

The Unique Self-Testimonies of Christ in Scripture

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In the ancient world founders of religions and religious leaders did not say the things Jesus said about himself. They saw themselves simply as men with divine messages to share. Muhammad saw himself as a prophet whose message and right to leadership came by divine authority. The Brahmans viewed themselves as priests whose task it was to determine values and to preserve ethical standards. Sankara and Ramanuja claimed to be interpreters of early Hindu religion. Siddhattha Gautama, who became known as the last and greatest of a succession of Buddhas or enlightened ones, saw himself as a religious meditator and philosopher. Confucius felt it his calling to impose a rigid formalism on his contemporaries. But none of them claimed to be God.

Many are willing to acknowledge that Jesus was a good man not unlike other “good men” who have founded religions. Many will even admit that he was a prophet, like Muhammad e.g., who said some profound things. But when one considers what Jesus said about himself it is impossible to conclude that he was simply a good man or a prophet or a philosopher. Those are impossible alternatives. Why?

C. S. Lewis, who once had been an agnostic, understood the issue clearly. He wrote:

I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about him: “I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God:” That is the one thing we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse... You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to (Lewis, *Mere Christianity* 40, 41).

Kenneth Scott Latourette, historian of Christianity at Yale University said:

It is not his teachings which make Jesus so remarkable, although these would be enough to give him distinction. It is a combination of the teachings with the man himself. The two cannot be separated... It must be obvious to any thoughtful reader of the Gospel records that Jesus regarded himself and his message as inseparable. He was a great teacher, but he was more. His teachings about the kingdom of God, about human conduct, and about God were important, but they could not be divorced from him without, from his standpoint, being vitiated (Latourette 44, 48).

Jesus claimed to be God. Just for the sake of argument suppose that his claim was false. There would then be only two possibilities. Either he knew his claim was false or he didn’t know his claim was false. Let’s consider each possibility.

Suppose that Jesus knew his claim to be God was false. That would make him a liar and a deceiver who knowingly and deliberately misled his followers. That would make him a hypocrite because he told others to tell the truth while he himself taught and lived a monumental lie. That would make him a demon because he told people to trust in him for forgiveness and heaven, and that would be diabolically evil if it weren’t true. Finally, that would make him a fool because his claims to be God led to his crucifixion. Nowhere in the character of Jesus is there the slightest hint of deceit or of depravity. Instead one sees from the beginning to the end of his life the purest and noblest person there has ever been. If Jesus was a liar how could he constantly and completely have been filled with such kindness, goodness, and holiness in the face of prejudice and opposition of every sort? If Jesus was living a life of deceit why would he have been willing to sacrifice his life?

If Jesus was not a liar then could he possibly have been mistaken about his divinity? Jesus lived in a fiercely monotheistic culture. To tell others that their eternal destiny depended on believing in him would have

made him a lunatic in the fullest sense of the word. But in Jesus there are no abnormalities that usually are found in those who are deranged. A lunatic would hardly have been the poised and composed man Jesus is always seen to be.

Again C.S. Lewis writes:

The historical difficulty of giving for the life, sayings and influence of Jesus any explanation that is not harder than the Christian explanation is very great. The discrepancy between the depth and sanity... of his moral teaching and the rampant megalomania which must lie behind his theological teaching unless he is indeed God has never been satisfactorily explained. Hence the non-Christian hypotheses succeed one another with the restless fertility of bewilderment (Lewis, *Miracles* 113).

Church historian Philip Schaff writes regarding Jesus' claim to be God:

This testimony, if not true, must be downright blasphemy or madness. The former hypothesis cannot stand a moment before the moral purity and dignity of Jesus, revealed in his every word and work, and acknowledged by universal consent. Self-deception in a matter so momentous, and with an intellect in all respects so clear and so sound, is equally out of the question. How could he be an enthusiast or a madman who never lost the even balance of his mind, who sailed serenely over all the troubles and persecutions, as the sun above the clouds, who always returned the wisest answer to tempting questions, who calmly and deliberately predicted his death on the cross, his resurrection on the third day, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the founding of his Church, the destruction of Jerusalem—predictions which have been literally fulfilled? A character so original, so complete, so uniformly consistent, so perfect, so human and yet so high above all human greatness, can be neither a fraud nor a fiction. The poet, as has been well said, would in this case be greater than the hero. It would take more than a Jesus to invent a Jesus (Schaff 109).

Jesus had an intellect that was unfailingly clear, sharp, and penetrating. He displayed a perfectly healthy and vigorous mind. He was always ready with an answer and was in complete control of himself in every situation. It is preposterous to suggest that such a man was deluded, or mentally unstable, or a lunatic.

In his book *More Than a Carpenter* Josh McDowell has a chapter entitled "Lord, Liar, or Lunatic?" There he writes:

When I discuss this (that Christ was true God as he claimed) with most Jewish people, it's interesting how they respond. They usually tell me that Jesus was a moral, upright, religious leader, a good man, or some kind of prophet. I then share with them the claims Jesus made about himself... When I ask if they believe Jesus was a liar, there is a sharp "No!" Then I ask, "Do you believe he was a lunatic?" The reply is "Of course not." "Do you believe he is God?" Before I can get a breath in edgewise, there is a resounding "Absolutely not!" Yet one has only so many choices (McDowell 33).

Why do people reject the testimony of Scripture that Jesus is true God as he claimed? Josh McDowell says: "Some people... reject this clear evidence (that Jesus is true God) because of moral implications involved. They don't want to face up to the responsibility or implications of calling him Lord" (McDowell 34).

I. "The Son of Man"

Perhaps the most tangled of all the theological controversies in the ancient church were those regarding the person of Christ. The Ebionites emphasized the human nature of Jesus and said that because of his righteousness he was named or designated the Messiah and the Son of God. According to some forms of Gnosticism Christ came in apparent human form to teach the spiritually qualified among humanity the way to salvation. They said that the human Jesus was only a phantom or an illusion made use of by the divine

Spirit-Christ, who had come to teach people how to escape from the slavery of material existence. Other Gnostics taught that the Christ was only temporarily united with the human Jesus, departing before the crucifixion. Gnosticism thus resembles and partly overlaps with Docetic forms of Christianity, which held that to accomplish human salvation, the Christ only seemed to become human and suffer and die on the cross.

Many later Christologies emphasized the divine at the expense of the human nature of Christ. For the Monophysites, Jesus was essentially divine in nature. They taught that in Jesus there was a human body with a divine soul or spirit. The Nestorians affirmed both divine and human natures in Jesus but drew a line separating the two natures. For Nestorius, the Divine Logos did not suffer and die, only the man Jesus did.

Since the time of those early Christological controversies few people have denied that Jesus was a man. Most today will admit that a man named Jesus lived, for even writers such as Tacitus and Josephus who were contemporaries of Jesus make mention of him.

Nevertheless that the Son of God became man, that the almighty Creator of heaven and earth entered human flesh, is as amazing and awe-inspiring for us today as it has been for God's people in any age. In a Christmas sermon from 1533 Luther relates an old medieval legend about the wonder of Christ's humanity:

The story was told in the papacy that at one time the devil came to Mass in a church. When the words "And he was made man," were sung the people did not kneel down but stood, and so the devil struck one of them on the mouth and rebuked him and said: You gross knave, are you not ashamed to stand here like a stick and not to fall on your knees for joy? If God's Son had become our Brother as he has become yours, we should not know where to stay for joy." I hold that the story is not true (Luther continued) but this is surely true: Whoever invented it had a lofty spirit and well understood the great honor that was bestowed on us by God's Son becoming man. (What Luther Says, Volume 1, 154)

In the Gospels Jesus clearly reveals that he is a man. To certain Jews who prided themselves in having Abraham as their Father Jesus said that if they truly were Abraham's children they would believe in him as Abraham did. And then he said, "As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God." (John 8:40) On the evening of the first Easter, Jesus suddenly appeared to his disciples and said, "Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." (Luke 24:39)

In addition, Jesus' favorite name for himself, Son of Man, reveals that he is a true human being, that he is the unique descendant of man who came into this world to save mankind from sin. A glossary item in the New Evangelical Translation explains why Jesus used this name so frequently

The term 'Son of Man' was used by Jesus concerning every phase of his ministry. Unlike the title "Messiah," the name "Son of Man" did not carry secular, political connotations with it in Jesus' day. Though this "Son of Man" designation had full Messianic implications in Daniel 7:13,14, its meaning had been hidden from the minds of the people. Thus, it had remained a neutral term which Jesus was able to apply to virtually every phase of his ministry. For example, he associated it with his suffering and death (Mk. 9:30-32) and ultimately used it to identify himself with the Person of Daniel 7 (Mk. 13:26; 14:62). For Jesus, "Son of Man" was a "revealing/concealing" term (*God's Word to the Nations* 590).

II. "I and the Father are One"

But did Jesus claim to be God? Some Bible doubters have suggested that Jesus never said that, that this was only how some of his early followers thought of him. It's true that his disciples called him God. Simon Peter said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matthew 16:16) John in his Gospel says, "The Word (Jesus) was God." (John 1:1) The apostle Paul says Jesus is "God over all" (Romans 9:5) and that in him "all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." (Colossians 2:9) The writer to the Hebrews says, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being." (Hebrews 1:3)

Did Jesus himself ever claim to be God? Absolutely! And in a variety of ways.

Jesus identified himself with God the Father. Thereby he made it clear that he was equal with God. Once Jesus said to the Jews, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.” And then the evangelist John says, “For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.” (John 5:17,18)

By referring to himself as the Son of God Jesus revealed that he is true God. What the Father is the Son is also. The elders of the Jews once asked Jesus to tell them whether he was the Christ. “You wouldn’t believe me if I did tell you,” Jesus said. Then they asked him if he was the Son of God. Jesus replied, “You are right in saying I am.” (Luke 22:70) In Mark 14 we hear the high priest ask Jesus, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?” At first Jesus didn’t answer, so the high priest put him under an oath. Jesus had to respond. “I am,” said Jesus, “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.” Note that in his reply Jesus claimed to be 1) the Son of God, 2) the One who would sit at the right hand of power, and 3) the Son of Man who would come on the clouds of heaven. The Sanhedrin caught all three points. The high priest tore his clothes because of the “blasphemy,” and they all condemned him as worthy of death.

No evidence is more convincing than that of hostile witnesses. The actions of Jesus’ enemies established Jesus’ claims. The Jews were faced with two alternatives. Either his assertions were blasphemy or he was God. They saw the issue clearly. Later they taunted him and crucified him because he said he was the Son of God (Matthew 27:43).

Jesus said that he was God, but he also declared his deity in a number of other ways. Time and again Jesus claimed that he was in full possession of divine attributes. When he commissioned the eleven disciples to “make disciples of all nations” he said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matthew 28:18) Jesus claimed that he had existed from all eternity. Jesus revealed his omniscience in a number of ways, but particularly by predicting his sufferings and by foretelling his departure. Jesus made it clear that he was omnipotent, that he could raise people from the dead and give them eternal life. By challenging people to point to any sin he had ever committed Jesus revealed that he was without sin, as perfect and holy as God the Father is.

Jesus said that people needed to worship him in the same way as they worship the Father. He claimed the ability to perform the very same works God the Father does.

When Jesus said, “I am the One,” or “I am He,” he was making an unmistakable claim to be Yahweh, the God who revealed himself to Moses as “I AM WHO I AM.” (Exodus 3:14)

Nowhere in the Gospels are Jesus’ claims regarding his deity more numerous than in the Gospel according to John. In chapter 20 John summarizes his Gospel, “These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” (John 20:31) The reader of John’s Gospel learns from Jesus’ own lips that the man Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah; that he is the Son of God who thus is true God; and that life and salvation are found only by believing in him.

There were individuals and groups in John’s day who denied these truths regarding Jesus, and so John wrote to warn his readers about them. The second-century church father Irenaeus says that John wrote his Gospel to combat Cerinthus. Regarding this heretic, Martin Franzmann writes:

Cerinthus denied that the “heavenly Christ” had been identified with man, the creature of flesh, in any real and lasting way; he maintained that, not the Christ but only the man Jesus (in whom the Christ had dwelt guest-fashion from the time of his baptism onward up to the eve of his Passion) had suffered and died (Franzmann 255).

There apparently were also those in John’s day who held that Jesus was not true God, that he was only a great man with superhuman powers, a belief later held by Arius and his followers. Already at work in John’s day were Gnostic notions that salvation is attained through right knowledge rather than by the work Jesus did on

the cross. John's Gospel was intended to nip these errors in the bud. And it is primarily from Jesus' own lips that John records the truth about who Jesus is and what he came to do.

More than once in his Gospel John recounts an incident in the life of Jesus and then follows that with words of Jesus which relate to the incident. Such is the case in chapter five. At the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem was a man who had been sick for 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there he asked him, "Would you like to get well?" "Lord," the man replied, "I don't have anybody to put me into the pool when the water is stirred. Somebody else steps in ahead of me." "Get up," Jesus told him, "pick up your bed, and walk."

Because the miracle was performed, on a Sabbath the Jews began to persecute Jesus, but he said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working." (John 5:17) Thus Jesus was identifying himself with God the Father. The work that the Father does Jesus does too because he is one in essence with the Father.

The Jews clearly understood what Jesus was saying. The next verse says that as a result they were all the more eager to kill Jesus, not only because he was breaking the Sabbath but "he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God." (John 5:18)

Jesus explained that he could perform the miracle (and do it on a Sabbath) because being one in essence with God the Father, he does exactly what the Father does. In fact, since he is true God, he has the almighty power to raise people from the dead. He said, "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it." (John 5:21) And then Jesus said the Father has entrusted the judgment entirely to the Son, "so that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him." (John 5:23)

So in swift succession Jesus tells the Jews three things about himself: he is one in essence with God the Father, he has the almighty power of God, and he is to be worshiped just as the Father is worshiped because he is true God.

In chapter ten John relates an incident that took place at the Festival of Dedication while Jesus was walking in Solomon's porch in the Temple. The Jews surrounded Jesus and asked, "How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us frankly." Jesus replied that he had told them but they had refused to believe. In addition, the works he had done testified about him. They refused to believe because they were not his sheep. Jesus explained that only his sheep listen to him and follow him. And then he said, "I give them (i.e. My sheep) eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:29). Since he is God, Jesus has the power to give eternal life to people. Jesus continued, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Again the Jews did not fail to understand exactly what Jesus was saying. They picked up stones to put him to death. When Jesus asked them why, they replied that it was for blasphemy because he had just claimed to be God!

Jesus then explained that since the Father had appointed him to come into the world to save the world it made no sense for them to accuse him of blasphemy for claiming to be the Son of God. He said, "What about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, 'I am God's Son'? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may learn and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." (John 10:36-38) Once again Jesus clearly claims that he is the Son of God, that he is one in essence with God the Father, and that the things he does prove it conclusively.

Even Jesus' disciples needed instruction about who he was. In chapter fourteen John records words spoken by Jesus on the night he was betrayed. Jesus had told his disciples that one of them would betray him. He had warned Peter that before the evening was over he would deny him three times. We can well understand that the disciples were troubled. But Jesus comforted them with the assurance that he would come back to take them to be with him forever.

It was then that Thomas interjected, "Lord, we don't even know where you're going, so how can we know the way to get there?" "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," Jesus replied, "No one comes to the Father except by Me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:6,7) "Thomas," Jesus was saying, "anyone who has learned to know Me, will know

My Father as well because I and My Father are the same essence.” Philip heard mention of the Father and blurted out, “Lord, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us.” Jesus replied, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father... Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.” (John 14:9,10) Several times and in a variety of ways in these few verses Jesus emphasizes that he is one with the Father and thus is true God.

A number of times in John’s Gospel Jesus reveals that he exists from all eternity. In chapter eight Jesus tells the Jews who prided themselves in having Abraham as their Father that their father is the devil and that they want to do what their father desires. The Jews respond by saying that Jesus is a Samaritan and has a demon in him. “No,” Jesus says, “I am not possessed by a demon. I honor My Father. My Father wants me to have glory and if anyone keeps My word he will never see death.” When Jesus said that, the Jews were absolutely certain that he had a demon. “Are You greater than our father Abraham?” they said, “He died and the prophets died. Who do You think You are?” “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58) “Therefore” John says (and note the word “therefore”) they picked up stones to throw at Jesus. Jesus had just claimed to be the eternal God. In their minds this was blasphemy.

Twice in his high priestly prayer recorded in chapter seventeen Jesus refers to his eternity. In verse five he says, “And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5). And then in verse 24 he says, “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world” (John 17:24). In Jesus we see the eternal God who in the last chapter of the Bible says concerning himself, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.” (Revelation 22:13)

Jesus’ words recorded by John repeatedly reveal his omniscience. In chapter six Jesus says that his flesh is true food and his blood is true drink. His disciples react to this teaching in a variety of ways. Some say it is hard to understand, and they wonder how anyone can accept it. Others turn away from Jesus and go back to their old way of living. Still others simply refuse to believe. Jesus says, “Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” The evangelist then comments, “For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him.” (John 6:64)

Later in the upper room after Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples he said, “You are clean, but not every one of you.” Again John comments, “For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not every one was clean” (John 13:11).

When Jesus and his disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane Judas led a troop of soldiers and Temple guards thereto arrest him. As they approached, John says, “Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” (John 18:4)

John records Jesus’ words from the cross to his mother and to John himself and then writes, “Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, ‘I am thirsty.’” (John 19:28)

More than once Jesus had predicted his sufferings. To Nicodemus in chapter three Jesus said, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up” (John 3:14). Some feel these words were not actually spoken by Jesus but are John’s commentary. It’s immaterial whether Jesus actually spoke these words, for a number of times Luke records words of Jesus in which he clearly predicts his sufferings. In chapter nine Luke quotes Jesus as saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (Luke 9:22).

In several places John records words of Jesus in which he foretells his departure. In chapter seven Jesus says, “I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent me.” (John 7:33) See also 13:33; 14:28; 16:5; 17:11.

There is in John’s Gospel yet another way by which Jesus identifies himself as true God. When he says for example, “I am the One,” or “I am He,” or simply, “I am” he is identifying himself with Yahweh, the I AM God. Lawrence Richards writes,

The term I AM (a form of the verb “to be”) is the root of the Hebrew personal name for God, Yahweh, which is expressed in our English versions as the capitalized LORD. Thus “I AM” is the unique name of the God of the Old Testament as he revealed himself to Moses, and acted in power to redeem Israel from Egyptian slavery! For Jesus to identify himself as the I AM was to make an unmistakable claim to be Yahweh himself, the one all Israel worshiped as God (Richards 703).

To certain Jews Jesus said, “If you do not believe that I am the One, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24 NET) Literally Jesus was saying: “I am He.” This expression recalls the self-description of God in Deuteronomy 32:39 “See now that I myself am he! There is no god besides me” and the same self-description of God in Isaiah 41, “Who has done this and carried it through, calling forth the generations from the beginning? I, the LORD—with the first of them and with the last—I am he.” (Isaiah 41:4) See also Is 43:10; 46:4.

Jesus continued, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, you will know that I am the One...” (John 8:28 NET) Again he was identifying himself with the Savior God of the Old Testament.

Earlier we mentioned that Jesus revealed his eternity by telling the Jews he had existed before Abraham. But besides his eternity he also reveals his identity with God by referring to Himself as “I AM.” “I tell you the absolute truth,” Jesus told them, “before Abraham came into being, I AM” (John 8:58 NET). They therefore picked up stones to throw at him because they felt that Jesus in identifying himself as the I AM God had committed blasphemy.

When Judas brought the soldiers and Temple guards to Gethsemane Jesus asked for whom they were looking. “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus told them. John records that when Jesus told them, “I am He,” they backed away and fell to the ground.” (John 18:5,6 NET) This strong self-designation of deity caught the enemies of Jesus so totally by surprise that they fell over backwards.

III. “I Am”

In addition to using the name I AM or similar names to identify himself as God, Jesus used a number of symbols or images, linked with the words I AM . Each image explains what it means that the Son of God became man and lived among us.

In chapter six John records the story of Jesus’ feeding of the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish. The day following the miracle people found Jesus on the other side of the Sea of Galilee at Capernaum. They were looking for Jesus, not because of what he had said, but because they had been well fed. “Do not continue to work for the food that spoils,” Jesus said, “but for the food that keeps until everlasting life.” (John 6:27) The people weren’t interested in such food. Having been well fed and entertained they wanted more of the same. “What miraculous sign are You going to work? Let us see it and we will believe You.” (John 6:30) “How about something spectacular like all the food we need every day? That’s what Moses gave our fathers in the wilderness.” “Moses didn’t give you that bread,” Jesus replied, “but My Father gives you the real Bread from heaven. God’s Bread is the One who comes from heaven and gives life to the world.” “Give us this bread,” they insisted. It was then that Jesus said, “I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35) The Jews realized that Jesus by these words was identifying himself with God. “Isn’t this Jesus, Joseph’s son, whose father and mother we know?” they grumbled. To silence them Jesus insisted that he had indeed come from God, and then he explained, “I am the living Bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats this Bread, he will live forever.” (John 6:5 1)

Just as we eat bread to have our bodies nourished so we eat “the living Bread... from heaven” to be nourished spiritually. We live from day to day by faith in Jesus, and we live eternally because of him.

In chapter nine John records Jesus’ healing of a man blind from his birth. Following the miracle the man confessed his faith in Jesus, and Jesus said, “I have come into this world to judge people, so that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind.” Some Pharisees asked Jesus, “We are not blind, are we?” But they were blind. The light was shining in their very presence, but they would not see it. Earlier Jesus

had said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12) Into the darkness of sin and unbelief light has come. Jesus is that Light.

In chapter ten Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep." (John 10:7) Jesus is the only door through which we can go and find safety. He is the only door through which we can be saved eternally.

Two verses later Jesus changes the imagery and says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11,14) Here is a shepherd who cares so much for his sheep that he is willing to die for them. Jesus continues, "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish." (John 10:14,27,28)

In chapter eleven John tells the story of the death of Lazarus. When Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days Jesus arrived in Bethany. "Lord," Martha said, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died." "Your brother will rise again," Jesus said. "I know he will rise again at the last day," Martha answered. It was then Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." (John 11:25) Jesus' vivifying power is so great that he is able to bring life even to mortal bodies, and one day He will raise all believers in him to life eternal in heaven.

After Jesus predicted Peter's denial at the end of John chapter thirteen, the disciples were understandably troubled. "Do not let your hearts be troubled," Jesus said. "I'm going to come back and take you to my Father's house." Thomas said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) Jesus is the only way to heaven. Not only are his words absolute truth but he is truth incarnate, and in him is life now and forever.

In chapter fifteen Jesus says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener." (John 15:1) He explains that as we remain in him and he in us we will bear much fruit, and that apart from him we can do nothing.

Jesus is true God become man to be our Savior from sin. In uniquely beautiful ways each of these images expresses what that means for us.

Lord, liar, or lunatic! There are no other choices. There have been many religious philosophers, preachers, and teachers of ethics in the history of the world. Nowhere did Jesus claim to be merely another of them. Jesus once said to the Pharisees, "If you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins." (John 8:24) Jesus claimed to be true man. He claimed to be true God. Jesus claimed to have all the attributes of God. He claimed that he did the very works of God. He claimed that he is to be worshiped as true God. Jesus claimed these things because they are true, he is the Lord, and because our eternal salvation depends on thus knowing him.

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