

"For every look at yourself, take ten looks at Christ.' This was the pastoral counsel of Scottish pastor Robert Murray McCheyne. It is exactly what this little book does. In bite-size portions, it helps us to stop, think, ponder, enjoy and worship the beauty and uniqueness of our living Lord Jesus. In a world full of empty, fleeting distractions, nothing matters more than turning our eyes upon Jesus."

Jonathan Prime, Director for London, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches

"This book did my heart good. Jonty's infectious love for Jesus and his longing for others to love him radiates through its pages, drawing you in and expanding your view of our glorious Saviour. Each devotion caused me to marvel at how incredible Jesus is, and fuelled my praise. Many times I found myself saying, 'Wow! Jesus is so amazing!' I think you will too."

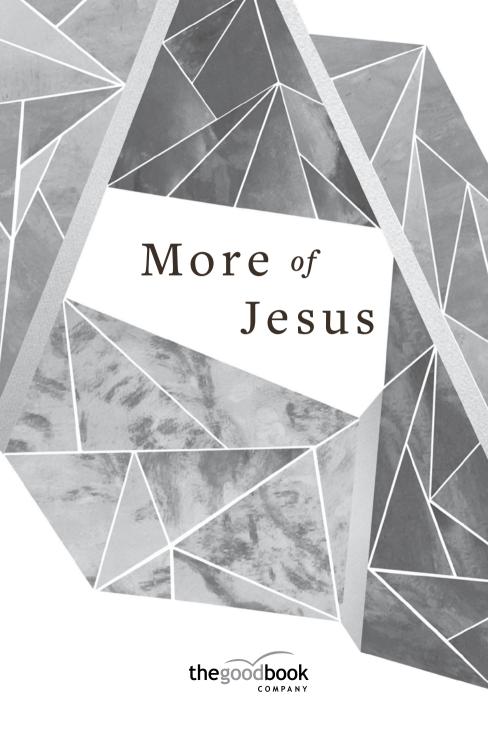
Carolyn Lacey, Speaker; Author, Extraordinary Hopsitality
(for Ordinary People) and Amazed

"Profound and yet clear. Helpful for believers but also an excellent resource to read with anyone who wants to explore the truths of Christ. For all our desire to be exact about Christ—and we must seek to be exact—we fail to represent Christ accurately if we do not give a sense of his beauty. This book gives a glorious sense of the beauty of Christ, helping us to meditate on Jesus and therefore truly enjoy him."

Yannick Christos-Wahab, Pastor, Stockwell Baptist Church, London

"My greatest need as a Christian can be reduced down to one desire: more of Jesus. Jonty's book has been a wonderful lifeline. As I have read through the short chapters, my heart has been stirred and my eyes opened wider. For too much of my Christian life, I've pursued Christianity without Christ, faith without Jesus. This gem of a book will help you—as it has helped me—get back on track. Discover, appreciate and enjoy more of Jesus."

Adrian Reynolds, Associate National Director, Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches



More of Jesus

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Introduction: An Invitation

The Lord Jesus is the greatest treasure in all the world, and knowing him will bring us the deepest joy. We will never exhaust his eternal excellencies. We will never have enough.

In 1838, William Gadsby wrote a hymn that beautifully captures the main conviction running through this book.

Immortal honours rest on Jesus' head, My God, my portion and my living bread; In him I live, upon him cast my care; He saves from death, destruction and despair.

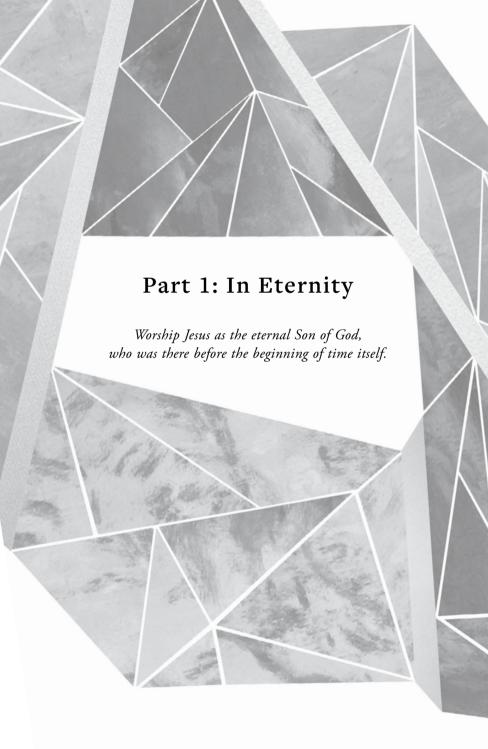
He is my refuge in each deep distress,
The Lord my strength and glorious righteousness;
Through floods and flames he leads me safely on
And daily makes his sovereign goodness known.

My every need he richly will supply, Nor will his mercy ever let me die; In him there dwells a treasure all divine, And matchless grace has made that treasure mine.

Jonty Allcock

O that my soul could love and praise him more, His beauties trace, his majesty adore, Live near his heart, rest in his love each day, Hear his dear voice and all his will obey.

Whether you are just starting out on the journey or are many years down the road, this book is an invitation to come and discover more of Jesus.





The Word

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:1-2

What an opening sentence for a biography of Jesus! Human language is stretched to its absolute limit as the apostle John conveys truths of infinite complexity to our finite human minds.

Normally we learn by starting with the simple and building towards the difficult. Piano teachers begin with middle C and then slowly add in more notes. But not John. His approach is similar to a piano teacher who presents their eager little pupil with the magnificent glory of Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 (in B flat minor) at the first lesson. Many, many notes fill the page—far beyond the beginner's ability to comprehend or to play.

Of course, some might immediately slam the piano lid shut and never attempt to play again. But others will be captivated by the sheer wonder of the music in front of them. Something stirs within and a hunger to taste that glory for themselves motivates them to go back to middle C and start to learn.

Chapter 1 of John's Gospel is Tchaikovsky. It is not simplistic or basic—it isn't supposed to be. Rather it will leave us bewildered, excited, and hungry to understand what this sentence could possibly mean. John makes clear from the very start that Jesus is not just another man. He is the one who is worthy of a lifetime of meditation. Here is where we start our journey: out of our depth and yet stirred to taste glory itself.

Let's break it down a little. John talks about the "Word"—so far so good. We know about words and use them all the time. But then we find the first unsettling reality: this Word is a person (notice that "he" was with God in the beginning). And it's this person who is to become the whole subject of John's Gospel. God has a Word to give humanity, and his Word is Jesus.

John is only just getting started. He now tells us two truths about this Word that will take us back into eternity and deep into the very nature of God: he "was God" *and* "He was with God".

Do you feel the human language creaking under the weight of glory that is being expressed? How can you be *with* someone while at the same time *being* that person?

If John only wrote one of those things, there would be no problem. If we were just told that the Word was with God, we would simply assume that God created another being (called The Word) who existed alongside him. There is God and there is the Word. All cleared up and simple.

Or if John had only told us that the Word *was* God, again there would be no problem. We would simply assume that the Word is another name for God. There is no distinction between the Word and God because the Word is God. Right?

But John says both. The Word was with God (which implies distinctness between the Word and God) and also the Word was God (which implies oneness between the Word and God). That is what crunches our minds. In Jesus we meet the one who gives us a glimpse into the eternal God. Jesus has always been with God, and he has always been God. In a sentence of breathtaking genius, John captures the eternal glory that we are going to glimpse as we gaze at Jesus.

He is more than a figure of history. He is the God of eternity. Let me spell this out... Before the manger and the donkey. Before the angel and the nativity. Before the baby was named Jesus. Before David, Moses and Abraham. Before the stars were flung into space and the earth was brought into being, the Word was there. He was with God. And he was God.

Jesus is wonderful because he is this Word. He is bigger than we can comprehend. He is greater than we could ever fathom. He is more worthy of worship than we could ever dream.

Do you find your heart stirred to get to know him more?



The Son

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does."

John 5:19-20

od does not tolerate rivals—but he absolutely loves his Son. This was the key that the religious leaders failed to see. They saw in Jesus a direct competition to the unique glory of God and so they began to persecute him. They were deeply offended by the audacity of this humble carpenter from nowhere.

They almost had a point—there are countless times when mere human beings have tried to set themselves up as a rival to God. And God always brings them down. For example, the great king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, had a go: Is not this the great Babylon I have built as my royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty. (Daniel 4:30)

Nebuchadnezzar spoke in god-talk. So, as a consequence, the one true God stripped him of his throne and sent him out to eat grass. No one in all of creation is worthy to stand alongside God and share his glory. But then comes Jesus, who clearly places himself as an equal to God. That seems outrageous but God did not stop him. Why?

The answer is simple and yet profound: Jesus is not a rival but a Son.

This language of Father and Son takes us deep into the mysteries of eternity. Before Jesus was born as a man, he was for ever existent as the Son. Before creation was spoken into being, there was an eternal Father and an eternal Son. This is why John is able to say that Jesus was with God (Son with the Father) and that Jesus was God (Son equal in glory with the Father). It doesn't solve all the problems or remove all our questions, but it does show us at least three beautiful things.

Firstly, God has always been the Father because he has always had the Son. God does not change. We change all the time—for 25 years of my life I was not a father, and then I had a son. But God is not like us, so there was no point in eternity when he became a father. This is called the eternal relations of the Father and Son. This relationship defines who God is now and who God has always been.

Secondly, it means that the Father is the source of the Son. The Father eternally generates the Son. There is an intimate and deep oneness between them. The Son is not a second being who exists independently from the Father. His being depends upon the Father.

Thirdly, it means that the Father has always loved the Son. God does not describe this relationship as a master and servant. Or a general and soldier. He reveals himself as Father and Son so that we catch something of the immense love between them.

Imagine a relationship so perfect that there is no suspicion, no competition, no misunderstanding, no disappointment, no division. A relationship so close that whatever the Father does, the Son also does. They are one and they work as one.

This is the God we adore. The God who is Father and Son (and also Holy Spirit, to paint the full picture!). It is a mystery beyond our comprehension, but it is not beyond our worship. When Jesus calls himself the Son, you can almost feel the Father's pleasure.

Jesus is wonderful because he has always existed in this stunning relationship of love. He needs nothing because he lacks nothing.

How does this idea of Jesus as the eternal Son lead you to worship today?

Radiance

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

Hebrews 1:3

Over the centuries, many writers have likened the Lord Jesus to the golden rays of sunshine. It is a beautiful image.

Sunshine is so powerful. It is able to pierce through the deepest darkness with a light that cannot be stopped. It drives away the lingering shadows of night. It floods the world with warmth, melting the icy chill of winter and bringing the sweet promise of summer. Sunshine is life-giving, joy-bringing, world-changing—it takes all the goodness of the sun and floods the earth with its smile.

A person who is trapped underground in a cave finds themselves in fearful darkness, untouched by light. The problem is not that the sun has stopped being glorious, but that in the cave there is no way to feel that goodness. The beauty of the sun is only experienced as rays of sunshine fall on our skin.

Just as the sun has the sunshine, so God has his Son.

God is infinitely more wonderful than the sun. His beauty is boundless and his majesty unparalleled. But God is in heaven and we are on earth—how could we ever bask in that glory?

The Son is the radiance of God's glory. (Hebrews 1:3)

The eternal Son of God is the means by which all the goodness of God is brought to every corner of this earth. The glory of God radiates out to us in the person of his Son. That is why we might rightly speak of Jesus as the sunshine of God. Jesus is the exact representation of God's glory; what we experience in him is truly the glory of God.

It is not like the bizarre human invention of sunbeds. We love the sun so much that we have tried to develop an artificial sunshine in order to top up the tan during the winter months. But lying in the harsh glare of a sunbed doesn't even compare to stretching out on the grass on a warm sunny day. It is a poor (and probably unhealthy) substitute.

Think what we have already seen: Jesus is the Word who is co-eternal with God. He is the Son who is in eternal relationship with his Father. He is of one essence and nature with God the Father and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the glory with which he shines is the very glory of God himself.

It is ridiculous to try and somehow divide the sun from its rays. You cannot have one without the other. The sun in its very nature and being is continually generating the sunshine. The old Church Father Tertullian spoke of this idea when he wrote:

Even when the ray is shot from the sun, it is still part of the parent mass; the sun will still be in the ray, because it is a ray of the sun—there is no division of substance, but merely an extension.

This means that we can bask in the true and essential glory of God as we come to Jesus the Son. All that is in God is carried to us in the person of Jesus. There is nothing more that God has for us—in fact, there is nothing more that God is, apart from what we find in Jesus.

Yet how quickly we turn to all sorts of other "sunbeds". We imagine that the glory we crave can be found elsewhere. We look for light and warmth and life outside of Christ but there is nothing there. Only a harsh and artificial glory that will never satisfy and will ultimately damage us.

Today, will you bask in the radiance of God's glory that we find in Jesus? All that God is, is yours in Christ. God holds nothing back but pours out himself in blessing upon you.

Jesus is the sunshine through whom we can experience and enjoy all the glory and goodness of God.

Are you seeking other sunshine to bring joy to your life? Are you settling for what is artificial and harmful? Make time to Son-bathe today.



I Am

Before Abraham was born, I am! John 8:58

We all love heroes, and the Jewish nation were no different. They had some strong contenders, but it would be hard to imagine anyone greater than Abraham. He was the promise-receiving, nation-fathering, altarbuilding, son-not-withholding, astonishing man of faith. The whole nation traced its roots and history back to him.

Mentioning his name was a quick way to put people back in their place. Are you greater than our father Abraham? No? Didn't think so. Now be quiet and go home. In terms of human greatness, Abraham was as good as it would get.

So, when Jesus is rapidly growing in popularity, the religious leaders try to quieten things down. They decide to use the Abraham put-down on Jesus. "Are you greater than our father Abraham?" (John 8:53).

But instead of a sheepish silence, the carpenter from Nazareth gave the most scandalous reply. He took their Abraham question and raised it to a whole new level. Brace yourself:

Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad. (v 56)

Not just greater than Abraham, Jesus claims to be the object of Abraham's faith and the source of his deepest joy. When Abraham rejoiced in God's promises, he was rejoicing in Jesus. When Abraham pulled a ram out of a bush to sacrifice instead of his son, he was trusting in Jesus, the perfect Lamb of God. Abraham's hope was pinned on Jesus, even though he didn't know his name.

That is some answer. The religious leaders are having their world blown apart. They try a counteroffensive to gain back control and mockingly ask how Jesus could possibly have seen Abraham. But Jesus responds with an even greater bombshell:

Before Abraham was born, I am. (v 58)

This has dialled up to full volume—for the Jewish leaders, there is no missing what Jesus is saying. I AM is the very name of God. And Jesus applies it to himself: *I am the God that Abraham believed in*. You have to let that sink in and feel the majesty. The name of God is so infinitely precious. I AM is how God chose to introduce himself to Moses in Exodus 3 at the burning bush. And what a name it is—it magnifies God and humbles us.

It speaks of his *eternal existence*. To be human is to have a beginning—but not for God. He simply is. He always has

been and always will be. He is pure existence. There was never a time when he was not.

It speaks of his *unchanging reality*. To be human is to become something that we currently are not (older, wiser, weaker, etc.). We are constantly changing. But God is not ageing. He is not growing. He is not learning. He does not change. God is solid ground in a world that shifts all around us.

It speaks of him as *the source of all that exists*. All existence flows from him and therefore is dependent on him. Nothing exists independently of God. We like to pretend in some way that our existence is what really matters—it isn't. God's existence is the heart of all things. That is what Abraham discovered: he was not interested in human greatness but in God's greatness.

Jesus takes this name as his own; he could not claim more for his identity. This is who we meet in the pages of the Gospels.

If you are thinking that Jesus did get older and did change and grow while on earth, you would be correct. We will get to that in section 3 when we explore him becoming human. But for now, we should stop on our journey to simply marvel at his eternal nature.

Before he ever became a man, Jesus was the I AM. Eternally existent, unchanging in nature, the source of all things. He silences all other claims to greatness.

Jesus is wonderful because he is the great I AM. We can stop with endless attempts to prove how great we are and instead rest in his greatness.

How does the greatness of Jesus make you feel small? How does he make you feel wonder?

First and Last

Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

Revelation 1:17

When someone tells you, "Do not be afraid", it is because three things are true. Firstly, there is something lurking that has fear-inducing potential. Secondly, you share the natural human inclination towards fear. Thirdly, there is a state to live in that is better than living in fear.

But in the face of fear, you need more than just words. You need something solid that can actually remove the fear, and that is what Jesus is talking about in Revelation 1. He is not denying that there is real and present danger (unlike the dog owner who says, "Don't be afraid, he doesn't bite"). When we look at the reality of the world, fear is not a misplaced emotion. Jesus is not calling us to live in denial.

Neither does he mean, "Don't be afraid, you can do this" (as in, "Feel the fear and do it anyway"). When we look within ourselves and see our frailty and weakness, again, fear is not a misplaced emotion. Jesus is not calling us to a greater self-belief.

The antidote to fear is found in what Jesus says next. "I am the First and the Last." That is the fear-defeating reality that Jesus is inviting us to experience.

So how exactly does that help?

Fear is an obvious consequence of living lives that we cannot control. Time marches, disaster strikes, dreams fade, death stalks. Even when things are good, we fear what might be coming round the corner.

So, we grasp at anything that gives us a sense of control and order—anything that might provide stability and security. The problem is that, in the face of real danger and threat, these things are about as effective as a baby's comfort blanket. Our spreadsheets, insurance policies, pension pots, and job security are as fragile as a toddler's teddy. We need something more stable and solid. We need someone who sits outside of the chaos—out of the reach of death itself.

Now hear the words of Jesus thunder like a waterfall: "I am the First and the Last". The sheer majesty of those words is breathtaking. In one short sentence, Jesus effortlessly sweeps us from eternity to eternity. Stop and let it sink in. This is our God.

To be the First means nothing comes before you. Jesus never has to fight to prove his worth. He doesn't need the approval of the crowds. He is not challenged by rivals. He was there before it all. Whatever you might fear, whatever seems immovable and all-consuming, Jesus was

there before it. The superpowers that arrogantly flex their muscles, the sicknesses that invade our bodies, the systems that perpetuate injustice, even the death that inevitably waits for us—none of these things are ultimate. Jesus was before them all. Do you feel the solid ground?

To be the Last means nothing will outlast you. Jesus will never be surpassed or replaced or upgraded. He will never be dethroned or defeated. He will never be a has-been or a quaint relic of history. He will never look back wistfully on the good old days. He will never sit in a rocking chair reminiscing about the past. When the boastful tongues of tyrants lie silenced in the grave, Jesus will still reign.

And in case we find ourselves doubting this reality, we have a tangible demonstration in history. The one who is the First and Last became like us. He took on our frail existence. Humanity tried to defeat him, Satan tried to dethrone him, death tried to finish him, but he rose in triumph. So he is rightly called by this name.

When we feel fear rising, rather than cling to temporary things that are uncertain and fickle, we need to hear the truth that Jesus is the First and the Last.

Jesus is wonderful because before anything else, he was there. And after everything else, he will still be there. Our lives shift and change, but Jesus doesn't.

What practically makes you feel safe in the world? How reliable is that thing you are trusting? How does the eternal reality of Jesus provide a firmer foundation?