

## IDENTITY OF JESUS AND WORDS FROM THE CROSS

April 8, 2025

### IDENTITY OF JESUS

Jesus' words and actions reveal his identity as the Son of God and Messiah.

#### Son of God

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you." "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Luke 2:41-49

As soon as Jesus was baptized [by John the Baptist], he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Matthew 3:16-17

Jesus frequently referred to God as "Father" and emphasized his unique relationship with God, stating, "I and the Father are one." John 10:30

#### Messiah and Shepherd

Jesus came to lead us to a relationship with God and eternal life.

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." John 14:6

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16

Jesus used the metaphor of a **shepherd** who cares deeply for his sheep, to emphasize his depth of care, closeness, and self-sacrifice for us. In contrast, there are others who do not have our best interests at heart. But Christ is bold and committed to us!

"Very truly I tell you Pharisees, anyone who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them. John 10:1-6

Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.” John 10:7-13

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” John 10:27-30

### **The Shepherd vs. Others**

- The Shepherd enters by the gate / front door, calls his own sheep by name and goes ahead of them to lead them to pasture, meeting their core needs. The sheep follow him because they know his voice. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus also refers to himself as the gate; whoever enters through him will be saved.
- In contrast, thieves and robbers come to steal, kill, and destroy. The hired hand is not the shepherd, does not own the sheep, runs away, leaves them unprotected against the wolf, and the wolf is free to attack and scatter them. The hired hand runs away and cares nothing for the sheep.

Isn’t it amazing that Jesus loves us this much and is so committed to our well-being? This level of self-sacrifice is like no other. “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15:13

**Reflect** → *Prayerfully reflect on Jesus’ identity in relation to God, and to you, as an openly loving, dedicated, self-sacrificial shepherd.*

**Q** → *Does this change your perspective or how you move through life? How?*

### **WORDS FROM THE CROSS**

Crucifixion was painful, humiliating, and public; it was a slow, suffocating death.<sup>1</sup> Some onlookers were heartless, casting lots for his clothes and mocking him.

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<sup>1</sup> “In antiquity crucifixion was one of the most brutal and shameful modes of death...applied mostly to slaves, disgraced soldiers, Christians, and foreigners – only very rarely to Roman citizens. Death, usually after 6 hours to 4 days, was due to multifactorial pathology...scourging and maiming, hemorrhage and dehydration causing hypovolemic shock and pain, but the most important factor was progressive asphyxia caused by impairment of respiratory movement. Resultant anoxaemia exaggerated hypovolemic shock. Death was probably commonly precipitated by cardiac arrest, caused by vasovagal reflexes, initiated inter alia by severe anoxaemia, severe pain, body blows and breaking of the large bones. The attending Roman guards could only leave the site after the victim had died, and were known to precipitate death by means of deliberate fracturing of the tibia and/or fibula, spear stab wounds into the heart, sharp blows to the front of the chest, or a smoking fire built at the foot of the cross to asphyxiate the victim.” <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/14750495/>

In his suffering, Christ spoke from the cross. His words were few but powerful, showing his character and heart. His words touched on Forgiveness, Salvation, Relationship, Distress, Abandonment, Triumph, and Reunion.

### 1. Forgiveness

“Jesus said, ‘**Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.**’ And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.” Luke 23:34

Even in this unthinkable awful situation, Christ was concerned for others, living what he taught: “**...love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**”, Matthew 5:44.

### 2. Salvation

The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, “If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself.” There was a written notice above him, which read: This is the King of the Jews. One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: “Aren’t you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!” **But the other criminal rebuked him. “Don’t you fear God,” he said, “since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”** Jesus answered him, **“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”** Luke 23:35-43 (emphasis added).

Jesus did not respond to the crowd that insulted, mocked, and taunted him. Instead, he focused on the person beside him that acknowledged his sin, accepted the consequences, recognized Christ’s sinlessness and deity, and humbly asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus listened and spoke to him with words of assurance and hope. Jesus’ earthly life’s purpose was to bring us to salvation, and dying on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins so we could be reconciled with God – so that is what he focused on: his purpose.

**Q** → *There is a lot of noise and commentary in our world. What or who do we tend to pay attention to / react to / respond to? We have a choice. How can we learn from Jesus’ example?*

### 3. Relationship

Picture the scene: Who was there? ...people who loved him, family, his closest friends, people there for the spectacle, people who mocked him, criminals being crucified, etc. Even as he suffered on the cross, he focused on others’ needs, entrusting John with the care of his mom.

“Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, **‘Woman, here is your son,’** and to the disciple, **‘Here is your mother.’** From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.” John 19:25-27

#### 4. Abandonment

“About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ (which means ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’).” Matthew 27:46

As a human, Jesus suffered real pain, anguish, and emotions, just like we do. Sometimes we feel we’ve been abandoned by God. In the Psalms, the psalmists cried out to God, raw and unfiltered. Jesus did too. God is big enough to hear and handle our big feelings. Psalm 22 mirrors troubles, despair, and crying out that has and will exist in the human experience. In the end, when it is finished, Psalm 22 reminds us that darkness does not get the final word.

#### 5. Distress

“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.” John 19:28-29

As a human, Jesus had real needs. Here, he may have been referring to his human earthly thirst, as well as the thirst for living water that will always satisfy. He spoke often about thirst for living water, leading us towards eternal life.

“...Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, ‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.’ ” John 7:37-38 <sup>2</sup>

“Everyone who drinks this [earthly] water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” John 4:13-14

#### 6. Triumph

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, “It is finished.” With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” John 19:30

Even though Christ was able to save himself, he chose to go through with the divine plan to serve as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins.

While he hung on the cross, Jesus knew he accomplished everything he needed to. Having taken the full weight of humanity’s sins, he achieved the end for which he was sent. Jesus’ death was a sufficient sacrifice to cover the sins of everyone once and for all. The gospel of John says, “...these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.” John 20:31

Jesus has triumphed. His work is complete.

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<sup>2</sup> “By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.” John 7:39

## 7. Reunion

“Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘**Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.**’ When he had said this, he breathed his last.” Luke 23:46

Having completed his work, Jesus commits his spirit to God; he knows the Father’s heart well, and knows he is trustworthy. As our good shepherd, Jesus led the way to eternal life, going ahead of us, to prepare a place for us.

This Easter season, let’s focus on Jesus’ identity and the words he spoke from the cross to help us understand the depth of his love and sacrifice, as we look forward to reunion with the Lord in our heavenly days to come.

**Reflect** → *Jesus chose to focus on the repentant person being crucified next to him. This reminds us that no matter what we’ve done, no matter how the world sees or treats us, no matter how late it is in life, he will listen to us and accept our repentance (change of heart and mind) and receive us wholeheartedly. The Lord is always ready to forgive a humble and repentant heart and to offer salvation to those that also believe in him.*

**Q** → *What is God trying to tell you today through today’s study?*

**Q** → *Have you received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not yet, do you want to? If you already accepted Christ, you can also pray this prayer again with me as an affirmation. God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. If you feel led, let’s pray this prayer out loud together:*

*“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe you are the Son of God, that you died on the cross to take away my sins, and that you rose again on the third day. I turn from my sins and invite you to come into my heart and life, and ask that you guide and renew me. Thank you for so generously loving me. In your name I pray, AMEN.”*