

He Shall Be Called




A Glad Tidings Church
Family Ministry Resource

A stylized Christmas ornament is centered on a solid red background. The ornament is a light green color and has a small circular hole at the top for a string. It is surrounded by a wreath of holly leaves, also in a light green color. Two white, four-pointed sparkles are positioned on the ornament, one on the left and one on the right. The text "PART TWO" is written across the center of the ornament in a light green, serif font.

PART TWO



ALPHA AND
OMEGA



And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” And then he said to me, “Write this down, for what I tell you is trustworthy and true.” And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. All who are victorious will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.”

Revelation 21:5-7 NLT

The divine title Alpha and Omega is one of the most powerful and assuring names for our Lord and Savior. This title is our certainty of God's lasting presence with us, of His sure promises, and of His sovereign power to bring His good plans to fruition in our lives. This use of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet refers to the "beginning and the end," or the "first and the last" (Revelation 1:8, 21:6, 22:13).

Jesus is the source and fount of everything – the Alpha who runs all of creation – but He's more than that! He is not the Alpha and the Unknown Quantity x, y, or z. He is the Alpha and an already fixed Omega. By claiming this title for Himself, Jesus speaks of both His eternity and His eternal sovereignty. Every time Jesus reminds us that He is the Alpha and Omega, He does so within the context of standing alone in power and majesty at the transition from this age to the glorious age to come.

As Alpha, Jesus is the initiator of creation. As Omega, He is creation's end as well! He guides the whole process of history to His own desired conclusion. When He says, "It is finished," we are reminded of His final cry on the cross; only now He is sitting on a throne as King and Lord. He is not only the first point in time, but He is also the first point in the new creation. He is "making everything new" and is the source of the "water of life." His words are "trustworthy and true." His purpose is not "well maybe... on the other hand... perhaps..." or, "only time will tell." The word of Jesus Christ is sure, and we can stand confident in the knowledge that whatever lies between the Alpha and the mysterious Omega is part of His larger plan.


Our world is changing at a frenetic pace, to the point that many of us do not recognize our own culture as the same one that we have known all our lives. But know this: God's creation will not wander about without purpose or completion. There is an Omega point, and His name is Jesus, the Christ, the everlasting God Almighty. He will hold up the finished product against His eternal purpose, judging everything according to that unchanging objective (Revelation 22:12-15).

But now is not the time for judgment; it is the time for invitation. "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' Let anyone who hears this say, 'Come.' Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life" (Revelation 22:17). Knowing that our future is secure in Jesus Christ, the Alpha and Omega, let us do everything we can to extend the invitation to those who do not yet know Him. Let us share our victory with others, so that they can inherit God's eternal blessings as children of Almighty God.

Prayer: We worship you, Lord Jesus, as our victorious God who holds the future in Your hands – not just our future, but that of all creation. Help us to rest in the assurance of this truth, and to understand that You have empowered us to share the gospel with those who do not yet know You. May we always be faithful to live for You in every way, until that glorious day when we see you face to face. Amen.



LIVING
HOPE



All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay.

1 Peter 1:3-4 NLT

This message, originally given to first century Christians, could not have been more timely or encouraging considering the tribulation they were experiencing for living out their new faith in Jesus amidst a hostile culture.

Those who were suffering persecution were not crushed and driven to the ground by their troubles. They were still able to look to the future with the sure confidence of the blessing in heaven that awaited them. Their confidence and hope were not in fragile superstitions or in the empty gods of the Greeks. It was grounded in and secured by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Matthew 28:5-7).

Their hope, in other words, was the hope of resurrection, which was and is Jesus' triumph over death and the enemy. Therefore, whatever happened to the early Christians or even us in this world is trivial compared to the hope of the future resurrection.

Deep down in our hearts we must know that we have a living hope because we have a living Savior in Jesus Christ! The very life of our hope flows from the resurrection power of Jesus Christ from the dead. His resurrection from the dead guarantees that the faith and hope we put in Him are not empty or in vain. They are alive and active!

1 Peter 1:4 also shows us that this living hope is not only a present hope but a future and eternal one; it will never corrupt or fade like all the other temporary things of this world. Our hope is ever increasing in faith and joy until we reach the consummation of it in eternity, when we experience the full presence and glory of God. We know it is a forever living hope because it is founded upon the living word of God. Isaiah 40:8 says, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."


We have this living hope as an anchor for our soul, firm and secure (Hebrews 6:19).

Be encouraged that as we live out our faith today, we can go through trials knowing that the pain, sickness, persecution, and all effects of sin will all one day give way to the eternal and living hope we have in Jesus.

Prayer: Jesus, we thank You for the living hope we have in You. Because of Your resurrection, all of Your promises, including our eternal life, are guaranteed. We thank You that this hope will never disappoint us and will shine even on our darkest days. Help us to share this living hope with others.



INTERCESSOR



Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

Romans 8:34 NIV

Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

Hebrews 7:25 NIV

Scripture tells us that after Jesus was crucified, he laid in a tomb for three days as was customary at the time. After those three days, he was raised to life and eventually ascended to heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father. Scripture also tells us that while he is sitting there, next to God, He is interceding for us!

When we intercede for someone, we pray to God on their behalf. We are presenting the needs of another to God and asking Him to meet those needs. So, now picture Jesus sitting at the right hand of God presenting your needs to Him. Isn't that incredible? Not only did Jesus conquer death, sin, and the grave, but he made a way for us to have an active relationship with the living God.

In the letter to the Hebrews, we see that Jesus is always interceding for us. What this means is that we can come to God at any time in prayer and Jesus is right there with us, pleading to God for us. Even if no one else on the planet is praying for you, He is! Jesus is our intercessor, and because of his life, death, and resurrection, he makes it possible for us to be in the presence of God.

In this verse, the Greek word used for "intercede" is *entynchanei*, and it is used in the present active tense. That means not only did he make a way thousands of years ago, but Jesus is currently at the right hand of God continuing to make a way for us to have an ongoing relationship with Him!

This is not because of anything we did to earn or deserve it. Thomas Brooks said, "God's hearing of our prayers does not depend upon sanctification, but upon Christ's intercession; not upon what we are in ourselves, but what we are in the Lord Jesus; both our persons and our prayers are acceptable in the beloved"

Remember this—Jesus sees you, He knows you, He cares for you and right now He is talking to God about you!

Prayer: Thank you Jesus for hearing my prayers. Thank you for interceding for me and for making a way for me to come into the presence of God. Amen.



LAMB OF
GOD

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! He is the one I was talking about when I said, 'A man is coming after me who is far greater than I am, for he existed long before me.' I did not recognize him as the Messiah, but I have been baptizing with water so that he might be revealed to Israel."

John 1:29-31 NLT

Then I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll and read it. But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has won the victory. He is worthy to open the scroll and its seven seals." Then I saw a Lamb that looked as if it had been slaughtered, but it was now standing between the throne and the four living beings and among the twenty-four elders.

Revelation 4:4-6 NLT

It was a night unlike any other night. God had been moving in might and in power, sending devastating plagues upon the land of Egypt. Nine plagues had been unleashed upon Egypt with one remaining. This last plague would bring about God's full justice upon Egypt, and with it a final end to the slavery of Israel.

Each home was to take a lamb, a beautiful, pure, and spotless lamb. They were to tend and care for it until the appointed night. That evening, at twilight, they were to slaughter the lamb and take some of the blood and smear it across the doorposts of their home. Once this was done, they were to enter their home and take part in a special meal that would be called "Passover." That night judgment came across the land and every home that displayed the blood of the lamb judgment passed over, but to all those without it, all those not hiding inside a home marked by this sign, death came to the firstborn son in the home.

Every year the nation of Israel celebrated this meal as a reminder of God rescuing them from slavery. It was a story held in their hearts and spoken often from their lips. And, every year a lamb was slaughtered, they shared in the meal, and they intentionally remembered God's judgment passing over.

Therefore, it is very interesting to hear John the Baptist's proclamation of Jesus. "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The significance of this statement would not have been lost

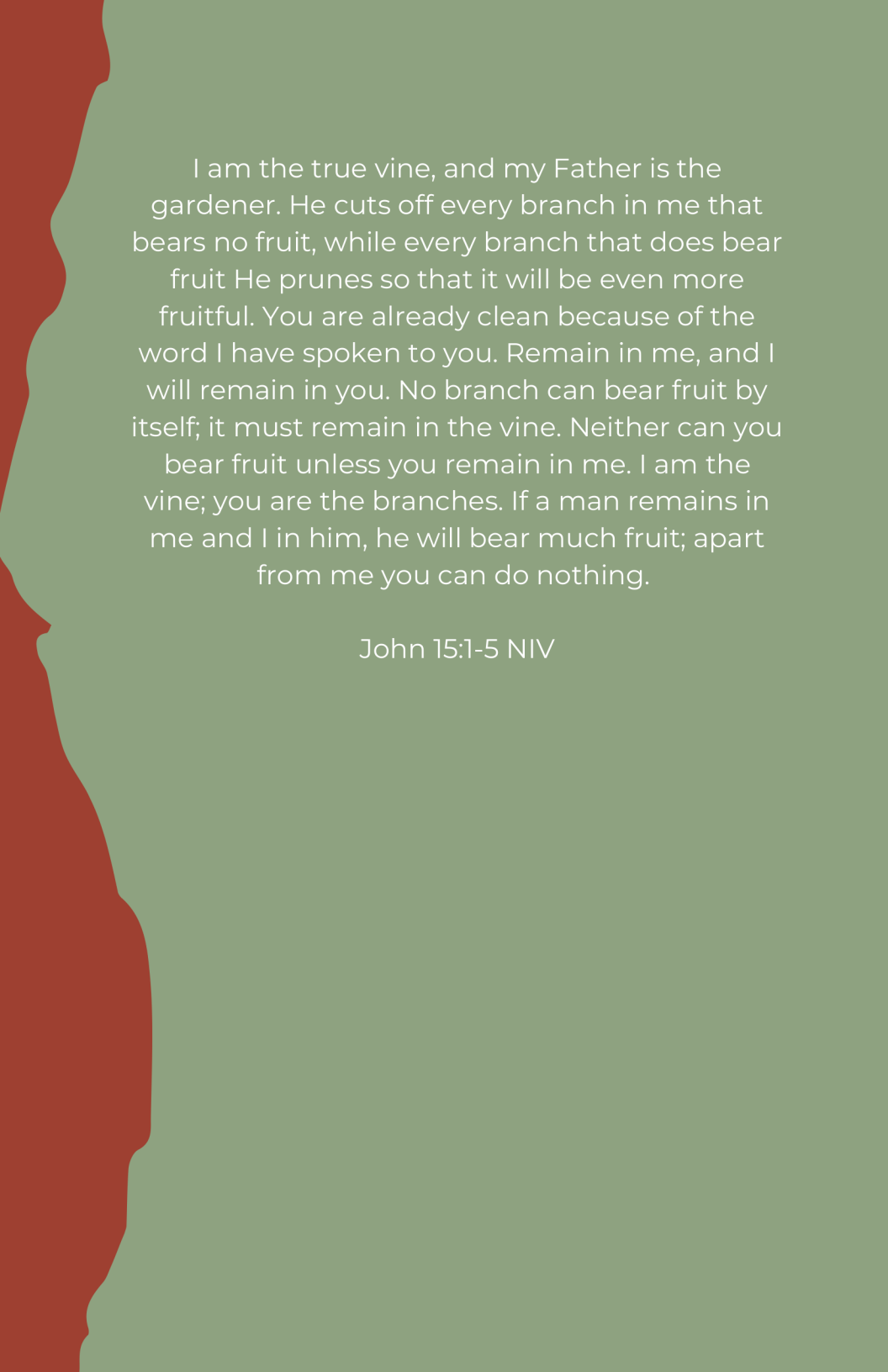
to those who heard it. John was proclaiming, “Look and look carefully, this is the one, true, and real Passover lamb!” John the Apostle expands on this in the book of Revelation. As John the Apostle is standing in the throne room of Heaven, his attention is diverted to the one who is described as the lion of the tribe of Judah (a title for Jesus). But when John turns to look, it is not a lion that he sees, but rather a lamb that appears as if it has been slaughtered.

Interesting to note was that Jesus’ crucifixion came about on the day when the lambs were being prepared to be slaughtered for Passover. Just as judgment in the Old Testament passed over every home that hid underneath the blood of the lamb, so too does judgment “Passover” all who hide themselves in the sacrificial death of Jesus! And just as the judgment in the Old Testament brought about freedom from slavery for Israel, we are set free from our slavery to sin and eternal death by the true lamb of God who takes away the sin of this world!

Prayer: God, we thank you for Jesus. Thank you that He is the lamb of God who takes away not just the sin of the world, but also our sin! Thank you that in Jesus you have chosen to forgive us, rescue us, and to love us! May we never forget what a great gift you have given us in Jesus.



THE TRUE
VINE



I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

John 15:1-5 NIV

Shortly after the last Supper, in the final "I Am" statement, Jesus teaches using a gardening metaphor that many in His day would understand. From the times of the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was referred to as the vine or a vineyard (Psalm 80, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21) that God had planted in the promised land and was expected to grow up strong, be fruitful, and be a blessing to the nations. But eventually, the vine grew wild, dried up, stopped bearing fruit, and was even uprooted as a result of the decay of sin in the hearts of God's people. But in this teaching we see Jesus illuminate that He is the only true vine and His people are now to be the branches connected to the vine, Himself.

It's important to know that Jesus, by this time in His life, had told His disciples several times that He would be betrayed, killed, and leave them to go back to the Father in Heaven.

Feeling discouraged and needing direction, it would have been easy for them, once Jesus had ascended to Heaven, to go back to the old vine of Jewish ways, teachings of the Pharisees, or even strictly Moses' law. Therefore, Jesus stresses the necessity of His disciples being connected to Himself even after His ascension to the Father. So much so, that He gifts us, His followers, with the Holy Spirit (John 14:16).


During this season, Jesus is drawing us to Himself and challenging us to be connected to Him so that we can be healthy in our spiritual lives and fruitful in our witness. Christ is the true vine. And as the true, main

vine, Jesus connects us to the roots of life and the presence of God Himself. There are several other vines that we have access to in our world and culture, but Christ is the one true vine and the only one who can bring about spiritual life and spiritual growth in our communities.

Prayer: Jesus, we thank You for the life we have in You. You alone are the true source of all life and spiritual blessings. We confess that we can do nothing apart from You. Help us to be connected to You and stay connected to You, the true vine.



OUR GREAT
HIGH PRIEST



So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

Hebrews 4:14-16 NLT

Whenever I am anticipating an important conversation, especially when it is with someone great, I am comforted by the presence of another person with me in the conversation. Having someone with me gives me confidence, calms my anxieties, and emboldens my speech. I feel the strength that comes in numbers and appreciate greatly when someone is with me to pray for me while I am engaged in an important conversation.

It seems that is how Moses felt as well. God had called him on the edge of the Midian desert when he turned to see the bush that was burning and not being consumed. In Egypt, the Hebrew people were being burdened by the heavy hand of the Egyptian Pharaoh, and they cried out to God. He heard their cries, remembered His covenant with them, and now was calling Moses to stand before the Egyptian monarch and demand that His people be let go. But, Moses did not want to go alone. He wanted someone to go with him to stand before the awful presence of the great dictator. God gave him Aaron, his brother, the one who would become the high priest for the Jews in the wilderness.

The author of Hebrews calls on the people of God under the new covenant to avoid the mistakes of their forefathers in the wilderness. He encourages them not to turn back and miss out on their inheritance, and He gives them the grand announcement that they have been given access to the presence of One much greater than the Egyptian Pharaoh. We have been invited to stand before God, the Creator of the universe, and the One who reigns in holiness and in

whose presence the hills melt like wax. Though invited to come before Him and bring Him our petitions, the thought is both awesome and terrifying. We need someone to stand with us.


The truth of the letter to the Hebrews is that Jesus is that someone and He, like Aaron is a High Priest, indeed the Great High Priest. He stands with us as the One who made access to God's presence possible and the One who knows our weaknesses, feels our pain, bears our burdens, and speaks on our behalf. He has experienced all that we do and yet, He overcame it victoriously. He is already in the presence of the Father, seated at His right hand and praying for us. When we come to God, we join the conversation that has already begun. We pray WITH our Great High Priest and can pray with confidence because we know He has our best interest in mind.

Bonhoeffer says, "He [Jesus Christ] wants to pray with us and to have us pray with him, so that we may be confident and glad that God hears us." Come to the Father with Jesus beside you. He is there to support you in your prayer, to back you up in what you are saying, and to agree with your prayer, because it has already been his own.

Prayer: Father, we thank you for your Son, Jesus Christ, the One who as our Great High Priest leads us into your glorious presence and stands with us as we bring our petitions, our pain, and our pitiful progress to you seeking your grace. We come with confidence that He is accepted and that His sacrifice was sufficient, and we rejoice in knowing that when we struggle to pray, He never stops lifting to you those of us whose names are engraved on the palm of His hand and whose lives He bears in His heart. Give us eyes to see Him, ears to hear His voice, and hearts to understand the depth of His love for us. In the name of our merciful and eternal High Priest, Jesus we pray. Amen



WAY, TRUTH,
AND LIFE



I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can
come to the Father except through me.

John 14:6 NLT

Our culture promotes a belief system that is contrary to Christianity and clashes with the words of Jesus. It is not uncommon to hear statements like, “I hope I am good enough to get to Heaven” or “My truth may not be your truth.” If you were to survey the human race, you will discover many trying to find fulfillment in life through everything but Jesus.

A few days before His crucifixion, Jesus prepared the crew that would be responsible for spreading the Gospel. One discussion involved His soon departure and imminent return. He commanded their trust and assumed they knew the way to where He was going, but Thomas answered, We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way (John 14:5)? Jesus responded, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me (John 14:6).

He is the Way. When you enter your destination into a direction’s app, you are given multiple routes—quickest, shortest, etc. We love options. Yet when it comes to eternity in God’s presence, there aren’t different routes to choose from. Jesus made it clear—I am the ONLY way! Advent reminds us that Jesus came in human flesh, lived a sinless life, and took our place on the cross. When we trust in Him ALONE, we have the guarantee of spending eternity in His presence.


He is the Truth. Absolute truth has been rejected by those outside and, sometimes, inside the church. Many no longer claim God's Word to be absolutely true. Instead, they define truth based on emotions, experiences, and circumstances. What may be true one day could be false the next. You can imagine the chaos this causes—people living and doing whatever they want with no clear sense of what is right or wrong. In Jesus' priestly prayer, He says, ...teach them your word, which is truth (John 17:17). Advent, full of Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in Jesus, reminds us that His Word is true and must never be rejected.

He is the Life. Finding fulfillment in life is the pursuit of every individual, but we often look in the wrong places. If our search for fulfillment centers around temporary things, we will never be satisfied. Having an abundance of money or resources feels good, but it is temporary. There is nothing like landing your dream job, but in the scope of eternity, that too is temporary. Jesus makes it clear that life can only be found in Him! Apart from Jesus, we will never be satisfied. As we celebrate Christ's birth this Advent season, cling tightly to these ancient words of Augustine of Hippo, Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds rest in thee.

Prayer: Jesus, I acknowledge that You are the way to the Father, Your Word is true, and in You alone, I will find rest and satisfaction. Amen.



SON OF
GOD



“The angel replied, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and He will be called the Son of God.’”

Luke 1:35 NLT

God's chosen people had been in a rut for about five hundred years. For generations they had been under the rule of a foreign kingdom. The glory and grandeur of Israel was long-forgotten. They were beaten, humbled, and discouraged. But the worst part was that there was no prophetic voice to let the people know that God was still with them. They were looking for a man to rise up and save them from this hopeless cycle.

Then suddenly and without warning, Salvation stepped into Israel's history to radically transform the fate of all humankind. Only He wasn't a mere man, as Israel had expected. He couldn't be just a man; their redemption would require someone special to change their eternal trajectory.

Jesus is called the Son of God because our heavenly Father wants us to understand that while the human Jesus was born just like we were, He wasn't the spitting image of His earthly mother. He was the spitting image of His heavenly Father.

"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see—such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together" (Colossians 1:15-17).

The Greek word for “image” is the word eikon, which gives us our word “icon.” It refers to a perfect replica – an exact reproduction. The simplest way to say it is, Jesus was God in human flesh. Jesus Christ the Son is just as much God as the Father in Heaven.


Jesus was (and is) fully God. He was not partially God; He was fully God. There was a time when Jesus was not a human being, but there has never been a time when Jesus was not God. And God stepped into our world to provide a sacrifice for our sins that nobody else could offer. He won the battle over death and demons to break for us every cycle of darkness in our lives.

That baby who was placed in a manger by the hands of His earthly father was in fact the God who holds the whole world in His hands. In fact, He doesn't just hold you and me in His hands; He holds the whole universe in His hands. He is the glue of the galaxies. He is the cement of creation. He is the Lord of the universe Who we worship. Jesus is always the answer you need.

Prayer: Thank you, Father, for sending Your only Son into the world to rescue us from our cycle of sin and hopelessness. Thank you for giving us a purpose and securing for us eternal life. We place our faith in You to impact our own lives so that we can live up to the potential You created in us. We trust you to do for us what we and nobody else possibly could. Our only hope is in You. Amen.



SON OF
MAN



Then Jesus began to tell them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead.

Mark 8:31 NLT

But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Mark 10:43-45 NLT

If you were to take the time and read through all four of the gospels in one sitting, one of the things that you would quickly notice is the title by which Jesus most often referred to himself, “the son of man.” In fact, Jesus used this title more than 80 times throughout the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But why did Jesus use this title, and what does it mean?

We firmly believe that Jesus was God. We sing it, we declare it, and we marvel at it. But if we are not careful, what can get lost in the midst of the Christmas story is His humanity. The term son of man in its simplest form means, “human being.” The fact that Jesus was the son of man, or a human being, is supremely important.

First, it proved that God has no desire to remain distant. He is not some old clockmaker who created the universe and then sat back passively, watching it tick on through time. God becoming the son of man proved His great love for humanity. He came down, He came near, He made Himself human, and this proved once and for all, the great lengths He was willing to go to rescue us from our sin.

Second, it proved His willingness to sympathize with our brokenness and pain. Jesus—the son of man—experienced life just like each of us. He felt pain, sadness, and loss. He knew what it was like to stub His toe and have someone He loved reject Him, to laugh until it hurt, and to mourn the death of those He loved. The son of man experienced every kind of pain imaginable—physically, mentally, socially, and relationally—so that we have someone who not only can sympathize with our pain, but who is WITH US in it!


Third, it proved what true love looks like. Love doesn't stand at a distance, love doesn't ignore pain, and love doesn't seek the interest of only itself. Jesus proved what love looks like by serving His disciples. As He washed their feet, God revealed what true love and true greatness looks like. It is displayed in the one who comes near and is willing to serve!

Jesus, the son of man, is lasting proof that God loves you and cares about you. He isn't far off, He isn't distant and uncaring; God in Christ came near so that you and I would always know His deep love for us. May we center our hearts on that truth this Christmas!

Prayer: God, we thank you for coming as the son of man. Thank you that you are not far off, not distant, not uncaring, but that you love us so much you came near. We remind ourselves that you are God, but that you also understand what we are facing and going through. You have felt pain just like us, and know sorrow just as we do, and so we can come to you in confidence knowing you hear every prayer and fully understand!



THE LAST
ADAM



The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:45 NLT

The creation narrative is a story that is filled with initial hope and great expectation. On the 6th day of God's creative masterpiece, He formed Adam from the earth's dust and then breathed into him and the lifeless form became a living soul. Then, when no suitable helper was found for Adam, God placed the first human under divine anesthesia and took from him a rib from which He made Eve. The two of them were together, blessed beyond measure, granted access to all of God's majestic handiwork with only one tree off limits.

Sadly, it was at this juncture that the feel good rhythm of the creation story came to a screeching halt. The couple who had been given everything within Eden except for one tree, could not resist the temptation of the serpent and trespassed the command of the Creator, taking fruit from the forbidden tree. Immediately they were exposed by their awakened conscience and did their best to escape the Divine presence. Hiding amidst the fig leaves, God found the couple and announced the consequences of their failure. They would be banished from the garden, survive only by the sweat of their brow, experience the curse of pain and sickness, and every member of the human family would ultimately die. Such was the contribution of the First Adam to the human family—wasted opportunity that led to the promise of death for all.

That IS the bad news but that is NOT the end of the story. The apostle Paul, reveals in his letter to the Corinthians, the powerful truth of the divine reversal

accomplished by Christ. Paul speaks clearly of the contribution of the First Adam. It was through his disobedience in the garden that death was introduced to humanity and became the inheritance of us all. From the moment we enter the world, we begin to die. That death, a result of sin, means much more than the cessation of our breath—it means eternal separation from God.


Enter Jesus, the One Paul calls the LAST ADAM. Unlike the First Adam, Jesus, though tempted in every way common to all humanity, did not sin but lived a perfect and spotless life, one that qualified Him to be the spotless Lamb of God that would take away the sin of humanity. At Calvary, He bore our sin and paid the ultimate price in our stead. He took death for us.

Had He stayed in the tomb, Paul makes it clear, our faith would be worthless and we would die in our sins without hope. “But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20 NLT.) Because He lives, we too can be assured that one day, though in this life we will die, we will be raised to eternal life. While the First Adam, through the divine breath became a living person, the Last Adam, by the power of God’s Spirit, became a life-giving Spirit.

Prayer: Father, you know how we so often struggle to rise above the failure and fleshly frustration of our “First Adam” nature, living so far beneath the grand privilege of those who are heirs of the Last Adam. Today we thank you for the grace that has rescued us, and we ask for the power of the Holy Spirit, who raised Jesus, the Last Adam, from the dead, to renew and invigorate our lives so that we can walk and live in the abundant and victorious life which you have provided. In the matchless name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.



REDEEMER



For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake. Through him you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and glorified him, and so your faith and hope are in God.

1 Peter 1:18-21 NIV

A young boy was walking along a road when he came across a small sheep, stuck headfirst in a long, narrow trench that had been dug beside the road. The boy wanted to help free the sheep, so he tied a belt around its leg and pulled as hard as he could. After some effort, he was able to free the sheep!

Immediately upon being set free, the sheep took a few stumbling steps and then a couple of joyful leaps... only to land headfirst back in the same trench just a few feet down the road! The sheep immediately started baaing helplessly after finding itself right back in the same condition it was in just a few moments before. Without hesitation, the young boy ran after the sheep and freed him once again!

Sometimes we are just like the sheep in this story—stuck in a ditch and crying out for help. We've tried everything we can, but we just can't seem to break free. Then suddenly, someone grabs us by the legs and pulls us out! That someone is Jesus! When we declare Jesus as Lord of our lives, we are redeemed. We are set free from the sins that separate us from God, and we are reconciled to Him. However, our freedom comes at a price—the precious blood of the Lamb. Jesus gave His life for us. And even when we fall back into the ditch, He shows us grace and mercy by running after us and pulling us out of our sin and nearer to Him! He wants us to walk alongside Him on the road to righteousness and not fall into the ditches of sin.

Colossians 1:13-14 says, "God has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we are redeemed from our sins. He died so that we could be set free! Just as the Apostle Paul says when writing to the church in Corinth, when we are in Christ, we are a new creation. The old is gone and we can walk in newness of life! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Jesus is our redeemer and by His grace we are saved!

Prayer: Jesus, thank you for sacrificing your life for me. Thank you for redeeming me and saving me from my sins. I am so grateful that I am a new creation in you! Amen.



ROCK AND
STRONG TOWER



The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior;
my God is my rock, in whom I find protection.

Psalm 18:2 NLT

The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the
godly run to him and are safe.

Proverbs 18:10 NLT

As a kid in school, I remember participating in tornado drills designed to prepare us for an actual weather emergency. When the alarm sounded, we were expected to drop what we were doing and in an orderly, single-file line, make our way to the designated “safe space.” We gathered with others and took cover. This designated location was to protect us from harm and served as our fortress in the storm.

David, who is responsible for writing several psalms, speaks of his own fortress and place of safety. In a psalm of celebration, where David recalled times his life was spared from his enemies, including Saul, he makes several references to that “safe space” where he was protected from harm’s way. David wasn’t referring to the locker room inside the school gymnasium or a hallway with no windows or outside walls that offered him protection. He was referring to something—or someone—greater! Listen to David describe his place of refuge and safety:

I love you, LORD; you are my strength. The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety. I called on the LORD, who is worthy of praise, and he saved me from my enemies. Psalm 18:1-3

Though David could recall the locations where his life was spared, he credits his salvation to the LORD—his rock and strong tower. The writer of Proverbs says, The name of the LORD is a strong fortress; the godly run to him and are safe (18:10). When we step into Christ, we

are safe. This is not a promise of freedom from physical harm, sickness, or disease while on earth. It is a guarantee that if we belong to Him, we will spend eternity in His presence. And in His presence, there is fullness of joy!

A tall tower or fortress was not only a place of refuge, but it could be used to see things from a whole new perspective. When we come into the sanctuary—God’s presence—our perspective is changed, refreshed, and more complete. The psalmist said, So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper. But what a difficult task it is! Then I went into your sanctuary, O God, and I finally understood the destiny of the wicked. The psalmist’s perspective shifted, and he received clarity in God’s presence.

Security, safety, and perspective cannot be found in politicians, wealth, or even great wisdom, but when we run to Jesus—the same God that rescued David—we can be certain that we will be saved. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever, so the Lord is still our Rock and Strong Tower.

Prayer: Lord, you are my Rock and Strong Tower. In you I find rest, security, safety, and renewed perspective on life. Help me to ALWAYS run to you instead of looking for salvation in earthly and temporal things. Amen.



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