



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT

“Who Was Jesus Christ?, part I (Our Divine Lord)”

[Prayer] We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast revealed the truth to us, and we pray, that as we consider the person of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that through this exercise tonight together and the Scriptures, we may come to know him in a deeper way. And we pray that this knowledge that we possess of him may have its proper issue in our everyday lives. We pray that he may not only be Lord in our minds, but also in all of the facets of our personality. And so we commit ourselves to Thee and pray that the word may have its saving activity in our hearts. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] Tonight is the second in our series of studies in Christology and soteriology. We are stressing soteriology, but it is impossible for us to consider the doctrine of salvation without some consideration of the doctrine of Christ. And particularly, the outlines of his person and work, for soteriology is the application of the person or work of Jesus Christ -- the persons and the work of Jesus Christ -- to our salvation, and to us, to be more specific.

So this is the second in the series, and if you have one of the outlines of the studies, you will notice that the title for tonight is, “Who Was Jesus Christ? or Our Divine Lord.” And this is the first in a series of two. The next subject which we will consider

next week is, “Who Was Jesus Christ? or The Man Christ Jesus: A Study in Hypostatic Union.” Now tonight we’re going to look at the deity of our Lord, and then next week we’re going to look at the humanity, and what this really means in so far as the resultant person is concerned. But tonight, “Who Was Jesus Christ? or Our Divine Lord.”

I’m going to ask that you turn with me to Matthew chapter 16 and listen as I read verses 13 through 16, which we shall use tonight for our Scripture reading. Matthew chapter 16, verse 13 through verse 16. “When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi he asked his disciples saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” As you well know that is one of the few grammatical mistakes in the Authorized Version. It should not be “whom” but “who.” But we’ll forgive them -- one or two -- at least. And after all, it’s not really a mistake is it? Just contrary to usage. It may be also, your usage. “And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist.”

Now I wonder if that was because of Jesus’ message of repentance? “Some, Elijah.” Was this because there was also the note of judgment in our Lord’s ministry? “And others, Jeremiah.” Was that because the tears of weeping over Israel’s rejection were often upon our Lord’s face? “Or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’”

The person of Jesus Christ is basic to the work of Jesus Christ. I think if you reflect for just a moment upon the fact that Jesus Christ’s work gained significance by virtue of who he is. Now you can understand the preceding statement. Because he is the Son of God his work, therefore, is much more significant. If he is not the Son of God, then his work has a much less significance for us. So it is really impossible for us to discuss the work of Jesus Christ without a consideration of the person of Jesus Christ, and vice versa. Hence the question, “Who was Jesus Christ?” is a very important question.

It is not a new question. It was asked by Jesus himself. He said to his disciples, “Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?” And when they gave some of the

interpretations of his person he said, “But whom say ye that I am?” Further on in the Gospel of Matthew, in the twenty-second chapter and the forty-second verse he asked the Pharisees, “What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is he?” And so the question, “Who was Jesus Christ?” That was a first century question as well as a 20th Century question.

The answers of modern man have been many and varied. For example, Pope Shaw, one of our great church historians has said, “The life and character of Jesus Christ is the holy of holys in the history of the world.” H. G. Wells said that, “Judged strictly by a historian’s standard, Jesus Christ stands first among men.” And yet, isn’t it a surprise -- a surprising thing when you turn to the history books of the 20th Century, and you read the accounts in which you expect to find the mention of our Lord, and a great deal of space devoted to him, you usually find something like a paragraph or perhaps a page. And it is a picture of a humanistic Jesus whose life could not have possibly -- on the basis of their description of it -- have had the influence upon the western world that it has had. The answer of course, to that problem, is that modern theologians, dominated by anti-supernaturalism, have a generally lower view of Jesus Christ.

Yesterday, when I was preaching on the subject of Jude, I quoted the opinion of one our outstanding modern theologians concerning Jesus Christ. In the article in one of our important works on -- on religion -- an article in the German work, *Religio in Geschiste und Gegenwart*, or R.G.G., as the scholars call it. In the article on Jesus Christ, Professor Hans Konzelmann -- who many scholars who know as one of the outstanding New Testament scholars -- has said this concerning Jesus Christ. This is the article in a dictionary of theology that is considered just about as authoritative as it possible for an article to be in the 20th Century. Konzelmann says concerning the Lord Jesus, “That he never designated himself either as the Son of God, nor as the Son of man.” He went on to say that, “His self-awareness is not apparent in the Christological titles. These were appended to him by the teaching of the church. We are to see him only as a great teacher and miracle worker who was filled with strong eschatological convictions, and

saw himself as the last herald, before the dawning of God’s kingdom. Faith in him as the Messiah and as the Son of God was first engendered under the impact of his resurrection appearances.”

Now this is a modern theologian with great influence who says that Jesus never called himself the “Son of God,” that he never designated himself even as the “Son of man.” And I’m sure, that when you read the Bible, you are immediately startled because it doesn’t take much intelligence to find a passage in one of the synoptic gospels, in which our Lord does refer to himself as the “Son of God.”

Now it’s true, he never, in the synoptic gospels said, “I am the Son of God.” He just told parables in which that truth was almost self-evident. But he did, over and over, speak of himself as the “Son of man.” It was his favorite title for himself. How then can a modern theologian say that he never designates himself as the “Son of God,” nor as the “Son of man?”

Well of course his view of the Bible is quite a bit different from yours. His view of the Bible is that it is a collection of interpretations, which the early church originated out of some loose amorphous tradition concerning Jesus, and has given us an interpretation theologically of the life and ministry of our Lord. But really, we can never really -- we could never know who Jesus was and what he did. The only thing that we can know is what the church thought he was a long time afterwards. And that is why in our articles, in our magazines and in our scholarly journals when the subject of Jesus Christ comes up, we have these things said about him.

I’ve always thought if you wish to know someone, the first thing you should do is to seek to get to know those who knew him best of all. If you wish to know me, the quickest way to know me would to go -- would be to go to my wife and ask her a few things about me. I’m not suggesting that you do that. Probably you’re not interested in knowing me. But if you were, that is where you would get first class information. Now if you could not get a hold of my wife, you might try my father, or my mother, or my

sisters, or my brother, or someone else who was close to me. Probably what you would do, though, is to go to one of my enemies, and then you probably would also get some truths too. But at least, they would be person who -- persons who were, to some degree, acquainted with me.

Now I think it is fair for us to say that if we wish to know something about Jesus Christ, we should go to those who had a first hand acquaintance with him. And if we can believe the records of the New Testament, even generally, we have some who claim to have had first hand knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth.

Now let’s see what they have to say about it. And so, I want to turn now to consider what the New Testament has to say about the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, first of all, the testimony of the texts themselves. Now I want to say that my presuppositions are, that I assume the reliability of the records that we have in the New Testament. I also am assuming the fundamental inability of anyone in the early church to invent a figure like Jesus Christ. I think it is totally beyond the power of anyone that I know of in the early church, to invent a Jesus of Nazareth, and what is said of him in the New Testament. As someone has said, “It would take a Jesus to invent a Jesus. And the church, by the very nature of its makeup, could never have invented a Jesus of Nazareth such as he is found in holy Scripture.” And that, in the final analysis, is the greatest evidence of the uniqueness and the originality, and ultimately, the deity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Hoskins and Davie, who have written a book called, *The Riddle of the New Testament*, have taken modern theological presuppositions and have submitted them to the test of an investigation of the records. And they have come to this very conclusion; that it was impossible for the Lord Jesus Christ as he is presented in our New Testament to have been invented by the early church. And so I do not believe what modern theologians say about Jesus, because what they say is based on false presuppositions.

Let’s see what the texts themselves have to say. First of all, I want you to remember a text in the Old Testament. We’re not going to turn to that one. But you’ll remember the text in Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14 in which the prophet, many hundreds of years before the coming of our Lord Jesus said, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel.” And remember, when we were studying this in the exposition of Isaiah, I pointed out that this word “Emanuel” is a combination of Hebrew words *emanu* a preposition, plus a pronominal suffix, which means “with us.” “Em -- with”; *emanu* -- with us” and “*El* -- God”. With us is God, or God with us, is the meaning of Emanuel. Now that text is quoted in the New Testament by one of the men who knew Jesus of Nazareth rather personally. So let’s turn to Matthew chapter 1, and will you listen as I read verses 21 through 23. Matthew 1:21 through 23. Now I’m going to read five or six passages, and I want you to read the too, so that you may see them and also I hope, remember some of them.

Matthew chapter 1, verse 21. Matthew writes that the angel said to Joseph, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins.” Now, Matthew adds, and he is the evangelist now, the man who knew Jesus -- the publican. He said, “Now all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet saying; Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted -- or transliterated, translated -- is, God with us.” Now it is obvious that Matthew interprets that name “Emmanuel” as meaning, “God with us.” And years after the birth of our Lord, when he wrote his Gospel, he sees that that text in Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14 applies to our Lord Jesus. He is “God with us.” Now I’m sure, that if Matthew were here tonight, and we were to say to him, “Matthew, was Jesus Christ very God of very God?” He would say -- he would have said, “Absolutely. Don’t you remember what I wrote in the first

chapter? How he fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14? He is Emmanuel, God with us.”

Now turn over to John chapter 1, verse 1. Now this is another man who knew our Lord. In fact, may have known him better than any of the others, for he was the one who reclined upon the bosom of our Lord. And in the very first verse of his Gospel he says, “In the beginning was the Word.” Now, before we finish this, I want you to look at the fourteenth verse, so you will understand that, when he uses the term “Word,” he is referring to Jesus Christ. He says, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory; the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” And so the Word is the only begotten of the Father, or Jesus of Nazareth. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Now that last clause is just about as clear a statement of the deity of Christ as it is possible for you to find. “And the Word was God.” Now that construction in the Greek text, is in such a construction, that there is no question whatsoever about the force of this. This text is so strong, that the Jehovah’s Witness have had to translate the New Testament in order to get away from the testimony of this, and they of course, have twisted this clause to mean simply that, Jesus Christ was in God, as if there were other gods. But the text is found in such a construction that, as that this rendering is absolutely correct. “And the Word was God.” Not “in God.” “Was God.” Not, “the god” as if there was another God -- as if the Father was not God, but “The Word was God.” In full agreement with the Trinitarian formula, that there is one God who subsists in three persons. We studied this last year, remember?

Now let’s turn over to the tenth chapter, the thirtieth verse. These are the words of our Lord himself. John records them. We read in verse 29 of chapter 10, “My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” Now the construction in the Greek text here, is neuter. This “one” is neuter. It is not, “I and my Father are one in purpose.” Though

that is true. But “I and my Father are -- literally -- one thing.” One in essence. C. H. Dodd, the great British New Testament scholar has said that, “This is the language of absolute unity.” Now, it cannot be said of a man, that he lives with God in absolute unity. There may be a measure of unity, but not absolute unity. Only God can live in absolute unity with God. And he said, “I and my Father are one.” In essence.

Let’s turn over to Philippians chapter 2, verse 6, a text we are going to look at in some detail next Monday night, if the Lord has not come by then. Would you be disappointed? Would you like to say, “Lord, I don’t think I’d like to go up until I, after next Monday night when Dr. Johnson speaks on the subject of the human nature of Jesus Christ.” [Laughter] You wouldn’t hurt my feelings, you know? If you just said, “I think I’ll pass up that lecture,” because I wouldn’t be here anyway. Now have you found it? Philippians chapter 2, verse 5, Paul says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” He thought it not a thing to be grasped after, “to be equal with God.”

Our Lord Jesus did not have to stretch out after something that was not his in order to be God, for he was God. Now Paul knew our Lord Jesus very well. He had had an experience with him on the Damascus road. And he had lived in fellowship with him for many years when he wrote these words, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” I think I would believe Paul more than I would believe a twentieth century theologian who is nineteen hundred years from Jesus Christ, and quite a few presuppositions from the presuppositions of the authors of Holy Scripture.

Turn with me to Titus chapter 2, verse 13. Titus chapter 2, verse 13. And the same apostle Paul, speaking in this verse -- one of his great Christological passages in which he talks about the past, the present and the future. Remember, we looked at it last Monday night. And in verse 13 we read, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Now if you were reading the

Authorized Version text here, you might say to me -- if you had an opportunity to talk back -- you might say, “Well, Dr. Johnson does not that mean -- looking for that blessed hope -- and the glorious appearing of the great God, that is, the Father, and our Savior Jesus Christ?” So how can we adduce this text in support of the deity of Christ, when it seems to be a text about the Father and Jesus Christ?

Now you know, when the Revised Standard Version was translated, a lot of very ignorant fundamentalists -- of which I’m one -- had a lot of nasty things to say about the Revised Standard Version before they had read it. And I’ll never forget the article that appeared in *Eternity Magazine* by Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse about a year later. It was entitled, “*I Have Read the RSV.*” And a lot of people around the country who had been criticizing it, their faces turned red, because they had not read it. It was obvious. They had gone through and picked out a few little things here and there.

Now you can do that with anybody’s translation except one: mine. [Laughter] That’s the only translation that I’m perfectly happy with. After all, remember the inspired text is not a translation. The inspired text is the original text. And if somebody mistranslates the text here and there, but the general teaching of the New Testament is not involved, don’t get too excited over it, because it’s going to be done, and there’s nothing you can really -- you can do about it really.

But anyway, there was a lot of criticism, and one of the criticisms was that there was a conscious attempt on the part of the translators to downgrade the deity of our Lord. Does anyone have the Revised Standard Version in the audience tonight? Now would you -- this is not in the church, so the women may speak. [Laughter] So would you read -- would you read Titus 2:13 for us, loud enough so that they can hear? Huh? All right. Would you read it loud enough so we can hear? [inaudible] Yes. Now, did you notice, “Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ?”

The text does not have to do with two persons. It has to do with one. And the Greek text makes it very plain that this is a text that concerns “Our great God and Savior

Jesus Christ.” It is a clear testimony to the deity of our Lord, and it’s found in the Revised Standard Version, and not in the King James Version. That’s not the only place. There are other places in the RSV. It has many places that are wrongly rendered, but there are other places that are truer to the original than our King James Version. So Paul says, “Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Now turn over a few pages further toward the end of the Bible to the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. What did I say? Hebrews chapter 1, verse 8. I wish I knew who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, then I could tell you. But whoever wrote it, was a master in theology. And in the eighth verse of the first chapter of this great epistle, he says after having said, “And of the angels he saith: Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith: Thy throne, O God -- Thy throne, O God -- is for ever and ever.” Now that is a text that is addressed to the Son. “Thy throne, O God is for ever and ever.”

And one final text. We may as well look at it too. 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 1 [Repeat], 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 1. Now while you are finding 2 Peter, I’m going to turn in the Greek text and I’m going to read this out of the Greek text. And you look at your English text as I read. “Simon Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ; to the ones who have obtained life, precious faith with us, in the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ -- our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Again. Peter, speaking of Jesus Christ says, “Our God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Did you notice the King James Version has, “Through the righteousness of God and our Savior Jesus Christ?” Not quite as clear as the original text has it.

Now then, I think that -- having looked at these texts -- you would probably have to agree with me that as far as the New Testament is concerned, there are sufficient clear statements to affirm, without any equivocation, the fact that Jesus Christ is God himself, that these texts state plainly that he possesses undiminished deity. If he does not possess undiminished deity, then the alternatives are; that he is a deceiver, and the apostles are

deceivers, he is an impostor, and they are impostors. Or he was deceived, a megalomaniac afflicted with holy de grand -- de grandeur, on the greatest scale. Or else, he was really what he said that he was. The Son of God.

This was Rabbi Duncan’s famous trilemma. He is either deceived, a deceiver, or our divine Lord. And those who have read the Scriptures, and know anything about his work in their hearts and in the hearts of others, have no hesitancy about the correct answer to that question. It has been said today, that there is a fourth alternative; that perhaps, he is a legend. But we are assuming of course, the reliability of the records.

In the light of this, is it not foolish for a man to say, as is often said, “I’m willing to accept the fact that Jesus was a great teacher, but I’m not willing to accept the fact that he is God.” Do you find any difficulty with that? Why, I do. Do you know why? Because he taught that he was God. We cannot distinguish between the teachings of our Lord and say that we can believe him as a teacher and not accept the things that he taught. But that is what Professor Konzelmann said. He was a great teacher, and a miracle worker, but he never claimed to be the Son of God, nor even the Son of man. This was what the church said about him. Well I think you see that I don’t believe Professor Konzelmann.

Now I want to talk about some other scriptural testimony, because the deity of our Lord does not really depend upon isolated texts, though I think it could -- the case could be made to rest upon them; other scriptural testimony, and first of all, the witness of the miracles. Others worked miracles besides Jesus of Nazareth, but his threw the work of others into the shade. Notice the impressiveness of the commands, which our Lord utters in the performance of his miracles. Let’s turn to Matthew chapter 8, verse 3 for an illustration. This is the story of the healing of the leper, and we read Matthew chapter 8, verse 1, “When he was come down from the mountain great multitudes followed him. And behold, there came a leper and worshipped him saying; Lord if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. Jesus put forth his hand and touched him saying; I will, be thou clean.” Look at the impressiveness of the command of our Lord. “I will, be thou clean.”

Turn over to Mark chapter 4, verse 39. Ah, my contemporary theological friends have a great deal of difficulty with this miracle. You know, men who are miracle worker -- workers -- claim to perform all kinds of miracles in the realm of the human body. You can turn on your TV and listen to men who tell you that they can perform great miracles. They are healers, and they speak about divine healing. I believe in divine healing. I believe God can heal. I do not believe in divine healers today. I do not know of anyone in whom I have the slightest confidence. If I were to have a divine healer before my face, I would say to him, “Sir, I have absolutely no confidence in anything you do until you raise two or three people from the dead for me. If you raise two or three people from the dead, I’ll be happy to become a believer in your ability to divinely heal.”

Jesus was not only a person who performed miracles of healing, but he actually had the power to perform miracles in nature itself. Listen to the story. Mark chapter 4, verse 35. “And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them; Let us pass over unto the other side. And when they had sent away the multitude, they took him even as he was in the ship. And there were also with him other little ships. And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow. And they awake him, and say unto him; Master, carest thou not that we perish? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea; Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” “Peace, be still.” And the wind suddenly stopped, and there is an immediate calm over the waters of the Sea of Galilee. No one ever performed miracles like that.

Elijah was the tool in a restoration to life. Elijah was a tool in restoration to life. The prophets performed miracles, but no man ever commanded nature and had the response that Jesus of Nazareth had. The powers of others were derivative, and if they had been able to express, in all of the places in which their miracles were described what was really going on, they would never have said that that power came from them. And you can see this in certain of the miracles that were performed. Do you remember Peter’s

miracle when he healed Anias? What did he say? Did he say, “I, the first pope in the Roman Catholic Church command thee to rise up and walk or to be healed?” No, do you remember what he said to Anias? “Anias, Jesus Christ heals thee.” And the miracle was performed, but through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the testimony of the miracles is further testimony to the deity of our Lord. His miracles conveyed the overwhelming impression of the presence of God. And you’ll notice that in that little boat, when they saw the miracle that took place, they feared exceedingly and said one to another, “What manner of man is this, that even the wind and sea obey him?” So I could say to my modern systematic theologians, “Take a look at Holy Scripture. His miracles are not like the miracles of ordinary men. He is able to control nature. Nature is at his beck and call; not he at nature’s, as we are.” You remember, that when Peter put down his net and there was enclosed in the net, the miraculous draft of fishes, in Luke chapter 5. When he realized what had happened, he said, “Depart from me O lord, for I am a sinful man.” It’s almost as if he realized that the Lord God of Israel was in the boat with him, and that’s exactly what was the case, too.

Secondly, the witness of his sayings, in which he appears as the supreme reveler of truth. This is other scriptural testimony. First, the witness of the miracles, secondly, the witness of his sayings, in which he appears as the supreme reveler of truth. Did you ever notice this about our Lord Jesus? That he is familiar with the scenery of the invisible world. He may speak about the affect of the life of a sparrow on the heart of God. He may speak about the care of God for even one hair upon those -- from the heads of those that belong to him. He speaks about joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repents. How did he have such knowledge as that? How do we know there is any joy in heaven over the repentance of one man? How do we know that there even exist angels? Our Lord not only knows of the invisible supernatural world, but he knows all about it, and he speaks authoritatively about it.

If I had time, we could illustrate some of these things. Let me just say this. Have you ever noticed how Jesus prefaced so many of his statements with, “Verily, I say unto you?” Have you ever thought anything about that? Or have you just read the Bible, and never bothered to think? Have you ever noticed anyone else saying that, at the time of our Lord, or before the time of our Lord? Do you know of anyone in Judaism who went around saying, “Verily, verily, I say unto you?” Do you?

No, of course you don’t. If you went to the library and studied from here until the time of the rapture of the church, you would not discover anybody else who spoke like that except our Lord Jesus Christ. The entire range of Jewish literature knows of no example of a scribe or a rabbinical teacher prefacing his remarks with the expression, “Verily -- or, amen -- I say unto you.” That was an authority. That was implicit in our Lord’s word -- and explicit too -- in our Lord’s words, which is not found in the word of any other man of that time, a tremendous claim.

I can only say that of things in the past. I may say, “Verily, verily, I say unto you. The Cowboys whipped the Saints, 21 to 17.” But everybody knows that, except Dave Long. [Laughter] I’m not sure he realizes what happened yet. He was a defensive end, you know. He kept going around yesterday afternoon like this. He was having a great day until the end of the game. Someone who was sitting with me watching the game yesterday said, “You know, out of 80,000 people in that stadium, there’s not one saint there really.” [Laughter]

When we speak about things, there is no note of authority. But when our Lord did, there was. Let me say further; the witness of his sayings, in which he lays claims on the lives and consciences of men affirm his -- affirms his deity too. The daily language of the Lord Jesus was, “Follow me.” When I get in the pulpit, I don’t like to say, “Follow me.” Occasionally, I think maybe by the grace of God, I could say, “Follow me in this or follow me in that.” But I am hastened -- I hasten to say, “It is not I, but it is God who has enabled me to do this, and I’d like for you to follow me in it.” But most of the time I feel,

because I know in my heart that I should say, “Follow him. Don’t follow me.” Now I know Paul said, “Be imitators of me as I am of the Lord.” And I would like to be able to say that as Paul did. I know my heart, and I know how rebellious my heart is. And so it’s rare when I can honestly say, “Follow me.” But Jesus never knew a moment when he could not say to everyone, “Follow me.” That was his daily language.

And then I think fourthly, the witness of his claim to forgive sins. The witness of the miracles; the witness of sayings, in which he appears as the supreme reveler of truth; the witness of his sayings, in which he lays claims on lives and consciences of men; and the witness of his claim to forgive sins. That’s a prerogative of God alone. No man can forgive sins, but Jesus did.

Let me read a simple story. Mark chapter 2. It’s the story of the healing of the palsied man. And Mark begins it with the first verse by saying,

“And again he entered into Capernaum after some days, and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway, many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door; and he preached the word unto them. And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was, and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy; Son thy sins be forgiven thee. But there were certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts. Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them; Why reason ye these things in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy; Thy sins be forgiven thee or to say; Arise, and take up thy bed and walk?”

Well you see, as far as they were concerned, if a man can do a miracle in the visible sphere -- right before their eyes -- then they can trust him for the invisible sphere. And so he said, “I want to do something in the visible sphere so that you will understand that I have authority in the invisible sphere.” So, “But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins -- he saith to the sick of the palsy -- I say unto thee; Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house. And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed and glorified God saying; We never saw it on this fashion.”

You’ll never find that in a healer’s meeting today. No, we have to put our hands over and you’ve got to have faith. And now, we’ve got to pray. And then, when the miracle is supposed to take place, someone has to help the brother off the platform because he might fall if he doesn’t have his crutches with him. That’s not a divine miracle. This was a divine miracle.

So if I were to look at the things that the Scriptures say about Jesus, and if it is not true that God did not -- if it’s true that God did not become flesh -- then I must have to believe that flesh became God. Because the things that Jesus did and said, affirm his deity. Perhaps you are saying -- as I think you should, if you are a thinking person -- “Well Dr. Johnson, with all of the evidence along this line, how is it that intelligent men who read the Bible to some extent, do not believe that Jesus was the Son of God? Are there some texts that seem to suggest otherwise?” Yes, there are several. Let’s take one of them. Mark chapter 10, verse 18.

Capital C, in our outline: Some Objections. Mark chapter 10, verse 18. Mark says, “And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him and asked him; Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him; Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.” Is not Jesus saying here, that he is not God? Does he not object to this young man saying,

“Good Master” and that only God is good? Does not the clear and obvious teaching this text mean that Jesus disclaims that he is God?

Perhaps we can get the truth of this best by an illustration. The emperor Joseph II of Germany used to go *incognito* on extensive tours through Hungary, Bohemia, France, Spain, Holland -- his territory -- his true self not being recognized. The reason he did, was in order that he might, from first hand acquaintance, discover what the people thought of their emperor. Now, if while he was in disguise, someone should have rendered homage or obedience to him -- not knowing who he was -- that belonged only to a king, then the king would have the right to arraign him for treason against the throne.

Now you see the mistake that the rich young ruler made whose -- that he did not know who Jesus was. He thought that he was simply, a teacher. And he took an adjective “good,” which in its -- in its fullest sense -- may only refer to God, and he took the adjective and attached it to a term concerning our Lord, which in his mind, did not involve deity. So he said, “Good teacher.” But since he did not know who Jesus was, and took an adjective that belonged only to God, Jesus rightly questioned him. If he had responded to our Lord and it said, “Oh but Master, you are God,” Jesus would have turned and said, “I have not seen or found so great faith, no not in all of Israel. A man who knows me for what I am.” He was not disclaiming deity. He was just saying, “Don’t use the adjective “good” if you’re not willing to believe that I deserve that adjective.”

There’s another text. Jesus said in John 14:28, “My Father is greater than I. You’ve said how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, you would rejoice because I said, I go unto the Father, for my Father is greater than I.” Well how can Jesus be God if the Father is greater than he?

Now I want you to notice he does not say, “My God is greater than I.” He said, “The Father is greater than I.” He speaks as the Son. He speaks as the Son who is here on the earth carrying out the will of the Father. He speaks as the mediatorial Son and the

mediatorial Son was under the direction of the Father, as long as he was here upon the earth.

Perhaps an illustration may help us here. There is a firm in this city called the “Johnny Mitchell Company.” I’ve known Johnny Mitchell, Orville Mitchell, Don Mitchell. I know nothing about the company -- so what I’m saying -- is not a revelation of anything. It’s just an illustration. Let us just suppose for the sake of supposition, that these three men are brothers in every way. Let us suppose also, that the ownership of that company is vested $33\frac{1}{3}$ percent in each brother. And let us suppose, just for the sake of our illustration, that these three men formed the company in this way. They got together and said, “Let’s form a manufacturing concern.” And as they discussed their relative talents, one says, “Well you know, I have selling talents. I’d like to handle sales.” Another said, “I’m interested in the technical side. I should like to have the authority in the technical sphere of our business.” And the other said, “Well I like administration. I’d like to handle the administration.” And so they agreed. There is absolute equality among the men, but relative inequality, as they assign each other functions within their company. They share alike in the profits. Their salaries are the same. And let’s suppose you should meet one of them on the street. You, a technical man, and you should meet the one who is the administrator. And you should say, “You know, I’ve been buying your -- your machines and they’ve done a real good job, but I have a particular problem. I need a machine that -- and then you launch into a long technical explanation of the kind of machine that you’re interested in. And perhaps the president of the company -- the administrator -- might say, “I’m sorry. I don’t understand a thing that you’re talking about. When it comes to machinery, Orville is greater than I.” You see relative inequality is compatible with absolute equality. And when Jesus said, “My Father -- or the Father -- is greater than I,” he was not saying that, in essence he was greater. He was saying, in office, he was greater. He is the administrator of the plan of salvation, and it is the Son who has voluntarily subjected himself to the Father, to carry out the work of redemption.

When it’s over, Paul tells us, “He should deliver up the kingdom to the Father and then God shall be all in all.” And the equality that is relative shall be only absolute throughout the ages of eternity.

So to answer the question, “Who was Jesus Christ?” truly, as the centurion said, “He was the Son of God.” And the poet is absolutely right in saying, “He gives a light to every age. He gives but borrows none. Jesus is the Son of God.” That does not say everything about our Lord of course -- and next week -- we’re going to try to give the other side. Let’s close with a word of prayer. We have about a twelve-minute or so break.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for Thy Word and for the greatness of the Son of God. And we pray that Thou will deliver us from the errors that are rampant in the twentieth century based on false presuppositions concerning the Scriptures. Enable us Lord also to realize that if Jesus Christ is Lord and God, he demands our fullest devotion and may he have it by the power of the spirit.

For Christ’s sake. Amen.