



Fix Your
Eyes On
Jesus'
wonderful
Names

Rev. Dr. Botros Botrosdief

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Names***

***“Christ who is over all, God
blessed forever”***

Romans 9:5

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work in the editing of this book.**

**May God be praised and His name highly exalted
for all good things that come from Him and to
Him and for Him!**

***Soli Deo Gloria-*
To God be Glory**

Botros

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Introduction

The Word of God indicates ways in which our Lord God and Saviour is to be known and responded to; as Jesus, Immanuel, Wonderful Counsellor, Son of God, Son of Man, Bread of Life, Light of the world, The Door, The Good Shepherd, The Resurrection and the Life, The Way and the Truth and the Life, The True Vine, The Great Physician, The Stone, The Great High Priest, The Surety, The Advocate, The Bright Morning Star, The Head, the Beginning, the First Born, and the Amen.

The title of this book, “*Fix Your Eyes On Jesus’ Wonderful Names*”, aims to bring together the above titles of Jesus which we meet in the New Testament.

No one can send out a book on a subject like this without a feeling of its complete inadequacy. I can only hope and pray that as the writing of it has opened to me something of the never-ending wonder of My Lord and My God Jesus Christ, so the reading of it will do something of that for others.

My prayer is that our eyes will open to Jesus’ glorious names, and our faith strengthens as it is written in Psalm 9:10, “*Those who know your name put their trust in you*”.

To God Alone Be the Glory Amen.

Botros Botrosdief

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1. Jesus

There were many names given to our Lord Jesus before He was born using the phrase, “*He shall be called.*” The angel said to Joseph and Mary: “*You shall call His Name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins*” (Matthew 1:21; Luke1:31).

Jesus is the dearest name that sounds sweeter in the believers’ ear as we sing for Him many songs of praise. *Charles Wesley’s* favourite song “*O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*” says:

Jesus! The name that charms our fears,
that bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.

Jesus’ name is *ישׁוּעַ* *Yeshu'a* in the Aramaic. It became *Ἰησοῦς* -Iesous, in the Greek and Jesus in English. The name of Jesus was a common Jewish name which means “Yahweh *is salvation*”. Believers of the Old Testament were looking to God’s promise Messiah. “*The Lord of salvation*”.

Let us see what the significance of Jesus Name is;

(1) It is significant because His name identifies who He is. His name identifies Him as God Himself. Immanuel, Christ, the Saviour, the Lord. (2) It is significant because His name describes His redemptive work that was achieved for our salvation. (3) It is also significant because His name empowers us with His presence and authority in our daily life.

Firstly; it is significant that Jesus received His name before He was born to identify Him and represent Him as God Himself “*God our Saviour- Immanuel -God with us*”. The

angel said to Joseph and Mary: *“You shall call His Name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31).

It is significant that the angel identifies Jesus, and represented Him to the shepherds as the Saviour, who is Christ the Lord *“I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord”* Luke 2:10-11

So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah: *“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called: Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”*. *“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,”* which is translated, *“God with us”* (Isaiah 9:6-7; 7:14).

Our Lord Jesus received His name before He was born, to identify Him as the Incarnate God whose *“name is above every name”* as Apostle Paul says (Philippians 2:9).

Secondly; it is significant that Jesus received His name to describe His redemptive work which is going to achieve our salvation.

The angel said to Joseph *“You shall call His Name Jesus for He will save His people from their sins”*. To the shepherds, the angel of the Lord says *“I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord”*.

It is written by the prophet Isaiah, that the ‘*Messiah*’ shall come and that he shall be wounded for our transgressions,

bruised for our iniquities and that the chastisement of our peace will be upon on him and only by his stripes, will we be healed (Isaiah 53).

The name of Jesus reminds us about His amazing humility as the Son of God when He came as a man to die. And we need to show the same humility that Jesus demonstrated while on earth as the Bible says in Philippians 2:5-8, *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross”*.

Because of this great work of love, humility for our salvation, His name is glorified far above every other name as the Bible goes on to say: *“Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:9-11).

Thirdly; Jesus name is given to empower us with His presence and the authority of His wonderful name.

Our Lord Jesus assured us of His presence whenever we gather together in his name (Matt 18:20). Let us not forget that His name Immanuel means *“God with us”*. We cannot afford to fear but to live in Faith because Jesus our Lord is always with us.

Our Lord Jesus gave the believer the right to use his name, (Jn 14:13, 15:16, 16:23-24, 26; Matt 28:18-19, Phil 2:9-11). So the question is: In what area of life can we use the name of Jesus?

By the authority of this Wonderful Name we get a breakthrough for ourselves and for others. It is only through Jesus' name, can we be saved. Jesus' name is a one-word summary of things which He came into the world to do and which only He can do. As the Apostle Peter says, "*Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12). "*For God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through him*" (John 3:17).

This wonderful name of Jesus can be called upon at any time in our daily life. We do all things and praying in His name as the Bible says in Col 3:17, "*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him*". All it takes is just like one telephone call to glory!

Let us call Him when we are in trouble, "*He is the Prince of Peace*". Call Him when you are sick and weak, He is "*The Mighty God*". Call Him when your life is shaky, for He is "*The Everlasting Father*". Call Him when you are surrounded by worry and fear for it is written "*The name of the Lord is like a strong tower; the righteous person runs to it and is set safely on high*" (Proverbs 18:10).

Call when the job is finished. Call Him when you are being accused. Call Him when you are confused, as He is a “Wonderful Counsellor”. Call Him when you need a miracle in your life for the day of miracles is not past, because the God of miracles is still present!

Yes, Jesus is a name, which is sweet and precious to believers who have gone before us. It has often done them good and it is still for us today. It has the power to ease our troubled consciences and give rest to our heavy hearts. Happy is the person who trusts not merely in vague notions of God's mercy and goodness, but in "Jesus".

Jesus the Name, Jesus the God, is an ‘Awesome Wonder’. Let this beautiful name of Jesus transform our life into something meaningful, because until we start living by His name, we are not living at all.

My prayer is that our eyes will open to Jesus’ wonderful name, and our faith strengthens by calling upon His name as it is written in Psalm 9:10, “*Those who know your name put their trust in you*”.

To Him be Glory Forever and Ever. Amen.

2. Immanuel

Immanuel one of the names that was given to Jesus before He was born, and we'll take a closer look at this great name to see the significance of its meaning. The prophet Isaiah said *"The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14).

The prophecy of Isaiah refers to the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:22-23, *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' which means, 'God with us.'"*

The question we must ask is; what did Immanuel mean to Isaiah? What did Immanuel mean to Matthew? And what does Immanuel mean to us today?

Isaiah is speaking to Ahaz, the King of Judah, who was trembling with fear when he realized that Aram/ Syria, and Ephraim, the northern Israelite state, had formed a coalition against him and planned to replace him with another King, - Tabeel.

The merciful God sent His prophet Isaiah to encourage Ahaz and tell him that the plot would not succeed. He would be secure, if he believed that only Yahweh could guarantee safety.

Isaiah said to him: *"Take heed, and be quiet; do not fear or be fainthearted for these two stubs of smoking firebrands (Syria and Ephraim) who have plotted evil against you, saying, "Let us go up against Judah and set a king over them, the son of Tabel". Thus says the Lord GOD: "It shall not*

stand, nor shall it come to pass. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established.” (Isaiah 7:3-9).

The LORD promised deliverance if the king would believe. Isaiah commanded him, saying “*Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God.*” But king Ahaz refused to trust in God, and he decided that it would be better to make a treaty with the King of Assyria to defend him against Syria and Israel.

When Ahaz failed to respond correctly, the LORD did not withdraw his promise just because of a King's unfaithfulness. The prophet Isaiah then announced the sign of the birth of Immanuel to show that Judah would survive the invasion encouraging the people that they would survive also in the future with the greater invasion to come from Babylonian kingdom.

God was faithful to the remnant of his people in the nation of Judah who were faithful to Him, and He said: “*The Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel... For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings*”.

And there was a child born in Ahaz's day - it wasn't the Lord Jesus, *but it was a child that was the sign* to signify that God is with His people and would deliver them from their enemies.

And if Ahaz would wait, and if Ahaz would have faith, when the age came that that child was able to discern right from wrong, then all the fear from the nations around would pass away and all would be at peace.

So it was, amidst all the trial and troubles that the nation of Judah faced, even though their King turned his face from the Lord and worshiped idols, God remained faithful with His people. That's what Immanuel meant to Isaiah - it was a child who would be born in his day who would signify deliverance of God's people. It would signify divine hope, God's grace, and God's faithfulness in the midst of their failure.

What did this name 'Immanuel' mean to Matthew and to the Jews of his day? The angel said to Joseph, “*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*’.

Just as the first Immanuel in Isaiah was to signify the hope of Israel, and deliverance from their enemies, so the birth of Jesus Immanuel would signify greater deliverance from our sins, and freedom from our captivity to Satan.

Immanuel in Isaiah was a picture, a type, pointing a big arrow to the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Immanuel of the New Testament, who was conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary, by the Holy Spirit that overshadowed her.

The prophecy of Isaiah has two “fulfilments”: a near, partial fulfilment that happened in Isaiah’s time, and a far or ultimate and complete fulfilment that happened with the birth of Jesus. Immanuel of the New Testament not only signifies God's saving act of redemption for those who trust Him but also signifies the continuation of His presence among the members of His Church. It is significant that Matthew began his Gospel telling us that God is with us and in the middle of his gospel he reminded us of Jesus promise, “*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the*

midst of them” (Matt 18:20). In the end of his gospel he assured us of Jesus’ promise, “*Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age*” (Matt 28:20).

That is what the name 'Immanuel' meant to Matthew and God's people of the first century, who were awaiting the coming of Messiah to redeem them from their sins and dwell among them forever.

What Immanuel means to us today?

The significance of this name for us today is this; God is telling us in the midst of the darkness and troubles in our life, I am with you, I am your Immanuel. I am with you always. He is with us! He is for us!

That is His grace, His glory that shined from above; His salvation is still for us today! Yes His saving power, His act of redemption is still in the midst of us today. The Apostle Paul put it like this: “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men*” (Titus 2:10)'.

The birth of both Immanuels, the first of the Old Testament and the second of the New Testament, signifies that God's presence is with His people from generation to generation. That is Good News indeed.

If you are going through many storms of life, sickness or pain or loneliness or desertion, trust in your Immanuel. Whatever trouble that surrounds you or you go through, no matter where you are, no matter how badly you feel; God is telling you: “I am with you!” He did not come to just put His hand on us; to just give us a pat on the back but He has come to stay. He has come to dwell in us! He is with us wherever we go, and in whatever we do. Jesus Immanuel is with us.

God is not just looking after us, but His very presence, His Spirit had come to actually dwell with us. God did not send an angel, but He has come personally to us, He took upon Himself our flesh that He might suffer in everything as we do, that we might know He sympathizes and comforts us and helps us in the time of need.

Emmanuel presents us a true God-man, one who is all that God is, and at the same time all that man is. He is the One **on** whose almighty arms we can rest and **to whose** human sympathy we can appeal.

Faith in Jesus our Immanuel ensures security amidst the terrifying circumstances in troubling times of life and also guarantees participation in the glorious future of Heaven.

Immanuel: God with us. It is wisdom's mystery. It is hell's terror. Satan and demons tremble with fear when they hear you trusting Immanuel saying; God with us. It is the sufferer's comfort. It is balm of his woe. It is alleviation of his misery. It is the sleep that God gives to his beloved. It is the rest after exertion and toils. God with us is the song of the Redeemed. Yes Immanuel God with us. Let us rejoice in Immanuel - God with us - and because of that, we can say; who can be against us. Immanuel to You O Lord be the glory. Amen.

3. Wonderful Counsellor

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light, on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned." (Is. 9:2) "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Is: 9:6)

These wonderful words of prophecy by Isaiah 700 years before the coming of the Messiah were fulfilled with the birth of our Lord Jesus in Bethlehem. These verses of Scriptures are the best known and best loved words about our Lord Jesus Christ. It is one of the greatest pieces of choral music ever composed – Handel's Messiah.

In these verses our Lord Jesus is given four names: *Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace*. Each of these four titles gives us a different aspect of who He is for us and the work that God wants to do in our lives.

His name is *Wonderful Counsellor*.

When we use the word wonderful, we mean something is good or excellent, for example I might say 'I had a wonderful time last night', meaning I've had a good time. But when Isaiah describes our Lord Jesus, as wonderful, he means more than good or excellent. The word means "a sense of wonder" as we read in Psalm 78:12 *"God did wonders in the sight of their fathers in the land of Egypt"*. Our Lord Jesus is a doer of

marvellous things, which are beyond human ability, and understanding. Look to his life, his teaching, his miracles, his compassion, and his wonderful love in sacrificing of himself for us on the cross.

God wants to bring a sense of awe and wonder to our lives. His name is *Wonderful Counselor*, and He can make our life wonderful if we heed his counselling. When He was asked, “Lord is it lawful to give taxes to Caesar?” He said “*Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's*”. When they brought a woman before Him, they asked Him “Moses told us to stone this woman, what do you say?” He said “*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*”. People were amazed when they heard this wonderful counselling.

Yes, our Lord is the one who imparts wisdom that leads us from darkness and confusion into light, out of danger into safety.

Because He loves us, He wants to give us His personal counsel and direction, as the Psalmist said 73:24, “*You will guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me into glory.*” We don’t have to be baffled by the problems we face, because with Christ as our Counselor, we can know His good and perfect will for our life.

When we are faced with an important decision, and need guidance, let us turn first to Scripture to hear the voice of Christ who answers our questions. God promised that He will guide us in the time of need. Let us trust His Divine care when things seem not clear for us. God is saying to each one of us, “*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye*” (Psalm 32:8)

Our Lord Jesus, is the one who understands us when no one else does. He is the one who stands by us when everyone else turns away. He is the one who really can help us confront

the past and begin again. What a relief to know that our Lord Jesus faced the same problems we face, and understands every experience we go through, He understands our tears, and our deepest needs, and He also is able to help us. This leads me on to the next name given to Jesus by Isaiah.

His name is ***Mighty God***. This means that Jesus has unlimited power for you as you encounter the demands of life. There are times when you probably have thought that it was very hard to live the Christian life. In fact, I think it is impossible to be a Christian apart from the help of the Holy Spirit. The Mighty God is there for us to give us the strength to do what is beyond our ability as human beings. By ourselves we cannot forgive, but Jesus our Lord gives us the ability to forgive anyone who hurts us. The Bible says “*Since Christ himself has gone through suffering and testing, He is able to help us when we are being tested*” (Heb 4:14; 2:18)

His name is ***Everlasting Father***. We read that the government will be on His shoulders, and yet His spiritual kingship is not like an earthly kingship, because He is not just a ruler, but an Everlasting Father as well.

In the time of Isaiah, when this was written, the kings were known as oppressors of the people. But the government of the Everlasting Father will be quite different. Isaiah 9 says that this ruler will not burden His people, but as the Everlasting Father, he will break the yoke off their backs and free them from oppression.

We see this fulfilled in our Lord Jesus who declared, “*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your*

souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matthew 11:28-30)

Our Lord Jesus has revealed the love of our heavenly Father and He offers us compassion, loving care, guidance, support and encouragement. He said, "I came to bring life in all its fullness (John 10:10). And as our everlasting father, He is not caught up in or restricted by time as we are. He does not change; He does not get older, He is for us forever as it written, "*Jesus Christ, is same yesterday and today and forever*" (Hebrews 13:8).

His name is *the Prince of Peace*. He is the Prince of Peace because through his sacrifice on the cross, we are made right with God and can experience peace with God. It is only through Jesus that we can experience the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Peace is not about the absence of trouble from our lives, but the assurance that no matter what we face in life, God is with us, and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. This is why Paul wrote, "*For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 8:38-39)

In Jesus we discover love, acceptance and forgiveness. His peace is deep down in our hearts as our Lord said, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid*" (John 14:27). This is why Jesus is the Prince of Peace. This is the message of hope for all of us. We rejoice in that peace that Jesus gives to us, because we know him as our Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, our Everlasting Father and our Prince of Peace

4. The Son of God

Son of God, is one of the most beloved names to Christian believers as the Apostle John says, *“I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life”*(1 John 5:13).

“The early Christian Church thought and spoke of Jesus and worshiped Him as God Himself. This is really significant, as most of them were Jews who believed only in one God, creator of Heaven and Earth and their confession of faith, *“Hear O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one”* (Deuteronomy 6:4.) נְשַׁמַּע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד

The question is what they meant when they thought of Jesus in terms of God? And what does it mean when they say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?

In Matthew 16:13-16 Jesus asked His disciples, *“Who do people say that the Son of Man is?”* And they said, *‘Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’* He said to them, *“who do you say that I am?”* Peter said, *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Peter expressed his firm conviction that Jesus was the promised Messiah, the Son of the living God.

This showed that Peter believed Jesus to be more than a good teacher or a great prophet, but rather God manifest in the flesh. The Lord Jesus then declared Peter to be blessed, for that revelation came only from God the Father, for *“no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit”* (2 Cor 12:3).

In John 5:18 we have the most clear understating of the Jewish mind when Jesus claimed to be, “The Son of God” and

applied the name of God, “I AM”, to Himself. The Bible says *“The Jews sought to kill Jesus, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God”*.

And in John 8:56-59, Jesus said to the Jews, *“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”* They said to him *“You are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!”* Jesus answered *“Very truly I tell you, before Abraham was born, I am!”* At this, they picked up stones to stone him. In John 10:31-33, Jewish leaders picked up stones to stone Jesus, but He said to them, *“I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”* They answered *“We are not stoning you for any good work, but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”*

Today as Christians, we must be ready to explain to anyone who asks the same question, how Christ is God and also called the Son of God?

First of all, we have to emphasise that God did not marry the blessed Mary and Jesus was born as Islam has accused us wrongly. Nothing in the Bible said so. The Bible states, however, that Jesus is God’s Son in the sense that **He is God made manifest in human form** *“And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh”* (1 Tim 3:16).

The Bible says in John 1:1, 14 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”*.

‘The Word’ is Jesus - who was with God in the beginning and became flesh. This is what ‘manifest or incarnate’ means - to be made flesh. This makes it clear that Jesus is the eternal God becoming human. So it isn’t so much that God had a human son, but that God’s son became human for our sake, to save us from our sins. As the Bible says in Hebrews 2:14-18, “*Since human have flesh and blood, Christ too shared in our humanity so that by his death he might break the power of death and free us from our slavery. For surely it is not angels he helps, but human. For this reason he had to be made like us, fully human in every way, in order that he might make atonement for our sins*” (Paraphrase).

Look at His Birth. It was beyond human comprehension, but was shown to be possible with God as the angel said to Mary, “*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, so the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God*”(Luke 1:35).

Look at His Life and Ministry. During the three years of His ministry, many recognized and testified that He was indeed the Son of God. *His Sinless Life, His teaching and His miracles* that fulfilled over three hundred prophecies, all proved that He was the promised divine Messiah. Further, demons knew Him to be the Son of God.

Jesus proved that He was God because He did things only God could do. He claimed to forgive sin, and proved this authority by healing the paralytic man immediately. The first thing Jesus told him was that his sins were forgiven. Jewish religious leaders accused Him of blasphemy, because by forgiving sin He was making Himself equal with God, who alone could forgive sin.

But Jesus answered this charge by saying, "*Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, and walk'?*" In other words, what is easier to do? Forgive sin, or heal the paralytic man? Then to prove His authority to forgive sin He said, "*Get up, pick up your bed and go home.*" *He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.* This amazed everyone and the people praised God, saying, "*We have never seen anything like this!*" (Mk 2:1-12).

But the Jewish religious leaders of His day were blind to the evidence of the deity of Jesus, and they continued to disbelieve Him. They finally asked the Roman governor to crucify Him for blasphemy, for claiming to be God.

Look at His Death and His Resurrection. The prime cause of His crucifixion was His claim to be God. The Lord's death was for everyone (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). He declared that He had power to raise Himself from the dead (John 2:19; Matt 12: 40), and His resurrection was clear proof that He was the Son of God (Romans 1:4)

Look at the rapid spread of Christianity in the first three centuries. It was because of the power of the resurrection of Jesus. The disciples of Jesus, with 500 believers, had been witness to His resurrection. They saw Him die; they saw Him raised from the dead. They were convinced beyond doubt that He was God.

The early Christian Church fell under intense persecution from the Roman Empire, beginning with Nero in 64 AD and lasted for 300 years, until the Roman Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, which allowed complete freedom for Christians to live without fear in the Roman Empire. In spite of persecution, the powerful witness of

Christian **martyrdom** led to continued spread of the Christian faith.

During these 300 years of the early Christianity, to declare the Christian faith was an invitation to death. The fish became a secret code to introduce one Christian to another. One Christian would draw a curve representing half of the symbol, and the other one would complete the cryptic symbol by drawing the second curve.

The fish captures the central meaning; the essential creed of the Christian faith, for the Greek word for fish is **ιχθυς**, an acrostic for "Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ" or (Iēsous Christos, Theou yios, Sōtēr), which translates into English as ***Jesus Christ, Son of God, our Saviour***.

I χ θ υ ς
Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour
Ἰησοῦς = **I** = **Jesus**
Χριστός = **χ** = **Christ**
Θεοῦ = **θ** = **God**
υἱός, = **υ** = **Son**
Σωτήρ = **ς** = **Saviour**

The statement "*Jesus Christ, Son of God, our Saviour*" captures both the person of Christ and his mission. It was revealing who is Christ? And what is His mission? He is the Son of God. He is the Saviour of the world both are expressed by the ancient symbol of the fish.

Many religious leaders and teachers have come and gone on the world scene. None of them could bring forgiveness of sin or salvation. None of them died for humanity nor conquered death by rising from the grave. There is only one Saviour- our LORD Jesus Christ! Without Him our faith is of no value. But because we believe that He is the Son of God, we have eternal life.

Yes, because Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, and He is the Way and the Truth and the Life, the only Door for eternal life, we enjoy the salvation He secured for us.

We are able to say with conviction, along with Peter, that Jesus is "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16); and also along with the Apostle Paul that Jesus "*is God over all*" (Romans 9:5)

Let this too be our faith' *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life*" (1 John 5:11-12). It is our only victory over the world "*Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God*" (1 John 5:5). And in 1 John 3:23 the Bible says "*This is His command: to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ*". It should ever be our testimony, "*We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life*" (1 John 5:20). May Martha's answer and Peter and all the believers who have gone before us be ours until He comes,

"Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of Living God" (Matt 16:16; John 11:27).

5. The Son of Man

The title, Son of Man, was the most personal and most favourite name our Lord Jesus used for Himself. It occurs 81 times in the four gospels. In Matthew it occurs 30 times, in Mark 15 times, in Luke 25 times, and in John 11 times.

It was not fully known to the Jews, but they believed that this title referred to the Messiah who would not die as they said to Jesus in John 12: 34, “*We have heard from the Law that the Messiah will remain forever, so how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?*”

They got that belief from the vision of Daniel 7 which says, “*I saw the son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven... all nations worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed*” (Dan 7:13-14).

Our Lord shed light on this title, applied it for Himself and emphasized three significance facts that explain what it means for Jesus to call Himself the Son of Man.

Firstly, the title, Son of man, speaks of Jesus’ authority as God Himself (Mark 2:10; 28).

Secondly, it speaks of Jesus’ suffering and death on the Cross for mankind to take away our sins (Matthew 20:28).

Thirdly, it speaks of Jesus’ Second Coming in glory at the end of time to judge the world and vindicate His people (Matt 13:40-43; Dan 7:13, 14 & Rev 1:13; 14:14).

The title Son of man speaks of Jesus' authority as God Himself (Mark 2:10; 28).

In Mark 2, we read the story of the paralysed man, carried by four men. When they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, "*Son, your sins are forgiven.*" The religious leaders who were sitting criticized Jesus and said "Why does this man talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Our Lord said to them, "*Which is easier: to say to this paralysed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.*" So he said to the man, "*I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.*" He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

In this story, the Bible is saying to us, "Since Jesus was Himself God, forgiving sins is just what you would expect Him to do". This story is also telling us that God wants to see our faith in Him, as He saw faith of the four men who brought their sick friend to Jesus. The man was healed not because of his faith but because his friends had faith. Jesus saw their faith.

The story defines the meaning of faith. It is faith in Christ. It was Christ in whom these four men had confidence. Faith is also taking a risk. These men knew that if they were not successful, their friends would laugh at them. They knew that the owner of the house might be angry when he saw the hole

in the roof; and Jesus and his disciples and the others inside the house might be angry when the sticks and clay and dust began to fall on their head. But their faith took that risk and determined that they were prepared to endure suffering of any kind.

Also, faith is taking action. They showed that they had real faith by making a simple mat or bed and carrying the man to Jesus. Faith is also persistence. First, they tried to push the man through the door, but it was impossible. They did not give up, but tried another way.

Let us too put our trust in Jesus Christ our Saviour, pray for those we love to be saved, bring them to Jesus in prayer. Showing our faith in action and not giving up, whatever the circumstance may be. Surely God will fulfil the desire of our hearts.

The title, “Son of Man” speaks of Jesus’ suffering and death on the Cross for mankind to take away our sins.

In Matthew 20:28 our Lord Jesus said, “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*”.

On the cross, our sins were laid on Him, as the Bible states in Isaiah 53, where Jesus, the suffering Redeemer, on our behalf, “*took up our pain and bore our suffering... He was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*”

The title, Son of Man, speaks of Jesus' Second Coming in glory at the end of time to judge the world and bless His people with the glory of the Eternal kingdom of the Father (Matt 13:40-43; Dan 7:13-14 & Rev 1:13; 14:14).

In Matthew 13:40-43 our Lord Jesus said, *“It will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”*.

And in Matthew 25:31-46 He said, *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ...’ Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels... And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.’”*

In Daniel 7:13-14 we read the vision of the coming of the Son of Man *“with the clouds of heaven...He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an*

everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

All these references, and more speak of Jesus as, “the Son of Man” indicating that He is the divine Messiah who is going to come in power and glory to judge the world and vindicate His people.

By becoming a man, Christ did not cease being God. The incarnation of Christ, which is the manifestation of God in the flesh, did not involve the subtraction of deity, but the addition of humanity- God appeared in human form. In fact, all the references in the Bible about the title “Son of Man” are used in contexts of Christ's deity. The Apostle John told us, *“This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”*

Yes, our Lord Jesus used the title ‘Son of Man’ for Himself, to indicate His Messianic work of redemption as the Saviour of the world. He is the God, who manifested in the flesh to save us from our sins and still today, speaks to men and women of faith, “I will fulfil the desires of your heart”.

Yes, Jesus as the Son of man, will come again in His glory and power to bring to His people the blessing of the eternal kingdom in the New Heaven where there will be no tears. God will wipe away every tear from our eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away and God as He promised *“Behold, I make all things new”* (Revelation 21)

6. Bread of Life

There are seven sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of John, which begin with the words ‘I AM’. “I Am the bread of life” *“I am the light of the world... I am the door of the sheep... I am the good shepherd... I am the resurrection and the life... I am the way and the truth and the life... I am the true vine”* (John 6:35; 8:12; 10:7,11; 11: 25-26; 14:6 & 15:1,5).

These sayings portray Jesus’ unique authority and identity as God. Jews of the first century understood that Jesus was claiming to be God in these ‘I Am’ sayings. They tried to stone him when He said *“Before Abraham was, I AM”* (8:58). In saying that, our Lord asserted not only His pre-existence as the Eternal God, but also adopted of the very name of God, ‘I AM’ for himself. God said that His name is *“I am who I am”* in Exodus 3:13-14, when He said to Moses, *“Say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you... This is My name forever”*.

In these seven ‘I AM’ sayings our Lord Jesus does not just speak for God like Moses or one of the prophets. He is the God who speaks. He meant that He would be to us what God proposed to be to His ancient people of Israel. So when we believe, follow and obey Jesus, we are believing, following and obeying God. When we worship Jesus, we are worshipping God.

We’ll look at the seven “I AM” statements to see what they tell us.

1. “I Am The Bread of Life” (John 6:35)

Our Lord Jesus said this after He had fed the 5000 people who had come to hear him preach. He then left, but the crowd followed him. Why? He had fulfilled their physical need. He had fed them when they were hungry.

Now Jesus challenged them, “*You are looking for me not because you saw the signs but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not work for food that perishes but for food that endures for eternal life*” (John 6:26, 27). They said “*What sign will you perform then, that we may see it and believe you? What work will you do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat’*” (John 6:30-31; Exodus 16:13-18).

He said what they should do is seek after the ‘*true bread from heaven*’ the bread ‘*that gives life to the world*’ (6:33). The crowd took Jesus words literally and cried out, ‘*Give us this bread always*’. And Jesus said “*I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst... Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*”

On hearing it, many said, “This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?” Jesus said to them, “*Does this offend you? The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.*”

Jesus' saying, "I AM The Bread of Life", answers four important questions;

1. What did Jesus want us to seek first?

Our Lord Jesus wants us to seek first the bread of heaven. He said "*Do not work for food that perishes but for food that endures for eternal life... For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world* (Jn 6).

2. What did Jesus mean when he said, "*I am the bread of Life?*"

Did he mean that he had suddenly become a piece of bread? To answer this, let us go back to the Mediterranean world of Jesus day. Bread was the most important and basic part of the diet. If you had bread and water you had a meal. If you had in addition some fish or red meat, a slice of cheese or a few dates you ate very well.

When Jesus said '*I am the bread of life*' he was not saying, I am like fresh bread but I am what you need to live and be blessed with eternal life. I am the one who can really nourish you along life's journey. I do not give you 'bread' that only feeds the body. I give you bread that offers eternal life.

The bread Jesus offers does not relieve physical hunger and thirst, but it gives eternal life and quenches spiritual thirst.

3. How this bread of life is to be taken?

Two simple words Jesus said- come and believe, "*He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst*". Coming to Jesus for this bread is not a literal coming as one might come to a shop that sells bread. It is to believe in Him and trust His work on the cross and His

promise of eternal life. He said, *“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”*

Our Lord Jesus is the one who offers bread that truly satisfies and He alone can satisfy our deepest needs.

4. Why did the Jews first think of ordinary bread and miss the point when Jesus spoke of the bread of life?

The answer is because they were just like us. The material things of life were more pressing and attractive than spiritual things. What they wanted was an unending supply of bread that could make their daily life easier.

Imagine, if one night in a dream we heard Jesus say to us, *‘I have a wonderful gift for you’*. I bet most of us would say, *‘How much money are you giving me?’* Or, *‘Is it a new car?’* Or, *‘Is it a great holiday?’* We so easily count our blessings in material terms. But as our Lord said *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” Matt 4:4*

Let us make no mistake about Jesus’s mission while He was on earth. Was His mission to be a good teacher? Yes he was that. Was it to be a miracle worker? Yes he was that. Was it to be a good example of how to live? Yes, he was that too. But his main mission on earth was to satisfy our deepest spiritual needs. In other words when Jesus said, *“I am the Bread of Life”*, he is saying; I alone can fully satisfy you.

Jesus came to this earth so that we could enjoy the eternal life. He came that we could belong in the family of God. He died to enable us to be brothers and sisters in God's family. We belong to him and we are privileged to call God our Father.

If we cultivate our relationship with Him, and trust His work on the cross for us and stand on His promises, then we will find Him a dear friend to us. Not only that, but we will also be relieved from our fears, and doubts. We will live secure in life for eternity; assured that nothing can separate us from His love. The Apostle Paul said in Romans 8:31-39, *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ... Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord”*

As bread sustains physical life, so Christ offers spiritual life that lasts forever. Jesus as the bread of life reminds us that there is something more important than money, homes, cars, family, holidays, etc. It is a relationship with Him that gives us life in all its fullness. The bread of life is what we need most. He said, *“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of man will give you”* (John 6:27). Jesus alone can sustain us along life's journey and prepare us for the glorious life to come.

7. Light of the World

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12) is the second of seven “I AM” statements of Jesus in the Gospel of John. *“I am the bread of life” (John 6:35)*

These sayings portray Jesus’ unique authority and identity as God. Jews of the first century understood that Jesus was claiming to be God in these ‘I Am’ sayings. They tried to stone him when He said *“Before Abraham was, I AM” (8:58)*. In saying that, our Lord asserted not only His pre-existence as the Eternal God, but also adopted the very name of God, ‘I AM’ to himself. In Exodus 3:13-14, God said that His name is *“I am who I am”*. God said to Moses, *“Say to the children of Israel, I AM has sent me to you... This is My name forever”*.

Jesus’ proclamation that He is the light of the world is powerful image that helps us to understand who He is and how He moves in our lives and ministers to our needs.

This proclamation speaks of three important truths:

1. It speaks of Jesus claim to be God as well as the long awaited Messiah, the Saviour of the world.
2. Those who follow Jesus will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.
3. Those who reject Jesus as the LIGHT will remain in darkness and die in their sin

God revealed Himself to Moses by the name “I AM” in Exodus 3:14. In declaring Himself to be I AM the light of the world, our Lord Jesus was claiming to be God and He is the

exclusive source of spiritual light. No other source of spiritual truth is available to mankind.

The Bible spoke of God as light, "*The LORD is my light and my salvation*" (Psalm 27:1); "*The LORD shall be your light forever*" (Isaiah 60:19). Prophecies also spoke of the Messiah as light and the sign that proves that He is the Messiah, "*Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you*" (Isaiah 60:1). "*In that day the deaf shall hear the words of the book and the eyes of the blind shall see out of darkness. The humble also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel*" (Isaiah 29:18-19).

Our Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees the Jewish religious leader, if you do not believe my words, believe the signs; it is the living proof that I am He.

"I AM" the Light of the world also speaks to those who follow Jesus that they will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

The followers of Jesus are not ignorant of the spiritual truth that brings eternal life. Their eyes are opened; knowing Him, the only true source of spiritual light. They stand firm in their faith in spite of their suffering of persecution and excommunication from the religious leaders. They follow His light and reject the darkness of traditions of men that contradict His Word of life.

There was a man, who was born blind, sitting on the way side begging next to the Temple of Jerusalem. Our Lord Jesus came to Him to heal him. The disciples of Jesus asked, '*Lord, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?*'" The disciples' question comes from what they had learned

from the Jewish Rabbis, i.e., that all disease and suffering is the direct result of sin. Such a wrong view was held by Job's three friends who believed that Job suffered greatly because of His sins. Let us not forget that- the entire point of the book of Job. It is not, "Why do people suffer?" but "Will you be true to God and trust Him as Job did, when you do not understand the reason for your suffering?"

Sadly, the disciples of Jesus did not look upon the man as an object of mercy or a sufferer to be relieved, but as a kind of riddle to be solved.

Our Lord answered, *'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him. I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.'*

Our Lord anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay telling him, to go *"wash in the pool of Siloam"*. He went, washed, and came back seeing.

This healing tells us our Lord Jesus always backed up His claims with application. He said, *"I am the light of the world"* and demonstrated His power to take away the darkness of this blind man.

Those who knew the blind man said, *'Is not this he who sat and begged?'* Some said, *'This is he.'* Others said, *'He is like him.'* He said, *'I am he.'* They said to him, *'How were your eyes opened?'* He answered and said, *'A Man called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes and said to me, Go to the pool of Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and I received sight.'* Then they said to him, *'Where is He?'* He said, *'I do not know.'*

The miracle was so incredible that the people could not believe their eyes. They took him to the Jewish leaders, the Pharisees. They asked him how he had received his sight. He said to them, *“Jesus put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.”* They said *“This Jesus is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.”* “What do you say about Him because He opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

The Pharisees called his parents and asked them, saying, *“Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”* His parents said, *“We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but by what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself.”* His parents said that because they feared the Jews, for the Jewish leaders had agreed already that if anyone confessed *that Jesus was Christ*, he would be put out of the synagogue.

The Pharisees again called the man who was blind, and said to him, *“Give God the glory! We know that this Man is a sinner.”* He said, *“One thing I know: I was blind, now I see.”* Then they said to him again, “What did He do to you? How did He open your eyes?” He answered them, *“I told you already, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?”* They insulted him and said, *“You are His disciple, but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from.”* The man said to them, *“Why, this is a marvellous thing, that you do not know where He is from; yet He has opened my eyes... Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing.”*

The proud blind Pharisees did not have spiritual sight to see that Jesus is the Messiah, and said to man “*You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?*” And they cast him out from the Temple.

Jesus, the Light of the world heard that they had cast him out; and He had found him, He said to him, “*Do you believe in the Son of God?*” He said, “Who is He, Lord that I may believe in Him?” And Jesus said to him, “*You have both seen Him and it is He who is talking with you.*” Then he said, “*Lord, I believe!*” And he worshiped Him.

Then Lord Jesus said, “*For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.*” Then some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, and said to Him, “*Are we blind also?*” Jesus said to them, “*If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains*”.

Our Lord Jesus is our light. By his Spirit and His Word, He will guide us safely through life to our heavenly home. His Light dispels any darkness that stands against us. His light pierces the darkness of sin and death and conquers them. All the darkness in the world cannot put out His Light. We look forward to His coming to be with Him in the New Heaven where “*Night will be no more, nor will we need light from the sun, for the Lord God shall be the Light of Heaven*”.

8. The Door

In John chapter ten verse seven our Lord Jesus declared “*I AM the Door of sheep. If anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture*”. This statement is the third of the seven “I AM” declarations of Jesus recorded only in John’s gospel which point to His unique, divine identity and the reason why He came to give us salvation.

Jesus said “*I AM the door*” when the Pharisees cast out the man, born blind, whom Jesus had healed from the temple. When Jesus found him, this man believed and worshiped Jesus Christ. He had discovered that Jesus Christ was the doorway into eternal life.

Then Jesus clearly states for the people around him in general and the Pharisees in particular “*Very truly I tell you, I am the door for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*” (John 10:7-10).

Our Lord is contrasting Himself as the good shepherd with the unfaithful shepherds, the Pharisees and the chief priests of His time, whom He describes as “*blind, thieves and robbers*” to be unfit shepherds of God’s people (John 9:39; 10:8)

Q: Why does Jesus describe the Pharisees and the chief priests as “blind”, “thieves”, and as “robbers”?

Firstly, because they ignored the Word of God that revealed the only way that God ordained for the salvation of mankind. They replaced it with their own wrong teaching and traditions. Secondly; they shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. Neither had they entered in, nor allowed those who wanted to enter in. He said to them in Matt 23:13 *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in”*. In John 9:22 we read that, *“They had agreed that if anyone confessed that Jesus was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue”*.

In Mark 7:1-13 Jesus said to them *“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men ... All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, ‘Honor your father and your mother’; and, ‘He who curses his father or mother must put to death. But you say, ‘If a man says to his father or mother, “Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban” that is, a gift to God, then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do.”*

Q: What does the picture of Jesus as the Door of the sheep telling us?

It tells us two important things: (i) There is no other way to the blessings of heaven except through Jesus. He alone gives

us entry into the presence of God. Here we see the exclusive nature of salvation in his saying I am “*the door,*” not “*a door.*” There is only one way. All other human ways lead in the wrong direction and to destruction (Matthew 7:13, 14). The Bible says “*And 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*” (Acts 4:11).

(ii) It is Jesus alone who gives us salvation, security, satisfaction and life more abundantly. “*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*”.

What wonderful and marvellous things await anyone who believes in Jesus on the other side of that door! To get a clear picture of these four glorious blessings, it is helpful to know a little about sheep and the eastern shepherding of the first century. Sheep are totally dependent upon the shepherd who tends them with care. The shepherd provides, guides, protects and he is the constant companion of the sheep. Sheep are totally incapable of finding their way to their sheepfold without their shepherd. Sheep are helpless against predators. If a wolf attacks them, they won't defend themselves. Sheep fear moving water. If sheep fall into moving water, they will drown. They will not drink from any stream or lake unless the water is perfectly still. The shepherd always takes them to still water. David in the 23rd Psalm said that “*the Lord is my shepherd; He makes me to lie down in green pastures, and leads me beside the still waters... though if I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil. For you are with me*”.

Sheep know the voice of their shepherd. When he calls they follow him because they know his voice. The shepherd would lead the sheep to safe places where they spend their entire day grazing and then, as night fell, the shepherd would lead them to the protection of a sheepfold which is nothing more than a circle or rectangle of rough stone wall with a small open space to enter. The shepherd would often sleep or sit in the opening, ready to guard his sheep from harm, in this case literally becoming the door to the sheep.

In the sheepfold, they are safe, secure, and fully satisfied. Wonderful and marvellous things await anyone who believes in Jesus and enters through Him as the door to His Father's kingdom. As followers of Christ, Jesus is both the Door to the sheepfold and He is our Shepherd who cares and is in constant devotion to those who are His, providing for all our needs. His door to His kingdom of love always opens to anyone who confesses Him as Saviour and Lord. Our response to Jesus Christ as the Door of the sheep determines our eternal destiny!

Now let us see briefly the four glorious blessings through Jesus the door. The first blessing is salvation as our Lord said "*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved.*" But salvation is the beginning of more blessings. The second blessing is security- Living without fear. "*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.*"

The idea of "going in and out" is describing life without fear. It represents security and liberty. We are free to live without regret and fear. The Lord promised us security as it is written "*The Lord will keep your going out and your coming*

in from this time and forever more” (Ps 121:8). Though we experience bad times as well as good, we do not "grieve as do the rest who have no hope" (I Thessalonians 4:13). God promised us: “Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out” (Deut 28:6)

The third blessing is satisfaction. *“I am the door. If anyone enters by Me... find pasture.”* Through this door we find the bounty of His provision. This of course is the same thing that the Apostle Paul wrote of when he wrote and told the Philippian believers, *“But my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* (4:19).

The Lord *"makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters."* (Psalm 23:2). The Lord sustains us. He is our Strength and Provider. He has promised "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you." We confidently say, *"The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid"* (Hebrews 13:5,6).

The fourth blessing is life more abundantly or fulfilment. Unlike the thief who comes to break in and destroy, Jesus our Saviour and shepherd come to give us life and life more abundantly. He is the door to the true knowledge of God; the door to security and peace. In Him we find fulfilment of the heart's deepest desires. He is the door to life which is real life.

We are as sheep in the midst of a green pasture. We are free to nourish ourselves on what the Lord has provided. We need not be hungry or thirsty. We are fully confident that we "are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last Day” (I Peter 1:5). Glory be to His name! Amen.

9. The Good Shepherd

“*I am the good shepherd*” is the fourth of seven “I am” declarations of Lord Jesus recorded in John’s Gospel (10:11).

Our Lord said “*I am the good shepherd*” after declaring that He is “*the door of the sheep*”, describing Himself as not only “*the shepherd*” but the “*good shepherd*” (John 10:7, 10). He is contrasting Himself to the unfaithful shepherds, the Pharisees and the chief priests who were in charge of the spiritual life of His people. He had already called them “*blind, thieves and robbers*” (9:41; 10:8) and now He compares them to a “*hireling*” or “*hired hand*” who doesn’t really care about the sheep (10:12-13).

Unlike hirelings who might run away and leave the flock unprotected, Jesus, the good shepherd, is committed to caring for and keeping watch over His people.

Q: What does the “*I AM the good shepherd*” tell us?

“*I am the good shepherd*” identifies Jesus as the divine faithful shepherd sent from above to fulfil what God promised in Ezekiel 34:10-16, “*Thus says the Lord GOD: I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out... I will feed them in good pasture, and their fold shall be on the high mountains... There they shall lie down in a good fold and feed in rich pasture... I will feed My flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick*” (Ezekiel 34:10-16).

Q: What does the “*I AM the good shepherd*” also tell us?

It tells us of the *three ministries that He performs as the Good Shepherd*; (1) His death and His resurrection to save us (10:11; 17-21). (2) His great tender care for us (10:14-15). (3) His great love to save those who never hear about His amazing grace (10:16).

I AM The Good Shepherd tells us of Jesus' death and His resurrection to save us (John 10:11; 17-21).

Our Lord Jesus speaks of “*laying down*” His life for His sheep. He gave His life on the cross for us as He said “*The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many*”(Matthew 20:28). Many times He affirmed the sacrificial nature of His death. He said “*I am the good shepherd, the good shepherd gives His life for the sheep... and I lay down My life for the sheep. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father*” (10:11, 15, 17-18). He did not die as a martyr, killed by men; He died as a substitute, willingly laying down His life for us.

His voluntary death was followed by His victorious resurrection. His resurrection was the grantee of our salvation as the Apostle Paul says “*who has died for our sins, and was raised because of our justification*” (Romans 4:25). Through His willing sacrifice, the Lord made salvation possible for all who come to Him in faith.

I AM The Good Shepherd tells us of Jesus' great tender care for us (10:14-15)

“*I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. The sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings*

out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice”(John 10:3,14)).

The word “*know*” means much more than intellectual awareness. It speaks of an intimate relationship between God and His people. Our Lord knows our names; He knows our natures, each one of us individually. Because He knows our nature, He also knows our needs. As a faithful shepherd He considers our special needs as He tends us. Psalm 23 is a beautiful description of how God cares for us. In the pastures, by the waters and even through the valleys, we have no fear, because our shepherd is with us, caring and meeting our needs.

I AM The Good Shepherd tells us of Jesus’ great love to save those who never hear about His amazing grace (10:16).

Our Lord Jesus makes it clear that it wasn’t just for the Jews that he laid down His life, but also for all nations as He affirmed “*I have other sheep which are not of this fold; I must also bring them, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd*” (John10:16)

The “other sheep” clearly refers to the Gentiles. As a result, Jesus is the Good Shepherd over all, both Jew and Gentile, who come to believe upon Him. “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16).

The phrase “one flock” clearly refers to people of God from all nations and He is still calling the rest of the redeemed and gathers them together. The Bible says, “*As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name*” (John 1:11-13). Our Lord the

good shepherd never stops. He works around the clock for all His redeemed and does anything to protect them. God tirelessly is looking for the one lost sheep and rejoices when it is found (Matthew 19:12-14). God never stops coming after those who never heard about Him.

Apostle John saw all the redeemed in His vision and says *“I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.... who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes”* (Revelation 7: 9-17).

We have the amazing gift of a good shepherd who longs to hold each one of us in His arms. The Bible says *“He will feed his flock like a shepherd, He will gather the lambs in His arms, He will carry them in His bosom and gently lead those are that with young”* (Isaiah 40:11) *“For He is our God, and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture”*. Let us not forget that He gave His life on a cross to redeem us. Our shepherd won't stop working until each one of us is living in his presence.

We are waiting and fully confident that *“when our Great Shepherd appears, we will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away”* (I Peter 5:4). *“May the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

10. The Resurrection And The life

In John chapter 11, we read that, four days after the death of Lazarus, Jesus came to comfort Martha and Mary. Martha said to Him, “*Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.*” Jesus said “*Your brother will rise again*”. Martha said, “*I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.*”

This was a common belief in the Resurrection of the Jews of that time except the Sadducees who did not believe in the Resurrection of the body (Matt 22:23 & Acts 23:8).

At this point, Jesus makes His fifth “I Am” statement “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die*” (John 11:25)

In this statement, two of Jesus’ great claims and promises are put together. It tells us three facts; (i) Jesus is the Lord of Life. It tells YES for the main question people ask about death, “*Is there life AFTER death?*” (ii) Heaven is real. And (iii) Hell is not a joke.

When Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life*”, He declared His divinity, claiming to be both the source of life and resurrection. By believing in Him, the dead in Christ shall live, and those living at the time of His second coming, never die. He is the Lord of Life.

The grieving Martha wished that Jesus had arrived earlier so He could have healed her brother. And when Jesus spoke

of resurrection, Martha expressed belief in the resurrection of her brother as a far-off event at “the Last Day”.

Martha considered time an undefeatable obstacle. Martha was saying, “It’s too late to help Lazarus, so now we must wait to the Last Day”. But Jesus shows that neither Death nor time is an obstacle to Him. Outside the tomb, “*Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ The dead man came out*”.

Our Lord’s *claim* to be the resurrection and the life - His claim to be the Lord of Life was proven by raising Lazarus, who was four days dead and also later by his own victorious resurrection over death.

Martha believed that the resurrection is a future event; Jesus showed her and us that the resurrection is a Person. Martha’s knowledge of eternal life was an abstract idea; Jesus proved that knowledge of eternal life is a personal relationship. Martha thought victory over death was a future expectation; Jesus showed her that victory is a present reality.

Jesus gives life to those who believe in Him. It is his repeated promise to anyone who believes in him, “*I will raise him up at the Last Day*” (John 6:39, 40, 44, 54). Believers in Jesus Christ will experience resurrection because; having the life Jesus gives, it is impossible for death to defeat them. There is no eternal life apart from Christ. He *is* life, and death has no ultimate power over those who believe in Him (1 Cor 15:53-57).

With Christ, death is but “sleep” (1 Thess 4:13). Because He lives, we live. Because He is the Life, we will enjoy the glory of the eternal life with Him forever.

John 3:16 says, *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish...not die...but....HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE!”*

Q: *Is there life after death?*

In His I AM the resurrection and the Life and the miracle of raising Lazarus that followed, our Lord Jesus provided us with answer YES for that main question people ask about if there is life after death.

Mankind has sought the answer to this question and the Bible records that Job asked it long ago when he said, *“If a man dies, will he live again?”* (Job 14:14) Yes there is life after death. It is Jesus’ promise, to those who put their trust in Him as He said to Martha, *“He who believes in Me will live even though he dies”*.

God, by His grace, invites us into the glory of the eternal life – a life that goes on and on and on, world without end through Christ Jesus our Lord, the Resurrection and the Life.

If we accept the grace of God, made possible by Jesus’ death and resurrection, then we can have eternal life. Those who deny the Word of God, and reject His love, they feel that death is the last move and they can’t win over it. But those who believe in God’s Word, and put their trust in Jesus who conquered death, they can shout with joy with the Apostle Paul, *“Where Oh death is your victory?”*

In Job 19:25-27, Job believed that when the Redeemer comes he will be resurrected to life again. He said, *“For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, And my*

eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!” In other words Job found the answer to this question. YES...there is life AFTER death. Jesus, the Redeemer, makes that possible.

Q: What happens when we die?

This body, this earth suit we have been wearing for many years, will cease to function one day, but our spirits will not die, we will continue to live and shall be with Christ in the third heaven- Paradise (Hades in Hebrew), but the body will turn to dust. The spirits of unbelievers goes to Hell=Sheol (in Hebrew= Tartars in Greek).

Our Lord gave us a story of two men who died, a rich man and a man named Lazarus who was living next door to that rich man. Lazarus died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom (name of paradise or heaven). The rich man also died and was buried. The rich man, with his spirit being in torment in Sheol- hell, lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Then he cried and said, *‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’* But Abraham said, *‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.’*

Jesus goes on to say that the rich man said to Abraham, *‘I beg you father, that you would send him to my father’s house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they*

also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham said to him, ‘They have books of Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ Abraham said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.’”

Yes, Heaven is real and Hell is not a myth or joke. Hell is real too. Our Lord Jesus says *“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation”* (John 5:28).

Apostle Paul says *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain... I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better... We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord... We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord”* (Phil 1:21-23; 2 Cor 5:6-7). Our Lord Jesus beat death for us, so to us death is only gain. It’s not the end. In fact it’s really the beginning.

Since Jesus rose victorious on the third day, death can never threaten us again. Death is NOT the final word! There IS life AFTER death. The Bible says, *“Since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a Man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all believers will be made alive”* (I Cor 15:21-22).

Our Lord Jesus offers us life for He is the source of life. He defined eternal life in this way *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent”* (John 17:3).

Q: What will happen next, when Christ comes again?

At the second coming of Christ, the dead in Christ shall live and those believers in Him who are still alive will never die. Paul says, *“For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words”* (1 Thess 4:13-18).

When Jesus said to Martha, *“I am the Resurrection and the Life”* He was presenting her with a challenge. “Do you believe me, when I make this claim? Do you want the life that I am offering? The same question is for us. Do you believe that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life? Do you want to have that glorious life that Jesus offers (John 10:10) Then trust in Him and believe His promise *“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die”* (John 11:25).

May Martha’s answer be ours as well: *“Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God who was to come into the world”* (John 11:27).

11. The way And The Truth And the Life

“I am the way and the truth and the life” is one of the seven “I Am” sayings of Jesus. **Jesus said this** on the last night before His death on the cross to take away our sins. His disciples were confused about His leaving them as He said *“My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come”* (John 13:33). Then Peter said: Lord where you are going? (13:36). The disciples did not understand that Jesus was speaking of His death and ascension to heaven. Jesus said to Peter, *“Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.”*

Our Lord said to them *“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. 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. And where I go you know, and the way you know”* (John 14:1-4).

Thomas said *“Lord we do not know where you are going, how we can know the way?”* At this point our Lord said *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:1-6).”

Without entering through Him as the only Way, there is no going to Heaven. Without believing Him as the Only Truth, there is no knowing the truth about God. Without the Life He offers there is nothing to live or hope.

According to Jesus our Lord, there never was, nor will there ever be, any other way to have eternal life in heaven than through Him as the Promised Saviour of mankind. Peter declared this same truth of Jesus as the Only Way to Heaven to the Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem saying, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*” (Acts 4:12).

In these days we live in, this statement is not easy for some people to believe, as they say that **this exclusive claim** of Jesus is politically incorrect and is considered a verbal slap in the face for other belief systems. They don't mind your saying that Jesus is a way to Heaven. But they do get upset when you say He is the only way to Heaven.

After the fall in the Garden of Eden, all people of the world have chosen for themselves until today one of three ways;

- (1) **Man- made religion** like Cain the first son of Adam, and Balaam the false prophet who ran after money, and Korah who rejected God's way of worship.

The Bible says in Jude 11 “Woe to them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, and perished in the rebellion of Korah”

- (2) The second way mankind chose is **rejection of God** and denial His existence. They say, “*There is no God, humans created God, not the other way around*”

The Bible says in Psalm 53:1 “The fool has said in his heart, “*There is no God.*”.

The Bible describes these two ways as “***The Broad Way***” that led to **destruction**. Our Lord Jesus said in Matthew 7:13 “*Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it*”.

(3) The third way, which is the Only Way to God is called “***The Narrow Way***” that leads to life”.

Our Lord Jesus said “***Enter by the narrow gate, because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it***” (Matt 7:13-14).

For those who are in **the broad way**, believe this way is **right and good**, but the Bible says the end of this way is death (Proverb 14:12). But God who loves the world is saying “**Enter by the narrow gate ... I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me... I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture**” (Matt 7:13-14 & John 14:6; 10:9).

That is why the followers of Christ in the first century were called “***The People of the Way***” (Acts 9:2, 19:9; 22:4; 24:14). Christians was an insulting name (Acts 11:26). In the fourth century it became officially an honouring name for the Christian religion. Sadly, from the fourth century till today, the Only Way to Heaven has been distorted and people of the world get confused. If you ask “***What will happen when we die? or What will happen, when Christ comes?***”

Some would say, “*I do not know*” and others would say “*We shall be as though we had never been*” (Obadiah 16). **There is no Heaven, or Hell.** Christ is not coming because there is no God”.

But if people believed what God said in the Bible, they will find the whole truth. According to God’s Word, this body, this earth suit we have been wearing for many years, will cease to function one day; **the body dies** and turns to dust, but **the spirits of all believers** in God will not. We will continue to live and shall be with Christ immediately in the third heaven- Paradise, which was called (Abraham’s bosom). **But the spirits of unbelievers** goes to Hell=Sheol in Hebrew and Tartars in Greek.

There is a great gulf between the third Heaven and Hell as is described in Luke 16:19-31, where Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus who was living next door. When Lazarus died, he was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom (name of paradise or heaven). The rich man also died and was buried. He found himself suffering in Hell and lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, ‘*Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*’ But Abraham said, ‘*Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those*

who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

Jesus goes on to say that the rich man said to Abraham, *'I beg you father, that you would send him to my father's house, for I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'* Abraham said to him, *'They have books of Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'* And he said, *'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'* Abraham said to him, *'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.'"*

At the second coming of Christ, all dead will be resurrected. The spirits come to their bodies from Paradise or from Hell and stand before God for the final Judgment. Those who belong to God will be in **the New Heaven**. And those who do not belong to God will be **at the Lake of fire**.

The question now is why did our Lord Jesus declare that He is the only Way to heaven, the only truth about God, and the only source of both physical and spiritual life?

He did this so His followers, the people of the Way, would be able to face the dark days of life looking for the greater good and the great end at His coming with joy and great hope, and carry on the mission of declaring the good news of salvation and the eternal life to the world.

The grace of our Loving God reached down to us because we are **INCAPABLE** of reaching up to Him. As far as the way to Heaven is concerned, our Loving God says to all people *"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is*

the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it... I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:1-6).”

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Way and the Truth and the Life “*Looking for and hastening His coming... For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words” (1 Thess 4:13-18).*

Yes, as the favourite song of many says;

*My hope is built on nothing less
than Jesus' blood and righteousness.*

No merit of my own I claim, but wholly trust in Jesus' name.

When the last trumpet's voice shall sound,

O may I then in him be found!

Clothed in his righteousness alone,

faultless to stand before the throne!

On Christ the solid rock I stand,

all other ground is sinking sand.

12. The True Vine

"I am the True Vine" is the last of seven "I AM" sayings of Jesus recorded only in John's Gospel. Each title is a metaphor pointing to who Jesus is, revealing His deity, and tells us what He is for us! Jesus had already said, *"I am the bread of life... I am the light of the world... I am the Door... I am the good shepherd... I am the resurrection and the life... I am the Way and the truth and the life"* (John 6:35; 8:12; 10: 9, 11; 11: 25; 14:6) and on the night before His death, He says to his disciples, *"I am the True Vine"* (John 15:1).

The question is; **why did our Lord Jesus say** *"I AM the True Vine and my father is the vinedresser... I AM the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing"*?

First, our Lord said it to contrast Himself with the unfruitful and unfaithful Vine, the nation of Israel. He came as the true vine to fulfil God's plan for all nations.

The Bible describes the True Israel as a Fig Tree, an Olive Tree and a Vine tree. **The Fig Tree**, illustrates the unfruitfulness and unfaithfulness of Israel. Israel as a nation failed to represent God's Light to the nations of the world. When Jesus came to earth, He gave them their last opportunity. Three years He waited but they rejected Him. He said to them *"I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit"* (Matt 21:43).

The Olive Tree, illustrates the Grace of God that grafted us into God's family. Believers from Jews and Gentiles

become one body, one people, one Church. **The Vine Tree** illustrates our union as believers with Christ. Because of this union, the sap of the Divine Vine will nourish us and produce the fruits of His Spirit.

God said to the unfaithful Israel, *“I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstfruits on the fig tree in its first season: but they went to Baal Peor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and they became abominations like the thing they loved (Hosea 9:10)*

In Romans 11, we as the believers from the Gentiles need to remember God’s grace toward us, *“For we were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree”*.

God said to Israel, *“What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, let Me tell you what I will do to My vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned... For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel.. He looked for righteousness, but behold, a cry for help (Isaiah 5:1-7)*

God sent Israel to exile in order to bring about repentance and come back to Him. Their cry in **Psalm 80** says, *“O God You have brought a vine out of Egypt; You have cast out the nations, and planted it. You prepared room for it, And caused it to take deep root, And it filled the land. Why have You broken down her hedges? ...O God of hosts; Look down from heaven and see, And visit this vine... Revive us, and we will call upon Your name. Restore us, O Lord God of hosts; Cause Your face to shine, And we shall be saved!*

When our Lord Jesus came to Israel, He gave them three years as the Last chance to repent, and **He said to them**, “*A man had a fig tree growing in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit on it but did not find any. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, ‘For three years now I’ve been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it use up the soil?’*” “*‘Sir,’ the man replied, ‘leave it alone for one more year, and I’ll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down.’*” (Luke 13:6-9)

Second, our Lord said, “I AM the Vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” because He wanted us to know that, even though we cannot see Him physically, we are as closely connected to Him as the branches of a vine are connected to its stem.

Our Lord, on the night before His death and after Judas left them to betray Him, was preparing His eleven disciples for His crucifixion, His resurrection, and His departure to heaven.

Knowing how disturbed they would feel, He gave them this lovely metaphor of the True Vine and branches to know that He was not going to desert them, even though they would no longer enjoy His physical presence. By His Spirit, He would continue to nourish and sustain them just as the roots and trunk of a grape vine nourishes and sustains its branches while they develop their fruit.

This beautiful metaphor of a vine and its branches represent four characters; the True Vine is Christ; the vinedresser is the Father. The fruit-bearing branches represent

the eleven disciples and all true believers in Christ, while the fruitless branches represent all who are like Judas who practice religion but do not have life or fruits.

No believer can achieve anything of spiritual value independently of Christ. He said, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Attaching ourselves to Him, we enable His life to flow in and through us, while His Holy Spirit in us produces “love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Our Lord said, “By their fruit you will know them” (Matt 7:16-20). Just as we know true branches by the good fruit it produces, so also we do recognize fruitless branches that do not produce good fruit and are cut away and burned. The reference here is to Judas Iscariot and those who profess to know Christ but whose relationship to Him is insincere. The fruitless branches are identified as not belonging to the Vine as the Apostle John says “*They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us*” (1 John 2:19).

Third, our Lord said “*Every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit*”. This encourages us to endure the suffering and hardship of pruning to enable us bears more fruits.

Let us understand the pruning process. Our loving God is pictured as the vinedresser who prunes us to produce more fruit. Pruning is clearing away unproductive and unhealthy growth to allow fruitful growth. Pruning involves cutting now to produce fruits later.

In the metaphor of the vine, it refers to cleaning shoots off branches. Pruning is also necessary in our spiritual lives. One of God's ways to prune us is to allow suffering and problems to come into our lives. He prunes us with a vinedresser's knife. Sometimes it hurts, and it may seem we are the only branch getting pruned while other branches need it more. But the Vinedresser knows what is the best for each one of us.

Spiritual pruning can take many forms. It may be a combination of difficulties. It may be persecution or slander from non-Christians. Whatever the method of pruning God uses, the effect is to narrow our focus and strengthen the quality of our fruit. We can be assured He cares about us and wants us to bear much fruit. He wants to free us from the shoots that drain our life and energy. He continues His care throughout our lives to keep us spiritually healthy and productive.

Knowing the Father's love and concern should change the way we look at trials. He does not allow us to experience problems and struggles for no purpose. The problems He permits are designed to develop us so we can bear more fruit. He does that because He loves us. As Hebrews 12:6 says, *"For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives."*

Do not fall into self-pity, fear, complaining, and brooding. Perhaps you ask, "God, why me? Why do I have to have problems when it seems like no one else does?" The Bible states *"For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but God disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness."* The pruning process hurts, but the fruit—holiness—is well worth it.

The Vinedresser's pruning knife is the Word of God as our Lord Jesus said in John 15:3 "*You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*" God's Word cleans the sin out of our lives. The Father uses affliction to make us more responsive to His Word. This stimulates fruitfulness.

Let me close with a pruning event in the life of the apostle Paul. God used him powerfully more than all other apostles. God, the vinedresser, pruned the unhealthy growth in that fruitful branch, and this is what Paul says, "*And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."* Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:7-10)

The pruning process helps us bear more fruit. Just as a vine's branches rely on being connected to the trunk and receive their life to bear fruit, let us depend on being connected to the Vine for our spiritual life and the ability to serve Him effectively. Let us rejoice and allow the Vinedresser to use his pruning knife of affliction, to make us more effective, and produce much fruit, because Christ our Lord is the True vine and we are His branches.

13. The Physician

Twice our Lord Jesus referred to himself as a "physician", once in the sense of "spiritual healer" and once in the sense of "physical healer." As *Spiritual Healer*, He called Matthew the tax collectors to follow Him and ate with him at his house. The Pharisees attacked him saying "*How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?*" Jesus reminded them that "*It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.*" (Mark 2:17)

As *Physical Healer*, Jesus said to those who did not believe in him in his hometown of Nazareth "*Surely you will quote this proverb to me: Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum*" (Luke 4:23).

There are three significant things about Jesus as "The Divine Physician";

1. He is the Physician who can diagnose the cause of trouble and has the treatment which is required.
2. He is the Physician who never looks down on the sufferer, but touches us by his hand of love and grace.
3. He is the Physician who risked His life to find the cure we need.

Yes, Jesus is the Physician who can diagnose the cause of trouble and has the treatment which is required.

In the story of healing *the paralysed man* in Mark 2, Jesus admired the faith of the four men who took the challenge to get their friend to be healed by Jesus. Their persistence of

faith was clearly in their actions. When it was impossible to push him through the door, they did not give up, but tried another way. They knew that the owner of the house might be angry when he saw the hole in the roof; and the disciples of Jesus and those who were in the house might be angry when the sticks, dust and clay began to fall on their heads.

Our Lord said to the paralysed man, “*Your sins are forgiven*” Why did Jesus talk about the man’s sins, since he was sick in his body?

It was not because Jesus believed that *all* sickness is a punishment for sins. The Jews did believe that, but Jesus did not always connect sickness with sin. When He was asked by His disciples about the young blind man, “*Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?*” Jesus answered, “*Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him*” (John 9:3).

After He healed the young blind man, Our Lord, took him from physical blindness to spiritual blindness and said “*I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind*”. When some of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these words, they said to Him, “*Are we blind also?*” Jesus said to them, “*If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, ‘We see.’ Therefore your sin remains*” (John 9:39-41).

Back to the story of the paralysed man, Jesus the Divine Physician went to the root of the trouble of his sickness. He saw what was in the heart of this man; and how this man was deeply sorrowful for his sins and his hope that God would forgive him. Jesus the Divine Physician assured him, “*My son,*

your sins are forgiven... Get up, take your mat and go home”. He got up, took his mat and walked”.

Yes, Jesus is the Divine Physician who can diagnose the cause of our trouble and He has the treatment which is required if our hearts look to Him to do so.

When we are sick or minister to those who are sick, what approach should we adopt?

The Bible states five principles. We need be aware of:

- Unconfessed sin and unbelief hinders our healing.
- Not all sickness is linked to personal sin.
- We must seek God’s hand with any medical treatment.
- We need to trust God even if we don’t get well. God’s ways are beyond ours. Do not put the blame of the sickness on yourself, assuming that healing doesn’t occur because of the lack of faith.
- In times like this, the peace and presence of God will comfort us when all else fails.

Jesus is the Divine Physician who never looks down on the sufferer, but touches us by his hand of love and grace.

A man with leprosy came and knelt before Jesus and begged him saying, “*Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.*” Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “*I am willing,*” he said. “Be clean!” Immediately he was cleansed of his leprosy” (Matt 8:1-4)

This man believed that Jesus was able to heal him, but he did not know that Jesus was also loving. This is the way that most of us think of God. We sing that God is powerful and can do the impossible, but in our own hearts we doubt His love and willingness to do a miracle in our own life.

The reason that this man said to Jesus, “*If you are willing you can heal me*”, is because leprosy in those times had the kind of symbolic dimension that AIDS has for many people today. Strict laws were made to keep lepers separate from others. They had to wear torn clothes and long hair, and could not go into anyone else’s house, and they had to shout “Unclean”, if they walked along the road (Lev 13). This man was forced by social custom and Jewish law to live in isolation and misery, because his presence among people defiles them.

Our Lord touched him and said to him, “*I am willing; be clean*”. **Jesus’ touch** did more than send healing power into sick bodies. The healing power of Jesus touches every level of our life: physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. This physical contact cut through barriers of isolation and was a sign of Jesus’ compassion and grace to suffering people.

To touch the leper was the most wonderful thing Jesus did on that day, for two reasons:-

1. By doing so, Jesus was going against the custom of the Jews. They thought that if a man touched a leper, that man would become unclean. Yet Jesus broke down walls of alienation and touched him, because He loved him and He didn’t want him to live in isolation and misery anymore.
2. The leper knew that Jesus loved him deeply, and did not look down on him like others, and he felt the touching hand of the love and grace of Jesus.

A woman came to Jesus while He was sitting in the house of a Pharisee and eating with him. This woman touched him and wept on His feet drying them with her hair. The Pharisee looked down to this woman and despised her and said in his

heart, *“If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is; that she is a sinner”*. But Jesus turned toward the woman and said to Simon, *“Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown.”* Then Jesus said to her, *“Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace”* (Luke 7:36-50).

Yes Jesus today is still the Divine Physician who never looks down upon us and is willing to touch us by His hand of love and grace.

Jesus the Divine Physician who gave His life to provide the cure we need.

Isaiah 53:4-5, *“Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we considered Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and **by His Stripes we are healed.**”*

This prophetic description by Isaiah describes what Jesus had to endure for us to heal us completely. While He was on earth, Jesus, the Divine Physician, was moved by so much suffering. He not only touched the unclean and made them clean, but also allowed Himself to be touched by the outcast and many sick, and made their miseries his own. And finally He went willingly to the Cross, taking our sins and our *sicknesses* on His shoulders as it is written in the Prophets

“He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses”
(Matthew 8:17; Isaiah 53:4, 1 Peter 2:24.)

He came to set the captives free, to preach the gospel to *the* poor; to heal the broken-hearted, and recover of sight of *the* blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD. He did all these, blessings us with healing in every level of our lives- spiritually, emotionally, socially and bodily- by being bruised, wounded, mocked, bleeding and dying on the cross, for ALL the guilt, shame, and sickness, for ALL who claim Him as their Saviour!!

It is written in the psalms, *“They pierced my hands and my feet”*, *“The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows”* (Psalm 22:16; 129:3). Seven hundred and fifty years earlier, Isaiah had prophesied concerning the Jesus Messiah! *“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting”* (Isaiah 50:6)

Jesus the Divine Physician took all of our diseases upon himself at Calvary. He bled and died to set us free and heal us, even before we chose Him!

We have peace, joy, freedom and inner health because of His amazing sacrifice of paying the ultimate price for our sins, bleeding to wash us as white as snow and *“taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses”*, abuse, cursing and stripes so that we are HEALED!!!!!!

Yes by *“His Stripes we are healed”* He is *“the same yesterday, and today, and forever”* (Hebrews 13:8).

14. The Stone/ Rock

“The Stone” is one of the meaningful titles of Jesus in the New Testament. This may seem a strange way to describe Him as the stone. But when we see that our Lord took this title from the Old Testament (Ps 118:22; Matt 21:33-46; Isa 8:14) and applied it to Himself, we discover that this title speaks of significant and meaningful things about Jesus.

(1) The Stone speaks of Jesus as the one who was rejected, but to Him belongs the final glory (Matt 21:33-46; Ps 118:22).

In His parable of the Wicked Tenants, Lord Jesus told us how they wounded and mistreated the servants whom the landowner sent to them, and how in the end they killed his only son. In this parable, Jesus is clearly foretelling what he knew would happen to himself, His death by the Cross. The parable ends with Jesus’ saying to the Jewish leaders, “*Have you never read in the Scriptures: The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes’?*” Then He said “*He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed*” (Matt 21:33-46).

During Jesus’ lifetime on earth, and all through history, there were those who tried to eliminate Him, or His name and His Church but still He stands supreme and the gates of hell never prevail against His Church. One of the attempts to wipe out the Christian Church was made by Julian the Roman Emperor from 361 to 363 AD. Julian used severe persecution

to wipe out the Christian Church and bring back the pagan religion. One of his soldiers was torturing a Christian who refused to deny Christ and mocked him saying, “*What is your Galilean carpenter is doing now?*” The suffering Christian answered, “*Making a coffin for your Emperor*”. In his battle to conquer Persia, the emperor Julian received a fatal wound. Those who were around him, heard him saying before his death, “*You have conquered, O Galilean*”.

Yes, Jesus the rejected stone triumphed historically and it is still true even today. In Acts 2 and 4 Apostle Peter said to the Jewish leaders, “*Let all Israel be assured of this: God has made Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.*” “*Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone. Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’*”.

Yes, Jesus is the stone who was rejected, but to Him belongs the final glory. The Apostle Paul says of Jesus, “*And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every*

tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:8-11).

(2) The Stone speaks of Jesus as the only foundation for life and the One who holds the Church together (1 Peter 2:4-10)

In ancient building, the cornerstone was the most important stone placed at the corner of the house that holds the walls and the foundation together. If the cornerstone of the building is removed, the whole building will collapse. So our Lord Jesus alone is the Cornerstone on whom His church would be built and holds the Church together as unified body of believers, both Jew and Gentile.

The Apostles Peter and Paul liken the Church to a spiritual house built up of the living stones and the foundation of the whole building is Christ. *“Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”. “Having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit”*(1 Peter 2:4-5; Eph 2:20-22).

Yes, the Church is built on Christ and can only hold together when it is founded and united in Him. He promised *“I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it”*.

(3) The Stone speaks of Jesus' position as the Saviour and the Judge in one (Isa 8:14; 28:16; Matt 21:33-46)

In Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16-17, we read “*The LORD... will be a sanctuary, But a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense... many shall stumble; they shall fall and be broken.*” “*See, I lay a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed*”. In the parable of the wicked tenants, Our Lord Jesus said, “*He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed*” (Matt 21:44)

It seems that these verses, say two, contradictory things: It seems to say first, that, as God’s Messiah, is a sanctuary, a hiding place for salvation and protection, and, second, that He is a stumbling-stone for damnation and destruction. How can these things both be true?

Our Lord Jesus is pictured as the stone/rock which is a *Sanctuary/hiding place* to those who trust Him, and a *stone of stumbling and a rock of offense* to those who disbelieve Him. The one, who believes on the Stone, *can’t be dismayed, can’t be put to shame*, but the one who rejects Jesus the Stone, will be crushed by the Stone and will be dismayed.

Still our Lord is the rock of salvation, the hiding place from the coming judgment as the Bible says, “*A hiding place from the wind, and a cover from the storm, as rivers of water in the desert, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land*” (Isaiah 32:1-3). But the day is coming, when He is no longer a saviour but a Judge for those who reject His love and choose

to go away from His mercy and call of grace. The Bible says, *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:17-19).

(4) The Stone speaks of Jesus’ spiritual kingdom that will never cease but stands forever (Dan 2:31-35).

We see this clearly in the Book of Daniel 2, in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar of which God gave Daniel the interpretation. Jesus is the stone that shattered the great image of the 4 metals that represented the kingdoms of the world that used to be. The stone became a big mountain which filled the earth. The meaning of the dream is that, kingdoms of the world come and go but the spiritual Kingdom of Christ stands forever. Babylon, the Head of gold, Persia the breast of silver, Greece the belly of bronze, and Rome the Legs of iron and its feet mixed with clay, all these great kingdoms have gone, but Christ’s Kingdom is still in the world and fills the earth. When our Lord came for our salvation, He started His spiritual kingdom even though He was rejected from Jewish leaders. His kingdom continues to grow. Nothing can stop it and it will never cease, and will never fail in spite of all the odds. It will last forever.

Yes, Our Lord Jesus is the tested stone, the precious stone, the cornerstone, the very foundation of His kingdom and the sure foundation for lives now and forever. Those who believe in Him are blessed forever and those who stumble over that rock chosen by God are condemned and dismayed.

This is exactly the picture that Jesus painted in the parable of the wise and foolish builders in Matthew 7:24-27. He said *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”*

Take Jesus Christ at His word, and build your life on Him and His promises. He will keep his word, for He said *“Anyone who comes to Me I will not cast him out”*. To think of Jesus as this sure foundation is to think of him as the only one on whom we can absolutely and without doubt depend.

Yes, we can trust the Stone, the rock of our salvation, relying on His promises, and marching on in our spiritual battle against the wiles of the devil, having our shield of Faith with which we will be able to quench all the flaming arrows of the evil one, whether doubt, fear, and all the storms of life. Christ’ kingdom never fails as the beautiful song says;

Crowns and thrones may perish, kingdoms rise and wane,
but the church of Jesus constant will remain.

Gates of hell can never gainst that church prevail;
We have Christ’s own promise, and that cannot fail.

15. The Great High Priest

There are many names and titles of Christ, in the New Testament. Each title or name focuses on a particular aspect of who He is and what that means for us. His title, “*The High Priest*”, is mentioned 14 times in the Letter to The Hebrews.

We are called through the Book of Hebrews, to consider Christ Jesus as “*The High Priest of our confession*”. “*Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus*” (Heb 3:1)

We are to consider Jesus as our great high priest in three distinct appearances that gives us a summary of His work for us; past, present and future. In other words: Redemption, Intercession and Final salvation.

Firstly: His Past Appearing. The Bible says, “*But now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself*” (Hebrews 9:24).

Secondly: His Present Appearing. The Bible says, “*For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*” (Hebrews 9:24).

Thirdly: His future appearing. The Bible says, “*And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation*” (Hebrews 9:28).

Q: What did Jesus do at His first appearing- the first coming?

He became our perfect High Priest and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice that takes away sin and opens the only way to God (Hebrews 10:1-39)

The word “priest” means a bridge-builder, and our Lord Jesus is not only the bridge-builder, He is himself the bridge between man and God. He said, *“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man comes to the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). In first Timothy 2:5-6; the Bible says, *“For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all”*.

It is clear in the Bible that the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifices was a reminder of sin, and the promised Messiah who would save them from their sin. The Bible says, *“For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near... But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:1-4).

When Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin the inadequate sacrifices were terminated at the Temple. Christ dealt with our sins once for all, never to be repeated. There was no need for another sacrifice. Jesus paid it all. He fulfilled the requirement of God’s Law that declared, *“The wages of sin is death.”* The Bible says, *“Every priest -of the*

Old- stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but Christ, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God... For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified... And God then says, 'And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.' Now where there is forgiveness of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin" (Heb10:10-18).

By His death, Christ has opened up the way into the presence of God. The moment He died, the curtain to the Most Holy Place was torn from top to bottom, and there is no longer any veil between God and man (Matt. 27:51). We have access to God through the shed blood of Jesus. Praise God! There is no need for another sacrifice, ever. Jesus paid it all!

Q: What does Jesus do in His present appearing in Heaven?

He became our faithful High Priest who can and will sympathize with us. The Bible says in Hebrews 2:17-18 *“In all things He had to be made like His brethren- fully human, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted”*.

The Bible goes on to say *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb 4:15).

The word “sympathy” is more than just feeling our pain. It carries the idea of *“knowing how we feel, coupled with a desire to help.”* It is a caring heart that reaches out to help the hurting.

Our Lord Jesus is able to personally sympathize with us; He knows what it is like to walk in our shoes. He knows our pain. He understands our trials. He is able to give us grace sufficient for every need we face in life (2 Cor 12:9). That should comfort our hearts!

Think just for a moment of the Old Testament high priest. Although his people couldn't go into the immediate presence of God Almighty, their names were brought before God continually. On the High Priest shoulders, and on the breastplate, were the 12 stones with their names on it.

Let me tell you, going through agony, going through distress - you are represented in heaven! Your name is before Him now. God, now, as you go through your troubles, as you go through your trials, the Loving God is looking at your name, He is considering your case - because Jesus Christ, your high priest, is bringing your name, bringing your problems, bringing your cares, bringing your case to Him. He sees it now, He is considering it. Amalek might fight, Balaam might curse the people of God, Moab might resist their progress, but God had their case before Him and led them all the way to the Promised Land.

I wonder has anyone ever come to you and said, 'I'm sorry to hear what has happened, but I know how you feel, I know what you're going through'. Yes it is kind word, but cannot take away your pain. God's word telling us, that we have a great high priest, who knows what we are going through, because He went through it so that He might sympathise, comforts us and supports us in our trouble.

The reason why Jesus sympathises is not just to sympathise and say, 'Oh, that's terrible', but it's to help, it's to guard us, it's to strengthen us. Think of this just for a moment: Our Lord

Jesus came to our world, as a man like us to experience this world's testings, trials, and temptations - and then, after He suffered a terrible death to take away our sins, He rose from the grave, ascending into heaven for one reason: so that He might sympathise with us, care for us, and so that He might feel for us and help us.

That is our Lord's present ministry in Heaven, to intercede for those saved by His blood, whose names are in His heart. That is why we sing,

Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea
A great High Priest whose name is love
Who ever lives and pleads for me
My name is graven on His hands
My name is written on His heart
I know that while in heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

Q: What will Jesus Do in His Future appearing-His second coming?

He shall appear to take us to our eternal glorious home. Our Lord is returning as the sovereign king of glory. He "*shall appear a second time, not to bear sin, to those who eagerly await Him, for salvation*" (Hebrews 9:28).

It could very well be that He is patiently putting off His coming for us to put our faith in Him as our saviour. The Bible states in second Peter 3:9-10, "*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward us, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the*

elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up".

By His first appearing Christ our great high priest, made possible salvation and took away the penalty of our sins.

By His present appearing, He provides His intercession for us, a daily grace that helps us to be free from the power of sin and aids and strengthens us to overcome Satan.

In His return, He will bless us with the final salvation from the presence of sin forever.

The Bible says in Romans 13:11-12, *"And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light". "For our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body"*.

Even so, come Lord Jesus! Come!

16. The Surety of A Better Covenant

Our Lord Jesus is titled and described in the letter of Hebrews 7:22, as a "*Surety*. This title speaks of our Lord Jesus as the answer of the long cry of man in Job 9; "*Nor is there any mediator between us? Who may lay his hand on us both?*" The Bible says that Jesus "*is a Surety of a better covenant*", also "*He is Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises*" (Heb 8:6).

The question is: Better Covenant than what? Better Covenant in what way? It is better Covenant than the first covenant, the covenant of Law (work), the Mosaic Covenant. The New Covenant was foretold in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and is fulfilled through the coming of Jesus who became our Surety for a better covenant by His death on the cross. It is better than the first, because it is ministered by a better Mediator, who offered a better sacrifice, His own blood, and this Covenant is founded on better "promises".

First, it is ministered by a Better Mediator.

Our Lord Jesus "*Has obtained a more excellent ministry, insomuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises*" (Heb 8:6). Moses was the mediator of the Old/First Covenant. The Old covenant's basis was the Law (Ex. 24:1-6). But this first Covenant left man in default for no man could keep the Law perfectly, and God said "*They have broken the covenant; they were unfaithful to me*" (Hosea 6:7; 8:1.) Man tried to keep the Law, but in vain. But the merciful God promised a New Covenant, with a better Mediator who is a surety for better promises.

Christ was superior to Moses, because Jesus has become a "*Surety of a better covenant*" (Hebrews 7:22). "*Surety*" is a

beautiful title that speaking of Jesus as the supreme guarantor who will never break his word. It is certain to be fulfilled. With men, a Surety is a mere guarantor, a co-signer who is jointly responsible with the principle debtor for the payment of a debt. Not so with Jesus Christ! Our Lord did not merely agree to meet our obligations to God's law if we, by some circumstance or condition, became incapable of meeting our own obligations. Our blessed Saviour, as our Surety, took the whole of our obligation before the law of God upon himself and paid it all by His own life.

The Bible says in Heb 9:12-15 that our Lord Jesus redeemed us *“Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood ...once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance”*.

Yes, Christ is the great High priest, and through his ministry as our surety for a better covenant, is the link that holds us in living relationship with God. Yes, that made him a better mediator and his covenant a better covenant.

Second, the New Covenant is ministered by a Better Sacrifice / Blood, Jesus' own life (Hebrews 9:23; 12:24)

Hebrews 12:24 speaks of "*Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better things than that of Abel.*" We may recall that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, because Abel made his offering by faith (Heb11:4). We know that the blood of Abel was shed in anger by his brother. Abel symbolises Christ, whose wicked brethren in anger caused the shedding of his blood. But neither the blood of righteous Abel, nor the blood in the animal he sacrificed to God, could atone for sin. Only Christ's blood could do that. Christ's blood is unique, so it "speaks better things than that of Abel", because Abel's blood cried for vengeance, but Christ's blood speaks of forgiveness of our sins and our eternal redemption.

The new covenant is superior to the old covenant because the old covenant was only a shadow, a type, while the new covenant is the reality, the fulfilment of the type. Christ offered Himself as the real sacrifice for sin and shed His blood to wash away our sins, and by the shedding of His blood He enacted this covenant for us. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He "*took the cup saying, 'This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins'*" (Matt 26:28). No other blood can take away the sins of the world (Hebrews 9:12, 15, 1:8, 10:1-4).

Thirdly; it contained better Promises (Hebrews 8:10-12)

The New Covenant contains four promises that show all that Christ has done for us (Jer 31:31-34; Heb 8:10-12).

A. The Promise of Grace (Heb 8:7-9). The emphasis in the New Covenant is on God's "I will." The New Covenant does not depend on man's faithfulness to God but on God's faithful promise to man. The Bible here in Hebrews 8:10 affirms God's "I will" on behalf of those who trust Jesus Christ. God

says *“I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people... and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness”*.

The New Covenant is wholly of God’s grace. No- one can become a part of this New Covenant without faith in Jesus Christ. Grace and faith go together just as the Law and works go together. The Law says, “The man that does them shall live in them” (Gal 3:12). But grace says, “The work is done- believe and live”.

B. The Promise of Internal Change (Heb 8:10).

The Law of Moses could declare God’s holy standard, but it could never provide the power needed for obedience. This Old Covenant was external; written on tablets of stone. But when we receive Christ of the New Covenant, God promises to give us a new heart that desires to love God and obey Him. God said *“I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts”* (Heb 8:10) As He promised in Ezekiel 36:26-27 *“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them”*

Yes, the Covenant of Grace makes possible an internal transformation that makes our hearts willing to love God with a desire to be His.

C. The Promise of Forgiveness of sins (Heb 8:11-12).

There is no forgiveness under the Law because the Bible says *“By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His*

sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). The Old Covenant of the Law could not promise forgiveness, but only a remembrance of sins, not a remission of sins. The New Covenant however promises that through the perfect sacrifice of Christ there is forgiveness possible to all who will call on Jesus’ name. God promised that in the New Covenant He will remember our sins and iniquities no more (Heb 8:12).

Q: What does it mean that God remembers sins and iniquities no more? Does it mean that an all-knowing God can actually forget what we have done?

If God forgot anything, He would cease to be God! God recalls what we have done, but He does not hold it against us. He deals with us on the basis of Grace and mercy, not law and merit. Once sin has been forgiven, it is never brought before Him again. He sees us in Christ who took away our sins, and God holds nothing against us.

D. The Promise of Eternal Blessing (8:13).

Because our Lord Jesus became our Surety, we are redeemed, justified, pardoned, made righteous in the sight of God and blessed with these eternal blessings. The Bible says that Jesus *“Became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him... Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption”* (Read- Rom. 8:28-30; Eph. 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; Heb. 5:9 ; 9:12).

In Him, God ceased looking to us for satisfaction. He freed us from all bondage, all curse, all penalty, and looked to His Son for satisfaction of our debts (Job 33:24; Phile. 1:18). Our Lord Jesus, as our Surety, took the whole of our debt upon himself. He was made to be sin for us when he hung upon the

cursed tree. Through that act, on our behalf, we are blessed with better promises which are given to any who are willing to receive, by faith, the gospel of Christ!

Yes, our Lord Jesus became our Surety for the better promises of that New Covenant. The word "better" in the book of Hebrews occurs 13 times and describes the New Covenant in relation to the Old.

According to Heb. 11:40 we have some better thing in Jesus;

Heb. 1:4 we enjoy the blessings of His excellent name.

Heb. 6:9 we will enjoy in Jesus the better End.

Heb. 7:19 we have in Jesus a better hope.

Heb. 7:22 Our Lord made a surety of a better covenant.

Heb. 8:6 Our Lord is the mediator of a better covenant.

Heb. 8:6 we have in Jesus better promises.

Heb. 9:23 our Lord is the better sacrifice.

Heb 10:34 in heaven a better and enduring substance (Future).

Heb. 11:16 In Jesus we desire a better country.

Heb. 11:35 by his power we will obtain a better resurrection.

Heb. 12:24 His blood speaks better things than Abel's, because Abel's blood cried vengeance, but Christ's blood speaks of eternal redemption (Gen. 4:10).

Yes, these are the better things (Heb 11:40) we enjoy in Jesus; our surety for a better promises. You may cry like David “*Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me*” (Psalm 119:122), or you pray like Hezekiah “*O Lord, I am oppressed; be my pledge of safety!*” (Isaiah 38:14) Look at Jesus who Has become our surety of a better covenant that contains better promises.

17. The Advocate

The Apostle John tells us, "*My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. 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 the whole world*" (1 John 2:1-2).

In looking at Jesus' title "The Advocate", this meaningful title signifies our Lord Jesus as the one who comes alongside to help us. As Christians, Jesus is our defender who pleads on our behalf, for the sins we have committed. Jesus is our Divine Defence Attorney, our Lawyer in Heaven. What a wonderful and encouraging truth!

The language that Apostle John uses in this text is legal. This is God's hall of justice. It is a courtroom setting in which Satan, the accuser, the prosecutor, accuses us, and brings up all our sins and shortcomings before God and claims that we don't deserve anything good. The Bible describes Satan in Revelation 12:10 "*the accuser who accused us before our God day and night*". We the accused come before the bar of God, but Jesus Christ is our Defence Attorney.

Q: What happen in our minds as children of God at this time?

Two things: We have distorted ideas about God and our fellowship with our Father God is broken. Satan invades our minds with distorted things about God. We think our God is very angry and mad at us. It seems as if God is saying to us "*why you did you do such thing? You disappointed me. How many times must I forgive you?*" This is what Satan puts in our minds. But this is not in God's mind toward us. God is not

angry or mad at us. He is not the accuser, but Satan is. God looks at us always as His children in Christ and He restores our soul; He leads us into the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake.

Our Lord Jesus, as our Advocate, is not the one who is trying to find us guilty. He remains our Saviour, our High Priest, and our Advocate to the end! The Bible is telling us in Romans 8:31-34 *“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us”*.

Satan the prosecutor, the accuser, can't argue injustice, can't condemn, and can't gain a hearing. For Christ Jesus our Advocate ever lives to intercede for us against every accusation that's brought before God. He is not only our Great High Priest who paid the penalty for all our sins by shedding His own blood, but He is also now our advocate, pleading our case so that we might enjoy all the blessings He purchased for us, regardless of our failures.

Q: What about our fellowship with our Father God?

When we sin as Christians, our fellowship with our Father God is broken, but we are still His children. The only thing we need to do is restore our relationship with Him again.

We must differentiate between God's gift of salvation (which is our relationship with God the Father, we are His children forever), and our Christian walk (which is our fellowship with Him). Here's an illustration. I am my father's

son, and nothing can change that. No matter what crime or sin I may commit, I am still his son forever. Now, I may have a broken fellowship with my father, but he is still my father nonetheless. If I return to my father, as the prodigal son did, asking for forgiveness, I am not asking to be his literal son again. I am seeking reconciliation concerning my fellowship, but not my sonship. The same is true with God. When we sin as believers, we are still God's children, but we have a broken fellowship with our Heavenly Father.

The Bible says in 1 John 1:9-10; 2:1-2, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. 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 the whole world.”* Here are the three steps we should always take:-

1. We need to consider our Lord Jesus as our “advocate” and come boldly before the throne of grace to obtain the mercy and grace that we need” (Heb. 4:14-16).
2. We must confess our sins so that our fellowship with our Father might be restored.
3. Walk in the light of God’s Word.

This is not giving a license to sin. It is quite obvious that God does not want us to sin (1 John 2:1). It is also obvious that none of us has achieved perfection yet, but the Spirit of God will help us overcome sin. God wants His people to be restored to full fellowship with Him. When we sin, we lose our sense of righteousness and we break our fellowship with our Father God, we feel shame to enter His Presence. Righteousness means right-standing with God. Righteousness

means the ability to stand in the Presence of God without a consciousness of sin.

Here we have to consider Jesus' name; the Advocate. He is the One who can go in on our behalf; Jesus Christ the Righteous. He is our Great High Priest, our substitute, for our sins; *“and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:1,2).

As our advocate, our Lord Jesus restores us our lost sense of righteousness, our fellowship with the Father. But He does more than just forgive us for our sins; He cleanses us from all unrighteousness. He cleanses us from that sin-consciousness that would keep us from going into God's Presence.

We have a beautiful picture of how Christ our Lord intercedes for us before the Father in Zechariah 3: 1-5. The Lord showed the prophet Zachariah a vision about *“Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebukes you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebukes you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?” Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you.” Then I said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by”*

Satan's effort to accuse Joshua and discredit him as high priest failed miserably as “The Angel of the Lord” removed the filthy garments he was wearing and clothed him with “rich robes” and a “clean turban” with the golden plate bearing the inscription: “Holiness to the Lord”.

We, as Christians, are like Joshua in Zechariah's vision. Satan is always looking for opportunities to "*accuse*" us before God (Job 1:6–12; 2:1–7; Zechariah 3 & Rev. 12:10). He still, as ever, accuses us and discourages us in our every effort to serve the living God. Yet, just as Satan stands ever ready to accuse us, the Angel of the Lord, symbolizes our Lord Jesus Christ who stands as our Advocate and Intercessor. Satan cannot condemn us (Rom. 8:31–39).

Like Joshua, God looks at us in the new clothes of the righteousness of Christ who died for our sins and lives to intercede for us today! If we are tempted and Satan gains victory over us in something, we can actually defeat this accuser through considering our Divine Defence attorney. Mercy and grace are always available to us. All we need to do is call on Christ our Advocate! Say this: Jesus Christ is my divine Advocate! He stands on my side. Praise His name!

We are blessed with two Divine Advocates; the Holy Spirit and our Lord Jesus Christ! The Holy Spirit in our hearts pleads with us not to sin and produces peace and comfort within our hearts in the hard times we go through (Romans 8:15, 16, 26, 27). Christ Jesus, our Lord, is our Advocate in heaven pleading for us and interceding for us before the throne of God against Satan, our accuser (Rev 12). If we do sin, our heavenly Father looks at us in Jesus our Advocate who pleads through His precious blood shed on our behalf! He ever lives to make intercession for us (Hebrews 7:25).

This is our story in Christ. This is His wonderful name, Advocate. He is our Defender, not our Prosecutor and we are forever secure in that intercession for us.

18. The Bright Morning Star

In looking at the names and titles given to our Lord Jesus in the New Testament we fix our eyes on Him alone. In doing so, we will have comfort and joy with our hope increasing and we will not grow weary and lose heart. The Bible says: “*Their sorrows shall be multiplied who hasten after another god... but those who look to him are bright; their faces are never covered with shame*” (Psalm 16: 4 & 34:5).

One of the most beautiful titles ever given to our Lord is “*The bright morning star*”. He is described as the ‘morning star’ in 2 Peter 1:19 and in Revelation 2:28. He identifies Himself as ‘the bright morning star’ in Revelation 22:16.

“I, Jesus have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright morning star”.

‘The bright morning star’, is the last reference in the Bible to our Lord, and He is giving us this name, to comfort us and to increase our hope in the troubles of this life until He comes and takes us to our glorious eternal Home. Let us see the significance of this name.

Q: Why Jesus is called the "*Bright Morning Star*"?

The ancient Greeks used two words for morning star: *Phosphorous- Φωσφόρος*, as the name for the planet Venus in its morning appearance. The second is *Heosphoros- Έωσφόρος* which means "Dawn-Bringer".

This title “the bright morning star” says at least three things about our Lord:-

Firstly; the morning star speaks of the Old Testament promises of the coming of Messiah, the Redeemer and the Saviour of the world to bring the blessing of redemption, comfort and hope.

God promised that one day the Messiah would rise like one of the brilliant stars in the sky for all to see. The prophecy said “*A star will come out of Jacob*” (Num. 24:17). Thousands of years later, God fulfilled His promises, and Zachariah the priest, praised God saying “*The Dayspring from on high has visited us; to give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace... The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death. Light has dawned*” (Luke 1:79 & Matt 4:16).

The wise men came to Him and said “*We have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him*” (Matt 2:2). God revealed to Simeon, the elder, “*who was just and devout, waiting for the coming of the Messiah*”, that he would not see death before he had seen the promised Messiah. When Simeon, and Anna a widow of about eighty-four years and all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem, saw Jesus, they blessed God and gave thanks to the Lord, for their eyes saw the light of salvation that God sent to all men - Luke 2:25.

The Apostle Paul says, “*For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor 4:6)

We will do well, as the apostle Peter says: “*to pay attention to the Word of God by His prophets, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts*” (2 Peter 1:19). The Bible says in Proverb 4:18

“the path of the just is like the shining light, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.”

Secondly, the morning star speaks of Jesus’ place as the supreme light of the world.

The morning star is the brightest of all stars, and this sets our Lord Jesus in the forefront of splendour. Other stars are insignificant compared with Him.

Stars are used in the Bible in several ways. For example, they typify Angels of heaven as the Bible says, that when God created the earth, *“The morning stars sang together and shouted for joy”* (Job 38:7). But a third of the angels sinned and God cast them out of heaven as the Bible says, *“God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment”* (2 Peter 2:4).

Satan, as the fallen star, deceived the nations of the world and made them worship the stars of heaven instead of worship the God who created them (Duet 14:19, Isaiah 14).

Stars also have a negative aspect; false teachers, kings and celebrities, who mislead the common people to copy their wrong doing, The Bible states, *“wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever”* (Jude 13).

Stars also typify in positive aspect, teachers, pastors, and faithful soul winners who lead people to life as the Bible says *“Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever”* (Daniel 12:3, Rev 1:20)

All these stars are insignificant compared with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bright Morning Star. The Bible says about our Lord *“He is fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon His lips...He is the lily of the valleys, the Chief among ten thousand...His mouth is most sweet... He is the brightness of God’s glory and the express image of His person... He is the true light of the world, which gives light to everyone who comes to Him. Yes, he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, And this is my friend”* (Psalm 45:1-2; Song of songs 2:1; 5:10-16 ; Hebrews 1:3 & John 1:)

Thirdly, the bright morning star speaks about the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus to end our night of trouble in this world.

This is wonderful but still there is more to the story. At His second coming, our Lord is going to reward us and to make everything new.

When the planet Venus appears shining brightly in the sky that means the dark night is nearly over, and the bright sunny day will follow very soon.

Venus arises in the dark sky around 4:00 am; soon the birds begin to sing. Shortly after that, within an hour or two, sometimes just a matter of minutes, the shining sun will cover the earth.

Christ's second coming means that God's light is about to shine forever on the universe, making all wrongs right, wiping away all tears, and fulfilling His promise of the creation of the new heavens and new earth.

Our Lord Jesus promised to those who “overcome” the trials and temptations of life, and remain loyal to him to the

end “*I will give him the morning star*” as He said to the church at Thyatira (Rev. 2:28).

The idea would be that the Lord’s people will partake of his victory and glory of Heaven.

The victorious Christian shares in Christ’s glorious triumph and authority, and possesses Christ as an everlasting treasure.

Jesus called himself “*the Bright Morning Star*” and shared this name with John and his readers, as the believers were having a rough time. John was exiled to the island of Patmos. Christians in Asia Minor faced persecution at the hand of the Roman emperors, from Nero to Domitian.

Things weren’t going to get any better for John and the rest of the believers. In fact, Jesus’ message throughout the book of Revelation is pretty clear: things are going to get worse before they get better.

That’s where Jesus’ name “the Bright Morning Star” helps us. Just like Venus rising in the morning marks the beginning of a brand new day, Jesus’ coming marks the beginning of a brand new day for us.

In the light of the Bright Morning Star, we are promised a more complete and perfect and wonderful view. Although God has “*shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in knowing and receiving Jesus Christ in our hearts as our Saviour*”(2 Cor 4:6), soon we shall see Him “*face to face*”(1Cor 13:12) and even “*be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” (1 John3:2)

The glorious day is coming. That day has no night, when we shall see the King in all His beauty. There will even be no need of the sun, “for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Revelation 21:23).

The long dark night of our earthly suffering soon shall be over. The appearance of the morning star means daybreak is about to happen. Our Lord Jesus being seen as the morning star means the eternal glory is at hand. For this reason, Christ as the morning star is a picture of great promise and hope.

God will wipe away every tear from our eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” God said, “I make all things new.” There shall be no more curse. We shall see His face, and there shall be no night there. We need no light of the sun, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb *is* its light. We shall reign forever and ever.

The Morning Star isn't hindered in its course by mists, fogs, clouds or dark vapours. Nothing can obstruct its motion. Our Lord is coming to us, and our hearts desire is to say: "COME LORD! COME QUICKLY"

Let us rejoice when we see or read about the MORNING STAR that speaks of the coming glorious Day of our Lord. We shall be in the heavenly Zion, as the Bible says, “We have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.” We are marching to Zion the beautiful city of God, looking to it and receive it by faith.

Yes, Amen, Come Quickly Lord Jesus.

19. The Image, The First Born And the Head

There are many descriptions of Jesus in the Scripture. He is many things to us at the same time; Redeemer, King, Saviour, Example, Lord and High Priest...etc. In Colossians 1:15-18 four titles are given to our Lord Jesus, "*The Image, the Beginning, the First Born and the Head,*" to show His supremacy as the Eternal Creator and the Head of the Church.

The question is: In what sense is Jesus the image of the invisible God? In what sense is Jesus the Beginning of God's creation, and the Firstborn of all Creation?

Jesus is the invisible image of God

The word "image" means "likeness; form or appearance". The use of this phrase helps us understand a part of Jesus' mission; that is, to reveal to us what God is like. We have not seen God, nor can we with mortal eyes (Read Romans 1:20 and 1 Timothy 1:17). So, in the person of Christ Jesus, God took upon Himself flesh so we could "behold" Him.

This was the point of the angels' words to Joseph concerning the birth of Jesus; "*...and they shall call His name Immanuel', which translated means 'God with us'*" (Matt 1:23). John 1:1-3; 14; 18 explains that "*The Word was with God and was God*" and that "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth*" and "*No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him*".

On the night before His death, Jesus responded to Philip's request to "*show us the Father*" by saying, "*Have I been so long with you, and yet you still have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me?*" (John 14:8-10).

From these verses we learn that Jesus is God come in the flesh to show us the Father. Earlier, Jesus had proclaimed "*I and the Father are one*" (John 10:30). The word "one" means more than just in agreement. It means "**of one essence or nature.**" Only "God" can be of the same nature as "God". Man has not seen God in His heavenly form and glory, but we have seen His image in Jesus, not in the physical body of Jesus but rather in His actions and teachings. When the early disciples worshipped Jesus, they were not sinning because they were worshipping God (Matthew 28:9).

Jesus was nothing less than God in the flesh. There was nothing lacking in the Deity of Christ. All the fullness of Deity dwelt in Jesus "*For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him*" (Colossians 1:19).

Jesus: The Head of Creation and The Church

The Scripture states, "*The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation... And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy*" (Col 1:15-18).

In this passage, as well as in other places in the New Testament, two Headships are ascribed to our Saviour;

- (1) Headship of Creation (Colossians 1:15)

(2) Headship of the Church (Colossians 1:18)

As to the physical creation, the universe Christ called Himself in Revelation 3:14, “*The beginning of the creation of God*” which is the same as in Colossians 1:15 where He is described as “*the first born over all creation.*” Both titles describe Christ’s headship of the creation.

The question is: In what sense is Jesus the Beginning of God's creation? And in what sense is Jesus the Firstborn of all Creation?

These two verses have been used in the heresy of Jehovah Witnesses: to say that Jesus was a created being. The word translated "beginning" means "origin." This does not mean that he is a created being. It refers to the fact that Christ Jesus is the origin of God's creation - He is the one who originated the creation process. He is the source of creation as John 1:3 states, “*All things were made through him, and without Him was not anything made that was made*”.

The word firstborn can refer to different things. It could refer either to something or someone that is first in order of time, such as a firstborn child, or it could refer to someone who is supreme in rank. It all depends upon the context.

The context refers to our Lord Jesus as the eternal Creator, the firstborn over all creation, not the firstborn in creation. “*For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together*” (Col 1: 15-17).

This same meaning of supremacy in rank is firmly established in the Old Testament. For example, Ephraim is referred to as the Lord's "firstborn" even though Manasseh was born first. Likewise, David is appointed the Lord's "*firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth*" despite being the youngest of Jesse's sons. While neither Ephraim nor David was the first one born, they were firstborn in the sense of supremacy in rank or "prime position" (Jer. 31:9; Gen. 41:51; Ps. 89:27; 1 Sam. 16:10-13).

Yes our Lord Jesus is the eternal Creator who spoke and the limitless galaxies leapt into existence. In John 1 He is called the Word, and the Word was "God", and in Hebrews 1:10 He is said to be the One who "*laid the foundations of the earth*". And in the very last chapter of the Bible, Christ refers to Himself as "*the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End*" (Rev. 22:13).

The Scripture makes it clear that Christ could not be nothing other than the pre-existent sovereign creator of the universe. The context does not admit the idea that He is a part of the created universe. He was "*long before every creature, and all things have been created through Jesus, and unto Him*" (Col 1:16). He cannot be a creature Himself but the Creator.

Q: In what sense is Jesus the Firstborn from the dead?

The Bible lists a number of people who had actually died and then come back to life apart from Jesus. They include Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, the son of the widow of Nain, Tabitha and Eutyches (Luke 7:14-15; Mark 5:41-42; John 11:43-44; Acts 9:40-41; 20:9-10). However there is a huge difference between the resurrection of Jesus and the different

resuscitations that are listed in the Bible. All of the people who came back to life eventually died again. Jesus was raised from the dead in a glorified body never to die again. He is the first of many who will follow at His coming (1 Cor 15:23).

As to the spiritual creation, the Church, our Lord is called the Head of the Church. *“He is the head of the body, the church”* (Col 1:18). The question is: **In what sense is Jesus the Head of the Church? What does it mean to be the head of the church?**

Every institution must have a head, or someone who leads and guides that institution. Without a head no institution can function effectively. The Lord's church is no exception. Spiritually speaking, the church is the body of Christ and He is our Head because He is Saviour and He holds all of His body together.

In our bodies, it is our heads that govern and rule the rest of the body. Without our heads, the body could not function. Also, it is by our head on our body that others recognize us. It identifies me as who I am. I can lose an arm or leg and still exist, but I cannot lose my head and live. This symbolism is very strong and we must recognize our union with Christ, He is the head of the church and we are His body.

A head directs a body. The body needs the head. Jesus is head of the Church because of his primary role in our redemption. Jesus founded the Church. He brought forth the Church and gave it life through his death and resurrection. Christ loves and cares for the Church as his own body. Yes, He cares for you and me *“For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones”* (Eph. 5:30).

As members of His body, we each have a role in building up the body. We are given gifts to fulfil this role, *"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another"* (Rom. 12:4-5).

Christ, the Head of the Church, set in the church the proper government to guide under His direction. The church leaders are to surrender ultimate leadership to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the One who leads and determines the teachings and practices of the church. Paul instructed Timothy and Titus regarding the qualifications of these men to hold these offices. They were to be men of integrity and full of faith. Men who would not seek their own gain and favour, but they seek the will of God. These men do not rule, rather they administer the will of God to others.

Church members are to follow Christ first and earthly leaders second, as those leaders imitate Christ. These individuals are not heads over the body; rather they are like the nervous system of our bodies. The head of our bodies issues commands through the nervous system to the various parts of our bodies. These nerves function under the authority of the brain or head. As a result of these instructions, the body functions healthily.

Christ, our Head, may appear remote and unavailable, but He lives inside every believer by His Spirit and He always empowering the members of His body on earth to live victoriously and do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13) When God's people put themselves under His direct headship, the result is unity (Ps. 133).

As Christ's Body, He speaks and acts through us to reveal His love to the world. United with Him in his suffering, someday we will share his glory that never ends.

Knowing Christ as our Creator gives us peace of mind all the days of our life, regardless of its troubles, because our Maker cares for us.

Knowing Christ as the Head of the Church gives us victory over Satan and his alliances, and also increases our hope regarding the joy of the glorious everlasting life in the New Heaven where there will be no more sea, no more tears, no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, no more pain, for the former things have passed away and as God promised *“Behold, I make all things new”* (Revelation 21)

20. The Amen

In His letter to the Church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation 3:7, our Lord Jesus introduced Himself with this unique title “*The Amen*”. He said to the Church “*These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness*”. What is the significance of this unique title?

The word “Amen” is spelled the same way in Greek, Latin, English and most languages of our day. We speak or sing this universal Amen at the conclusion of prayer, or a sermon, or creed, or at the end of many hymns and also at the end of the worship service. Now, when we hear or say “Amen”, what do we understand it to mean? Does “Amen” mean the worship service is over? NO!

“Amen” is a little Hebrew word with a great big meaning. It is used to express our faith and trust in the Lord. It means, “*so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled.*” Amen emphasizes an important truth which is certain, sure, firm and true.

In general, we say Amen to express our agreement with the truth we hear or prayer we say or we listen to. One example of its use occurs in Psalm 106:48 which states, “*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say Amen.*” In the same way, when we say “Amen”, we mean “Yes Lord”, it is our desire, we agree with it. Hear our prayer Lord. Let it be! Lord.

Our Lord Jesus said to the dying thief on the cross, “*Amen, Amen, I say to you today that you will be with me in Paradise*” (Luke 23:42). He used this word and asserted it by the doubling of the word, “*Amen, Amen,*” which in modern English translated to “*verily,*” “*certainly,*” and “*most assuredly.*” It is God’s great word of certainty. He is saying

Amen, Amen, to let us give very close attention to Him and value and believe His sayings!

Why does our Lord Jesus call Himself the “Amen”, and what is the difference between our Amen and God’s Amen?

The significance here is this, when this word is applied to Jesus as His personal name, it means that Jesus is “*Faithful and true*”. He is the God of truth. **God’s Amen means that He is faithful.** He is saying to us, “*What I have said and promise is true and it shall be so with you.*”

But our “Amen” is to agree, accept, believe and wait to enjoy the fulfilment of God’s promises to us. When we say “Amen” at any time during the worship or at the end of the worship service, we do not mean that the prayer is over, we are going home, but we mean “*so let it be Lord*”. It is our desire. That is why, when God speaks to us, we say, “Yes Lord”, “So be it Lord.” We say, “Amen” to him who is the Amen, the Faithful and True.

It is significant that our Lord, the "Amen", the God of truth, presented Himself to the Church of Laodicea in all its breakdown and failure. He was saying to her, and to us, look at me, I am all what you need. I am here for you; I am totally worthy of trust. I want to hold you up, and take care of you. I want lift you up from your troubles. I am here to help you. I am here to take away your fear, your worry. I am the faithful and the true One. I can change your weakness to strength.

So without hesitation, we can say “Amen”, we put our entire lives in His hands. We believe that His promises are true for us today and we can enjoy His presence, goodness and mercy all the days of our life.

Sometimes we ask, how can we know that the promises of God are true?

We are all familiar with promises. We are also familiar with seeing them made and broken. There are many reasons why this is true. Sometimes we forget, and sometimes it may be due to circumstances beyond our control. Sometimes we change our mind, and we do break our promises. What about the promises of God? How certain are they?

The promises of God are true because of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul said *"If God gave us His only Son, He will surely give us all things with Him"* (Rom 8:32). Jesus is the Amen because through Him, all the promises of God are sure *"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God"* (2 Cor 1:20).

Our Lord Jesus was and is the 'Yes' to all the promises of God made in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. His word is sure and every promise to us will come true. Jesus is our faithful God. He is not a God of lies.

The Bible says in Galatians 3:16 *"that it was through Christ, God intended to fulfill the promise to Abraham... And in your seed (which is the Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"*. Also in Acts 13:32-33, the Apostle says: *"And we declare to you glad tidings how that the promise which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled the same to us their children, in that he has raised up Jesus again."*

I Corinthians 15:1-6, tell us that there were more than 500 brethren at one time who bore witness to the fulfilment of this promise. Jesus is the Faithful God and *all* the promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled through Christ and by Him.

This particularity of Jesus will always be attacked by the enemy of our souls. Satan will always attempt to make us believe that Jesus abandoned us, because we are going through difficult times, or we are sick, and it seems that we have to live with it, or we are facing a certain persecution.

As Satan deceived Eve and made her believe his lies, he is trying the same way with us. But God is faithful and true. All of His promises that were given to His people in the Old Testament were fulfilled as it is written in Joshua 21:45, "*Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled*". And all the promises in the New Testament will come true too. He has promised to supply every need we have. That's Philippians 4:19. Now notice, God has obligated Himself only to the extent of our needs. That would include food, clothing, shelter, companionship, love, and salvation through Jesus Christ.

God has promised that His grace is sufficient for us. That's 2 Corinthians 12:9. According to His promise, we will not be overtaken with temptation. Instead, He assures us that a way of escape will be provided "*No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it*" (I Cor10:13). Jude wrote that God: "*is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*" (Jude v 24).

God has promised that all things work together for good to those who love and serve Him faithfully (Romans 8:28). It may be difficult for us to see and understand how this is

accomplished at times, but God has promised it, and He will deliver.

God has promised us victory over Satan. The Apostle Paul testified, "*Thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (I Cor 15:57). In Romans we read: "*If God is for us, who can be against us? ...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:13-39).

Let us trust God, and lean on His promises and make them ours by faith. The One who we call, the Amen wrote them for us. He is saying to us that what He said and promise is "true" and "*it shall be so.*" Then let our "amen" say to the "Amen", yes Lord, we trust and believe you.

That is why we say at the end our prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. All the promises of God find their Yes – fulfilment for us in Jesus. Knowing that Jesus is the Yes to all the promises of God, then our response without hesitation is to say in our hearts "*Yes Lord it shall be so according to your promise. In the name of Jesus Christ our Lord*" Amen.

May the Lord help us to say "Amen" to the Amen, Jesus the Faithful God in all that He is for us to the glory of God forever and ever! Amen!

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***“Fix Your Eyes On Jesus’
Wonderful Names”***

Dr. Botros Botrosdief

The Word of God indicates ways in which our Lord Jesus Christ is to be known and responded to; as Jesus, Immanuel, Wonderful Counsellor, Son of God, Son of man, Bread of life, Light of the world, the Door, the good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, the Way and the Truth, the True Vine, the Physician, the Stone, the great High Priest, the Surety, the Advocate, The Bright Morning Star, the Image, the Head, the Beginning, the First Born and the Amen.

My prayer is that our eyes will open to God’s glorious names, and our faith strengthens as it is written in Psalm 9:10 “Those who know your name put their trust in you.”

Dr. Botros authored 38 books, 10 in English and 28 in Arabic. Dr. Botros is the minister of

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