

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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JESUS IS THE WAY

Richard Garbi

In modern culture, Jesus is often admired but misunderstood. As Dan Kimball noted in *They Like Jesus but Not the Church*, many people “understand Jesus as a peacemaker who loved others and died for what he believed in” but stop short of acknowledging His divinity (Kimball, 2007, 255). While this portrayal paints Jesus as an inspirational figure, it ultimately falls short of the claims Jesus made about Himself. Some argue that Jesus’ divine status was a later invention of the Church. For example, Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* popularized the myth that Jesus’ divinity was “voted on” at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325 (Brown, 2003, 233). These claims beg the question: What did Jesus actually say about Himself, and what did His disciples believe about Him? The Bible gives clear answers that strongly affirm Jesus’ divinity.

The Bible presents a singular message. God, who created everything, came to the earth as a man. He died and rose from the grave so we might live eternally with Him. The New Testament gives us an account of Jesus’ life, His teachings, and the work His disciples did following His death and resurrection. They testified about Jesus and built on the work of Jesus to establish a body of believers.

Peter declares that he is a witness to the life of Jesus, saying: “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” (II Peter 1:16) John declares the same thing:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (I John 1:1-3)

Finally, John tells us the conclusion he wishes us to reach concerning Jesus in **John 20:30-31** “Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” The apostles testified that Jesus is God.

Jesus was not just a moral teacher. Jesus is the Son of God and claimed to be so. In **Matthew 16:13-17**, Jesus asked His disciples who they thought He was. Peter responded, “*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,*” to which Jesus affirmed the answer, stating that this revelation came from God Himself. In the Jewish context, “Son of God” was not merely honorary—it was “*making himself equal with God*” (**John 5:17-18**).

Jesus Used the Divine Name “I AM”

In **John 8:58**, Jesus declared, “*Before Abraham was, I am.*” His Jewish audience understood this as a direct reference to God’s self-identification in **Exodus 3:14**, “*I AM WHO I AM.*” Their response? They picked up stones to execute Him for blasphemy (**John 8:59**). Jesus was clearly invoking the divine name for Himself.

Jesus Affirmed His Identity During Trial

In **Mark 14:61-64**, the high priest asked Jesus, “*Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*” Jesus answered, “*I am,*” and referenced **Daniel 7:13-14**, a prophecy of divine authority and glory. The high priest tore his robes and accused Him of blasphemy, which confirms they understood His claim as divine.

To reject Jesus’ divinity is not only to misunderstand Him—it is to deny His own words and the unified witness of Scripture.

Jesus Claimed Unity with the Father

In **John 10:30**, Jesus said, “*I and the Father are one.*” The Jews again picked up stones, saying, “*Because you, being a man, make yourself God*” (v. 33). Jesus was not misunderstood; He was understood perfectly, and they considered His claim blasphemous because it was a direct claim to deity.

Jesus Accepted Worship

Worship is reserved for God alone (**Exodus 20:3-5**). However, Jesus repeatedly accepted worship without rebuking those who offered it:

Matthew 14:31-33 *And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'*

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John 9:35-38 – “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped Him

Matthew 28:9 – The women “took hold of his feet and worshiped him.”

If Jesus were not divine, such worship would have been idolatrous, and He would have corrected it. Instead, He affirmed it.

Jesus not only claimed deity; He also declared that there is no other path to heaven except through Him. Jesus said, “*I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*” (**John 14:6**) Notice, Jesus did not say I am a way. He said I am the way. There is only one way to heaven, and it is through Jesus! After a particularly hard teaching that led some of his disciples to leave Jesus, he asked the twelve disciplines “*Do you want to go away as well?*” (**John 6:67**) Peter replied: “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.*” (**John 6:68-69**) A few years later, following Jesus’ death and resurrection, Peter and John were arrested by the Jewish authorities for proclaiming Jesus. While on trial, Peter proclaims: “*This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*” (**Acts 4:11-12**)

These singular claims by Jesus, that he is God and that He is the only way to heaven, force us to make a decision. We must either accept Him or reject Him. C.S. Lewis famously argued that Jesus’ claims leave us with only three logical options: He was either a Liar, a Lunatic, or Lord:

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 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, 1952, 55-56)

If Jesus knowingly lied about his divinity and being the path to salvation, He was not moral. However, who would die to protect a lie? Would His closest disciples also lay down their lives to protect that same lie? Most of Jesus’ disciples died horrible deaths proclaiming Jesus. This makes it unlikely that Jesus was a conman.

What if he did not know he was lying, but had some

mental infirmity? Jesus’ life and teachings, demonstrating unmatched wisdom, compassion, and power, bear qualities that are incompatible with delusion. Philosopher Peter Kreeft adds: “*Jesus has in abundance precisely those three qualities that liars and lunatics most conspicuously lack: his practical wisdom... his deep and winning love... [and] his ability to astonish.*” (Kreeft & Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, 1994, 60-61)

Even skeptics have recognized Jesus' uniqueness. John Stuart Mill, a non-Christian, acknowledged the moral greatness of Christ, writing that no one could “*find a better translation of the rule of virtue... than to endeavor so to live that Christ would approve our life*” (Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, 1874, 254-255).

This leaves only one reasonable conclusion: Jesus is God. The evidence is overwhelming. Jesus claimed to be God. His disciples affirmed it. His life, death, and resurrection confirmed it. Moreover, millions of lives transformed by Him testify to it still today. To reject Jesus’ divinity is not only to misunderstand Him—it is to deny His own words and the unified witness of Scripture.

Hebrews 1:3 declares: “*He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.*” One day, “*at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord*” (**Philippians 2:10-11**).

Jesus, God in the flesh, came not to condemn but to save. He offers this salvation to all who will believe, repent, confess, and be baptized for the remission of sin.

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CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Sam Woody

For me, one word encapsulates the essence of obedience: **Change**. Just the mention of it might make you shudder. I know very few people who *genuinely* enjoy change. It disrupts our comfort, upends our routines, tests our priorities, and ushers in waves of anxiety. Yet, I am firmly convinced that living a life of obedience to God is impossible without a willingness to embrace change.

This truth is far easier to articulate than to live out, but its validity remains unshaken. It's easy to talk about change—it's much harder to actually implement and execute it. As you read these words, it's likely that you (or someone close to you) are grappling with the reality of change.

If we're going to **change** to be approved unto God - **change** to be presentable unto Him - and **change** to escape the trappings of this world... We need to stop kicking against the goads & let the Potter do His work - on us, in us, and with us.

Consider the following passages:

Isaiah 29:16: *Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; for shall the thing made say of him who made it, 'He did not make me'? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, 'He has no understanding'?*

Isaiah 45:9: *Woe to him who strives with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth! Shall the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Or shall your handiwork say, 'He has no hands'?*

Romans 9:21: *Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor?*

When we yield our wills like clay to the Potter, we accept that change is inevitable - and purposeful - in His hands.

King David understood this centuries ago when he penned **Psalms 51**, a cry for transformation forged in the fires of personal failure:

Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
(Psalms 51:1-4, 10)

David's sins—hypocrisy, adultery, murder, and stubbornness—had estranged him from God. Recognizing his desperate need, he pleaded for a changed heart, trusting that only the Lord could perform such a lasting miracle.

Heart surgery is indeed God's specialty, and though the process stings, the outcome is breathtaking.

When we explore biblical examples of change, few stories rival the dramatic transformation of Saul of Tarsus into the Apostle Paul. His life stands as a testament to God's power to reshape even the most resistant hearts. Saul was a zealous Pharisee, fiercely opposed to the early Christian movement. He stood by approvingly at Stephen's stoning (**Acts 7:58-8:1**) and set out for Damascus to arrest more believers. But God had other plans:

*Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' (**Acts 9:1-5**, NKJV)*

Blinded for three days, Saul fasted & prayed until Ananias, obedient to God's call, restored his sight and baptized him (**Acts 9:17-18**). From that moment, Saul - now Paul - was a new man. His mission flipped from destroying the church to building it, as he became one of the greatest proclaimers of the Gospel.

Paul's transformation teaches us profound lessons:

1. No One Is Beyond God's Reach:

If God could redeem a persecutor like Saul, He can transform anyone. This offers hope for ourselves and those we pray for, no matter how far they seem from faith.

2. Change Can Be Disruptive:

Paul's encounter was jarring—blinding light, a voice from heaven, days of darkness. Our changes may also come through upheaval, but they pave the way for God's purposes.

3. Change Redirects Our Purpose:

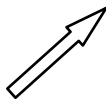
Paul's life took a new trajectory, from opposition to evangelism. When God reshapes us, He aligns our paths with His divine will.

Change isn't a one-time event; it's a daily process in the Christian life. Scripture urges us to ongoing transformation. (**Romans 12:2**, **2 Corinthians 5:17**)

This daily renewal - shedding the old self and embracing the new - requires surrender and trust. Paul modeled this, writing, "I die daily" (**1 Corinthians 15:31**, NKJV), reflecting his constant yielding to God's transformative work.

Change can be terrifying, but faith empowers us to embrace it, knowing God is sovereign. He promises, "*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ*" (**Philippians 1:6**, NKJV).

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Please check your expiration date!

Glory to God!

The **Kirksville, MO** congregation rejoiced when **Donna Barkley** placed her membership with the body on May 11.

The church on **Riverside Rd, Ozark, MO** praised God when **Ben Morris** was appointed to the eldership and **Eric Rogers** was appointed a deacon under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and with the assistance of Dan Huff on May 4.

Blessed Are the Dead

Rex Dale Wood, 76, passed away June 22. Rex was born November 12, 1948 in Kirksville, MO to Dale and Betty (Buckman) Wood. On December 19, 1970, he married Pat Hagan, his wife of 54 years. Together, they raised four daughters. He was a member and elder of the Meadville Church of Christ. Rex was also a Meadville School Board President, Linn County Farm Bureau President, County Fair Swine Chairman, on the Linn County Pork Producers Board, Missouri Pork Producers Board, Missouri Soybean Merchandising Council, Linn County Cattleman's, and the American Legion.

Gerda Erika (Pawlowski) Pfeiffer, 89, fell asleep on June 10. Gerda was born August 7, 1935 in Hamburg, Germany. On December 28, 1973, in Kirksville, MO Gerda married Harold Pfeiffer who preceded her in death in 2004. Gerda was a member of the congregation in Kirksville, MO.

Thank You!

Your editor would like to thank Wade Stanely for his many years of service to this publication. He has been an encouragement to many, including your editor, through this work.

Special Meetings



2025 Special Meetings

September 14.....Sunday Meeting, Lawrence, KS
September 28.....Sunday Meeting, Braymer, MO
September 27.....Ladies' Day, Lone Jack, MO
October 3-5.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO
October 18-19.....Weekend Meeting, Ozark, MO

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