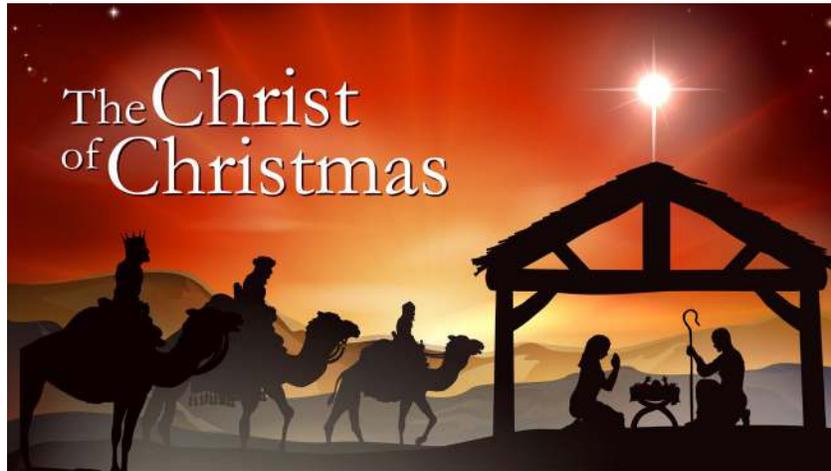


The Christ of Christmas

Expositional Study Of John 14:6

Written By
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December 15, 2019



The old Christmas Carol *How Great Our Joy!* puts the reason for the season in perspective with these words:

While by the sheep we watched at night, glad tidings bro't an angel bright.
How great our joy! Great our joy!
Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!
Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!
Praise we the Lord in heav'n on high!

The lyrics make one wonder: What were the shepherds all joyous about? Why did they offer praise to the Lord in heaven above? Pragmatically, why are we as followers of the babe of Bethlehem all joyous? Why do we praise the birth of this Jewish babe born to Mary and Joseph?

The answer to the queries was answered definitively when the babe grew into a man. What did He, Jesus, say about himself? He identified himself as the great eternal divine God, who had arrived as prophesied (Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:2). How did He do this? By performing miracles only God could perform, for one, and for another, by associating himself with divine titles related to the great *I Am* of the Old Testament (Ex. 3:14; John 8:58). Yes, Jesus left no doubt about His divinity when He identified himself with this ancient name of God.

He did, however, further refine the meaning of the divine name by adding multiple predicates to the subject. John, the beloved disciple, records seven of these informative titles Jesus uttered when He walked among us:

- One, I am the bread of life (John 6:35, 41, 48, 51)
- Two, I am the light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5)

- Three, I am the door (John 10:7, 9, 11, 14)
- Four, I am the vine (John 15)
- Five, I am the way (John 14:6)
- Six, I am the truth (John 14:6)

At the end of the first clause of John 14, verse 6, Jesus adds the seventh divinely ordered predicate to further crystalize His identity.

⁶ Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John. 14).

Life. It is not just essence of who Jesus is as the Creator (John 1:4; Col. 1:16-17), it is, as we see here, something He offers freely to sinners. Stated differently, if you, by faith, embrace Him as THE only way to heaven, if you, by faith, understand that He is THE epitome of all spiritual/religious truth, then, *ipso facto*, you are able to come to the Father as His child both here and in eternity because you have life. What kind of life? Eternal life. Christ’s closing clause, of course, reminds us of just how restrictive this eternal access to the Father is. In order to receive eternal life a sinner must come, by faith, through the One who is Life, Jesus. Have you done that yet? It is what the Christmas story is really all about.

Since this seventh aspect of Christ’s name is so important for spiritual living, it warrants our focused attention during this holy season. From this particular divine title we learn this timeless, exceptional, and grand truth:

Jesus Is The Only One Capable Of Granting Eternal Life To Those Who Believe (John 14:6)

What is the longing of each highly mortal man? He desires to live forever. But since he cannot, since we cannot, he/we typically go to great lengths to increase his/our odds for life:

- We work out and watch what we eat (except at Thanksgiving and Christmas, of course).
- We purchase special creams designed to rejuvenate aging skin.
- We steer clear of activities which might prove detrimental to our health
- We try and eat anti-aging foods (<https://www.thehealthy.com/aging/healthy-aging/anti-aging-foods/>).
- We buy hair growth products to maintain that youthful appearance (<https://www.elitedaily.com/p/the-6-best-products-for-hair-growth-thickness-17898831>).
- We floss (studies show it does prevent heart disease, go figure¹).

¹ <https://www.verywellhealth.com/simple-steps-to-increase-your-life-expectancy-2223907>: When you floss, you help prevent your gums from becoming inflamed. That’s a good thing. What is happening when your gums are inflamed is that you have a chronic bacterial infection in your mouth. This harms your arteries through two mechanisms: the bacteria find their way into your arteries and hang out (causing plaques), and your body mounts an

- We attempt to cut back on stress. Good luck with that in the D.C. environment.
- We take screenings and tests to assure we catch disease early
- We eat so-called super-foods (turmeric, ginger, garlic, avocados, leafy green vegetables, blueberries, flax seeds, oats, broccoli, and apples).
- And when it appears we may not live forever, we make sure our names are engraved in stone so we will not be soon forgotten. Some folks, who so want to live forever, resort to cryonics. The scientific process places the body of the deceased in temperatures below -130 centigrade in an attempt to preserve enough brain information to permit future revival of the person when technology has increased to new, jaw-dropping levels. Good luck with that <https://www.cryonics.org/about-us/faqs/>).

As He faced His own mortality by dying a horrific death on the cross the next day, Jesus shockingly told His disciples in the Upper Room Discourse that He was the way to God, the embodiment of all spiritual truth about how to get to heaven, and that He was the Lord of *life*. From this eye-brow raising definitive statement, we are forced to consider two logical outcroppings:

Jesus Offers True Belief About Life

The word “life” in Greek is *ζωε* (ζωή). Lexically, it has four primary meanings according to Friberg’s Greek Lexicon:

ζῶω contracted form ζῶ; impf. ἔζων; fut. ζήσω, mid. ζήσομαι; laor. ἔζησα; *live*; (1) of natural physical life; (a) *live, be living, be alive* (1C 15.45), opposite ἀποθνήσκω (*die*); (b) of return from death *become alive again* (MT 9.18); (c) of recovery from sickness *get well, recover, be well* (JN 4.50); (d) with mention of the sphere or basis of life *live in* (AC 17.28); *live by* (MT 4.4); (2) of supernatural, spiritual life, including resurrected life for the body and eternal life for the soul (JN 11.25, 26); (3) of the conduct of life *live (as)* (GA 2.14); *continue (to sin)* (RO 6.2); *live (for)* (2C 5.15); (4) participle ζῶν *living*, of things deriving from God as the source of life (IP 1.3).

Of these, which is Jesus talking about? I would say meanings 1 and 4 are out because he is talking to disciples who are already very much alive. This leaves us with the second and third meanings. I would say the second meaning is primary here, while the third meaning is secondary. Why do I say this?

For one, to understand a word’s meaning you must consider how the author in question used the word. John, interestingly enough, uses this exact word with the definitive article in two other places: John 1:4 and 11:25.

³ All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (Jn. 1:3-4).

immune response to the bacteria in your mouth, causing inflammation (which in turn can cause your arteries to narrow). This makes it hard for your heart to do its job and can lead to heart disease.

⁴ ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων (John 1).

Here, John ties Jesus back to the creative moment of Genesis chapter 1. His statement is quite informative. Before the cosmos was created, with all of its complex systems and governing laws, Jesus was the eternal God who possesses and is the essence of life. With a mere creative word, He, the omnipotent God brought the vast, specular creation into realization. His existence and creative word answers the questions atheism, skepticism, and science cannot answer: Why is there something rather than nothing? Why is there order as opposed to disorder? How did something come from absolutely nothing? What started the chain of cause and effect since it is impossible for anything or anyone to be self-caused or self-actualized? And, more importantly, why is there complex life anyway? Where did physical life come from? It came from the God of life, Jesus.

As a side note, what does John mean when he says that Jesus was “the light was light of men?” Does this mean all men are saved? No. The Lord of life, Jesus, give each man life, physical and spiritual, and in his body he possesses an innate understanding that there is a living, eternal God. Paul talks about this in Romans 2,

¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus (Rom. 2).

Each man, therefore, is given physical and spiritual life by Jesus, coupled with a degree of interior revelation, and some general revelation (Rom. 1:18ff), that there is an eternal, personal God beyond this earthly existence. John’s first usage of the word “life” is wedded to the concept of eternity.

The second usage of the life (*zoe*) with the article occurs in John 11, verse 25. Standing with a distraught Martha, who had just lost her beloved brother, Lazarus, Jesus shared this truth:

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, (John 11).

Here the emphasis is upon the fact the belief in Jesus gives a mortal, sinful man eternal life. The fact Jesus, then, turned and prayed and with three words, “Lazarus, come forth,” also shows He has power to grant physical life to a person who has been dead for four long, necrotic days. But the emphasis in the passage is most definitely on the fact Jesus, who is the Lord of Life, gives eternal life to those who follow Him. Eternal life is, therefore, the same primary emphasis in John 14, verse 6, because Jesus is talking about going to heaven and preparing a place for His followers to dwell in when He calls them home.

For another, to understand a word you must consider the wider context. If you keep reading Christ’s enlightening teaching in John 14, you encounter the emphasis upon life denoting spiritual life and living victoriously in the here and now.

¹⁵ If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. ¹⁶ And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; ¹⁷ that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or

know Him, *but* you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. ¹⁸ I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹ After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you *will* behold Me; because I live, you shall live also (John 14).

Keeping God's commandments is, no doubt, a spiritual exercise for all saints. How will we go about this? Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to indwell His people so they are empowered to live lives of victory over the old, sinful self (Rom. 6:19ff). All of this speaks of spiritual conduct, which is the secondary contextual meaning of this word for life. True, all followers of Christ will have eternal life dependent upon His eternal life, as He states in verse 19; however, His presence with us in the person of the Holy Spirit is all about having the power to live a godly, holy life in the here and now.

All of this is something to be quite joyous about, isn't it? As stated, Jesus gives sinners the opportunity to trade eternal death and judgment for eternal life and bliss. This concept of eternal life permeates many passages in John which precede chapter 14. Consider the authorial evidence:

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; ¹⁵ that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life (John 3).

Observation: Negatively, if you do not look to Christ, as a sinner, and believe that He gives you forgiveness and eternal life, you will stay in a state of eternal death. Positively, if you look to Him in faith, believing that He is the Savior of all savors, you will be immediately given eternal life.

Here is another instructive verse:

³⁶ He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (John 3).

Observation: Positively, belief in Jesus as the Son/Savior moves a sinner from eternal death to eternal life.

Christ's words to the Samaritan woman are most insightful:

¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life (John 4).

Observation: the sinner, regardless of their sordid past, who drinks, by faith of Jesus, the water of life, immediately has a spiritual artesian well of eternal life springing up in the core of their formerly spiritually dry and parched life.

Christ's words in John 5 also utilities the word *zoe* to denote eternal life:

²¹ For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom He wishes (John 5).

²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5).

Observation: Jesus is the only one who can give eternal life to a spiritually dead, lifeless soul. You might need to re-read that if you embrace a diverse and pluralistic view of religion. Jesus is quite restrictive because truth matters when so much is on the proverbial line. Note the progression of moving from death to life: first, the sinner (you) must hear Christ's word/gospel, and then the sinner (you) must make a cognitive, reasoned decision to believe in Him in light of the evidence. Question: Have you moved from death to life yet? Again, this is the story of Christmas.

Christ's narrow and definitive words to the verbally and unbelieving Jews in John 6 further buttress the fact that *zoe* is primarily talking about eternal life in John:

⁴⁰ For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day (John 6).

⁴⁷ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. (John 6).

Observation: Once again, Jesus is quite clear and He minces no words. If you, the sinner, want to move from a state/position of spiritual death, which is inherited from your association with Adam's sin (Rom. 5:12-21), to a state of eternal life, *you must believe in Him as the Savior*. There are no exceptions, alterations, or modifications. This spiritual truth transcends all time, all cultures, and all religious teachings which deny this truth, no matter how nice, friendly, spiritual, and moral the people might appear. Dead sinners only become alive saints by their faith relationship with Jesus, the Christ. This is why Jesus said that "no man comes to the Father, but through Me." The preposition, *dia* (διά) here with the genitive, *me* (ἐμοῦ) denotes *the only means* by which this radical transformation occurs. It occurs by means of faith in the person and work of Jesus, the Lord of all life.



The old Devil, of course, has clouded the issue, hasn't he? He has many tricks in his bag of tricks designed to keep people from placing their faith in Jesus. As I said in our last study, Jesus said this would occur in the *Parable of the Weeds* (Matt. 13:24-32). Here is a picture from a farmer's field in the Valley of Elah where David took on the giant Goliath. See the purple-headed thorn thistle mixed in with the wheat? This is exactly what Jesus said the Devil would do with the gospel. Whereas the gospel is about gaining divine forgiveness and eternal life in God's presence solely by means of faith, God's Adversary makes sure that . . .

The World Offers False Beliefs About Life

How does the Adversary go about doing this? This is a study in and of itself. Suffice it to say he sucks people into false belief systems.

For the less religiously, spiritually inclined, he can deceive them with the teachings of evolutionary science, causing them to erroneously conclude there is no way, in light of the scientific evidence, a personal, living Creator God exists. Peter Atkins, the renowned Oxford Chemistry Professor, minces no words in his dislike of religion and belief in God. He so believes that belief in a divine being is inimical to scientific thinking, he once wrote, “Humanity should accept that science has eliminated the justification for believing in cosmic purpose, and that any survival of purpose is inspired only by sentiment.”²

Ironically, other well-known, highly accredited, and influential scientists do not hold the illogical view of Atkins. John Houghton FRS, the pre-imminent British space scientist, writes, “Our science is God’s science. He holds the responsibility for the whole scientific story . . . The remarkable order, consistency, reliability and fascinating complexity found in the scientific description of the universe are reflections of the order, consistency, reliability and complexity of God’s activity.”³ He merely looks at the complexity of the star systems and galaxies above his head and makes the logical conclusion: There must be a divine being, viz., God, behind the irreducibly complex cosmos. For Houghton, belief in God is not blind but is based on a logical understanding of the facts built into the cosmos.

But I digress.

The Devil gets thinking people all locked up in the notion that faith is blind and is not concerned with the scientific facts. Such is not the case, however. But they believe it anyway because they do not want to believe in God, which, in turn, will guide them to the person and work of Christ in history. Hence, they will not bat an eye over the fact they cannot even answer the most basic questions about our origins: Where did non-eternal matter really come from? How did complex order come from a Big Bang? Why are we here? How can you prove the purpose of man based on science? If there is no God, how do we know what evil is? How did moral thinking actually come from an absolute meaningless evolutionary system? How did something come from nothing?

The scientifically educated will smugly grin over the Bible’s claim that Jesus walked on water, while they will never stop and admit the miracle of water itself. Concerning the wonder of water, Ravi Zacharias muses,

Think of this for a moment. In eighteen milliliters of water (about two swallows full) there are 6×10^{23} molecules of H₂O. How much is 6×10^{23} ? A good computer can carry out ten million counts per second. It would take that computer two billion years to count 6×10^{23} . Look at it another way. A stack of five hundred sheets of paper is two to three inches high. How high would the stack be if it had 6×10^{23} sheets? That stack would reach from the earth to the sun, not once, but more than one million times.⁴

²“The Limitless Power of Science,” *Nature’s Imagination-The Frontiers of Scientific Vision*, ed. John Cornwell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 125).

³John Houghton, *The Search for God—Can Science Help?* (Oxford: Lion, 1995), 59.

⁴Ravi Zacharias, *Jesus Among Other Gods* (Nashville: Word, 2000), 80-81.

The same God who created this complexity could certainly walk on that which He created. Further, the complexity of that which we enjoy when we drink a swallow or two when we are thirsty is a daily reminder that there is a personal, complex God, who designed this cosmic anomaly.

Yet, despite the evidence for belief in God and in God's Son, the Devil works overtime to keep folks locked tightly in their false belief systems so they won't believe and be saved. All they, then, as humanists have is life in the here and now with no future or hope of what lies ahead beyond this life. Is this a snapshot of your life this Christmas? I'm here to tell you there is ample evidence for not just believing in God, but in believing in His Son who is not only the essence of all life, but stands ready to give you forgiveness and eternal life when you turn to Him in faith.

Where scientism, or the love of science at all costs as the metanarrative of life, will work for some, it will not work for others. So what does the Devil do? He weighs them down in false religious systems which purport to lead them to life. Here's a sampling of how he dupes unsuspecting people into thinking their system gives them eternal life.

- Salvation and life in *Transcendental Meditation* seeks to unite their followers with the Creative Intelligence. Regarding this process, Ron Rhodes remarks, "By reaching a state of bliss-consciousness, or happiness through meditation, TM claims people can free themselves from endless cycles of reincarnations. "Salvation" occurs when persons raise themselves from the gross levels of consciousness to the highest level, which is "unity consciousness." There are seven levels—dreamless sleep, dreaming, wakefulness, consciousness of one's soul or transcendental consciousness, cosmic consciousness, God's consciousness, and Unity consciousness. At this highest level, one's consciousness is completely absorbed into Brahman. "One sees that there is no difference between myself, other selves, and the material world. It is all one."⁵

Complicated, isn't it? See how it by-passes the biblical notion of sin? That's one of the Devil's tactics. The last thing he wants is for you to see yourself as a spiritually dead sinner who needs the Savior. See, also, how you have to live in a certain way and do certain works in order to be delivered from a hopeless system of birth and rebirth? Again, this puts salvation in your court and makes your efforts the way, the truth, and the life which lead to God. This is diametrically opposed to the simple, clear, easy-to-follow words of Jesus.

- Salvation and life in the *Baha'i Faith* is based on the teachings of Mizra Ali Muhammad, known as "the Bab," meaning "the Gate," who supposedly was the greatest manifestation of God in human flesh. The Bab, who is also supposedly a direct descendent of Muhammad, is supposedly greater than the Islamic founder. In many respects, he functioned like John the Baptist by pointing to the even greater prophet and manifestation of God yet to come. The Bab was executed in 1850, but the prophet finally came in 1863 in the person of Mirza Husayn Ali, or the "Baha'u'llah," meaning "the Glory of God." He claimed that he was, in fact, the second coming of Christ and the Comforter Jesus spoke of in John 14:16. He went on to teach that God is "the Most Exalted, the

⁵Ron Rhodes, *The Challenge of the Cults* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 181.

Inaccessible, the Invisible and Unknowable Essence, and that He can never be completely known.” Jesus Christ, of course, was just one of the many manifestation manifestations of God, but they deny His actual incarnation, deity, and miracles. How do you find eternal life in this devilish system? Good question. You must believe in the many manifestations of God, coupled with a lifetime of perpetual obedience to the laws they deem are important. As they state, “Only in striving to fulfill the law does [one] come into a right relationship with God.”⁶

Tricky, wouldn't you say? If God is unknowable, why would I want to know Him? This is highly illogical, as well, for how you say God is unknowable, yet challenge adherents to know him to a certain degree? How can you know the unknowable? You can't. If salvation and life are dependent upon my performance and observance of laws, I'm sure no one will know where they are headed in the next life, right? If the Bab and the Baha'u'llah were greater than Jesus, why didn't they perform the miraculous works of Jesus? Why didn't they raise themselves from the dead, too? They couldn't because they are not the essence of life like Jesus was and is. He could lay His life down and pick it up again because He was, and is, the Lord of life, physical and spiritual, temporal and eternal. And, in contradistinction to Baha'i faith, Jesus was most clear that He was the great I AM, the God who exists in and outside of all time and space. He was also quite clear that He was, and is, the only One who can give life to a spiritually dead soul. How He gives that life is so simple even a child can grasp it. All it takes is an understanding of one's sinful status, coupled with simple belief that Jesus is the Lord who grants life to sinners who come to Him.

This Christmas you just might be lost in a field of weeds. What do you need to do? Embrace, by faith, the gospel seed Jesus presents in John 14, verse 6. May this day He become your Way to God, your Truth about how to secure an eternal relationship with God, and your Life which will stretch into eternity in God's home called heaven.

The moment all of this becomes true for you, you will be able to sing our opening carol with great gusto and joy:

While by the sheep we watched at night, glad tidings bro't an angel bright.
 How great our joy! Great our joy!
 Joy, joy, joy! Joy, joy, joy!
 Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!
 Praise we the Lord in heaven on high!

⁶Ibid., 219-222.

