

# JESUS THE LIFE

by  
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## I Cynicism and Real Life

In the brief video, we heard a number of common views today concerning God and Jesus. Notice that concerning Jesus, he is regarded as a holy man, a prophet, a teacher, or a good example. Some also believe that He did great miracles. But when a Christian says Jesus is the only Saviour, people often object. Are Christians being unreasonable, even bigoted? With all these different opinions, it is easy to get cynical.

Cynicism is a mark of our day. Popular culture is full of it. Cynicism develops from confusion over competing options, and also from the hurt we feel when significant people fail us, and unfortunately, we too often see failure in our politicians, religious leaders, our parents and friends, and even ourselves.

This cynicism can take very different forms. A few years ago I was talking to a roof repairman and I asked him why people in our town were so hesitant to talk about religion. He put his hand to his throat and said, "Because they're fed-up to the back teeth with it." He was disillusioned with organized religion in general, and he also didn't want anyone telling him how he ought to live his life. He had seen little reality in religion and lots of rules, and it repelled him.

Another example is of a woman who pursued a very successful academic career. She earned her PhD. Her first book was a best seller. She became a respected professor in New Testament studies. She was inducted into the most prestigious societies related to her field, and yet, with everything going for her, she found that she was empty inside and became addicted to watching television and drinking alcohol. Then, a bitter personal experience showed up her inner bankruptcy. She realized that all she thought was true was wrong and that it could not satisfy her heart, or solve her problems.<sup>1</sup>

I think a lot of people are in these kinds of situations today and it leads to cynicism. But cynicism does not bring peace. Rather, it makes us feel more deeply the need for an anchor of the soul- something or someone that is sure and steadfast that will not move when the hard things in life hit us. We want certainty; we want assurance; we want stability. We want a life that satisfies.

In the midst of this situation, Jesus stands out in many people's search for contentment. How does one get an accurate view of Jesus? Does He have anything to do with the kind of life we all want? The best way to answer that is to look at Jesus' own words.

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<sup>1</sup> Linnemann, Eta, *Historical Criticism of the Bible: Methodology or Ideology?*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1990. Her story is in the Author's Introduction.

At the lunchtime talks today, we looked at Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, and also his statement "I am the Resurrection and the Life," in a book from the Bible, John's Gospel. The CU has free copies of this book for anyone who wants one.

## II "Life" in John's Gospel

In John's Gospel, Jesus talks a lot about life. The word "life" is used 47 times in this Gospel. Jesus uses a lot of pictures to get His point across and He ties life to Himself.

In John 6 He calls Himself the Bread of Life (after feeding the 5000).

In John 11 He calls Himself the Resurrection and the Life (just before raising Lazarus from the dead)

In John 10 He says that He is the door into life, and that He came that we might have life and have it abundantly (after contrasting Himself with leaders who manipulate and abuse people)..

In these instances, He is using the word 'life' in two ways. First, He is talking about eternal life in the sense of life *after* we die in this world. Second, He is talking about a kind of life that we can live *while in* this world that will continue into the next. And He ties both of these to Himself. In all of these places, Jesus is making a big point that the life He is inviting us to *is* the real life in contrast to what's on offer around us; a kind of life that brings contentment, satisfaction, and joy. A kind of life that is not dependent on how much money you have, or how little trouble you have to deal with in this life.

## III Jesus is the "Life"

All of these sayings of Jesus get focused in one verse, John 14:6, where Jesus said ***"I am the way and the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except through Me."***

You know, that is an incredible statement for someone to make. It would be either supremely arrogant or supremely delusional in the mouth of anyone else. Yet from Jesus, it has a strange credibility. His example, His compassion, His power, His integrity all conspire to cause us to pause and think when we hear His words. Listen to His words again:

***"I am the way"***- not "a way" but "the way"- a single, unique, personal way to the Father. In our pluralistic era this is not a popular thought, but the more one studies religions, the more one realizes that all religious ideas and systems are *not* equally valid or good. And Christianity is a unique way among the world's religions. God's forgiveness and blessings are not earned through keeping rules, or gaining some secret knowledge, or doing a particular religious ceremony or by putting ourselves into some altered state of consciousness. Rather than earning or working for God's forgiveness we are to receive these blessings as a gift through our simple faith in Christ's atoning death and resurrection. Jesus said in John 3:16, ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."*** Jesus said that He personally was the only way to the Father.

Jesus then said: ***“I am the Truth.”***- truth singular, absolute, and personal; not just one truth among many truths. The Apostle Paul elsewhere says that in Christ ***“are hidden all the hidden treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge.”*** (Col. 2:3, NIV)

Then Jesus brings these sayings to a climax by stating categorically: ***“I am the Life”*** – again singular, absolute, and personal. Jesus was saying He is the source of Life, real life that begins in this world and extends into the next. Elsewhere Jesus is recorded as saying ***“I came that they might have life and might have it abundantly.”*** (John 10:10)

We all realize at some time in life that we need an anchor. It might happen to you early in life, or it might happen later, like to the woman academic I mentioned earlier. To continue her story, after she found herself bankrupt from alcohol and TV, she found her anchor in a living relationship with the risen Christ, and she found the way out of her addictions and uncertainty. I would like to offer you that same anchor, Jesus Christ. Jesus’ answer is not something to do, but someone to trust. If you trust Him, you will find Him sufficient for whatever life throws at you, and you will have an anchor that will give you a certain hope in the next life as well.

What is this eternal life that Jesus says He is the source of? Jesus tells us a few chapters later (John 17:3):

***“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”***

This life is a relationship with God. Jesus is the key to it because only He can give it. The final part of John 14:6 was, ***‘No-one comes to the Father except through me.’*** The Bible tells us that our sins keep us from God. Jesus died on the cross so that those sins can be forgiven. Jesus also gives the Holy Spirit to whoever believes in Him, and that Spirit makes it possible for you to have a close relationship with God.

The Bible makes this promise to us when we trust in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17):

***“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new the has come!”***

#### IV The Kind of Life Jesus Gives

If we have Jesus, we have everything we really need. Listen to some other things Jesus said that make this clear:

*Concerning our worrying about food, clothes and our physical needs:*

***But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well.*** (Matthew 6:33)

*About when we are having a hard time with this life:*

***Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. (Mt 11:28,29)***

*About putting the physical life before eternal life:*

***If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mt 16:24-26)***

Real Life is not a reward for work. Real Life is God's gift, and it only comes to those who believe in Christ.

Augustine, a man who had tried all the religions on offer in his day and then came to Christ, wrote, **“you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they can find peace in you.”**<sup>2</sup>

This is a piece of ‘false’ amber-resin that has hardened but is not yet fossilized. If you look closely you will see some insects trapped in it. When this resin was tree sap, these insects probably thought they had struck it rich. They came to drink the sap as food but then found themselves trapped. The sap covered them, trapped them, and killed them. If we look for life from the things of this world, we are like these insects - putting our hopes in things that will actually trap us and hurt us. Jesus would have you come to Him for real life.

## V Final Words

Consider these final words from the Bible (1 John 5:12):

***He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.***

Thank you for listening. Please feel free to ask questions and contact me through my website, [www.spotlights.org](http://www.spotlights.org). There are free materials at the table at the back. Please help yourself. I hope within a couple of days to have the text of this talk and an MP3 download available on my website.

Given at Bradford University 7 February 2007 as part of their CU Mission.

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<sup>2</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, New York: Mentor Books, 1963, 17.

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