of the world and time began, His deliverance was promised. First, in the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3:15 *"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."* The road to Calvary (Our hope for Salvation) was not an easy one. From birth He faced challenges that we can only imagine. He was born in the humblest of places, and already there was a price for His life as decreed by Herod (Matthew 2:13) *"Get up! Take the Child and*

*His mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is going to search for the Child to destroy Him."* He proved time and time again He was the Savior to come; by word, miracles and more importantly by the way He lived. He became the Perfect Sacrifice, the atonement for our sins. 1 Peter 1:18-20 *"For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake."*

In Gethsemane He unjustly felt the burden of a criminal on death row. One can only imagine what a goes through the mind of a criminal as he is about to die. Perhaps, attempts to reconcile his life and evil deeds as they flash before his eyes, seeking forgiveness for the pain he has caused. A well deserved punishment for his deeds, some may say. What then of Jesus our Savior? What flashed before His eyes as He felt the cross closing in? The miracles He performed? How He made the blind to see and the lame to walk? Perhaps the long travels and sleepless nights He endured to bring the news of salvation. He had done absolutely anything to deserve the punishment He received. For you and me He was unjustly mocked and beaten. For you and me He was unjustly judged and condemned and, like a criminal, was crucified. He paid the irresolvable debt of the world. But more importantly He died for you and me, that we may have a hope of salvation! If this isn't Love then I don't know

what love is!

When He ascended to Heaven, He promised He would come again for us, who obey the Gospel of Salvation. The Bible speaks of Him coming as a judge, but for us who believe and follow His commandments, He comes to save us from the cares and struggles of this world. We will ascend with Him to Heaven, to receive that Mansion He has prepared for us! Undeniably our Lord has done His part to be our Savior; He gave His life for us! But have we done our part? Have we turned our life completely over to Him? Galatians 2:20 *"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."* Is there undeniable proof in our lives that He is Our Jesus, Our Savior?



### **My Jesus – My Lord**

Phil Lumpkin

When you think of the word "lord" what thoughts come into your mind? You may think of "lord" as a term associated with submission, such as used by Sarah in 1 Pet 3:6 when she, *"obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."* You might think of it in a negative sense, such as when used by Jesus in Luke 22:25-26, *"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called Benefactors."*

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*but not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.”* But you’ll most likely associate the term “lord” with Jesus Christ, as did Peter several times in his second epistle.

Peter wrote, *“but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...”* 2 Pet 3:18. The Greek term used by Peter is “kuriou,” which is translated into our English word “lord.” Thayer defines “kuriou” as “having power or authority, he to whom a person or thing belongs, one who has the power of deciding, the possessor and disposer of a thing, the owner.” According to Strong, the root meaning of this term connotes supremacy, primarily the idea of supremacy in authority.

Jesus Himself reinforced this definition when he said, *“and why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?”* Luke 6:46. It is as if Jesus said, “you call Me Lord, implying that I have authority to direct your actions, yet you refuse to obey my commands.” They only used “lord” as a title and did not render the respect due to someone in authority. Jesus then likened them to a foolish man who built his house on the sand – and the ruin of that house was great.

Matthew 12 begins with Jesus’ disciples plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath day and being harshly corrected by the Pharisees for violating the Law. Jesus reminded the Pharisees of other “sanctioned” violations of the Sabbath law, and finished his rebuke with, *“but I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, I desire*

*compassion, and not a sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”* Matt 12:6-8. Certainly Jesus was enlightening the Pharisees about weightier issues, but while doing so He boldly proclaimed that He was Lord of the Sabbath. He was stating that He had the authority, the right to make the Sabbath laws and He also had the right to modify or abolish those laws. In short, these were His laws; He could do whatever He wished with them. He was establishing His “lordship,” His supreme authority to demand or forgive compliance.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter preaching to the Jews said, *“Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ – this Jesus whom you crucified.”* Acts 2:36. Jesus’ position and authority came from none other than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When they realized that they had murdered God’s elect, they recoiled with, *“men and brethren, what shall we do?”* But we know this was part of God’s timeless plan to redeem mankind. Because of His death on the cross for our sins, *“... God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* Phil 2:9-11.

When we take a closer look at Jesus as our Lord, we come to see Him as Creator and ourselves as His creation, to see Him as God and ourselves as His children, and to see

Him as the King of kings and ourselves as subjects in His glorious kingdom. We come to see that He and He alone has the authority and power to forgive our sins and He alone has the power and authority to save our souls in heaven. Others may claim to represent God, but our Lord actually is the Lord of lords and King of kings. We have been given the exalted privilege to understand this mystery and the opportunity to willingly bow our knees in humble subjection and confess that Jesus is Lord.



### **My Jesus – My Friend**

Greg Sells

During my years I remember having many friends. I had friends in sports, neighbors, cousins and school. Were they really friends? Most are only a memory, however some still remain. Today, I consider my wife my closest friend. The idea of friend and friendship involves three components: association, loyalty, and affection. There are also three levels of meaning: friendship as association only; friendship as association plus loyalty; and friendship as association plus loyalty plus affection. These levels come from only one source – Christ. I have friends that have remained because of the bond we share in Christ. Jesus in everyway is the ultimate example in friendship. For us, He is the originator, the proof, and the

very essence of the intimacy which exemplifies a friend.

John 15:12-15 reads this way, *“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”*

### **Jesus the Originator of Friendship**

The association, loyalty, and affection which together comprise the idea and meaning of friend were defined best by Jesus' actions on the cross. More than mere lip service was his action for me to take on the unimaginable and die physically. This expression of love is divine and is the revealed foundation on which stands the origin of a friend. I never have had an earthly friend who willingly died for me. US Army Pfc. Ross McGinnis and Navy Seal Michael Monsoor recently did just this. They sacrificed their lives so that others might live. Jesus also laid down his life for his friends, so that others might live spiritually. He told the apostles that there was no greater act that a friend would ever perform than to lay his own life down for another. What He lets us know in this lesson is that the origin of friendship is based in love, His divine love for us. God's desire is for us to know Him and His Love and His friendship for us; so He gave us the Savior who not only showed us

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the origin of friendship, but also proved His friendship to us.

### **Jesus the Proof of Friendship**

I struggle on a daily basis with the unspoken need for proof before I make decisions of importance. In many ways this is crippling spiritually. Genesis 1:27, *"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."* God is aware of our every need including the need for proof because he created us in His image. Jesus proved His friendship and His love with His life. *"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."* John 15:13, 14. He then told us what our part is to be, *"You are my friends if you do what I command."* He gave His life to secure a place for His love in our hearts; when we learn of His dying love, we should joyfully obey His commands. Obedience is our proof of friendship to Him.

### **Jesus' affection and Intimacy in Friendship**

John 15:15-16, *"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name."* The highest proof of our friendship, and the great source of its depth and richness, is the inherent intimacy that holds nothing back, that allows friends to share their innermost secrets. It is a blessing to be Christ's servant; Christians take comfort in calling

themselves His servants. Christ had often spoken of disciples as His servants. But *"the servant knows not what his Lord does,"* he has to obey without knowledge of his master's plans. In His great love our Lord now says: *"No longer do I call you servant. But, I have called you friends, for all things I heard from my Father I have made known unto you."* Christ's friends share with Him the mystery of the Gospel. As Christ's friend we do not, as servants, do His will without spiritual insight. We have been admitted, as to an inner circle of friendship. Friendship thrives in fellowship, doing things together. Friends trust each other with the things that they would not entrust to others. What is it that gives a Christian access to this holy intimacy with Jesus? *"You are my friends if you do what I command you."* It is our loving obedience that purifies the soul and enables this intimate friendship with the Savior. Through our humble and faithful obedience, the soul becomes fitted for the ever closer fellowship, and the daily life of friendship becomes a continual experience: *"I have called you friends; for all things I have heard from my Father, I have made known unto you."* I have called you friends. What an honor! What a privilege!

Were my "friends" really friends? Can I really be their friend? Ask yourself what kind of friend you are? Christ's association, loyalty, and affection have been combined together for us – do we return the favor? I can certainly do better. How about you?



## **My Jesus – My Mediator**

Russ Ward

*“In Christ’s Name.”* Are these not three of the most wonderful words of consolation, peace, and assurance one can ever hear? Yet to Christians the words often bring a myriad of emotions and thoughts, of relief and sorrow, and yes they can even bring forth anxiety or peace, all of which depends upon today, this day and where I stand in my relationship to the Father Jehovah God. This should never be.

My dad and older brother, as we would say back in West Texas, just didn’t *“gee haw”*. They approached nearly everything from two different directions, neither really coming to understand the other. My Mother more often than not would mediate between the two of them. She had a way of tempering my brother in his approach to my father while at the same time she could reason with my father to look beyond the point of contention into the heart of the young man and into trusting that my brother would in time move away from the ground he was defending. You see she could see that when the chips were down, and when things became difficult, and the ultimate choice was to be made there was strength of character that would lead him to do that which he had been taught, and to which she knew he would hold onto.

When my mother died it affected us three boys in different ways because each of us had a different relationship with her. In retrospect though, I knew that the grief and pain in many ways was more difficult for my older brother than for us younger boys. We

were married with mounting responsibilities in caring for a wife, children, working to support a household, and responsibilities with our respective congregations. All of these simply forced us to forge ahead trusting in our Faith and recognizing the Hope that is given to faithful Christians. My older brother filled a different pair of shoes. His earthly advocate and confidant was gone and the mediator that he had come to trust in the family relationship could no longer act as a buffer.

For just a moment think what would it be like not to have Christ as our mediator with the Father. He’s gone, no light, no savior, no redeemer, no testator, no testament, no reconciliation, no forgiveness of sin, no HOPE. Now reflect for a moment, simply stop and truly thank the Father for loving us and providing the gift of Jesus. Here we are weak and sinful, the most pitiful of all creatures. Yet we have a perfect mediator, an advocate with the Father, and access to both Mercy and Grace. Do you know why?

**#1 Because He is God.** John 14:11 – 13.  
*“... I am in the Father and the Father in Me ... and whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”*

**#2 Because He was man.** 1 Tim 2:5  
*“For there is one God and one mediator also between God and Men, the man Jesus Christ who gave himself as a ransom for all.”*

**#3 Because He fostered a new covenant.** Heb. 8:6 *“But now He (Christ) has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a*

*better covenant..."*

**#4 Because He's our savior & redeemer. 1 John 2:1-2** *"... And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world"*

**#5 Because He said he would.** John 14:6 *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh to the Father but through me. ... vs 14 If you ask me anything in My name, I will do it."*

We can't truly reflect upon, nor contemplate Christ the mediator without first knowing all the other attributes of Christ. You see it is the one aspect of Him that is all encompassing. Now let's go back to the beginning. *"In Christ's Name."* Are these not three of the most wonderful words of consolation, peace, and assurance one can ever hear?



### **My Jesus — My Judge**

Craig Sweet

Most of us have heard a common English saying, "don't judge a book by its cover", which basically means that you cannot determine the value of something based upon its appearance. This saying has some roots back to the early 1900's, but I believe we

can relate this saying back to Jesus in Matt 7:21 where he says, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven."* Jesus then told them to depart because he never knew them. Why would he say this? Because Jesus is our judge and he looks at our hearts and motives and not just our actions.

Jesus provides us with some background for His statement which will help us understand the basis for which we will receive His judgment. In Matt 7:15-16, He begins by warning about false prophets coming in and teaching in sheep's clothing but inside are ravenous wolves. Jesus tells us that we can see their true motives by what they are doing and not just by what they are saying (*"... you will know them by their fruits..."*). Paul also warns us that we will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ for our deeds (2 Cor 5:10).

Another common saying we hear is "actions speak louder than words". If you were to tell someone you were a Christian, would they be convinced? Would anyone believe you based upon your actions? A better question would be, do you need to tell someone that you are a Christian or would they be able to figure that out based upon your actions? We all make judgments based upon not only what someone says, but more often, what someone does. Christ expects us to work and bear fruit. He told a parable in Luke 13:6-19 regarding a fig tree that did not bear fruit for 3 years. He instructed the vine grower to cut it down and not to waste the space. However, Jesus is also patient. When the vine grower re-

requested a little more time to help the tree bear fruit, it was granted to him. But, it was not an infinite amount of time. Jesus expects us to bear fruit without any exceptions and we will be judged by those fruits.

If we return to Matt 7:21, we now can understand that Jesus will not solely judge us based upon our actions. He was not condemning them for the things they were doing in his name. He was condemning them for why they were doing the things they did. He said, "I never knew you". Jesus was looking inside their hearts for their motives and their attitude. Where was their love for Jesus? Where was their personal relationship with Christ? Were they just doing things without understanding why? Were they doing these things with the heart of a servant? Were they just going through these tasks like they had to do under the old law? Evidently, they were not doing these things for the reasons that Jesus wanted otherwise he would not have condemned them.

In Rom 2:16, Paul tells us that Jesus will be judging us based upon our secrets according to the gospel. He knows the thoughts of our heart which means He knows our true motives when we do things. It is the motives and principles of a man that makes up his character. True impartial justice only will come when the motives are determined for our actions. Therefore, when Jesus judges us, he will be looking beyond our actions to determine what really is driving our efforts in our hearts.

Rest assured that the judgment is coming and Jesus will be our judge (Acts 10:42; 2

Tim 4:1; 1 Pet 4:3; Jn 5:22). He is going to be a righteous judge because He does not seek his own will, but the will of the Father (Jn 5:30). Is this a scary thought that you will be judged by your "secrets"; by your thoughts and motives, and not just by your actions? Who won't tremble at the judgment throne of Jesus if their heart is not right? But, if our heart is right, what a comforting thought that Jesus our Savior and Redeemer will also be my Jesus – my Judge because we know that we will get a fair judgment.



Isaiah 9:6-7 A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.



## **My Jesus – My High Priest**

Dick Dabney

There lived in the latter part of the first century, I imagine, two friends who walked through life with similar interests and spiritual goals, but with very different backgrounds. Jomren was a Hebrew, deeply steeped in Jewish lore and devoted to worship of Jehovah, God of all creation. Parco was from Sparta, raised in the Greek culture. These two had met when they worked together as laborers at the harbor of Joppa on the Mediterranean Sea. Parco and Jomren were together, as usual, when the message of Jesus Christ confronted them one day through a traveling evangelist. They each had different life experiences to draw on, but the message rang true in both of their hearts, and they became Christians together, fast followers of the truth of the gospel of Christ as they listened repeatedly to the teaching of the evangelist.

They knew of the life and death of Jesus, and the evidence of His resurrection. They were devoted to His spiritual principles and pondered with each other how to make application of these challenging truths in their lives. The evangelist had spoken of Jesus Christ as a high priest of God's children (Heb. 3:1), an image of the Messiah that was not expected among men. What Parco knew about priests was minimal at best, and Jomren's knowledge of the high priest was firmly attached to his Jewish heritage.

Jomren knew that God himself had established the priesthood of His people when He had redeemed the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. The company of priests, from the

Jewish tribe of Levi, was appointed to be mediators for the common people before God, to bring their sacrifices and worship in the way He instructed and to demonstrate a standard of holiness due to God. He had set Aaron, the brother of Moses, as the first high priest. Jomren explained to Parco that the high priest had the honor and the awesome responsibility of being the only person allowed within the holiest part of the tabernacle of worship. The high priest, the ultimate mediator, was to enter the most holy place – the “holy of holies” – just once a year, to bring a special offering before God for the sins of the people (Heb. 9:6-7). This obviously conferred on the high priest a position of highest honor and respect among those who brought their worship to God.

Jomren recounted how the high priest served the people by offering gifts and sacrifices for sins before God (Heb. 5:1). He could deal gently with the ignorant and misguided because he was beset with weaknesses himself (Heb. 5:2). And he had to offer sacrifice for his own sins before he could represent the people before God (Heb. 7:27). Then remembering the teaching of the traveling evangelist, Jomren began to better understand how much greater is Jesus Christ as our High Priest.

Jomren understood the evangelist's point that Jesus didn't elevate himself to this high position, but that He was appointed by God (Heb. 5:4-5). And although Jesus was not descended from Aaron or Levi (Heb. 7:13-14), still He was sanctified, just as Melchizedek was known as a priest before God (Heb. 6:20). That point was especially important

for Jomren because the Jewish religion would otherwise reject this whole idea, since God himself had declared (Ex. 29:29) that high priests would be from the lineage of Aaron. But God, who originally declared the priesthood of Aaron, also declared this change in the priesthood and noted (Heb. 7:12) that this was part of the change from the Old Law to the new dispensation of Jesus Christ.

Jomren explained to Parco that the high priests through Aaron, being limited to this life, were regularly replaced when they passed from this life. But Jesus would never be replaced (Heb. 7:24) because He lives forever. And while earthly high priests entered into the holy place made with the hands of man, and in their limited schedule, Jesus entered into heaven itself – into the very presence of God – once for all (Heb. 9:24-25, 11-13), to be a mediator for us. And He entered by the value of His own blood, not just the representative blood of animal sacrifices.

Parco listened and considered what he knew about the Christ. He understood that Christ came to this world in flesh and blood, and so He truly can be merciful as High Priest for us. He can come to our aid when we are tempted in this life because He experienced this life as we do (Heb 2:14, 17-18) and can sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb. 4:14-15). Compared to the earthly high priests, He brings a greater hope (Heb. 7:19) and we can draw near to God.

When Jomren recalled that God allowed the blood of animal sacrifices to serve as a

limited cleansing for the Jewish worshipers, he understood how much greater would the blood of Christ serve us, since His sacrifice was without blemish (Heb. 9:13-14). He was the perfect atonement demanded by holy God. And in comparison to the system of earthly priests and the man-made tabernacle, Jesus is the mediator of a better covenant, enacted on better promises (Heb. 8:6). Unlike the common worshiper through the former high priests, He enables us to come before God ourselves, with the full strength of His unmatched sacrifice.

Parco found a tree to lean against as he pondered these profound things. He said to his brother Jomren, "If these things be so, great indeed is our advantage in Jesus Christ. We can truly draw near with great confidence to God's throne of grace. We can receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need (Heb. 4:16)." Jomren said, "Parco, I don't believe it could be stated any better."



### **My Jesus — My Example**

Ron Gray

In the Gospel of John chapter 13, Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. He asked them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" Apparently, no one answered. Then Jesus said, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (vs. 15). In this darkening time, when

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Jesus knew that the hour had come that He should depart from this world, He enhanced His message with His actions. This is just one of many examples revealed to us throughout the ministry of Christ.

Jesus lived on this earth approximately 33 years. The last three years were concentrated upon His teaching and ultimately His sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. I have often wondered why, like the proverbial iceberg, 90 percent of His earthly life was hidden from our view. Were the first 30 years simply a growth period where Jesus matured and then began His mission? I am excited to learn just how mistaken I had been concerning those hidden years. Although detailed descriptions of His early life are rare, there scriptures shine abundant light upon all of His days on this earth.

In the book of Hebrews, God's purpose for the entire earthly life of Christ can be clearly seen. *"He had to be made like His brethren."* 2:17. *"Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which he suffered"* 5:8. He *"was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."* 4:15. *"For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted."* 2:18. *"And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."* 5:9.

Jesus was not just passing time until His moment arrived to preach the Gospel and then to go to the cross. My Jesus was living the daily life that I live. He faced the same pains, heartaches, and temptations that present themselves before me. I cannot look to Him in times of misery and cry, "You

don't know what it's like!" I cannot raise my eyes to Heaven while falling into the arms of temptation with the excuse that "You just don't know how hard it is!" *"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses..."* Heb 4:15. My Jesus can sympathize with my weaknesses. My Jesus can aid me when I am tempted. My Jesus knows what I am going through because He has been there! He showed me how to face temptation without giving in. He showed me how to live without giving up. Jesus is my perfect example.

Jesus taught me that I should *"love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength"* and to *"love your neighbor as yourself."* Mark 12:30-31. He told me that no other commandment is greater than these. Though He has all authority to teach and every right to command these things, He took it one beautiful step further. My Jesus – my Example, not only taught, not only commanded, but lived these principles before men. As we might say today, He did not just talk the talk, He walked the walk. He did this to show me that it can be done and that even I can succeed, with His grace and mercy.

The last words of the Gospel of John proclaim that Jesus did so many things that if they were all written one by one, that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. We cannot, therefore, cover each detail of the beautiful examples of Godly living that he set before us. I would like to list a few of the examples that inspire me in my attempt to follow the

footsteps of Jesus.

- My Jesus showed me that even the Son of God could not change the hearts of some, but he never gave up trying to reach and teach them.
- My Jesus showed me that lamenting over the lost is not a wasted effort. He longed for, prayed for, and worked for the salvation of Jerusalem.
- My Jesus taught me how to pray (Matt 6:5-15) and lovingly allowed me to hear His prayer to His Father (John 17:1-26).
- My Jesus showed me by His example not to have prejudices toward any man or woman, but to offer them the way of life which is accessible by His blood to all.
- My Jesus showed me how to forgive when it is hard to do so (Luke 23:34).

My Jesus showed me that the perfect man has emotions such as: anger, sadness, tears, compassion, and fear. He demonstrated how to deal with each one in a proper way without sin.

Our Jesus, our Example taught us so much by His life, His actions, His attitude, His principles, His love and His purpose. We cannot find a better life than this: *“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps...”* 1 Pet 2:21.



## My Jesus – My Brother

Carol Fertig

Many of us are blessed to have a familial relationship with someone called a brother. Ron Gray, Linda Lowe, and I can tell you how close that relationship is and how we miss our brothers when they are gone. We all (and if others had brothers who passed away recently that I don't know about, please forgive me for not mentioning you) still have pangs of sorrow and feel a void where our brothers were. God saw fit, however, to provide us with a Brother who always was, is, and ever more will be beside us.

The brother relationship began badly in scripture with the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. When challenged by God, Cain asked, “Am I my brother's keeper?” Gen 4:9. By holding him accountable, God showed us that we are indeed responsible for our brother's well-being. We are to look out for our brothers and keep watch over them.

Romans 8:15-17 reads, *“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, Abba! Father! The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.”* In these verses Paul helps us understand the familial relationship into which we have been adopted. He emphasizes that as disciples of Jesus Christ we

have been adopted into the family of God, with all the rights and privileges of sonship. He goes on to emphasize that we are not only children and heirs of God, but in particular, *“fellow heirs with Christ.”* Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is our older brother!

Our brother Jesus redeemed us from eternal death by willingly giving Himself in our place. He stands between us and the pit of sin and death. I Timothy 2:5-6: *“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony borne at the proper time.”*

The children in a family share a lot of their lives with each other. They understand the pressures, dreams, hopes of their brothers. The writer Clara Ortega said of siblings:

We know each other as we always were.

We know each other’s hearts.

We share private family jokes.

We remember family feuds and secrets, family griefs and joys.

We live outside the touch of time.

There were two men who heard John the Baptist say to Jesus, *“Behold, the Lamb of God!”* (John 1:37-41). One of these two was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. These men were Jews who were waiting for Messiah along with all of their nation. Andrew went with Jesus to where He was staying that day, and realized what a momentous thing was happening. The very first one he wanted to share this with was his brother. John 1:41-42a says *“He found first his own brother Simon , and said to him, ‘We have*

*found the Messiah’ (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus.”* What greater love than that a brother would bring his brother to Jesus! This brother shared hope, joy, history with his own brother first.

Our brother Jesus put on flesh to share life under the sun. He came willingly to earth to share in all the things we His brothers and sisters live with. He was tempted like us, yet showed us how to successfully resist Satan. He lovingly endured the agony of the cross to pay the price for our sins. He did all this in order to present us to His Father as one of the family, as adopted sons and heirs with Him. He brought us to the hope and joy and glory found only in Himself.

Our brother Jesus is strong, compassionate, able, willing and loving. His love for His brothers in spirit shows no clearer than when he was preparing his disciples for His death: *“Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”* John 14:1-3.

Our brother Jesus told his disciples in Matthew 28:20b, *“lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* He won’t refuse to be our keeper or to care about us.



## My Jesus – My Redeemer

Aaron Lumpkin

Redeemer, vindicator, defender, kinsman, rescuer, savior, guardian, protector, advocate -- these are among the many terms various translators use to describe the Hebrew word *go'eel*. It refers to an ancient Middle Eastern custom that seems to pre-date even the nation of Israel (Job 19:25). We find it used exclusively throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, often describing the Lord, but it is a word or concept that does not translate well into the New Testament Greek, and even less so into our modern English. So why, then, do we so often associate this term "redeemer" with God, the Son, when nowhere in Scripture is He ever clearly referred to by that title?

Perhaps the best translation for the idea of *go'eel* is that of a closest relative. More specifically, the word describes a closest relative who incurs certain specific responsibilities.

Before we look at each of these functions of a *go'eel*, let us first remember that Jesus *is* our closest relative. We have been adopted as children to God, the Father (Rom 8:15, Eph 1:5). While Jesus is the only Son begotten of the Father (Jn 1:14), He is by no means the only son: "For all of you are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:26). It is extremely difficult to fathom that our God could elevate us to the status of being a brother and fellow heir with the Messiah Himself (Rom 8:16-17). It is, however, precisely in this unique position as our closest relative that we see Jesus dutifully fulfill the role of our *go'eel*.

Let's look at the responsibilities we find in Scripture of a *go'eel* and see how our Lord Jesus performed each duty.

1) The *go'eel* was to buy back land sold by his kinsman. Remember that the idea of inheritance was of great importance in Hebrew society. At times, one would find themselves in debt and sell their inherited land to repay that debt. In order to keep the inheritance in the family, the *go'eel* was required by the Lord to buy the land back, and the new owner was required to sell it back to the family (Lev 25:23ff; Ruth 4). Likewise, from the beginning man was intended to walk in paradise with God. We have sold this inheritance because of our sin, and it is Jesus who has paid the price to return this inheritance to us (Eph 1:3-18).

2) If the debt was more severe, sometimes an individual would sell themselves into servitude to work off that debt (Ex 21:1-11). In this case, the *go'eel* was to ransom the relative by paying whatever remained of his debt (Lev 25:47-49). In a similar fashion, we have all sold ourselves in bondage to Satan because of our sin, and it is Jesus who emancipates us from this debt of slavery (Rom 6; 1 Cor 7:23).

3) In the case of one Hebrew killing another, it was the grim task of the *go'eel*, or blood avenger, to execute the sentence of judgment on his kinsman's murderer by putting the culprit to death (Num 35:6-34). Going back to Eden, we see that Eve and Adam died because of their sin (Gen 2:17), and the devil "was a murderer from the beginning" (Jn 8:44). In the same way, we have

each forfeited our lives to sin (Js 1:14-15), but it is Jesus who is our vindicator and has defeated both sin and death to avenge our deaths (1 Cor 15: 56-57; Heb 2:14-15).

Let us then consider the “Great Redeemer” Jesus – the payer of our debts, liberator of our souls, avenger of our lives – our *go’eel*! What better word could there be to describe such a one?!

Much more could be said on this subject, but we’ll conclude with the words of righteous Job, who, in the midst of the struggle of his life, yearned for his *go’eel*: *“As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last shall take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!”* Likewise, may our hearts faint within each of us for our *go’eel*, our Redeemer!



### **My Jesus – My Shepherd**

John Ledbetter

Jesus said, *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”* John 10:11. The shepherd and the sheep – to me this is the most precious figure of speech, that Jesus is my Shepherd. Twice Jesus declared, *“I am the good Shepherd.”* John 10:11, 14. The importance of this metaphor lies in its use by Jesus, first to establish His claim of being God in the flesh,

and second, to identify Himself as the “Son of David,” Israel’s great shepherd king.

A knowledge of the Old Testament concerning the true shepherd of Israel is vital to a proper understanding of what is meant by Jesus. God appears throughout the Old Testament as the true shepherd of Israel (Psalm 23:1; 79:13; 80:1; 95:7). In Ezekiel chapter 34 the whole chapter is given over to this metaphor of God as the good shepherd and the false leaders as the evil shepherds. This great chapter is the key to all that is spoken here. When Jesus when twice declared that “I am the Good Shepherd,” He was declaring that He was God.

There is a further inference of this claim of being the “Good Shepherd,” and that refers to His being the Son of David. Ezekiel prophesied, *“Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken.”* Ezekiel 34:23, 24. Ezekiel’s prophecy did not refer to the literal king David, long dead, but to the Son of David, the Messiah, who would truly reign over the kingdom, the church, upon the throne of David (spiritually). Thus, in the times of Christ, the Messiah was usually spoken of as “the Son of David” (Matthew 22:42).

“David” is to be taken symbolically to mean Christ (Ezekiel 34:24). God had promised David that the Messiah would be of his lineage and would reign on the throne of

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His kingdom forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). Therefore Ezekiel is not speaking of a literal resurrection of David, but rather of the time when David's greater Son, Jesus Christ, would be raised out of the faithful remnant and be crowned as prince (compare Jeremiah 23:5-6). The apostle Peter affirmed that Jesus was raised from the dead to sit on David's throne (Acts 2:29-30). Furthermore, James quoted the prophecy of Amos when he affirmed that the ruins of the "tabernacle of David" had now been rebuilt in order that the *"rest of mankind may seek the Lord."* Acts 15:13-17.

As a young boy I enjoyed living on the farm where my father had a flock of sheep. I learned how my father, as their shepherd cared for his sheep each day and night. He gave each of his sheep a name as you would your pet animal that you love, protected and provided food and water; strengthened the weak sheep, healed the sheep that were sick, and made a cast for sheep when their leg had been broken. He would call the sheep to come up at night to feed them and keep them safe in a pen he had built with a high fence and a canopy on top of the fence where no wolf or vicious animal could break in to kill them.

Sheep are humble, timid animals that need constant care. They cannot swim if they fall into a stream, nor take care of themselves in the wilderness. The shepherd is their life. Jesus is my Shepherd, He knows me by my name, He is very close, intimate, and cares for me. He is loving and devoted to His sheep, risking His life or even giving His life in defense of the sheep

against vicious beasts or thieves. Jesus said in Luke 15:1-7, that if a shepherd has one hundred sheep and one is lost he will go after the one that is lost until it is found. Each sheep is important to him. The shepherd will go to the most dangerous height of the mountain and risk his life to reach for the lamb that has fallen into danger and caught in the rocks. When he has rescued it He takes it in his arms and carries it to safety with love and devotion.

In the allegory the "Good Shepherd" is Jesus, and the sheep are the Christians. In John 10:11, Jesus says, *"The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep."* In this scripture Jesus prophesies concerning the cross where he gave His life for us. In John 10:10, Jesus teaches, *"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."* Christians not only have the promise of life in the world to come (John 3:16), but also through the abundant spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3) they live life on earth to the fullest with the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Phil. 4:6-7, 11-13).

When I read that Jesus is my Shepherd, I understand He loves and cares for me in my every need, both spiritual and physical. Jesus is my Shepherd. He is with me now and will be with me in eternity.





# My Jesus



## My Jesus

Sitting on the throne  
With God reigning forever  
Maker of all things  
All power and glory  
My Lord, My God, My Jesus

God who became man  
Living a perfect life  
Dying to save the world  
All power and glory  
My Example, My High Priest,  
My Jesus

Knowing my deeds  
Saving my life  
Through you we pray  
All power and glory  
My Judge, My Mediator, My Jesus

We who are saved  
Become a child of God  
Following your steps  
All power and glory  
My Shepherd, My Brother, My Jesus

Aileen Perl Fancher

## My Jesus, I Love You Hymn 110

My Jesus, I love Thee, I know thou art  
mine; For Thee all the follies of sin I  
resign; My gracious Redeemer, my  
Savior art Thou; If ever I loved Thee,  
my Jesus tis now.

I love Thee because Thou hast first  
loved me; and purchased my pardon on  
Calvary's tree; I love Thee for wearing  
the thorns on They brow; If ever I  
loved Thee, my Jesus tis now.

I'll love Thee in life, I will love Thee in  
death; And praise Thee as long as  
Thou lendest me breath; And say when  
the death dew lies cold on my brow; If  
ever I loved Then, my Jesus tis now.

In mansions of glory and endless de-  
light; I'll ever adore Thee, in heaven so  
bright; I'll sing with the glittering  
crown on my brow' If ever I loved Thee,  
my Jesus tis now.

William R. Featherstone

