

Jesus: The Way, the Truth, and the Life

People used to name their children after a prominent family member or some character trait they valued. Now they pick names that sound good or are in vogue. Popular singer Beyoncé and rapper Jay-Z (Shawn Carter), for instance, named their daughter Blue Ivy Carter.

Sometimes, names that top the popularity polls even make the news! A couple years ago, CNN reported that the Parent.com name search Web site said the top five names for girls were Isabella, Millie, Sookie, Ann, and Ella—Isabella being the most popular. The top five names for boys were Jacob, Max, Liam, Ted, and Mo.

A friend of mine named his sons Dwight and Calvin. When I asked him whether he had named them for the deceased United States presidents Dwight Eisenhower and Calvin Coolidge, he said No. He'd given them the names of two people he respected deeply—but they weren't political figures; they were long-departed Christian ministers: the

theologian and Reformer John Calvin and the great preacher Dwight L. Moody.

I've met people whose names are actually titles: Mister and Queenie and even Major. When black people were deliberately shown disrespect in public—grown men being called “boy” and women “gal”—they gave names like this to their children, hoping to evoke a measure of respect for them.

Jesus—the great I AM

On many notable occasions, God instructed earthly parents what to name their children. For instance, He told Abraham what to name his son of promise, a forebear of Jesus. “God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, *and* with his seed after him” (Genesis 17:19). And more than a thousand years later, God sent an angel to tell Zacharias what to name his son, the forerunner of the Messiah: “Thou shalt call his name John” (Luke 1:13).

And when it came to naming the Savior, God was particular. He didn't use an Internet search engine to decide on a name for this very special baby yet unborn—this child of promise, the earth's eternal Redeemer who was preexistent, but who was now coming into the world shrouded in flesh. Through an angelic messenger, the eternal Father told Joseph: “Thou shalt call his name *Jesus*: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21; emphasis added).

According to the apostle Paul, Jesus is the eternal God. In Paul's letter to the Colossians, he says of Jesus: “He is the

image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:15–17, NKJV). John 1:1–3 says the same thing about Jesus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

One source comments on the meaning of Jesus’ being the “image” of God.

Jesus was an “exact likeness” of God—a “perfect Representative.”

Christ . . . perfectly reflected visibly “the invisible God” (1 Ti 1:17). . . . “Likeness” implies mere *resemblance*, not the exact *counterpart* and *derivation* as “image” expresses; hence it is nowhere applied to the Son, while “image” is here, compare 1 Co 11:7 [TRENCH]. (Jn 1:18; 14:9; 2 Co 4:4; 1 Ti 3:16; Heb 1:3). Even before His incarnation He was the image of the invisible God, as the Word (Jn 1:1–3) by whom God created the worlds, and by whom God appeared to the patriarchs. Thus His *essential* character as *always* “the image of God,” (1) before the incarnation, (2) in the days of His flesh, and (3) now in His glorified state, is, I think, contemplated here by the verb “is.”¹

If this is true, and it is, then Jesus undeniably is the God who called Moses to deliver the Hebrew slaves from their Egyptian bondage. When Moses asked the God of eternity what he should call Him, God said, “‘I AM WHO I AM.’” Just tell them, ‘I AM has sent me to you’ ” (Exodus 3:14, NLT).

Notice that Jesus said He bears that name. He declared of Himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6, NKJV). When He said, “I am,” He repeated His introduction of Himself to Moses. *I AM* is a form of the verb *to be*, so Jesus introduced Himself as the One who is. This statement implies that He is the eternal, self-existent One. No one else gave Him life or in any other way brought Him into existence. Like the Father and the Holy Spirit, Jesus is eternal. He therefore exists above and beyond time and circumstances. Because He is above and beyond human time and circumstances and thus isn’t limited or controlled by them, He can *interrupt*, *intercede*, *intersect*, and *interpret* times and circumstances for us.

And because He is above and beyond them, He can also *infiltrate* them. Because He is always and at all times “I AM,” He always *is*. He ever lives. Because He always *is*, every day is always today and not yesterday or tomorrow. He is Jesus Christ, “*the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever*” (Hebrews 13:8; emphasis added).

God *knows* all about our cares and sorrows because He is ever present with us.

And God *cares* for us.

Therefore God *appears* whenever His people need Him.

And God *provides* whatever His people need.

* Or I Will Be What I Will Be.

The Way

Just before His trial and crucifixion, Jesus told Thomas, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6, NLT). In other words, He was saying that *He is the only road* that takes travelers to the Father.

Our spiritual journey is a journey of faith. It is designed to take us into the fullness of fellowship with the Father. But this journey doesn’t begin with Southwest Airlines or Amtrak or Greyhound. It doesn’t start at an airport. It begins in our hearts and minds. It is a journey to a place inside that will take us to a place outside. It is a journey not of place and time but a journey of our being. It is a journey of our becoming.

You see, we have been separated from God by our sinfulness. “Your iniquities have separated you from your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2, NKJV). This sinfulness has affected our very being and nature. Our journey of faith is designed to re-create in us the nature that Adam and Eve lost for all of us in the Garden of Eden—and to re-create the relationship that also was lost in that garden. It is a journey in which we are restored to the image and nature of God, first in our character and then in our bodies. It is our own fallen nature that cultivates within us the desire to do the evil that we do. We need a way back to God—a road back to Him. This way, this road, is Jesus.

Have you ever noticed that some streets and roads are faulty? They may be poorly identified or too narrow or unpaved and muddy. The way to God isn’t like that. It’s clearly

mapped out, in good repair, and free of hindrances. But that doesn't mean that it's level and easy to travel. It has its hills and valleys, its sharp curves. But it's a true road, and it leads upward to everlasting life.

Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13, 14). This road is the clear way. While it is invisible to the world, it is visible to the eye of faith; it is visible to believers. It makes itself manifest in the lives of those who have found it.

Jesus is also the way from earth to heaven. He is the way from sin to purity. He is the way from wrong to right. He is the way from death to life. He is the way from ignorance to enlightenment. He is the way from weakness to strength. He is the Way of all ways.

The Bible informs us that some people have already traveled this road successfully: Enoch, Moses, and Elijah the Tishbite. Enoch was pure and holy in a world drowning in sin. Moses, who could have been a pharaoh, gave his life to leading God's people to the Promised Land. And Elijah stood for God when it seemed he was the only one still faithful.

But even these three people needed a mediator between themselves and God. That Mediator was, is, and ever will be Jesus. Paul wrote, "There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5).

Ellen White pictured this in another way. She said, "Christ is the way from earth to heaven. By His humanity He touches

earth, and by His divinity He touches heaven. He is the ladder that connects earth and heaven. . . . Because of His incarnation and death, ‘a new and living way’ has been consecrated for us (Heb. 10:20). There is no other means of salvation (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5).”²

It is Jesus who is the Great Way-Maker. Have you ever needed someone to make a way for you, to—like a blocker in a football game—run interference for you and thereby clear a path for your feet? Jesus has done this for all of us. Because He is the great I AM, He has credibility with God, with Satan, with all the other angels, fallen and unfallen. They all respect Him. Consequently, when He mediates with God for us, the issue is settled. When He commands Satan on our behalf, the issue is likewise settled—all because Jesus is the great and mighty I AM, the eternal Way-Maker.

The Truth

Jesus is also the Truth. He is the absolute Truth, the full Truth, the only Truth, the eternal Truth. He is nothing but the truth. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes, “In its basic meaning truth is that which corresponds to fact. John frequently, as here, uses the word in a wider sense to denote what is true in things pertaining to God and the duties of man, or in a more restricted sense the facts taught in the Christian religion concerning God and the execution of His purposes through Christ.”³

There can be no truth without Jesus. Philosophers may philosophize, strategists may strategize, debaters may debate,

quibblers may quibble, but without Jesus and His Word entering in, all is false and untruthful. *It is Jesus who determines truth, because there is no reality without Him.*

A common teaching of our age is *relativism*. Its adherents believe there is no eternal, changeless truth. What is true varies with a person's life situation. What is true for me may not be true for you. All things are relative to a person's thinking, desire, goals, and so forth.

Jesus undercuts that teaching by declaring that He is the standard by which all lives are to be judged. Therefore, He is the *objective* truth, not the *subjective* truth. His principles are universal and timeless, and His teachings are applicable to all humanity.

Being the Truth means living the truth and telling the truth. And from the beginning, Jesus has been truthful with humanity.

Jesus told Adam and Eve that they would surely die if they ate the forbidden fruit.

Lucifer, through his artful ventriloquism using the serpent, said that they would *not* surely die. Adam and Eve believed the devil's lie—and we've been dying ever since!

Here's the truth as it is in Jesus:

The only way in which men will be able to stand firm in the conflict, is to be rooted and grounded in Christ. They must receive the truth as it is in Jesus. And it is only as the truth is presented thus that it can meet the wants of the soul. The preaching of Christ crucified, Christ our righteousness, is what satisfies the soul's

hunger. When we secure the interest of the people in this great central truth, faith and hope and courage come to the heart. If God has given his Son to die for sinners, he means to counteract sin. He has made the great gift because of his love for sinful, fallen man. We must make it plain that he is able and willing to save all who come unto him and believe in him as their personal Saviour. Present this again and again, until the mind can take it in. Let every teacher put his whole heart, his whole mind and soul, into this work, lifting up Jesus, and bidding the people look and live. Let the sinner fix his eyes on Jesus, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. As he looks to Christ, he will feel the power of God. He must not devote the precious time to deploring his sinfulness, looking upon the wounds and bruises he has received in the services of Satan. By faith carry the mind up within the veil to view Christ as our intercessor before the mercy seat. Let the sinner behold Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life, and his soul will be open to receive the truth as it is in Jesus.⁴

Because Jesus is the unvarnished truth, He calls us to live lives that are truthful, truth filled, and truth bound. He is the “naked” truth.

I once heard a story in which truth and lies were personified to draw a stark contrast between the two. Long ago and far away, Truth and Lie lived in the same little town. Truth was always dressed in white from head to toe. He wore a white hat, a white shirt, a white suit with a white tie, and white socks and

shoes. He was always meticulous in his dress. Lie, on the other hand, was always filthy.

Truth was out for a walk one hot day, and he came upon a lake. Since it was the time of day when no one else was likely to come there, he decided to go skinny-dipping. He hung his clothes on some shrubs and low-hanging tree branches with care, making sure nothing would fall off nature's clotheslines onto the ground. Then he slipped into the pristine waters of the lake and swam away.

About that time, Lie happened to come along. He noticed the immaculately clean clothing hanging on the shrubs and tree branches, and a nefarious idea came to him. He quickly slid out of his filthy clothes and exchanged them with the pristine ones that belonged to Truth. Then, disguised as Truth, Lie walked back to the town and began to deceive people.

After a while, though, someone shouted, "Here comes the real Truth!" Then, as the people of the town peered into the distance, someone asked, "How do you know that is the real Truth and not an impostor?"

The answer came back, "Because it is the naked Truth!"

Truth refused to wear Lie's filthy clothing.

Jesus is like that. He never appears in the filthy clothes of falsehood. He *is* the truth, and He *reveals* the truth. When He spoke the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai, He spoke and then wrote truth. We must obey the Ten Commandments—every last one of them—for they are truth, having come from the mouth of the Lord and then being written by His finger. Aligning ourselves with the truth of the universe—the truth of God and His righteousness—is always

the best policy. He is the one and only True Witness—the witness to the eternal truth of the Godhead. And in His revelation of truth, He is not general but specific:

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent (Revelation 3:14–19).

As the holy Healer of eternity past, present, and future, Dr. Jesus tells us the truth about our spiritual condition—and about our diagnosis and prognosis. The diagnosis defines our ailments, our disease, our real condition. It is the act or process of identifying or determining the nature and cause of a disease. Through the prophet Isaiah, God asks His people, “Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint” (Isaiah 1:5).

The prognosis is a prediction of the probable course and

outcome of a disease—the likelihood of recovery. So the Lord calls us: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (Isaiah 1:18–20).

Yes, Jesus is the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth!

The Life

When Jesus says He is the life, He is telling us several things. First, He is saying that no life exists without Him. We took a look at John 1:1–3 a few pages back and saw that it portrays Jesus as the Creator-Redeemer. Paul wrote in a similar vein: “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Colossians 1:16).

According to the Bible, then, God—Jesus—made the world in six literal days, and then He rested the seventh day and blessed it and hallowed it. And His creative activities continue. We are alive today because of Jesus. He made us, and He sustains us. “In him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

But more important, Jesus is the model human being. His life is the supreme example of what the Father wants the lives of all of us to be like. We are to live our lives after the similitude, the likeness, of Jesus’ life. He, who was pure and holy,

demonstrates and models before us how to be holy. Without this holiness, we will not see God. Jesus said, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). And Paul wrote, “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Jesus is the definition of a holy life, the presentation of a holy life, and the power that enables us to live a holy life. It is Jesus in us and us in Jesus that results in eternal, everlasting life.

“God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). The only hope we have is the hope of Christ living out His life within ours as we surrender to Him.

We aren’t really living until we live the life that Jesus has set before us. We live the life of Jesus through the Holy Spirit living in us and producing the righteous results of that indwelling in our lives.

Once again, Paul speaks clearly about the “fruit”—the results—of the indwelling of Jesus in us through the person of the Holy Spirit: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22, 23, NKJV).

There are many ways of determining whether or not the tree that’s being examined is an apple tree. Expert arborists can distinguish the different varieties of trees by examining their bark, branches, root system, and leaves. But the easiest way to know what kind of tree we have is to look at the fruit it produces. After all, Jesus did say, “By their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20, NKJV).

Of course, Jesus wasn't really concerned with trees. He was saying we know whether or not people are Christians—followers of Christ—when we see whether or not they have the “fruit of the Spirit” in their lives.

Does this mean that if we don't have all the fruits of the Spirit, then we aren't Christians? No. While these fruits will be manifested completely in the people who surrender themselves to God daily, we must remember that we are “under construction.” God is, through His divine operations, growing Christians. He is making us more and more Christlike daily. And He is in charge of the total operation; we are not. We are the willing subjects of His work, and we share the responsibility for the work—we must cooperate with Him. But ultimately, the credit and the glory will all be His.

When we come into a salvific relationship with Jesus, God judges us by looking at Jesus. He accepts the merits of His life in place of the selfishness, sin, and disobedience in ours.

He was unselfish, so we are to become unselfish.

He was loving, so we are to become loving.

He was kind, so we are to become kind.

He was patient, so we are to become patient.

He was temperate, so we are to become temperate.

He was joyous, so we are to become joyful.

He was obedient, so we are to obey.

Little Timmy's punishment

Years ago in a small rural town, there was a group of students no teacher had been able to handle. They'd even managed

to run off three teachers in a single school year.

A young man just out of college heard about the class, and he applied to the school. In the pre-employment interview, the principal warned him, “You don’t know what you’re asking for. No one has been able to handle these students. You’re likely to be beaten terribly.”

After a few moments of silent prayer, the young man looked at the principal and said, “Sir, I want to take on the challenge. Just hire me on a trial basis.”

The next morning the young man stood before the class and said, “I’m here today to teach you—to help you learn. But I realize I can’t run the school by myself. I need your help.”

A boy whom the local people called Big Tom was sitting in a desk at the back of the room. He whispered to his buddies, “I don’t need any help. I can lick that little bird all by myself!”

The teacher told the kids that if they were to have a school, there’d have to be some rules. But then he said that they’d be the ones to make up the rules; he’d just write them on the blackboard.

The students were surprised. This teacher’s way of conducting school certainly was different!

The students began to suggest rules. One said, “No stealing,” and someone else shouted, “Be on time for class,” and thus it continued till ten rules were listed on the board.

The teacher then asked the class what consequences there should be for breaking these rules. “Rules don’t do any good unless they’re enforced,” he said.

One of the students suggested that all those who broke one of the rules be given ten licks across their back with a

rod. The teacher thought that was pretty harsh, so he asked the kids if they would stand by this punishment. They all said they would.

Everything went pretty well for two or three days. Then at lunchtime, Big Tom came in very upset. He said someone had stolen his lunch.

Someone said he had seen little Timmy holding Big Tom's lunch. So the teacher called little Timmy to the front of the room, and he soon admitted that he had taken Big Tom's lunch.

Then the teacher asked little Timmy, "Do you know what the punishment for stealing is?"

Little Timmy nodded. He knew what it was.

"You'll have to take off your coat," the teacher said. Little Timmy was wearing a great big coat.

Timmy pleaded, "I'm guilty, and I'm willing to take my punishment. Please don't make me take off my coat."

The teacher reminded little Timmy of the rules and punishments and again told him he must take off his coat and take his punishment like a man.

The little fellow started to unbutton his old coat. As he did so, the teacher saw that he wasn't wearing a shirt under the coat. He also saw little Timmy's frail, bony frame, which he'd obviously wanted to keep hidden beneath that old coat.

The teacher asked Timmy why he had come to school without a shirt on. Timmy replied, "My daddy's dead, and we're very poor. I don't have but one shirt, and my mother is washing it today. I wore my big brother's coat so's to keep warm."

The teacher looked at the frail back with the ribs and the spine practically pushing themselves through Timmy's skin.

He wondered how he could lay a rod on the little back that didn't even have the slight protection a shirt would provide. Yet, he knew he must enforce the punishment or the children would no longer obey the rules. So he raised the rod to strike the first blow.

At that, Big Tom stood up and came down the aisle, asking, "Is there anything that says I can't take little Timmy's whipping for him?" The teacher thought about it and said No. Then Big Tom ripped his coat off and stooped over little Timmy, who still lay on the desk; and hesitantly, the teacher began to ply the rod on Tom's big back. But for some strange reason, after only five licks, the rod broke in half.

The young teacher buried his face in his hands and began to sob. Then, hearing a commotion, he looked around the room and saw that all the students were crying too. Little Timmy turned, threw his arms around Big Tom's neck, apologized for stealing his lunch, and begged for his forgiveness. He told Big Tom that he would love him till the day he died for taking his whipping for him.

Jesus, the Creator of heaven and earth, came as was prophesied to show us the way, to teach us the truth, and to give us eternal life. He took the punishment that we deserve so we can live with Him throughout eternity.

Aren't you glad that He loves us!

Endnotes

1. Colossians 1:15, in R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

2. Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald®, 1980), 5:1035.
3. *Ibid.*, 5:989.
4. Ellen G. White, *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 28, 1893.